

## The *Pandora* Story

Although reasonably successful in her challenging mission—capturing 14 of the 25 *Bounty* mutineers in Tahiti—HMS *Pandora* came to grief on the Great Barrier Reef.

She was hulled on what's now known as Pandora Reef, and sank in 30 metres of water, 120 km east of Cape York.

Many died—crew and prisoners alike. But there were many more amazing feats of survival and seamanship.

In this section, we explore the events surrounding the *Pandora*'s final voyage ...



Oswald Brett's impression of the *Pandora*'s last moments afloat.

## Captain Bligh's remarkable story of survival

The *Bounty* mutineers set Captain William Bligh adrift with 18 men in an eight-metre, two-masted launch. He had been allowed to take some navigational equipment and papers, and enough food to last for five days. The 19 castaways tried to supplement their rations with food from Tofua. All but one escaped with their lives following an attack by hostile Tofuans. Fearing to make another landfall, Bligh decided to head straight for Timor—about 3600 (nautical) miles (about 6480 km) away.

"We had no relief with the day save its light. The sea was constantly breaking over us and kept two persons bailing, and we had no choice how to steer for we were obliged to keep before the waves to avoid filling the boat."

*(Bligh's journal entry for 14 May 1789)*



Dodd *Bounty*

The cold and wet conditions in the launch were agonising. The exhausted men bailed constantly. What little food they had quickly became wet and almost inedible.

"The misery we suffered this night exceeded the preceding. The sea flew over us with great force and kept us bailing with horror and anxiety. At dawn of day I found everyone in a most distressed condition and I began to fear that another such night would put an end to the lives of several, who seemed no longer able to support their sufferings. I served an allowance of two teaspoonfuls of rum; after drinking which, having wrung our clothes and taken our breakfast of bread and water, we became a little refreshed."

*(Bligh's journal entry for 22 May 1789)*

They endured these conditions for four weeks before sighting New Holland (Australia). Their journey had taken them past the Friendly Islands (Tonga), Fiji and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) Finally, they had reached the Australian mainland, landing on an island east of Cape Weymouth, which Bligh named Restoration Island. Here they found water and scavenged for food. Collecting clamshells they made a nourishing broth.

After two days, threat of attack by apparently hostile Aborigines prompted the castaways to resume their journey. Turning from the Torres Strait into the Arafura Sea, all the dangers of the open seas faced them again. Again they had to bail constantly; and again Bligh cut the rations, fearing there would be insufficient to last the journey to

Timor. Despite their weakness-and a daily intake of food that probably amounted to only 345 calories and resulted in a weight loss of approximately 20 kg per man-they eventually made it to Timor.

Their ordeal had lasted 48 days. Bligh's reputation as a superb seaman largely stems from this episode. (Bligh's notebook containing his observations of the open boat voyage is in the National Library of Australia. It has been transcribed and a facsimile published: John Bach (Ed)-The Bligh Notebook, 1986, National Library of Australia.)

Bligh and his "loyal" crew eventually managed to get home to England in a Dutch East Indies Company vessel called *Vlijt*. His report of the mutiny was hand-delivered to the Admiralty in March 1790.

And the *Pandora* is dispatched-the sequel to the *Bounty* mutiny begins ...

There are two more remarkable open boat voyages associated with this time and place in history - see the schooner *Matavai* and the Bryants below.

## The *Bounty* mutineers

Captain Bligh's description of the *Bounty* mutineers had been communicated to Captain Edwards. It included the following descriptions:

- **Fletcher Christian**—master's mate, aged 24, 5ft 9in; blackish or very brown complexion, dark brown hair, strong made ... tatowed on his breast and on his backside; his knees stand out ... He is subject to violent perspirations ...
- **Edward Young**—midshipman, aged 22 years, 5ft 8in high, dark complexion and rather a bad look, dark brown hair, strong made, has lost several of his fore teeth ...
- **George Stewart**—aged 23, 5ft 7in; good complexion, slender made, narrow chest and long neck; star on left breast, one on left arm; a heart with darts on left arm; small face and black eyes
- **Peter Heywood**—aged 17, 5ft 7in: fair complexion; well proportioned; very much tatowed; on right leg the 3 legs of Man.; not done growing at this time; speaks with a strong Manx accent.
- **James Morrison**—aged 28, 5ft 8in.; sallow complexion, long black hair; slender made; lost the use of the upper joint of right hand fore finger; star tatowed under left breast; tatowed garter round left leg with motto "honi soit qui mal y pense"—wounded in one arm with musquet ball.
- **John Millward**—aged 22, 5ft 5in; brown complexion, dark hair; strong made; heavily tatowed "taoomy" or breastplate of Tahiti over the pit of his stomach.
- **John Sumner**—aged 24, 5ft 8in; fair complexion, slender made, a scar on left cheek and heavily tatowed.
- **Thomas Burkitt**—aged 26, 5ft 9in; fair complexion, face pitted from small pox, slender made, heavily tatowed.
- **William Muspratt**—aged 30, 5ft 6in; dark complexion, slender made, a strong black beard, scars under his chin, tatowed.
- **Henry Hillbrant**—aged 25, 5ft, fair complexion, strong made, shorter left arm having been broke, is a Hanoverian, speaks bad English.
- **Richard Skinner**—aged 22, 5ft 8in; fair complexion, well made, scars on both ankles and right shin, heavily tatowed, by trade a hair dresser.
- **Michael Byrn**—aged 28, 5ft 6in; fair complexion, slender made, marks of an "issue" on his neck, almost blind.
- **Thomas Ellison**—aged 17, 5ft 3in; fair complexion, dark hair, strong made; his name and date Oct 25 1788 tatowed on right arm.
- **Joseph Coleman**—aged 40, 5ft 6in; fair complexion, grey hair, strong made, a heart tatowed on his arm and 5777
- **Thomas McIntosh**—aged 28, 5ft 6in; fair complexion, slender made, pitted with small pox.
- **Charles Norman**—aged 26, 5ft 9in; fair complexion, slender made, pitted with small pox and has a remarkable motion with head and eyes.
- **Charles Churchill**—ship's corporal, aged 30 years, 5ft 10in, fair complexion ... top of head bald, strong made ... the fore finger of his left hand crooked ...
- **William Brown**—assistant botanist, aged 27 years, 5ft 8in high, slender made ... a remarkable scar on his cheeks which contracts the eye lid and runs down to his throat, occasioned by the King's evil ...

## HMS *Pandora*-sequel to the *Bounty* mutiny

Predictably, the Admiralty took more than a dim view of the events described in Bligh's report. The Royal Navy frigate HMS *Pandora* was dispatched to the South Pacific in 1790 to capture the 25 men who had "pirated" the *Bounty* and cast adrift her captain, William Bligh. The mission to reclaim the *Bounty* and to capture the mutineers and bring them home to stand trial was entrusted to Captain Edward Edwards.

On her South Pacific voyage, the *Pandora* was carrying a special armament of 20 six-pounder carriage guns and 4 eighteen-pounder carronades. She was heavily laden with provisions for the additional officers, midshipmen and seamen and with stores and fittings. All would be needed to crew, refit and supply the *Bounty* should she be recaptured and brought back to England.

There were 135 men onboard when she left Portsmouth. The *Pandora* departed on 7 November 1790, sailed around Cape Horn, via Tenerife and Rio de Janeiro, and arrived at Matavai Bay (Tahiti) on 23 March 1791.

## HMS *Pandora* - Vessel specifications

HMS *Pandora* was a 24-gun "Porcupine Class" frigate. The vessel was designed by Sir John Williams. She was built in Deptford (London) by Messrs Adams, Barnard & Dudman in 1778-79.

Overall length: 114 feet 3 inches (35 metres)

Length along the keel: 94 feet 3 inches (29 metres)

Breadth: 32 feet 2 inches (9.8 metres)

Draught: 15 feet (4.5 metres)

Tonnage: 513 tons

The *Pandora* was armed with:

- 20 six-pounder cannon
- 4 eighteen-pounder carronades
- 12 half-pounder swivel guns

HMS *Pandora*: Anatomy of the Ship by John McKay and Ron Coleman (Conway Maritime Press) contains scale drawings of just about every detail of the *Pandora*. The book is available from the MTQ Shop.

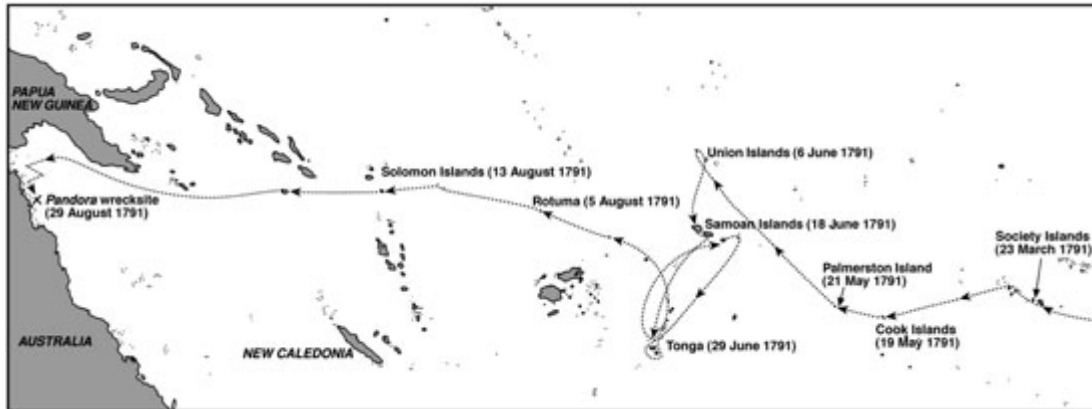
## Capturing the mutineers

The *Pandora* first encountered mutineers at Matavai Bay on 23 March 1791. Peter Heywood, George Stewart, Joseph Coleman, Richard Skinner and Michael Byrne came onboard voluntarily, within hours of the ship's arrival in Tahiti. The rest, however, were not so easily apprehended.

Several initially managed to elude capture. The day before the *Pandora* arrived, some had actually sailed off in a schooner they had built. Captain Edwards was told that they had little water with them and would probably soon return to the island.

That information proved accurate, and by 9 April 1791, nine more "pirates"-as Captain Edwards referred to them-had been tracked down, taken prisoner and brought onboard. Their locally-built schooner was confiscated and refitted with canvas sails for use as the *Pandora's* tender and renamed *Matavai*.

Captain Edwards was informed that two others-Matthew Thomson and Charles Churchill-had been killed in a feud well before the *Pandora's* arrival. The rest of the mutineers-nine in all, including Fletcher Christian-had left Tahiti in September 1789 in the *Bounty*, and had not been seen or heard of since.



Journey of the Pandora

With 14 of the mutineers captured and secured in "*Pandora's Box*", Captain Edwards spent nearly four months searching the South Pacific for the *Bounty* and the other mutineers. The search-taking in the Society Islands, the Cook, Union and Samoan islands, and Tonga-was largely uneventful, at least in terms of finding traces of the *Bounty* and the other mutineers.

Several of the *Bounty's* spare spars were found at Palmerstone Island, leading Captain Edwards to believe some mutineers may have been on the island. Shore parties commanded by Lts Corner and Hayward were mobilised. Five of the *Pandora's* crew were subsequently lost when the jollyboat launched under midshipman John Sival (to maintain contact between the *Pandora* and the shore parties) went missing in a storm on 24 May 1791. The boat and crew were never seen again. Roughly one month later, off Tofua, another crew was given up as lost, when the schooner *Matavai* failed to show at an agreed rendezvous.

Fletcher Christian and the remaining mutineers were never located. They had found refuge on uncharted, uninhabited Pitcairn Island, which lay well to the east of the South Pacific area then being searched by the *Pandora*. No trace of them would be detected until 1808, when the American sealer *Topaz* happened on Pitcairn and found the mutineers' descendants. By then only one mutineer (John Adams) was still alive.

## Inside "Pandora's Box"

A prison cell was built on the *Pandora's* quarterdeck to hold the 14 prisoners and keep them separate from the *Pandora* crew. Conditions inside the cell were cramped, spartan and unhealthy. The inmates dubbed their inhospitable home "Pandora's Box".

Initially, the prisoners were allowed visits by their Tahitian wives, children and friends. They had been allowed out to "the heads" to relieve their calls of nature. However, Captain Edwards put a stop to this when he started to suspect that the prisoners may be plotting their escape by giving notes to the crew, asking them to pass on messages to their Tahitian friends. After that, the prisoners had to make do with so-called "necessary tubs", and were forbidden visitors.

### First-hand accounts:

James Morrison (prisoner):

"This place, which we styled '*Pandora's Box*', was only 11 feet in length and 18 feet wide at the bulkhead, in which were two small scuttles of 9 inches, and one on top of 18 or 20 inches square, secured by a bolt. When it was calm, the heat was so intense that the sweat frequently ran in streams to the scuppers, and soon produced maggots, and the hammocks given to us were full of vermin, from which we could find no method of extricating ourselves."

Peter Heywood (prisoner):

"We were all put in close confinement, with both legs and hands in irons, and were treated with great rigour, not being allowed ever to get out of this den. And, being obliged to eat, drink, sleep and obey the calls of nature here, you may form some idea of the disagreeable situation I was in."

Surgeon Hamilton:

"The prisoners' Tahitian wives visited the ship daily and brought their children to their unhappy fathers. To see the poor captives in irons, weeping over their tender offspring, was too moving a scene for any feeling heart."



Prisoner



## Wrecked on the Reef

An unfortunate combination of factors conspired to cause the *Pandora* to run aground, and ultimately sink. Bad or reckless seamanship does not appear to have been a factor. Nor does unusually bad weather.

## The Great Barrier Reef lives up to its name

Having set a westerly course through the South-West Pacific, the *Pandora* encountered the first islands (Mer Island) and reefs of the Great Barrier Reef on 25 August 1791. Edwards named them the "Murray Islands", but did not send boats ashore to investigate. To bypass them, a southerly course was followed.



Water colour of the *Pandora* by Bronwyn Searle

But the Great Barrier Reef was doing justice to its name-no suitable passage was found. After three days of staying safe in open Coral Sea waters by night, and venturing back towards the reefs by day, a large opening was eventually sighted.

A yawl was launched and Lt Corner was given orders to reconnoitre the entrance. Late in the afternoon, Corner signalled from the yawl that a navigable passage had been found. But as night was approaching and probably because he was afraid that the yawl could be separated, Captain Edwards ordered Corner back to the ship to get the yawl onboard before nightfall.

Captain Edwards:

"At three quarters past four he made the signal that there was a channel through the reef fit for a ship, and after, signal was made and repeated for the boat to return to board, and after dark, false fires and muskets were fired from the ship, and answered with muskets by the boat repeatedly to point out the situation of each other. We sounded frequently, but had no ground at 110 fathoms."

## *Pandora Reef* earns its name

In ordering the yawl back to the ship to be picked up before nightfall, Captain Edwards was undoubtedly taking precaution against losing another of the ship's boats. With the tender, a jollyboat and 14 men already missing, the mission could ill afford the loss of another boat and more men.

This probably accounts for the *Pandora* actually coming into the entrance late in the afternoon. With the sun low on the western horizon, visibility would have been greatly reduced by reflection and glare, and any reefs lying ahead would have been difficult for the lookouts to see.

Hove to, awaiting the arrival of the yawl alongside, the *Pandora* was particularly vulnerable to the strong tidal current that was driving her further into the entrance-where it was low tide at approximately 4.30 pm. With a flooding tide, there would have been a strong current setting the vessel to the west after about 6 pm. The *Pandora* struck the reef around 7.20 pm.

It is likely that the crew may have been distracted by the signalling between the ship and Corner's yawl. More significantly, with sunset around 6 pm-and the sun low on the western horizon after about 5 pm-it would have been very difficult to discern waves breaking on the small submerged coral outcrop in this part of Pandora Entrance.

This outcrop-now unofficially referred to as "*Pandora Reef*"-is surrounded on all sides by depths in excess of 30 metres (16 fathoms). Closer to high tide-around 11 pm that day-there would have been four to five metres (12 to 16 feet) of water over the outcrop. It is possible that the *Pandora* may have cleared the reef-or at least not impacted on it as heavily-had she run onto it later in the evening.

## night when nothing goes right

Aided by the rising tide, the crew managed to refloat the vessel after several hours aground. She came to anchor at about midnight in 16 fathoms on the other side of *Pandora Reef*.

The hull was damaged and leaking badly. The carpenter had reported that within 90 minutes of striking there was 8 feet (approximately 2.5 metres) of water in the hold. Three prisoners were let out of "the box" to assist at the pumps.

By all accounts, the crew performed splendidly-whether at the pumps, below decks attempting to make repairs and stop leaks, fothering (covering with sails) the hull or heaving guns overboard to lighten the ship. They continued to do so in spite of two fatal accidents during what Surgeon Hamilton called an "exceeding dark, stormy night". (The identity of the two men killed before the *Pandora* sank is not revealed in Captain Edwards' list of the 31 crew members "lost with the ship".)

Just how "dark and stormy" a night it was is uncertain (Hamilton was a medical man, not a seaman, after all!). Perhaps there was no bright moon. However, no other first-hand accounts mention "stormy" weather. Although any swell or wind would have complicated the crew's efforts to stay afloat, unusually bad weather does not appear to have been a major factor in the *Pandora* running aground and subsequently sinking.

Surgeon Hamilton:

"The guns were ordered thrown overboard; and what hands could be spared from the pumps, were employed thrumming a topsail to haul under her bottom to endeavour to fother her ... We baled between life and death ... She now took a heel, and some of the guns they were endeavouring to throw over board run down to leeward, which crushed one man to death; about the same time, a spare topmast came down from the booms and killed another man ... During this trying occasion the men behaved with the utmost intrepidity and obedience, not a man flinching from his post."

During the night one of the pumps broke down, so the crew could not keep ahead of the water flowing in. At dawn, it was clear that nothing more could be done to save the stricken vessel; more water was coming in than the pump crews were able to deal with. Orders were given to abandon ship and to release the remaining prisoners.

## There she goes!

Joseph Hodges, the Armourer's mate, was sent into Pandora's Box with tools to knock off the prisoners' shackles and irons. It appears that by then it was "too little, too late" as, according to Morrison's account, the ship began to sink suddenly before all of the prisoners had been released from their fetters and let out of the box. The fear and panic the prisoners undoubtedly experienced are not hard to imagine.

James Morrison (prisoner):

"At daylight the boats were hauled out and, most of the officers being aft on top of the box, we begged that we not be forgot when by Captain Edwards' orders Joseph Hodges, the armourer's mate, was sent down to take the irons off; but Skinner, being too eager to get out, got hauled up with his handcuffs on, and there being two following him close, the scuttle was shut and barred again. I begged the Master-at-Arms to leave the scuttle open when he answered 'Never fear my boys; we'll all go to hell together!' The words were scarce out of his mouth when the ship took a sally and a general cry of 'there she goes' was heard. Burkitt and Hillbrandt were still handcuffed and the ship under water as far as the mainmast and it was now flowing in fast on us when Divine providence directed William Moulter to the place. He was scrambling up on the box and, hearing our cries, took out the bolt and threw the scuttle overboard. On this, we all got out except Hillbrandt."

William Moulter's humane deed, which undoubtedly saved several other mutineers from a certain death, was recognised in 1984 when one of the sand cays in Pandora Entrance was named after him. The cay referred to by Captain Edwards as "Entrance Cay" is now called "Moulter Cay". The survivors made for "Escape Cay", about three miles away. Four prisoners and 31 *Pandoras* had died.

## Survival

The survivors' accounts and drawings of their three days on a small sand cay, and 18 days at sea in open boats, give us an idea of the hardships sailors endured after they lost their ship in Great Barrier Reef waters.

Captain Edwards:

"Upon mustering we discovered that 89 of the ship's company and 10 of the pirates that were onboard were saved, and that 31 of the ship's company and 4 pirates were lost with the ship."

## Three days on a sand cay

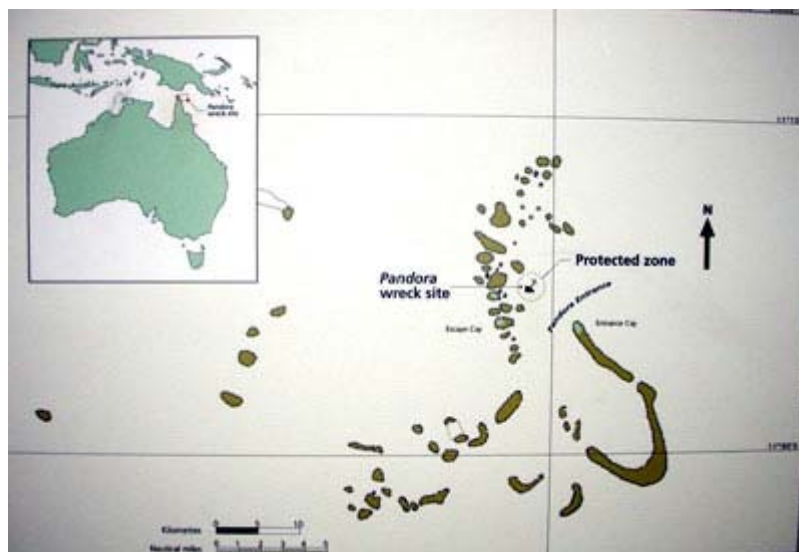
Eighty-nine crew and 10 prisoners survived the sinking. Four prisoners and 31 of the *Pandora's* crew had perished. The 99 survivors made for a tiny sand cay about 4 km away in four open boats. They called this tiny island "Escape Cay"—it is one of four existing cays in the area now called Pandora Entrance, and most probably the one currently referred to as "Preservation Cay".



Jumping overboard



George Reynolds' sketch of a shipmate clinging to some wreckage before being rescued by one of the boats.



Pandora Display Map

The cay was a barren strip of sand without water or shade. According to prisoner James Morrison, it was "... scarcely 150 yards in circuit and not more than six feet from the (sea) level at high water."

There was no hope of rescue. Crammed onto the cay, they took stock of their situation. Captain Edwards was faced with the daunting task of getting his crew and the prisoners back to England alive. He had only four of the ship's boats and very little water and provisions had been saved. The prisoners were sent to one end of the cay, under guard, and ordered not to speak to anyone.

**James Morrison (prisoner):**

"... the sun took such an effect on us who had been cooped up for these five months that we had our skin flayed off, from head to foot, altho' we kept ourselves covered in sand during the heat of the day ..."

During the first night on the cay, one of the *Pandora's* crew, James Connell, nearly went mad. Suffering from extreme thirst, he had drunk seawater. The survivors had only been allowed two small glasses of fresh water per day.

Shelters were made using sails from the ship's boats. The prisoners were denied the use of an old sail to erect a shelter. Their only protection against the fierce sun was to bury themselves in the sand during the day. The exposure began to take effect.

**Surgeon Hamilton:**

"... the heat of the sun, and the reflection from the sand, was now excruciating; and our stomachs being filled with salt water ... rendered our thirst most intolerable ..." The day after the wreck, George Passmore, the *Pandora's* Master, was sent back to the wreck in one of the boats to see if any useful flotsam could be salvaged. He returned with several pieces of the mast, some lighting chain and the ship's cat, which he found sitting in the "crosstrees" (the mast top platform) protruding above the waves.



Escape Cay in 1997 (Photo: Gary Cranitch).



## 18 days at sea in open boats

The 99 survivors spent two nights on Escape Cay, before setting out for Timor-Kupang in the four remaining boats, the closest European settlement in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). They arrived in Timor after an arduous 18 day, 2200 km voyage through the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and across the Arafura Sea.

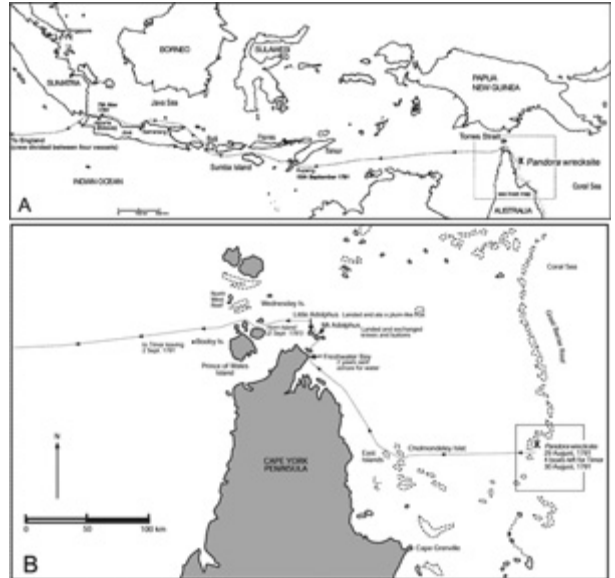
The boats followed a westerly course through what is now called Denham Pass. They made landfalls on Cape York and a few islands in the Torres Strait. The two yawls were sent ashore at Freshwater Bay where they found a good stream. On Mt Adolphus Island they were attacked by islanders while negotiating for water.

### Surgeon Hamilton:

"On entering a very fine bay, we found excellent water ... As we passed round the bay, two canoes, with three black men in each, put off and paddled very hard to get near us. They stood up, waved and made many signs for us to come to them. But as they were perfectly naked, had a very savage aspect, and having heard an indifferent account of the natives of this country, we judged it prudent to avoid them."

Captain Edwards named Little Adolphus Island "Plum Island" after they had landed there and tried to eat some "nonda" plums, which they did not find very nourishing or thirst-quenching. Early next morning they landed on Horn Island, where they heard the howling of dingoes-referred to as "wolves" by Surgeon Hamilton.

As they made their way through Prince of Wales Channel into the Arafura Sea later that day, for Thomas Hayward the sight of the Torres Strait islands receding on the horizon was probably accompanied by some pithy comments and muttered oaths. He would have wished never to set eyes on these islands again. After all, having been one of the "loyalists" who went with Captain Bligh in the *Bounty's* launch, this was the second time in as many years that he found himself in the same waters in a small open boat: in peril, uncomfortable, cramped, exposed, hot, hungry and thirsty!



Map of the survivors' course.

Map of the survivors' course.

## Survival in the Arafura Sea

Conditions in the ships' boats were almost unbearable, especially during the 14 days in the Arafura Sea. Excruciating thirst and the scorching sun were the worst hardships suffered.

### Surgeon Hamilton:

"On the night between the 5th and 6th, the sea running very cross and high, the tow line broke several times; the boats strained and made much water; and we were obliged to leave off towing for the rest of the voyage, or it would have dragged the boats asunder ... The men who were employed steering the boats were often subject to a coup de soleil, as everyone else were continually wetting their shirts overboard and putting it upon their head, which alleviated the scorching heat of the sun, to which we were entirely exposed, most of us having lost our hats while swimming at the time the ship was wrecked ... We now elected to weigh our slender allowance of bread, our mouths becoming so parched, few attempted to eat; we found that old people suffer this much more than those that were young. A particular instance we observed in one young boy, a midshipman, who sold his allowance of water two days for one allowance of bread. And as their suffering continued they became very cross and savage in their temper. In the Captain's boat, one of the prisoners took to praying, and they gathered around him with much attention and seeming devotion; but the Captain suspecting the purity of his doctrines, and unwilling he should make a monopoly of the business, gave prayers himself."

### James Morrison (prisoner):

"On the 9th as I was talking to McIntosh, Captain Edwards ordered me aft and without assigning any cause ordered me to be pinioned with a cord and lashed down in the boat's bottom, and Ellison who was then asleep was ordered to the same punishment-I attempted to reason and enquire what I had done to be thus cruelly treated ... but received for answer: 'Silence you murdering villain, are you not a prisoner? You piratical dog, what better treatment do you expect?'"

By 11 September 1791, the survivors' plight had become extremely serious. They had last sighted land when they left the Torres Strait on 2 September. Their water supply was perilously low so the ration of one wine glass full per day reduced some men to drinking their own urine. Others were better able to cope with their thirst than with their hunger.

## Back to civilisation

They still had four more nights to suffer before reaching a small village in southern Timor, where they finally found food and fresh water. Another three more days along the Timor coast finally saw them make the safety of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) settlement at Kupang.

They were treated kindly at Kupang by the Dutch authorities and after nearly five weeks recuperation they made their way to Batavia (Jakarta) in the VOC ship *Rembang*. There they were able to arrange for passages on VOC ships, which would eventually get them home to England.

Before they set sail for Batavia, a group of convicts-escapees from the penal colony in New South Wales-was entrusted to Captain Edwards' care. In addition to this, there was a fortuitous reunion at Samarang with the missing *Pandoras* from the *Matavai*. But Thomas Barker, one of the nine missing men on the *Matavai*, had already died in Surabaya hospital before the reunion.

Two of the escaped convicts and five wreck survivors subsequently died in Batavia Hospital. The remaining *Pandoras* were divided into four groups under lieutenants Larkan, Corner and Hayward, each travelling back home via Holland on one of three VOC ships-*Horssen*, *Zwaan* and *Hoorweg*. Captain Edwards, several warrant officers, the escaped convicts and the 10 *Bounty* prisoners embarked with the fourth group on the *Vredenburg*.

Several more were to die at sea on the journey home. Among them was William Oliver, the 19 year old master's mate who had been given command of the *Matavai*, and, in a feat of seamanship and survival rivalling Bligh's much-vaunted open boat voyage in the *Bounty*'s launch, had safely navigated the *Matavai* from the Friendly Islands to Samarang via Surabaya.

## The schooner *Matavai*

Built by some of the mutineers on Tahiti, the schooner *Resolution* was confiscated by Captain Edwards. Renamed *Matavai*, it acted as a tender in the *Pandora*'s search for the *Bounty*. William Oliver, a 19-year-old master's mate, was given command of a crew of eight.

After becoming separated from the *Pandora* during a storm off Samoa, Oliver successfully navigated the *Matavai* to Tofua and then to Surabaya. The journal kept by his second in command, 16 year-old midshipman David Renouard, is a fascinating account of the abilities, survival skills and endurance of distressed 18th century seamen surviving in the South Pacific.\*

### David Renouard, midshipman:

"With much perseverance, the mutineers had built a boat. She was handsomely shaped of about 18 tons. Captain Edwards resolved to commission her and gave orders that she should be repaired and supplied with canvas sail and such other necessaries as her service required. Having christened her the 'Matuavy Tender' after the bay so named, he put her in charge of a master's mate, midshipman, quartermaster and six seamen."

The *Matavai* arrived in Surabaya several weeks before the survivors of the *Pandora*'s shipwreck. Oliver's astonishing feat of navigation and seamanship rivals (and in some respects surpasses) Bligh's much-vaunted open boat voyage in the *Bounty* launch. Ironically, Oliver's crew were suspected as *Bounty* mutineers and imprisoned. One of the crew did not survive the voyage to civilisation-Thomas Barker ("much advanced in years", according to the teenaged Renouard) died in Surabaya hospital in October 1791.

### Renouard:

"Mr Oliver immediately waited on the governor to acquaint him with our misfortunes and to implore the protection and assistance due to British subjects in distress. But the fate of the 'Bounty' had been communicated to (him), in consequence of which the governor suspected the truth of our story. The appearance of our vessel, being built entirely of Otaheitan wood, served to strengthen him in the opinion that we were in reality part of the 'pirates' who had seized on the 'Bounty'."

But Oliver managed to persuade the governor to let them go on to Batavia. On the way there, several weeks later, they fortuitously met up in Samarang with their former shipmates, who had survived the wreck of the *Pandora* and were on the VOC ship *Rembang*.

William Oliver died on the journey home, having fallen ill in Batavia. David Renouard narrowly escaped the same fate. The *Matavai* was sold to a local merchant and years later wrecked in the South China Sea off the Ladrões Islands.

\* Renouard's account was published in 1964: H.E. Maude (Ed)-"The Voyage of *Pandora's* tender" [Mariners' Mirror vol 50 (3)]

## The Bryants

On 28 March 1791, a small cutter crept out of Port Jackson penal colony in New South Wales. Onboard were William and Mary Bryant, Mary's two children and seven other male convicts. They were about to escape the penal colony in a stolen boat. Their journey would take them along the east coast to Cape York, through the Barrier Reef and across the Arafura Sea to Timor. It was their intention to present themselves as shipwreck survivors. The escape had been carefully planned by William Bryant. A moonless night was chosen and there was no vessel in Port Jackson that could pursue them.

For 69 days they struggled to survive as they threaded their way along the coast, through the Great Barrier Reef and the Torres Strait, and across the Arafura Sea. When they finally reached Timor, they posed as shipwreck survivors, but their story was regarded as suspicious. When Captain Edwards arrived in Timor a few weeks later in the *Pandora's* boats, they were found out.

The escaped convicts were placed under Edwards' charge and were eventually transported back to England with the *Bounty* prisoners. William Bryant and one of Mary's children died in Batavia hospitals. After she arrived in England, Mary was not sent back to NSW. Her story became a *cause célèbre*, attracting the attention of important members of society-among them, the distinguished author James Boswell, who successfully pleaded her case that she had endured enough and should be pardoned.

James Martin (one of the Bryant party; from his memoirs):

"... that Night we were drove out to Sea by a heavy Gale of Wind and Current, expecting every Moment to go to the Bottom, next Morn'g saw no Land the Sea running Mountains high ... the sea coming in so heavy upon us every now and then that two hands was Obliged to keep Bailing out and it rained very hard ... the Woman and the two little Babies was in a bad state ... we made Land which proved to be a little Island about 30 leagues from the Main the Surf running so very high ... but we Concluded amongst Ourselves that we might as well Venture in there as to keep out to Sea ... we got in safe without much damage and haul'd our boat up ... then we went to get a Fire which with great difficulty we got ... we had but one Gallon of fresh Water for there was not a drop of Fresh water to be had on this Island ... but found a great Quantity of very fine Large Turtles ... we staid on this Island six days during that Time we killed twelve Turtles and some of it we Took and dry'd over the fire to take to sea with us."

## The human toll

### *Pandora* crew running tally

*Pandora's* crew numbers throughout the voyage.

|  |
|--|
| <b>135 were onboard at the time of departure from Portsmouth</b><br>- 1 died of natural causes in the Atlantic (James Johnson) |
|--|

|   |
|---|
| <b>134</b><br>+ 1 gained (Jonathon Brown mustered on in Tahiti) |
|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>135</b>  | - 5 lost in Sival's jollyboat on 24 May 1791 (never heard of again)   |
| <b>130</b>  | - 9 lost in Oliver's tender <i>Matavai</i> on 24 June 1791  |
| <b>121</b>  | - 1 died of natural causes in the Pacific (Henry Adams) on 14 August 1791   |
| <b>120</b>  | - 31 died in the wreck on 29 August 1791  |
| <b>89</b>   | + 8 gained after the reunion at Samarang with Oliver's <i>Matavai</i> crew; Thomas Barker had died already in Surabaja hospital |
| <b>97</b>   | - 1 lost when Jonathon Brown mustered off in Batavia  |
| <b>96</b>   | - 16 died during the journey from Timor to England, most of diseases caught in Batavia  |
| <b>80</b>   | - 2 lost at Cape Town (1 left behind in hospital, 1 deserted)   |
| <b>78 of the <i>Pandora's</i> crew made it home to England in June, July or August 1792</b> |   |

## The four *Bounty* prisoners who died when the *Pandora* sank

Source: Captain Edwards' Report (Thompson, 1915:89).

- George Stewart (midshipman)
- Richard Skinner (Able seaman/barber's mate)
- John Sumner (Able seaman)
- Henry Hillbrandt (Hildebrandt?) (Able seaman)

## The 31 *Pandoras* who died during the wrecking

Source: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) ADM 36/11136.

| Petty Officers                              | Able Seamen                    | Ordinary Seamen   | Landsmen      |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| ANDREWS, John<br>(Quartermaster)            | BRIXLEY, Thomas                | FEA, Robert       | BANDY, Joseph |
| ARBUTHNOTT, Alexander<br>(Sailmaker's mate) | CARROLL (or Carrol),<br>Thomas | GORDON, James     | JONES, Evan   |
| BOWLER, Robert (Purser's<br>steward)        | CRAY, William                  | MACKIE, Richard   |               |
| BROWN, Robert (Carpenter's<br>crew)         | CULLIMORE, James               | MAYSONER, Martin  |               |
| GRIMWOOD, John (Master-<br>at-Arms)         | DEDWORTH, William              | MILLER, James     |               |
| RODRICK, William (Corporal)                 | DURLING, Daniel                | THOMPSON, William |               |

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| EGLINGTON, George          | WEBBER, Robert |
| FLETCHER, William          |                |
| HAMMOND, Samuel            |                |
| HENRY, Patrick             |                |
| LYON (or Lyons), William   |                |
| PAXTON, Alexander          |                |
| PERRYMAN, William          |                |
| REEVES (or Reeve), William |                |
| SKELTON, William           |                |
| SWAN, William              |                |

## The 16 Pandoras who died after the wrecking

| Name                 | Rating        | Location                       |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| William Oliver       | Master's mate | On board VOC <i>Vredenburg</i> |
| Thomas Lindsey       | Qtr-master    | On board VOC <i>Hoornweg</i>   |
| John Ph. Fenwick     | Midshipman    | On board VOC <i>Hoornweg</i>   |
| Alexander Montgomery | Carpenter     | Batavia Hospital               |
| Dennis Mahoney       | Cook          | Batavia Hospital               |
| William Clements     | Armourer      | On board VOC <i>Rembang</i>    |
| James Brown          | AB            | On board VOC <i>Hoornweg</i>   |
| William Farrell      | AB            | On board VOC <i>Vredenburg</i> |
| John Murphy          | AB            | On board VOC <i>Rembang</i>    |
| Robert Milton        | AB            | Batavia Hospital               |
| James Murray         | AB            | On board VOC <i>Zwaan</i>      |
| John Patterson       | AB            | Batavia Hospital               |
| William Pilch        | AB            | Batavia Hospital               |
| Charles Pummel       | AB            | On board VOC <i>Zwaan</i>      |
| James Connell        | Ord           | Batavia Hospital               |
| John Davis           | Ord           | On board VOC <i>Rembang</i>    |

## Prosecuting the mutineers

At Cape Town, the 10 surviving mutineers were transferred from the *Vredenburg* to HMS *Gorgon*, a homeward-bound British warship. They arrived in England in June 1792. They were transported directly to Portsmouth to stand trial. Their trials were held that September onboard HMS *Duke*. The charge was mutiny. If found guilty, a mandatory death sentence would follow.

Charles Norman, William McIntosh, Michael Byrne and Joseph Coleman were found not guilty and immediately released, as William Bligh had vouched for their innocence. However, the six other prisoners (Peter Heywood, James Morrison, William Muspratt, Thomas Ellison, John Millward and Thomas Burkitt) were all found guilty as charged, and sentenced to death.

However, only Tom Ellison, John Millward and Tom Burkitt were actually executed. Upon appeal, William Muspratt was acquitted on a legal technicality. James Morrison and Peter Heywood received a Royal pardon. See subsequent careers below.

The following speech has been attributed to John Millward, before he was hanged with Ellison and Burkitt onboard HMS *Brunswick* in October 1792:

"You see before you 3 lusty young fellows about to suffer a shameful death for the dreadful crime of mutiny and desertion. Take warning by our example never to desert your officers and, should they behave ill to you, remember it is not their cause, it is the cause of your country that you are bound to support."

No further attempt was made to capture the remaining mutineers. No attempt was ever made to salvage the *Pandora*.

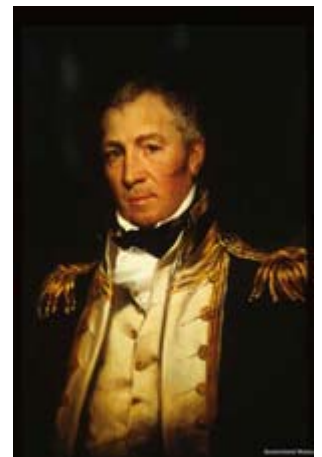
## Subsequent careers

Peter Heywood stayed in the Royal Navy and had a distinguished career as a seagoing officer. He retired a widely respected post-captain in 1817.

**James Morrison** also stayed in the navy. He served with distinction in several of the main naval engagements of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, eventually drowning in 1807 while serving as the gunner on Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge's flagship HMS *Blenheim*.

**Captain Edward Edwards** and his officers were exonerated for the loss of the *Pandora*. Edwards never received another seagoing command. He subsequently served for a few years as a "regulating captain" (recruiting officer) in Argyle and Hull, and then resigned himself to (apparently inevitable) inactivity on the half-pay list.

**Surgeon George Hamilton** published his *Pandora* voyage narrative in 1793. After this he served in HMS *Lowestoft* where he was to lose an arm during the bombardment of a fortified tower on Cape Mortella in Corsica in 1794. He was "invalided out" of the service. It is assumed he returned to his native home in Northumberland to live out his days on an invalid's pension.



Peter Heywood

**First Lieutenant John Larkan** fought in the Battle of the Glorious First of June (1794), was promoted to the rank of commander and served out his naval career as a commander of "Sea Fencibles" (i.e. a coast guard unit) in Galway. He died in Athlone in 1830.

**Second Lieutenant Robert Corner** was promoted. His next posting was to HMS *Terrible* as first lieutenant. He continued to serve meritoriously, especially during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. He ended his career as the Superintendent of Marine Police in Malta and died in 1816.

**Third Lieutenant Thomas Hayward** was also promoted to the rank of commander. He died in 1797 while in command of the sloop HMS *Swift*, which was lost with all hands during a typhoon in the South China Sea.

**Midshipman George Reynolds** eventually attained the rank of commander in 1831, despite having retired from active duty in 1814. Dying in 1851-60 years after the loss of the *Pandora*-he was most probably the last survivor.

The rest of the *Pandoras* have faded into historical obscurity. But something about their lives can be reconstructed from the archaeological record.



Midshipman George Reynolds