

BEAUTIFUL NORFOLK ISLAND

by Ted Cookson

People sometimes ask me which is my favourite place in the world. Without hesitation I usually reply that Norfolk Island is my favourite spot. Not only is the island extremely scenic, but its history is fascinating, being intertwined with the Mutiny on the Bounty saga.

Situated between Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia, beautiful 4.6-kilometer-square (11.3-mile-square) Norfolk Island is a self-governing territory of Australia. In the fifteenth century, Polynesian settlers remained on the island for perhaps a century, and then departed mysteriously. Banana trees, stone tools and the Polynesian rat provide evidence for their presence.

Captain James Cook, the European discoverer of Norfolk Island, landed on the island in 1774 during his second voyage to the South Pacific. Cook was under the impression that the native Norfolk Island pine trees would provide excellent masts for ships of the Royal Navy, and he thought that the island's flax plants would yield material for ships' sails. Unfortunately, history proved Cook wrong. The Norfolk Island pines had too many knots to make strong masts, and it was too difficult to prepare the flax plants for manufacturing.

In order to foil possible French settlement of Norfolk Island, the island's first European settlers were sent

in March 1788. This was only three months after the British settlement of Australia in January 1788. The original party of 15

convicts and seven free men was later supplemented with additional convicts, and the island's grain and vegetables were sent back

to Sydney in order to relieve the conditions of starvation there.

By 1792, after successive waves of convict settlement

