

17 August 2000

Dear Dr. King,

Thank you for your letter of 31 July.

I was pleased to read that you had made contact with the Pery-Johnston family. I hope that his widow will be able to pass on some useful information.

Throughout WWII my Colonial Service colleagues and I simply got on with the jobs given to us. The British Government in London had made it clear from the outset of the War in September, 1939, that Colonial Service personnel throughout the Colonial Empire were required to remain at their posts. A few like myself were positively discharged from the British military forces and despatched to the colony we had been selected for pre-war. Some of the younger officers, including my self, were then posted to the Colony's armed forces. The more senior officials remained at their civilian posts. We were all, of course, aware of the difficulties of our relatives back in Britain, and they were never far from our thoughts. The likely prospect of not seeing them again for some time was hard to bear. I am sure that that was particularly the case with married officials. There was, of course, no vacation leave to Britain between 1938 and 1946.

In the book " Fiji in the Forties and Fifties " referred to in your letter there are chapters on " The Colonial Administration " and " The Fiji Military Forces " which you may find of some interest. The book was published in 1994. Costs of publication were met by Motibhai and Co., who have retail outlets in Fiji, including Nadi Airport, and who marketed the product. So far as I know, sales have been confined to within Fiji.

On the matter raised in the fourth paragraph of your letter " Why weren't the Americans told? ", and remembering the refreshingly international attitudes that Sir Harry always displayed, I am certain that there was no sinister intent on his part. The American Consul resident in Fiji at that time was a Mr. Abbott, with whom Sir Harry was on good terms. I find it hard to believe that the Consul was unaware of the bones discovery.

I assume that you have already been in contact with the U.S. Department, which was heavily involved in the planning of Amelia Earhart's flight route. When I visited Enderbury Island, one of the Phoenix Group, with Sir Harry in December 1941, we believed it to be uninhabited. To our surprise there was a small U.S. expedition there, whose function they told us was to coastwatch and pass on shipping movements to the US authorities - see Sir Harry's " A South Seas Diary ".

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Ian Thomson.

② P.S. I believe that to have been the Dept. of the Interior but can't be certain.