

A scenic photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, a sandy beach is partially covered with dark, jagged rocks. The ocean is a deep blue, with white foam from waves washing onto the shore. In the middle ground, a large, dark rock formation juts out into the sea. In the background, a steep, forested cliff rises, topped by a sharp, pointed rock formation. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

**A GUIDE TO  
PITCAIRN**

(4th Edition)

# PITCAIRN ISLAND

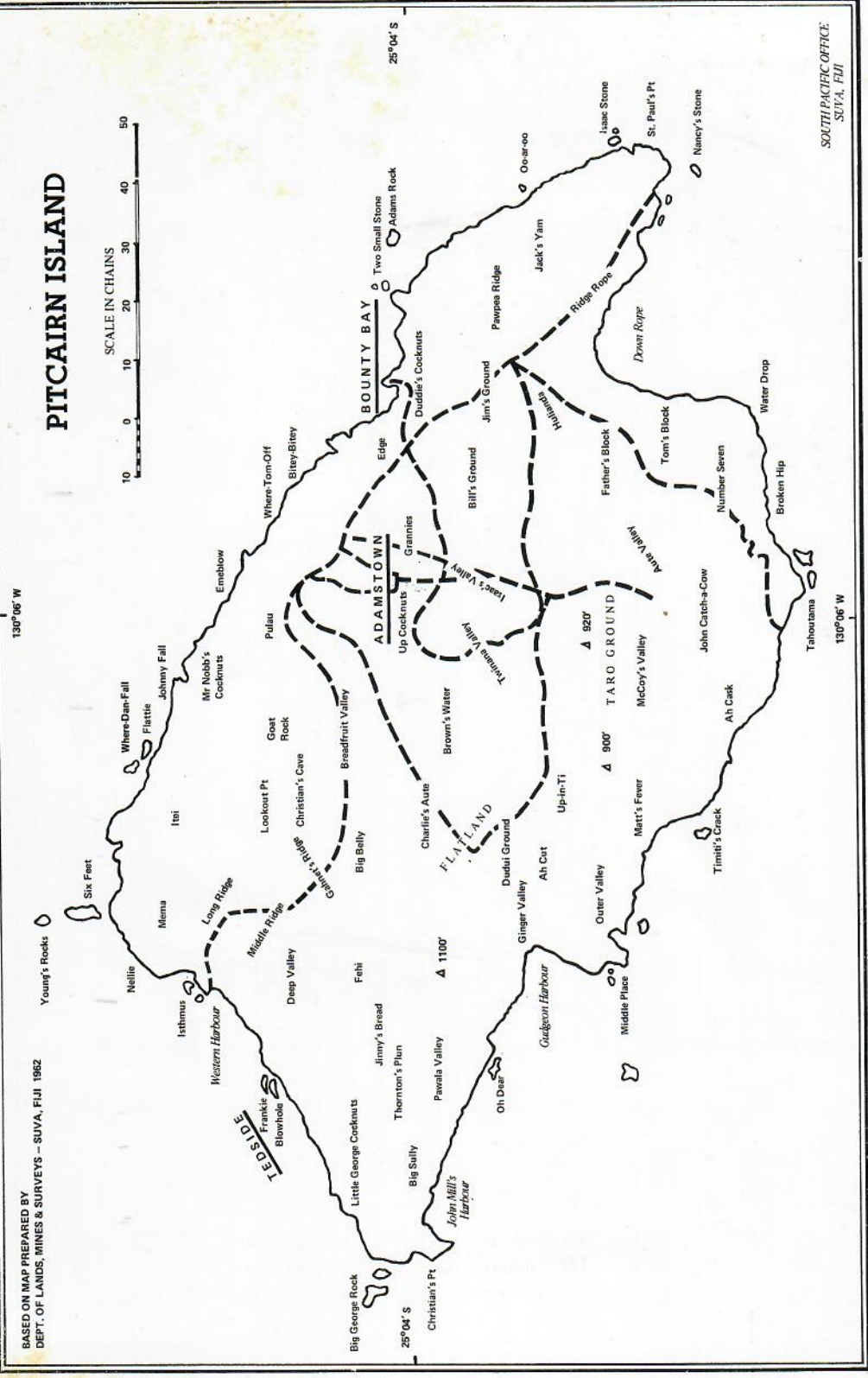
BASED ON MAP PREPARED BY  
DEPT. OF LANDS, MINES & SURVEYS - SUVA, FIJI 1962



130° 06' W

130° 06' W

SOUTH PACIFIC OFFICE  
SUVA, FIJI





# A GUIDE TO PITCAIRN

British High Commissioner  
Wellington, New Zealand  
September 1962

PUBLISHED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLANDS OF PITCAIRN,  
HENDERSON, DUCIE AND OENO  
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Front Cover: Bounty Bay.

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## **PREFACE**

Successive editions of the Guide have been published partly for official record and partly to provide an up-to-date source of information for prospective and actual visitors to Pitcairn and others interested in the history and present life of the island. Much of the original material was gathered from letters, reports and observations in the Official Pitcairn records, correlated and edited by Mr Cowell. Many contributed to this source of information, among whom I should specially mention Mr H. E. Maude, OBE, of the Australian National University, who was largely responsible for the form and coherence of the historical chapters.

Part I remains virtually as it was in the first edition while Part II has been successively revised in each edition to reflect the changes in the Pitcairn way of life. Part III has been altered little and Part IV, containing extracts from the writings of the late Roy P. Clark, one time postmaster on the island, is as it first appeared in the third edition.

I am grateful to those, and in particular to Mr Garth Harraway, Commissioner for Pitcairn, who have contributed to the production of the present edition.

**Richard Stratton**  
Governor

British High Commission,  
Wellington, New Zealand.  
September 1982.



*Bounty* replica under full sail.

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## Part I

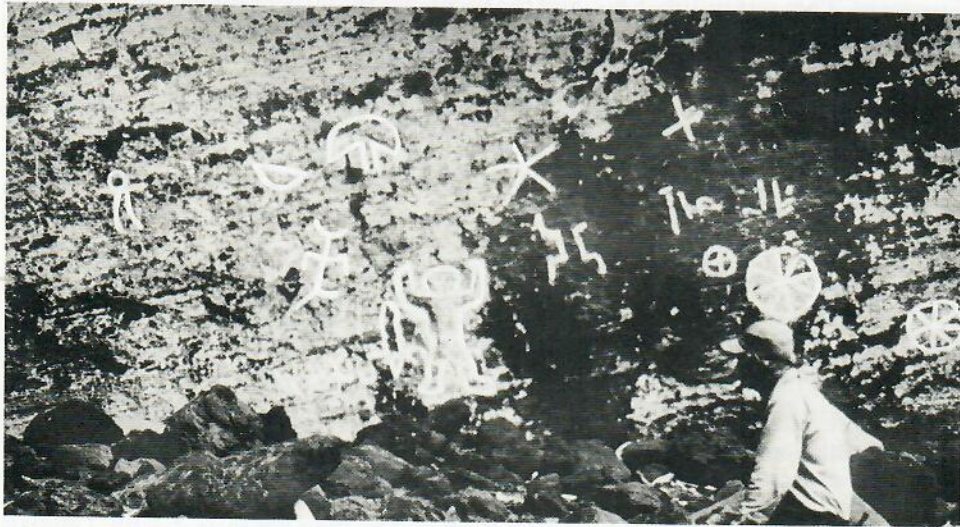
# PITCAIRN'S HISTORY

AS YOU SAIL towards Pitcairn, you approach one of the remotest of the world's inhabited islands, lying halfway between New Zealand and the Americas. Four thousand eight hundred kilometres of open ocean separate you from them; a few archipelagos lie to the north; and the southern seas are empty to the ice caps of Antarctica.

If you call at Pitcairn, you will see a unique community of Anglo-Tahitian descent which turned a naval mutiny into a celebrated romance.

### Who were the first settlers?

We do not know who first settled this small volcanic island about 9.6 km. round and 4 km. at its greatest length. But settlers there were, for early visitors from Europe found many relics of Polynesian civilization, probably from Mangareva some 490 km. to the north-west. There were roughly hewn stone gods still guarding sacred sites; carved in the cliff faces were representations of animals and men; burial sites yielded human skeletons; and there were earth ovens, stone adzes, gouges and other artefacts of Polynesian workmanship.



Polynesian rock carvings at Down Rope.



Pitcairn Island from the East.

### Discovery by Europeans: 1767

“It is so high that we saw it at a distance of more than fifteen leagues, and it having been discovered by a young gentleman, son to Major Pitcairn of the marines, we called it PITCAIRN’S ISLAND”.

In these few words were recorded the first sight and naming of Pitcairn by a European. That was in July 1767, and the words are those of an Englishman, Captain Philip Carteret of H.M.S. *Swallow*, who was, however, unable to land because of the surf “which at this season broke upon it with great violence”.

No one except the determined Captain Cook was interested in Carteret’s report and his search for the island was deflected by an outbreak of scurvy. So Pitcairn might have become the home of ex-sailors with their Polynesian families and, like other islands in these latitudes, a casual stopover for whalers looking for land and fresh food. But its destiny was to be quite different.

The tale of the mutiny of His Majesty’s armed ship *Bounty*, which led to the founding of the Pitcairn community, is well known. All that needs to be told here is that on 28 April 1789, when the *Bounty* was in the Tonga Group on her way home from Tahiti with a cargo of breadfruit trees for planting in the West Indies, the master’s mate, Fletcher Christian, and others of the crew mutinied. Casting adrift the Commander, Lieutenant William Bligh, and eighteen loyal officers in the ship’s boat, the mutineers sailed the *Bounty* back to Tahiti, to Tubuai in the Austral Group.

There, relations with the inhabitants soon deteriorated and, spurred by the fear of discovery and arrest, nine of the mutineers set sail with Christian in search of an uninhabited island, secure from the outside world. To help them the men took with them six Tahitian men and, to look after them and be their consorts, twelve Tahitian women.

## Settlement by the mutineers: 1790

For two months the men on the *Bounty* combed the Cooks, Tonga and the eastern islands of Fiji for a home; and it was almost in desperation that Christian, recalling or stumbling on Carteret's account, sailed eastwards again for Pitcairn, which he reached on 15 January 1790. "With a joyful expression such as we had not seen on him for a long time past" Christian returned from the shore to report that the people who had once planted Pitcairn with coconut palms and breadfruit had either died or left it. The island was lonely and inaccessible, uninhabited, fertile and warm; it exceeded his highest hopes.

The *Bounty* was anchored in what is now called Bounty Bay and stripped of all her contents, including pigs, chickens, yams and sweet potatoes, which were laboriously hauled up the aptly named Hill of Difficulty to the Edge, a small, grassy platform overlooking the Bay. Then, fearing that if any European vessel sighted the ship retribution would inevitably follow, the mutineers ran the *Bounty* ashore and set her on fire so that no trace of her, or clue to their whereabouts, would remain visible from the sea.

Fletcher Christian, the man who had led the mutineers to this remote island, was a son of the Coroner of Cumberland and of Manx descent on his father's side. He had been to school with the poet William Wordsworth, was well-educated and, in the words of a friend, "mild, generous and sincere". Certainly his energy and cheerfulness drew both respect and affection from his fellows and, although he died a few years after landing at Pitcairn, he is still remembered as the founder and first leader of the settlement.

Of the other mutineers, Midshipman Edward Young was also well connected and was devoted to Christian, whom he succeeded as leader; "reckless Jack" Adams, later to become Patriarch of Pitcairn, was a Cockney orphan; Mills, Brown, Martin and Williams were killed within four years of arrival; and of the other two, the Scotsman William McCoy and the Cornishman Matthew Quintal little good can be said, except that they were neither better nor worse than the average seaman of the time.

On arrival the mutineers made themselves rough leaf-shelters where the village of Adamstown now stands, but the tiny community did not settle down without friction and, indeed, murder. The Tahitians were treated more as slaves than as fellow human beings and their revolt led to the slaying of some of the mutineers and, finally, to their own deaths. By 1794 only Young, Adams, Quintal and McCoy remained of the male settlers, leading households of ten women and their children.

The next four to five years were peaceful except for occasional outbreaks by the women, including an abortive attempt by some to leave the island. As Young recorded in his journal: "building their houses, fencing in and cultivating their grounds and catching birds and constructing pits for the purpose of entrapping hogs, which had become very numerous and wild, as well as injurious to the yam crops", kept the settlers busy. Gradually the men and women grew reconciled to their lives and to each other, and all might have remained harmonious had not McCoy, who had once worked in a distillery, discovered how to brew a potent spirit from the roots of the *ti* plant (*Cordyline terminalis*). By 1799, Quintal had been killed by Young and Adams in self-defence and McCoy had drowned himself. Then, in 1800, Young died of asthma, leaving John Adams as the sole male survivor of the party that had landed just ten years before.

## John Adams and his flock: 1800

As leader of the community of ten Polynesian women and twenty-three children the former able seaman, John Adams, showed himself to be as capable, kind and honest as he had formerly been loyal and helpful to Christian and Young.

Each family had its own house and most, but not all, of them were within the village, planned in English style around a common and fenced to keep the chickens in and the hogs out. Solidly built of local timber, some of them with bedrooms on a second floor, the island homes owed little to Polynesia except their thatched roofs.

The women had brought their own utensils from Tahiti, which were handed down from mother to daughter, and the men had landed tools and other implements from the *Bounty* and fashioned more as necessary. Food cooked in Polynesian stone-lined ovens, consisting mainly of yams, taro and bananas with coconut cream and an occasional pig, bird or goat was, in Polynesian style, served twice a day, at noon and nightfall. Clothes were at first made out of sail cloth from the *Bounty*, but they were later replaced by loin cloths and skirts of *tapa*, the traditional Polynesian fibre cloth. In brief, European and Polynesian ways mingled in complete isolation from the rest of the world.

John Adams was no scholar. He read with difficulty and could hardly write, but he was essentially a gentle man who humbly discharged his responsibility for the community he headed. Such was his manner that all took pleasure in obeying his example, which he patterned on virtue and piety and regulated by the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer, on Sunday services, family prayers and grace before and after every meal. And to ensure everybody's well-being, Adams saw to it that the young people cultivated the land, cared for the stock and were not allowed to marry until they could support a family.



John Adams (from a drawing by R. Beechey, engraved by H. Adlard).

## An end to isolation: 1808 and 1814

In 1808 the little colony was discovered by Captain Mayhew Folger, an American sealing captain, but his visit was brief and his report aroused little interest in an England pre-occupied with the Napoleonic wars.

Six more years passed before H.M.S. *Briton* and *Tagus* rediscovered the settlement on 17 September 1814. Ignorant of the American's report the astonished British commanders were charmed by the physique, simplicity and piety of the islanders. Favourably impressed by Adams and the example he set, they agreed it would be "an act of great cruelty and inhumanity" to arrest him, and so began the long association between Pitcairn and the British Navy which was to influence its development over the next century.

Twenty-five years of isolation were now ended. Increasing visits were paid by ships sailing from India and Australia to South America, or to England via the Horn. The reports they brought back stimulated an interest, not least in the English Missionary Societies, and gifts of Bibles, prayer books and spelling books were sent to the island, as well as such practical necessities as crockery, razors, tools and guns.

In addition, nearly every visiting ship made generous gifts and bartered surplus stores for provisions, and it was at this time that the orange was introduced; that houses were improved with the aid of saws and planes; and clothes and living became more European in character.

### **Successors to John Adams**

As he grew old, Adams worried about the future of his flock but his appeals to the British Government and missions for a successor to lead and educate them were not met, and it was to voluntary exiles that succession fell.

The first was John Buffet, a shipwright from Bristol who landed with John Evans, a Welshman, in 1823. Both married island girls and founded families, and Buffet taught the children and took over the church services.

The population had now risen to 66 from the 35 of 17 years earlier, and Adams, believing the land was yielding less, seeing the supply of timber decreasing and concerned that the erratic water supply would be insufficient for the growing population, sought the community's removal to Australia.

Meantime, in 1828, another settler arrived. George Nobbs, alleged to be the illegitimate son of a marquis, was well educated and had served both in the British and Chilean Navies. He was a strong character and soon ousted Buffet from the rôle of schoolmaster and pastor. Then, on 5 March 1829, John Adams, venerable and corpulent, died at the age of 62. He left behind a community which, though it originated in mutiny and had suffered misery and murder, was to form the basis of countless Victorian sermons. The dramatic regeneration was virtually Adams's work alone, and he was mourned as "Father", the name by which he had been known to every member of the community.

### **Unsuccessful emigration to Tahiti: 1831**

Meanwhile Adams's request for emigration was being sympathetically supported in London and, although later naval reports discounted his fears, it was decided to re-establish the islanders in Tahiti. Despite some initial objections, the islanders all set sail on Admiralty vessels in March 1831.

They were given a generous, warm-hearted welcome by the Tahitians but they did not feel at home: They had become on the one hand too European in their ways and, on the other, stricter in moral, particularly in sexual, behaviour than their hosts. They longed to return to their own habits in their own island, all the more so when infectious diseases, to which they had little immunity, began to kill them. The first to die, within a month of arrival in Tahiti, was Fletcher Christian's son,



Thursday October Christian  
(from an engraving by H. Adlard)  
b. October 1790. Known also as  
Friday October Christian after  
1814 when time was corrected—  
see "A change of religion: 1887",  
on page 16.

Thursday October Christian, the first child born on Pitcairn and the oldest member of the community. His death was followed by the youngest, Lucy Anne Quintal; and during the next two months there were ten more deaths and only a single birth. This heavy toll of deaths, more than their general unhappiness, moved everyone in Tahiti to pity for their plight. Supplies of special food for the sick were provided; and a number of efforts were made to arrange for their return to Pitcairn. All attempts failed, however, due to one reason or another, until Captain William Driver of the Salem whaler *Charles Doggett* arrived at Papeete and offered to take the remaining 65 back to their island home for a total of \$500. A subscription was immediately organized by the local community; the Pitcairn Islanders contributed to this by selling blankets and other necessities, so anxious were they to return. Captain Driver sailed with them from Papeete on 14 August 1831, and reached Pitcairn on 3 September.

Their gratitude was expressed in a note of thanks—

Pitcairn Island, Sept. 3, 1831

This is to certify that Captain William Driver of the brig *Charles Doggett* of Salem carried 65 of the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island from Tahiti back to their native land, during which passage Captain Driver behaved with the greatest kindness and humanity becoming a man and a Christian, and as we can never remunerate him for the kindness we have received we sincerely hope (that through the blessing of the Almighty) he will reap that reward which infallibly (sic) attend the Christian.

Signed: *George H. Nobbs, Teacher*  
*Arthur (his mark) Quintal*  
*John Buffet*  
*John Evans*

## A dictator steps in: 1832

Inevitably, the little community had lost some of its innocence. It was leaderless, too, for Nobbs had not yet been accepted as Adams's successor, and they could not agree on a local head. There was a period of anarchy and drunkenness but the vacuum was soon filled. In October 1832, a puritanical busybody, by the name of Joshua Hill, landed on the island, claiming to have been sent by the British Government. He was welcomed and, supplanting Nobbs as pastor and teacher, at once appointed himself as President of the "Commonwealth" of Pitcairn.

To his credit, Hill abolished the distilling of liquor but he also introduced arbitrary imprisonment and other severe punishments for the smallest misdeeds. He secured the expulsion of Nobbs and other "lousy foreigners" who formed an intimidated opposition, but their departure caused a reaction and his power gradually declined until, in 1838, his claim to represent the British Government was exposed and he was forcibly removed from the island. Nobbs returned from "exile" and by a general vote was reinstated as pastor and teacher. One has only to read Hill's literary effusions to surmise that he was probably mentally unstable throughout his six years on Pitcairn.

### **Pitcairn's first constitution: 1838**

The dictatorship of Hill and increasing visits by American whalers brought the islanders to recognize their need for protection, and they prevailed upon Captain Elliott of H.M.S. *Fly* to draw up a brief constitution and a code of laws selected from those already in force. A Magistrate (who must be native-born) was to be elected annually "by the free votes of every native born on the island, male or female, who shall have attained the age of eighteen years; or of persons who shall have resided five years on the island". He was to be assisted by a Council of two members, one elected and one chosen by himself. Not only was this the first time female suffrage was written into a British constitution but it also incorporated compulsory schooling for the first time in any British legislation.

Whatever the precise legal significance of Captain Elliott's action the Pitcairn Islanders date their formal incorporation into the Empire from 30 November 1838, when the new constitution was signed on board the *Fly*. That they also became a British Settlement later under the British Settlements Act of 1887 is of no consequence to them!

### **A time of tranquillity: 1838-1848**

The next decade was peaceful and uneventful, although in 1845 the worst storm in the island's history destroyed many coconut palms, bananas, yams and boats. Periodic epidemics of influenza; accidents recorded in place names such as "Where-Tom-Off"; and births, marriages and deaths alone disturbed the placid life.

The population topped the hundred mark; Nobbs was firmly in control; and Buffet taught the young men navigation, carpentry, and how to fashion curios of the kind still made from *miro* and other local woods.

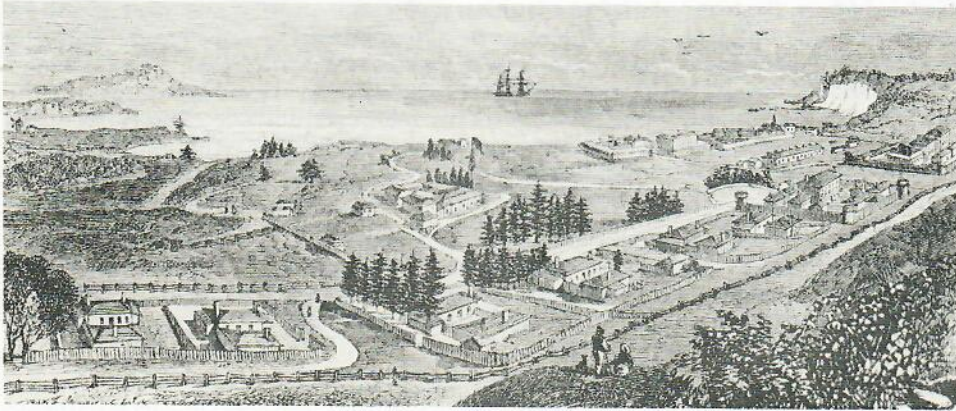
Adapting themselves to the needs of their seafaring visitors the islanders became skilled market gardeners, producing potatoes, yams, coconuts, bananas, oranges, limes and chickens, for which they accepted in return clothing, tools and money. And largely because they sold their produce for fixed prices, they acquired a reputation for strict honesty.

Inevitably, the islanders' language, clothes and ways grew more European with these contacts, but Tahitian customs were not entirely swamped, and the traditional pastimes of kite flying, stilt walking and surf riding still occupied many of their leisure hours.

## Emigration again: to Norfolk Island in 1856

By 1850 the islanders numbered 156 and were increasing rapidly. Their friends in England and the Pacific were again discussing the question of emigration, for it was feared that land would soon become insufficient, and fish had deserted the coastal waters since the landslides caused by the great storm of 1845.

After their experiences in Tahiti the islanders insisted that if they were compelled to emigrate it should be to an uninhabited island, and, after examining several possibilities, the majority of the community decided to move with British Government aid to Norfolk Island. It had much to recommend it. It was larger than Pitcairn and now uninhabited, but sixty earlier years of convict labour had left hundreds of acres under cultivation. It was well stocked with domestic animals; there were roads and houses and, in 1856, when the naval transport *Morayshire* arrived, all the 194 islanders boarded her.



Kingston, Norfolk Island, the residence of the Pitcairn community, 1857.  
(From an engraving in Murray's *Pitcairn*.)



George Hunn Nobbs (from a daguerreotype by Kilburn, engraved by H. Adlard).

## Return to Pitcairn: 1859–1864

This might have been the end of the Pitcairn story, but in spite of the advantages of Norfolk, many of the islanders wanted nothing more than to return home. By this time, no matter who was elected Chief Magistrate, the real leader of the community was George Nobbs, who had been ordained priest in the Church of England in 1852 and who lived on, at Norfolk, until 1884. His early failings had long been forgotten and, through twenty years of selfless service as spiritual mentor and secular teacher, he had won affection and trust in his adopted home.

Had he opposed migration few of the others would have gone; but not even his arguments against return could conquer nostalgia.



Late in 1858 an opportunity arose when the *Mary Ann*, en route to Tahiti, offered passages, and 16 of the islanders, led by Moses and Mayhew Young boarded her. Characteristically, those who chose to stay behind voted to pay the costs of the journey from communal funds.

The returned settlers found their houses in Adamstown and their gardens overgrown and the cattle and other domestic animals running wild. And they arrived just in time to stop the French, who thought the island abandoned, from annexing their home.

In 1864 a further four families from Norfolk Island decided to return, led by Simon Young who, with Nobbs's parting blessing, was to become the community's new leader. It was a different Pitcairn now of 43 people and only five families—the Youngs, Christians, McCoys, Buffets and the American Warrens. And of these, the male lines of the McCoys and Buffets were to die out!

### **A Swiss Family Robinson existence**

This third wave of settlers knew from past experience how to make the best use of their resources, but materially they were probably worse off than the mutineers. They had, for instance, no sail cloth to turn into clothing and no means of lighting their make-shift homes other than by candlenut. What was more, there were far fewer visiting ships from which to obtain goods. The peak period of whaling in those latitudes was past and, compared with the forty ships a year that called twenty years previously, there were now only about a dozen.

The occasional vessel that did stop, however, was now likely to be a steamer carrying passengers. The islanders therefore turned Buffet's lessons to advantage by selling them curios in place of the food they had sold to the whaling crews. Their limited resources were fortunately supplemented by a succession of shipwrecks which brought them a new "bounty" from the outside world. The kindly community fed and clothed the shipwrecked sailors who, after they returned home to relate their adventure, rewarded their rescuers with gifts of crockery, clothes, flour, books and even an organ.

Renewed visits by men-of-war in the Pacific also revived the traditional English interest in the children of the *Bounty* mutineers. Queen Victoria sent another organ as a personal gift in appreciation of the islanders' "domestic virtues"; and a Liverpool firm tried to arouse interest in the commercial production of cotton, arrowroot and candlenut oil.

### **The Islanders settle down**

As Nobbs had planned, Simon Young took over the work of pastor and school-teacher, and the former system of government by a Magistrate and two councillors was re-introduced. Almost the first communal task was the construction of a combined school and church but, with this, repairs to houses, and the replanting of gardens, there was no energy left, and much of the island reverted to natural bush.

In 1868, some of the Norfolk Island settlers, including old John Buffet, who was to live to the ripe age of 93, visited Pitcairn and urged their relatives to rejoin the now wealthier community. But nothing happened except that occasional visits between the two settlements have continued, desultorily, until today.

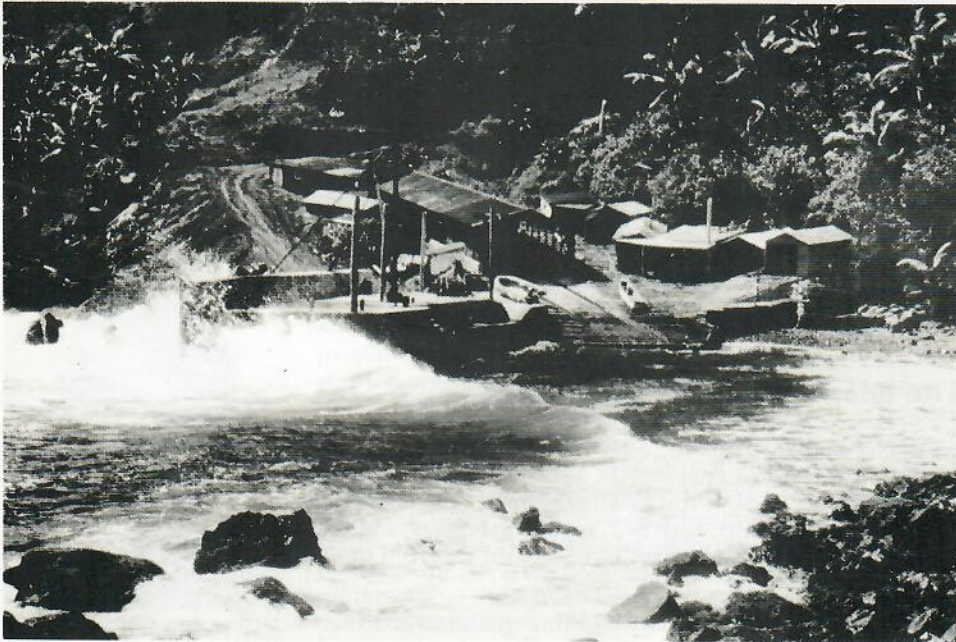
## Fresh settlers create a bar to any more: 1882

New blood brought new ways and ideas to the tight little society, but one of the newcomers fell in love with a girl who was, unfortunately, already engaged to a Christian. Strong passions were aroused and the Commander of the visiting H.M.S. *Sappho* was induced to approve a law forbidding strangers to settle on Pitcairn. The law was later amended but only to permit settlement by those whose presence was considered of benefit to the island.

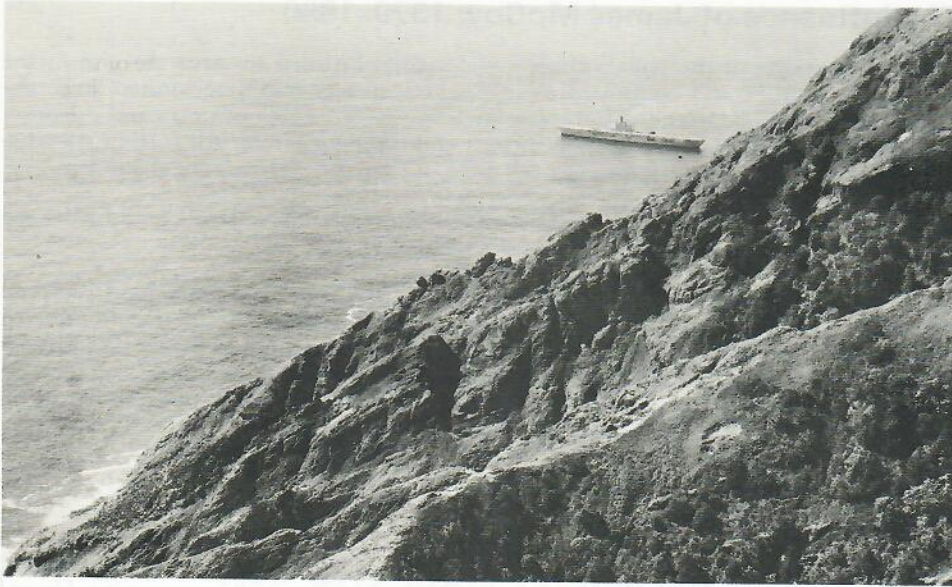
## A change of religion: 1887

With the passing years and no strong leader, reports of social deterioration grew. Simon Young, loved and respected, and his gentle and talented daughter Rosalind, were too humble and tolerant of frailty to impose their will, and family faction inhibited cohesion.

From the days of John Adams, the islanders had been staunch adherents of the Church of England. They read and studied the Bible, which was for many of them their only reading matter, and its texts were truth. Not unnaturally, therefore, they read with increasing interest the contents of a box of Seventh Day Adventist literature sent to them from the United States in 1876. And when a missionary arrived ten years later he was allowed, by unanimous vote, to stay and argue his cause.



The Landing.



H.M.S. *Warrior* off Bounty Bay.

The result was recorded in Mary McCoy's diary in March 1887: "The forms and prayers of the Church of England laid aside. During the past week meetings were held to organize our church service on Sabbath". So Saturday again became the day of rest as it had been until 1814 when Fletcher Christian's omission to correct the time across the date line was rectified.

Conversion was greeted with great pleasure by the Seventh Day Adventists in America and they raised funds for a missionary ship, which sailed for Pitcairn in 1890. The islanders were baptized in one of the rock-bound coastal pools, and the pigs were killed to remove the temptation of eating pork. But few other changes were needed; all were already total abstainers; most were vegetarians, except for occasional meals of goat, which is not forbidden by Adventist discipline; and few smoked.

### **Parliamentary Government: 1893**

The Missionaries relieved the aging Simon Young in the school and, energetically, introduced history, grammar, cooking and nursing; began a newspaper and a kindergarten; and opened a public park. Thus stirred by example, the islanders began to question their social inertia and, putting it down to weakness in their leaders, asked Captain Rooke of H.M.S. *Champion* to reorganize their system of government. An elected Parliament of seven was introduced and, for the only time in Pitcairn's history, executive and judicial functions were separated. The legal code also was revised to create penalties for, amongst other things, adultery, wife beating, cruelty and "Peeping Toms"; and the system of public work of pre-migration days was restored. Society was a long way, indeed, from the simple order of Adams!

## The influence of James McCoy: 1870–1890

But the reports of the naval officers who visited Pitcairn towards the end of the nineteenth century still continued to reveal how society had deteriorated since the return from Norfolk Island. There was lawlessness and a lack of unity and purpose; and, in 1897, murder. That the community did not degenerate still further was due largely to the influence of James Russell McCoy, a great-grandson of the mutineer.

In 1870, at the early age of 25, McCoy had been elected Magistrate and during the next 37 years he was chief executive no less than 22 times.

Although island-born, McCoy had spent some time both in London and Liverpool and, autocrat though he was, he was also, in a real sense, a link between the old Pitcairn and the new. By the turn of the century he had restored purpose to the community by enforcing the recently revived laws of public works; and his personal courage and example, which won him respect if not popularity, secured improvement until he began to spend much of his time overseas on missionary work.

## The constitution reverts

In 1904, R. T. Simons, the British Consul at Tahiti, paid his first visit to Pitcairn and found the parliamentary system too cumbersome for the small community. He re-introduced the time-honoured post of Chief Magistrate and two committees to take charge of internal and external, that is marine, affairs. All the posts were made subject to election and an additional office of Secretary-Treasurer was created. What was more, the days of representation without taxation were ended: an annual licence fee for the possession of firearms was introduced which, until 1968, when motor vehicle licences were introduced, was for so long Pitcairn's only tax.

With some amendment Simons's constitution and code stood the test of time, until in 1940 H. E. Maude, representing the British High Commissioner in Fiji, consolidated and expanded them.

## The end of isolation

The twentieth century brought an end of European rivalry in the Pacific and naval visits gradually diminished. Fortunately the Mission ship, *Pitcairn*, and her successors maintained contact with Tahiti and merchantmen again began to call with increasing frequency until, in 1914, the opening of the Panama Canal placed Pitcairn on the direct run to New Zealand. Many of the new visitors were liners carrying hundreds of passengers anxious to have mementoes of the island, halfway rock on the longest regular service in the world. A ship a week, and Pitcairn's isolation was over!

The pattern of life changed, inevitably. More and more men developed an urge to see the world, which money and the visiting ships made possible, and communities grew up in Wellington and Auckland from which some moved on to Australia. But even so, the public economy of Pitcairn languished and it was not until postage stamps were issued in 1940 and philatelists came to the rescue, that "shanty town" became the Adamstown of today.

## Part II

# PITCAIRN ISLAND AND ITS PEOPLE

"Had it been found in the right quarter of the globe it might have been taken for a bit of primeval paradise. Situated just within the tropics the climate is delicious—the heat of summer is moderated by the daily sea breezes—the island knows no winter. Contagious diseases, foul atmospheres, direful social convulsions, carking cares are all unknown."

*(From the Unpublished Travels of Richard Shaw Nichols. Circa 1852).*

### THE PITCAIRN ISLANDERS

AS RECOUNTED in Part I, the people of Pitcairn Island are descended from the mutineers of the *Bounty* who, led by Fletcher Christian, landed there in 1790 with six Tahitian men, twelve Tahitian women, and an infant girl. The first reliable estimate of the population was given by Captain Folger of the *Topaz* in 1808 when it was 35, and by 1856, the year of the migration to Norfolk Island, it had increased to 194. By 1864 a total of 43 people had returned to Pitcairn and in 1937 the population reached its peak of 233. It then declined, to remain for some time fairly constant between 130 and 150. By 1980 it had further declined to 63.

The rate of increase—over 3 per cent annually in the period 1808 to 1856 and about 2.5 per cent from 1864 to 1937—was quite remarkable at a time when other populations of the Pacific were declining, and it indicates that the original Anglo-Tahitian stock was strong and healthy. Inter-marriage with close relatives has been necessary, but the population has remained tough and vigorous, helped, no doubt, by the few immigrants of English and American origin. Contrary to Victorian prognostication that a closed society would deteriorate mentally and physically, no evidence of harmful effect has yet been adduced.

On the whole the features of the islanders are English, particularly those of the men. In stature Pitcairn Islanders tend to be tall; skin colour varies from a light Polynesian brown to darker than fair; brown to hazel eyes occur more often than blues and greys; and the black hair of Tahitian ancestry predominates.

The decline of the resident population from its pre-Second World War peak of 233 to 86 in 1963 is attributable to migration, principally to New Zealand. The impetus to migrate was the considerable surplus of young men of marriageable age and the attraction to them of improved economic status, particularly during the war years when communications with the outside world were restricted. During the war, too,

several islanders served in the Armed Forces: on land in Germany, the Middle East, the Pacific and South-East Asia; in the air; and at sea with the Merchant Marine. A constant outward flow of population has now become part of the order of society, and the island tends to suffer from the loss of men and women in the prime of life.

Statistics of the population and its composition are given in Appendix I.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF PITCAIRN**

### **Where the island lies**

Pitcairn is a small volcanic island situated in the South Pacific Ocean at latitude 25°04' south and longitude 130°06' west. It is roughly 2170 km (1350 miles) east-south-east of Tahiti; 3070 km (1910 miles) east by south of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands; 5310 km (3300 miles) east-north-east of its administrative headquarters in Auckland, New Zealand, which is the southern terminal of its main line of communications; and just over 6600 km (4100 miles) from Panama, the gateway to the United Kingdom, America and the north-east. It is of irregular shape, some 3.2 km (2 miles) long by 1.6 km (1 mile) wide and, from the best available map, its area is 450 hectares (1120 acres).

### **Physical features**

It is a rugged island of formidable cliffs of reddish-brown and black volcanic rock, nowhere giving easy access from the sea.

From Hulianda Ridge just above the landing at Bounty Bay, round the south-east corner where St. Paul's Point rises lofty and bristling, through Down Rope, with its tiny beach, past Gudgeon to Christian's Point at the western extremity, the cliffs are sheer and inhospitable, capped by volcanic ash and tuff. Many of the land slopes, too, on the western side are very steep, the highest point on Pawala Valley Ridge, only a



**Pawala Valley and Ridge, rugged and precipitous.**

few hundred metres from the coast, being 347 metres above sea level. In the north, from cliffs of over 60 metres, the land rises a little less precipitously to about 270 metres; and the slopes of Flatland, which nestles in the centre, run comparatively gently downwards to the north-east and the settlement of Adamstown.

In local parlance there are a number of valleys or "walleys", though many are only minor depressions in rock caused by normal weathering. For most of the year they carry no water but, just west of Adamstown, Brown's Water is a spring of intermittent flow. The lower slopes and floors of the valleys have soil of colluvial origin and are usually heavily covered with fruit trees.

Flat or flattish had forms only 8 per cent (36 hectares) of the total surface of Pitcairn; rolling land covers 31 per cent (140 hectares); steeply sloping land 34 per cent (152 hectares); and cliffs the remaining 27 per cent (122 hectares).

Geologically, Pitcairn is comparable with other Pacific Islands such as Hawaii, Tahiti and Samoa. It appears to have been formed by progressive volcanic activity and to be the top of a volcano whose base is far below the sea. Only a hundred metres or so from the coast there is neither shelf nor coral growth and the rock structure is dominated by basalts with later additions of andesites, trachytes and pyroclastics and minor intrusions of obsidians and pitchstones.

## The climate

The climate of Pitcairn is equable. Although there are no regular trade winds, east to north-east winds predominate with westerly winds increasing in frequency in the winter months. Mean speeds range from 11 to 15 knots and east to south-east gales of short duration may occur perhaps a dozen times a year. Hurricanes have been experienced but are extremely rare.

Mean monthly temperatures vary from around 19°C. in August to 24°C. in February, and the absolute range recorded is 10°C. to 34°C. The rainfall average for the period 1960-74 was 1821 mm annually, which was fairly evenly spread throughout the year, July and August being the driest months and November the wettest. Relative humidity is usually upwards of 80 percent and cloud averages six-tenths.

## Vegetation

The natural forest observed by Carteret at the time of Pitcairn's discovery in 1767 has almost vanished and the island is now covered with secondary bush and grassland. The bush consists of small trees, burau (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*); tapau (*Broussonetia papyrifera*); rose apple (*Syzygium jambos*); guava (*Psidium guajava*) and tall weeds such as lantana (*Lantana camara*).

Local tradition has it that there were few or no native grasses on the island originally. Today the most common species are Alwyn Grass (*Sorghum halepense*); cat's-tail (*Sporobolus elongatus*); Job's tears (*Coix lacryma-jobi*); crow's foot (*Eleusine indica*); and paspalum (*Paspalum orbiculare* and *P. conjugatum*). The more important of the large number of plants and trees that have been introduced are referred to on page 26; and, in general, most of the common tropical and sub-tropical plants are now present.

## Animals and birds

The only native mammal is the Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*); and cats, dogs, goats, fowl and the common mouse have been introduced, the mouse as late, it is said, as 1942. The Register Book records that rabbits and cattle were landed in 1849 but they did not survive; and the common pig was exterminated towards the end of the last century when the island was converted to the Seventh Day Adventist religion. An interesting and rare introduction is the Galapagos giant tortoise. (*Testudo elephantopus*). However, it does not breed and its numbers have diminished until only one survives.

The birds of Pitcairn are predominantly oceanic and migrant, the few land birds having affinities with those of the Austral and Tuamotu Islands in French Polynesia.



The unique and flightless Henderson Island chicken bird, from a drawing by Farrar Bell.

Of 28 types listed, Henderson Island (see page 48) has 17 including the unique flightless chicken bird (*Nesophylax ater*); Oeno 13; Ducie ten and Pitcairn six. There is no record of the extinction of any native species. Of the birds breeding on Pitcairn the best known are the Fairy Tern (*Gygis alba pacifica*), the Common Noddy (*Anous stolidus pileatus*) and the Red-tailed Tropic Bird (*Phaethon rubicauda*). The Pitcairn Island Warbler (*Acrocephalus vaughani vaughani*) or "sparrow", is a native sub-species, dark-brown above and yellowish to buff below. Legislation has been enacted to protect the bird life.

## ADAMSTOWN AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The threshold of Pitcairn is a steep and narrow mud path. Running from Bounty Bay to the Edge—the level grassy area at the top of the cliff—it follows the track used by the mutineers when they landed. It rises sharply upwards for 70 metres hugging the side of the reddish cliff, slippery in the rain and hard and gravelly when it is dry. And as in the days of the mutineers certain goods must still be transported up this path if they are too heavy for the flying fox that the islanders now possess.

The settlement of Adamstown, the original home of the mutineers, is well situated on a northerly slope 120 to 150 metres above sea level, and covers some 24 hectares of park-like land. The main path from the Edge, above the landing at Bounty Bay, runs for about 800 metres through the village roughly parallel with the coast. "Upside" and "downside" of the path numerous little lanes wind towards sprawling houses, scattered irregularly among bushes, ornamental shrubs and garden patches. There are some seventy house sites in Adamstown but in 1981 only twenty-two were in use. The homes on the remainder, formerly the dwellings of islanders now dead or living abroad, have fallen into dilapidation or disappeared altogether and will soon be claimed by the advancing bush.

Built on simple foundations of boulders and logs or wooden piles, with floors of roughly dressed boards, the houses are well ventilated at ground level. The weather-board walls are often unpainted and, although most of the windows are now glazed, sliding



shutters of an original pattern, which enable the whole window space to be used for ventilation, are still to be seen. All the roofs are of corrugated iron from which guttering and pipes lead rain water, the only constant source of fresh water available, into private storage tanks. Kitchens and toilets, and often the bathrooms and workshops as well, are usually separate from the living quarters.

In a highly individual society it is not easy to give a pen picture of average living conditions, but spaciousness is the general rule. The average number of rooms in a house is five and the inhabitants three. Kitchens tend to have traditional dirt floors with a stone oven, an open-hearth fire called the "bolt" and a minimum of furniture: but some are modern, equipped with refrigerators and washing machines, and at least three have deep freezers.



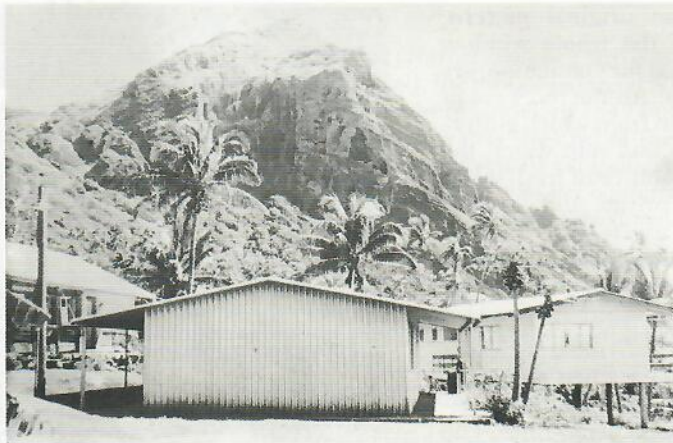
The main road.

In the living rooms and on the verandas there are the usual tables, benches, chairs and a bunk or settee; almost invariably a clock, a telephone and a sewing machine; and sometimes a radio, gramophone, harmonium, and a typewriter. Most of the main bedrooms are furnished with a wooden bed with mattress, wardrobe, sea-chest or chest-of-drawers, and dressing-table. Some of these rooms may be painted; they are generally clean and decorated with soft furnishings and a miscellany of pictures; and all are lighted with electric light from a generating plant installed in 1968.

The Public Square, "upside" the main path and rather less than 500 metres from the Edge, is the heart of Pitcairn. The Court House, a one-storeyed timber building with a veranda running along its entire length, takes up one side of the square, and outside, on a plinth, stands one of the anchors of H.M.S. *Bounty*, recovered by the *Yankee* in 1957.

At one end of the Court House is the Island Magistrate's Office. The main hall, rarely used for judicial proceedings, is also the Committee room for the Island Council and the meeting hall for the community.

Some thirty metres across the square and separated from the Court House by a strip of garden is the Church, a trim, modern building of concrete and wood erected in 1954, where the *Bounty* Bible, which is on permanent loan to Pitcairn from the Connecticut Historical Society, is safely kept beside the pulpit. In the square is the bell which is rung both on religious and secular occasions. A series of solemn strikes in ones and twos is the call to prayer; strikes of three summon the able-bodied men to public work; four is the signal for a share-out of food from a passing ship; and on the strike of five announcing the arrival of a ship, everyone downs tools and hastens to the Landing.



Government hostels: Christian's Cave on Rock Face.

On the third side of the square is a building containing the Dispensary, Library and Post Office and facing it, alongside the path, is a long bench where one may wait for church or assembly or just sit and idly gossip.

Almost a kilometre north-west of the Square, along the path to Pulau, are the School and the residence of the teacher, both of which were built in 1950. Although not strictly speaking part of Adamstown, these two buildings, except for the Radio Station on Taro Ground in the south and two imported prefabricated buildings which were erected in 1968 and 1971 as hostels for Government officials visiting the island, complete the record of habitation on Pitcairn; they are magnificently situated among a parkland of natural bush, grass and coconuts under the shadow of Lookout Point and the yawning cave to which Fletcher Christian is reputed to have repaired in solitude to survey his island domain.



Square with Courthouse, Post Office and *Bounty* Anchor.

## EARNING A LIVING

The economy of Pitcairn falls into two distinct parts. The private economy depends almost exclusively on subsistence farming and trading; the public on income from the sale of stamps and on interest from investments. A programme of social and economic improvement is being undertaken but, because of the island's isolation and small population, economic prospects are restricted; and it is doubtful that much more can be done to improve subsistence agriculture, introduce new or improved varieties of food crops and systematize the trade in handicrafts. Mineral resources have not been scientifically investigated, but even were workable deposits of, say, phosphate found, the consequent bounty would be of short-term value and would not ultimately affect the island's future as an isolated coastal community.

On an average a man will spend about one day a week in his garden; one day fishing; one day visiting ships and trading aboard them, or getting fruit and vegetables for sale or exchange, or attending the boats; part of a day on public work; two days making souvenirs for sale; and the Sabbath at Church and at rest. Occasionally there is the chance of paid labour on government jobs, but it usually provides work only for a small number of men for a few days or weeks at a time. All the women do some form of weaving in addition to their household duties.



Taking home the wood.

Wages are normally paid by government only. The current hourly rate is one dollar, there being no differentiation between skilled and unskilled labour. Local government officials are paid allowances, for none of their occupations are full-time, ranging from \$298 a year for two Councillors who perform the duties of assessors and whose services are rarely required more than twice or three times a month, to \$1,130 a year for the Island Magistrate. As is common in small and isolated communities, public appointments and benefits from them are more widely distributed than is warranted by the work to be done.

Since the economy of the island is basically subsistence agriculture and there is no retail trading except with a small co-operative store established in 1967, no price index is maintained. Imports of food come mainly from passing ships and much of the island's non-consumable stores are purchased through Sealine Services of Basingstoke in the United Kingdom, or suppliers in New Zealand and are often transported free of freight. Clothing is plentiful and costs little in terms of money since parcels continue to come from well-wishers in all parts of the world. The principal imports are textiles, flour, canned and dried goods, sugar, fuel and machinery.

It is estimated that some 60 per cent of the island's souvenirs used to be sold on board ships and the remaining 40 per cent by mail order, mainly to the United States;

but, since passenger liners no longer call at Pitcairn (the last having been withdrawn from service in mid-1968), the pattern of trade is changing and a search for new outlets has become necessary. No assessment of private income that can be considered accurate has been made, for the islanders are reticent about their earnings. But a soil and climate that yield food liberally; generous friends overseas; trading aboard ships and by mail; no taxation; and a tolerant New Zealand which allows access and work without impediment are the Pitcairners' inheritance; and there has been no need so far to reduce it to equivocal statistics.

## Agriculture

When Carteret sighted the island in 1767 he reported that it was almost exclusively covered with trees, but settlement and the consequent clearing and burning have left but a remnant of the original forest at the western tip of the island. It is probable that miro (*Thespesia populnea*) and rata (*Metrosideros villosa*), which provide useful timber for building and woodcarving, were original species, but apart from exotics of mainly ornamental varieties, most of the island is now under secondary bush and grass, interspersed with gardens and fruit trees.

Generations of haphazard husbandry, which has encouraged erosion in some areas, are not quickly rectified, but quiet steps have been taken since 1960 towards the regeneration of forests by the local government's agriculturalist. The predatory goats of Pitcairn, which for many years rendered all attempts at reforestation abortive, have been brought under control, through legislation approved by the Island Council and enacted in 1960, and replanting is now proceeding satisfactorily.



Men at work in young Miro plantation.

Soil formation and development is rapid and, although there is evidence of appreciable leaching, the prevalence of nutrient-rich rocks ensures a latent fertility that improved husbandry could exploit. The organic content is low but may readily be improved by green manuring, mulching, composting and possibly the use of nitrogen and potassium fertilizers, combined with a rational process of strip bush-fallowing.

Most of the gardens lie in an arc on the more gentle slopes to the south and west of Adamstown and provide a variety of root and green vegetables and fruit. Sweet potatoes (*kumara*), yams, arrowroot and taro are the staple subsistence foods, supplemented by beans of different sorts, sweet corn, tomatoes and carrots. Scattered all over the island are bananas, lemons, limes, oranges and grapefruit, all of which flourish and fruit heavily even though cultivation is minimal. Among other produce, mangoes, pineapples, sugar cane and several types of passionfruit give almost as good a yield, while coconuts of the dwarf species, which were introduced from Fiji some thirty years ago, are better suited to the climate than the original tall varieties. In brief, Pitcairn Island is remarkably fertile and productive.

### **The allocation of land**

Land is held under a system of family ownership, based upon the original division of the island by Fletcher Christian and his companions, and modified after the return from Norfolk Island. Since the system has never been studied in detail it is impossible to decide whether theory differs from practice and the remarks that follow are a synthesis of observers' reports.

There is reason to think that the first of the few islanders who returned to Pitcairn from Norfolk in 1859 assumed title to as much of the best land as the pre-emigration system and public opinion permitted. After 1864 there was still some land left in trust for others who never returned and gradually it was incorporated into family holdings. Through these factors and prudent marriages, under a system of bilateral inheritance by which a wife's land passes to her husband, the pattern of ownership has become uneven, but the complaints that are voiced from time to time are more likely to be inspired by resentment of inequality than by actual want. Nevertheless, the pattern of agriculture and settlement places a premium on flattish, fertile land close to Adamstown and in it, and a system known as "borrowing" has been developed to meet scarcity, under which an owner grants rights to the borrower, for food gardens or for housing, for as long as he remains on Pitcairn.

Bilateral inheritance, although partly balanced by the passing of a woman's title on marriage to her husband, has caused fragmentation and the pattern of usage is one of widely separated plots. A count made several years ago disclosed that there were over 150 garden plots, varying in size from a fifth to a third of an acre, cultivated by 37 families. The pattern today is probably little changed but, as an official soil survey in 1957 disclosed that over five times that area of land was suitable for development as gardens, it is likely that choice plays some part in the patchwork.

Until recently, legislation concerning land was limited to a simple regulation requiring the Island Magistrate to ensure that land marks were inspected annually. Although legislation does not prohibit the alienation of land to foreigners, as a general rule the only rights to pass are to their descendants from marriage to a Pitcairner, who acquire the normal benefit of inheritance.

New legislation to rationalize the whole customary land tenure system, and to provide for the formal administration of the estates of deceased land owners, was introduced in 1967. While the population continues to decline through emigration time does not press. It is, perhaps, more important that the land under grass and scrub should be brought under forest first, that erosion may be checked and the natural vegetation restored more approximately to the state it was in when Midshipman Pitcairn first sighted the island in 1767.

### **Animal husbandry**

The only two useful animals are the fowl and goat, but neither is domesticated. The goats, of which there are slightly less than 100, are a contentious problem. They are not eaten very often; they are not milked; and they occasionally damage food gardens. But the principal case against them is that by eating bushes, young trees and grass they have contributed to pockets of soil erosion and inhibit conservation and the regeneration of forest. Against this catalogue of criticism stands a body of islanders who regard the goats as a reserve stock of food for emergencies, and legislation enacted in 1960, to secure more effective control and the reduction of goats, was designed to meet both points of view. Whether it will ever succeed entirely is doubtful but at least the goat population remains static and the animals seldom stray into the cultivated parts of the island.

As an alternative to goats, consideration has been given to re-introducing cattle, but the lack of surface water and of interest in animal husbandry generally makes success problematical. The introduction of sheep is a possibility discussed from time to time by the Island Council.

### **Fishing**

Fish, of which the most common are rock cod, grey mullet, red snapper and a species of mackerel, are plentiful in the seas around Pitcairn but its rocky coastline is often pounded by ocean rollers, and there may be weeks of rough weather when deep-sea fishing is impossible. From the rocks with a line, or about them with a toddling iron (spear), small fish can be caught at almost any season, and no fish, however small, is returned to the water.

Line fishing from a canoe, kneeling and watching for prey through a glass-bottomed cylinder is traditional, and on a good day fifty to a hundred fish averaging between one and three pounds can be caught. The motor launches are also used on occasions when a number of people intend fishing from the same spot. From June to August migratory whales are sometimes seen off-shore and a few months later barracouta and tuna may be caught by trolling. On visits to Oeno Island (see page 49), where the lagoon is rich in tropical fish, large quantities are caught, salted and taken back to Pitcairn. For religious reasons shellfish are not eaten.

### **Handicrafts**

Nearly every household on Pitcairn is a small factory and the whole family takes part in manufacturing handicrafts or curios, a development assisted by Laeffler, an Austrian wood-carver, who lived on the island earlier in this century. The basic work of wood-carving is done in the home workshop with its bench and lathe, and with axes, gouges, chisels, broken glass and sandpaper, and planes which are usually of good quality.



Wood carvings and weaving.

The men can often be seen about the island with their baskets containing, perhaps, a partly carved flying-fish and the oddments of small tools and bits they need to complete it. The women's rôle is the weaving of baskets and hats from pandanus leaf and painting shells and other small articles, all of a type that is widespread in the Pacific.

Miro (*Thespesia populnea*), a dark, durable and handsomely grained wood, is preferred for carving and, since Pitcairn itself has long been denuded, visits for supplies to Henderson Island, 160 kilometres to the north (see page 48), are made when opportunity offers, usually when the Master of a passing ship will carry the islanders' boats, which are later sailed home in convoy. The most common articles carved are flying-fish, sharks, tortoises, vases, birds, walking sticks, inlaid boxes and, of course, models of H.M.S. *Bounty*, most of which are sold or bartered on board ships.

### Trading

There is little reliable information about how much is obtained from "trading", but one observer has reported that "the people always say, the money is in those ships so long as you have the curios to trade". Whatever the return is, and it is counted in goods as well as money, it is not negligible.

Five strokes of the public bell announce that a ship has been sighted and whatever is being done is at once dropped, fruit and curios are hastily gathered, the boats are launched and manned and plunge out through the surf of Bounty Bay. The custom of exchanging "public fruit" for goods of approximately equal value which later could be distributed

evenly at the "share-out" in the Square has now largely disappeared. It is each for himself on board, and the men stand short watches in the boats below in strict rotation. Trading relations with ships' complements vary according to company policies and personal attitudes, but the romance of Pitcairn rarely leads to the islanders being disappointed.

The pattern is always much the same: trading starts when the deck is reached; the men sell what they can as quickly as possible and disappear below to contact their "friends." Usually the call is enjoyed by everyone and when the ship's siren sounds, hands are shaken, the islanders clamber down the ladder and, as they pull away, burst into a song of farewell that competes with the churning propellers. Women, increasingly, visit merchant ships and all, children included, enjoy an occasional trip out to the cruise ships which call at the island infrequently.



Men unload supplies at the Landing.

The Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy (the latter in particular), in recent years, have had a long and generous connexion with Pitcairn, and it is fitting to pay tribute to them for, if these ships did not call on the long haul between Panama and New Zealand, it might well have been necessary to abandon the island. Ships and the sea are not only part of Pitcairn's history, they are also its continuing lifeline, providing the means of living, of contact with the far-off world and, sometimes, even of life itself for a dangerously-ill islander.

The £ sterling was replaced by the NZ dollar (when New Zealand adopted decimal currency in July 1967) as Pitcairn's official currency for keeping the island's accounts; but American, Australian and other currencies can usually be exchanged on the island. British postal orders are sold and cashed, and travellers' cheques are accepted.



The public revenue of Pitcairn comes almost exclusively from the sale of postage stamps (which were first introduced in 1940) and interest on investments; and except for minor licences, there is no taxation. Financial administration is vested in the Governor, but all local expenditure is estimated and controlled by the Island Council.

The island's revenue and expenditure from 1972 to 1981 were as follows:

	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81
	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$	NZ\$
Revenue	100,069	124,335	175,258	198,753	249,227	327,262	258,836	490,428	1,053,811
Expenditure	65,936	75,494	92,262	102,395	127,216	210,806	217,541	303,617	526,960

Further details are given in Appendix II.

The practicability of developing Pitcairn's resources is very limited. Nevertheless, since 1959 Pitcairn has received generous grants from the British Government under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. During recent years such grants have assisted in the purchase of two tractors, a marine-diesel engine for one of the longboats, a stone crusher, a diesel generating plant for the supply of electric light and power to Adamstown and the Bounty Bay landing, improvements to the Court House and the building and equipment of a government hostel for the use of government officers visiting the island. Grants have also been awarded for the technical training of the island's dental officer at the dental clinic of the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, Fiji; for in-service training for the Island Secretary at the South Pacific Office in Suva; and for the appointment of an expatriate on two occasions as a whole-time resident Government Adviser on the island.

## ***COMMUNITY LIFE AND LEISURE***

Pitcairn is a family of individuals, and community life and leisure reflect it.

### **Public work**

Public work, which by law is required of all men between the ages of 16 and 60, is partly a relic of the homogeneous community created by John Adams and partly a necessity born of the basically moneyless economy. The duties included in it are all decreed and controlled by the Internal Committee on behalf of the Island Council, and in recent years that part which is not traditional has been reduced as far as finance reasonably permits. Nowadays there is a government school which provides free education; there are government-provided radio communications which benefit the private citizen as much as the administration; there are public buildings which house a free dispensing service for the sick, a post office, a library and a combined Court House and community hall. These are all services which fall outside the old tradition, and public work on them is kept to a minimum.

Perhaps the most essential of the public duties that are still recognized as being traditional are concerned with Bounty Bay and the maintenance of the public boats, which are public in the sense that they are owned by the community and not by the

government. Installations in the Bay, however, are provided mainly from general revenue and grants from Britain and, since they are vital to the life of the people and the outcome of older custom, there exists a degree of give-and-take in their maintenance. Public trading, the landing of cargo, the "share-out", and the maintenance of roads and paths are also part of accepted community service as, in very much the same category, is the voluntary work undertaken for the Church.



**Boat repairs—Public Work.**

There is little doubt, however, that public work is generally as unpopular on Pitcairn as it would be in much of the rest of the world; but it is all too evident that a small community, so dependent on co-operative action, could not change over entirely to a system of paid labour, so the grumbles and compromises are likely to go on as they have always done.

### **The Church**

The Seventh Day Adventist Church which established itself on the island ninety years ago is attended by most of the population. The Sabbath School meets at 10 o'clock on Saturday mornings, the Seventh Day Sabbath, and is followed by Divine Service an hour later; on Tuesday evenings there is a further service in the form of a prayer meeting. A Young People's Society, which aims at providing for the spiritual needs of youth, meets for divine service weekly, and a junior society provides for young boys and girls in a similar way. Local administration of the church is vested in a resident Pastor and elders, and it forms a branch of the Central Pacific Union with headquarters in Auckland, New Zealand.



A Church service.

### Films

Films are very popular and regular supplies are received from the Central Office of Information in London; from the National Film Library of New Zealand; and, through the Seventh Day Adventist Church, from the United States. Commercial films are also hired occasionally from New Zealand, and when they are shown a charge is made to cover the cost of hiring.



Christmas celebrations.



The Landing, Bounty Bay.

### The island newspaper

In April 1959, the Education Officer and Pastor published the third monthly news sheet in Pitcairn's history—*Pitcairn Miscellany*. This mimeographed double-sheet paper continues to be published under the auspices of the School. Its predecessors were *The Monthly Pitcairner*, which was born in December, 1892, and about which little information is available; and *Pitcairn Pilhi* which, published also by an Education Officer, ran from July 1956 to December 1957.

In its own words *Miscellany* sets out to publish "highlights of overseas news, local news, ship news, entertainment news, Church news, and other features that come to the notice of your editors and which are thought likely to interest you". Hardly an issue fails to contain contributions by the islanders, and not least valuable are their occasional reminiscences and interpretations of the earlier history of the island. The circulation of *Miscellany* in 1981 was 750 copies and went as far afield as Antigua, Australia, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Denmark, Fiji, France, Germany, Hawaii, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, New Guinea, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Poland, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and 38 states in the U.S.A.

### Clubs and community recreation

In 1956, clubs for both men and women were formed with guidance from the Education Officer. They tended to be spasmodic in activity, but their meetings provided a useful forum for discussing community affairs. With the rapid decline in population, these clubs no longer exist. Sports and entertainments are now organized by an elected Entertainment Committee.

Community recreation is not, however, deeply rooted in the island, partly because of the individual character of the people and partly, perhaps, because an active, outdoor life during the day tends to send people early to bed unless there is a special incentive to break routine. During the summer months the children play in Bounty Bay and the young men may be seen shooting the breakers on surf boards; occasional picnics are arranged, particularly when the yams are ready to harvest in April and May; fishing and goat hunting interest many of the men; women drift into groups to weave their baskets and gossip; and the square at Adamstown provides shaded benches for the old and the idlers, and an open space for the young to play in. Church and church societies, the occasional club meeting, the odd evening of table tennis or other games, perhaps an annual concert and fancy-dress party for the children, the ever-popular films, and the recurrent birthday parties are the complement of the day-time work of the community.

## Cricket

Cricket on Pitcairn, as it used to be played before the decline in population, deserves special mention because the traditional matches were played in a pre-Hambledon spirit. The first edition of this *Guide* described a match as follows:

A word is spoken, the challenge taken; deliberation develops into argument and by evening teams of a score or more a side are announced. Old bats are brought out, new bats are hurriedly made, the miscellany of other equipment is inspected and repaired; and at daybreak the public bell rapidly tolls the way to the hillside—*up Hulianda* or to *Number Seven*—where the young men armed with hoes and cane knives soon clear a pitch in the Alwyn grass and cat's-tail.

When enough stragglers have arrived straws are drawn to see which side bats first, scorers from each are chosen to ensure a degree of unanimity and mathematical accuracy in the tally of runs, and the game begins.

There is no batting order: men and boys push and grab and the victors, flourishing their bats, take up stance at the crease, surrounded on the leg side by their own team impatiently waiting for the chance to push and grab again. There is no controversy about unfair bowling which, fast, erratic and sometimes alarming, is from the *up-side* end of the pitch.

The prevailing stroke is a hearty and lofted sweep to mid-on, for the grass, scrub and hillside pitch make other strokes almost worthless, and the ball is enthusiastically chased by all fielders within range, and by a good number of excited children as well when it vanishes into Alwyn grass and Lantana scrub. Occasionally, unless the precaution of burning-off has been taken, these forays into the grass are hotly resented by wasps which turn the vigorous pursuit of the ball into a tactical manoeuvre of beating, darts and dashes! From the edge of the grass a constant wave of barracking breaks over the field, rising to cheers when the ball is lost or a wicket falls, and to mild ribaldry when an unfortunate batsman collects a "duck".

Quiet falls at breakfast time, the Pitcairn equivalent of the luncheon break, but only for a few minutes, for the younger men are anxious to return to the battle which continues until the sun dips below Taro Ground. By then, each side will have batted up to seven times, some eight hundred runs will have been agreed and recorded by the rival scorers, and tired but triumphant the winners will throw down a challenge for tomorrow with a public dinner as the stake. During the night the opposing captains are surreptitiously at work to ensure that when the game is resumed next morning, every family will have representatives on both sides. Who wins or loses on the second day is then less important; the end has been achieved for every family will be involved in preparing the public dinner. And so the contest comes to its grand finale in the riot of a women's game and the good fellowship of a public feast.

Today such matches are seldom played. With the steady shrinking of the labour force the men can no longer find the time for such prolonged tournaments and cricket is played only in half-day matches on the rare public holidays (Queen's Birthday, New Year's Day, Anzac Day and Bounty Day).

### A birthday feast

It is on occasions such as birthdays, not necessarily held exactly on the date, that the controversial goats come into their own, if one may so describe the hunt that ends with several of them in the stone oven along with some of the local variety of chicken.

All of the closest relatives, perhaps a third of the island's population, are invited to "tea" and around the long table, neatly laid and covered with a cloth, an array of chairs



Preparing "Pillhai".

and benches awaits the guests who come laden with their own *pillhai*, a mixed vegetable dish, and, from those who have refrigerators, jellies and cold puddings of various kinds. Everyone is seated and grace is said—probably "Bless this food kind Father, bless it to our soul's use and make us thankful. Amen"—and silence is broken only as the feast advances.

The Pitcairners are solid trenchermen with a taste for sweet delicacies, which they mix appreciatively with meats and vegetables on the single plate that serves throughout the meal. Conversation about the food and the capacities of the eaters begins to flow and complimentary belching brings a glow of satisfaction to the hostess, who bustles from oven and "bolt" (open fire) and washing-up to the table with yet more food and steaming cups of cocoa and tea. This Pitcairn is a "dry" island, but then its early years were clouded with the murders and miseries that followed William McCoy's conversion of a *Bounty* boiler into a still for procuring spirits from the roots of the *ti* tree (*Cordyline terminalis*).

When the guests have had their fill and every "bally" is tight, they drift off to the verandas to continue their convivial talk while the helpers take their turn at the table and the young children receive attention if they need it. For a short while, hosts and helpers mix with the guests and the conversation, still mainly of the feast just finished, drifts into somnolence. The party slowly breaks up with a minimum of acknowledgement, that speaks for the unity of the family, and with a parcel of tit-bits and bones for the patient dogs. "So long as you get enough" is the host's farewell and no Pitcairner would be so churlish as not to have eaten up to it!