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Australia,
17 September, 1991.

Mr F.A. Goerner,
24 Presidio Terrace,
San Francisco, California 94118,
U. S. A.

Dear Mr Goerner,

Your letters of the 2nd, 4th and 5th August arrived out of sequence but my wife Honor has got them straight and I must now gird my loins to reply.

We are naturally predisposed to help you in any way we can as Honor said at once that you must be the suthor of that superb book The Search for Amelia Earhart, which we bought immediately it appeared and have always regarded as the only bit of well-researched sense ever published on this emotionally-plagued subject. Most of the rest is tripe.

Honor has sent you Of Islands and Men and in Chapter 8, on 'The Colonization of the Phoenix Islands', you can read about my first stay on Gardner in October 1937; my second, when I brought the first worker-settlers to the atoll on the Nimanoa (1938-39), and later when I promised to fetch their wives (p.338); and my third, on the Moamoa, later in 1939, when I spent over a month on Hull, Sydney and Gardner establishing co-operative societies, appointing local governments and arranging a postal service, with three local post offices.

I then developed a crook back and handed over to Gallagher, who made Gardner his headquarters. The article tells how by March 1941 8,000 coconut palms had been planted on Gardner and the transfer of lands to the workers (now settlers) was commenced.

For later data on Gardner see P.B. Laxton, 'Nikumaroro', Journal of the Polynesian Society, vol.60, nos 2-3 (June-September, 1951), and particularly his typescript

been a seaman in the Navy.

He was living with a Samoan woman who was always getting pregnant and I arranged with the American doctor on Canton for him to have a vasectomy, which fixed the trouble.

Burns Philp had engaged him some years before, I presume as one of their village traders, and later put him in charge of their Tokelau labour on Hull and Sydney; he ran a small trade store for them as a sideline. When their contracts had expired he took them back to their islands on a Burns Philp vessel and settled in Samoa, where for a time I believe he acted as Harbour Master at Apia, and later ran a chicken farm to earn a living.

That bit about Jones being a British Agent is, in my opinion, hokey. Whoever said it did not know the hierarchical nature of the British governing system and the ramifications of the Old Boy network. Why should the British want a secret agent in their own Phoenix Islands: to spy on the well-connected Oxford and Cambridge graduates with high honours degrees whom they had specially selected to run the place? My uncle, Sir John Maude, was, for instance, then the head of all the British Civil Services - the top public servant in the Empire. And why pick on a Burns Philp labour overseer stuck on Hull with no wireless and no transport and no means of knowing what was going on anywhere?

Both the Americans and the British in the Phoenix carried on their work quite openly and were on good terms with each other. In my talks with my American counterparts we agreed that the question of who owned the islands was one for Washington and London to settle and that nothing we could do would have the slightest effect on the result. So we might as well share each others beer and anything else we could scrounge.

For the work of the Americans in the Phoenix you should read a book by another lifelong friend, E.H. Bryan, Jr, called Panala'au Memoirs, Honolulu, Pacific Scientific Information Center, Bernice P Bishop Museum, 1974.

published war histories. I have no idea where Roberts is now, but I heard that he was retired in New Zealand. Possibly the Colonial Pensioner's Association in England would know his address. Roberts was for a time an officer in the Colonial Secretariat at Tarawa but I doubt if he was ever concerned with the Settlement Scheme; at least not in my time. I was the Administrator of the Colony until 1949, when I became Deputy Secretary-General and O.i.C of the Social Development Section of the international South Pacific Commission.

(18) I think that this question has been answered in my letter of May 4 to Gillespie, which Honor has sent you - it is on p.2. I could live on Gardner indefinitely and I cannot see why anyone else with average intelligence could not do the same. The fish were so plentiful and tame that I could scoop them up in my hands from the shallow pools on the reef. One of my jobs in Honolulu in 1942 was to help my friend Kenneth Emory prepare his Castaway's Baedeker to the South Seas, Honolulu, Objective Data Section, Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas, 1942. This was later published as South Seas Lore, Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1943, and it will, I think, convince you that survival on tropical atolls is not, except in very dry areas, a great problem. Of course if one believes the TIGHAR's journalist, who writes in 'Tracing Amelia's Footsteps' (This World, Dec.19, 1989) that the climate of Gardner was so hot that 'drinking a quart of water a day, members would go for days without urinating', then life on the island must have been rather different than in my days.

Finally to deal with the query in your letter of August 2, I knew Jones well. In fact I found him on Hull an emaciated bag of bones because he had not been eating any fresh greens. I really saved his life by recommending him to eat plenty of Boi (Portulacca), and when I saw him a few months later he was as plump as a partridge.

Jones was a typical beachcomber-type island trader and I imagine called himself captain, as many others of his ilk did, because he had run his own small craft when engaged in village trading. He was not very educated but could have

Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme? In any case the U.S. claimed Gardner as their own territory, so they would scarcely ask my permission before visiting their atoll. This is the first time that I have heard of the Bushnell visiting Gardner but I imagine that they visited all the Phoenix Islands. When I was disembarking the colonists at Hull a U.S. warship was watching our movements with great interest and this was probably the Bushnell (I have forgotten her name after 50 years).

I protested formally to her captain about her plane surveying the atoll and he replied politely that he was sorry and meant no offence but unfortunately had no means of recalling the plane as it had no wireless. So we had a drink together and I went ashore to get on with the work of settling in the settlers.

The two Fiji surveyors then protested to me that the colonists were building their homes right in the middle of the airstrip; and this time it was my turn to say that I was sorry but unfortunately they had taken all the best coconut-growing and food-producing land for their airport and where else could I build the village? (See the picture facing p.346 of the book we sent; Aririki was called after our son Alaric, their idea, not mine - a near-by village was called Ona after my wife Honor).

In the end we had houses all over the airport but I never heard another word about it; the surveyors went back to Fiji and nothing ever came of the New Zealand/British Defence Scheme: it was probably somebody's bright idea which would have cost millions for absolutely no purpose.

(16) I never knew the U.S. Navy had any concern about Gardner other than to build a Loran station there, as they had done in the Gilberts, Pitcairn and anywhere else where technical reasons indicated the desirability. They raised no objection to our colonizing the atoll.

(17) No, I know of no one. I imagine that you could find information on the defence team in the National Archives at Wellington, and it might be written up in one of N.Z's

found anything they would surely have told the world about it, or at least reported it.

(9) I cannot find the figures because I sent all my reports and correspondence to the Archives at Adelaide (see Honor's letter)...Susan Woodburn, the Archivist, will copy and send you the lot, if you want it, but will have to charge for the work.

(10) Drought was given as the reason, but the settlers said that the drought was no worse than the periodic droughts in the southern Gilberts. My guess would be that it was due to lack of interest in maintaining communications with the Phoenix (which was an expensive drain on the limited Colony revenue) now that the Group was no longer of any strategic or other interest to Britain, who would therefore be unwilling to subsidise the expenditure, especially as from an economic point of view the settlers were better off in the Solomons.

(11) Gallagher was Officer in Charge of the Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme (or 'oic piss, as I regret to say we were known by all and sundry) until his death in 1941. I seem to remember that after that the Settlement Scheme ceased and Gardner was administered as part of the Phoenix Islands District by the Administrative Officer in Charge, whose headquarters were on Canton. But he was lucky if he could scrounge one of our 60-footers to visit his District.

(12) The plantation director (first time I've ever heard that title) was G.B. Gallagher, the local Pooh-Bah.).

(13) Yes, he has a good grave erected by the islanders, who loved him, but the war prevented me from putting a bronze plaque to his memory on it.

(14) We had no radio communication when I was in charge; and supply ships (mostly the small island schooners) were high;ly irregular and infrequent.

(15) How would the USN know anything about me or the

In 1943 and 1944 I worked for American Naval Intelligence at Pearl Harbour, being attached to the Fifth Amphibious Force. There I wrote a little Handbook entitled Notes on the Gilbert Islands for the use of U.S. Forces, Intelligence Section, Fifth Amphibious Force, 1942, which was sewn up in water-proof envelopes and distributed to all troops before they landed at Tarawa and Makin: I never heard of anyone who actually read it but a copy would be worth a lot now. This was really one of many sidelines, for most of the time I was helping to prepare the plans for the recapture of Tarawa.

Then COMSOPAC, Noumea, sent me to Pitcairn again to keep the peace while they built a Loran Station. It was one of those Liberty ships and the propellor fell off just as we ran into a cyclone. After drifting for days with a sea anchor New Zealand's largest tug reached us and towed us back to Wellington, taking three weeks over the job. Eventually we reached Pitcairn and, after a stay, San Francisco.

In my spare time I worked for the C.I.A., then the Office of Strategic Services. producing inter alia their Handbook on the Phoenix Islands. Throughout the war I commuted to and from Suva and Honolulu, I think 14 times, but the jobs I was on were too diverse and discrete to itemize. For one of the most interesting see the Preface to my Slavers in Paradise, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1981.

Then in 1946 I flew to London, via Majuro, and thence to Washington, as Adviser to the British delegation to the long Conference at the Pentagon on the U.S. claims to 22 of our islands (including Gardner). It took me four months to produce a detailed, historically-based report on The Phoenix and Line Islands, with special reference to the Question of British Sovereignty, which was published but marked 'Restricted': I don't know if it still is, since the islands now belong to the Republic of Kiribati or else to the Cook Islands. But its detailed history of Gardner is all pre-Earhart and therefore I presume useless to you.

(8) No. The Loran crowd were great wanderers over the island (there was nothing much else to do) and had they

(6) As instructed, I declared Gardner and the other Phoenix Islands to be part of the British Empire. Enclosed is a copy of the first page of a biographical sketch by Robert Langdon which refers to these ceremonies, copied from Gunson, Neil, (ed.), The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H.E. Maude. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1978. See also the picture of one of these symbolic acts in Of Islands and Men, p.330. If, as you say, the survey party also put in a claim it was ultra vires. In any case they put up no notification to that effect, for I saw none on any island; nor, for that matter, did they cut mine down.

Light aircraft from Canton presumably on joy rides used to fly over any or all of the Phoenix Islands, or so I was informed, but the Gardner lagoon was not suitable for landing on and, as I know from personal experience, nobody landed on the open ocean except from dire necessity. It certainly was a ticklish business except in a dead flat calm. I should be astonished if any seaplane ever landed off Gardner at any time: planes cost money even if pilots and personnel were expendable.

(7) I enclose a curriculum vitae which gives a broad outline of what I did in World War II. Briefly I was in New Zealand when Pearl Harbour occurred. As I could not get back to the Gilberts I was made First Assistant Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission. In the early part of the war Honor and I were marooned on Pitcairn for eight months as British shipping was not allowed to stop lest they got sunk by a submarine.

Finally an American timber freighter took us to Panama and from there we flew through Brownsville to Los Angeles where we caught the last Matson sailing to Fiji. Then a stint as Consul to the Kingdom of Tonga, 'and all United States possessions south of the Equator'. I swelled with pride until I counted them up and found there was only one - American Samoa. Then I was seconded to the Tongan Public Service to do a Report on its reorganization for Queen Salote.

left it on rubbish piles, for the Americans were much admired for their conspicuous expenditure by the islanders. I cannot imagine two expensive expeditions being sent to Gardner without finding anything: it is the significance of what is found that may cause controversy.

Re your PS: we were at Ocean Island in July 1937; and later in our lovely island home on Beru, while I was preparing to depart for Gardner. with my entourage of Old Men who were elected to appraise the islands for settlement by the hoi polloi.

Now for replies to your second letter. I attach a copy with the queries listed by numbers so that you can identify the one under reference.

(1) Yes. We explored Gardner to examine the vegetation, dig wells and assess the potential of the atoll for settlement; but we saw nothing atall during our peregrinations relating to the Earhart flight

(2) No: nothing at any time.

(3) Nothing at all.

(4) No. Any visitor could have dropped a shoe. I am told that quite a few trans-Pacific yachts call at the Phoenix Group with, or more usually without, the permission of the central administration at Tarawa.

(5) I never met anyone from this survey party except a couple of surveyors on loan from the Government of Fiji who were marking out sites for a landing ground and accessory buildings on Hull. I was told, however, that it was a rush job and that inspection from the sea sufficed to show that most islands were quite unsuitable for an airstrip. In fact they considered Hull was the only really suitable island so the others were discarded. These people were technicians on a business venture and not sent to look for Earhart relics. I was told later by the Americans that they were quite right in choosing Hull, which was far more suitable than Canton for a mid-Pacific landing base.

memorandum dated 6 April, 1949, which is very detailed, with maps showing the work being done all over the atoll, land allocations, the road bulldozed through the Buka forest, etc.

I had the whole of this typescript copied by Xerox and sent to Dr Thomas F. King, 410 Windsor Street, Silver Spring (I enclose a copy of his letterhead). Dr King was last year contemplating writing a novel on the drama of Gardner and its settlement. Surely he would let you borrow this photocopy, but if he declines I can get it recopied, if I can find it. He went to Gardner on the first TIGHAR expedition and apparently fell in love with the place and its rather unique history.

The Roberts you mention must have been P.G. 'Robbie' Roberts, the author of several good articles in the Journal of the Polynesian Society. I recruited him, and a few other officers in the New Zealand Army, at the Demobilization Barracks in Wellington, N.Z. Robbie did well and I later got him the job of Public Relations Officer with the Bougainville mining outfit; when I last heard of him he was Registrar at the University College at Lae; but I believe he is now retired somewhere in New Zealand.

You ask what I think of all the TIGHAR razzmatazz: strictly not for publication I regard it as bull, to use an Australian term. Gardner is such a small atoll and was inhabited for so long that every inch of the place must have been walked over many times; anything out of the ordinary would have been reported and be on record. Not so much happens on a small atoll from day to day and unusual events and findings form the subject for endless gossip and conjecture. A skeleton wearing lady's shoes would have been a sensation retailed throughout the Central Pacific.

But it should not be difficult for the TIGHAR people to find something, for there was quite an amount of debris and probably many bones buried there from time to time - the Loran people alone must have buried a lot of bric-a-brac, or