

THE OBJECT FORMERLY KNOWN AS NESSIE

A photographic image the size of a grain of sand may be the best stand-alone piece of evidence yet found to reveal the fate of Amelia Earhart. The nearly microscopic dot is in a wallet-size photo of Gardner Island (now Nikumaroro) taken three months after Earhart's aircraft disappeared. TIGHAR and U.S. Government photo analysts agree that the image seems to show the wreckage of a main landing gear assembly from a Lockheed Electra. There is only one possible source for such debris in that place at that time – Earhart's Model 10E Special NR16020.



The Bevington Photo measures 2.5 by 3.5 inches and is reproduced here actual size.

ORIGIN OF THE PHOTO

In the early 1930s, His Majesty's Gilbert & Ellice Islands Colony had a problem. Since "the coming of the flag" in 1892, British administration had resulted in steady population growth. The amount of available land on the colony's low coral atolls, of course, remained unchanged and by 1931 over-population was at crisis level, especially in the Southern Gilberts. It was obvious that new land suitable for development must be found.¹ In September 1937 Lands Commissioner Harry Maude was directed by the Western Pacific High Commissioner to mount an expedition to determine which of the islands of the remote Phoenix Group might be suitable for colonization and settlement.² For an assistant, Maude recruited newly arrived Cadet Officer Eric R. Bevington.

From September 18 to October 31, 1937, sailing aboard the Royal Colony Ship *Nimanoa*, Maude,



Gilbert & Ellice Colony Lands Commissioner Harry Maude (center, hands on knees) and Cadet Officer Eric Bevington (to Maude's left) with the Gilbertese delegates.

Bevington and 19 Gilbertese representatives inspected all eight islands of the Phoenix Group. Bevington kept a journal and took photos. The expedition spent three days at Gardner – October 13, 14, and 15 – and found the atoll suitable for future settlement. Bevington's journal is on the TIGHAR website at http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Bevington_Diary.html.

¹ *Of Islands and Men*, Harry Maude, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 320.

² *Ibid*, p. 321.