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CHAPTER 5

“Sometime is lies”

Narrative and identity in two mixed-origin island languages

Rachel Hendery, Peter Mühlhäusler, and Joshua Nash

We compare Pitkern-Norf’k and Palmerston narratives to each other and to narrative construction in other more well-known English dialects. This will demonstrate that narratives of these two beach community languages differ from the latter in many parallel ways. We discuss the narrative types ‘historical stories’ and ‘tall tales’ taken from the historical record and from our own field-work on Palmerston Island and Norfolk Island. Stories the islanders tell about themselves and their history will be the main focus as these illustrate the islanders’ conception of their identity. Pertinent questions of historicity arise when multiple conflicting accounts of an event exist, or when the islanders’ own oral histories differ from the information in the European colonial record.

The Pitkern-Norf’k language is one of the outcomes of the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789. When a small group of British sailors and their Tahitian consorts exiled themselves on Pitcairn Island, a new society and a new language emerged within a generation. In 1856 the entire 193 strong population of Pitcairn Island was re-settled on Norfolk Island. Several families back-migrated to Pitcairn in the 1860s and the population of Pitcairn is now around 50 people.

The variety spoken on Pitcairn is referred to as Pitkern and that on Norfolk Island as Norf’k. They are mutually intelligible dialects of the one language, which can be subsumed under the label Pitkern-Norf’k. The inhabitants of both islands continue to feel closely related and contacts are on the rise. These connections are both literal (e.g. cultural and linguistic ties) and mythical (e.g. narrative constructions within the stories shared by the two islands). The Pitkern-Norf’k narratives in this paper are mainly from Norfolk Island.¹

Palmerston English arose in similar circumstances to Pitcairn, when the previously uninhabited Palmerston Island (Cook Islands) was settled by the Englishman

1. If the reader wishes to find out more about narratives from Pitcairn, a number of Pitkern discourses and narratives can be found in a paper by Källgård (1993).

William Marsters, his three Cook Islander wives, a Portuguese-Creole-speaking man, and around 10 others not named in records but referred to variously as “Tahitians” or “Cook Islanders from Atiu”. The island now has about 50 inhabitants and is a 3–5 day boat journey from the nearest other inhabited islands. The inhabitants are monolingual speakers of a dialect that shows influence from both William Marsters’ Midlands English dialect and from Cook Island Māori (Hendery, 2012; Hendery & Erhart, 2013). The Palmerston narratives discussed in this paper come from a variety of historical sources, as well as from Hendery’s fieldwork in 2009 and 2013.

Our main theoretical point relevant to narrative studies and narrative coherence is that despite the different locations and language histories and influences of our case studies, similar narrative systems have developed which exemplify how insular speech communities interact through stories, language, and group behaviour. The narratives discussed in this paper run the gamut from oral history, to ghost stories, through to ‘small stories’ (conversational, unelicited narratives, c.f. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 1998). Our descriptions provide a possible approach to documenting and theorising about island peoples and island languages which may also be applicable to insular communities in other parts of the world. We begin by describing some of the important themes of the narratives of these islands, including idyllicisation, truth and lies, and the ocean. In the second part of the paper we outline some ways in which narrative construction is constrained by the social realities of small communities.

Approaching island narratives

Idyllicisation and historicity

Both Pitcairn Island and Palmerston Island have been the subject of romantic imaginings since their stories have been known to the outside world. Amoamo (2012) describes how this mythologising of Pitcairn Island takes place through retellings of the *Bounty* story and asserts that islands in literature and popular culture serve as distant paradises: they symbolise the possibility of starting afresh, of reinvention, and even salvation from a fall from grace.

The conversion and redemption of the Pitcairn Islanders following an initial period of brutality, sexual excesses, and laxness became a key topic in the nineteenth century religious literature resulting in hundreds of articles, tracts, and booklets dealing with this miraculous story. The Pitcairners acquired the reputation of being a particularly pious and clean-living people, which generated a huge amount of goodwill and generous gifts from visiting vessels. It also played a major role in the resettlement of the Pitcairn Islanders on Norfolk Island in 1856 when

the Pitcairners were given large parts of Norfolk and also generous help with their passage from Pitcairn and during the settling in period. The new settlement was a social experiment, with the primary question being whether continued isolation would lead to a morally perfect group of people. The morals of the Norfolk and Pitcairn Islanders have been under scrutiny ever since the Pitcairn Island population was discovered by outsiders in 1809. Outside interest in their moral affairs continues to be a discourse in present-day tourism (e.g. Amoamo, 2011). On the one hand, meeting outside expectation has been a source of income. On the other hand, it has also generated great tension between how people want to live and how they are expected to live by those in the outside world.

This "island utopia-dystopia effect" (Mühlhäusler, 1998; Mühlhäusler & Stratford, 1999) has also skewed the few images of Palmerston presented in the media and even in academic literature. The story of young William Marsters coming from England to build a new society from scratch on an uninhabited island together with his three wives is much more romantic than the more historically accurate version, in which there was already a labour gang on Palmerston, who had been there for several years working copra (Hart, 1891; see also Hendery, 2013). The story could therefore be told as the tale of a Portuguese sailor and a group of Cook Islanders who remained on Palmerston after their initial work contract expired, and who built a new society together, joined later by an Englishman. This is not, however, the story commonly told by islanders or outside writers.

Descriptions of Palmerston focus on its isolation, its religiousness, and its simplicity of lifestyle. Such facets are valid aspects of island life, but it is also true that August and September can see two or three tourist yachts at a time moored off the island with new visitors arriving every day. Most Palmerston Islanders have close family on Rarotonga or in Auckland, and phone them every few weeks, visit them once a year or so, and many families spend as much as six months a year off-island.

The romantic elements of the Palmerston story are no doubt also appealing to those who live there. Their own focus in oral histories and songs is on William Marsters, *a brave hero*, not on the majority, who were Cook Islanders.² They talk and sing about their *island paradise*, which is *blesseded by God*.³ At the same time there is widespread awareness of the social and economic problems of the island.

2. The reference to Marsters as a 'brave hero' is from one of the oldest songs the islanders sing, which begins 'Oh William Marsters was a brave hero'. Several more modern songs refer to an island paradise. The reference in the following sentence to the island being blessed by God is a quote from a Palmerston Islander in an interview Hendery recorded in 2009. Unless otherwise stated, in the rest of this paper quotations and excerpts from Palmerston stories are from the author's own fieldwork.

3. Paradise is a metaphor frequently used by Norfolk and Pitcairn Islanders with regard to their islands too.

The history is not as straightforward as it is sometimes portrayed. Different histories are favoured by different families. When Maureen Hilyard self-published a book in 2008 claiming to have identified the family background of Marsters and to have traced his activities in the Pacific before coming to Palmerston, this caused division between those islanders who believe she might be right and those who argue her statements are ‘all lies’. This tension between historicity and romanticism expresses itself in the oral histories of the island.

Similar historical debate exists for Pitcairn and Norfolk. The story of the mutiny of the *Bounty* and the troublesome first decade of the Pitcairn Island settlement has been told and retold numerous times. The various accounts given by John Adams, the sole male survivor, contradict each other, and the story told by Rosalind Amelia Young (1984), daughter of the mutineer Edward Young, glosses over the many unpleasant details of early history, including the racial tensions that led to the murder of all Polynesian males within a short period and the suppression over the next 50 years of Tahitian language, religion, and cultural practices. In this connection it is significant that Tahitian traditions of folk tales and myths are not in evidence in any of the narratives told by the Pitcairners. Similarly, Polynesian myths are not part of Palmerston Island storytelling culture.

The stories both groups of islanders tell about themselves and their history influence their perception of self and identity in terms of their cultural past and often hazy present. Pertinent questions of historicity arise when multiple conflicting accounts of an event exist, or when the islanders’ own oral histories differ from the information in the European colonial record. A vivid example is the insistence of both Norfolk Islanders and Palmerston Islanders that their respective islands were given to them as gifts by Queen Victoria. These accounts are retold both within the communities and to visitors and are appealed to when negotiating with Australia (Norfolk) and New Zealand (Palmerston) about matters of government.

Truth-telling

In small communities differences in tellings of historical events can loom large, causing rifts between families who believe each other to be lying or misrepresenting events. Norfolk Island and Palmerston Island deal with these tensions differently. In Palmerston narratives, the question of the truth of a story and the teller’s knowledge of such is usually foregrounded very explicitly. For example, in a story about the history of the island and its settlement by William Marsters, the storyteller notes, “There was an anchor on the beach and he took the anchor and dumped it in the [sea] so that he can claim the land. *So, I don’t know how true it is. Really don’t know.*”⁴ The storyteller then contrasts this with something he admits

4. Here, and in the following quotations, the italics are inserted by the authors to indicate the relevant part of the quotation.

to making up: "Well sometime is lies. I's a told him, you know, believe it or not. If you want to believe it you believe it. If you don't, then you don't."

Even in much more formalised, long-form narratives, assertion of truth usually makes an appearance. In a long story about her childhood, an elderly woman says, "when we go round, say, the other islands to find a coconut on the beach, we just cut it, open it up, is full with maggot. *Yeah, that's true.* Full with maggot." Another elderly woman telling a story about her fighting in the schoolyard as a child concludes with, "So, there are two ways of a thing. I lived a two different life. *I'm saying this truthfully.* And I fight at school so that they won't fight me anymore."

Overt assertion of truthfulness is much less in evidence in Pitkern and Norf'k narratives, though a larger body of data might require a reassessment of this statement. One reason for the absence is that historically, Pitcairn Islanders, after their conversion, were renowned for their plain speaking. The two books available on Pitcairn Island between the mutiny and the island being opened to the outside world in 1809 were the Bible and the Reverend Doddridge's *Practical Discourses on Regeneration* (1742). In this important work, read and quoted by the mutineer Edward Young, we find a passage that expresses their attitude to using language.

It is a sufficient consolation for our labours, and far more than an equivalent for all, if we may have a testimony in our consciences, that we compose and regulate our discourses in such a manner as may be approved by God, in whose name we speak.

It is noteworthy that the word for untruth or lie in Pitkern Norf'k is *stolli* 'story'. If it is not a story, it must be true by default. Note, however, that the word 'story' when used in English to refer to Biblical stories has no such implication. The Bible, until very recently, was accepted as divine truth by all Pitcairners. The Pitcairners are diglossic and the domain of religion has always been talked about in English. There is no Pitkern Bible translation nor are religious services held in Pitkern or Norf'k.

Truth and tall tales

Truth assertion becomes much more complex in a genre especially popular on Palmerston Island: the tall tale. These stories are often told to outsiders with a straight face, as a sort of gullibility test. The true entertainment provided by the story is then at the expense of the outsider and serves a purpose of community bonding.

An example from Palmerston Island is found in a 1959 interview between John Burland and Ned Marsters, in which Ned tells John about how squid like to climb pandanus trees and *spring down on the white sand*. In a short text of 131 words, Ned asserts the truth of his story explicitly three times with *that's true*, and importantly, notes once that some outsiders do not believe it.

A similar example from Hendery's fieldwork is story 1 in the Appendix to this paper, in which a group of Palmerston Islanders tell her about all the exotic wild-life that exists in their lagoon: elephants, cats, hippopotamuses, half-crocodiles, and, all joking aside, seals. Several days later, they clarify that they were joking about the seals too. But rather than seals, they have *eels*, and not just salt water or fresh water eels: "We have in-between eel. Between salt and fresh." One of the bystanders interjects on Hendery's behalf, "You're making her want to charter a boat and leave."

This final statement is the key to this sort of joking. It draws a sharp line between insiders, who understand the jokes, and outsiders, who are supposed to be confused by them and therefore remain 'outside'. While Hendery had tried to claim status as more of an insider by joking along with the Palmerston Islanders about the hippopotamuses, and making it clear she had not fallen for that story, the joke was nevertheless on her, because she had not seen through the second layer of the tall tale: the story about the seals was also untrue. The social bonding created as these tall tales solidify the insider/outsider distinctions also means that a popular story genre on the island is a meta-level description of a tall tale: a story *about* how someone fooled a visitor into believing an untruth. This is illustrated in the second example in the Appendix, in which E tells about the time he tricked a visitor into believing squid are unsafe to eat.

In the story about the seals and the hippopotamus E backs up S's claim about the seals with "No, is true." Even later, when they are admitting that ninety percent of what they have been telling the researcher is a joke, they claim "Ten percent is the language. *Is true.*" Interestingly, in the story about how E tricked a visitor into giving him some squid, A is careful to point out to Hendery that "he was lying!" and to explain the motivation. This can be read as a deliberate attempt to bring her into the inner circle, at least for the duration of this story, as the unnamed visitor serves the role of the fooled outsider, and the insiders, including the researcher, are laughing at his gullibility.

Isolation, island life, and the ocean

Pitcairn, Palmerston and, to a lesser extent, Norfolk are unusual in Pacific colonial history in that the "colonial" newcomers arrived to a blank slate. Although the population of early settlement was a combination of Polynesians and Europeans, neither group was indigenous, so the culture and language of the new settlement was co-created more than imposed. Post-colonial anthropology and history of the Pacific have noted that the ocean plays a very different symbolic role in Pacific narratives and understanding of the world than it did in the Colonial European world. It is considered to be 'hostile', 'romantic', or 'empty' to Europeans

(cf. Corbin, 1994; Deloughrey, 2013), but from the perspective of many Pacific peoples is a densely populated place that connects people through trade and navigation (Hau'ofa, 1993; Lee, 2009). This environmental context is key to interpreting the narratives told by Norfolk, Pitcairn and Palmerston Islanders, as indeed some have argued is the case for the interpretation of any narrative:

A second problem arises from examining people's autobiographical stories in isolation, more precisely: in textual isolation. In a sense, isolating narratives from their discursive contexts and cultural life world is already part of the Aristotelian conception of narrative. While such an approach may seem plausible if we take narrative to be a written text, it is precarious if we want to approach a person's autobiographical narratives in order to understand his or her brain, mind, sense of self, and identity construction. [...] We believe the main difficulty of this approach results from its tendency to decontextualize stories. More precisely, it decontextualizes self-narratives from three essential areas or aspects of what Alexander Luria (1979) called the "living reality" of human beings: the intersubjective context in which all stories are told (which includes the dialogic or discursive relationship between teller and told), the larger autobiographical context that is behind all self-narratives (which includes one's life history), and the socio-cultural context (which includes the social environments in which narrators share their lives with others). (Hyvärinen, 2010, p. 21–22)

In narratives from Norfolk and Palmerston, we see the islands characterised by their own inhabitants as 'remote' and 'isolated' and the ocean as something to be feared. Fishing stories rarely feature boasts about the size of the catch, but are concerned with the dangers and hardships of fishing and with the islanders' dependency on fish as their staple food. Drowned people returning as ghosts are a frequent occurrence. Wiseman (1977, no pagination) writes in his chapter on Norfolk Island 'Haunting':

... there is that odd feeling of isolation and loneliness that characterizes Norfolk. Maybe this is due to the convoluted landscape limiting observation in most places to a few hundred yards, and sometimes concealing the older houses until you are almost upon them.

He retells a number of popular ghost stories, as do Maev and Gil Hitch (Hitch & Hitch, 1988) in their little book of Norfolk Island *forms*, the word for 'ghosts'.⁵ Gaye Evans (2013) recently produced a ghost story book for children, featuring the Hukimilish, Norfolk's resident bogeyman. Many ghost stories told to children feature Billy Tin, a scary figure who frightens people in *friedy* (scary) places such as Ghost Corner or Ghossie Ghossie. Recurrent themes in Norfolk ghost stories

5. Interestingly, the colloquial term for ghosts on Palmerston Island is also *forms*.

are drowned people turning up in the houses of spouses and relatives and big cattle-like monsters (*friedi mumu* – scary cows) who obstruct people's paths. Examples of such stories are given in the appendix as stories 3–6.

On Palmerston, many stories focus on shipwrecks, hurricanes, tidal waves, and drownings. Even in stories that do not involve death by ocean misadventure, the sea is intimately connected to loss. Many stories are about people leaving by boat and not returning, or about young people trying to run away by boat and failing, or being caught and brought back.

Stories about drownings sometimes have the dead appearing to their families before their death is officially announced, as in story 7 in the Appendix. That ghosts are to be feared is not explicitly stated in that narrative, but it is clear in another story recorded by John Burland, in which a man describes his reaction to a woman being possessed by the spirits of dead family members:

My skin feel just like a rasp and my head – oh big! Right from when I was a boy I been frightened of the ghosts, right up to that time and after.

(Burland, 1960, p. 261)

Interestingly, Pitcairn was “homely” and familiar and free from ghosts: as the narrator in a story (Appendix 4) observes:

Em use-er see dem thing on Norfolk Island dah's make we like Pitcairn better 'n here!
‘They habitually see these things on Norfolk Island. This is why we like Pitcairn better than here.’

The Pitcairn Islanders who relocated to Norfolk in 1856 experienced a difference between Pitcairn and Norfolk in terms of their control over the islands. They were the sole agents in making Pitcairn their home, but on Norfolk their settlement efforts were often thwarted by British, Melanesian and Australian outsiders. This difference expresses itself in terms of the islanders perceiving spookiness and evil spirits in the latter place but not the former.

In the early years on Palmerston, Pitcairn, and Norfolk, the islanders did not have the material resources or the long traditions of local maritime activity that would have allowed them to master the ocean like Polynesians elsewhere in the Pacific, but were rather at its mercy in a way which much more closely resembled the experiences of their colonial relatives. The narrative association of the sea with danger, death, loss, and the occult can be seen as an expression of this.

Constraints on narratives

Pitcairn, Norfolk, and Palmerston Island societies are shaped by the amount of shared context among the islanders in their narratives. This means the degree of background information given in a story, and the use of explicit referents, such as names and places, is much less than in contexts where a storyteller could not rely on his or her audience sharing so much background.

Natural, non-elicited narratives in Hendery's Palmerston corpus rarely specify the place and are usually vague about time ("One time..."). The closest they come to specifying location is in E's story about tricking the visitor out of his squid, in which the story proper begins, "One time it was at a sailboat." This is not surprising, since the island is so small and isolated; all stories take place within about a kilometre square area. This is an example of the sort of "high context" communication style (in the sense of Hall, 1976) that is possible in such a small densely-networked community.

Narratives told to outsiders for their benefit contain more proper names, more background information, more description, and careful explanations of terms they might not be familiar with. An example of this is given below, an excerpt from a long story about a fishing trip. We have italicized the part that is clearly an aside for the researcher's benefit.

...when I got there I smashed up some bait very fine, chuck it in the water. *We call it paru, the fish paru 'charm', yeah. It's just you know, the charm that's over the fish – fish come up.* So I draw my fish in, 'Fish! Fish!'

By comparison, when Palmerston Islanders retell the Pear Story (a silent film created for the elicitation of comparable narratives from different languages, see Chafe, 1980), they know that the researcher is familiar with the video it comes from, and so do not use these explanatory asides. They also use few explicit subjects, even when this leads to ambiguity:

And then the boy came along on a bike. Stop. Got off his bike, put the bike down. Picked up one of the baskets, got back on his bike, put the basket on his bike and rode off. And on his way he saw the girl coming pass. Distracted him. Boy taken his hat off. Distracted him and he hit a big rock. Drop down, and he was on the ground suffering.

In this excerpt there are 15 main verbs ('narrative heads' in the sense of Labov & Waletzky, 1997), of which only five have overt subjects. In the two clauses where *distracted* is used, the implied subject is different from the subject of the previous clause, and in the second case, is not even the most recently mentioned noun. This is possible because the universe of potential subjects is so small and the hearer so

familiar with the story that the teller can assume enough shared knowledge to fill the gaps. And this is equally true of most stories set on Palmerston Island and told by islanders to islanders.

A related constraint on narratives in such dense multiplex societies is that new information is very valuable, since it is relatively rare for one person to know something that no one else does (cf. Keenan & Ochs, 1978). Refusal to share information can be direct, as in Pitkern-Norf'k, where it is acceptable to reply to *Larna me* 'Tell me about' with a speech formula such as *no larnen, I se sly* or *I se oop* 'I am not going to tell you'. On Palmerston Island a request for information that is not going to be provided is most commonly answered with a joke, or with a lie so obvious that it serves a humorous function. This is one of the roles of the tall tale.

Another aspect of societies in which so much is common knowledge is to avoid conflict by not mentioning the names of those who feature in a delicate story but refer to, as in Norf'k, *an old man, a man, eè, so and so, myse father*, or *sullun*. Another way of circumventing the need to identify the narrator as the originator of information is to employ the formula *dem tull* or *dem tullen* 'it is said that'. Norfolk Island's *dem tull* is the metalinguistic descriptor of a rumour, a frequently used device when avoiding personal responsibility for a story, or when one wishes not to threaten face. *Dem tull* is a powerful means of exercising social control. Similarly, on Palmerston Island, sermons frequently contain slightly fictionalised stories about an unnamed person who committed a specific sin, which serves both to put the individual on notice that his sins were observed by the community, and as a warning to others.

Leaving the narratives behind

Small island narratives offer cultural and linguistic insight into the interaction of small island peoples in remote and confined spaces. The stories told in these low-information island societies (cf. Keenan & Ochs, 1978) expose a desire to hold close information which may be useful cultural capital. Access to information through narratives is only given if one is not perceived as a threat to social stability.

We have outlined some of the common themes of narratives, constraints on narratives, and the roles of narratives in these small communities. We have shown that the themes are sometimes shaped by a tension between the islands' European and Polynesian heritages. For example, post-colonial narratives about the islands' histories are perhaps more idealised than the reality, and the islanders are torn between siding with this outsider perspective of an "island utopia" and admitting to the harsher experiences of life in a small remote community without easy access to much-needed resources. Unlike their Polynesian ancestors with thousands of

years of sea-faring prowess in their respective locations, the Palmerston, Pitcairn, and Norfolk Islanders were in unfamiliar environments cut off from their cultural and material resources, and subject through their European-born patriarchs to the colonial perceptions of the sea as an emptiness that separates and threatens. These tensions are expressed in the roles played by the ocean in both everyday narratives and ghost stories.

We have also discussed the narrative constraints, or, some might say freedoms, offered by geographically and demographically small communities such as these, such as the ability to leave details of place, time, and person implicit, and the necessity of protecting new information, sharing it carefully with the right people at the right time. We showed that Pitcairn, Norfolk, and Palmerston all have strategies for avoiding sharing information, such as outright refusal, joking, tall tales, and avoidance of attribution.

Finally, we argued that stories in these islands often share a purpose of community bonding, which is accomplished by strengthening the already strongly delineated boundary between 'insider' and 'outsider', both in terms of the ways in which storytelling to each audience differs, and also by telling stories at an outsider's expense.

It should be borne in mind that in describing the narratives of these islands, we are dealing with small populations who have resisted repeated attempts to assimilate them into mainstream Anglo culture and who have experienced much denigration of their linguistic and cultural practices. Describing their linguistic and cultural practices on an equal footing with those of other Pacific populations is a first step towards acknowledging and redressing this history.

Appendix

Full text of stories referred to in the paper

1. Elephants in the lagoon (Palmerston Island)

- E. I like raw fish. Good for your health.
 A. I love to eat fish.
 E. Just as they're small. The big too good to eat. Yeah well, cats in the lagoon. Elephants in the lagoon.
 S. Cat.
 E. And then 'e'll get big. There's a few only we have of them.
Hendery A few elephants, yeah?
 E. Every day you see one or two.
Hendery Yeah, I think I saw one.
 A. A hippo. A hippo.
 C. A what?

- A. A hippo we know.
Hendery Yeah I saw one swimming out in the lagoon. An elephant, yeah.
- C. Dolphin.
- E. There's sometime you don't see or when you see the hippopotamus. Hippothomas.⁶
 And when you go and swim early in the morning, you'll see it. You'll see some seals.
 You wait.
- A. Just listen.
- E. The crocodiles we have here is the half a crocodile.
Hendery Just the back half or the front half?
- E. The half is here.
- A. When they see you, you become the back half.
- S. Well last month, that was a possibility that we saw a seal here.
Hendery I – you still joking?
- E. No, is true.
- R. I thought they like colder water.
- S. Yeah, well, it's–
- A. That's what we thought too.
- S. That's was the second one we saw here and then the thing just went out and just disappeared: never came back again.

2. Not too sure whether it's good to eat (Palmerston Island)

And the squid, I thought we don't have them around our reef. But is here. Yeah and I really think I saw, one time it was at a sailboat. Well the boat came in. The sailboat came in in the morning about 7 o'clock. So I went out. And I see this birds on the water, eh? This thing. Well I thought it was flying fish. Just jump out of the water and down you know. All this time I thought was flying fish. And it was, the sailing boat was coming right into the middle of. And I see some jump up and a couple end up on the boat.

So we came in and drop anchor. I saw the guy on the boat said to me, oh, he's got squid on the boat. Oh there's a few of big ones! Still alive! Luckily they didn't crawl... go back out. Two. Two big ones. And I came and put it in my boat still alive. And I said to him, I'm not too sure whether it's good to eat.

- A. [laughs] He was lying!
- E. Because I didn't want him to eat it. Then I brought it.
- A. He wanted to eat it!
- E. Cook him, uh clean it. Straight in the frying pan with butter and onion and then I eat it!

3. Billy Tin Ghost Story (Norfolk Island)

What we, as children loved and dreaded were Uncle Willie's tales of ghosts (or spookies), particularly the accounts about Billy Tin, who haunted Bennett's Flat and had been seen and heard by many.

'Larna ucklen (tell us) 'bout dem time you bin see Billy Tin?' we would beg.

Uncle Willie would take his time getting his pipe to draw, a look of awe and contemplation on his face.

6. This joke – hippothomas – was perhaps at the heart of the whole story about elephants and hippos in the lagoon. Thomas is a teenage boy who is much larger than the other boys his age.

'Mind you', he would say, 'a ghoses only fer some people to see'.

'Charles says ent such a thing', I once said, bold in my brother's name.

'Oh, yes. Gut a ghose all right, boy. I bin see et.' Uncle Willie sat frightening himself with his memories. 'This night, I gwen down dere to Kingston, jest walken slowly. Myse horse, he es a gud horse, nawha any trouble. Es dark night en quiet as a rat hiding from dem dorgs. Then, jest as I come to a bend in dar road, I see this form come up outa one ah dem gutters. The horse snorted, he nor like et. I know et se ghose cos et se got no proper shape but es wet and thin as sea spray. I tries to pass but the damn thing starts climbing orna horse, longfa (with) me. By golly, et didn't take me lorng to get going'.

(Source: *In the Sweet Bye and Bye: Reminiscences of a Norfolk Islander*. Pauline Marrington 1981: 16)

4. Come up ah Mission Pool one hooley-hooley thing take me! (Norfolk Island)

A So, with dah, I tell him, take ah pig, start home on er sledge, I go catch my's horse, dah one dem use er uh eh take plough. Sometimes we take it in a scarifier, but – I go down catch ah thing, an' ah thing dah ahmerulla!

B Ah!

A Oh, an' when I come out – I gunna hawe er tell ah thing fer Aunt Tabe's again, - some o' dem 'theeg an' er thogue' ser ful up, ah saddle fer pine gum!

B O – ow!

A Well, I jump in ah saddle, nex' thing I know I ser pilli!

B You ser stick in ah thing!

A Oh, I pilli good!

B Well, I - er - ah! Haha!

A I tell ye, ah horse is rough' un! Kin' er dere trot-trotin', I ca' lip' out ah saddle!

B Well!

A Come up ah Mission Pool one hooley-hooley thing take me!

B Ah!

A An' hatyey dea form in front me, der fas' er I go, der fas' er dah form go! Well, you believe me, my's hair ser stan' up!

B Dah is ghos'!

A You thought!

B Oh, yeah, em use-er see dem thing on Norfolk Island – dah's make we like Pitcairn better 'n here!

A Well, ca' wah, but – e-e-eh! – dah thing dere plain as ah chapel!

B Ho-ow!

A Well, anyway I ser pummel ah road come up!

B Yeah!

A An' hatyey I is!

B Well, I glad you ser get here!

A You dunno whether Ol' Man goin' fer fish in er mornin'?

B I newer learn-er you. Dem mean er go?

A Dem mean er go. If he gwenner go, I gwenner sleep in des night.

B Anea, as you learn, too hooley-hooley dem cat an' em niao broom is good 'un.

C I newer nough gut er cattle up Palm Glen. Jus' when we break water in er open side gen dem big pine one speckle layhaw burn – er – powder gen ucklen, an frai is fraidy moo-

moo when ser savage daffy. I on'y nough' gut all dem' long fer me, I ser soop fer fraid. But good job I newer soop! So dah's dah!

B Anea! See, you moos-er soop fer fraid!

C But I tell er what I pilli on ah saddle! When we get home, me an' all dem tother one dead fer hilly, 'cause bin too hot up yanner.

(Source: *Studies in the Norfolkese Language, Part 1*, Arne Zettersten 1981)

5. *The Ghost Ship of Norfolk Island*

Just about every island has a story about a ghost ship and it usually revolves around an old sailing ship drifting in the fog or sailing past without a sound and disappearing into the mist! I must tell you about the ghost ship we saw off Norfolk one day recently and the only way I can tell it is the way it happened and use Norfolk landmarks which if you don't live on Norfolk will perhaps be a little hard to follow.

Joan and myself plus the grandchildren were driving down Middlegate Road about 2pm one hot sunny day to go for a swim in Emily Bay. As you get down to just before Panorama Court you get a great view over Kingston and a very large area of sea and the horizon and being a fisherman your eyes automatically scan the sea.

We noticed in the sea through the Norfolk pines just above Jackie Ralph's house, a ship slowly coming in towards the coastline and from the angle it looked like it was going to anchor just below Joe Nobbs' house or go around to Headstone. We stopped the car and watched the ship move closer to shore and it was about 100ft long with 2 masts (no sails up) with a high front and a very high stern and looked like it was made of wood. After about 10 minutes of watching the ship we drove down to the beach for a swim and about an hour later we thought we would go and have a look at the ship.

Firstly we went to Kingston pier thinking it might be there but no ship! A couple of fishing boats had just come ashore and they hadn't seen any ship so we thought it must be at Headstone where quite a few yachts and ships anchor at times so off we went and there was nothing at Headstone either! So we went up to the top tip to see if any of the guys that look after the rubbish had seen any ship passing by in the last hour or so and they hadn't seen anything! And they have the best view of the sea on the Island.

Well there we have it – we all saw it coming into the island but no one else saw our ghost ship which looked like one of those old Spanish galleons. We asked around for a couple of days but no one had seen anything and all we got was a few strange looks! But what we all saw was a ship that nobody else had seen.

(Source: *Hooked by the Sea*. Ian Kenny 1999).

6. *One white horse (Norfolk Island)*

One time one gal lost her husband and she miss hem dar much she usa go down dar cemetery at night foo talk to her departed husband – and one dark cold wintry night one white horse galloped past dar cemetery.

(Source: Told by Greg Quintal Snr 2009)

7. Ghost from the Ara-Ura (Palmerston Island)

The same night the Ara-Ura was lost Old William was reading on the bunk in his room when he looked up and sees a girl sittin' in the door of his house. He keep quiet and just look at her. She won't turn her face. He was there till she got up. He want to see her face so he know who this girl is. He was thinkin' it was Marion. The hair is all wet like she been in the water and come right o'er.

She got up and he follow her out of the house and down on the beach. He didn' call. He just following to see if she turn around. But he know by the way she walks it's Marion. When she got to the beach she flied off and gone.

Old William came right along to Tepou, the second wife and call her. He says, We got bad news. This woman was asking, 'What'? and he won't tell her. 'You wait until the ship comes in.' He went back home.

Two or three weeks later the ship got in. The passengers went straight up to William's house and told him. But William won't tell he know of it until after when he tell Tepou, and then she tell us. He won't let on. He was cryin' and when the news got about everyone cried.

Sarah and Tepou was knockin' themselves with stones and tearing their clothes and their hair and cryin'. We had to take the stones away from them, me and my cousin. The two wives later cut their hair right off all o'er as a sign of sorrow. When I see these two women cry like that, I can't cry myself. I thinks in myself, What's the reason that they knockin' themselves like this? But after my father died I see there is some reason for it. In the time of my father I nearly jump in the hole with sorrow.

(Source: Burland 1960).

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