

Ship "Morayshire"
July 17th 1856.

Dear Mother

We are now off Sydney so I begin this letter in case we should go in there to send it off by the first opportunity. I know you and John must be anxiously looking for a letter as well as myself.

We are bound to Hobart Town in Vandemanland but the very rough weather we have had, we were obliged to bear up for Sydney. We are in sight of land and it is fine weather so the Cap^t is in two minds whether to go into Sydney or to go to Hobart Town. I hope he will go into Sydney as we have been out of the World these last 5 months, I am longing to hear some news of home and the War.

What do you think John, that little book you gave me is nearly filled with my diary of course. I cant copy it off now but I will give you all the news I can and you shall read my Book when I get home. But I am very very sorry to say the "Morayshire" is on a trading voyage and if I do not leave her out here I may be out for three years, yet it is very uncertain if the Cap^t can get a cargo for home (he will) if he cant no one knows where we shall go, so the "Morayshire" may not take me home now.

July 30th. at Hobart Town. We arrived here on Sunday 27th having been 32 days from Norfolk Island, a very long passage with very heavy weather. It is not more than 1400 miles altogether. Very few people have such duration of such heavy weather. Still we are all right and tight and I am very well.

On the 30th. of February. We left Sydney for Norfolk Island with a Botanist and a Gardener to get plants &&& and a Passenger. Had all sorts of weather but not half an hour fair wind all the way. Arrived at Norfolk Island on the 1st. March. Discharged some bread and corn &&& and left again for Pitcairn Islands. Of course we had our usual luck, head winds which obliged us to go around New Zealand some distance out of our way. When we turned the corner we had a little fair wind and some very heavy gales from the Westrd which sent us along stunningly.

At about 10am on the 23rd. of April we sighted Pitcairn Island. It looked a large rock at a distance, I held up a barley corn to the horizon and it looked much larger than the Island.

When we were within 2 or 3 miles, we saw a canoe coming off with 2 men in it. They came along side and jumped on board and shook hands with us as if we were old friends. We passed a rope's end down and one man hauled the canoe on board. Next day I was sent ashore in the Whale boat. Pulled by the Islanders. There was no difficulty in landing as the surf was not higher than Polzcath¹ in fine weather. When I landed two or three of us went up to the town as they call it. About a dozen wooden huts. I had a run up one of one of the little valleys, oh how pretty! It may well be called a Paradise. There are all sorts of trees growing together just like xxx of a Dung Heap. Cocoa Nut Trees in abundance. There are four sorts of Plantain and Banana Orange trees with their branches bending beneath weight of the fruit and all of the best sort &&& Banyan Trees and a great number of other things which I cant name. All that they eat are Yams, Sweet Potatoes and Plantains. When they are at work digging the yams they generally kill pig but they dont care much about animal food and that is all the work they have to do and that is all they have to do.

Their clothes, they get from the "Whalers" who call them sometimes and also tea and other xxleged comforts in exchange for yams and potatoes. They make a kind of cloth from the bark of a tree. I have several pieces of it.

When I came back from my walk I went to the house where I was invited to stop, they were getting tea ready. We sat down, that is Simon Young, Daniel Adams and myself. The women waited until we finished. I eat a goats tongue cooked plantains and sweet potatoes, very nice. In the evening we went to the singing room to hear them sing, they all sing together and very well indeed. But they looked so pretty, all the females are dressed in long white night shirt shirts or something like night shirts with nothing on their feet and only a wreath of everlasting flowers on their heads and they seem so fond of each other in fact that are just like a large religious family where the Brothers and Sisters are very fond of each other. It is a beautiful moonlight night, the girls looked like a lot of Ghosts running among the trees.

I had a beautiful bed to sleep in and after breakfast when I left I was loaded with presents. Two men and myself carried them down there were cocoa nuts, Pine Apples oranges && a straw hat and two wreaths to wear but I must stop here as I shall fill up my letter before I get half way.

We were employed until the 2nd May taking their luggage on board &&. When they all came on board and we set sail for Norfolk Island with a fair wind. We had several heavy gales of head winds and sighted Norfolk Island on the 5th June and on the 7th, they were all landed safe and well with the addition of one on the passage. On the 10th I was sent ashore. When I landed there were about a dozen Females on the jetty. Oh dear what a scene, to see your darling Boy kissed and hugged by every one of them. The news soon spread and I was escorted up to the settlement with a regular regiment of Females as if I was one of their own just returned from a long voyage.

I slept ashore all night and went on board next morning. We were knocking off and on here discharging and taking on board bags and luggage until 26th June when the Convicts 5 in number and 4 officers came aboard and we set sail for Hobart Town where we arrived on the 27th of July after a very boisterous and long passage. We stopped in that dirty Hole until the 7th Of August when we left for Sydney with 37 passengers and are now getting sight of Botany Bay and will be in Sydney tomorrow if we do not have our usual bad luck. You can imagine how I am looking forwards to hear some news of my dear little home. I am getting regxxally mamsny sick but never mind, there are good things coming boys, only wait a little bit longer.

August 20th at Sydney. We arrived here on the 13th. Heard that your letter was sent down to Hobart Town, this is a disappointment. How anxiously I am looking at the signal staff every day and every hour watching for the arrival of the "Tasmanian". At last she arrived having been nearly a week overdue owing to stress of weather. There were several letters for others, some dated April. But none for poor me. You can imagine how I was disappointed. I have been looking forwards for this letter for the last four months.

We have been advertised for London in the Papers but have been withdrawn again so at present we do not know where we are going. I may be able to let you know by the next male. If she does not go home I shall try to leave. I hope the Company will not be broken up before I get home. I am anxious to know how they are getting on &&.

Admiral King died suddenly the other day and the Weddow, a Miss Lethbridge² I believe has sent a message to say she hopes that I will come to see her. I shall go one day. We shall be here for two months yet. I expect before we leave again if I could only get a letter I should be happy again. My old friends here at Sydney say that I am growing both ways (fat) and looking well. My Pitcairn Beard I can put into my mouth and bight the ends off, what do you think of that Mother. Please dont laugh John, its only two months growth. I suppose Uncle has retired by this, if he has not he ought to and sit and enjoy the fruits of his labours.

Fred and Fanny are quite well I hope and in the old house, and my dear brother, I am building a Castle for him down at Limmington and my dear old Mother I hope and trust in God she is happy and well in my dear little home. If I could only get a letter to Idate³ these things I should be happy but never mind I must wait a little longer.

Please give my love to Bembole⁴ people. Mrs Parnell I suppose by this time && and except the same from
your ever affectionate son.

George J Curgenven
3rd Officer.

Ship "Morayshire"
Aug 20th 1856

PS. I will write as soon as we know where we are going, think we shall go home. The Pitcairn Islandise⁵ is a regular Mania out in this part of the world, it is not so at home, I suppose.

22nd I heard today that we were going to Manilla for sugar. I do not know whether it is true or not, if it is we shall be away nearly 6 months more on the voyage and come back again. Shall be here at least 3 months if we load for home so that will make up ten months before we leave here for home. As soon as I get your letter I shall decide. I can't bear the idea of being out here 3 or 4 years.

Manilla is a city in the Island of Luconia, one of the Philippine Islands. Give my love to all my friends and tell them I am very well, I have not laid up one day during the voyage.

George J Curgenven 3rd Officer

Address my letters to Smith Campbell & Co ship Morayshire of course, I hope you will make up for lost time.

1. Polzcath is on Padstow Bay near his home at St Kew.
2. Phillip Parker King 1791-1856 married Harriet Lethbridge of Launceston in 1817. Naval Surveyor
www.adb.online.anu.edu/biogs/A020053b.htm
3. Who is Idate?
4. Bembole people, friends of the family?
5. Pitcairn Islandise is a regular Mania. Does it mean going "Native"?