Mutiny on the bounty

a131007h.jpg [1]
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**

![Image of William Bligh's Log Book]

**Transcript:**

Page Title: Rems Tuesday at Sea 28 April 1789

Light Winds and cloudy Nr Wind NE-E & WE

I kept near ogodo until 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 threatned 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 1789

Light winds and cloudy. Mr. Wood No. 2 & 3. We kept some time apace until 5 o'clock this afternoon in hopes to have had some connexion off but were now weaved and therefore directed my course to the northward of Tierra. Mr. Teger the master had the first watch, Mr. McArthur the Gunner the middle, and Mr. Christian one of the mates who had given an order to the morning watch - this was the time I had 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 cabin I was fast asleep, and seizing me by the hands with a cord & threatened instant death if I made the least noise, however, showing myself called sufficiently loud to alarm the officers, who found themselves usually secured by six pistols at their doors. There were now three men in my cabin door & four inside. Mr. Christian had a cutlass & the others were armed with musquets & knives. I was now carried on deck in my bed to torture with a severe bandage round my wrists behind my back, where I found no means to escape from. I and the crew who put a stand for such a violent act, but I was threatened if I said a word. Mr. Hayward & Bellows were in Mr. Christian's watch, but had no idea that any thing was doing until they were allarmed - the arms were all secured, so that no one could get near them for musquets. Mr. Elphinston the mate was secured in his hammock - Mr. Nelson I
Transcript:

& 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 Mizen 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’ endeavouiring 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"
Reckless in their actions. The three Hatching guards, by
leaning through which the Boatswain and Carpenter
were previously on deck where they saw me standing and
the Major and with my hands tied behind my back under
a Guard with Christian at their head. The Boatswain
was now ordered to hail 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 baby
he was directed to hail the Launch and which was done
by Captain and Walshe. Watkins and I. J. Donaldson.
Clark were now ordered into the boat, when which I
returned my authority demanded the cause of such
an order, endeavoring to bring some one to a sense of his
duty, but it was no effect. "Hold your tongue sir or you
will be dead in a instant."

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, there he returned.

I continued to endeavor to change the state of affairs,
when Christian changed the cutter he had just gained
for a Boyoict that was brought her, and taking one
with a strong prise by the head that tied my hands, he
continued to threaten one with instant death if I did not
be quiet. The fellows around ode that they had never
seen such a young lad,

and particular People were now called
on to go into the Boat, and were married out in 1520, and
with those people I concluded of course I was to be
let a drift, I therefore in making another effort to
bring about a change requested myself to be in such a
manner, as to be unable with "And his brothers out"
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 Leboigue -- Sail Maker
Jno Smith -- Ab
Thos Hale -- Ab
Geo. Simpson -- Qur Master's Mate
Rob Tinkler -- Ab
Rob Lamb -- Ab
Mr Samuels -- Clerk
The Bonam and seamen who were to go in the boat set to work and collected canvas bags, long, wide and flat, and an eight and twenty gallon cask of water, and the carpenter got his tools and such.— Mr. Samuel got 15 loaves of bread with a small quantity of meat with and was allowed to take a Readout and compass into the boat, but forbid on pain of death of touching any map or book. Ephraim's book of astronomical observatory, constant or Time Keeper, or any of my drawings or copies. The seamen were now heaving every one onto the boat, and the rest of them being on, the order directed them to be arms to each of this crew. — Some were exceedingly fatigued, and one or two unhappily saw some do nothing to offset the sufferings of the ship's men, endeavor instead and threaten with death, and the remaining people were made in the boat.

[Names and titles listed]

[Signature]
Transcript:
There remained on board as Pirates and under Arms -
Fletcher Christian (Mate & acting (Lieutenant
George Stewart acting Masr 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 Sevrt 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

a286065h.jpg [11]
There remained on board at Bounty and under command of Captain Christian, Morey, Acting Master, George Stewart—Acting Master, Mate, John Haywood—2d Mate, James Young—2d Mate, Charles Churchill—Rt. Corp., Mr. Settle—Gunner, Mr. Morrison—1st Mate, Mr. Parke—Capt., Richard Lawrence—Q.M., John Law—2d Mate, John Wight—2d Mate, Thomas Williams—2d Mate, Mr. Ellis—1st Mate, Joseph Martin—1st Mate, Richard Kenner—2d Mate, Robert Thompson—2d Mate, Mr. Pearson—Pilot—Assistant, Mr. Booth—1st Mate, Mr. Johnson—2d Mate, Mr. Aikin—3d Mate, Mr. Crow—2d Mate.

In all 25 Hands.

This is briefly the statement of the case. The men were called and forced onto the boat while I was under a guard, with the hope of securing me by the said guard. The boat was manned with one hand at the oars, and the other hand under arms, and the men were holding their pieces.
Transcript:
cocked' which so enraged me against those ungrateful Wretches that I dared them to fire and they uncocked them.
Isaac Martin, one of the Guard I saw 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
which, as enraged mankind those unexpected
Whatch a, that I heard them to you and they en-

I shall Martin one of the guards I
now I had brought to a sense of his duty, and at
he put me with Shaddock, my ship being so confined,
in endeavoring to bring about a change in my stua-
than, as explained to each other by our respective
ally our spirits; this was however shown, to Martin
was instantly removed from my shore inclination
was to leave the ship, but for a great part another,
death of her did not return until the ship

The summaring left the lieutenant
and two carpenters McCrack & Borovin were
kept contrary to their inclination, and they kept
of one in a flood of tears, to remember, before every
one that they had no hand in the transaction. And
hopes, this pilot who is half blind and not to had
no knowledge of what was done and wanted to leave
the ship, there unfortunatethen therefor we are saving
of energy.

It is of no moment for one to recount
my endeavors to rally those to a sense of their duty.
The offenders all stand the loss by speaking to every
in general, for now I was entitled to announce 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 severely, till
very one else except the Master, Doctor, Botanist, Gunni.
Transcript:

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
and Wallace's men were ordered to their own tasks, such as liberty. To the latter I am
indicted for securing my money, pay commissions, and materials. These papers, also my boat
and some articles without these former I had willing to certify what I had done, and my honor
would show these to the power of Calomney, or that
a proper document to have defended it. All
this was done with good intentions being guarded.

The Master's Cabin was of loud, to secure
the few articles in my cabin for our eyes, and each
other through the door and window, and he had a pair
of ships' cutlasses and ammunition in this cabin
a firm subscription might have made a good use of them.
These articles I had made for the use of the
Officer of the Watch since the 24th, and they were
kept in the cabin, but upon consideration
that these they might be stolen from thence, they
were over after night in the Master's cabin. After
the said boat was on the rocks, Capt. Ths. had one man
with him, and the men in the boat were not
coming in, and he was at last persuaded, and his
question to Ths. was, will you let me
remain on the Ship? Ths. - Have you any objections?
Capt. Ths. - I suppose to them which mean them down.
Master is good, but this was just before portion.
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

a1139002h.jpg [17]
William Bligh's telescope Between 1770 & 1790
Call # SAFE / LR 6 [18]
Digital ID: a1139002
View collection item detail [19]

About this item:
Undated. Date approximated from when Bligh reached adulthood

a928120h.jpg [20]
Wax impression of William Bligh's private seal After 1770
Call # SAFE / R 241d [21]
Digital ID: a928120
View collection item detail [22]
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

a1138006h.jpg [23]
William Bligh’s signet ring & seal  Between 1754 & 1817
Call # SAFE / DR 188 [24]
Digital ID: a1138006
View collection item detail [25]

a1138003h.jpg [26]
William Bligh’s signet ring & seal Between 1754 & 1817

Call # SAFE / DR 188 [24]
Digital ID: a1138003

View collection item detail [27]
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

View collection item detail [29]a928502
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