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‘... a pity you didn’t wing him’: Gender, sexuality and race

Here at Tulagi, the Headquarters of Government and of the police establishment, you have failed to give adequate protection to white women, as recent records show, and you will continue to fail until unpractical idealism gives place to cold reason and stern justice, and the punishment is made to fit the crime.

— Donald Mackinnon, BSIP Advisory Council, 1933¹

Pacific colonial society

When I lived in Port Moresby in the 1980s, a common joke was that all expatriates fell into one of three ‘M’ categories: missionaries, mercenaries or misfits. It was also said that if the men were single and over 35, they were probably gay. Based on conversations in the 1970s and 1980s with gay expatriates who had friends whose experiences dated back to the prewar years, there is a good chance the ‘gay’ tag was also often relevant in New Guinea and Solomons Islands in the 1930s, although things were much more circumspect decades ago. Certainly, the three-M theory applied.

1 *WPHCG (S)*, 19 March 1934, MAC, 25 October 1933, 55.

Some Europeans arrived in the archipelago as heterosexual couples who had decided to take on an adventure by living in faraway islands. Among them were men and women driven by Christian fervour to spread the message of the Lord on a new frontier. There were also many single adventurers who thrived on living in a different culture. For others, the motivation was the chance of a job during hard economic times in Australia. They were ready to try their luck and expected conditions to be a little rough and the supply lines long. Separated from their families, they had no support during any domestic difficulties. For many city folks early in the twentieth century, it was like crossing a time warp to the years of their grandparents on the Australian colonial frontier. Solomons Islands was a British protectorate and, for some, it meant a trip around the world to the Antipodes, giving up cold, snow and sleet for heat, warm rain, cyclones and earthquakes. However, the shipping routes ran via Australia, from where supplies came, and even if expatriates arrived with no links to Australia, they soon found their way there, for medical care and for recreation. As the decades progressed, more and more government staff were recruited directly from Australia and, to a lesser extent, Fiji and New Zealand. Two of the four big trading companies originated from Australia and the other two also had Australian employees. As well, Chinese residents developed links with Australia to supplement existing connections with Rabaul, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Little is known about most of the European and Chinese children on Tulagi or of the Solomon Islander children who lived there. There were many child deaths from diseases such as malaria, and some expatriate parents went as far as to clothe their children from head to toe in mosquito netting for protection. Alexander ('Sandy') Robert Wilson, son of Spearline and Jessie Wilson, died on Tulagi in October 1926 at 13 months of age. Vera Clift lost her two-year-old son, Peter, to suspected malaria. Violet Laycock was always careful to give birth in Australia and not return to Tulagi until her children were thought strong enough to survive, usually at three or four months. Nevertheless, her daughter Eileen died on Tulagi from malaria, aged 18 months.² Even when children were brought up on Tulagi and began their education home-schooled with correspondence courses, they were eventually sent away to Australia to further their education. If they could afford it, women accompanied their children. Like their counterparts in expatriate plantation families, most of

² Golden 1993, 327; Boutilier 1984a, 192–94.

the European children from Tulagi spent many years away at boarding schools, returning only during the long Christmas breaks. Once their son turned eight, Spearline and Jessie Wilson sent him to boarding school in Sydney. The Elkington children, Thomas and June, were both sent to Australia; Thomas went to live with his grandmother in Australia when he was five to attend primary school. After she died, he was sent to complete his education at Southport School (on what is now Queensland's Gold Coast) as a boarder. Thomas returned to Tulagi in 1926, and the next year, at age 11, June left Tulagi to attend the Garden House School in Mosman, Sydney. She had been home-schooled for the first few years of her education, using correspondence courses.³

Photographs of Spearline and Jessie Wilson's children have survived. Their lives on Tulagi appear to have been remarkably similar to those of children in tropical Australia. They had a 'red Indian' tent and a dolls' house and a large garden in which to play.

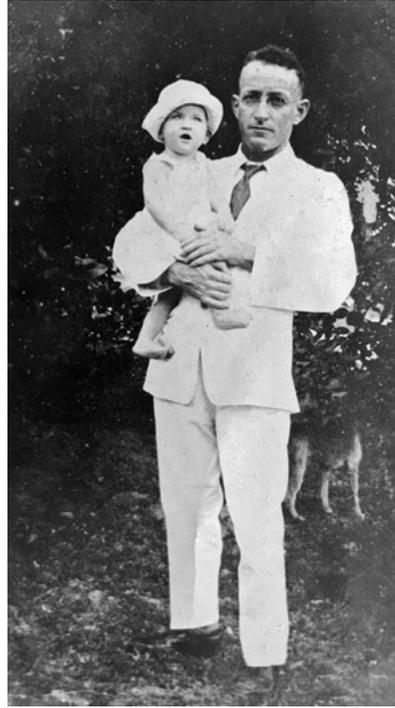


Plate 6.1 Spearline Wilson and his son Alexander ('Sandy') Robert, aged eight months

Sandy was born in Sydney on 25 September 1925 and died on Tulagi on 29 October 1926.

Source: UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs.

³ UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, J.A. Wilson to Mary, 23 March 1932; Golden 1993, 92; Information from Ian Elkington, 15 February 2017.



Plate 6.2 Spearline and Jessie Wilson's children on Tulagi: Andrea Gordon (born 1931) and James Michael (born 1928), with their 'red Indian' tent

Source: UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs.



Plate 6.3 James Wilson on a garden bench at the family home in Tulagi

Source: UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs.



Plate 6.4 Jessie Wilson and her daughter Andrea Gordon visiting Sydney

Source: UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs.

Most employees spent their holidays (often called 'furloughs') away from the protectorate and, given the lengthy boat trips involved, much of their leave time was spent travelling, particularly if they returned to England. From 1926, the wives of government officers were given an annual fare to Sydney, which caused an exodus over Christmas and New Year. It was a chance to go shopping, seek medical care and catch up with family.⁴ Judging by the length of leave periods recorded for BSIP officials, it was not unusual for staff to be away for three to six months. They could also take leave on half-pay to extend the period. Frances Blake, whose husband was an accountant in the Treasury, said they had three months' leave every two years and managed to arrange six months' leave to return to Britain every five years.⁵ While they were away, their jobs were performed by assistants or staff seconded from other departments. The wives of public servants often went on leave three months before their

4 UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, J.A. Wilson to Mary, 21 May 1926.

5 Boutillier 1984a, 188.

husbands and returned three months later. Many residents stayed for only one contract, moving on to better themselves or because they were unable to stand the tropics or the isolated lifestyle. There was a constant sense of impermanence. European society was held together by the half-dozen long-staying families and a group of resident bachelors.

Pacific colonial urban society had similarities with life back in Australia or Britain, although there were also unique features. In the Solomon Islands context, one has only to consider the mixed-race medical doctor Nathaniel Crichlow or the children of the leading mixed-race families (such as Geoff Küper, trained as a native medical practitioner, but always an outsider) to begin to appreciate the complexity. There were unacknowledged mixed-race children absorbed into villages or around Chinatown and several prominent mixed-race families and dozens of others, who fitted uneasily into British and Chinese racial and class systems.⁶

Descriptions of colonial society in Fiji show attempts to hold to British class conventions. The elite ignored lesser families, treating them as though they did not exist. Tulagi was probably always too small to enforce this depth of class-bound rules. It would, for instance, be hard to move to the other side of the street to ignore someone beneath contempt (as occurred in Suva) when the Tulagi street was a narrow coral path and you were both puffing your way up the ridge. In Fiji, CSR field engineers were regarded as inferior to chief engineers, who were permanent officers in the company, yet field engineers were not allowed to associate with those below them—the mechanics, stockmen and storekeepers.⁷ Both Knibbs and Wilson had been field engineers in Fiji. On Tulagi, their long tenures erased their previous inferior status. However, there was a clear hierarchy in the domestic space, expressed in the architecture of the houses and interpersonal relations. The wives of senior administrators felt superior to the commercial company wives (except perhaps the wives of the BP, Levers and Carpenters managers) and both groups seem to have looked down on the plantation wives, who visited Tulagi on their way to and from the outer islands. Yet, there were also plantation wives who saw themselves as upper class and superior. Racial boundaries were stricter than social divisions, but still permeable.

6 Very little has been written on this aspect of Solomon Islands. Bennett's 2015 chapter on the Pacific War years concludes that there was little connection between servicemen and the local women, most of whom were evacuated into the centres of the islands during the war. Some cultural aspects of the separation would also have applied before the war.

7 Knapman 1986, 106.



Plate 6.5 Pop and Agnes Johnson on Tulagi in the 1930s

Source: Suzanne Ellis Collection.

Single white women were in short supply. If a public servant, missionary or planter wanted to marry, he usually had to find a wife while away on annual leave. The only local sources of wives were Tulagi Hospital, where nurses were appointed from 1914, or the daughters of plantation owners or managers. The hospital became known as the ‘matrimonial bureau’—an indication that the nurses usually married quickly and moved on. During the hospital’s first 15 years, only two nurses managed to fight off hopeful suitors.⁸ For example, Jessie Watt arrived as a nurse in 1923 and was soon married to Spearline Wilson. Her letters home detail his courtship. Wilson visited her three times a day and, although she thought him ‘a dear’, she told a friend that she preferred men with dark hair, and he was fair-haired. Spearline kept wooing and eventually she succumbed, even though she admitted that there was no dearth of suitors. Another nurse married the Burns Philp manager, a man Jessie Wilson described as ‘a perfect dear too, heaps & heaps of money’.⁹ Clearly, he was considered a good catch. Inga (Ingrid) Svensen, daughter of Oscar Svensen, was also a nurse at Tulagi Hospital. She left Brisbane for the Solomons in 1934 to keep house for her brother on one of the family plantations. Inga had not been there long when both nurses at the hospital fell ill and resigned.

8 Boutilier 1984a, 188.

9 UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, J.A. Wilson to Mary, February 1925[?].

TULAGI

A registered nurse, Inga was persuaded to take their place, until in 1937 she married Ernie Palmer, a prominent trader, labour recruiter and, later, planter. He, too, used heavy-duty wooing, learning to play golf to impress Inga and having Chan Cheong make her a beautiful sailing dingy for her birthday, for which Palmer lovingly completed the rigging.¹⁰

Other local white daughters also married Tulagi bachelors. For instance, three daughters of Sam and Edith Atkinson from the Western Solomons married Tulagi-based government officers.¹¹ Another local marriage was that of Jack Lotze, Carpenters' manager, to Dorothy Johnson, daughter of Pop Johnson, the Treasurer.



Plate 6.6 Agnes and Pop Johnson and their daughter Dorothy

Source: Suzanne Ellis Collection.

10 Golden 1993, 104; Struben 1963, 56.

11 Golden 1993, 362.



Plate 6.7 The marriage of Jack Lotze to Dorothy Johnson, Tulagi, 1931
Source: Suzanne Ellis Collection.



Plate 6.8 Jack and Dorothy Johnson and an unknown woman
Source: Suzanne Ellis Collection.

On Tulagi there were no 'aristocratic' Solomon Islanders comparable with the chiefly Fijian elite, although some of the native medical practitioners were high-ranking Fijians and their Solomon Islander counterparts carried status among their own people and foreign residents. Indigenous clergy were another in-between category of uncertain status. Jonathan Fifi`i mentions Joe Kona and Suda, both from Kwaio Malaita, who looked after him when he first worked on Tulagi as a boy. Suda, from west Kwaio, was the head dresser at the hospital. Although he was illiterate, Suda had worked his way up to be in charge of the hospital's dressing room—the equivalent of a casualty department. He fed Fifi`i, beyond what he received from his employer, and, as much as he could, provided guidance to the young Kwaio. Fifi`i arrived as a 10 year old in 1930, earning 5 shillings a month as a house servant. Back in Kwaio, his father needed shell wealth for a mortuary feast for Jonathan's grandfather. Fifi`i went to Suda, who gave him enough money to purchase two bags of rice and 12 big Dove tobacco twists, which his father was able to sell to obtain the necessary shell wealth.¹² There would also have been Solomon Islanders in the Tulagi enclave who were highly regarded in other ways, by possessing traditional knowledge, skills in healing, magic or fighting or coming from families whose members were prominent leaders.

Mixed-race relationships

Biographical sketches of the early European residents provide an essential account of the diverse group of individuals who made the Solomons their home. Inter-marriage between expatriate families created an intricate web, and some of the plantation owners, managers and traders had local wives and mixed-race children, which added complexity to societal norms. Of course, many foreign men had relationships with local women, which they often chose not to acknowledge. For instance, when Thomas Edge-Partington, then aged in his 20s, was based on Gizo as Resident Magistrate (1904–09), he had a mistress from nearby Simbo Island. He was forced to apologise to both the Resident Commissioner and the High Commissioner for his (in Mahaffy's words) 'connection of an immoral kind'.¹³ He also received an official reprimand from London.¹⁴ His fall from grace offers

12 Fifi`i 1989, 34.

13 Mahaffy is quoted in Jackson 1978, 167.

14 CO, 225/87 170 (Microfilm, 2915), T.W. Edge-Partington to F.J. Barnett, 20 September 1909; WPHCA, 4/IV 836/1908, Arthur Mahaffy to HC, 22 December 1908, C.M. Woodford to Major, 30 September 1910.

a window into the existence of mixed-race relationships and the level of acceptance. Over centuries, the British Colonial Service had quietly encouraged colonial public servants to have concubines. Although it came too late to affect the assessment of Edge-Partington's behaviour, in 1909, the Marquess of Crewe, Secretary of State for the Colonies, issued the 'Crewe Circular', which made clear that such relationships were an offence against morality and would no longer be tolerated.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Mahaffy noted that Edge-Partington had 'permanently impaired his influence with the natives' because he had reduced himself to the level of a disreputable trader. Edge-Partington—young and sociable, leading a solitary life and, other than his sexual liaison, an exemplary employee—was given a second chance. He could have been dismissed, but was forgiven, 'banished' to Malaita as the first Resident Magistrate and placed on probation. He married a British woman in 1913.

In the early years of the protectorate, only a few regulations directly governed European relationships with Solomon Islanders. Government policy opted for minimal administrative interference, particularly when it came to marriage, divorce and adultery. Customary behaviour varied island by island and the British had been unable to codify local conditions. Missionaries blessed the marriages of indigenous converts and usually did not concern themselves too closely with other sexual practices and types of relationships. Customary marriages could sometimes come into conflict with conversion to Christianity, and there were other conflicts when mission teachers with no civil licences took it upon themselves to conduct marriages.¹⁶ Indigenous betrothal practices, which usually included an exchange of wealth items to bind the families, continued to operate with no reference to either civil or Christian authority. Most Europeans living with Solomon Islander women were in *de facto* relationships, choosing a middle way between customary practices and something approaching a Christian or modern civil marriage.

Britain passed the *Colonial Marriages Act 1865* to ensure that marriages contracted in its colonial possessions had the same validity as those in the United Kingdom. The 1893 order in council included provision for ministers of religion to celebrate marriages, if one marriage partner was a British subject. This provision was extended in 1896 to cover marriages between 'foreigners'—a term that included Solomon Islanders. In 1907, another order in council declared the protectorate a 'marriage district' and

15 Hyam 1986; Hyam 1990, 157–81.

16 Laracy and Laracy 1980, 133–35.

enabled civil marriages to be officiated by the Resident Commissioner or the Collector of Customs. Unlike in neighbouring Queensland, the BSIP laws never tried to limit or ban interracial marriages.

It is unknown how many mixed-race marriages occurred. Such couples lived all through the archipelago, except probably on Malaita or Choiseul, which had few foreign residents. Quite a few of the early traders came to brutal ends and the presence of a local wife could be a good safeguard by providing a close link to the people and a conduit for information. Taking a local wife was also a good way to learn local languages. Indigenous people may also have used marriages as a strategy to negotiate with Europeans.¹⁷ There are examples of long-lasting relationships made in both customary and modern Christian styles, such as that between the Küpers of Santa Ana and the Wickhams in the north-west, and there were no clear class or racial patterns in those relationships. Even a few district officers and possibly one resident commissioner seem to have been involved in interracial relationships. Early traders often had indigenous wives and sometimes took advantage of local practices of polygyny. Graeme Golden lists 30 long-term mixed-race heterosexual relationships.¹⁸ One marriage he missed was that of Lars Nielsen, the trader who began Gavutu and then sold out to Oscar Svensen in 1903. His great-great-grandson reports that Nielsen had a Malaitan wife, who lost contact with her husband when he returned to Norway. Their only child, a daughter, married into the Wickham and Pratt families from Western District.¹⁹ The practice of having local ‘wives’ was quite common, even on Tulagi and close by in the Gela Group. Trader Julius W. Anderson, a Norwegian, operated his own engineering business on Tulagi before beginning work for Carpenters in about 1928, in charge of their workshop. He had a Gela wife and family

17 In *Illicit Love* (2015), a study of interracial sex and marriage in the United States and Australia, Ann McGrath makes the point that the Indigenous Australian women in many of the relationships made temporary alliances and often were already married to Indigenous husbands. Her interpretation is that this was part of the attempt to preserve sovereignty and exert a modicum of control on behalf of their people. Indigenous husbands likewise could exert some authority in these cross-cultural relationships. Nevertheless, McGrath’s study is of settler societies where the colonisation process was of a different intensity. See also McGrath 1984, 2005.

18 I have not included those already named in this subsection of the text. Golden 1993: Major I. (Dick) Harper (pp. 101, 184), John (Jack) Cooper (127), Arthur L. Threlfall (156), Thomas Woodhouse (202–04), T.G. Kelly (205, 215), Thomas Easson (212), Charles Atkinson (214), Edmund Peter Pratt (215–17), Jean Peter Pratt (218–19), George Creswell (223), Joe Biskin (231–33), Aubrey Griffiths (242), Harold Markham (244–47), William Bennett (250), Harold Beck (260), Tom Butler (287), Charles Olsen (288), Dick Richardson (290), C.R.M. (Roy) Gorringer (320), Ernie Palmer (103–05), William Macdonald (359), John Mathews (384–88), Harry Hoerler (398), James A. Buchanan (157) and Albert Molkin Andresen (183). For Palmer, see also Struben 1963.

19 Golden 1993, 68–69; Information from Justin Nielsen, 18 September 2016.

and owned property in Mboli Passage.²⁰ Dick Harper, a Gela plantation owner, married Enid Bennett, the part-Solomon Islander daughter of W.H. Bennett from Isabel.²¹ William Dumphy, originally from Queensland, became a small-scale planter on Guadalcanal. He had a local wife and, after he died in the early 1920s, his daughter Maggie married Jim Buchanan, an English engineer in his 40s who had helped build Levers' Gavutu wharf in 1906. Buchanan owned a small plantation in the Gela Group and the couple had a daughter, Jean. Another Dumphy daughter, Bella, has already been mentioned; she too married an expatriate.²²

Wilfred Fowler described a situation on Isabel in which a plantation owner, after a quick romance in Sydney, married and then deserted his new wife. She turned up at Tulagi and wanted to visit her husband. Refusing to heed warnings that it was not a good idea, she eventually reached Isabel, where she found him to be a hopeless alcoholic in relationships with several village women.²³ The sexual exploits of Jack Barley, a district officer and acting Resident Commissioner, have remained in Solomons' folklore. He was always concerned about depopulation and the Tulagi joke was that he was trying to rectify the problem all by himself.²⁴ While posted on Ontong Java in 1915–16, he had an affair with a local woman, who became pregnant, bearing his son, Jack Charles junior. According to some sources, Barley declared his love for this woman and was determined they should marry. Strongly advised against it by other government officers, he was forbidden by the Resident Commissioner.²⁵ The woman died soon after during an epidemic. Because of the official interference he encountered, Barley became more circumspect about revealing his later liaisons. However, he had at least two Solomon Islander children, Jack junior and Bill, and two other children he fathered to different women while based in Fiji. His Australian family is aware of even more children.²⁶ The relationships did no harm to Barley's BSIP career (1917–32) nor afterwards, when he was Resident Commissioner of the Crown Colony of Gilbert and Ellice Islands.²⁷ James Boutilier credits Za Za, a Simbo woman, with having relationships with five European men, one of whom

20 Golden 1993, 76. Anderson died from tuberculosis in Tulagi Hospital in 1935.

21 *ibid.*, 101, 250–51.

22 *ibid.*, 146, 157.

23 Fowler 1959, 211–23.

24 Akin 2013, 362–63, n. 59.

25 *ibid.*, 362–63, n. 59; Butcher 2012, 171–72.

26 Butcher 2012, 171–72.

27 Boutilier 1984a, 196.

was Jack Barley. Bill Barley married Sumoli Wilomena Andresen in the 1930s. Jack senior was finally formally married in 1933, when he was 46, to a 24-year-old Queensland woman, Florence A. Doughty.²⁸

Expatriate men had sexual relations with local women, particularly on islands where such relationships were accepted. Before he married Inga Svensen, Ernie Palmer, one of the expatriates who was closest to Solomon Islanders, availed himself of any sexual activity he was offered. On Makira, he was on friendly terms with Nafunenga, one of the leaders, who had an attractive daughter, Kavatnaasukulu, with whom Ernie had a relationship, for which he paid shell valuables to her father. Eventually, Nafunenga presented Palmer with an ultimatum: either marry his daughter or end the relationship, and all the wealth payments would be returned. Palmer chose to move on. Although he was fond of Kavatnaasukulu and she taught him a great deal about Makira, she always called him 'Sir' or 'Masta Palmer' and preferred to eat with his crew, slipping away into the shadows if he had expatriate visitors.²⁹

Albert Molkin (Andy) Andresen, a Swede, arrived in the Solomons in about 1917, working first in the Western District, where he had relationships with local women, before leasing plantations on Guadalcanal, Ulawa and finally on Mandoliana Island in the Gela Group. His wife, Za Za, is one of the most fascinating serial wives of white men. Za Za was with the alcoholic Andresen from the 1930s until the 1960s. His daughter Sumoli was the child of his Ulawan wife, Tiganapalo. In the 1930s, when Sumoli married Bill Barley, Za Za arrived to attend the wedding. There are two versions of what happened next. One is that Za Za 'hit it off' with Andy Andresen and the other is that Sumoli arranged for Za Za to marry her father to look after him in her absence. Whichever is true, legend suggests they were married at the same ceremony as Sumoli and Bill, much to the consternation of the officiating missionary. Za Za kept the Andresen home spotless and always tried to curb his drinking—somewhat unsuccessfully—until his death in 1965.³⁰

In 1933, Dr Sylvester Lambert mentioned an 'Austrian anthropologist' who had worked on Santa Ana and Choiseul, who was told to leave quickly or be charged with the rape of two Santa Ana girls, one aged

28 Akin 2009, Notes from Lambert, 27 May 1933.

29 Struben 1963, 32–33.

30 Bill and Sumoli Barley were the parents of Lady June Devesi, the wife of Sir Baddeley Devesi, the first Governor-General of Solomon Islands. Za Za lived at Mandoliana until she moved to Honiara in the early 1980s. Golden 1993, 183–85; Information from Transform Aqorau, 22 September 2016.

about eight and one 12 years old, whom Heinrich Küper had brought to Tulagi to report the behaviour. This was probably Hugo. A. Bernatzik, who published *Sudsee* in 1934, with an English translation the next year. For his reward, the anthropologist is said to have acquired gonorrhoea from the older girl.³¹

The best examples of prominent mixed-race families are the Wheatleys and the Wickhams from the Western District, the Campbells from Makira and the Küpers from Santa Ana, close to Makira. Short biographical sketches of the founders of these four families add to the complexity of life on Tulagi. They were constant visitors to the capital and some of them, particularly the Wheatley and Wickham families, were among the richest residents in the protectorate, yet they were never totally accepted because of their domestic arrangements. Although 'polite' Tulagi society was uncomfortable with them, they could never be ignored.

Norman Wheatley, born in Yorkshire in 1868, was apprenticed in his father's steelworks in Newcastle. Bad tempered, he attacked the foreman with an iron bar and fled. Wheatley reached the Solomons via Brisbane on a trading ship in the 1890s. He decided to leave the vessel when it reached idyllic Roviana Lagoon in the New Georgia Group. The resident trader had been killed and Wheatley volunteered to take over. Two years later, he discovered that the trading ship on which he had arrived had been captured at Bougainville and its crew killed. He then set up his own trading venture, under the protection of local bigmen, who benefited from access to his trade goods. He was successful but ruthless in the way he operated, using the bigmen to dispatch any rivals. Wheatley married Nutali and the couple had three daughters, Florence, Jean (Lina) and Annie. Florence and Jean both married planters, which helped create an important Western Solomons dynasty. Annie married Alemaena from Marovo Lagoon. Nutali left Wheatley and he next married Sambe Vindo, with whom he had six children. Two of these sons became native medical practitioners—the highest-status, best-paid government position that a prewar Solomon Islander could hold. Wheatley built a beautiful home at Laperti plantation on the shore of Roviana Lagoon and amassed thousands of hectares of land in the New Georgia Group and on Isabel. He was wealthy and prone to extravagant purchases during trips to Australia, including of a former Sydney Harbour ferry, which ended its days in Marovo Lagoon. His finances began to decline in the mid-1920s

31 Akin 2009, Notes from Lambert, 23 May 1933.

and he died in Tulagi Hospital in 1930. He was the arch-caricature of a Pacific planter: overweight, drank too much, swore like a trooper, had many children and behaved like a feudal lord.³²

Francis (Frank) Wickham, who was born in Somerset, England, in about 1850, was another early arrival. Shipwrecked in Bougainville Strait about 1875, he was soon working for Alexander Ferguson, a trader. In the usual pattern, Wickham was able to set up as an independent trader and planter, owning several trading ships and significant amounts of land around Roviana and Marovo lagoons. He married three times to local women and had six children. Wickham shifted to Sydney in 1908, where he interested himself in the sporting careers of two of his sons, who became famous swimmers and divers. His son Alick 'invented' the 'Australian crawl' (freestyle) swimming style, which was in fact a New Georgia way of swimming.³³ Frank Wickham never returned to the Solomons and died in 1926. His family remains prominent in Solomon Islands today, with other descendants in Australia.³⁴

Frederick (Fred) Campbell, an Australian from Wee Waa in New South Wales, was appointed as Commandant of the Armed Constabulary in 1912, serving at Auki and Tulagi, before he became District Officer for Makira in 1918. The next year he left government service and became a trader and plantation owner on Makira, marrying twice, first to Maria Kainaua and then to Kapinihare from Aona. There were no children from the first marriage and two boys, Jack and Pat, from the second. His marital infidelity ended the second marriage and, although he never remarried, Campbell had several relationships with local women on Makira. Campbell managed to straddle two worlds. In the 1920s, he was a member of the exclusive BSIP Advisory Council, which guided the Resident Commissioner, yet he maintained his indigenous family. We can imagine the conversations had (or perhaps avoided) when he served on the council with Reverend John F. Goldie, the Methodist leader, or with the Anglican Bishop of Melanesia. In the 1930s, Campbell was briefly Makira's District Officer again, once more blurring the boundaries. He died in 1953. His son Jack became president of the Makira Council and a member of the Legislative Council in the 1960s.³⁵

32 Moore 2013, entry for Norman Michael Jackson Ernest Wheatley; Golden 1993, 227–30.

33 Osmond and Phillips 2006; Osmond 2006; see several entries under Wickham in Moore 2013.

34 Moore 2013, entry for Francis Wickham; Golden 1993, 206–08. Wickham's final wife, Samba Vindo, survived him by many years and was still living in Dolovae village, Munda, in the 1980s when she was 100 years old. Information from Transform Aqorau, 22 September 2016.

35 Moore 2013, entry for Frederick Melford Campbell; Golden 1993, 305–07.



Plate 6.9 Frank Wickham, who married three local women and had six children

Source: PMB, AU PMB Photo 58_108.

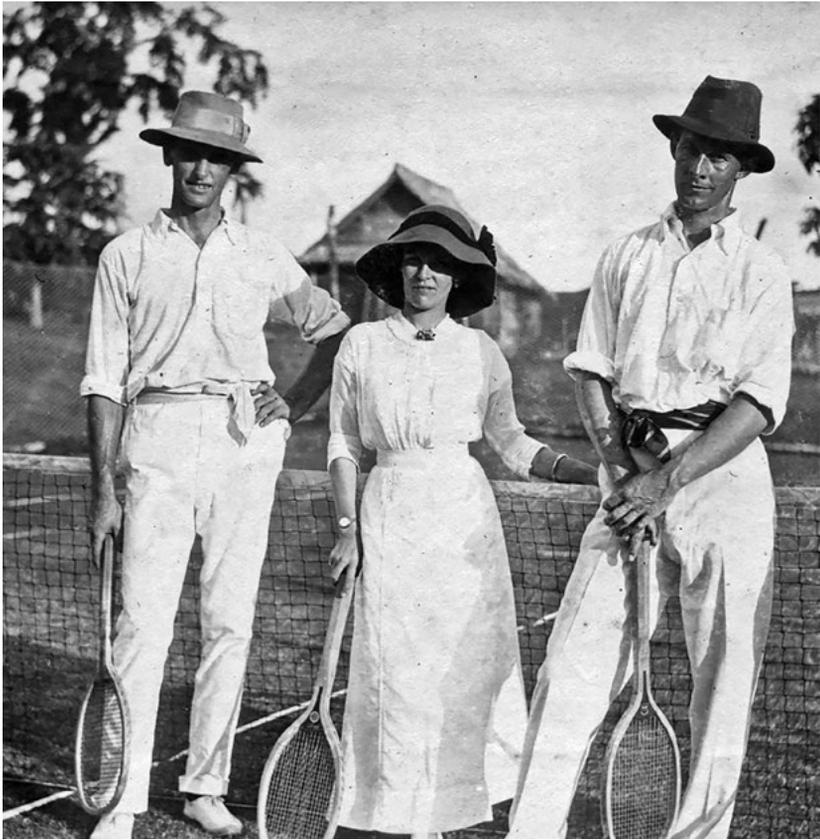


Plate 6.10 Fred Campbell in 1913 while he was Commandant of the Armed Constabulary, playing tennis at Auki, Malaita, with Mary Edge-Partington and Captain Hancock of HMS *Sealark*

Campbell became a planter on Makira and married twice, first to Maria Kainaua and then to Kapinihare of Aona.

Source: BM, Thomas Edge-Partington Photographic Collection.

Heinrich Küper had been a German naval officer. He arrived in the Solomons via German New Guinea in 1912, then entered a trading and plantation partnership on Santa Ana. He managed to buy out his partner, married Augusta Kafagamurironga, the daughter of a local chief, and raised three sons and a daughter. Although initially their marriage 'contract' was based on customary exchanges, eventually Küper wanted a formal Christian ceremony. He went as far as to build a church where it could take place. Küper was interned during World War I, although in a very minimal manner. The Küpers were not involved in Tulagi society in the way the Campbells were, and lived closer to indigenous society.

However, the children were educated by the Melanesian Mission. The eldest son, Geoff, who had been initiated into his mother's descent group, was educated in New Zealand and trained in Suva as a native medical practitioner. One of the earliest Solomon Islanders to receive a high-level European education, while maintaining his indigenous culture, he reacted against the racial prejudice he faced from the colonial elite.³⁶

There were other 'outsiders', those who 'batted for the other team'—a phrase from that era meaning homosexual. Homosexuality was illegal in British law and frowned on by the bulk of the expatriate population. Although some Solomons indigenous societies were accepting of homosexuality, others were not and saw it as offensive. For instance, there is little space for homosexuality in Malaitan society, although Malaitans were involved in homosexual activity on plantations. According to historian Judith Bennett, homosexuality among Solomon Islander male labourers was 'practically universal and tolerated' on plantations.³⁷ Dr Sylvester Lambert's observations in the 1930s back up this opinion:

Europeans don't think that the primitive man goes homosexual. Humbug! Ask any of the big planters—and they're he-men if there ever were any—ask 'em about the native boys that weave their hips and ogle at the work-gangs going by. We call them 'queens', and they're nuisances we've jolly well got to get rid of it.³⁸

In addition, Georgina Seton, a planter's wife, commented that she worried about homosexual threats to her young sons from labourers on their plantation.³⁹ Some Europeans and Chinese must have had discreet homosexual relationships with Solomon Islander men. There is enough evidence from around the Pacific to know that these relationships did occur, and some evidence from the Solomons.⁴⁰ It is also possible that there were homosexual relationships between some of the Chinese and between some of the Chinese and Europeans. In the early decades, there were Chinese *haus-bois* on Tulagi, like those found in northern Australia, particularly in Darwin, which had a large Chinese population. We know that homosexuality was accepted among the elite in premodern China and

36 Moore 2013, entries for Heinrich Küper and Augusta Küper Kafagamurironga; Golden 1993, 299–300, 103–06; Information from Doreen Küper, Brisbane, 19 August 2016.

37 Bennett 1987, 174, 182, 441, n. 56; Bennett 1993, 141, n. 74. See also Moore 2000b, 53–55.

38 Lambert 1946, 22–23.

39 Boutilier 1984a, 194.

40 Aldrich 2003, 246–75; Moore 2010–12, 36–37; Bennett 1987, 58, 174, 182; Moore 2000b, 57–59; Hilliard 1978, 155.

that domestic servants from southern China were open in their attitudes to homosexuality; it was a way for servants to wield power in domestic relationships.⁴¹

Our main evidence relates to indiscreet or improper ‘relationships’, such as those Reverend Charles Brooke had with Gela schoolboys, which led to his dismissal in 1874. In the 1890s, A.E.C. Forrest, an American lay member of the same mission, was dismissed for similar activities involving students on Santa Cruz. He remained on the island as a trader but was ostracised by other Europeans and eventually charged in 1901 with gross indecency. Forrest fled to the Torres Islands in the northern New Hebrides—close by but beyond the jurisdiction of the protectorate—where he took his own life in 1908.⁴² The most prominent homosexual was Bishop Frederick M. Molyneux (1928–31), who was told to resign or face prosecution for his sexual relationships with schoolboys. He left quickly.⁴³

Reports of homosexuals include Henry J. Townsend, who arrived in about 1878, after fleeing Samoa and Fiji because of his liking for men. He and a male ‘native’ friend landed at Uki to work for John Stephens, a trader’s agent. Townsend was killed soon afterwards, for reasons other than his sexuality.⁴⁴ Another was cadet officer L.W. Keppel, who was accused of the homosexual rape of Ganga, a labourer from Rendova Island, at Auki headquarters on Malaita in 1911. He also left quickly, which seems to have been the standard method of dealing with cases of sexual misdeeds, although there were also more dramatic results.⁴⁵ In the early 1930s, Dr Lambert recorded that a prominent trader was about to be arrested for homosexual relations with Solomon Islanders, but chose to take ‘100 Iron Arsenic and Strychnine pills’ rather than face the disgrace.⁴⁶

While they were not necessarily practising homosexuals while in the protectorate, we can probably add to the list anthropologist Ian Hogbin and district officers Wilfred Fowler, Hector MacQuarrie and Michael Forster.⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, other expatriate men also fell into this category. If they were lucky, they ended up on islands where homosexuality was

41 Chaperlin 1930; Lowrie 2013.

42 Golden 1993, 32–33; Bennett 1981, 180.

43 Moore 2013, entry for Frederick M. Molyneux.

44 Golden 1993, 280.

45 *ibid.*, 31; NASI, BSIP 14/40, T.W. Edge-Partington to C.M. Woodford, 27 December 1911.

46 Akin 2009, Notes from Lambert, 23 May 1933.

47 Laracy 2013, 243–56; Ian Hogbin, Interview with Clive Moore, Sydney, May 1978; Butcher 2012, 182, n. 878; MacQuarrie 1946.

accepted in local cultures. Some of the student partners mentioned above would have been older teenagers and young men in their 20s, although this does not abrogate the breach in duty of care nor that the sexual acts were illegal in British law.

It was unthinkable, given the racial and sexual beliefs and rules of the time, for European women to have sexual relationships with Solomon Islander men. I have not been able to locate any cases from Solomon Islands, although occasionally this did occur in other colonial realms, such as in neighbouring Queensland, where the government tightly controlled Indigenous interracial marriage, and in colonial Papua and New Guinea.⁴⁸ There also appear to have been occasional female visitors to Tulagi who were loose with their morals. Wilfred Fowler has left us a tantalising description:

I had met women who had stopped off the mail-boat in Tulagi. One had been a dipsomaniac who had refused to leave Sterling's Hotel and had later spent a month in hospital; the others had been trollops free with their favours until they had set up house with someone or had been shipped back to Sydney.⁴⁹

All of this serves as an introduction to the complexity of Solomons gender and sexual relations in the 1910s to 1930s, which will be teased out in the remainder of this chapter. An element of moral panic was played out over many years.

Sexual misadventures

Having so many young male servants around the house had some disadvantages. There was a discernible level of sexual and racial tension in Tulagi and the main concern was the possibility of the sexual assault of white women by black men. Sexual assault by white men of black women seldom rated a mention and, if it did occur, like the cases of homosexuality, the culprit was shipped out quickly before legal proceedings began. Although it was never exactly stated, a close reading of the diary of teenager Edna Campbell suggests that she was not allowed to walk about alone on Tulagi. Letters written by her aunt Jessie Wilson also contain references to attempts at molestation in the 1920s and 1930s,

⁴⁸ McGrath 2015, 254.

⁴⁹ Fowler 1959, 211.

and disciplinary regulations were passed in the same decades. She was personally involved in one incident and was always worried about break-ins when her husband was away, arming herself with a revolver.

Tulagi's foreign female population was small when the White Women's Protection Ordinance was passed in Australian Papua in 1926. This included the death penalty for rape or attempted rape of any white woman or girl, which was intended to discourage sexual misbehaviour by indigenous males. Indecent assault of a European woman could be punished with life imprisonment, accompanied by a whipping and hard labour. In comparison, the rape of a Papuan woman carried a sentence of one to four years' imprisonment with hard labour. The draconian 1926 ordinance was motivated by an attack on a European woman in a Port Moresby street in August 1925 and two more similar attacks in December of that year. After the first attack, lieutenant-governor Sir Hubert Murray was besieged by white men demanding action and claiming that more attacks were likely. Most of the settlers understood very little about Papuan cultures and viewed Papuan adult males as primitive and unable to control their sexual desires. The issue was also used to undermine Murray's policies towards Papuans—partly motivated by those who wanted more economic development and land alienation than Murray allowed. However, after the December 1925 attacks, Murray moved quickly and, by January the next year, had passed the White Women's Protection Ordinance. Superseding the relevant section of the Queensland Criminal Code (which operated in Australian Papua), the ordinance was among the most severe legislation of its type in the British Empire, equalled only by a 1903 ordinance in Southern Rhodesia.⁵⁰ It was used several times between 1926 and 1934: one Papuan was hanged, one was sentenced to hang but was reprieved and several were imprisoned for assault. The ordinance was not repealed until 1958.⁵¹ It was mentioned in the BSIP Advisory Council debates in relation to similar issues at Tulagi and elsewhere in the protectorate. There can be no doubt that the expatriate population was aware of what had happened across the Coral Sea. Deep-seated European racism was at the base of the decisions taken, creating severe punishments for nonconsensual heterosexual activity between indigenous men and expatriate women in Australian Papua and Solomon Islands.

50 Behlmer 2018, 312, n. 72.

51 Inglis 1974; Inglis 1982.

I have been able to locate eight reports of attacks on white women in the BSIP between 1916 and 1937, which is more than are recorded for Australian Papua. Most of the attacks were on nurses at the hospital, which undercuts any argument that the cases related to expatriate male 'ownership' of indigenous women and could point to availability and proximity as the causes. However, this may be a faulty Eurocentric interpretation of what Solomon Islanders understood as a household. Perhaps some of the male doctors were at fault, causing payback to fall on the nurses. Nurse Edith Elliot was assaulted by a Solomon Islander in June 1916, as was nurse E.G. Ralph in November 1922. Then, the next year, during the night of 29 October, Maifurua, a Malaitan constable, was apprehended in a house, the conclusion drawn being that he had intended to assault a European woman.⁵² The report indicated that there had been other cases. A year later (1924), Jessie Watt (later Wilson) described an incident with another nurse:

We had a native boy in the house the other night. Sister Wright was awakened by feeling his cold hand on her knee & thinking it was a frog that had jumped up tried to brush it off, but as it persisted she grabbed her torch & off he went like a shot over the balcony & was off. We called the sentry who gave chase, but so far nothing has been discovered. So now we both sleep in the one room, & have made up our minds to marry the first man who asks us, because this is no place for unprotected women. We have a sentry back & front to guard us (native police) but we have a feeling that it must have been a sentry who came in!⁵³

There was an incident the next year involving Sister Betty Laycock, who had been resting when a Fijian entered her room.⁵⁴ The upshot was that nurses were issued with revolvers and given lessons in how to use them; nurse Watt said: 'We keep one under the pillow all the time.'⁵⁵ Later, as Jessie Wilson, she still slept with a gun under her pillow if she stayed at home when her husband was away, although she usually went to stay in another house at such times.⁵⁶

52 UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, J.A. Watt to Mary, 9 May 1923.

53 *ibid.*, 18 June 1924.

54 Boutilier 1974, 14; Boutilier 1984a, 197.

55 UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, J.A. Watt to Mary, 18 June 1924.

56 *ibid.*, 26 May 1925.

There is other evidence of similar problems on Tulagi, and the matter was discussed by the Advisory Council several times between 1915 and 1935. While house servants were trusted, there were many reports of prowlers, who may have been innocent members of the armed constabulary on night patrol. Nevertheless, the constabulary was not entirely innocent, as the 1923 incident involving Maifurua suggests, and in 1921 they celebrated Christmas Eve by raiding Chinatown and doing considerable damage. The *Planters' Gazette* thundered that:

Acts of violence, even to white women, take place with impunity, and nearly every resident has personal experience of the insolence, or worse, of the lazy, incompetent and brutal constabulary.⁵⁷

Flogging for serious offences was allowed under the Preservation of Order Regulation No. 18 of 1922, which was modified in 1925. The regulation seems to have been introduced for similar reasons to the ordinance in Papua, although without the death penalty. The 1925 BSIP regulation applied alongside any previous law or regulation:

Male persons sixteen years of age or over may be flogged; male persons under that age may be whipped only. Flogging is by means of the ordinary cat-o'-nine-tails, whipping by means of a tamarind rod or light cane, etc. The maximum number of strokes in case of flogging is limited to twenty-one; in case of whipping, six to twelve strokes according to age. A Resident Commissioner may substitute a whipping for a flogging, though the offender may be sixteen years of age or over. All cases of flogging must be carried into effect in the presence of a medical officer—who is empowered to order the flogging to be suspended either wholly or after partial execution should he consider the offender to be physically unfit to undergo the punishment.

No female shall be sentenced to corporal punishment, and no person shall be sentenced to undergo corporal punishment more than once for the same offence.

Corporal punishment may not be inflicted in public.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Planters' Gazette*, 6, May 1922, 14.

⁵⁸ A. Young 1926, 175. A cat-o'-nine-tails is a leather whip with nine frayed ends used for severe physical punishment. It was used by the British Navy and Army and in some judicial punishments.

The 1925 flogging regulation was disallowed under a consolidation of the same regulation (No. 8 of 1930), replaced the same year with a new regulation enabling more severe punishment of offenders found illegally in dwelling-houses:

Any person found in any dwelling houses or any verandah or passage attached thereto or in any yard, garden or land adjacent to or within the curtilage of such dwelling-house shall be liable on conviction thereof to imprisonment with or without hard labour for any term not exceeding one year, or if a male person under sixteen years of age, may be whipped in lieu of such punishment.⁵⁹

In November 1932, Levers' manager Major Frank R. Hewitt raised the matter again at the Advisory Council. Hewitt doubted that imprisonment was sufficient deterrent. He believed that prison was regarded as work without pay. Based on his conversations with Solomon Islanders, Hewitt felt that only physical punishment was feared and that the Judicial Commissioner should be given the option to order whipping or flogging in all cases. Two plantation owners on the council, Donald Mackinnon from Vella Lavella and Geoff Clift from Fera on Isabel, along with other planters on Guadalcanal, supported Hewitt.⁶⁰ The Judicial Commissioner did not agree to the extension of flogging, arguing that this measure was usually reserved for crimes with violence. The High Commissioner concurred but asked for details of all cases in this category over the previous five years.⁶¹ English law was clear on the matter. Unless modified by a regulation under the WPHC, rape or attempted rape was not punishable by whipping, although any 'attempt to choke, strangle or suffocate with intent to commit any indictable offence' was punishable in this way.⁶² Whipping was not introduced for this offence as the High Commissioner's investigation did not establish any evidence of prior cases.

The matter was discussed widely among BSIP expatriates. Hewitt and others raised their concerns at Advisory Council meetings in 1933. Clearly, concerns about the vulnerability of white women existed among the small European community. Then two incidents occurred during 1933 that forced the issue. Two white women were raped by Solomon Islanders, one

59 *WPHCG (S)*, 29 January 1932, 1930 Regulation No. 8, Section 3, Subsection 2 was approved on 16 December 1930, MAC, 17 November 1931, 28.

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*, 17 December 1932, MAC, 3 November 1931, 122.

62 *ibid.*, 28 March 1935, MAC, 23 October 1934, Report by the President, RC F.N. Ashley, 29.

a planter's wife in Western District and the other the wife of a protectorate official.⁶³ Both cases resulted in convictions and Ashley recommended that the option of flogging be added to the 1930 regulation. Mackinnon, representing the plantation sector, was scathing about the incidents:

I refer to the wave of crime of a serious nature that has been sweeping through the Protectorate for more than twelve months. No more severe blow to our prestige, humiliating to our standard of ethics or demoralizing to our system of native control could be struck than that which violates our sacred trust, the safety and honour of our womenfolk. As men we have in the past and will continue in the future to take such personal risks as may be encountered in dealing with an uncivilized, or partially civilized native race. That risk is probably little more to-day than we should meet in our own country, but the women of our race, resident here, are not so fortunate. They are, of necessity, frequently left unprotected for varying periods, and are thus at the mercy of the house servants and other natives whose duties may take them to the homesteads. Savage primitive passions when aroused have led to abominable acts, humiliating to our pride and dignity as white men, and shameful and dangerous to the women who look to us for protection ...

Here at Tulagi, the Headquarters of Government and of the police establishment, you have failed to give adequate protection to white women, as recent records show, and you will continue to fail until unpractical idealism gives place to cold reason and stern justice, and the punishment is made to fit the crime.⁶⁴

Mackinnon wanted corporal punishment introduced for offences against white women, crimes of violence and consumption of alcohol. Other nonofficial members of the Advisory Council supported him. Clift called for the lash and imprisonment to be introduced for assaults with violence on women. Hewitt was worried that expatriate residents would take the law into their own hands and lynch one of the perpetrators. Strangely, Anglican Bishop Baddeley abstained from the debate, possibly compromised by his position and faith, unable to condone either leniency or violent punishment.⁶⁵

63 Laracy and Laracy 1980, 141; *WPHCG (S)*, 19 March 1934, MAC, 25 October 1933, 55.

64 *WPHCG (S)*, 19 March 1934, MAC, 25 October 1933, 55.

65 *ibid.*, 56–57.

Resident commissioner Ashley did not believe that the extra punishment would act as a deterrent and instead advocated radical changes to the conditions under which Solomon Islander males were employed.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Ashley gave in and asked the Judicial Commissioner to investigate Mackinnon's claims, but he found no knowledge of one of the cases, which rather strained Mackinnon's credibility. The Criminal Law Amendment Regulation (No. 7 of 1934) was created to provide the penalty of flogging in certain cases of criminal assaults on women. Unlike Papua's White Women's Protection Ordinance, there was no specification of race in the regulation, although it did specify that a medical practitioner had to be present at the punishment, which meant it could only take place at Tulagi. There were very few doctors in the protectorate and the only certainty of finding one was at Tulagi Hospital. Hewitt objected to limiting the floggings to Tulagi.

Even with the revised regulation, the issue of prowlers and illegal entry into houses and grounds continued. In 1937, Jessie Wilson used her gun on an intruder she caught creeping into her bedroom one night. Her shot parted his hair, making him easy to identify in the morning as he could not hide the new track through his coiffure.⁶⁷ Resident commissioner Ashley wrote to her, unofficially, expressing his concern:⁶⁸ 'I suppose one in my position ought not to, but, I do say "bravo" for firing at the fellow, it is a pity you didn't wing him.'⁶⁹

In similar circumstances, lieutenant-governor Murray in Australian Papua had acquiesced to pressure to introduce the death penalty. When expatriate women were evacuated once war began, the debate ceased. The 1934 regulation was repealed in 1951 by the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Repeal) Regulation. One grim reminder of these days was the whipping platform that either survived at Tulagi or was rebuilt in Honiara, as it existed at the police headquarters at Rove in the early 1950s, although it was never used after the war.⁷⁰

66 *ibid.*, 28 March 1935, MAC, 23 October 1934, 29; Thacker et al. 1936, 118.

67 Information from her granddaughter, Kate Broadhurst, 10 July 2015.

68 UQFL, Wilson Papers and Photographs, RC F.N. Ashley to J.A. Wilson, 9 March 1937, to F.A.G. Wilson, 8 March 1937.

69 *ibid.*

70 Laracy and Laracy 1980, 142; Information from Alan Lindley, Adelaide, who joined the BSIP Police Force in 1952.

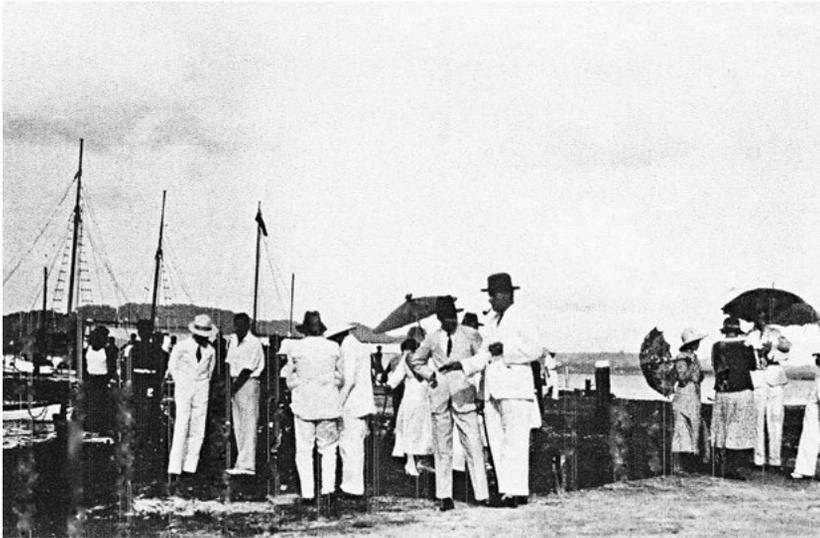


Plate 6.11 Pop Johnson is in the centre of the photograph

Dorothy Lotze is on the right holding her umbrella while her husband, Jack Lotze, holds their baby, Ruth. Vic Sheridan is partly obscured on the right edge of the photograph. The scene is the wharf at Tulagi.

Source: Suzanne Ellis Collection.

Solomon Islanders observed strict rules and taboos about sexual contact between males and females, violations of which carried severe punishments, even death. However, this never inhibited adventurous males from engaging in '*krip*' (creeping in the night)—a common practice. Familiarity with Europeans in domestic situations on Tulagi and on plantations and missions, and a growing resentment of colonial inequalities, led some to test their rights of access to houses and their occupants. As foreigners were not part of the socio-legal system, severe punishments were irrelevant if *kriping* foreigners. There were certainly flirtations between Solomon Islander women and expatriate males: these led to casual sexual encounters and sometimes permanent marriages and families. There may also have been flirtations between indigenous males and expatriate men and women, and in the Papuan and Solomons contexts there seem to be examples of expatriate women being careless in their interactions with indigenous males.⁷¹ In the Solomons, Georgina Seton, wife of a planter, said there were women 'with too few clothes' who liked to swim 'in the nuddy [naked] and constituted a menace to the safety

71 Ralston 1975, 60–62.

of other expatriate women'.⁷² Pop Johnson's granddaughter Suzanne Ellis remembers him saying that one reason young white girls should be sent away for education was to remind them that 'brown was not the norm'. The family had experience of mixed-race marriages. The brother of Pop's wife Agnes, Carl Cronstedt, married three New Hebridean women.⁷³ Clearly, expatriate residents were conscious of possible sexual encounters and all knew of long-term mixed-race relationships.

The surviving descriptions of muscular Solomon Islander males clad in skimpy, tight *lap-laps* may indicate that a few expatriate males and females achieved some degree of voyeuristic pleasure from the sight. Were domestic servants viewed as being of neutral gender, to be treated as predictable and beyond sexual or personal feelings? Some of the literature on Pacific and Asian domestic servants suggests that *haus-bois* were usually regarded as nonsexual. But nothing destabilised colonial power more than sexual encounters between indigenous servants and expatriate women and men. We will never know if Tulagi's night 'creepers' indicate a general change in behaviour towards foreign women. It is also possible that the incidents related to revenge on individual expatriate males who had transgressed with indigenous women and who were being punished via their own womenfolk. Although alcohol may have fuelled some aberrant behaviour, if we start from the premise that Solomon Islanders in the 1920s and 1930s behaved rationally within the limits imposed on them by their customary upbringing (which was morally strict) and their exposure to urban situations, there would have been predictable cultural consequences to personal interactions.

The same circumstances that provoked the draconian ordinance in Australian Papua existed on Tulagi. However, in Papua, Murray had much more power to rule and could pass special ordinances never possible in the BSIP, where decisions were checked by the High Commissioner in Fiji and ultimately by the Colonial Office in London. Passing a law as severe as the one in Papua would have been difficult in the protectorate. Racial ideology depicted Solomon Islanders as much lower on the human scale than Westerners and Darwinism gave justification to assumptions of biological superiority. 'Experts', including Woodford and some other officials and missionaries, seemed certain that Solomon Islanders were heading for

72 Boutlier 1984a, 197.

73 Information from Suzanne Ellis, 7 June 2016.

extinction.⁷⁴ Images of lustful but childlike savages were common in the literature of the time. Regardless of personal friendships that developed, it is not hard to imagine that European and Chinese residents were wary of rumoured propensities for violence and uncontrolled sexual passion by Solomon Islander males.

The evidence in Jessie Wilson's letters and other sources confirms that there were tensions at Tulagi that could easily lead to sexual misadventure. Gender and sexuality were only two of many social categories woven into the imperial agenda. There were differences in Solomon Islands and particularly in the Tulagi enclave, largely relating to the smallness of the foreign community, the difficult geography of a 900-island colonial territory and the lateness of the arrival of the colonial state, with no formal colonisation until the late 1890s. Manipulation of male labour, both in overseas colonies and within the protectorate, was one key to social changes, although it was hardly unique in the colonised world. The domestic scene around Tulagi was part of all this. Chapter 8 carries on the arguments about Pacific urbanisation and the type of societies that evolved.

74 Rivers 1922; Akin 2013, 9–10, 114–22.

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