

Pambu

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THE EXPLOITS OF THE 'CECIL RHODES OF THE PACIFIC'

The voluminous papers of a man who has been described as 'the Cecil Rhodes of the Pacific' are to be copied on microfilm by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. The papers are those of John T. Arundel, one of the dominating figures in the Pacific phosphate and copra industry from 1870 until his death in 1919.

At the time of his death, Arundel was one of the principal shareholders in the Pacific Phosphate Company, the organisation which then mined the phosphate deposits of Ocean Island and Nauru. These deposits were acquired in the following year by the British, Australian and New Zealand governments for £3,500,000.

Some thirty years earlier, it was largely through Arundel's representations that the British flag was raised over most of the Phoenix Islands in the Central Pacific; and he himself took possession of Vostok Island on behalf of Queen Victoria in 1873.

Yet Arundel never figured in Who's Who, the Dictionary of National Biography, or other such reference books, and when he died no obituary notice of him appeared in The Times. Many basic details about him are therefore not readily available; nor are they to be found among his papers, even though these include a series of diaries spanning the half century from 1870 until his death.

The PMB has not been able to find out, for example, when or where he was born; in what circumstances he first came to the Pacific; or how he acquired the capital for his first enterprises.

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau was established in 1968 as part of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. Its purpose is to locate unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands and to obtain copies of them on microfilm for five world libraries specialising in Pacific research. The five libraries are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu; and the State Library of Victoria.

However, it seems that he was a son of the Rev. John Arundel, secretary from 1819 to 1846 of the London Missionary Society, which sent its first missionaries to the Pacific in 1797.

His first extant diary covers the beginning of what he described as his third voyage round the world. He was then employed by Houlder Brothers and Company of London, who had interests in several guano islands in the Central Pacific. On that voyage, he travelled from England to Australia, via the Suez Canal, thence to Auckland, Rarotonga, the Society Islands and finally Starbuck Island, one of the Line Islands. At Starbuck, he spent a couple of weeks 'collecting guano,' and then returned to Australia.

During the next few years, Arundel was in and out of Starbuck several times. He also visited a number of other islands in that vicinity, including Caroline, Fanning, Vostok and Flint, which were exploited for phosphate.

By the early 1880s, Arundel had branched out on his own; and having obtained leases from the British Government for Flint and Caroline Islands, he began systematically planting them with coconuts, employing labourers from the islands thereabouts. By mid-1882, 155,000 nuts had been planted.

Meanwhile, Arundel prospected for guano in many islands, including Tetiaroa, an atoll some twenty-six miles from Tahiti, where he found 'many natives placed there by the king to look after his pigs.' He also spent some time in 1881 looking unsuccessfully for Victoria Island, an island reputed to exist near the Cook Group.

By 1886, Arundel had developed plans to plant several of the Phoenix Islands - namely, Sydney, Enderbury, Hull, Gardner and Canton - with coconuts. The first of these islands was then held by Arundel on lease from the British Government; the rest were leased by one C.A. Williams, of New London, Connecticut.

A prospectus issued by Arundel at the time proposed the formation of 'a Small Private Company for the purpose of Cocoa Nut Cultivation and the Manufacture of Copra, Coir, and other products of the Cocoa Nut.' The two objects of the company were:

- * To acquire from Arundel his rights and interest in the coconut plantations on Flint and Caroline Islands, 'distant about 400 miles from Tahiti...'
- * To plant 'some or all of the Phoenix Islands with coconuts.'

'The Islands of the Phoenix Group,' the prospectus said, 'are daily becoming more valuable from the increased communication between the Samoan or Navigator's Group (from which they are only 600 miles distant) and the Australasian Colonies and San Francisco, and thereby with the outer world.'

'The Mail Line of Steamers between San Francisco, Honolulu, Auckland, and Sydney, passes through the Samoan Group - and the Steamers call off the West Cape of Tutuila, on both their upward and downward journeys, every four weeks.... The time from Samoa to the Phoenix Group is from four to six days.'

After mentioning other ships that connected Samoa with the outside world, the prospectus added: 'It is also very probable that the New Cable to be laid across the Pacific from Victoria, Vancouver Island, or San Francisco to Auckland and Sydney, will pass through the Phoenix Group.... All this opening up of communication naturally enhances the importance and value of the Phoenix Group, and there is no doubt that in the race after Pacific Islands which is now taking place among the Great European Powers, these will before long attract considerable attention....'

The prospectus advocated the planting of half a million coconuts in the Phoenix Group, and it estimated that even if no more than £14 per ton were obtained for copra, and no use was made of the fibre, those islands should be yielding an annual profit of £30,000 by 1895.

Arundel's appeal, by means of his prospectus, led to the formation of John T. Arundel & Co., which, not long afterwards, acquired most of the interests of C.A. Williams in the Phoenix Group, and then obtained leases for those islands from the British Government.

Following this, HMS Egeria was sent to the group in 1889 to take Birnie, Phoenix, Hull and Sydney Islands under British protection; and HMS Curaçoa was assigned to visit Gardner Island for that purpose in 1892.

The new company thrived, and in due course it was absorbed into a larger company, the Pacific Islands Company Ltd, of London. The PI Company also acquired the business interests of a Sydney firm, Henderson & Macfarlane, which had trading stores in the Tokelau, Gilbert, Ellice and Marshall groups, plus coconut plantations on Christmas and Suwarrow Islands.

Arundel became vice-chairman of the new company, the chairman being Lord Stanmore, formerly Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji and first High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.

Lord Stanmore said at the first ordinary general meeting of the new company held in London on 19 April 1899 that its object was 'to bring about the fusion of large firms trading in the Pacific, in order to avoid unnecessary competition, and to conduct the businesses with greater economy.'

He also stated that Arundel had made a visit to 'various parts of the world' during the previous two years, and that this had resulted in the acquisition by purchase or concession of:

- * Clipperton Island, containing valuable guano deposits, about 650 miles from Acapulco, Mexico. (A concession from the Mexican Government.)
- * Rabi Island, Fiji, containing several thousand coconut trees. (On a ten-year lease, with the option of purchase.)
- * St Heliers Estate, Taveuni, Fiji, which included 180 acres planted with coconuts. (Formerly owned by Sir John Thurston, then Governor of Fiji.)
- * Mbua Estate, Vanua Levu, Fiji.
- * Vostok Island, containing a deposit of guano and also very suitable for coconut planting.
- * Freehold property on Butaritari, Gilbert Islands.

Lord Stanmore said that profits divisible among the ordinary shareholders for the year 1897 were only £2,160, and

that those for 1898 were expected to amount to £7,000. However, it was hoped that during 1899 'the full benefit would be felt of the original idea on which the Company was started', and that there would be 'a considerable avoidance of competition and economy in working.'

The year 1899, however, did not turn out as hoped. As Lord Stanmore said at the next annual meeting of shareholders in December 1900, there had been 'errors in the management' and in the 'mode of keeping and rendering accounts in Australasia'; and the company's receipts had been 'injuriously affected by a series of unfortunate incidents not likely to recur....'

'But,' Lord Stanmore went on, 'however disappointing the past results may prove to be, the Directors are glad to be able to give a far more cheering account of the prospects for the immediate future. The Crown has recently granted to the Company, through the Colonial Office, at a nominal rent for a long term of years, the exclusive privilege of exploiting phosphates from Ocean Island, an island which contains perhaps some of the richest deposits of that character...in any part of the world.'

The discovery of the phosphate deposits at Ocean Island was the work of one of Arundel's employees, Albert F. Ellis. In his book Ocean Island and Nauru, Ellis described how he returned to Sydney from those islands in 1900 with a cargo of copra and 'bearing news worth many such cargoes.' Arundel was at the wharf to meet him, and, as Ellis said, 'it was decided to start work at Ocean Island forthwith.'

In May of the following year, Ellis accompanied Arundel and various German officials to Nauru, then part of Germany's Marshall Islands Protectorate. As the topography of that island was similar to that of Ocean Island, it was suspected that valuable phosphate deposits would also be found there, and this soon proved to be the case. Later, Ellis wrote, a meeting of the chiefs representing each tribe was held to acquaint them with the 'recent developments.'

'They were told,' he said, 'it had been found that the rocks and soil on the high portion of the island were useful to white men, and that the company whom we represented would pay them for the phosphate at a stated rate.'

'The chiefs were gravely interested; one of them thought it was hardly the thing for the white men to have to pay for rocks, and another suggested that when they were being removed, we might leave behind sufficient for them to make the special stone sinkers they use for their fishing lines....'

Back in London, negotiations were soon put in train to sell off the non-phosphate side of the Pacific Islands Company's business, and to amalgamate what remained with the Jaluit Gesellschaft of Hamburg to form the Pacific Phosphate Company. Meanwhile, a licence was obtained from the British Government to exploit the Ocean Island deposits for 98 years from 1 January 1902; and a 94-year concession was obtained from the German Government for the exploitation of the deposits at Nauru and other islands in the Marshall Group.

The total extent of the deposits at Ocean Island and Nauru were estimated in 1901 to be more than 54 million tons. Before long the company was exporting up to 200,000 tons a year. This enabled it to pay a dividend of about 50 per cent on a paid-up capital of £250,000.

In the early days of the Phosphate Company, Arundel still held a managerial post and travelled extensively. In 1907, he visited a number of islands in the eastern Pacific in search of new phosphate deposits.

This trip resulted in the discovery of high-grade deposits at Makatea, near Tahiti, and the subsequent formation of the Compagnie Française des Phosphates de l'Océanie, in which the Phosphate Company had a large financial interest.

Arundel, accompanied by his family, made his last visit to the Pacific in 1909. They travelled in the s.s. Ocean Queen, which narrowly escaped a serious accident at Nauru when a mooring windlass collapsed, causing a four-ton anchor, 160 fathoms of chain, and 90 fathoms of seven-inch steel wire hawser to slide into the sea.

Arundel, who was on the bow of the steamer at the time, rushed aft expecting to find legs and arms mutilated, and bodies all over the deck. But by good fortune there were no casualties.

However, soon afterwards, in passing close to Makatea, something went wrong with the Ocean Queen's engines, the vessel drifted on the reef, and became a total loss.

Arundel resigned from his managerial post soon after the accidents. 'He was then well on in years,' Ellis wrote, 'his health was not good, and was naturally affected by these events. His later years were spent quietly in England, though his interest in island matters continued keen to the last....'

The Arundel papers to be microfilmed comprise his diaries from 1870 to 1919, a miscellaneous collection of letters, and a number of printed papers, including prospectuses, relating to the enterprises he was engaged in. These papers are at present held in the Department of Pacific History, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

Permission to microfilm them has been given by Arundel's grandson, Mr John Aris, of London. The microfilms will undoubtedly be of considerable value to scholars.

PREWAR PATROL DIARIES
COVER 13 YEARS

A complete series of patrol diaries covering the years 1927 to 1939 is among the recently microfilmed papers of a former district officer in New Guinea, Mr H.E. Woodman, of Sydney.

The papers have been filmed for the nineteen sponsoring libraries of the Papua New Guinea Records Project as PMB 602 (2 reels).

Mr Woodman went to New Guinea as a member of the Public Works Department in the mid-1920s. After a brief period as a gold miner, he volunteered to take part in the Nakanai punitive expedition of 1926-7, which set out to arrest the murderers of four European prospectors in October 1926.

Following this, he was invited to join the New Guinea Administration as an acting district officer at Ambunti in the Sepik District. Over the next twelve years, he was also stationed at Manus, Madang, Kavieng, Namatanai, Gasmata, Aitape and Kavieng again.

During this period, he kept extensive patrol diaries, from which he wrote up his patrol reports, many of which have also been microfilmed.

Other papers which Mr Woodman has generously made available for copying are:

- * A detailed summary of evidence given by a group of Madang people into the Jomba land case in 1931-2.
- * His station diary while district officer at Madang after World War II.

Mr Woodman retired from the Administration to live in New South Wales in 1947.

INDEX TO MICROFILMS
IN LATER ISSUE

The index to PMB microfilms which was to have appeared in the present issue of Pambu will now appear in a later issue.

The publication of the index has been delayed by the non-arrival of a series of films from Rome, for which PMB numbers have been assigned, but of which the precise contents are as yet unknown. The proposed index will cover all films in the manuscript series since PMB 1. It will be accompanied by a short titles list of films added to the series since the last index was published in Pambu No.29.

COMPLETE SERIES OF
ANNALES DES SACRES-COEURS

Thanks to the cooperation of institutions in France, Belgium, the United States and the Vatican, the Bureau will soon have a complete series of microfilms of the Annales des Sacrés-Coeurs from 1894 to 1940.

This journal, which was published from the headquarters of the Sacred Heart Order in Europe, contains a great deal of information about Sacred Heart missions in Easter Island, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Hawaii.

The order was founded in France in 1814 with the object of 're-animating the Catholic faith at home and propagating it among the infidels.'

In 1833, the order was entrusted with the task of catholicising all the islands of the eastern Pacific from Easter Island to Hawaii and Samoa. The first missionaries arrived at Mangareva in 1835.

The order was commonly known as Picpus - the name of the street in Paris in which its headquarters originally stood. They were later transferred to Braine-le-Comte, Belgium, and are now in Rome.

Father Honoré Laval, of Mangareva, and Father Joseph Damien, the leper priest of Hawaii, were two of the best known missionaries of the order in the Pacific islands in its early days.

PACIFIC ITEMS PRESENTED
TO NATIONAL LIBRARY

Several collections of papers of considerable interest to Pacific scholars have recently been presented

to the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The collections include:

- * Some papers from Mrs Ann Deland of Adelaide covering the years before World War II when she and her husband, Dr C.M. Deland, lived on Bougainville and in the New Hebrides. Included in the papers are letters, photographs, a description of Bougainville in 1926, and a manuscript short story.
- * The journal of G.H. Inskip, who served under Captain Owen Stanley in HMS Rattlesnake in 1849-50 during her survey of New Guinea waters. The journal was given to the library by the Vancouver Public Library.
- * Four diaries, covering the period 1848-57, kept by the Rev. Dr John Geddie, the first Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides. These were given to the library by Mrs L. Thompson of Melbourne. (Several copies of these diaries apparently exist. Others, held by the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, Sydney, and the Maritime Conference Archives, Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax, Nova Scotia, have been microfilmed for the Bureau on PMB 418 and PMB 477.)
- * Research notes, lists, correspondence and drafts relating to Phyllis Mander-Jones' Manuscripts in the British Isles relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Of these papers, the National Library says: 'These extensive files reflect the vast amount of research and editing carried out over six years and contain a good deal of information about various manuscript collections which it was not possible to incorporate in the final publication.'

JOURNAL OF PEARLING VOYAGE TO TUAMOTUS

A day-by-day journal describing a pearling voyage to the Tuamotu Archipelago in 1825-6 is among a collection of valuable documents on the Pacific recently acquired by the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. The journal was kept by Samuel Stutchbury, who later became the first government geologist in New South Wales.

Stutchbury left his post at the Royal College of Surgeons, London, to sail as naturalist in the ship Sir George Osborne of the Pacific Pearl Fishing Company. His journal begins when he arrived at Gravesend on 11 August 1825. His ship sailed via the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, passed through Bass Strait and arrived in Sydney on 17 December 1825. After three months in Sydney, of which his journal gives a good description, Stutchbury transferred to the ship Rolla, of the same company.

The Rolla and Sir George Osborne sailed in company for New Zealand and arrived at Kororareka on 23 March 1826. They continued their voyage eastwards after a fortnight and touched at Rapa, Raivavae, Tubuai, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Huahine and Tahiti. On 23 July they reached Hao Atoll and remained pearling there until the following October. The journal contains a long description of Hao and of an unsuccessful attempt to use a diving bell there.

After touching again at Tahiti, Stutchbury sailed for home via Cape Horn and reached Dartmouth on 8 May 1827.

Stutchbury later returned to Australia as Geological and Mineralogical Surveyor, a post he held from November 1850 to December 1855. He reported the discovery of gold near Bathurst in May 1851.

Papers acquired by the Turnbull Library are:

- * Observations made during a voyage to the South Seas on board the Sir George Osborne - a day-by-day rough manuscript from the beginning of the voyage to 16 September 1826. This is a manuscript of 177 pages, including an appendix entitled 'Notes of Incidents'.
- * Observations made during a voyage to New South Wales and the Polynesian Isles in the Sir George Osborne and Rolla - a more detailed manuscript from the beginning of the voyage to the return to Dartmouth. This is contained in 182 pp., and there are several appendices - a 'natural history' vocabulary of Island words (9 pp.), an account of pearlshell obtained (1 p.), a meteorological diary (2 pp.), copies of letters from Stutchbury to the Pacific Pearl Fishing Company from Sydney and Tahiti (4 pp.), an agreement with native divers and a translation by the Rev. John Williams (2 pp.) and an account of goods traded with the islanders, received during the voyage etc. (48 pp.).
- * Account and report book kept while in charge of the geological survey in New South Wales, plus geological reports etc.
- * An album containing a few autographed letters, etc.

Stutchbury's accounts of his voyage to the Tuamotus are among the few detailed records of the pearling industry in those islands in the 1820s to have survived. Others are contained in the unpublished journal of Hugh Cuming (Mitchell Library manuscript A1336) and in J.A. Moerenhout's Voyages aux Iles du Grand Ocean (Paris, 1837).