

so mild a temperature throughout the winter that vegetation continues without interruption, one crop succeeding another." But it was the Norfolk Pine that most intrigued him - those "noblest pines, in straightness, size and magnitude."

These magnificent trees, which have since emigrated all over the world, interested Governor Phillip too. He was amazed to learn of their "incredible growth" - and of the fact that many of them were over 200 feet high, and over 30 feet in girth. "These trees," he noted, "promise the most valuable supply of masts and spars for our navy in the East Indies."

King's community prospered. Cultivation increased, and further batches of convicts, accompanied by free settlers arrived. In five years the population had risen from 25 to just over 1000, and in 1793, 2000 bushels of wheat, 50 tons of potatoes, and many other crops were produced. By 1803, however, most of the convicts had served their sentences, and the Government wanted them as settlers in Australia. It was therefore decided to close down the settlement and in 1806, despite the vigorous protests and resistance of the inhabitants, the island was abandoned.

For 20 years it ran to waste. And then in 1826, another penal colony was established. But the happy prosperity of the first was not achieved by the second. The convicts, usually numbering more than 1000, were men of the worst type - "cruel and vindictive" and "harsh and cruel" were the adjectives applied by the superintendent to two overseers who were murdered by convicts. Bishop Ullathorne who visited the island in 1834 observed that "the cruelties practised there make demons of men," and Norfolk became the terror of civilisation.

During this period there were two unsuccessful mutinies, involving the execution of 30 convicts. And on no less than six occasions groups of men absconded in small boats. Most of those who escaped in this way arrived in New Zealand and took to whaling. But the first group had a longer and more adventurous journey. After six weeks on the sea, and when they were almost exhausted, they were picked up by a whaler. At first they were too weak to do anything. But as their strength revived, so did their spirit of enterprise. It was not long before they had murdered the crew of the vessel, reached Pleasant Island, and gone from there to England