

NORFOLK ISLAND LANGUAGE

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For the last three years I have enjoyed part of my holiday break on Norfolk Island, a lovely, lonely dot of land in the South Pacific midway between New Caledonia and the northern tip of New Zealand.

The Norfolk islanders, and their Pitcairn ancestors before them, have spoken English for generations. However, amongst themselves, and with others they like or trust, their speech is a fascinating patois, a made-up language which originates from the mutineers of HMS Bounty and their Tahitian wives. The majority of words are of English origin, sometimes with different meanings, and more often than not pronounced differently, but the Polynesian influence is clearly demonstrated by the distinct emphasis on vowels.

The Norfolk language, or the Pitcairnese language, or Norfolk or Pitcairn for short, is a spoken language. It was not until 1986 that a serious reference was finally published which will hopefully preserve this historic patois, and may even prove to be the foundation-stone of a written Norfolk Island language at last. The work I am referring to is A Dictionary of Norfolk Words and Usages, compiled by Beryl Nobbs. Here is a selection of words recorded in this book, including tautonyms, palindromes, onomatopoeic terms, ucalegons (excessively specialized words), and others of general interest.

ANNA a dish made from cold sweet potatoes and coconut milk
A-OO crabs' intestines
BONNA-BONNA lumpy (used of some fruit)
BOOHOO a swelling caused by a heavy blow
BOOROOS meaningless chatter
BUNNUS burnt buttocks
BUS-WHARGUS ugly beyond description
CRACK-CRACK badly chapped hands
CRARB-ARRA a barbed spear used to catch crabs
DE-ED dead
DOO don't
FLO-UTT the feeling one gets from physical exhaustion
GILDAGURRA ingrained body grime
GLISTA the act of giving an enema
HOOW1-HOOW1 a creepy feeling
IW1 stunted, undersized
JALILLY to make a mess of things
MAEK-MAEK unsystematic
MAHONE someone who exaggerates pain or illness
MOO-OO a rushlike plant growing on the foreshore

MUTTY-MUTTY the feeling when one's mouth is very dry
 OO-AH to sit with the legs apart in an unladylike position
 OOPOO unthinkable
 OOTATOW small new yams
 PLY-PLY to splash a little water on oneself for a quick wash
 POOP-OO faeces
 RUMMA to gather periwinkles and catch crabs at night
 SMOO-UK smoke
 SUFF-SE-DUNNA-SINK dead low tide
 TYE-TYE tasteless food
 UNNA-UNNA to lack self-confidence
 UP-A-TREE pregnant
 WHAWHAHA to put on airs
 WRIGGLA the mosquito larvae

THE INTERNATIONAL PALINDROME CLUB

The May 1986 Word Ways announced the formation of the International Palindrome Club by Josep Maria Albaigès, Numància 87, 08029 Barcelona, Spain. The November 1987 Word Ways reported the publication of its first 38-page newsletter, containing various articles on palindromy (mostly in Spanish, but with reprints from Word Ways in English). In the Year of the Palindrome, it seems appropriate to report that the IPC is alive and well, having just published the eleventh issue of its newsletter (now titled Semagames), as well as a booklet by Ramon Giné i Farre containing 888 Spanish-language palindromic phrases. The IPC continues to take a broad view of palindromes, including syllabic palindromes, Scott Kim inversions, and musical palindromes. One article features pseudo-palindromes (such as odorar or Papini), a topic explored in Word Ways by Ed Wolpow in May 1980 under the title of Agamemnon words.

Word Ways contributors to Semagames include Michael Helsem and Jeff Grant, and they continue to reprint Word Ways material. Those interested in joining the IPC should write to the editor at the address given above. In particular, send \$15 through bank transfer to his current account: 2011-0368-03-0000042466 in the Caixa de Barcelona, Oficina 368, Av. Diagonal 369, 08037 Barcelona (do not forget to include your name!). Alternatively, send a money order (not mail order), adding to it \$2 for other expenses.