

2+ August 1999.

Dear Dr. King,

My son, Peter, has sent on to me a copy of your letter to him dated 30 July. Perhaps the Fiji Museum staff, who informed you that I had "passed on", were possibly imagining that Scotland and Heaven - or Hell - are synonymous.

I wish that I could be of some help to you in your search to solve the mystery surrounding Amelia Earhart's disappearance in 1937, but, alas, I have little to offer.

In November 1941 when I was ADC to the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific (Sir Harry Luke), I accompanied him aboard HMFS "Viti" on a tour of the Phoenix Islands. We landed on Sydney (Manra), Hull (Orona), Gardner (Nikomaroro), Phoenix, Enderbury and Canton Islands. On Gardner Island we visited the grave of Gerald Gallagher, the District Officer who was in charge of the resettlement Scheme and who died there on 21 September some two months earlier. Unfortunately I do not have a copy of Sir Harry's published "South Seas Diary", but if you can lay your hands on a copy, you may find that it contains some relevant information which may be helpful.

I do, however, recall meeting Gerald Gallagher in Suva three or four months before he died. He was staying in Government House, where I was then working, as a guest of Sir Harry. It was not uncommon for Sir Harry to invite persons serving in the more distant islands of the Western Pacific to stay for a day or two in Government House. It may well be that the purpose of his visit to Suva was to pass over the bones for examination.

David Hoodless held a B.Sc.(Hons) degree from London University. He began his public service in Fiji in 1912 aged 25 as a school teacher, and by 1927 had progressed to being Fiji's Assistant Director of Education. In 1930 he was appointed to the post of Tutor, Central Medical School, an institution that trained students to be medical practitioners in the island territories of the South Pacific. In 1936 he was promoted to be Principal of the Central Medical School. The post of Pathologist in the Fiji Civil Service in the year 1941 was vacant. John Eric Pery-Johnston, who held a Diploma in Pathology and Bacteriology from New Zealand was the sole technician at that time in the Pathological Division of the Medical Dept. If still alive to-day he would be 87.

H.E. Maude, lately of the Australian National University in Canberra, and a former Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, wrote several outstanding books on the Central Pacific islands, including "Of Islands and Men", published in Melbourne, Australia, in 1968, in which there is a chapter devoted to the colonization of the Phoenix Islands. You might find a worthwhile contact therein or from one of his other works.

E.R. Bevington, who lives at Holman's Cottage, Bisterns Close, Burley, Ringwood, Hants BH24 4AZ, England, served in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands from 1937 onwards and who was with Gallagher on Nikomaroro, may know about the bones. Sorry I cannot be of any further help.

Sincerely,

Ian Thomson.