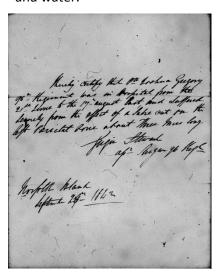


MEDIA RELEASE

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION

Early morning, on 21 June 1842, a daring escape attempt was undertaken by twelve convicts aboard the brig Governor Phillip. The Norfolk Island Museums and Research Centre are lucky to hold within our collection a copy of the diary of one of the soldiers wounded in the mutiny, Private Joshua Hamlet Gregory of the 96th Regiment (NIM20360), as well as a copy of his medical certificate which details the wounds he received in the scuffle.

The Governor Phillip had landed, after significant problems, some of its cargo at Cascade. However it was then forced to make way for the schooner Coquette which had arrived from Sydney. During this time, the convicts had been kept aboard the ship so they could start work at daybreak and therefore take advantage of the fair-weather conditions. Shortly after 7am the work party were let out to start unloading the launch, and after seeing that there were only two soldiers and a sergeant on duty the convicts overwhelmed the soldiers and took charge of the ship. The ship's Captain and the rest of the soldiers were trapped below decks but held all of the weaponry except that which was carried by the soldiers on deck, and all the food and water.



Surgeons Report 1842, Reel 693 4-2583 NI Research Centre

The convicts held the ship for roughly half an hour, before they were overcome and the Captain re-took command.

Five mutineers were killed in the scuffle, two were severely

wounded and four later executed in Sydney. Sadly, one soldier drowned and two were wounded, including Private Gregory. Three of the convicts are identified as being buried in the cemetery at Kingston - James Saye/Say, Bartholomew (or Bartley) Kelly and Samuel Jones. A fourth, James/Patrick Bedwell is almost certainly one of the convicts killed in the mutiny and is also buried at the cemetery in Kingston.

"Norfolk Island Mutiny", Southern Australian, 6 September 1842. (Image courtesy of TROVE, National

Library of Australia)

NORFOLK ISLAND-MUTINY.

THE government brig Governor Phillip, arrived at Sydney from Norfolk Island arrived at Sydney from Norfolk Island, has brought intelligence of a daring at-tempt made by some prisoners to effect their escape, which terminated in a serious affray. They succeeded in reaching Phillip Island, but were captured and confined on board the Coquette. They there mutinied and atten ted to seize the v tinied and attempted to seize the vessel, when a dreadful conflict took place; six people were killed and wounded. The following are the particulars of this affair with some other information from the Is-

Ind :—

"It appears that twelve prisoners had man factured a boat, by means of which they succeed in gaining Phillip Island, whither they were prisoned and captured.

"A plan was laid by the boat's crew employ in calcading the Governor Phillip to take it schoomer Coquette, but this was defeated, and it parties were imprisoned on board.

Private Gregory was hospitalized on Norfolk Island for two months due to the serious nature of his wounds - his medical certificate states that he suffered from a deep cut approximately three inches long and was in hospital from the day of the mutiny through to 17 August 1842. From his diary, we know he was only 20 years old when the mutiny occurred, and that he was from a 'highly regarded' family with important military connections – his great-grandfather was a General and his great uncle had served with distinction at the Battle of Trafalgar, "in whose arms the renowned Lord Nelson expired". He also speaks extensively about the mutiny in his diary, stating that he had overheard whispers by the convicts the previous night but upon warning his superiors was told that is was 'but a fancy' and to not worry.

Of the mutiny itself, he writes over five pages on the account with some excerpts below:

"... at four in the morning it was my turn to go on sentry until six. I had been posted but a very few minutes, when orders were given to put the brig about. I told two of the convicts to come on deck. Instead of two, four made their appearance. I said "I only called for two and that is all I want, so two of you can go below again", but they seemed to take no notice of what I said, still making their way up the fore hatch. I levelled my pistol at the head of the first of them and said if he moved one step I would blow out his brains. This cooled their mettle... At six o'clock I was relieved by another. On giving up my orders I was most particular in impressing on his mind my suspicion, and told him to have a sharp eye on them..."

but mever made any attempt to bite it at last he disappeared, and we saw no more of him for the rest of that day, he was the largest Shark I ever Saw, about so feet long, and as big round his body as a horse, how days was as bong as we more able to remain at the dettlement for the swelle rose very high, is also did the wind, the uncher flukes brake off, and the Brig drifted out to Sea with about to fathon of table the hanging from her bories, the next they we returned to the ascade where we succeeded in landing a deal more of our large, and would have cleared out, if it had not been for the schoner loquette, arriving from sidney with stores for the island, the same as ourselves, the Boats were sent to her to clear her out first, as she was only hired for a certain term by government, the task was templeted by the 21 th of June, and the Boats crew came absard of us making their Barge fast astern of the Brig, that night they remained on board, and the saind blowing pretty strong we was forced to get under way h. and heat off and on during the night the connersation of the connect the Raised a Suspicion in my mind, their whipers I didnot at all like for 3 was heard one of them propose a rush upon the sentry; and take possession of the arms on the quarter deck. I related my suspecions and what I hast heard , to my commades , but they made light of it, and Said it was only fana, of mine, but at all events I persuaded the despeant to put on another dentry which I thought would put a check on them, Every time the Brig went about during the night two of the Boats crew had to come on deck to breasent the Barge from striking against the Brige I remarked them well, when they were called to their duty, with what indifference they lame. and if the captain of officer on watch tall them to hear a hand they returned Some lancy knower, in a most dogged manner, at four in the morning, it was my him to go sentry, until lix, I had been posted but a very few minutes, when orders were given to put the Brig

Private Gregory reports that he then went below decks and fell asleep until: "I was awoken by the report of a musket and a great scuffle, and more on deck, just over my head. I sprang to my feet, seized the first musket that came to my hand, and rushed up the main hatch. At the same moment the sergeant was making his way below, bleeding dreadfully from wounds in his head. He had nothing on but his trousers, he looked the most pitiful spectacle. I had hardly gained the deck when I received a heavy blow on my head with a cutlass which sent me head over heels down the ladder again, the blood streaming down my face fearfully and almost blinding me..."

Private Gregory continues to describe the scuffle in very detailed terms, having been filled in on what had occurred prior to his waking by a fellow soldier. He tells that the hatch leading between desks had been fastened by the convicts by placing heavy items over the top, but

they eventually broke through the prison and partition that lay between them and the cabin, which gave them a clear run through the lower decks. They attempted to saw through the hatch but Private Gregory reports that the convicts poured boiling water through the gaps, scolding three people badly. He goes on to give a detailed account of how the soldiers and officers received the upper hand and retook the ship, all of which is very interesting reading!

If you would like to read Private Godfrey's account or have any questions about this article, please do not hesitate to contact the Norfolk Island Museums on 23788.

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