

**PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS BUREAU**

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**Trip Report**

**PMB Fieldwork in Rarotonga,  
Cook Islands 21 March – 4 April 2015**



Shells and lei's given to Kylie on arrival at Rarotonga  
Cook Islands, Saturday 21 March 2015

**Summary**

The main purpose of this trip was to:

- Copy documents held in the archive of the Cook Islands Christian Church at Takamoa Theological College;
- Continue to copy documents from the Cook Islands Administration, Resident Commissioner's Office Correspondence with Resident Agents in the Outer Islands, 1893-1974 at the Cook Islands National Archive; and
- copy select papers from Professor Ron Crocombe's extensive archive.

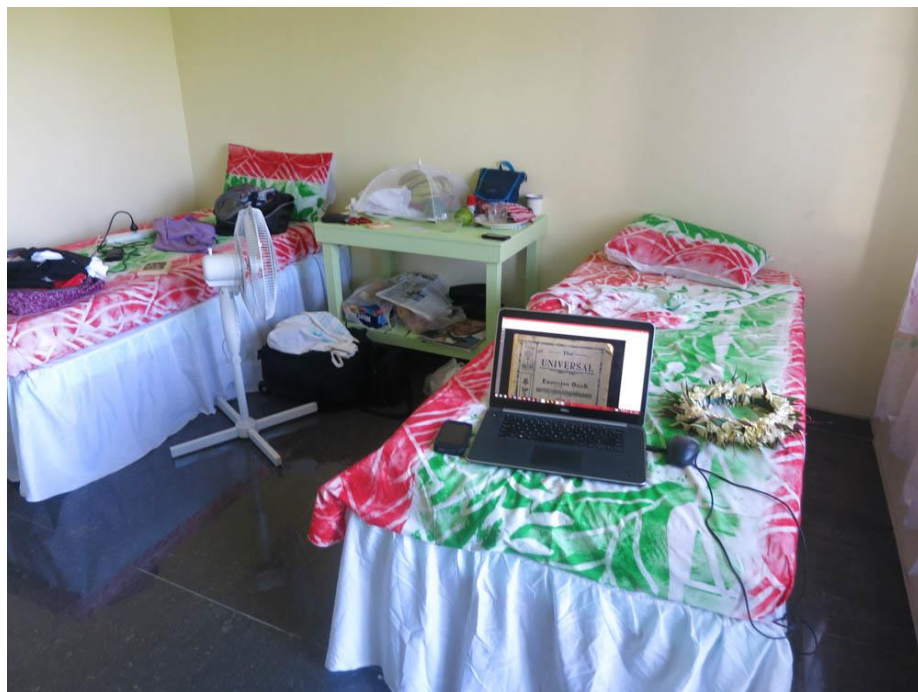
5982 digital images were taken creating the following PMB titles:

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| PMB 1408 | Cook Islands Christian Church, Land deeds, land titles and maps of the Cook Islands Christian Church, 1864-1913. Restricted Access. (445 PDF images)                 |
| PMB 1409 | Cook Islands Christian Church. Register of all LMS Missionaries who have attended Takamoa Theological College, Book 2, 1816-2013. Restricted Access. (97 PDF images) |

- PMB 1410 Cook Islands Christian Church. Archives of the Cook Islands Christian Church, 1849-2009. PDF. Available for reference. (962 PDF images)
- PMB 1411 Cook Islands Administration, Resident Commissioner's Office: correspondence with Pukapuka Resident Agents, 1928-1953. PDF. Restricted Access. (2683 images)
- PMB 1412 Crocombe, Ron. 1929-2009. Research papers, correspondence, articles and student essays on land tenure in the Pacific Islands. PDF Available for reference. (1795 images)

I arrived in Rarotonga on Saturday 21 March. I was welcomed at the airport by Paula Paniani, Acting Head of the Cook Islands National Archives and Tui Tupa, Archives Officer at the Cook Islands National Archives. They had arranged for transport to take me to the Pukapuka hostel where I stayed for the duration of the fieldwork.

The Pukapuka hostel was located directly opposite the National Archives in Rarotonga. The bedroom was in a new extension and was clean and simple accommodation. The outer island hostels were mainly empty, but come July, when the Cook Islands will celebrate 50 years of independence, they will be full to overflowing!



My room in the Pukapuka hostel.

## **Cook Islands Christian Church**

**Mon 23 – Wed 25 March**

I began work at the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC) Archives on Monday 23 March. Nga Mataio, the General Secretary of the Cook Islands Christian Church met me and showed me his own archive of digital photographs. I advised Nga on some simple file naming procedures that would help him to organize his digital files. Nga gave me a full set of the PDFs of the Cook Islands Christian Church newsletters and agreed to allow the Bureau to distribute these documents as a title.

In 2011 the CICC hosted a visit from Christine Gordon, the Archivist at the Uniting Church archives in Sydney, Australia and Linda Turton, a library assistant at the Camden Theological College of the Library of the Uniting Church of Australia. For four weeks Linda and Christine worked with Vaine Tutavake, who had been appointed to the archivist/librarian position, on the CICC archives.



Kylie and Vaine Tutavake digitizing CICC archives

The CICC archives are in an excellent condition. They are housed in appropriate boxes and the listings are detailed. Vaine is an fine archivist. Several visitors came to the Church whilst I was working there and I witnessed Vaine's extensive knowledge of the collections as she assisted them with a variety of enquiries, many relating to genealogy and land.

Vaine took a strong interest in the digital equipment and after showing her the basics of how to use it, she was able to help me with the digitization of some of the CICC records. We copied some of the most significant items in the CICC collection, the Cook Islands Christian Church, Land deeds, land titles and maps of the Cook Islands Christian Church, 1864-1913 (PMB 1408). I also copied the original Register of all LMS Missionaries who have attended Takamoa Theological College from 1816-2013 (PMB 1409). In addition to this I copied several birth, death and marriage registers, dating from 1849 (PMB 1410).





Vaine Tutavake standing proudly in the very organized and CICC archives repository strong room. Vaine is holding some of the archive boxes I delivered and donated to the CICC.

The CICC continues to encourage CICC churches in the outer islands to deposit their registers with the CICC archive at Takamoa for safe-keeping.

### **National Archives of the Cook Islands (NACIs)**



National Archives of the Cook Islands staff office and reading room at the back of the Ministry of Culture National Museum.

### **Thu 26 August – Thursday 2 April**

There has been a restructure of the Ministry of Culture since my last visit in 2010. All of the Cook Islands National Archives staff that were present in 2010 are no longer employed at the Archives. The National Archives staff are now Paula Paniani (Acting Archives Manager),

Tui Tupa, Archives Officer and Tumutoa Henry, Archives Assistant. Paula Paniani is the daughter of the former Archivist, Mr. George Paniani. Paula has experience working at the Ministry of Justice with various kinds of records.

The reading room and staff of the National Archives of the Cook Islands are now situated in the back of the main Ministry of Culture National Museum space in a separate office area. The NACIs collection remains in the Takuvaine Valley. The archive staff make trips up to the collection 3-4 times a week on average when researchers require material to be retrieved. The NACIs archives are more accessible and welcoming to customers in their current location at the Ministry of Culture, however the staff are not close to the collection and working on or with collection materials is proving difficult.

I worked at the National Archives of the Cook Islands copying correspondence with the Resident Agents to and from the Resident Commissioner's Office for the islands of Pukapuka (1908-1953).



Kylie setting up the digitization equipment at the National Archives of the Cook Islands.

The correspondence includes reports on agricultural production, shipping, education, health, building and port construction, island Council matters together with detailed accounts of irregular events such as labour and land disputes, criminal activities, boats, statistics, annual reports, cyclones and storms.

The PMB titles from the National Archives of the Cook Islands are marked "Restricted Access". I checked with Ms Paula Paniani, the National Archivist (A/g), if the restriction still applies or could be eased. Paula said that they want the restriction to apply because of personal names, family and land matters that appear in the papers. I assured her that the PMB and our member libraries would continue to adhere to the restriction and users of the PMB National Archives of the Cook Islands microfilm would contact her before accessing the PMB titles.

The National Archives of the Cook Islands received a UNESCO grant in 2011 which enabled them to temporarily transfer their entire moving image archive to New Zealand for digitisation. Ms Paula Paniani visited the NZ film and sound archive for seven weeks in 2014 and learned some digitisation and archival skills whilst working on the archive. The moving image archive remains in New Zealand and when she can, Paula will return to NZ to continue the digital preservation work that she started. The UNESCO funding also enabled the National Archives of the Cook Islands to purchase a flat bed MICROTEK scanner which is being used to digitise historical photographs from the NACIs collections. Over 3000 historical photographic images of the Cook Islands have been scanned, however the negatives collections are, as yet, unfinished.

The PMB microfilms that were copied at the NACIs were converted into digital (PDF) format. This conversion was done overseas as there was no machine available at the National Archives to digitise microfilms.



Paula Paniani and Tumutoa Henry with Kylie at the National Archives of the Cook Islands.

On the final day of my visit Paula Paniani arranged a workshop with record keeping officers from several Government Departments. I spoke about the work of the Bureau and how I digitise collections. Paula spoke about the Acts and Regulations that the National Archives of the Cook Islands and Public Service Departments are bound by. She also spoke about some of the resources at the Archives and reminded those present that they were to legally bound to deposit Government records with the National Archives of the Cook Islands. She said that Archive staff were able to help them with deciding what to keep and dispose of. There were many questions following the session, particularly around the management and retention of digital records as well as personal/family records within the Cook Islands. Cook Islands TV were present at the presentation/workshop and interviewed me about my work and my impressions and hopes for archives in the Cook Islands.





Paula Paniani and Kylie presenting a workshop on record keeping and digitising archives for Cook Islands Government Department representatives.



Kylie being interviewed by Cook Islands TV about archives in the Cook Islands.

## **Ron Crocombe's papers**

**Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 March**

I visited Marjorie Crocome on Saturday afternoon and used the detailed listing I prepared on the 2010 visit to identify which of Ron Crocombe's papers were to be copied. Crocombe is a well known Pacific Historian and lecturer. He was the founding Professor Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific and the founding Director of the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. He was awarded a PhD. from the Australian National University in 1961. From 1957 to 2009 he published extensively on a large range of topics relating to the Pacific including land policy, rural sociology, ethnohistory, regional organization, social, cultural and educational policy, politics, asia and the Pacific and international relations. Much of his work was devoted to facilitating and coordinating research by Pacific Islanders. The Crocombe collection is a significant resource for scholars of Pacific studies.

Some of the plastic tubs and archival boxes listed in 2010 were not in the room. Marjorie said that she had transferred some of the collection to USP. I decided to focus on the land tenure files. These were extensive in themselves and included essays by USP students on land tenure in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (PMB MS 1412).



Kylie with Marjorie Crocombe in her garden.



The filing cabinets containing most of the Ron Crocombe archive in the small enclosed verandah off the side of the study had visibly deteriorated since my visit in 2010.



Filing cabinets in 2010 (left) and in 2015 (right).

I spoke with Marjorie Crocombe about the collection and encouraged her to deposit Ron's collection with the Cook Islands National Archives. She said she was hesitant because of the lack of air-conditioning and space in the current archives repository but promised to follow it up with Paula Paniani.

On Wednesday 2 April the Cook Islands Prime Minister visited the National Archives at the Ministry of Culture whilst I was working there. Marjorie Crocombe had contacted him and asked him to investigate the possibility of installing solar panels and air-conditioning at the Cook Islands National Archive repository building in Takuvaine Valley. The Prime Minister and Paula Paniani visited the Takuvaine Valley repository to inspect the building and conditions. The Prime Minister has asked Paula to write a report recommending the installation of solar panels and air-conditioning in the secure room as the first step towards improving the condition of the Takuvaine Valley repository. This was a great outcome for the Cook Islands National Archives and I wish to thank Marjorie Crocombe for her intervention. I will also submit a letter of recommendation to the Prime Minister that these improvements are made to the building in Takuvaine Valley.

#### **Additional Meetings and Visits**

On Wednesday 25 March I met with Sonny Williams, the Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Paula Paniani for a breakfast meeting. I explained to Sonny the work I was undertaking and encouraged him to support the Archives. Sonny was interested in the PMB's digital equipment and asked me to provide a copy of the costings and a brief report on any recommendations I might have for the Cook Islands National Archives. He thanked me for the PMB's digitizing work at the Cook Islands National Archives.

## **Working conditions and notes**

It was extremely hot and humid during the first week of my visit. I had thought it was just me, but soon realized that local Cook Islanders were also complaining of the heat. The local water can not be used as it can be contaminated so I bought bottle water for my stay and remained healthy.

The digital equipment worked well. I was able to monitor the images as I took them using the laptop and re-shoot if necessary. For my last trip to Papua New Guinea I left the post-processing work for when I returned home. Once home, I found it difficult to find the time to post-process and prepare the images for upload to the PMB catalogue. I decided that with this trip I would try post-processing the images as I worked. I undertook a lot of the post-processing work in the evenings. I cropped and edited the raw files to create derivative TIFF files, then merged the TIFF files into PDF files, and then compressed the large PDF files to be less than 20MB each. It was time consuming, but I felt better that the work was done and on my return to Australia I only have to make minor edits to the catalogue records before uploading the new digital content to the PMB catalogue.

As part of the post-processing work I prepared an .html listing with links to the digitized documents in PDF for each of the archives that I copied for the owner of the archive that I copied. This took some time, however the local Cook Islander owners were most grateful that they were able to receive “their digital” copy from me prior to me departing.

I made regular back-ups during the trip to the external LaCie 1TB and 2TB hard drives. Due to the large file sizes of the RAW, TIFF and PDF files both of the external hard drives were almost full by the time I departed Rarotonga.

There was much interest and excitement about my work and the digitization equipment. Many people talked to me at length about the equipment and the setup. I have promised to publish information about the equipment and the specifications that I use to digitize archives on the PMB web page.



Tsunami evacuation route signage around Rarotonga.

### **Future work for PMB in Cook Islands**

#### **Cook Islands National Archives**

There are still a number of boxes of correspondence with the Resident Agents to and from the Resident Commissioner's Office for the islands that could be copied. The Cook Islands is investigating purchasing their own digitizing equipment, so there may be no need for the Bureau to undertake this work if they do it themselves. See listing below:

Suvarrow (Box 25/1) – 2 boxes

Palmerston (Box 26/1) – ? boxes

Takutea (Box 27/1) and Mitiaro (Box 28/1) – 1 box (boxed together)

#### **Rod Dixon and USP**

Rod Dixon was overseas during my visit, however in 2010 he said that there were several personal paper collections of prominent Cook Islanders in private hands:

Reuben Tylor – indicated he has the personal Papers of his father who was Resident Agent of Mangaia in the 1960s

Lionel Trenn – was a Resident Agent in the 1940s, Registrar of the Courts and a friend of Nordorf and Hall and other literary types.

Wynn Ryan – was a highly decorated New Zealand officer who helped the King of Greece escape the Nazis in Crete. He was a resident agent and then chief engineer on Rarotonga.



Jim Little – former Resident Agent

Sir Tom Davis (former Prime Minister)

Sir Geoffrey Henry (former Prime Minister)

Sir Albert Henry

**Thank you**

I would like to thank the following people for their support and assistance during my stay.

Nga Mataio and Vaine Tutavake at the Cook Islands Christian Church

Paula Paniani, Tui Tupa and Tumutoa Henry at the Cook Islands National Archives

Sonny Williams, Secretary of the Ministry of Culture

Marjorie Crocombe

Jeannine Daniel at the Office of the Ombudsman

Mahiriki Tangaroa and Eruera Nia

Staff at the Pukapuka Hostel

Kylie Moloney

Executive Officer

Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

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Takamoa Theological College, Rarotonga.