

## Court-Martial

### William Peckover Testimony, Thu, Sep 13, 1792

**Mr. WILLIAM PECKOVER, Gunner of the "Antelope," but late of the "Bounty," called in and sworn.**

#### **Examined by the Court—**

**Q.** Inform the Court of all the Circumstances within your Knowledge respecting His Majesty's Armed Vessel "Bounty" being run away with.

**A.** I was awaked out of my Sleep by a confused Noise; directly after, I thought I heard the fixing of Bayonets. I jumped out, and put my Trowsers on; at the Door I met Mr. Nelson the Botanist, who told me that the Ship was taken from us; my Answer was we were a long way from Land. When I came off the Deck Mr. Nelson answered, "It is by our own People and Mr. Christian at their head"—or "has got the command," I don't know which—"but we know whose fault it is," or, "we know who is to blame"—I do not know which of those Expressions it was; I made Answer, "Let us go forward and see what is to be done." Going to the Hatchway, trying to get up, we were stopped by John Sumner and Matthew Quintal with fixed Bayonets down the Hatchway, who said, "Mr. Peckover, you must come up, we have Mutinied and taken the Ship, and Mr. Christian has got the Command"; those were the Words to the best of my Knowledge. In a short time after Mr. Samuel came up, and told us that he was going away in the small Cutter with Captain Bligh, Mr. Hayward, Mr. Hallet and himself, and advised with me what he should take with him. I told him that if I was in his Place, I should take but very few things, upon which he put a few Shirts and Stockings in a Pillow Case; some short time after, Mr. Fryer came down to my Cabbin he asked me what I meant to do for the best. [I replied] that I wished to get Home if I possibly could, for by staying behind we should be reckoned as Pirates, if we should ever be taken. He told me something about Captain Bligh, but what I can't say, and that he himself would be answerable for that, and he was ordered upon Deck just at this time. I was a long while down before I was ordered up, and when I came upon Deck I saw Captain Bligh, and Mr. Christian standing alongside of him with a naked Bayonet. I saw Burkitt in Arms on the Quarter Deck—John Mills, I can't say whether he was in Arms or not, but he had got a Cartouch Box bound round him. I asked Mr. Christian to [let me] go down forward to get some things out of my Chest; his Answer was, "Have you got no things down aft?" I told him, "No, only a few," and I stepped to the Gangway and went over the side; there was a Centry at the Gangway, but who, I cannot say. I saw Muspratt forward upon the Forecastle, he seemed to me as if he was about something in the Wood, he was not under Arms or in the Act of Splitting Wood. I saw three or four more People there, whose Names I do not recollect, nor do I know whether they were under Arms or not. Then I went down into the Boat; the Centry saw me down; then I believe there was about ten or twelve in the Boat.

The Cutter was lying alongs' with Michael Byrn in her. In about four or five Minutes after this, the remainder with Mr. Bligh came into the Boat; a short time

after they veered her astern with the Hauser, whilst we were lying under the Stern, Thomas Burkitt came and asked me if I wanted anything. I told him I had only what I stood in, a Shirt, and a pair of Trowsers; he told me if I would send my Keys up, he would go and get me some Cloaths. I told him that I had lost them, or dropped them overboard. He made me some Answer, which I do not remember, but told me that he would go and get me some; he was gone a short time, about 8 or 10 Minutes, and returned with a Handkerchief and different Cloaths, and threw them into the Boat; one more whom I don't know went down into my Cabbin and got me some more Cloaths. Coleman called to me over the Stern and beg'd that I would call upon a friend at Greenwich and acquaint him of the matter; then he said that he wished to come in the Boat. Mr. Cole at different times asked Captain Bligh to cast the Boat off, or cast her loose, that he was rather dubious of their firing into us. I cannot say the Answer that Captain Bligh made him, but the Boat was cast adrift, but by whom I can't tell.

**Q.** Were you upon Deck any considerable time, before you were put into the Boat?

**A.** I suppose three Minutes would exceed the time.

**Q.** Was you carried upon the Quarter Deck?

**A.** No.

**Q.** In what part of the Ship did you spend those three Minutes?

**A.** I believe I was upon the Combings of the after Hatchway.

**Q.** Did you see Christian?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Where was he?

**A.** On the Starboard side of the Quarter Deck.

**Q.** Could you distinguish every body upon the Quarter Deck from the Combings of the Hatchway upon which you stood?

**A.** By looking round I could, except those that were in the Wake of the Mizen Mast.

**Q.** Could you see any Persons that were not below that were in any other Part of the Ship?

**A.** All except those who were where the Pigs were stowed, as there was a Platform over them—on the Starboard side I could.

**Q.** What hindered you from seeing on the Larboard side?

**A.** The Main Mast—I don't doubt but I looked round there, but I saw nobody if I did.

**Q.** Were there any Centinels over you, during the whole time you were upon Deck?

**A.** I don't remember any—the two Centinels who were over us were at the bottom of the Ladder.

**Q.** Were you placed on the Combings of the Hatchway by the Centinels, or were you at liberty to stand in any part of the Ship?

**A.** I was not at liberty to stand in any other part of the Ship—Mr. Christian desired me to go into the Boat; he told me that the Boat was alongside, and that Captain Bligh was just agoing In.

**Q.** What number of Men did you see under Arms, in any Part of the Ship?

**A.** Thomas Burkitt; John Mills with a Cartouche Box round him, but whether he was under Arms or not I won't pretend to say; Christian had a Bayonet in his Hand; the two Centinels who were below, John Sumner and Matthew Quintal.

**Q.** Are you sure that you saw no other Person under Arms, but those which you have mentioned?

**A.** No more than what I have already mentioned.

**Q.** Name them over again?

**A.** Christian, Burkitt, Sumner, Quintal.

**Q.** Where were the Arms of the Ship kept?

**A.** All in a Chest upon the Main Gratings.

**Q.** Was the Arm Chest usually kept locked?

**A.** Yes—with the Keys in the Master's Cabbin.

**Q.** How long was it from the time that you first heard of the Mutiny till you went into the Boat?

**A.** I suppose it might be about two hours, or two hours and a half.

**Q.** How many People did the Ship's Company of the "Bounty" consist of?

**A.** Forty-three, I believe, at that time.

**Q.** How many of those did you consider were concerned in the Mutiny?

**A.** Four or five.

**Q.** Was it your opinion that four People took the Ship from nine and thirty?

**A.** Not by any means.

**Q.** Give your reasons to the Court for thinking so?

**A.** There certainly must be more concerned, or they could not have taken the Ship from us; those that I mentioned were all that I saw under Arms when I came upon Deck.

**Q.** What were your particular reasons for submitting, when you saw but four Men under Arms?

**A.** I came naked upon the Quarter Deck with only my Trowsers on, and there I saw Burkitt with a Musquet and Bayonet, and Christian alongside of Captain Bligh, and the Centry on the Gangway, but who he was I do not know.

**Q.** Did you expostulate with Mr. Christian on his Conduct?

**A.** I did not.

**Q.** Did you go with the Centinels who were over you?

**A.** I reasoned with them below, but to no purpose.

**Q.** Was any Force used towards you, to put you into the Boat?

**A.** The Centries see me up and Burkitt, as I mentioned before, upon the Quarter Deck, and Mr. Christian ordered me to go into the Boat.

**Q.** Did you on that day see Joseph Coleman?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did he appear to be under Arms?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What was he doing when you saw him?

**A.** Looking over the Stern.

**Q.** Did you see Peter Heywood, the Midshipman, on that day?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see Michael Byrn?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** At what time did you see him?

**A.** Nearly 8 o'Clock.

**Q.** Was he under Arms?

**A.** No, he was in the Boat alongside.

**Q.** Did you see James Morrison?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see Charles Norman?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Was he under Arms when you, saw him?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What was he doing?

**A.** Looking over the Stern.

**Q.** Did you consider him at that time as one of the Mutineers?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see Thomas Ellison?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see Thomass McIntosh?

**A.** Yes, he was looking over the Stern.

**Q.** Did you consider him as one of the Mutineers?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see William Muspratt?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Was he under Arms, when you Saw him and what was he doing?

**A.** No, He was forward upon the Forecastle.

**Q.** Did he appear to be obeying the Orders of Mr. Christian?

**A.** He was doing nothing, he was standing upon the Forecastle.

**Q.** Did you see John Millward that Day?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Was he under Arms when you saw him?

**A.** Not to my Knowledge.

**Q.** Did you consider him as one of the Mutineers?

**A.** It is impossible to say, he was not under Arms.

**Q.** Was he one of those People who awed you to go into the Boat?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You say you saw Joseph Coleman looking over the Stern, did you consider him as one of the Mutineers?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You saw Michael Byrn in the Cutter; did you consider him as one of the Mutineers?

**A.** No.

**Q.** In the former part of your Evidence you have said, that you were put into the Boat by the Centinel—Do you know who that Centinel was?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Was there a Centinel on the Gangway as you went over the Ship's side?

**A.** There was, but I can't say what his Name was, and he must have been under Arms at the same time. I cannot be upon Oath, whether he was under Arms or not.

**Q.** In what Situation was Byrn in the Cutter when you saw him?

**A.** To the best of my knowledge, he was standing in the Cutter. I don't remember whether he was about anything or not.

**Q.** Did he seem to be in sorrow?

**A.** He did.

**Q.** Did you see Norman when he looked over the Stern as you have before described call out to any Person in the Boat?

**A.** I do not recollect.

**Q.** What are your reasons for believing that Coleman, Norman, McIntosh, and Byrn were averse to the Mutiny?

**A.** I often heard Captain Bligh mention it in the Launch.

**Q.** But what was your own Observation?

**A.** That when they were upon the Stern they appeared to wish to come into the Boat, what slight sight I had of them—I was busy about moving the Things in the Boat that I do not recollect only Coleman calling to me.

**Q.** In the former part of your Evidence in Conversation with Mr. Nelson, the Botanist, he said to you that you knew whose fault it was, or Words to that effect—do you apprehend that Mr. Nelson alluded to any of the Prisoners?

**A.** No—it is impossible to judge what he meant.

**Q.** Do you know whether any of the thirty nine People, who you say were not of the Mutiny or under Arms, attempted to relieve Captain Bligh?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or if they attempted to accompany him into the Boat?

**A.** I also understood, Joseph Coleman, McIntosh, and Norman, that they wished to come into the Boat; this is only what I heard Captain Bligh say.

**Q.** Those Men who remained in the Ship, did you believe them to be of Mr. Christian's Party, except Coleman, Norman, McIntosh, and Byrn?

**A.** We had every reason to suppose so.

**Q.** Do you know whether Burkitt had the Watch upon Deck, on the Morning of the Mutiny?

**A.** Yes, he had.

**Q.** Was Muspratt one of the Watch on that Morning?

**A.** I believe he was not in a Watch, he was in a Galley.

**Q.** Was it Ellison's Watch upon Deck?

**A.** I believe it was; I can't say, he was not in my Watch.

**Q.** Had Norman that Watch?

**A.** I believe he was; he was not in mine.

**Q.** Had Coleman and Byrn that Watch?

**A.** I am not certain. Byrn was, I think.

**Q.** Where was Millward at the time you saw him?

**A.** Looking over the Stern.

**Q.** In what Watch did Mr. Heywood, the Prisoner, do his Duty?

**A.** In the first Watch, with Mr. Fryer.

**Cross-examined by JAMES MORRISON—**

**Q.** Do you recollect when you was in that Boat astern of the Ship, that I did hand over the Cutlasses and five or six and twenty Pieces of Pork, two large Gourds of Water, and a ball of Spun yarn to sling the Mast alongside the Boat?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you ever observe anything in my Conduct that would lead you to think I was concerned in the Mutiny?

**A.** No.

**Cross-examined by THOMAS BURKITT—**

**Q.** Did you see me when you came upon Deck offer to force you or anybody else into the Boat, or use any bad Expressions or make Game of anyone Person in the Boat?

**A.** No further than standing there with a Musquet and Bayonet fixed.

**Q.** Did ever my Conduct during the Voyage and during the five Months that I was with you as a Centinel at Otaheite before that Morning give you reason to suspect that I was a ringleader in the Mutiny?

**A.** Not in the least.

**By the COURT—**



**Q.** Who were Mr. Christian's Messmates?

**A.** Mr. Elphinstone, Mr. Young, Mr. Hallet and Mr. Ledward, the Surgeon's Mate, and Robert Tinkler.

**Q.** When he relieved you at 4 o'Clock in the Morning, did you observe anything particular in his Conduct, or in his Manner?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Were there any Centinels usually placed on board the "Bounty" in any part of the Ship at Sea?

**A.** No.

**The Witness withdrew.**