

42/11 Namatjira Drive,
Weston, A.C.T.2611,
Australia,
4 May, 1990.

Dr Richard E. Gillespie,
Executive Director, Tighar,
1121 Arundel Drive,
WILMINGTON,
Delaware 19808,
U. S. A.

Dear Dr Gillespie,

Sorry about the delay in replying to your letter of 15 March. Blindness is not helping me to cope with the correspondence, as it means that I cannot see what I am typing; so I must ask you to excuse the numerous errors. Things will be, I hope, a lot better when my new gadgets arrive from the Royal Blind Society, who are truly marvellous people. At 83 one cannot afford to give up, or one dies very rapidly, so I have a book just published, one at the publisher and one on the eve of completion.

I must admit that the sensational reports in the press on your recent expedition to Nikumaroro were greeted with a good deal of incredulity and mirth: an Irish magistrate working for New Zealand embarking on a rowing boat from the Phoenix Islands for Fiji and clutching a sacking bag full of bones. 'Such stuff as dreams are made on'.

Our opinion was not changed by the arrival a bit later of an article called 'Tracing Amelia's footsteps' in a Journal entitled This World. To comment on some of the statements in this gem of journalese would take pages.

I am bound to say, however, that my strictures do not apply to your own article entitled 'Bones' for here you have detailed the earlier versions of the Nikumaroro story, which appeared in the newspapers, but end with a critical appraisal which I find unexceptional except for one or two minor points.

Dr D.C.M. Macpherson was our best friend (I speak for my wife, Honor, as well as myself). We came out from England together in 1929 and our close friendship continued until he died. I visited him frequently when we were both lonely in Suva during the war: his wife lived in Scotland and mine was evacuated to Rotorua when the Japanese were expected. I find it difficult to understand therefore, why he never once, in our interminable reminiscences, spoke of Gallagher's 'Bones'. Incidentally, Mac was the Assistant Director of Medical Services for the Colony of Fiji and not Chief Pathologist for the Western Pacific High Commission.

Gallagher was presumably an Irishman by descent, as you state but he was English to his fingertips. I doubt if he had ever been to Ireland; his mother lived in England and his brother was a Clergyman in the Church of England..

I took a prospecting group of Gilbertese to Gardner Atoll, where we stayed from 13-16 October, 1937, our task being to explore the island thoroughly, dig wells and evaluate its potential for colonization. It seems curious that nobody saw anything worth reporting when going round the island so-recently after Earhart's landing, or on my subsequent visits to land the first settlers, and later still to see how they were getting on and arrange with them to return to the Gilberts and bring back their wives and children,.

You might think it advisable before embarking on your second expedition to send someone reliable to interview any ex-Nikumaroro settlers now resident in the Solomon Islands. With any luck he ought to obtain some information of value; and it is possible that he might even find someone who remembered where the bones were buried. For a reasonable recompense he might even be induced to accompany the expedition and point out where to dig.

What baffles me is why Amelia Earhart or her companion should have died. There was plenty of food on the atoll, any amount of fish on the reef and in the lagoon, and coconuts to drink or eat on the ground or on the trees. The succulent leaves of the boi (Portulaca) makes a very nutritious vegetable salad and can be sucked for moisture.. The mta, the ruku and the wao are also, I believe, growing wild on the atoll. The water is brackish, but drinkable for a period in an emergency.. The climate of Nikumaroro is excellent, despite Linda Puig;; not hot like Enderbury and indeed cooler than some of the Gilberts, where I lived for some 20 years and found the temperature delightful.

One wonders too why, as she apparently sent radio messages for three days, she did not say where she was. Presumably she had a chart. Taking all factors into account it would seem that if Earhart and her companion crash-landed on the Nikumaroro reef one was killed on landing and the other too injured to do more than send a few messages before dying.

I enclose a copy of some historical notes on Nikumaroro which I wrote in the late 1930s or early 1940s. You will see from these that ~~that~~ the skeleton found on the atoll if pre-1937 was almost certainly that of a Polynesian man, as Goerner states, for the islanders known to have resided there were Polynesian workers from Niue Island.. I also send a list of documentation on the early days of the Settlement Scheme, including a number of letters from Gallagher, in case you want to check everything for a mention of a skeleton (or bones). The only correspondence we sent to the Resident Commissioner on Ocean Island, for transmission

to the W.P.H.C. and eventually to London were formal Progress Reports, thus what you were looking for would not be among the material in the Colonial Office archives, but might quite possibly be contained in one of Gallagher's chatty letters - which were anything but formal.

This Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme material is in the archives of the University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001, and the archivist in charge is Susan Woodburn. Access is **not** restricted.

Yours sincerely,

Harry E. Maude
H.E. Maude.