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## David Cotterrell: Independent on Sunday : Wanderer of the Lonely Seas

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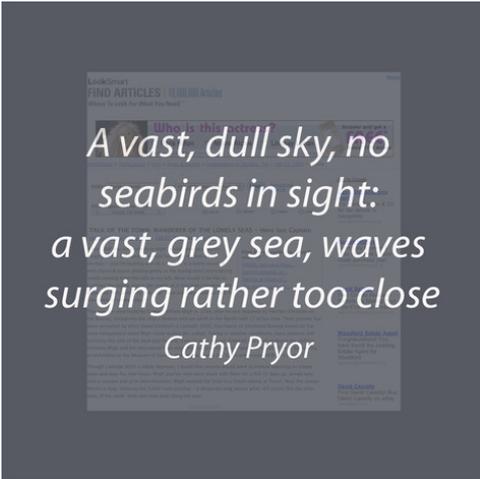
A vast, dull sky, no seabirds in sight: a vast, grey sea, wavessurging rather too close. The sight has made me feel a littleanxious - and I'm looking at it on a screen, in a warm museumwith classical music playing gently in the background and enticing smells coming from the cafe at my left. What would it be like toconfront the reality, out in the ocean, in a tiny boat crammed withdesperate men, with only five days' food and water, and no help forthousands of empty miles?

This was the view faced by Captain William Bligh in 1789, after he was deposed by Fletcher Christian onthe Bounty, forced into the ship's lifeboat and set adrift in the Pacific with 17 of his crew. Their journey hasbeen recreated by artist David Cotterrell in Latitude 2005, nine hours of simulated footage based on theterse navigational notes Bligh made during the ordeal. Taking in weather conditions, wave patterns andcurrents, the size of the boat and the way it would have moved, Cotterrell has tried to depict the shiftinghorizons Bligh and his men would have seen. His "panoramic video projection" is part of Dead Reckoning,an exhibition at the Museum of Garden History that marks the 250th anniversary of Bligh's birth.

Though Latitude 2005 is oddly hypnotic, I doubt that anyone would want to endure watching its emptyskies and seas for nine hours. Bligh and his men were stuck with them for a full 41 days as, armed onlywith a sextant and grim determination, Bligh steered the boat to a Dutch colony at Timor. Near the screenthere's a map, showing the 3,600-mile journey - a desperate slog across what still seems like the utterends of the earth. Only one man died along the way.

The Museum of Garden History might seem an odd venue for a nautical exhibition. But Bligh played a partin the history of horticulture. The Bounty was in search of Tahitian breadfruit. In 1791 - after the Navy hadexonerated him over his loss of the Bounty - Bligh made a second, successful voyage, bringing backseveral breadfruit species for the botanical gardens at Kew. Moreover, the Bligh family were parishmembers of St-Mary-at-Lambeth, the former church that houses the Museum, and Bligh's body is buriedthere.His grave lies at the back in a formal knot garden. It's hard to miss the monument - large, well kept, witha stone breadfruit on top. Though the garden's pretty, it's not quiet: it's close by Lambeth Bridge andthere's constant uproar from passing buses and trucks. Not much rest, nor peace. But then, Bligh was usedto that.

Cathy Pryor



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