strangest and most disturbing in the world. With his son Randy and a third man, Terry Young, Christian began a three-year term for sexually assaulting young girls on Pitcairn. Together with three other islanders who were also found guilty but escaped prison sentences, the convicts represent almost half the adult male population of the island. Teams of warders from New Zealand, will guard the prisoners over the next few years and British Ministry of Defense police are there to ensure law and order is maintained. As Pitcairn’s population is only 47, their presence makes it the most heavily policed place on Earth.

Christian was originally accused with six other men of taking part in systematic sexual assaults on girls as young as eight. The case emerged after a teenage girl told a visiting British policeman she had been raped. The investigation revealed that 32 women who had grown up on Pitcairn claimed to have been sexually abused and 31 men, some now deceased, were accused. Seven of the women named Steve Christian, the island’s mayor, as their attacker. Eventually he was among those who were tried on Pitcairn. The trial revealed a disturbing picture of systematic sexual abuse. According to one victim, Jacqui Christian, life on the island was pleasant for children: “We could go nice places we wanted to after school, riding our bikes or flying kites.” But by the time girls reached 11 or 12, things changed. “Being a girl, we always tried to avoid being anywhere with an adult man... The older you got, the smarter about where you were and who you were with, who was safe to be around and who wasn’t. No one spoke out until the police came.”

Jacqui, now living in Australia, gave evidence against several Pitcairn men by video link. What happened affected her whole life: “I’m 35 and I still have not been game enough to have children of my own yet.” However, a different version was given by other islanders, including Steve Christian, who claimed it was consensual under-age sex. The case, not surprisingly, shattered the community. Some women came forward to report rape while others maintained that under-age sex was part of the culture of Pitcairn. Teenage sex was said to be a consequence of the island’s “impassioned ancestry.” Merelda Warren, whose brother was acquitted, acknowledged that most women of her generation were having sex at the ages of 12 or 13: “We’re Polynesians. In Polynesia we grow up very quickly.”

Six of the seven accused were found guilty: Steve Christian, aged 55, got 3 years, his son Randy, 32, received six, and Terry Young, five years. Seventy-nine year-old Len Brown received home detention. All appealed but the verdicts stood and the men began their prison terms. This will not be much of a privation. The men built their own prison, transported in kit form from Britain and specially constructed to house them. It is the most luxurious building on the island and even has indoor plumbing, a Pigcairn extravagance.

Robin McKie, The Observer November 19

WHAT’S NEW IN HAWAI’I

HŌKULE‘A, THE HAWAIIAN VOYAGING CANOE, is on a historic voyage. It has reached Satawal where a 57-foot double-hulled voyaging canoe, Alingano Maisu, was presented to navigator Mau Piailug. The crew’s main goal was to deliver the canoe to Piailug, who taught Pacific way-finding to a generation of native Hawaiians and inspired a renaissance in canoe voyaging in Hawai’i. In a ceremony, 16 people were honored as Pwo, master navigators in the sacred brotherhood of Micronesian wayfarers. The Hōkele’a will sail on to the islands of Japan.

The Hawai’i sailing voyagers are scheduled to make eight stops at islands or atolls through Micronesia: Pohnpei, Chuuk, Pulap, Satawal, Woleai, Ulithi, Yap and Palau, in that order, and through three island nations – the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau – once held as strategic trust territories of the United States under a United Nations mandate after World War II. For the Hawaiian voyaging canoes, the Micronesian islands are part of the reason for the journey, to pay homage to a sister civilization that helped Hawaiians rediscover their ocean navigation tradition.

J. Bruggencate, Honolulu Advertiser

WHAT’S NEW IN LONDON

THE BRITISH MUSEUM HAS HAD an exhibit that is certainly of interest to readers of RNJ. Called “Power and Taboo, Sacred Objects from the Pacific” it concentrates on the Polynesian Triangle, covering the period 1760 to 1860. Displayed are artifacts related to tapu that were collected by Europeans during that time, and used to control the power of the gods. An impressive catalogue, Pacific Encounters, Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-186 by Steven Hooper (288 pages), accompanies the exposition. It contains 72 pages of written text plus 268 photographs, practically all in color. It is splendidly made, with accompanying descriptions and illustrates more objects than are on display.

Some items drew my attention. Of course I first looked at the section dedicated to Rapa Nui and I was a bit disappointed that there was only one small case containing four woodcarvings of birdmen, objects that most of us have seen before. The catalogue, however, illustrates ten objects. (The moai that has been on display in the museum for decades was not moved from its site elsewhere in the building).

What struck me was the plank canoe acquired from Nukutavake Island (Tuamotus) by Captain Samuel Wallis during the voyage of H.M.S. Dolphin in 1767; it was donated to the museum in 1771. This is not a model, but a real canoe (without the outriggers), with a length of 3.87 meters. The hull is composed of 45 narrow wooden planks sown together with plaited coir cordage covering battens of split coconut leaf midrib. A carved human figure on the stern is partially broken; only its legs, carved on either side, still remain. But for the rest, this paddling canoe is still in astonishingly good condition.

Of interest was that this canoe, although not from
Rapa Nui, exactly fits the description by Captain Bouman of the Thienhoven (the second ship in the fleet of Jacob Roggeveen) who wrote in his journal on 7 April 1722, while they were circling Easter Island in search of a safe anchorage. This was the first known European encounter with Rapa Nui. The Dutch took the islander on board, dressed him in a pair of old pants, showed him their ship, gave him Dutch gin to drink, and watched as he danced to the music of a violin.

When he left the ship in a rising sea, Captain Bouman was worried, for he noted that the islander spent half his time bailing the canoe and therefore had only half his time left for rowing. Bouman described the canoe as follows: “His canoe had been made of small planks that were held together by some sort of rope; it had two blocks of wood on the inside. It was so light that one man alone could easily carry it. For us it was surprising that one man alone had the courage to venture out so far in the ocean with nothing else at his disposal but one paddle, because when he approached us, we were about three miles from the coast....The wind was variable with rain, which compelled us to turn away from the coast. Therefore we had to take leave of our company to which he felt very little inclined. So in order to get rid of him, we had him brought to his canoe, but he remained with our ships until he noticed that we were sailing away from the coast, only then did he return to the shore. The sea was already hollow so that I was afraid whether he would return all right”.

The extreme ingenuity of the construction of such a canoe is clearly shown in the photograph of a detail. The people of Rapa Nui also mastered this technique. This canoe of sown planks is certainly the only one still in existence and due to its size, it has practically never been on display in the British Museum.

Also new to me were certain primitive drawings of British sailors exchanging objects with Tahitians during Cook’s second voyage; these have only very recently (1998) been identified as having been made by Tupaia, the great navigator from Ra’iatea taken on board by Captain Cook in Tahiti in order to present him to the court in London. Unfortunately Tupaia died from malaria on the way. Two of his drawings are on show at the exposition. All in all, this exposition is certainly worth a visit.

Herbert von Saher, November 2006

1 Those who wish to read the complete report of this remarkable encounter can find it in RNJ Volume 8 (4) 1994 in which the text of Captain Cornelis Bouman’s journal during the days around Easter Island was translated into English for the first time, by von Saher.

WHAT’S NEW IN HANGARDA

A wind-driven fire burned over 163 hectares in a two-day fire that began in the Vai Atare section of the island, on the east side of Rano Kau, probably started from a discarded cigarette. Driven by strong winds, it swept through a eucalyptus grove and across grassland before being contained by local firefighters.

MOAI DAMAGE. There is growing indignation on Easter Island regarding “probable damage” to a moai that was struck by a tourist at Rano Raraku. The case is particularly serious because the person charged is Enrique Schmidt Meier, age 76, the father of the current Ministra de Bienes Nacionales, Ms. Romy Schmidt. He was detained on the island after a tour guide observed him strike a moai with a stone. Rumor has it that the damage was evaluated at two to three million pesos (US$3,809 to US$5,714). Mr Schmidt claims that he never meant to strike the moai; he was only showing his friends how the natives carved them, and he is very sorry. Authorities stated that no one is above the law.

La Tercera, 16 November 2006

TRADE BEAD FOUND ON RAPA NUI! Last year’s Earthwatch field season, under the direction of Chris Stevenson and Sonia Haoa, discovered a rare glass trade bead at Hanga Hahave (Site 5-111, Test Unit 1, Level 1). The test unit was placed on a rake-out mound of an umu pae which in turn was associated with a poro house pavement and a basalt activity platform. All were located near the coastal road where the stone quarry is currently operating. The artifact was made from “drawn molten glass” that was passed through a six-sided shape to give it a polygonal cross-section. It is about 0.5 cm in length and about 0.5 cm in diameter. Similar beads in a variety of colors first appeared in North America in the 19th century and they were most likely made in Bohemia.

The earliest word we have about trade beads comes from the Dutch who reached the island in 1722:

“While their ships were still keeping well off the island, the Dutchmen were visited by the first Easter Islander, a nude and friendly native, whom they brought on board.... He was later started off again towards the shore, presented with two strings of blue beads around his neck and some other trifles.” (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1961:45 citing Behrens 1732:132-133).

Carlyle Smith found beads at the Maunga Auhepa house site: “Five glass beads were found. Four of the beads are faceted blue opaque glass in the form of octagonal tubes, 5 mm in diameter and from 5 to 6 mm in length. The shortest bead is light blue; the other three are dark blue. All four beads came from near the surface in the house and stone enclosure. The fifth bead is quite different from the first four. It is elliptical in longitudinal section, and is composed of light blue, milky glass. It measures 8 mm. in diameter and 1.1 cm. in length. This specimen was found at a depth of between 60 and 70 cm. near the bottom of the refuse deposit at the northern end of the excavation.” And, “The beads were submitted to Kenneth M. Kidd of the Royal Ontario Museum for identification. Kidd recognizes the faceted beads as similar to those found in archaeological sites in the Plains Area of North America dating from the