Putting Down Roots
Belonging and the Politics of Settlement on Norfolk Island

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Abstract

In this thesis I theorise emergent nativeness and the political significance of resettlement among the descendants of the mutineers of the *Bounty* in the Australian external territory of Norfolk Island (South Pacific). Norfolk Islanders are a group of Anglo-Polynesian descendants who trace their ancestry to unions between the mutineers of the HMAV *Bounty* and Tahitian women. Norfolk Islanders’ ancestors were resettled from their home of Pitcairn Island to the decommissioned, vacant, penal settlement of Norfolk Island in 1856. Since this date, members of the Norfolk community have remained at odds with state officials from Britain and Australia over the exact nature of their occupancy of Norfolk Island. This fundamental contestation over the Island’s past is the basis of ongoing struggles over recognition, Island autonomy and territoriality, and belonging.

Using a combination of qualitative research conducted on Norfolk Island and extensive historical and archival research, I present an ethnography of belonging among a highly emplaced island population. One of the central problems in conceptualising Norfolk Islanders’ assertions of belonging is that Norfolk Islanders not only claim Norfolk as a homeland, but members of this community have at times declared themselves the indigenous people of the Island. With respect to recent anthropological theorisations of indigeneity as relationally and historically constituted, I consider the extent to which concepts such as ‘native’ and ‘indigenous’ may be applicable to descendants of historical migrants. I distinguish between a concept of ‘nativeness’ as entailing primary historical and social connections between a group of people and a defined territory as asserted against others, and ‘indigeneity’ as a globalised form of subjectivity inseparable from historically constituted power relationships colonists and colonised. This distinction allows me to productively describe Islander’s emplacement and enduring connections with place. I suggest that Norfolk Islanders’ sense of belonging to Norfolk Island should be regarded as a form of nativeness, not to be dismissed as inauthentic due to the facts of their ancestors’ historical movement.

Describing how nativeness is constructed on Norfolk Island required me to take a multifaceted approach to how Islanders made connections to their past and attributed meaning to it. I situate my analysis at the juncture of anthropology, memory and history, focusing on how Norfolk Islanders construct their belonging to the Island by positioning...
themselves relative to their past. I explain how Norfolk Islanders’ sense of nativeness to Norfolk Island is constructed through a combination of the ways in which they: remember settlement through ritual and commemoration; construct key continuities with original settlers through tracing descent from founding Pitcairn ancestors, maintain a deep sense of family emplacement on Norfolk Island through intergenerational property relationships; mobilise connections between language, locality and belonging and importantly; reiterate a historically persistent belief, not always shared by all Islanders, that Norfolk Island was a gift from Queen Victoria to the Pitcairn people.

I bring the thesis to a close by reflecting on Islanders’ awareness of their historical and contemporary occupation of Norfolk Island and the role of historical documentation in Islanders’ constructions of belonging. I argue that nativeness can emerge among people who are historically conscious of their ancestors’ history of migration, provided the concept of ‘nativeness’ is disarticulated from the conditions of ‘occupation since time immemorial’ associated with related concepts such as ‘indigeneity’ and ‘autochthony’. Contrary to these conditions, I conclude that nativeness and a memory and history of migration are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Rather, I demonstrate that the form of nativeness that Norfolk Islanders claim to Norfolk Island is largely predicated on their ability to remember and document the conditions of their ancestors’ settlement on Norfolk Island and their ability to sustain the significance of this event in contemporary consciousness.
Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been both a privilege and a challenge, and I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people. First and foremost, this thesis is dedicated to Alice Buffett. Alice taught me much about Norfolk Island and the Norf’k language and I am eternally grateful for her assistance, generosity and guidance. Additionally, I am truly indebted and thankful to Tom Lloyd for the incredible generosity he has shown me these past few years. Tom was indispensable in helping me establish myself on the Island and also made time to answer many of my initial questions patiently and enthusiastically.

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Statement of Candidate Contribution

This thesis contains only sole-authored work. This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.
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Glossary

Acronyms

**Cth:** Legislation created by the Commonwealth of Australia.

**CGC:** Commonwealth Grants Commission.

**G.E.P:** General Entry Permit.

**JSCNCET:** Joint Standing Committee on National Capital and External Territories

**NI:** Norfolk Island.

**NIG:** The Norfolk Island Government.

**Nlk:** Legislation created by the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly.

**MLA:** Member of the (Norfolk Island) Legislative Assembly (see ‘Legislative Assembly’ definition).

**OFC:** Offshore Financial Centre (see ‘Offshore Financial Centre’ definition)

**T.E.P:** Temporary Entry Permit (see ‘Temporary Entry Permit’ definition)

**UNAA:** United Nations Association of Australia (see, ‘United Nations Association of Australia’ definition).

Definitions

**Administrator:** The Crown and later the Australian Federal Government’s representative on Norfolk Island. The position was first created in 1898 and the office holder from this time until the passing of the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth) had considerable legislative power. Under the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth) the Administrator has performed a similar role to an Australian State governor.

**Anniversary Day:** see ‘Bounty Anniversary Day:

**Bounty (Anniversary) Day:** A commemoration held on the 8th June each year celebrating the anniversary of the arrival of the Pitcairn settlers to Norfolk Island in 1856.
Burnt Pine: The main commercial centre of Norfolk Island. Consisting mainly of the buildings alongside Taylor’s road and The Village (see Norfolk Island Map).

Cadastral Map: A register and cartographic display of land subdivisions and tenure.

Carrington System: a system of land grants was introduced on Norfolk Island in 1888 by Lord Carrington. In this system, grants were given to settlers on the condition that the applicants fulfil eligibility criteria, and with the condition that certain improvements must be affected on the land within a period of time. These grants continued to be made through to 1896.

Common Law Title (land): A form of land title whereby title owners need to demonstrate their ownership of their land by tracing land transmission back to the earliest grant made by the Crown through a series of deeds of grant/title.

Crown Colony: A colony of the British Empire ruled by an appointed Governor appointed by the British Crown.

First Settlement, The (Norfolk Island): First European settlement on Norfolk Island (1788-1814).

Freehold: A form of land tenure in which titleholder has rights to land for an indeterminate period.

Guaranteed Title: see, ‘Torrens Title’.

Lighter/Lighterage: A method of moving cargo from sea vessels using lighters - small, unpowered boat used for moving cargo towed by a powered boat and steered from the rear using an oar. On Norfolk Island, cargo is moved from ships to the Piers at Cascade and Kingston.

Medicare: Australia’s public-funded universal healthcare system.

Melanesian Mission, The: An Anglican mission agency that supports Anglican churches in Melanesia. In 1866, the Melanesian Mission moved its headquarters to Norfolk Island and began to train Melanesian men as missionaries and tradesmen on the Island until the 1920s (Hilliard 1978).

Morayshire, The: The passenger ship that transported the Pitcairn Islanders from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island in 1856.


Offshore Financial Centre: Also called a Tax Haven. A low-tax jurisdiction catering toward the interests of offshore corporate organisations or companies (McCann 2006:16-18). While distinctions are sometimes made between offshore financial centres and tax havens, within this thesis the two terms are used synonymously.

Order in Council: Legislation made in the name of the British Queen and her Privy Council.
**Rood, Perch, Acre:** Old Imperial area measurements. One acre equals four roods. One rood is roughly equal to forty perches.

**Second Settlement, The (Norfolk Island):** The second British settlement on Norfolk Island, which operated from 1825-1852. This settlement was used as a prison for recidivist convicts from the Australian colonies’ other penal populations.

**Third Settlement, The (Norfolk Island):** Also commonly referred to as the Pitcairn Settlement, this period of settlement began in 1856 and is commonly understood to be the present settlement. Some scholars claim that there were two later settlements on Norfolk, the Melanesian Mission settlement and the post-1960s Mainlander settlement.

**Torrens Title:** An indefeasible form of title in land which was first used in South Australia. Deeds of title are registered at a centralised authority that ‘guarantees’ the title, avoiding the need for the owner to present evidence of an unbroken chain of titleholders back to the original grant (as in Common Law Title) and reducing the potential for title to be contested through adverse possession. On Norfolk Island, Torrens Title is commonly called ‘Guaranteed Title’.
Notes on Translation, Language and Orthography

There are two main languages spoken on Norfolk Island: English and Norf’k. Most interviews and discussions with Norfolk Islanders were conducted in English, though Islanders regularly switched to Norf’k throughout my conversations with them. I have used italics to indicate a switch to Norf’k (or to indicate a marked Norf’k accent. Older Norfolk Islanders tended to modulate their speech considerably, which often alters the meaning of a sentence. I use underlines to denote various forms of spoken emphasis. English translations are placed in square brackets [ ] after the italicised text. I accept full responsibility for any errors in Norf’k translation.

Orthographic choice for Norf’k is a somewhat controversial issue as Norf’k has not been a written language for most of its existence. There is no agreed upon way to write Norf’k and its written form has been the source of considerable dispute among speakers. The first substantial study of Norf’k was conducted by linguist and Norfolk Islander Shirley Harrison (1972, 1984) in the late mid to late 70s and early 80s. Since the 1980s, two popular dictionaries of Norf’k with different spelling systems have also been published. One was written by Norfolk Beryl Nobbs Palmer ([1986] 2002), the other by Norfolk Islander Alice Buffett and Linguist Don Laycock (1988). In conversations about language, various speakers of Norf’k expressed their allegiance to one spelling system or the other (see also, Mühlhäusler 2011:677) – and importantly to those that wrote them – while some claimed to write it their own way distinct from these books.

At the time of writing, Buffett and Laycock’s (ie. Buffett and Laycock 1988; Buffett 1999) Speak Norfolk Today was the most comprehensive dictionary and has gained the most public (official) approval on the Island. Where I have written passages in Norf’k, I have used this style. In cases where the source was already a written source, I have maintained the author’s original spelling. As a further note to Norf’k speakers, although I have used the Buffett and Laycock spelling system, my spellings reflect the variations in pronunciation that I encountered in my interview material.
Figure 0.1: Map of Norfolk Island
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Norfolk Island

‘Brutus, to the west, beyond the kingdoms of Gaul, lies an island of the ocean, surrounded by the sea; an island of the ocean, where giants once lived, but now it is deserted and waiting for your people. Sail to it; it will be your home for ever.’


On volcanic islands, all come from elsewhere. As Dening (1980:31) notes, “Every living thing…has been a traveller”. The people, things and customs that arrive on islands over time play a fundamental role in fashioning them as places with social meaning. “They might land naked on an empty beach” Dening (1980:32) writes, “but in their minds, their languages, their relationships they bring a world with them”. When the British came to settle Norfolk Island in 1788, they pondered at the presence of banana palms and the ubiquitous Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*) at their landing places, but all in all considered the Island socially vacant; more befitting of the term *Terra Nullius* than land occupied in continental Australia. This island, bereft of human life, was soon to be the site of successive waves of settlement and abandonment that brought diverse peoples to its shores. This thesis will focus on the Pitcairn Settlers, who occupied Norfolk’s rolling hills, farmed its valleys, and whose descendants have called and claimed the Island as home for over 150 years.

Norfolk Island is generally only remembered in the annals of Australian history for its role as a penal settlement; a regime that treated its prisoners so deplorably that Robert Hughes (2003:457) called the Island a “machine for extinguishing hope”, and which Marcus Clarke
(1970:367) described as a “place…set apart for all that is hideous and vile in our common nature” that realised “the popular notion of hell”. Hughes’ tome on the foundation of Australia makes only passing reference to the Pitcairn settlers, Clarke’s makes no mention at all. Given such vivid accounts of atrocities executed during the Island’s penal history, Raymond Nobbs (2006) notes, it is somewhat understandable that these accounts tend to eclipse its subsequent status as the home of the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers.

Today Norfolk Island is home to around 1800 people, most of whom are of Australian, New Zealand or (originally) Pitcairn Island ancestry (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006). The Island’s landmass is 34 km² (3455 hectares) and slightly closer to New Caledonia and the northern tip of New Zealand than to continental Australia. Norfolk is an Australian Commonwealth territory and is the largest of only three islands in the central northern reaches of the Tasman Sea. Of these three islands (Norfolk, Nepean and Phillip), only Norfolk is permanently populated. The Island’s political capital is Kingston, which consists of a series of orderly Georgian stone buildings at the base of the plateau on which the majority of the Island’s population lives. The area with the highest density of settlement is Burnt Pine, the commercial hub of the Island, though residents’ dwellings are distributed across the entire Island.
Norfolk Island is a territory under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia.¹ The Australian Government maintains that Norfolk Island is an “integral part of Australia”, yet some Islanders contest some of the implications of this official position.² Norfolk residents are not subject to all Australian laws, do not pay Australian taxes, and do not have access to most Australian social services (Commonwealth of Australia 1997). Additionally, up until the turn of the 21st Century, Island residents were not required to hold Australian citizenship to vote in local elections or run for local office (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). The Island’s separateness from the political and economic institutions of the Australian mainland has created space for Norfolk Islanders to continue to see themselves as different from, and often external to, the Australian nation.

¹ Norfolk Island is the oldest of Australia’s ‘territories’. Australian territories tend to be divided into those that ‘external’ and ‘internal’. Internal territories include the Northern Territory, The Australian Capital Territory and the Jervis Bay Territory, which are geographically attached to the Australian mainland. External territories include the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Herd Island and McDonald Islands, Christmas Islands, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, The Australian Antarctic Territory, Coral Sea Islands, and Norfolk Island.
² For example, the extension of requirements for Australian citizenship to the Norfolk Island electoral process (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2002), the right of all Australians to freedom of movement to and from Norfolk Island (see, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999) or even the Island’s status as part of Australia (see, The Society of Pitcairn Descendants 1996).
Norfolk Island’s status is anomalous because unlike other Australian states or territories, its residents do not pay income tax, companies tax, or goods and services tax to the Australian Government. An indirect outcome of this exemption from taxation is Norfolk Island does not have a local unemployment benefit scheme or access to the same level of welfare and social citizenship rights as mainland Australians (van Fossen 2002:218). The Island has 100 per cent employment, as any unable to support themselves or unable to gain support from others, must leave the Island. Many residents work anywhere up to 6 different jobs, the majority of which are in the Island’s tourism industry or the Island’s public service. Before the 1960’s, the Island’s economy was characterised by a predominantly subsistence mode of production and an unstable agricultural export market typified by a series of export booms and busts (Treadgold 1988:126-127). The instability of the Island’s primary industries was symptomatic of the logistical difficulties in establishing an overseas market for local agricultural produce. Norfolk has no harbour, natural or man-made, and goods must be unloaded and loaded from visiting container ships using smaller boats called lighters or brought to the Island by plane. Since the 1960s the Island’s tourism industry and public service have become the chief providers of work for the population. In the 2006 Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing, 51% of residents aged 15 years and over were engaged in work that mainly caters for tourists (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006) and 18% (as of 1996) were employed by the Norfolk Island Administration (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:35).

\footnote{In the past this enabled the development of tax avoidance schemes that have since been curtailed by the Australian Government (see, Treadgold 1988; van Fossen 2002).}
Figure 1.3 Map showing Norfolk Island in relation to Pitcairn Island and Australia. Map by Haylee Fieldes, 2011.
This thesis is concerned with the ways Norfolk Islanders construct belonging to Norfolk Island and use these ideas of belonging in relation to others. The people studied in this thesis are primarily the descendants of the Pitcairn settlers on Norfolk Island. These settlers were relocated from Pitcairn Island – an island more than 6000kms to the east of Norfolk – in 1856 and resettled on Norfolk Island, and their descendants remain there to this day. The Pitcairn settlers now identify themselves as ‘Norfolk Islanders’ and have come to consider the Island their homeland.

Norfolk Islanders’ relationships with the Island are constructed around their various understandings of the conditions in which their ancestors came to occupy Norfolk. The British-facilitated resettlement of the Pitcairn Islanders to Norfolk Island was considered one of the first successful state-sponsored relocations of an island community in the Pacific (Maude 1959) and Norfolk Islanders are highly conscious of this as an aspect of their history that holds ongoing importance to them. Disagreements over the conditions of occupation are foundations for ongoing conflict and disputes between Islanders, other settlers to the Island, and those that govern them. According to most historians of the Island (Bladen 1906; Currey 1959; Hoare 2003; Nobbs 1984), Norfolk Islanders’ ancestors, the Pitcairn Islanders, were given a series of land grants to settle on the Island and the rest of the Island’s land was vested in the Crown. Despite some documentary evidence suggesting that the Pitcairn Islanders were told about these grants before they were resettled on Norfolk, many Pitcairn Islanders have come to believe that the British Crown had promised their ancestors the entire Island. Though this claim has been constantly refuted by the Australian Government, the contention that Norfolk Island belongs to the Pitcairners and their descendants has persisted and has regularly cropped up in debates over local autonomy from other governments ever since. Many Islanders still believe that the Island is legally theirs, and many more regard Norfolk Island as the intended homeland of all Pitcairn descendants.

Belonging is particularly at issue on Norfolk Island because it is a place with a history of numerous periods of settlement, most of which are chronologically close together. The settlement experience – using a general definition of ‘settlement’ as occupation of a new region by migrants – renders the very need to construct a place in which to belong acute and pressing, just as it makes the place-making and place-claiming processes more palpable. There is a more immediate need to create a locality in which to belong, to stave off a sense
of insecurity and displacement. Norfolk Islanders have constructed a sense of emplacement and attachment to Norfolk Island through their negotiation of this space with others. In the period since settlement, Pitcairn Islanders and their descendants have developed a variety of strategies for producing and reproducing links to locality including representational practices and methods of signifying and recognising their attachments to place and to each other. I examine the means by which Norfolk Islanders interpret, construct and manage their relationships with Norfolk Island in the context of their interactions with others. I argue throughout that Norfolk Islanders hold a strong sense of attachment and nativeness to the Island and primarily outline how this attachment to place has developed through their knowledge of the past and of the specific circumstances in which their ancestors occupied the Island, their understandings and enactments of their cultural difference to others, and their various dealings with those that have governed them.

Notes on Nomenclature and Demography

Before discussing the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis in more depth, it is necessary to offer some definitions and descriptions of the groups of people that live on Norfolk Island. I use the term ‘Norfolk Island residents’ to denote all people who are legally permanent residents of Norfolk Island under the Norfolk Island Immigration Act 1980 (Nlk). As of the 2006 Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing, there were 1,386 such residents living on the Island (see figure 1.3). Residency status is contrasted with the other three common immigration statuses operating on the Island: Temporary Entry Permit holders (T.E.Ps, or guest workers), General Entry Permit holders (G.E.Ps or provisional residents) and visitors, who are primarily tourists.

Norfolk Island residents make further distinctions among themselves based on residents’ connections to the first settlers to the Island. Most Australian Government reports address Norfolk residents of Pitcairn Descent as a subsection of the community distinct from any other residents. The 1975 Report of the Royal Commission into Matters Relating to Norfolk Island identified and defined ‘Pitcairn Descendants’ as: “the people descended by blood ties from the Pitcairners transferred to Norfolk Island in 1856 (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:10). Despite the official use of the term ‘Pitcairn Descendant’, the label ‘Norfolk Islander’ or ‘Islander’ is more commonly used by most Norfolk Island residents to
refer to the living descendants of the Pitcairn settlers to Norfolk Island. Nevertheless, not all residents consider these terms to be completely interchangeable, and while at this point it will suffice to use the term ‘Norfolk Islander’ to refer to Pitcairn Descendants, later in the thesis I seek to illustrate how the terms ‘Islander’ and ‘Norfolk Islander’ are nevertheless contested.

![Figure 1.4: Chart showing distribution of residency status, ordinary resident population of Norfolk Island, Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing, 8 August 2006.](image)

The Pitcairn Islanders were a group of Anglo-Polynesian descendants of unions between the British mutineers of the HMAV *Bounty* and Polynesian (primarily Tahitian) women who fled with them to Pitcairn Island aboard the *Bounty* in 1790. There is a dense body of literature and historical material devoted to the interpretation of events surrounding the *Bounty* mutiny. The story of the mutiny on the *Bounty* has been told and retold in countless books (fiction and non-fiction), articles, and films. As Salmond (2011:21) notes, these accounts typically focus on the mutiny and the different interpretations of the source of the conflict between crew and captain, and little on the events that followed it. As it would be exhausting to cover all of these interpretations, what follows is a bare bones account of the relevant aspects of Pitcairn Island history.

In 1787 the HMAV *Bounty*, under the captaincy of William Bligh, was sent by the British Royal Navy to transport live breadfruit trees from Tahiti to the West Indies as a cheap food

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4 There are all manner of theories as to why Fletcher Christian led the mutiny in April 1789, from a longing for the women of Tahiti that they had left behind, to some kind of convoluted, hidden homosexual relationship between Bligh and Christian, to an uprising against standard naval punishment and Bligh’s foul language (Dening 1992:346-367). To illustrate the extent of some of the speculation and debate, some authors have even claimed Fletcher Christian managed to make it back to England after the mutiny.
source for slaves. The *Bounty* spent five months in Tahiti, and during that time, the crew entered into various economic and sexual relationships with Tahitians. When the *Bounty* left Tahiti to continue its journey, ship discipline was lax and the crew was somewhat resentful for being made to leave Tahiti and return to full naval duties. Upon return to the open seas the *Bounty*’s Master’s Mate, Fletcher Christian, led a mutiny against Bligh. Captain Bligh and his sympathisers were lowered into an open launch (see figure 1.5) and the mutineers returned to Tahiti to gather supplies. The remainder of the *Bounty*’s crew, many of whom were not directly implicated in the mutiny, chose to stay on Tahiti. For fear of discovery and punishment for their key roles in the mutiny, Fletcher Christian and nine of the mutineers set sail to search for an island they could use as a refuge from the British Empire. With them were 19 Tahitian women and six Tahitian men, some of whom had come willingly, while some had been tricked into staying aboard the *Bounty* overnight, only to find themselves on the open sea in the morning (Nicolson and Davies 1997:28).

After extensive travels, the crew and passengers of the *Bounty* – 6 Polynesian men, 9 mutineers, 19 women and a baby – landed upon Pitcairn Island in 1790. Pitcairn had been mischarted when Europeans initially discovered it in 1767 and as such it offered the remaining mutineers a means of escape from the British Navy (Nicolson and Davies 1997:41; Maude 1968:21). The *Bounty* was subsequently scuttled, leaving the new settlers of Pitcairn in isolation for almost two decades. In 1808, after 18 years of complete isolation, Pitcairn was reconnected with the outside world through a chance discovery by an American ship, the *Topaz*. By this time, only one of the mutineer men and around ten adult Tahitian women and their numerous children remained, the rest of the settlers having met their deaths due to a period of homicide and violence on the Island. After its rediscovery, the Island became a regular stopover for British ships for a large part of the early 1800s, and with the patronage of the British Navy, the Pitcairn community grew rapidly. The Island quickly outstripped its available resources, which eventually necessitated the population’s relocation to Norfolk Island in 1856.

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5 One crew member, Fletcher Christian, married a high ranking Tahitian woman named Miamiti (who eventually ended up on Pitcairn) some adopted Tahitian customs such as tattoo, wore Tahitian barkcloth (*maro*), began to speak a mixture of English and old-Tahitian, and increasingly distanced themselves from naval discipline (Shapiro 1936:35-36). As Dening (1992:257-262) put it, they were considered by their contemporaries to have ‘gone native’. 
Norfolk Islanders continue to recognise their genealogical and cultural links to Pitcairn Island and its current inhabitants – mostly descendants of Pitcairners who returned there from Norfolk after 1856 – and both Pitcairn Islanders and Norfolk Islanders speak similar, mutually intelligible languages, Pitkern and Norf’k respectively. Norfolk Islanders by the above definition made up roughly 47 per cent of Norfolk Island’s permanent population – which includes those of G.E.P and Resident status – of 1576 residents in 2006 (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006), meaning the Island is home to the highest concentration of Pitcairn Descendants in the world. ‘Norfolk Islanders’ are a diverse mix of people with heterogeneous experiences of living on and off Norfolk Island. Islanders and other Island residents regularly leave the Island when young and return later in their lives. The Island is accessible via flights to Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Auckland and there is considerable ease of movement between the Island and these destinations. As such, many Islanders living on the Island today have lived considerable portions of their lives in Australia and New Zealand, have family members living off-Island, or plan to live off-Island at some time in their lives.
Before the mid-20th century, the Islander proportion of the community comprised the majority of the Island’s population and organised themselves into large family groups who lived, worked and socialised in close proximity to one another. After the Second World War, large numbers of Australians and New Zealanders settled on the Island. These settlers have generally been called ‘Mainlanders’, which is the unofficial name generally given to all those not descended from Pitcairn settlers. From the perspective of some residents of Norfolk Island, ‘the mainland’ can refer to either Australia or New Zealand. ‘Mainlanders’, are therefore not necessarily from Australia. As an indication of the extent of the Island residents’ interactions with and movements to and from New Zealand and Australia, 36 per cent of all persons living on Norfolk Island in 2006 were born on the Island, compared to 32 per cent born in Australia and 22.9 per cent born in New Zealand (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006:10). I capitalise the terms ‘Islander’ and ‘Mainlander’ to indicate that these are specific terms that have been constructed and are given a particular local meaning by residents of Norfolk Island.

6 ‘Mainlanders’ have in the past been referred to as ‘Englishmen’, ‘interlopers’, ‘outsiders’ and ‘strangers’, ‘blow-ins’ (see also, Harrison 1984) all names that designate a degree of otherness in relation to Pitcairn descendants.
Belonging and Nativeness

Norfolk Islanders’ belonging to the Island is largely constructed through their various relations with others. The concept of belonging seems well equipped to deal with the broad relationality of Norfolk Islanders’ sense of self as it is a concept that places actors’ attempts to make and break connections with other people, things and places at the centre of ethnographic focus. Edwards (1998:144), in her account of belonging in the Northwest English town of ‘Alltown’, describes belonging as “forged through a variety of attachments, which include links to pasts and persons, as well as to places”. Such belongings are articulated contextually, as diverse relations to people, things and places fade in and out of focus and importance (Edwards 1998:158; Edwards and Strathern 2000). I trace some of the ways in which people on Norfolk Island construct their belongings through the different forms relationships they forge, reforge or deny with others. Belonging often expresses something more than just the existence or non-existence of a relationship, it generally indicates a particular characteristic of the relationship itself; that the relation is right, real, or authentic (see, Miller 2003) and is often perceived positively (Edwards and Strathern 2000; though see, Crowley 1999; Yuval-Davis 2004) by those claiming it.

In her theorisation of belonging, Miller (2003) begins with a minimal understanding of belonging as a state of being in which one’s relation to the world is experienced and apprehended through one’s social location, one’s history, and one’s locality (Miller 2003:218). Miller (2003) asserts that academic focus is most often solely on this minimal understanding, the content of discourses of belonging, (the factors such as history, locality or community through which are generally understood to constitute it) rather than what it actually means to belong. She proposes that while belonging makes connections with these external referents (history, community, locality) it is primarily concerned with “...ourselves as subjects” (Miller 2003:220). That is, that by articulating a sense of belonging to something else, we uncover elements of the self, or supplement the self-identity in some way. Miller argues that studying belonging means working through the ways in which subjects understand their relationships to history, locality, and social situation in order to grasp how they relate to themselves (see, Miller 2006:170-171).

Nativeness entails making similar connections to history, locality and people as Miller’s theory of belonging but should also be seen as recognised status or identity-as-belonging to be claimed vis-à-vis others. Since the mid-1990s, some Norfolk Islanders have declared that
all Pitcairn Descendants are indigenous, but the way that this played out and the community backlash to the use of the term indicates that most Islanders believe such claims to indigenous recognition are divisive and are not willing to identify as such. It may seem illogical to use the term ‘nativeness’ rather than ‘indigeneity’ when some Islanders have claimed indigeneity in the past (O’Collins 2002; The Society of Pitcairn Descendants 1996). The problem with the term indigenous in this analysis comes from two key sources. The first problem is that many residents of Norfolk Island (Islander and Mainlander) are uneasy with the term ‘indigenous’ and, in debates that I will outline in chapter Five, see it as divisive and detrimental to social cohesion within Norfolk Island, counterproductive to their various desired forms of engagement with the Australian state on the other, and like many other communities, (Yeh 2007; Nyamnjoh 2007) see it as fitting awkwardly with their own concepts of belonging to place. The second problem is that while I wish to engage with ‘indigeneity’ concept, I do not wish to be completely bound by some of its immediate implications. As Niezen (2003) and Merlan (2009) have argued, the concept has developed as a concept in tandem with nation-spanning political category of ‘indigenous’ and is difficult to separate the concept from the kinds of claims or restitution that these movements make vis-à-vis the states they address. Generally, these claims entail recognition of certain collective rights within certain states founded on their (or their ancestors’) prior occupancy (Maybury-Lewis 1997:7), including the rights to self-determination and to reappropriate of control over place-based resources (Castree 2004; Kenrick and Lewis 2004). While some Norfolk Islanders make claims to self-determination and control over local resources vis-à-vis the Australian state based on the historical context of their occupancy, the term, as Barnard (2005) notes, tends to obscure the specificities of local definitions of belonging. I use the term ‘native’ because while Norfolk Islanders certainly believe they belong to the Island and assert their primary attachments to it, only a few identify and have sought recognition as indigenous. Nevertheless, a terminology is necessary to describe the ways that various actors and groups claim a primary relation to place as an indicator of their relations with others who are designated as settlers.

The term ‘native’ also comes with its own set of intellectual and political baggage, but I believe this baggage can more easily be separated from it by outlining clearly the way in which I will use it. Kuper (2003:389) has suggested “it has a colonial ring to it” and is often used as a “euphemism for the word primitive”. I wish to distance myself from this historical
meaning of the term. In my usage, ‘native’ refers to what Merlan (2009:304) defines as the
colloquial usage of indigeneity, which is: “first-order connections (usually at small scale)
between group and locality” and to connote “belonging and originariness and deeply felt
processes of attachment and identification” to a particular place. I am less concerned with
whether Norfolk Islanders ‘are’ or ‘are not’ native to Norfolk Island, but rather the ways in
which nativeness is nevertheless deployed by Islanders against others in particular
circumstances. I therefore use the term ‘nativeness’ (and native) to describe locally
produced ideas of belonging to Norfolk Island, while I reserve the term ‘indigeneity’ (and
indigenous) to refer to a globalised category of person and sets of related rights.

**Time, Priority and Settlement**

Norfolk Islanders’ connections with the Island are largely expressed through the ways in
which they consciously locate themselves and others in time and space. People on Norfolk
Island often talk about, think about, and use their knowledge of the past in their daily
interactions. For instance, Norfolk Island’s social history is layered by successive periods of
settlement (see also, appendix A). The order in which these people came to the Island and
circumstances of their arrival continues to play a role in the local construction of identity
and difference today. Historians have generally narrated and organised the history of the
Island by segmenting it into successive stages of settlement and abandonment (Hoare 2003;
Nobbs 1988b; Nobbs 1991; Nobbs 2006; Rickard 1995). This has also infused local
understandings of settlement and it is common to find local residents using these periods of
settlement to locate their own relationship to the Island. The first known occupation of
Norfolk was by early East-Polynesian seafarers in around the 13th and 14th centuries. This
was not known until the late 20th century, when archaeological surveys began to confirm
that these Polynesians had settled on the Island for several generations but subsequently
abandoned the Island. Archaeologists have not been able to conclusively confirm their
reasons for doing so (Anderson 2001; Specht 1993; Anderson and White 2001:139).
The Island’s recorded history began when Captain James Cook rediscovered it in 1774. In 1788, British settlers who came on the First Fleet to establish the Sydney colony in Australia also occupied Norfolk Island. This ‘First Settlement’, as historians commonly call it (see, Nobbs 1988b; Rickard 1995; Hoare 2003) was primarily an agricultural settlement populated by both convicts and free settlers. In 1815, it was abandoned by the British after it proved logistically unviable to transport produce to the Australian colonies (Nobbs 1988a; Hoare 2003:30-34). In 1825, the Island was again resettled by the British for use as a prison colony in which “the extremest punishment short of death” (Hughes 2003) was meted out to unfortunate recidivist offenders in the mainland colonies. Due to concerns about the treatment of prisoners on Norfolk, this ‘Second Settlement’ was shut down and the Island was again abandoned in 1855 (Nobbs 1991). This succession of settlement and abandonment finally drew to a close when the Pitcairn Islanders were relocated to the Island in 1856 and established a “Third Settlement” in what has been described as a “complete break with the past” (Hoare 2003:84; see also, Emery 1985). Historian John

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7 Most historians of the Island (Nobbs 2006; Rickard 1995) describe the Melanesian Mission – established on the Island through a grant from the New South Wales government in 1866 – as the Island’s fourth
Rickard (1995) has suggested that despite the persistence of the material detritus of previous occupation, the Island was a kind of *Terra Nullius* (land belonging to no-one) at the beginning of each successive settlement. However it is important to note that while the land lay empty of people for periods after 1788, the British Crown maintained unambiguous legal possession of the Island.

Cultural constructions of time are vitally important to the kinds of connections and identities people claim in relation to a place. The identities of natives and settlers, for instance, are largely constructed based on temporal distinctions that retrospectively establish some people as prior to others (Pratt 2007:398; Canessa 2008). Helms (1998:75) notes that “‘Prior’ is, by definition, a relational or structural term; something can be ‘prior’ only with respect to something else”. In other words, groups’ claims of firstness or priority do not exist independently of the kinds of relationships with others who make them politically and socially meaningful. Islanders believe they occupied the Island before, and in different circumstances to the particular others (namely Mainlanders) to which they contrast their associations to the Island. Islanders envisage not only ‘priority’, but also a distinguishing type of relation to the Island not shared by other (earlier or later) settlers. This constitutes a succession to primary attachment through the abandonment of previous claims, and through claims of having been ‘given’ the Island or land by Queen Victoria. Norfolk Islanders assert this sense of ‘priority’ despite being surrounded by physical relics that stand as evidence of prior occupation, largely because these prior colonial inhabitants have offered few serious contestations to Islanders’ sense of belonging.

**The Island and ‘the Mainland’**

Islanders’ understandings of their emplacement on Norfolk Island are asserted and contested in the context of the territory’s political location within a larger state, Australia. I meld an analysis of local belonging with an analysis of how interactions with state actors have influenced the means by which this belonging has been claimed. Central to Islanders’

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8 As Paine notes in his discussion of ‘firstness’, the historical reference for the firstness of indigenous people is generally not in relation to those that came before, but “to the period immediately following European contact” (Paine 2000:83).
understandings of themselves is the question of local autonomy. Islanders are at odds with each other and the Australian state over the ideal level of control that local residents should have over Norfolk Island. This has been an ongoing area of disagreement and conflict among Islanders, Islanders and Mainlanders, and Island residents and the Australian state. In fact, the issue of local control over law and administrative processes dates back to shortly after the beginning of the Third Settlement.

The current (as of 2010) model of Island governance was established under the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth) and responsibilities are shared between the Island’s local Legislative Assembly, the Australian Federal Government and Federal Parliament (Commonwealth of Australia 2003b:8). The Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly is a nine member unicameral legislative body and created through the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth). Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are the primary lawmakers for Norfolk Island. The local Assembly is responsible for a mixture of Territory-level, State and Federal executive and legislative powers, which means it has considerably higher level of responsibility and power than Australia’s mainland territories. According to a 2003 Joint Standing Committee Report, the Island’s legislature can “enact laws on virtually any topic that it chooses, including on matters that are the preserve of the Federal Government elsewhere (such as customs and immigration)” (Commonwealth of Australia 2003b:37). Under the *Norfolk Island Act 1979*, (Cth) Australian Government has delegated most of its legislative responsibilities to the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly, but reserves the right to intervene if necessary.

Because the Island’s legislature is small and so orientated toward local issues, it is often difficult to separate the debates that occur within the legislature from the daily life on the Island. As one Island resident noted in a submission to a 2003 Australian Government report: “The electorate here is pretty close… if you are out shopping and the Chief Minister goes by you can grab him by the collar. You can walk straight into his office. You have accessibility that is unheard of elsewhere” (Bennett, in Commonwealth of Australia 2003b:50). Because of this closeness between electorate and its representatives, I often use debates in the legislature as another means of describing local subjectivities and as means of illustrating the extent of wider public debate on the Island.
Norfolk Island’s anomalous relationship with Australia predates the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth). Since 1855, Norfolk Island has been jurisdictionally separate to the mainland and as a result, many Australian laws have never been extended to the Island. This is largely a result of the historical conditions surrounding the Island’s resettlement by the Pitcairners, but Norfolk’s ‘islandness’ has also played a key role in its maintenance. Islands generally sit in a complex political relationship with larger continental states and this is certainly evident in terms of the tendencies for states to recognise them as separate jurisdictional spaces. Maurer (1997) defines ‘jurisdictional spaces’ as:

> …legally defined spaces demarcating zones of legislative, executive, and judicial power and authority. Jurisdictional spaces only sometimes correspond with ‘physical’ spaces; when they do, they naturalize ‘physical’ space and hide their own constructed and contingent character (Maurer 1997:228).

Such designations often heighten the role that laws play in how islands are defined, bounded and governed. Sociologist Godfrey Baldacchino (2006:853) points out that federal states the world over have had difficulty determining the extent to which differences in community size, economy, population, and distance from central authority should be reflected in the areas of government practice and law. He argues that despite the common
liberal problematic resulting from treating constituent groups in a nation state differently, the same rule is often not applied to island enclaves (2006:853). Baldacchino notes that “[v]arious, typically large, states are finding it convenient to develop a creative use for usually small, far-flung and remote, island jurisdictions within their orbit, facilitating activities that could be anathema on home ground” (2006:861). Anthropologists have also made note of this tendency for large or continental states to designate areas as ‘offshore’—as distinct from onshore—for the purposes of facilitating various forms of political, social and economic activities disallowed or questionable in the mainland jurisdictions (Rawlings 2004; Maurer 1997).

Norfolk Island has existed as a separate jurisdictional space since 1855, but state officials with diverse aims have administered this space. The early Pitcairn settlement period was a site of considerable legal experimentation by British and Australian authorities. While an initial Order in Council made by Queen Victoria and her Privy council in 1856 proclaimed that the Pitcairners were to “govern themselves by laws and usages adapted to their own state of society” the law has historically been a medium through which varying Administrators and governing bodies have enacted their models for ideal economic relations (property relations, land grants, market regulation, taxes) and social relations (such as regulating the use of Norf’k in the Island’s school, and setting the parameters of Island residency) and these have had lasting impacts on the Island and its residents. Since 1979, Norfolk Island has been partially self-governing with its own locally elected legislature. The Island government has considerable economic and political autonomy that exceeds comparable powers given to other mainland Australian states and territories, making it an experimental jurisdictional space of a different kind.

‘Canberra’ is the Federal capital of Australia, but for many Islanders it is also a metonym for regulation, bureaucracy and Australian state power. ‘Canberra’ consists of a collection of bureaucrats and lawmakers who hold varying degrees of influence over the Island’s future. When they make reference to ‘Canberra’ more broadly, they are referring to agents of the state such as the Australian Federal Government ministers, cabinet members, bipartisan Joint Standing Committees and bureaucrats who collectively govern, influence, or suggest

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9 Islands have long been seen as a microcosm of biological and social activity, and have often been used by colonial powers as objects of social and political experimentation (Baldacchino and Royle 2010; DeLoughrey 2003; Baldacchino and Milne 2006).
directions for the Island through various means. State bureaucrats tend to maintain that Norfolk Island is bound to Australia constitutionally, which means that Islanders’ understandings of their ‘distinctiveness’, ‘separateness’ and primary connections to place are often at odds with the Australian Government’s official stance that Norfolk Island “integral part of Australia” (Commonwealth of Australia 2003b). In a 2003 Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories report, the writers noted: “despite claims by some in the community that Norfolk Island is ethnically and culturally distinct from Australia, and that Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn descent are indigenous and Norfolk Island is their ‘homeland’, this is not borne out by the historical evidence” (Commonwealth of Australia 2003b:9). Furthermore, Australian Government reports often describe Norfolk Island as lacking any pronounced cultural differences to the mainland, seeing the Island’s population as ‘ethnically akin’ to the rest of Australia, repeatedly quoting a report from 1975 that claims just that (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1975k). In other words, Canberra openly contests Islanders’ assertions of nativeness to Norfolk Island, and does not recognise Islanders’ assertions of difference to the rest of Australia.

Methods

My fieldwork on Norfolk Island began with a preliminary trip in October 2006. I returned to the Island in February 2007 and conducted extended field research there until December 2007. Since this principal fieldwork period, I have returned to the Island twice; once in 2009-2010 for a period of three weeks from December to January, and once for three weeks in 2010-2011, again in December and January. I had initially chosen the Island as a field location because I was interested in studies that documented articulations of belonging and local emplacement in settler-descendant societies. Norfolk Island became my site of choice particularly because of its similarities to continental Australia as a locale which was

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10 The historical evidence that the inquiry report references was an Australian Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1975k) that described Norfolk Island as economically and socially linked to Australia. The report then referred to an earlier report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission that found that while Norfolk Islanders could be considered a ‘minority group’ under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, they were not indigenous to Norfolk Island or Pitcairn Island (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999:30-35).
settled relatively recently, but also because of the Island’s marked differences to the Australian settlement story, such as its historical chain of settlement, abandonment and resettlement. In a way, it seemed like the ‘holy grail’ of fieldwork locations. Here was a place where a group of people had essentially moved to an abandoned Island, some of whom had made various claims that they were native, indigenous or that their ancestors had been given the Island. At the time, I had read a number of studies of settler belonging in Australia and New Zealand, namely Michele Dominy’s (2001) *Calling the Station Home*, and Peter Read’s (2000), *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*. What struck me about these books were their authors’ depictions of settlers’ senses of self and relationships to place as inextricably tied up in their historical and contemporary relationships to an indigenous ‘other’. Read (2000) represents the interrelatedness of settler belonging and indigenous dispossession most explicitly in the beginning paragraph of *Belonging*, asking a question replete with doubt; “How can we non-Indigenous Australians justify our continuous presence and love for this country while the Indigenous people remain dispossessed and their history unacknowledged?” (Read 2000:1). My initial investigation was framed around the questions of whether Norfolk Island’s history of settlement and abandonment opened up, quoting Miller (2003) different ‘existential opportunities’ for the Pitcairn Settlers to ‘settle in’, and what a ‘settler’ identity looks like in a different kind of sociocultural configuration to those outlined by Read (2000) and Dominy (2001).

Norfolk Island has been studied extensively by academics in the past few decades, particularly by Australian historians and economists. As the Island played a major role in the early settlement history of Australia, there is a wealth of primary and secondary historical material available concerning the first and second British settlements (Barry 1958; Best 2007; Clarke 1970; Curtis and Doyle 1987; Dalkin 1974; Hazzard 1984; Hughes 2003; Nobbs 1988b; Nobbs 1991). The third (Pitcairn) settlement, which unlike these earlier settlements is disconnected from Australia’s national foundation story, has generally received less interest in comparison, particularly in books about Australian history. The first, and only, anthropological fieldwork study of the Norfolk Island community was conducted by Harry Lionel Shapiro (1927, 1928, 1929), a physical anthropologist who conducted five months of field research on Norfolk in 1923-1924 (Nobbs 2006:189). Shapiro was interested in Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island primarily because he believed
that it offered a means of testing prominent theories of genetics and miscegenation in his era. His chief findings related to the results of inbreeding in a small island environment – promoting the concept of hybrid vigour in order to explain the lack of genetic deterioration in mixed-race groups. He also offered details of Norfolk Island material culture (Shapiro 1927, 1928). Shapiro’s major book on Pitcairn descendants, *The Heritage of the Bounty* (1936) and his later publications (Shapiro 1927, 1928, 1929) are remembered somewhat fondly by Islanders for helping to dispel negative stereotypes associated with miscegenation (between European and Tahitian ‘races’) and inbreeding. Shapiro (1928:301) found of both communities that “inbreeding in a sound stock is not attended by the traditional stigmata of degeneration”. Shapiro made significant contributions to his field, becoming President of both the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (from 1935-1939), and the American Anthropology Association (in 1948), though – as he noted in a new postscript to a reprint of *The Heritage of the Bounty*, renamed *The Pitcairn Islanders* (1968:255-256)– he conducted no further research with Norfolk and Pitcairn Islanders after his initial visits to these islands.

Since Shapiro, ethnomusicologist Philip Hayward (2006) conducted three months of ethnographic research on the Island in 1999 and published a detailed social history of music and dance on Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands from the events of the *Bounty* mutiny until the end of the 20th century. Malcolm Treadgold (1988) wrote a comprehensive economic history of all three settlements of Norfolk Island. The Norf’k language has also piqued the interest of linguists Flint (1964) Shirley Harrison (1985); Harrison (1985) in particular offers a detailed study of the Norf’k language in its social setting, focussing largely on issues of diglossia and language variation but also noting relevant aspects of social organisation among Pitcairn descendants.

While much has been written about Norfolk Island, until recently little has been written explicitly dealing with the ways in which Norfolk Islanders understand and construct their relationship to the Island in terms of their history. Mühlhäusler and Stratford (1999) published a preliminary discussion of historical successions of migration to Norfolk Island and the ways in which settlers to the Island have constructed place through language and metaphor. They briefly describe the tensions that these migrations have created on the Island, describing Norfolk as “…a contested space: between convicts and soldiers; between settlers and distant administrators…between notions of indigenous and migrant cultures.
and languages; between ideas of the good place and its opposite” (Mühlhäusler and Stratford 1999:216). Linguist Peter Mühlhäusler has conducted recent research on the Island with a twofold focus on Norf’k language maintenance (Mühlhäusler 2002b, unpublished-b, 2007) and Norf’k language ecology (Mühlhäusler 2002a, 2006, 2008a), the latter tracing the ways in which Norfolk Islanders have used Norf’k to create relationships with their environment. Finally, linguist Joshua Nash (2011) has conducted a recent linguistic study that has documented toponymic knowledge and place creation on Norfolk Island.

When I first visited the Island for a week in late 2006, I found an island recovering from some important events. The 8th June earlier that year marked the sesquicentenary of the Island’s settlement by the Pitcairn Islanders. It was also a year of considerable uncertainty for residents.11 Concerned residents and the Island’s Legislative Assembly had spent much of 2006 – and in fact much of the new millennium – justifying the continued existence of the Island’s limited self-government regime to Canberra.12 In late 2006, most residents were certain that the Australian Government was going to significantly reform the Island self-governance arrangements. One of the implications of this proposed change of governance status was that Norfolk residents would be required to pay Australian income tax for the first time. Canberra eventually decided to abandon these ideas in late December 2006 to January 2007 and retain the existing self-governing status.

When I returned in February 2007, the Australian Federal Police were coming to the end of five years of prolonged investigations concerning the murder of Janelle Patton on the Island in 2002.13 The alleged murderer had since been located and within a week of my arrival, the accused’s trial was being conducted. This was the first recorded murder on Norfolk in almost 150 years, and the investigation created considerable turmoil in the community as locals were forced to consider the possibility that it was ‘one of their own’ who committed the act. Members of the Australian press following the case made unprecedented inquiries into the workings of Norfolk Island society and three ‘true crime’ books were published on the matter (Latham 2005; Lipson and Walters 2005; Maynard

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11 A sesquicentenary is the 150th anniversary.
12 The press in Australia capitalised on the Bounty links of many of the residents, giving rise to headlines such as “Mutiny She Wrote” (Milliken 2004) and “21st Century Colonialism: Mutiny on ‘Bounty’ Island” (Marks 2006).
13 This is not completely true, as a case of infanticide was recorded in the early 20th Century.
These books all depicted the Island as a closed - or omertà (Latham 2005:100) society - whose members had closed ranks in order to ‘protect their own’.15 These claims were largely exaggerated, however in some ways the media’s claims were self-fulfilling in that the large level of attention they gave to the Island crystallised into an initial wariness of anyone asking a lot of questions about Norfolk, myself included.

At the same time as the controversy and increased media attention surrounding the murder on Norfolk was playing out, over the other side of the Pacific, Pitcairn Island, the origin island of Norfolk Islanders’ ancestors, was experiencing internal turmoil due to very public criminal trials of Pitcairn men relating to widespread sexual abuse. The conjuncture of these important events created what ethnomusicologist Philip Hayward has described as a ‘cultural crisis’ for Pitcairn/Norfolk cultural identity (Hayward 2006:209-223) as both island communities have increasingly had to come to terms with the increasing influence that extra-local forces such as the mass media have their self-images. Islanders’ heightened awareness of how they were perceived by others may well have influenced the data I gathered, as Norfolk residents had certainly developed a high level of reflexivity about themselves, as they had spent the better part of a decade representing their interests to others, and had seen the world’s image of them reflected back to them on the television and in print media.

My initial contact with the community was made in a short one-week visit to the Island in from the 19th to the 26th of August 2006. During this trip, I gathered unpublished primary written sources about the Island’s culture, economy, history and politics and gained access to government archives including land use statistics and government legislation. Before this point, I had had no contacts on the Island apart from a few emails to other academics who had worked with the community, and a brief exchange of emails with the curator of the Norfolk Island Museum. I was interviewed for one of the local newspapers, and I conducted a series of radio interviews and made a handful of contacts within the Norfolk Island Museum and in the Island’s Administration. During the radio interviews, I briefly described my project as an investigation into belonging and identity on Norfolk Island the rationale behind which was to understand the ways in which settler

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14 The books were called *Norfolk Island of Secrets*, *Nightmare on Norfolk*, and *Fatal Flaw*.

15 After some considerable local finger-pointing, combined with the accusations of the Australian media, the killer was found to be a Temporary Entry Permit holder from New Zealand, and the community seemed to give a great sigh of relief that it was not an Islander or other permanent resident (see also, Latham 2005:227).
peoples more generally form a sense of attachment to the place of their settlement. After I finished one interview at Radio Norfolk (the local radio station), a caller, Frank, rang up and invited me around to his house to discuss my project further. I did so the very next day and we discussed my project for about an hour. He was interested in my project primarily because he had taken part in a number of constitutional disputes with the Australian government concerning the rights of Norfolk Islanders. Frank was quite forthcoming that he believed a project such as mine could document some of the longstanding issues concerning the Norfolk Islanders’ relationship to the island. It was the first of many similar comments I was to hear throughout my fieldwork. When we parted ways, Frank offered me a place to stay at his house should I decide to return.

My longer fieldwork trip to Norfolk Island was from the 15th February to the 18th December 2007. It was during this trip that I gathered the greater part of the ethnographic material presented in this thesis. For the first month of my stay on Norfolk Island, I took Frank up on the offer he made on his first visit and stayed as a guest in his house at Middlegate. Frank introduced me to a number of his long-time friends, colleagues and it was with his assistance that I was able to attend a number of family gatherings and social events. After a month, I moved in to my own private residence in Cascade and continued to conduct research from there. This was largely because while I was, and continue to be, exceedingly thankful for all that Frank had done for me, I had also come to the realisation that Norfolk Island was an exceptionally faction-riddled community and that living with him (as opposed to visiting him) was fuelling suspicions of me among some of his peers who stood in opposition to his political views.

In around May 2007, I had met my partner Haylee and had moved in to a house in Buck’s Point with her. Over this time I conducted participant observation by observing interactions between residents in public spaces, attending family gatherings, picnics, barbecues, and parties. I visited the pubs, sporting clubs and RSL where I socialised with residents young and old. I attended a considerable number of Island tours, museums and tourist shows. I also participated in and observed public events including public meetings, organised performances and re-enactments by members of the resident population and tourists, school functions, community organised plays and sporting matches. Most importantly, and in step with Norfolk Island tradition, I spent long periods of time visiting people in their homes. I have supplemented my ethnographic data arising from my
anthropological fieldwork with extensive archival research. Much of what Norfolk Islanders told me about themselves invoked their sense of history, so in order to understand these linkages I have read government reports, submissions to inquiries, correspondence extensive newspaper archive research, conversations with local historians, land grants documents, legislation tables, and Norfolk Island and Commonwealth Hansard.

For immigration purposes, my own position as a researcher on the Island put me into the category of a T.E.P. or a Temporary Entry Permit holder. Such permits entitle the applicant to work and stay on the Island for a period of twelve months, after which it is necessary to either reapply or leave the Island. The Island’s separate immigration system means that Australians and New Zealanders do not have an automatic right to residency and must go through a restrictive process in order to become one. This generally takes around six to seven years. The permit system on Norfolk Island, as of the *Norfolk Island Immigration Act* 1980 (Nlk), also makes distinctions regarding residency status. T.E.Ps are also necessary in order to work on the Island for any amount of time.16 My position as ‘a T.E.P’, as those in my position were often called, did not go unnoticed and placed me roughly at the bottom of Island residents’ hierarchies of belonging. There was a clear divide between those whose residency status marks them as having a degree of permanence within the community and those seen as itinerant workers, Island residents generally make less effort to make long-term relationships with the Island’s itinerant workers in particular. Nevertheless, as I began working on the Island – both in a capacity as a researcher and in paid employment – and made it clear to people that I would be there for an extended period, residents began to open up more with me. Since my 2007 fieldwork trip, I have made two further visits to the Island from late December to January in 2009 and 2010. Since my 2007 fieldwork trip, I have maintained regular email and Facebook contact with some of my informants and friends on Norfolk Island, and I have sent as much of my work as possible to informants those who have been interested in reading it.

In total I conducted 60 recorded, semi-structured interviews with 44 respondents. Interviewees were chosen to represent as wide a cross-section of the community as possible, based on age, time spent living on the Island, political views, knowledge and occupations.

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16 If a T.E.P. holder intends to stay for a longer period and eventually gain residency, then they must apply for a General Entry Permit (G.E.P). A G.E.P holder is entitled to stay on the Island for a further four years, but must still possess a job. After four years holding a G.E.P, the applicant is able to apply for permanent the status of Resident (permanent residency) (Administration of Norfolk Island 2006).
12 respondents identified as Islander women, 18 as Islander men, 5 as Mainlander men, and 7 as Mainlander women. Of the Mainlanders interviewed, 3 of the men and 4 of the women were currently married to, or had been married to, Islanders and most of these people were interviewed with their spouses. Interview durations ranged from 35 mins to 4 hours. I also conducted 18 follow-up interviews with key informants, who thankfully had the time and patience to sit with me for long hours talking about their lives and the Island and were available to answer many of my questions. I conducted recorded interviews with two 21-30 year olds; five 31-40 year olds, four 41-50 year olds, ten 51-60 year olds, eight 61-70 year olds, seven 70-81 year olds, four 81-90 year olds and; one 91-100 year old.

In addition to recorded interviews, I conducted semi-structured unrecorded interviews with an additional 25 residents. At times I have regretted not recording these additional interviews as I needed to write down or recall all of what was said, however informants were often more candid in their discussions when they were not being recorded; an indication of both the awkwardness that using a voice recorder can cause, and for some, the extent to which the Island’s past few years of media attention had made residents wary of being quoted verbatim. Some of my more interesting conversations began only when they knew I had turned the recorder off, and regularly my informants would ask me not record some of their statements.

All interviewees have been given pseudonyms in this thesis and many have had minor details about their lives (location of dwelling on the Island, precise birth date, precise occupation) removed or changed in order to ensure their anonymity. This was a conscious choice of mine, made in the early planning of my fieldwork. Confidentiality and anonymity were strong departmental values among my postgraduate colleagues at the time of my commencement. I built these values into my initial Human Ethics Research Application, which amounted to a formalisation of the restrictions on how I could relay my research findings. Overall these circumstances substantially shaped my research experience, and in particular determined the conditions under which I could write about the people I had studied. There was strong bureaucratic imperative to continue following the data-gathering and reporting process I had laid out in the initial UWA Human Research Ethics Application.
In hindsight, and under free conditions, I would have elected to use people’s names. Nevertheless, a significant number of Island residents had nevertheless agreed to be recorded only on the basis of ensured anonymity. Other respondents, particularly elder islanders that were used to speaking of/for the community, were more than happy for me to use their real names in any publications, but it seemed to me to be a cumbersome type of ethnography where every person needed a footnote to describe whether the name I used was their actual name or one I had chosen for them. The pseudonyms I have chosen are typical male and female Anglo-Australian given names that are commonly used on Norfolk Island.

There are difficulties associated with disguising people’s identities in a small community, and I have attempted to disguise persons as much as possible, especially if they had specified that they did not want to be linked to some of the information they gave, or if I believed it could have negative consequences were their identity revealed. As an author, maintaining a balance between safeguarding individual identities and communicating the specificities of people’s family and social affiliations was complicated. When facing the limitations of anonymity, it was difficult to convey a sense of the unique personality and character of the people I encountered, which was one of the more celebrated aspects of Norfolk Island’s social landscape. Where possible, I have preserved participants’ family names to retain the general sense of association with old island families which is so important for Norfolk Islanders to this day.

**Limits of Study**

This thesis focuses primarily on Islanders by the ‘Pitcairn Descent’ definition outlined above, and there are a number of problems with this that I must declare fully in this introduction. There is a risk I can give the impression that people who have more recently migrated and settled on the Island (Mainlanders) do not share an abiding sense of attachment and belonging to Norfolk Island. The Mainlanders I spoke to often declared that their sense of attachment and emotional connection to the Island was often unrecognised or dismissed by Islanders. It is important to note that Islanders do not hold feelings of love and attachment to the Island in monopoly. This has never been my intention in this thesis, and in fact I recorded a diversity of sentiments regarding the Island
among non-Pitcairn Descendants that indicate their loyalty to the Island and its people as home. In fact, the strength of some Norfolk Islanders’ assertions of primary attachments are often detrimental to other residents who feel that their sense of belonging has been devalued by those who assert the primacy of descent from Pitcairn settlers as a form of belonging to place. I have tried throughout this thesis to draw attention to the fine line between sentimental attachments, expressions of primary connections, and more discriminatory and chauvinistic attitudes. I have, however, largely centred this thesis on the experiences of Pitcairn Descendants. This decision was largely based on my wish to enquire into the primacy that Norfolk Islanders place on their descent and the extent to which this indicated a consciousness of settlement as a continuing basis for creating hierarchies of attachment to Norfolk Island.

**Thesis Structure**

Norfolk Islanders have established a sense of nativeness to Norfolk Island, and this sense of nativeness has developed around questions of what rights Norfolk Islanders have to the Island, who belongs to the Island, and arguments over how and by whom the Island and its population is governed. My aim throughout this thesis is to outline the ways that Islanders construct belonging and a native identity in the context of their relationships with the various others against (or with) which they define and situate themselves.

Islands, as McCall (1994) notes, are finite terrestrial spaces in which a heightened sense of land as a “limited good” needing to be carefully managed and negotiated predominates among their populations. Land ownership and use has always been a central concern and site of contestation on Norfolk Island. Chapters two and three approach Norfolk Islander’s interests in land and property from two different angles. In chapter two, I discuss the arguments between Islanders and those that have governed them over who Norfolk Island belongs to and the conditions of the Pitcairn Descendants’ occupancy of Norfolk Island. Island oral histories present a narrative of their resettlement on Norfolk Island as a gift from Queen Victoria. This claim of having been given the land has been expressed within unequal structural relations with both the British and Australian Governments, who at various points in time have contested or offered alternative (generally legal) definitions of how Norfolk Islanders are related to Norfolk Island. I use the anthropological literature on
the gift to consider the ways that Norfolk Islanders have formed a symbolic relation with that land, but as a site in which Norfolk Islanders have attempted to manage their relationships to the two nations that they have been a part of; Australia and Britain. In doing so, I offer an alternative construction of Norfolk Islanders’ relations with land and with outside power that focuses on the personal relationships established through transfers of land from the Crown to the Pitcairn settlers. Islanders often express their political relationships to Australia as though the Island is being physically pulled in different directions and the metaphor of the gift has been particularly used as a strategic vehicle for claiming various degrees of distance from Australian governance, or as preface to statements about the Island’s autonomy vis-à-vis other regional powers.

While chapter two explains and contextualises the wider political disputes that Norfolk Islanders have engaged in regarding the ownership of the Island, in chapter three, I discuss the role of intergenerational property transmission as material markers of family continuity and as a connection to the original settlers of Norfolk Island. Norfolk Islanders’ historical associations with the land, recorded in historical and legal documents of ownership, are one of the primary means through which Islanders assert the continuity of their family connections to Norfolk Island and also the means by which future continuity can be practically ensured. Following the trend of chapter two, chapter three also engages with the anthropological literature on property relations and exchange to account for the role that the granting of land based on descent had on creating enduring forms of difference between Islanders and others. This again implicates Norfolk Islander’s relations with others – such as British and Australian colonial authorities – as playing a constituent role in the ways that their identities as native to Norfolk Island are expressed today.

In chapter four, I discuss Islanders’ connections to place and to their ancestors who settled the Island, but approach the issue through the lens of commemorative practices and social memory. Islanders’ sense of nativeness to Norfolk Island rests in their abilities to remember their ancestors’ settlement in a particular way and to project these ideas onto their identities as Norfolk Islanders in the present. On the 8th of June every year, Norfolk Islanders take part in a re-enactment ceremony and communal picnic in celebration of the settlement of the Pitcairn Islanders on Norfolk. This commemoration plays a role in confirming Norfolk Islanders’ historical relationships to the Island and their understandings of their originality to Norfolk Island. Using historical and anthropological theories of collective (or social)
memory, I approach Bounty Day as an explicit performance of continuity of settlement and a means by which Islanders connect themselves to a settlement narrative through embodied performance. In particular, I focus on how the popular celebration of Bounty Day produces (and reproduces) a consciousness of ‘firstness’ and nativeness among its performers, and in doing so also reproduces the categories ‘Islander’ and ‘Mainlander’ as relational identities that coincide with the categories of ‘native’ and ‘settler’. The ways in which this firstness and nativeness is performed has shifted in relation to historical contingencies and the changing others to which Norfolk Islanders contrast themselves.

In chapter five, I tackle a central question of how Norfolk Islanders understand their relationship with the place their ancestors settled and the meanings this settlement is given in the active expression of a native connection to place in the present. Norfolk Islanders do not have a singular idea of how they are related to Norfolk Island and most Islanders would certainly not self-identify as ‘indigenous’. I encountered a highly variable set of sentiments of attachments to place and community. Most, however, agreed that Norfolk Island was their homeland and claimed that possessing Pitcairn Islander descent denotes that one is a member of a particular group that is known to have a strong historical association with the Island. The emphasis on firstness and descent in Islanders’ claims to belong therefore make recent anthropological discussions of indigeneity ‘good to think with’. I use recent anthropological discussions of indigeneity to theorise how Islander identity has developed through particular historical, relational processes of boundary creation and ethnogenesis.

Despite the structured unity and similarity expressed in the Bounty (Anniversary) Day commemoration, the day-to-day implications of the distinctions between Norfolk Islanders and their others are far from straightforward. In chapter six, I discuss how Norfolk Islanders and other long-term residents transact words in Norf’k and English as a means of exchanging recognition of their relationships with each other. In doing so, local actors use Norf’k and English to communicate their concepts about who belongs and who does not in particular social situations.

In chapter seven I discuss Islanders’ relationships to the Australian Government through the lens of their understandings of autonomy and self-government. Norfolk Island’s self-governance arrangements with the Commonwealth grant the Island legislature considerable autonomy and this autonomy is expressed most explicitly in the creation of local legislation.
I use local debates about compulsory seatbelt legislation and taxation as a means of locating Islander’s political relations with the Australian state within wider abstracted debates about their own sense of autonomy from others. Norfolk Islanders’ relationships with the Australian state alternate between engagement and resistance, and notions of territoriality and belonging are routed through the various claims that Islanders make of or against Canberra. Many Islanders’ continuing beliefs that control in territory and territorial separateness are inherently tied in with their sense of self and the construction of Norfolk Island as a place to call home and in which to live authentically.

I use chapter eight to reflect on Islanders’ awareness of their historical and contemporary occupation of Norfolk Island and the role of memory and historical documentation in Islanders’ constructions of belonging. In conclusion, I argue that Norfolk Islanders’ sense of being native to Norfolk Island rests not in being original to place, but in the multiple means by which they remember their ancestors’ settlement. Settlement, I conclude, is an ongoing process marked by the means in which Islanders and others record and remember the past.
CHAPTER TWO

An Island Gift

Everyone knows that Norfolk Island is inhabited, mainly, by the descendants of some of the mutineers of the ship Bounty...but it is not generally known under what circumstances, or for what reasons, and under what conditions their removal from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island was made...The present-day visitor to Norfolk Island has all these questions very easily answered and settled for him by the Islanders. They claim, in fact, an absolute ownership of Norfolk Island. I think, however, it will be seen upon careful investigation of such original records as remain, that there is no clear, equitable, and certainly no regular, legal, foundation for such claim (Bladen 1906:1).

The Queen Victoria Garden

On the 24th May 2009 a respected Norfolk Islander elder named Marie Bailey held a function to celebrate the opening of her ‘Queen Victoria Garden’. The garden was constructed on a section of Marie’s own land situated on a prominent corner just out of Burnt Pine. The area was planted with Royal Poinciana (delonix regia) trees and dotted with beds of native and exotic flora, which included a breadfruit tree. The land upon which the garden was constructed was granted to her ancestor, Emily Christian, who married George Bailey in 1877, a blacksmith and builder who was one of the first non-Pitcairn settlers to the Island.

The centrepiece of the garden is an octagonal gazebo inscribed with the names of the eight original Pitcairn families who were granted plots of land on Norfolk (figure 2.1). In the centre of the gazebo is an octagonal, lacquered tablet with newspaper clippings about Queen Victoria arranged underneath. Amidst these clippings is a hand-written letter signed by eight male Norfolk Island Elders and addressed to the British Colonial office shortly after Queen Victoria’s death in 1901. It expresses Norfolk Islanders’ intentions to construct
a monument to their beloved monarch in celebration of her life. The writers of the letter asking the Crown to send them a life-sized bronze statue of Queen Victoria. Despite the pleading tone of the letter, the statue was never sent and the monument the letter refers to was never built.¹ At the centre of the small pagoda sits a glass cabinet containing a far more modest statuette of the monarch than that which was requested by Islanders over 100 years ago. Her bust displays a mildly unimpressed gaze that greets any visitors entering the memorial (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1: Gazebo in Queen Victoria Garden. 2010. Middlegate, Norfolk Island. Photo by Author.

Fixed into the table are quotes from the original British Orders in Council that prepared Norfolk Island for the arrival to the Pitcairners. These Orders separated the Island from Australia constitutionally and granted certain rights and responsibilities for the new Governor of the Island, Sir William Denison.

And it is hereby ordered and declared that, from the date aforesaid, the said island, called Norfolk Island, shall be a distinct and separate settlement; the affairs of which until further Order is made in that behalf by Her Majesty,

¹ Part of the letter reads; “We think that a life-size bronze statue of Her Majesty Queen Victoria at the age of 37 years, which was her age when we came to Norfolk Island, is the most suitable memorial that can be raised to her memory on Norfolk Island”.
be administered by a Governor to be for that purpose appointed by Her Majesty, with the advice and consent of Her Privy Council.

And whereas the inhabitants of the said island are chiefly emigrants from Pitcairn’s Island in the Pacific Ocean, who have been established in Norfolk Island under our authority, and who have been accustomed in the territory from which they have removed to govern themselves by laws and usages adapted to their own state of society, you [the Governor] are, as far as practicable, and as far as may be consistent with the regulation next preceding, to preserve such laws and usages, and to adapt the authority vested in you by the said recited Order in Council to their preservation and maintenance (emphasis in original).

The phrase “distinct and separate settlement” was indented, enlarged and highlighted, which marked it as significant. On another panel is an additional letter by B. Toup Nicholas. It reads:

...you will be pleased to understand that Norfolk Island cannot be ‘ceded’ to the Pitcairn Islanders, but that grants will be made of allotments of land to the different families, and I am desired further to make known to you that it is not at present intended to allow any other class of settlers to reside or occupy land on the Island.

Many of the remaining newspaper clippings and quotes on the table tell a story of a relationship between Norfolk Islanders and Queen Victoria, many of the quotes skirting around the central issue of the legal and administrative conditions upon which the Pitcairn settlers occupied Norfolk Island.
Figure 2.2: Statuette of Queen Victoria 2009. Middlegate, Norfolk Island. Photo by Haylee Fieldes, 2009.
Figure 2.3: Queen Victoria Garden: Details of the story of Pitcairners’ settlement on Norfolk and their relationship to Queen Victoria. Middlegate, Norfolk Island. Photo by Author 2010.

Marie is a monarchist and expresses her continuing feelings of a relationship with the Crown by memorialising the figure of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria holds special importance for many Norfolk Islanders; her personage is intimately connected with local understandings of the very place of Islanders on Norfolk Island. As some oral histories of the Island recount, it was due to her kindness that the Pitcairn Islanders were able to settle on Norfolk Island. For other Islanders, particularly those in older generations, the kindness of Queen Victoria to the Pitcairn settlers was more specifically captured by the Norf’lk phrase “Kwiin Victoria giw et f’aklan”; that is ‘Queen Victoria gave it [Norfolk Island] to us’.

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how Islanders’ relationships to the Island have been shaped and asserted relationally in their contestations with others over Island governance. While Islanders are largely united in characterising initial Crown grants of land to their ancestors
as gifts, they often argue among themselves and with various Australian and British Government officials over the pivotal question of whether Queen Victoria, the highest authority in the British state, gave the entire landmass of Norfolk Island to their ancestors in 1856 in addition to these individual grants of land. It is important to note that however these arguments over territoriality and relationships to states have been waged, Islanders’ historical claims that the island was gifted to them in its entirety are one of the enduring means through which they have sought recognition of their relationship with the Island and autonomy from other governments. In claiming the Island as a gift, some Islanders have claimed not only that the entire landmass land was given to them, but also made an assertion of territoriality which, following Sack (1983), is an attempt to affect influence or control various actions and interactions by asserting control over a geographical space. 2 I take an anthropological approach to gifts and their important role in forming and maintaining relationships to explain how some Islanders’ claims of ‘Island-as-gift’ are an invocation of their proprietorship and territoriality over the island. Additionally I discuss these claims as a key site through which Islanders have managed their relationships with the various states that have sought to govern them.

My discussion in this chapter is informed by my ethnographic material, such as oral histories I recorded from elderly Islanders, however the following is chiefly an ethno-historical account of the explicit claims to rights over the Island that Islanders have made against the Australian and British governments. I make extensive use of archival sources, historical correspondence documents, reports and submissions to commissions of inquiry, sources handed to me from Islanders’ vast private collections, alongside secondary historical sources and interview material. With a focus on the junctures in which Islanders have claimed the Island as a gift, the time frame I cover in this chapter is from shortly before 1856 to 1979. This covers the period from the settlement of the Pitcairners to self-government.

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2 I use this term instead of the related term ‘sovereignty’ as ‘territoriality’ expresses a sense of control over a bounded space that fits more specifically with the claims Islanders make through the language of property. Territoriality not only encompasses ‘sovereignty’ but also property in land and personal space, and the bounding of space, making it more versatile term for discussing the various purposes that claims to ownership of the Island through gift have been put toward.
The history of Norfolk Island since the arrival of the Pitcairners is richly dotted with episodes of “civilised disputations” (Bulbeck 1978:6) between Islanders and external authorities, whether they be in Great Britain or Australia. At key junctures in Norfolk Island’s constitutional history, Islanders have reasserted claims that the Island was gifted to them. The conditions upon which the Pitcairners came to occupy Norfolk have also played a fundamental role in the ways in which some Islanders have confronted attempts of the Australian state to place Norfolk Island within its jurisdictional borders. In the 1960s and 1970s, Islanders were faced with the Australian Government’s moves to alter the Island’s taxation system. These moves were resisted by a considerable percentage of Norfolk Island residents (both of Islander and Mainlander descent). Mainlander businesspeople who had taken interest in the Island began to lend additional support to Islanders’ claims in order to ratify successive political positions that were in opposition to the Australian Commonwealth’s attempts to assert jurisdictional influence over the Island, particularly in areas of taxation, immigration, land matters and electoral rights. These persons drew on existing arguments of Islander rights dating back to settlement, effectively articulating issues of Island taxation with ongoing disputes over territoriality and legitimacy of Australian rule that derived from an original gift. This argument reached a critical point in the 1960’s and 1970’s when the Australian Government became increasingly concerned with Island-based
tax evasion activities and were under pressure from the United Nations to make justifications for its remaining non-self-governing territories. The actions taken by the Australian Government to resolve the ambiguity in Norfolk Island’s constitutional status culminated in a Royal Commission and finally in Australia awarding the Island with a system of partial self-governance in 1979.

**An Island for an Island?**

From around 1840, Pitcairn Island’s finite environmental resources had begun to dwindle, causing famine, water shortages, and insufficient land for the coming generations. The Pitcairn community petitioned the British Government to relocate them from their ‘Rock in the West’ that had been their home since 1790. Despite their pressing need to alleviate their material hardships, the Islanders turned down a number of offers of land from the Crown, deeming them inappropriate for a variety of reasons – including the presence of other natives in the areas suggested, the presence of convicts, and that the proposed locations were outside the political boundaries of British Empire (see, Bladen 1906).

The Pitcairn community had already experienced a short period of resettlement in Tahiti during 1931 and 1932. This British-sponsored relocation in Tahiti was ultimately a failure and the Pitcairners, suffering from disease and disillusionment, had returned to Pitcairn Island in less than a year and stated they would not readily leave Pitcairn again.3 Overall, the Tahiti experience re-enforced the community’s will to remain isolated from other groups, but this will to remain apart had to be weighed up against the viability of living on Pitcairn among its diminishing resources. British authorities eventually suggested Norfolk Island as a suitable place for the Pitcairn Islanders’ resettlement. The prison settlement on Norfolk was abandoned in 1855, and the Island offered an opportunity for the Pitcairners to live in relative isolation from the world, while also providing the necessary resources and unoccupied territory for the population to expand. Importantly, Norfolk was also a British territory, allowing the Pitcairners to maintain their status as British subjects. The conviction of the Island’s inhabitants that they were leaving behind their home permanently rendered this decision highly significant.

3 According to Currey (1959:345), they were not in favour of moving from Pitcairn in the first place but did so because they were “ultra-sensitive to what they gathered…were the sentiments of the British Government” on the matter.
The Pitcairn Islanders expected to be able to live on Norfolk Island in much the same way as they had on Pitcairn. Shortly before this resettlement to Norfolk, the Queen’s representative to Pitcairn Island, Captain S.G. Fremantle, relayed the expectations of the Pitcairners to the British Government in September 1855 to “be allowed to live on Norfolk Island in the same seclusion from the rest of the world as they have hitherto done at Pitcairn” (Fremantle, cited in British Parliamentary Papers 1857a:27). Pitcairn’s physical remoteness had largely shaped its solitary relationship with the rest of the world, but the British Navy had also contributed to this ‘isolation’ by taking the Pitcairners under their ward and sheltering them from ‘strangers’ (Dening 1992). By the 1830’s, the Pitcairn Islanders had begun to habitually invoke British patronage and protection from visiting naval captains (Nobbs 2006:36). In 1838 the Pitcairners formalised this patronage when they asked passing British Captain Elliot of the H.M.S. *Fly* to proclaim Pitcairn Island as part of the British Empire. The Pitcairners had elected to join the British Empire largely because they believed such allegiance would allow them avoid the predations of “lawless [primarily American] strangers on whale ships” (Elliot (1939) cited in Nicolson and Davies...
Elliot drew up a set of simple laws and regulations for Pitcairn Island and it is from this point on that the Island was regarded as a British Crown Colony by the Pitcairners (Nicolson and Davies 1997:162). Despite their status as British subjects, the Pitcairners had considerable autonomy from Britain; interventions executed by agents of the British state were generally made only at their request.

The Gift and the Law

The British government facilitated the removal of the Islanders from Pitcairn Island in May 1856, which was one of the first British government-sponsored relocations of an entire Pacific Island population (Maude 1959:138; 1968:315-342). The Pitcairners arrived at Norfolk Island aboard the Morayshire on the 8th of June 1856. That morning they were ferried ashore to the Island’s convict-built pier, seasick and homesick. The caretakers of the Island and the few remaining convicts from the previous settlement greeted the Pitcairners on shore and showed them to the vacated convict buildings of Kingston that were to be their temporary dwellings.

Through the process of state-sponsored resettlement the Pitcairners had entered into a different constellation of relations with government and in particular, far closer ties to the Australian colonies. This relationship to government was laid out in a British Order in Council on the 24th June 1856 (see appendix B1 – Orders in Council). While the Order in Council of 1856 stated that the Pitcairn settlers should be entitled to “govern themselves by laws and usages adapted to their own state of society”, it also indicated that the Governor of New South Wales (NSW), who at the time was Sir William Denison, would take up the duty of the Governor of Norfolk Island, and would possess final authority to

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4 A Crown colony was a colony of the British Empire ruled by an appointed Governor appointed by the British Crown. Formal cession of the Island to Britain did not occur until 1887. As Currey (1959:356) states “British policy in the South Pacific in the first half of the 19th century was opposed to the assumption of the responsibilities in such a relationship”.

5 Historian Raymond Nobbs (2006) states that Norfolk Island was strategically important to the British Government in reaction to increased French expansion in the Pacific (2006:58). However, he puts forward his theory that a complementary reason for the Pitcairners’ resettlement on Norfolk Island was that its Governor and the Governor of New South Wales, Sir William Denison also viewed the settlement in terms of a social experiment (2006:47-51). Nobbs (2006) describes the settlement as a “benevolent experiment to relocate the ‘children of Eden’” (2006:51). While his evidence for this ‘experiment’ hypothesis is a little scanty (consisting primarily of a number of uses of the word by Governor Denison) Bladen (1906) too quotes a dispatch from Denison in which Denison suggests “that Norfolk Island should not form part of the adjacent colonies. The effect of making it part of these...[would affect] the experiment which is now about to be made” (emphasis added, Denison, cited in Bladen 1906:6).
‘preserve and maintain’ the newly settled group. The NSW/NI Governor’s legal authority over the Pitcairners represented a significant change in the power relations between the British and the Pitcairners as the arrangement gave the Governor of New South Wales executive powers over land use and law making.

Islanders first voiced their argument that the Island was gifted to them in a clash with British officials about differing forms of land tenure. One year after their arrival on Norfolk Governor Denison dispatched surveyors to Norfolk to divide parts of the Island between the Pitcairn families. The Pitcairners told these surveyors that their help was not needed and that they would prefer to work the land in common. When the surveyors returned to New South Wales having not carried out their initial orders, another group of surveyors were sent by Denison, this time with his written authorisation to divide the Island. The heads of each Pitcairn family were to receive 50 acres of land and the rest would be held as Crown land, subject to further grants (see chapter three). The Pitcairn Islanders protested against this grant system, claiming that Queen Victoria gave the entire Island to them rather than just individual allotments, and indicated that they should retain control over the distribution of land.

None of the official correspondence concerning the transfer of Norfolk Island to the Pitcairners conclusively substantiates the Pitcairn Settlers’ claims that the Island was ceded to them (see, British Parliamentary Papers 1857a, 1857b, 1863), yet recorded evidence of the Pitcairners’ views on the matter suggests that this is what many had come to believe (see in particular, Belcher 1871). How they came to hold this belief has been the source of speculation among many historians (see for instance, Belcher 1871; Bladen 1906; Currey 1959; Nicolson and Davies 1997; Nobbs 1984, 2006). Most have intimated that it was a result of a number of ‘human’ factors such as considerable confusion between the Pitcairn Islanders and British representatives in the early stages of planning the resettlement. In 1854, two years before the Pitcairners abandoned their island, B. Toup Nicholas had written to the Pitcairn Islanders regarding the terms and conditions of their resettlement on Norfolk, explicitly stating that the Island could not be ‘ceded to the Pitcairn Islanders’, but that land would be made available for their use (Nicholas, in British Parliamentary Papers 1857a:11).
Between 1854 and 1856, the Pitcairn Islanders became convinced that Norfolk Island would be theirs completely. Some authors have suggested that British officials may have verbally exaggerated the Islanders’ entitlements to encourage them to leave Pitcairn (see, Nobbs 2006:37-39). Currey (1959) Nobbs (1984, 2006) and Belcher (1871) additionally cite the Pitcairn Islanders’ likely confusion over the legal definition of ‘cession’ and ‘possession’. Currey, for instance, asserts: “[c]ession implies much more in law than possession, no matter how lawful, but laymen, let alone the rank and file of Pitcairn’s, might well have failed to recognise the distinction” (Currey 1959:361). Bladen (1906:2) states that “it is easy to see how these unsophisticated people would give the most liberal interpretation to any expressed intentions on the part of the British Government...how naturally they would concede that the exclusive occupancy of Pitcairn would be continued at Norfolk”. O’Collins (2002) argues that the Pitcairners felt it necessary to claim complete ownership of Norfolk Island to reclaim what they had felt they had lost in the abandonment of Pitcairn Island (2002:5-6). In addition to some of the above authors’ assessments, Raymond Nobbs (2006:32) suggests that his ancestor, George Hunn Nobbs, may have been mistaken about what was being offered to the Pitcairners after having been granted audience with Queen Victoria about the matter of their transfer in 1853. As leader of the Pitcairn community, G.H Nobbs may have been in a position to convince other Pitcairners that the community had a personal relationship with the Crown and that the Island was to be a gift. For whatever reasons they initially considered the Island theirs, they continued to claim it as a gift at various junctures primarily because these claims were means to politically contest their positions as subjects of various governments.

The matter was further compounded by Islanders’ insistence that they were handed the articles of cession for Norfolk Island after a visit from the Queen’s representative, Captain Fremantle, shortly after their resettlement on Norfolk on the 23rd June 1856 (see, Belcher 1871:317). While this letter primarily listed restrictions on land use – including limiting the Islanders’ power to distribute land as they saw fit – the Pitcairners generally welcomed the letter because they believed it to be a formal cession document that stated the conditions of their occupancy of the Island (Nobbs 1984:62). The letter – often called the ‘Fremantle letter’ – was lost within years of having been read to the Pitcairners, which

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6 Historian Raymond Nobbs (1984, 2006) offers the most detailed scenarios that could potentially account for these misunderstandings.
perhaps contributed to widespread speculations as to its content. The belief in the existence of a formal cession document and various speculations regarding its content continued to be passed down in Island oral histories, fuelling the resilience of Islanders’ initial beliefs that Norfolk was rightfully theirs (see appendix B2 for Fremantle letter, appendix B3 for declarations signed in 1898 by Pitcairn Islanders (most original settlers) insisting a cession document was handed to them when they landed on the Island in 1856). The ‘Fremantle letter’ was relocated in the 1960s and was found to be absent of any information specifying the Island’s legal cession to the Pitcairners (Tiakihana 1966:79-82).

The Islanders’ initial claims that the Island was a gift seemed to be an effort to ensure the Island’s unalienated territory would remain under their control and that they would then be free to allocate property as the community grew. The understanding among some Islanders that the Island in its entirety was a gift fulfilled an immediate material need of the community to possess rights of control over the place in which they resided and invoked what they perceived as a right to the same autonomy that they had possessed on Pitcairn.

As O’Collins (2002) argues, the Pitcairners had to “insist on their complete ‘ownership’ [of Norfolk] or their traumatic abandonment of Pitcairn Island would have been for nothing” (2002:5-6). These claims began to take another form in 1896, when Norfolk Islanders were first faced with the prospect of becoming ‘Australians’. While Australians also shared a legal status as ‘British subjects’, (a status that did not change until 1987) a key difference was that Norfolk Islanders believed that their subjecthood was the result of a direct relationship to the Crown (founded as an “island gift” to Queen Victoria. Vocal Islanders protested this change of civil status by claiming that they wished to remain British subjects, and that one of the central conditions of their transfer to Norfolk Island from Pitcairn was an expectation that they would remain as such. We can take this as meaning not that their position as British subjects was directly under threat, as indeed they would have remained British subjects even if they became Australian citizens, but rather that their relationship with Britain was to be mediated by a third party, Australia, which possessed its own de facto citizenship after 1901 (de jure after 1949). Islanders protesting these shifts in status sent a

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7 For instance, in a submission to the Royal Commission into Matters Relation to Norfolk Island by “Grannie” Quintal claimed she “…heard from her old aunt that a document was given to Fredrick Young…[later] a man from Australia came and asked if he could take a look at the document …[and after reading the document he said to the people “I think I will take the document back to Australia with me”…and he was never heard from again (Quintal, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975c:320).
series of letters and petitions to Her Majesty and her representatives calling for the preservation of the Island’s constitutional status as a Crown colony. In addition they claimed that all of the unalienated land on Norfolk Island remained a gift from Queen Victoria and Australia had no right to intervene in their affairs (see appendix B3).

Figure 2.6: Statement from George Martin Frederick Young and Thomas Buffett c.1880 in which they claim that a cession document was taken from them. Source: Private collection, Norfolk Island.
Gifts

Before discussing the above claims, I consider what gifts are and how they affect social relationships. Ideas of gifts and relationships can then be applied to the ways that Norfolk Islanders have managed their relationships to various governments and the Crown. A gift is a voluntary transferral of property in a thing from one possessor to another, whereby the thing transferred continues in part to be associated with the giver and where the giver has no expectations of immediate return. Mauss (1969:10-11) made the renowned claim that there are three obligations attached to the gift; the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to return the gift. However, in terms of the current discussion, the most pertinent aspect of Mauss’s (1969) *Essai sur le don* is his argument that objects come to be associated with persons in the course of gift exchange. As Mauss notes (in relation to the Maori *hau*):

…the bond created by [the exchange of] things is in fact a bond created between persons, since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself (Mauss 1969:10).

Mauss claimed that when someone gives a gift to a person or group, they are giving something of themselves to another, which means that the thing given continues to be linked with the giver. So, in addition to a person having a relationship with the thing (i.e. property) they also have a relationship with the giver of the thing. Gregory (1982) has further worked with these concepts to theorise and oppose gifts and commodities. Commodities, he argues, are completely alienable from their original or subsequent owners, while gift objects continue to be associated with their donors and are therefore inalienably linked with those who have held and exchanged them (Gregory 1982:43). So, the difference between gifts and commodities for Gregory relates to the extent to which the objects being exchanged are personified or objectified (Gregory 1982:41-47).

Gifts create or maintain a relationship between the giver and receiver or are a means of recognising a relationship already existent (Caplow 1984; Carrier 1995; Mauss 1969). Gifts are media for creating and maintaining social relationships primarily because they represent the relationship in the form of an object (Gell 1999). By media, I refer to something that occupies a position midway between two or more parties in a relationship, but also something that acts as a means of transmitting additional information between these...
parties. In this sense, they are media through which relationships are constituted and made visible to others (Strathern 1988). While we cannot presume to understand what Pitcairners’ indigenous understanding of a gift was, we can infer that from many of the Pitcairners’ perspectives, the Island was considered a gift, and a gift that originated from the person of Queen Victoria. Islanders’ understandings of their relationship with the Crown were given material form and substance through the gifting of the Island to them by Queen Victoria.

The Pitcairners (or at least some of them) considered their move to Norfolk Island as a not entirely a one-sided bestowal upon them. There is evidence some Pitcairn Islanders believed that they would be forfeiting their rights to Pitcairn Island to the Crown in exchange for similar rights to Norfolk Island, including continued a relationship of considerable autonomy from the British state; an exchange of like for like. This comes across strongly in an 1898 letter from a group of 16 elders of the Norfolk Island community (many of which were born on Pitcairn), to the British Colonial Secretary (see appendix B3 for full letter). The signees declared that when they left Pitcairn:

…we were promised that we are to govern ourselves on Norfolk Island in the same manner as we were when residing on Pitcairn Island, by the election of our own Chief Magistrate and Councillors etc. As shown by the Order in Council bearing date June 24th 1856… the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island left that Island with the full understanding that on our arrival at Norfolk Island we should be granted other houses and live stocks in lieu of those left behind on Pitcairn Island.

Nevertheless, Islanders’ use of the term ‘gift’ in the majority of other instances of dispute indicates that overall they did not believe that their resettlement on Norfolk was merely an exchange of like for like, but part of an unfolding relationship that began on Pitcairn and would continue into the future. Authors have noted the Christian tradition of thinking of land as a gift from God (see, Brueggemann 1977), however, Islanders seemed to understand the Island as a gift of territory, but also a gift of self-government or control over territory.

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8 Attwood (2003:16) has also discovered land claims made by Aboriginal people against the state based on their mistaken beliefs to have entered into relationships of reciprocity with the Crown.
On the Relationship between Giver and Receiver

Because transactors exchange gifts on the basis of their relations with each other, gifts and counter gifts generally communicate something about the relationship between transactors (Carrier 1995; see also, Sahllins 1972:186) or that the relationship is of a certain kind (Caplow 1984). To understand the relationship between the Pitcairn settlers and visitors, it is necessary to examine some exchanges they had with passing captains on Pitcairn. While these exchanges indicated a considerable degree of hospitality on the part of the Pitcairners, most visiting British Captains to the Island noted that the Pitcairners often took much more than they gave and, according to Silverman (1967:100) a constituent part of the early Pitcairn economy consisted of charitable donations from passing captains. The Pitcairners soon gained a reputation as the 'beggars of the Pacific' (Silverman 1967:100). Passing British Captains considered the Pitcairners innocent and child-like, and repeatedly that this 'activated whatever glands of benevolence the ships' captains (and frequently the crews) might possess (Silverman 1967:100). The Pitcairners even began to address captains and the Queen as fathers and mothers respectively. Unbalanced gift exchange can often slip into relationships of patronage and exploitation (Graeber 2001) however Pitcairn Islanders were not averse to being under the Crown’s patronage, nor that of the British Admiralty. In fact, they expressed on numerous occasions a desire for such a relationship.

British Naval captains repeatedly reported that the Pitcairn Islanders expressed a deep-seated loyalty to the British Crown. The secretary of Admiral Moresby described the Pitcairn Islanders’ commemoration of the Queen in 1852 as “their grand day; it is kept up with feasting and dancing, and all sorts of merriment. Among the first questions everybody asks is, ‘How is her Majesty the Queen?’ (Letter from the Admiral’s Secretary, cited in Murray 1857 [1854]:215). This loyalty was expressed through the exchange of things as well as words. The Pitcairners’ adoration of Queen Victoria was most succinctly expressed

9 Mauss' primary assumption was that gifts must be reciprocated or returned. In Sahlins’ ‘spheres of exchange’ typology, the more balanced the exchanges are, the more they resemble barter or market exchanges, and the less work these exchanges do in creating or maintaining binding relationships. Graeber (2001) also argues that balanced reciprocity is not always conducive to constructing ongoing relationships from gift exchange. He, like Sahlins, argues that there are different expectations for reciprocity within some relationships of inequality (Graeber 2001). Graeber uses the example of giving coins to a beggar. It would be rare indeed for a beggar to then reciprocate by offering a return gift, and actually the initial giver would be likely to refuse such a gift were it to be offered. This is because it is only necessary to balance the exchange in certain circumstances, namely when there is some indication that the receiver of the gifts’ autonomy is at stake.
through a formal address of loyalty and an accompanying gift described in a letter from the Pitcairners to Her Majesty:

“...a small chest of drawes of our [Pitcairn Islanders] own manufacture from the Island wood : the native name of the dark wood is miro : the bottoms of the drawes is made of the breadfruit tree ; our means are very limited; and our mechanical skill also; and we will esteem it a great favour if your Majesty will accept it ; as a token of our loyalty and respect to our gracious Queen” (Hancock 1947:16).\textsuperscript{10}

Queen Victoria’s response was to send the Islanders a portrait of herself and her family, which was placed in the Island’s singing room and according to the Pitcairn Register, “all hastened to obtain a view of so great a treasure as the picture and gift of our much-loved Sovereign” upon its display (Pitcairn Island Register in, Murray 1857 [1854]:280-281).\textsuperscript{11}

These early gifts between the Pitcairn Islanders and the Queen were both sincere expressions of loyalty, and a form of reputation management, as the continued flow of material goods and gifts from benefactors in England was secured only through religious and patriotic displays that maintained their reputations as the most British place in the Pacific (see, Nobbs 1984::17). These series of gifts were also indicative of an unfolding relationship of reciprocity and familiarity that Islanders believed they had with Queen Victoria and the British Government. The community’s existence did not solely rest on the generosity of visitors, but the Pitcairners certainly became accustomed to being the objects of altruistic endowments (Silverman 1967; see also, Nobbs 1984).\textsuperscript{12}

Many Norfolk Islanders have continued to reciprocate in this relationship historically through displays of loyalty, allegiance and sacrifice to the Crown and through symbolic activities that draw on and accentuate continuing links between both Pitcairn and Norfolk Island and Britain. They treated their monarch as though they were partaking in a

\textsuperscript{10} Whether the author of the letter, George Hunn Nobbs (an English settler to Pitcairn; see Chapter 5) is referring to Pitcairners as natives is unclear. Miro is the Pitkern word for a type of tree (\textit{Thespesia populnea}), but the word is originally of Tahitian origin (see Ross and Moverly 1964:243).

\textsuperscript{11} This portrait has been passed down through one Norfolk Island family and remains mounted on a wall inside a Norfolk Island residence to this day.

\textsuperscript{12} Maude (1964:63-64) explains that the charity bestowed on the Pitcairners primarily came in the way of European material goods, particularly clothing. Nobbs (2006:32) notes that the Pitcairners were used to receiving gifts from powerful British figures who had taken a paternalistic interest in the Island. The Pitcairn Fund Committee and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge also took an interest in the community’s wellbeing and provided donations to the community which were used to buy tools to supplement their agricultural and whaling ventures (Silverman 1967:101).
continuing personal relationship with her. The personal aspect of this relationship did not completely disappear over the years since the original gift, as is indicated by the continuing loyalty and appeals to the Crown as a ‘known’ entity, and the continuing high regard that Islanders held for members of the Royal Family. As one unashamedly monarchist Islander has written, “…islanders always felt a very warm and a very personal gratitude to the Queen whom they felt had looked on them with very special favour in many small ways as well as making Norfolk Island available to them” (Christian-Bailey 1975). Islanders in their sixties or later often did not share such strong allegiance to the British Crown, but recalled their parents’ strong sense of Britishness and exceptional fondness for the monarchy. For instance, Chester, a Norfolk Islander in his mid-sixties, told me of his mother’s strong love of Queen Elizabeth II.

My mother, she worshipped the Queen, she was God to them people. We didn’t go to bed without saying our prayers and singing God Save the Queen. Each night, you just didn’t do it without that mate. Or sit down to a meal, very much so (emphasis in original, Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007).

Despite being a Territory of Australia, Island residents continue to sing God Save the Queen at public events rather than Advance Australia Fair, and some Islanders told me that they think of Queen Victoria rather than Queen Elizabeth II when they sing this anthem. Others recalled a sense of deference given to English people who visited the Island. Maggie, an Islander 74 years of age, told me that she was “brought up to be British…English, that’s it English. I used to be told “You listen to dem because they es Inglis salan [they are English people] (emphasis in original, Maggie, recorded interview 02/09/2007). On Pitcairn and Norfolk Island until recently, Islanders primarily represented themselves as English, while the identifiably Tahitian cultural practices associated with the Pitcairners’ Tahitian foremothers – such as tapa cloth production, Tahitian dancing, and separation on the basis of gender at mealtimes – though prevalent in the first generation of Pitcairners (Shapiro

13 For instance, a summary of a submission by A.I Buffett to the Royal Commission into Matters Relating to Norfolk Island states; “Her early recollections are of parents and paternal grandfather talking with older residents in terms of great appreciation of and devotion to Queen Victoria. This was because Queen Victoria gave Norfolk Island to the Pitcairn people” (Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975c:337). And later; “I do not believe, once being given a place, that it should have been withdrawn from these people or any people” (Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975c:341).

14 Inglis or English in Norf’k can either refer to people of English ethnicity, English as a language, or more generally an English-speaking person (including Australians and New Zealanders). Based on her earlier mention of British, it seems she was referring to nationality in this case.
1936:173-174), steadily declined in popularity. Based on his linguistic fieldwork on the Island in the 1950s, Flint (1979:296-297) noted that the material culture of Norfolk Islanders had shifted to resemble that of “many similar modern British communities”. Other authors have similarly noted that these shifts to British identification and cultural practices were largely due of close exchange relationships with the British (Maude 1964:63-64) but others also point to the persistence of deeper racism in the Pitcairn community since the early settlement on the Island (Dening 1992:336), and the brief resettlement in Tahiti (Maude 1968:301-304).

A close relationship with Britain was underscored in other ways, namely through symbolic practices and acts of sacrifice. Norfolk Islanders fought primarily in the Australian and New Zealand Armed Forces during World War I and II and had an unusually high level of defence force recruitment. According to the Norfolk Island RSL sub-branch, 81 out of 160 eligible men went to war in World War I, and 280 out of 365 eligible resident men (plus 8 women) served during World War II.15 Additionally, many elder Islanders I visited in my stay on Norfolk had portraits of Queen Elizabeth II hanging on their walls of their sitting rooms and told me they considered themselves British subjects rather than Australians.

Islanders’ relationships to the Crown are inextricably tied to their relationship to the ‘Island-as-gift’. If we think in terms of the Maussian gift, then it makes sense that Islanders would voraciously oppose their new relationship with Australia by claiming the Island was given to them. As I have shown, many Pitcairn Settlers believed they held a special relationship with the Crown and that their occupation and connections and proprietorship of Norfolk Island were authorised by the British Monarchy. The personal, subjective relationships and obligations attached to this gift were not transferrable like sovereignty. Hence while the Island was passed to Australia, Islanders still claimed a continuing relationship with Queen Victoria and therefore continued to consider themselves British subjects. As the gift of the Island was inalienably linked to the British Crown, it is through

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15 The links between enlistment and a continuing relationship with Britain were made explicit in a Sydney Morning Herald article on Norfolk Islanders enlisting for the World War I war effort. The writer recalls a speech given by Mr Cornelius Quintal, one of the last remaining Pitcairn settlers to Norfolk. Mr Quintal told the five Island recruits: “Be brave, for you are descended from the bravest men that ever lived. Your forefathers were the only men who ever took a British battleship...England forgave them, protected them, and gave them this beautiful island. Fight, boys, and win. God be with you” (S.C 1916 Sydney Morning Herald).
Continuing Claims of ‘Gift’

Since settlement, neither Queen Victoria nor any of her representatives or descendants has confirmed that the Island was a gift to the Pitcairners, so it seems that this belief may have been almost completely one-sided. Nevertheless, in successive instances when a decision has been made for the Island that is outside the control of residents, Islanders have made appeals to the British Crown prefaced by a reference to a historical gift from the Crown and have expressed claims of rightful ownership. The first was made in 1857 shortly after resettlement when the Pitcairn Islanders were first told that they were not free to divide the Island among themselves as they saw fit (Belcher 1871; Young 1894; Bladen 1906:9; Currey 1959-361; Nicolson and Davies 1997:205; O’Collins 2002-8; Hoare 2003:74-76; Nobbs 2006:41-58). The matter was again raised when the Melanesian Mission headquarters was relocated to Norfolk Island (Belcher 1871:313; Nobbs 2006:75-78; Hilliard 1978); again in 1897 when the Island was transferred from Britain to the colony of New South Wales (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1976:87; Nobbs 2006; Kerr 2009). Since joining the Australian Commonwealth, Islanders’ submissions to successive Australian Commissions of Inquiry have continued to raise these issues time and time again (Commonwealth of Australia 1921, 1926, 1976). From this point on, I will focus primarily on the claims that were made by groups of Pitcairners during and after British Authorities began to divest control of the Island to the NSW and the Australian Government.

Before the turn of the 19th century, the British Government exhibited a loss of interest in the Island and seemed eager to divest responsibility for its welfare to New South Wales. The New South Wales Governor grudgingly accepted the additional post of Governor of Norfolk Island in 1896 (O’Collins 2002:14-15). In 1896 the new Governor of New South Wales revised the existing laws of the Island amidst complaints by Islanders and visitors that the rule of law was not being upheld on Norfolk (Hoare 2003:105-106). The powers that the locally elected Chief Magistrate held were reinvested in an external official,

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16 Hoare (2003:105) states that the particular objection that the Governor had with the locally elected Chief Magistrate was that he had authorised the occupation land without the Governor’s approval.
appointed by the Australian Government (O’Collins 2002:14). This move drew sharp opposition from many Islanders as it removed the local judicial and executive powers of the Pitcairn community and effectively revoked the measure of self-government initially stipulated in the 1856 Order in Council (Hoare 2003:105-106). Laws relating to universal suffrage that had been in place since Pitcairn were also withdrawn. In 1897, the original 1856 Order in Council was completely revoked and all powers of governance over the Island were transferred to the New South Wales Government.

In 1901, the new nation of Australia was born and an old queen died. Queen Victoria passed away on January 22nd 1901, very shortly after the date the states of Australia were federated. In 1856, Australians and Norfolk Islanders were like-minded in thinking of themselves as British citizens, though their affiliations diverged as Australia neared federation. At a time when Australia was looking toward its future as its own sovereign state, Norfolk Islanders maintained that they were first and foremost British subjects. As Norfolk Island was still a ‘distinct and separate settlement’ by Order in Council, it did not become part of Australia at federation, leaving the question of its exact status somewhat puzzling for the new nation’s officials. Discussions among NSW parliamentarians and newly elected Federal parliamentarians convey a sense of confusion over what kind of territory Norfolk Island was, to whom it belonged (the State of New South Wales or the Commonwealth), and what was to be done with it (see, Kerr 2009:129-132).

It took until 1914 and another British Order in Council to formalise Norfolk Island’s place as a territory of the Commonwealth of Australia. This was the final stage of British relinquishment of authority in Norfolk Island and it placed the Island firmly as a territory under the jurisdiction of the Australian Federal Government. Amidst these 1914 changes to the Island’s political status, Australian Commonwealth Secretary for the Department of External Affairs, Atlee Hunt, visited the Island and documented continuing claims of historic rights by Islanders in his report of the Island.

They [Norfolk Islanders] seem to have acquired the idea that the whole of Norfolk was to be given to them as their exclusive property, but it is beyond doubt that the arrangement was not that Norfolk was to be ceded to them, but only that grants of land would be made to different families (Hunt, cited in Commonwealth of Australia 1976:87).
In 1896, an Administrator was placed in charge of the Island, and Islanders’ political representation from the beginning of Australian influence in 1897, up until self-governance was awarded in 1979, was limited to democratically-elected bodies of local residents who acted with either minimal legislative powers, or an with advisory capacity only: The Council of Elders (1897), the Executive Council (1903), the Advisory Council (1935) and the Norfolk Island Council (1960). The changes in the administration of Norfolk Island from Britain to Australia (and subsequent administrative and representative body changes) had substantial effects on Islanders, both in terms of their allegiances to external authorities and in terms of the ways that Norfolk Island was governed across the 20th century.

A Petition to Her Majesty

The contestation over the conditions of Norfolk Islanders’ occupancy became more complicated from the 1960’s onwards as a third key party entered the debate. Many wealthy Mainlander settlers to the Island had by this time begun echoing the Islanders’ arguments that the British Crown gave the Island to the Pitcairners, and that this entitled Islanders to certain historic rights to self-government. In 1964, Australian mainland companies were beginning to utilise Norfolk Island as a tax haven or ‘offshore financial centre’ (OFC). The historical claims by Islanders that Norfolk Island was given to the Pitcairners found new utility in arguments over the applicability of Australian income tax law on the Island. The refutation of Australian jurisdiction, and in particular of the validity of the Income Tax Assessment Act (1936-1973) to Norfolk Island, also had marked benefits for the companies that had begun to exploit Norfolk Island’s fiscal relationship to Australia for the purposes of avoiding Australian income tax.

Albert, an Islander now in his 80’s, described to me in detail one of the more pronounced conflicts he had been involved in with the Commonwealth of Australia. The conflict he described is an example of a number of conflicts over historic rights and taxation that occurred in the 20th century. In 1966, Albert’s uncle (by marriage) told him that “Norfolk Island was the nearest thing he’d ever seen” (Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007) to a West Indies tax haven. The Island’s Companies Act had never been amended and so various tax avoidance schemes could operate. His uncle, who was an Australian
Mainlander, had convinced him that transforming Norfolk to an OFC would be beneficial to the Island by injecting capital and creating employment. After a few years of operating as a tax haven, the Australian Government intervened and threatened to close a loophole that allowed Australian companies to register on the Island. Albert suggested that this occurred much against the wishes of the Norfolk Island Council of the day, who according to him, resigned “en masse”. Albert believed they did so because they felt that Canberra possessed undue influence over the Island (see, Hoare 1983:22 for similar assessments).

[According to Albert, they said] ‘We’re not going to be told what we can and can’t do by somebody in Canberra when we consider it’s good for Norfolk Island’. And that... just that... standing up and being counted like that goes back to the ongoing argument that Norfolk Island is not part of Australia, because there were certain things that happened...certain things that had been done to put the Australian Government to assume that they could do what they wanted to do on Norfolk Island as far as legislation was concerned (Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007, emphasis in original).

Albert became involved in a move by a group of “local gentlemen on the Island” in 1972 to create a petition to Queen Elizabeth II. “And their feeling was that they ask the question ‘When we come head-to-head with Australia, to whom do we have the right to appeal against any decision?’” (Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007). Albert agreed to go around the Island door-to-door with another Islander to gain signatures for the petition. The wording of the petition began:

May it Please Your Majesty: In 1856 Your great-great-grandmother Her Majesty Queen Victoria reserved Norfolk Island for Her loyal subjects of Pitcairn Island.

Our original Pitcairn community were moved here, and Norfolk Island was proclaimed a distinct and separate settlement in the Crown’s Dominions. Since then both the men and women of Norfolk Island have willingly fought for the Crown in every war in which our Sovereign has called on us to serve (see, Hoare 1983:24).

The writers of the petition (including Albert) outlined a series of concerns about the activities of the Australian Government in legislating for the Island (see appendix B5 for
full copy of the petition wording), and citing proposed taxation and quarantine laws, claimed that the Australian Government was making decisions that were against the wishes of Norfolk Islanders. They claimed: “Australia appears to believe it has the right to govern Norfolk Island and the land we have inherited as if we were a Colony owned by Australia” (Hoare 1983:24). The questions asked of the Queen in the petition were:

**Whether** His Majesty the late King George V gave Australia only the power to take actions for our peace, order and good government; or whether he gave Australia power to govern Norfolk Island in any way it wishes.

**Whether** the island remains, as Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria declared it to be, a distinct and separate settlement; or whether Norfolk Island has become part of Australia.

**Whether** we may continue to give our first loyalty to Your Majesty and to look to you for our ultimate protection; or whether by accepting Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria’s offer of Norfolk Island, our original community was unknowingly sacrificing its rights and privileges as a dependency of the Crown as Pitcairn Island still is (cited in, Hoare 1983:24-25).

The petition gained a total of around 400 signatures in the course of its circulation, but was never sent to the Queen. As Albert put it:

> It just faltered and died a lingering death. But I think from that came the Australian Government’s realisation that they needed to get this question sorted once and for all, which resulted in Justice Nimmo’s Royal Commission (Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007).17

Albert’s story of the failed petition to the Queen is indicative of the ways in which Norfolk Islanders have engaged with the Australian Government. Albert’s letter was prefaced with an assertion of a continuing link between Queen Victoria’s descendants and the Pitcairn Islanders’ descendants on Norfolk Island. Albert and his fellow petitioners asserted a relationship to exist between Norfolk Islanders with the British Crown and that this relationship entailed continuing obligations between the two. The petitioners claimed that

17 It is quite unlikely that the petition by itself precipitated the inquiry into Norfolk Island governance, but rather a number of factors that will be explained below.
Islanders had demonstrated their obligations through loyalty and action (for instance, by fighting in various wars for the Crown) and claimed that the Monarchy was under obligation to continue to protect Pitcairn Descendants from other states; in this case, Australia. The petitioners’ references to Queen Victoria’s gift, then, quite clearly provide a means of recapturing or accentuating their continuing relationship with the Crown. Of course, highlighting this relationship comes with its own set of interests. The conflict Albert was involved in combined ideas of historic rights arising from assertions of collective ownership of the Island (in this instance through appeals to a gift) and a perceived relationship with the Crown, with the growing economic influence and interests of the Island’s OFC.

**A Distinct and Separate Settlement**

The use of Norfolk Island as a tax haven had arisen from two conditions stemming from its original constitutional position in 1856. The first condition was that Norfolk Island had never integrated into the Australian Federal taxation system as its unique status as a ‘distinct and separate settlement’ by Order in Council made it a separate jurisdictional space. Before 1942, income taxation was levied by Australia’s states. It seems that an important consequence of Norfolk Island’s constitutional ambiguity was that it escaped the transfers of these powers to the Federal Government post-1942. Thus, Norfolk residents were not required to pay Australian income tax. The second condition was that before 1973, although residents were taxed on income having an Australian source, the Island was otherwise regarded as a “foreign country” for taxation purposes (Treadgold 1988:215). At the peak of its tax avoidance period, Norfolk had a total of 1571 companies on its companies register, more than one company per head of resident population (Treadgold 1988:218). These tax evasion strategies gained the attention of the Australian Government and resulted in the case of *Berwick Ltd v. R.R Gray, Deputy Commissioner of Taxation* (1976) 133 CLR 603, in which the High Court unanimously ruled that Australia possessed full sovereign powers over Norfolk Island.

Within this period of tax evasion activity, the Australian Government asserted its authority to tax the companies that were utilising Norfolk Island and residents of Norfolk Island
were implicated within wider conflicts between tax avoiders and Australia. The historical position of the Islanders that was responsible for their initial separation from mainland Australia as a ‘unique and separate settlement’ was also what permitted businesspeople to develop the tax haven in the first place. Arguments made by tax avoiders in favour of retaining Norfolk’s functionality as a tax haven were increasingly intertwined with the arguments of those Pitcairn Descendants who believed the Island was given to them. Both of these groups argued that Norfolk Island was entitled to its own political system, and its unique territorial status, and to be autonomous of the mainland.

Eventually the increasing Australian Government interest in sorting out the exact status of Norfolk Island vis-à-vis the Commonwealth led to the Whitlam Government initiating the 1975 to 1976 Royal Commission into Matters Relating to Norfolk Island, commonly called the ‘Nimmo Royal Commission’ after its Commissioner, John Nimmo. The Royal Commission was to report on:

1) The future status of Norfolk Island and its constitutional relationship to Australia
2) The most appropriate form of administration for Norfolk Island if its constitutional position were changed (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:5).

Again citing historic rights, vocal groups of Pitcairn Descendants argued that the Island belonged to them. These ‘historic rights of the Pitcairners’ were listed and interrogated extensively in the Nimmo Report (Commonwealth of Australia 1976). The Report identified four main categories and several subcategories of alleged rights that were brought to the Committee’s attention by Pitcairn Descendants in the Nimmo Report’s submissions and hearings. These were:

(a) A right to live in Norfolk Island which ‘belonged to’ the Pitcairners and their descendants.
(b) A right to govern themselves as their ancestors did in Pitcairn’s, subject to and in accordance with British law. (No Pitcairn descendants contended at any stage that they are not British subjects, on the contrary they proudly claimed they are.)

A small percentage of Islanders gained some material benefits from this situation. They were put on as nominal board members of offshore companies, and received stipends for their services (2003:105).
(c) A right to maintain their ancestor’s way of life which included:

(i) communal grave digging and free burials;
(ii) enough land to be held by families to permit them to sustain themselves in basic necessities;
(iii) grazing on commons land to be available to all;
(iv) maintenance and development of the Pitcairn dialect;
(v) non-interference with a life style involving such things as self-help, family picnics, special festive days and observance of the Christian religion;
(vi) obligation to provide labour for public works.

(d) A right to freedom from taxes – and certainly freedom from taxes imposed upon Norfolk Island by other countries, colonies or territories for the partial benefit, at least, of those other areas. (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:84-85).  

Dealing with the first two categories of rights (a & b) the report stated that they encountered a “widespread firmly and honestly held belief that Queen Victoria gave Norfolk Island to their ancestors in 1856” among Pitcairn Descendants (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:84). However, upon inspecting the evidence, the writers of the report came to the conclusion that “It is clearly demonstrable in respect of the claim that the entire Island ‘belonged to’ the Pitcairners that the opposite is the truth and that Norfolk Island was never ceded to them” (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:85). In something akin to an early Australian native title decision, the report additionally concluded that Islanders historic rights – most particularly any claims of collective ownership of the Island – were either unfounded or had been extinguished through demonstrated discontinuity with past practices. Nimmo claimed that the needs of Pitcairners had changed greatly since 1856 and that the complexities of Norfolk Island’s economy by 1975-76 had made any initial rights incompatible with the contemporary community’s best interests.

…while the original Pitcairners on their departure from Pitcairn’s wished to preserve their way of life, their descendants voluntarily departed radically over the

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19 Other submissions to the Commission, such as that by A.C Buffett, suggested that Islanders should have priority rights over employment positions over non-Islanders; reserved places in any representative body; and the benefit of aid from Great Britain and Australia (see, Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975f:886)
years from that way of life in favour of a life which gave them greater protection against illness and disease, better schooling for their children, more amenities and higher standards of living (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:91).

Perhaps most damaging to the claim that the entire Island was given to the Pitcairners, Nimmo reduced these claims of historic rights to reflections of economic self-interest among sectors of the Island community, noting that these claims were mobilised largely for the purposes of tax evasion. The Commission’s response to the claims of these groups was an assertion that:

…the groups who were most critical of Australia’s government of the Island…were those who had moved to the Island in recent years predominantly to amass or retain wealth…They went to considerable lengths, including the use of small numbers of Pitcairn descendants as willing accomplices, to propound their points of view.

One gathered from the evidence of some of the Pitcairn descendants that they had been moved to support these groups because of exploitation [by newer settlers] of their fear of what the Commonwealth Government might do in the spheres of taxation and land control if it continued to govern the Island (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:64; see also, Yager in Commonwealth of Australia 1975e:441-442).

The businesspeople who had come to settle or engage in economic activity on Norfolk Island certainly found the Islanders’ existing disputes with the Australian Government to be a useful bargaining tool for their own political purposes (see van Fossen 2002). Islanders (on both Pitcairn and Norfolk) have had a history of outsiders taking key leadership roles in their community (see, Hancock 1947; Dening 1992), and the tax haven created similar openings in the community for wealthy foreigners, particularly those with technical and legal skills. In the Royal Commission submissions, a string of persons representing offshore financial interests gave evidence alongside Islanders and many of these representatives supported the Island’s further detachment from Australian control. There is also considerable evidence to suggest that some of these new settlers were involved in organising local opposition to Australian rule.
The Historic Rights of the Pitcairn Settlers on Norfolk Island in 1856

A NEW INTERPRETATION TURNS 120 YEARS OF ACCEPTED HISTORY UPSIDE-DOWN

BY ED HOWARD, EDITOR OF THE NEWS © COPYRIGHT 1977

For 120 years the Pitcairn settlers on Norfolk Island, and their descendants, have known that basic rights were granted to them in 1856: a right for them as a community to live by themselves...a right to govern themselves as they thought best, with advice from time to time from the British Government...a right to use all of Norfolk Island, except perhaps for a few reasonable properties reserved to the Crown, in whatever way they thought best...a right to accept new settlers if they wanted to, or to keep new settlers out if they wanted to.

For almost all of those 120 years, the Pitcairn settlers and their descendants have been told again and again by authorities outside the Island that their historic rights were just a misunderstanding. The first of these authorities was Gov. William Denison. Soon after their re-settlement on Norfolk he began imposing laws the settlers did not want, concerning the ownership and use of land on the Island. The Islanders were told they had no choice in the matter; the Governor governed, not the people of the Island.

The latest of the authorities has been Sir John Nimmo, whose Royal Commission Report states that there is no legal foundation for the historic rights whatever.

He proposes that Norfolk Island should now be integrated into the Commonwealth. If his recommendations are accepted by Australia - and Australia seems inable to in determination to implement the Nimmo Report - it will be the final extinction of the historic rights. They will legally be extinguished, for all time.

Through the 120 years since 1856, the descendants of the Pitcairn settlers have learned, one generation passing its knowledge on to the following generation, that the rights were real, and that they have been unjustly abused and taken away.

"Whenever such a claim has been advanced between 1856 and the present, it has been refused," says Sir John Nimmo in his Report. But the belief of the Islanders has persisted.

I have become convinced that the belief has persisted because it is true.

I have come to believe that from Gov. Denison all the way down to Sir John Nimmo, men in positions of authority have wanted to show that the historic rights were non-existent because those men wanted to make changes in Norfolk Island that the people of the Island did not want - changes that would be impossible if the historic rights were honoured.

I have become convinced that the Islanders' persistence of belief, in the face of disdain and disregard from persons of education and authority, is a monument to the power of truth to endure.

And I have become convinced that the Governors, Judges, Royal Commissioners, historians, writers and investigators who seem to have locked arms over the years, pushing aside the historic rights, will one day be regarded by history as a parade of persons who gravely misused their powers over one particular small race.

I think they could well have seen that the historic rights were real, if they had wanted to see. I believe they were blinded by one common fault: they all thought that they were superior to the Islanders, and that they had some innate authority to carry out their own plans even though the rights of the Islanders were abused in the process.

I do not know whether the actions of these authorities were illegal - though I feel certain that they were, in some cases. I do not know yet whether some of the historic rights still exist, and should at last be honoured - though I believe that may be possible. Time has been too short, my training and abilities have been inadequate, and historical records

Affidavit

I, Edward Davenport Howard, of Collins Head, Norfolk Island, do hereby solemnly swear that to the best of my knowledge and belief the historical and other facts in the accompanying article marked "A" with pages numbered 51 to 56 are true, that the conclusions drawn from those facts are fair and reasonable, and that the Pitcairn Settlers on Norfolk Island in 1856 were given the right to own or have public use of all of Norfolk Island except for three buildings and 7½ acres of land, and the right to continue governing themselves according to their own laws and usages.

Sworn before me at Norfolk Island this 30th day of February, 1977... (s.d.) Edward Davenport Howard

Figure 2.7: Propaganda from the Norfolk Island News, March 3 1977. Note in particular the Affidavit at the bottom of the page.
A wealthy American settler to the Island, for example, is widely believed to have been a central actor in the creation of the Islander-only lobby group, the Pitcairn Society (Also called the Society of Pitcairn Descendants, or the Association of Norfolk Islanders) and made use of his own media (see figure 2.7) to drum up Islander support for self-determination. Community members still offer different assessments on the role of these settlers in steering the political debates of the 1970s. Some believe that alliances between wealthy settlers and Islanders were merely providing an outlet for longstanding views of the Islander community towards Australia, whereas others believe these settlers were responsible for engineering these beliefs.

The Nimmo Report’s recommendations suggested widespread changes to the Island’s constitutional position by incorporating the Island into the electorate of Canberra and extending all Commonwealth legislation – including that relating to taxation and welfare – to the Island. It also suggested a representative body called the ‘Norfolk Island Territory Assembly’ be established to administer the Island in a limited capacity. Islanders were to vote in Australian Federal elections and pay Australian income tax. The report was met with a mixture of support and condemnation (Hoare 2003:152). On-Island support for the recommendations of the Nimmo Report was relatively muted, however, opposition took the form of letters to the United Nations Committee of Twenty Four on Decolonisation, appeals to Queen Elizabeth, petitions circulated among residents regarding the report (called the ‘Solemn Declarations’) and the solicitation of the Australian mainland media.

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20 One Islander that I met had this (now deceased) American settler’s collection of papers and letters. One of the letters he was able to produce was a letter to the soon-to-be head of the Pitcairn Society. The letter discussed the benefits of creating an all-Islander group to lobby the Australian Government; as such a group could bypass criticisms that they were being run by wealthy tax avoiders.

21 Even during the Royal Commission, there were also a substantial number of Islander residents that opposed any move toward independence. For example, Mr R.H.H. Nobbs stated as follows:

> I would not like to see the Island depart from its present position as a Territory of the Commonwealth. My reasons for not wanting independence are:

(i) It would virtually be the end of the descendants of the Pitcairn community.
(ii) The Island would be taken over and exploited by large financial interests (Nobbs, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975a).

Another woman quoted by the report stated that she “hoped to avoid the possibility of my children scrubbing or washing millionaire’s floors” (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:43).

22 See Hoare (1977) for an example of written support for the findings of the Nimmo Report.

23 The United Nations Committee on Decolonisation is a United Nations subcommittee established in 1961 with the task of granting independence to colonial territories. While it initially had 17 members, membership was increased to 24 in 1962.
regarding opposition to incorporation (van Fossen 2002:218; Hoare 2003:153-155). In 1977, a group of Norfolk Islanders banded together (with the help of non-Islanders) to form the Society of Descendants of the Pitcairn Settlers (now called the Association of Norfolk Islanders), an Islander-only lobby group claiming to promote the interests of Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn Descent. The Pitcairn Society and the Norfolk Island Council organised strong opposition to the recommendations of the Nimmo Report, and the Australian Government eventually chose to take a considerably different trajectory to the Report’s recommendations. However, the decision by the Australian Government to take a different approach to Nimmo’s recommendations also had origins in Australia’s international duties and its relationship to the United Nations.

From the Gift to Recognition: Moves to Self-Government

Norfolk Island’s governance came under its most intense Commonwealth scrutiny at a time when the Australian Government was under considerable pressure from the United Nations Committee of 24 on Decolonisation to reassess the governance regimes of its external territories. It is at this time that appeals to the United Nations began to take the place of appeals to Britain as an external authority capable of intervening in the Island’s relationship with Australia. In the mid-1970’s, the United Nations’ attention had been drawn to the Cocos Islands and the former Australian protectorate of Papua New Guinea was also granted independent status. The Nimmo Report and the eventuating government action must therefore be viewed in relation to wider discussions about the futures of non-self-governing territories under Australian rule. In a 1974-5 Senate discussion titled The Role and Involvement of Australia and the United Nations in the Affairs of Sovereign Australian Territories, one senator noted wistfully a “...new international concept

24 Bernie Christian Bailey, for instance, was one prominent Islander in opposition to some the Report’s findings and provides an example of the appeals to the rights of the Pitcairners from this period.

I do not try to claim that any of these original rights of the Pitcairners or what they believed were their rights have any constitutional validity today. But I would claim that injustices have been done, and that much has been taken away from the Pitcairners either against their will or without their full understanding of what was happening...this should never happen again, and...Norfolk’s future should be guided only by the wishes of those who have made it their home, and not by outsiders who think they know what is best for us (Christian-Bailey 1975:16).

25 The very first point on the Society of Pitcairn Descendants’ list of objectives was;

“To promote the knowledge of the Pitcairn race and of the conditions on which the community of Pitcairn Island abandoned that island on 3rd May 1856 and resettled in Norfolk Island” (Hoare 1983:35).
developing that indicates sovereignty on cultural and ethnic grounds as against the European concept of territorial integrity and sovereignty” (Commonwealth of Australia 1975k:28).\textsuperscript{26} Australia was presented with the pressing need to dispense with their non-self-governing territories in order to avoid disapproval from its United Nations peers and the international community. On the other hand, in the 1975 Commonwealth report titled \textit{United Nations Involvement with Australia’s Territories: Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence}, the committee indicated it did not believe Norfolk Island was a non-self-governing territory. The report noted:

The position of Norfolk Island in the opinion of this Committee is less difficult [than other Australian territories]... The population of about 1900 is \textit{ethnically and culturally akin} to the mainland, its economic and social ties are with Australia, and there is complete freedom of access between the mainland and Norfolk Island (emphasis added, Commonwealth of Australia 1975k:112)

At that stage, the Australian Government had been unconvinced that United Nations involvement in the territory would be likely (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1975k:122) however a 1978 report conducted by John Bulbeck of the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) – a non-profit, non-government Australian community group whose stated goals are to promote the ideals and aims of the United Nations (United Nations Association of Australia 2007) – seemed to greatly influence the Australian Government’s final decision on the Island’s status. The Bulbeck (1978) report condemned the Nimmo Report and was highly critical of the role Australia had played in Norfolk Island’s governance since the turn of the 20th century (see also, Hoare 1983:39). Bulbeck relied heavily on submissions from the Pitcairn Society and other anti-Australian leaning community members on Norfolk Island.\textsuperscript{27} He argued, contrary to the findings of the above report, that Norfolk Island was a non-self-governing territory (Bulbeck 1978:1,21) and considering this, recommended:

\textsuperscript{26} Such a view is also congruent with the growing tendency of liberal states around the world to recognise such cultural difference in the form of self-government regimes and group autonomy (see, Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995).

\textsuperscript{27} The appendix of submissions in Bulbeck’s (1978) report is overwhelmingly dominated by the pro-independence submissions from the Pitcairn Society and Norfolk Island News publications (see figure 2.7 for an example of the general tone of the Norfolk Island News publication).
Australia’s domestic interests would best be served by prompt steps to ‘power down’ the intensity of the Norfolk Islanders’ discontented uncertainty and then moving to establish a final basis for self-government of Norfolk Island with all deliberate speed (Bulbeck 1978:21).

Importantly, it also stated:

...by the criteria of the resolutions of the U.N. General Assembly...Norfolk Island is quite clearly and inescapably at present a non-self-governing territory (Bulbeck 1978:15).

From Australian Commonwealth Cabinet documents released in 2008, it seems that this UNAA report and subsequent discussions with UNAA officials had a considerable influence on R.J. Ellicott, who took on the role of Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for the Capital Territory for the Fraser Government in 1978. The appointment of Ellicott seemed to ease some of the tensions between the Australian Government and Norfolk Islanders due to his willingness to engage in consultations with the residents of Norfolk Island and the Norfolk Island Council (Hoare 1983-41). Shortly before the announcement of the Island’s new self-government regime, he spoke to cabinet about governmental changes to Norfolk Island, specifically mentioning the findings of the UNAA report and its recommendations to institute a policy of Island self-determination (see, Ellicott 1978:4).

He also informed the cabinet that in formulating a policy framework for the territory:

...we should take account of certain special characteristics of the island, in particular the structure of its present economy, its historical background, and its way of life that has to some extent preserved the tradition of the Pitcairn Islanders (emphasis added, Ellicott 1978:5).

Soon after the Cabinet meeting, the Australian Government enacted the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth).28 The Act was a new legal framework for the separate administration of Norfolk Island that was also still “consistent with its status as part of the Commonwealth of Australia” (Ellicott 1978:1). The *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth) prescribes that Australian

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28 According to Ellicott in a 2004 interview, the subject of Norfolk Island self-governance was not debated extensively in Cabinet “I don’t say that it was a foregone conclusion and I don’t say that there were some who wouldn’t have wanted the Nimmo Report in full. But I did not have a great deal of resistance from the Prime Minister or other leading members of Cabinet” (Ellicott, in The Norfolk Islander 28/08/2004).
Commonwealth legislation does not apply to Norfolk Island unless specifically extended. It also provided a much stronger level of limited self-government than the Nimmo Report recommended, seeing it as “…desirable and to be the wish of the people of Norfolk Island that Norfolk Island achieve, over a period of time, internal self-government as a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth” (Norfolk Island Act 1979: Preamble). The Norfolk Island Act 1979 (Cth) was described by van Fossen (2002) as a compromise between those Canberra parliamentarians who believed that governing an island territory with a partially ethnically distinct population from a distant seat of power was problematic, with those in parliament who believed Norfolk Island was an integral part of Australia and that laws on Norfolk Island are capable of violating the rights of Australian citizens who live there (van Fossen 2002:212). The Norfolk Island Act 1979 also preserved Norfolk Island’s residential tax haven, meaning that residents of Norfolk Island continued to be exempt from Australian residential income tax.

While a net effect of the Nimmo Report was a large step towards Island self-government and the maintenance of its tax haven, it also contained the most conclusive refutation of any assertion that the Island was given to the Pitcairn Islanders. The limited form of self-government awarded to Norfolk Island came not through the recognition of an historical gift or of rights originating in the conditions upon which the Pitcairners settled on Norfolk, but through an emergent global political discourse and process in which states such as Australia were increasingly willing to accommodate various forms of difference through mechanisms of institutional and legal recognition (see, Taylor 1994)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tracked the evolution of the Pitcairn settlers and their descendants’ claims that the Island was given to them. Ultimately, it is this initial belief in rights to territory granted by the British Crown that has underpinned Norfolk Islanders’ continuing sense of separateness from Australia to this day. The belief in the Island as a gift has given shape to Islanders’ relationships with Britain and set the tone of many of the debates regarding the legitimacy of Australian governance of the Island.

Any prospect of using claims of gift as a means of claiming of ownership of the Island have been substantially dampened by the 1975-6 Royal Commission’s strong refutation of these
assertions and subsequent Australian Commonwealth and independent reports have reiterated its findings (see, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999; Commonwealth of Australia 2003b, 2002). The 2002 Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (JSCNCET) report on the Island’s constitutional status (JSCNCET) captured the general position the Australian Government takes towards Islanders’ assertions of Island-as-gift:

…this aspect of claimed Norfolk Island history is a myth perpetuated by a minority of Pitcairn descendants and other more recent, often wealthy, arrivals motivated by self-interest to resist the imposition of income tax (Commonwealth of Australia 2003b:29).

Islanders are also well aware of how their claims to place have been tarnished by the tax-evasion era. Those who wished to enlist allegiance against the central role that Australia has played in the Island’s governance have exploited the strong allegiance that Norfolk Islanders have historically exhibited towards Britain and the Crown. Nevertheless, some feel that the continuing tendency for Australian Government and others (c.f. van Fossen 2002) to reduce Islanders’ diverse political interests to opinions about tax and tax evasion is unfair and dismissive of the complexity of their disputes concerning governance. A 75 year old ex MLA named Harland told me he felt that the whole Island community was now tarred with the ‘tax dodger’ brush.

Islanders exhibited a high degree of historical awareness of the various contestations over their ancestors’ settlement on Norfolk Island. When I visited my informants in their homes during my fieldwork in 2007, often they would produce a vast array of correspondence documents, decades-old petitions, and dusty volumes of legislation in order to support their varied arguments about the nature of the Island’s political relationship with Australia. Despite considerable contestation of detail, most Islanders felt it important to settle the issue of settlement. Whether to refute or support it, the question of Queen Victoria’s gift to the Pitcairn Islanders was often the starting point in describing this relationship, how it had unfolded and how it was today. I believe that the role that the ‘Island-as-gift’ argument plays as a focus of diverse interests is precisely why it appears to be so recurrent across Norfolk’s Pitcairner settlement-history. The validity of the ‘Island-as-gift’ is acknowledged and dismissed by different actors because it is a metaphor for foregrounding particular
relationships that not all actors wish to recognise. In other words, acknowledgement of a gift means one must deal with the consequences, such as the relationships that it evokes and the historical responsibilities it appeals to.

Beyond the simple transmission of an object from one person to another, gifts constitute a means through which people go about forming enduring and often binding relationships with others. What is striking about Islanders’ claims of gift is the considerable geographical and social distance between the figure of Queen Victoria and the Pitcairners. This distance was mediated through the Islanders’ ongoing attempts to connect themselves to the Queen through the gift, appealing to what they saw as her continuing historical responsibilities to care for them. Markedly, despite the fact that Queen Victoria reigned as monarch up until 1901, Victoria as a person appears to be largely absent as an ongoing actor in the governance of Norfolk Island after allegedly giving the initial gift to the Pitcairners. Indeed, there is little information regarding what Victoria herself thought of the Pitcairners’ continuing claims of a gift. Very few attempts were made by Islanders to directly query her about the nature of this gift (it is likely this would have been difficult to achieve), and there is no evidence that she responded to any correspondence with the Pitcairners personally. Rather, Islanders directed their concerns to the Colonial Office, the New South Wales Governor, and the Australian Government. It is likely she is commemorated largely because she is remembered for a single gesture that legitimated what Islanders often call their ‘special relationship’ with Norfolk Island – and consequently their difference to other settlers. It is her absence from the ongoing relations of governance that allowed Norfolk Islanders to maintain a positive, personal relationship with her in the midst of the complicated disputes they had with the Crown’s representatives on Norfolk since settlement.

Finally, the idea of place as *given* reflects a point of departure from the construction of territoriality and land in other British settler societies in a number of ways. Unlike in Australia or New Zealand, the land upon which the descendants of the Pitcairn settlers live has been understood not as taken or seized; but as given. Despite the historical fact that Islanders came to the Island, many Islanders believe that the Island also came to them. This is one of the initial bases of Islanders’ sense of belonging to land. The Pitcairn Islanders did not appropriate their place on the Island from others through the physical displacement of
prior inhabitants, but were given their belonging to the Island as a sign of their relationship with the British Government and Queen Victoria.
CHAPTER THREE

The Gift of Land in Fee Simple

The gift of land in fee simple, the obligation of fencing it, the necessity of finding the means of purchasing much they have hitherto received gratuitously will give rise to new wants and offer numerous motives for exertion” (Denison 1870:414).

Irrespective of the fact that people think money can buy anything, I think on Norfolk Island there is something that money can’t buy from some Islanders, that is their land, and their farming land. – Bataille, R.A., in Submission to Nimmo Report (Commonwealth of Australia 1975b:3996).

In the previous chapter I discussed how Islanders have been entangled in debates with representatives of the Australian state regarding the terms upon which Norfolk Island was gifted to the Pitcairn settlers. Despite such disagreements about the extent of what was in fact given to the Pitcairn settlers, Islanders’ rights to the land granted to them shortly after settlement have generally been protected and have not been subjected to quite the same degree of legal doubt as rights to the entire Island landmass. Land that was granted to early settlers to the Island – and the transmission of this land through generations – has played an important role in preserving Norfolk Island’s social structure and on maintaining enduring relationships to place formed in the settlement period. Islanders feel strongly that there is a social order on the island, however this social order is far more fluid than their own characterisations often are. Nevertheless, they believe that an association with land (and the kinship and property relationships that presuppose and reinforce this association) provides a sense of social continuity amidst much historical change, and this belief exists in spite of all of the contradictions and disjunctures a relationship to land may hold for them.
Islanders are surrounded by the material vestiges of their ancestors. These vestiges play a continuing role in defining and communicating their generational emplacement on the Island to themselves and others. Some of the meanings that Islanders attribute to land ownership have arisen from geopolitically specific historical and institutional developments in the areas of land use, transmission and ownership. Islanders often explained their connections to land sentimentally in terms of its heritage significance, but also used the language of property as represented in legal and historical documents, cadastral maps, place names and oral histories, indicating that the Island’s laws pertaining to land ownership and use have been – and continue to be – important in the ways in which Islanders articulate and maintain and legitimate their connections to the Island.

The term ‘family land’ can refer to any land that is known to have been within the family for generations. In a loose definition of family land, some long-term Mainlander families have family land. The archetypal form of family land is land that has been passed down from parent to child/grandchild since the original Crown allocations in the 1850s to the 1890s. One informant for instance, provided a typical definition of ‘family land’ as “land that has been in the family for generations, more so [called family land] when it’s family land from original allocations ...and is gifted down through the family” (Dean, Personal correspondence 02/02/2010). When describing their connections to the Island to others (especially Australian politicians), Norfolk Islanders often say that it is ‘part of their tradition’ to pass ownership of such land to their children, and they often juxtapose this with what they imagine urban Australians to do with their land, which is sell it.1 As one middle-aged Islander woman wrote in a 2006 submission to a Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) Inquiry, “Part of the Norfolk Culture is the handing on of family land. Land was granted to our forebears and has been kept and passed on from generation to generation. This is part of the pride and heritage that we so proudly cherish” (Christian 2006).2 In another submission to the same inquiry, another Islander woman wrote: “We do not sell our land for our retirement. We hand it down to our children, who pass it on for

1 See similar comments about the importance of ‘family land’ to Islanders made by the Norfolk Island Government (Norfolk Island Government 2006:4) and a Commonwealth Grants Commission Report (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:19).

2 This inquiry was asked to “...advise on how much financial assistance is needed from the Australian Government to enable State and local government-type services to be provided on Norfolk Island at comparable Australian levels (and existing debts to be serviced), if comparable Australian revenue raising efforts were made, and if services were delivered at the average level of efficiency” (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:1).
them and future generations” (Tavener 2006). She described the land she owned – a house and land at Rocky Point that had been passed down through her family from her great-great grandparents to herself.

These Islanders claimed that the commercial value of their land was outweighed by its role as a source of past and future continuity for themselves and their families. Some of my informants brought up the subject of family land in our discussions about the Island’s self-government arrangement, in response to a perceived future threat – such as Australian land taxes – to the transmission of their land to their descendants. Matthew, an Islander in his 50s, for instance, stated the following to me:

... it is a huge part of our culture to pass the land down through our families. And of course Australia has land tax, Australia has land rates. Norfolk doesn’t…the Norfolk Government doesn’t have that is because it would break the culture. You can’t hold on to your land if you’re having to pay taxes on it... (emphasis in original, Matthew, recorded interview 10/12/2007).

The above statements suggest that for some Islanders, family land is vitally important source of continuity and cultural stability on Norfolk Island. Most Islanders living on Norfolk today, and many more residing in Australia and New Zealand, hold some present or future interest in family land. However, many Islanders assert that it is traditional to pass landholdings down to their children not because all Islanders do this, but because this represents an ideal relationship they believe they should have with their landholdings and, in particular, what should be done with inherited land.

Land-owning Islanders have offered these statements about family land within the theatres of official inquiries and in the context of political opposition to assets-testing and land taxation. While there are certainly many Islanders who have received title in land from their ancestors, large tracts of land have also been subdivided and sold, and many Islanders have sold and repurchased land. Australian Government reports on Islanders’ attachments to landholdings present a different perspective on the value of land to Islanders’ claims. In 2006, a report of the Australian Commonwealth Grants Commission Inquiry stated:

Pitcairn descendants express a strong sense of attachment to the land that was allocated to the original settlers at the bequest of Queen Victoria. Hereditary
landholding and the protection of a rural environment are described as part of the culture of the Pitcairn descendants and claimed as a special circumstance in several submissions we received. The submissions made the case that land was not a tradeable commodity but was held in trust for future generations. We note, however, that in the years we have examined in this inquiry, most transactions are of a commercial nature, rather than transfers falling into the ‘love and affection’ category (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:19).

While the report indicates that there are a number of actions that conflict with Islanders’ broad claims of a singular, traditional, inheritance practice, such intergenerational property transmission represents a strategic means by which Islanders can assert generational continuity with the Island in the context of such inquiries. There are several reasons why family land is a particularly effective medium through which to make claims of generational emplacement, cultural difference and belonging to Norfolk Island. Firstly, it is a limited good. Not only does the Island’s finite space create the conditions for scarcity, but various government and social practices have also restricted the availability of land on Norfolk to outsiders at different points in time. Secondly, land is durable means of maintaining continuity between the past and the present. As Simmel (1978:353) notes, objects of immovable property “…persist and survive in relation to man, the individual recedes in importance. Land appears as the rock upon which individual life, like the wave, rises and runs off”. There is therefore a tendency for individuals to see their relationship to land as representing generational continuity (Simmel 1978:353). Thirdly, such land has many of the symbolic characteristics of objects that Weiner (1992) refers to as ‘inalienable possessions’; history-bearing objects that represent important aspects of continuity by accumulating the identities of their owners through time.

While the wish to pass on material wealth and possessions to children is certainly not a sentiment culturally specific to Norfolk – or in fact specific to Islanders on Norfolk – certain social and economic forces have contributed to the tendency for Islanders to attempt to keep land off the market. Both Islander and long-term Mainlander families’ relationships with the Island are generally sustained and partially ensured by the transmission of land through generations. At its most basic level, the transmission of land is an important source of tangible durability, demonstrative of an effort to create at least an illusion of the stability of identities (Helms 1998:164) and a very practical means of
ensuring that families are able to maintain a continuity of residence on Norfolk Island
down generations. Without this transmission, generational emplacement on Norfolk Island
would be difficult to maintain.

I will approach Islanders’ relationships to their landholdings in two parts. In the first part, I
will give an overview of the initial distribution of landholdings to Pitcairn settlers and the
effects that this has had on the meaning of being a Pitcairn Descendant Islander on
Norfolk Island. Despite the presence of leasehold landholdings, in the interests of limiting
this discussion, I will focus solely on freehold title. I argue the grants process
institutionalised differences between persons based on their descent as such grants were
awarded to the Pitcairn settlers and their descendants on the basis of such descent. Granted
land as it exists today represents important continuities with the past, linking gifts from the
British Crown with Islanders today. In the second part, I explore some of the ways that
land ownership and inheritance practices associated with the retention of family land has
provided a sense of continuity for families beyond living members. In particular, and
perhaps most obviously, retention of land has allowed Islander families to continue to live
on the Island. Overall, I will argue that it is through family land, and particularly granted
land, that Islanders make claims to hold a fundamentally different relationship to the Island
than other residents. Family land is therefore a touchstone with the Island and with
ancestors; a source of durable connections to a familiar and familial past, and one that
holds a further promise of continuity of Islanders’ emplacement on Norfolk Island into the
future.

**Initial Land Grants to the Pitcairners**

When the Pitcairn Islanders first settled on Norfolk Island, They arrived on an island
already largely transformed by two short periods of occupation by British settlers, who had
significantly altered the natural and built environment though intensive agricultural activity
and the construction of penal infrastructure. The Pitcairners became “new tenants” (see,
Commonwealth of Australia 1976:101) of the houses in Kingston and were left with a
considerable stockpile of physical capital such as roads, buildings, equipment and livestock
for their use (Treadgold 1988:73). In 1856, key features of Norfolk’s built environment
included several convict-built Georgian stone buildings in Kingston, as well as two small
satellite agricultural settlements at Cascade and Longridge (see figure 3.1). In addition to these buildings, the grassed landscape of cleared, rolling hills were ideal for small scale farming and cattle-grazing.

The initial order given to officials by the Governor of Norfolk Island, William Denison, was to facilitate the distribution of the entire Island landmass to the Pitcairners, barring some 150 to 200 acres for a school and a church, and another 500 acres for reserves (see appendix B2). The Pitcairn settlers initially turned down this offer – either in the mistaken belief that they were free to distribute the land themselves, or because they were concerned that the issuing of grants would disperse the population thinly across the Island. They instead opted to continue working the land about Kingston in common (Young 1894:133-134).

In 1859, William Denison dispatched a second set of surveyors to the Island this time the offer to divide up the land was more insistent. The landmass was divided into 157 lots of around 50 acres – many of which were not allocated to settlers at that time. The head of each family and some unmarried settlers who were considered capable of occupation of new lands drew lots and received their 50-acre grants. Fifty five initial grants of land were issued to Pitcairners in 1859 in this way (see, Kennedy and Jamieson 1860) some families having more members who were of an age to take advantage of this grant system than others (see figure 3.1). The Crown continued to allocate 50-acre free grants until 1870 upon marriage (25 acres for each individual), after which time the granted size was decreased to 25 acres. The grants of 25 acres continued intermittently until 1896, when the Island’s constitution and legal system were radically changed.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that some officials facilitating the resettlement, including Denison himself, viewed it as a type of social engineering, the principles of which seemed to revolve around inducing the Pitcairners to achieve greater levels of self-sufficiency and industry on Norfolk Island than they had on Pitcairn; to this end, other officials often referred to the Pitcairn settlement as an ‘experiment’ (see, British Parliamentary Papers 1857a, 1857b; Denison 1870). The island’s legal position was

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3 This was also partially because of initial shortages of men that were of working age and also because the Kingston area already contained shelter and access to the sea (Treadgold 1988:76). Of the 194 Pitcairners that landed on the Island, 107 of these were children.

4 The last recorded grant of 50 acres in the Norfolk Island Report (1906) was made in 1867.
consistent with its laboratory like status; Norfolk occupied a separate jurisdictional space in which various forms of legal experimentation were conducted to move Islanders from subsistence to commercial production. Additionally, a number of direct attempts to effect social adjustments were made through such institutions such as private property allocation. Paddick (2000a:99), a lawyer who reviewed the Norfolk Island immigration system, argues that Denison simultaneously facing demands in New South Wales to recognise squatters’ rights and to reform the N.S.W electoral system. She argues that “...having seen the result of a flexible approach to the distribution of land, Governor Denison found himself favouring a more rigid, defined approach than that which he had originally advanced” (Paddick 2000a:99).

While these historical developments may have influenced Denison’s desire to closely control the distribution of land, it is also clear that ambiguities in property ownership that were rapidly developing on Norfolk were inconsistent with his desire to instil in Islanders a capitalist spirit and work ethic (Denison 1870:414). British colonial authorities have generally considered commons property as antithetical to capitalist production and state control (see, Scott 1998:39), and it is clear from Denison’s early comments that he was in
favour of increasing the productive capacity of the Pitcairn settlers through land policies that would foster further ‘exertion’ (Denison 1870:414).

Around 25% of the Island’s total landmass was initially given to the heads of Pitcairn families (see figure 3.2) (Nobbs 2006:53) most of which was placed in the ownership of the male heads of the families. Larger families with children of an eligible age seemed to fare better than those with fewer adult members. The rest was held by the Crown – capable of being purchased by Islanders – or was left to be allocated to the upcoming generation (Nobbs 2006:53). Denison maintained that this remaining Crown land would ultimately be granted to the Pitcairners, and not any other class of settler. The extent to which Islanders had view of property generally consistent with the English view of land as personal (individual) property – of the type that Macfarlane (1978) outlines – before their settlement on Norfolk Island is unclear, though Shapiro (1936:192) believed that Pitcairners had always held private property in land on Pitcairn. Nevertheless, it is clear that since this time, they have increasingly exhibited a view property in land as a set of rights to territory that can be possessed by an individual or family. Historical sources make it clear that the first (European, Bounty mutineer, male) settlers to Pitcairn Island appropriated and divided the landmass of Pitcairn Island between them (see, Wood, cited in Belcher 1871:210). Erskine (2004:152) notes that the scarcity of land and resources on Pitcairn Island before 1856 led the Pitcairners to clearly inscribe their rights to personal property on various things including (and by extension their fruits), livestock, household items and tools (Erskine 2004:168-172; see also, Shapiro 1936) and traces this practice back to at least 1800. A complex series of personal marks and brandings developed and such a system existed up until the move to Norfolk Island, though fell out of practice shortly after, possibly due to a greater abundance of resources, goods, and equipment (Erskine 2004:171-172).

From a British legal standpoint, land on Norfolk was granted initially as a peppercorn rental title. The operative words of all land grants given on Norfolk Island were:

That we have granted, and for Us, our heirs and successors do hereby grant unto the said [grantee’s name] His heirs and assigns, all that Piece of land [description of

5 Of the total 55 grants made, 49 were placed in the ownership of men, and only 6 in the possession of women settlers (see, Kennedy and Jamieson 1860).
land] to Hold unto the said [grantee’s name] his heirs and assigns forever yielding and paying thereafter yearly to us, our heirs and successors the quit rent of one peppercorn forever, if demanded.

The reference to “His heirs and assigns forever” indicates that a fee simple title in common law was the intention, which is why the land was legally alienable from their original grantees (capable of being detached from its owner’s person) in common law. However, the quit rent of one peppercorn indicated that rights to use the land ultimately rested in – and depended on – the Crown, its heirs and successors (see, Dekker 2005:30). A quit rent is a remnant of feudal law that was a necessary transaction to convert wastelands into freehold title, but it also indicated that no absolute ownership autonomous from the Crown’s continued consent had been acquired. Fee simple is defined by Cheshire (1982) as a form of freehold interest that would “endure until the person entitled to it for the time being – whether the original donee or some subsequent alienee – died intestate and left no heir” (1982:147, original emphasis). Furthermore, fee simple land could be subdivided, passed to others, or exchanged for money (Cheshire 1982:34). Cheshire further states that generally, all of the important qualifications that make fee simple “almost complete ownership” have been eroded over the years to the point where it is basically equivalent to complete ownership, however it seems that on Norfolk Island, the ‘almost’ clause was made explicit (see also, Maurer 1997:191-198). In other words, Islanders were left with almost, but not quite, complete legal control over their land as a personal possession, including the freedom to sell it whenever they wished, but the Crown reserved a right to intervene.6

The Crown’s reservations aside, the considerable personal control granted over land had unforeseen consequences for external authorities. British officials were left confounded by attempts by Islanders to sell, trade or swap their land through formal or informal agreements (see, Denison 1870:422-423). This came to a head when a number of unsanctioned instances of land trafficking had occurred when a group of 16 Pitcairn settlers returned to Pitcairn and passed their titles to others before leaving in 1858.7 Concerned by the alienation of granted land, Denison put in place measures to prevent any further

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6 Unlike other forms of title such as ‘fee tail’, the passing on of interest in the land is not restricted to a particular class of heirs (such as lineal descendants). The ownership of fee simple is considered to be superior to other forms of land ownership due to the owner’s freedom to subdivide or exchange the land freely to anyone.

7 Another group of 26 Pitcairners left in 1863 (Nicolson and Davies 1997:204-205).
alienation of land to outsiders, a policy that continued in various forms until the early 20th century.\(^8\)

Despite Denison’s initial aims to introduce a stronger commitment to private property in land on the Island, the policies of land ownership instituted by subsequent officials were more involved with limiting rights to freely distribute land. The inability for Islanders to alienate land to those outside the community made the Islanders’ title to land on Norfolk more akin to a *fee-tail* system. “The grantee was not allowed to sell to persons unconnected to the Island. If he wished to leave the Island he could sell to one of the inhabitants; failing that, the community could purchase it at valuation. Thus ‘strangers’ were barred” (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:44,402) from owning land, and in effect, this policy operated as an immigration control and prevented outsiders who were unconnected to the community (that is, people who not married an Islander) from living on the Island.\(^9\) Officials were exasperated to find that Islanders were trading the generous gifts they received from the Crown.

This restriction on alienation of granted land – and on other kinds of settlers moving to Norfolk Island – was short lived. As Nobbs (2006:55) has noted, it seems that Islanders held the belief that the remaining land was to remain in trust for the upcoming generation of Pitcairn settlers, to be granted when necessary. In 1866, however, the Melanesian Mission acquired over 1000 acres of land on Norfolk Island through a combination of grants and purchases, and established their headquarters on the Island, to be used to train Melanesians for placement in the New Hebrides, Santa Cruz Group, and the Solomon Islands. Historians Hilliard (1978:35) and Nobbs (1984:90) describe the Pitcairners as being “outwardly friendly but inwardly angered” by the presence of the Melanesian Mission on the Island, which operated until the 1920s, as they believed that the land was to be held in trust for their descendants. Ultimately, it was at this point that Islanders came to realise that if the Crown had any original intentions to reserve the unalienated land on

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\(^8\) During his second visit to Norfolk Island, he wrote: “One man had sold land in Pitcairn’s Island which of course did not in any way belong to him, to his aunt who gave him in exchange the house she had been permitted to occupy, but to which her departure had vacated even the small shadow of claim created by occupancy” (Denison 1870:422).

\(^9\) Mitchell (2002:61) notes, in relation to British land policies in Egypt, that authorities in the 1800s favoured policies that compelled individuals to remain at work on the land, and to confirm the rights to transfer property to others in the event that land was left unoccupied, and this seems to have been the case on Norfolk Island.
Norfolk for future descendants of the Pitcairners, these intentions had not been maintained.

**Marriage Grants and Moving ‘up-country’**

Initially, the Pitcairners remained in the Kingston area with their extended families and farmed their parent’s land and the land in Arthur’s Vale in common. As they married, they moved up onto the plateau (now Burnt Pine and Middlegate) and out Steele’s Point and Rocky Point to settle on their newly acquired allotments. An Island tradition of communally constructing new homes aided these married couples in forming new households, and created debts and obligations with others in the community (Nobbs 2006:109; see also, Treadgold 1988:87-88). According to my informants, close relatives such as brothers, parents, and friends, contributed to house building, with the expectation that the owner of the newly built house would reciprocate in labour in the future.

Allocation of this new land to married couples was facilitated via the Crown grants. Each individual who married would receive a grant of 25 acres, providing the applicant was of Pitcairn descent and 25 years old (New South Wales 1906:21). So, a marriage between two Pitcairners would yield a combined grant (provided the grant was applied for) of around 50 acres from the Crown. This meant that gifts from the Crown continued to be made to married couples far beyond the initial land allocation, and the grants process continued to distinguish between people based on their descent. For example, in 1865, a visiting trader named Isaac Robinson settled on Norfolk and married Hannah Quintal. Isaac, who later became a successful farmer, the registrar of lands on Norfolk Island, and the Island’s US consular official for the Island, purchased 12 acres of land in 1887 near Cascade Road, then another 2 acres close by in 1897, the total land costing him 42 pounds (New South Wales 1906). As a marrying Pitcairn Descendant, his wife Hannah had earlier received a Crown grant of 27.1.25 acres of prime farming land at Steeles Point which passed into her name in 1871 (New South Wales 1906). Being an American outsider, Isaac received no such grant himself but gained access to this property through marriage to a Pitcairner. In such a case, it is evident that within the grants process, the Crown institutionalised clear distinctions.

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10 The initial grants extended from Kingston to Cascade, Steele’s Point, Burnt Pine and Rocky Point, but did not extend to the northwest to Anson Bay or Duncombe Bay.
between those of Pitcairn descent and those of non-Pitcairn descent through the distribution of material endowments. Descent from Pitcairn ancestors was a necessary precondition to receiving a land grant from the Crown.  

Subsequent Grants and their Eventual End

The Carrington system of land grants was introduced in 1888 by Lord Carrington, and these grants continued to be made through to 1896 (New South Wales 1906:18-19). Through this system, grants were given to settlers on the condition that the applicants fulfil eligibility criteria, and that certain improvements be affected on the land within a period of time (Commonwealth of Australia 1926:17). Allotments were selected and the permission of the Chief Magistrate was sought before ‘improvements’ – such as fencing, clearing and other forms of work – were made to the property. The construction of structures such as houses on the property was also taken into account as signs of occupation and improvement of lands (New South Wales 1906:24-28).

Improvements were assessed before the applicant gained title to the land, and some grants were rescinded as a consequence of insufficient fencing and cultivation (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1926:17). Outside authorities repeatedly expressed their concerns over insufficiently fenced lands. By building fences, Islanders not only designated the boundaries of ownership, but were also conducting recognisable ‘work’ on the land, which was consistent with a Lockean (1993 [1689]:129-134) notion of property, whereby work is an integral act in transforming a thing into property (by mixing one’s labour with it).  

11 Unfortunately there is no evidence of grants to the descendants of mixed marriages such as this, so I cannot confirm whether such descendants were eligible for grants, or if they were unable to apply in the window available. Robinson was one of the first outsiders to marry into a Pitcairn family on Norfolk, and the first of Robinson’s children to marry did so in 1897, one year after the grants process officially ended (see, Varman 1992:72).

12 Fencing off land from the commons was part of a larger scheme of private enclosure of the commons, which has played an important role in the development and extension of European private property regimes characteristic of modern capitalism (see, Polanyi 1944:34) as enclosure removed some of the ambiguities relating to ownership of land placed the onus of improvement (capital investment) on an individual owner or household (see, Marx 1981:753-758; Gregory 1997:93).
Small areas of land would be fenced off from the commons for the purposes of subsistence cropping. The dual meanings of the Norf’k word ‘faens’ is reflected in the statements ‘Ai gwena faens in a pis a laen’ [I am going to fence in a piece of land], and ‘Ai gwena werk/plant in a faens’ [I am going to work/plant in the garden]. Islanders used fences to bar the access of cattle to small plots of land used for cultivation, but under government pressure, slowly began to implement fences in order to mark the boundaries of property. The requirements for improvements to be made were partially a response to what Australian and British officials believed to be the deterioration of arable land (and therefore the productive capacity) on the Island since the abandonment of the Island as a convict settlement in 1855, and also because of a general belief that commonage systems led to deterioration of land, the spread of weeds, and indolence and laziness among the population (New South Wales 1906:13-15). In 1886, report on the Island conducted by Commissioner Wilkinson (a representative of the Governor of Norfolk, Lord Loftus) estimated that less than 200 acres was under cultivation (out of a total of 4000 acres occupied) which amounted to around 1-6 acres per adult male being worked (Wilkinson, in British Parliamentary Papers 1885:283).

In 1896, the grant system that Islanders had benefited from for 38 years came to a definitive end. A number of official enquiries had been made concerning Islanders’ use of the land they had been granted, and officials had reported that Islanders were not complying with officials’ notions of appropriate hard work, industry and improvement (New South Wales 1906:19; Nobbs 2006). This coincided with the transfer of the Island to the Australian Government, and with the abolishment of the position of Chief Magistrate on Norfolk Island. The transfer to Australia contributed to a great deal of unrest on Norfolk Island. For 38 years – and longer if the time on Pitcairn was counted – Islanders had been under the rule of the British Empire. Under such a regime on Norfolk, Islanders had been gifted a large quantity of land – at least 91 grants of land had been made to Islanders in the 38 year period since 1856 – and many more Islanders had to pay only nominal fees to purchase or lease further land. During the Island’s period under British

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13 According to most official enquiries, Norfolk Island has never been used to its full agricultural potential since the convict era (Stephens and Hurton 1954:23; Commonwealth of Australia 1915b, 1915a). While Islanders were encouraged to improve the land through fencing it and clearing weeds from it, these improvements yielded very little material rewards for Islanders and therefore most were left to cover over with scrub.
authority, freehold land exchanges had been restricted to those of Pitcairn descent or those who had received the Governor’s permission to reside on the Island – which generally required additional approval from the Pitcairn community (Treadgold 1984:42). This meant that the great majority of land transactions were conducted between Islander families, and the ability for outsiders to own land was severely restricted.

In 1899, new laws (including those pertaining to land) were introduced to the Island, and Islanders who were living in the buildings at Kingston were informed that those buildings were Crown property and subject to rent payments. Islanders responded with assertions that the buildings in Kingston had been granted to them in 1856. A New South Wales Government report recommended that many of the occupants of the Kingston buildings who had let the buildings fall into ruin should be required to pay rent for them (New South Wales 1906). Some occupants refused to pay this rent on the grounds that they believed the buildings belonged to them and had to be physically removed from these premises in 1907 (O’Collins 2002:23; New South Wales 1906). This incident continued to be remembered in the Island’s oral histories. One transcript from the 1975 Royal Commission contained an account of the incident by Helen Evelyn Buffett:

William Quintal was...turned out into the street because he would not sign. He refused to go because he believed Queen Victoria had told him to live there. He stuck to Queen Victoria’s name. When they arrived from Pitcairn there was no decision about who was to really live where – if they walked up the steps of a home, there they lived. They did as their Queen said, and as Queen Victoria had said to “go and live there”, they, according to her grandfather, “just walked into the house” (Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975i:467).

In 1906, laws were also passed allowing non-Pitcairners to purchase freehold land and apply for leasehold land on Norfolk Island as it was imagined by Australian officials that the opening up of Norfolk to other settlers would have the effect of increasing economic

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14 The dilapidation of these Government buildings in Kingston was mentioned decades earlier by Wilkinson (Wilkinson, in British Parliamentary Papers 1885:281-282).
15 One of my informants, Audrey, an Islander in her 70s, recounted a similar story about the evictions: “Where the Administrators office is now, the Pitcairners squatted in the houses there. I don’t know who else lived there, but my great-grandmother she was a sick lady when they did the evictions, and she was the one who was carried out on her bed and was left on her bed on the verandah, and rumour says it’s her ghost that haunts that they see in that house” (Audrey, recorded interview 27/11/2007).
competitiveness among Islanders, introduce ‘much needed’ new blood to the Island community, and speed Islanders’ transition from a subsistence to commodity economy (Commonwealth of Australia 1956:14-15). Despite the end of the grant period and of policies ensuring Islanders’ exclusive occupation of the Island, the relationships formed through the granting of land and the subsequent transmission of property through families continues to influence Islanders’ understandings of their own connections to the Island as different to later settlers; Islanders were granted land, outsiders were not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1884</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1896</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Initial Grants to Established Pitcairn Families - 50a, primarily to heads of families but also singles over 25 years old and capable of occupation.</td>
<td>On Marriage - 25a, to each male of Pitcairn descent. 25a or 13a to each female.16</td>
<td>On Marriage - 12.5a, to each individual of Pitcairn descent. Unclear how much for each female. None for those not of Pitcairn Descent.</td>
<td>Unconditional free grants abolished – no grants made officially available until 1888</td>
<td>Up to 25a, (Carrington System - applicants eligible for land grant providing applicant demonstrates having made sufficient improvements to it.)</td>
<td>End of all free and conditional grants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2:** Table showing institutional changes regarding the granting of Crown land to Norfolk Island (Pitcairn Descendant) residents 1859-1856. Source: (Commonwealth of Australia 1926).

**Property and Identity**

“At the micro-level” claims Hann (1998:3), “property relations form the myriad ways in which people build up their social identities through holding and using a variety of ‘things’ in their environment”. Margaret Radin (1993) identifies property as integral to giving people “‘roots,’ stable surroundings, a context of control over the environment, [and] a context of stable expectations that fosters autonomy and personality” (1993:197) but she also argues that in Western capitalist societies, property is also tied up in economic considerations. This creates a tension between property as simultaneously bound up with persons and open to the market. Comparably, Hann (1998:6) separates property into two

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16 There is some discrepancy in records concerning the grants made to females in this period. According to the Report to the House of Commons by Henry Wilkinson (see, British Parliamentary Papers 1886:236-7) both men and women received 25a each at marriage.
poles on a continuum ranging from personal to impersonal. Impersonal property is a category of thing that can be readily transacted, while personal property entails certain moral evaluations of its worth, and are therefore treated as valuables or heirlooms (see also, Radin 1982).

Weiner (1992:39) has argued that hard work that is required by people in order to establish and maintain social identities and that holding material possessions take up much of the burden. Weiner elaborates on Mauss’ (1969) thesis that gift objects are never completely alienated from the giver. She identifies a particular class of objects that are so tied up in their original owners’ identities that even giving these things away does not fully alienate them from their previous possessors. These types of objects, which she labels ‘inalienable possessions’, are integral to the construction and maintenance of social identities. These objects, which Weiner calls ‘inalienable possessions’, remain explicitly outside of common forms of exchange (see also, Godelier 1999:109-170). Weiner (1992) defines such possessions and their power as follows:

What makes a possession inalienable is its exclusive and cumulative identity with a particular series of owners through time. Its history is authenticated by fictive or true genealogies, origin myths, sacred ancestors, and gods. In this way, inalienable possessions are transcendent treasures to be guarded against all the exigencies that might force their loss (1992:33).

Weiner (1992) states that such forms of valuable property succeed their owners through time and are transferable to new owners, conveying with it an authority that exists “outside the present” (1992:42). These possessions act as “a stabilizing force against change because...”

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17 Graeber (2001) notes that Mauss’ (1990) notion of ‘inalienability’ of things from persons that give them, (that is, complicating the association between things and people) is perhaps his most compelling theoretical addition to political thought and stands in opposition to Marxist foci on alienation in production, rather than in a legal-property ownership framework. “By seeing alienation as something that can happen every time an object changes hands,” Graeber states, “Mauss reminds us that ... things are continually being maintained, altered, and above all, vested in new meanings, even as they are often repeatedly detached and alienated again” (Graeber 2001:163).

18 Godelier (1999) tends to describe these possessions as ‘sacred objects’ (see also, Werner and Bell 2004). Godelier also notes that sacred objects (or inalienable possessions), are often “presented as gifts, but gifts from the gods or the spirits are supposed to have given to the ancestors of men, which the present-day descendants must keep safely stored away and must neither sell or give” (Godelier 2009:57). Gudeman (2001) on the other hand, points to similar objects that he calls ‘sacra’. Gregory (1997:75-122) more generally refers to what he calls ‘goods’ in an effort to separate inalienable things that are supposed to be given and inalienable things that are supposed to be kept. Goods fall into the latter category.
...[their] presence authenticates cosmological origins, kinship, and political histories” (1992:9). Granted land on Norfolk Island fulfils these roles as it authenticates the cosmological origins of the group by evoking memories of the settlement narrative of the group; much of the land has remained within the Pitcairn Descendant group as it has been transmitted through families from founding ancestors to the present through inheritance practices, and furthermore it is representative of a political narrative of a historical gift of land or territory that legitimates Islanders’ occupation of Norfolk as distinct from earlier and later settlers to the Island. When the Pitcairn settlers accepted their grants of land, they understood them to be gifts from the British Crown – and more specifically, they were believed to have come from the person of Queen Victoria. The belief of a continuing relationship with the British Crown was partially embodied in granted land which – as a gift of the variety that Mauss explores (see, Mauss 1969; Carrier 1995:25) – is powerful in maintaining such a relationship between giver and recipient.

As inalienable possessions take upon them the burden of forming and maintaining enduring identities and persons, they also help to constitute enduring differences between persons. As I have shown, in the context of the grants process, the Pitcairn settlers and their descendants represented a clearly bounded, state-recognised, corporate group of recipients. Barring the granting of land to the Melanesian Mission (and allowing the purchase of further land) and some individuals, no other group or institution possessed collective rights to receive land grants. Within the context of the land grants process, Islanders represented a racially defined corporate group with specific rights to grants established through their descent from Pitcairn settlers. Furthermore, Islanders were not able to alienate land to outsiders without community permission until the early 20th century, so the exchanges of land was restricted to a particular type of person known to be a descendant of such settlers. Such gifts of land were initially passed on fairly reliably through generations of Islanders, representing an enduring relationship with the British Crown and with grantee ancestors and highlighting the exclusivity of ancestral identity and the holding of title to ‘family land’.

19 For example, in Gregory’s (1997:85) discussion of goods, he notes that English gentry’s attempts to keep their land off the market because landholdings were a means by which their exclusive class positions were reproduced.
By concentrating analysis on family land on Norfolk Island we can recognise it as a site in which of a number of different forms of exchange, gifts and possessions converge. Initially, there was the highly contested gift of the entire Island territory by Queen Victoria at settlement, outlined in the previous chapter; then there were the Crown grants of allotments shortly after settlement that have been characterised as gifts by Norfolk Islanders. After these initial grants, the Crown made subsequent gifts of land to Pitcairn Descendants at the point of marriage. Even after the cessation of the Crown grants, Islanders gifted plots of land to relatives at the point in which they married or in the form of inheritance. On a broader scale that bridges all of these complex forms of gifts, exchanges and property, we can identify two means of attributing value to land that are in constant tension with each other: holding land within the family as an inalienable possession (which includes gifting it in various inheritance practices), and selling land (in particular, selling land to those not related to the seller). This is a tension between two different forms of value. On the one hand, the value of ‘family land’ as ‘family land’ is a product of its history of retention within a particular family and its removal from exchange; retention within a family involves a transmission of ownership through generations from grantee (or at least an early owner) to present day. On the other hand, family land is also attributed value through its potential to be exchanged within a property market. The selling of family land has become an increasingly common practice and, as a practice that can potentially disconnect family land from all of the above historical connections, the selling of family land has been a significant basis of cultural change on Norfolk Island. It is the tension between land as a link to the past and past relations, and land as a commodity, that I wish to focus in on in the remainder of this chapter.

Before the turn of the 20th century, most land on Norfolk Island was a possession inalienable from Islanders. Mainlanders were unable to purchase land without permission from the community and it was generally only through marriage that they were able to hold land themselves. As time has passed, legal changes and the increasing presence of other settlers and the market have offered increasingly lucrative alternatives to holding and keeping land. While some families have kept their land, in others, inheritance practices have undergone significant change, and the social pressures to hold family land have decreased. Before coming to the issue of land sales, I will first discuss the subjective meanings attributed to family land on Norfolk Island and its ability to bear history.
Materiality and Memory

In particular circumstances, certain types of objects come to be associated with persons who give it or hold them, and, as Weiner (1992) has theorised, these associations can often continue back in history to include those who held them previously (see also, Carrier 1995:26). Following this, family land not only represents the link to the British Crown as the original giver, but also acts as a material basis of links from ancestors to present owners. Land is what Weiner (in Myers et al. 2001:277) calls a ‘highly differentiable’ object that affirms the existence of family continuity over the course of generations, and as an object that “does not spoil” (Edwards (1961) cited in Besson 1987:23), it has a permanence to it that makes it a durable representation of this continuity (see also, Simmel 1978:353). In addition to acting as a means of perpetuating family emplacement, family land has also operated as an important base of subsistence activity.

When I asked many Islanders about their land, they often recalled their connections to their ancestors who first settled on Norfolk. Most landowning Islanders were able to tell me about their land in some detail, including when such land was granted and to whom, if it was bought or if it was ‘family land’. For instance, when I asked Herbert, 63, about whether he inherited the land we were standing on, he said immediately, “Yeah. This land was part of an original grant to my great-grandfather Patteson Quintal and he was granted 25 Acres through here at Steeles Point in 1880, so yeah” (emphasis in original, Herbert, recorded interview 13/09/2007). As if to prove it, Herbert showed me a block-mounted cadastral map in his living room which was created during the process of the New South Wales commission into landholdings on Norfolk Island, that detailed the full extent of granted land since 1859 (see, New South Wales 1906).

Islanders often remember their ancestors’ grants through such appeals to such legal documents, displaying their ancestors’ original grant papers from the British Government on the walls of their homes. Some, like Herbert, also display the cadastral maps showing their ancestor’s holdings and grants. The original grants documents, with Queen Victoria’s seal on them are valued highly by many Islanders and put on display accordingly. Following Bourdieu (1977:184) we can understand such documents as institutionalised mechanisms of objectification, whereby Islanders’ reliance on deeds of possession
circumvent their need to continuously and entirely recreate the links between persons and their acquisitions – such as their landholdings.\textsuperscript{20} The cadastral map is a further step in this process of objectification, they “render the world an objective reality” (Maurer 1997:226) by organising relationships between persons and land in a way that made them intelligible on a large scale (Scott 1998; Mitchell 2002). Islanders’ willingness to display these maps indicates some of the ambivalent attitudes towards rule from afar. On the one hand, the creation of maps of landholdings was a device through which the British, NSW and Australian Government exerted considerable power over the meaning and control of property and the centralised and ordered means by which it would be transmitted. On the other hand, such official representations of property are for that same reason powerful, and have been instrumental in Islanders’ own assertions of belonging and acting as a record of relationships between descendants of that grantee and the landholding.

The value of such legal documents is also evident in many Islanders’ unwillingness, until as late as the 1990s, to convert their land titles to the Torrens Title system. As Howard & Howard (1984:57) observed in a guide to Norfolk Island; “Many Island families treasure the original grant documents, believing that they have a higher authority than anything any modern day government could do”.\textsuperscript{21} Such scepticism of other forms of title is most clearly expressed in the following excerpt from a poem called ‘Torrens Title’, written by an Islander named Jackie ‘Ralph’ Quintal in 1974:

When our forefathers came to this Island
The Queen, made promises grand
Your heirs and assigns forever
That’s how we got portions of land

The Islander thought he was secure
he treasured his own little plot

\textsuperscript{20} Halbwachs seemed to be pointing to similar practices of objectification when he wrote:

“...in the case of a land registry or other legal certificate recalling the existence of some property right, society not only establishes a relationship between the image of a place and a document but considers that place as already linked to that person who has posted or fenced it, resided there continually, or cultivated it for his own benefit” (Halbwachs 1980:142)

\textsuperscript{21} Helen Evelyn Buffett recalled similar sentiments in her grandfather, who had a document “which was stamped with red wax and was “signed by my hand and seal, Victoria R.” ...Her grandfather valued the document greatly and often when resting used to get it out and look at it” (Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975i:466)
Now the government is finding out new ways
of how to take over the lot
[...]
So they scoff at the old Deeds
Given them by Her Grace
how could she give them this land, they now say
when it wasn’t hers in the first place
[...]
They’ll offer the words “Torrens Title”
to me this is just Government greed. For
how can the words Torrens Title compare
with the seal on your deeds? (Quintal 1988[1974]).

Quintal was referring to the deeds of ownership that Islanders were given on receipt of their land grants. Quintal’s poem quite explicitly captures the political power of land ownership documents in affirming Islanders’ connections to land, and connection to the British Crown, and the tendency of Islanders to privilege these documents over other forms of title that would generally be considered superior to common law title (see also, Adams, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975i:471; Nobbs, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975g:724). As of 1996-97 fears of their land being subject to adverse possession claims prompted most (90%) of the Island’s landowners to convert to the Torrens Title system – or Guaranteed Title, as it is called on Norfolk (The Norfolk Islander, 22nd Sept 2007: 11).

Islanders employ a variety of naming activities, which affirm the representational capacity of property in land. Both the names of family homes on Norfolk Island and the Norf’k names given to Island places often relate to the owners, contemporary or historical, of particular landholdings or houses. Through these multigenerational forms of land transmission and occupation, some families claim significant emplacement in particular locales. These emplacements create the conditions for what Allen (1990) calls a ‘genealogical landscape’; a landscape in which people’s names for and ways of talking about

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22 In a submission to the 1975 Royal Commission, G.G.F Quintal, a councillor in the Norfolk Island Council and estate agent, noted Islanders’ position toward Guaranteed Title as follows “...a lot of the Islanders came and more or less had a go at me for bringing in a title they did not want because they said they preferred the peppercorn type which they were granted when the Pitcairners came here and it was good enough for them” (Quintal, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975h:1205).
places reflect and locate persons within a series of genealogical and property relationships that have taken place in a location over time (see also, Wagner 2002). Such naming patterns often make apparent either a direct relation between a location and a person, such as a name in the form of a possessive, (for instance, *Munna’s* or *Ma Anna’s*) or an indirect relation such as a reference to an event in which persons were implicated. Old family homes often bear names that denote their uniqueness and their history. A fraction of the place-names that make use of possessives were been compiled in the map of unofficial local placenames which was printed in Edgecombe (1999:102) (see figure 3.3) and more recently, further examples been compiled by linguist, Nash (2011). In the Norf’k language, land and houses are commonly given possessives such as *Stegside* [Steg’s Place], *Ma Aelis* [Ma/Mother Alice] and *Branka House* [named after a past owner, Branka Nobbs].

Up until 2009, houses on Norfolk Island did not have numbers so many family homes have been given names which denote not only their historical owners but their individual identities as family homes. Such names can endure long after the land has left the family and therefore these forms of property often remain inalienably linked with these earlier owners. In line with Wagner’s (2002) theorisations of ‘genealogical landscape’, often a necessary criteria in having one’s name inscribed in a place is ownership of land, therefore while present and previous owners of land, and their relatives, are often remembered in toponymy related to buildings and landholdings, non-landowners are often not.24

One of the most well-known of all named landholdings on the Island is ‘Simons Water’ (see figure 3.4). Simon’s Water is the largest remaining parcel of original grant land. Located in Steeles Point, it is a large paddock of around 50 acres dotted with trees. It was named in the 1960s after a creek running through the property. The creek itself was called Simon’s Water after Simon Young, who received it as an original grant in 1859. Simon was one of a group of Pitcairners who returned to Pitcairn in 1863. When he left, he left his older brother, George Martin Fredrick Young to manage his estate. He also declared in his will that should any representatives of his family wish to return to Norfolk Island, half of

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23 Note also the large number of named fishing locations on the coastline. Fishing locations are often named after people, though those people are not considered to have exclusive rights over those locations. Archaeologist Nigel Erskine (2009:149-150) notes a similar connection between possessive place-naming schemes and historical ownership on Pitcairn Island.

24 This link between property ownership and toponyms containing possessives does not extend to commons areas such as coastal and deep sea fishing locations.
the property should be given to them (New South Wales 1906:48). The land initially did
not pass from Simon Young’s name after he returned to Pitcairn, but remained as part his
estate until it was eventually sold to William John Ward ‘Tarie’ Buffett in 1896, who was
Simon Young’s sister’s grandchild. The land then became known as ‘Tarie’s Paddock’ (see
figure 3.3, top left corner of map), and remained in the hands of two members of the
Buffett family until the 1960s. An Islander from the Christian family who was not directly
descended from the original owner eventually bought both parcels in the 1960s, and his
family now runs cattle on it. In buying it, he reinstated the name of the original owner of
the property (and of the stream running through it), and the property is now called
‘Simon’s Water’. According to the owner, descendants of Simon Young have, at various
junctures, returned to Norfolk Island and unsuccessfully attempted to claim half of
‘Simon’s Water’ via a series of adverse possession claims in lieu of the stipulations of Simon
Young’s will.

25 Thanks goes to Mary and Bernie Christian-Bailey for their comments on an earlier draft about the history
of this landholding.
The movement of landholdings between families have created multiple – and sometimes contested – connections with Simon’s Water, connections which is given outward expression in naming practices. All of the players in this particular transition were members of founding Pitcairn families. In the case of Simon’s Water, the transferral of ownership from one family to another; from the original owner, Young, to Buffett, to Christian, did not erase its associations with previous owners. Each period of ownership, and the family it corresponds to, is remembered in a name. These cumulative naming practices – by which I mean the tendency for landholdings or houses to compile multiple names over time – illustrate the means by which landholdings can accumulate the social identities of their individual owner(s) or family affiliations over time.

Another way memories of previous owners surface and are narrated is via widespread beliefs about ghosts and hauntings. Beliefs in ghosts (commonly these are ghosts of deceased Pitcairners) are quite common on Norfolk Island and a substantial number of my informants claimed to have seen or felt the presence of ghosts.26 Two of the homes I lived in during my fieldwork were reportedly haunted and occasionally upon visiting people’s homes, the owners (Islanders or Mainlanders) would talk about the ghosts they had seen in them. Daniel Miller (2005:107-112) discusses haunting and ghosts as a mythical means of reconciling problems of social and material relations that arise due to the relative stability of a dwelling or place in contrast to the transience of its occupants. The ghost reconciles and mediates the history of the house with those who may otherwise be indifferent to it. Returning to inalienability, the presence of ghost stories may well illustrate local sentiments that houses have histories that are deeply connected to previous owners and attest to the continuing agency of the past owners of these houses the lives of those that go on to live in them. So, while landed property is alienable in terms of the law, memories of places such as knowledge of previous owners, builders and grantees, establish degrees of attachment that continue after the land leaves a person’s possession. In other words, family land is constitutive property that bears history.

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26 One of my friends claimed in 2007 that a room in her house was haunted, and she believed that the ghost was that of her grandfather, who built the house. When I visited in 2011, her parents had conducted considerable work renovating the house and the presence of the ghost had reportedly faded.
Land Accumulation and Transmission

Inheritance practices are an important way of maintaining social structures and relationships by reallocating the deceased people’s material artefacts and cultural equipment from one generation to the next (Goody 1962:273-274; Tilley 2006:60; Hann 2008:146). In the previous section, I discussed how both land and family homes are media through which persons are remembered and continue to be remembered. In this section I will discuss how land and family homes have been held and exchanged among Pitcairner families.

Access to land on Norfolk Island has been historically important in terms of subsistence production. Generally, the allocation of property in territory across generations is important in governing and as a means of reproducing social categories such as descent (Godelier 1988:82-84). While most Islander families were granted sufficient land at settlement to achieve subsistence levels, inequalities of land access between families grew as land was subdivided, sold, distributed and accumulated between the Pitcairn settlers. Gleeson (1952) for instance, made reference to the tendency for land accumulation and retention among Norfolk Islanders claiming that land was “the islanders’ most prized possession” and that “the retention, and if possible the further acquisition, of land assumes to the islander an importance far greater than the economic value of the land. Accordingly the land is seldom sold, and only sometimes leased, to Mainlanders” (Gleeson 1952:24). Treadgold (1988) additionally noted that land sales, gifting and marriage alliances among various families had created significant inequalities in the area of land ownership. He states:

The transition from a situation of almost complete equality in the ownership of land [in 1859] (or at least equality subject to any differences in soil, terrain etc.) to one of marked inequality was the result of a complex interaction of bequest patterns, marriage alliances, differences in family size, gifts, rules (and changes in rules) governing later land grants, and land sales and purchases (Treadgold 1988:124).

Based on data available from landholdings in British, New South Wales, and Commonwealth Reports (British Parliamentary Papers 1885, 1886; Commonwealth of Australia 1926, 1959, 1976; New South Wales 1906), cadastral maps (Kennedy and Jamieson 1860), reports on land use (Stephens and Hutton 1954; Norfolk Island Government 1987;
Woolcock 1978; Nobbs 1983), and heritage surveys (Varman 1984) and my informants’ substantial knowledge of matters relating to land, it seems that land transfer practices between families were – and are – variable, though they did exhibit some basic patterns across most families. Descent on Norfolk Island is generally reckoned bilaterally, and parents have generally subdivided and transferred their land to both sons and daughters in near equal quantities.

A Norfolk Island Administrator’s Report from the 1950s states that laws regarding land transactions that were introduced in 1859 established rules regarding the equal distribution of land among children in the case of intestacy (Commonwealth of Australia 1959:10). The Administrator maintained that Islanders also followed suit in regard to dispositions made via will and that this was responsible for the small holding sizes on the Island. However, this system dates back as far as Pitcairn Island and was responsible for large scale inequalities of land-ownership among Pitcairn Islanders, as is evident in the description of Pitcairn Islanders’ land holdings on Pitcairn Island by Captain Wood in a letter from 1849:

> The original settlers, the mutineers, marked out and divided the land into nine equal parts; these parts were again equally subdivided among their children, and again the children of the third generation have also a portion of their subdivisions (Wood, cited in Belcher 1871:210).\(^{27}\)

Silverman (1967) additionally states that it is likely that the Pitcairners were aware of English forms of impartible inheritance, such as primogeniture, whereby the eldest son inherits all of his father’s land, yet for some reason, perhaps because there were no conditions of scarcity that put initial limits on subdivision, they chose not to implement it.\(^{28}\) The exception seems to be some members of the Nobbs family, who tended to pass their lands to mainly males to avoid subdividing their farming land, sometimes observing the rule of primogeniture.

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\(^{27}\) Captain Waldegrave made similar notes about Pitcairn Island in 1830. He noted that land had in fact been allocated to John Buffett, and that Evans had access to land through his wife: “The whole island has been portioned amongst the original proprietors, therefore a foreigner cannot obtain land except by marriage or grant. Eleven-twelfths are uncultivated” (Waldegrave 1830, cited in Barrow 1961:159-160).

\(^{28}\) See Macfarlane (1978, 1998) and Gregory (1997:87-90) for wider discussions of the role of primogeniture in English inheritance practices.
Most early property transmissions occurred at the death of a parent, and all children, male and female, received an equal share in the property. As the Pitcairn settlers’ households grew and children married, parents would generally subdivide sections of their land and gift it to the marrying couple to form their own households. In some cases, the land was gifted to children at marriage. In other cases, land would be held earmarked for the couple and would legally change hands upon the death of the owning parent. Up until the mid 1950s, males held most titles and women’s land would often become the husband’s property upon marriage.

As some of these subdivided plots sat side-by-side, clusterings of kin groups formed in particular areas of the Island (see figure 3.4 – Note the author’s identification of family territory on the map) and adjacent households continued to support each other economically (Harrison 1984:25). Members of some families are still associated with – and concentrated in – particular areas of the Island, such as the Buffetts (who were also formerly associated with the land surrounding Pine Avenue – destroyed to make way for the airport in World War II) on Two Chimney’s Road in Steeles Point, the Nobbs family in Rocky Point and the Christian family in Shortridge and the Anson/Duncombe Bay area, among others. These are generally the result of a family buying or having been granted a large plot of land, and then subdividing it as the family expanded, or families purchasing land next to each other. Generally the extent to which a family is clustered in a region of the Island is also an indication of the success of their inheritance practices in keeping land off the market.

Some families have chosen not to subdivide their blocks further, and have instead built multiple houses on the same parcel of land. Others have little choice, as the Norfolk Island Plan (2010 [2002]) defines a minimum subdivision size. Ambilocal residence has therefore been common, especially for young couples. Wolf (1966:74) argues that inheritance patterns are partially shaped by scarcity. Partible inheritance of landholdings was initially common in frontier territories where availability of land is not an immediate issue – see also Dominy (2001:36) for a similar explanation inheritance practices New Zealand. Land was abundant when the Pitcairners settled on Norfolk, and several sources note that the Pitcairners had more land than they could cultivate.
The quality and sometimes quantity of the land offered by parents upon subdivision often differed between siblings. If a child had parents who were both Islanders themselves, both parents generally owned fragments of land somewhere on the Island. The type of land one received often depended on the person one married and in particular if one married an Islander or Mainlander. An Islander woman who was marrying a Mainlander man seemed to be considered the most likely to sell land. In my discussions with Paul, and his wife Joanne, both in their 50s, I was told that in their family, the Christians, daughters were more likely to receive less productive, inaccessible, or inferior land:
Joanne: …daughters might have been given land but they were the ones more likely to sell it…and go. Because they were going with their husband, either away or whatever.

Paul: Yeah, that’s the sort of thing that did happen in our family… One of my sisters was given the family land at Cascade as a wedding present, and sort of, the land got sold and they moved… (emphasis in original, Joanne and Paul, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

Often the type of land given would ensure that it would in fact get sold. Paul explained that his sisters were given a block of land that they considered next to useless due to its accessibility and location. The piece of land had no access road, was on a slope and was uncultivable, and these factors influenced his sisters’ decision to eventually sell it.

Before the 1890s, the elder children of Pitcairn settlers were of an age to make better use of the grants process, as such grants were limited to those over 25 years of age who had married. As a result many elder children owned their own land and homes when the time came for them to inherit (particularly at the death of a parent). In some families, the lot with the family home was willed to the youngest child on the death of the title-holding parent, in others, the family home went to the eldest child. Due to the process of dividing up property and giving it to children as they married, the family home was sometimes the only property still left in the parents’ name after they had retired from farming activity.

Economic change and Land Sales

A Commonwealth report on the Island’s economy by Gleeson (1952) estimated that 4100 acres of land on Norfolk was held in the form of freehold title, most of which by Islanders. Leasehold, on the other hand, was more evenly distributed between Islanders and Mainlanders (1952:26). By the mid-1970s, this was to change significantly. In 1976, the Nimmo Royal Commission estimated that less than half of the original granted land remained in the hands of Pitcairn Descendants (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:62) and surmised that such land alienation was incompatible with many of the submissions the

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29 If the husband that owned the land died, then the widow would often be given life interest in the estate, as indicated in various recorded incidences (Commonwealth of Australia 1926; New South Wales 1906; Varman 1984).
Commission had received from Islanders that claimed that the land on Norfolk belonged to Islanders alone and should be reserved for them.

While freedom to dispose of one’s property is the right of descendants of the original settlers as well as of any other citizens, and while such right is recognised, it was nonetheless contradictory to hear on the one hand in evidence expressions of intense attachment to land possession by Pitcairn descendants and the need for such land holdings in their way of life yet to be faced on the other hand by obvious evidence of willingness to sell what was allegedly such a highly regarded and traditional possession provided the price was attractive enough. These sales do detract from the weight which one would otherwise give to arguments urging action to ensure preservation of the alleged traditional right of the Pitcairn descendants to freehold land in Norfolk Island (Commonwealth of Australia 1976).

In the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, Islanders had gone from owning most of the freehold title to the Island’s land, to owning less than half of this title (see figure 3.5). Since 1856, a significant amount of land had been alienated in other ways, including an estimated 76 homes and 700 acres were alienated from Islanders to build the airport, known locally as the destruction of Pine Avenue (Halligan, 1942, in The Norfolk Islander 20/01/2007).

Agricultural production (both subsistence and commercial) very quickly receded as the OFC service and tourism industry began to dominate the Norfolk Island economy in the 1960s (Treadgold 1984:51). This seemed to have an enormous impact on the ways that Islanders lived, worked and valued their land. The tourism industry began to replace subsistence farming as early as the 1930s. Tourism, unlike the unstable and seasonal agricultural export industries and whaling activities that were previous sources of cash income, offered opportunities for somewhat more stable access to cash. Much land previously used for agriculture became less necessary for survival as Islanders relied more and more on imported goods for their subsistence. As may be expected, there is some correlation between the changing value of land, and the extent to which Norfolk Island’s economy was based on agrarian production. As the agricultural economy waned, land transmission to descendants became increasingly unstable. Owning large areas of land is no longer integral for ensuring generational emplacement on Norfolk Island.
Although exact figures are not available, by 1933 the population of the Island had for the first time an even number of Norfolk Islanders to people born overseas (Norfolk Island Government 1987:2). This proportion of Islander and Mainlanders was maintained for decades, and by the 1960s, land prices – particularly in the township of Burnt Pine – were being driven up by an even greater influx of new settlers to the Island from the mainland (Treadgold 1988:224). In the time between the census in 1961 and 1966, the population of Norfolk Island rose from 844 persons to 1,147 persons (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1966:2). These new residents had to be housed, and many bought parcels of land from Islanders. Many Islanders subdivided and sold sections of their unused land during this period and some recorded considerable resentment from others for doing so (Brook, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975j:241). Before the *Land (Subdivision) Ordinance 1967* (Cth), no restrictions on subdivision of land existed. Even with restrictions
in place, Christopher Nobbs (1983:6) calculated that between the period of 1967 and 1981, one hundred subdivisions of freehold land were authorised. Many of these subdivisions made use of a loophole that allowed for subdivisions to be made providing the resulting portions would be transferred to family members. Some Island landowners subdivided through this means in order to sell the portions to non-family members (see, Buffett, in Commonwealth of Australia 1975d:794). Nobbs (1983:6) suggested that the increasing fragmentation of holdings was a sign that land and housing on Norfolk Island were now well and truly part of an international property market.\(^{30}\)

In 1990, in order to combat this subdivision, the Norfolk Island Plan was introduced. One of the most significant features of the plan was the introduction of zoning and subdivision guidelines (see, Norfolk Island Government 2010 [2002]). Such planning guidelines limit the extent to which freehold land can be subdivided subject to its location on a zoning distribution map. As a result of this legislation, some Islander families have had to be more selective in regards to who inherits the family land. As Eric, an Islander in his 60s who has inherited a large tract of farming land by virtue of being the only child of his family resident on the Island, stated:

> A lot of people have family off Island. And therefore they don’t necessarily get to own them. I know, personally, that if there’s lots of land in the family, and then half the kids have gone to move away somewhere else, and then half the children are left on Norfolk Island, generally the ones on Norfolk Island get the land. Because they actually show that there’s general interest in that land. Or they’re here when some parent dies or you know, it’s just circumstantial. What limits that is that Norfolk Island is zoned, so that means that you can’t divide past a certain limit. So it may already be at that limit, so you’ll get what’s left. If you’re working on the land and you’re involved then you will get the land (emphasis in original, Eric, recorded interview 11/12/2007).

The confines of this legislation have influenced bequest patterns significantly, though I was unable to fully gauge the extent of this change in my fieldwork in 2007. Some Islanders I spoke to have anticipated problems for themselves when the time comes to pass their

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\(^{30}\) However, despite this, it seems that Islanders tended to keep the larger part of the subdivision and sell off smaller plots to mainlanders. Returning to figure 3.1, much of the land lots owned by mainlanders and businesses are substantially smaller ‘residential’-sized blocks of land.
landholdings to their children, and others find themselves selling land that they cannot subdivide.

Despite Islanders’ beliefs that ‘family land’ should ideally be kept within the family and never sold, there are clear conflicts between what Islanders say about their land and what they end up doing with it (Commonwealth of Australia 1976). Norfolk Islanders were clearly agents in this land loss, and were often willing to sell their land when the necessity arose. As Funda (1974) notes, they did have limited choices, and often sold their only bankable commodity – land – in order to “fund their wishes to join the modern world”.

It is important to remember that despite the arguments and concerns among Islanders over the selling of family land, the extent of alienation from Pitcairn Descendants to non-Islanders has been greatly overstated by both Royal Commissions and even Islanders themselves. As can be seen on the map of landholdings displayed below (figure 3.6) large areas of the Island’s landmass, around 70% at least (and higher in some areas where original grants were made), remain in the possession of Pitcairn Descendants in the form of freehold title. Figure 3.6 also indicates that the extent of Islanders’ interest in land is much larger than that of Mainlanders. The shaded areas in demonstrate the extent of freehold land in possession by Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn Descent. Therefore, a considerable proportion of this freehold land on Norfolk Island remains as ‘family land’ (see figure 3.6). In the next section, I will show how people on Norfolk Island have responded to the holding and selling of their land, and the complicated relationships that people maintain or create with family land today.
Figure 3.6: Map of Norfolk Island showing extent of Pitcairn descendant land 2010 (excludes land held by Islander-owned businesses). (Adapted by author from source: Registry of Lands, Norfolk Island 2010).

Selling Family Land Today

“We’ve actually bought another block of land”, Tristram informed me in between bites of a cafe hamburger. “McCoy land” he said and raised his eyebrows. “Actually...McCoy land bought from one of the original 50 acre lots. Original Pitcairner grant land” he spelt it out quite proudly. In 2007, when I came to know him, he had been back on the Island for less than a decade. His mother, after a long period away, had also returned to the Island and taken up residence with Tristram’s father. Tristram was born in 1953 in Canberra and is the eldest of two children. His mother is a Norfolk Islander from the Christian family, and his father was a Mainlander. Having been raised in Australia, he first visited Norfolk Island

31 Note also the extent of fragmentation of landholdings when compared to earlier cadastral maps.
in the 1960s and stayed with one of his mum’s sisters in the family home at Cascade, one of the old Christian family homes in the area.

Today, most Islanders seem to know someone in their family who had sold their family land on Norfolk and left the Island. Tristram told me his aunt’s home (their family home) was sold to the Nobbs family a few decades ago. As he told me this, he thumped his hand on the table and cursed in mock anger (while looking around for Nobbs family members). After the house was sold, he did not come back to Norfolk again until the early 1990s. He told me the family land, which belonged to his mother and her siblings, was eventually also sold some time after his mother moved to Canberra with her husband.

[When it was sold] my mum was upset. She wasn’t here at the time, but her half sister and brother, they went to school in Sydney so they moved to Australia and sold up the land. Mum was upset, but I don’t think there was an issue there and then. There appears to be more of an issue now. You know, selling off family land is taboo... But they [Islanders] all do it (emphasis in original, Tristram, recorded interview 07/12/2007).

His last comment struck me as strange so I asked him the obvious question. ‘How can something such as the sale of family land be thought of as taboo if everyone does it?’ He responded:

Well it’s upsetting by my generation’s standards at least...Um I guess ... my answer would be there’s probably a greater level of threat today to a traditional Norfolk Island. Where there’s twenty times the amount of visitors here than back in my mum’s day... In her day, there was nothing like that. So it was truly was their Island. Well now it ain’t. It’s shared with 20 different nationalities. I think there’s that many nationalities here already. So maybe it’s got something to do with that. You know, people are feeling much more threatened, because the world is coming to Norfolk (emphasis in original, Tristram, recorded interview 07/12/2007).

Tristram’s comments about his mother’s land and the land he himself purchased – “original Pitcairner [McCoy] grant land” – point to the tendency of residents to continue to refer to land in terms that indicate its status as an inalienable possession and as retaining a history of previous owners. Competing discourses of legal and inalienable ownership exist.
as previous owners are remembered and continue to be associated with the place. People can buy land, but they cannot generally extinguish the memory or knowledge of previous owners, in particular that of original grantees.

At the time I was interviewing Tristram in 2007, rumours were circulating about a few families leaving the Island due to a drop in tourist numbers and a subsequent economic downturn within the tourism industry. While the number of families leaving was relatively small, concerned letters were appearing in the letters to the editor column from those who were worried that the Island’s economic situation was driving young families off the Island.32 A week after my discussion with Tristram, I spoke with Erin, 41, on the back porch of her house in Middlegate. Erin’s brother had recently sold up his share of the family land and his family was one of those leaving the Island that week. His land holding lay near Ball Bay and had been in the family for generations. He was leaving because he wanted to get a job where there were chances of promotion, a job that was not available outside the public service on Norfolk Island. When asked if there had been any pressure put on her brother to retain the family land, she said: “Yeah there is, although my father has sold his family land so... and my mother sold her family land, so I guess he’s not going to get any judgement thrown in from that direction, but, yeah ...I know my sister and I wouldn’t of done it” (emphasis in original, Erin, recorded interview 05/12/2007). She remains silent for a few seconds, then adds in a defensive tone:

Yeah I know there’s a lot of people on Norfolk that really think selling family land as a cardinal sin. Sure...Not only because it’s traditional, but now they say that it is getting rarer and rarer to hold family land, you know, that outsiders being able to afford high prices, so by the more you sell, the more the prices go up, and the more the locals get pushed out of the market. But I think a lot of people that are against people selling family land come from more of just a traditional sentimental angle. Rather than thinking about it financially, economically... (emphasis in original, Erin, recorded interview 05/12/2007).

Islanders such as Erin and Tristram tended to express their disappointment with the land sales of the past, but nevertheless saw such sales as inevitable if regrettable acts. As Dean, an

32 I could only manage to get my informants to actually name two families that were leaving, however the rumours were pervasive enough for the Legislative Assembly to discuss the matter in the next Norfolk Islander, and for the Chief Minister to discuss it on the local radio station.
Islander in his late 30s stated to me, it is the knowledge of the continuity between family and land that contribute to its value and to the disappointment when it is sold.

I think that the issue of selling inherited land here is realistically no different to the same thing happening anywhere else in the world, especially in small communities where the history of the family & the land is known. And when a lot of those people in the community are related to each other there will always be a far stronger feeling of disappointment that a gift was sold (emphasis in original, Dean, recorded interview 22/11/2007).

Erin and Tristram’s comments are all indicative of the moralising discourse concerning land as an inalienable possession and concerning what ideally should be done with it. In the case of family land, it is the risk of loss that helps to constitute its value. Islanders today are somewhat amazed that ‘against all odds’, some families still retain parts of their ancestors’ original grants. Norfolk Islanders’ invocation of tradition in such instances is as much what Sider (2003:177) calls a “forward-looking action”, an effort to adjust of collective interests, as it is an attempt to emulate the actions of the past. To look at Islanders’ invocation of the tradition of land transmission in this way highlights their fears of further land loss and what such loss might entail. As one Islander in his 50s, Matthew, stated to me: “…we saw what our parents went through when they got rid of their land and many of us in my generation said, ‘never again’” (original emphasis, Matthew, recorded interview 10/12/2007). For those who have kept their family land, and even purchased land from other Islanders who were willing to sell, the situation is markedly different.

Chester, who is in his mid-sixties, is the son of a mixed marriage between an Islander woman and Mainlander man. He was willed two areas of land from his father and co-owns one of these areas with his brother, Patrick, who also still lives on Island. He inherited three plots of land – two from his father, one from his mother. One tract of land near Longridge was inherited from his mother’s side of the family. This land was originally part of a grant issued to Allen Buffett in 1875 by Sir H. Robinson (Governor of Norfolk Island) for 24 acres, 3 roods, and 16 perches (New South Wales 1906). Allen Buffett had 7 children, and by 1934, the land had been subdivided into 7 three and a half acre lots (Property and Survey Branch: Department of the Interior 1934). Chester now lives on the lot next door to the family home that he grew up in, which was originally built by Allen, his great
grandfather on his mother’s side. A large tecoma hedge (*waini*) interlaced with ivy, screens most his property from the road, and inside, he grows passionfruit and citrus in the few trees he possesses on his property.

Chester also inherited an area of around 10 acres of land in town from his father, who bought it for 80 [his father says 150] pounds off another Islander who thought it was useless. The money for the purchase was lent to his father by his mother’s sister-in-law, who also happened to be his mother’s second cousin. He brings up this land when we are discussing the township of Burnt Pine. “My dad wanted to build a place... My father”, he points to himself. “And he got offered a place in Burnt Pine. Paid 80 pounds, ’cos nobody’d live there. My grandfather asked why the hell you want a piece of land in Burnt Pine for? Nobody wants to live there!” (Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007). Chester laughed with mock incredulousness, then adds; “There you go...”, as though that explained it all. Perhaps it does.

Chester’s land in Burnt Pine is in a profitable location. When his father bought it, Chester told me, “There was nothing there! The army had a camp in that bloody paddock!” he says. When the Burnt Pine area began to be developed, his father built shops along the road face. Despite Chester’s father subdividing and selling off portions of this block, including some of the shops on the land, this landholding sits in what is now the middle of town and a commercial district has grown in the immediate area. Chester and his brother collect the rent from the lessees along the roadside.

I asked Chester if he would ever think of selling his land. “Not as I can envisage, mate, no. I don’t think I’ll be selling that. Nope. Like I said, that was Dad’s house, that was my parent’s house, and I’m like that. I’ll leave it to my grandson now. Cos all that would have been my son’s” (emphasis in original, Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007). Chester’s son had recently passed away, and so the portion equal to his son’s inheritance has skipped a generation, and Chester wanted to give it to his grandson. “Burnt Pine would have been my son’s. That’s right. And my daughter, my house [in Longridge] will be hers. Of course my son’s gone, that [he points in the direction of Burnt Pine] will be my grandson’s. He’s after me. If he wants to flog it after I’m dead...well I wouldn’t know...” He sounded a little sad about the prospects of the home being sold, but also seemed to be resigned that the matter is ultimately out of his control. In 2007, his grandson was living on the mainland,

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returning periodically during the holidays and when he wanted a break from city life (or ran out of money). Chester was left unsure about whether his grandson would return for good one day to take up the family land.

Mitch: Do you know if your grandson would ever...live here?

Chester: I don’t know, I don’t know. He may. He may wanna come back and live here. And if he does, he’s got something (Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007).

Chester viewed land as a form of security for himself his children and grandchildren. As he said, if his grandson were to ever return to Norfolk Island, he would have something to return to. On an Island that loses much of its young population to Australia and New Zealand, systems of land succession create a reason, and incentive, to return. However despite his own wishes to keep the land for his family, Chester is not one to criticize people who do sell their land.

[His voice slowly escalates and gets louder throughout his explanation.] Yeah but it’s people who’s never really lived here that are causing trouble. They come back to the Island when ____ were ready. They come back to the Island when Norfolk had electricity, tar seal roads. Where were ____ for forty years? There was nothing here. They come back and say, ‘What you done for OUR Island?’ It’s not their Island at all. I mean there’s Mainlanders that has lived here longer than Islanders. My uncle never lived here. [____] Buffett, he never lived here. Then those people come back here and whinge about ‘you’re selling the place off’. They didn’t give a damn if it blew away 40 years ago! [quietly now] It’s rabish [empty, useless or foolish words]. I think, anyway. Yeah (emphasis in original, Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007).

Chester’s anger towards those critical of land sales stemmed from his belief that not all Islanders have equally shared the burden of keeping their inherited property. From his point of view, those who stayed on the Island in times of hardship worked hard to live on the Island, whereas he sees those who left and returned as having lost their right to criticize others. Importantly, this drew out a further distinction, this time among Islanders; of those who kept land and those who left it. One the one hand, Chester said that no one should criticise those who have sold, and on the other hand, he attacked anyone who engaged in
such criticism by questioning their commitment to the Island on the basis of their history of residence on the Island. In his mind, they had given up the right to make such statements because they had not stayed.

Summary

The gift of land to the Pitcairners on Norfolk Island institutionalised differences between Islanders and Mainlanders. The power of objects in human interactions lie in their abilities to “represent the unrepresentable” (Godelier 1999:109). Family land has for some Islanders come to represent their material links with the monarch who granted them the land in the first place, and with a settlement narrative that authenticates a story of origins. For these people, family land makes material a connection that legitimates Islanders’ presence on the Island and further underpins Islander’s belief that they have a fundamentally different relationship to their land than later settlers. In addition to its representational qualities, property in land and the laws surrounding it largely shaped Islanders’ links to the Crown and to other governments, as they became simultaneously fearful and reliant on different governments to protect their property rights.

Importantly, ‘family land’ has been at the centre of a network of intimate relationships through which ownership has passed from family to family through marriage, bequest patterns and land sales. The result is that land is embodied with many of these relationships contained in its past, including those that link families to each other and to their ancestors as original owners. When it comes to the symbolic importance of family land, these past relationships can be recaptured by Islanders in order to provide a degree of stability to their sense of self and identity in a time when they are concerned that their traditions and identities are being eroded by social change.

If identities are only provisional constructions that must be maintained through processes that require the hard work of social actors (Weiner 1992; Harrison 2006), the continuing role of inheritance practices in safeguarding that stability is important to this maintenance. These practices are indications of the ways that Islanders positively value the intimate relations of belonging that surround such property relations, and the wish to protect such values from forces (such as the market) that would alienate or subvert them. So on the one hand, while these practices represent what Dominy (2001:132) calls practices of ‘social
traditionalism,’ attitudes towards land sales also provide a focus for ethno-nationalist sentiments among some Islanders. Island land continues to be valued today because it continues to draw family members back to the Island and provide a means by which future generation of Norfolk Islanders can continue occupy the Island, but just as importantly to some it offers a means of keeping potentially unwanted settlers out. This idea also arose more explicitly in my interview with Charlotte, a 76-year-old Islander who had strongly negative opinions on Islanders (particularly newly returned ones) making claims of historic relationships to land:

Charlotte: They [some Islanders, particularly those in the Pitcairn Society] claim that they’re indigenous. And they’ve mainly lived away. A lot of them were born here and go away as children for their own reasons. And they go away and come back. And they believe like the Nazi that they’re a pure race, and Norfolk belongs to us. Those who’ve been the recipients of land grants. And then the idea has been stuck in their minds not only does it belong to us, but we will rule it. Who are they to come in...? (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 08/05/2007).

As Charlotte indicates, some Islanders have strong misgivings about the way that historical connections to property are used in denoting exclusivity and exclusionary sentiments.

Inherited land, and in particular that class of land known as ‘family land’ helps to preserve and recall such an image of the Island, and an image of continuity with people and events of the past, keeping land off the market is part of a process in which Islander identity is considered to be safeguarded.33 It is here that ideas concerning land ownership intersect with wider understandings of belonging to Norfolk Island, and perhaps sentiments regarding the Island belonging originally to Norfolk Islanders. Retention of land by Islanders is a structuring force that emphasises the continuity of identities over change (see, Simmel 1978:353 on immovable property and continuum) while at the same time the selling of such land has been responsible for some of the most profound changes to Norfolk Island life.34 Family land is subject to the same vicissitudes as other inalienable possessions, and has been readily sold in the past and continues to be sold today. Islanders have always

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33 Gregory (1997:94) notes that “Population growth…is accompanied by an assertion of ancestral rights over a good that denies other people a right of access”.

34 I have also heard Islanders gossiping about land sales in which they expressed their disappointment at the land not being bought by other Islanders.
left the Island and searched for their fortunes elsewhere, and for this and other reasons, they have often sold their foothold on the Island when they do.

Conclusion: Alienating the Inalienable

Gregory (1997:115) states that: “As a good, the supreme value of land lies in the prestige and sense of belonging it gives to its guardians and...this makes them very reluctant to sell”. When these goods are sold, the loss can be experienced as both social and material (Kirsch 2001: 176). Similarly, Weiner (1992:11) states that inalienable possessions represent social identities as they are reconstituted through time. They legitimate within each generation by giving such linkages in material form through the passing on of these possessions. She argues strongly that such possessions “are the most potent force in the effort to subvert change, while at the same time they stand as the corpus of change” (Weiner 1992:11).

While there is no doubt that the sale of family property has precipitated considerable change in the social makeup of Norfolk Island, Weiner’s discussion of inalienable possessions seems to be ill equipped to deal with the role that the market has played in these changes in the value of land. Land’s value as a family possession, to be kept and passed on, is constantly weighted against its utility in terms of production, and the possible commercial advantages of divesting ownership of the land. Weiner argues that this is in fact one of the paradoxes of inalienable possessions, that despite their ‘absolute value’, they are nevertheless “...exchanged, lost in warfare, destroyed by rivals, sold, or are unclaimed, thus undermining the ability of rulers or families to keep intact the material symbol that legitimates their rank, status, or uniqueness” (Weiner 1992:37). Similarly, Myers (2001:57-58) argues that certain durable objects that may valued for their links to identity and the past are nevertheless “susceptible to...shiftings of trajectory, to being switched from one regime of value to another” due to the very materiality that makes them durable. To this end, Keane (2001:73; 2003:414) has argued that the very materiality of things create an excess of meaning, allowing them to be transacted in ways that diverge from their conventional usage.

The problem in the case of land on Norfolk is formulating a way of understanding the dual meanings of possessions as commodities and as tied up with people’s social identities and as objects which have meanings that can shift value and relevance across varying contexts. Part
of the problem with Weiner’s approach to inalienable possessions, as identified by Gregory (1997:82), is that she “deals with the conceptual switching from goods (keeping) to gifts (giving) but in a context which, for the most part denies the coevality of the imperial commodity” (emphasis in original).35 As I have explained, land as property has always been alienable to non-descendants of Islanders, therefore there has always been the potential for land to leave the hands of those for whom it holds subjective value. However Gregory (1997:94) also notes, the very legal and social mechanisms that often allow people to legitimately hold items of inalienable property can also allow these things to be alienated and travel the path of the commodity. Gregory has suggested that inalienable possessions in land are passed on until the social mechanisms that allow this process to reproduce itself begin to fail. On Norfolk Island, the increased movement of people to and from the Island, the collapse of agriculture, the appeals of the international property market, government intervention in property transmission and subdivision have caused some of these mechanisms to break down. Nevertheless the moralising discourse of land as something that is to be kept not sold continues to present the ideal actions for Islanders to take in relation to land ownership and transmission, despite the possibilities of what people may eventually do with their land.

35 While Gregory (1997) does not explain his usage of the word ‘imperial’ in this instance, he notes earlier in his book that certain ‘special’ commodities (gold and silver bullion, cowrie shells et.) act as standards of value that all other things can become articulated to or subordinated by.
CHAPTER FOUR

Bounty, Boundary and Memory

“…what is remembered of things past? Which of past beginnings, endings, and continuities are marked with significance? Which have mental and emotional signs placed upon them saying in effect: “Look at these objects. Understand and feel again through them what was once true and what, when you recognise and value its significance, will be true again”” – W. Lloyd Warner (1959:112).

Norfolk Islanders commemorate the anniversary of their ancestors’ arrival to the Island on the 8th June every year on a day they call Bounty (Anniversary) Day. The day is a public holiday on Norfolk and many tourist-related activities are cancelled to make time for the festivities. The celebrations begin by recreating the historical events of the morning in 1856 upon which the Pitcairners disembarked from the Morayshire to make Norfolk Island their home. While the day is without a doubt a celebration of togetherness and community for Norfolk Islanders, in this chapter I focus on the ways in which this celebration accentuates boundaries between Pitcairn-descendant Norfolk Islanders and Mainlander residents. Recourse to the Pitcairners’ migration to the Island as a group, as represented in the Bounty Day festival, continues to be a major point of differentiation on Norfolk Island and the main source of a separate ‘Islander’ identity in contrast to the Island’s later settlers. While the commemoration makes no direct references to the kinds of disputes over land and territoriality discussed in the previous chapters, the Bounty Day ceremony creates and maintains a consciousness of the Pitcairners’ ‘firstness’ of settlement in its performers. It is a display of a shared history and origin that is integral to establishing and performing their nativeness to the Island.
Although Bounty (Anniversary) Day only occurs once a year, the ideas about Norfolk’s past and present that are encapsulated by this commemoration of settlement resonate throughout the community in various ways. I begin by offering an extended description of the Bounty (Anniversary) Day march. I follow this vignette with a review of the relevant literature concerning the role of historical representation and historical consciousness in the construction of social identities. I theorise Bounty Day as a site in which a particular narrative of the Island’s past is performed and made available to participants. The commemorative ceremony of Bounty Day is a strong repository of collective memories, memories that influence individuals’ attitudes towards the past and present. I will draw on examples of the changing nature of the Bounty Day celebration and how its representations of the past reveal wider issues concerning the Islander’s stake in belonging to Norfolk Island. Through a series of illustrative quotes from Islanders, I will discuss how the traditional celebration of Bounty Day makes explicit particular lines of division between Islanders and Mainlanders and, through its emphasis on settlement and ‘firstness’, communicates to performers and spectators what they should make of these divisions.

**Bounty Day**

At 8:30am on the 8th of June 2007, I pulled up in my car at Slaughter Bay with my partner, Haylee. Others had already arrived. Vehicles lined the grass on both sides of Bay Street, all the way back to Bounty Street and beyond. More cars continued to filter in to Kingston, parking further and further from the Pier, some beeped their horns at friends and family as they arrived, giving the ‘Norfolk wave’ as they manoeuvred through the trickle of people walking toward the Kingston Pier. By the time I made the short walk to the Pier and surrounding buildings, there was already a large congregation of Islanders crowding the area, their numbers steadily increasing until around 9:30am. Barefoot children ran past, splashing in the puddles and laughing. Others took the opportunity to pose for family photos, standing next to the boat shed and the old, abandoned lighters with grass growing through their ageing wooden hulls.
Many Islanders give a prayer for good weather the night before Bounty (Anniversary) Day and it seemed to have been answered in 2007. The sky was grey, however, and threatened rain later in the day. On the Kingston Pier, Islander families were dressed in simple costumes with the sombre colours of 19th century period dress. The men predominantly dressed in black or brown trousers with white, long sleeved shirts rolled up to the elbows. Many wore a black, grey or brown waistcoat or vest over their shirts. The women wore either black or white dresses or skirts with blouses. My quick glance around the crowd indicated that footwear was not a requirement, the crowd of feet clad in an assortment of black shoes, sandals, thongs, with a sprinkling of bare feet on the wet ground.¹ Most Islanders, men and women, also wore a traditional woven Norfolk-style hat on their heads. Some women adorned themselves with a bonnet or Pacific Island-style flowers in their hair. One man wore a digital watch on his wrist. A few wooden wheelbarrows modelled on the ones used on Pitcairn stood out in the crowd; they were filled with straw and some had small children nestled inside.

¹ The lack of shoes could be considered historically consistent, as many Pitcairners were shoeless on arrival.
Once the families were assembled on the pier, 400-500 people in total, a group of eight Islanders – a cross section of the Island in terms of age and rowing ability – boarded a rowboat on the steps of Kingston Pier. At the bow of the rickety boat sat a small flagpole, the Union Jack flapping in the breeze. The boat sat low in the water and rocked considerably as the waves lapped against its wooden hull. The signal was given and the lighter was rowed a short distance from the Pier. The rest of the Islanders stood watching the boat rock back and forth, chattering to each other. The crowd of Islanders was in turn surrounded by a group of onlookers of about half their number. This smaller crowd consisted mostly of visitors from Australia and New Zealand, but was also dotted with some familiar local faces. The more enthusiastic tourists knelt in the mud to take pictures of the milling crowd of Islanders, but all in all they kept their distance.

![Map of Kingston](image)

**Figure 4.2: Map of Kingston.** Design by Haylee Fieldes 2009.

2 The boat used on Bounty (Anniversary) Day is actually a smaller rowboat used especially for the re-enactment. Though it represents a ship’s lighter, it is smaller and more manoeuvrable. A lighter is a small boat that is used to transport goods and people from offshore ships to one of the two piers on the Island. The absence of a deep-sea harbour necessitates that all goods that do not arrive at the Island by plane be transported in such a manner.

3 The dark, shaded boxes on the map indicate the locations of Second Settlement buildings.
The lighter crew began to row back towards the Pier. Standing closest to the lighter at the steps of the pier were three people, two men and a woman, clothed in fine period dress that stood in sharp contrast to the rest of the Islanders’ modest costumes. As the lighter drew closer, the passengers disembarked and the three finely dressed figures greeted each person as they stepped back on to the Pier. Once all had disembarked, the landing party joined the rest of the group assembled in front of the Pier Store and organised themselves for the walk to the cenotaph. As they began to leave, groups of tourists closed in on the performers, impeding traffic and snapping photos of procession. Less zealous onlookers crowded the areas overlooking the pier at Kingston to watch the procession.

As a group, the procession walked towards the war cenotaph. Most were on foot, the exceptions being the elderly and those unable to walk the distance to the war memorial. Children were ‘piggybacked’ or ‘wheelbarrowed’ about, while the elderly were given seats in vintage vehicles. As the elder Islanders climbed aboard an old Model A-Ford, Norfolk’s first ever tourist bus, tourists bustled forward to take photos. Eventually, the tourists moved out of the path and the vehicles set off ahead of the main group, who followed along the road, chatting and joking as they went.

The Islanders walked over the old convict bridge and assembled on the crossroads of Pier Street, Quality Row, Middlegate Road and Country Road at the war cenotaph. Tourists, friends and uncostumed relatives of the marchers trailed behind the group and to either side, the most congregating at a distance behind the Islanders. The marchers surrounded the white cenotaph, which commemorates the large number of Norfolk Island residents (both Islanders and later settlers) lost in two World Wars. God Save the Queen was sung, and wreathes were laid upon the war memorial by various officials and children in an act of respect to the fallen. The procession then reassembled and continued along Quality Row.

Flanked on one side by Second Settlement buildings and on the other by the grassy expanse of a modern 9-hole golf course, the costumed Islanders made their way toward the cemetery. Upon reaching the cemetery, the marchers congregated around the white picket fence at the entrance and sung The Sweet Bye and Bye led by an elder Islander. Additional

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4 A cenotaph is a monument erected in honour or memory of a group or individuals.
5 During my fieldwork, this elder was Kik Quintal, and had been for many years (pictured centrally in figure 4.4).
Figure 4.3: Islanders beginning their march to The Cenotaph, Bounty Day 2007. Kingston, Norfolk Island. Photo by Haylee Fieldes 2007.

Figure 4.4: Elderly Islanders on vintage car, Bounty Day 2007. Kingston, Norfolk Island. Photo by Haylee Fieldes 2007.
hymns and prayers were then sung, including *Let the Lower Lights be Burning* and the *Pitcairn Anthem* and the *John Adams Prayer*, which was read by a direct descendant of John Adams; followed by *The Lord’s Prayer*. As the hymns were sung, children took wreaths made by Norfolk Islander women down to the graves of notable ancestors and placed them next to the headstones. The ancestors chosen for this honour were predominantly the matriarchs and patriarchs of first Pitcairn settlers of Norfolk Island. After these wreathes were placed, others took the opportunity to honour more recently passed or otherwise notable family members, again through the placing of wreaths.

Those of Pitcairn Descent dressed in period costume were invited up the hill to Government House for morning tea. At this point, I remained with the rest of the tourists and outsiders. This was my conscious decision based on the explicit remarks made to me by several Islanders that non-Islanders were not permitted to attend this leg of the re-enactment. What I know of this section of the parade I draw from the discussions I have had with Norfolk Islanders and from video footage from previous years. Once the group had ascended the small hill to Government House, the Administrator and his wife – the only Mainlanders present who were not attached to an Islander family – officially welcomed the people into their home. The group divided themselves according to their lineage and their costumes were then judged. Banners hung from the veranda of Government House, representing each of the family names. Some banners took a genealogical approach to representing their families, others emphasised the Polynesian influences in their family history. The Administrator’s wife oversaw the judging of the costumes and awarded the best-dressed family with a shield. Formalities aside, the children then rolled down the Government house hill, signalling the end of the march. The procession broke apart as some people made their way down to the ruins of the old prison compound to organise the communal picnic while others returned home in their cars to finish their picnic preparations.

It had been raining heavily since the end of the Government House leg of the Islander ceremony and the landscape was beginning to look sodden, too wet even to use a camera.

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6 John Adams was the early leader of the Pitcairn Island community.
7 The judging of the costumes is a relatively recent addition to the day’s itinerary by a previous Administrator and some Islanders pointed out to me that it was not something everyone liked.
8 The Buffett Family won in 2007.
As the picnic was to take place a couple of hours after the Government House leg of the ceremony, I returned to a house near Burnt Pine to help an elderly Islander, Charlotte, 76, to assemble and transport her offerings to the Bounty Day picnic. After gently balancing her lemon pies and other sweets on the seats of her rickety car, we both set off, in separate cars, back down the hill to Kingston. For non-Islanders, attendance at the picnic was by invitation only, Charlotte having been kind enough to invite me to her table.

Figure 4.5: Trestle tables set up for the Bounty Day picnic. The rain was too heavy to use a camera for the picnic later in the day. Kingston, Norfolk Island. Photo by Author, 2007.

At 12:00pm we entered the location of the communal picnic, which had been set up inside the old prison compound, the tall, stone walls sheltering the picnickers from the worst of the wind, but certainly not the worst of the rain. The ruins had not had a roof since the late 19th century, and in some places, little wall to speak of either. As we entered, we saw a marquee for the tourists set up by one of the Island’s touring companies. Decades ago, tourists were all invited to eat with the Islanders, but the increase in the size and influence of the tourism industry has meant that there was now limited space and food to go around. Over time, these limitations have enflamed some local tempers. The compromise was to see the tourists repositioned outside the walls of the compound, not quite out of view but safely out of the way of the Islanders.
Each of the original eight Island families had their own table, laid with tablecloths and piled with food. There was also an extra table that was organised for official guests such as Australian Commonwealth officials and senior members of the local public service who were not connected to a family of Pitcairn descent. Many non-Islanders were present, having been invited to family tables by their Islander friends. I placed my own offerings on the table next to a whole suckling pig resting on a bed of aluminium foil. The table I had been invited to was piled with roasted meats such as pork, turkey, chicken, whole trumpeter, and identifiably traditional Island dishes such as Tahitian-style fish *mudda*, *pilahai*, *aena* and *hibi* pies, lemon pies and corn bread. While traditional dishes have their place at the table, a wide variety of food is present and it was not uncommon to see modern cuisine making an appearance. At 12:30, a short grace was said and the Administrator and his wife were formally welcomed to the picnic and invited to join the families for their lunch. I sat down next to the Administrator and his wife, making small talk about my project and eating from a plate that was rapidly filling with water from above.

After the families and their guests had eaten their fill, many left the picnic area and spent the afternoon relaxing, visiting family and friends, drinking, or enjoying leisure time. This year, the crowd rapidly dispersed from the picnic area, a warm fire more appealing than the bitter ocean wind buffeting Kingston. Many families went to various houses around the Island to continue their celebrations after making an appearance at the sodden compound. Traditionally, after the picnic a sporting match (most commonly a cricket match) would be played called Bounty vs. Allcomers. The ‘Bounty’ team was originally made up of those Pitcairn Descendants who had ‘Bounty names’, the Christians, McCoys, Quintals, Youngs and Adams’. The others, including both those with Pitcairn but not *Bounty* names, and Mainlanders were all in the ‘Allcomers’ team. No one seemed particularly keen to play this year. After sitting in the rain for the past two hours, no one wasted any time returning home or to shelter to continue the festivities in comfort. In the evening, the Bounty Ball was held at Rawson Hall. Everyone on the Island including tourists was invited and the night concluded with ballroom dancing and singing. Awards are given to the dancers and

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9 *Mudda* is a local dish consisting of green banana dumplings cooked in coconut milk. *Pilahai* is a baked dish made from a pulverised banana, sweet potato, taro, pumpkin or yams or a combination of these ingredients. *Aena* is boiled kumera mixed with coconut milk and baked in an oven. *Hibi’s* are small periwinkles found on the rocks around Norfolk Island. Tahitian fish is a recent culinary introduction, and a few interviewees have questioned its traditional basis.
there are prizes for both Norfolk Island residents and visitors. Children are also encouraged to dance.

The Past as Remembered

In his extensive analysis of historical consciousness, historian David Lowenthal (1985:40-41) asserts that societies rely on their pasts to make sense of and validate the present. In particular, the perception within a group of a relatively stable past provides important points of reference with which to validate tradition, to confirm a sense of individual or group identity and to make sense of one’s place in a present social milieu. In order for groups to utilise the past in such a way, understandings of the past that play important roles in validating identity and tradition require a degree of stability within the group. Individual understandings of history are stabilised through a larger group by homogenising certain representations of the past. Processes of sharing and validating individual memories within a group shape a collectively remembered past, as individual memories of the groups past that are not shared by the whole group are reworked to coincide with the socially important elements of the past (1985:196). It is this (somewhat) stabilised understanding of history that social scientists have come to call ‘collective memory’ or ‘social memory’.

Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 1992) provides one of the earliest efforts to theorise the social aspects of remembering in 1925. Halbwachs placed emphasis on the group as a fundamental influence in the shaping of understandings of the past. In doing so, he adapted psychological conceptions of memory, which held memory as a property of the individual, and expanded them to a social or collective scale. He claimed that there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society. The particular groups of which people are members mediate the relative importance of these collective memories. Remembrances of events and experiences that are shared by most of the group

10 As Locke (1689) notes in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, “So that what-ever has the consciousness of present and past Actions, is the same Person to whom they belong” (Locke 1975 [1689]:340-341).

11 While Olick & Robbins (1998) and Olick et al (2011) identify a number of academic precursors to Halbwachs, they locate him as the central figure in the evolution of ‘collective memory’ as a concept.
members come to the fore, and elements of the past that are less widely shared are pushed into the background or forgotten, or remain the memories of only part of the group or individuals (1980:43). Furthermore, the influence of the contemporary social milieu is very much present in the reproduction of meanings attributed to the collective past (1992:48-51). Collective memory is therefore a useful concept for understanding the persistence of certain ideas about the past and certain ways of thinking about the present within social groups (Schwartz 1991). Importantly it is not just factual knowledge of the past that is recorded and passed on in collective memory, it is also “…attitudes of the past and ways of thinking” (Halbwachs 1980:64).

The ideas of the past that make up collective memories are both political and social. It is through the constant interplay between written history and collective memory that elements of a group’s history are accorded significance. As Zerubavel (1997) who used the concept of collective memory to interrogate Israeli nationalist accounts of the past, summarises:

Collective memory continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas. And in the process of referring back to these records, it shifts its interpretation, selectively emphasising, suppressing, and elaborating different aspects of that record (Zerubavel 1997:5).

Dual processes of remembering and forgetting keep collective memory in a constant state of flux, as new meanings and emphases are ‘remembered’ and drawn into lived memory while others are forgotten or relegated to history (Zerubavel 1997:214). Returning again to Bounty Day, acts of commemoration are also sites of remembering, and by association, forgetting. Commemoration, by its very nature, relies on these processes of remembering and forgetting in selecting suitable pasts to memorialise. It is this concept of commemoration as a particularly focussed mode of remembering, that has become increasingly important to understandings of memory and its transformations within the social sciences (Zerubavel 1997:5).
Social Memory, Commemoration and Bodily Practices\textsuperscript{12}

Connerton (1989:41-104) states that social memories of the past are deposited in both culturally specific bodily practices and commemorative ceremonies. Just as ceremonial activities are shaped by the society that performs them, so too do ceremonies inform and maintain the social order from which they have arisen. Commemorative ceremonies are formalised ritualised performances that, like other rites, have a repetitive aspect to them (Connerton 1989:45). The repetitiveness of these rites implies a general sense of continuity with the past, but the expressed purpose of commemorative ceremonies is to be explicitly commemorating this sense of continuity (Connerton 1989:48). Commemorative ceremonies establish this continuity by making specific references to particular historical persons, events and places in the form of ritual re-enactment.

The differences between commemorative ceremonies and other processes of articulating ideas of the past are evident when we examine characteristics of these ceremonies that are not generally shared with other forms of historical reconstruction such as myth and textual inscription. The first characteristic is that unlike mythological narratives, commemorative ritual performances have fixed and repetitive qualities. Ritual can be considered a repository of social memory structured into a form that is readily enactable and repeatable (James 2003:107). Connerton (1989:57) characterises ritual as having less potential for variance when compared to oral forms of passing on memory and that it therefore provides a more reliable medium for the transmission of collective memories. Connerton stresses persistence over malleability of commemorative ceremonies, though others, such as Spillman & Conway (2007; see also, Conway 2007) have noted, no two commemorations are exactly the same. I will demonstrate that even though the core aspects of Bounty (Anniversary) Day have remained somewhat fixed, there was still a large degree of variability and change over time, both in terms of the structure of the re-enactment and likely in terms of meanings it generated for participant and audience.\textsuperscript{13} Also, unlike Connerton (1989), I do not claim that these ceremonies are necessarily more important sites for the transmission of collective memory than oral history or mythological narratives. In previous chapters I have

\textsuperscript{12} I use the term ‘social memory’ as opposed to ‘collective memory’ hereon in on the basis of Olick et al’s (2011:40-41) discussions of the conceptual baggage associated with the term ‘collective memory’. They note that Halbwach’s descriptions of ‘collective memory’ tend to alternate between only the common memories of groups and socially shaped individual memories.

\textsuperscript{13} See also Conway (2007), Spillman & Conway (2007) for examples relating to Bloody Sunday commemorations.
already outlined the ways that oral history and materiality are both means by which Islanders access and transfer knowledge of the past. Nevertheless the performative qualities of rituals are an important means of transmitting information about the past. With this in mind, I focus on his discussions of the more immediate physical, performative quality of commemorative ceremonies as being integral to denoting the significance of certain aspects of the Island’s past.

A second characteristic of ritual is their render certain components of the past explicit and link these components to social actors in ways that purely textual forms of historical reconstruction do not. Commemorative rites are capable of drawing connections between the contemporary performing group and the subject matter enacted in the ritual. Ritual practices, unlike the telling of myths or narratives of the past, are able to specify the particular relationships between performer and subject matter (Connerton 1989:54,57). If it can be said that rites make explicit the relationship between the performer and what is being performed, then rites that specifically commemorate past people and events have the potential to specifically draw connections between the performers and those people and events involved in the performance (Connerton 1989:61). Historical re-enactment involves more than just reminding the participants of the past events marked out in the ritual. Bodily presence of participants within the representation of history encourages actors to view the historical material presented in the ceremony as significant and related to contemporary performers.

Commemorative ceremonies enable a community to be “reminded of its identity as represented and told by a master narrative” (Connerton 1989:71). In Connerton’s terms, this master narrative becomes a sort of ‘autobiography’ of the group’s self that adapts and changes focus as the membership and meaning of the group changes. The ceremony of Bounty Day is meaningful to the performers because the performance corresponds to – and gives value to – a further set of non-ritual actions within the group. The particular meanings that participants and audience draw from Bounty Day has most likely changed over the years, as evident by the changing nature of the Bounty Day celebration which will be discussed shortly. Even if the ceremony were to remain somewhat fixed in its structure and performance over a period of time, its meaning may still change dramatically between generations as the attitudes of the performers change. The significance and meaning of the Bounty Day re-enactment to different generations of Islanders is apparent though the
changing structures of the celebration. Memory is an important element of this process, but it must be remembered that we as anthropologists can never really know what people are thinking. We can see people march, but can never completely know how they interpret these events. The best that can be said is that the bodily participation of people in the march provides participants with a collective experience of events, though the ways that this maps on to individuals’ sense of history is by no means straightforward or formulaic.¹⁴

The History of the Bounty (Anniversary) Day Ceremony

In 2006, Norfolk Island celebrated the sesquicentenary of the Pitcairner settlement.¹⁵ While events such as reunions, sporting matches, workshops and concerts were scheduled for the entire year, the celebrations centred on the anniversary of the landing of the Pitcairners in Kingston in 1856.¹⁶ Many Pitcairn Descendants living in Australia and New Zealand made the journey to be with their extended families and the Islander ranks in the re-enactment march swelled with these extra participants. 2006 was also a year characterised by increased local insecurity regarding Norfolk Island’s political future as a partially self-governing territory. The Australian Commonwealth had put forward plans to radically change the Island’s model of limited self-government and the march became a rallying point for the expression of the strength of Norfolk Islander identity, and for some, as an act of solidarity against the proposed changes to their political status. Among those I interviewed were Islanders who were angry with Bounty Day being used for such political signification. Nevertheless, the combination of the sesquicentenary celebrations and the opposition to proposed reforms to the Island’s political status meant that in 2006 Bounty Day had its largest turnout to date.

¹⁴ Some younger Islanders merely attend because everyone else does, some take pride in their heritage, and others indicated they are more interested in the food and alcohol.

¹⁵ A sesquicentenary is a one hundred and fifty year anniversary.

¹⁶ Cannadine (2007:106), in his examination of ceremony concerning the British monarchy, states that no analysis of ceremony that assesses a ritual in isolation can offer a convincing explanation of its meaning. Its meaning is only re-discovered when the ceremony is contextualised and evaluated in terms of the social milieu and historical situation in which it was performed, and through an examination of the performance itself (Cannadine 2007:107).
I observed the Bounty Day ceremony in the 2007, one year after the sesquicentenary.\(^{17}\) The march and levels of participation were noticeably more subdued this year, and Islanders repeatedly told me that I ’should’ve seen it last year’. The popularity of Bounty Day has risen and subsided in the 150 years since the Pitcairn Islanders settled on Norfolk and seemed to have reached its peak in 2006. The only other comparable year in terms of the scale of the celebration seems to have been the Centenary year of 1956. Additions to the parade in this year coincided with what seemed to be an increased historical awareness within the Islander community of the role of the 1856 settlement in Norfolk Island’s history brought about by the anniversary of this settlement.\(^{18}\) Over the years since, the Bounty Day ceremony has undergone incremental changes that reflect the changing political and social desires of its participants and organisers.

Before the celebrations surrounding the centenary of Pitcairner settlement in 1956, the Bounty Day ceremony took a more militaristic, maritime form. Only men marched, and some Islanders whom I interviewed claimed that participation in the march was restricted to men who were patrilineal descendants of Bounty mutineers. The 1931 celebration was the first official celebration of Bounty (Anniversary) Day in 27 years (Norfolk Island News 10/06/1932, reproduced in The Norfolk Islander 14/06/2008). A speech in 1944 by Administrator Captain Eric Stopp, recounting the 1931 procession – which was the 75-year anniversary of settlement – demonstrates the prevailing maritime/military theme of the celebration.

The descendants of the mutineers took great pains to represent their ancestors in a fitting manner, and many were smartly decked out in naval rig. The Christians and Youngs were dressed as officers and the Quintals, Adams and McCoys as naval ratings. The proceedings commenced when the “crew” of the “Bounty” paraded at the War Memorial and were inspected by the Administrator, who congratulated them on their smart appearance. The parade then marched along Quality Row

\(^{17}\) The march from the 2006 sesquicentenary was televised on TV Norfolk. From this programme it was possible to gauge the participation levels as being much higher than the 2007 turnout.

\(^{18}\) This is supported by Norfolk Islander linguist Shirley Harrison’s (1985:137) observations of the unwillingness of Norfolk Islanders to talk about the history of Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands and “…sweep it under the carpet in the hope that the less praiseworthy parts of it would be forgotten”. Harrison cites a centenary edition of the Island’s local newspaper containing historical and cultural information as a sign that this attitude had changed substantially and that Islanders were more willing to reflect on their history (Harrison 1985:149 [6]).
where the present head of the Christian clan took the salute. The head of the clan was an imposing figure as he was dressed in the full dress military blue frock, a naval cap, epaulettes and a large sword usually used in his plantation for desuckering bananas. Four of the surviving Pitcairners who had landed on 8th June 1856 occupied seats on the Quarter Deck. A salute was fired from the Bounty’s gun with the aid of Chinese crackers; God Save the King and Rule Britannia were sung with tremendous enthusiasm; and cheers were given for the four Pitcairners. The cricket match “Bounty” versus “All-comers” then commenced (Stopp 1944).19

Stopp’s description indicates that there were few references to Norfolk Island landmarks in the commemoration, with most references being related to the Bounty mutiny. Later in his account, Stopp states that there were initially also plans to throw a Captain Bligh impersonator into the stream, though this gesture to the mutiny was rejected at the last minute for fears of ‘offending the Administrator’, who was himself a Captain. The Bounty vs. Allcomers match took a much more central position in the 1931 festivities, further suggesting that Islanders’ attention was drawn more to the events of the Bounty mutiny than the settlement narrative of Norfolk Island.20 Paul, 58, recounts his early experiences of Bounty Day before the centenary.

Paul: …Bounty Day almost died out many years ago… as an event…And I can still remember going along to the very…early in my time, to the march and we used hire old sailor’s uniforms and we used to get dressed up in sailor’s uniforms for the day and it was in those days that I can remember going down to the Pier and there would have been…twenty people? Roughly… (Paul, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

In the 1950’s, the maritime emphasis began to be superseded by a different sort of re-enactment. Most respondents claim that the re-enactment of the Pitcairners landing began around, or on, the centenary of settlement.21 The Island’s Administrator in 1956, Brigadier C.H.B. Norman, described a Bounty Day commemoration similar to its contemporary

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19 The Bounty’s gun was brought from Pitcairn to Norfolk Island in 1856 with the Pitcairners.
20 Hayward (Hayward 2006:85-92) states that Norfolk Islanders in the 1930’s experienced a revival of interest in the Bounty story. This interest, in the Bounty mutiny was initially generated from outside the Island as a series of films popularised the story for a new audience and Islanders that lived away reintroduced this interest to Norfolk.
21 Hoare (Hoare 1983:8) briefly states that a re-enactment occurred in 1950, but does not specify its format.
incarnation in his annual report. According to his brief account of the march, there was a re-enactment of the landing and a procession, followed by a picnic, much like today. Norman describes the traditional lunch in more detail than anything else.

The traditional island picnic followed at which 929 people sat down at the one long “table”, cloths being spread end to end the length of the prison walls on the north side. After singing the Grace the diners sat down to the greatest display of food the island has ever seen, pork, sucking pigs, hams, ducks, chickens, turkeys, and fish comprising the main meats, supported by potatoes, kumeras, yams, taro, pil-hi, mudder and salads of various kinds. The main sweets were lemon and cream tarts, plum puddings, fruit pies, jellies and fruit salad (Norman, in Commonwealth of Australia 1959:19).

The centenary of settlement celebration in 1956 seems to be somewhat of a departure from previous celebrations, as considerable efforts were taken to make that particular Bounty Day a cut above the rest. Furthermore, some of these changes were brought about by the Administrator’s office, and funding from the Australian Government to print a program of events and historical publication summarising the Island’s history to that date (see, Commonwealth of Australia 1956). It seems that the 1956 Anniversary Day was the first time that the performers incorporated period costumes into the march. The Administrator’s report states that period costumes were worn in this year, though pictures from later years still indicate the continued persistence of the sailor suits and maritime theme on the march (Buffett 2004:104). Since the 1956 Centenary, Bounty Day has roughly followed the format of the Centenary celebrations, though sometimes with little to no turnout by Islanders.²²

Between 1956 and the present day, the Bounty Day march has been transformed from a low-key event where only a few Islander men would march from the Kingston Pier dressed in sailor’s uniforms, into a highly organised commemoration that occupies a much more central place on the Norfolk Island calendar. Attendance at Bounty Day by Islanders today is strong. Some Islanders do not participate every year and those with young families are most likely to attend the re-enactment, though the majority of Islanders will attend the

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²²To some extent, this lack of turnout in some years is representative of the practicalities in getting down to Kingston in the pre-war years. Unsealed roads and lack of motorised transport, along with poor weather were also mitigating factors governing whether the Bounty (Anniversary) Day parade would take place.
march and picnic. The changes to the celebration that have taken place have mainly been to the re-enactment component. Core elements of the commemoration have remained consistent for a considerable period. In my informants’ living memory, there has always been a picnic of some sort on Bounty (Anniversary) Day and, since at least 1956, there has been some form of procession. The most striking change comes in the re-enactment of the Pitcairn landing and in the modes of dress used to represent these historical ancestors.

Figure 4.6: An early Bounty (Anniversary) Day celebration, unknown year. Kingston, Norfolk Island. (Source: National Archives of Australia, CP822/1, 7883718).

As the march has become more central to expressing cultural identity, more elements that signify the distinctiveness of Norfolk culture have been incorporated into the march. Furthermore, the march shows signs of what Hayward (2006:85-108) calls the “re-Polynesianisation” of Norfolk identity, as it is often the more ‘exotic’ elements of Norfolk material culture that have been added to the traditional Bounty Day costumes.23 There are, however, disagreements regarding what is deemed an acceptable degree of change to smaller features of the Bounty Day commemoration. Two elderly Islander women referred

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23 Pictures and descriptions of the Anniversary (Bounty) Day ceremony in Hoare’s (1996:42-43) account of Norfolk Island in the 1930’s show no signs of the plaited hats in the celebration.
negatively to the increasing popularity of hibiscus adornments among younger girls in the march, citing their historical inaccuracy. Maggie, 74 discussed what she believed to be the inaccuracies in wearing even the plaited hats that are now commonplace in the ceremony, stating:

Someone has made it a traditional hat. Well the only time they put on *that* hat was when they were fishing or went farming or something. You dressed up. You’d never wear the hats because they would mean that you were very poor had nothing [chuckles], you know? (emphasis in original, Maggie, recorded interview 02/9/2007).

While there is some diversity in the types of attire worn today, bright colours are generally avoided by the performers, being inconsistent with what ancestors would have worn. While there are some rules about dress standards, precise historical re-creation does not seem to be the primary role of the re-enactment. Nevertheless, wearing the same clothes ancestors does contribute to ‘authenticity of experience’ (Handler and Saxton 1988:245).

**The Revival of Bounty (Anniversary) Day and the Tourism Industry**

The large influx of tourists to the Island since the 1960’s has played a key role in fostering some of the innovations in the formalised ceremonial aspects of Bounty Day. Today, the Bounty Day Committee, a group of community volunteers, organises nearly every aspect of the day. Historically, however, the tourist bureau played an important role in establishing and maintaining the performative aspects of the march. The tourist presence on the Island not only provided a much larger audience for the Islanders’ performance, but also an economic stimulus for increased cultural production. Jane, an Islander in her 80s, described the origins of the Bounty Day march in its present incarnation:

Jane: We started it actually, when I was in the tourist bureau after the war [World War II]. And I think there at one stage there were only 6 of us doing the march. But a few of us started it up to get it going again. Because [we did it] once again, for our culture…and also for the visitors. It was a special day in our history and we

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24 For examples of re-enactments that place much greater emphasis on the authentic portrayal of historical events, see Handler & Saxton (1988).

25 This will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.
used to talk, tell them about it when the Pitcairners landed… ‘We’ll all start
Bounty Day up again’. And that’s how it started. Of course it’s grown very well
now

M.L.: So was it 1956 when it started to get more organised again?

Jane: I’m not too sure when actually. It gradually improved, but it’s the last ten,
fifteen years maybe that it’s really picked up

M.L.: What changed that made it more popular?

Jane: No, it’s just more people came. More people realised. I think. That’s the great
thing. I always think it’s so great to see all the kids dressed up and everything and
that gives them the idea of our culture and why it needs to be preserved. When they
dress up in their hats and everything, and you know, like we did in Bounty
Day…it’s interesting to see that so many people are coming to Bounty Day
(emphasis in original, Jane, recorded interview 21/11/2007).

Jane’s descriptions indicate that many performers view the commemoration as a means of
emphasising and protecting local culture. However, its complementary appeal to a tourist
audience contributed significantly to its continued survival in the first place. The dual
interests in the celebration between tourists and Islanders have not existed without
considerable tensions over the years. Before turning to the more general interests that
Islanders have in the procession, I will first discuss the continuing relationship between the
tourism industry and the Bounty Day performance.

Many Islanders today view the tourism industry’s encroachment on Bounty Day with
ambivalence. While they acknowledged the role of the tourism industry in their livelihood,
they are also somewhat resentful of the busloads of tourists who descend upon Kingston in
the hours leading up to the march, especially as tourist operators were making money out
of the celebration. During general discussions of Bounty Day, six of my interview
respondents recounted stories of tourists impeding marchers, intruding on the Islanders’
tables during the communal picnic and even eating off the tables. In an attempt to curtail
this behaviour and separate the tourists from the Islanders, tourism operators have been
obliged to set up tables and cater tourists separately. This presents another source of
discontent as many Islanders resent the touring companies profiting from the tourists
Harland, 65, explained the issues that Islanders have with the tourists:

Harland: Some people [Islanders] find it difficult [to be comfortable with] ...visitors who want to just see it as a spectacle. The picnic area is probably the biggest example, where there are so many visitors catered for in a commercial sense, inside the compound, that might overshadow those who are [there] for the traditional picnic observance. And that has its tensions from time to time. And there’s a balance to be struck in all of this, of course. Tourism’s the Island’s industry, and we should have some pride in people wanting to see how we celebrate cultural arrangements here. The difficulty arises when ‘seeing what happens’ is overtaken in a way that mars or overshadows or whatever... that it becomes difficult. For example, you’ve got more people in the compound [for the picnic] that are there on a paid-meal basis than you’ve got traditional... well that’s rather overshadowing the real thing.

M.L.: Has the problem been solved recently by having separate...[tables]

Harland: Yes it has, yes it has (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

Concerns about local privacy have seen specifically ‘tourist spaces’ (such as the separate tourist table) develop alongside existing ‘local’ spaces in efforts to curtail the more intrusive elements of the tourism industry on local actors. Despite these developments, some family groups have continued to return to their homes for the traditional picnic lunch rather than join their extended families in the compound. Jimmy, 32, discussed why his family returns home for their Bounty Day celebrations after the march:

M.L.: Which family table do you sit at?

Jimmy: We used to sit at, a lot of the Christians used to have it down the compound [Kingston ruins] but we have it up at home now with a group of people. A lot of family and that’s what really matters.

M.L.: Is there any particular reason why you have it at home?
Jimmy: Because we’re...bombarded with tourists...more or less...to be quite honest. You’ll find a lot of people these days have it at home aye. A lot of ’em

M.L.: So what in particular do you find invasive about the tourists?

Jimmy: Well you gotta find the line between... I know tourists are the big industry... but you’ve gotta find the line between [it] being our day, being Norfolk’s national day, you know, and being a tourist attraction and I think it’s crossed the line, you know...and just...yeah...like we’re being put on show (emphasis in original, Jimmy, recorded interview 07/12/2007).

In other words, the presence of paying tourists in the Bounty Day ceremony as spectators in the march and partial participants in the lunch blurs the line between ‘commemoration’ and ‘entertainment’. It also blurs focus of the ceremony as inwardly directed towards participants or outwardly directed towards spectators (Baumann 1992:102-5). Islanders’ anger at the tourist presence in the celebration seems to be strongest when the boundary between performer and audience is crossed.

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Figure 4.7: Tourist table located to the side of the compound, Bounty Day 2007. Kingston, Norfolk Island. Photo by Haylee Fieldes, 2007.
Bounty, Boundary, and the Production of ‘Firstness’

Rites have a meaning and significance that goes beyond their visible ritual actions and extends to the performers. Connerton (1989:44) states: “…whatever is demonstrated in rites permeates also non-ritual behaviour and mentality”. In this respect, the effects of rites on the group that performs them are not exclusively limited to the time and place of their enactment. At its core, Bounty Day evokes a sense of shared Islander identity that is displayed bodily through action and contrasted with the Mainlander (tourist or resident) spectators who watch on. Furthermore, as a mode of commemorative performance, the events of the day are also important in the transmission of social memories of a settlement narrative within the Norfolk Islander group. Bounty Day becomes a site of reminiscences that reproduces knowledge of Islander group’s historical past and affirms a particular understanding of social relations in Norfolk society.

There are, therefore, two key elements present in the Bounty Day commemoration for its performers. One is a drawing of connections between present day actors and historical persons involved in a particular settlement narrative, and the other is the boundary-maintaining discourse that governs participation in the performance of this narrative. These two aspects are interrelated, as narratives concerning a group’s beginning are often central to the construction of the group itself. Bounty Day focuses on the particular events that mark a group’s emergence as a distinct, bounded, social entity. As Zerubavel explains:

> The commemoration of beginnings is clearly essential for demarcating the group’s distinct identity vis-à-vis others. The emphasis on a “great divide” between this group and others is used to dispel any denial of the group’s legitimacy. The commemoration of beginnings justifies the group’s claim as a distinct unit (Zerubavel 1997:7).26

The commemoration of beginnings through a settlement narrative therefore legitimates a boundary around a particular group. The settlement narrative performed by Islanders on Bounty Day is linked to contemporary actors through ritual performance, maintaining the idea of separate beginnings with the audience of Mainlanders, but establishing continuity between historical and present day actors within the group. The gap between the settlement

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26 See also, Zerubavel (2003:101-110) for further discussion on myths of origin and their links with priority of occupation.
narrative being performed, the original Pitcairn settlers, and the contemporary performers of the ceremony is closed, the result being the recognition that the group performing the ceremony is the same, in some essential ways, as the historic group it is representing. In making this connection, the Bounty Day performance objectifies the past-present relationship in the particular way it is understood from the present (c.f. Merlan 2006:87; Conway 2007:106).

This past-present relationship is made more explicit through the use of visual representations of the past in the parade. Re-enactments, unlike verbal or written narratives, can be understood a form of multisensory engagement with the past (Handler and Saxton 1988:248). Period dress, for instance, conveys a much more embodied sense of how ancestors felt, what it would be like to ‘be in their skin’, and renders the relationship between present performers and their ancestors explicit. Charlotte, an Islander in her mid seventies, recalled a particularly pronounced example of the reminiscences that can be evoked by the re-enactment:

Charlotte: I normally used to start the conversation coming up [to the cenotaph] with the people around me. ‘Wael yu noe wi siisik plenti [Well you know, we’re very seasick] but its good,’ and you look around [looks around wide-eyed in amazement] and ‘What a huge place it is compared to Pitcairn’ and ‘Look at all those walls and buildings’ and you know, going across the bridge, [we] pass comment…about how it’s a stone bridge, things we had never seen on Pitcairn… (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 06/04/2007).

To my knowledge, Charlotte had never been to Pitcairn, but imagining how ancestors would have felt brings the individuals in the procession closer to their forebears. The groups’ emplacement in the preserved Georgian landscape of the Kingston area also provides a historically significant backdrop to the commemoration. The relics of previous settlements on Norfolk Island surround the group; many of the Georgian buildings that were present on the day the Pitcairners landed in 1856 are still standing today. Some in the group, like Charlotte, choose to specifically reminisce and visualise ‘what it was like’ for their ancestors to see these sights.
Basso’s (1988) work on Western Apache experiences of place and place naming is relevant here. Basso notes that the Apache view places in a way that provides them a vantage point to look backwards in time, to stand in their ancestor’s tracks (1988:112). While for Norfolk Islanders, the extent to which the past and present is collapsed may not provoke the same intensity of reminiscence, the visitations of key sites on Bounty Day hold the same power to influence participants’ experience of time. Islanders such as Charlotte imagine themselves as founding ancestors through their experiences of, and location in, place.

These processes of reminiscences are not merely responses to the ceremony itself, but rather, the ceremony becomes a formalised, acceptable site in which to reminisce. These reminiscences are also heavily supplemented by the knowledge inscribed in historical texts. The knowledge of the Pitcairners’ reactions to the Norfolk Island landscape was most likely drawn from the diaries and correspondence documents of Pitcairn settlers, who report similar reactions to their surroundings on the day of arrival in 1856.27 As the re-enactment

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27 Sarah Nobbs, wife of George Hunn Nobbs, reflected on the day of the Pitcairners’ arrival in a journal entry shortly after settlement. This entry illustrates the similarity of this particular reminiscence with historical text.
has evolved, elements of what happened on the day the Pitcairners landed have been drawn from historical texts and incorporated into the procession.\textsuperscript{28} The three figures on the pier who act as the greeting party were not always a part of the procession but were added when the landing re-enactment was created. Two of these figures are typically played by the current Administrator and his wife, who are assuming the roles of Thomas Samuel Stewart (the interim caretaker and Commisariat Storekeeper during the transition from the second penal settlement to the Pitcairner settlement) and his wife, who greeted the Pitcairn settlers in the very same place in 1856. The third individual on the pier is assuming the role of Captain Denham, who stood at the pier in 1856 and greeted the Pitcairn settlers as they alighted. The role of playing Denham normally seems to be given to either the Chief Minister or the Speaker of the House. Among the group being welcomed is another individual performing the role of the ship’s doctor. These four people, then, are the only ones who represent specific historical persons in the landing re-enactment. So, inscribed history has been used to supplement the ceremony and bring to life additional historic characters to be performed in the present. This again demonstrates the unclear boundary between collective memories and inscribed history.

The visiting of sites along the march is a key example of Bounty Day’s spatial dimensions. Local sites and landmarks structure the connections made to the past. Participants engage with the history of these sites as they hold relevance to the group by talking about their ancestors and exchanging their perspectives of the past. The Kingston Pier, where the re-enactment begins, is the site of the initial Pitcairn settler landing in 1856. The contemporary marchers then loosely retrace the movements of the settlers on the day of their landing on Norfolk. Again, the significance of retracing ancestors’ footsteps is a material means of making explicit the unbroken link between the contemporary participants and these original Pitcairn Islanders who settled on the Island. The purposes of the visits to these places are not explicitly to evoke any historical information regarding that place, but to evoke the particular meaning of that place within the history of the Islander group. The role of these visits in social reproduction is evident in the central place of

\textsuperscript{28}This also illustrates some important elements of the interplay between collective memory, ceremony and inscribed history. For an anthropological example of this interplay between written material and tradition, see Borofksy’s discussion of the revival of past customs aided by written anthropological material (1987:131-156).
children in the procession. Children lay wreathes and are encouraged to participate more than any other members of the group. The marchers move between sites of intense reflection such as the war cenotaph and the graveyard. It is these places, inscribed with significance, that evoke memories of the Islander’s historic role in shaping the history of the Island and attest to the continuity of habitation from past to present. The graveyard is significant as it contains so many of the current Island community’s ancestors, these ancestors are buried side by side, a testament to the continuing links between people today.

The honouring of ancestors’ graves by descendants of those ancestors also equates the contemporary Islander population with those first Pitcairn settlers. While many societies honour their dead, the ritualised visitation of the graves of distant relatives demonstrates a consciousness of a collective ancestral past that is continuous with the present (see, Penrose 2002:281). The visiting of graves makes explicit the fact that generations of ancestors have lived and died on Norfolk Island. Older Islanders told me that they give thanks to these people on Bounty Day for giving them the Island and the traditions that they have today. Many elderly Islanders expressed to me their sense of gratitude to these first settlers for their crucial role in making Norfolk Island what it is today. There is a deep understanding of the sacrifices that these Pitcairn settlers made in leaving their homeland of Pitcairn Island to
settle on Norfolk. As such, descendants see the heritage their ancestors brought with them as a gift to the present generation; which is paid back through ritualised exchanges with the dead that express contemporary Islanders’ gratitude for the work of their ancestors.

Ritual community and implications for ‘others’

The subject matter of the Bounty Day celebration is closely related to Islanders’ ancestral past. As such, only those who share a particular ancestry dating back to the initial Pitcairn settlers can potentially share the memories evoked by such a celebration and emplace themselves within the version of the past created by the reminiscences. In other words, these historical ancestors form a reference point through which present day Islanders trace their relationship to each other and through which membership in the Bounty Day ‘ritual community’ is determined. Connerton (1989:86-87) notes that the bodily display of ceremonial privileges, which include the eligibility of ceremonial membership, are a means by which blood relationships are known and recalled by social actors. In Bounty Day, the importance of descent is reflected in popular understandings of who can legitimately take an active role in the re-enactment. These restrictions as to who can enter the march replicate ideas regarding group membership on a wider societal level. Only those of Pitcairn descent and their spouses are allowed to march in the parade. Similarly, only those of Pitcairn descent and spouses are allowed to dress in costume and go up to Government House for tea. Erin, 41 remembered a time when descent-based entry to Government House was strongly enforced:

Erin: Who comes on to the [Government House] lawn? There used to be somebody at the gate. Where everyone walked through, and that would be where somebody might get a little [knocks on table] tap on the shoulder and say, ‘Pitcairn Island families only sorry’. Now I haven’t noticed that in the last few years that there’s actually been anyone there monitoring who goes in... [She pauses and thinks] That’s alright though, this is a special time, and you gotta have some exclusiveness, bugger it (emphasis in original, Erin, recorded interview 5/12/2007).

Entry into Government House is more tightly regulated than other components of the parade. This restrictiveness comes partially from the restrictiveness of the narrative of the past that the participants are re-enacting. The events of Government house, minus the judging of the costumes, attempt to replicate the historical events of the Pitcairner’s visit to
Government house in 1856 on the day of their arrival. During this visit, the Pitcairners were treated to tea by the caretakers, Mr and Mrs Stewart; roles given to the Administrator and his wife. In this space more than any other, Islanders are assuming the place of historical figures; their own ancestors. The people who were present at this muster were recorded, and there is no place in this re-enactment for outsiders. Outsiders, including myself, are told that they have no place in the history they are re-enacting – excepting the roles taken by the Administrator and his wife.

The restrictions on who is allowed to march have changed slightly in recent years. Initially the non-Islander spouses of Islanders were not permitted to march in the parade and a small amount of opposition to spouses marching remains. Ophelia, an Islander in her 80s, having married a Mainlander, strongly supported the right of spouses to march.

M.L.: Who gets to dress up [and march]?

Ophelia: All the descendants, and there are some...like visitors don’t get dressed up, no. But if you’re not, here I go again, of that DNA, of that line, and you’re in the family... they get dressed up too...

M.L.: So spouses?

Ophelia: Yes, yes. Although some of them [Islanders] don’t think it should be that way. But, why not if you’ve been accepted into that family?

M.L.: So do people actually say that “you shouldn’t be allowed to march”?

Ophelia: Yeah, yeah. But like, for instance, if one of our people marries an Australian or a New Zealander and they have a child. Why shouldn’t they get dressed up and have their child dress and march?

Ophelia: No... but why not the mother too if she’s got that child? (emphasis in original, Ophelia, recorded interview 28/7/2007).

In contemporary Bounty Day re-enactments, all married and some non-married partners to Islanders are permitted to march, although some couples expressed discomfort in doing so. Those spouses and partners without Pitcairn descent who do march face the possibility of
criticism from some older marchers. Take the following comment from Emily, a 30-year-old mother with young children who is married to a non-Islander.

Emily: The first year that [my husband] marched with me, I had someone come up and say, ‘You really should…[someone] was quite upset with you [her husband] being there and maybe you should write an apology letter’, and we were like ‘Oh no no!’ And I was really worried that I’d upset someone. A few days later I thought, ‘No, that’s not cool, he’s a part of me now’. And that’s my family…that’s the kid’s father… and even for the children, if they see you excluding someone, immediately that’s giving them a… ‘Oh ok…so if…’ It’s sort of putting the line of discrimination in there straight away, and I don’t think that’s right. If you’re going to teach your children to the Island way which is all over accepting and welcoming, then surely your own father or mother can walk next to their partner (emphasis in original, Emily, recorded interview 23/11/2007).

Both Emily’s and Ophelia’s remarks demonstrate the tensions about the meaning of Bounty Day to Islanders and non-Islanders. Emily expressed her concern over whether the restrictions on who could march would affect her children’s conceptions of social difference. This concern highlights Emily’s awareness of the commemoration’s potential to accentuate difference within the community, and also within a family. Spouses of Islanders are often caught between identification with insiders and outsiders. Some elderly Islanders I conversed with had trouble reconciling the social relations between Islanders and their non-Islanders affines. As with Ophelia’s comments, spouses’ biological relationships to their children are often cited as the reason why they should be able to march. One respondent, Charlotte, went a step further to justify such an assertion and attempted to legitimate affinal relationships through the logic of blood transfer. She claimed that mothers of Islander children were Islanders because the mother’s blood mixed with the blood of their children in the placenta. Such an example, though not typical of Islanders’ descriptions of their relations with mainland spouses, is an example of what Firth et al ([1970] 2006:73) describe as the “peculiar, almost mystical, quality [that] is sometimes attributed to consanguinity”. So, while some spouses choose to march, others found their position as partial-insiders too precarious, and did not take part in the march for fears of being singled out as not belonging.
Popular ideas among Islanders of who can participate in the ceremony render the boundaries of Islander identity particularly explicit on Bounty Day.\textsuperscript{29} Despite this starkness in which social boundaries are displayed, Islanders view the day loosely as a celebration of togetherness. While this is often the case within the Islander group, the commemoration also promotes a very clear sense of difference \textit{vis-à-vis} others. This is because while ritual “creates and confirms a world of meanings” among the performers, it also “implicates others”, those outside of the performing group (Baumann 1992:98). Baumann claims: “‘Others’ may be implicated not only as physically present addressees but, even in their absence, as categorical referents” (1992:99). Islander identity, as represented by Bounty Day, is partially constituted by the performative confirmation of its own historical continuity, but the boundaries of Islander identification are constituted through its contrast to Mainlander residents and tourists who act as spectators. While these links are obvious to all who are marching, the public display of these links is a means by which spectators come to recognise this.

\textbf{Figure 4.10: Tourists following the Bounty Day marchers, Bounty Day 2007. Kingston, Norfolk Island. Photo by Haylee Fieldes 2007.}

\textsuperscript{29} Cohen (1985:50) discusses ritual’s tendency to heighten the consciousness of participants and construct and affirm boundaries.
In his discussion of rites, Bourdieu describes a process of “sanctioning and sanctifying a difference” by “making it exist as a social difference, known and recognized as such by the agent invested and everyone else” (Bourdieu 1991:119). Bourdieu argues that such rites are also rites of institution, in the sense that they possess “the power to act on reality by acting on its representation” (Bourdieu 1991:119). Such recognition of social difference relies on the presence of others. Islanders’ positions as descendants of first settlers to the Island require an Other to recognise them as such, and Islanders have taken great pains to simplify the image, and to make this representation very obvious to others.

This boundary between Islander and Mainlander identity is actively enforced on Bounty Day, though it is on Bounty Day also that this boundary faces the most direct challenges. In 2006, some Mainlanders and tourists, so taken up in the celebrations, marched side by side with Islanders. Erin, 41, recounts to me how she felt when these people ‘crashed’ the march.

M.L.: People have mentioned that in the sesquicentenary year, that there were people participating in the march that weren’t of Islander descent and perhaps even tourists marching. Were you there that year?

Erin: Yeah I was. And there people there who had no Norfolk Island descent, no Norfolk Island blood but had lived here all their lives and had Norfolk Islander kids, had married a Norfolk Islander. And I thought ‘Yeah good on you’, and I would go up and give them a kiss and say ‘Good to see you here’ you know...I don’t agree with T.E.P’s marching, though. Girlfriends might be pushing it too. Don’t agree with that. Just like I wouldn’t go to New Zealand and take part in Waitangi Day. You know? I wouldn’t participate in an Aboriginal person’s special day. I wouldn’t. I’d support it, I’d be there on the.... [claps her hands in applause] clapping it along. But I wouldn’t be in amongst it because that would just be wrong to me. And I have seen people like, that are here, like teachers and wife and kids draw up in the Bounty gear and march along and it’s like [in an angry voice] ‘No it’s not a play, not a little ‘act’ we’re doing, this is...we’re commemorating our ancestors’ (emphasis in original, Erin, recorded interview 05/12/2007).

Bounty Day is defended so closely because it is something that participants hold as special and exclusively theirs. Commemorating settlement in this way invariably involves tracing
lines of continuity from the past to the present. Bounty Day is a particularly strong point of connection between present day Islanders and the past, and it is at this point of connection “...where a version of the past is used to ratify the present and to indicate directions for the future” (Williams 1977:116) that discourses of Norfolk Islander identification are most strongly enforced and contested. In specifying the requirement of Islander descent for legitimate admission in the parade, the structure of the ceremony also limits the effects of the particular act of reminiscing to a bounded group. The Island is, in a sense, ‘resettled’ every year and the links to those Pitcairn settlers is maintained, as is the explicit display – through public re-enactment – of who possesses these links within the community.

Conclusion
As Olick and Robbins (1998:133) claim: “Memory is a central, if not the central, medium through which identities are constituted”. In the Bounty (Anniversary) Day commemoration, Islanders reproduce the identities of Islanders and Mainlanders through designations of audience and participant. The changing modes of celebrating Bounty Day represent a shift in the importance of the historical circumstances of Pitcairner settlement on Norfolk Island in the collectively remembered past. The march has been a recent addition to the celebration, indicating that Bounty Day is not only a site of recollection and historical reproduction, but also of historical and cultural transformation. Like all commemorations of past events, Bounty Day objectifies and simplifies a past-present relationship, but it does so in the particular way that actors imagine this relationship in the present, which means present-day subjectivities and concerns about the present influence the ways that this relationship is expressed. Papoulias (2005:116) describes the ability of memory to adapt to changing circumstances, as “the condition and location of agency”. In this way, actors involved in the Bounty Day ceremony not only transform the past, but also authorise other participants’ understandings of the past.

On a broader level, the increased references to historic sites in the march highlight a shift in the importance of a settlement narrative over earlier representations of the Bounty story in the parade. It is also no accident that the cut-off point for Islander identification happens to be the historical conjuncture being celebrated. Considerable effort is devoted to maintaining this settlement narrative as a salient collective memory and point of difference
between Islanders and Mainlanders. Such efforts accord the settlement of the Pitcairners considerable “commemorative density” (Zerubavel 1997:8-9) and thus indicate the importance of this element of the Norfolk Island past for present Islanders.

While Bounty Day is commemorated once a year, the ideas encapsulated by the re-enactment permeate Norfolk society to a wider degree and simultaneously inform, confirm and make explicit general discourses of which group has a greater claim to being ‘local’ to Norfolk Island, and where the boundaries of this group lie. If commemoration is a deliberate attempt by social actors to concentrate memory on a particular element of the past, then Bounty Day concentrates memory on the Islanders’ connection to a settlement narrative that in turn informs and reinforces Islanders’ notions of separate identity and priority of settlement. James Clifford (2000), in his discussion of the ways that groups negotiate between past and present, claims:

...if a discursive linking of pasts and futures is integral to the positioning of collective actors, then some gathering up and performance of ‘traditions’ must inform all political subjecthood. To imagine a coherent future, people selectively mobilize past resources. Articulations of tradition, never simply backward looking, are thus generative components of peoplehood, ways of belonging to some discrete social time and place in an interconnected world (Clifford 2000:97).

Bounty Day, therefore, is an important performance of cultural identity that establishes Norfolk Islanders as a people who belong to Norfolk Island. The ritualised bodily presence of Islanders among the historic sites of Kingston, spatial aspects of the march, are not merely displays of a shared cultural heritage and group solidarity, they are what Appadurai has labelled “...social techniques for the production of ‘natives’” (Appadurai 1996:205). Collective memories of the past are powerful images that are capable of constituting and shaping understandings of peoplehood, indigeneity and belonging. The particular intersections between history, tradition and present day actors that occur in the Bounty Day ceremony allow participants to discover or rediscover a particular way of locating and understanding their historical position on Norfolk Island and in relation to others by recognising themselves historically through their continuity as a group back to settlement.

While the Bounty (Anniversary) Day ceremony appears to be a boundary marking strategy, it is also a site of exchange – between Islanders, between old and young – where aspects of
the past are brought into the present and subjectivities are created, transmitted, and transformed. Bounty Day is a formalised means for Islanders to mutually recognise their own nativeness and belonging to Norfolk Island by transacting ideas about the past and their place in the Island’s history. In practice, however, the lines between self and other, outsider and native, are far less clear than they appear, and many are caught between the world of the insider and outsider.
CHAPTER FIVE

Settlement, Descent and Belonging

There is nothing in the mass of data about indigenousness which says that a people cannot be successively indigenous to two (or even more) different geographical locations. Indigenousness is not a matter of race, creed or skin colour: it is the occupation of a geographical entity wherein no other people resides, and is validated by continuance, by the putting down of roots, by the reverence accorded to a homeland (McCullough, C, in Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999:33).

As a Dog Becomes a Cat

Near the end of my stay on Norfolk, I conducted an interview with a 65-year-old Islander named Harland. Harland had spent 5 years of his childhood in Australia when he was very young, but had spent the majority of his life living on Norfolk Island. He was a senior community member and was now semi-retired. He had spent much of his working week donating his time and energy to various community groups, and I had caught him in the midst of planning an annual Norfolk Island event. About halfway through the interview, we stopped so he could call his wife and tell her he’d be late home for dinner. When he got off the phone, I decided to ask him a direct question about how he would define a ‘Norfolk Islander’. Harland’s response gave me cause to believe that he, like most Norfolk Islanders I had spoken to previously, had already thought about this question at length.

An Islander is somebody who is [of] Pitcairn descent... that came here in 1856... and are from those families, so to say. While you may achieve one of the legal statuses such as ‘citizenship’ or ‘residency’, you cannot come into the Island and achieve ‘Islander’ status. You either have it or you don’t have it. You’re born with it. It’s not available to be secured or purchased or acquired in any way. I think most
people, but not all people, understand that. For example, my wife, who’s not an Islander, she’s an Australian… And she would never claim to be an Islander. And if you ask others who have married into the community, most of them would not claim to be Islanders. Now that doesn’t mean second-class status at all, not on your life! That’s not what it’s about. But it is what your lineage is…everybody has a lineage, but you’re of that lineage or another lineage. You can’t say suddenly that you’re swapping. It’s just not available to you and that’s what ‘Islander’ is about. It’s your lineage. Some people do equate reaching your immigration status with becoming an Islander… One person, I think quite famously said… He asked the question and gave the answer… ‘How does somebody become an Islander?’ And the answer is ‘exactly the same way as a dog becomes a cat…’ However, having said that, and going back to the example of my wife saying that she’s not an Islander…her children are Islanders, without a doubt (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

I then asked Harland if being an Islander denoted a form of status over others:

I think to some degree yes. But some would play it more than others. […] When you start to talk about status it always has difficult connotations. In the main, people don’t claim it to claim a status “I am better than you”. But they will want to make it plain that they are of this place. Place whatever emphasis you like upon it. It’s not always meant that I’m better than you. I think that’s important to say. People want to be associated with the place, but [are] not saying that to try and create a status for them (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

Harland raised two important issues. Firstly, presented a very rigid boundary between Islanders and others and secondly, he established an inextricable link between Islanders to the Island’s ‘first’ settlers. In making such a statement, he noted a non-Islander becomes an Islander ‘like a dog becomes a cat’. This is a colloquial saying that was often invoked by Islanders and Mainlanders alike in order to describe the immutability of social identities on Norfolk Island.¹ According to the local phrase, a person cannot become an Islander in the

¹ Although the phrase is used by Islanders to explain their relationship to Mainlanders, it was an American (i.e. a Mainlander) settler to the Island who coined the phrase.
same way as one species cannot become another. Another implication of this statement is that one can become a resident of Norfolk Island, but one cannot become a descendant of the first settlers to the Island; or hold the same historical relationship to the Island such descendants hold.

Introduction

In this chapter I specifically discuss how Islanders create and mobilise their connections to Norfolk Island as a homeland. Islanders often assert their belonging to a group and to Norfolk Island by emphasizing their common descent from the first settlers of the Island’s Third Settlement. The settlement history of Norfolk Island is detailed enough that it is possible for people to know when groups of people or individuals arrived on the Island and in what order. For Islanders, known ancestors settled on Norfolk Island, and it is through connections to these known ancestors that they base their initial claims to belong vis-à-vis later settlers; Mainlanders. I use recent debates surrounding the concepts of indigeneity to highlight the ways that Islander identity and connections to Norfolk Island as a place, has developed through particular historical, relational processes of boundary creation and ethnogenesis.

I begin this chapter by outlining the changing role of descent in Islander identity since Pitcairn. The types of segmentation created through the tracing of descent have been a consistent means by which Islanders have created social hierarchies among themselves and with others. Secondly, I discuss the context of the emergence of a sense of nativeness to Norfolk Island as Islanders have been faced with the growing influence of another group: Mainlanders. Finally, I focus on two instances in the late 1990s where these ideas of nativeness have become the subject of debates over indigenous recognition in the Island’s legislature and wider community. Like the High Country Farmers in Dominy’s (2001:27)

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2 This also seems to be the logic behind some Islanders’ claims that Islanders are genetically unique and cannot receive organ transplants from those who are not related to them (see, The Society of Pitcairn Descendants 1996). I can find no evidence that supports these claims, though recent medical research among the Island’s population has found a genetic predisposition among Pitcairn Descendants to hypertension, cardiovascular disease and obesity (see, Bellis et al. 2005).
study, some Islanders “try on” various words such as ‘indigenous’ in an attempt to make sense of their relationship to the Island and others. These claims are not invented out of nothing but are means by which some Islanders have positioned themselves in relation to Mainlanders and the Australian Government in much the same way as indigenous people position themselves towards their colonisers.

**Pitcairn/Bounty Descent**

Islanders trace their ancestry through genealogy, history books, oral histories and through their embodied performance of their relationships to first settlers on Bounty (Anniversary) Day. Norfolk Islanders often use the Norf’k word *kamfram* [come from] to denote connections to such ancestors. The term, generally meaning ‘origins’, also has multiple positive connotations of breeding, class, family pride, pedigree, genealogy or ancestry. As Buffett (1999:54) writes “Orl aklan noe auwas kamfram” [All Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn ancestry know who their first forebears were] Buffett writes further: “Orlem Kreschen gat ‘Pi’kern blad el tries dems kamfram back t’them” [All of the Christians have Pitcairn blood and will trace their kamfram back to them] (Buffett 1999:55).

As indicated by the Bounty (Anniversary) Day commemoration, Norfolk Islanders currently trace their kamfram cognatically from Pitcairn ancestors. However, Islanders have not always solely emphasised their bilateral descent from Pitcairn settlers as an indicator of group inclusion. Before the mid-20th century and the growth of a Mainlander population on Norfolk Island, Pitcairn Descendants also considered distinctions among themselves to be important. In the past, Pitcairn Descendants recognised distinctions between patrilineal descendants of *Bounty* mutineer ancestors and the descendants of those who came to Pitcairn Island after the *Bounty*. Settlement on Pitcairn Island occurred in two ‘waves’ (see figure 5.1). The first group to settle Pitcairn (barring an early Polynesian settlement) were the *Bounty* Mutineers and their Polynesian entourage who came aboard the *Bounty* in

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3 *Kamfram* is defined in Alice Buffett’s (1999:54) encyclopaedia of Norf’k terms as a noun that means “genealogy, ancestry”. Mühlhäusler (2008b:94) defines *kamfram* slightly differently as “origins” or “to originate”.

4 The latter definition of *kamfram* as a noun form was not picked up by Elwyn Flint in his unpublished 1960 Norf’k wordlist, nor by Harrison (Harrison 1972, 1984, 1985) in her work, either because they missed this word, or because this metaphorical meaning as ‘genealogy’ was a more recent development (Mühlhäusler unpublished-c, pers. comm.).
1790. Out of all of the Polynesian and mutineer men, only six of the Bounty Mutineers left descendants. These men were Fletcher Christian, Matthew Quintal, Edward Young, Alexander Smith (later, John Adams), John Mills and William Mickoy (later, McCoy). All other males died before they had children. By the time the Island was rediscovered in 1808, the only adult male left on Pitcairn Island was John Adams, who had become the community’s leader and pastor. The 23 descendants of the Bounty mutineers kept with the English tradition of recognising their patrilineal descent through their fathers’ surnames. As a result, the population of Pitcairn in 1808 shared only six English surnames between them when it was discovered.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Settlement Period #1</th>
<th>Settlement Period #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>Bounty mutiny occurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td><strong>Bounty crew and Polynesians settle on Pitcairn</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Pitcairn Island Discovered by British</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td><strong>Two Englishmen (Buffett and Evans) Settle on Pitcairn</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Nobbs settles on Pitcairn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.1: Summary of key settlement periods on Pitcairn Island.**

After 1823, some 15 years after Pitcairn was rediscovered, a second ‘wave’ of settlers arrived, consisting of three Englishmen who married first-generation Pitcairn Islander women and took key leadership positions in the Pitcairn community (see figure 5.1 – Settlement Period #2). The first two, John Buffett and John Evans left the British whaling ship *Cyrus* and settled on Pitcairn in 1823. John Buffett married the daughter of Edward Young and John Evans married the daughter of John Adams. Buffett took over the role of schoolteacher and pastor of Pitcairn Island from John Adams who died in 1829. His position as pastor was eventually usurped by a third settler to Pitcairn, George Hunn Nobbs; a former privateer and soldier of fortune who settled there in 1828 (Nobbs 1984:18-21). These were the first non-Bounty, non-Polynesians to settle on Pitcairn Island, and it is clear from several sources that these new arrivals initially caused considerable division within the Pitcairn community (Nobbs 1984; Clarke 1986; Nicolson and Davies 1997). At one point in 1832, another settler by the name of Joshua Hill joined the Pitcairn community and spread dissonance between ‘the native born’ Pitcairners and the

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5 Though there are still descendants of John Mills, the surname, Mills, ‘died out’ in 1814.
Englishmen (Nicolson and Davies 1997:142-143). In 1834, Buffett, Evans and Nobbs were exiled from Pitcairn by the rest of the Pitcairn population for a period of three years before Hill was deposed and the trio were permitted to return to the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Bounty or Non-Bounty</th>
<th>Whether settled on Norfolk or Returned to Pitcairn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk, some family members returned to Pitcairn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintal</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCoy</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk, some returned to Pitcairn but surname ‘died out’ on Pitcairn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Some settled on Norfolk, most returned to Pitcairn. Surname no longer exists on Norfolk though people who still identify as cognatic descendants still reside there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills</td>
<td>Bounty</td>
<td>Mills surname ‘died out’ before the move to Norfolk. Cognatic descendants of Mills still exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffett</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Most settled on Norfolk, others returned to Pitcairn. Buffett no longer a family name on Pitcairn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobbs</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Settled on Norfolk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: List of ‘Bounty’ and ‘English’ Pitcairn surnames and whether members settled on Norfolk, Pitcairn or both islands.

With the addition of these three English settlers, the total number of surnames on Pitcairn Island rose to nine. Out of these six Bounty families and three ‘English’ families, seven came to reside permanently on Norfolk Island (see figure 5.2). Some members of each family returned to Pitcairn in the two episodes of return migration in 1858 and 1863 (Clune 1966:181-187). Islanders often described these seven families to me as though they were the units in which the early Norfolk Island community organised itself, though the extent to which they did this is difficult to deduce from historical documents.

Endogamous marriages were common among Pitcairn Descendants on Norfolk Island up until the end of the 19th century, however they were not exclusively so. A few ‘Englishmen’ settled on Norfolk Island shortly after the Pitcairners were resettled and with the permission of the community, either purchased land on the Island or gained access to it through marriage to a Pitcairn Descendant. Many of these men were American whalers or

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6 Most of the Young family, homesick and dissatisfied with their new island, returned to Pitcairn Island with a small group of other Pitcairners shortly after the move to Norfolk.
English settlers, and by and large were not from Australia or New Zealand. The Island was not politically or socially linked to Australia to the extent it is today, hence the term ‘Mainlander’ does not seem to have been applied to these new arrivals. Instead they were called ‘Englishmen’. By historical accounts, these men were ‘readily integrated’ into the community (see, Young, in Belcher 1871:327-329; Nobbs 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Pitcairn Settler Surnames</th>
<th>Adams, Buffett, Christian, Evans, McCoy, Nobbs, Quintal, Young</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 5.3: Names of original settlers and new settlers registered as landowners in 1885. Source: British Parliamentary Papers (1886:253-258). (*Denotes whether settler married in to Pitcairn family shortly after arrival – I have not marked if the settler’s children intermarried, as they often did).

By 1884, at least 17 new surnames were recorded on the Island’s landowner’s list in addition to the original eight Pitcairn patronyms (see figure 5.3). By 1896, nearly all of the new male settlers to Norfolk Island or their children had married into Islander families, and some 35 per cent of all residents at this time (most of which were Pitcairn Descendants) possessed non-Pitcairn surnames (Treadgold 1988:85). The data on Mainlander women marrying Islander men is a little sketchier and, though it is clear from genealogies that this also occurred (for instance, Varman 1992), it is also clear that the English men marrying into the community were particularly marked by Islanders and by state officials who took the addition of new surnames into the community as a sign of the Islanders’ willingness to admit new settlers into the community (British Parliamentary Papers 1886; Commonwealth of Australia 1976).

The descendants of Pitcairn settlers marked the differences between ‘English’ families and ‘Bounty’ families in a number of ways, most of which were remembered but no longer deemed relevant by Islanders in the time of my fieldwork in 2007. Firstly, varying degrees of English and Norf’k were used by different families as means of differentiation and distinction, which I will address separately in the following chapter. Secondly, Descendants enacted the difference between patrilineal Bounty mutineer descendants and others through organised performances. These forms of difference were most explicitly performed on Bounty (Anniversary) Day. While Bounty Day commemorated a broad commonality between all descendants of the Pitcairn settlers, Albert, an Islander in his 80s who was from
an ‘English’ family, stated that when he was young, there was also a ‘great dividing line’ among Pitcairn Descendants with *Bounty* surnames and the ‘English’ descendants of Evans, Buffett, and Nobbs or any additional male who had since married into the community on Norfolk.

The big thing was the cricket match. And in those days you *definitely* had to be a Christian or a Quintal or a McCoy to take part in the parade. And you had the picnic of course, but the day finished off with the big cricket match where you had Bounty vs. Allcomers, you know. To play in the Bounty team you had to have a good old *Bounty* name, but *anyone* could play in the Allcomers. And it was pretty much a great dividing line on that day, particularly (emphasis in original, Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007).

The first recorded mention of the Bounty vs. Allcomers cricket match was in 1879 in the diaries of Elisabeth Colenso (cited in Swabey 1956) who describes it as an 11-a-side cricket game played on Bounty Day on the grassy lawn in front of the Administrative buildings in Kingston. While I cannot confirm when the game ceased to be played regularly, it at least continued up until the 1960s and has been played intermittently since. Patrilineal *Bounty* mutineer descendants (that is, those with Bounty surnames) would make the ‘Bounty’ team, while non-patrilineal descendants and non-Pitcairn Descendants would make the Allcomers side. This essentially placed non-patrilineal descendants of *Bounty* mutineers in the same team as non-Pitcairn Descendants (see figure 4.3). Looking back on the game in 2007, Islanders such as Albert claimed that the game was divisive, but there is little evidence available of whether participants felt this way about it at the time. Chester, 65, another Islander who participated in it, simply told me: “That’s how it is. We were Buffetts so we were Allcomers. Of course we were. And you had to accept it if you wanted to live here [Laughs]” (emphasis in original, Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007). It is likely that such distinctions only came to be seen as divisive once a more solid idea of Islander identity as cognatic descent became a basis of social organisation in other areas of Norfolk Island life. Pitcairn Descendants in the Allcomers teams were proud of their British ancestry and initially it seemed that all were happy to perform either their British heritage or their Bounty heritage.
Eventually, opinions towards these divisions began to change and ‘non-Bounty’ Islanders sought greater inclusion into a common ‘Islander’ group by applying pressure to restructure the celebration of Bounty Day. According to some respondents, as the number of Islanders with no Bounty surname grew, they became increasingly less willing to be placed in the Allcomers team. Chester, who played in the Allcomer team, explained the demise of the match by stating: “I think what happened, it got that way that there was more Allcomers than anybody else” (emphasis in original, Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007). Some of this pressure also culminated in various pushes for ‘Bounty Day’ as a whole to be renamed (or returned) to the more inclusive name, ‘Anniversary Day’. Although it is difficult to ascertain which name was used first (Anniversary Day or Bounty Day), different families have different traditions of calling it one or the other. As Steven, an Islander in his 60s, noted:

…the Nobbs never liked to call it ‘Bounty Day’ because the Evans’ and the Buffetts’ and the Nobbs’ weren’t Bounty names, so they tried to push it as ‘Anniversary Day’, but it’s never stuck. Bounty Day has always been the one (emphasis in original, Steven, recorded interview 08/11/2007).

In other words, the pressures to change the name from ‘Bounty Day’ to ‘Anniversary Day’ were in part an attempt by non-Bounty surnamed Islanders to refocus commemoration on the settlement of Norfolk Island rather than the events of the Bounty mutiny. This was also displayed in the changing form this commemoration took as the re-enactment moved away from maritime imagery to more squarely focus on settlement.

7 Technically, there are very few Youngs on Norfolk Island so I am unsure where they are categorized. Yet they have Bounty origins so they would most likely be in the Bounty team.
The increasing prominence of cognatic descent in Islander identity was part of a process of ethnogenesis, whereby the more inclusive conceptions of ‘Islander’ identity were foregrounded over patrilineal means of tracing descent. Islander identity was incrementally refocussed around shared links to settlement, while other forms of public differentiation (such as the Bounty/non-Bounty surname categories in early Bounty Day commemorations) were increasingly decentred. These shifts also marked a growing awareness of an identity constructed around place, as Islander group membership more explicitly began to coincide with an idea of firstness on Norfolk Island. As one Mainlander informant (now in her 60s) who came to Norfolk Island in the late 1960s noted:

The feeling I had when I got here [from Australia] is that the Norfolk Islanders… It was their home, their Island. There’s ‘us’, then there were the other people that came in, and they came in later. And occasionally some stayed. But in those days it was more or less like that. You didn’t need to define yourselves because you ‘were’. There was just ‘aklan’ [us] on the Island (emphasis in original, Joanne, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

Joanne notes a kind of distinction that developed more around the notion of time and firstness than the identities of Islander and Mainlander. Firstness, of course, is a relational concept, and can therefore only be deployed against others who come later. As the presence of Mainlanders increased, Pitcairn Descendants increasingly put forward a unified ‘Islander’ identity that prioritises the firstness of cognatic descendants of Pitcairn settlers vis-à-vis a growing group of others; Mainlanders.

Islanders and Mainlanders

While in 1856, the population of the Island consisted of 194 persons, all Pitcairn Descendants, by 1921 the population had risen 717 persons, 129 of which were non-Pitcairn Descendants (Nobbs 2006:187). Despite this, the relative isolation and lack of

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8 Cognatic descent was already ‘available’ to Islanders as Islanders already traced it for other purposes such as property transmission. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated, the term ‘Pitcairn descendant’ may not have been a form of self-definition, and arose as much through the British and Australian state’s tendency to place Island residents within particular administrative groupings. Furthermore, the British and Australian states recognised Islanders as eligible for land grants according to their cognatic descent from all Pitcairn settlers and did not tend to recognise any distinction between Bounty surnames and that of Buffett, Nobbs and Evans.
stable industry on Norfolk was a major deterrent to rapid population growth. During World War II, a runway was built on the Island, which facilitated greater movement of people to and from Norfolk and opened up the Island to tourism and immigration. By the 1960’s, the Island had received a large influx of new settlers, its population growing from 800 persons in 1961 to 1422 in 1971 (Treadgold 1988:224). By 1978, the Island’s resident population had grown to 1698, 64.4% of which were not of Pitcairn Descent (Treadgold 1988:224; Hoare 1983:85). After 1978, the proportion of Islanders to Mainlanders has increased again (see figure 5.5).

The social effects of these changes were significant. Islanders had increasingly taken advantage of regular air services to and from the Island and many had found work and partners in Australia and New Zealand. Islanders also increasingly married the Mainlanders who had come to settle or work on Norfolk. This seems to be an historical trend that began as early the 1900s but was accelerated after the building of the airport.\(^9\) By 1976, of the 323 Pitcairn Descendants on the electoral roll, 130 (40%) were married to Mainlanders (Commonwealth of Australia 1976).\(^{10}\)

![Figure 5.5: Percentage of NI population of Pitcairn / non-Pitcairn descent 1978-2006](chart)

**Figure 5.5:** Percentage of NI population of Pitcairn / non-Pitcairn descent 1978-2006. Sources: (Hoare 1983, 2003; Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 1996, 2001, 2006; Nobbs 2006; Treadgold 1988).

\(^9\) Between 1914 and 1945, 30 per cent of marriages were between Islanders, 60 per cent were between Islanders and Mainlanders, and 10 per cent were between Mainlanders (2006:187). While no breakdown between sexes is available, from a brief analysis of genealogies and my own informants, Pitcairn descendant men and women both exhibited a tendency toward exogamy.

\(^{10}\) As further indication of the extent of this growth in the Mainlander population; of the Island’s 536 non-Pitcairn descendant residents in 1976, 347 of these residents had arrived on the Island since 1966 (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:68).
The rapid increase in the immigration of Mainlanders to Norfolk from the building of the airport coincided with a period of economic diversification and growth in the Island economy. By the 1960s the Island’s taxation exemptions were being utilised by new arrivals, transforming Norfolk into a prominent OFC and tourism location. Mainlanders were often at the forefront of this economic development and were often seen by Islanders to have a different attitude towards the Island’s further development. Often, they opened new businesses that competed with existing local ones (Hoare 1983:59-60). In 1975, Sir John Nimmo divided Mainlanders into two key interest groups; retirees who had moved to the Island for its lifestyle, and those who moved to the Island for reasons of economic opportunity such as tax exemption. While Nimmo admitted that the ‘beauty and lifestyle’ on the Island may have contributed to Mainlanders’ decisions to migrate to the Island, he concluded:

It is fair to say that residents of non-Pitcairn lineage (with a few notable exceptions who are in the Island for its intrinsic charms) are there predominantly for the monetary advantages which the business opportunities and taxation status of the Island afford them (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:69).

Generally, those Mainlanders who were not retired had occupations such as merchants, professionals or cable station workers and according to Treadgold (1988), were therefore much more likely to be engaged in wage labour as opposed to subsistence production. In addition to the influx of these workers, the number of wealthy Mainlanders who had explicitly moved to Norfolk Island during the 1960s for the various tax benefits they could accrue, also increased substantially (van Fossen 2002:219).

Despite considerable intermarriage with Mainlanders, Islanders often expressed their resentment that Mainlanders did not share some of the same values as themselves. As one Islander, Miss Rosemary Quintal, noted in her submission to the Nimmo Royal Commission: “[There is] concern by Pitcairners for perpetuation of their unique way of life – which is not catching in so far as mainlanders are concerned” (Quintal, in Commonwealth of Australia 1976:336). The ‘Island way’ is a common but rather nebulous term used by Islanders to describe the intangible qualities of Island culture. These qualities are generally summarised as; a pride in self-reliance, strong community feelings, a distinct sense of humour, strong family values, generosity and hospitality and a strong sense of
Wiseman (1977) also noted that Islanders believed that their practices of generosity were not reciprocated by many Mainlanders:

…islanders began to feel that mainlanders were taking advantage of them, abusing their hospitality. The Norfolk custom was, generally speaking, never to arrive empty-handed and you would never leave empty-handed… ‘Just like a mainlander: takes everything and gives nothing’ became a common criticism (Wiseman 1977:10).

Mainlanders were therefore often associated with extractive or exploitative economic forces and culture loss due to intermarriage with Norfolk Islanders. Even today, some Mainlanders do not feel like they completely belong to Norfolk. Ted, for instance, was a Mainlander who had lived on Norfolk since the early 70s and had been married to an Islander 30 years, with whom he has had three children. He told me:

An Islander is a person of Pitcairn Descent. That’s it in a nutshell. I mean I’m not. I never will be, and that’s been made clear to me on a number of occasions. Doesn’t matter what you do for the community, how often you do it, what roles you pursue. Green’s always Green. However watered down. Even people [Mainlanders] who were born on the Island… lived here all their lives. They don’t get to wear the mantle of ‘Islander’. Not unless they have Pitcairn blood in them (emphasis in original, Ted, recorded interview 01/11/2007).

However, despite these claims of immutable differences, some of my Islander informants attempted to construct the meaning of what it is to be a Norfolk Islander differently. This seemed to be the case with Anthony, a 56-year-old Islander who when considering some members of long-term-Mainlander families who were his close friends, had trouble deciding who should be considered a ‘Norfolk Islander’. However despite his attempts to include Mainlanders, he eventually reiterates the importance of descent in any definition of ‘Islanderness’:

I’ve got friends whose grandparents came here, so they’re a third generation residents. Their grandparents moved here and so they’ve been brought up here in this place and have never lived anywhere else and very often they can speak Norf’k very well. And so I suppose there’s overlap from one [Islander] to the other
[Mainlander]. On the other hand, blood is thicker than water and you’ve got a big extended family then you’re a Norfolk Islander, I guess [laughs] (emphasis in original, Anthony, recorded interview 18/10/2007).

‘Norfolk Islander’ is deployed as a native identity as while it may come with various assumptions about cultural similarity, the primary criteria of inclusion is descent from first settlers. I use the term native or nativeness here to refer to what Merlan (2009:304) claims as a kind of colloquial definition of indigenous; that is: “first-order connections (usually at small scale) between group and locality. It connotes belonging and originariness and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification”. Nativeness conveys idea sense of priority over others who are designated as settlers. As Mamdani (1998) states: “You cannot have one without the other, for it is the relationship between them that makes one a settler and the other a native” (Mamdani 1998:249). Islanders only became other than settlers when they placed themselves in a temporal relation to newer arrivals. This conception was most clearly expressed in my conversation with Jimmy. Jimmy, 32, was the son of a prominent Norfolk Islander activist who had travelled widely but had only ever lived permanently on Norfolk.

Jimmy: I don’t wanna sound bloody…prejudiced or nothing…I’m not prejudiced at all, but my understanding of a Norfolk Islander is someone who’s of Pitcairn descent. And it doesn’t necessarily mean you’ve been born here. You know, they could’ve even lived away their whole life, you know, their parents are Norfolk Islanders, I’d consider them a Norfolk Islander too. Someone of Pitcairn descent. [He pauses and considers what he has said] I’m trying to say it like I’m not belittling anyone. The reason I say that is because that’s the way I was brought up to believe. When the Pitcairners first came to Norfolk, they came over here as a, sort of, whole group of people, in one lot, and it’s just we’re the original inhabitants, that’s my understanding anyway (emphasis in original, Jimmy, recorded interview 07/12/2007).

While not all Islanders would state it so bluntly, Jimmy claims that it is Islanders’ ancestors’ originality on Norfolk Island that authenticates their relationship to place and their subsequent rights to be treated as belonging to the Island. Jimmy therefore equates Norfolk Islander identity with nativeness and originality. According to his view, Islanders therefore
occupy an enduring position on the Island as first inhabitants, while Mainlanders are by comparison considered immigrants or settlers to the Island – and in the present circumstances at least, nativeness in such a way is not conceptually available to Mainlanders. However it is also clear that Jimmy was uncomfortable in explicitly stating this division to me and was aware he may be offending others in doing so.

While these sentiments about nativeness and non-nativeness are relatively widespread, most Islanders have found it difficult to reconcile claims of special status as ‘firstcomers’ with their close social relationships with Mainlanders. This is most apparent when Islanders have attempted to connect their local native identities as Islanders with emergent trans-local ones such as that of indigenism. I will now detail some of the reactions of Islanders to attempts made within the Island’s legislature to officially recognise Pitcairn Descendants as the indigenous people of Norfolk Island. These are the most explicit claims that Islanders have ever made to have a status as native recognised, and these claims have been the source of considerable contention and division among island community members.

**Experiments with Indigenous Recognition**

Since the 1990s, some Norfolk Islanders have attempted to gain official recognition of Pitcairn Descendants’ nativeness and belonging to Norfolk Island through appeals to internationalised categories of indigeneity. In this section I am not dealing with the related question on whether their assertions of indigeneity would be recognised by international indigenous bodies, but rather how Islanders themselves understood indigeneity to fit with their own social and historical sense of belonging to the Island. As such, I seek to demonstrate how Islanders have sought to position themselves – or strategically ‘articulate’ themselves, in Li (2000) Clifford’s (2001) sense – to global indigenous movements by relating the concept of indigeneity to their own historic and contemporary experiences. As I will demonstrate, for many Norfolk Islanders ‘indigenous’ is much like a shoe that does not quite fit.

The first claim to indigenous status was made in 1994 by the Society of Pitcairn Descendants (now called the Association of Norfolk Islanders), a group of Islanders who banded together in 1977 in an effort to counter some of the recommendations of the Nimmo Report (see chapter two). Since the passing of the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth),

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this group continued lobbying for increased local autonomy. By 1993-1994, the Society of Pitcairn Descendants had changed its name to the Association of Norfolk Islanders (for the sake of clarity, I will call this group the Pitcairn Society). This group declared that the Pitcairn Descendants were the indigenous people of Norfolk Island and sent out letters addressed various authorities to inform them of this declaration (O'Collins 2002:149). The Society made representations to the British Government and the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, seeking recognition as an Indigenous people entitled to self-determination. These claims have never been recognised by Australia or any human rights body, nor has the United Nations made any official declaration regarding Islanders' indigenous status.11 Being a relatively small group that cannot claim to represent a majority position on the issue, the Pitcairn Society has generally gone about this alone. However, there have been occasions when some of their ideas regarding indigenous identification have been discussed in the Island’s legislature.

The matter of indigeneity was raised again in April 1996 in a debate over the wording of Norfolk’s immigration policy. Mr Neville Christian, a Pitcairn Descendant MLA in the Island’s Legislative Assembly, was concerned that the proportion of Pitcairn Descendants on Norfolk constituted a numerical and electoral minority on account of being outnumbered by Mainlanders. At this time, 46.5% of the Island’s population was of Pitcairn Descent, so Islanders were already slightly a numerical minority (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 1996). As a corrective, he proposed changes to the general objectives of the Island’s immigration policy that would protect the interests of Islanders. He stated:

I cannot sit back…and have the indigenous people of Norfolk Island, that is the Pitcairners, totally displaced in what is really their homeland and so I think if a point can be added to the general objectives… “Norfolk Island shall continue to be

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11 In terms of United Nations Recognition: Ric Robinson clarified in a 2011 letter to the editor “In response to a letter I wrote the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, I received the invitation to the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva. As 1993 was the year of the U.N. Indigenous People, and as the Pitcairners were the first people as a whole people to settle Norfolk Island as a permanent homeland, we declared ourselves to be the indigenous people of Norfolk Island” Robinson in Norfolk Online Letters to the Editor 31st May 2011).

In terms of Australian recognition: In a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report, the authors explicitly addressed the Society of Pitcairn Descendants’ claims to indigenous status; “Having regard to their history, the Pitcairn descendants cannot be described as Indigenous people. They are indigenous neither to Norfolk Island nor to Pitcairn Island” (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999:34)
the homeland of the indigenous people” (N. Christian in, NI Hansard – 10/04/1996).

As the debate continued, Mr Christian was eventually pushed to clarify his position:

Whether you like it or not, a native Norfolk Islander is an indigenous person. I consider myself to be indigenous. I travel on an Australian passport because it is the only one available to me… I recognize that already in our homeland we are probably numerically a minority. What I do not want to see is our political clout be totally negated or shoved aside (Christian in, NI Hansard 10/04/1996)

Christian’s suggestion drew expressions of concern from other members of the house, particularly those contesting his use of use of the term ‘indigenous’. A Mainlander MLA named Mr Mike King for instance, objected to the term ‘indigenous’, labelling it “inappropriate” (King in, NI Hansard – 10/04/1996). Mrs Lozzi Cuthbertson, another Mainlander MLA, further raised the issue that the Mr Christian’s second proposed wording of the measure may be “seriously against the Anti-Discrimination Act” (Cuthbertson in, NI Hansard – 14/06/1996).

When Mr Christian expressed that his concern was that Norfolk Islanders were “effectively displacing themselves” by allowing themselves to become a minority in their own homeland, this concern was echoed by a number of other members. For instance, another Islander MLA, Mr. Adams, agreed with Mr. Christian:

I believe the Minister’s concern is for the culture of the people, his concern is the maintenance of the culture of the people who came from Pitcairn and their descendants here today and I fully support the intent of those words and I believe we, one of the greatest dangers for the Norfolk Island people who are descendant from the Pitcairn people is that we become a minority in our own place, and a minority in many forms and fashions and I think it’s good to reiterate our concern that it doesn’t happen and have such touchstones as those words put into our legislation and our way of doing things, and I fully support the amendment (NI Hansard 10/04/1996).

Eventually, the house agreed to a substantial rewording of the initial proposal to state that it: “recognizes a special relationship for the descendants of the settlers from Pitcairn Island
with Norfolk Island and their desire to preserve their tradition and culture” (NI Hansard 15/05/1996).

The matter was left to rest until a year after this debate, when in May 1997, the Island’s Eighth Legislative Assembly was formed and the question of the official recognition of Islanders’ connections to the Island re-emerged as a topic of political discussion. An Islander MLA and member of the Pitcairn Society named Mr Ric Robinson introduced a motion that the Assembly: “accept and acknowledge that the descendants of the Pitcairn settlers of Norfolk Island are the indigenous people of Norfolk Island” (NI Hansard 11/06/1997). While Mr N. Christian was interested in introducing ideas of indigeneity because he was concerned over Islanders’ growing minority status in what he believed should be recognised as their homeland, Mr R. Robinson seemed to be more concerned with how such a concept might be mobilised not only locally but also in the Island’s political disputes with Canberra. Robinson explained that the passing of such a motion in the Island’s Legislature could be the basis from which to establish a range of local policies to revitalize the Norf’k language, to provide the impetus to preserve Norfolk Islander heritage and culture; and to move towards full internal self government and economic self-sufficiency.

Like Mr Christian, Mr Robinson maintained that Norfolk Islanders regard the Island as a homeland, something that he argued the earlier two groups of European penal settlers to the Island (and presumably their descendants) could not lay equal claim to. These groups, he argued, did not arrive on the Island with an existing sense of peoplehood.

The Pitcairn people...were resettled here as a whole people, complete to grannies, dogs, cats, sewing boxes, archives, customs and traditions and a sense of identity as a people, they abandoned Pitcairn Island at the behest of the British Government to live here in Norfolk Island, as their homeland. They were the first whole and entire people to live here for the normal purposes of living. That is a homeland, and they hang in here, they had a go of it. All the previous attempts at settlement had been abandoned...Some might say that Norfolk Islanders are of “mixed race”. And that Pitcairn Island is the homeland anyway. In which case, what is one to say about the Aboriginal people of Australia, who immigrated from an earlier
homeland…some 40-60 thousand years ago (emphasis added, Robinson, NI Hansard 11/06/1997).

To Mr Robinson, the regard that the Pitcairners had for the Island could only be that of an indigenous people for their homeland. Furthermore, he believed that the criteria of ‘firstness’ and ‘wholeness’ ruled out other claims to similar status from convict descendants or any other group that came before the Pitcairners.

The proposed motion did not receive the popular support of the community, and while it is impossible to gauge the numbers in favour or against it, the fact that the motion was eventually withdrawn indicated its narrow support base. Six out of nine MLAs were Islanders, but with two Islander MLAs opposing the motion, the positions taken in this debate did not form exclusively along Islander / Mainlander lines. The only member of the Assembly that offered full, unqualified support for Robinson’s motion was Mr Nobbs, an Islander, who stated:

We’ve had forever the Islanders Mainlanders groupings…however there is one indisputable fact. The descendants of the people transferred here from Pitcairn. If that’s the division, I’m sorry but it happened quite before my time. You know we used to be satisfied with the statement, “Queen Victoria gave us the Island” and that’s it. Indigenous was not even thought of, personally I know what I am, and I really [do] not care what I’m called…However, we find in this modern world certain key words that people relate to (Nobbs, in NI Hansard – 21/05/1997).

Nobbs stated that while the claim that Queen Victoria gave the Island to the Pitcairners bore little credence outside of the Island in 1997, ‘indigenous’ was a word that had global currency. “I mean we can say it [that the Island was a gift] as long as we like but they only understand such words as indigenous” (Nobbs, in NI Hansard 25/06/1997). He believed the Motion would allow Islanders to form a beneficial relationship with the United Nations and other global bodies representing indigenous people and that forming such a relationship would allow Islanders to bypass the need to have their relationship with the Island recognised by the Australian Commonwealth. A Mainlander MLA, Mr Brown, also expressed his agreement with the Motion, stating:
All the mutineers were Englishmen when they went to Pitcairn Island but what we are being asked to recognise is that the Pitcairn people as they were in 1856 are the indigenous people of Norfolk Island...Just because I’m a Mainlander does not cause me to begrudge the recognition of the descendants of the Pitcairn Settlers as the indigenous people of Norfolk Island (Brown, in NI Hansard 25/06/1997).

With the exception of Nobbs and Brown, more than half of the members opposed the motion because it did not seem to have the support of the community. Residents were concerned that such recognition could affect Norfolk Island’s relationship with Australia, and that connections to a global indigenous movement could be used by those that supported Norfolk Island’s independence (or a radical degree of autonomy) from Australia to drive a wedge between Australia and Norfolk Island through appeals for greater self-determination as indigenous people.

Additionally, but certainly no less important, many MLAs noted the reluctance within the Islander community to self-identify as indigenous as they did not have “an overwhelming desire to be known as indigenous” (Bates, in NI Hansard 25/09/2007). These members stated that residents, both Islanders and Mainlanders, were concerned that such identification would deepen the already strong divide that existed between residents of Pitcairn descent and Mainlanders, who additionally made up the majority of voters on the Island. Some of the uneasiness arose from the belief that while Mainlanders could be historically placed settlers vis-à-vis Islanders indigenes, they were also family members, close friends, co-workers, pillars of the community, and sometimes generationally emplaced people who belonged in ways that the rhetoric of indigeneity did not recognise. For instance, Islander MLA Mr Buffett noted:

Some people quite clearly say to me, we are what we are...Many are of the view one way or the other. They say the motion is not going to make a great deal of difference. Other people have quite clearly said to me they think the Motion is dividing up the community into one category or another category (Buffett, in NI Hansard 25/06/1997).

The discussion continued in the Island’s Assembly from the 21st of May 1997 to the 10th September 1997 when Robinson, anticipating defeat on the issue, withdrew his motion instead of allowing a vote on it. Despite the dissipation of the debate regarding indigenous
identification, the terrain that the debate occurred on is still in place and has re-ignited on a number of instances since.\footnote{For example, in 2011, during a period of significant reforms to Norfolk Island’s governance arrangements, two Islanders sent letters to the Norfolk Islander declaring that ‘now’ was the time to gain indigenous status and protect Norfolk culture.}

I was well aware of these debates as I entered the field; I found that many Islanders were dismissive of pursuing indigenous recognition, viewing it as a political device for enacting autonomy from Australia. However, some Islanders suggested that they would consider themselves indigenous ‘if’ indigenous was redefined in light of their own understandings of their relationship to Norfolk Island. Anthony, 56, for instance, frames it in terms of the Island as a gift from the crown: “If it was understood that an island was given for a population of people to move there unencumbered. If that’s indigenous [...] I agree with that” (emphasis in original, Anthony, recorded interview 18/10/2007). This was similar to the response from Redmond, an Islander in his 90s who very explicitly stated how he thought the concept related to Norfolk Islanders: “I think Norfolk Islanders are indigenous because the Island was given to the Pitcairners for settlement by Queen Victoria in 1856 after the convict era (Redmond, recorded interview 06/12/2007). Many Islanders, such as Herbert, 63, found it difficult to reconcile their original status as settlers with ideas of indigenous belonging to the Island, and this plays out in their responses to the concept of indigeneity. Herbert stated that he felt indigenous, but that the term should be reserved for the traditional indigenous groups, such as Australian Aboriginal people:

Some people will argue that [Islanders are indigenous]. I wish it were true. But really, it all depends how you look at the word ‘indigenous’ and interpret that. And the way I would interpret that word would be somebody who… has… been in a place for... [a long time] like the Australian Aboriginals for example, when the white settlers already arrived, they were already there, they’re indigenous people. Tahitians are indigenous to Tahiti. But [sighs] to say that Norfolk Islanders are indigenous, although we would love to be called that... I would love to be able to say ‘yes’ we are indigenous, but we came here after the white settlers had turned this place into a prison. So you really can’t say that we got here first. Which is how I would think of the word indigenous should apply. And it doesn’t matter what you do, I can’t seem to be able to apply that to us. Although I’d like to... We feel
indigenous but to actually...we do, we feel indigenous! That's how we... and I can pretty much reckon that I could speak for every Norfolk Islander of Pitcairn or Bounty person. Yeah. But it doesn’t matter how much you feel it... (emphasis in original, Herbert, recorded interview 13/09/2007).

Herbert notes that indigenous people were ‘already there’ when others arrived, which he found difficult to reconcile with his knowledge of Norfolk Islanders’ arrival after other white settlers had left the Island. In other words, he was not able to connect his understanding of Islanders’ historical occupation with the concept of indigeneity.

The mostly unsuccessful assertions of an indigenous identity represent an attempt on behalf of some Norfolk Islanders to gain formal recognition of their relationship with the Island as a homeland. Both assertions of legal ownership and of indigenous connection to place have been used by some Islanders, such as the Pitcairn Society, as resources to further political aims, and in particular to influence the constitutional quarrels between Norfolk Island and Australia. It would, however, be wrong to say that these assertions of indigenous status were mobilised wholly to achieve a political end. They should also be understood as a very real aspiration of some Islanders to gain recognition of their connections and attachments to Norfolk Island.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed some of the ways that Islanders have created and mobilised claims to belong to Norfolk Island as a homeland through their descent from Pitcairn settlers. While Pitcairn Descendants initially distinguished between patrilineal descendants of Bounty mutineers and others, as the Island began to be populated by Mainlanders they increasingly muted displays of difference among themselves and accentuated their connections to the Island vis-à-vis Mainlanders. This presents a unique situation. Islanders primarily understand themselves to be the descendants of settlers, however in their relations with Mainlanders they tend to claim their nativeness and belonging to Norfolk Island.

This sense of nativeness has its limits. Islanders do not generally explicitly claim to be a native or indigenous people, and certainly very few people on the Island would claim indigeneity as a primary identity or call themselves ‘a native’. Furthermore, when groups of
Islanders such as the Pitcairn Society have made attempts to situate Islanders’ sense of nativeness and belonging within global categories of indigeneity – as a way of making sense of their relations with the Island, the Australian Government, and with others who have settled on the Island – their efforts have not gained the popular support of the majority of Islanders. So, while Islanders recognise an enduring relationship to the Island through descent, and some seek some kind of official recognition of their ongoing relationship with the Island, these ideas do not tend to resonate with universalised and homogenised ideas of indigeneity.

Nevertheless, despite their discomfort with the term ‘indigenous’, Islanders claim a relationship with the Island based on the circumstances in which their ancestors arrived on the Island, and their ancestors’ priority in time in relation to Mainlanders. Norfolk Islanders therefore claim a settler identity but also emphasise their native connections to the Island. This sense of nativeness only became valuable and claimable on Norfolk Island in relation to others who have arrived later. This emergence of nativeness within a context of relationality with more recent arrivals to place feeds back into recent debates regarding the concept of indigeneity in anthropology. In these debates, some anthropologists have called for historicised conceptualisations of indigenous identities that are grounded in the relational processes that produce them (De La Cadena and Starn 2007; Merlan 2007, 2009; Saugestad 2001). Merlan (2009:304-305) for instance, identifies relational definitions of indigeneity as “definitions that emphasize grounding in relations between the "indigenous" and their "others" rather than in [criterial] properties inherent only to those we call "indigenous" themselves”. Merlan notes that criterial definitions tend to locate an essential indigeneity within a particular kind of person with particular attributes, rather than in the kinds of relations these people have with others.

De la Cadena and Starn (2007) define indigeneity as “a process; a series of encounters; a structure of power; a set of relationships; a matter of becoming...not a fixed state of being” (2007:11). They argue that indigeneity is something that emerges “within larger social fields of difference and sameness” and gains positive value “through relation to what it is not” (2007:4). They further note that “indigenous cultural practices, institutions, and politics become such in articulation with what is not considered indigenous within the particular social formation where they exist” (De La Cadena and Starn 2007:4). Such an approach to indigeneity becomes less a question of how local practices and ways of being
resonate with an idea of a homogeneous, universalised indigeneity, but how indigeneity is articulated and mobilised in a particular local context in relation to particular others. Indigeneity, then, can be thought of not as a set of attributes identifying a type of person(s) but as a series of relationships and structures that position a group towards its others in practical, unintended or strategic ways.\textsuperscript{13} If we are to take these new developments in the anthropological theorisation of indigeneity seriously, then we must also assess their implications for peoples not typically given such a title. This seems to be call given by Trigger and Dalley (2010) following their review of these new approaches to the concept of indigeneity. They ask the question that if indigeneity is indeed “a fluid sociocultural phenomenon”, could indigeneity be “emergent over time in populations which begin their presence in a location as settlers, migrants, and visitors?” (2010:57). As I have attempted to show, Islanders began their presence on Norfolk Island as settlers, but have come to understand their relationship to place as fundamentally different to that of later settlers. While it is clear that they do not accept the label indigenous, as Clifford notes, “There must be, and in practice there are, many ways to conceive of “nativeness” in less absolute terms” (Clifford 2001:482).

\textsuperscript{13} Li (2000) and Clifford (2001) for instance, have described nativeness or indigeneity as a product of ‘articulations’, something that is not self evident or a natural part of people, but emerges instead within the context of political struggles and negotiations between people and groups in unequal power relationships.
CHAPTER SIX

The Norf’k Language

Speaker 1: *Dem English salan yusa laugh fe aklan we’ wii talk but dem ka andeitan auwas laengwidg en wish dem el talk jus like aklan*¹ [Those English (Mainlander) people used to laugh at the way we talk but they can’t understand our language and wish they talked just like us].

Speaker 2: *es da de wieh kos tu’u guud fe talk Norf’k* [That’s right, because it is so good to talk Norfolk] (Harrison 1984:119).

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on language practices as a way of conceptualising the formation, management and recognition of relationships between Islanders and Mainlanders on Norfolk Island. Norfolk Islanders use a local language, Norf’k, as a medium of differentiation, but also as a medium for recognising relationships to others. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Islanders often appeal to their primordial links to first settlers in their constructions of belonging to the Island. However, these appeals create problems in situations where close social relations exist between Islanders and non-Islanders. Islanders and Mainlanders have shared Norfolk Island in near equal numbers since the 1940s, and every resident seems to have different criteria with which they recognise others as belonging to Norfolk. Some favour descent; others time lived on-Island, continuity of residence, or residency status. The processes by which people are recognised as belonging to the Island are highly subjective, never achieve complete community-wide agreement, and often involve subjective assessments of people’s emplacement in local networks and of their

¹ Note that this passage has been translated from phonetic style to the Buffett orthographic style.

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ability to make apparent their social positioning. Language use is one of the means by which the different social positionings of residents are performed and are made apparent.

In the course of talking to Islanders about their language use, I came across varying opinions regarding who in the community should be permitted to speak Norf’k. Tensions arose particularly between Norfolk Islanders who believed that controlling the use of Norf’k was a means of protecting a key aspect of Norfolk Islanders’ selves from appropriation by non-Islanders, and those who questioned the continuing utility of rigid strictures on use. These beliefs indicated Islanders’ awareness of language use as having certain effects on social relationships that required management. Varying opinions towards the speaking of Norf’k indicate some of the ways that Islanders have sought to manage their relationships with others. I am interested in the ways that actors use Norf’k in different ways to communicate how people belong in particular social situations. In following this line of enquiry, I do not wish to discount the inherent purpose of language as a medium of practical communication, but rather wish to emphasise that many Islanders are conscious that language is also a mechanism for the exchange of social recognition.

My focus in this chapter is not specific speech acts, but on more general attitudes towards the effects of language in particular social contexts. I examine the explanations that actors have of their actions when speaking Norfolk and English. As McDonald (1989) notes in her discussion of Breton speakers in Brittany, language use and choice can depend on contexts such as topic of conversation, age, gender, occasion or the social identities and relationships between speakers, but these contextual elements are not structural givens that predetermine linguistic behaviour. Rather their effectiveness is subject to the perceptions of the speakers of what they are doing when they use language in different ways. McDonald contends:

In order to grasp the nuances of differential language use in local talk, it is not the linguist’s or the sociologist’s perception of context that is required, nor the economy or objective lists of apparently fixed and neutral pairs, [i.e. closeness/distance, male/female, formal/informal etc.] but rather the perceptions, classifications or definitions, or the self-definitions of the language users themselves (McDonald 1989:278).
In other words, a researcher cannot merely identify a series of contextual elements that predict language without additionally taking into account the products of the speaker’s reflexive awareness of these contextual elements. The culturally negotiated and reflexive beliefs about language and its links to power and difference are what linguistic anthropologists call ‘language ideology’.

Judith Irvine (1989) makes the point is that there is no direct analogy between linguistic and social relationships because these relationships themselves are mediated by speakers’ ideology of language. According to Irvine’s (1989:255) definition, a language ideology is a “cultural … system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests”. Silverstein (1979:193) defines language ideology as “any set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as rationalization or justification for perceived language structure and use”. Linguistic anthropologists use the concept of language ideology to explain the consequences of actors’ reflexive awareness of language, and speakers’ understandings of language’s effects on the world, and their links to sociocultural phenomena (Kroskrity 2000:5; Makihara and Schiefflin 2007:4; Keane 2007:17). Silverstein (1979) in particular tends to see language ideology as being explicitly perceptible on the level of local metalinguistic discourse about language itself, which he calls native metapragmatic ideology. Silverstein (1979), along with Krosrity (2000), argue that these ideologies are multiple and that people draw on different beliefs about language in different contexts.

I want to focus on a particular aspect of language use, the meanings that Islanders place on speaking Norf’k and being a Norf’k speaker. Islanders make use of the relationships between English and Norf’k in their relationships with others, but they do so through their varying rationalizations of the nature of links between social and linguistic relationships. This chapter will therefore discuss Islanders’ rationalisations about language and social difference at the level of their talk about language. These include Islanders’ varying notions about the correct or ideal relationships between language use and social identities. In my discussion I will draw particular attention to a few beliefs about Norf’k and English. Firstly, there is the idea that Norf’k is for Norfolk Islanders. Secondly, that Norf’k is for close or intimate relationships and is a means of recognising such relationships, and thirdly, that one’s use of Norf’k must be recognised by others as legitimate.
I begin this chapter by offering a brief description of Norf’k, its origins and a summary of the contexts in which it is most generally spoken. I then discuss Islanders’ understandings of the relationship between Norf’k and English and the different values Norfolk Islanders have placed on each at different times. I then discuss how Norf’k and English are used in situations where only Islanders are present and when in situations of mixed company. Next, through a series of illustrative quotes, I outline some of Islanders’ diverse beliefs concerning who should or can be a speaker of Norf’k and in particular, whether Mainlanders should be speakers of Norf’k. I finish the chapter with some illustrative quotes from Mainlanders and their experiences of learning and speaking Norf’k.

**Pitkern/Norf’k**

The Norf’k language is a variation of Pitkern, a contact language that developed on Pitcairn Island in the settlement founded by *Bounty* mutineers and Tahitians. It is a mixture of Old English and other English dialects, Tahitian and West Indian Creole. The exact point at which Pitkern began to develop is the subject of disagreement among linguists and other researchers. Shapiro (1936:209), for instance speculated that the language developed as a result of the mutineers attempting to teach Tahitians English. Laycock (1989) presented the view that the language developed during the Pitcairn Islanders’ abortive relocation to Tahiti in an effort to distinguish themselves from those they settled among, while Dening (1992:58) notes that the Bounty crew members began to use a “Tahitian-English pidgin” aboard the *Bounty* prior to the mutiny in an effort to “underscore a relationship changed by their Tahitian experience”. Both Laycock (1989) and later Ingram and Mühlhäusler (2004:786) make the important point that although Pitkern and Norf’k are languages that have been mostly spoken on isolated islands, they have largely developed in the context of their speakers’ various social relations with others, and in the context of speakers’ bilingualism in English.

The precise context surrounding the emergence of the Pitkern language aside, by the 1850s Pitkern was spoken alongside English on Pitcairn Island, and the Pitcairn Islanders continued to speak these two languages after they were permanently settled on Norfolk in 1856. The variety of Pitkern spoken on Norfolk has since become known as Norf’k (also called Norfolksese, Norfolk, or Norfuk on different occasions) and currently has an
estimated 800 speakers of varying levels of proficiency. Pitkern continues to be spoken today by descendants of the Pitcairn Islanders who returned to Pitcairn and this variety is called Pitkern (or Pitcairnese).²

Most, if not all, speakers of Norf’k are bilingual in Norf’k and some form of English close to Standard British English (including Australian English Norfolk English or New Zealand English, which for the sake of convenience I will hereon refer to as English) though there has been a steady language shift from bilingualism in Norf’k and English to monolingualism in English. Norf’k is, therefore, a language that not only has very few speakers, but also considerable diversity in terms of competency and linguistic skill. Linguist Peter Mühlhäusler estimates that Norf’k has around 1500 words in total, and speakers readily switch to English words when a Norf’k word for something is unavailable to the speaker, or within the vocabulary of Norf’k.

Both Harrison (1985) and Laycock (1989) categorised degrees of Norf’k speech based on the extent to which such speech relied on English syntax, phonology and vocabulary in everyday conversation. The three types of Norf’k they identify move on a spectrum from mostly Norf’k to mostly English. The first is ‘Broad Norf’k’, which is considered by Harrison (1985) to least resemble Standard English. This variety has been strongly influenced syntactically by the languages of those who settled Pitcairn, including St Kitts Creole, Old Tahitian and English dialects and is not readily intelligible by English speakers. This type is followed by ‘Modified Norf’k’, which makes use of some English syntax and Norf’k vocabularies. The final type is ‘Instant Norf’k’. ‘Instant Norf’k’ makes the most use of English grammatical structure and words but speakers add a Norf’k accent and pepper their speech with common, easily recognisable Norf’k words – such as wataweih [hello, how are you?], naawe [swim], yorli [you], moosa [almost], kaa waa [do not know], and morla [tomorrow] (see also, Laycock 1990:625).

Because of the extent to which Norf’k and English are mixed in everyday conversation, it is difficult to say which aspects of vocabulary are Norf’k and not Norf’k and this seems to be a site of disagreement and contention among Islanders. Nevertheless, Norf’k speakers often

² Most Norfolk Islanders I spoke to seem to prefer the term Norf’k or Norfolk. In fact, most pronounced it ‘Norfolk’ in English, and ‘Norf’k’ in Norf’k, though this varied. Others names for it I head were; ‘auwas langwij’, ‘our language’, ‘the Norfolk Language’ or ‘the lingo’. No one I spoke to liked or used the term ‘Norfolkses’ or ‘Pitcairnese’ (see also, Flint 1964:202-203 n.1).
profess to know whether speakers are trying or not to ‘speak Norf’k’. These ideas are conveyed by a few common expressions in the Norf’k metalinguistic lexicon that express assessments of language proficiency, such as “yu el tork Norf’k?” [Can you speak Norf’k?], “dem kaa tork Norf’k” [they can not talk/speak Norf’k], “Dem kaa wataweih f’ tork Norf’k” [they do not know how to talk Norf’k], daa ent Norf’k [That’s not Norf’k] and “yuu kaa do / kaa tal et propli” [you can not do it / can not say it properly] (see also, Harrison 1972, 1985; Buffett 1999; Borg 2011).

These terms are also signs of a drop in the numbers of broad Norf’k speakers. In 2007, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added Norf’k to the list of the world’s endangered languages. At last estimate (the year 2000) 580 persons on Norfolk Island could speak Norf’k, though linguist Peter Mühlhäusler estimated that around 800 Islanders spoke varying degrees of Norf’k, with as few as 50 traditional ‘broad Norf’k’ speakers, of which nearly all were elderly (unpublished-b). Mühlhäusler (unpublished-b) further estimated that only 2% of the Island’s population speak a broad form of Norf’k and that the majority of Norf’k speakers spoke ‘Modified’, or ‘Instant Norf’k’, which are highly reliant on English grammar and vocabulary (Mühlhäusler unpublished-b, 2002b; see also, Harrison 1985).

Norfolk Islanders have responded to this language decline by indicating a strong wish to revive and revalorise Norf’k. Norf’k has primarily been an oral language, and the few written forms it has appeared in have generally been restricted to poetry books (see, Quintal 1988; Christian 1986) and informal letters between family members. However, since the 1980s, two dictionaries have been published (see, Palmer [1986] 2002; Buffett 1999), and the editors of media publications such as The Norfolk Window – one of two local newspapers – have stated their commitment to increasing the visibility of Norf’k as a written language. These efforts to write Norf’k have been hampered by ongoing disputes among Islanders regarding the correct way in which to write Norf’k (i.e. orthographic style).

In 2004, the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly passed the Norfolk Island Language (Norf’k) Act 2004 (Nlk) to gain further global recognition of the existence and status of the Norf’k language. The Act established Norf’k alongside English as the co-official language of Norfolk Island and described Norf’k as the “language... that is spoken by descendants of
the first free settlers of Norfolk Island who were descendants of the settlers of Pitcairn Island”. Thus Norf’k is explicitly identified within as an object belonging to (or attached to) a discrete community. Norf’k is now occasionally used in political speeches and the Norfolk Island Government is committed to increasing the visibility of the language through the implementation of bilingual signage and information in government reserves.

**Norf’k and English**

Norf’k’s utility as a resource of social differentiation arises from patterns of its usage in conjunction with Standard English. Norf’k tends to be spoken in intimate situations among close friends and family and some kinds of working relationships and primarily by people of Islander (Pitcairn) descent. Norf’k is common as a medium for gossip, casual conversation and socialising. English is used in nearly all other forms of communication and is the more-commonly spoken language in public locations on the Island, and is the primary language used for writing and official discourse.

As a result of linguistic field research on the Island in 1957, Flint (1964, 1979) described a case of stable diglossia between English and Norf’k. Diglossia is a term used by Ferguson (2000 (1959)) to describe a particular type of societal bilingualism (or bi-dialecticism) whereby two languages are positioned in dominant/subordinate relation to each other according to the contexts in which they are used. One code, called the High [H] code, is used for a variety of formal situations such as writing, religious ritual and education. Another, often a local vernacular language, is the Low [L] code, used for informal social interactions. According to Flint (1979), a near-standard British English (i.e. English, within the context of this thesis) was the [H] code on Norfolk Island, and Norf’k was the [L] code. English was used for religious ritual, writing and interactions with officials and outsiders whereas Norf’k has traditionally been used for close, intimate relationships, casual conversation and certain forms of work and leisure activities. The extent to which the diglossic situation described by Flint is still in place is questionable. Harrison (1984) described a crumbling diglossia in her linguistics PhD thesis on Norf’k, and as I will show, Islanders themselves feel as though they have considerable choice in the language they use for communication.

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*The word ‘diglossia’ has much older Greek classical origins.*
Flint (1979:297) noted that Islanders saw neither English or Norf’k as inferior to the other. Mühlhäusler (2008b) seems to disagree with this and argues that Islanders had some negative views towards Norf’k, referring to speaking Norf’k as ‘murdering the King’ (see also, 2004:780; see also, Mühlhäusler 2007:228). However, this term is not a direct reflection of the negative attitudes Islanders had toward Norf’k. Flint (1964:203) also recorded these expressions: “You kilen da kwii” and “Yu brekin da king’s crown’, [in English, ‘You are murdering the King’s – or Queen’s – English’] as terms used when one was not speaking English correctly, indicating they referred to negative attitudes towards mixing Norf’k with English as opposed to general attitudes towards Norf’k. While Norf’k could be mixed with English in particular situations – and often this was the means by which new words would enter the Norf’k vocabulary – English was to remain as close to standard as possible. My own informants recalled a similar attitude towards maintaining some conceptual separation between Norf’k and English, especially when the situation required one to speak English.

The positive values that Islanders attributed to English during the 20th Century are most clearly represented in the differing roles that Islanders expected these languages to play in the Island’s education system. The New South Wales State Department of Education (Aust) pursued a policy that banned students from speaking Norf’k in the Island school from 1912 to 1929 (see, Flint 1964:190; Harrison 1985; Mercer 2006; Mühlhäusler 2007). Some parents supported these English education policies in the hope that increased proficiency in English would allow their children greater social mobility and more off-Island occupational opportunities, while others felt that being forced to speak English in the playground was disempowering for the children. Mühlhäusler (2007) notes that despite the lifting of the ban, attempts to discourage bilingualism in favour of monolingualism in English continued within the schooling system until at least 1952, and efforts to introduce the teaching of Norf’k in schools did not begin until 1980. One of my informants, who was an ex-headmaster of the Norfolk Island Central School, contended Norf’k language classes began earlier than this in 1972.4

4 The ex-headmaster told me: “In 1951, I didn’t see any signs of the suppression of the language and when I became the principal in 1972, I introduced the language into the school. We had a teacher here who was a Norfolk Islander teacher called Faye Bataille, and she took classes. Two lessons per week each class, to preserve the Norf’k language. And that happened in 1972, although some of the history books said it didn’t happen until 1982” (emphasis added, Ex-Headmaster, recorded interview 19/10/2007).
Language, Locality and Cultural Identity

The association of Norf'k with the local space of Norfolk Island is relationally produced through its speakers’ juxtaposition of Norf'k with English, which tends to represent the non-local. Norf'k speakers make use of the relationship between Norf'k and English in their relationships with others. While most Islanders today speak English more often than Norf'k, English remains the language of social detachment and otherness at a number of interconnected levels. Because English pre-existed the Pitcairners as a group, Islanders have little control over how it is to be spoken. Islanders are able be recognised as authors of Norf'k in ways that they are not when they speak in English as they are conscious of the ways in which its development coincides with their emergence as a group. Sayings and words in Norf'k are intimately connected to past and present people, places, and events on Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island (Mühlhäusler 2006). Islanders who are able to demonstrate linguistic mastery, to work with words and phrases to give them new contextual meanings, are often remembered of fondly as ‘old characters’ (see, Harrison 1984:119-120) and some of their idiosyncratic sayings are remembered and continue to be attributed to them long after their deaths.

This is clearly evident in the linguistic practice of *daa thing fe dems* which Beryl Nobbs Palmer defines as ‘quoting so and so’ ([1986] 2002:53). These are memorable usages of Norf'k that are recognised by others through the continuing association of a phrase with the original speaker or action. Some of these *dar thing fe dems*, as Mühlhäusler (2010:350-351) notes, are only used by members of certain families, and are used as deliberate markers of separate family identity, while others have wider currency. The Norf'k phrase ‘*Daa thing fer* Lindsay, *Lubbe aa red stoen*’, for instance, roughly translates as ‘leave it alone’, but also references a past event, ‘as Lindsay left the red rock’. This phrase recalls the actions of a

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5 As Coombe and Herman (2004) discuss in their article on the use of Maori languages on the internet, English and Maori both have different symbolic values attached to them and with these values come different expectations of access.

6 They do not necessarily have to have passed away to be treated as old characters. There are a few elder Islanders, predominantly but not exclusively men, who other Islanders look up to as a role model of how to speak Norf'k creatively.

7 There are many variations of this phrase, such as ‘*Daa thing fer...Lin’ en aa red stoen*’ or merely ‘*lubbe aa red stoen*’. Beryl Nobbs Palmer ([1986] 2002:53) lists the phrase as “‘*Wi do furret semis ar Red Stoo-un, lubbe side e!*’ (Let’s treat it as we would Red Rock, leave it where it is)”.

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person named Lindsay Buffett, who died in 1931. As Audrey, an Islander born in the early 1930s, explained to me:

[The phrase] means, ‘leave it where it is’. Lyn, as in Lindsay Buffett, wanted to get some good stone and there’s a red stone somewhere [on Norfolk Island] and someone suggested that they blast this rock and get it. And he said, ‘Nah just leave it where it is. Forget about it. Lubbe side es. Leave it where it is’. And that became a saying on the Island. […] And that was something that was said before I was born and it’s still around (emphasis in original, Audrey, recorded interview 27/11/2007).

As Audrey’s description of the term’s origin indicated, Islanders understand themselves, their peers and their ancestors as the agents of Norf’k language creation and remember many of these acts of creation. Norf’k also provides a means of indexing a family identity alongside Islander identity as certain words or phrases are only used by particular families or in particular parts of the Island, meaning that it provides a means of maintaining more specific forms of differentiation than the Islander/Mainlander form that is most perceptible.

English is other to Norf’k because with every act of speaking different degrees of Norf’k, Islanders are shifting their location in relation to English and English speakers. The interplay between the two languages in everyday use plays a key role in social differentiation and in creating and recognising social relationships. While on Norfolk, English is constructed as available to everyone who can speak it, the use of Norf’k on Norfolk is subject to complicated array of differing cultural practices, understandings of rights of use, and contradictory ideas of who should and can properly speak the language.

Some Islanders consider Norf’k as a form of cultural property belonging to Islanders. This is best communicated in the expression often used to describe Norf’k, ‘auwas laengwij’ or [our language]. The personal pronouns auwa and aklan both mean ‘us’ in Norf’k and refer primarily to insiders within a given context, but auwa is most often used by Islanders to explicitly mark ‘us’ as people of Pitcairn descent (see, Buffett 1999:12-13; Mühlhäusler unpublished-a:Unpublished). Such proprietary claims over Norf’k seem to indicate the status of Norf’k as a constituent part of Islanders’ identities, and of awareness of language as a constitutive symbolic practice; what Simon Harrison (2006:4-7) calls a symbolic practices.

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8 I never heard a Mainlander use the word ‘auwa’, but have heard one use the term aklan (for instance, thanks fe aklan [thanks for us] after a dinner party).
According to Harrison, cultural groups claim collective ownership over certain practices that are relied upon as a source of difference. As Islanders’ material culture is not starkly distinctive from that of its closest neighbours, Australia and New Zealand, language practices are a particularly important arena for the management and enactment of social difference. As a Norfolk Island politician noted in an Assembly speech on the passage of *The Norfolk Island Language (Norf’k) Act 2004* (Nlk) “We all know that cultural groups possess a number of characteristics. Special or peculiar to themselves. Food. Crafts. Music...The Norfolk Island language is a distinctive element in the Norfolk Island cultural makeup” (Buffett, D. in *Norfolk Island Hansard* 15/12/2004). These kinds of links between language and identity are clearly expressed within many discussions of language ideology and nationalism, whereby a single language is promoted as a sign of cultural unity and separate identity (Bourdieu 1991; Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2000).

Many Islanders told me their language was the most tangible evidence of separate identity. Some, such as Charlotte, saw it as a sign of historical continuity and as a source of pride, partially brought on by its recognition elsewhere as an object worthy of academic study and the status that academics have given it as a language rather than a dialect of English. For instance, in one of my interviews, Charlotte, 76, noted:

Charlotte: [Norf’k and its recognition as a language] gives the people of Norfolk Island of Pitcairn ancestry...an identity. [...] ‘cos we start from 28 people, and that language is derived from those people. And it is now established, and it is studied at various universities. Now we can say, ‘Yes we do have a language; we’re not just some dirty dropouts from the mutiny’ (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 03/04/2007).

For Charlotte, Norf’k was equivalent to other languages (in the sense of being a language among languages as opposed to a dialect) and represented a positive relationship of continuity with ancestors. To her, the fact that her ancestors created a language is a sign of inalienable possessions. \(^9\) Opposition to the de-ethnicisation of language is common in settings where language has a history of being used as a form of ethnic differentiation, such as discussed by Oakes and Warren (2007:98-101) in Quebec. In such cases, tensions arise between those wishing to preserve the status of a language as a subnational identity marker, and those (often representatives of national governments) who are attempting to link the same language with a wider national identity.
that Islanders are more than ‘dirty dropouts’, but that they have their own culture to be proud of.\footnote{A small proportion of my Islander informants, (and a larger number of my Mainlander informants) denied that it was in fact a language. Chester, an Islander in his 60s for instance was quite adamant that it was “… a lingo, not a language” (Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007).}

Islanders employ a number of cultural practices that preserve their links with the Norf’k language, which Laycock (1989, 1990) gives a useful summary of. In Laycock’s (1989) analysis, the most important role that Norf’k plays in social interaction is in indexing social identity. He classifies the Norf’k language as a cant, which he defines as “...a type of linguistic parasite, in that it cannot exist in isolation, away from the language of the larger community that the cant-speakers are attempting to hide from” (Laycock 1989:627). This characterisation means that the language is completely predicated on the existence of an Other language and speakers of this other language; in this case English and English speakers. Laycock describes Norf’k [and Pitkern] as a ‘secret language’ used to exclude non-Islanders and act as a “set of identifying markers not readily learnt by outsiders” (Laycock 1989:626-627). He notes that while Islanders are expected to be speakers, ‘outsiders’ are not permitted to speak it, or are not recognised by speakers as being capable of speaking it correctly. Laycock therefore identifies the main purpose of Norf’k as a means indexing Islanders’ ethnic or racial identity vis-à-vis others. Laycock states;

PN [Pitkern/Norfolk], for all of its existence, has mainly served to define the Islanders, as against non-Islanders (Mainlanders, \textit{strienjas} ‘strangers’), and to exclude the latter from Island affairs (Laycock 1989:624).

In Laycock’s (1989) description, Islanders’ language practices effect a form of social closure to non-Islanders and that speaking Norf’k relatively neatly correlates to a separate Islander space, or ‘domain’ (see, Hymes 1972) of interaction in which non-Islander access is limited. Laycock saw language practices as integral to reproducing the implied racial boundaries of the group, through the construction of an ‘Islander’ domain. In my discussions with Islanders about language, I found that many had divergent ideas of what Norf’k was used for, and what speaking Norf’k denoted, indicating a heterogeneity of ideological positions towards language and its use. I found that Norf’k speech is deployed situationally, depending not only on the ways that speakers perceived their relationship with each other,
but also based on their speakers’ ideas of the role of language in signifying or even making this relationship.

Language practices and the boundaries they create do not always reproduce the racialised categories of Islander and Mainlander, but often work against or across them. They additionally reproduce and acknowledge other important relationships. Although code choice potentially provides a means of foregrounding an Islander/Mainlander divide, such choices in social interaction also make it possible for people to represent and acknowledge other types of relationships that cross-cut these divisions, such as associations with place, community and individuals. There is an ongoing tension between those Islanders who want to include non-Islanders as Norf’k speakers on the basis of a shared local space, and those who make proprietary claims over language and do not want non-Islanders to speak it on the grounds that Norf’k belongs to Islanders only.

**Norf’k and English Among Islanders**

Harrison (1984) explicitly focussed on the speaking of Norf’k among Islanders and notes that Norf’k and English indexed social relations of closeness and distance between Islander speakers. She notes the traditional values and attitudes attached to Norf’k and English in speech situations featuring all Islanders:

> Through code-variation mechanisms the Norfolk Island speaker is able to produce a variety of stylistic meanings. Many stem from the WE/THEY code contrast which underlies functional distinctions between Broad Norfolk [Norf’k] and Norfolk English in diglossia. In ideal diglossia, the WE code, Broad Norfolk, being regarded as the normal habitual language between Islanders, conveys associations of informality, warmth and intimacy, personal attachment, solidarity etc. In the same situation use of Norfolk English becomes socially marked and unexpected behaviour, so that it acquires contrasting meanings of formality, impersonal relationships, detachment, non-local values etc. (Harrison 1984:7).

The relation between Norf’k and English was exploited to recognise relations of closeness and distance based on the speakers’ ideas of insiderness and outsidersness, along with determinations of who was present in a given social situation. This included degrees of
‘insiderness’ among Norfolk Islanders themselves. Considerable pressure was placed on speakers to maintain the links between these social contexts and code-use.

Older Islanders I spoke to directed a clear sense of disapproval towards those who attempted to use English or ‘act English’ in situations where Norf’k speaking was expected. Such behaviour was interpreted as an act of individuation, which threatened the equality of the group. Two of my elderly female informants went so far as to suggest that speaking English in the company of all Islanders was considered ‘waawaha’ [haughty, conceited, putting on airs], which in this case was an accusation that the English speaker thought they were ‘too good’ to speak Norf’k among Norfolk Islanders. As Ophelia, an Islander woman in her 80s told me: “It’s the natural thing to do [speak Norf’k]. I could not speak English to my children or any other Norfolk Islander because it’s in us to speak our own language. It’s in our hearts to speak it” (emphasis in original, Ophelia, recorded interview 28/7/2007). In particular, the use of English by people who had lived and worked off-Island, or were from mixed marriages, in situations where Norf’k was expected (namely informal situations) was an act that could bring down accusations of being waawaha.

Charlotte: Robinson, he was an English speaker. He married Aunt Hannah Quintal. So Aunt Jemima who is Sylvia Nobbs’ mother, she married Robinson’s son and that’s Cobby, I don’t think I ever heard uncle Cobbs speak Norf’k. See they were English speakers. And they still have their characteristic speaking. They could understand it [Norf’k]. But people who spoke mainly Norf’k, they would think they’re waawaha. If you speak English to a Norfolk Islander, if one walked in the door right now, the fact that you’re here it’s ok, but amongst ourselves it would be considered waawaha and waawaha in that context would mean that you think you’re a cut above the ordinary Norfolk Islander (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 03/04/2007).

In this case, the accusation of waawaha indicated the person speaking English was failing to act in a way that acknowledged a particular type of social relationship (of closeness or similarity) between the participants. This was a relationship that should be recognised through the use of Norf’k in conversation and this is also largely a product of the relative

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11 Other bilingual communities also make this distinction, indicating that when one switches from a language of solidarity to a language associated with social distance in a context where solidarity is expected, then such a person can be accused of ‘putting on airs’ (see, Blom and Gumperz 1972:419).
position that English took as a language of formality and the ways that it had taken on meaning as non-local/non-Islander. Charlotte continues:

It’s ridiculous to talk English around another Norfolk Islander. Ridiculous. Otherwise they’d think you were being waawaha, that you were trying to ‘do English’, as they called it. And [an] English person is a person from other than here who doesn’t talk Norf’k (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 03/04/2007).

Charlotte’s account seems to indicate that in the past, attempts by Norfolk Islanders to ‘do English’ or speak English in particular situations were looked on as attempts to disassociate oneself from other Islanders, and that speaking Norf’k in particular contexts was an important component of being recognised as being equal with, or similar to, other Islanders. Charlotte notes quite simply that an English person is a person from somewhere other than Norfolk Island here who does not talk Norf’k. Norfolk Islanders have a number of words for non-locals, ‘Outsiders’, ‘strienjas’ [strangers] or ‘inglis salan’ [English person], in other words, calling someone English was indexing a degree of ‘outsiderness’. Some older Norfolk Islanders such as Charlotte still associate Norf’k and English with different forms of social closeness or distance, and English in particular is associated with enactments of a non-local, non-Islander identity in all-Islander settings.

The judgements placed on those that spoke English to Norfolk Islanders could well have been a means of sidelining Islanders who had been raised elsewhere, or whose parents for whatever reasons did not speak Norf’k in the home. Islanders often interpret language proficiency as an index of mobility and mixed marriage-parentage. One of Charlotte’s parents, for instance, was both from what she called ‘English’ families (her father’s parents were Buffetts and Nobbs’), and both of her parents’ families had long traditions of English-speaking in the home dating back to their English ancestors John Buffett and George Hunn Nobbs. English proficiency was one of the few bases for distinction in the Norfolk

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12 Borg (2009) for instance, records a Norf’k sentence that illustrates this point in a recent newspaper article on the Norf’k language: “Es shi tuu waawaha f’am tork lorg’ akl an, ai bet shi gwen’ dubaagen shi iiwen kaa waawiah f’ tork Norf’k” [She is too conceited and stuck up to come and talk with us, I bet she is going to pretend she doesn’t even know how to speak Norf’k] (The Norfolk Window 25th March 2011).

13 A tradition of English education existed as early on Pitcairn Island. Three of the English settlers on the Island, John Evans, John Buffett and George Hunn Nobbs, all encouraged members of their families to speak English in their homes on Pitcairn. This tradition continued after the move to Norfolk Island. These families
community before inequalities in wealth became a more significant marker of difference (Harrison 1985:136). The home was a key site of the reproduction of social difference. Those in the Buffett and Nobbs families were more likely to speak English in the home, and this was partially the basis the forms of linguistic and social differentiation between Islanders outlined above.

While those of elder generations tended to claim that speaking English in certain situations would be considered inappropriate, my informants younger than 50 years old tended to disagree with these ideas about speaking English to Islanders, and often felt they were not restricted in using either language in their social interactions. This is supported by Harrison’s (1984) observation that younger Islanders had a greater degree of personal choice and felt considerably less social pressure to speak Norf’k in all Islander situations (Harrison 1984:438). Largely, this may be due to the fact that Norf’k and non-Norf’k speakers are present in most social contexts, and English tends to be used in such settings. Despite this tendency to speak English more, my informants often expressed a sense of disappointment with themselves when they recalled common experiences of conducting an all-English conversation in the sole company of Islanders.

Despite this breakdown of the old diglossic domain usage, language is still the source of forms of differentiation between younger generations of Islanders today. Today, proficiency in Norf’k tends to be associated more with (but not necessarily limited to) people who have remained on Norfolk, have been raised in households with traditions of Norf’k speaking at home, and engage in activities or work with other Norf’k speakers, whereas time spent off Norfolk during one’s childhood years and attitudes towards Norf’k speaking at home are two strong barriers to achieving proficiency in Norf’k (Harrison 1985).

One thing that was not fully identified by Harrison in the early 1980s is that a lot of Islanders find themselves unable to muster the linguistic resources to participate in Norf’k speech that characterised the sociolinguistic situation on Norfolk in the past. Islanders who were not reared speaking Norf’k expressed insecurities about their ability to speak Norf’k publicly. Although such Islanders were generally encouraged to speak Norf’k well and rarely told not to speak it, the conspicuous and public nature of speaking Norf’k was risk

had members that were the most competent in English and were sometimes also the least competent in Norf’k. Nevertheless, according to informants, nearly all Islanders spoke some degree of English and Norf’k.
laden, as having one’s Norf’k proficiency questioned was potentially a means of denying a persons’ legitimacy as a ‘real Islander’. Islanders that had spent little of their childhood on Norfolk were those who were most often subject to this kind of assessment. Charlotte, for instance, confirmed she had taught many Islanders who had grown up in Australia and New Zealand how to speak Norf’k, noting that language proficiency was one of the areas where difference between returnees and life-long residents of Norfolk were drawn out.

Charlotte: They come to me and say, “Well you’ve got your culture, but what about us?” And these weren’t children. There would even be grandparents that come back to Norfolk and say they had to go away because of a sick parent, and they’ve come back, and they belong, they are us, but they can’t talk it.

Mitch: Why do they want to speak it?

Charlotte: They want to speak it because they were reared in Australia or New Zealand and one of the partners was an English speaker or a non-Norf’k speaker. They’d come back, sometimes with children some of them and they would be picked at by some locals, ‘You can’t even talk Norf’k!’ You know, it’s a bit of a skirmish to your character to not be able to speak (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 17/04/2007).

Some Islanders I spoke to did learn to speak Norf’k off-Island if it was spoken in their family homes while away. This was more likely if the person had two Norf’k speaking parents. Nevertheless, the tendency for Norfolk Islanders to raise young families in Australia or New Zealand – in addition to varying language practices in the home, and increasing dominance social role of English – has also taken its toll on the abilities of younger generations of Norfolk Islanders to speak Norf’k comfortably and unselfconsciously. Older Islanders, generally those above 60 years old, were very much conscious of the steady decline of Norf’k vocabularies in younger generations. Older Islanders would often question younger Islanders’ abilities in Norf’k, or alternatively, younger Islanders would note how much better people of their grandparents’ generation could speak it.

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14 Borg (2011) a native scholar of Norf’k, makes a similar statement: “There are now generations of Islanders who have missed out, or are currently missing out on the opportunity to learn to speak Norf’k in a safe, supportive and encouraging environment, and among them are some fairly regretful adults”.
Younger Islanders who wish to mark themselves as Norfolk Islanders are generally able to muster the linguistic resources necessary by speaking different levels of ‘Modified’ or ‘Instant Norf’k’. Yet assessments of ‘broadness’ are still used by speakers as a yardstick of how one conforms to an idealised image of a Norfolk Islander as the bearer of local culture and a speaker of Norf’k. This means that ‘instant Norf’k’ speakers are often not recognised by older Islanders as Norf’k speakers due to their smaller vocabularies and increasing reliance on English grammar and syntax. Chester, a 65 year old Islander who worked in a profession dominated by broad Norf’k speaking Islanders, assessed the language abilities of own family members and was unconvinced that they could speak Norf’k.

Chester: See, even with my kids, it’s easier to speak English, because really they can’t speak the language. You know, they can understand it, but they can’t speak it. And they admit that. They admit that... And it’s a dying thing. It’s eventually going to go I’m telling you. It’s eventually going to go.

M.L: So do the children in your family speak it?

Chester: You go talk to [his niece] Janet [he points up the valley to her house]. She can’t speak it. There you go, that answers your question [he laughs].

M.L: She told me she speaks it amongst her friends but not older people.

Chester: You see, that is the very reason, because she can’t. Or [that] I might think she can’t [pauses]. And she can’t! [Laughs heartily]. That’s right! Yeah [He continues chuckling with satisfaction] (emphasis in original Chester, recorded interview 10/11/2007).

Islanders who have grown up off-Island are encouraged to speak Norf’k, but inability to do so correctly also places these people in a position where they are open to ridicule or judgement by others. Some non-Norf’k proficient Islanders were considerably anxious to not put themselves in a position where ridicule could take place. Someone may feel like a Norfolk Islander, and be accepted to some extent as one, but be unable to represent oneself as one through the medium of language. It is important to point out that these people have other resources through which they can signify their identities as Islanders, and that language, though a key form of representation, is not the only form. Islanders who cannot
Arnold was born in Auckland, New Zealand in the mid-1950s and had lived on Norfolk for over 40 years. He told me that his grandfather was from Norfolk Island, but had sold his family land and jumped aboard a ship, eventually ending up in Auckland. In the mid-1960s, Arnold’s mother wanted him to come over and “see his heritage”. His whole family moved to Norfolk but he was the only one who decided to stay. When I asked Arnold if he spoke Norf’k, he told me his grandfather did, as did one of his brothers, but he chose not to because he felt he did not speak it properly. “I never went to school here. To speak it properly, you’ve got to really have grown up with it. So I don’t speak it, because there’s nothing worse, to me, this is only my view, if somebody doesn’t speak it properly, they should shut up” (emphasis in original, Arnold, recorded interview 21/11/2007). Arnold then told me that it was exactly because others shared his own attitude towards ‘newcomers’ speaking and learning Norf’k that many Islanders who grew up overseas refrained from trying to speak it.

And that’s what happens. We introduced it into the school, because it was taken away from kids in school [in the past...]. And trying to get it back into the school is not easy, because there’s the embarrassment of the kids [Islander or Mainlander] who haven’t lived with it. And speaking it to a local and knowing that if they’re not speaking it right, they’ll be laughed at (emphasis in original, Arnold, recorded interview 21/11/2007).

Arnold never stated that he would not be allowed to speak Norf’k should he wish to, and in fact he has told me he has been encouraged by others to speak it on a number of occasions. He refused to largely because he believed he would be assessed based on his ability and skill in crafting sentences in Norf’k in a way he was not while speaking in English, and was

15 Kathleen, 65, for instance, left the Island when she was a child and only returned to the Island when she was a married adult. When I asked her if she spoke Norf’k, she replied, “No...It’s sad isn’t it? It saddens me that I don’t, because there are things that you can say in the Norf’k language that you can’t translate. There’s a humour to it that is unique” (emphasis in original, Kathleen, recorded interview 26/11/2007). I instantly felt bad for asking her the question, as it seemed make her feel deficient in some way.

16 Arnold was not arguing that one learns Norf’k within the school classroom, but in the playground and from Norf’k speaking friends.

17 According to young adults I spoke to who had just left school, the school would be segregated into who could and could not speak Norf’k, and the ones that could speak it were considered ‘cool’.
unwilling to offer himself up to public scrutiny in such a way that his proficiency could be used to deny him recognition in a particular situation.

**Talk About Language: Who Should Speak Norf’k?**

Many scholars of Norf’k have noted its role as a linguistic marker of insider and outsider statuses (Mühlhäusler 2007:217; Harrison 1984). When I began questioning people about language, I noted a diversity of attitudes towards language use and various anxieties that accompanied these attitudes. Both Islanders and Mainlanders were in broad disagreement on how and when Norf’k could be spoken, how it was to be spelled, who could speak it and how it should sound when spoken. Furthermore, some of my informants, particularly those raised off-Island, expressed feelings of considerable anxiety over speaking Norf’k in public. Older Islanders occasionally criticised younger people for speaking what they saw as incorrect Norf’k, and some younger people confessed that they avoided such criticism by only speaking Norf’k among their peers and that they often spoke English with those of older generations, including their own grandparents.

Very little agreement can be reached regarding whether Mainlanders can – or indeed should – be speakers of Norf’k. Some argue that anyone living on the Island should be allowed to speak Norf’k, while others argue that only Islanders can legitimately do so. Most of my respondents represented themselves as open to non-Islander residents speaking Norf’k if they could speak it correctly, yet still cited the potential for such an act to be criticised by other Islanders. In my interviews, it became apparent even though some Islanders personally recognised non-Islanders’ rights to speak Norf’k, they did not presume to speak for all Islanders in this regard and avowed that some Islanders would not accept non-Norfolk Islanders speaking Norf’k. Harland, an Islander in his mid 60s for instance, noted that for him, a non-Islanders’ demonstrated fluency in Norf’k did not automatically mean he would conduct the conversation in Norf’k.

M.L: When and where do you tend to speak Norf’k?

Harland: Amongst Island people. Not amongst non-Island people.18

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18 It is clear from other conversations that I have had with Harland that he means Islanders of Pitcairn descent when he refers to ‘Island people’. 194
M.L.: What if the non-Island person could speak the language?

Harland: Unlikely. It’s a very controversial...Some people are very strongly of the view that non-Island people shouldn’t dare speak our language. I may well be of that view, if in fact the language wasn’t endangered [says bemusedly]. If it is endangered, then the only way to retain it is to enter into the processes of teaching it [to everyone], and that means teaching it to Island people as well, who maybe don’t live in an environment where it’s spoken. In the present set of circumstances, I think it’s integral to include non-Islanders in speaking the language (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

Harland seemed to indicate that the ideal situation would be one in which only Norfolk Islanders spoke Norf’k, yet the present circumstances warranted a move away from this ideal situation. Despite grudging concessions that non-Islanders should be included in Norf’k language education, and that some non-Islanders may well have a good grasp of Norf’k, Harland claimed that he only conversed in Norf’k among other Islanders.19 “Some people who have lived here for very long periods of time and would understand every word, but would not venture to speak it. So to those people you may speak English” (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011). So, while Islanders often frame their speech habits in terms of whether those around them are proficient in Norf’k, there is a belief that demonstrated proficiency in Norf’k does not guarantee that others will recognise a speaker as a legitimate person to converse with in Norf’k.

Many Islanders believe that non-Islanders are inherently less proficient in Norf’k.20 In this way, the boundaries of the group are implicated in Islanders’ own understandings of what they are doing when they make a choice between speaking English or Norf’k. While some Mainlanders have been encouraged by family members and close friends (a subject that I will discuss shortly) to speak Norf’k, others had been discouraged either through others drawing attention to and making fun of their language abilities, or by others directly questioning their rights to speak Norf’k. The opinions that Mainlanders or non-speakers

19 It is clear by his later juxtaposition of Island people with non-Islanders that Island people are Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn descent.
20 For example, one Islander insisted that no Mainlanders spoke adequate Norf’k, that they “car tal et propli” [cannot speak it (Norf’k) correctly] (Rose, recorded interview 28/10/2007).
hold toward speaking Norf’k often contribute to this position. Mainlanders are just as likely to criticise other Mainlanders who presume to speak Norf’k as much as Islanders.

In my interviews and informal conversations, Islanders generally explained their transitions between Norf’k and English as based on their assessments of the Norf’k proficiency of other participants in the conversation. Rules of general politeness dictate that English instead of Norf’k should be used around non-Norf’k speakers, and this has been a relatively consistent aspect of language use on Norfolk since at least the time of Flint’s (1954) fieldwork (see, Flint 1979:298). However, there was a tendency to equate a non-Norf’k speaker with a non-Norfolk Islander. Maggie was an Islander in her mid-70s who worked part-time giving talks in a Norfolk culture tour. She grew up on-Island in a household of broad Norf’k speakers. Maggie claimed that she would not speak Norf’k around anyone who was not proficient in it, but after being pressed further, it seems that here ideas of proficiency in Norf’k was also recognised as an index of something else. Maggie went on to tell me that she spoke Norf’k among Norfolk Islanders and English among all others:

I was reared like this and I believe in it. We speak it [Norf’k] in the home, and if I’m in mixed company it’s always English. We were never allowed to speak it if people didn’t understand it. And it was a language that we were brought up to understand, that was developed for communicating amongst yourselves. But when you communicated with the outside world, you communicated in English. That’s how it was with me (underlining in 4th sentence added, Maggie, recorded interview 02/09/2007).

Maggie’s description of code choice raises the question of who is considered to be an insider (ourselves) in relation to language use. Furthermore, she maintained that English usage was more applicable for communications with outsiders. Maggie’s explanation of language behaviour as a response to the proficiencies of others involved in the conversation is only half of the story, as proficiency itself is often predicated on related ideas of who is expected and encouraged to be a speaker of Norfolk and who is not. The question of who constitutes an outsider in terms of language use is, therefore, far from self-evident and ideas of who can be a speaker to be drawn differently from person to person based on the relationship that speakers have with each other, their opinions toward non-Islanders speaking it and their opinions toward language purity. When I asked Maggie whether non-
Islanders should refrain from speaking Norf’k, she said, “Yes, because from my opinion, it’s not because I don’t want them to speak it, but I want them to speak it properly. [She laughs] Some of the accents are so...so shocking [...] It starts in the home, otherwise they never get it properly” (emphasis in original, Maggie, recorded interview 02/09/2007).

Another Islander in his early 60s, Herbert, on the other hand, seemed more openly conflicted over the question of what type of person should speak Norf’k, or was capable of speaking it.

Sometimes, people try to speak the language and it doesn’t quite sound the way it should. I’m gonna get in a mess here… erm... I’d like to… [He sighs and attempts to start again] I’d like for everybody to have a go at speaking it. And I suppose because you speak it badly doesn’t mean you shouldn’t speak it... Yeah no, actually no I don’t think so really. There’s been a couple of people that I know that have lived with Norfolk families that didn’t grow up here that never spoke the language. Until they were in their adult life…And they speak it without any hint of not having spoken it… and they speak it as though they grew up with it. But only a handful of people can do that. Not many. So I suppose it’s a bit unfair to say that people shouldn’t speak it, and I almost did say that. But when you think about it a little bit further, the more people that try and speak it the better. Regardless of who they are. If they wanna have a go at speaking it? Terrific! (emphasis in original, Herbert, recorded interview 13/09/2007).

While these views could well be attributed to genuine dislike of poor pronunciation and concern over the purity of the language, Laycock (1990) has taken a different angle and has argued that such attitudes are also a characteristic of the cant-based element of Norf’k. He noted that while outsiders were considered to speak ‘bad’ or ‘imperfect’ Norf’k and discouraged from making further attempts at speaking it, Islanders who had an incomplete grasp of Norf’k were encouraged to speak it despite their speaking abilities (Laycock 1990:625). While I came across similar attitudes concerning language purity to those detailed by Laycock, these attitudes were also directed to other Islanders, indicating that Laycock’s links between cultural identity and language use should not be taken as givens. I reinstate my point that such views depend on how they understand this link, and I will now present two ways that this link between cultural identity and language is mediated. To
begin, I will present a number of metalinguistic discourses about the presumed intentions behind speaking English and Norf’k among Norfolk Islanders.

**Norf’k and English between Islanders and Mainlanders**

Despite attempts from some Islanders to maintain the position of Norf’k as a marker of difference between themselves and others, the lack of consensus on who could be a legitimate Norf’k speaker has contributed to considerable heterogeneity in competencies and practices among Mainlanders and Islanders. As Islanders have moved to and from the Island, and Mainlanders have also settled on the Island, many Mainlanders are in closer relationships and maintain more regular interactions with Norf’k speakers than many Islanders and are sometimes better located to learn Norf’k. As a result, many non-Islanders want to speak Norf’k as they see it not as a symbol of a particular heritage, because they see it as a sign of acceptance by Norfolk Islanders.

Unlike the primordial belongings mobilised by some Islanders, language is something transmissible and shareable and, therefore, holds potential to be used as a source of a wider Norfolk Island ‘national’ identity. As a result, there is a tension between Islanders who want to manage language use according to the traditional meanings of Norf’k and English as contiguous with cultural identity or descent, and there are those who want to make Norf’k more available to all residents of the Island. For example, Anthony was a 56-year-old Norfolk Islander who had grown up in Sydney who had moved to the Island in his teens. He described the disagreements he had with his wife on the matter of language use:

Anthony: If people *come* here, I think that they should be encouraged to learn Norf’k and speak Norf’k. And no matter how they do that, they’re not going to sound like a real, true, Norfolk Islander. [he thinks] Some do... I think that they should [speak it]. Over the years, it’s been a real them or us situation. And I don’t necessarily agree with that. And I know a lot of Norfolk Islanders would disagree with me on that point. My wife [also a Norfolk Islander] disagrees with me on that one (emphasis in original, Anthony, recorded interview 18/10/2007).

While there is an increasing tendency for non-Islanders who have grown up on Norfolk Island to speak some degree of Norf’k, the majority of these people are normally toward the
English end of the ‘Broad Norfolk to English’ spectrum. Norf’k is taught in the Island’s school, so anyone who undertakes primary education on Norfolk learns how to speak some Norf’k words and phrases. However, many children from Mainlander families did not speak Norf’k outside of class, apart from the odd word or phrase, indicating that while they may know how to speak, they may still refrain from doing so. Speaking the odd Norf’k word or phrase is interpreted by Norf’k speakers differently to trying to ‘talk Norf’k’.

There is no consensus on the issue of non-Islanders speaking Norf’k and whether they should be accepted as Norf’k speakers by others. As a result, Mainlanders who publically speak Norf’k are sometimes open to accusations of attempting to emulate Islanders, or claim Islander status for themselves. Stephen, 60, whose father was a Mainlander and mother was an Islander, maintained that Norf’k was the language of those of Pitcairn descent and that his father had always refrained from speaking it altogether (inside and outside of the home) for fear of impinging on Islanders’ claims over it.

If you weren’t an Islander you daren’t talk it. And if you were an Islander you were expected to... See my father came here in ’55 and to this day he never spoke Norfolk. I mean he knows every word of it and has so from the beginning but he never spoke it. Not to this day. It wasn’t expected for him to do it and in fact it would have been looked down upon. A lot of Islanders would have said ‘What are you doing speaking our language, ‘cos you’re not an Islander’ (emphasis in original, Stephen, recorded interview 08/11/2007).

These kinds of statements seem to indicate one clear belief about Mainlanders speaking Norf’k: that such actions would draw hostile responses from some Islanders. Despite Mainlanders’ insecurities about how their speaking of Norf’k could be perceived by others, there are a number of situational factors that contribute to the likelihood of Mainlanders learning Norf’k and being recognised as speakers of Norf’k. These are best illustrated in people who have married in to Norfolk Island families and people who have either been born on Norfolk, or have lived on Norfolk for most of their lives and worked in contexts dominated by Norf’k speakers.

21 Norf’k language classes are compulsory in primary school, but optional in high school.
Nathan was born in New Zealand in 1980. His mother left Norfolk Island briefly to give birth to him, and apart from a short stay in Auckland post-birth, he had never lived anywhere other than Norfolk. He was not of Pitcairn Descent, and his parents are from the UK and New Zealand. Nathan seemed to have an ambivalent attitude toward the position he felt he was placed in on Norfolk. On the one hand, he loved the Island and felt generally well accepted. On the other, there are certain people who make him feel he does not belong in the same way as people of Pitcairn descent. When I asked him if he considered himself a Norfolk Islander, he made it clear to me that he was not of Pitcairn descent, but he also made it apparent that he loved Norfolk and thought of it as his only home. “Only in the sense that I’ve lived here all of my life and I haven’t known anything else, but no, I’m not a blood Norfolk Islander or anything, no” (Nathan, recorded interview 11/12/2007). Nathan told me that he speaks passable Norf’k all the time amongst his friends and at work, which was a necessary part of working in a predominantly masculine environment of Islanders. Nevertheless, he restricts his use of it around the people he refers to as ‘hardcore Islanders’. “I don’t speak Norfolk around them, because I know they wouldn’t look on it very good, and I don’t like stirring the water or anything” (Nathan, recorded interview 11/12/2007). While Nathan went to school on Norfolk, has friends that are predominantly Norfolk Islanders, and works mostly with Islanders, he still limits his speaking of Norf’k to those people whom he knows well and knows have accepted his speaking of Norf’k.

You do get a bit segregated at times because the Islanders are very, a lot of the time, very protective of who they are, and they know they’re a special people and what they’ve got is pretty special… It’s easy to get excluded, especially from the sort of hardcore Norfolk Islanders. [He stops talking and grimaces to indicate he finds them intimidating]. You know, there’s some people who don’t let you in no matter what you do or say so you just give up in the end. Then there’s other people you’ve lived with all of your life and…they’re your brother, you know, so there’s no segregation there (emphasis in original, Nathan, recorded interview 11/12/2007).

Nathan only speaks Norf’k around those he is close to. He makes it clear that to do otherwise in a public space could possibly lead to public conflict. Those he called ‘hardcore Islanders’ are those whom he is not particularly close to, and therefore there is greater risk that his performance of belonging through speaking Norf’k will be denied recognition. ‘Hardcore Islanders’ in this case, refers to Islanders who hold a fairly militant attitude
toward Norf’k as a form of cultural property belonging to Islanders. The greater the size of
the group he spoke Norf’k to, the greater he believed the chance he would be challenged
over it.

As indicated by the unclear position allotted to non-Islander spouses in the Bounty Day
march, non-Islander spouses are conceptually placed in the ambiguous position of being
partial Norfolk Islander insiders. These ambiguities are evident in the differing attitudes
toward spouses learning Norf’k. While a Norfolk Islanders’ spouse is legally part of a
Norfolk Island family, they are not necessarily expected or pressured to learn Norf’k,
though they are often permitted should they attempt to learn, especially if they have
children. When Islanders indicated their support of supportive of spouses learning Norf’k,
the social reproduction of Islanders who can speak Norf’k seemed to be the goal, as it was
often because it was recognised that the spouse’s attitude toward the speaking of Norf’k in
the home was a key determinant of Norf’k proficiency. Other informants acknowledged
that the difficult positions spouses are placed in have contributed to the steady decrease in
Norfolk speakers on the Island.

Mainlander spouses are placed in a difficult position because they sometimes face the same
discouragement from learning Norf’k as other Mainlanders. This notion can be seen in the
case of Hano, 68 (an Islander) and his wife, Judith, 50 (a Mainlander). Hano was known
for his home brew, and would regularly get together in his shed with his male friends where
the conversation would be conducted in all Norf’k. He claimed that his friends and family
generally discouraged their spouses from speaking Norf’k in the home. While he drew
particular attention to Mainlander women, but also indicated that few Mainlander men
were encouraged to speak Norf’k.

Hano: We talk a lot of it...amongst ourselves we talk it all the time. Occasionally I
break out with her [He points his thumb to Judith next to him]

Judith: [Nods] I can understand it clear. I speak it more and more but because it’s
an accent [She gets cut off by Hano].

Hano: [shakes his head] You don’t...We don’t like the ladies to speak because not
many them can actually speak it. And they realise that too.

M.L: Is this mainly the ladies?
Hano: [He thinks] **Some** of the men try too. There’s only **one** guy actually that I’ve heard him speak properly. I thought he was an Islander he spoke it so good (emphasis in original, Hano and Judith, recorded interview 06/12/2007).

In my own observations and interviews, most male and female spouses would, like Judith, speak the occasional Norf'k word, often have extensive knowledge of Norf'k vocabulary, but generally refrain from speaking Norf'k in public. Public speaking of Norf'k involves a person becoming accustomed or comfortable with speaking Norf'k outside the home. It is for this reason that working relationships are an important factor in language use. The person that Hano believed spoke Norf'k so well that he was misrecognised as an Islander worked in the Norfolk Island Administration, a sector dominated by Norf'k-speaking Islanders. Mainlanders (men in particular) who engage in manual labour with other Islanders, work predominantly with Islanders in the Norfolk Island Administration, and socialise in public with other Islanders, are most likely to pick up Norf’k.

Of the Mainlander spouses who knew and spoke Norf’k in public, those who were considered by others to speak it fluently and were generally permitted to speak it by others, were also those who had strong relationships with other Islanders, including many formed through working relationships. Joanne’s story of how she came to learn Norf’k is a case that highlights the interconnection of working and other relationships and language proficiency. When I spoke to Joanne’s daughter, Emily, 30, she said the extent of the association between Norf’k and Norfolk Islanders led her to believe that her mother was an Islander by descent. “I remember as a kid when I learnt that she wasn’t a Norfolk Islander and I was like, oh, ok. I had no idea” (emphasis in original, Emily, recorded interview 23/11/2007). Joanne worked in a female-dominated domestic environment as an attendant at an old Island home converted to a guesthouse that was owned and run by Islanders. Unlike some of the examples above, Joanne experienced pressure from others to speak Norf’k:

> I was really fortunate that the first day I landed on the Island and started work, there was someone working at the hotel that I went to who decided that she’d took a shine to me, and she decided day one that she was going to teach me how to speak Norf’k. And yeah… she [her colleague] spoke really broad Norfolk and every day I had a new sentence that she’d throw at me... And I never ever had that thing where people make fun of you or tell you not to bother trying because you sound
ridiculous or that sort of thing. That’s what’ll kill the language (emphasis in original Joanne, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

Joanne then started work at an Islander-run bed and breakfast, and was surrounded by Norf’k speakers. In this environment, the other workers refused to do anything she said unless she spoke Norf’k to them correctly. Eventually, she married in to a Norfolk Islander family and has continued to learn Norf’k from her husband’s family members.

I found this old, half a dozen foolscap sheets I bought in a little shop here in town. It was, hardly anyone had ever seen it. And it was Moresby Buffett’s daughter’s [see Harrison (1972, 1984, 1985)] thing, she did a thesis on the language, a very early one. And it had all these lists and lists of words and so I can still remember taking them home my husband’s house and sitting there talking, and saying ‘How do you pronounce this?’ and ‘What’s this mean?’ (Joanne, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

Joanne has been instrumental in teaching her children and grandchildren to speak Norf’k. Nowadays, her children are widely recognised as models of what Islanders should be and should act, and Joanne, along with her husband Paul, were cited by a few of my elder Islander informants as being a good parents for ‘keeping Norf’k going’. In her whole experience of talking Norf’k, she claimed: “I’ve only ever had one or two people who have spoken English back at me very pointedly” (Joanne, recorded interview 04/09/2007), indicating she is very rarely denied recognition as a Norf’k speaker.

It was Joanne’s relationships with friends and work colleagues who opened up opportunities for her to learn the language. She said that it was acceptance into this group that allowed her to learn Norf’k, and in fact it was expected of her. It is important to note, following Taylor (1985:237), that words, indeed language, comes from others. In this case, Joanne was given words and acceptance as a speaker in the context of her close relationships with other Norf’k speakers, such as friends, family and work colleagues. In Joanne’s case, her acceptance as a Norf’k speaker is without a doubt a sign of wider social acceptance by Islanders, a product of her various working, family and social relationships with other Islanders. As residents of Norfolk Island recognise non-Islanders’ fluency in Norf’k as an

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22 As one elderly informant, Maggie stated, “Emily [Joanne’s daughter] is what Norfolk is about”. When pressed further, Maggie stated that it was because Emily had good parents (Maggie, recorded interview 02/09/2007).
outward sign of their emplacement in a network of relations among Norfolk Islanders, the delegation of the right to speak Norf’k to non-Islanders is an act of recognising kinds of relations to community that are not constituted by the inclusiveness of descent (such as friendship or filial relations). In this regard, exchanges in Norf’k can create, affirm and reproduce important relationships among community members.

Conclusion

The varying ideologies surrounding the ways that Islanders understand, manage and use language in Norfolk Island society is a product of an overall recognition of language as a constituent part of local discourses of belonging and identity. Switching between Norf’k and English is one of the most public, common and intimately experienced cultural practices through which some residents of Norfolk Island publically identify themselves, or seek to be recognised as belonging to the Islander community. Proficiency in Norf’k is demonstrative of close connections to other Norf’k-speaking Norfolk Islanders. As a verbal, often public act, speaking Norf’k is subject to scrutiny from others, who assess the legitimacy of its usage in given situations. Broader varieties of Norf’k are difficult to learn as an adult, and generally speakers of broad Norf’k have grown up on the Island around other Norf’k speakers. As such, proficiency often becomes an outward sign of identification as a Norfolk Islander and as belonging to an Islander community.

When people speak Norf’k to each other, they are exchanging more than just words. They are also exchanging recognition of their relationships to each other. Within this context, ideas about who can and cannot speak Norf’k are part of process by which localness and relationships of intimacy and distance are reproduced, and in the process of reproduction, become subject to revaluation and change. There seems to be a growing trend among younger generations of Islanders to see the traditional boundaries of language use as unnecessary or counterproductive to either the preservation of the language, or efforts at creating a unitary identity for Norfolk Island that transcends the folk categories of the past. The extent to which some Mainlanders have been able to enact a local Norfolk Island identity through the speaking of Norf’k indicates the extent to which belonging to Norfolk Island is a constant process of negotiation and not completely fixed to understandings of priority or descent.
CHAPTER SEVEN

A Distinct and Separate Settlement

I personally would not like to see Australia here, meself. And my opinion of Norfolk at this very time is it’s livin’ beyond its means. That’s why the Island struggles. It’s alright havin’ fifty two channels, kerbs and gutterin’, mobile phones… but somebody’s gotta pay for this and the population of this Island is still 1500 really… And nothing’s changed. That’s my opinion. No, I wouldn’t like to see Australia. But they will always be here. They have to be… That’s why we’ll always have the Administrator on the hill (emphasis in original, Chester, 65, recorded interview 10/11/2007).

According to certain strains of liberal thought, living in a polity controlled by others is to live a problematic existence (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1994). However, the idea of what constitutes ‘others’ in relation to governance is problematic in itself. Islanders debate the extent to which they can allow others to control Norfolk Island without losing a sense of peoplehood. The loss of a distinct Norfolk Islander identity is one of their main objections to reforms to local governance or legislation periodically proposed by Canberra. My particular aim in this chapter is to discuss Islanders’ ideas about autonomy from others through their relations to government. These relationships are complex, but manifest most clearly in disputes about local legislation and in ongoing disputes with representatives from Canberra over the Island’s self-governance and fiscal arrangements. The Australian Commonwealth has granted the Island legislature considerable autonomy and this autonomy is expressed in the form of local legislation, including laws that relate to both road safety and the collection and redistribution of wealth.

The issues of seatbelts and taxation offer two examples of widely realised relations between governments and governed that are often taken for granted in Australia. In the Norfolk Island case, however, these issues materialise difficult-to-conceptualise notions of how
governance by the self and by others is experienced and understood by Islanders. In
different ways, these issues brush against the heart of what self-government means to
Norfolk Islanders, the issue what kinds of autonomy are desired, and what the ‘self’ in self-
government is. Individual aspects of Island governance such as seatbelts and tax are vehicles
through which the relationship between state and society is negotiated and contested on
Norfolk. Arguments over seatbelts and taxation occupy similar positions in these conflicts
to the historically central question of whether the Island was an Imperial gift. It is
important to note, however, that the various relationships that Norfolk Islanders maintain
with the Australian Government are far more complicated than that of the historical gift
relationship they share with Queen Victoria. As noted in chapter two, Queen Victoria had
very little further to do with Norfolk Island after an initial Order in Council and the
allocation of grants of land by her representatives.

Norfolk Islanders’ relationships with the Australian state, however, are far more complex
and multifaceted and it can be expected that Norfolk Islanders’ responses to the state are
diverse, encompassing accommodation, resistance and ambivalence. In this chapter, I have
chosen taxation and seatbelts as just two arenas in which these relations are played out,
primarily because it is in response to these two topics that Islanders have engaged in the
most heated public debates. As a way of introducing some of the complex ways in which
Islanders understand their position within the Australian nation-state, I begin with an
overview of a long-running argument among Norfolk Island residents in 2004 over the
introduction of seatbelt legislation on Norfolk Island.

**Buckling Up**

On the night I first arrived on Norfolk Island, I left the airport and caught a lift with an
Islander named Frank to the house I was to stay in. I threw my bags into his truck and
climbed into the passenger seat. As I was putting my seatbelt in place, Frank nodded
toward the belt, shook his head and laughed. He told me there was ‘no need’ and, saying
no more, started the car. I sheepishly un-clicked the buckle and spent the rest of the short
journey to Frank’s house with my seatbelt draped slackly across my chest. In the days
following, I quickly learned that most locals did not wear seatbelts, and that buckling up –
like locking one’s car or taking the keys out of the ignition when exiting the vehicle –was
generally not the way things were done on Norfolk. For weeks, whenever I got into a car
with someone, I instinctively reached behind my shoulder to click my seatbelt into place.¹
If the person I was travelling with saw me reaching back, or worse, sitting there already
strapped in, they would not hesitate to poke fun at me. It took a considerable amount of
time to keep instinct at bay and leave the buckle where it was.

My experiences of being pulled up over seatbelt wearing are more than a minor (moral) tale
about belonging on Norfolk Island. A few years earlier in 2003, a severe automobile
accident occurred, causing a loss of lives. The loss of life in 2003, however, had prompted
serious action. When the coroner reported that the deaths could likely have been prevented
if seatbelts were used, some Island residents began to question the liberal traffic laws that
made the wearing of seatbelts optional, allowed passengers to ride on the back of trucks,
and did not empower the police to initiate random breath tests. A committee consisting of
concerned residents and MLAs called the Drug and Alcohol Awareness (DAA) working
group submitted a number of recommendations to the Norfolk Island Government to
consider revising some of these laws. In May 2004, the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly
introduced a series of amendments to the Road Traffic Act 1982 (NI). The Road Traffic
(Amendment) Bill 2004, proposed changes that would strengthen the Island’s road traffic
laws, adding new provisions regarding drink-driving, compulsory use of seatbelts,
motorcycle and bicycle helmets, defining maximum loads of vehicles, and introducing new
sections on the use of mobile phones while driving (The Norfolk Islander: 14/02/2004).

The following week, an open letter co-signed by 41 young residents of the Island was sent
to the Norfolk Island Government Chief Minister and printed in The Norfolk Islander that
week (The Norfolk Islander 24/04/2004). The author of the letter, a young Islander, argued
passionately that the “…introduction of these amendments will strip the remains of the
unique identity that Norfolk Islanders consider to be a part of their “way of life”” (The
Norfolk Islander 24/04/2004).² The author bemoaned that despite the codification of
obligations to preserve Pitcairn Descendant heritage and culture in the Norfolk Island Act
1979 (Cth) and in planning legislation, there was no official definition of what this culture
was or how it was to be protected. Nonetheless, she argued that driving without a seatbelt
should fit into such a definition. “It would be fair to assume that a minimum 50 year
lifestyle consisting of driving without a seat belt, driving at low speeds, no breathalyser,

¹ I never had this problem with my own car as it lacked seatbelts and buckles entirely.
² The Norfolk “way of life” is mentioned over a dozen of times throughout the three-page letter.
driving with people on the back of trucks and waving to people in passing cars is our way of life, tradition and possibly our culture” (The Norfolk Islander 24/04/2004).³

The greater significance of the letter’s focus on traffic laws – other than as an issue of legal change and personal inconvenience to Island residents – lay with the way it personalised and made material the difficult and abstract debates around a number of key political issues; such as the relationship between government and those being governed (“...it should be at the driver’s discretion [to wear a seatbelt and so forth]”), the territory’s self-government and legislative autonomy (“It is obvious that legislation has not been developed to incorporate the unique Norfolk Island way of life and has instead been duplicated from Australian legislation... Perhaps a drive up Mt Pitt and "one piece a pilhi" is needed to refresh the Assembly’s memory of where and who we are”), and tourism and the economy (“We are of the opinion that most, ...come to Norfolk Island for its freedom and “unique way of life” “Why would they [tourists] bother coming to a small island if it were just the same as another suburb of the mainland?”) (The Norfolk Islander 24/04/2004).

³ The ‘Norfolk wave’ is what residents call the practice of waving from a vehicle when passing another vehicle. As far as I could tell, this wave was never actually subject to any restriction in the proposed legislation.
The wider context and timing of the letter and debate was also important. The year 2004 was the 25th anniversary of Island self-government. The Australian Commonwealth had taken renewed interest in the Island’s governance and the number of Federal inquiries into Norfolk Island’s financial and administrative system had sharply increased since 1999. The seatbelt debate came in the middle of a period of sustained Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee (JSC) scrutiny of Norfolk Island self-government from 2003 to 2005, including the publishing of two parliamentary reports: one on governance (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2003b) and one on the financial sustainability of the Island (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2005). The first of these reports was released in late 2003, and heated exchanges within the letters to the editor section of The Norfolk Islander regarding the report recommendations continued play appear as late as November 2004. As such, Island residents were understandably sensitive to being under the scrutiny of the Australian state, and the seat belt issue gave concrete form to some of the more abstracted positions that had been taken and played out in the ‘theatre’ of the official inquiries.

The co-signed letter was met in the following issues of The Norfolk Islander with further letters responding positively and negatively to the proposed legislation on the themes of the utility of the legislation’s implementation, and the role of government and regulation on the Island (The Norfolk Islander: 24/04/2004). For some, the ability to legally drive without a seatbelt was interpreted as a symbol of cultural difference, personal and territorial autonomy, and as a means of differentiating the Island from Australia. For others, it remained primarily a health and safety issue rather than one of cultural maintenance (The Norfolk Islander: 29/05/2004).

Alongside the practical arguments concerning the implementation and applicability of this legislation to Norfolk Island was the perception by those who opposed it that the Bill’s introduction would cause a further erosion of the legal specificities that allowed Norfolk Island to maintain difference and distance from the Australian legal system. The Bill’s critics often played on ambiguities regarding the source of the legislation and, despite the law having been introduced by the Norfolk Island Government, it came to be seen by many as an indirect assertion of Australian sovereignty and the dominance of mainland (and Mainlander) ideas in Island politics. For example, one MLA, Mr Robinson, stated his reasons for opposing the bill as part of a wider aspiration to retain Norfolk Island’s
distinctive laws, painting the Island as a place that enjoyed greater freedom from government than the Australian mainland.

What I want to do is take into account the unique character of Norfolk Island. In the main our tourists come here to escape the rigid, overbearing, over-legislated places they come from (Robinson, R. in NI Hansard 19/08/2004).

Mr Robinson also presented a petition opposing the Bill to the Assembly on the 19th August, signed by 325 residents (NI Hansard 19/08/2004). The Island’s legislature debated the issue for almost six months before it was finally put to the vote. Before the vote, one of the Bill’s proponents, Mr David Buffett, responded to the considerable community criticism, and was insistent that it was first and foremost a matter of safety, and not any attempt to emulate Australian traffic law.

We have had some Australian pieces of legislation forced upon us. We have fought against some. But it must be recognised that when safety issues are the issues and we feel it’s in balance...it will be wrong to interpret that as just trying to mirror what happens in Australia (emphasis added, Buffett, D. NI Hansard 22/09/2004).

In October 2004, the Assembly that passed the Bill handed power to a new Legislative Assembly. This Assembly instantly repealed the ‘unpopular’ sections of the Bill that concerned the wearing of seatbelts and bicycle helmets. Before the final vote to repeal was taken, Mr Brown, the MLA who received a large number of votes for promising to roll back the amendments, loosely attributed the inapplicability of the laws to the specificities of the Island:

I could sit down here and list a whole host of reasons to repeal these sections of the Road Traffic Act ranging from it being a lifestyle issue for Norfolk Island to it being just another symbol of the ever increasing influence of Australia, but the fact of the matter is, this is Norfolk Island and we just don’t need them...For those people who wish to live in a society with these rules. Feel free. There are planes which leave every weekend (emphasis added, Brown, T. NI Hansard 15/12/2004).

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4 The number of signatories later rose to 354.
5 It is unclear just how unpopular these sections were, as only a minority actually signed the petition
Viewed in isolation to other issues, Norfolk Island residents were clearly quite divided and impassioned about the issue of seatbelts and whether they should be compulsory, yet the seatbelt issue also embodied broader, abstract discussions of Norfolk Islanders’ relationship to their local government and the Australian Government. The actual argument surrounding seatbelts reveals residents’ diverse opinions on what a government (The Norfolk Island Government or Canberra) should be allowed to do – in terms of processes, rights, responsibilities, self-empowerment, – and how their local governance arrangements fit into this.

Introduction

Canberra has recognised Norfolk’s difference to the mainland by instituting separate government and taxation arrangements on the Island, yet has never directly recognised any of the claims of Islanders to minority rights based on cultural difference. In other words, no Australian Government body has ever directly suggested that Norfolk Islanders have an inherent right to self-government or self-determination, yet they have legislated for these types of governmental powers. In some instances, the writers of Australian Government reports have refused to recognise the existence of Islanders’ cultural difference between the mainland population and Norfolk Island, stating the Island is “ethnically and culturally akin to the mainland” (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, 2003b), while on others they have ambiguously noted the distinct “lifestyle” or “culture” of the Norfolk Island people as deserving of special status and attention (Ellicott 1978). Perceptions of being “ethnically akin” to the mainland can be threatening to Islanders’ conceptions of themselves and of self-government as they imply that the legislative needs of the Norfolk Island community are no different from other Australian communities, and that Australian laws are directly

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6 For instance, Bob Debus, the former Minister for Home Affairs (Territories) introduced the Territories Law reform Bill stating:

All [Labor and Liberal territories ministers from the past 30 years] agree that Norfolk Island is part of the Australian federation. All agree that its unique history and culture, together with its geographical position, require that it should be given a special status (Debus, in House of Representatives Hansard: 21nd June 2010:55).
transposable to Norfolk Island. Islanders in favour of self-government are forced to justify its existence by constantly reiterating that they are different.

These discussions of self-governance generally take place within context of regular Australian Government inquiries into Norfolk Island, or in response to moves by the Australian Government to alter the Island’s governance status. The Island’s connection to the Australian Government is formalised through bureaucratic links to the Department of Territories (D.O.T), or the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (J.S.C). The Federal department responsible for Norfolk often changes titles between governments and this is representative of the shifting terrain that Islanders have to deal with.7 It is through these changing institutional bodies that the Norfolk Island Government engages in dialogue with the Australian Government, and these departments and committees hold considerable power over the status of the Island. The Island’s continuing separate status of legislative autonomy and fiscal autonomy is precariously reliant on the disposition of the Department of Territories to maintain its position of non-interference, and local actors see their presentation of the Island’s difference (economic, cultural, geographical and political) to Australia as integral to preserving the legislative differences between Island and mainland.

Canberra’s governance of the Island has been most active following recommendations made by Royal Commissions or ‘official inquiries’ into Island governance (for example, Commonwealth of Australia 1914, 1926, 1975k, 1976, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006). These inquiries have been conducted with regularity since the late 1990s and the Island’s residents are presented opportunities to express their multifarious interests to the Australian Federal Government through submissions and hearings processes. As Ashforth (1990) notes in his analysis of official inquiries in South Africa, inquiries such as these are ritualised and theatrical demonstrations of state power and legitimacy in which groups of state representatives and local subjects publically voice their concerns about governance. In the process, governments perform their ability to listen to the public, and therefore reaffirm their legitimacy in making decisions for the public. Norfolk Islanders have generally been encouraged to raise their concerns in these forums but have otherwise

7 For example, the title of the department responsible for Norfolk Island is now ‘The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government’.

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been marginal to the processes of interpreting or making decisions based on the findings of these inquiries.

The regularity of these Australian Government visits and inquiries often leave Island residents fatigued and frustrated with the Australian Federal Government’s role as the evaluator of the Island’s success (see, Hoare 2003:173), yet the hazards of being misrepresented or misrecognised are great enough to compel Islanders to continue to attend these hearings and submit to these investigations. Speaking with some Islanders more directly involved in these processes gives one a sense of this frustration. When I interviewed Harland (an Islander in his mid-60s) in 2007, the Island had gone almost an entire year without a major Australian Government inquiry. As a person who had been in a position to represent the Island politically, Harland discussed the difficulties and necessities of translating the Island’s difference and interests to Australian officials. His frustration with the inquiry process was still evident in the heated tone of his voice.

Harland: We’ve had inquiries after inquiries about Norfolk Island [asking] ‘why are you claiming to be different?’ and that sort of thing. External [Commonwealth] inquiries have been asking that question forever... annoyingly at times. I’m not too sure that I can be more specific than that. But listen to this. Some people are of the view, that if you can’t verbalise your culture then it doesn’t exist [...] there is not always an understanding that culture has to be verbalised one iota. Language aside for a moment... [He pauses, thinks for a while, and changes the subject with renewed heat in his voice] And why the hell have you got to explain it to somebody? And why is it that you’ve always got to be on the back foot to get the message across? And unless you get the message across, they [Australian officials] go away thinking it doesn’t exist! And this matter of being different ...is all a myth! And that, we have come across from time to time. And we’ve not always been good at verbalising it, and I’m not sure if we have to be good at verbalising it. But if you’re not, it does leave you in the position of people thinking that there’s nothing there (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

Harland maintained that if Islanders did not actively demonstrate their difference, especially to Australian officials, then they risked being misrecognised as the same as mainland Australians. Islanders rely on others, such as Australian officials, to respond to
their cultural difference in ways that affirm its existence and substance and ‘strategic essentialism’, the deliberate simplification of difference and commonality in order to achieve common political aims, often plays a key role in this process.

Many of the submissions to these inquiries take on a performative quality, as some Islanders present an image of themselves to Australian state actors in order to make diverse claims on the Australian state. These submissions are an important aspect of the ongoing dialogue between Norfolk Island residents and the Australian state, yet they do not go very far in demonstrating how Norfolk Islanders experience governance and self-governance in their daily lives. The submissions are somewhat abstract discussions about what governance is and how it should be done, issues that are difficult to pin down in practice, and despite the range of submissions, are generally left to political commentators and government officials, where strong views are expressed but are often difficult to clarify when it comes to their practical implications and benefits. Overall, the most important question – of whether self-government has been of net-benefit to Norfolk Islanders, and whether local autonomy has positively affected material wellbeing – is the subject of heated, ongoing discussion among residents. Such discussion ultimately leads to questions of whether legislating for the preservation of difference is as important as the material wellbeing of the Norfolk Island community.

Self-Government: Internality / Externality.

By 2009, the Island had reached the 30th anniversary of partial self-government under the Norfolk Island Act (1979). This event was celebrated with various cultural heritage displays and a series of activities were to demonstrate the Island’s continuing political and social vitality. Current and ex-Assembly members and Australian public figures gave speeches reflecting on the various achievements of self-government (The Norfolk Islander, 27th August 2009). In his own speech, the Island’s Chief Minister Mr Andre Nobbs, discussed the challenges of Island self-government, but held it as an overall success for the Island:

Back in 1979 there were those in Norfolk Island and elsewhere who said that self-government would be only a passing phase and before too long Norfolk Island would simply be absorbed into a Commonwealth electorate, ‘normalised’ as a tiny
and almost indistinguishable part of the broad Australian community (Nobbs, in The Norfolk Islander, 22nd August 2009).

The Chief Minister presented self-government as a framework in which the Island’s culture and territorial integrity was safeguarded and processes of government were indigenised (Nobbs, in The Norfolk Islander, 22nd August 2009). Self-government on Norfolk Island arose from a belief among Canberra legislators that the Australian Government could not adequately cater to the political needs of an island that was physically remote from the centre of political power (van Fossen 2002). The tension between Island exceptionalism and integration of Norfolk Island into the Australian economic, political and legal system is a consistent theme in the Australian Government’s dealings with its external territory since Federation. Even in 1914, some representatives of the Australian Government were calling for changes to Island governance so that “local inhabitants should be charged with the responsibility of working out their own salvation” by giving them the “fullest possible measure of self-government” (Catts, in Commonwealth of Australia 1915b:17). This was not seriously considered until late 1970s when the then Federal Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Bob Ellicott, put to the Fraser government Cabinet the proposition that the Island govern itself to a suitable extent (Ellicott 1978:5-6; van Fossen 2002). This was agreed to with minimal debate and the resulting legislation was the Norfolk Island Act 1979 (Cth). During the celebrations of the 25th anniversary Norfolk Island self-government in 2004, the same (retired) Bob Ellicott was interviewed about the Australian Government’s rationale for the Norfolk Island Act 1979 (Cth).

If there is one thing that Australia is about it is about letting people be themselves and that includes communities. Aboriginal communities ought to be allowed within certainly limits to be themselves, people of Cocos Island who have a separate background and heritage they should be allowed to be themselves as a separate community and Norfolk Islanders in the same way (emphasis added, Ellicott, in The Norfolk Islander 28/08/2004).

It is clear from Ellicott (or at least his recollection of the decision 30 years after) that part of the rationale for Norfolk Island self-government was that by governing themselves they could ‘be themselves’. Ellicott’s statements indicate Norfolk Island self-government was to allow local ‘freedom of expression’ by enabling a local autonomy that reflected people’s
‘real’ selves, whereas governance by others was seen to potentially inhibit such self-expression. Such steps toward community self-governance were characteristic of the multicultural policies and ideologies that developed among Australian Government departments in 1970s (see, Lopez 2000:454-460). In the late 1970s, when the Australian Government was approaching a decision relating to Norfolk Island’s political status, the political climate in Australian Parliament was increasingly open to the idea of allowing groups to self-manage certain aspects of local governance. These policies were representative of the politics of difference and recognition that took hold in government departments in the late seventies in Australia.

The ‘politics of difference’ arises from a liberal state’s attempts (through its institutions) to take account of the needs of individuals on the basis of their ‘unique’ identities as members of particular subnational groups. These different groups are held as being distinct from others and therefore requiring and deserving differential treatment (Taylor 1994:38-39; Gutmann 1994:8). Within this context, distinct social and cultural groups “deserve to be recognized for who they interpret themselves to be and allowed to pursue their collective survival as they understand its requirements” (Orlie 2004:140). Recognition to difference is accorded on the grounds that to do otherwise would subsume authentic individual identities under a dominant whole, thereby undermining the aspirations of the liberal state to provide access to the universal dignity of self-determination (Taylor 1994:57). In order to take into account such difference, a multicultural state may recognise the rights of minorities to engage in their own practices on the condition that they do not impinge upon certain ‘universal’ freedoms (Kowal 2008:338). While the Australian Government’s commitments to legislate for difference (particularly in Aboriginal Australia) and the success of these schemes have been the subject of considerable debate within anthropology since the turn of the 21st Century (see, Povinelli 2002; Kowal 2008; Sutton 2009) in the late 1970s, key figures in the Australian Government clearly expressed an aspiration to allow for Norfolk Island to pursue its own governance.

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8 As Rowley (1986) noted, this philosophy was evident in the Australian Government’s policy toward Papua New Guinea after World War II and saw its logical conclusion in the lead up to granting the territory full independence from Australia in 1975. Rowse (1998) however, presents an important counterpoint to arguments that the Australian Government’s policies of self-determination were made solely with a mind to the interests of those previously subjected to colonial control. Stating that not only were such policies an effort to “acknowledge the dignity of cultural difference” but also a way for the state to divest any responsibility for failing to improve the lives of those in marginal political communities (Rowse 1998:10).
Islanders seemed to also understand self-governance a sign of the Australian state’s recognition of the Island’s difference and a means of protecting it. However, in 2007 there were mixed views among residents as to whether self-governance had been a success on Norfolk. The views tended to revolve around the desired relationship that Norfolk Island would or should have with Australia. For some, the answer was complete autonomy and self-government, in which the Island would ideally be ‘fully self-governing in free association’ with Australia rather than a territory under its control. Others wanted Norfolk Island to be fully integrated with the Commonwealth of Australia, and for all Australian laws, taxes and benefits to be extended to the Island.

It is important to note that my own research has been undertaken against a backdrop of incremental change to these self-government arrangements, and I have been working on shifting sands throughout the course of my investigation. While very few residents in 2007 seemed to oppose the notion that decisions of government be made by those that would be affected, many also countered that the economic benefits of self-government had yet to be felt by many Islanders. The Norfolk Island Government’s insufficient service provision, along with an ageing population and insufficient healthcare services and poor management of Island funds, seemed to be pressing issues influencing some residents’ calls for a the ‘winding back’ of the Island’s progress toward full internal self-government.

Among my informants, self-government was generally valued positively due to the local autonomy it enabled. What they understood this autonomy to consist of and which elements held value differed considerably, though the ability for locally-residing persons to create legislation that catered to the specificities of Norfolk Island was valued. As Arnold, 60, a previous minister of the NIG noted to me, “We know best how to run the place […] It’s our zone, it’s where we are” (emphasis in original, Arnold, recorded interview). 

9 While I can only speculate as to how these views had changed by 2011, letters to the editor, my conversations with Island residents on a visit in late 2009 and late 2010 and email conversations with Islanders, seemed to indicate that residents have been progressively more critical of the success of self-government than they were in 2007.

10 A letter to the editor to The Norfolk Islander in 2009 typified these views: “Our “self-government” has been one of threats, bullying and indifference to our indigenous rights, the fact that Norfolk Island is a homeland, and that our logical destiny is of associate rather than a part of. The latter has no basis in legal fact, as Australia’s own” (The Norfolk Islander, 15th August 2009).

11 This breadth of positions toward self-government was well represented in the inquiry into the Island’s self-governance arrangement Quis Custodes Ipios Custodes? [Who will guard the guards themselves?] (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2003b).
21/11/2007). Anna, 37 made similar comments in her support of self-government; “I think we can make our own rules and regulations. I think we know what we need. Rather than someone living away, saying ‘do this, do that’ when they have no idea what decisions they’re making and how it impacts on our day-to-day lives. We like to be our own selves and our own individuals” (emphasis in original, Anna, recorded interview 15/11/2007). Anna’s comments in particular point to an idea of the value of self-government as enabling a particular kind of selfhood that is made possible when a political subject sits in correct relation to government.

This intertwining of government and selfhood was apparent in local beliefs that self-government – as opposed to governance by others – was the ideal means of protecting territorial integrity and the cultural difference of its resident population. In 2007, many of my informants described the precariousness and relative powerlessness of Norfolk identity and territoriality to withstand the cultural and political influence of Australia without Island self-governance. Threatened with the loss such a framework, as they were as recently as 2006, many Islanders I spoke to contemplated their own vulnerability to being ‘swallowed up’ by the Australian mainland. When I asked Harland, for instance, whether he supported Norfolk’s retention of self-government, he said ‘absolutely’:

Harland: Because unless it does so, it will become another suburb...of Brisbane, or Sydney, or wherever. It would be immersed and submerged in the overwhelming culture that exists elsewhere. That’s inevitable. Not by design necessarily, but by the sheer weight of numbers. And size. [...] The reality is, that if you are a small dot in a big ocean you will become part of the ocean, and your identity as a small dot will become nothing. So, Norfolk Island, if it values its heritage, needs to work fairly hard, to maintain it. And being immersed in somebody else’s isn’t going to achieve that. That doesn’t mean that one shouldn’t have strong affinity [with Australia]. But to be submerged in it, and to not have some reasonable degree of autonomy, is a balancing act (emphasis in original, Harland, recorded interview 27/08/2011).

Jimmy, 32, more explicitly stated that he believed that self-government was an extension of Pitcairn Descendant’s distinctiveness.

12 Within a Kantian strain of liberal philosophy such autonomy is positively associated with the promotion of human dignity by fostering the abilities of persons to determine and pursue their own view of “the good life” (Taylor 1994:56-58).
Jimmy: I think self-determination...I think it’s all tied up with the fact that we consider ourselves a distinct and separate people, and [...] a lot to do with rules and regulations. If we can govern ourselves, decide our own legislation, make our own laws, decide where we’re going. And it’s not being decided by somebody two thousand kilometres away in an office doing it by remote control. And it also instils in us a sense of identity. ‘This is our place, we decide what we do with it’ (emphasis in original, Jimmy, recorded interview 07/12/2007).

For Harland and Jimmy, self-government acted as a barrier against unwanted cultural change. It gave the Island coherence and boundedness that seemed difficult for them to imagine if the Island ceased to be recognised by Australia as bounded political community. They believed in the power of self-governance to affirm and enact (whether legally or symbolically) difference, which furthermore protected the Island from possibly negative implications of governance by ‘others’. Other Islanders were far less concerned with these issues of self-governance and argued that the Australian Government had always been present on the Island in one way or another. Charlotte, 76, for instance stated to me; “Well, a lot of people would cooee and clap their hands, but you see, Australia already is here, and some of its laws apply here” (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 24/04/2007). In this sense, Charlotte took issue with the idea that the Island was fundamentally ungovernable by others by drawing attention to the significant role that Australia already played in Island governance.

Despite their conflation often in the context of local discourse on governance on Norfolk, it is important to distinguish between self-government and self-determination. Moltchanova (2009) defines the difference between the two terms as follows; “…self-determination is the capacity of a group to determine its future political status, while self-government is the capacity of a group to make and apply rules within the parameters of its existing political status” (Moltchanova 2009:7). In these terms, since its 1979, Norfolk Island as a polity has never been self determining, but has been self-governing, as it has always operated within the political status created and bounded by the Australian or British governments. Nevertheless, self-government, like self-determination, is a relational status that raises questions of what the ‘self’ is understood to be, how it is constituted and what political actions can be said to arise from it. In other words, an individual or political
community can only maintain their freedom and self-determination in relation to the will of others (Moltchanova 2009:44-45).

Within this context of ‘relational autonomy’, it is unsurprising that it within discussions of local governance that the Australian state most strongly materialises as the ‘other’ to Norfolk Island. Local political discussions revolve around ongoing comparisons between the local Norfolk Island government and Australian levels of government. In these discussions, Norfolk Island is constituted as a political community largely in relation to what it is not; Australia. In order to safeguard the constitution of Norfolk Island as a political community, otherness to Australia must be maintained, performed and preserved, or the ‘self’ in Norfolk Island self-government arrangements becomes indistinguishable from the wider Australian political community. Islanders rely on a number of essentialising strategies to maintain a collective self that I have highlighted throughout the thesis. The disputes over traffic laws represent a part of this process, and legal specificities have been noted as a potential symbol of differentiation elsewhere in the thesis. As Maurer (1997) states in relation to the British Virgin Islands, the passing of indigenous laws are important in one’s ‘nation’ a self-governing agent of history;

> We need “our own” laws as emanations of, demonstrations for our “uniqueness.” In Authoring their “own” laws, British Virgin Islanders demonstrate to themselves their ability to be “authors,” to write from a coherent, unified, and unique subject position, to authorize a “nation” – to be subjects of (legislative, national) history (Maurer 1997:247).

The arguments with representatives of the Australian state have generally centred on legislation and governance, so it is understandable that legislation has become symbolic of the act of Island self-governance. Laws created on the Island since 1979 similarly draw considerable power and utility from their signification of parity with the Australian system. Being able to say ‘we have our own laws’ positively affects Island residents’ sense of self worth as it denotes some kind of common, comparative footing to engage with the Australian mainland. Harrison calls this form of identification with the other “difference as similarity”, whereby “social actors share aspects of identities with Others by virtue of identifying with them, or being identified with them, at some higher level of inclusiveness” (Harrison 2006:56). Claims of nation-like parity to Australia in terms of Norfolk’s legal
system and its taxation and welfare system are some of the ways in which the Norfolk Island government and its supporters seek some kind of comparative equality to the Australian Government. The uniqueness and particularity embodied in legislation such as Norfolk Island traffic laws is central to self-government discourse for another reason, as the powers granted to the Island by the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* (Cth) rest on a presumption of historical, economic and cultural difference that make governance of the community from Canberra problematic. Legislating for this difference is one clear way to practice self-government and affirm its necessity.

The forms of local legislation that are the most controversial but most clearly embody this will to legislate for the specificities of the Island are laws regarding state extraction and redistribution; in particular those relating to income tax and social welfare. Here, the practices of self-government have considerable material consequences for Norfolk Islanders. Arguments concerning extraction and redistribution have been central to local discourses of self-governance and autonomy. As an exchange between a government and those governed, taxation is a mechanism by which wealth is redistributed (or not) within a political community and is therefore informed by moral positions concerning wealth in general, but also it is important as a practice of self-government and an enactment of separateness from the rest of the Australian nation state. I do not wish to discount the material and moral elements of opinions toward taxation, which of course people worldwide are deeply concerned/passionate about (see, Campbell 2009; Levi 1988; Lieberman 2009; Murphy and Nagel 2002; Tilley 2009a), but it is also important to recognise that the ferocity of the arguments over Island taxation – that began even before its brief phase as a tax haven – are also fuelled by the role that taxation and financial transactions play as devices for the enactment of self-governance and difference.

**Fiscal Autonomy**

Despite the severe curtailment of the Island’s offshore finance activity in the late 1970s, Norfolk Island remains a residential income tax haven, and the question of whether

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13 As Kymlicka (2007) notes, there is a tendency for scholars and theorists to conceive of recognition as symbolic or token, or detached from other state functions such as redistribution (c.f. Fraser 2000) whereas in reality, the recognition of minority groups can entail considerable shifts in allocation of economic resources and political power (Kymlicka 2007:80-81).
Commonwealth taxation and services should be extended to the Island or whether the Island should continue to fund itself remains the most contentious aspect of Australia’s relationship to Norfolk Island (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2001, 2003b, 2003a, 2004, 2006, 2005). Access to local control over public revenues have been a source of disagreement between the Australian Government and Norfolk Islanders at least since the first Norfolk Island Council was elected in 1960, and the Australian Government finally conceded to this pressure with the Norfolk Island Act 1979 (Cth) (Hoare 2003:141). Since that time, the Island’s separate taxation regime has been seen as inextricably connected to its continued autonomy.

Before 1979, Norfolk Island’s administration was highly dependent on the Australian Government, who would give the Island a grant every year with which to provide necessary services for the Island.14 After the Norfolk Island Act 1979 was passed, the Island’s newly formed Legislative Assembly was given the responsibility of levying its own finances and redistributing revenue among the Island’s population in the form of public services and welfare payments. The Norfolk Island Government continue raise revenue through a variety of different taxes, including a customs duty, an accommodation levy, and absentee landowners levy, a departure fee for tourists, and through the Norfolk Island Government Enterprises such as Norfolk Telecom, a Liquor store (called the Liquor Bond) and a Philatelic Bureau. In 2007, a GST of 9% (now at 13%) was introduced and several other taxes and fees were scrapped (The Norfolk Islander 25th August 2007).

The Norfolk Island Government has refrained from taxing certain forms of wealth such as land and income. Land tax has only ever been extracted from absentee landowners, and income tax has never been collected in any form. The Norfolk Island Government and Administration use all money levied from local taxes and fees for the purposes of Norfolk Island. Norfolk Island’s detachment from the revenue sharing arrangements between state and federal governments elsewhere in Australia means that Norfolk Island residents have not been entitled to many Australian Government services. The Australian Commonwealth provides a limited array of services, mainly in the areas of defence, foreign relations and

14The Administrator would hold ultimate control of these funds, but was advised by the Norfolk Island Council. Labour and funds for public works were levied through a call to common labour that operated on a rotational system. Every male of suitable age would take his turn to spend three and a half days a year engaged in common labour (Commonwealth of Australia 1976:45). This practice eventually ceased in 1974 due to its conflict with an ILO convention on forced labour and was replaced with an obligatory payment to the Administration instead.
joint management of the Island’s national parks. Island residents do not have access to Australian health benefits and must pay a Medicare levy and must pay additional fees and charges to gain access to health services. Additionally, the Island’s welfare system is significantly less encompassing than the Australian system. A crude assessment shows that in 2006, only 20 per cent of people living on Norfolk Island (including non-resident T.E.Ps) received any form of Government welfare payment from the Australian or Norfolk Island Government (Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006:29). When one deducts the payments that come from non-Norfolk Island government sources (primarily Australian pensions), this percentage falls to 5.6. This compares to the 47.7 per cent of all residents of continental Australia who received some form of income support benefit or pension in 2000 (ABS 2000). The question of the adequacy of Norfolk Island’s service provision and its ability to fund these services have become crux elements in local debates over the Island’s potential incorporation into Commonwealth revenue sharing arrangements (see, Commonwealth of Australia 2001, 2006).

Van Fossen (2002) maintains that local arguments over Norfolk Island’s political relationship with Australia can be traced to the differing class interests that have weighed into the debate over tax, and that political sentiments that stress Norfolk Island’s autonomy from Australia are merely a wealthy minority of residents using Norfolk Islanders to oppose the extension of Australian income taxation to the Island (van Fossen 2002:218-225). While this may ring true for those that wish to completely sever ties with Australia, it cannot explain why Islanders with differing class interests partake in the same argument. Van Fossen’s explanation has also been periodically shared by some Island residents and representatives of the Australian Commonwealth (see in particular, Commonwealth of Australia 1976) to explain the vested interests of those that oppose Commonwealth taxation. Charlotte, an opponent of the Island’s offshore financial capabilities, described the local demands to retain self-government made by Islanders as being driven by the same interests that saw Norfolk Island’s development as a tax haven.

Charlotte: The people who want to come here and take Norfolk over [by setting up an OFC]. They try to frighten us from Australia. They say it to everybody. They

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15 Paddick (2000b:47) noted (others have argued too conservatively) that between 4.2 and 4.7 percent of all funds contributed to the Norfolk Island economy arrives via the Australian Government, and further argues that “Much of this is spent supporting Australia’s presence on Norfolk Island”.

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say it to me. ‘Oh don’t let Australia take you over, you’ll have to pay land tax, income tax...we’re far better off...etcetera.’ (emphasis in original, Charlotte, recorded interview 24/04/2007).

It is clear that Charlotte saw the type of separate status arising from self-government as a success for offshore interests and detrimental to local residents who were not able to benefit (in terms of government services) from the wealth flowing through the Island. Furthermore, she believed that offshore interests had influenced Islanders to support the Island’s own taxation and welfare scheme, despite this scheme often working against the interests of many Islanders.16 However, residents can only speculate as to the motives of wealthy settlers for living on the Island. As tax avoidance/evasion is by nature difficult to trace, it is difficult to fully determine the extent to which various groups of residents actually do continue to take advantage of the Island’s political relationship with Australia. Despite the difficulty in gauging the influence of offshore finance on the Island’s taxation legislation, it is clear that the scenario has not lost its explanatory power for local residents.

The Australian and Norfolk Island fiscal systems approach the raising and spending of revenue in different ways, yet for the purposes of this discussion, the relevant feature of Norfolk’s fiscal system is that Island residents have at no point been obligated as individuals to transfer portions of their personal income directly to the Australian state (Treadgold 1988:215-216). Despite periodic attempts by the Australian Government to institute income taxation and extend Commonwealth services to Norfolk Island, the Island’s separate taxation status has been retained in various forms since 1856. Pre-1942, the island was not included in the New South Wales income tax system, nor was Norfolk Island included when these powers were transferred to the Federal government in 1942. This means that absence of an income taxation relationship between Norfolk Islanders and the Australian Government has been one of the most consistent and stable elements of Islanders’ relationships with the Australian state, and has proven a more durable structure than the Island’s successive government arrangements. In other words, whether deliberate

16 One thing that is clear from Charlotte’s opinions of self-government is the conviction that Norfolk Island is controlled by ‘outside’ interests – whether offshore financiers or mainland settlers – and not by Islanders, that Islanders themselves were/are not using the Island to avoid tax, only outsiders, and that the tax regime is by implication not an expression of self-governance. This presents a dichotomy between Islanders as people who live on the Island as their home, and more recent settlers that have moved to the Island for economic benefits.
or not, Norfolk residents have been recognised by the Commonwealth as persons who are not obliged to pay tax.

**Taxation and Relationships**

A high proportion of Norfolk Island residents are wage labourers working in the tourism industry.17 As Collier (2001:69) notes, wage labour – as a cultural concept – encourages “those who earn money to think of their earnings as reflecting their individual efforts, and therefore as theirs alone to spend”, leading to a “dissolution of obligation” (Collier 2001:69). However, when income tax is levied, taxpayers are explicitly called upon to fulfil their obligations to each other by dispensing with part of the product of their labour to the state or a governmental body. Despite this close association between persons, their labour, and the state, taxation very rarely features in general discussions of what political communities are, how they are bounded, and how they operate (however, see Schumpeter 1991 [1918]). Some theorists have recently revisited the social role that taxation plays within a nation state (Rawlings 2003:276; Murphy and Nagel 2002:3; Tilley 2009b; Turner 2008:134; see, Martin et al. 2009) and have argued that taxation is, at its heart, a material manifestation of the social relation between a person and the state they are living in or a part of (see in particular, Lieberman 2009). According to Roitman (2005), taxation is the “founding transfer” between the citizen and the state that governs access to the rights inherent in citizenship (of property, in access to services, consumer protection, for instance), and is therefore integral to initiating and maintaining state-citizen relations (Roitman 2005:203).

Within this context, taxation – and attitudes toward it – is a medium through which social scientists can understand aspects of individuals’ and groups’ relationships to each other (Murphy and Nagel 2002), to a particular state, and as self-conscious members of a political community (Martin, Mehrotra, and Prasad 2009:1; Turner 2008:134; Rawlings 2003:276). Rawlings (2003) describes taxation as an important institution or process “that

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17 An ABS report from 2003/4 on wages and salaries in the Norfolk Island private sector indicates that 410 full-time and 490 part-time employees (out of a total of around 1,183 total private sector or Government workers (this is the 2006 census figure, see Norfolk Island Census of Population and Housing 2006) were paid wages or salaries in 2004/2005 (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:74). While there are no data on the proportion of this figure that consists of wage labourers, I would estimate that this proportion would be quite high based.
link[s] individuals to one another and to a “wider public” that share a territorially defined nation-state that is mapped in the social imaginary” (Rawlings 2003:282). In other words, taxation is a means by which the nation state may mediate its relationship with citizens and one of the means by which citizens enact a relationship (and its associated obligations) to a nation state and an imagined community (see, Anderson 1991). At the heart of people’s approaches and opinions toward taxation and its alter, redistribution, is a concern about their relationships to others, and in particular to a political community.

Leiberman (2002) moves beyond this basic acknowledgement and proposes that people’s responses to taxation regimes are influenced by their cultural identity and their assessments of their marginality in relation to the state.18 His work is particularly fruitful in relation to Norfolk Island because of his focus on the role that taxation plays in materialising relationships and boundaries. Leiberman’s (2002) data on South Africa demonstrates that respondents’ attitudes toward the state’s representation of a ‘national political community’ affected their intentions to avoid paying tax. On the other hand, feelings of “closeness or affinity toward other groups included in the state’s definition of national political community” increased the inclination toward voluntary compliance with the tax system (Lieberman 2002:55). Lieberman argues that people with a strong sense of membership of a national community are more likely conceive of their tax obligations as a ‘duty’, as they are more likely to feel they are giving up their resources to benefit their national community (Lieberman 2002; see also, Wenzel 2002).

According to Lieberman, the legitimacy of a central state’s demand for taxation is increased when the citizen’s view of the nation is congruent with that defined by the state. “Such citizens are more likely to assume the state will serve ‘their’ group, rather than ‘someone else’” (Lieberman 2002:41). When collective political identities are at odds with the image of what Leiberman calls the ‘national political community’, there is a likelihood that these groups will be less inclined to see their taxes as benefiting ‘their’ group and more inclined to discount the possibility of long term future gains from taxation (Lieberman 2002:41-43). “[T]hose who reject the terms of membership [in a national political community] will view any redistribution as unjust – a transfer from ‘one of them’ rather than ‘one of us’

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18 A growing number of researchers on tax compliance are drawing attention to the effects of personal and collective identity in shaping attitudes toward taxation (Taylor 2001; Wenzel 2005; Lieberman 2002; Wenzel 2002).
(Lieberman 2002:43). In other words, those who reject the terms of membership of a national community may oppose taxes on the grounds that the recipients of the services it is put toward are ‘others’.

The terms Lieberman uses to describe people’s responses to taxation are not what one would expect to read in relation to a subject as mundane as paying taxes: ‘obligation’, ‘affinity’, ‘membership’. Lieberman’s focus on these feelings about tax helps us think about how the payment of tax can be experienced by people as a community rather than merely as individuals, and how opinions toward taxation are influenced by subjects’ understandings of social boundaries and belonging: affinities and relationships to a government and community. All of this counters theories of taxation that reduce opinions about taxation to mechanical individual self-interest and instead locates these opinions at the level of moral conduct, and in wider relations between a collective ‘self’ and ‘other’. Importantly, taxation and debates surrounding it are also debates about what is valued within polities and how money should be spent according to these values (Murphy and Nagel 2002). As a result, there is a tendency for views regarding taxation and redistribution to be representative of certain collective ideals. I believe this can be taken a step further; or at least on Norfolk Island it seems to play out differently. It should be clear by now that not all of the Norfolk Island community imagines itself as being part of the national political community of Australia, to use Leiberman’s term. For those Norfolk Islanders, the discourse surrounding the introduction of Australian taxation is not centred solely around the benefits one will receive, but also on what kind of autonomy the community may lose in the process.

Returning to the Norfolk Island tax debate, it seems that Norfolk residents’ responses to the prospects of Commonwealth taxation were as variable as the opinions relating to self-government in general. Matthew, an Islander in his 50s who had grown up in Australia and had settled on Norfolk Island a decade ago, seemed to give the most hostile response to the idea of Island residents paying Commonwealth taxation. He presented what he saw as a comparable scenario for me (an Australian), of Australia being taken over by a larger neighbour. As he heatedly concocted this scenario, he used the Island’s welfare and taxation systems as examples of autonomy and self-government.

Put it this way. Let’s say tomorrow, Indonesia takes over Australia. And says to Australia, ‘Look here Australia, you’re only a piddly twenty five million people, you
can’t really cope. The land’s too big for you, you know. [...] We might as well take you over. Tell you what; we’ll give you all the dole. [...] And you now have to live our way, you have to speak our language, you have to value what we value’ [...] And that’s what Australia was basically saying to us last year! ‘You will do away with your traditional values. We will have no respect for your taxation system; we will have no respect for any of your values. You must take on Australian values. You must speak Australian English. You must do the things we do. If you do this, we will give you the dole’ (emphasis in original, Matthew, recorded interview 10/12/2007).

Matthew believed that being made to pay Australian tax in exchange for welfare was a process that placed Island residents in a binding relationship with Australia that would eradicate difference. When I asked Matthew about specific areas where Australian taxation was incompatible with Island values, he drew attention to the lack of land tax on Norfolk Island, which he saw as important to maintaining traditions of land transmission by removing some of the financial burdens of holding such land. If being in correct relation to a legal system enables self-determination, then Matthew’s gripes about taxation are also arguments about the Island’s sense of desired autonomy and self-government. Matthew held what was considered, by the majority of other Islanders I spoke to, to be an extreme anti-taxation viewpoint. Generally, Islanders’ views on the benefits and disadvantages of Australian taxation range on a continuum from beliefs that the island should be fully incorporated into all Federal taxes and services that the mainland has access to, to beliefs that any extension of the Australian taxation and welfare system to the island entails a parallel extension of Australian society to the island, potentially erasing local difference and autonomy.

Most Islanders I spoke to had strong views about Australian taxation which were also connected to their assessments of the fairness of Australian social services system, and assessments of how the Island would be served by such a system compared to their present fiscal system. Islanders’ perceptions of the Island’s ‘smallness’, ‘insignificance’ and distance from authority seemed to play an important role in these assessments, as did the potential impact of trading aspects of local autonomy and control for increased social benefits. The most common response was far more ambivalent than the views expressed by Matthew. Many Islanders felt that the Commonwealth taxation and welfare system was not well-
suited to the specificities of Norfolk Island, and were unsure that the Commonwealth
would direct the necessary spending toward the Island. Nevertheless, they were also
sceptical about the ability of their local government to continue to provide for their needs.
Consider the following exchange between Paul, a 58 year old Islander, and his wife Joanne,
who was in her late 50s and had been a resident of the Island for 40 years.

Joanne: You know, they [Canberra] would want to put everybody on the list so
some get money and some don’t, and I love that here that people are actually given
work, instead of just given the dole. Because it actually, it helps the community, it
keeps their self-esteem going, they’re relevant, and there’s nothing worse than for
people to feel that they’re irrelevant and just… a dead weight… on the community.
And we have people that don’t earn a living that feel important by being given a job
to do like say… holding a gate open or handing out funeral notices at the gate of
the cemetery. People like that. And I don’t think that will carry under at all.

Paul: Yeah, you don’t wanna lose that. But I think there’s also an awful lot of
people on the Island who… are suffering. And I think that if the government did
step in with some assistance financially then that’d be a good thing. For instance,
the hospital on Norfolk Island. I heard a rumour; you know, *dem tal* [they say],
that for people having babies and other things that can [currently] be carried out on
Norfolk Island, they’ll have to go away. […] The hospital here is capable of looking
after different things. I don’t want to see that lost.

Joanne: Christmas Island has […been given] something like a 23 million dollar
hospital as part of the sweetener so they [the Australian Government] can take up
part of the Island, having troops there all the time and detention centres and stuff.
They have lots of money and they throw money at things but now the people on
Christmas Island have this super duper hospital and no staff. And they all have to
go off the Island for more things than they did before (emphasis in original, Joanne
and Paul, recorded interview 04/09/2007).

In the above exchange, ambivalence toward the Australian Government’s ability to help
Norfolk Island is characterised by weighing up of the material relief that the Australian
state could offer with the potentially negative implications for local autonomy and
traditional means of support that accepting such relief may entail. In other words, there is a
fear that community cooperation and local control will be traded for dependency. Dean, an Islander in his late-30s, also framed the introduction of Australian taxation along these lines. He was unsure about how the introduction of Federal taxation and welfare would influence the Island’s sense of community. He believed that the level of economic independence that the Island was integral for sustaining the close traditional relationships of mutual self-help on Norfolk. Dean’s thoughts on taxation and Australian welfare appeared to be consistent with an understanding of moves toward redistribution by the state as freeing individuals from obligations to their primary networks (see, Godbout and Caillé 1998:61-62; Mauss 1990; Simmel 1978), though he interpreted this freedom as potentially detrimental to existing social relations.

...the thing about that level of [Commonwealth] taxation is that it just changes the way that everything works on Norfolk. People say ‘well we’ll get this and get this and get this’ but we don’t get without... giving. And there’s certain benefits, I guess, that come from it, but how that affects those community groups how that affects that whole sense of community, how that affects that sense of one-ness and I guess the giving-ness the, amount that this community actually gives. That could change drastically and I guess I see that as a negative, a possible negative. I’ve lived away from Norfolk for a long time and I’ve lived in a lot of communities under the ‘bigger rule’ and smaller locations? [waves his hand dismissively] You’re nothing to them (emphasis in original, Dean, recorded interview 22/11/2007).

Dean told me that the Island’s isolation, close-knit community and limited social welfare benefits created a “duty of care” that he believed ensured “that Norfolk will retain its identity as a separate location” (Dean, recorded interview 22/11/2007).

For various reasons, Norfolk residents conceive of paying Australian income tax as a form of passive absorption of the Island into the mainland, and this is not always conceived of as a negative thing. For instance, Stephen, an Islander in his 60’s, believed that a considerable number of residents, including other Islanders, were far more sympathetic toward the introduction of Commonwealth services and taxation, and declared himself to be one of this number. Many such Islanders declared they were somewhat alienated by vocal Islanders’ public displays of ‘anti-Australian’ sentiment in blogs, inquiry submissions and Australian newspaper articles (for example, Christian-Bailey 2008; The Society of Pitcairn
Descendants 1996). These people felt that this ‘outspoken minority’ of anti-Australian Islanders periodically misrepresented them. Stephen’s personal reasons for supporting such a move had a lot to do with his own rising medical expenses that were becoming increasingly difficult to meet.

I personally think that we would be better off if we were [joined the Australian welfare and taxation system] in the long run. I could envisage it happening, and Norfolk Island being absolutely shaken around, and we wouldn’t know where we are for a while, as the mainland...covered us and enveloped us entirely. But I think the future of Norfolk Island hangs too much in the balance with tourism [...] And I would have thought that being part of the mainland system...with all that surplus money, that Norfolk Island would have to benefit (emphasis in original, Stephen, recorded interview 08/11/2007).

Despite his support of the Island’s integration with the Commonwealth taxation system, he also describes this integration using words like ‘envelop’. Words like ‘absorption’ and ‘envelopment’ imply the dissipation of a boundary, a collapsing or erosion of difference between two previously distinct entities. This begs the question, what exactly do Islanders such as Stephen believe they are being absorbed by? What exactly do they think they are becoming a part of? If what Lieberman argues is correct, and responses to taxation are determined by citizens’ ideas of social boundaries and experiences of belonging to a group, then the reverse is also possible, that taxation and financial transactions are actually in part responsible for the constitution and maintenance of this boundary.

It is perhaps unsurprising that this separation from the Australian taxation system is locally understood as a key structure that socially separates Island residents from continental Australia. If, as I have theorised, taxation creates a network of relations between the taxpayer, government mediators and other taxpayers, then the Australian taxation system is a large system of actors through which monetary transactions flow. Taxpayers are connected to other taxpayers and the state through this mediated relationship. Island residents’ separation from this network of relations is one of the key ways that Norfolk Island’s separate status materialises to them. In remaining separate and disconnected in such a way, they retain a degree of power and autonomy in terms of choice of what their
tax payments are spent on, but this comes at the expense of access to certain potentially beneficial Commonwealth services.

**Conclusion**

It is important to recognise that while political communities are to some extent imagined (Anderson 1991) through collective memories and shared public ceremonies (Zerubavel 1997), media, collective experience, and adherence to a set of shared rights and obligations, they are also shaped by economic processes (Turner 1997, 2008). Island residents’ understandings of their relationship to the Australian national political community are produced through their positioning in relation to a combination of these symbolic and economic processes. Ultimately it is to Australia that Islanders are becoming more closely tied; geographically, politically and economically. Most Norfolk Island residents do not deny that there are practical and material benefits of political and economic connections with Australia, but feel politically and geographically separate to the rest of the nation and wish for this to be reflected, in some way or another, in the institutional frameworks the island operates within. This separateness fosters diverse views of whether their own interests do not necessarily coincide with those of an Australian state that primarily represents continental Australians.

In my hours-long conversations with Islanders about Island politics, I realised that most saw the Island’s arrangements with the Australian state as a connection or a relationship. As such, they often understood the Island’s constitutional position as part of Australia as one that has not always existed and could be subject to re-evaluation. Much of Island residents’ talk about governance inevitably consisted of their opinions of the ideal combination of engagement with, and distance from, ‘Canberra’; what powers to give to others and what to keep for themselves.

In the first section, I argued that the ways that Islanders think about seatbelt legislation is in some ways representative of the relationship of autonomy that many Islanders wish to have with Australian Government. In the second section I have argued that the awarding of self-governance is widely seen by Islanders to have contributed to the protection of the Island’s culture and territorial integrity. Many Islanders believe that this type of relational autonomy has been integral to protecting their historical sense of self as separate from
Australia, but Australia’s continued recognition of rights to self-government demands that Islanders present distinctive selves (expressed in terms of laws and regulations that reflect their own values and concerns) requiring of continuing self-government. Residents’ attitudes toward various aspects of law (whether taxation or traffic) as expressions of self-government have created a tendency for certain forms of legislation to be seen as potential vehicles for the creation or erosion of a Norfolk Islander ‘self’. The removal of the Island’s legislative difference and replacement with mainland laws and processes is often threatening to Norfolk Islanders as these changes imply that the Island does not need to self-govern, is capable of operating under Australian law, and that its residents are the same in other essential ways as other Australians.

In the final section, I discussed the ways in which Islanders understand their marginality to Australia through the lens of taxation and welfare. Government transfers of tax and welfare are widely realised material relationships between individuals and their governments. As such, Islanders enduring disconnections from Australian state fiscal processes have been partially generative of their separate identities from the rest of Australia. This connects distinct laws and legislative traditions to the material implications of exchange and relationships that have underpinned this thesis. Islanders’ relationships to the Australian Government are characterised by their constant assertions of separateness within a context of growing interdependence with Australia. This tension has been productive of Islanders sense, and experience, of difference, and it is through these assertions that Islanders construct Norfolk Island as a locality, and locate themselves as a separate, distinct people in relationship with, but not yet fully a part of, the Australian nation-state.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion: Memory, Belonging and the Politics of Settlement.

In late 2008, while I was deep in the process of writing, the Australian Government declared its renewed interest in reforming Norfolk Island’s governance regime. It had, of course, been threatening to do so since the late 1990s. Norfolk Islanders were again confronted with a large degree of uncertainty as to what these reforms would herald and how their future would be affected. On the 17th Jan 2009, an open letter addressed to The Hon. Kevin Rudd (who at that time was the Prime Minister of Australia) was published in the Norfolk Islander. It was signed by 14 elders of the Norfolk Islander community, all over 80 years of age. It is notable that many of these elders had considerable authority in the community as repositories of knowledge about Norfolk Island’s culture and past. Several of the signatories were highly politically active during the Royal Commission years and were representatives of a generation that had been at the centre of disputes over taxation, the gift, and the wider political status of the island. Many of the 14 also owned significant amounts of land, and all were by-and-large Norf’k speakers. The letter they signed read:

When our people arrived on Norfolk Island en masse from Pitcairn Island on June 8, 1856, it was with the understanding that this island would become our new home. A Great Seal was issued for the new Crown Colony of Norfolk Island by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, with the name of Pitcairn Island and a ship landing
amidst Norfolk Island pines to commemorate this great gift to the Pitcairn people. On that day, Pitcairn Islanders became Norfolk Islanders. This island has been our home ever since (Norfolk Island Elders, in The Norfolk Islander 17th Jan, 2009).¹

The letter illustrated Islanders’ ongoing attempts to have their belonging to Norfolk Island recognised through recourse to the historical context of their ancestors’ occupation, locating the beginning of Norfolk Islanders’ relationship with the Island over the past 150 years as the 8th June 1856, when the Pitcairn Islanders stepped off the Morayshire and became Norfolk Islanders. The letter seemed to condense a lengthy process of dwelling and home making, of putting down roots over generations, into a single transformative event; settlement. The remainder of the letter expressed the 14 elders’ concern about whether the Australian Government was giving due consideration to the “future of the Norfolk Island people”; ending with an appeal to the Australian Prime Minister to respect Islander’s history and their continuity relationship with the Island:

As your government proceeds to examine our best interests, we ask you to keep in mind these two related questions: when the new conditions are fully realised, will we as a people still exist and will Norfolk Island continue to be our home? It would be to everyone’s eternal shame if the answer were “no” (Norfolk Island Elders, in The Norfolk Islander 17th Jan, 2009).

As a whole, the letter was a marked illustration of something that I had been grappling with for some time, the great extent to which Islanders remained self-conscious of their very occupation of the Island across generations.

It always seemed to me that what was most important to Norfolk Islanders was who they were in relation to the past. Their own arguments over descent, language use, marriage, land ownership, official history and memory were always at the background of issues to do

¹ The letter additionally explained that the Island’s elders welcomed a continuing dialogue with the Australian government about the status of Norfolk Island, and were also grateful for the rights and benefits that the Island’s relation with the Commonwealth enabled (see appendix B6 for full letter).
with government, taxes, recognition of royalty and the classification of in-migrants. In part, people understand their relation to the world in which they live through such interpretations of their relationship to their past. In particular, a shared relationship with the past is necessary to give a group roots and a stable sense of self in the present (Lowenthal 1985:41) and to enable a sense of continuity between past, present and future (Smith 1999:10). I was interested in exploring why Islanders were so enveloped by their past and the role that awareness of the past played in their relationships with others.

In this thesis I have detailed the ways in which Norfolk Islanders make belonging by connecting themselves to their past (including the people and events connected to this past). I found that such connections could not be adequately explored under the typical rubrics of oral vs. written history, rather, I have broadened my analysis by considering the complex means (material, embodied, and habitual and historical) through which Norfolk Islanders remember, make sense of, and connect with their past. Substantial portions of Norfolk Islanders’ past were encoded and recalled in disparate sites that prompted remembrance: placenames (see, Nash and Low Forthcoming); land ownership and transmission (i.e. the remembering of original grants and their owners through time); sayings (for instance, dar thing fe dems); choices about which ancestors to trace descent from; re-enactments of settlement, and their use of various aspects of the past (such as, language, Bounty vs. Allcomers, Islander vs. Mainlander distinctions, and written documentations) in the making of hierarchy and difference.

When I first arrived on Norfolk, I was particularly struck by the degree to which Norfolk Islanders were conscious of their ancestors’ migration to the Island and their continuing sense of continuity with this group of settlers. Evidence of this awareness permeated a diverse range of social situations. Settlement’s continuing importance to Islanders’ self-definition was displayed in public forums such as plaques, monuments, tourism, government legislation, and commemorations such as Bounty (Anniversary) Day. Islanders also made recourse to the Pitcairners’ settlement again and again in my conversations with them about social difference and hierarchy, indicating that this event continued to permeate present consciousness. Subsequently, when I returned from the field, the intensity with which the Pitcairners’ settlement seemed to return to and inform the present on Bounty (Anniversary) Day and in countless other ways, remained in the background of my thoughts. Much of this thesis has been my attempt to explain why this aspect of the past
took a primary significance in Islanders’ self-definition and in their rationalisations of present political and social circumstances.

**Firstness, Nativesness, History**

Throughout this thesis, I have argued Norfolk Islanders’ claims to hold a special relationship with Norfolk Island is analogous to a native relationship with place. These were not claims to an autochthonous identity (of having arisen in situ – though Geschiere’s (2009) broad definition of autochthony as a kind of relational priority holds some parallels) nor did Islanders typically describe themselves as ‘indigenous’. While Islanders continued to contest the specific details of how their ancestors occupied Norfolk Island, they were unified in acknowledging that their ancestors had indeed come from elsewhere. Their nativeness was emergent in, and indeed contingent on, their very awareness of this movement. Their capacity to put a date to their ancestors’ arrival, to locate it in chronology and identify who this group of settlers were, was fundamental to how they fashioned their sense of belonging to Norfolk and how they mobilised their sense of belonging in social interactions.

At their most basic, designations of ‘native’, ‘indigenous’, or ‘autochthonous’, identities can be condensed to a temporal distinction: one group was there before others (Canessa 2008; see also, Geschiere 2009). Canessa (2008:360) claims at the core of these identities is a consciousness among those claiming them of an original occupation of territory. He proposes that a necessary aspect of identifying as indigenous, native, and the like, is not merely priority in time and space to others, but an historical awareness of such priority among the group itself. Norfolk Islanders’ constructions of their nativeness to Norfolk Island are predicated on such an awareness of their ancestors’ priority to other groups.

Islanders’ consciousness of their ancestors’ original occupation of place – as an act of migration that sits within both documented history and continuing social memory – placed it in contrast to a sense of depth of association since ‘time immemorial’ (time beyond memory and recorded history) of the sort that groups claiming nativeness commonly make (Maybury-Lewis 1997). In these contrasting cases, (chronologically) distant ancestral movement to a place is often obscured, or forgotten, and superseded by assertions of autochthonous rather than migratory origins (Clifford 2007; Kuper 2003). In other
circumstances, migration is remembered through mythological and other practices, such as the tracing of descent back to founding ancestors in Polynesian societies (Pocock 2005:223, 250), but still rarely recorded at the moment of original occupation in written form. Instead, the ‘priority’ or ‘originality’ of a native group is typically recognised through the particular forms of temporality and historical documentation introduced by settlers, who record the presence of an ‘already there’ population that becomes ‘original’ by the very presence of the settler (Beckett 1988:5-6; Pratt 2007:398-399). Despite the absence of such claims to occupation since time immemorial, I have argued that Norfolk Islanders’ appeals to their ancestors’ historical migration and occupation of the Island was an alternate mode of claiming primary connections to place; of claiming nativeness.

Norfolk Islanders’ claims to priority of occupation do not reflect a mistaken belief that their ancestors were the first group of people to ever occupy Norfolk Island. Rather, these claims suggest that the vacating of the Island by these previous settlers provided an opportunity for Islanders to emphasise their own beginnings as a source of legitimacy and belonging. It is the primacy given by Norfolk Islanders to 1856 as a beginning that has allowed them to claim superior belonging to Norfolk Island against others who inhabited the place chronologically prior to their arrival but subsequently left, and against those that have occupied it since. The very process of arguing, memorialising, and working out the conditions of their ancestors’ arrival on Norfolk Island, to which Norfolk Islanders devote considerable time to, is a productive undertaking in determining the conditions of their own nativeness and belonging to the Island. Arguments and contestations concerning the detail of the arrival of the Pitcairners preserve settlement within memory and locate the relative importance of this event (their beginning) in the Island’s past. Islanders thus distinguish their ancestors’ settlement in relation to others as an event of high commemorative density (see, Zerubavel 1997) relative to other potential beginnings, such as the arrival of the first British settlers in 1788 or the prehistoric Polynesian settlement. Norfolk Islanders were not there from the beginning (as autochthonous people may well claim). Rather, similar to Pocock’s (2005:224) interpretations of Maori occupation myths, they fashioned their own beginning through their memories of occupation.
Social beginnings, of the sort that the Pitcairners’ settlement represents, are consequently not separated from the present and located in an increasingly distant past. Rather, provided they are recollected and commemorated, they can continue to “infuse the present” (Schwartz 1982:395) in important ways. Settlement as a social beginning holds commemorative significance for Islanders beyond its role in supporting their claims of priority to subsequent settlers to the Island. As the letter I described at the beginning of this chapter illustrated, the Island elders’ claims to the Island as home were indeed supplemented by the historical detail of their ancestor’s precise date of arrival. However, the letter also contained an appeal – by reference to the Norfolk Island official seal – to the “great gift to the Pitcairn people”. It is largely this belief in a gift of territory from a distant monarch to the Pitcairn Islanders that establishes Islanders’ sense of a fundamentally different relationship to Norfolk Island.

Assuming occupancy of the Island as if it were a gift has allowed Islanders to construct their relationship with the Island as particular, special, and authorised by a powerful Other. It is the kind of historical detail that validates Islanders’ claims to belong to Norfolk Island, crafting the basis of belonging on more than just priority of occupation in time, or continuity of inhabitancy since settlement. In such a construction of the past, Islanders’
collective relationship with the Island was founded on their ancestors’ initial relationships with the Queen, who recognised the Pitcairn Islanders as a group, gave them individual grants on Norfolk, and, depending on the interpretation of Island history, sanctioned their use of the entire Island, which then became ‘their Island’. The Island-as-gift has nevertheless remained a consistently problematic means by which to claim nativeness. It has tended to crumble under the weight of historical documentation and legal opinion, despite some Islanders’ reluctance to submit to the authority of such documents in defining the past and their relationship to place. Historical documentation plays a dual role in these constructions of the Island’s past. Firstly, following Schwartz (1982), it sets certain limits on what aspects of the past are available for people to memorialise. Secondly, while historical interpretations of the past are not entirely detached and objective, history’s very claims to an official representation of the past that enjoys the “sanction of scholarly authority” (Hutton 1993:77), provides the basis by which the historicity of memorialised events, such as the factual basis of Queen Victoria’s gift to the Pitcairners, can be recognised or denied recognition. Historical documentation of settlement therefore has particular repercussions for Norfolk Islanders, offering the potential security of recognition of firstness and the details of arrival, but also holds the potential to repudiate key validating memories of the past.

**Futures**

The securities and insecurities Islanders often find in their appeals to the past are mirrored by their attitudes toward the future. Many Islanders – such as the elders who signed the letter to Kevin Rudd – held a strong sense of uncertainty over their collective future. While the future is always to some extent unknown from the position of the present, ‘uncertainty’ implies an additional awareness that the established present is not a static state of affairs, but subject to quite drastic change that could be positive or detrimental (Boholm 2003:167). For some, this future was tied inextricably to the Island’s position within the Australian nation state – to self-government and to recognition of Islanders’ special relationship with the Island. For others, it lay in more pragmatic efforts to remain aware of who they were and ensure the perpetuation of this awareness as they inevitably grew closer and closer to Australia. As an Islander posted on a news item about the Island’s ongoing financial woes in 2010, “We oonie gwen lorse "uwwus wae" eff we let ett goe” [We are only
going to lose our way [of life] if we let it go]. Norfolk Islanders’ frequent recourse to the past through tradition, ‘way of life’, language, and heritage – and their efforts to maintain these elements of the past – suggest that remembering the past is integral to their sense of future self-continuity and peoplehood. In one of my many conversations with Albert, an Islander in his 80s, I asked him about his thoughts on the future. His solemn response indicated how heavily the burdens of the past weighed down on him, but also that the future was ultimately out of his hands:

Albert: We have this great responsibility to keep Norfolk Island for the ones coming on. Whether they will have that same feeling as we have... I do not know. But, you need to look at it from a few points of view. My generation is carrying on from those who were before, from the people who came from Pitcairn. Some of them were still alive when I was a young boy. And this has always been our home. We didn’t have the outside pressures to share it with anybody else. Now we have my generation, the one after me, and the one after them again.

M.L: So you’re saying it’s important to keep Norfolk for your children?

Albert: As much as we can... we can to try and keep alive that cultural and traditional way of Norfolk Island; this sense of community. It not only preserves and keeps alive an image of Norfolk Island in our minds, it also means we can preserve it for our children... But whether they want to do it, it’s up to them really (emphasis in original, Albert, recorded interview 21/03/2007).

It seems to me that Norfolk Islanders were so absorbed by their past because their sense of legitimacy was largely drawn from it. What was at stake in remembering the past was what Islanders often called their ‘special relationship’ to Norfolk Island – their sense of belonging to a place and to a group – which they considered to be under continual threat. Norfolk Islanders’ sense of nativeness to Norfolk Island in particular, hinges not only on their ability to locate their occupation of Norfolk Island within history and have this connection recognised by others, but also on their ability to maintain a sense continuity between founding ancestors and themselves; to remain a people. For Norfolk Islanders, the past is not merely remote from the present, but continues to be drawn from in ways that are powerfully constitutive of identity and difference today. Settlement on one hand is an event that occurred generations ago, but on the other hand it remains in memory and continues
to define the foundations of an original connection to Norfolk Island, to which Norfolk Islanders continue to orientate their sense of identity and location in the world.
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## Appendix A: The *Bounty*, Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island: Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.14th Century</td>
<td>(NI) Polynesian Settlement of Norfolk Island. Island eventually abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1767</td>
<td>(PI) Pitcairn Island discovered by HMS Swallow. Charted incorrectly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td>(NI) Captain James Cook ‘discovers’ Norfolk Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>(NI) Norfolk Island settled by British to form the First Settlement on Norfolk Island, shortly after the First Fleet’s settlement of Sydney Cove (NSW).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td><em>Bounty</em> mutiny occurs. <em>Bounty</em> crew, led by Master’s Mate Fletcher Christian, place Captain Bligh and his supporters in a longboat and set sail for Tahiti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>(PI) <em>Bounty</em> arrives at Pitcairn Island and is scuttled, its passengers settle on Pitcairn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793, 1799</td>
<td>(PI) Sexual antagonism, racial violence causes numerous disputes between the settlers, culminating in the deaths of all Tahitian men and all but 2 of the mutineers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799–1800</td>
<td>(PI) Edward Young teaches Alexander Smith to read using the <em>Bounty</em> Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>(PI) One more mutineer (Edward Young) dies of asthma (or consumption) leaving one mutineer, Alexander Smith, the sole adult male among 10 Tahitian women and 23 children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>(PI) Alexander Smith, intoxicated, has vision that the Archangel Michael threatened him with a dart, becomes fiercely religious and changes his name to ‘John Adams’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>(NI) British government elects to move a large portion of the First Settlement population to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania). A small number of British settlers remain on Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>(PI) Captain Mayhew Folger of the US ship <em>Topaz</em> rediscovers Pitcairn Island. Relays information to Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>(PI) British ships <em>Briton</em> and <em>Tagus</em> call at Pitcairn Island, contact with Britain established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>(NI) First Settlement on Norfolk Island closed. Buildings razed and Island abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>(PI) John Buffet &amp; John Evans (British sailors) settle on Pitcairn Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>(NI) Norfolk Island reoccupied and penal settlement reopened to house recidivist convicts from the Australian colonies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Events relating to Norfolk Island are labelled: ‘(NI)’. Events relating to Pitcairn Island are labelled: ‘(PI)’ and shaded grey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>(PI) George Hunn Nobbs (another Englishman) settles on Pitcairn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>(PI) John Adams dies and George Hunn Nobbs takes over role as leader (with important roles also allocated to Thursday October Christian and John Buffett).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>(PI) Pitcairners abandon Pitcairn Island and are resettled on Tahiti. Many die of disease and they gain transport back to Pitcairn in the same year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832–1837</td>
<td>(PI) Englishman Joshua Hill settles on Pitcairn. After creating considerable division, he was eventually deposed in 1838.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>(PI) Pitcairn becomes a British colony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>(NI) Reports of atrocities conducted toward prisoners on Norfolk Island lead to convict station closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>(NI) Pitcairn Islanders relocated to Norfolk Island and last convict and free settler caretakers leave Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>(NI) First group of Pitcairn settlers return to Pitcairn Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>(NI) Second group of Pitcairn settlers return to Pitcairn Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>(NI) Melanesian Mission headquarters established on Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>(NI) Commissioner Henry Wilkinson Reports on Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>(NI) Island’s locally elected Chief Magistrate becomes an appointment made by Governor of New South Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>(NI) Order In Council passed. Norfolk Island to be administered by Governor of the colony of New South Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>(NI) Order In Council passed. Norfolk Island to be administered by the Governor of the state of New South Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>(NI) Governor Rawson instigates commission of inquiry into land use on Norfolk Island, conducted by Commissioner Alexander Oliver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>(NI) <em>Norfolk Island Report of Commissioner Alexander Oliver</em> published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>(NI) Norfolk Island Act 1913 (Cth) operative and Island officially becomes and Australian Commonwealth Territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>World War I begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>(NI) Melanesian Mission relocated to the Solomon Islands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>(NI) Royal Commission into Norfolk Island Affairs initiated by Australian Federal Government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>World War II begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>(NI) Norfolk Island Airstrip built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>(NI) Island residents celebrate centenary of landing of Pitcairn settlers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>(NI) Norfolk Island Council constituted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>(NI) Tax avoidance becomes increasingly prevalent, and new Australian and New Zealander settlers arrive on Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>United Nations Involvement with Australia’s Territories: Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence released. Writers of Report claim Norfolk Island is “ethnically and culturally akin to the mainland” and dismiss the prospects of UN involvement in the territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>25 Norfolk Islanders and some filmmakers make ‘pilgrimage’ to Pitcairn Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Australian Medicare withdrawn from Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Australian on Norfolk Island who registered on electoral roll vote in Federal Elections for first time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Society of Pitcairn Descendants declare themselves indigenous people of Norfolk Island.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Historical Documents
Concerning the Pitcairn Settlement on Norfolk Island

1. Orders in Council dated 24th day of June, 1856 [Abridged]

At the Court at Buckingham Palace, the 24th day of June, 1856.

PRESENT:

The Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty,


Whereas by an Order made by us in Council bearing even date with these Presents, we did order that, from and after the date of the proclamation of that Order as therein directed, the said Island called Norfolk Island should be and the same was thereby separated from the said Colony of Van Diemen’s Land, now called Tasmania, and erected into a distinct and separate settlement, the affairs of which shall, until further Order is made in that behalf by Us, be administered by a Governor to be for that purpose appointed by Us with the advice and consent of our Privy Council:

And whereas by the said Order in Council is further provided that from the date afore said, the said Governor of the said Colony of Norfolk Island shall have full power and authority, to make laws for the order, peace, and good government of the said Island, subject nevertheless to such Rules and Regulations as we at any time by Instruction or Instructions, with the advice of our Privy Council, under our Sign Manual and Signet, may think fit to prescribe in that behalf:

Now we do hereby declare the following to be the Rules and Regulations so mentioned and referred to in the said Order in Council. In framing such laws as aforesaid you are to observe, as nearly as the circumstances will admit, the rules laid
down by our Instructions under our Sign Manual and Signet addressed to you from time to time as Governor of New South Wales;

And whereas the inhabitants of the said Island are chiefly emigrants from Pitcairn’s Island in the Pacific Ocean, who have been established in Norfolk Island under our authority, and who have been accustomed in the territory from which they have removed to govern themselves by laws and usages adapted to their own state of society, you are, as far as practicable, and as far as may be consistent with the regulation next preceding, to preserve such laws and usages, and to adapt the authority vested in you by the said recited Order in Council to their preservation and maintenance.

And whereas you are further authorised by the said Order in Council to make grants of Waste Lands in the said Island in our name and in our behalf, subject nevertheless to such Rules and Regulations as aforesaid: Now we do hereby further enjoin you to exercise the authority so vested in you, as far as you may find it practicable, in conformity with such laws and usages as aforesaid which you may find established among the inhabitants in question, in relation to the possession, use, and enjoyment of land.

And we do further direct that in all matters within your competency in relation to the government of Norfolk Island, and not specially provided for in these our present Instructions, you do govern yourself by our Instructions addressed to you as Governor of New South Wales, as far as the same may be applicable to the subject.

And is hereby further ordered and declared that from the date aforesaid the said Governor for the time being of the said Island called Norfolk Island, shall have full power and authority in Her Majesty’s name and in Her behalf but subject nevertheless to the Rules and Regulations which may be prescribed by any such instructions as aforesaid to make grants of waste lands to Her Majesty belonging within the said Island to private persons on their own behalf or to any persons, bodies politic or corporate in trust for the public use of Her subjects there resident or any of them.

Source: (Commonwealth of Australia 1976)
2. The ‘Fremantle Letter’, 1856

To the Chief Magistrate of the Pitcairn Islanders now resident on Norfolk Island, all arrangements made by the community of Pitcairn Islanders are to be subject to the approval of H.E. Sir W.T. Denison, Governor General of N.S.W.

The whole of the Coast line including the jetties, and the roads now made thro’out the Island are to be reserved as public property. The following buildings are also to be retained as belonging to H.M Governt:

The Gaol
The Chaplain’s House
Also 200 acres of cleared land at Long Ridge for a Glebe and 500 acres elsewhere.

The Islanders however are not debarred from making any temporary use of the above mentioned grounds and buildings. They are to understand that they are not allotted as property, to any individual. This is communicated by direction of H.E. The Governor General.

Signed,

Stephen G. Fremantle
Captain of H.M.S Juno
Senior Officer in Australia

Norfolk Island

June 25, 1856.

The Right Honourable Council Chambers, Norfolk Island
Joseph Chamberlain 7th May 1898
England

Sir,

I have the honour to forward you at the request of the Pitcairn Islanders the papers enumerated below.

The Parties are old now (at least some of them) who had taken this opportunity to record an oath, the causes and reasons for removal from Pitcairn Island, and so that at some future day these papers could be referred to by theirs.

There are other documents incomplete and when completed will be forwarded on to you. These papers are executed in duplicates, one set forwarded to you, one to Sydney, one to remain on Norfolk Island.

I have the honour to be,

Always,

Your Humble Servant

O.M. Quintal

President, Council of Elders

Joseph Chamberlain was the British Colonial Secretary for the period between 1895 and 1903 and was therefore in charge of managing Britain’s colonies.
We the undersigned Elders of the Community of Norfolk Island and immigrants from Pitcairn Island declared that agreements were entered into by us and others with Lieutenant Gregorie and others, Agents of the Crown for the removal of the Pitcairn Islanders to Norfolk Island.

At a public meeting held on leaving island of the inhabitants previous to leaving the said island, Lieutenant Gregorie read a letter stating that the whole of Norfolk Island with the exception of a few acres would be ceded to us.

This offer held out to us was the principal inducement of all the inhabitants immigrating to Norfolk Island. That we have from time to time for the last 40 years made our own laws and regulations dealing with the land on Norfolk Island, and that all the Governors of Norfolk acknowledged and ceded that right to us.

That as a further inducement held out to us we were promised that we are to govern ourselves on Norfolk Island in the same manner as we were when residing on Pitcairn Island, by the election of our own Chief Magistrate and Councillors et. As shown by the Order in Council bearing date June 24th 1856. That the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island left that Island with the full understanding that on our arrival at Norfolk Island we should be granted other houses and live stocks in lieu of those left behind on Pitcairn Island, and in consequence of that promise the houses with certain stock were divided among the immigrants on there [sic] arrival on Norfolk Island in June 1865.

That the sheep and certain quantity of cattle and a horse were reserved for public purposes, and by degrees sold and turned into cash in order to create (with private sums of money subscribed by friends) a fund. The intent on which a way be sufficient to pay the necessary public expenses of the island.

That the sum is now in the hands of Trustees.

That in accordance to promises made to us Norfolk Island with houses, the Keys these of [sic] and the stock running on the island, and all documents of title to the island were handed to by Mr Stewart who had charge of Norfolk Island in the present [sic] of
Lieutenant Gregorie and some of Islanders, to the Chief Magistrate, for, and on behalf of the Pitcairn Island Community and their descendants.

For the last 40 years we have enjoyed these rights and privileges.

That we respectfully assent our claims to Norfolk Island and to request that you, as the Queen’s Representative to give your support for the maintaining or Rights and Privileges to the said island and to the Fund known as the Norfolk Island Fund and now invested in the New South Wales Securities.

John Buffett Senior     Arthur Quintall
Leonard Christian     Thomas Buffett
Alfred Nobbs          G. M. Young
Fairfax M. Quintall    Jonathan Adams
Henry F. Quintall     Josiah Adams
                        A.B Quintall
                        George Evans
                        Joseph Quintal
                        Byron Adams
                        Oliver Masey Quintal
                        Cornish Quintal

4. Letter from Byron Adams and O. Masey Quintal to His Excellency Viscount Hampden, Governor of Norfolk Island, 1896
(Source: British Parliamentary Papers 1897:15)
In submitting to you the annexed memorial and protest from the elders – members of the “House of Representatives” – of Norfolk Island, we respectfully desire to summarise its leading contents by stating that those representatives object to annexation of that Island to New South Wales for Governmental purposes because (amongst other reasons) such a measure would:

1st. Involve the destruction of the distinctive character and race of the people, as well as of the ancient laws, institutions, and customs of themselves and their Pitcairn fathers, which were carried with them to Norfolk Island in 1856, and were guaranteed to them by Her Majesty’s Order in Council of that year, and which its successive governors enjoined to “preserve and maintain.”

2nd. It would subject the people of Norfolk Island to a code of laws (that of New South Wales) entirely different from their own, and unsuited to their circumstances.

3rd. It would inundate the Island with strangers, and expose all its unalienated lands (which are the property of the Islanders by gift) to be appropriated by those strangers within a few days’ time, and at a price very insignificant indeed.

4th. It would lead to the introduction of large quantities of spirits, the importation of which has hitherto been strictly prohibited under the ancient laws of the Island.

5th. It would subject the Island to taxation without (we fear) adequate representation; and deprive the Islanders of the rights of electing their own Magistrates, which they have exercised for 100 years past (upon Pitcairn and Norfolk Island); and

6th. In May 1888, it was resolved by the “House of Representatives.” At a meeting presided over by his Excellency Lord Carrington, at Norfolk Island (just as has now been resolved
upon), that Norfolk Island should remain a Crown Colony, and not be annexed to New South Wales, and nothing has occurred since then which affects the decision.

There are various other reasons which could be readily assigned why the present project should be abandoned, as we sincerely hope it may – but it should be proceeded with, notwithstanding the memorial and protest now submitted to your excellency, we respectfully request that this paper and this letter be forwarded to the secretary of state for the colonies, and that he be asked to submit them to Her Majesty the Queen, who has ever exhibited a like regard for the wishes and happiness of the humblest of her Colonies as of the greatest.

We are, &c.

BYRON ADAMS,

Chief Magistrate, Norfolk Island

O. Masey Quintal,

Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court
of New Zealand

Norfolk Island; Delegates

5. Petition to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, 1972


May it please Your Majesty: In 1856 Your great-great-grandmother Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria reserved Norfolk Island for Her loyal subjects of Pitcairn Island.

Our original Pitcairn community were moved here, and Norfolk Island was proclaimed a distinct and separate settlement in the Crown’s Dominions. Since then both the men and women of Norfolk Island have willingly fought for the Crown in every war in which our Sovereign has called on us to serve.
In 1914 Your grandfather the late King George V gave to the Commonwealth of Australia responsibility for the peace, order and good government of Norfolk Island.

Like a Colony we do not have representative government or right to vote how we shall be governed. We do not seek representation in Australia’s government or as any right to vote how that country should be governed.

In governing us Australia has given to Norfolk Island certain benefits. We are deeply grateful for its benevolence. Yet our community does not want charity to support us.

Now Australia has begun making changes on Norfolk Island which are not to secure our peace, order and good government and which in some cases may harm us greatly. It has brought down complicated laws which appear to deal with Australian conditions rather than with the welfare of our community. It has announced a new scheme of taxation laws in our Island to solve problems that are Australia’s and not ours. It is considering making Norfolk Island a maximum security animal quarantine station for Australia, so that if there were unexpected dangerous diseases they would be prevented from infecting Australia by being confined to our few square miles of land – and has been plainly said that this decision will be made by Australia and that our own Island would not be the deciding factor. It has dealt weakly with the protection of our fishing waters, which are essential to us…

In such actions Australia appears to believe that it has the right to govern Norfolk Island and the land we have inherited as if we were a Colony owned by Australia. We do bot believe that it has ever been lawfully given such a right. The resolving of this difference of belief between Australia and ourselves appears to depend on the true meaning of proclamations by past Sovereigns of Norfolk Island and we respectfully believe that only Your Majesty can impartially rule –

*Whether* His Majesty the late King George V gave Australia only the power to take actions for our peace, order and good government; or whether he gave Australia power to govern Norfolk Island any way it wishes.
Whether Norfolk Island remains, as Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria declared it to be, a distinct and separate settlement; or whether Norfolk Island has become part of Australia.

Whether we may continue to give our first loyalty to Your Majesty and look to you for our ultimate protection; or whether by accepting Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria’s offer of Norfolk Island, our original community was unknowingly sacrificing its rights and privileges as a dependency of the Crown as Pitcairn Island still is.

Our way of life and the future of our community depend on how these questions are answered. If we remain silent and Australia continues to exercise its assumed power over us, we fear that our birthright will soon have been lost forever.

We, whose signatures are attached, therefore respectfully beseech Your Majesty, with as great urgency as may be thought fit, to direct us and those that govern us how these questions shall be answered…

6. Letter from Norfolk Island Elders to Kevin Rudd
(Printed in *The Norfolk Islander* 17th Jan, 2009)

The following is a copy of a letter sent to The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia. It is signed by 14 elders of our community, and all signees were born in 1928 or before:

The Honourable Kevin Rudd
Prime Minister
Canberra

Dear Prime Minister Rudd,
When our people arrived on Norfolk Island *en masse* from Pitcairn Island on June 8, 1856, it was with the understanding that this island would become our new home. A Great Seal was issued for the new Crown Colony of Norfolk Island by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, with the name of Pitcairn Island and a ship landing amidst Norfolk Island pines to
commemorate this great gift to the Pitcairn people. On that day, Pitcairn Islanders became Norfolk Islanders. This island has been our home ever since.

We, the undersigned, representing the majority of the island elders of our community, welcome the ensuing dialogue between the Australian government and our elected officials regarding improving the relationship between the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island. We are Australian citizens and are grateful for the protections that bestows. But as the elders, we are also concerned at what these talks may hold for the future of the Norfolk people.

As your government proceeds to examine our best interests, we ask you to keep in mind these two related questions: when the new conditions are fully realised, will we as a people still exist and will Norfolk Island continue to be our home? It would be to everyone’s eternal shame if the answer were “no”.

Very humbly yours,

William “Pumpa” Adams
Marie Bailey
Lorna Christian
Owen Evans
Peggy Evans
Edith Mack
Baker “Foxy” McCoy
Rae “Tiny” Olsen
Doreen Olsson
Jim Olsson
Greg Quintal
H.J. “Jackie Ralph” Quintal
Mary Selby
Audrey Scott