

Mutiny on the Bounty: Two Cornishmen

Heather Dale June 2006

William Bligh, captain of the HMAV (His Majesty's Armed Vessel) *Bounty*

- Born Sept. 9, 1754 in Tinten Manor, St. Tudy, Cornwall.
- Son of Francis Bligh (Plymouth custom's officer) and Jane (nee Balsam).
- Small man with quick temper, overly emotional, verbally abusive, unable to make lasting friendships or command respect of his sailors. Often humiliated his officers in front of the men, wouldn't delegate, and had high opinion of himself. But did have higher priority on hygiene & exercise for his sailors.
- Universally acknowledged as a brilliant navigator and mapmaker.
- A lifelong seaman, he was selected by Captain James Cook in 1776 as Sailing Master on the *Resolution*, as part of Cook's third & fatal voyage to the Pacific. Rumoured to have started the firefight with Hawaiian natives where Cook was killed. Returned to England in 1780.
- Married Elizabeth Betham (daughter of customs collector) 4 Feb 1781. Her Manx family had connections to Fletcher Christian's family, which got the latter his post on the *Bounty* before he led the mutiny. Served as master on the *Belle Poule*, followed by 18 months as lieutenant on various ships. 1783 to 1787 he was a captain in the merchant service.
- In 1787 was given command of the HMAV *Bounty*. After mutiny in 1789, he successfully navigated 3618 nautical miles (6701 km) in an open 23-foot launch, to bring his 18 loyal crew members to the Dutch East Indies colony of Batavia after 41 days at sea (Timor/Indonesia). Only one crew member was killed by natives while getting supplies on the island of Tofua, though more died of disease upon reaching Batavia. Hailed by Navy as returning hero, though largely ignored by British media (more interested in the French Revolution). Court martial absolved him of guilt in losing the *Bounty*.
- Continues distinguished naval career until his death on 7 December 1817. Briefly loses another ship (the *Director*) in 1797 as part of fleet-wide Nore mutiny. Made Governor of New South Wales, Australia from 1806 to 1808 – when he was victim of another mutiny (the Rum Rebellion), and confined to "ship arrest" until 1810. Was made Rear Admiral of the Blue in 1810, and died a Vice Admiral of the Blue. He had 6 daughters and is buried in his family plot at Lambeth Church, London (which is now the Museum of Garden History).

Matthew Quintal (Quintrell), able seaman on the HMAV *Bounty*

- My second cousin, 6 times removed! (Luckily, I'm not descended from him.)

- Born 1766 in Padstow, Cornwall. Died age 33 in 1799, on Pitcairn Island, South Pacific.
- Married 15-year-old Tahitian 'Sarah' (also known as "Big Sullee") on Tahiti in 1789. Stayed with her until her accidental death in 1799 on Pitcairn Island. Had five children by Sarah and 'Susannah' (Tahitian wife of Edward Young).
- Youngest and "lustiest" of the mutineers to settle on Pitcairn Island. Heavily tattooed, powerfully built; known for very violent temper (bit his wife's ear off in a fight). Had been the first person ordered flogged by Bligh on the *Bounty* (24 lashes for insolence & mutinous behaviour).
- One of the first men approached by Fletcher Christian; was one of the eight key mutineers.
- Rumoured to have (accidentally?) burned down the *Bounty* as it lay at anchor in Bounty Bay, Pitcairn Island.

The Bounty:

- 1787 – *Bounty* starts long voyage to Tahiti, to collect breadfruit plants as food source for West Indies slaves. During 5 month island stay, they grew 1000+ seedlings, and the crew got soft and lazy. Many men took up with Tahitian women, including master's mate Fletcher Christian (married chief's daughter Maimiti, he called her "Isabella"), and Matthew Quintal (called his wife "Sarah"). Bligh remained faithful to his English wife.
- With the breadfruit seedlings safely stowed in special racks, the *Bounty* heads back to sea in April 1789. Crew problems begin immediately, as unpopular Bligh cracks down on discipline and cuts rations (despite plentiful stores). Had already had 3 attempted desertions on Tahiti, and nearly half of crew had venereal disease. Within 3 weeks, Fletcher Christian had led a successful mutiny.
- Fletcher Christian is Cumberland lawyer's son; strong, cheerful, charming, well liked, but with black moods. He instated even more strict crew discipline after the mutiny, but it was accepted by crew as fair and reasonable, unlike Bligh's punishments.
- Early morning, 28 April 1789 (with an erupting volcano within sight of the ship), Christian approaches sailors Matthew Quintal (age 21) and Isaac Martin (age 30). They get support of key crew, including the armourer who gives them weapons while Bligh (age 34) sleeps. The mutineers simultaneously arrest the officers, and drag Bligh to the deck in his night-shirt, hands tied. Bligh goes berserk, wildly shouting curses and threatening the crew. Ship's Master John Fryer begged mutineers for the 23-foot open

launch boat, rather than the rotten-bottomed cutter; Bligh (fully dressed) and 18 loyal crew are put to sea in the launch. They're given 150 lbs. of bread, 28 gallons of water, a little rum, a quadrant and compass. No maps, no sextant or timekeeper; though the carpenter was allowed to take his toolbox which had 4 cutlasses in it.

- On June 6, 1789, they went back to Tahiti briefly (fearful of the British finding them there), to resupply and get 4 native wives: "Jenny" Adams, "Mary" McIntosh, "Sarah" Quintal, and "Isabella" Christian. 17 Tahitian men & boys also came, and 7 more women were lured on board and not allowed to leave when the *Bounty* weighed anchor.
- Christian takes them to the island of Tubai (Tubuai), whose islanders canoed out, swarmed the ship and stole anything not nailed down, before being driven off. The next day, 5 islanders paddled out with a canoe full of 18 beautiful young women; but while the mutineers were distracted, 50 war canoes were launched; Christian ordered a point-blank grapeshot volley into the invaders, and the natives fled the ensuing carnage. The mutineers started building a fort but gave up and returned to Tahiti for a third & final time. Two Tubaian men choose to come with them.
- Only 25 crew remaining of the original 44, and several aren't too happy about the mutiny. Most of the Tahitian men leave the *Bounty* (I assume the women weren't allowed to leave). 16 of the mutineers decide to remain on Tahiti despite the threat of justice; the HMS *Mercury* had already been there looking for them. Before setting sail, the remaining 9 mutineers lured some more women aboard, but soon discovered that they were old and fat... they were unceremoniously dumped on the next island.
- For the next 6 months, they looked for a place to settle. Christian had read about remote Pitcairn Island in Hawesworth's "Voyages"; it seemed perfect – remote, uninhabited, lush, good climate, lots of fish and fresh water. But it took them 2 months to find it, as it was incorrectly charted (but at least the British wouldn't find it). Finally, they settled down.
- In 1791, the Frigate *Pandora* was sent to Tahiti and captured 14 of the 16 fugitives (two had already died). On the way back home, they were wrecked off the Great Barrier Reef, where 4 mutineers drowned. Captain Edward Edwards was a very cruel captain; the mutineers were kept in terrible conditions and would have all died except that an unknown crewman unlocked their cage during the wreck. The surviving mutineers were taken back to England for trials in September...but only two were hanged; the rest were acquitted or pardoned.

Pitcairn Island:

- The settlers arrived at Pitcairn on 18 Jan, 1790. The settlers included: 9 white men (all mutineers), 2 Tubaian male natives, 4 Tahitian male natives, and 12 Tahitian women. There was only 8% arable land on Pitcairn, so Christian divided it equally between the white men, and treated the native men as servants and labourers. Christian also arranged "marriages" for all the Tahitian women, to keep his men happy... each white man got a wife, the two Tubaians shared one woman, one Tahitian had a wife, and the remaining 3 Tahitians shared one woman as well. This led to bitter resentment from the native men, but they all lived fairly peacefully for a while... though Matthew Quintal and his wife Sarah were known to have loud fights.
- One night the Bounty caught fire and was destroyed; some say by Christian's order, others that Quintal acted on his own (or dropped an oil lamp). Their only boat was now the small cutter.
- Two women eventually died, one of lung disease, and another accidentally fell off a cliff while gathering birds eggs. Christian simply "reassigned" two of the native men's women, which led to a murderous plot.
- The Tahitian and Tubaian men got guns and axes and set to on October 3, 1793. Fletcher Christian was digging in his garden when he was shot in the head, and his face smashed in with an axe. A Tubaian was killed by the Tahitian men, and another Tahitian was lured into a house and poisoned by his former wife. More white men were murdered, and two whites (John Adams & Edward Young) were captured; Matthew Quintal and William McCoy managed to hide for several days and even killed a Tahitian who was hunting them. The remaining native men were killed over the next few days by Adams, Young and the women (who were very strong and capable; Jenny killed a man with an axe). When it was all over, only 4 of the original 15 men were left (McCoy, Quintal, Young, Adams), along with the women and several children.
- Relations degraded between the men and women of Pitcairn. Matthew bit off his wife Sarah's ear during a violent argument. At one point, all the women barricaded themselves in one hut with the children, playing with the bones and skulls of 5 of the dead men. They refused to come out unless the men helped them build a boat; the men grudgingly agreed, but it sank (suspiciously) and so the women agreed to at least bury the bones.
- A cold war waged between 1794 and 1795, with general uneasiness and even occasional attacks. The women often camped on the other side of the island; the men traded fish with them.

- On 20 April 1797, Bill McCoy and Matthew Quintal succeeded in distilling spirits. Bad idea. Bouts of general drunkenness followed, in which McCoy jumped blithely to his death from a high cliff, and Sarah Quintal also fell collecting food in 1799. Matthew Quintal (age 33) was rarely sober, and 'Susannah' Young was pregnant with his child. He demanded that Christian's widow Isabella become his "replacement" wife, or he would kill all Fletcher's children. The remaining two white men had had enough – they killed him with an axe.
- By now there were 20 children, 9 women, Edward Young and John Adams left on Pitcairn. In 1800 Young died of tuberculosis, leaving John as the patriarch of this odd clan. They lived on in relative peace; John Adams (who had been taught to read by Young) found God and taught the islanders using the *Bounty's* only surviving bible. He lived to age 65, dying on Pitcairn in 1829; by then, the mutineers' children were running the colony, which now had visitors from the outside world (Queen Victoria took a keen interest in Pitcairn throughout her reign, and sent them gifts, including an organ for their church). Isabella Christian died in 1841; she could still remember Captain Cook's visits to Tahiti in the 1770s... before the *Bounty* saga began.

References:

- David Marshall. Breadfruit, Buccaneers and The Bounty Bible. Available at Toronto Reference Library; 996.18
- David Cordingly. Under the Black Flag. Available at Toronto Reference Library; 910.45
- David Cordingly. Women Sailors & Sailors' Women. Available at Toronto Reference Library; 910.45
- Wikipedia.com – entries for William Bligh, Fletcher Christian, Matthew Quintal, John Adams.
- <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/15411> - has the entire text of "A Voyage to the South Sea", written by William Bligh himself in 1792.
- <http://www.lareau.org/bounty.html> - The official Pitcairn Island website, with bio info about the settlers.

H.M.S. BOUNTY MUTINEER, MATTHEW QUINTAL

Nancy Dale, Nov 1995

I am researching the Blight/Quintrell Family of the Ruan Lanihorne and Veryan areas. My 3xgt grandfather, Richard Blight, married Mary Quintrell in Veryan on Oct 18th, 1823. Her second cousin, Matthew Quintal, was one of the Bounty Mutineers. Mary's grandfather, James Quintrell, and Matthew's grandfather, Colan Quintrell, were brothers, sons of John and Thomasine (Thomas) Quintrell of Veryan.

Pedigree Chart for Matthew Quintal:

2xgt-grandparents: Matthew Quintrell (b c1649) and Hannah Brent (b c1651); Gt-grandparents: John Quintrell (b 1677) and Thomasine Thomas (b 1684);

Grandparents: Colan Quintrell (b 1708) and Jane Lee;

Parents: Arthur Quintrell (b 1732) and Sarah Leverton (b c1733)

Matthew Quintal (b 1766, Padstow)

m.1 Tevarua, "Sarah", "Big Sullee" (b 1774, Tahiti)

m.2 Teraura, "Susannah", (b c1775, Raatiran, Tahiti)

Had 5 children and over 2000 descendants.

Officers and Crew of H.M.S. Bounty:

Lieutenant William Blight, *Captain*

John Fryer, *Master*

Fletcher Christian, *Master's Mate*

Charles Churchill, *Master-at-Arms*

William Elphinstone, *Master-at-Arms's Mate*

Thomas Huggan, *Surgeon*

Thomas Ledward, *Acting Surgeon*

David Nelson, *Botanist*

William Peckover, *Gunner*

John Mills, *Gunner's Mate*

William Cole, *Boatswain*

James Morrison, *Boatswain's Mate*

William Purcell, *Carpenter*

Charles Norman, *Carpenter's Mate*

Thomas McIntosh, *Carpenter's Crew*

Joseph Coleman, *Armourer*

Peter Heywood

Thomas Hayward

John Hallet

Robert. Tinkler *Midshipmen*

Edward Young

George Stewart

John Norton) *Quartermasters*

Peter Lenkletter

George Simpson, *Quartermaster's Mate*

Lawrence Lebogue, *Sailmaker*

Mr Samuel, *Clerk*

Robert Lamb, *Butcher*

William Brown, *Gardener*

John Smith *Cooks*

Thomas Hall

Thomas Burkitt

Matthew Quintal

John Sumner

John Millward
William McCoy
Henry Hillbrandt
Alexander Smith *Able Seamen*
John Williams
Thomas Ellison
Isaac Martin
Richard Skinner
Matthew Thompson
William Muspratt
Michael Byrne

Mutineers:Fletcher Christian, *Acting Lieutenant*John Mills, *Gunner's Mate*Charles Churchill, *Master-at-Arms*William Brown, *Gardener*

Thomas Burkitt

Matthew Quintal

John Sumner

John Millward

William McCoy

Henry Hillbrandt *Able Seamen*

Alexander Smith

John Williams

Thomas Ellison

Isaac Martin

Richard Skinner

Matthew Thompson

The Pitcairn Community:

Fletcher Christian and Maimiti

Edward Young and Taurua

Alexander Smith and Balhadi

John Mills and Prudence

William McCoy and Mary

Matthew Quintal and Sarah

John Williams and Fasto

Isaac Martin and Susannah

William Brown and Jenny

Minarii and Moetua

Tetahiti and Nanai

Tararu and Hutia

Te Moa, Nihau and Hu

On Dec 23rd, 1767, H.M.S. *Bounty* sailed from Portsmouth for Tahiti to bring breadfruit plants back to West Indies to feed the slave population. Captain Wm Bligh was a harsh, tyrannical leader and while homeward bound, some of the crew mutinied on April 28th, 1789 near Tofoa in the Friendly Islands. They put Captain Bligh and 18 others into the ship's launch while 7 others loyal to Bligh had to stay on board the *Bounty*. The latter were put off at Tahiti, eventually picked up by an English ship, returned to England in irons and court-martialled.

After an incredible, 47-day voyage of 3600 miles in an open boat, Captain Bligh brought his half-dead crew to anchor at Coupang, the Dutch colony of Timor, Indonesia, on June 15th, 1789. Later they returned to England via Batavia.

Meanwhile, the mutineers took the *Bounty* back to Tahiti from where, in September 1789, nine of them with native wives and friends sailed to find refuge on tiny, isolated Pitcairn Island. They founded a community there which went undiscovered for 18 years. Our **Matthew Quintal**, a belligerent crewman who had already been disciplined on board the *Bounty*, proved a troublesome resident. It was he who set fire to the *Bounty*, which sank in shallow water. He helped William McCoy distill a potent alcoholic drink and its influence turned the paradise into a struggle of bitter vengeance. Matthew was so brutal in his drunken rages that finally he had to be killed. In February 1808, the American sealing vessel *Topaz* discovered them, by now a 'thriving community of mixed

blood, ruled by Alexander Smith (alias John Adams), the only surviving mutineer. After his death, all the settlers were removed to Norfolk Island by its missionaries in 1831 where the descendants of **Matthew Quintrell** now form the largest family.