Women as Agents of Change

A project co-funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (the CPA) and the Norfolk Island Branch of the CPA to commemorate Commonwealth Day 2011 on Norfolk Island South Pacific
The 14th of March 2011 is Commonwealth Day and the theme this year is “Women as Agents of Change”.

The Legislative Assembly of Norfolk Island is a Member Branch of the international body known as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (the CPA) which was founded in 1911 and this year, 2011, is its centennial year.

To celebrate the centenary of the CPA and to participate in commemorating Commonwealth Day, our CPA branch has embraced the Commonwealth Day theme and created both school and community based activities to promote Norfolk Island’s women, the CPA and the Commonwealth.

This, the fourth settlement of Norfolk Island, owes its origins to a very famous woman. Queen Victoria; who granted Norfolk Island in 1856 to the descendants of the Bounty Mutineers who settled Pitcairn Island following the Mutiny on the Bounty. The Pitcairn Islanders, having outgrown that tiny rocky outcrop they called their island home moved en masse to Norfolk Island arriving on HMS Morayshire on 8 June 1856.

This E-book is created to tell stories of the women who have been significant agents of change in the heritage of Norfolk Island. The Commonwealth Day edition of the E-book, which by necessity is limited in the number of stories it contains, will be launched at the Norfolk Island Central School on Commonwealth Day. Of course there are many more women who have been agents of change in the Norfolk story book and our E-book is the perfect tool to use for this purpose as it is unlimited in the number of stories it can contain.

We trust this first issue of the E-book will inspire and encourage both young women and men to be agents of change in your own lives and the future of Norfolk Island.

Robin Adams JP MLA
Speaker and CPA Branch President

March 2011
Queen Victoria

Victoria came to the throne of England in 1937, just a few months after her 18th birthday. She ruled for over 63 years, during a period of enormous growth and development, and at a time when the British Empire extended to over a quarter of the world’s population.

One of the smallest places in Queen Victoria’s “empire” was undoubtedly tiny Pitcairn Island, a tiny rock in the Pacific Ocean. The Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian wives had made Pitcairn Island their home back in 1789, during the reign of Victoria’s grandfather George the Third. For many years, they had remained isolated, with no contact with the outside world. When they were finally discovered in 1808, Victoria’s uncle, George the Fourth, was on the throne. By this time, the little community had turned to a strong faith in God, and had turned their backs on the violence and lawlessness of the past. The people of England, from the Sovereign down, took a strong interest in the people of Pitcairn and bore them a great deal of goodwill.

Ships travelling the Pacific via South America regularly visited the Pitcairn Islanders. It should be remembered that, at this time, a Ship’s Captain actually represented government authority, and these men not only did whatever they could to assist and advise the Pitcairn Islanders, but also conveyed news, letters and requests between Pitcairn and Britain.

It was Captain Elliot, of The Fly, who, in 1838, helped the little community to draw up a list of laws by which they could be governed. The captain would have brought them news of the new young Queen Victoria who had come to the throne just months before, and from that time on, the people of the island always sought news of their young Sovereign when ships visited.

The people of Pitcairn always regarded themselves as British subjects, and flew the Union Jack flag. Although their exact legal and constitutional position may not have been clear at this time, they were, without doubt, the Queen’s most loyal and grateful subjects. Her title of “Defender of the Faith” particularly appealed to them, as they also regarded themselves as full members of the Church of England.

George Hunn Nobbs had arrived on Pitcairn Island in 1828, and over the years had taken on a leadership role there. He became the island’s teacher and doctor, and also their pastor and spiritual advisor. Nobbs felt he would like to have some official authority from the Church of England, and it was arranged that he would travel to England to be ordained. His visit took place between 1852-3, and he was widely welcomed wherever he went, by authorities and ordinary people whose imaginations had been captured by the inspiring story of the Pitcairn people.

During this visit to England, Nobbs also took the opportunity to consult with the British Government about the need for the Pitcairn people to find a new home. The island was becoming too small for the community, which by then numbered 190. Consideration had been given to moving them to Hawaii, but the authorities were now thinking about Norfolk Island as a suitable place, as the penal colony there would soon be closing.

Towards the end of his visit, George Hunn Nobbs (now Reverend) had an audience with Queen Victoria herself and Prince Albert at their home in Osbourne House on the Isle of Wight. Later, Nobbs wrote about his embarrassment at the fact that when the Queen had held out her hand, he had, perhaps, grabbed it a little too eagerly and warmly. Such was his delight and affection, he may have forgotten the protocols. In any case,
the Queen presented him with a large lithograph reproduction of a painting of her and the Prince and their young family. This picture is still in a private home on Norfolk Island today.

Something we should remember is that when we are dealing with the "Crown", we are actually dealing with the constitutional government, headed by the monarch. However, the community that grew from the Bounty saga, because of their isolation and a degree of naïve innocence, tended to focus their loyalty on the person of the monarch himself or herself. In actual fact, although the Queen was a constitutional monarch, and did not exert any actual real power, we know that she took a real interest in politics right from the start of her reign, and would often consult with and give advice to her ministers, even having her favourites.

How did the Queen herself feel about these small outposts of her empire? There is no doubt that she encouraged the actions of her successive governments to exercise a beneficial oversight over all her subjects. As a monarch who herself was known for upholding strong values of integrity and honour, she believed that the Pitcairn and Norfolk communities, who had adopted strong religious and moral values after the Mutiny, were deserving of any assistance that her government could give.

It was with a feeling of gratitude to the Queen that 193 people made the journey from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island in 1856. Initially, each family was given a grant of 50 acres (20 hectares) Victoria's name appeared on the grant deeds. Further grants were given when the offspring of the original settlers married. They regarded their new island home and their individual grants of land as gracious gifts from Queen Victoria herself. This sentiment is still strong in many island families today.

When two groups of islanders found they could not settle on Norfolk, and returned to Pitcairn, they were concerned that Her Majesty would think them ungrateful for turning their backs on Norfolk Island, and took great pains to see that they themselves bore the cost of the voyage, and it did not come from the public pocket.

Over the ensuing years, both the Norfolk Island people, and the community that had re-established itself on Pitcairn, maintained their strong feelings of patriotism to Britain and devotion to the Queen. They took the opportunity to toast and salute their monarch whenever they could, and the occasions of the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees were causes for great celebration.

On Norfolk Island, when the 50th anniversary of Victoria's reign was coming up, the elders of the island looked for a suitable project to mark it. It was decided to encourage people to subscribe to a Queen Victoria Scholarship Trust Fund, for both Junior and Senior school students. This was a fitting enterprise, because Victoria had ruled over the period when educational opportunities had opened up enormously for both boys and girls. The scholarship awards continue to this day, and still carry great prestige, even though the monetary value is now small.

Because Victoria's era was a time of great expansion in travel, technology, commerce and industry, it was inevitable that the Bounty descendants would not continue to experience the same isolation as they had previously. Particularly on Norfolk Island, the little community began to see the changes that were taking place in the world, and they benefited not only from the new technologies, but also from the improved humanitarian values that were making life better for people.

When news of Queen Victoria's death reached the island in 1901, there was great sadness. She had ruled for 63 years and seven months. Few members of the community could recall any other monarch presiding over them. It was a difficult time for Norfolk Island's people. They had recently lost the right to elect their own magistrates and outsiders had been appointed. Their local laws had been repealed, and preparations were being made to eventually hand control of Norfolk Island over to the newly established Commonwealth of Australia. The relationship of the Norfolk Islanders with their Queen for over 60 years had underpinned the stable foundations of the community. Although their loyalty to the ruling monarch would remain, they had lost a familiar symbol that gave them comfort and protection.

Memorials to the great Queen were established all over the world, and it seemed surprising that the Norfolk
Islanders did not build one. In recent years, Miss Marie Bailey has decided to correct this situation. On the land in Queen Elizabeth Avenue that was granted by Queen Victoria to her grandmother Emily Bailey, on her marriage to George Bailey in 1875, Marie has established “Queen Victoria’s Garden.” The gardens contain many plantings, including exotic specimens from all corners of the former British Empire. There is a gazebo where a marble bust of the Queen sits on a table, surrounded by pictorial and written material relating to Queen Victoria and Norfolk Island.

Shortly before the completion of the project, Marie received a copy of a letter, originally written and signed in 1901 by a number of the island elders, to the authorities in England, requesting permission and assistance to erect a memorial to Queen Victoria on Norfolk Island. It is not known if a response was ever received, or indeed, if the letter was ever sent.

However, the text of this petition reveals the strength of the feelings of gratitude and debt in the hearts of the Norfolk Island people to the great Queen.

The letter reads in part:

“June 11th 1901

To His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward 7th

We the undersigned former inhabitants of Pitcairn Island and who left that island with our families hope that Your Most Gracious Majesty will not think us presumptuous in humbly addressing you It has been one of our most highly valued and greatest privileges to correspond with our great and beloved Queen Victoria whom death has taken from us........

...By the death of our great and beloved Queen Victoria we have lost a friend in need, a loving mother, a watchful protectress, and a beloved Sovereign

She in our time of need granted us Norfolk Island when Pitcairn Island was getting too small for our community and we were in consequence beginning to be in straightened circumstances.

She always watched over us in Pitcairn and Norfolk Island as only a loving Mother can. In prosperity and adversity our interests have been respected and protected...

Although a small and insignificant community when on Pitcairn Island, yet the men-of-war of our Sovereign frequently visited us supplying us with many necessities of life. They also assisted the authorities to preserve law and order, and helping in many ways to advance our community.

Her death has left an aching void in our hearts....

The writers go on to request the king to arrange for a suitable statue of the late queen to be sent to Norfolk Island as part of a memorial.

“We think that a life size bronze statue of Her Majesty Queen Victoria at the age of 57 years, which was her age when we came to Norfolk Island, is the most suitable memorial...”

The letter is signed by eleven Norfolk men, who describe themselves as “Your Most Gracious Majesty’s faithful and loyal subjects.”

In the early part of the 20th century, “Empire Day” was celebrated throughout the whole of the British Empire (later the British Commonwealth), and the day chosen was May 24th, which had been Victoria’s birthday. There was a special emphasis on participation by children, and a half-holiday was given on the day. Nowhere was it celebrated with greater enthusiasm or patriotism than here on Norfolk Island, and many of
the island’s older people will tell you about the special treats and festivities of those days. Children would wear red, white and blue ribbons, wave flags, and sing songs like “Rule Britannia.” and “God Save the Queen (or King).” The latter is still the National Anthem on Norfolk Island.

In the second half of the 20th century, the tradition died out, and the Queen’s Birthday was celebrated with a holiday in June. The old Empire Day became Commonwealth Day and is now celebrated in March. Norfolk Island is still proud to be part of that Commonwealth, along with over 50 other countries which used to be colonies of Britain, but which are now self-governing. The present Queen Elizabeth is the head of this great organisation, which has brought stability, sharing of ideas, and many benefits to the people and the governments who belong. Along with Norfolk Island, most of those other countries would look back on the time of Queen Victoria’s rule with a degree of nostalgia as a time when there was great economic and scientific progress, and the establishment of good democratic government. The fact that so many former territories and colonies have chosen to stay in the Commonwealth is a tribute to a monarch who ruled her subjects with great wisdom and integrity.

Mary Christian-Bailey first came to Norfolk Island as a schoolteacher in 1966. In 1970, she married Norfolk Islander Bernie Christian-Bailey, and they have five adult children. Mary has a passionate interest in Norfolk Island’s heritage, and in recent years has taken the opportunity to write about the island for magazine articles, and also in her blog http://devonhouse.blogspot.com
Our Polynesian Foremothers

Mauatua
Teraura
Vahineatua
Toofaiti
Tevarua
Teio
Teatuahitia
Teahuteatuatuaonoa
Tinafanea
Mareva
Opuarai
Faahotu

These are the names of the Polynesian women who settled on Pitcairn Island with their European and Polynesian partners in 1790. The first six women had children and the remaining six died childless although their contribution to the Pitcairn story is immeasurable. At least ten of these names can be broken down into meaningful morphemes that indicate nobility. This means that when the Bounty left Tahiti’s shores in the early hours of the 22nd of September, 1789, these women just disappeared from the genealogical chants which were routinely recited and committed to memory by the orators of the time for women of that position in society. They were already women of consequence and born leaders before they became embroiled in the Bounty story.

This is not what historians and academics have been telling us for the last two hundred years. As recently as 1964 it was written that only three of those women were of upper class background and the rest were ‘non descripts of the Polynesian lower classes who alone were normally permitted to consort with the crews of visiting ships’. In reality only the higher classes were allowed to have any sort of interaction with ship’s crews in those early contact years unless expressly authorised by the chief of the district. Such misinformation shows a kind of disregard for half of our Pitcairn heritage and the twelve women who played such an important role in developing the very fabric of our culture. It’s astounding that Fletcher Christian and John Adams’ lives are so well documented, but so little has been written about the women who nurtured and birthed a new people. It is essential to know our own ‘come from’ by studying the lives of these women.

How did those women cope when by love or kidnapping they found themselves captive on an island where no law or code of conduct prevailed? They didn’t have the familiar net of their cultural norms to fall back onto when they found themselves in a racial majority but under the thumb of a violent minority that they didn’t understand. They emerged from this chaos like glorious phoenixes from the flames, because somehow, they found a way to put things right. Those women were agents of change. They made the best of the situation, got on with it and educated their children who would similarly become agents of change in their own ways.

In Polynesian philosophy, a woman’s body, or more precisely her womb, becomes a vessel. Attached to that vessel is a cord, which when a child is born, will forever anchor and help them find their way through life and back home. Is it possible for us to reach back through the generations and know those women,
by recognising their tangible and intangible legacies (our language, our weaving, our cooking, our native medicines, our stubbornness, our sense of humour, our very DNA) and find those cords that attach us to them? Our ancestresses were women who had been groomed for leadership, and on Pitcairn they fulfilled their destinies in a way no one could have envisaged.

Their unexpected fate saw the Bounty arrive at Pitcairn Island in January 1790 accompanied by one baby girl, eight mutineers and six Polynesian men. Three years later, all of the Polynesian men had been killed, and only four mutineers and ten women survived, and seven children had been born. By Boxing Day, 1800, only John Adams, the ten women and a growing brood of children populated the small island. That first decade had been a period of massacre, chaos and birthing.

Throughout those anarchic times, the women were nurturing, feeding, raising and educating children. Much of the work fell on their shoulders. They farmed, fished, caught birds, cooked in earth ovens, and made barkcloth. The cloth they made clothed their little society, and was used for every conceivable activity needing fabric: bed linen, blankets, nappies, cooking, towelling, and gifting. They worked in little huts attached to their homes, a place where women and girls met together, as it was a feminine domain. For hours they would work at beating tapa cloth. This is where they let out their emotions, frustrations, hatched plans, sang and danced to stretch out their limbs cramped from sitting for long periods. The mothers and daughters created an innovative pattern to decorate their cloth. The quality and quantity of tapa cloth made by their daughters is extraordinary. Many pieces are now stored in museums and collections around the world.

At the beginning of the 1800s when the chaos was over and John Adams had his epiphany, he became sober and buckled down to teach the children to read and write from the Bible. Life became easier. This moment is a credit to him and also the women - it could only have happened with their support as they formed the majority of the adult population. Any assumption that the women wanted the children to become anglicised and converted to Christianity appears extremely impractical given there was only one Englishman living amongst the ten of them and that those women had their own religions. But I do believe they were relieved that the last mutineer had finally decided to direct his interest to the education of the children by teaching them to read and write; and that grass roots religion introduced by Adams actually complimented their own.

In 1808, Captain Mayhew Folger arrived, and from then on visits to Pitcairn became more frequent as the world discovered their existence. Folger’s first encounter was with Friday (also known as Thursday) October Christian, the colony’s first-born. He paddled a canoe out to the ship with two other young men with gifts of a hog, fruit and vegetables. This of course, was the traditional way of meeting anyone who came to one’s territory in the Pacific. At Folger’s departure, the women presented him with a long length of beautifully made barkcloth, following the ancient tradition of gifting cloth at the departure of a visitor. Many journals written by consequent visitors tell of the delightful first generation of children. They were tri-lingual, wrote and spoke English admirably and spoke Tahitian and the developing Pitkern. Their conduct was so exemplary that they became renowned for their pious and godly ways.

‘All that remains to be said of these excellent people is, that they appear to live together in perfect harmony and contentment; to be virtuous, religious, cheerful, and hospitable beyond the limits of prudence; to be
patterns of conjugal and parental affection, and to have very few vices. We remained with them many days, and their unreserved manners gave us the fullest opportunity of becoming acquainted with any faults they might have possessed.'

‘In person, intellect, and habits, these islanders form an interesting link between the civilized European, and unsophisticated Polynesian, nations…’

Before Adams died in 1829, John Buffett, John Evans and George Hunn Nobbs had married into the community. In 1831 all the inhabitants were moved to Tahiti and only Mauatua, Teraura, Toofaiti and Tinafanea survived of the original settlers. How can we possibly imagine their thoughts as they watched Tahiti’s shore approach from the decks of the ship? What were the words they spoke with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren? Imagine their feelings as they stepped back onto Tahitian sand; and their sadness as they took in the changes since their departure 41 years earlier. Tahiti was now on the verge of civil war and full of missionaries and whalers. Before long, their only thought was to leave again.

There were moments of joy meeting old and new family members. The young ‘Queen’ Aimata, a cousin to Mauatua, generously received them. Aimata adopted island-style Mauatua’s great-grandson Reuben Nobbs. She tried to make them as welcome and comfortable as possible, providing land and houses for them. But before long, many of the Pitcairn people contracted the Spanish flu, which was sweeping the island at the time. Tragically, Toofaiti and Tinafanea died, along with 12 other adults and children.

The Pitcairners procured passage back to their home by selling some of their belongings, and by the kindness of friends. They were broken hearted and dispirited having lost mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers, daughters, sons and grandchildren. Mauatua and Teraura were the only original settlers now living.

Not long after their return, they were visited by Joshua Hill, a charlatan who attempted to become a dictator amongst them. Their naiveté betrayed them, allowing Hill to cause much suffering and separation until he was overthrown some years later. They became vulnerable to the increased whaling crews in the area, which would eventually lead them to ask Captain Elliott of the HMS Fly to draw up a list of regulations for them in 1838. These ‘laws’ contained one very important detail: that a magistrate should be elected by votes of all inhabitants born on the island over the age of eighteen, and anyone who had lived on the island for over five years. This perhaps made Pitcairn the most democratic country of the day by giving women the right to vote. This egalitarian law complemented the way they lived as observed by Frederick Bennett,

‘A modest demeanour, a large share of good humour, and an artless and retiring grace, render the females particularly prepossessing … They bear an influential sway both in domestic and public politics; and this they are better calculated to do, since they are intelligent, active, and robust, partake in the labours of their husbands with cheerfulness …’

Bennett turned his attention toward Mauatua and Teraura.

The only survivors of the first settlers are two aged Tahitian females, who possess some interest, in association with the history of these islanders. The eldest, Isabella, is the widow of the notorious Fletcher Christian, and the mother of the first-born on the island. Her hair is very white, and she bears, generally, an appearance of extreme age, but her mental and bodily powers are yet active. She appeared to have some knowledge of Capt.
Cook, and relates, with the tenacious retrospect of age, many minute particulars connected with the visits of that great navigator to Tahiti. The second, Susan Christian, is some years younger than her countrywoman Isabella. She is short and stout, of a very cheerful disposition, and proved particularly kind to us; indeed, I flattered myself that I had found favour in the sight of “old Susan,” as she not only presented to me a native cloth of brilliant colours, which she had herself manufactured, but, bringing a pair of scissors, insisted upon my taking a lock of her dark and curling hair, flowing profusely over her shoulders, and as yet but little frosted by the winter of life.

Mauatua and Teraura had arrived at Pitcairn Island as the oldest and youngest women, and survived all of the original settlers. Teraura had made a life with Mauatua’s son, Friday (aka Thursday) October. At Kew Gardens England, there is a fragment of a piece of barkcloth that these women made together. Another fragment of a larger piece was gifted by Mauatua in 1841 for Peter Heywood’s wife when she was told of his success, marriage and death. Mauatua was actually on her deathbed at the time, suffering from an epidemic recently introduced by a visiting ship’s crew. She died a month later.

Teraura was witness to the first ‘Bounty Day’ celebration—this was the 60th anniversary of the burning of the Bounty. Nobbs wrote in the Pitcairn Island Register,

“At twelve a number of musketeers assembled under the flag staff and fired a volley in honor of the day. After dinner the community Male & Female assembled under [sic] in front of the Church, where the British flag was flying and gave three cheers for Queen Victoria, three for the Government at home, three for the Magistrates here, three for absent friends, three for the ladies, and three for the community in general: amid the firing of muskets, and ringing of the bell. At sunset the Bounty’s gun was fired, and the day closed in harmony and peace, much, very much have we to be grateful for both to God and man. It is voted that an annual celebration be observed.”

Teraura died on July 10, six months after that first celebration of Bounty Day. Only six years on, the whole of the population would move to Norfolk Island. The daughters, grand daughters and great granddaughters carried a legacy of good humour, marvelous hospitality, island culture and unique ways which have been passed down the generations to us, their descendants, today.

Pauline Reynolds is a descendant of Mauatua, Vahineatua, Teraura, Tevarua, Teio and Toofaiti. Two years ago, Pauline moved back to Norfolk Island with her Tahitian husband and their two children, Mauatua and Oihanu after living on Huahine (Toofaiti’s homeland), one of the outer islands of Tahiti, for 14 years. She has written extensively about the Polynesian women of the Bounty and been published in local and international publications. She has published two books: I’oa Tahiti-Tahitian names for Babies and Pitcairn Tapa – ‘Ahu no Hiliaurevareva. She has also written a small textbook for Norfolk Island Central School about the story of the Bounty to be published this year. She is currently finishing a book about the lives of the forgotten women of the Bounty and their daughters. In 2010 Pauline was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to travel to museums in New Zealand, Hawai’i, England, Scotland and Norway to study the barkcloth made by her ancestresses on Pitcairn. She hopes to become an agent of change in the way the Bounty story is told.
When you look closely at the early sepia and black and white prints of the early Pitcairn women who arrived on Norfolk Island on that cold, wet and blustery Winter's day in 1856 they present a rather evocative but somewhat sombre picture. In their inert state it is perhaps difficult to tell whether this is indicative of their frame of mind, or the time-frame in history within which they were taken. There is something so staunch, upright and wooden about them; something so very 'proper' in their clothing and in their stance. Their broad dark faces and thick frames reveal not only an almost tangible air of fear and apprehension, but also their dual ancestry for they are the daughters, granddaughters and great-grand daughters of Polynesian women, and the Englishmen who piratically seized HMAV Bounty just off Tofua in April 1879. It was of itself to become perhaps the most infamous mutiny in British maritime history yet today over 60 years on they were opening a new and quite different chapter in their history book.

Following the mutiny those on board the Bounty finally established themselves on tiny, isolated Pitcairn Island where after a period of murder and mayhem they settled down, began to live peaceably, married and had children. The anglo-Polynesian 'children of the Bounty' were for all intents and purposes, as the Tahitians so succinctly put it 'aaupiti' or double-minded people whose fathers belonged to one country and their mothers to another. At first they were bi-lingual, until eventually they developed their very own language. The girl children, as they grew into women and even as they became mothers themselves, spent long periods of time with their Polynesian mothers and learnt much about life, food gathering and preparation, tapa (bark cloth) production, and the traditional ways, especially of the women in their mother's ancient cultures.

When Admiral Fairfax Moresby visited Pitcairn in 1853 it was by then quite clear that the rapidly increasing number of inhabitants would soon necessitate removal to a larger place. George Hunn Nobbs who had become the Island's leader returned from his ordination in England to find the Pitcairn people suffering grievously from famine and disease. Following a request to Her Majesty Queen Victoria funds were established in the 'mother country' and arrangements made for the entire population of Pitcairn to be transferred to Norfolk Island. Queen Victoria's most gracious offer of a new home, and her ongoing attentiveness and generosity, ensured that she has remained a stately figurehead to whom the Islanders have always had a strong allegiance and continued to hold in very high esteem and affection.

On 2nd May 1856 amid a groundswell of grief and tears the final gut-wrenching hours saw them breakfast for the last time on Pitcairn. With heavy hearts the entire population of Pitcairn Island boarded the Morayshire which had come to transfer them to Norfolk Island.

Of the 194 people who arrived on Norfolk Island in 1856, 42 of them were women over 18 years of age; many of whom had been extremely sea sick throughout the thirty-six day voyage, and three or four of them had been alarmingly ill. Few of them had any real concept of life beyond their Pitcairn Island homes, other than those who had experienced the catastrophic attempted re-location to Tahiti twenty-four years earlier.

By 1850 the last of the Tahitian foremothers on Pitcairn had died. Six short years later when the Pitcairner women arrived on Norfolk in 1856 they brought with them many of the old ways of the Polynesian women; as well as the English ways of their mutineer 'fathers', and the ways of the Englishmen who had integrated into the community. In the time leading up to their transfer the Pitcairners lived under the British flag and considered themselves loyal British citizens. Despite any subsequent administrative changes, the notion of Britain as the 'motherland' and the British monarchy as benevolent keepers was a sentiment that some Islanders held on to well into the twentieth century.

Pressures from outsider or 'english' authorities as the Islanders referred to them, saw the implementation of language suppression measures and an increasing tendency among the Islanders themselves to live a curious double-life where they were schooled to behave and speak as 'english' men and women amongst the 'outsiders';
and to be ‘islanders’ amongst their own. It is in fact a sometimes largely unconscious pattern that continues to this day; and was so clearly and concisely illustrated by Island artist Jean Clarkson in ‘The Two Faces of My Grandmother’ in which she depicts her own grandmother Delia Adams’ double-life.

In early June 1856, apart from the Morayshire, H.M.S. Herald was at the Island doing surveying work, there was also a visiting whaling vessel on hand; both of which assisted in the disembarkation process. Arriving late in the afternoon of June 5th an early attempt was made to get some of the women ashore but the conditions prevented this occurring. They finally all disembarked on June 8th and Frederick Howard working on board the Herald had an opportunity to spend some time with the Pitcairners during the first few weeks of their arrival. He wrote of how the ‘majority of the female countenances are very pleasing’, that they had a most good humoured look about them and he went on to say ‘I think the women never spoke without a smile’ which he took to be ‘a sign of a happy mind’. He noted that ‘the women in general wear a peculiar kind of dress which make them look exactly like ‘Chinese’, especially as they do up their hair in Chinese fashion. Their petticoat is generally made of blue cotton drill and the upper thing which domes down within 18 inches of the ground, and shows the blue below, is of white cotton or calico and looks very well. They always go around with white pocket handkerchiefs round their necks which they sometimes tie round their heads in lieu of bonnets’. On Sundays they rigged up in their finest garb. He also commented on the fact that they were ‘lighter than the Samoan people and had very fine hair and eyes’. He made another quite curious observation when he visited Government House and saw an old barefooted woman in a very dirty looking gown which had once been white of about 60 years of age ‘talking to Mrs Stewart and Mr Sheppard in a perfectly easy and fluent manner and was smoking a short clay pipe at the same time’. Mr Howard wrote of how the women found some large pools of water and set about washing themselves. The friendly, open and easy countenance of the people is reflected in the fact that after a few days on the Island he was kissed by the women in greeting.

The bishop of New Zealand had visited the Island in the Southern Cross just before the Pitcairners arrival. Bishop Selwyn re-visited with supplies about two months afterwards and at the time the Rev. John Coleridge Patteson wrote ‘They all have the dress of poor people, with feelings of those gentle-born and nurtured. Two of John Adams’ daughters, the oldest people on the Island, are really magnificent women – like queens; old Hannah, with long black hair flowing almost to her waist, though sixty-five years old’. Mrs Sarah Selwyn remained on the Island whilst the Southern Cross continued on with its Melanesian missionary work. She assisted in the day school and Sunday school and tried to impress upon the minds of the young women and girls whom she taught the importance of practising habits of cleanliness and industry while young, teaching them also how to cook. Not satisfied with merely giving instruction she would visit her scholars at their homes to see whether those instructions had been followed or not.

On Norfolk Island the increasing pressures to be more ‘english’ and less ‘native’ would have a significant effect on how the Pitcairner women, and the Pitcairner community in general role-modelled themselves, who and how they perceived themselves to be; and inevitably who they wanted to become both as individuals and as
a community. Governor Denison’s first impressions in 1857 reinforced the general view of many in authority. He was less than favourable when he wrote “their apathy and indifference annoyed me at first, I thought it indicated an undue development of Tahitian blood, and I wished to bring out more of the Englishman’. The competing pressures of ‘English’ and ‘Island’ ways divided, and continues to divide individuals, families and the Islander community today. Mrs Sarah Nobbs, granddaughter of the original Pitcairn settlers records in some small way a picture of this brave and bewildering new world they now found themselves in:

‘Everything was so strange, the immense houses, the herds of cattle grazing, and in the distance the gigantic Norfolk pines, filled us for the moment with amazement.’

Many of the Pitcairners, and particularly the women, endured severe almost melancholic homesickness. They missed the warmth and small size of Pitcairn, as well as its yams, sweet potatoes, taro, and coconuts. They longed, in fact sighed for their old home and the old ways. In this strange new land they were filled with a multitude of fears and confusion. Bound under a new sky in a new land there were new ‘English’ skills for the early Pitcairner women to learn, strange overly large and formidable stone houses to become acquainted with containing internal fireplaces the first that they had in fact ever seen; they learnt how to whitewash a hearth, milk a cow, prepare and cook sheep and cattle, and ride a horse – most of them had never seen such things before let alone knew what was to be done with them.

There were of course some losses and some gains for the women in the move to Norfolk Island. In 1838 Pitcairn had made history when it became the first place in the English speaking world to introduce women’s voting rights. While Governor Denison left this law untouched during his visit to Norfolk Island in 1857 this precept was later reversed for a time when in 1903 voting and election to the Executive Council became the preserve of Island men over the age of twenty-five years. Today women again enjoy equal voting rights. Perhaps most tellingly with regard to the general status of women throughout the Islanders history is the fact that most Islanders trace their Pitcairn lineage back through both maternal as well as paternal lines.

If in those early years on Norfolk as the men went about the business of clearing allotments and building new homes, the women certainly set the tone for how this new life might be viewed. The early Pitcairner women raised generally large families in the convict-built Georgian buildings along Quality Row. At one end in No. 1 Quality Row Maria and John ‘Little Farder’ Quintal were raising nineteen children. At the other in No. 10 Quality Row Issac Young and Miriam “Milliyarm” Christian had sixteen children. In fact of the 194 people who arrived in June 1856 there were 110 children under 17 years of age among them; the care burden was therefore quite considerable. In this new land, as in the old, the Islanders were rarely prosperous, sometimes trading with whaling vessels, and later the Melanesian Mission, but generally relying on a barter system and later on a number of boom and bust export industries to survive. The women settled down to a routine of keeping house and raising children, and learning the finer points of needlework, they helped to work the land, they gathered wild fruits such as guavas, lemons and oranges, and processed what the land yielded to sustain their families. They foraged when they needed to and went rock-fishing when they could.

The Island community today owes a debt of gratitude to the early Pitcairner women for the fact they did
not completely leave their old world behind and in doing so they preserved a wonderful cultural legacy. They collected flax and palm fronds and continued to teach their children to make traditional hats, niau (palm) brooms and baskets, they continued to use the yolo (traditional stone graters), and the ana (coconut graters). They prepared traditional food such as mada (green banana dumplings), pilahai (a kind of sweet or savoury pudding), and aena (mashed kumera and coconut). Despite the 'Suppression Years' many also continued to use and teach their children and grandchildren the Pitkern-Norf’k language. They ensured that there was always a place and a home for the Island culture. The traditionally large amounts of time women spent in child-rearing meant that the women were stabilising influences during this time of great upheaval and change. As the community settled down to a new life and new ways the women often placed subtle overlays upon the more formalised education and thought processes of the community.

Some of the old original Pitcairner women remain in living memory. They were strong, resilient, gracious, god-fearing and had an all encompassing love for children. In March 1943 the oldest surviving Pitcairner on Norfolk, and the last of our native Pitcairn daughters, Aunt Selina or Ma Lina to her nearest and dearest, died and with her died the last tangible link between the old world and the new. Her epitaph 'in the sweet by and by' fittingly reminds us that whilst the pieces of our material culture are today spread throughout the world and the people of the ‘Bounty’ are now many and far flung we will all once again meet 'on that beautiful shore'.

Rachel Nebauer-Borg is a 7th generation Norfolk Islander. Her greatest joy in life is the time she spends with her family, especially with her 8th generation Island children Ella and Brandon. Whilst the Mutiny on board HMAV Bounty has captivated the world’s imagination she believes that there is a far deeper, richer, and almost hidden story to be told. It is these rich layers of history and culture which motivated her to start her own personal journey of discovery. When Islanders share with her their knowledge and insights into Island life, she in turn gains a great deal of personal satisfaction in being able to write about it and share the Island’s culture and its stories with others. More than anything she would want to encourage Islanders to try and leave a tangible legacy behind for the Island’s children.
Sylvia Esther Nobbs (nee Robinson)
Aka – Granma, Aunty Girlie

Girlie was born here on Norfolk Island just over 100 years ago. A beautiful soul who has lived through both World Wars and the Great Depression era and seen many a change on Norfolk Island including the evolution from horse and carriage to driving motor transport.

It wasn’t easy for her growing up on Norfolk Island. There were always plenty of chores to do such as milking the cows, growing corn and wheat to make the bread, feeding the animals. She lived in a big old home where there were always lots of ‘letl salan’ (little children) around. It was a 6 mile walk each way to school and they had no shoes and plenty of ‘graab’lieg (bindi-eye) to contend with on the way. Swimming at the beautiful beaches was a rare treat.

At the age of 8 whilst riding her horse to school with her brother Ken, she had a nasty fall off the horse, getting dragged by the stirrups. This accident badly damaged her leg and she suffered with a lot of pain and was in bed for over two years unable to walk or go to school. In desperation one day after traditional medicine had failed to work, her Mother contacted the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) nurse for help. With treatment from the nurse, her leg healed. This had a profound impact on Girlie and she was baptized and is still a practicing SDA along with many of her family.

She is the matriarch of the Nobbs family, mother to seven children, grandmother to twenty six, great grandmother to fifty, great great grandmother to seven and building. She has been a tower of strength for all of her family, taught us the gifts of respect, perserverence, sense of humour and working hard, but most of all given us the greatest gift, that of unconditional love.

Her love of sport is well known. Up until the age of 96 Girlie was still able to play tennis and ace many an unsuspecting opponent and her laughter could be heard ringing all around Rocky Point.

She has shown hospitality to all she has met. Opened her home and fed many a stranger who have never forgotten this wonderful Norfolk icon.

Aunty Girlie was born at Cobby’s Gen Crystal on Norfolk, a famous old home out near Crystal Pool, now used as premier tourist accommodation. She described Cobby’s as “a big farm and home, with plenty of ‘letl salan’ around”. Aunty Girlie said there were always plenty of chores to do like milking the cows, and growing corn and wheat for making bread. There was always corn porridge for breakfast, and lots of vegetables, chooks, ducks, (brown) turkeys and pigs.

There was rarely time to go ‘naawi’ (swimming); school was a six mile walk each way with no shoes on, and there was plenty ofgraab’lieg (bindi-eye) for unsuspecting bare feet on the way. While our ‘letl salan’ still love to swim, “most have shoes of some kind today, but most don’t want to walk”, she says.

When Aunty Girlie was eight, she was riding her horse, (named Jim), with brother Ken on board, near to where the Cameralines shop is today, and had a fall which left her with a badly damaged leg for over two years. (Ken was fine.) Traditional medicine didn’t cure her, and in desperation her mother called the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) nurse for help. After treatment by them her leg got better, but she says, “I am suffering today for missing over two years of school”.

This event was the first of a number which had a profound impact on Aunty Girlie. Every Tuesday evening (rain or shine) Pastor W. D. Smith of the SDA Church would ride his bike to Aunty Girlie’s house to teach the scriptures. And then Aunty Girlie was ‘visited by the Lord’. She was baptised in the SDA Church with
her husband Dick, at Slaughter Bay, and she and many in the Nobbs family are dedicated SDA members to this day.

Wonderful stories of Girlie’s life were recounted, to the amusement of everyone in attendance. Stories about how fast she used to drive, ‘even with dem letl salan hanging on to the windows’, as well as how this strong-willed woman still puts her boots on and grabs a spade to dig potatoes out of her garden. Let’s not forget her 90th when she asked for a chainsaw for her birthday! These narratives were humorous, heart-warming and extremely touching.

Gaelene Christian is the grand daughter of Sylvia Esther Nobbs (Girlie). One of seven children born, raised and schooled on Norfolk Island. She moved to Australia at the age of 19 to work and returned to Norfolk Island when her son Joshua was born. Along with her husband John, they own and operate Christian’s 4WD Tours and Emily Queen Glass Bottom Boat Tours and is happy to be living on Norfolk surrounded by her very large Nobbs and Christian families.
Fay Bataille MBE, OAM

Born in Norfolk Island, Fay Bataille commenced her education at the Norfolk Island Central School in 1932. On completion of her schooling she joined the faculty as a junior teacher. She then left Norfolk Island and spent a year at Haberfield Demonstration School and on her return, taught classes from Kindergarten to Year 4 at NICS. In 1967 she spent another year overseas, mainly at Ermington West school and returned home to Norfolk to teach Kindergarten until her retirement in 1986. During that time, Miss Bataille taught over 1400 students and in several instances, three generations of Norfolk Islanders. It was standard practice of islanders both young and old, to consistently call her ‘Miss Bataille’ whether they saw her at school or in the community environment. She was devoted to encouraging all of her students to build a strong set of character values. In her Kindergarten classroom not one child accepted even a pencil in class from Miss Bataille without the “thank you” - and any request was preceded by “please”. Her classroom environment enabled children to explore and develop personal values. Her students learnt to act with manners and to behave with kindness towards others. In this early childhood education level, the foundation was set by Miss Bataille to enhance in each child the aim to do your best and to be honest and sincere.

Miss Bataille was a staunch advocate of the preservation of the Norfolk language and heritage. She was instrumental in the revival of “Norfolk” within the school through her programmes in the 1980s. This encouraged community leaders and older citizens to be visiting speakers and to pass on their knowledge and stories of Island life to primary students. In the school sporting arena Miss Bataille was a dedicated patron of Nepean House.

Girl Guides was a major part of Miss Bataille’s life from the age of 4 years, as Mascot when her sister Iris was Lieutenant. She continued through as a Leader to 1960 when she became Guide Captain and then Commissioner in 1990. After Miss Bataille’s death in 1995, a letter from the Deputy State Commissioner of the Girl Guides Association in New South Wales highlighted their appreciation of her involvement with Guiding in Norfolk Island:

‘Fay was the face of Norfolk Island to those of us who knew her from Guiding. She extended wonderful hospitality to many visitors, tourists, trainers, leaders and young people. No trouble was spared to make us welcome. Fay made opportunities for visitors to meet the Norfolk Island leaders, join in the local events and share with the girls in the unit. She worked hard towards having a hall, and offered it generously for Guide and Ranger groups to visit. She was so proud of Norfolk, her home, and she ensured that visitors should share its warmth.’

Miss Bataille was very active in the Royal Norfolk Island Agricultural and Horticultural Society and in her Church, serving for over 30 years as Secretary to the Church of England Parish Council and teaching.
continuously at Sunday School.

She was a foundation member of the Sunshine Club, a foundation member of the Bounty (Anniversary Day) Committee and a member of the Silver Jubilee Trust.

In 1968 Miss Bataille was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of her outstanding and continuous contribution to the Norfolk Island community. In 1986 she was invested by the then Administrator, Commodore John Matthew, with the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) at a memorable occasion at the school sharing her honour with the pupils she loved so well.

She had an innate sense of what was needed and could lead with a kind word, a helping hand or firm encouragement. She had the courage and determination to follow through on whatever goal she had set for the betterment of her community. With her driving strength, she inevitably succeeded.

The following extract written by Baden-Powell in 1936 lists four essential points to look for in a leader:

* She must have whole-hearted faith and belief in the rightness of her cause;
* She must have a cheery, energetic personality, with sympathy and friendly understanding for her followers;
* She must have confidence in herself through knowing her job;
* What she preaches, she must herself practice.”

Miss Bataille lived her life with these leadership qualities and applied them in all areas of her involvement in the Norfolk Island community.

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**Jodie Williams** (great-niece of Fay Bataille) was born on Norfolk Island and is a direct descendant of the Pitcairners who arrived on the island in 1856. She completed most of her schooling on Norfolk before continuing further education in Auckland, New Zealand and then to Sydney, Australia for Graphic Arts studies. Jodie Williams has travelled extensively to London, Portugal, Tahiti, USA, Hawaii & the Cook Islands. Jodie is a writer, designer and publisher with a particular love for projects involving her island home.
On 26 January 2011 at Government House on Norfolk Island Miss Marie Bailey was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her considerable contributions to tourism on Norfolk Island but her services to this community extend far beyond this. Marie is also responsible for considerable achievements and contributions in areas such as sport, promotion and preservation of local culture and heritage, horticulture, and island beautification.

Marie was virtually responsible for the establishment of a Tourist Bureau on this island in the 1960’s, when the island was first becoming popular as a tourist destination. She was a real pioneer in this field, and today’s Tourist Bureau traces its beginnings to Marie’s initiative and enterprise, and ability to see an emerging need in the 1960’s.

From small beginnings Marie’s dream eventually led to her having a thriving business and a fleet of buses, and employing a team of local islanders who became skilled at meeting the needs of visitors in a very professional manner. It was rightly named “Marie’s Tours”. For Marie it was about showcasing the special things about Norfolk Island – its beautiful natural features and the history and heritage of its people.

Many of Marie’s other enterprises and initiatives have also greatly enhanced the visitor experience on Norfolk Island, but we shall list them separately.

Marie undoubtedly has made Norfolkers more strongly aware of their very special heritage, and given them a reason to be proud of their culture. It has been a win-win situation, promoting a viable tourist industry, improving the standard of living of local people, and developing community pride.

Although Marie sold her tour business, it was not because she proposed to retire! She just saw another opportunity to develop a new project whereby many local artefacts and items of interest could be preserved and displayed, and from this the “Pitcairn Settlers’ Village” developed, based around the historic old Bailey homestead. Her grandfather’s Blacksmith shop was restored to working order, and various outbuildings were utilised to preserve and display an enormous variety of items associated with the daily home and working life of the people who had come from Pitcairn and made their homes on Norfolk Island, showcasing the creativity and resourcefulness of the Pitcairn descendants right up to the present day. Visitors to the Village are also able to see a wonderful array of plantings of both local and exotic species.

With the Pitcairn Settler’s Village established and running, Marie turned to creating her dream of many years – The Cyclorama – which in the words of many who visit is “world class”. The Cyclorama tells the story of the Pitcairn people from the time the Bounty ship left England, to Tahiti, Pitcairn and Norfolk Island. An ambitious project which took two local artists well over a year to complete the incredible painting task. Visitors to the Cyclorama are always incredibly moved by it, and come away with a much greater awareness of the saga and heritage of the Bounty descendants and the Norfolk people.

Now in her senior years Marie could be forgiven if she had decided to rest on her laurels but that was not to be; it was time to give expression to her desire to tell the island’s story, with the development of the “Queen Victoria’s Gardens”, a large parklike area adjacent to the Cyclorama. The gardens contain a gazebo, where Queen Victoria’s strong involvement in the Norfolk Island story is showcased. For Marie it was important to
recognise and show gratitude to Queen Victoria for her gift of
Norfolk Island to the Bounty descendants, and her keen interest
in the welfare of the people. In particular, she wanted to show her
appreciation for the grant of land, on which the Cyclorama and
Queen Victoria’s garden stand, given to her grandmother when
she married in 1875. The plantings in the gardens represent
specimens from all areas of the Old British Empire, as well as
traditional Polynesian plantings. The gazebo and the gardens are
available to be enjoyed by visitors and locals free of charge. The
Queen Victoria Gardens have not only greatly beautified this
area of the island, but have also reinforced local awareness of and
pride in cultural heritage.

As well as the aforementioned projects, which have all been
established in a tasteful and environmentally sympathetic way,
Marie established, some years ago, an avenue of Poincianas along
the roadside of her own and of an adjacent property belonging to
a relative. There are about twenty trees in all spaced out along the
street just inside the fences. She took a personal interest and involvement, not only in growing these trees from
seed and planting them, but of their ongoing watering, care and maintenance. Today, most of them are now
blooming, and provide a beautiful display of colour in the early months of the year. They are complemented
by The Queen Victoria Gardens behind them, and by the very beautiful plantings and landscaping around the
Cyclorama complex adjacent, and the magnificent gardens at her home and in the Pitcairn Settlers’ complex
nearby.

Marie trained in horticulture at the Massey University in New Zealand, and has always put her skills to good
use. She loves to grow plants from cuttings and seed, and her properties are a treasure trove of indigenous,
native and exotic species. Although she is in her eighties, it is still a common sight to see Marie out with a
spade, a hose, a bag of fertiliser, or on the lawnmower seeing that her plants and grounds receive the care they
need and deserve.

In the Pitcairn Settlers Village, among the very extensive plantings, Marie maintains a traditional garden
growing the fruits and vegetables that have sustained the Norfolk and Pitcairn people in the past. This garden
not only grows many unusual and old species, but is healthy and well-maintained, and helps ensure that many
old skills and plants will be preserved.

Marie’s best known sporting achievements are in Golf, and it is only in very recent years that a shoulder
injury has restricted her golfing activities. She is a Life Member of the Norfolk Island Golf Club, and for some
years held the course record. She was the A grade Singles champion of the club for 22 separate years, a Mixed
Foursome champion six times (the last when she was in her late seventies), a Ladies Foursome champion ten
times. She represented Norfolk Island in the South Pacific Mini Games in 2001 (again in her seventies) and
also competed in the South Pacific Games in 1999 in Guam.

Marie retired from active competition in 2005, when she was nearly 80, and still had a low handicap of 13.
Her prowess as a fine horsewoman, and tennis player should not go unacknowledged.

Marie will be remembered as a true pioneer, a woman who laid trails for others to follow. She has had visions
of possibilities and worthwhile ventures, carried out the planning and groundwork herself, and then has seen
these through to completion, using her own initiative and resources. She has always believed that if something
is worth doing it is worth doing well, and has had a hands-on involvement in all her projects to see that the
best possible outcome is achieved. Once her projects have been established, she has continued her hands-on
involvement to ensure that everything is maintained properly and to a high standard.
No doubt her schemes and achievements have given Marie a great deal of personal satisfaction, but everything she has done has also enabled others to be involved and utilise and develop their special skills, and what has resulted has been for the benefit of this community - aesthetically, and culturally, as well as bringing broad economic benefits to the community.

Marie is still dreaming and envisioning how things can be improved. She continues to keep very busy, physically active, and engaged with her family, friends and the community in general. Meanwhile, she gives active encouragement to the younger generation in their endeavours.

Marie’s contribution to the life of this island has been way beyond what one would normally expect of a single individual.

Edited by Robin Adams JP MLA

Robin, a Norfolk Islander, came to Norfolk following her marriage in 1966 to another Islander. She has two adult sons. Prior to coming to Norfolk Robin was a Secondary School Science Teacher. She joined the Norfolk Island Public Service in 1967 and has made the public sector her career on Norfolk. Formerly Registrar of Lands, she moved from the Public Service into the Parliamentary Service in the early 80’s; being appointed Clerk to the Legislative Assembly in 1984, a post she held until her resignation in March 2011 when she was elected to the 13th Legislative Assembly and appointed as its Speaker. Robin is a passionate gardener and promoter of sustainable agriculture.
Norah Jane Mitchell (nee Christian)

There are some things that never change, but life is full of surprises. It’s the way that we deal with the surprises that can make a huge difference. There are people who have vision - the ability to see opportunities that require them to release traditional thinking and are empowered with confidence to choose new directions. These special people are often referred to as agents of change. My mother, Norah Jane Mitchell (nee Christian) was one of these special people.

My parents named our home “Hettae”. It’s a Norfolk Island word – a mix of Old English and Tahitian - that, in its very basic sense, means “Here it is”. They wanted their home to be a place where people could find friendship and caring, kindness and nourishment, fun and laughter and lots of music: a place where you always feel welcome. After my father died and we went to Melbourne to live, our home there was named “Hettae”. It became a hub for Norfolk Islanders visiting Melbourne and for a succession of new friends to enjoy the hospitality, laughter and good food that Mum was so skilful at providing.

When I reflect on her life, I recognise the courage, resourcefulness and determination, the strength of character and selflessness of my mother, the eldest of four children of Andrew Johnstone Nash Christian and Emily Sarah (nee Quintal) who left the familiar and caring community of Norfolk Island to live in a place that was strange and far from family. She was a true agent of change, seeing opportunities when they arose, choosing new paths – and she had the confidence and courage to act on them. In Melbourne, my brother and I were the true beneficiaries of the change.

My mother was named Norah Jane after her two grandmothers, but the Scottish doctor who delivered her pronounced Jane as Jean ... and that’s what she was called! Whilst her parents lived and worked in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), Jean lived with her grandparents at Ivy House, a Boarding House at Steeles Point, which was a popular place for visitors to stay when ships were the mode of transport and a stay was often for six weeks or more. She worked as a nurse when the Norfolk Island hospital was at Bishop’s Court near Saint Barnabas’ Chapel (formerly, part of the Melanesian Mission). In Melbourne, she worked at the Taxation Office so that we would have the money to return to Norfolk Island for Christmas holidays. These experiences prepared her well for the adventures ahead.

It was not until my brother and I had completed our schooling that Mum returned to Norfolk Island. She saw an opportunity in the newly established tourism industry and set off on a new path of her own. In 1965, with her own Mother’s blessing, her vision was to transform the family home into a Guest House and to provide services and a Norfolk Island experience that people would remember forever. She may well have named the Guest House “Hettae” but, as the family home, it was always referred to as Aunt Em’s place or Mother Em’s. “Aunt Em’s” was the perfect name for the Guest House. Testimonials to the success of this venture can be found in Visitor’s Books, poems, cards, letters and magazine articles. The Australian Vogue
Living magazine, in 1972, referred to 
“Jean Mitchell, one of Norfolk’s best-loved Islanders, 
proprietress of the friendliest guest house in town, 
“Aunt Em’s”. Her dignity and generous approach to life 
is typical of these people of Bounty crew and Polynesian ancestry.”

An article in the Australian ‘Family Circle’ magazine 
said this:

“Somerset Maughan would have been quite at home 
at Aunt Em’s Island Home, with its wide verandahs and 
cushioned cane chairs; the group of relaxed guests; 
afternoon tea on the round, cane-legged table; hibiscus 
quivering; island palms rustling in the warm breeze.

Jean Mitchell runs the guest-house – and the guests – with consummate ease. With room for ten guests, the 
house is nearly always full. The food is superb island-style, rich with avocados, pineapples, bananas, lemons 
and oranges, fish and meats of every kind.

... Jean has about two acres of land and grows 
everything she possibly can. “What we don’t eat straight off the tree or out of the ground, we bottle or pickle,” said Jean. Her pantry is full of bottled fruits, sauces and 
chutneys.”

In 1974, Queen Elizabeth, with Prince Philip, Earl Mountbatten, Princess Anne and Mark Phillips visited Norfolk Island. Jean and her “Aunt Em’s” team 
provided all the food for the Official Guests. It was the ultimate accolade and public recognition for her accomplishments.

Jean proudly shared her appreciation of the natural beauty of 
the Island with her Guests. Cliff-top breakfasts and watching the sun rise over Buck’s Point created cherished memories for 
many who tried hard to resist an early-morning start. Picnics at 
Simon’s Water and barbecues at the beach were also highlights.

Good food, healthy eating, relaxation and well-being were an 
important aspect of the “Aunt Em’s” philosophy so it was no 
surprise when Jean took over the management of the health food store she and my brother set up in the early 1970s. It began in a small building in New Farm Road, adjacent to the well-established CCR Nobbs General Store. When my brother left the Island, the health food shop was moved to a building in 
the garden at “Aunt Em’s”. It was a fabulous venture, offering organically grown nuts and grains, bulk flours and honey, 
a wealth of literature, fresh alfalfa and mung bean sprouts, 
delicious salads, sandwiches and slices ... everything one could think of for good health. Jean named the store “Hettae Health”. She had seen an opportunity and had the courage and confidence to act.

Fiercely proud of her Island heritage, despite being part of the generations who were forbidden to speak the
Norfolk language at school and were often made to feel ashamed to be descendants of mutineers, Jean loved to share stories with her guests and to participate in Norfolk languages classes at Norfolk Island Central School. She loved any opportunity to “talk Norfolk” with her grandchildren and dear friends.

As a true agent of change, there was yet another course for Jean to take. Letting go of the business she had so lovingly created and passionately operated was very difficult. Her strength of character and vision came into play once more. When the time came for her to relinquish the reins of the businesses she had created with passion and a deep love of making people happy, she handed the reins to people she trusted and, with confidence, married her long-time companion, Keith. They travelled and entertained and lived a full life – and they built a new home together where there was love and laughter and gatherings of good friends. There was often music and – always – great food. They called their new home “Hettae”.

Trish Magri is the daughter of James Frederick Mitchell and Norah Jane Mitchell (nee Christian). Her younger brother, James, died sadly in February 2010. Trish was born on Norfolk Island, matriculated at Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne and has continued her education ever since. She is Librarian and teacher of Information Technology at Norfolk Island Central School. Trish is the proud mother of four amazing adult children and grandmother to eight very precious and special grandchildren. She lives on Norfolk Island with her long-time friend and partner, Mike, and travels whenever the opportunity arises.
Alice Buffett

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

It was a bright Sydney summer’s day early in the 1950s. A pretty, intelligent and vibrant young woman makes her way down the busy city streets alive with the buzz and hum of industry and the hustle and bustle of humanity. She soaks up the ambience and stimulating worldly conversations, she patronises the arts, and is invigorated by the exciting and new opportunities which lay ahead. What happens next will change the course of her life forever. A world away on her tiny Island home her father sends her a letter. His message is short and simple “come home Alice, your Island needs you”.

Alice did come home; and this in fact is what lies at the very heart of our common wealth. The essential internal driver in building up a people, a community and a nation is the inner compulsion and willingness to serve. To answer the call, to build on our common or community wealth with selfless determination, and without fear or favour. Alice Buffett’s public and private life has for the greater part been dedicated to this service. She has a discerning knack of being one thing to one person; and all at once many things to many people. To know and understand the sum of those things one needs to spend an inordinately long amount of time with her; and be able to keep up.

Alice was born on Norfolk Island in 1931. Both her parents were Islanders and she is a 7th generation direct descendant of Bounty mutineer Matthew Quintal and his Tahitian wife Tevarua. She has a deep and abiding love for Norfolk Island and its people and both by choice or default she has been a quiet and unobtrusive, and at other times much more overt ‘voice for the voiceless’.

In small isolated Island communities such as Norfolk with its limited resources the absence of social, material and cultural wealth can sometimes be glaringly obvious. Before the Island had an official social welfare system the provision of ‘social services’ fell wholly and solely upon individuals, families, and charity. All communities have social problems and issues; some more, some less. Alice has always ‘put her money where her mouth is’ and opened her heart, and her home to a steady stream of people in need or in crisis, to children, mothers, fathers, the youth, people with mental health issues, the disabled, victims of domestic violence, and sexual abuse, single parents with children, individuals affected by alcoholism, drug and gambling problems, or a lack of worker rights, the temporarily homeless - the down, downtrodden, the destitute and the needy. In many of these circumstances where emotions are high she has sometimes been the subject of death threats, yet remained unwavering in her support. Those who challenge her quickly learn that she is a fair and firm but formidable foe. For every one she has sheltered, she has counselled many more. It is fair to say that the public or ‘visible’ parts of a person who serves their community in these ways is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Alice’s absolute passion for achieving social welfare reforms in her later political life quite probably has its place directly in what she saw and experienced over the years in the general community.

By 1979 Alice found herself being heavily lobbied to serve her people in a more public capacity. Alice became a member of the First Legislative Assembly in 1981 on a by-election, and went on to serve in the Second, Third and Fifth Legislative Assemblies. In her political life Alice Buffett MLA is, as she is in every other aspect of life, highly principled and unapologetic. At least twice during her terms of office this led to the dissolution of parliament. Alice worked tirelessly to bring forward and implement the required legislative framework to effect essential social justice reforms and achieve a higher degree of equality. She marks the healthcare, workers compensation and social services reforms as among the most important accomplishments made by herself and her colleagues during her terms in office. People who find themselves in somewhat disadvantaged circumstances now have a safety net and recourse in law. Although ‘retired’ from public life this work continues unofficially at both a local and intergovernmental level. She continues to provide formal and informal advice, counsel, commentary and critique to political candidates, legislators, politicians & policy makers, policy advisors and administrators. This has always been complemented by the preparation of personal...
parliamentary submissions, report appraisals, and other supplementary activities.

Alice is a social justice advocate, counsellor and humanitarian. She provides counsel and practical support to many people in her community. She endeavours to assist anyone who falls through social and legislative or policy safety nets, especially in the areas of social welfare, immigration, worker entitlements and healthcare. She holds families together in times of duress, and provides judicious and considered advice and guidance. Alice is a born pragmatist, she draws her advice from her own life experiences and learning; she is very real and results orientated which generally enables those who seek her out to make good and well-informed choices for themselves.

Her charitable works have been life-long and her causes are many. In the early 1990s Alice set-up a Charitable Trust to raise funds to provide mammogram services to the Island women; a project she hopes to see come to fruition. She continues to contribute to local charities and charitable events and internationally recognised charities. Of particular note is her past work with the RSL Women’s Auxiliary which reflects her respect and gratitude for the sacrifices made by serving military personnel during world wars and other hostiles.

To many Islanders who know and love her she is simply ‘Ma’, a moniker of respect and reverence which was bestowed upon her for the many countless children, be they four or forty, that she has nurtured, fed, fostered and counselled throughout her life. ‘Ma Alice’ is mother and matriarch to an entire community. Children growing up in a world where little else could be relied on knew that ‘Ma’ was a rock and her home a place of love and shelter. Stories abound over generations of the many children, stray puppies, cats and chickens she has taken into her heart and her home and under her wing. Many of her ‘babies’ are now grown and far flung and a steady stream of them continue to check in on a fairly regular basis. ‘Ma Alice’ has worked daily, hourly in her community, be it from her office, her studio, her home or from her hospital bed.

Alice has a natural compulsion to learn, share knowledge, and educate others, particularly in the areas of history, politics, culture and spirituality. To this end she has written and published two books and CDs, many articles, pamphlets and letters in order to educate others. Alice also mentors and assists others working in these fields. She works with and provides advice to educators and policy makers on an unofficial basis in the area of general education because she is passionate about the need and opportunity for a sound education. Alice is also a recognised local historian. It is to her that people come for specific advice on family, Island and cultural history. Alice is often called upon as a local fact-finder, dictionary and encyclopaedia. This was the motivator which led her to write her books - because people kept asking the questions!

On an Island with limited resources and support services everybody does everything. Alice is one of the best examples and a fitting benchmark; what sets her apart is that she takes everything she does to the highest level. She is an intelligent and academic individual who has widely read and has well considered opinions in any number of areas. She is variously consulted by resident and visiting academics on a wide range of matters including archaeology, theology, anthropology, linguistics, musicology, sociology, politics, law and history.

Alice believes in free-enterprise and self-determination and provides solicited and unsolicited advice on a wide range of issues affecting people wishing to go into business, people who are in business and to those she thinks should be encouraged to go into business for themselves. She is particularly passionate about opportunities for young islanders to do so and from her own experience; she gives advice on matters of best accounting, best business practice and other relevant matters.

Alice is a life member of the Community Arts Society. Her lifelong aim has been to foster young or up and coming artists in all areas of the arts. Many of the local musicians, dancers, thespians, multi-media artists, writers, songwriters and artists in general have received her support and encouragement in many different ways to reach their potential and realise their goals. She mentors them, tracks their progress and is eminently proud
of their every achievement. She has twice accompanied the Norfolk Island delegation to the Festival of the Pacific Arts as the Cultural Ambassador. Her aim is always to foster cultural acceptance and understanding.

Alice is widely read and educated in the fields of theology, philosophy and spirituality. Her intelligent and considered opinion and advice is often sought by theologists, ministers of religion and layman of all faiths, all ages and all denominations. She is a community leader in her particular chosen faith which includes oversight and implementation of activities within her faith. Her work in these areas is inspired by her own immense and unwavering personal faith.

Among the rich bounty of legacies Alice has left for future generations is the provision of an orthography, dictionary and encyclopaedia of the Norf'k language which has been listed in the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger of Disappearing. Norf’k has its roots in a mix of 18th Century English, ancient Polynesian and West Indian Creole – a language which has developed over more than 200 years as a result of the melding of cultures following the mutiny aboard HMAV Bounty. Alice is a recognised specialist in this field and she was subsequently invited in 1996 to lecture at Oxford University. Alice has worked tirelessly in the area of cultural preservation, maintenance, perpetuation and propagation. Her book 'Speak Norfolk Today' is now a textbook. She provides advice and guidance, commentary, critique, proofreading, editing and translation services in these areas to the Island people, to academics, educators, public and private bodies, authors, poets, storytellers, songwriters, the media and any interested individuals on a one-off or ongoing basis. This she has more often than not done gratis.

In 1999 she became Alice Buffett OAM in recognition of her tireless services to the community. She is an exemplar of how we should all live. Alice lives how she leads. Much of what she does is voluntary or simply just because someone asked her to. Despite the ill health that has been a constant in her life she would still like to publish and promulgate a universal language ('Universal Auxiliary Language') as she believes this is one of the keys to world peace and understanding and she has been recognised by international bodies for her projects.

Today as a double amputee and octogenarian Alice’s daily challenges are of a somewhat different nature yet as testament to her enduring disposition and personal strength of character this is still by no means what defines the essential Alice; it is the quality and calibre of the people who walk through her door that are reflective of the life she has lived and continues to live in the service of her community, the world and her God. Our Island and our world community is so much wealthier for having Alice in it; she has dedicated a greater part of her life to maintaining and increasing our common wealth. It must be surely conceded that Alice has put aside many of her own personal dreams and aspirations for a greater common good. Although she might never concede to the fact, in many ways she has been impoverished by her life’s work and her selflessly charitable and generous nature; conversely it is because of her and those like her that our community is so much richer. To be a ‘voice for the voiceless’ is no easy task but in her doing so our Island community, and the world community, is so much ‘wealthier’ for she has certainly well filled the common coffers of political, social and cultural wealth; and shown an unwavering commitment to our Commonwealth.

Rachel Nebauer-Borg is a 7th generation Norfolk Islander. Her greatest joy in life is the time she spends with her family, especially with her 8th generation Island children Ella and Brandon. When Islanders share with her their knowledge and insights into Island life, she in turn gains a great deal of personal satisfaction in being able to write about it and share the Island’s culture and its stories with others. More than anything she would want to encourage Islanders to try and leave a tangible legacy behind for the Island’s children.
I am honoured to be asked to contribute to the commemorative e-book for Commonwealth Day 2011. When I took up the position of Head Teacher Secondary Studies at Norfolk Island Central School in 1997, I quickly became aware that Norfolk students had something very valuable that other students I had previously worked with struggled with; Norfolk students had a strong sense of their identity, who they were and what it meant. This sense of identity gave them a secure and confident foundation upon which to build an education that would equip them for life, not just on Norfolk but in the wider world.

I came to see part of my role here, amongst other things, as fostering and strengthening that Norfolk identity. In 2008 I was instrumental in having the New South Wales Board of Studies, which oversees the credentialing of our Norfolk students for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, accept Norfolk language as the Language Other Than English requirement for the School Certificate. This meant that Norfolk language was a recognised subject within the curriculum and would be recognised for the School Certificate. This was a significant marker on the path to assuring Norfolk language its rightful place in our children’s education and validating Norfolk’s heritage culture as a natural part of that education.

Now this significant change and my part in it, built upon the hard work and inspiration of a dedicated group of women who had seen the damage done by outdated and at times brutal suppression of Norfolk language in the school. Students, up until the 1960s were caned for speaking Norfolk and their language denigrated. Amongst the diverse arguments and opinions about the nature and value of Norfolk language one thing seemed irrefutable; the school could play a valuable part in promoting and preserving the language just as it had played a significant part in suppressing it.

Miss Fay Bataille was a driving force in promoting the need for Norfolk language to be taught at Norfolk Island Central School. Mrs Helen Pedel continued the program, encouraging the participation of community speakers such as Maev Hitch, Enid Westlake, Susan Pedel, Jeannie Mitchell and Mildred Bataille. Helen, along with her primary school colleagues Roz Tierney and Julie South, produced a Norfolk colouring in book with financial support from Rotary, Lions and the Society of Pitcairn Settlers. Thus the community became important partners in this language preservation project.

Mrs Suzanne Evans took on the Norfolk language teaching and facilitator role in the infants/primary school producing wonderful books, posters and materials to encourage and assist our youngest folk to enjoy and value their language and culture. In keeping with our technological age she has also produced a talking book and interactive CD of Norfolk language and is currently working on creating a Norfolk language website.

Mrs Beverley Cooke, as Art teacher in the secondary school, worked with Mrs Suzanne Evans to produce Norfolk Language —

Back row: Trish Magri, Susan Pedal, Roz Tierney, Suzanne Evans, Front row: Nicki Beadman, Judith Davidson, Helen Pedel
an exciting Norfolk Studies elective which was accepted by the NSW Board of Studies for Years 9 and 10 students.

Special mention needs to be made of the life work of Mrs Alice Buffett in codifying and promoting Norfolk as both a written and spoken language. Here is a woman who needs to be recognised as a courageous agent of change. Whilst controversy was inevitable, it was also healthy in putting Norfolk language and its preservation as a priority issue in the community’s mind. Her contribution was recognised by the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly in accepting her system as the official language of Norfolk Island and gaining United Nations recognition of Norfolk as an endangered language. This official recognition underpinned the application for Board of Studies recognition of Norfolk language in the School.*

Mrs Gaye Evans continues to make an essential contribution to the Norfolk language program as the community speaker teacher. Now all Year 7 students participate in Norfolk language classes and Year 8 students may choose to continue their language studies as a semester elective in Year 8. Gaye’s contribution to the development of programs and resources has been invaluable. She has been ably supported by the dedication, skills and hard work of language teacher Mrs Nicki Beadman who continues to strive to promote the funding and integration of Norfolk language and culture in the school.

To complement the language and culture initiatives in the School, Mrs Colleen Crane and Mr Archie Bigg have once a year run a school coordinated three day Year 9 camp where students “live” the Norfolk way with input from at least thirty community members.

Mrs Patricia Magri, the School Librarian, a long time supporter of the significant role of Norfolk language and culture in the education of our students, has made an invaluable contribution to the school programs and community through the establishment of a repository for Norfolk language resources and publications and the production of the Living Library Project and website, which collects and gives ready access to recordings, documents, photographs, sketches and maps pertaining to Norfolk’s culture and language past and present.

All these women have been a part of exciting and significant change. Many of us are not of Pitcairn descent. Some of us have families that go back a long way on this Island and some of us don’t. But what binds us together is our belief in the Norfolk language and culture and the contributions big and small we have made to its promotion and future. For my part, over the fourteen years I worked at Norfolk Island Central School, I have been privileged to help promote and coordinate the efforts of so many others.

*I would also like to acknowledge the financial support, skills, inspiration and persistence of Adelaide University’s Professor Peter Muhlhausler.

Judith Davidson grew up in inland New South Wales on a fine wool property near a small country town called Boorowa. She attended the local two teacher Primary School and, after three years of Distance Education, went to board in Goulburn. Fortunately her enthusiastic participation in debating, public speaking, modern dance, gymnastics, drama and choral groups did not cost her the HSC. Following an Arts degree from University of New South Wales, Judith took up teaching in Wollongong then resigned to see the world. After two years of living in England, Holland and Germany, Judith returned to Australia and became involved in building an adobe house and establishing a vineyard and winery. In returning to teaching, Judith worked as Head teacher in two Central Schools at Boorowa and Portland before gaining the position at Norfolk. She continues a passionate interest in the arts, literature, politics and political history and social equity including women’s rights and child protection.
Trish Magri

inspiring, empowering with a wonderful thirst for knowledge

Her belief in the quote that “you never stop learning and never stop sharing ideas and information” has taken Trish from an inquisitive school student with a fascination for technology to an IT professional, teaching students and community members and breaking down the digital divide on Norfolk Island.

Trish’s fascination with technology began with her first purchase of a transistor radio, tape recorder and record player from “Prentices” the duty free shop on Norfolk Island. Then, she was one of the first of her peers to have this cutting edge technology. Now, Trish is one of the first to purchase the new Apple iPad, continuously update with podcasts, introduce video conferencing at Norfolk Island Central School and allow an isolated community distance education through the internet.

Trish Magri initially studied Medical Technology whilst working at Monash University, Melbourne. She worked in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology with Professor Carl Wood and found his groundbreaking work in IVF research fascinating.

Returning to Norfolk Island in 1972, Trish took over the role of School Librarian at Norfolk Island Central School. Then the library was housed in a classroom within the infants block and run by Nancy Nobbs. Proving that isolation is not an issue in continuing your education, Trish studied by Distance education; Library and Information Science and a Graduate Diploma in Education and Vocational Training, then in Information Technology to enable her to teach in both the school and TAFE sectors.

Despite living on Norfolk Island, her first students were actually in NSW with lessons via email and the internet through the New England Institute of TAFE, Tamworth.

Trish Magri worked with Kevin Demery, then Principal at Norfolk Island Central School, on a vision and administration proposal – to relocate the School Library to a building known as the Old Guide Hall and to include the creation of a computer lab. Eight computers were initially installed and these were expected to take Norfolk Island Central School technologically into the 21st century. Trish was then responsible for further introducing new technologies into the school – the introduction of video conferencing, donated by the New England Institute of TAFE, SmartBoards in the Library and classrooms funded by a generous community member supported by the current Principal Neil Solomon and the interactive response system and Quizdom,
which allows students to make individual responses for assessment and learning.

Trish’s vision includes empowering community members, who did not grow up with new technology, in the use of computers. Basic IT courses were implemented for the community, supported by Jo Wienewsiak the schools IT teacher. In more recent times, Trish has provided TAFE Certificate courses to community members as well as members of school staff. Trish has been at the forefront with further expansion of the school Library with the Mobil Technology Centre which now has 25 computers and video-conferencing facility.

Trish has a future view of the library and technology area of Norfolk Island Central School. She hopes to see the whole school become more confident in the use of IT.

Trish would love to see the integration of the Norfolk Island community library into the school library. She can envision the Joint-Use library having educational programs running year round, the community having access to the computer labs which are locked up over the 12 week school holiday periods and the Centre becoming a hub of learning with the Centre open at night as well as holiday periods.

It is an exciting vision from Trish Magri, an agent of change who has lead Norfolk Island forward with technology and her passion for learning.

Suzanne Evans lives on Norfolk Island with her family, of 4 kids. She teaches Norfolk Language and Culture at Norfolk Island Central School and is a proud 7th generation Norfolk Islander.
She has a passion for teaching and loves encouraging the students strength, identity and pride that Norfolk kids have in their language and unique culture. Suzanne is also a swimming teacher and PE teacher and actively promotes sport and active living in the community.
To embrace the Commonwealth Day 2011 theme, our school children enthusiastically embraced the creative writing project and the prize winning entries from Infants, Primary and Secondary follow:

**Infants**

*My mum*

My mum has a bubble of love around her and she loves everyone cause her bubble goes everywhere. Trakka
This is about a woman who has not only changed my life and the family's but the community as well.

This woman is my Nan, Nanie Peg!

Nanie has taught me to be proud to be a Norfolk Islander, and to fight to keep our culture, heritage, lifestyle, independence and our way of life.

Nan has shown me all her old photos and things she has from when she was growing up and from the war. I know how lucky I am to be growing up now and all the things I have, both my Nanas had hard lives and didn't have the things I do. She also showed me how to plant lots of things in the garden, like potatoes which saves us money than having to buy it from the supermarket, it tastes better also. The most important thing in my Nana's life is family. She has us all up her house for dinner every Sunday night. We say grace before every meal and we come together.

Nan (Margaret Florence Evans) was born on the 15th of March 1922 in Melbourne Australia. She went to school at Norfolk from 1928-1937. After she finished school she went straight into nursing at Bishop’s Court at Norfolk Island.

In 1941 she enlisted in the Australian AIF (Australian Infantry Force) as a nurse in the war. She completed many jobs like a transportation driver for cargo and was a chauffeur for VIPs.

She then returned to Norfolk in 1946 and continued nursing here. She then got married in 1948 to Charles Leopold Evans and had three girls and five boys, eight children altogether. She is a proud grandmother of 19 and a great-grandmother of 6. During this period she worked as a contract cleaner for the Norfolk Island Central School and the Administration of Norfolk.

She was President of the RSL woman’s Auxiliary for 22 years. She was awarded life membership and also taught Norfolk language at Norfolk Island Central School to the kids. She raised money and produced a tape on the heritage and the culture of Norfolk Island. This was called Norfolk Legacy. Many of the people in this video have since passed but there are stories and memories that will live on forever. I’m proud of my Nan and hope one day I can do the things she did and make her proud of me as well.

Love always,
Shyanne Evans.
Secondary (equal first prize: Ruby Menzies-Thompson & Aden Ciantar)

Frances Lorraine Beecham is a special type of person; Frances was born on the 1/3/1945. When Frances was growing up she lived in Muswell Brook, Newcastle.
Her achievements and qualifications are: Infants Specialist School Counselor, District Guidance Officer, Senior Education Officer I working with children 0 -5 years old, (with special needs – hearing/sight/language), Senior Education Officer II (student welfare K -12 Riverina Regions)
Frances came to Norfolk Island in July 1994 and worked at Norfolk Island Central School from 1996 to 2010

Fran, as she is known to me, always wanted to be a teacher for as long as she can remember, when she was 5 years old she used to go around the streets of the area she lived in and pick children younger than herself to bring them home and seat them on the back steps of her house and pretend to be the teacher, she felt like she wanted to care and help them.

Knowing this about Fran makes me realize that she has always been a caring, gentle person from such a young age.

Fran is very inspirational to me as well many other children, students and adults on Norfolk Island. Her care and devotion to helping others including me is unlimited, she is always wanting to help, always wanting to give but yet never interfering.
Whilst I was in infants and primary, I struggled with my school work, I never really had that clear understanding of what I was supposed to do, I just went along with class work and hoped for the best. I was always so shy and hated the teacher asking me questions in front of the class, then Fran came into my world and somehow she changed things like a fairy...after a while things opened up for me and became clearer and brighter (even the rooms seemed brighter). I began to understand and not struggle so much with reading writing and numbers

Fran taught me everything I know for school, she taught me to believe in what I do and that what I do does matter. She has given me confidence and strength which helps me everyday now that I am in high school.

Fran made me feel better about myself and I do know that that matters.

I know many other students visited Fran for many other reasons whilst she was at NICS, so did other families, mine included.
I guess we all felt that Fran had a lot to offer in our lives and the special way she listened to everyone’s problems always made them feel they were not alone.

Fran was the source of strength and hope in my school and my life.

Frances Beecham is my inspiration and mentor.
Written by Ruby Menzies-Thompson
Year 7
Norfolk Island Central School
Coral Rowston is the Manager of the Norfolk Island National Park, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. This is one of my favourite places on Norfolk Island and, in the last two years, there have been huge improvements made in the park all thanks to my friend’s mum, Coral Rowston. Under her direction, the walkway paths have been improved; native vegetation has been restored; and the next generation’s relationship to the environment has been assured. Coral is a definite agent for change because of her ongoing dedication to our environment and the community it supports.

Coral has improved not only the walkway through the Botanic Gardens but has wood chipped all the bushwalking tracks through the National Park as well, making them easier and safer to use. This is a great way for tourists and locals to experience the nature of Norfolk Island. Before Coral laid the wood chips, the bush tracks were surfaced with slippery gravel. This made it easy for rangers to drive through the park but not that great for bushwalkers. The wood chips give the tracks a more natural look. Coral (without killing the native or endemic trees) chopped down groves of introduced Guava and made the wood chips out of them. Coral is not only an Agent for Change – she is resourceful too.

Coral Rowston’s efforts have also had an impact on the broader Norfolk Island environment. In late 2009, together with her staff, Coral organised a “Threatened Species Day”. They gave away 320 native plants from the park nursery. These are now planted in gardens and backyards across the island. One of the reasons why Coral is trying to increase the native vegetation is so she can improve the habitat for our native animals. The last of the captive green parrots have been released back into the wild and if Coral and her team can successfully eradicate all the rats from the park, she may even be able to reintroduce our gecko! These creepy little animals are only found now on Phillip Island, which is six kilometres from Norfolk, and on some of the islets you can see from Captain Cook’s Lookout. This reinforces my belief that Coral is an agent for change because she has given the environment a second chance to flourish.

Another reason why I believe Coral has had such a positive impact on the Norfolk Island community is in 2009, Coral introduced a new program into N.I.C.S called “Ranger For A Day”. Our Year 5-6 class was the first to experience this program. We cleared a huge area of the Botanic Gardens that was smothered in Morning Glory (a weed on NI). We then filled the space with 90 native plants. After the whole experience everyone was glad they had contributed to the improvement of the environment and “their” trees will be there for generations to come. Coral has definitely changed the way we think and how we respond to the environment.

Coral has been only been here for two years but in that time she has helped to change the Norfolk Island National Park, the broader environment and our community attitudes as well. She has improved the park’s walkways; restored native vegetation; and gained the support of the next generation in caring for our environment. She really is an Agent for Change and an inspiration to us all.

Written by Aden Ciantar
Year 7
Norfolk Island Central School