

# THE TRIALS OF CAPTAIN BLIGH

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CAPTAIN COOK'S domination of Pacific exploration makes it easy to overlook the group of younger talents who began their careers under him as midshipmen or master's mates, or in other capacities. George Vancouver is covered elsewhere (see Chapter 7), but, among others less well known, Alexander Hood was the nephew of celebrated admirals and became a captain at 21, dying heroically in a single-ship duel in 1798, and Edward Riou played a small part in the Botany Bay story (see pp. 110–12) before being killed under Nelson at Copenhagen in 1801. Richard Grindall (on the second voyage) became a distinguished fighting officer who commanded the 98-gun *Prince* at Trafalgar in 1805. He died as a retired admiral, as did Cook's nephew, Isaac Smith, and James Burney, whose importance as a historian of Pacific exploration augmented the fame of his otherwise artistically talented family. James Trevenen saw much later action and died in Russian service against the Swedes, after war forestalled his attempt to lead a Russian survey voyage to the Bering Strait. Lastly here, the American-born Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon, the *Discovery's* armourer on the third voyage, captained the two ships of the King George's Sound Company that pioneered the British fur trade on the American north-west coast in 1785–88. They returned around the world, which Portlock circumnavigated again on a voyage to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies in 1791–93. On this occasion it was as commander of the schooner *Assistant* in the second 'breadfruit expedition' led by Cook's third-voyage sailing master in the *Resolution*, William Bligh. Bligh is, of course, best known for his first breadfruit-transplantation attempt in the *Bounty*, which ended in a mid-Pacific mutiny in 1789. Cast adrift, Bligh and 17 companions (an eighteenth was killed early on) were saved only by his own skills as a seaman and navigator after an escape to safety in a voyage of more than 3,600 nautical miles. Had they died – which was a far more likely outcome – we might now know as little of the *Bounty* affair as we do of the disaster that overtook Lapérouse at the same time on the reefs of Vanikoro.

Bligh mutiny 1789,  
had he died we would know  
as little about the life  
of Lapérouse's crew





CAPT. BLIGH.

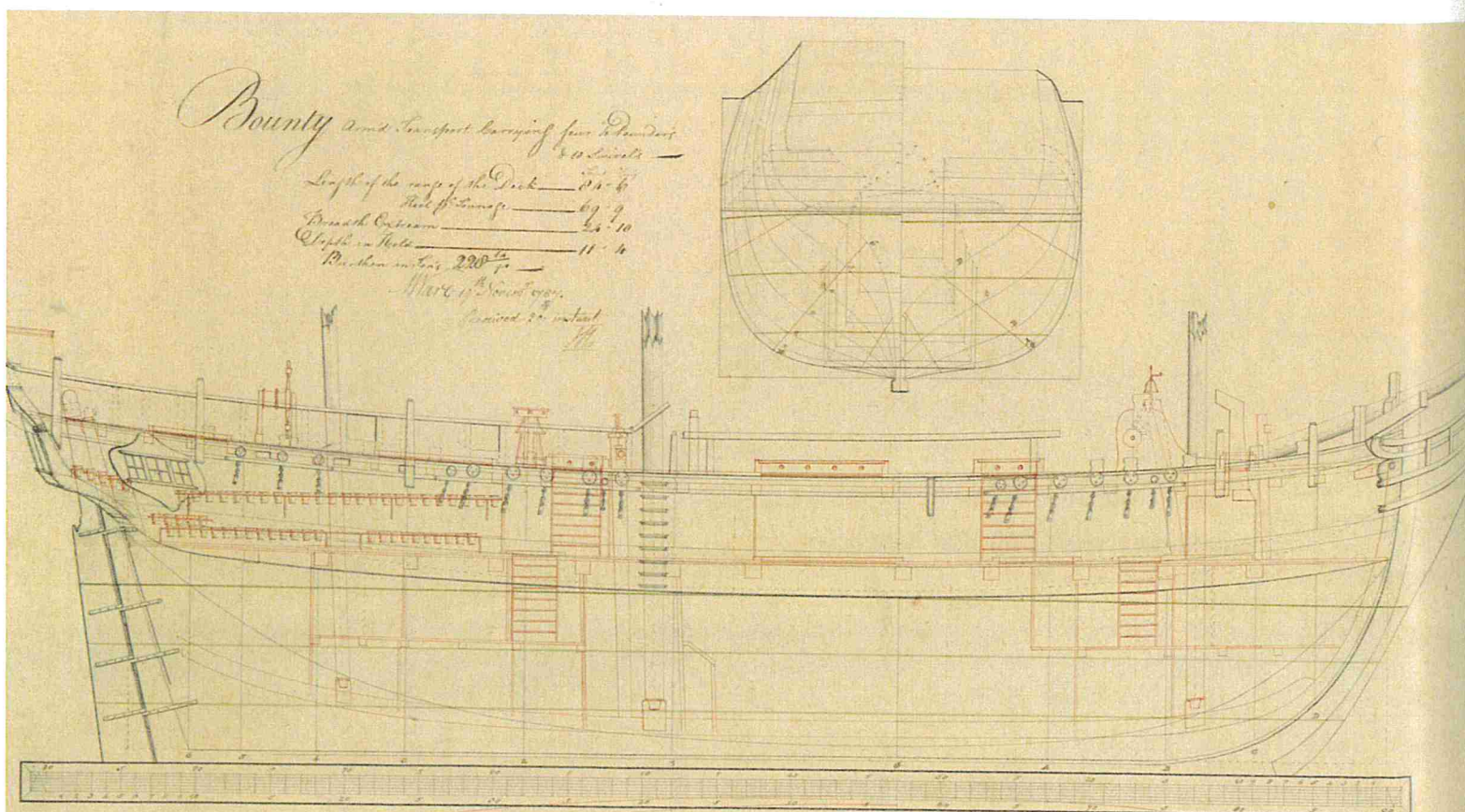


PREVIOUS PAGES William Bligh (1754–1817); the engraved frontispiece to his 1792 account of the *Bounty* voyage. It shows him as a recently promoted captain, and is based on John Russell's pastel portrait now in the Captain Cook Memorial Museum, Whitby (along with its pair of his wife, Elizabeth).

BELOW Internal sheer profile of the *Bounty* (formerly the *Bethia*) (detail). This shows the internal layout, with companionways and the staging for breadfruit plants in the great cabin in red. The prefabricated racks were set up only in Tahiti, increasing crowding in the rest of the ship.

## MUTINY ON THE *BOUNTY*, 1787–89

Born on 9 September 1754, William Bligh came from an old Cornish family with naval, military, aristocratic and customs connections, his father being a Plymouth customs officer. He went to sea at the age of 15, rated as an able seaman (AB) until 1774 and as a midshipman thereafter, primarily learning his navigation and seamanship from three years (1771–74) in the 36-gun frigate *Crescent* in the West Indies, and two in the sloop *Ranger*. The latter was involved in anti-smuggling operations in the Irish Sea, based at Douglas on the Isle of Man, where Bligh formed significant connections. It was at that point, when he was 21, that Cook picked him as master of the *Resolution*, undoubtedly over more experienced men.





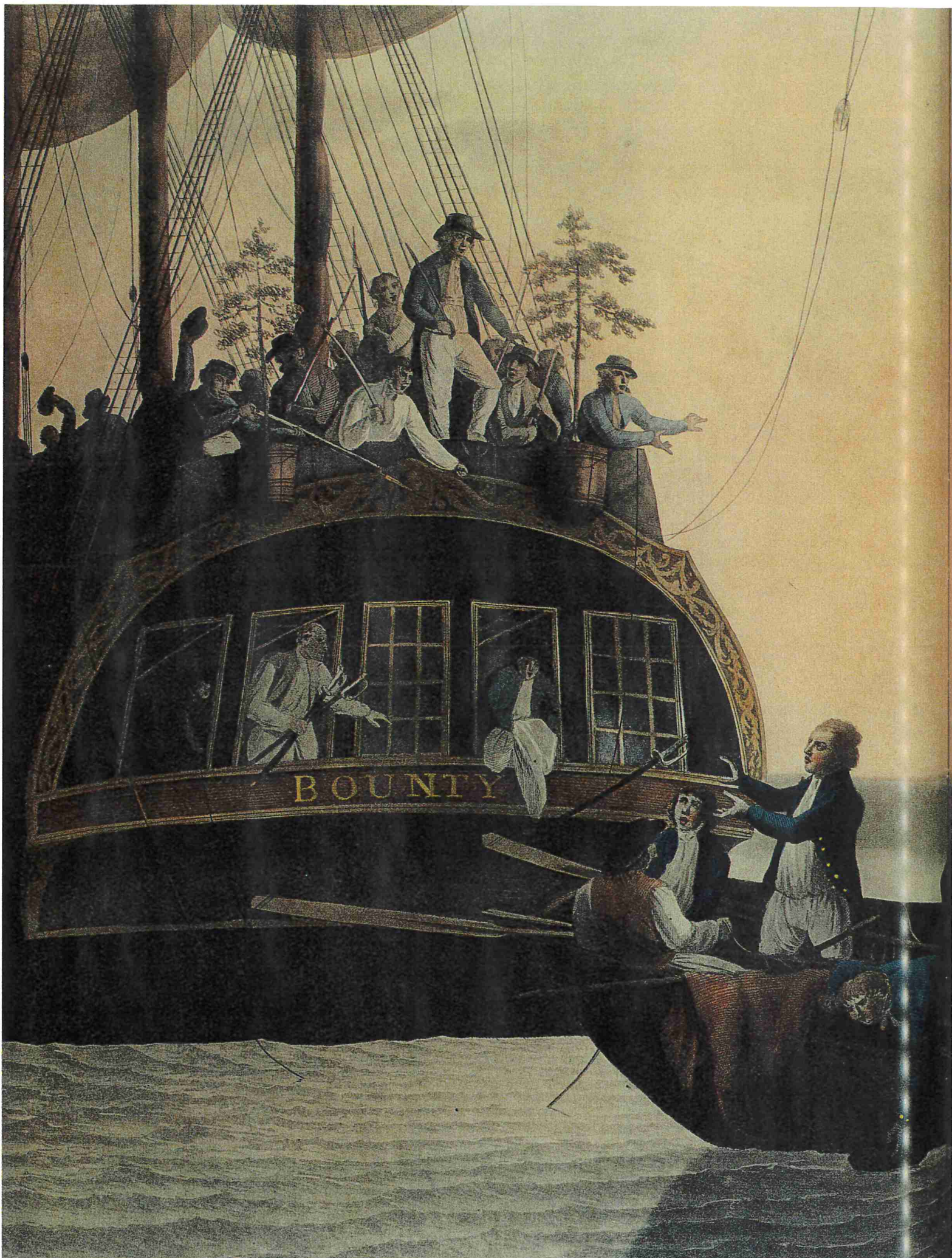
This suggests that someone important recommended him, though Cook must also have been impressed by his journals and charts, which Bligh would have submitted to the Admiralty. None of these from his pre-*Resolution* days survives, and he later stated that he lost all his own early charts from 1774 onward with the *Bounty*.

As master and the expedition's other principal surveyor, Bligh certainly worked closely with Cook. A number of his charts from the latter's last voyage are identifiable, and whatever polish he acquired from Cook as a navigator and surveyor, he closely followed his shipboard regime on both the *Bounty* and the *Providence* voyages. This included insistence on high standards of cleanliness in vessels and men, a good antiscorbutic diet, however much sailors disliked 'greens', and exercise, including compulsory dancing to a seaman fiddler: this was Bligh's innovation in the *Bounty*, even though the man he chose was near-blind and of little other use. He also maintained Cook's then unusual practice of a three-watch system which allowed eight hours' rest in twelve rather than four on, four off. Less admirably, he would have seen Cook's occasional gesticulating outbursts of temper – his own being similar in style – which Cook's crews called his 'heivas', after a vigorous Tahitian dance.

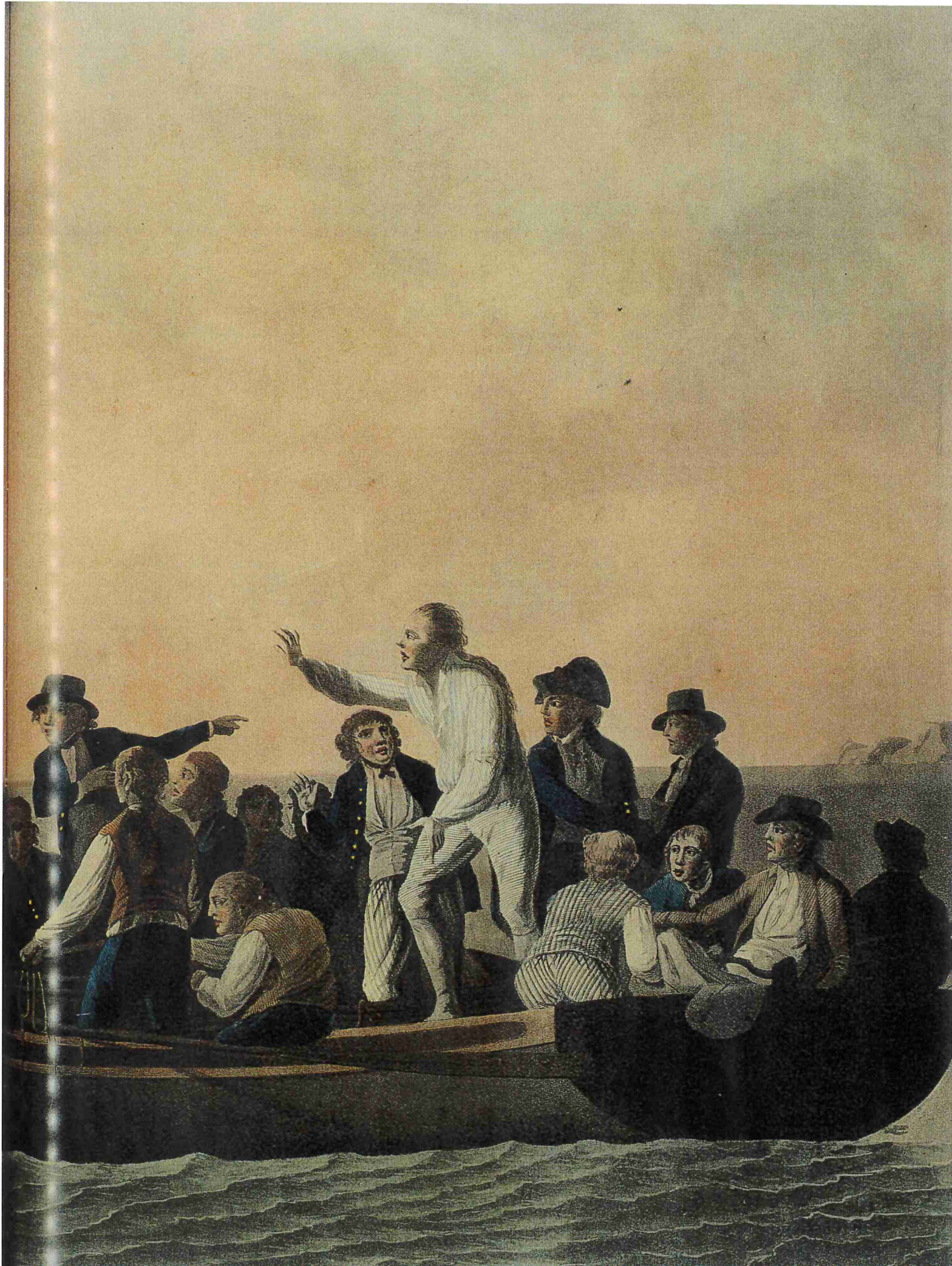
Bligh's failing, though one that only the *Bounty*'s circumstances made critical, was to have a short fuse too much of the time. A cautious and often self-congratulatory perfectionist, he saw others' failures to meet the standards that he required, in both expected ends and the means by which they were to be achieved, as worrying slackness. While 'placid and interesting' in private, on duty he switched from civility to invective with dizzying ease, though he was not physically brutal by the standards of the day. He was not an excessive 'flogger' either of his own men or of light-fingered Tahitians, finding it little deterrent in the latter case. Cook, by contrast, dealt more severely on various occasions with Polynesian pilfering, especially on his last voyage: on Hawaii, his loss of patience with it contributed, in part, to his death.

Bligh's genius – of which he seems to have remained unaware – was for inducing severe stress in subordinates who disappointed him, especially those lacking hardened maturity. The Navy did not recognise this critical weakness either, since it ran by clear rules, with no concept of 'psychological' mitigation to explain disobedience and failure of duty. Bligh's reputation was tarnished by what emerged about his style of command in the court martial of the *Bounty* mutineers – not least since he was by then again in the Pacific and unable to defend himself. However, the worst official reprimand that he ever had was as captain of the *Warrior* in 1805, when one of his lieutenants called him before a court martial for 'tyrannical behaviour'. The charge being partly upheld, he was simply reprimanded and told to moderate his language. It is more notable that while he was one of many captains turned out of their ships during the fleet mutiny at the Nore in 1797, when he was in command of the *Director*, he was not on the mutineers' blacklist of the hundred most unpopular officers, whom the Admiralty agreed to replace.











PREVIOUS PAGES THE MUTINEERS  
TURNING LIEUT BЛИGH AND PART  
OF THE OFFICERS AND CREW ADRIFT  
FROM HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP THE *BOUNTY*,  
28 April 1789; painted and engraved by  
Robert Dodd, 1790.

This is the most famous image of the  
*Bounty* mutiny but it is only a reconstruction.  
Bligh is the standing figure without a coat.

Two mutineers are throwing swords and  
clothing into the boat from the stern windows,  
above which stand Christian and other  
armed mutineers.

OPPOSITE A branch of the breadfruit  
tree; engraving by John Miller after Sydney  
Parkinson, 1773, from the published account  
of Cook's first voyage.

Rather, he was well respected by his crew and defended them in the affair, blaming  
agitators who had come aboard from other ships. In short, his fitness to command  
was well within accepted norms and his competence as a seaman, navigator and  
guardian of his men's welfare was exceptional. His volatility limited but did not  
stop his advancement, and it was other exceptional circumstances that combined  
with it to spark the Royal Navy's most famous mutiny, in the *Bounty*, one that was  
also very untypical in being neither a fleet 'strike' nor a single-ship revolt against  
unarguable tyranny.

Signs of Bligh's ability to make himself unpopular appeared on the *Resolution*  
after Cook's death on Hawaii in 1779. Both in the events surrounding that and on  
the rest of the voyage, Bligh behaved with resolution and professional skill. However,  
he did not respect John Gore, to whom command of the *Resolution* eventually  
devolved, and he appears to have alienated Cook's second lieutenant, James King,  
who brought the *Discovery* home in 1780. On their return, Gore, King and nearly  
every other officer were promoted, some less deserving than Bligh. Bligh himself  
was not, presumably because Gore and King did not recommend him. King was  
in fact almost Bligh's antithesis in personality, as expert an astronomer as Bligh was  
a navigator, popular and 'one of the politest, genteelest & best-bred men in the  
world'. When he completed the official write-up of the voyage proceedings, Bligh  
was incensed to find that all charts included that were not Cook's were credited to  
Henry Roberts – another post-voyage 'promotee' who only made fair copies of  
Cook's and Bligh's surveys. That Bligh received a one-eighth share of the publi-  
cation profits confirms his creative rights, but King gave him no credit. Personal  
antipathy aside, the explanation for this probably lies in Bligh's private criticism  
of those accompanying Cook at his death and the absence of retribution against  
the Hawaiians. Lieutenant John Williamson's irresolution as the boat commander  
during that fatal skirmish was notorious but even he was promoted, only to have  
his cowardice confirmed by court martial after the Battle of Camperdown in 1797,  
when in command of the *Agincourt*. Bligh, by contrast, showed his courage there  
and had probably approached the *Bounty* voyage ten years earlier with some bitter  
memories and a point to prove.

Bounty was  
Royal Navy's  
most  
famous  
mutiny  
probably coz  
Bligh  
survived +  
was promoted  
- / Cook





*Sitodiuum. allile.*

*Olatreite*

*George Robinson pinxit*



In February 1781, at Douglas in the Isle of Man, Bligh began a happy 30-year marriage to Elizabeth Betham, intelligent daughter of Richard Betham LL.D, the local Receiver General of Customs there, and two weeks later was appointed master of the frigate *Belle Poule* in the North Sea. That August he fought in the Battle of the Dogger Bank, against the Dutch, after which he was at last promoted to lieutenant, briefly in the *Berwick* and the *Princess Amelia*, and then as sixth lieutenant of the *Cambridge* in March 1782. The *Cambridge* took part in Lord Howe's relief of Gibraltar from Spanish siege later in the year but was paid off at the war's end in January 1783. Bligh returned to his 'Betsy' and daughter Harriet (the first of six) at Douglas, but needed more than his half-pay to support them. Fortunately his wife's uncle was Duncan Campbell, a ship owner and the government contractor for the recently introduced prison-hulk system (see p.91). For the next four years Bligh gained profitable experience as a merchant captain commanding three of Campbell's West Indian traders as well as acting as his agent in Jamaica. It was in Campbell's *Britannia* in 1787 that he was persuaded to take on a well-educated and ambitious volunteer midshipman, of Cumbrian origin and Manx residence. This was Fletcher Christian, who had previously sailed only in the frigate *Eurydice*.

While Bligh and Christian made two voyages together in the *Britannia* and became ill-fated friends, a plan was evolving in London to transplant breadfruit, a staple of the Tahitian diet, to the West Indies as a cheap food for the enslaved African workforce on British plantations there. Cook's voyages had made the plant well known, notably to Joseph Banks, who had sailed on the *Endeavour* voyage and who was now President of the Royal Society. In May 1787 George III instructed Lord Sydney to issue orders for the Admiralty to allocate a ship to the experiment. The small vessel provided and the consequently inadequate command structure and deficient initial planning – none of which was the fault of Bligh – indicated that the Navy was less than enthusiastic. It was, however, a great opportunity for a suitable junior officer, and Bligh's name probably came up early given his Pacific and West Indian experience, with Campbell certainly lobbying Banks on his behalf. On his return in the *Britannia* in August 1787 it was Banks whom he thanked for his 'great goodness' in honouring him with the command, even before the Admiralty confirmed it.

By then the Navy Board had already bought a ship and was fitting her out. It had also been told to choose one no larger than 250 tons and, in the event, the selection fell to Banks and David Nelson, the senior gardener for the voyage, who had also sailed on Cook's last expedition. Their involvement ensured its suitability for plants but not for other factors that might have given pause to an experienced seaman like Bligh. Their choice, a 215-ton West Indiaman called *Bethia* but now renamed *Bounty*, was in fact the smallest vessel considered (90ft 10in x 24ft 4in, or 27.7m x 7.4m, and drawing 11ft 4in, or 3.5m). That was very small considering the nature of her mission

1787 =  
plans to  
transport  
breadfruit  
made famous  
by Cook's voyage  
to West Indies  
- cheap food  
for enslaved  
African work  
force on  
British plantations

Bligh chosen  
with help  
South West  
Indies &  
Pacific  
(Cook's  
experience)

Banks  
probably had  
personal  
role in  
recommending  
Bligh as  
captain  
Spontaneous  
breadfruit  
enterprise



Royal Navy chooses smallest ship available, renamed *Bounty* from *Bethia*



John Adams, alias Alexander Smith; print from a drawing by Midshipman Richard Beechey of HMS *Blossom*, which called at Pitcairn in 1825.

Adams was one of the more violent mutineers, and was their last survivor on Pitcairn Island. He died there aged about 67 in 1829, as the Christian patriarch of the Anglo-Tahitian community the mutineers had created.

and her prescribed passage, which was to be 'west-about' to Tahiti, on the shortest route via Cape Horn. From there, orders also directed her to circumnavigate westward, making up any breadfruit losses with other exotic plants from the East Indies.

By contrast, the solid *Endeavour* was of 368 tons, and after nearly losing her on the Great Barrier Reef, Cook never again sailed with just one ship. Of his other vessels, the *Discovery*, at 299 tons, was the smallest and *Resolution* the

largest, at 462 tons. After the *Endeavour* voyage, Cook also never again risked the hazards and delays of beating west round Cape Horn. Instead he took the longer route east before the prevailing winds from the Cape of Good Hope, and used New Zealand harbours as his base for launching out into the Pacific.

The size of 'His Majesty's armed vessel *Bounty*' also defined her administratively as a 'cutter', the smallest of vessels in terms of permitted complement. This ordained only a lieutenant in command, with no other commissioned officers who would have buttressed Bligh's authority and no Marines to defend it or the ship. These were all advantages that Cook had enjoyed even when only a lieutenant commanding the *Endeavour*, which, like all his larger vessels, was rated as a 'sloop'. Bligh himself, together with Banks and others, canvassed for his promotion to rectify this situation; however, Lord Howe at the Admiralty refused.

Bligh had never been round the Horn either way, and the deficiencies deriving from both choice of ship and prescribed route lay not with him but with the Admiralty, which then compounded normal practical delays with an unaccountable one of three weeks to issue sailing orders. This almost guaranteed that they would hit adverse weather at the Horn. Despite heroic efforts, Bligh could not beat into the Pacific and was forced to turn back the long way round via the Indian Ocean,

Navy ordered Bligh to go west around Horn, which was far more difficult & dangerous & which would not be his 1st voyage, & so the Indian Ocean route was longer

intended over the Horn - but lost passage  
as the route was too long & dangerous  
for the *Bounty* - (the ship was too small  
to go round the Horn) - from there



Results: ...  
lost + went to Tahiti over route w/ huge delay,

for which he had only contingency permission. Arriving well behind schedule at Tahiti, they then took time to get the plants ready, following which they had to wait to catch seasonal winds for the return voyage. The exhausting struggle with the Horn and incidents that occurred on the long following passage had sapped crew morale in one way, while their overlong dalliance in an aphrodisiacal South Sea paradise undermined discipline in another. Other factors also raised the odds that there would be trouble.

The *Bounty's* crew was made up of the usual mixture of the reliable, the indifferent, the immature and some confirmed troublemakers. The good men included the armourer John Coleman, the gunner William Peckover and the sailmaker, Lawrence Lebogue. Peckover spoke Tahitian, having sailed on all three of Cook's voyages, while Lebogue – at 40, one of the oldest men in the ship – had been under Bligh in the *Britannia* and would sail with him again in the *Providence*. Some of the hard cases were Charles Churchill, the violent and unpopular ship's corporal, James Morrison, bosun's mate, and able seamen Matthew Quintal, John Williams and 'Alexander Smith' – whose real name was John Adams. Williams was the first of the mutineers to die on Pitcairn Island; Adams survived easily the longest, dying in 1829. William Purcell, the carpenter, proved corrosively insubordinate from an early stage but drew the line between that and mutiny. John Fryer, the master, was competent but soon became anxious and resentful as Bligh's greater competence and censorious style undermined his role, while the surgeon, Thomas Huggan, was a slovenly alcoholic. The meticulous Bligh tried unsuccessfully to shed him before the voyage, during which his growing incapacity proved both dangerous and a standing affront to good discipline.

Of a complement of 44 under Bligh, 25 would be implicated in the mutiny. Two of these, Churchill and Matthew Thompson, were later killed on Tahiti and four died as captives in the wreck of the pursuing *Pandora*, whose captain, Edward Edwards, carried off both the guilty and the innocent, treating them with equal severity, when he found them there in 1791. Nine were eventually tried in 1792. Three, including the loyal Coleman, were acquitted as uninvolved and six were sentenced to hang, though only three 'foot-soldiers' were in fact executed. Those pardoned included the plausible Morrison and the gentlemanly Manxman Peter Heywood, whom Bligh had been pressed to take as a 15-year-old midshipman by his wife's father. Heywood, who later rose to be a naval captain, would have been hanged less for active mutiny – his role remaining somewhat equivocal – than for failure to distance himself clearly from it, and he owed his salvation to being both well defended and well connected. The remaining 14, including another gentleman able seaman, Edward Young, would vanish with *Bounty* herself to a mostly violent fate on remote Pitcairn under their leader, Fletcher Christian. Christian was only 24 when he finally cracked after a trivial row over missing coconuts (Bligh claimed

than  
overly  
stay in  
Tahiti  
further  
undisciplined

oldest living  
mutineer  
on Pitcairn  
lived to  
1829  
(John Adams)

crew of  
44  
which were  
implicated  
in the  
mutiny

in the end,  
only 3  
brakes,  
2 killed on  
Tahiti,  
27 died in  
Pandora wreck

9 tried in  
1792

14 made it to  
Pitcairn to mostly  
violent ends



Dec. 1787 departure,  
Bligh 33 yrs old

they had been stolen) that involved several of the officers. With the accumulated effects of his captain's temper, their prolonged stay on Tahiti and the suicidal loss of self-esteem that failing to meet his own and Bligh's expectations seems to have induced, this was the last straw for Christian.

Bligh finally sailed from Portsmouth, into bad weather, on 23 December 1787 and on 5 January put into Tenerife. Shortly afterwards he began his three-watch system, but needed a third watch-keeping officer in addition to Fryer and Peckover. For this he picked his protégé Christian, then a master's mate, and early in March rapidly advanced him to acting lieutenant – a rank the Admiralty would customarily have confirmed on return. Compared with the 33-year-old Bligh – and with Fryer, who probably resented the favouritism – he was very inexperienced and, though he knew Bligh to be 'passionate', flattered himself he could deal with this side of his personality. In the event both men had unrealistic expectations: Bligh's disillusionment with Christian and the gradual psychological disintegration that his expression of it induced in him had a devastating finale. 'I am in hell' was the sole, hopelessly inarticulate explanation that the latter could give his astonished mentor when he cast him adrift.

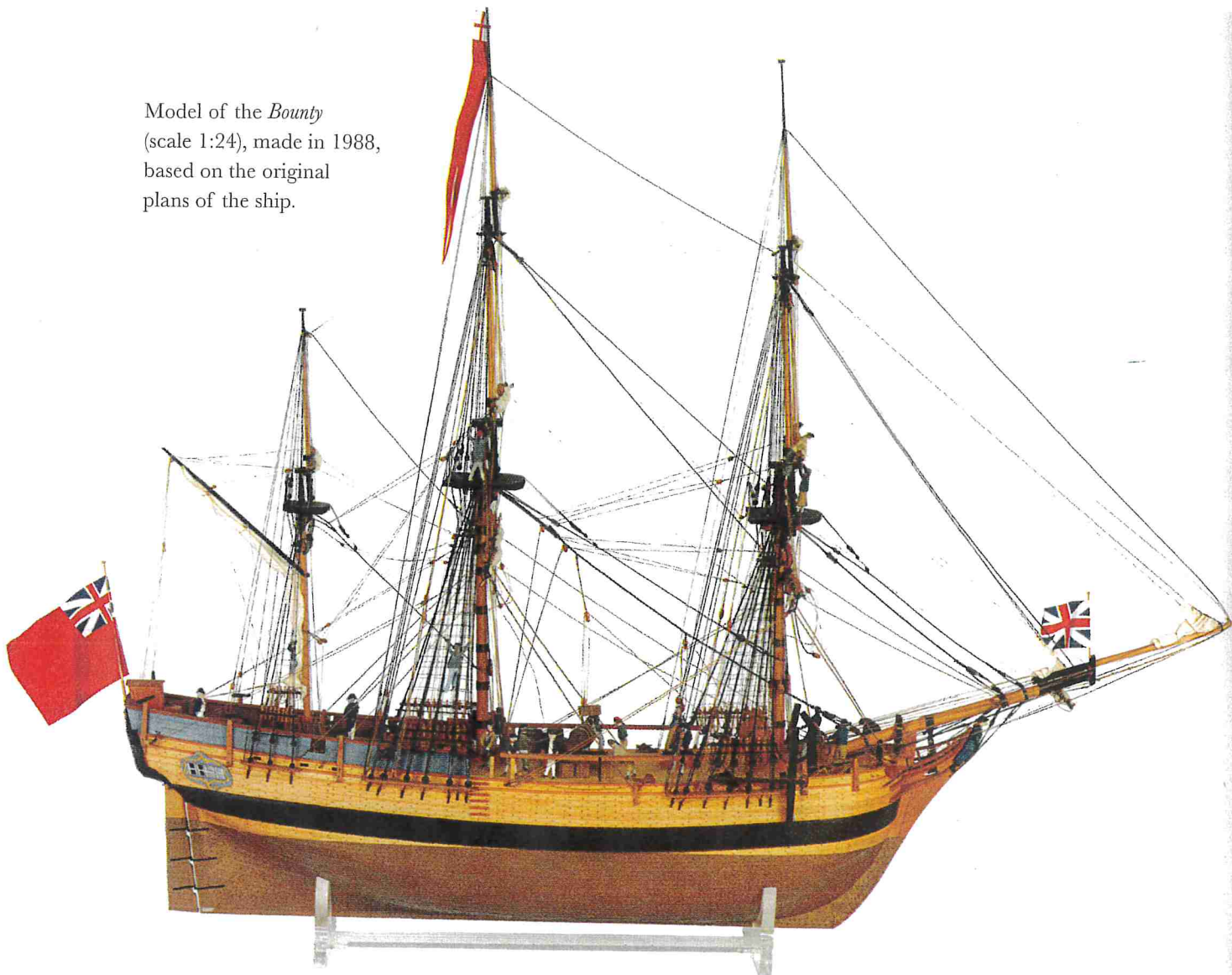
*Bounty* reached Cape Horn in the last week of March, at the start of the southern autumn, and for a month Bligh tried to fight his way round against huge seas and westerly gales before turning for the Cape of Good Hope. That his crew sustained the struggle for so long was remarkable, since only 13 of those rated as 'able-bodied' (of which his complement was nominally 25) were in fact mature seamen. They were greatly helped by Bligh's well-organised regime in which hot food was regularly provided and clothes systematically dried in the galley. He in turn was proud to reach Cape Town still with a crew free of 'scurvy, flux or fever' and no deaths or serious injuries. The *Bounty* sailed again on 1 July 1788, east for Tahiti, though Bligh also took aboard seeds and fruit plants for Governor Phillip's nascent colony at Botany Bay, in case he accidentally landed up there. Instead, they had a tedious but rough passage straight to Adventure Bay, Tasmania, where the first unusual disciplinary incident of the voyage occurred, when William Purcell twice refused to comply with Bligh's orders concerning wooding and watering ashore. Exactly why this happened is unknown. Purcell claimed that the work was not proper to his carpenter's rating, but Bligh could neither keep so vital a craftsman confined until later court martial nor flog him, warrant officers being exempt from such punishment. Purcell returned to his senses when Bligh told him that no work meant no food, but effectively unpunished defiance of orders was a serious challenge to Bligh's authority.

The breach was widened shortly afterwards by Fryer, who refused to countersign Bligh's audit of Purcell's and Cole's regular accounts without Bligh certifying Fryer's

Spent a month  
trying to get around  
the Horn before  
7 Nov 1787



Model of the *Bounty*  
(scale 1:24), made in 1988,  
based on the original  
plans of the ship.



own satisfactory performance. Bligh forced his retreat by reading out the Articles of War and the master's standing instructions before the ship's company. However, it was another extraordinary incident, probably indirectly connected with the death of James Valentine, a seaman, from septicaemia caused by the incompetence of the drunken surgeon, Huggan. Bligh was not satisfied with Fryer, and as master, he should also have been aware of Valentine's condition, Bligh having been made to understand he was recovering. Huggan compounded his ineptitude before they reached Tahiti, first by misdiagnosing scurvy in several men – which incensed Bligh as much as scurvy itself would have after all his precautions – and then by wrongly certifying the crew clear of venereal disease. After a final attempt at reasoning with him failed, Bligh had the surgeon's filthy berth cleaned and his liquor supplies confiscated, though not permanently enough to prevent his death from alcoholism in December 1788 at Matavai Bay.

They had arrived here on 26 October and renewed friendly contact with the local chief, Tinah, well known to Cook by his earlier name of Tu or Otoo.

Tu friend of  
Cook, is  
still a  
chief  
when Bligh  
reaches  
Tahiti in late 1788

Tu now  
known as  
Tinah



Following Cook's example, Bligh issued strict orders to prevent theft by islanders and to maintain the value of trade exchange through the appointment of a single official 'trader', a task given to the Tahitian-speaking Peckover. He also forbade theft or the violent recovery of stolen items from the Tahitians, as well as any maltreatment of them especially with firearms: these were to be used only where life was threatened. The arrival of the *Bounty* was an opportunity for Tinah to reassert himself following ill fortune in recent local conflict. Bligh had brought many gifts and rapidly secured as many breadfruit plants as he wished for 'King George' in return. When he later said he might move on to other islands, Tinah offered to supply all his needs rather than see him go elsewhere. This suited Bligh well and his only move, at Christmas, was along the coast to the more sheltered anchorage of Oparre. In both places Christian took charge of the shore camp and Fryer of the ship, with Bligh coming and going between the two in close and inevitably critical supervision. Many of the crew, including Fryer – but not Bligh any more than Cook had done – formed liaisons with local women for the duration. Christian's seem to have been unspecific until after the mutiny, when his Tahitian 'Isabella' (the mother of his son, Thursday) accompanied him to Pitcairn. Fryer later caused trouble by misappropriating property of his lover, one of several incidents of casual attitudes to local sensibilities that Bligh had to deal with.

Local theft was a more immediate problem, Bligh's most effective counter-measure being to punish his own men for their carelessness that was usually the cause of the losses. For seamen (such as Adams, alias Smith, on 4 November) this meant flogging; for the officers, a lashing with his tongue. Before long, Purcell again stood on the strict letter of his duty, defied a reasonable request from Bligh and was only briefly confined, while Thompson, a seaman, received 12 lashes for equal 'insolence and disobedience'. By contrast, Coleman earned Bligh's praise for his readiness to help Tahitians by forging useful items from pieces of iron brought to him. For Fryer and Christian, the move to Oparre coincided with a decline in Bligh's opinion of both. Fryer, having surveyed the channel, managed to run the ship aground in it by keeping a poor lookout, while Christian, ahead in the ship's launch, also failed to stay on correct station to prevent this. Bligh was probably incandescent at such bungling of a simple manoeuvre. Fryer and Cole were later also to incur his wrath when sails were taken out of store and found to be mouldy through lack of proper care, a matter well within Fryer's supervisory remit. Bligh recorded that he would have replaced both men had the option existed. Fryer later also let the ship's indispensable timekeeper run down because he forgot to wind it. (This was Kendall's second official copy of Harrison's great prototype; the first, used by Cook, was by then with Arthur Phillip in Australia.)

On 5 January 1789, a week after their arrival at Oparre, desertions finally started to occur – a potentially capital offence, but one already known in the Pacific.

numerous instances of an inept crew  
ruining relations w/ locals, letting sails  
get mouldy, letting timekeeper run down coz  
not winding, ship aground due to simple

1. Bligh's special breadfruit will  
needs in exchange for all the help to  
make the second state of his political  
future

the first... night (in the launch)  
the second launch



Several deserters as well

The absconders in the *Bounty's* small cutter were Churchill, William Muspratt – recently flogged for ‘neglect of duty’ – and John Milward. A paper found among Churchill’s possessions also named three of the shore party, including Christian, though Bligh accepted their denials of being aware of what this implied. Fryer then blundered by not detaining a Tahitian who came on board and admitted to helping the deserters, but on 23 January all three were recaptured. They were put in irons and flogged. All expressed contrition and gratitude for the leniency, being aware that a court martial later would have delivered worse. At the end of their stay a particularly bad case of Tahitian theft earned the perpetrator one hundred lashes. Although this was by far the heaviest beating Bligh ordered, its severity was partly to counter the urgings of local chiefs that the man be killed when they delivered him up, which Bligh of course rejected. The man bore his punishment with apparent indifference.

The *Bounty* at last sailed for the East Indies on 4 March 1789 with over 1,000 plants on board, including more than 700 breadfruit potted up in racks in her great cabin. The ship was also stuffed with supplies of local produce, pigs and goats, as well as private stores and curiosities of all kinds. The farewells were ceremonious and affectionate, but also distressing to many couples about to be separated. Christian’s party, especially, now irksomely found themselves back in the confinement of the ship under Bligh’s immediate management, after 23 easier weeks ashore.

Things finally came to a head on 24–26 April at Annamooka in Tonga, where Christian, master’s mate William Elphinstone and Fryer went ashore with parties to collect wood and water. The result was a spate of thefts arising from the fact that local chiefs were not immediately on hand, the shore parties’ inexperience at dealing with islanders less accustomed than Tahitians to European intrusion than the Tahitians were, and Bligh’s orders against the use of firearms. Bligh appears to have damned Christian publicly as a ‘cowardly rascal’ in the matter, and Morrison later recalled that at their departure he berated the assembled crew as a ‘parcel of lubberly rascals’, pointing a pistol at William McCoy and threatening to shoot him for inattention. The last flare-up was at sea on 27 April, with the coconut incident, when Bligh exploded at several of the officers for at least turning a blind eye to the apparent theft of these supplies, although Christian was cast in the role of principal victim only in accounts written by his subsequent apologists.

By now Bligh clearly considered all his officers lax and again told them so in no uncertain terms. The tempest over, he then characteristically and rapidly forgot the matter, and asked Christian to dine with him. Christian declined and, as night fell, finally succumbed to the private ‘hell’ boiling in his head since the Annamooka incident. He first contemplated suicide, then the idea of swimming to Tofua, 30 miles away. This developed into an equally wild plan to escape on a makeshift raft, about which he spoke to several people, among them Midshipman George Stewart,

March 4,  
1789 leave  
Tahiti for  
East Indies  
w/ 700+  
breadfruit  
potted up +  
over 1,000  
plants total  
+ 23 weeks  
ashore w/  
Tahitian wives  
+ little R.I.  
oversight  
+ crew back only  
sh. p. discipline  
April 24-26  
events came to  
a head at  
Tonga where  
Bligh berated  
Christian + crew  
for stealing +  
Tonga +  
water/wood  
trip

Bligh  
calls Christian  
"cowardly  
rascal" + entire  
crew  
"a parcel of  
lubberly rascals"



April 28, 1789, Christian recruits six accomplices  
 takes watch at 4am with feeling of the  
 Bligh versus mutiny, break into arms locker,

who later died in the *Pandora*. Stewart dissuaded him, saying the crew were 'ripe for anything', and this seems to have lit the fuse that led to mutiny.

After a fitful sleep Christian came on watch at 4am, rapidly recruited Quintal, and he in turn persuaded the violent duo of Churchill and Thompson to join them. Smith (Adams), McCoy and Williams also joined and, thanks to Fryer's lax procedures, Christian easily obtained the key to the arms locker from the unsuspecting armourer, Coleman. At daybreak on 28 April 1789, the sleeping Bligh was seized in his bed by Christian and three others, tied up and lashed to the mizzen mast on deck. Fryer was also detained.

In the ensuing hours of chaos, it soon became clear that, while the core of armed mutineers were united and determined, they could recruit only just over half the remaining crew. No one was prepared to kill Bligh and in the end he and 18 men, including Fryer and Purcell, were cast adrift in the ship's 23-foot launch. Other loyal men remained on the ship, since there was no room for more. The *Bounty* then vanished, eventually to remote and mischarted Pitcairn. By 1808, when Captain Mayhew Folger of the American whaler *Topaz* landed there, only John Adams remained, as benign patriarch over a community of 26 English-speaking children of mutineers and eight of their Tahitian mothers. All the other mutineers and their few Tahitian male companions had long since died, mostly through internecine killings. One such death was that of Christian, the first of the five mutineers killed on 'Massacre Day', 23 September 1793, by the Tahitian men, resentful of their inferior treatment and the women's alliance with the Europeans. *Bounty* herself was stripped and burnt in 1790 to preclude detection, including as a result of further flight.

by 1808, a whole American ship finds only John Adams still alive  
 on Pitcairn a patriarch of 26-English speaking children of  
 mutineers & of Tahitian women - most mutineers died of kill.

## THE VOYAGE OF THE *BOUNTY*'S LAUNCH

each other, including Christian on 'Massacre Day' (9/23/1793) when  
 he sent the Tahitian men to kill Adams & fire if they (mutineers) at

Those left in the boat should also have died, as the mutineers expected them to. However, 150 lb of ship's biscuit, 28 gallons of water, a little pork and some rum, wine, coconuts and breadfruit were put aboard in the m  le, along with clothes and Purcell's tools, Bligh's papers and basic navigational items, including tables and a sextant. Bligh immediately headed for nearby Tofua, where they foraged with only limited success from 29 April to 2 May. The boat held no firearms, something quickly noted by observant Tofuans who arrived on 1 May and who, with easy pickings in view, attacked the following day. Bligh saw it coming and just managed to get the boat away with the loss of a sturdy loyalist, John Norton, who was killed on the beach. In the shocked aftermath it was clear to all that without guns they were unlikely to be better treated elsewhere. Bligh therefore set sail for Dutch Timor in the East Indies, more than 3,600 nautical miles to the west, having

those cast  
 adrift should  
 have died  
 though they  
 do have some  
 provisions -  
 however, no  
 guns, &  
 no sails  
 Tofua immediately  
 attacked them  
 and they realized  
 this - one man  
 killed a black - w/o guns they would  
 be their fate everywhere

seize Bligh  
 in bed &  
 tie him up  
 to mizzen  
 mast on  
 deck  
 Fletcher can  
 only recruit  
 a little over  
 half the crew  
 & have  
 willing to kill  
 Bligh so  
 18 men left  
 adrift in  
 23-ft.  
 launch

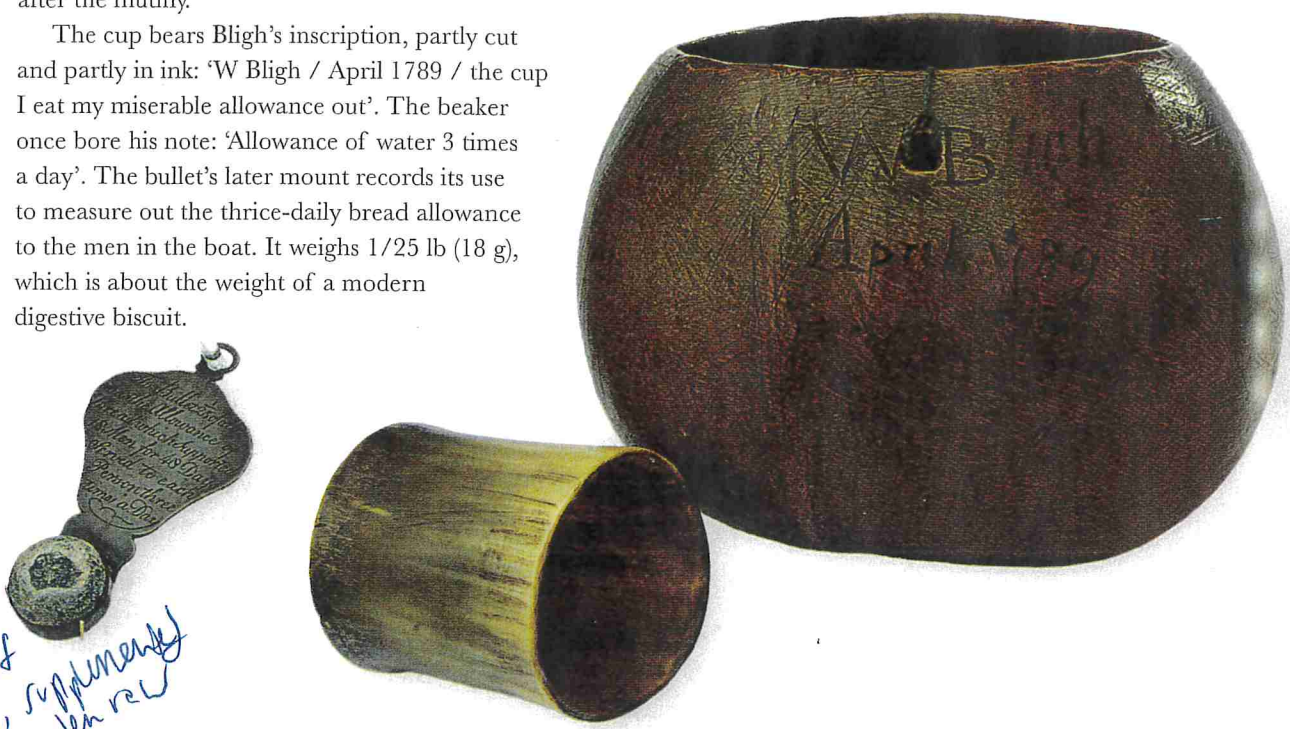
inferior  
 treatment &  
 women's  
 alliance w/  
 Europeans  
 - Bounty  
 stripped &  
 burnt in 1790  
 to preclude  
 detection  
 of pursuit  
 anyone leaves  
 & reveals  
 whereabouts



50 nautical miles away, strict rationing  
aboard

Coconut cup, horn beaker and bullet weight used during the voyage of the *Bounty*'s launch, 28 April to 14 June 1789, after the mutiny.

The cup bears Bligh's inscription, partly cut and partly in ink: 'W Bligh / April 1789 / the cup I eat my miserable allowance out'. The beaker once bore his note: 'Allowance of water 3 times a day'. The bullet's later mount records its use to measure out the thrice-daily bread allowance to the men in the boat. It weighs 1/25 lb (18 g), which is about the weight of a modern digestive biscuit.



eat an ounce of bread per day, supplemented by a few birds taken raw

staying afloat required constant bailing, no charts to go on, just memory & a notebook

ten, in many men, Bligh felt he can only rely on 10 of the men

extracted a solemn oath from all to abide by the most stringent rationing of their supplies. This was initially an ounce of bread a day (later reduced), supplemented until they reached Australia only by a couple of birds eaten raw.

The voyage that followed was Bligh's finest. The launch's gunwale was down to inches above the water, and in stormy and often torrentially rainy weather staying afloat required skill and endlessly exhausting bailing. Everyone was perpetually cold and wet and often terrified, and they were able to sleep only fitfully in the exposed and cramped conditions. Bligh had no charts and only his memory of the south-west Pacific to go on, but nonetheless managed to plot an accurate course in a small notebook, using an improvised log line, latitude observations and Peckover's watch. The watch kept going until 2 June, albeit not as accurately as the *Bounty*'s chronometer (which went to Pitcairn). Early on they were pursued by two canoes, but escaped and did not attempt to land again until Bligh predicted that they were approaching the northern Barrier Reef. On 29 May they landed within it on what Bligh called Restoration Island. Here stress-induced disagreements again broke out, followed by a blazing row further up the coast when some men – admittedly weakened – refused to help forage on Sunday Island. Purcell was again insolent and Fryer, attempting to defuse the situation, appeared to side with him when Bligh threatened Purcell with a cutlass. At this point Bligh noted only ten men he felt he could rely on, Fryer and Purcell being among those he could not.



By 4 June they were again at sea north of Cape York but, despite the brief respite, Lebogue and Thomas Ledward, the acting surgeon, were seen to be sinking fast. It was therefore with 'an excess of joy' that early on 12 June they sighted Timor, though another dispute rapidly ensued between Bligh and Fryer about the former's decision to seek a European harbour rather than first get ashore for more food. Nonetheless, on 14 June the launch made port at Coupang (Kupang), Dutch capital of the colonial island of Timor, where they were well received and cared for by the authorities. It was the 48th day since the mutiny; the party had suffered no deaths from exposure or starvation, though Nelson, the gardener, and another man died shortly afterwards from local fevers, as did three others before they reached home.

on 4 June many  
they reach Timor  
city of Coupang  
exposure or starvation

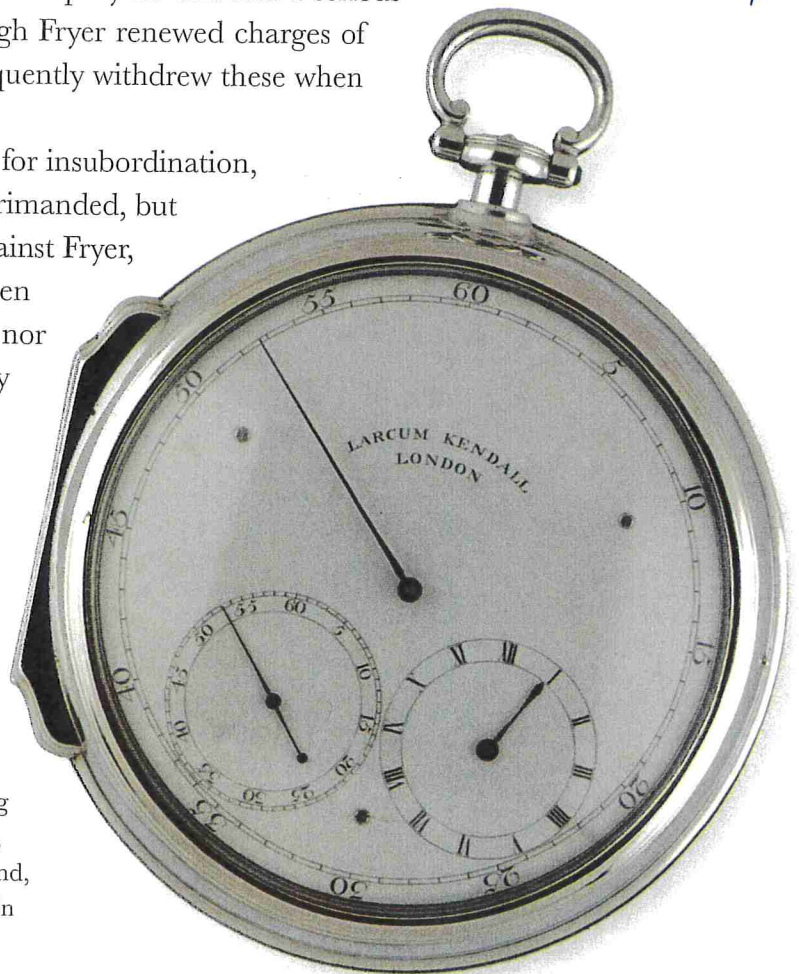
Bligh had  
to Batavia  
on schooner  
he bought  
on credit  
still 15 mts  
of his watch  
at the  
way

Their safe arrival did not, however, close the factional breach, which came to its last crisis at Sourabaya that September. Bligh and his men arrived there en route to Batavia, in a schooner that he bought on credit at Coupang and named the *Resource*. On the point of leaving, he found several men incapable of work and asked Fryer if they were ill (they were in fact drunk). On receiving an insolent reply followed by general complaints about ill-treatment from others, including Purcell, Bligh this time reached for a bayonet before calling in the Dutch authorities to support him. In the ensuing local inquiry no one laid a serious complaint against Bligh, although Fryer renewed charges of financial impropriety. He subsequently withdrew these when Bligh produced his accounts.

Bligh later had Purcell tried for insubordination, for which the carpenter was reprimanded, but he laid no formal complaints against Fryer, even though they would have been justified. Likewise, neither Fryer nor Purcell ever complained officially against Bligh. Unlike Christian, all three were tough and understood the unwritten rules. One mutiny was bad enough: more could ruin all concerned, whichever side they had taken.

'K2', the *Bounty* watch.

This is Larcum Kendall's second copy (1771) of Harrison's epoch-making 'H4' chronometer. Taken on the *Bounty*, it went with the mutineers to Pitcairn and, by a tortuous route, came back to Britain only in the 1840s.





from Batavia <sup>near</sup> the river on Dutch ship. home by March 1790

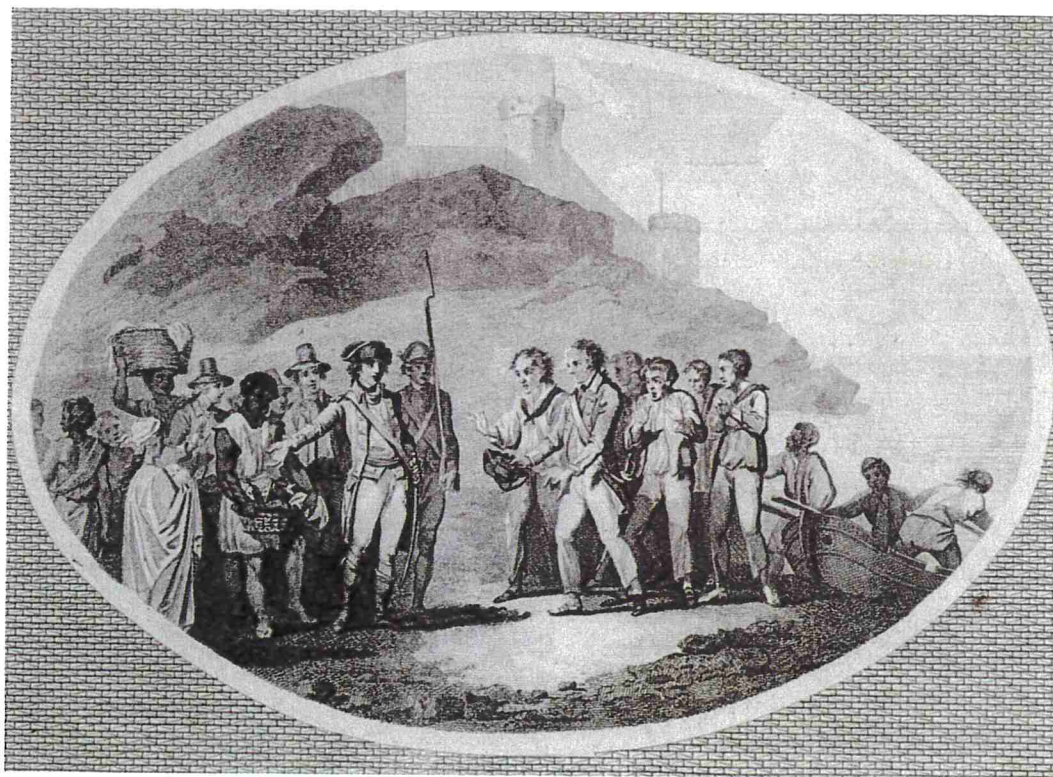
At Batavia the fractious company parted, Bligh reaching home on a Dutch ship with his clerk, John Samuel, and another loyal man in March 1790. On his return he rapidly published a preliminary account of the *Bounty*'s loss and his open-boat voyage as part of a campaign to secure his position. Lacking any awareness of his own contribution to the mutiny, he blamed the corrupting effect of Tahiti on evil men. As no contrary view was presented, the subsequent court martial for loss of the *Bounty*, which Bligh and the men he saved faced that October, also absolved them all from blame.

blame corrupt effect of Tahiti for mutiny, absolved in court martial for loss of *Bounty*

## THE SECOND BREADFRUIT VOYAGE, 1791–93

With his published account making him a celebrity, Bligh was rapidly promoted to commander, and then to captain in December 1790. Four months later, on 16 April 1791, he was formally appointed to the new, 420-ton *Providence* to repeat the *Bounty*

Bligh's published account of mutiny makes him a celebrity, rapid promotion to captain



LIEUT. BLIGH AND HIS CREW OF THE SHIP *BOUNTY* HOSPITABLY RECEIVED BY THE GOVERNOR OF TIMOR, at the end of the launch voyage; engraving by William Bromley after Charles Benazech, who made the survivors look better

than they were in reality. Bligh wrote:

'Our bodies were nothing but skin and bones, our limbs were full of sores, and we were clothed in rags ... the people of Timor beheld us with a mixture of horror, surprise, and pity.'



1791: re-appointed to her ship to  
replant breadfruit throughout the  
the 1/ consort ship

project of transplanting breadfruit to the West Indies, with a 500-guinea gratuity from the Jamaica Assembly to speed him. This time he selected the ship, launched only on 23 April, and had the 100-ton *Assistant* as consort. She was commanded by Lieutenant Portlock, promoted from master's mate in 1780 after bringing home the *Resolution's* advance despatches from Cape Town.

The *Providence* voyage had similarities with its predecessor as well as differences from it. Events in the *Bounty* obscure the fact that, for all his troubles, Bligh was an important observer of the geography, society and natural history of everywhere he visited – Tahiti, the East Indies and the Cape of Good Hope. As he explained to Banks, speaking of the *Bounty's* launch, 'I have endeavoured to make the remaining part of my voyage of some avail even in my distress'd situation,' and he kept a running survey through the Fiji islands (of which he was European discoverer) and up the coast of Australia, through the Prince of Wales Islands off Cape York, avoiding New Guinea only for lack of firearms. This observation continued in the *Providence*. It included discoveries round Adventure Bay, Tasmania, and a swift but competent further recording of the Fiji group on the westward passage from Tahiti. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement was a hazardous 19-day survey through the Clarence Islands of the Torres Strait, punctuated by two attacks from islanders there in which one man died.

However, the essential difference between the two breadfruit voyages was that Bligh's advice underlay all preparations for the second and that they reflected his customary foresight and the example set by Cook: he required two ships and a sound command structure, with a full complement of subordinate commissioned officers and a party of 24 Marines, four of whom were in the *Assistant*. Once at sea, he also reinstituted the three-watch system and the same tight regime as in the *Bounty* for welfare and good order, both afloat and ashore. His irascibility when subordinates failed to meet his exacting standards was otherwise the same, not least since his own health was bad throughout the voyage as a result of the hardships he had already suffered. Young Matthew Flinders, who sailed with him, came to admire but never to like him and the old difficulties soon showed themselves again in Bligh's relationship with Francis Godolphin Bond, the *Providence's* first lieutenant.

Frank Bond was Bligh's nephew and already a lieutenant with long sea experience when Bligh invited his participation to help his nephew's career. When Bond agreed, Bligh exerted influence to have him appointed, but it was typical of him that, once they were on board, considerate Uncle William became nagging and imperious Captain Bligh. This made the voyage a bitterly remembered purgatory for Bond, whose more easy-going outlook was bound to infuriate his uncle.

Consequently, and knowing his uncle's prior reputation as a 'tyrant', he soon had experience of his 'ungovernable temper' but was wise enough to conceal his resentment, of which Bligh remained unaware. By contrast, the sensible and artistic







OPPOSITE NATHANIEL PORTLOCK  
(1747–1817); artist unknown.

Born in Virginia, Portlock served as a master's mate on Cook's last voyage and commanded the *Assistant* on Bligh's second breadfruit voyage. This portrait shows him as a merchant captain on his fur-trading voyage to north-west America (1785–88). His ship, the *King George*, and her consort, the *Queen Charlotte*,

are in the background. The figure to the left is a man of Nootka Sound, based on an image by John Webber from Cook's last voyage. Portlock is buried at Greenwich, where he died as an officer in the Royal Hospital for Seamen.

George Tobin, making his first commissioned voyage as the third lieutenant, recognised in Bligh 'the quickest sailor's eye, guided by a thorough knowledge of every branch of the profession necessary on such a voyage'. While Tobin's inexperience occasionally brought out 'the Unbridled licence of [Bligh's] power of speech, yet [it was] never without soon receiving something like an emollient plaister to heal the wound', and he rapidly learnt how diligence avoided what he called 'passing squalls'. At the top end of the scale, the experienced Portlock, in the *Assistant*, had a highly successful partnership with his leader. At Tahiti, Bligh noted that his 'alertness and attention to duty makes me at all times think of him with regard and esteem', an encomium not bestowed on any other of his subordinates.

The ships sailed on 3 August 1791, east via Cape Town to Tasmania and thence direct to Tahiti, where they arrived on 9 April 1792. Here Bligh discovered that *Bounty* had twice returned before vanishing, leaving the party that Edwards had already swept up and carried off in the *Pandora*. On 20 July, with 2,126 breadfruit and about 500 other plants on board, Bligh left Tahiti again for the Torres Strait and Coupang, where he learnt a little of the fate of *Pandora* on the Barrier Reef. Mangoes were among the plants that he also collected in the Indies and that he was thereby responsible for successfully introducing to the Caribbean, whither he sailed on the long westward passage via St Helena. He reached St Vincent on 23 January 1793 and went on to Jamaica, breadfruit and other plants from the Pacific and East Indies being landed in both places. After all the trouble, however, breadfruit proved unpopular with the enslaved Africans it was meant to feed, but Bligh and Portlock received a warm welcome from the authorities of both islands, as well as generous immediate rewards for their efforts.

They arrived home in August 1793 with additional plants for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, including (from the Caribbean) the originally West African ackee, today the national fruit of Jamaica, which was classified as *Blighia sapida* in Bligh's honour. The homecoming was otherwise muted: Britain was already eight months into war with revolutionary France and Bligh found his earlier fame soured by notoriety from the trial, in his absence, of the *Bounty* men whom Edwards had brought home. Although the *Providence* expedition ended with complete success

his voyage successful  
James Cook with L.A.T.  
more breadfruit  
on Charles Francis



and, taken overall, considerable good feeling towards Bligh from his men, the Admiralty granted none of his officers their hoped-for promotions. Bligh himself was much later (in 1801) elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for his 'distinguished services to navigation' but in 1793–94 found himself writing a defensive pamphlet to rebut allegations made against him in connection with the mutineers' defence at trial. The popular myth of 'wicked Captain Bligh' was well planted there while his back was turned and, ever since, it has often needed cutting back to see Bligh the man in true proportion.

## REBELLION, RESISTANCE AND RETIREMENT

Bligh's last mutiny – more a *coup d'état* – which deposed him as governor of New South Wales owed something to his personality, but little in the way of blame. In this case his assertive rectitude lacked subtlety but helped end a situation too long out of control under his immediate naval predecessors, John Hunter from 1795 and Philip Gidley King from 1800.

Bligh was appointed governor in April 1805 though he did not sail for Australia, accompanied by his second daughter, Mary, until February 1806. By this time his reputation for having a bad temper was augmented by one for being a brave fighting commander. He distinguished himself as captain of the *Director* in Admiral Duncan's victory over the Dutch at Camperdown in 1797 and commanded the *Glutton* at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, fighting next in line astern to Nelson's *Elephant* and winning warm praise from him. His later command of the *Warrior* followed a brief spell of survey work in 1803–04, which included being temporarily in charge of the Hydrographic Office, and he gave up the *Warrior's* captaincy only when Banks – and a generous salary – persuaded him to go to Australia.

The colony at Sydney Cove was by then firmly in the grip of the New South Wales Corps, which included, notably, the able but unscrupulous figure of the 'Perturbator' (now Captain) John Macarthur, a complex, depressive man of 'restless, ambitious and litigious disposition', in Hunter's phrase. This was complicated by conflicts between the officers of the corps; between the corps and the emancipated convicts and free settlers whom it exploited commercially; and between the corps's private-property interests and its official role of supporting the authority of the naval governors who followed Arthur Phillip – a case of 'who will guard the guards', with inter-service discord thrown in. In the three-year interregnum between Phillip's departure and the return of Hunter, the corps had subverted civil government, control of landholding, convict labour and trade through Sydney for its own profit – with Macarthur at the centre of the web as Regimental Paymaster from 1792 and Inspector of Public Works the following year. Both Hunter and



King were well aware of the problem but were unable to deal with it and were duly recalled as this became apparent. London also failed to help in other ways. In 1801 Macarthur was sent home to face court martial for duelling with his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Paterson. However, the charge was dismissed in England, with Macarthur also using the occasion to win substantial official support for an Australian wool-farming experiment, despite falling foul of Joseph Banks, and he sailed for Sydney again in 1804, taking merino sheep with him. When the government shortly afterwards looked to replace King with someone who was incorrupt, resourcefully independent, firm and 'not subject to whimper and whine when severity in discipline is wanted', Banks had just the man in mind, and Bligh was appointed.

He reached Australia in late 1806, by which time Macarthur had evaded a new ban on corps officers being involved in trade by resigning, and purported instead to represent the 'free inhabitants' – though Bligh quickly found this was not the case. Being well experienced in mercantile finance, and with no reason to favour Macarthur, he had soon acquired a clear picture of his self-interested ways and baleful influence. He also found that, prohibitions or not, the corps was thoroughly corrupt. His conclusion was that the whole corps should be sent home and replaced, a view which threatened the military interest on which his own practical authority rested.

The complex outcome was that by January 1808 Macarthur had manipulated a commercial court case brought against him by another of his enemies, the colony's Judge Advocate, Richard Atkins, to make it a means of undermining Bligh. The aim was to provoke Bligh to take Atkins's side, and Bligh duly fell into the trap, thereby demonstrating an improper bias to which the other six court officers formally objected, as Macarthur had intended. Bligh then ordered them to surrender their papers in the case and explain themselves before him. Macarthur easily presented this as an illegal ultimatum and, with other allies, petitioned Major George Johnston, commander of the corps – who was well aware of what was going on – to rescue the colony from Bligh's usurpation by arresting and supplanting him. This was ostentatiously done on 27 January 1808, leaving both Macarthur and Johnston in control until July, when Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Foveaux – another appalling and self-interested corps officer – returned from London as Bligh's lieutenant-governor but also refused to reinstate him.

Those involved in the 'rum rebellion' quickly fragmented into factions, and for the next year Bligh remained under arrest at Government House, refusing to return home until London ordered him to do so. In January 1809, when Paterson returned to Sydney as senior officer, Bligh obtained permission to transfer to HMS *Porpoise*, which had come out with him three years earlier. As a ruse, he gave his word that he would sail immediately for London, breaking it once aboard, where



his naval authority was unchallenged. Although Johnston and Macarthur left for London in March to prepare their cases, Bligh stayed at sea between Tasmania and the Sydney coast for another year, intercepting ships from home for intelligence and to revictual. His daughter Mary, married and widowed since their arrival in 1806, also remained with him ashore and afloat from the time of his arrest.

In 1809 London at last took decisive action by sending out the 73rd Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel Lachlan Macquarie. He was also ordered to succeed Bligh as governor after formally reinstating him in order to reaffirm London's sole right to appoint and dismiss. This was not practical as Bligh was off Tasmania when Macquarie arrived on 28 December 1809, but he was nonetheless greeted with proper honours when he landed at Sydney again on 17 January 1810. Macquarie later wrote privately of him as 'most disagreeable [and] ... a very improper Person to be employed in any situation of Trust or Command and ... generally detested...' This harsh opinion clearly has some truth. However, it probably does not take sufficient account of the stress Bligh had then been under for two years, nor of the fact that he certainly still had respectable support in Sydney.

Bligh finally left in the *Hindustan* on 12 May 1810, in a small convoy that carried away the whole 'Rum Corps', which subsequently became the British 102nd Regiment of Foot. This time, however, he left without his daughter. She had what can only have been a whirlwind romance with Macquarie's deputy, Lieutenant Colonel O'Donnell, and assured her bewildered father that she wished to marry him and stay in Australia. Although Bligh was soon brought round, it must have been with mixed feelings that he gave her away in marriage for the second time just before he sailed, at a ceremony in Government House.

He returned to England and the rest of his family in October 1810. In May 1811, George Johnston, now lieutenant-colonel of the 102nd Foot, faced a court martial at Chelsea for 'the act of Mutiny' in deposing Bligh as Governor of New South Wales. A month later an unqualified verdict of guilty saw Johnston cashiered, though the only consequence of his dismissal was his retirement to his substantial farm in Australia. As a civilian, Macarthur faced no charges in London but remained at legal risk in the colony until family lobbying persuaded the government to grant him indemnity from trial there eight years later. In the meantime he was, in effect, trapped in England while his able wife Elizabeth managed his Australian affairs with great success. This included pursuing his wool experiment using cross-bred merino sheep, though it came to full fruition only after Macarthur's return in 1817. As a result, he is still credited as one of the founders of the Australian wool industry; he eventually died insane.

Bligh's promotion to rear-admiral, delayed until after the Johnston verdict, was confirmed in July 1811 and backdated a year. He did not serve again, except in advisory capacities, nor did he long enjoy the company of his much-loved wife



The tomb of William Bligh and his wife at the former church of St Mary's, Lambeth, London (now the Garden Museum), overlooking the Thames beside Lambeth Palace. This photograph shows it before the 2017 completion of the new building extension around it.



Betsy. She died in 1812 and was buried in the graveyard of their London parish church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, leaving him with four unmarried daughters, one of whom was epileptic. Harriet, his eldest daughter, had married the wealthy panorama showman Henry Aston Barker in 1802 and the third – Elizabeth – married Richard Bligh KC, a barrister and her second cousin, ten days before her father's death. Failing health seems to have precluded his attendance, since she went up the aisle with her brother-in-law, Henry Barker. Bligh had spent his last years at Farningham in Kent, rising by seniority to Vice-Admiral of the Blue before he died, aged 63, while under medical care in London. He was buried with his wife at St Mary's, where their imposing monument still bears witness to him as 'the celebrated navigator who first transplanted the Bread fruit tree from Otaheite to the West Indies, bravely fought the battles of his country and died beloved, respected and lamented on the 7th day of December 1817'. The church, however, now has a very different use, and an appropriate one as the final harbour for a navigator whose fame – or notoriety – is for ever linked to a botanical experiment. In 1977 it opened as the Museum of Garden History, now the Garden Museum. Bligh's tomb is today a highlight in the courtyard garden of the striking modern extension that was completed in 2017, just ahead of the 200th anniversary of his death.