PAMBU NEWS

After more than 16 years as Executive Officer of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Ewan Maidment retired on Wednesday 2 November. Over 70 people attended Ewan’s farewell lunch held at the Australian National University. Professor Brij Lal delivered a speech covering Ewan’s role in guiding the Bureau over the past 16 years and the important legacy that he has left behind.

Ewan presented a speech about his work in the islands and his ongoing commitment to archives in the Pacific and in Australia. He thanked many of the people who have worked with him as colleagues and friends at the A.N.U. and in the Pacific over the past 29 years. Sioana Faupula performed a Tongan dance and Ewan joined her to celebrate! We presented Ewan with a framed printed German map of Oceania (c.1870) as a gift. He was delighted!
Ewan has been appointed as a Visiting Fellow to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau and will begin work listing and organising archival collections in the new year. He is also going to work on writing the history of archival administration in the Islands.

I would like to thank Ewan for allowing me to learn from him over the past three years. Please see Ewan’s farewell note on p.4 of this newsletter.

In the second half of 2011, Ewan and I focused on consolidating the handover and copying Pacific archives held here at the ANU and in Australia.

In August I travelled to Samoa to attend the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council of Archives (PARBICA) conference. Over 105 participants attended the conference. Key themes that emerged from this conference include:

- the need for more training and professional development opportunities for Pacific archivists.
- an interest amongst Pacific archives in embarking on their own digitization/scanning projects. Several Pacific Island archives have begun their own scanning projects. These projects focus on digitisation for access. The long-term storage and back up of digital files is an issue for Pacific archives. The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau continues to play an important role in preservation copying of archives throughout the Pacific.
- issues such as storage space and suitable buildings as well as infrastructure challenges, including computers that work and power outages, are ongoing issues for Pacific Island archives.
- the ongoing need for Pacific Archivists to train public servants in the importance of record keeping.
- the continual threat of environmental challenges such as tsunamis, cyclones, floods and pests to Pacific archives.

As part of the conference, Ewan Maidment was awarded an honorary life membership of PARBICA.

Delegates of the 14th General PARBICA Conference, Apia, Samoa

In 2012 I will return to Samoa to collaborate with Piula Theological College to copy their student theses and work with the Library at the National University of Samoa to make preservation microfilm copies of The Samoan Times (1984-1993) for PMB member libraries.

The PMB is an official Australian Partner Organisation (APO) in an Australian Volunteer for International Development Program. Dr Sue Feary will be the assignment volunteer and work towards the development of a small booklet/report on the history of the YWCA in the Solomon Islands. Sue will use copies of the PMB title PMB 1360 SOLOMON ISLANDS YWCA, Archives, 1975-2009, Reels 1-4. (Available for reference.) along with oral history interviews to develop the report.

Twenty-two PMB titles were microfilmed in-house from June to November 2011. These include Nigel Oram’s papers on town planning in Bougainville and Honiara, and Provincial administration in PNG and the Solomon Islands, 1962-1993 (PMB 1371), Sione Latukefu’s correspondence and unpublished manuscripts, 1962-1995 (PMB 1315), selected archives of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, 1852-1942 (PMB 1359) and patrol reports and related papers of Michael Cockburn from Daru, Western District, PNG, 1952-1953 (PMB 1373). Please see the back page of this newsletter for the latest PMB manuscript and printed document series microfilm titles.

Fourteen photographic collections were digitized by the Bureau from June to November including photos from R.A. (Dick) Keevil (PMB Photo 57), see PMB Collection Highlight on p. The PMB now has over 58 digital image collections relating to the Pacific Islands.

Kylie Moloney, PMB Executive Officer
Pambu, December 2011


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PMB COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT
PMB Photo 57—Richard (Dick) Keevil

Richard (Dick) Keevil was a British Colonial Serviceman from 1942-1971. In 1944 he participated in the Chindits Special Forces in Burma as a Platoon Commander. In 1945 Dick was recruited by the Colonial Office to take on a role as Development Officer in Nigeria. Keevil worked on agricultural development and communication in Africa and in 1952 married Margaret and later had two children, Frances and Lesley.

In 1958 Keevil relocated, with his family, to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. He worked for the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Agricultural Department and initially lived in Auki, Malaita where he was to develop the cocoa industry. In the late 1960s, Keevil was transferred to Honiara to develop education services within the Agricultural Department.

Keevil compiled and published articles in *The Solomon Islands Farmer* (see PMB Doc 530), local newspapers and presented radio broadcasts for the national radio network. He later collected and published *Custom stories of the Solomon Islands* (see PMB Doc 510) and instrumental in establishing the Solomon Islands National Agricultural show in 1969.

*Dick (Richard) Keevil with Princess Anne at the Solomon Islands Fair, [20-21 February 1974.]*

I would like to thank the Keevil family for allowing the PMB to copy Richard Keevil’s collection of papers and photographs.

Kylie Moloney, PMB Executive Officer

* * *

Why not receive Pambu electronically
The PMB is trying to save paper.

The *Pambu* newsletter is distributed to over 500 people and organisations twice a year. This requires a large amount of paper and is costly for the Bureau to post.

Please help the Bureau save money and switch to receiving your *Pambu* newsletter electronically.

If you wish to receive the *Pambu* newsletter electronically, please send an email to: pambu@anu.edu.au.
FAREWELL FROM EWAN MAIDMENT, FORMER PMB EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It was my last day in Majuro in July 2001. I had been at the College of the Marshall Islands Library for a week working against time to finish microfilming Giff Johnson’s, Marshall Islands Resource Materials, 1946-1993 (PMB 1172/Reels 1-17). Before the plane left at midnight for Koror there were still 23 of Giff’s files to microfilm – on the Military, Palau, Ponape, the Solomon Report, Spying, Star Wars and Waste dumping, etc.

First thing in the morning I went to Gibsons, the supermarket, mainly to buy beer for Tony the CMI technical officer who had helped persuade the Bureau’s 240 volt portable microfilm camera to run on two 110 volt circuits without shorting out. Tony was from Fiji and a bit sympathetic to the power supply problem. Giff also happened to be at Gibsons buying cleaning agents for the kindergarten teachers’ living quarters. They had a working bee the next morning.

Giff was encouraging and optimistic that I would finish the work. He said that he liked to work to deadlines. It rained hard and consistently most of the day. At the CMI Library I worked through to 10pm and packed up the gear, under pressure the whole day to get through the microfilming, exposing three reels of film which is close to my limit.

Thinking of Giff’s fondness for deadlines, while working at the PMB to meet them, often made me smile. They are not my cup of tea but they do help get things done. I am hoping that retirement from the position of PMB executive officer after 16 years will offer some relief from the deadlines.

I am very grateful to all the people and organisations who produced and/or cared for Pacific archives in the Islands and elsewhere and who have let me work with them on the PMB’s archives preservation projects. It has been a great privilege to help preserve and disseminate a legacy of Pacific archives, manuscripts and rare printed material which will be of use to researchers in the Islands and beyond for many generations.

It is also a privilege to have contributed to the functioning of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau which, now having been in operation for nearly 45 years, itself has a part in the contemporary history of the Pacific Islands. In Kylie Moloney’s capable hands, under the continuing astute guidance of Professor Brij Lal and the members PMB management committee, the Bureau is well equipped to continue its good work.

I miss the Islands and the people of the Islands and plan to return one way or another. In the meantime please note that I shall remain at the PMB for at least next year as an honorary ‘visiting fellow’ and can be contacted there by email at ewan.maidment@anu.edu.au

By Ewan Maidment
13 Dec 2011

*   *   *

CHANGE IN LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF PALMERSTON ISLAND, COOK ISLANDS

Palmerston Island, the smallest and most isolated of the Cook Island group, with its unique British heritage and Polynesian-influence dialect of English, has only rarely been visited by researchers. Fortunately one of the earliest of these researchers documented his visit and other contact with the island richly. This is John Burland, from Marsterton, New Zealand, who visited the island in 1960 in order to research his history “The Marsters of Palmerston Atoll, or alternatively, Palmerston’s Marsters” (unpublished MS, 1960).

The Alexander Turnbull library in Wellington holds not only this manuscript but more than 700 photographs (transparencies) taken by Burland while in the Cook Islands, many of which are of Palmerston Island and its inhabitants, and a transcription of a one-hour interview Burland conducted with Ned Marsters and his daughter Peka, when they visited New Zealand in 1959.

“J C Burland typing up notes in the Big House, Palmerston Atoll, Cook Islands, June or July 1960” (Turnbull Library 1/4-090485-F)
Together with early letters and council records held in the Cook Island archives, Burland’s interview forms part of a small corpus of historical information that is currently informing a three year Australian Research Council-funded project by Rachel Hendery (Australian National University) on change in language, culture and identity of Palmerston Island. The interview contains a wealth of information about the settlement of the island and its early history, and also sheds light on many aspects of daily life on the island, such as what was considered ‘leisure time’ for women:

Burland: "So you are busy with copra every day, and fishing. When do you make those lovely hats?"
Marsters: "The ladies makes the hats."
Burland: "Oh, the women don't go out for copra?"
Marsters: "The women go out too for the copra."
Burland: "So they just do the hats when they feel like it?"
Marsters: "Just when they gets rest they gets on to the hats."

We can also already see in the Burland interview the use of deadpan humour and ‘tall tales’, which play a large part in interactions on the island today (and which Daniel Curran, a sociology PhD student from the University of Kent has dubbed ‘humour-mongering’).

Marsters: "I seen in the papers that they don't believe that the squid will crawl ashore."
Burland. "The which?"
Marsters: "Squid. Well, I seen in the paper. That's from Rarotonga. I told the Dresser at Palmerston - on this I can say that is true. In Palmerston here when I was a boy - we was boys and we goes on the beach spearing - the squid used to go up the pandanus."
Burland: "Up the trees?"
Marsters: "Yes."
Burland: "Did they?"
Marsters: "On the pandanus and taking - eating - the flowers of the pandanus. And from the top he spring from the top and spring down on the white sand, crawling down to the sea. On the beach side."

The Palmerston Island culture and dialect have recently been undergoing immense change due to greater connection with the outside world, so it is extremely valuable to have access to these earlier records of daily life and oral history.

“Teraia Cough Marsters and his "labour", Kainga, "knocking" fish spears in the Carpenter House, Palmerston Islet.” (Turnbull library PA12-0514-07 )

By Rachel Henderey
Email: Rachel.hendery@anu.edu.au

AN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE RABAUL VOLCANOLOGICAL OBSERVATORY

A new information management system (IMS) was installed at the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory in East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea, in July this year. Consisting of more than 3000 bibliographic citations, 80% linked to full-text documents, the IMS was provided as part of Geoscience Australia’s RVO Twinning Program, funded by AusAID.

Background

A volcanological observatory was created in Rabaul in 1940 by the Australian government following the volcanic eruptions there in 1937. Norman Fisher was its first Director, and he re-established and expanded the RVO after World War II to encompass all active volcanoes in the country. The PNG government assumed responsibility for the Observatory upon Self Government in 1973, but strong ties have remained between the RVO and the Bureau of Mineral Resources, now Geoscience Australia, over the years. AusAID has supported the development of the RVO since the 1980s, and especially since the eruptions of 1994 destroyed much of Rabaul, via
Pambu, December 2011

the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory Twinning Program.

Access to current and historical records of volcanic activity is vital to understanding how the volcanoes in PNG behave and thus an essential requirement of the Observatory’s work. Over the years, a traditional library collection of journals, books, reports and Observatory records and correspondence has been maintained. However, the environmental conditions in Rabaul are far from ideal for such materials—the humid tropical climate combined with fine volcanic dust from ongoing eruptions, mould and insect infestations have all led to their deterioration.

Many RVO records were microfilmed by Ewan Maidment of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in recent years to ensure their preservation, but accessibility remained an issue for RVO staff. Digitisation was recognised as a more comprehensive and practical long-term solution to their information management needs.

Development

Shane Nancarrow, Manager of the RVO Twinning Program, and project consultant Dr Wally Johnson approached Ewan Maidment of PAMBU and staff of the Doc Fisher Library at Geoscience Australia for advice on how to proceed. Former Library Manager Bev Allen had prepared a ProCite bibliography of works on PNG’s volcanoes and current staff suggested that this form the basis of an electronic database, with hyperlinks to PDFs of full documents. Inmagic DB\TextWorks was chosen as the database software, on the basis of its flexibility and robustness and as it is already in use by an agricultural library network in the region.

Doc Fisher Library Manager Chris Nelson prepared a prototype IMS based on advice from project and RVO staff and migrated the bibliography citations into it, following which GA Library Officer Lynette Andrew input over 800 new records. Digitising the RVO records microfilmed by PAMBU added significantly to the volume and value of materials held in the IMS. The system currently includes scientific reports and papers, historical reports of volcanic activity, archival records, maps and photographs. A manual and training guide was also prepared for RVO staff.

Implementation

The RVOTP team transported the IMS and a dedicated PC to the Observatory at the end of July. The system was demonstrated to RVO staff and a meeting of the RVOTP Coordination Committee, including representatives from AusAID and the PNG Department of Mineral Policy and Geohazards Management.

Training followed, with an introduction to the IMS for all RVO staff, covering its scope, design, effective search techniques and associated thesaurus, and formatting search results. Evaluation of exercise sheets assisted in selecting staff for further training on data entry, editing and database maintenance. Despite interruptions caused by eruptions of Tavurvur, this further training was conducted in early August. An official handover was made on August 5th.

By Chris Nelson
Manager, Doc Fisher Library, Geoscience Australia
Pambu, December 2011

THE BOUGAINVILLE LIBRARY TRUST

After a return visit to Bougainville in April 2009, Lloyd Jones, author of Mister Pip, established the Bougainville Library Trust in New Zealand to support local people to preserve and rebuild Bougainville’s culture and strengthen literacy. In response a group of local people established the Bougainville Heritage Foundation. The Bougainville Library Trust is working with local people to plan, build, stock and fundraise for a community library in Arawa, Bougainville.

Storytelling is at the heart of Bougainville culture. The library and cultural centre will be the base for recording, preserving and publishing local stories. Local people see the library as an important step in the rebuilding process after the devastation caused by a decade of conflict. It will be built of local materials by local people in a sustainable mix of traditional and modern methods.

The aim is to rebuild the island’s cultural confidence and to instill among the younger population a sense of pride in where they come from as well as providing a window to a larger world.

For more information, see: http://bougainvillelibrary.org.nz/

SURVEYING THE STATE OF AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

For over a decade the NFSA has supported individual archives and organisations through projects sponsored by the Australian Government, UNESCO, ASEAN and the South East Asia Pacific Audio Visual Archives Association (SEAPAVAA).

The work of the NFSA with archives in the SE Asia and Pacific has given us a unique view of the problems facing audiovisual archives in the tropics and the more innovative ways archives have solved some of these problems. The most recent example of the work of the NFSA in the local region was in July this year when Ray Edmondson, Curator Emeritus NFSA, and I travelled to Papua New Guinea. Our brief was broad, to visit known audiovisual collections and locate other significant collections and assess ways in which the NFSA could potentially assist the people responsible for these collections in improving their preservation practices.

Papua New Guinea has an immensely rich and vibrant culture, however there is an unfortunately low resource base with which to effectively preserve the remaining audiovisual recordings that document this culture. The organisations responsible for the collections in Papua New Guinea have very limited opportunities to obtain assistance, especially an on-the-ground assessment of their work practices and scoping of potential improvements.

Prior to leaving Canberra we had made tentative arrangements to visit the major collecting institutions such as the National Library and the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, both in Port Moresby and the National Film Institute in Goroka. We were also aware of potentially significant collections in places such as the Divine Word University in Madang and hoped to find other similar less high profile collections.

The trip focused on visits to Madang, Goroka and Port Moresby. These are major centres with known collections we felt that these locations would give a good perspective of the state of audiovisual preservation.

The issue of personal safety was considered a constraint to our travels. 'Raskols’ or gangs are a major concern for locals and travellers alike. Raskols are such a problem that all the collections we visited required significant security. Perimeter defences of strong steel fences capped with razor wire were ubiquitous and often armed security
guards were present as well. The response to this security threat extended to lengths that I have not seen anywhere in the world, the need for a ‘Raskol proof’ construction.

Starting in Madang, Ray and I discovered that the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had archives in each of the 19 regional radio stations. These local archives had live recordings, often made in the field, of performers and performances dating back to pre-independence days. The earliest recording we noted was 1971, and despite the tropical climate the recording looked quite play-able. Even more interesting was the project that NBC had embarked upon to duplicate these recordings digitally and send copies of the digital recordings to the NBC head office in Port Moresby for archiving.

The project was vast in its scale as each archive we estimated to hold between 2-3,000 ¼’ tapes, or somewhere around 1,500 hours of audio recording. Multiply this by the 19 regional stations and an estimated 10,000 hours held at the NBC offices in Port Moresby gives somewhere between 48,000-50,000 hours of recordings to duplicated!

The initial funding and set up for this project was part of an AusAID project, the Media Development Initiative (MDI). However it appears the audio archiving was not a major component of the MDI and sufficient funding to complete the preservation appears uncertain.

We then visited the highland city of Goroka. In Goroka there was not only the National Film Institute but other collections unknown to us at the outset. The Melanesian Institute, a research and study centre run collaboratively by several churches, held a small collection containing some unique material and a private collection of original video recordings of life in the Goroka district. The National Film Institute (NFI) in Goroka is managed by the acclaimed film maker Chris Owen.

Chris spent a lot of time with us, covering the history of film making in Papua New Guinea over the past 30 years. While we were talking with Chris explained his vision for the major redevelopment of the NFI in Goroka that is expanding the Institute to take on the role of the National Film Archive.

While Goroka has some issues in terms of accessibility, the highland climate is far more conducive to successfully running a film storage facility. The temperature and relative humidity are more temperate than the coastal cities meaning less energy is required to maintain an acceptable environment for a film collection. At the NFI Ray and I conducted a full preservation survey of the collection and training needs for the organisation.

The trip ended in Port Moresby where most of the national institutions are located. We visited the major national institutions and were able to conduct a full survey of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS).
Not just from the tropical climate but also the march of technology that leaves in its wake the legacy of analogue collections. Without support for playback and transfer to contemporary formats these legacy collections are unlikely to have a working life far into the future.

The audiovisual collections of Papua New Guinea are trapped like so many other audiovisual collections around the world. These collections contain unique recordings of fading and lost traditions that now only survive in a form that will also finally succumb to the massive rate of change taking place in the world. The NFSA is taking a major role in assisting where we can.

This edited article was reproduced with permission from Mick Newnham, Senior Researcher, NFSA.

To read more, see: http://www.nfsa.gov.au/preservation/research/survey-audiovisual-archiving-papua-new-guinea/

* * *

**Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands**

Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context

Edited by Alan Rumsey & Don Niles
Available online as a free download, including an interview transcript, 22 audio files and a short video.
See: http://epress.anu.edu.au/sung_tales_citation.html

**COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION FILES, FOREIGN COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, UK**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom has recently announced that it will be making available to the public a large collection of files from former British territories, sometimes known as the “migrated archives”.

The Foreign Secretary made a written ministerial statement to Parliament on 5 May 2011 about these colonial administration files held by the FCO and subsequently informed Parliament on 30 June that he had appointed Professor Badger from Cambridge University as the Independent Reviewer.

Professor Badger has approved a timetable for the transfer of the migrated archive files to The National Archives (TNA). The first batch of files, representing around 16% of the total collection, is expected to be available at TNA in April 2012.

The transfer timetable for Pacific countries includes: Fiji, July 2012; Gilbert and Ellice Islands, July 2012, New Hebrides, April 2013, Solomon Islands (BSIP), September 2013 and the Western Pacific, November 2013.

For more information, see: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/publications-and-documents/colonial-administration/

* * *

**RIP**

Mr. Misiwaini Qereqeretabua
Director National Archives of Fiji
&

Mrs Salesia Ikaniwai
Librarian of the National Archives of Fiji

It is with great sadness that two respected colleagues who worked at the National Archives of Fiji passed away at the end of 2011.

Mr. Misiwaini Qereqeretabua, the Director of the National Archives of Fiji passed away on 4 December 2011 and Mrs Salesia Ikaniwai, the Librarian at the National Archives of Fiji passed away on 23 December 2011.

Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and the staff of the National Archives of Fiji dur-
CHARLES M. WOODFORD
FIRST RESIDENT COMMISSIONER OF
THE BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS
PROTECTORATE

In October 2011 I travelled to the home of Mr and Mrs Presswell in Bundanoon with Karina Taylor from the Pacific Research Archives and Dr David Lawrence, Resident Visiting Fellow, Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program to survey and list some papers and photographs belonging to Charles M. Woodford. Mrs Joan Presswell is the grand-daughter of Charles M. Woodford.

Charles M. Woodford was appointed the first Resident Commissioner of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1896. Charles Morris Woodford was born in 1852 and educated at Tonbridge School in England. He settled in Suva about 1882 and from Fiji visited Kiribati (the Gilbert Islands group), as Government agent on the ketch Patience. In 1886, as a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society he made the first of three successive explorations of the Solomon Islands, especially Guadalcanal, where he was the first white man to penetrate the interior to any distance, collecting natural history specimens for the British Museum. His experiences are described in his book A Naturalist Among Headhunters (1890).

In 1895 Woodford became Acting Consul and Deputy Commissioner at Samoa. Woodford held the post of Resident Commissioner in the Solomon Islands until his retirement in 1914. His later years were spent in Sussex.

Woodford contributed an account of his visit to the Gilbert Islands to The Geographical Journal in 1895, and a note on Ontong Java in 1909. In 1916 he read a paper to the Royal Geographical Society on Polynesian settlements in the Solomon Islands, published in the Journal in 1926. Woodford helped elucidate the narratives of Mandaña’s discovery of the Solomon Islands by identifying places visited by the Spaniards and taking photographs for inclusion in the Hakluyt Society publications. He also published papers in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, of which he was a Fellow.

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau had previously made copy of some C. M. Woodford papers in the early 1970s when the papers were held for a time at the Department of Pacific History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, A.N.U. The additional material that we collected from the Presswell home in October included photographs taken during a voyage to and residence in the Solomon Islands from April to October 1886 (PMB Photo 56), family photographs, correspondence, diaries, press cuttings, pamphlets and rare printed material from the early 20th Century.

Dr David Lawrence is preparing a manuscript for publication on Charles M. Woodford. The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau will copy the archive and the Presswell family will donate the papers to the Pacific Research Archives at the A.N.U.

By Kylie Moloney
PMB Executive Officer

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PMB Photo 56_12, Group of village men with insect/bird collecting nets, Solomon Islands, c.1886.
Pambu, December 2011

THE PERSONAL DIARIES OF FRANK GORDON FILMER

Pambu no.29 included an account of the 1913 eruption of the Ambrym Volcano in the New Hebrides by Frank Filmer. Here, Bernard Hull, Frank Filmer’s grandson, writes about the man himself.

Personal diaries of Frank Gordon Filmer covering the years 1908 to 1918, during which time he was a missionary in the New Hebrides (now called Vanuatu), have recently been copied by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PMB 1358).

Frank Gordon Filmer was born at Grange, South Australia on March 3, 1885 and died at Meadows, South Australia on August 29, 1956. Frank was appointed by the Australian Churches of Christ as their first long-term missionary to the New Hebrides, and on February 29, 1908 he boarded R.M.S. Malaite in Sydney, bound ultimately for Ranwady (now Ranwadi) on the island of Pentecost. He celebrated his twenty third birthday four days into his sea journey. Initially Frank was based at Ranwady living in a traditionally built home but in early December 1908 he negotiated to purchase land at Banmatmat near the south-western tip of Pentecost Island. On this land, purchased from the local owners on behalf of the Churches of Christ, Frank built a kit home which had been imported from Queensland, on top of a small hill overlooking the bay at Banmatmat and Ambrym in the distance.

On March 9, 1909 Frank began a journey home to South Australia where he married Rosa Fountain. Six days later, Frank and Rosa left Adelaide by rail bound for Sydney where they spent several weeks before boarding a ship on May 1st that returned them to Banmatmat. There they began their almost 14 years as husband and wife.

Frank’s diary entries concentrate mainly on his own daily exploits. Apart from brief descriptions when they were in ill health (usually bouts of malarial fever), he rarely spoke of his wife Rosa’s or his children’s activities. The entry on April 6th 1909, the day of Frank and Rosa’s wedding, has only two words, “Got married.” However, Frank was (by all accounts) a very loving husband, father and grandfather who provided well for his family.

Most of the entries in Frank’s diaries covering his time in New Hebrides from 1908 – 1918 might be described as mundane (e.g. “M’t’ng and school” which is, without doubt, the most common entry in the diaries, and which described his morning Christian meetings and school lessons for his “boys” as he called his New Hebridean (Ni-Vanuatu) students). However, between these “ordinary” entries in the diaries, one occasionally finds a gem. The most obvious example of the latter being Frank Filmer’s first-hand account of the eruption of Ambrym on December 6 and 7, 1913 which is, by a very wide margin, the longest entry for any single day and truly captures the terror of the event and the urgency of his (and others’) heroic actions by which most of the island’s residents were saved (see Pambu no.29).

The diaries also mention a meeting that Frank Filmer attended with other missionaries and lawyers on the island of Paama on June 23 and 24 of 1913. At this meeting they discussed and then collectively signed a resolution which sought to stand up for native rights against what they perceived as gross miscarriages of justice by the French authorities of the then Condominium of New Hebrides.

Despite Frank’s determined efforts to save her, Rosa (and the unborn child she was carrying at the time), died on March 11th 1923 from a severe attack of malaria. Frank buried Rosa at Ranon on the island of Ambrym, having built his wife’s coffin. He officiated at the funeral and later made a concrete headstone which was observed to be still standing in 1984 and is probably still standing today.

Frank, with his five young children returned to Australia in 1923. While serving as the pastor of the church in Kadina, Frank met Vera Edna Woodward and the two were married in November 1925. Frank and Edna (as his new wife preferred to be called) returned to New Hebrides with Frank’s four surviving children in late 1925 or early 1926. Two daughters, Shirley and Iris, were born to Frank and Edna over the coming two years. During this time (and also between 1919 and Rosa’s death in 1923) he worked as a plantation manager on the islands of Ambrym and Epi.

Frank died and was buried at Meadows, South Australia in 1956. Although Frank Filmer was known to have kept diaries each year, no written records of his time in New Hebrides after 1918 are known to exist.

Frank’s descendants continue to maintain their connection with Vanuatu that he began more than a century ago.

By Bernard Hull
BSc. A.Mus.A. (Grandson of Frank Gordon Filmer)
## LATEST PMB MANUSCRIPTS & PRINTED DOCUMENT SERIES MICROFILM TITLES

Please refer to the PMB website [http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/](http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/) for full list of microfilm titles and detailed reel lists. Unrestricted titles are available for purchase from the Bureau. Please see the price list online at: [http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/docs/Prices11May.pdf](http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/docs/Prices11May.pdf)

| PMB 1219 | JOHNSON, Patricia, Ramale Album. 1 reel. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB 1358 | FILMER, Frank Gordon (1885-1956): Diaries relating to his service with the Church of Christ Mission on Pentecost Island, New Hebrides, 1908-1918. 1 reel. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB 1359 | ANGLICAN CHURCH OF MELANESIA (Anglican Church in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Norfolk Island, New Zealand and Australia), Selected archives, 1852-1942. Reels 1-4. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB 1361 | BISHOP PATTESON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, Theses for the Diploma in Theology, Bachelor of Theology, and other staff papers, Kohimarama, Solomon Islands, 1970-2010. Reels 1-7. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB 1363 | DIVISION OF PACIFIC AND ASIAN HISTORY, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Annual Reports, 1952-2008. Reels 1-2. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB 1364 | BOURKE, R.M. (Mike), Field data on the altitudinal range of crops in Papua New Guinea, 1979-1984. 1 reel. (Available for reference.) |
| PMB Doc 481 | COMBAT OUVRIER, Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Kanaks et des Expolites (USTKE), Noumea, Nos.1-54 (gaps), 1992-2001. 1 reel. (Available for reference.) |