

## THE NEW GUINEA COLLECTION: UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA LIBRARY

by Nancy Lutton

If the New Guinea Collection at the Library of the University of Papua New Guinea is ever christened with a name to commemorate a person, perhaps it will be that of G. A. V. Stanley, known to his fellow expatriates in Papua as GAVS and to Papuans as "Uda Boroma", the wild pig. This latter appellation was a compliment and a term of endearment, for GAVS was that rare person who was able to bridge the barriers of race and live happily with Papuans, and adopt their culture. Further than that, he accepted the responsibilities of their culture, as when he was adopted into the Tupuseleia tribe, he also conformed to the obligations of kinship, which anyone aware of the pattern of Papuan customs would know to be quite onerous.

To Europeans living in colonial Papua of the 1930s and post-war Papua New Guinea of the 1940s and 1950s, he was an eccentric recluse, an impression he did nothing to refute, indeed he encouraged it, with wry humour. On one of his old wire recordings, there is a dialogue between Stanley and a lunch guest. Stanley is asking the guest how he enjoyed the stew and the guest replied it was nice rich meat. Stanley then reveals that the meat is a cat. It is not revealed whether this is true or a joke.

But why name a library after him? GAVS was a geologist and geographer of renown, spending forty years of his adult life in Papua. The work he did in oil exploration and mapping was considerable. His ability to look after himself in the bush was astounding (hence Uda Boroma). The breadth of his interests was phenomenal.<sup>1</sup> It was he who saw no reason why the ANZAAS conference should not be held in Port Moresby, then little more than a frontier town, and despite much scoffing, it was held only a few years after his death. However, the interest that most concerns this paper, is the fact that GAVS was a prolific collector of Papua New Guineana, and managed to put together in his library some very rare items, particularly many early mission texts in many of Papua New Guinea's multitude of languages. He also prepared a bibliography, which is probably the most extensive on New Guinea ever prepared, but unfortunately it is only in manuscript form and needs much editing before it could be published.<sup>2</sup>

When GAVS died in 1965, his collection was bought by the Papua New Guinea Administration and given to the University of Papua New Guinea, which was then at the planning stage.<sup>3</sup> Besides these many rare books and pamphlets, there were long runs of periodicals, some manuscript accounts of Papuan customs, a number of wire recordings, maps, photographs, many many field notebooks, and lots of personal account books. The wire recordings incidentally, have now been transferred to modern tapes by courtesy of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney, as Stanley's wire recorder could never be made to work. There is material in the Stanley

Collection therefore of almost all the types of material now held in the enlarged New Guinea Collection.

In today's political climate, where Papuans demand a right to an identity separate to that of New Guinea, to call this collection the New Guinea Collection is perhaps to court trouble. But New Guinea means many things, and the sense used here is that of that whole bird shaped island of New Guinea, plus those islands incorporated into the political unit known as Papua New Guinea. The line in setting up the special collection had to be drawn somewhere, and rightly or wrongly, other parts of Melanesia were excluded, but Irian Jaya was included. In fact the collection is more truly a national subject collection of Papua New Guinea, together with whatever has been able to be obtained on Irian Jaya.<sup>4</sup>

The University's undertaking to set up a "national collection" at the time was very necessary because no other library in Papua New Guinea had the means to do so. The Public Library at Ela Beach in Port Moresby, it is true, had a small New Guinea Collection, which had grown out of the collection previously owned by Sir Hubert Murray, Papua's Lt. Governor for over thirty years, who died just before World War II hit the shores of New Guinea. This collection is stronger than our collection in back runs of periodicals, and does have a few rare items we have been unable to obtain, a complete set of *Guinea Gold* for instance, the newspaper published for the Australian and American troops on the New Guinea battlefields and which was printed continuously for 1,320 days from November 19, 1942 to June 30, 1946. However, the Public Library Service has been appallingly badly provided with funds, and has never been able to purchase on the open market rare second hand books. Neither had it ever been able to concentrate on collecting other materials, such as manuscripts, tapes, microfilms, photographs, slides, films, records etc., and once the University began to do so, it was content not to compete, but to concentrate on preserving and improving what it had.

The only other public New Guinea Collection of note is that of the late Charles Barrett, which was bequeathed to the Papua New Guinea Government, and it has found a home in the Administrative College Library. This again is a collection of "regular" library materials. A catalogue is available.<sup>5</sup>

Recently the PNG Cabinet has approved a National Library Service, for which librarians in Papua New Guinea have been fighting for years. Naturally, one of the first priorities will be a New Guinea Collection, and the Public Library and Barrett Collections will be amalgamated. But this is not enough, as our own University New Guinea Collection has found. There needs to be a legal depository, the lack of which has been the greatest hindrance to the collecting of New Guinea materials. Despite this, the UPNG New Guinea Collection has been publishing a *New Guinea Bibliography* since 1967, but it has been impossible to make it complete because of the lack of the legal depository. The Bibliography is in fact merely a list of all the materials (except manuscripts) added to the New Guinea Collection which are published *in* Papua New Guinea, or *about* New Guinea, in fact a subject and not a national bibliography. As this task is rather an

onerous one on the University's resources in terms of materials, time and staff, we look forward to the day when the National Library Service can take it over, as it is expected it will become the legal depository for Papua New Guinea. The other national type service that the New Guinea Collection does is the preparation of a *New Guinea Periodical Index* which alone would take up about 50% of the staff's time. The staff allocation is one librarian, two library officers and one library assistant, but we have never had two library officers so far. However, judging by its popularity with other libraries, and usefulness just to the staff for answering enquiries, the *New Guinea Periodical Index* would appear to warrant the time spent on it.

I have spent some time on the foregoing description in order to give the reader some idea of the context in which the New Guinea Collection operates. I shall now proceed to describe those aspects of the Collection of professional interest to readers of *Archives and Manuscripts*.

Our manuscript collection is not large in comparison with some of the collections held in Australia, such as the Mitchell and National Libraries, and the University Libraries. We were, of course, too late in the field. Some may feel too, that since Papua New Guinea has a good National Archives, that the University's collection is merely in competition. The National Archives is essentially the archives of government. There are some private papers there, but like the Public Library with regard to books, neither staff nor resources have been available to seek out manuscripts of a private nature. Furthermore, since most research workers in PNG are at some time attached to the University, the availability of manuscripts on the spot has proved of inestimable value.

Our largest collections are the archives of the Anglican and United Churches in PNG. Both these churches have designated the New Guinea Collection as repository for their archives, which are added to from time to time. Even with these archives, there is still a tremendous amount to collect. The United Church archives, for instance consist of about 80% Milne Bay District Methodist Mission papers. Of the papers of the London Missionary Society which operated in Papua from 1872, very little has come to hand so far, though some have been recently found at Moru and at Saroa. The manuscript collection has also a number of diaries and other papers by individual missionaries and a huge collection of papers from the Abel family of Kwato. The latter are best described as family papers, diaries, letters, photographs and some writings. They differ from the Anglican and United Church collections in that they are not in general letters of transactions of the business of operating Kwato Mission, though some such appear incidentally. However, due to the family's prolific penchant for writing detailed letters to each other, they are of great historical value, but because of the private nature of much of their contents, they are severely restricted.

Amongst non-mission manuscripts, which consist of about one-quarter of the whole, the larger collections include the G. A. V. Stanley papers, as mentioned above, and the W. C. Groves papers. W. C. Groves was post-war director of education in Papua New Guinea

after a career as an educational anthropologist amongst the people of New Guinea, Nauru and the Solomon Islands, extending back to 1922. These papers have been extensively used, as education is one of Papua New Guinea's most popular research subjects. In 1967, moves were made, by the then University Librarian, to ensure that the Bougainville Copper project, which was to have such enormous economic and social implications for PNG was keeping adequate records. After a personal visit to Bougainville, he found the records are very full and well kept, and will be retained at Panguna and not at the Melbourne headquarters.<sup>6</sup> Some reports by authoritative observers and some monthly reports (all restricted) have been deposited in the New Guinea Collection.

Smaller items of particular interest are five letters and a drawing belonging to John Moresby, the diaries of Bishop Stone-Wigg, and a journal and letter book belonging to Sidney H. Ray made when accompanying the Cambridge Expedition of 1898-99. We also have photocopies of many valuable manuscripts, for instance, Richard Thurnwald's diary kept in the Sepik District from 1913 to 1915 and the letters from Camilla Wedgwood written to her family from 1922 to 1945, giving many glimpses of her work with native education. Recently a *Preliminary List of Manuscripts* held in the Collection has been published.<sup>7</sup> It is hoped that this will be followed by a more descriptive list when time permits.

Before then however, a great deal of work needs to be done in sorting and arranging the photographic collection. Original prints have been given to us by such people as Marnie, Lady Bassett, who took them on her 1921 visit to Rabaul. These accompany her original letter book, also in our possession, from which her book *Letters from New Guinea, 1921*<sup>8</sup> is taken. Other original photographs include albums from former residents of Papua or New Guinea, some identified, but many not. The bulk of the collection is copies of prints. Of particular interest are those belonging to the Royal Commonwealth Society, showing the scenes in Port Moresby Harbour during the visit of Commodore Erskine in November 1884, when he proclaimed the British Protectorate, and also those taken by J. W. Lindt, the photographer who accompanied Sir Peter Scratchly, the first Special Commissioner to British New Guinea in 1885.<sup>9</sup> More recently we have copied the complete set of photographs owned by Ian Stuart, the author of *Port Moresby: yesterday and today*.<sup>10</sup> There are near three hundred of these, many belonging originally to W. Gors, the first manager of Burns Philp, appointed in 1891 and who remained for many years.

Events of the University itself have been well recorded pictorially; we have photos of all the graduation ceremonies, including every graduate, and some of the drama and dance entertainments held here. There is also a pictorial record of the South Pacific Games of 1969. A listing of the collection is badly needed and with a bit of luck I hope to produce one in 1975.

In a country which knew no writing before "discovery"<sup>11</sup> by Europeans, oral history is very important, though I know we are not unique in this matter. Oral history collections have become important everywhere with the refinement of the tape recorder. Oral History is

taught as a subject at this University. Students are lent cassette tape recorders and they return to their villages to interview their elders. The interview in most cases will be conducted in the vernacular, and this student will transcribe and translate and write his essay from it. Some of these essays or transcriptions appear in the History Department's journal *Oral History*. When the work is complete, the tapes and the English translation are given into the keeping of the New Guinea Collection.

We do have many other tapes as well; some of New Guinea's 700 languages are recorded, traditional music, collections of folklore, descriptions of customs. Almost any lecture or seminar of importance held at the University is recorded. Some old timers such as gold prospectors Jack Fox and Mick Leahy have left their reminiscences on tape; also our first Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Gunther tells us of his years as Director of Health, Assistant Administrator, member of the House of Assembly, as well as the University — quite a slice of Papua New Guinea history, but restricted for the present.

Sound is also recorded on discs, but our collection of these consists mainly of popular song groups and some traditional singing by trained choirs. The movie film collection is also small. The Department of Information has a large collection of films and there would appear to be little point in duplicating it. It is expected to become part of the National Library Service. However, one set of films which are obviously more appropriately housed at the University is the 17-reel collection of research films on the disease Kuru, known as laughing disease, and found only amongst one group of New Guinea Highlands people, the Fore, and nowhere else in the world. These films are restricted for viewing by small groups of medical researchers only. They have been donated to us through the generosity of the research team headed by Dr D. Carlton Gajdusek. More recently we have acquired 19 films of World War II in PNG through the generosity of the Australian Government. As there was some publicity engendered upon their presentation to the University, the demand for public viewing was so great, that they have been shown to packed audiences in the University's two largest lecture theatres on four different nights, and many people are still complaining that they haven't seen them.

Microfilms are of course an integral part of the Collection. The University has only this year been able to grant us funds to buy our own microfilm camera, which will be a portable one. So far, exchange of microfilms of rare materials with other libraries has been a rather one sided affair. Naturally we have been contributing to the Papua New Guinea Records project, (which is mentioned by Kevin Green elsewhere in this issue) and we are very sorry to hear that it is being discontinued. We have bought all the commercial microfilming of back copies of PNG newspapers that has been done by the University of Queensland, we have the Western Pacific High Commission Archives, and any other that have been filmed, and we seek out and ask for microfilms of any theses presented to any university in the world on a New Guinea subject.

Another sideline to the work in the Collection, which will increase during 1975, is the Biographical Register. This was originally Kevin

Green's idea to be an adjunct to his work on the Papua New Guinea Records project, and in consultation with H. J. Gibbney of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and myself, we started a loose leaf type register, each entry being in duplicate, one copy to Mr Green and one to our Collection. That this could prove to be a popular project was shown when the news media found out and gave it some publicity. Recently, the History Department has proposed to the University's research committee that a PNG graduate be employed to research and produce a PNG Dictionary of Biography. Discussions are at present in progress between the Department, Australian Dictionary of Biography through Mr Gibbney, and myself as to the form it should take, and what it should be called. The peculiar problems of such a project in Papua New Guinea are obvious to anyone who knows that except in recent years birthdates are usually unknown, people often have several names which they use for different occasions, they change them with bewildering frequency, and spelling of such names is hardly ever standardised. Furthermore the custom varies as to whether the father's name is the first or second name, or either. It is unlikely that the final product will have any similarity to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* whatever it may be called. especially as there is a strong case for including people who are still alive. Once a famous man has retired, he is likely to sink into obscurity in his village and be never heard of again, even in death.

The University administration is becoming increasingly concerned about the care of its own archives, and in October 1973, Mr H. J. Gibbney was asked to visit, examine the records and report on a desirable policy.<sup>12</sup> Space does not permit a detailed summary of this report, but briefly, Mr Gibbney found that the whole system needed to be re-organised not only for greater efficiency, but also so that the procedure for turning records into archives or for disposal should be facilitated. Throughout an institution of this size, there is naturally enough great duplication, but there would also appear to be gaps in the holdings of most departments. The depository for the University's Archives he recommended should be in the New Guinea Collection. In this University where finance is so very tight, this is the obvious solution, but it also poses problems in storage and organisation. Storage is a problem because every time the library is extended, other space hungry departments move in and there is again no room left for expansion, and organisation because of the lack of a trained archivist. Attempts to get an expatriate have failed, and with rapid localisation that is of questionable value anyway. The same rapid localisation enables almost any of our own graduates to be promoted almost immediately to positions of high prestige in the Government. Who is going to take the relatively lowly position of an archivist, or librarian for that matter?

As can be seen, the range of activities that come within the scope of the New Guinea Collection, is very broad indeed which makes the work of the collection extremely interesting. The tragedy is that funds do not allow for more staff, and that each activity gets only part time attention with consequent loss of service to those who need it. On the other hand, we are strong on co-ordination. Research enquiries do

not need to be directed to several different departments (except in the case of government archives). We are also strong on co-operation, especially with our History Department in the matter of oral history tapes and the biographical register; and with the University Administration with regard to the UPNG archives. There have also been discussions with the Anthropology Department about the depositing of unpublished research papers,<sup>13</sup> though many people give them to us voluntarily anyway. Indeed, the lack of such a Collection must have been a great hindrance to research before the advent of the University, and I feel sure that G. A. V. Stanley, would feel very proud that it was his collection that became its foundation.

#### REFERENCES

1. G. A. V. Stanley would be an excellent subject for a biography. Short accounts, from which these facts are culled, are to be found in *Papua New Guinea Scientific Society Annual Report and Proceedings*, 1966, p.40-44 (article on GAVS by S. Warren Carey); *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Nov. 1965, p. 24 and 143; and in *Encyclopedia of Papua and New Guinea*, Melb. U.P., 1972, p. 1099.
2. Photocopies are held in the National Library of Australia and UPNG. I do not know where the original is.
3. File concerning acquisition of G. A. V. Stanley Library, 1965-66, in New Guinea Collection, UPNG Library.
4. The Collection has previously been described by W. G. Buick "New University builds up one of the great libraries on New Guinea" *Pacific Islands Monthly*, January 1968 p.71-75; and also very briefly in his papers given at the Brisbane 1967 and Adelaide 1969 L.A.A. Biennial Conferences, and in his "Niugini's 'national' library" *Overland* 49:34-36, Spring 1971.
5. Yocklunn, S. C.: *The Charles Barrett Collection of New Guineana: an author checklist*. Port Moresby, Administrative College, 1969.
6. Buick, W. G.: *Notes for a talk to the UPNG History Seminar*, March 27, 1968, Typescript.
7. Lutton, Nancy: *Preliminary List of Manuscripts held in the New Guinea Collection of the University of Papua New Guinea Library*. UPNG Library, 1974.
8. Bassett, Marnie: *Letters from New Guinea 1921*. Melbourne, Hawthorne Press, 1969.
9. The originals of these are in the State Library of Victoria.
10. Stuart, Ian: *Port Moresby: Yesterday and Today*. Sydney, Pacific Publications, 1970.
11. The term "discovery" is used tongue in cheek, as Europeans certainly did not discover New Guinea.
12. Gibbney, H. J.: (Report to Vice-Chancellor UPNG on the University's Records), October 10, 1973.
13. *Man in New Guinea*, Vol. 6, No. 3, September 1974, p. 12.