

NORF'K: Australia's tiny Pacific island Territory:

Slides from four PowerPoint presentations on the island for U3A Southern Highlands Inc (Bowral, NSW), 2024

Norfolk Island is a remarkable place. It is tiny, remote and isolated, with a past about which there remains debate, and a present that is not well studied. As a geographer I have learned that the more I know about the landscapes and people of the island, the more I find there is to know.

By way of introduction to the slides in the four PowerPoint presentations which accompany this note, I have been researching the island intensively since 2020 when historian Cathy Dunn led a group to the island to commemorate the sinking of *HMS Sirius* in 1790, my third trip there.

Cathy supplied members of that group with a trove of material copied from primary and other sources relating particularly to the first penal settlement on the island, which led to my exploring that trove, doing further research, making further visits to the island, and making presentations on *Norf'k* for the University of the Third Age (U3A) Southern Highlands Inc in both 2021 and (after extensive revision) again in 2024.

During my research online I have uncovered many documents and images in unexpected places, and I have extracted material from these for around two hundred slides in my presentations, adding notes and my own slides to the presentations. In 2024 these provided the background for my four lectures to U3A.

As a collection the slides themselves merely hint at the kind of detail that can be discovered about the island, both past and present, and they cover far more than I could in four two-hour lectures. I have not attempted to document my commentaries, but users of the collection will get an idea of what I talked about from the description of my course and the outlines of my four presentations which I set out below.

Because the collection may be of more general interest, I am offering it to the island Library and Museum for public use. I will not publish any of the material from my presentations but as my offer will put it into the public domain I hope that as a courtesy users will reference online sources which I have noted on some slides and acknowledge me as the compiler of the collection (and the unnamed source of many slides).

Ian Bowie

ibbowie@bigpond.net.au

Bowral NSW, November 2024

I described my U3A course thus in 2024:

It's about a Territory under Australia's administration, with an area and population akin to those of many rural Australian suburbs, but with an international airport, and with geographical as well as historical ties to New Zealand. It has landscapes with convict-built remains that rival those of Port Arthur, and gorgeous scenery, and is more than just a paradise for the newly wed and the nearly dead. I will seek to de-mythologise stories told about its occupation serially by Māori, penal settlements, descendants of HMS Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian women, and a Melanesian mission and a military occupation from New Zealand. I will consider also something of what might be learned about small remote and isolated settlements in Australia by studying the island's people and their economy today.

In more detail, the sides for my four presentations in 2024 covered:

Part 1: Much ado about very little

- 1.1 Introductory
- 1.2 Some basic geography
- 1.3 Overview of the island
- 1.4 Natural history

Part 2: Origin stories

- 2.1 The first/Polynesian settlement
- 2.2 First penal settlement, 1788-1814
- 2.3 Second penal settlement, 1825-1856
- 2.4 The *Pitcairners*, and their back-story

Part 3: The settlement that lasted

- 3.1 The Colony of Norfolk Island 1856-1897
- 3.2 The island Territory, 1897-1942
- 3.3 World War II and its aftermath
- 3.4 Self-government, 1979-2015

Part 4: Some challenges

- 4.1 Demographics including ethnicity
- 4.2 Employment and the economy
- 4.3 The Tourism sector
- 4.4 The Public sector
- 4.5 Heritage and its management