

# Pitcairn News

Volume 5 No 7

July 2011



The grassy area at Ship Landing Point, with steep declines down to St Pauls to the right and to Buffett's Red Dirt and eastern Adamstown on the left.

## Kari orn Pitcairn tull:

A typical winter month has gone by, with cool weather and sunshine, lots of gardening activities.

A team of rat-eradicators and ornithologists has gone to Henderson Island to catch the unique flightless birds and keep them caged and safe from the rat poison that will soon be spread by man and by helicopter. When the island is completely rat free, the birds will set free again, hopefully before the end of this year. 12 or so years ago there were two efforts to eradicate the rats here on Pitcairn, but a couple of them survived. As we know, that is all it takes, for before long the rat population had exploded, even more so because they had few natural enemies, with most of the cats killed by the poison as well. Let's hope it will be the flightless birds who survive this attempt, and not the rats!

We also mention the passing of one of Pitcairns Supreme Court judges, Russell Johnson following a short illness.



## OUR NEW HOLIDAY: PITCAIRN DAY 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY

On 2nd July 1767 Pitcairn was re-discovered by crewmember Pitcairn on the "Swallow" (as Tim told in June issue, the first discoverer of the Pitcairn Islands was a Portuguese in 1606 – a matter of over 400 years ago ). There was a ceremony at the cemetery, which had undergone a facelift with new plaques to identify graves which had had no headstone, but which the older generation had helped to identify and name. The Store and the government offices, usually open on Sundays, were closed, and there was a public dinner at the Square to further establish our new holiday. To the left a picture of the cemetery with the new plaques, and to the right another picture from the cemetery before the plaques, but with more seasonal flowers, the hedge of mock coffee trees and Flatland in the background.



*Kari will take over the historic article this month, as our historian Tim is having a break.*

## DROUGHTS AND WATER CATCHMENTS ON PITCAIRN



Browns Water

The drought was declared officially over four months ago. The showers started again at the end of March, after five months of next to no rain. Some households were down to their last 5000 litres, which might sound like a lot (5000 litres of lemonade or Coca Cola is more than you need for a lifetime), but not when you need it for washing, cleaning, cooking and drinking – it goes in a flash. The ground was parched, plants and trees likewise. Our natural spring at Brown's Water just above Adamstown dried out, too. The last serious drought we had was in 1971, over 40 years ago, and people still remember how they scrounged for water – at Mema's Pool just under the Tedside ridge, at the spring by Big Tree to Malai in Tedside, at Bang Iron out Pulau, at Down har Well below the Edge. But even then it never became so critical they had to go Down Har Cask, down on the rocks on the southern coast, which they did in earlier days during droughts, according to records.

During the 1980s we had some long hot summers, and since our family of four relied on one single concrete well, we had to be careful with water usage. Most afternoons we took our soap and towels up to the smooth rocky area below Brown's

Water, and had our evening ablutions – the kids loved it.

Since droughts hit the island frequently from the very beginning of the settlement, the islanders had tanks to collect rain water, but it is not mentioned what those tanks were made of. These days we all have Nura tanks made of heavy plastic – 1000, 5000, 10,000 and 20,000 litres – or concrete cisterns. Amazingly, the Pitcairners had big reservoirs of water in the Tedside hills, and they sold or traded water with visiting whaling ships. There must have been some kind of catchments from the overflow at Mema's Pool under the ridge. Captain Beechey describes in 1825 how the islanders carried wooden caskets full of water from Tedside to the Landing, and from there swam out with them through the breakers to the ship, for it was too rough for the boats.

No sissies, those Pitcairners of old! *"...and had there not been so much surf upon the rocks, that the casks could only be got through it by the natives swimming out with them, we should in a short time have completed our stock of water. This process, however, was very harassing to them, who, besides this arduous task, had to bring the water from a distance in calabashes...."* The islanders washed twice a day, and infants were bathed three times daily in cold water, even during times of water shortage, so they were indeed a "clean" people, devoted to cleanliness.

After the return from Tahiti in 1831 the islanders made sure that future droughts would not have the dramatic ill effects as before. They erected more tanks for catching rain water, which would be enlarged as the population increased. Doctor Bennett on the "Tuscan" wrote during the 1834 visit : *"...rain water is largely received in ponds and tanks, and it is not until rain has been absent for seven or eight months (editor: and we thought our five months drought was a major catastrophe!!!) that the residents experience any material inconvenience from this cause. The greatest supply of water is still obtained from a natural excavation which was discovered by William Brown, the assistant botanist of the Bounty, and thence named Brown's Pond. It is supposed to possess a spring."* We call the spring Brown's Water today, and several hoses go from that spring under Flatland down to Adamstown, where we still make use of the botanist's water.

But after the several calamities which prompted the islanders to leave the island for Norfolk in 1856 (although some families later returned), there is no more mention of the reservoirs. However, James Russell McCoy – Pitcairn's elected leader for altogether 20 years between 1870 and 1906 - was instrumental in setting up a piping system to supply water from Brown's Water to Adamstown, mentioned in several reports around the turn of the 19th Century. A visitor in 1921 reported : *"...with water from the small aquaduct constructed of split bamboos on trestles, which conveys water to the village from a neighbouring spring."* While McCoy's generation used split bamboo, we use rubber hoses, but otherwise the principle is the same, so not much have changed.

In spite of the rain showers we have had the last months, there has been no lengthy and heavy downpours, fully saturating the ground, but we hope that will happen before summer, when we potentially could face another drought.



Concrete Well & Nura Tank



### THE "BOUNTY" SAILS AGAIN

Swedish Margot who visited the island early 2010 sent us these pictures. The "Bounty" replica was in her hometown Stockholm, and she enjoyed her visit onboard. Another correspondent told us that the "Bounty" is expected in Kristiansand on the south coast of Norway in late August, so she is travelling far from the Pacific waters where the original "Bounty" once navigated –and finally ended – at the bottom of Bounty Bay here on Pitcairn.



### MUDDY WATERS



I know you have probably seen enough pictures of the Landing, but this is to show the muddy waters in the harbor after heavy rain. Sometimes you can see the mudcoloured water surround the whole island after lengthy downpours. Enormous amounts of soil are washed away during rainy weather.

### MISS T ON THE MOVE



Poor Miss T was observed eagerly climbing the steep road from Tedside going up to the ridge and down to Adamstown, and probably had forgotten all about the gate islanders have put right above the banyan trees for the purpose of stopping her getting across Big Ridge and stompng around in our gardens and helping herself. Back down she had to go – bad luck, Miss T!!!

### BREIID (BREADFRUIT)

We are in the middle of the breadfruit season, or "breiid", which we eat as chips, cooked in stew or as pillhai. Absolutely delicious, and it freezes well, too, so we can eat it all year long. As some of our readers might remember, breadfruit plants from Tahiti was the only cargo onboard the "Bounty" at the time of the mutiny, on the way to the Caribbean islands to feed the slaves there. Most of the breadfruit trees are around Adamstown, and each "fruit" is as big as a football.



### TWO COLD GELS

Royal and Irma caught at a picnic up Har Beans, well covered from the cold winds. This to demonstrate that even on subtropical Pitcairn it gets C O L D in wintertime.

## WILD GOATS AND CHICKENS

The wild goats have turned into a real problem threatening our natural resources. Previously you would only come across them in the remote valleys and occasionally down Tedside, but now they are everywhere. They are not shy and skittish either, not scattering in panic when they see you. Pauline came across a herd of 30 at the junction of Aute Valley and McCoy's Valley, several big billies among them, and they acted very nonchalant, as if this was their territory. They are more numerous than ever before, encroaching on the limits of Adamstown, and appear almost domesticated. The damage on gardens, orchards and forests could be extensive. A young orchard Up Har Hollow was demolished by goats during the last six months. The young banana trees down Tedside have also been nibbled at.

Wild chicken is another problem, and though chicken are much smaller than goats, the damage they can do, equal that of the goatherds. Our house has six hens in the pen, and at least 20 wild ones lurking in the surrounding bush. We can't leave our bunches of ripening bananas hanging on the porch anymore, the chicken help themselves by flying up and nibble it to pieces. Sometimes, when they fancy a change in the menu, they wander inside to the catfeeding dish and feast there. The only defence we have, except for continually shooing them out, is to close all doors leading outside, so it is like being under siege, while the chicken cackling angrily outside. In the gardens they scratch out seeds and seedlings, whether vegetables or flowers, convinced they are sowed and planted for their benefit. Most people declare the plague of goats and chicken has never been worse than at present.

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### Just in time for Christmas, **Pitcairn Honey** a gift with a difference



The tropical roseapple trees are in full bloom. Our bees are using the mild winter weather to the fullest. Pitcairn is one of only two countries without any bee disease. The roseapple flowers produce a very sweet nectar, on any given day it is a sight to see the bees working this flower. A hint of this flavour is found in the honey.

Our honey contains no chemicals, just pure bee honey in 250g jars.

Our government has set outrageously high postal rates for Pitcairn, but come October it will be even higher. Our mail ship for Christmas is leaving here in late September. Take advantage of our postal rates NOW and order honey for Christmas, minimum orders are **two** jars.

The price for **each** honey jar including packaging / postage (depending on the destination) starting at around \$US15.00 and going up to \$US17.00. If you order five or more jars, you will get one jar free. Contact Dennis or Brian at [honey@pitcairn.pn](mailto:honey@pitcairn.pn) for orders or more information.



## PRESS RELEASE

PITCAIRN ISLANDS  
ADMINISTRATION



PITCAIRN ISLANDS  
ADAMSTOWN  
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE  
— 20 JULY 2011

# Rare Birds of Henderson

Henderson Island is part of the Pitcairn Group and was designated a World Heritage site in 1993. Renown for having the largest pristine raised coral atoll in the world and an ecology that has remained intact from human activity, Henderson Island is in trouble.

With four endemic bird species, eight snails and nine plants found nowhere else in the world, Henderson is also home to marine turtles and twelve different seabird species, including four types of petrel.

This stamp issue focuses on the rare endemic birds, namely the Henderson crake *Porzana atra*; the Henderson fruit dove *Ptilinopus insularis*; the Henderson reed warbler *Acrocephalus taiti*; the Henderson lorikeet *Vini stephani* and gives special attention to the Henderson petrel *Pterodroma atreta*.

It is the plight of the petrel that has captured the attention of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and they have initiated the Henderson Island Restoration Project which involves the planned eradication of introduced rats that are driving the Henderson petrel towards extinction. Over 95% of petrel chicks on Henderson are killed by rats within one week of hatching - over 25,000 chicks every year. These rats are also competing with the other land birds and therefore may be limiting their populations.

In August-September 2011, the RSPB operational vessel will be at Henderson, carrying two helicopters that will use GPS technology to methodically drop poison bait across the entire island. This highly targeted, short-term intervention will bring really long-term benefits: the Henderson petrel saved from its slide towards extinction, a large island restored and at least ten further unique species safeguarded for future generations to enjoy. The overall cost of the eradication project is in the region of GBP £1.5 – 1.7m.



The RSPB is seeking help with funding and the Pitcairn Islands Philatelic Bureau has agreed to donate \$NZ 1.00 for every Henderson Bird set of stamps or First Day Cover purchased. To find out more about this worthwhile project please visit the dedicated website: [www.rspb.org.uk/hendersonisland](http://www.rspb.org.uk/hendersonisland)  
The RSPB and the Philatelic Bureau thank you in anticipation for your help in saving the bird life of Henderson.

### Rare Birds of Henderson Collectors Notes

Designer: Donna McKenna, Wellington, New Zealand  
Printer: Southern Colour Print, Dunedin, New Zealand  
Process: Offset Litho plus foil embossing.  
Sheet format: Two panes of 20 stamps. 40 stamps per sheet with gutter.  
Stamp size: 30mm x 42.3 mm horizontal  
Perforation Gauge: 14.0 x 14.167  
Denominations: Stamps \$0.20, \$0.40, \$1.50, \$2.10 and \$4.40.  
Paper: 114gsm Tullis Russell non phosphor paper  
Period of Sale: 20 July 2011 for a period of 2 years.  
Acknowledgement:: The Philatelic Bureau wishes to thank Michael Brooke and the RSPB for their help in the production of this stamp issue.

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FROM ONE OF OUR READERS

(We included this as most of us are interested in world news. Love Mr Mandelas quote.)



We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

Nelson Mandela

Hi Julie, Thanks once again for including me in your email list for Dem Tull. I love reading about events on your unique island. I thought you may enjoy this picture of South Africa's most famous son who has just celebrated his 93rd birthday (18 July). I feel honoured and proud to be a citizen of the country that gave birth to one of the most compassionate and gentle men of all time. Happy birthday Nelson Mandela! Best regards from Cape Town, Julian

Letters to the Editor:

Hi, Thank you very much for Dem Tull June received. **Greetings to all of you.** Kind Regards, Margot

Again my thanks for the thumbnail glimpse of Pitcairn. since the chances of me ever visiting are slim and none your descriptions and pictures are a treasure if any one was interested in my city..... ah well. Bernice, Culver City, California USA

PEEK-A-BOO (Kari and Izzie)



MORE PHOTOS OF BROWNS WATER from the album of Terry Young



Back issues of Dem Tull can be found on: [www.demtullpitcairn](http://www.demtullpitcairn).

OBITUARY

Lynette Robyn Hunt (nee Brown) passed away on 3 July 2011 at the age of 52 following a short illness.

She was the youngest of three daughters to the late Merle and Walter (Wally) Brown and niece of Len, Royal and Mavis all of Pitcairn.

Our condolence to the family.

## THE BACK PAGE – Julie Tull

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- On 31 July 2011, Pitcairn time the latest hearing of the court case that made Google news a couple of months ago, took place by video link, one leg in the Pitcairn Admin office in Auckland and the other in the court house on Pitcairn. This was still on pre trial arguments. The case has now progressed to the Supreme Court for the next trial to be held on 23 August 2011. There was a good turnout of Islanders in the courthouse on Pitcairn who left with mixed feelings. On a high at defence arguments and a low at the apparent deafness of the magistrate (who just happens to be a lawyer in the New Zealand jurisdiction) to defence arguments.

As far as the current case is concerned, not withstanding what the charges are and who the defendant is, does any Pitcairner stand a chance to a fair trial? We now have a new Constitution. We now have rights to the European Court of Human Rights. Do we not? Let us see what happens from hereon in.

- Following the tragic passing of Terry Young, (Dem Tull, May 2011), there has been much discussion, amongst islanders, on the state of medications at the Health Centre. It has been established that most of the medication was past its use by date and that the antibiotics administered to Terry was also expired. Our oxygen supply was also in dire straits.

A number of oxygen bottles with labels still attached (where one would expect them to be full) were actually empty. We were told that we had approximately 48 hours of oxygen left at the time of Terrys tragedy. Well another tragedy was only recently averted a few weeks ago, with only two minutes of oxygen left. One of our able bodied and much needed residents was on the brink of death from an asthma attack and the two minutes of remaining oxygen revived her. If more oxygen was needed could we have had another premature death?

To me this series of events is scandalous. The family of Terry Young asked for an investigation of the medications scandal and have been informed that following a series of meetings for debriefing purposes, a system has been put in place to prevent this from happening again and an inquiry is no longer necessary. Oh come on. A system was already in place. On 1 April 2009 our new system of Division Managers and Council came into being. “Open and Transparent” and “Accountability” became the fashionable sayings during that period of considerable change. Division Managers are supposed to provide a monthly report to council on all of their departments. And surely a doctor earning megabucks from Pitcairn standards should have known about the state of the medications in the clinic. Surely the Division Manger responsible for the clinic should have known about the state of the medications in the clinic. Surely Council should have known about the state of the medications in the clinic from the Division Manager's monthly report – or at least they all *should* have known. Is the system working? Apparantly not otherwise the state of the medications in the clinic would have been picked up long before, and they would not have had to have the recent series of further meetings to make sure something like this doesn't happen again.

Now then, what happens about an inquiry on Terry? In other jurisdictions something like this would have automatically gone to a coroners court where negligent homicide should be one of the considerations. But on Pitcairn are we just expected to carry on and go about our daily life as if nothing so serious had happened? It is no wonder some are left bitter when if no one is held accountable now, what next for the future? Sure makes Pitcairn Unique.