Mutiny on the bounty

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The tale of the mutiny on the Bounty remains one of the most intriguing stories of adventure on the high seas more than 200 years after the ill fated voyage that made Captain Bligh and Fletcher Christian legends.

Bound for Tahiti, the *Bounty* sailed from Spithead, England on 23 December 1787 under the famous Captain William Bligh. This was Bligh's second visit to Tahiti and he had many friends on the island. The *Bounty* stayed in Tahiti nearly six months. Having completed her mission to collect breadfruit trees from the colony, she set sail but the crew was dispirited at leaving such an easy life behind.

The *Bounty* was underway to the West Indies when, on the morning of 28 April 1789, Fletcher Christian and part of the crew mutinied. He set the captain and 18 members of the crew adrift in the ship's cutter.

Bligh was a master seaman who had previously navigated for Captain James Cook. He managed to sail the tiny vessel almost four thousand miles to Timor.

Christian and the mutineers took the *Bounty* back to Tahiti and then, with six Polynesian men and twelve women, sailed the ship to Pitcairn Island where they burnt it at sea. After this desperate beginning, they established a colony that remains to this day, settled by the descendents of the *Bounty* mutineers and their Tahitian wives.

### William Bligh's Log Book

Transcript:

Page Title: Rems Tuesday at Sea 28 April 1789

[page 54]

Light Winds and cloudy Nr Wind NE-E & WE
I kept near ogodoo untill 5 O'Clock this afternoon in hopes to have had some cannoes off but I saw none Therefore directed my course to the West & went to the Southward of Tofoa - Mr Sayer The Master had the first watch. Mr Pickover The Gunner the middle' and Mr Christian one of the Mates who I had given an acting order to' the Morning watch. - This was the tour of duty for the Night - But I am now unhappily to relate one of the most atrocious acts of Piracy ever committed.

Just before Sunrise Mr Christian & The Master at Arms & several officers came into my cabbin while I was fast asleep' and seizing me tyed my hands with a Cord & threatened instant death if I made the least noise' I however' having a reverie' called sufficiently loud to alarm the officers' who found themselves equally secured by Centinels at their Doors - There were now three men at my Cabbin Door & four inside (a) - Mr Christian had a Cutlass & the others were armed with Musquets & Bayonets - I was now carried on Deck in my shirt' in torture with a severe bandage round my wrists behind my back' where I found no man to rescue to me. I ask'd The reason for such a violent act' but I was threatened to be put to death if I said a word. Mr Hayward & Hallet were in Mr Christian's watch' but had no idea that any thing was doing untill they were all armed - The Arms were all secured' so that no one could get near them for Centinels - Mr Elphinston The Mate was secured in his Hammock Mr Nelson & '
(a) Fletcher Christian - (a) Chas Churchill (a) Thos Burkitt' (a) Jno Mills - Alexander Smith Jno Sumner - Mathew Quintal assisted under Arms on the outside
From Tuesday at Sea 20 April 1709

Light Windy and Cloudy. Mr. Mind AE & Visc.

I kept on the deck until 8 o'clock this afternoon, with hopes to have had some company off, but saw none. Therefore directed my course to the Northward of Utopia. Mr. Troyer the Master had the first watch, Mr. Ponder the Gownner the Middle, and Mr. Christian one of the mates who had given an acting order to the morning watch. This was the turn of duty for the night. But I am now unhappily to relate one of the most atrocious acts of piracy ever committed.

Just before sunrise Mr. Christian & the Master at Arms came into my state. I was fast asleep, and seizing one of my hands with a cord I threatened instant death if I made the least noise. However, shrieking, and calling sufficiently loud to alarm the officers, who found themselves usually secured by counters at their doors. There were now three men at my cabin door at this instant. Mr. Christian had a cutlass & the others were armed with muskets, & pistols. I was now carried on deck in my bed to the top with a severe bandage round my wrists behind my back. I was bound no how to resist to me. I said the least, he put a musket to such a violent act, but I was threatened if I said a word.

Mr. Haupert & Ballet were in Mr. Christian's watch, and had me. I fear that my thing was going until they were all armed. The arms were all secured, so that no one could get near them for counters. Mr. Delphiniton the Mate was secured in his hammock. Mr. Nelson &
& Peckover in their Cabbins. The fore Hatchway guarded by Centinels through which the boatswain and Carpenter were admitted on Deck where they saw me standing abaft the Mizzen Mast with my hands tyed behind my back' under a Guard with Christian at their head - The boatswain was now ordered to hoist the small cutter out' with a threat if he did not do it instantly to take care of himself:- but on a representation that this boat was very leaky he was directed to hoist the Launch out which was done. Mr Hayward and Hallet midshipmen and Mr Samuels clerk were now ordered into the Boat' upon which I assumed my authority & demanded the cause of such an order' endeavouring to bring some one to a sense of his duty' but it was to no effect "Hold your tongue Sir or you are dead this Instant" was constantly repeated to me.

The Master by this time had sent to be allowed to come on deck and was permitted' and as soon was ordered back
to his Cabbin again' where he returned.--
I continued to endeavor to change the Tide of Affairs when Christian changed the Cutlass he had in his hand for a
Bayonet that was brought to him' and holding me with a strong grip by the Cord that tied my hands' he continued to
threaten me with instant death if I did not be quiet.- The Villains round me had their pieces Cocked & Bayonets
fixed' and particular People were now called on to go into the Boat' and were hurried over the side' and with those
people I concluded of course I was to be set a drift' I therefore in making another effort to bring about a change
expressed myself loudly in such a a manner' as to be saluted with "blow his Brains out"
Nickham in their cabins: He then Hatchway guarded by sentinels through which the Boatswain and Coopers were driven on deck where they saw one standing half the way and with my hands tied behind my back under a Guard with Christian at their head. The Boatswain was now ordered to hold the small tucket out with a threat if he did not do it instantly to take care of himself. But on a representation that this boat was very leaky he was directed to board the Launch and which was done. Mr. Raymond and Mr. Nicholl and Mr. Quinn and Mr. Clark were now ordered into the Boat, whereupon I appeared in my authority and demanded the cause of such an order, endeavoring to bring some one to a sense of his duty, but it was of no effect "Hold your tongue sir or you are dead this instant" was contemptuously repeated to me.

The Master by this time had sent to be allowed to come on deck and was permitted, and as soon was ordered back to his cabin again, where he returned.

I continued to endeavor to change the face of affairs when Christian changed the clothes he had contrived for a Boyquit that was brought him, and throwing one with a strong prise by the leg that tied my hands, he continued to threaten one with instant death if I did not be quiet. The Rebels around me had their faces locked X, Garnett gave and particular people were now called on to go into the Boat, and were likewise ordered out and told both those people. I concluded of course I was to be let a drift, I therefore in making another effort to bring about a change, I pushed myself forward in such a manner as to be saluted with "Who his business"?
Transcript:
The Boatswain and Seamen who were to go in the Boat set to work and collected canvas twine' lines' sails and cordage and an eight and twenty Gallon Cask of Water with four empty Beakers and the Carpenter got his Tool Chest. - Mr Samuels got abt 150 lbs of Bread with a small quantity of Rum and Wine and was allowed to take a Quadrant and Compass into the Boat' but forbade on pain of death of touching any Map whatever - Ephemerise Book of Astronomical observations Sextants or Time Keeper' or any of my drawings or Surveys. The Mutineers were now hurrying every one into the Boat' and the most of them being in' Christian directed a dram to be served to each of his Crew: - I was now exceedingly fatigued and [indecipherable] unhappily saw I could do nothing to effect the recovery of the Ship - every endeavor was threatened with death' and the following People were now in the Boat:

John Fryer - - Master
Thos. Ledward -- Surgeon
David Nelson -- Botanist
Wm Peckover -- Gunner
Wm Cole -- Boatswain
Wm Purcell -- Carpenter
Wm Elphinston -- Masts Mate
Thos Hayward - Mid.
Jno Hallet - Mid.
Jno Norton -- Qur Master
Peter Linkletter -- Qur Master
Lawrence Lebogue -- Sail Maker
Jno Smith -- Ab
Thos Hale -- Ab
Geo. Simpson -- Qur Master's Mate
Rob Tinkler -- Ab
Rob Lamb -- Ab
Mr Samuels -- Clerk
New Bratton and seamen who were to go in the land set to work and collected canvas, houses, being, sail and stage and one eight and twenty fallen stock of water and the carpenter got his tool chest. — Mr. Samuels got 13 lbs. of bread with a small quantity of flour then and was allowed to take a quadrant and compass into the boat, but forced in pain of death of touching any map or line. Captain's book of correspondence contains letters from Mr. Thomas or Tom Kepple, or any of my drawings or letters. The mutinies were now laying every one onto the boat but the rest of them being in, Mutiny directed them to be sworn to each of his crew. — none was accordingly satisfied, and one of the unhappy said I could do nothing to affect the recovery of the ship. Every endeavours and threats with death, and the prisoners were now on the road.
Transcript:
There remained on board as Pirates and under Arms -
Fletcher Christian (Mate & acting Lt)
George Stewart acting Mr Mate
Peter Haywood 2nd Mid
Edward Young 2nd Mid
Charles Churchill Ship's Corporl
Jno Mills Gunner's Mate
Jas Morrison Boatn Mate
Thos Burkitt Ab
Math. Quintal Ab
Jno Sumner Ab
Jno Millward Ab
Wm McKoy Ab
Heny Hillbrandt Ab & Cooper
Wm Muspratt Ab & Taylor
Alex Smith Ab
Jno Williams Ab
Thos. Ellison Ab
Isaac Martin Ab
Richd Skinner Ab & Mastr Sevr Ship's Barber
Mathew Thompson Ab
Wm Brown Botanist assistant
Michl Byrn Ab Fidler Boat Keeper & worthy of mercy
22 besides these were kept contrary to their inclinations
Josh Coleman Armourer
Chas Norman Carp. Mate
Thos McIntosh do. Crew
In all 25 Hands
This is briefly the statement of the Case. - The officers were called & forced into the Boat while I was under a
Guard abaft the Mizen Mast' Christian holding me by the bandage that secured my hands with one hand' & a
Bayonet in his other. The Men under arms around me had their pieces

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There remained on board at Bounty and under arms—

Nathan Christian (late 1st Mate) 

George Stewart—acting 1st Mate 

Albrey—2nd Mate 

Charles Young—3rd Mate 

Charles Churchill—1st Corporal 

Mr. Salt—Benners Mate 

Mr. Morrison—Bror. Mate 

Mr. Bagwell—Ab 

Mr. Quinlan—Ab 

Mr. Collier—Ab 

Mr. Hilliard—Ab 

Mr. Woods—Ab 

Mr. Smith—Ab 

Mr. Williams—Ab 

Mr. Ellison—Ab 

Mr. Martin—Ab 

Mr. Reiner—Ab 

Mr. Lyman—Ab 

Mr. Pearson—Planois' assistant 

Mr. Lynch—Ab 

Mr. Pate—Ab 

Mr. Johnson—Ab 

Capt. Clarke 

In all 25 hands.

This is briefly the statement of the case. The crew were called for and the boats were got into the boat while I was under a guard, with the ship, the Niger. Mr. Clarke, Christian holding me by the hands, that secured me, while they carried me to the boat. He then ordered the men around me, and had their pieces...
cocked' which so enraged me against those ungratefull Wretches that I dared them to fire and they uncocked them.

Isaac Martin one of the Guard I saw I had brought to a sense of his duty' and as he fed me with Shaddock' (my lips being so parched in endeavoring to bring about a change in my situation)' we explained to each other by our Eyes reciprocally our wishes. This was however observed' & Martin was instantly removed from me whose inclination then was to leave the Ship' but for a threat of instant death if he did not return out of the Boat.

The Armourer Joseph Coleman & two Carpenters McIntosh & Norman were kept contrary to their inclination' and they begged of me (in a flood of tears) to remember' before every one that they had no hand in this transaction.

Michl Byrne the Fidler who is half blind I am told had no knowledge of what was done and wanted to leave the Ship. These unfortunate Men therefore are deserving of Mercy.

It is of no moment for me to recount my endeavors to rally & bring to a sense of their duty the offenders - all I could do was by speaking to every one in general' for none one was suffered to come near me. I did my duty as far as it was possible to save the Ship' and they knew me too well to put much in my power and therefore bound me very securely' whilst every one else except the Master' Doctor' Botanist' Gunner
touched, which so enraged me against those ungrateful Witches that I had them to give and they conferred them. —

Joseph Martin one of the Seamen I saw I had brought to a sense of his duty, and as he had one with Shaddock, my wife being so far off in endeavoring to bring about a change in any other, we explained to each other by our eyes, especially our fingers. This was however useless, & Martin was instantly removed, on a strange inclination 

they had to leave the ship, but for a dreadful & high death of one did not return, or of the boat. 

The Reeve, the Seaman and two Carpenters Mr. Thomas & Norrmann were kept contrary to their inclination, and they kept 

themselves in a kind of glee to remember, ere every one that they had no hand in the transaction. 

I suppose this Fellow who is half blind, I am told he had no knowledge of what was done and wanted to leave 

the ship, where unfortunate then there was many of these. 

It is of no concern for one to account for my endeavors to rally them to a sense of their duty. 

the offended, all stood to lose by speaking to every one in general, for not one was suffered to announce me I did any duty as far as it was possible to save the ship, and they knew me too well to find me in my power and therefore bound me very severely, shall 

seen me one else except the Master, Doctor, Botanist, Garrison
and Mr. Samuels my clerk who were confined to their Cabbins' were at liberty. - To the latter who got leave to quit his Cabbin I am indebted for securing my Journals' my commission and some material ship papers' also my uniforms and some cloaths without the former I had nothing to certify what I had done' and my honor and character would have been in the power of calumny' without a proper document to have defended it - All This was done with great resolution being guarded & strictly watched - He attempted to save the Time Keeper and my Maps & Drawings (b) for 15 years past which were numerous when he was hurried away with "damn your Eyes you are well off to get what you have". - (a)

The Masters Cabbin was opposite to mine. He saw them in my Cabbin for our eyes met each other through his Door Window' and he had a pair of Ships Pistols loaded and Ammunition in his Cabbin. a firm resolution might have made a good use of them - These Pistols I had ordered for the use of the Officer of the Watch since the (c) 24th Jany and they were at first kept in the Binnacle' but upon consideration That there they might be stolen from...
thence' they were ever after kept in the Masters Cabbin. - After he had sent twice or thrice to Christian to be allowed to come on deck' he was at last permitted' and his question to Christian then was' will you let me remain in the Ship? - "No" - have you any objections Captn Bligh? - I whispered to him knock him down Martin is good' for this was just before Martin  
(a) I was frequently saluted with' "blow his brains out" There was not one however who had resolution to do it.  
(b) Among which were my original surveys of West Coast of America and the Sandwich & Friendly Islands done with Capt. Cook [then?] for 15 Years past  
(c) Publish orders issued this day. See order Book

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and it appeared my deck was confined to their work hands to quit their veteran duties, since I was liberty to the latter, I am indebted for securing my liberty, my commissions, their materials, ships papers, all my clothes and some clothes which without this former I had been to certify what I had done, and my honor Lt. Clarke would have been in the power of rebellion, without a proper document to have defended it. - ill, this was done with qualms of knowing being guarded. I distinctly watched her attempted to leave, the time. After I had the backs & ... thought he was having to ... down your legs you are well off to get what you have.

The Master, Lt. was of course to ensure the security in my cabin for our eyes and each other through the door windows, and he had a pair of ships pistols and ammunition in his cabin, to form rebellion might have made a good use of them. These pistols I had given for the use of the officer of the watch since the 24th, and they were kept in the blunder, but upon consideration that even if they might be stolen from thence, they were not after kept in the Master's cabin. After the ship had been twice or thrice to Christmas to holac...

"Sir, have you any objection?"
"Sir, what? I refuse to them, make them down. Master is good, for this was just before Christmas..."
Page 59 - Log of the Proceedings of His Majestys Ship Bounty in a Voyage to the South Seas, (to take the Breadfruit plant from the Society Islands to the West Indies,) under the Command of Lieutenant William Bligh, 1 Dec. 1787 - 22 Oct. 1788

Call # Safe 1 / 47
Digital ID: a286067

William Bligh's Mementos

About this item:
Signatures / Inscriptions: "Captn Wm Bligh / Royal Navy" -- engraved on inner brass cylinder
"Troughton / London" -- engraved on inner brass cylinder
General Note: Undated. Date approximated to between when Bligh first joined the navy and when he returned to London following the Bounty mutiny
William Bligh’s telescope

Call #: SAFE / LR 6
Digital ID: a1139002
View collection item detail
About this item:
Undated. Date approximated from when Bligh reached adulthood

a928120h.jpg [21]
After 1770

Call # SAFE / R 241d

Digital ID: a928120

View collection item detail

About this item:
Signatures / Inscriptions: "Mrs Maurice Oakes / Ring & seal of Governor Bligh. Property of his great-great-grandson Maurice Oakes. Lakeside Rd. Eastwood" -- written on a calling card inside the original box

General Note: Undated. Date range based on Bligh's birthdate and death date
Wax impression of the seal at R 241d
For identification of stones see DR 188n
William Bligh’s signet ring & seal


William Bligh’s signet ring & seal

The Mutineers turning Lieut. Bligh and part of the officers and crew adrift from his Majesty's Ship the Bounty / painted and engraved by Robert Dodd
Mutiny on the bounty
Published on State Library of NSW (https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

From Terra Australis to Australia

Matthew Flinders' journeys

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