

It will be seen from the foregoing that the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has a formidable task ahead of it if it is to reach the vicinity of the goal described in the fifth paragraph of this article. But the task, although formidable, is not a daunting one, particularly as a number of additional libraries and institutions have already expressed interest in joining the list of libraries sponsoring the Bureau, while others, with regional or sectional interests in the Pacific, have become subscribers for selected microfilms produced by the Bureau.

Sponsoring libraries of the Bureau pay an annual membership fee of \$2000 Australian. Half of this amount goes into a salaries fund, while the other half is used to cover microfilming costs and travelling expenses, etc., incurred in the location of manuscripts. Non-member libraries may purchase any of the Bureau's microfilms at the cost prices of those films to the member-libraries, after salaries and other overhead expenses have been taken into account.

It goes without saying that every additional membership fee and purchase order for microfilms will enable the Bureau to quicken the pace and extend the scope of its activities, and will bring nearer the day when the Bureau will approach its goal.

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“A GROUP OF ARCHIVES RESCUED FROM WAR-DAMAGED PORT MORESBY”

by KEVIN GREEN

Papua and New Guinea Archives

In his article “An Analysis of Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration* in the light of Australian Experience”, Ian Maclean describes how he and K. A. Lodewycks, when beginning their archival careers, “met together over a group of Archives rescued from war-damaged Port Moresby”¹. The return of this “group of Archives” and others of the Papuan Administration to Port Moresby is perhaps an appropriate occasion to examine the circumstances of the rescue of the records from Port Moresby and to discuss some of the consequences of this action.

The circumstances of the transfer of Papuan records in early 1942 are not fully documented and this account is largely a matter of conjecture. Contrary to what is commonly assumed it would appear that there was no definite attempt to evacuate all the records when the Civil Administration was withdrawn²—this is scarcely surprising in view of the situation created by the Japanese invasion of New Guinea.

The difficulties under which officers of the Papuan Government attempted to carry out normal administration are detailed in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry conducted by J. V. Barry which, in 1944, investigated the circumstances of the suspension of Civil Administration³, but perhaps the following exchange of correspondence (between the Resident Magistrate at Kerema and the Government Secretary) typifies the situation⁴.

HON : G.S.

51/2/42.

P.M.

NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS

Not infrequently there is the opportunity here to purchase from Kukukuku natives — eager to trade now that obligingly they are trying to live peaceful lives — any number of plain arrows, for which the Government Anthropologist has informed me, there is a ready sale in the capital, probably for house adornment.

If you favour the idea of these sales (which could be carried out by the Government Storekeeper, pro tem.), and informed what a bundle of, say, ten arrows could be sold for, then I could cut my cloth accordingly in respect of payments to the natives. I think we should encourage these efforts by the Kukukuku who, no doubt, are finding peaceful measures rather trying at times.

R.A.V.

R.M.G.D.

21/1/42.

114/213/42

R. M., G. D. KEREMA :

NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS.

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 51/2/42 of the 21st January re above.

I regret to say that no one requires any adornment to their homes here. A good many of the inhabitants had their homes taken away from them but in any case we expect Port Moresby to be bombed and destroyed any day now.

H. W. CHAMPION

G.S. 2/2/42.

The Civil Administration was continued until 14 February 1942, but by 6 February the Administrator and his Executive Council had come to the decision that the circumstances of the war made it "neither necessary or possible to maintain the administration of Papua"⁵. At this stage the Administrator (H. L. Murray) forwarded a telegram to the Department of External Territories which read in part:

MOST URGENT REQUEST YOU ARRANGE ARMY HEADQUARTERS INSTRUCT COMMANDANT FIRSTLY THAT CROWN LAW OFFICER BIGNOLD HOLDING GOVERNOR GENERALS COMMISSION AS MEMBER EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS SHOULD ACCOMPANY ME WHEN ADMINISTRATION WITHDRAWN STOP HE IS ESSENTIAL TO ME WHEN SETTLING OUTSTANDING ADMINISTRATION AFFAIRS AND I BELIEVE YOUR DEPARTMENT ALSO STOP ...⁶

If the presence of the Crown Law Officer was essential to enable Murray to settle outstanding business, it seems reasonable that records would also be required, and it appears that records were, in fact, transferred to Australia at the time of the suspension of Civil Administration.

The records that would be transferred would depend upon two main considerations.

1. What "outstanding business" needed to be "settled".

2. The organisation of the records of the administration at the time. It is difficult, if not impossible, at this point in time (1969) to determine what administration business was outstanding; indeed given the circumstance of early 1942 it is difficult to conceive that there would be any at all. However, it can be fairly certain that Murray had determined to press for some sort of inquiry into conditions resulting in the suspension of his administration. In order to have the basic documentation to prepare for such an inquiry it is likely that the current records of the two "general administrative" departments (i.e. the Administrator's Office and the Office of the Government Secretary) would be required. The main "current" records of these two departments consisted of:—

ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE (formerly Lieutenant Governor's Office)

Correspondence files, multiple number series 1921-1942.

*DEPARTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARY.*⁷

1. Correspondence files, Circa 1915-1942.
2. Patrol Reports, Circa 1908-1942.
3. Station Journals, Circa 1914-1942.

Although I have postulated that it is likely that all the "current" records of the Administrator's Office and the Government Secretary's Office were transferred from Port Moresby to Australia, probably in February or March of 1942, not all of these records are known to be extant. In September 1942 a list was compiled (presumably by officials of the Department of External Territories) of the contents of 4 boxes of records received "from Papua"⁸. All these four boxes contained records of the Government Secretary's Office. Box 1 contained some general material pre-1914; boxes 2 & 3 contained Patrol Reports circa 1908 to 1934 (with a few for the year 1940/41) and box 4 Station Journals circa 1914-26. Probably at some later stage, certain files of the Administrator's Office were received by the Commonwealth Archives Office. What, then, happened to the rest of the files of the Administrator's and Government Secretary's Offices that were transferred to Australia? It is of course quite possible that they were lost or destroyed during the transfer but I think that to be most unlikely. In the first place, several of the files of the Administrator's Office bear an indication that they were used as exhibits in the "Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances relating to the suspension of the Civil Administration of the Territory of Papua, in February, 1942". (Incidentally since it is clear from the Report of the Commission that these exhibits were presented in connexion with evidence given in Australia and *not* in Port Moresby, and since these files were not listed as being among records of the Civil Administration in Port Moresby in 1943, this would appear to support my conjecture that the files of the Administrator's Office were transferred shortly after the suspension of the Civil Administration). The series of files of the Administrator's Office which are held in Archives are far from complete, and, to me, they appear to be a residue left after other files were removed for some purpose. It is impossible to say exactly what files do not exist but it would appear that those files which would be relevant to post-war development of the Territory have been removed. To take but two examples, the file on the Uncontrolled Areas Ordinance (of which there is reference in another file)

is missing, and there are no files on the subject of native labour, both questions that were important in post-war development proposals for New Guinea. This "guess" that the files may have been made use of in connexion with post-war development proposals fits in with the fact that the more recent Patrol Reports and Station Journals have not come to light whereas the earlier ones were received in Canberra in September 1942⁹. I find it difficult to believe that by some ironic coincidence the records which were likely to be of greatest use administratively at the time were the very ones that had been destroyed during the transfer (though anyone who has furniture etc. removed will assure you that it is always the most valuable items that are lost or damaged!).

I mention my conjectures as to the use (or uses) that may have been made of the records of the Papuan Administration partly as an attempt to explain the limitation of the available material (and in turn to enable me to make suggestion as to where researchers and others might inquire as to alternative sources of information) but also in the hope that someone reading this article may be able to provide some clue as to where such records might be, if indeed my conjectures are correct, and that the records have not been subsequently destroyed.

I have conjectured that some of the records of the Papuan Administration were transferred to Australia for a specific use (or perhaps uses) rather than from any desire to safeguard the records. However, this is not the case with subsequent transfers of records from Port Moresby. Some files of the Department of Lands, Surveys and Mines were forwarded to Sydney for safekeeping probably also in 1942 as it was realised that these would be required when the Civil Administration was restored. It appears that prior to the return of these records to Port Moresby in 1946 that some sorting was done. Only files dealing with current land matters were returned and other records found their way into the Commonwealth Archives. In 1943 records (mainly bound volumes of despatches of the Administrator's Office) were discovered in a shed at the back of the old headquarters and these records were transferred to the Department of External Territories in Canberra¹⁰. Subsequently other transfers of records to Canberra were made. Records of the South Eastern Division of Papua were transferred when the station at Misima was closed, and other records were transferred in 1951¹¹ and in 1955 following Mr Gibbney's survey of records of the Territory.

Provided proper use is made of the archival facilities, the placing of records of the Papuan Administration in the Commonwealth Archives has no detrimental effect upon the administrative processes of the Territory. Indeed, I probably do not have to explain in such a journal as *Archives and Manuscripts* the positive advantages to a Government (or any business or other organisation) of properly conducted archives facilities to aid the process of administration. However, the transfer of the records of the Papuan Administration to Canberra has had a most unfortunate consequence for historical research. It seems to have been assumed that the records of the Papuan Administration in the Commonwealth Archives Office represent *all* the surviving records of that Administration.

This assumption is sometimes expressed negatively, usually in an introduction, in explaining the limits of the research project. Thus in the

Introduction to Margriet Roe's thesis, *A History of South-East Papua to 1930*¹²

Although arriving last, officials soon occupied the dominant position. Their records, while deficient at many points, comprised basic source material. Thus existence and accessibility of relevant records largely determined the limits, both in place and time, of the thesis.

Another publication which makes use of records of the Papuan Administration available in Canberra but not those available in the Territory is Paul W. van der Veur's *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries, From Torres Strait to the Pacific*¹³.

A positive expression of this assumption is contained in a recently published biography of Sir Hubert Murray. The dust jacket of Francis West's *Hubert Murray: The Australian Pro-Consul* claims that the book is based on "all of his [Murray's] personal and official papers". Dust jackets are, of course, primarily for advertising the book, but in the Prologue, West makes this statement:—

Most of the official records of his [Murray's] administration survive (unlike those of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea) and although after 1918 they deal with a period well beyond the fifty year limit of access to official papers, with certain minor exceptions they have been generously made available by the Department of Territories through the Australian Commonwealth Archives Office for the whole of his term as governor.¹⁵

In the narrow sense of the records of the Lieutenant Governor's Office (subsequently Administrator's Office) this statement is reasonable enough (with the reservation mentioned earlier in this article) but West makes it clear in both the Bibliography and the references quoted that the statement is meant to imply that most of the records of the total Administration of Papua for the relevant period were available to him¹⁶. By his acknowledgement to Mr H. J. Gibbney (formerly Senior Archivist in the Commonwealth Archives Office) who "offered his unrivalled knowledge of the sources"¹⁷. Dr West implies that Mr Gibbney is also guilty of making the assumption that the records available in Canberra constitute *all* the extant records of the Papuan Administration, which, in view of Mr Gibbney's part in the establishment of the Papua and New Guinea Archives and his continuing interest in the records of Papua and New Guinea, I find hard to believe.

It is a common theme, particularly by historians when addressing meetings of archivists, to stress the value of the archivist to the researcher¹⁸, although I think no-one has been as generous to the role of the archivist as was Croce when discussing the distinction between philological historians (bad) and pure philologists.

For these latter, the poor learned one, archivists and archaeologists are harmless, beneficent little souls. If they should be destroyed, as is sometimes prophesied in the heat of controversy, the fertility of the spiritual field would be not only diminished, but ruined altogether.¹⁹

However, the Archivist is frequently placed in the situation of knowing that a researcher has not made use of sources which might be of value

to him. In the majority of cases an archivist would say nothing; but in the case of West's biography of Sir Hubert Murray and the other works mentioned, I consider that I have a duty not only to correct the false assumption but also to explain the circumstances which allowed the assumption to be made. With the return of the records to Port Moresby this unfortunate assumption will, presumably, no longer be made. It is therefore convenient at this point to provide a sketch of the story of the establishment of the Papua and New Guinea Archives.

A fire which destroyed substantial quantities of records of the Government Secretary's Office in 1949²⁰ and the discovery of some records (notably the minutes of the Executive Council of Papua) during a visit to the Territory by the Chief Extension Officer of the Commonwealth National Library, prompted the Administration to inquire as to the best methods to ensure the preservation of important records. An officer of the Commonwealth Archives (Mr H. J. Gibbney) was made available in 1955 to conduct a preliminary survey of records of the Administration. Out of the recommendations made as a result of this survey a decision was made to appoint a "Records Officer-Archivist" within the Public Service of Papua and New Guinea. This officer was considered to be similar to the positions of "Registrar" established in several Commonwealth Departments, although in the case of the Territory the Records Officer-Archivist would have a repository under his control. While consideration was being given to this report another fire occurred, this time in the Administrator's Department and the Department of Law, destroying further records of the Territory. Mr Val. Prescott was appointed to the position of Records Officer-Archivist in 1959 and was given as his repository, the basement of the old European Hospital (now House of Assembly building) in Port Moresby, which, with extensions, still houses the Papua and New Guinea Archives.

In addition to making storage available for non-current records of the various Government Departments, Mr Prescott was actively engaged in building up the collection of pre-war records, particularly from outstations along the Papuan coast. Considerable quantities of pre-war records were brought into archival custody. But this created the situation which must inevitably be faced in connexion with any concept of an Intermediate Repository or "Records Centre" — at what stage should the records be released from this "purgatory" and elevated to the status of "Archives"²¹; in this case the transfer of the records to Canberra where they could be amalgamated with the records already held. Of course there was another alternative — the return of the records to Port Moresby and the "upgrading" of the repository from an Intermediate Records Repository to an Archives. Repository facilities and staff were available and thus two of the reasons for the transfer of the records to Canberra no longer existed. The other main reason for the records being in Canberra was that they could be more easily made available to scholars. But by 1962 it could be foreseen that there would be demand from within the Territory for material for research even though such institutions as the University of Papua and New Guinea were not set up until some time later. In 1962 approval was obtained for the establishment of an Archival Authority for the Territory of Papua and New Guinea completely separate

from the Commonwealth Archives Office and Mr Prescott became the Territory's first Chief Archivist. It was also agreed in principle that the records of the Territory held upon trust for the Administration in the Commonwealth Archives Office should be returned although this was not achieved until some 6 years later.

The "group of Archives rescued from war-damaged Port Moresby", which had a place in the story of the beginnings of the Commonwealth Archives, now form an important part of the collection of the Papua and New Guinea Archives.

REFERENCES

NOTE. In this article I have used the titles Commonwealth Archives Office and Papua and New Guinea Archives although these titles did not come into existence until 1961 and 1968 respectively.

1. *Essays in memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, Society of Archivists, 1962, p. 128.
2. For example a note made in one volume of despatches reads "... The Indications are that they [the contents of the volume] were removed before the records left Port Moresby in 1941."
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances relating to the suspension of the Civil Administration of the Territory of Papua in February, 1942. Transcript, Canberra, 1945. (Hereafter referred to as the Barry Report).
4. Records of the Resident Magistrate, Gulf Division, File 2. (Papua and New Guinea Archives accession A48).
5. Barry Report, p. 20.
6. *ibid.*
7. A new filing system was adopted in 1915 of which the Station Journals and Patrol Reports were originally a part. However, by about 1926 the Station Journals and the Patrol Reports were kept distinct. The pre-1915 files may have been consigned to some storage area but in view of the fact that some of these were received in Canberra in September 1942 it would seem more likely that they were also in the records section of the Government Secretary's Office. The Government Secretary was also responsible for staff records but since virtually all the "active" staff files are now in the Papua and New Guinea Archives it may be assumed that the staff section operated in an office separate from the general office of the Government Secretary's Department.
8. Department of the Government Secretary, Territory of Papua and New Guinea, CA Series (1942-1955) file 1/8/1/27. Papua and New Guinea Archives, accession A30.
9. Other possible uses of the Patrol Reports, Station Journals and other correspondence are in connexion with the War-damage Compensation inquiry; or some military purpose such as in the Allied Geographical Section.
10. Department of the Government Secretary, Territory of Papua and New Guinea, CA Series (1942-1949) file 1-2-2. Papua and New Guinea Archives, accession A43. This file is one of only 130 out of approximately 4,000 that was salvaged from the fire in the Government Secretary's Department in 1949. This series was begun as the correspondence records of the Headquarters of the Angau administration.
11. See below, p. 28.

12. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. New Guinea Research Unit (A.N.U.) Library, Port Moresby.
13. Paul W. van der Veur.—*Search for New Guinea's Boundaries, from Torres Strait to the Pacific*, A.N.U. Press, Canberra, 1966. Some eleven references from the Patrol Reports of the Western Division are included. Since van der Veur found so much of interest in these reports (of which only those prior to 1934 were available in the Commonwealth Archives) it would be surprising if the Patrol Reports after 1934, and indeed all the records of the Resident Magistrate of the Western Division and other records of the Papuan Administration, would not also produce relevant information.
14. Francis West.—*Hubert Murray: The Australian Pro-Consul*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1968.
15. *ibid.*, p. 3.
16. See also *ibid.*, pp. 7 & 8.
17. *ibid.*, Acknowledgements.
18. See, for example, the recent article by Philip D. Jordan "The Scholar and the Archivist—A Partnership", *American Archivist*, Volume 31 Number 1, January 1968 pp. 57-65.
19. B. Croce.—*History: theory and practice*.
20. An interesting remark upon the lost records could well be remembered by researchers searching official records. The Acting Administrator reported to the Department of Territories that

The loss of records is serious, but not grave, nor irreparable. Under the present system of distribution of copies of correspondence to Departments, it is expected that new records can be rebuilt from local sources and from copies obtained from your Department.

Department of the Government Secretary, Territory of Papua and New Guinea, CA Series (1949-1955) file 20/5/2. Papua and New Guinea Archives, Accession A30.
21. I have adopted the term "purgatory" from Herbert E. Angel's presidential address to the Society of American Archivists in 1967, published as "Archival Janus: The Records Center" in the *American Archivist*, Vol. 31 Number 1, January 1968, pp. 5-12. However, I cannot agree with Mr Angel's view of the importance of such "Record centers". The attempt to divide records into 3 divisions (i.e. 1. Current Records 2. Intermediate Records and 3. Archives) in order of diminishing use by the department creating the records—or is it in order of increasing availability to researchers?—instead of 2 (1. Current records and 2. Archives) does not seem to me to have any validity. The advantages of providing archival storage and facilities to non-current records overcome the disadvantages of removing the non-current records from current records. There does not seem to be any advantage in further dividing the non-current records; indeed additional disadvantages are introduced both for administration and for research. To any suggestion that "Intermediate Records" can be stored in "second class" storage facilities I would reply that if it is necessary to keep a document for only two years, such a document should be kept for that period under the same conditions as records deemed worthy of permanent retention—and what of "intermediate records" that will eventually become "archives"?