4. A naturalist in the Solomon Islands

It was into this complex, rather dangerous, but undeniably exciting region that Charles Morris Woodford ventured in 1885. He was intent on making a comprehensive collection of zoological and entomological specimens for possible sale to the British Museum of Natural History. On 23 October 1885, armed with collecting equipment, personal gear including a rifle and revolver, and survey instruments lent from the Royal Geographical Society, which included a 6 inch sextant (RGS no 970), a George’s artificial horizon (RGS no 66), a prismatic compass (RGS no 13), a hydrometrical apparatus and two thermometers (RGS nos 8039, 8121 and 2154), an aneroid barometer (RGS no 841) and an ordinary thermometer (RGS no 12), he left Gravesend on the RMS Dorunda in the company of 23 other saloon passengers and 283 steerage adult emigrants bound for Queensland (Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 20 October 1885–8 April 1886; The Brisbane Courier 15 December 1885; The Brisbane Telegraph 15 December 1885). The Royal Geographic Society in London regularly lent exploration equipment to members but no doubt they expected to get their carefully numbered and itemised equipment back in good condition regardless of the place in which the explorer travelled.

Woodford had to be prepared to use arsenic, the standard taxidermic process in the 19th century, when treating animal skins and dead birds. There were practical health problems associated with using strong chemicals in village environments. The sago and bamboo huts and shelters are highly combustible, and floors have gaps for air. Liquids spilled on the floor above can drip on to people seated below. The floors are covered with pandanus mats that are used for seating and sleeping. Mats are valuable and damage to them means considerable work for the women who must repair or renew them. Woodford often found himself assigned to a small, discarded shelter or house well away from the main village area without quite knowing why. He occasionally commented in his diaries that he was allocated small, disused houses at a considerable cost in trade goods without realising the practicality of the decision-making from the villagers’ perspective. Not only was he a white man and a stranger, surrounded with many trade goods and equipment, but he was keen to pay people to collect animals that they either ignored or hunted for food. He then dried the skins and stored them or, even worse, did not eat the food animals that he paid for. His behaviour would have been considered most peculiar. But these challenges, as well as the use of arsenic and photographic acid, were not the only dangers that a young explorer had to face. On the trip to Australia the passengers on the Dorunda were exposed to cholera.
Cholera and quarantine at Peel Island

The *Dorunda* stopped briefly at Batavia (Jakarta) on its way to Australia, then entered the Torres Strait and anchored at Thursday Island on 6 December 1885. Woodford immediately went for a walk in the bush collecting moths. By the time the ship reached Townsville several steerage passengers had come down with cholera, which was probably contracted in Batavia when the ship docked there for fresh food (*The Brisbane Courier* 17 and 19 December 1885; Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 20 October 1885–8 April 1886; *The Queenslander* 16 January 1886). This is the only time cholera is known to have reached Australia. When the ship reached Brisbane the entire ship’s company was quarantined on Peel Island in Moreton Bay. Accompanying Woodford in first class was Augustus Spry, a prominent apiarist from Brisbane, together with his valuable collection of Liguanian, Italian, Syrian and Palestinian bees that were being imported to form a viable honey industry in Queensland. Nervous quarantine officials fumigated the bees. It appears, from newspaper reports, that the bees all died.

Woodford’s diary details the boredom of his enforced stay on Peel Island during his quarantine there. Saloon passengers were accommodated in the largest buildings built on the Bluff in the south-eastern corner of the island. The ship’s officers, the doctor, and female steerage passengers with children had separate quarters, as did married people with families, but the ship’s crew and male steerage passengers slept in tents (Ludlow 2009). The single women ‘under Miss Chase, the matron, [were] surrounded by a fence six feet high’ (Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 20 October 1885–8 April 1886). Following discharge from Peel Island, while staying at Lennon’s Hotel he visited the Brisbane Botanic Gardens in the city and the Museum, then located on Gregory Terrace, Bowen Hills, and wrote: ‘The former is very pretty the latter indifferent’. Woodford also took the opportunity to meet with Hugh Hastings Romilly, the Deputy Commissioner for British New Guinea, on 18 January 1886. Romilly offered to take him to Papua but Woodford declined. He displayed some of his photographs of Peel Island in the window of Hislop’s furniture store to aid the *Dorunda* Relief Fund that the Queensland government established to raise money for needy families of the 20 or more passengers who had died on the voyage. The cholera case was closely monitored by newspapers of the day though Woodford wrote in his diary that ‘[t]he people in Brisbane appear to have gone wild with funk’ over the scare (*The Queenslander* 16 January 1886; Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 15 December 1885).

In late-January 1886 Woodford left for Sydney where he attended a lecture on Captain Henry Charles Everill’s New Guinea expedition, which was sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. He sat next to the missionary, the Rev William Wyatt Gill, who agreed with him that the expedition was a
fraud. The expedition led by Everill left Sydney in June 1885 with the intention of navigating the Fly River in Papua as far as the mountain foothills. Instructions from the Royal Geographical Society were highly detailed. The party was to make Aird Hills their base of exploration and to survey the flora, fauna, geology and climate of the Gulf region. They were instructed to make detailed notes and drawings and take photographs of the country between the coast and the highlands. They were given orders to avoid conflict with the local people and to survey local languages, habits and customs (The Sydney Morning Herald 15 June 1885: 5). Everill’s party attempted to access the Central Highlands via the Aird River in the Gulf district but the country defeated them. They retreated and decided to travel along the Fly as far as the Strickland River. Assuming the Strickland would be navigable to the highlands they went about 200 miles until their vessel, the Bonito, stuck fast on the mud. After eight weeks the boat was re-floated on a flood tide and the expedition returned south. The Townsville Bulletin reported that ‘if the party had explored the Aird instead of the Fly River, the net scientific results would have been greater’ (The Morning Bulletin [Rockhampton] reporting from The Townsville Bulletin Friday 4 December 1885: 6). Woodford and Gill’s opinions of the Everill expedition may have been severe but scientifically and ethnographically they were correct: nothing had been achieved (Everill 1886). Woodford wrote in his diary of 7 December 1885, ‘I am told they [the expedition members] fired away a large part of their ammunition shooting at bottles between Sydney and Thursday Island. I do not believe in exploring by the aid of dynamite’ (Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 7 December 1885). It is hoped that Woodford gained more from a discussion with Gill, a member of the London Missionary Society who had assisted A. W. Murray with the development of the first LMS mission station at Mawatta near Daru in 1872. In 1884, before the Everill expedition, he had taken the second group of Rarotongan pastors to Papua. He was an author of some standing whose writings had done much to improve the missionary image among scientific circles in Australia and England. Woodford no doubt hoped that his privately funded expeditions, without sponsorship from the Royal Geographical Society, would amount to something more significant.

Return to Fiji

Woodford finally arrived back in Suva on 17 February 1886 and took rooms above the offices of the Suva Times. He wrote in his diary: ‘Suva looks much the same but very dull’ (Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 20 October 1885–8 April 1886). Fiji was not the place for him. He was obviously attracted to the unexplored Solomon Islands. In Suva he attended a dance by Solomon Islanders at Dr Corney’s plantation where he photographed the men in Meke
costume. Woodford would later meet with the leader of this dance group on his return home to north-west Malaita. The *Suva Times* of 24 February 1886 reported that Woodford had ‘come out on behalf of the British Museum, and will proceed by the first opportunity to the Solomon Islands for the purpose of collecting the reptiles and rare insects to be found in that group’. Woodford had made a small collection of natural history objects, mainly *Lepidoptera*, on his previous trip to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1884 and some short papers had resulted from this collection (Butler 1885; Woodford 1885). His Fijian collections had attracted the notice of Dr Albert Günther, Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum of Natural History (Heath 1974a: 20) and Arthur Butler, a prominent taxonomist and Assistant Keeper of Zoology, had also praised them (Butler 1884). As a result of this previous work both the Royal Geographical Society and the British Museum of Natural History gave Woodford formal letters of introduction to the then Governor of Fiji, Sir John Bates Thurston (*The Gravesend Journal, Dartford Observer, and County Intelligencer* 7 April 1888: 8). Woodford had obviously known Thurston before for he had reported to him on conditions in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands during the trip there in 1884. It is curious to know why he needed a formal statement of intent but Thurston had to give official permission to travel to the Solomon Islands and the letters of introduction would have secured that request. Woodford was now recognised as a natural history collector not a minor clerk in the colonial service. Like many other young men of this period he was keen to make his mark. If the collection were of quality then he could legitimately sell it to an institution like the British Museum. Commercial artefact and natural history dealers in London were eager to receive new specimens from unexplored places in the Western Pacific. Having made a good start in Fiji, Woodford could now look elsewhere (see Barrow 2000 for an excellent study of the natural history trade in the United States in the late-Victorian period).

The Solomon Islands were a good choice. They were volcanic rather than coral atolls and would therefore show a range of biological diversity from the more common coastal species to endemic inland and mountain species. The islands were on the eastern extremity of the Melanesian chain. Here the people were predominately Melanesian. In the southern islands however they were predominately Polynesian. A small trading vessel could sail around the islands easily and Woodford was obviously confident enough to allay any fears that he would be in physical danger living with the people. Alfred Russel Wallace had recently published a sequel to his famous study of the geographical distribution of animals. In the new book, *Island Life* (1880), Wallace classified islands into three groups: oceanic islands, and two types of continental islands. The main Solomon Islands would fit the oceanic islands category well. Having been formed in mid-ocean and never part of a large continent, they would therefore be characterised by a lack of terrestrial mammals and amphibians, and their
zoological inhabitants would be the result of accidental colonialisation and subsequent evolution. Consequently, there should be a large range of endemic species in the islands that would be a valuable case study as little comprehensive collecting had been done in the region.

**Scientific rationalism of late-Victorian England**

Exploration of the New World by young amateur scientists and travellers greatly expanded the understanding of the biological world and this biological reasoning underwrote the early scientific classification of human species. The late-Victorian era was a time of scientific rationalism. The static religious determinism that saw natural history as the work of God had been replaced by a constantly changing view based on the principles of evolution and adaptation stimulated by the writings on the origin of the species by Charles Darwin (1859). Taxonomy, and the classification of species, was essential to this scientific view of the world. Alfred Russel Wallace (1853 and 1869) had undertaken groundbreaking work in South America between 1848 and 1850 and in the Malay Archipelago between 1854 and 1862. This led to Wallace’s theoretical classification of the world into biogeographic regions, which convinced him of the reality of evolution due to natural selection. His book, *The Geographical Distribution of Animals* (1876) would remain a definitive study of zoogeography for the next 80 years. The much examined crisis of faith of the late Victorians, triggered by the growth of science, was really a feature of the intellectual elite. The middle and working classes retained much of their religious conservatism well into the 20th century.

The naval officers and naturalists attached to Royal Navy ships from the Australia Station led the way in the biological discoveries in the Western Pacific. William Milne was attached to the survey ship HMS *Herald* as a botanist and collected 200 species of plants from Makira and Guadalcanal for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1854, although William Hemsley, Principal Assistant at Kew Herbarium, wrote disparagingly that ‘they were mostly common things from the coast region’ (Hemsley 1891: 501 and 1895: 163). John MacGillivray, also on the *Herald*, is credited with capturing the first specimen of the large birdwing butterfly, *Ornithoptera victoriae* [Gray 1856] at Wanderer Bay. Here the crew from the *Herald* were investigating the disappearance of Benjamin Boyd (Macgillivray 1852–1854; Tennant 1997). The commonly reported story of the capture is that MacGillivray could not catch the butterfly in a net because it was flying so high that he had to shoot it down from the top of the tree and consequently this holotype female specimen is peppered with holes (Tennant
In fact, the truth behind the capture is a little more prosaic. As MacGillivray had no insect net at all he could only resort to shooting the insect—but it was most certainly caught at Wanderer Bay.

The first holotype male specimen would be captured by Woodford on Malaita quite some time later (Woodford 1890b: 66–68). Julius Brenchley (1873) who sailed on the HMS Curaçoa in 1865 made many scientific discoveries in the Solomons, as did Alexander Morton from the Australian Museum who travelled on the HMS Cormorant in 1881 (Morton 1883; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 12 September 1881: 5 and 26 September 1881: 7, 8). Morton reported that local people had discarded stone implements by this time in favour of traders’ axes and that two forms of imported tools were used. One, an elongated cone flattened towards the base with a rounded cutting edge, was used as an adze while the other, conical in shape but with a wide flattened cutting edge ground sharp on both sides, was used as a ordinary axe or tomahawk (Morton 1883: 63). He had difficulties in collecting ethnological specimens apart from stone tomahawks, presumably those discarded in favour of metal axes, but noted: ‘I secured, however, an interesting series of human skulls, and the head of a native from the Lord Howe’s Group [Ontong Java] in spirits’ (Morton 1883: 64). These he brought back to Sydney. He returned to the Australian Museum with 200 bird specimens, representing 50 species, 20 species of fishes, two species of crustaceans, four species of reptiles, 28 species of land snails and over 20 species of freshwater shells (Morton 1883). Morton was an expert natural history collector who had previously been part of an expedition to south-eastern New Guinea (Papua) in 1877. He accompanied Andrew Goldie who was working on behalf of a private natural history collector and seller R. B. Williams of Holloway Place in London (Ramsay 1879a, 1879b, 1880a and 1880b; see also Mullins, Bellamy and Moore 2012). This resulted in a large and important collection of mammals and birds from Papua that are now housed in the Australian Museum in Sydney.

Captain John Moresby (1876) on the HMS Basilisk made significant ethnographic observations during the cruise to New Guinea, parts of Polynesia and the pearing stations of the Torres Strait between 1871 and 1874 and Captain Cyprian Bridge (1886), like a number of naval officers, read a paper on his travels though Melanesia, Polynesia and to New Guinea during 1882 and 1883 before the Royal Geographical Society in London. Small collections from the Solomon Islands were made by naval officers like Lt Richards of the HMS Renard who visited the islands on their annual tours of inspection (Ramsay 1882a: 176–180, 1882b: 718–726, 1882c: 833–834). Private collectors also travelled on trading vessels. James Cockerell visited the Solomon Islands on the schooner Ariel owned by Captain Brodie and made a collection of 50 mammals and 350 bird skins that he sold to the Australian Museum (Ramsay 1880b: 65–84). The details of these
collections were published in well-respected journals such as the *Proceedings of the Linnaean Society of New South Wales*. This scientific knowledge was then widely disseminated throughout the influential, intellectual elite of the Empire.

### Scientific manuals of enquiry

Officers of the Royal Navy Australia Station published many short examinations of the physical or ethnological features of the islands and even published accounts in the Australian newspapers. Most data were collected using standardised sets of guidelines roughly equivalent to questionnaires which commenced with general facts and figures and then led to more detailed examinations of cultures and customs for those with more time at their disposal. The Admiralty’s *Manual of Scientific Enquiry*, published in five editions between 1849 to 1886, was planned as a guide for naval officers but could be used by ‘travellers in general’ (Great Britain. Admiralty 1871). It was more scientific than the *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* first published in 1874 which was designed specifically for collecting information on both anthropology—described as the anatomical and physiological features of mankind—and ethnology—defined as the customs, history, religions, languages and arts of native peoples. *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* was published in six editions between 1874 and 1951 (Garson and Read 1892).

The questions on anthropology and ethnology in the first edition had been quickly drawn up in 1873 by Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers and a committee from the British Association for the Advancement of Science at the request of the organisers of the expedition sent to find Dr David Livingstone (Petch 2007). These expeditions had multiple roles. Members of the expedition sent back artefacts and natural history specimens, as well as reports on populations and cultures they encountered. Along with detailed survey maps and notes on geology and botany these were based on the guidelines set by *Notes and Queries*. The ethnology section in the first edition published in 1874 was written by E. B. Tylor, the prominent cultural evolutionist who later became the Keeper of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

In addition to these guides, J. G. Frazer at Cambridge privately printed his own set called *Questions on the Manners, Customs, Religion, Superstitions, &c, of Uncivilized or Semi-Civilized Peoples* in 1887 (Frazer and Holmes 1889). This edition was followed by two more in 1889 and 1907. Copies of the first edition and the third edition are contained in Woodford’s papers so it is clear that he used this reference material (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 7/3 and 7/56). Certainly during his first and second expeditions to the islands Woodford collected social and cultural information that he later published. But it is clear
that his real aim was collecting natural not cultural history. In addition, the Royal Geographical Society in London published its own set of questions called *Hints to Travellers* (Galton 1878, Driver 1998). This was widely used in the late-19th and early-20th centuries and went through 11 editions between 1865 and 1935. The fourth edition contained one of the first comprehensive accounts of the problems and prospects of field photography for explorers that would have been useful in the Solomon Islands (Galton 1878: 47–53). Both the fourth and fifth editions would have been available to Woodford. *Hints to Travellers* was an attempt by the Royal Geographical Society to reconcile different forms of knowledge: the theoretical and the empirical, the amateur and the professional, the global and the local, and the particular and the universal. The Royal Geographical Society was an important organisation at the forefront of colonial exploration. It occupied a pivotal position between the scientific establishment, the Imperial government and its elite world of political concerns, and the wider educated public (Ryan 1997: 22). The Royal Geographical Society was ‘part social club, part learned society, part imperial information exchange and part platform for the promotion of sensational feats of exploration’ (Driver 1998: 29). Knowledge was actively debated and contested within the Society. Issues of race, the ‘civilizing mission’, the process of modernisation and even esoteric knowledge were discussed at meetings. While the Society was not openly political its members were often staff of the Colonial Office, the India Office, the Admiralty and other organs of state. It was both influential and prestigious. Displaying the letters Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society (FRGS) after one’s name was a sign of important associations. Woodford became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1885.

Of all of these important instructional manuals, the Admiralty manuals were the most encompassing and the most scientifically orientated. They were divided into four parts: part one was on astronomy and hydrography; part two was on meteorology and terrestrial magnetism; part three covered questions on geography, medical statistics and ethnology; and part four was on geology, zoology and botany. The chapter on ethnology, originally written by J. C. Pritchard, was revised by E. B. Taylor for the fourth edition. Travellers were recommended to report on ‘all that relates to human beings, whether regarded as individuals, or as members of families or communities’ (Great Britain. Admiralty 1871: 233). Anthropological science was advancing as a separate intellectual discipline, especially following the publication of the more comprehensive second edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* in 1892 (Petch 2007). Boyle Somerville, a Lieutenant on the surveying ship HMS *Penguin*, spent more than eight months camped in the Marovo Lagoon area between 1893 and 1894 and, using the guidelines in *Notes and Queries*, he made many important ethnographic notes on New Georgia peoples later published by the Anthropological Institute (Somerville 1897). Somerville’s notes are particularly detailed for a causal visitor
at that time. He was one of the first to make some estimates of the comparative value of shell rings (*poata*), which he valued at about 1 shilling and 3 pence apiece. He valued whale’s teeth much higher at £1 each and, for comparison, a stick of trade tobacco cost one halfpenny (Somerville 1897: 405). These practical manuals of information collecting were part of the expansion of intellectual enquiry in late-Victorian England. Much of the information, and most of the specimens, being taken back to the museums and scientific societies of the metropole was collected by amateurs not professionals.

**Henry Brougham Guppy**

It was Henry Brougham Guppy who was to contribute most of the social and economic information on the Solomon Islands before the expeditions of Woodford. Guppy was a naval surgeon trained in Edinburgh who wrote about the geology and geography of the islands, their potential as a British colony, and some well-considered comments on the lifestyles and culture of the local peoples (Guppy 1887a, 1887b and 1903–1906). Guppy was a perceptive observer, writer, amateur naturalist and scientist. He travelled widely and had been to the Far East before serving in the Pacific. Between 1881 and 1884 he served as a medical officer on the sailing schooner and survey vessel HMS *Lark*, engaged in the waters around the Solomon Islands and the Western Pacific at a time when trade between the Australian colonies and Asia and India was expanding. The tropical waters north of the Australian colonies were not well known and the Royal Navy sent many survey and patrol vessels to chart the islands, oceans and coral reefs. In 1887 Guppy published probably the first comprehensive study of the natural history, geology and botany of the Solomons (Guppy 1887a). His botanical collection, much of it collected on Fauro, Alu and the Mono Islands, was donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (Hemsley 1895: 163). Guppy also investigated head hunting, ritual, material culture, physical anthropology, and languages, and he included one of the first translated versions of the journal of Hernán Gallego in his book. Guppy is credited with being the first serious scientist to investigate the cultural and natural history of the islands, although again Hemsley at Kew Herbarium was patronising in his gratitude for the specimens when he wrote: ‘Dr Guppy had had no previous experience in selecting specimens of plants, and many unmistakable novelties were insufficient for description’. Despite this the preliminary findings by Hemsley (1891) established the fact that there were two distinct features in the composition of flora in the Solomon Islands: the first was a group of distinct endemic generic species, often found on higher altitudes and associated with rare Malayan and Polynesian types, the second was a group of shore plants of very wide general distribution in the tropics. During his time in Alu in the Shortland Islands, Guppy made the acquaintance of Gorai, the chief
at Morgusaiai Island off the main Alu Island. This was to be a fortuitous meeting. Guppy (1903–1906) later published a two volume work of the observations of a naturalist in the Pacific that included studies in Fiji. Despite his short stay in the region, Guppy certainly established a foundation upon which scientific and cultural research could be based.

Henry Guppy presumably advised Woodford to some degree because the latter carried a recommendation to Gorai. The Solomon Islands seemed ideal for a young man with ambition. Exploration in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century came to have a number of contested meanings. Science, literature, commerce, the Empire and even religion were all motivations driving the need to comprehend the world. But the explorer of the period was characteristically a white, middle class male, not wealthy but of some independent means, with an eccentric, even idiosyncratic, personality. These mostly young men were ‘loath to be tied to any broader institutional system’ and were a disquieting figure to the sedentary, conservative, metropole-based scientist (Butlin 2009: 226–228). They were often unknown men with little or no scientific training; risk-takers in a staid, conservative world bound by convention. Exploration tied science and Empire together and became one of the strengths of British colonial expansionism.

**Science and Empire**

During the 19th century scientific knowledge expanded, both within and outside the universities, as new scientific institutions like the British Museum, the British Museum of Natural History and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew grew in status. Kew became the nerve centre for all British colonial botanic gardens. Plants were received from all over the world and acclimatisation gardens were established in the colonial dominions and dependencies (see Mullins, Bellamy and Moore 2012). English botanic gardens operated in service of British colonial expansion and through the exercise of their scientific knowledge they increased the comparative commercial advantage of Western core powers over the rest of the world (Brockway 1979). The Victorian era accorded prestige and influence to eminent scientists.

The Royal Navy that was reconstructed after the Napoleonic Wars became a peacetime institution of high regard and some status, promoting British Imperial economic and political security. It also saw itself as the upholder of British social and cultural values. The naval officers who formed a network of enlightened, educated men with keen interest in science were instructed in drawing and mapping. Many became keen photographers. All this material added to the knowledge of the world. The British Museum benefited greatly from the ethnographic materials collected during voyages of discovery by the
Royal Navy ships (Owen 2006). The natural history collections sent to gardens at Kew and the Natural History Museum in Kensington were then studied and the results published. The Admiralty supported this work. Ethnographic materials, however, did not attract the same scientific attention. If they were displayed at all they were often poorly labelled and marked as exotic curiosities. Objects from the Pacific represented difference: the heathen black juxtaposed against the Christian white. They defined European identity through contrast rather than enhanced understanding. Ethnographic collections sent to Britain and Australia at this time illustrated the dichotomy between the savage and the civilised, between the morally superior and the benighted inferior. Ideas of intellectual and cultural superiority were inculcated into young men at an early age. At the reception and lecture at Tonbridge School lauding the expedition to Central Africa under Stanley and the participation of A. J. Mounteney Jepson, the Headmaster T. B. Rowe stated it ‘was one of the great characteristics of the English race that it governs, civilizes and moulds the world at large, and extends throughout it a beneficent and civilizing influence … It was our lot under Providence to have an Empire … Patience, intrepidity, courage, obedience to constructed authority, the capabilities of self-government, sagacity and perseverance—these are the qualities which gave us our proud portion as a nation’ (The Gravesend Journal, Dartford Observer and County Intelligencer 7 June 1890; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/2 Press cuttings 1886-1911).

But science was also a recognised avenue for social mobility at a moment of unprecedented change. Many scientists rose from the unglamorous beginnings as provincial amateur naturalists. Linnaean taxonomy transformed both botany and zoology and it was systematics—the classification of species, their description and preservation in museum collections, and the investigation into their evolutionary history and environmental adaptation—that underwrote evolutionary theorising (Raffles 2001: 525). But there remained the clear distinction between the place of the self-educated enthusiast and the professional. It was important for an ambitious natural history collector with talent to gain cultural capital and penetrate the elite. Members of institutions like the Royal Geographical Society were often members of the Royal Colonial Institute and the Linnaean and Zoological Societies. Membership of these associations allowed colonial officials and travellers an avenue for the presentation of their colonial encounters to their fellows. Even casual observations that mixed fact with prejudice were discussed, but membership of these learned societies remained largely the province of middle class males. This was a time of debate between the supporters of monogenesis, the belief that all humans have a common origin compatible with Christian teachings, and the supporters of polygenesis, the racialist position that placed emphasis on different racial and ethnic characteristics and classified peoples on a scale as either savage, barbarous or civilised (Lorimer 1988: 405). The basic assumption that the subject races
were doomed to extinction following contact with supposedly superior stock from the Anglo-European world arose at this time. It grew to importance when the ethnologist Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers spoke openly of the eventual extermination of the subject races following sustained cultural contact (Lorimer 1988: 409, 420).

For a young man like Charles Woodford, the authority of the explorer depended substantially on the writing of a narrative that combined travel, science and adventure in an unexplored corner of the world. Alfred Russel Wallace, R. H. Codrington and Rev George Brown, believers in monogenesis philosophy, argued for a common origin and closer linguistic connections between Papuans and Polynesians (Lorimer 1988: 414). To cross the barrier between the unknown man of talent and the recognised man of science the amateur had to seek new ground and obtain first-hand experience of the region. For Woodford, the Solomon Islands and the Western Pacific in general, was the location of this scientific knowledge. Tropical nature and its manifold variety of plants, animals and peoples was perceived as a thing of wonder (Raffles 2001: 519). The key nodes of professionalism were Kew Gardens and the British Museum of Natural History. Only through sponsorship from these institutions, or by a self-funded expedition that led to official recognition, was it possible to attract the attention of the higher echelons of the metropolitan natural history circles. Woodford had chosen the second option, a self-funded expedition. This was the most difficult and most financially risky method of attracting attention, but men like Alfred Russel Wallace had done it and achieved success.

The tasks of collecting, cataloguing and describing nature’s forms demanded a range of skills and experience but most of all it required considerable resources of time and money. The amateur had to know not only what to look for, but how to observe, and for this the numerous explorers’ and travellers’ manuals were essential (Driver 2004: 8, 853). An impressive natural history cabinet was a sign of some recognised social capital with significant exchange value. It would elevate the owner into the ranks of the learned scientific establishment that was inevitably filled by men with Oxbridge credentials (Raffles 2001: 525, 537). Victorians also looked to the work of Richard Hakluyt, ‘the moving intellect of early British transoceanic expansion’. Hakluyt’s achievements had been in the construction of exploration as a broad field of nation-making through the assembly and publication of the most important travel writings of the day (Raffles 2001: 523). Woodford’s third and last expedition to the Solomon Islands was underwritten by the influential Hakluyt Society’s need for detailed identification of the places visited in the Solomon Islands by the Spanish explorers under Mendaña.

The Imperial scientific network was a rich and powerful one. In the history of scientific exploration the spatial language of centre and periphery—‘home and
abroad, the cabinet and the field, the metropolis and the frontier’—long held sway (Driver 2004: 81). Scientific discoveries and new technologies formed a central part of the British colonial heritage. From this came the quest to order and categorise, to define nature and revise concepts of space and history, and to transform the resources of exploration into raw material for markets at home and the new museums that advertised this conquest and control over nature (Macleod 1993: 119). This quest for social and natural order rationalised colonialism and the expansion of the British Empire. Science brought with it views of nature and race that sustained much racial and cultural prejudice. Science became a colonising ideology even as it was being promoted as a means of improving and uplifting humankind from ignorance and superstition.

The best known of all the early scientists, Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin, had both begun their careers as amateur specimen collectors. Wallace began as a financially constrained sole collector in the Amazon and the Malay Archipelago, Darwin as a well-connected, gentleman companion and natural history savant on the HMS Beagle (Fagan 2007). Woodford had more in common with Wallace. Both were financially self-supporting, both lived largely alone with local villagers, and both had to rely on the assistance of porters and guides. Both men worked in difficult physical environments and followed routines organised around collecting and capture of specimens in the morning and early afternoon and the preparation of the samples late in the day and early evening. Both used the services of paid local hunters and collectors. Like Wallace, Woodford was collecting beetles and butterflies and more rarely shot birds and mammals. Both kept small live menageries. Wallace tailored his collecting according to what would sell: tropical birds, brightly coloured butterflies and beetles. Woodford’s expeditions in the Solomon Islands yielded 20,000 specimens (Tennant 1997). By comparison, Wallace who spent much longer in the field, collected over 125,000 specimens in the Malay Archipelago alone. His Amazon collections, not counting almost the entire first collection lost at sea, amounted to a further 10,000 specimens (Fagan 2007: 617). Like Woodford, Wallace’s field notes are complete detailed summaries with species counts collected at given localities. For a first-time collector and author it would have been daunting for Woodford to receive a review of his book in Nature (24 April 1890: 582–583) written by Wallace, but it would have been encouraging to know that his collection was well received at the British Museum. Like other adventurer/explorers, Woodford had to rely on hospitality trails of European settlers and traders, networks of planters, merchants and officials all arranged casually through letters of introduction or contacts made in the field. Living in local communities, both men were dependent upon the goodwill of the people and the availability of guides and porters. As an isolated explorer-scientist Woodford was exposed and vulnerable, probably more vulnerable than he really knew at the time.
First expedition

Woodford arrived back in Fiji in February 1886 hoping to catch an early boat going north to the Solomon Islands, but none was available. As it would have been the wet season in the north it can be assumed that boats were delayed by the weather. Having secured permission from Thurston all he could do was spend the time collecting insects and animals on Viti Levu. He also called on Ratu Tomoci, the son of Cakobau, who lived at Bau. After waiting two long months he finally secured passage on the Christine, a small topsail schooner of 97 tons that was taking 120 returnees back to their home communities in the
New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands and the Lord Howe’s Group (Leueneuwa: Ontong Java). The *Christine*, like many vessels in the labour trade, had been previously used for other work, in this case the timber trade, and had been wrecked off Uki ni Masi. It had been subsequently re-floated and repaired in Auckland at a cost of £200 (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2. Diary 16 April–5 June 1886). The *Christine* also had a licence to recruit 46 male labourers for Fiji and travelled with a Government Agent to supervise the repatriation and recruitment processes (Woodford 1888a: 354). The boat spent the latter part of April and early May in the New Hebrides recruiting for new labourers. Woodford detailed the manner in which young men were engaged for work:

When ships are seen by the natives of their coast they make a smoke ashore if they want to communicate. The two boats [from the *Christine*] were then lowered, fully armed in case of accidents, with four rowers in each, one in charge of the recruiter and the other in charge of the Government Agent. The former backed in on to the beach, throwing a small anchor out of the bows, so as to be able to pull off in case of attack; the crew at the same time sit ready at the oars. The recruiter stands up in the stern of the boat, while the natives crowd round him, and he conducts the trading for yams or other food or tries to persuade boys to engage. The other boat, with the Government agent, keeps afloat, and acts as a covering boat to the other in case of attack. In some instances we only used one boat, and then the recruiter and Government agent went together; but wherever the natives were mistrusted we always made use of two boats (Woodford 1888a: 355; see also The Vagabond 1886 for details of similar recruiting procedures and an excellent photograph by J. W. Lindt in Brunt and Thomas 2012: 220 of recruiting vessel, two boats—one offshore—and men being recruited at Pangkumu in Malekula, New Hebrides in 1890).

On 10 May 1886 Woodford wrote in his diary: ‘Position at noon 11˚44’S 163˚12’E 120 miles. At two o’clock we sighted land. This was the northeast end of San Christoval [Makira] and my first view of the Solomons Group’. Next day the *Christine* was becalmed off Santa Ana and men from the island came out in canoes without outriggers, ingeniously carved and decorated. The men had spears and wore white cowrie frontlets and white discs in their ears. The trader at Santa Ana, Frank Nyberg, told Woodford that he knew Gorai of Alu and ‘says that I shall be quite safe with him’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 11 May 1886). Like earlier explorers Woodford was impressed by the beauty and grace of the canoes of the Solomon Islanders. While later he thought those of the New Georgia people the best of all, on 11 May 1886 he wrote in his diary of his delight:
The Solomon Island canoes as I afterward found out are most certainly things of beauty. In fact I have never seen canoes that sit so gracefully upon the water. The long graceful sweeping curves of their bows and sterns must inevitably impress a stranger seeing them for the first time, while upon closer inspection the ingenious way in which the planking is fitted together and the seams caulked with vegetable putty compel admiration for the ingenuity and labour expended upon them (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5 Revised Diary 11 May 1886).

On 12 May, Woodford was out early after insects and was delighted at his success. He felt that the beauty and variety of the flora and fauna, even on this his first island, augured well for the long-term success of his field work.

The **Young Dick** attack

From Santa Ana the boat sailed to Kahua on Makira, on to Ugi, and then crossed to Sa’a at the bottom of Maramasike (Small Malaita). Here it met with the Melanesian Mission vessel *Southern Cross*. On board the *Southern Cross* Woodford was told that the corvette HMS *Opal* had just been to punish the Kwaio people of central Malaita for their attack on the labour vessel, the *Young Dick*. According to oral history recorded by Roger Keesing (1986) a Kwaio fighting leader, Maeasuaa, from Uru Harbour had attacked and killed many crew members, and then plundered and burnt the labour vessels the *Borealis* in 1880 (*The Brisbane Courier*, 8 January 1881: 4) and the *Janet Stewart* in 1882 (*The Brisbane Courier*, 2 May 1882: 3). Retaliation by the Royal Navy had been ineffective. In fact the success of the attacks made Maeasuaa respected and raised his status. This made other men eager to attack labour vessels in the hope of raising their status in their communities. On 20 May 1886 the *Young Dick* was attempting to recruit for Queensland when it was attacked in Sinalagu (Sinalanggu) Harbour, south of Uru. The motive was cultural revenge. A man, Taafana’au, was in mourning over his son Boosui whom it was assumed had been kidnapped by a labour boat. He offered blood money to any man who could kill a white man from another labour vessel (Keesing 1986: 277). One man, ‘Arumae, heard of the blood debt and so planned to attack the *Young Dick* that was then anchored offshore. Although all the purification rituals that he and his associates performed were rejected by the ancestral spirits they still planned to go ahead with the attack (Keesing 1986: 282–283). This was the second attack on the *Young Dick* in a matter of days and it too was unsuccessful, although a number of the crew including the Government Agent, the carpenter, the cook, one sailor, and a recruit were killed. The Kwaio warriors were eventually repelled by other men on board the boat.
In all, the crew of the *Young Dick* were attacked three times in their attempts to recruit along the east coast of Malaita that May. More than any other attack on a recruiting ship, the *Young Dick* raids earned the people of Malaita the reputation for the most savage in the islands (Boutilier 1983: 48). At a subsequent coroner’s inquiry held in Maryborough on 5 June 1886 detailed evidence was given by the European crew and verbatim evidence in Pijin by Melanesian crew members. The testimony was often confusing. For instance, the Mate, Charles Marr, on ‘being called, is [sic] too drunk to give evidence’ (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1887b). As a result it was recommended that part of the Malaita coast be closed to recruiting. The instigator of the revenge attack, Taafana’au, was then killed by the survivors of the raid in revenge for the deaths of their kinsmen. The son, Boosui, reportedly kidnapped, had been a voluntary recruit and he later returned from Fiji where he had been working on plantations (Keesing 1986: 285). Not long after, in July 1886, the *Young Dick* was lost off the coast of Queensland with around 130 to 140 labourers on board thus opening another deep wound in relations between Malaitans and recruiters. It was clear that both sides misunderstood each other. Woodford was sailing into a complex world where his values and attitudes would be seriously challenged.

**Collecting on Malaita**

Woodford’s vessel, the *Christine*, anchored in Uru Harbour and then in North West Bay (Sinalanggu), both locations of previous attacks. It remained there from 26 May to 2 June 1886. During that time Woodford went ashore and collected insects, clearly untroubled by the recent violence, although he wrote: ‘I always carry my revolver and then I have all the time my gun in one hand and net in the other and the natives would not venture to attack anyone unless they can get them at a dis-advantage’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 28 May 1886). At Sinalanggu he also caught eight female and two male bird-winged butterfly (*Ornithoptera victoriae*) and wrote: ‘The male, distinguished for the brilliant metallic green and gold colour of its wings, has never previously been discovered, although the much larger though more sombre-coloured female has been known for many years, from a single specimen captured during the visit to this group [Wanderer Bay on Guadalcanal by John MacGillivray] of H.M.S. Herald in 1854’ (Woodford 1888a: 357; 1890b: 64). Woodford had been supplied with a tracing of the female specimen by Arthur Butler at the British Museum so the capture of male specimens would have been especially rewarding. The birdwing butterflies, *Ornithoptera priamus urvilleanus* and *O. victoriae*, endemic to the central Solomon Islands, lay their eggs on the host plant, *Aristolochia tagala* (Indian birthwort or Dutchman’s pipe), commonly found along sandy beaches and in the undergrowth of old coconut plantations (Straatman 1969).
It appears Woodford, like MacGillvray earlier, was obliged to shoot at least two female butterflies with dust shot although he was pleased that he could capture a male in ‘grand condition’ (Woodford 1890b: 66–68; Tennant 1997: 170; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5 Revised Diary 26 May 1886). Woodford’s capture of the butterflies has not entered natural history folklore but as Tennant describes it, perhaps it should be there. Tennant wrote: ‘It is odd that the story of a stark-naked future Resident Commissioner dashing along the beach with a butterfly net, and falling head over heels, watched by 100 “boys” [men on the recruiting vessel] and a lookout in the crow’s nest, has not entered the folklore in the same way as MacGillvray’s story—which is surely tame by comparison’ (Tennant 1997: 171). However, this interpretation of the day’s collecting may be rather anecdotal for Woodford’s diary entries are more restrained. There are no entries describing a naked run on the beach. He did note with amazement the size and beauty of the butterflies on the east coast of Malaita and reported that the first one seen was at least eight inches in wingspan. Woodford wrote: ‘The sight of these insects on the wing is very fine as they fly along among the tree tops with a lazy flapping flight and occasionally sailing with outspread wings’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 27 May 1886). In his revised diary these events are expanded in more detail and Woodford documents the history of the discovery and the range of the species on Guadalcanal and Malaita.

Woodford’s travels to Alu, where he planned to stay, were to take him first to Malu’u, at the northern end of Malaita, then to Coleridge Bay (Fauabu) just north of Cape Ritter on the north–east coast of Malaita. This was the home of the men who had danced at Dr Corney’s plantation in Suva. He recorded in his diary that labourers in Fiji get paid £6 for the first two years—£3 a year—but only in trade, not money, and that the payment of £12 for the third year is given in cash: a total of £6 in trade and £12 in cash. The problem was that the trade goods were chosen for the men by the plantation owners. This differed from the situation in Queensland where men were paid £6 a year in cash and not goods. The leader of the Meke dance in Suva was landed back in Coleridge Bay all dressed in ‘bright red flannel shirt, turkey red Sulu and a woollen “Tam O’Shanter” cap in which the colours yellow green red & blue are absolutely dazzling to the eye’. On 6 June the Christine anchored at Gera (Mbara) island, off the village of Aola on Guadalcanal, where Lars Nielsen had built a trading station. Nielsen had been at Mbara since 1885 and Woodford wrote: ‘The natives here have a much better character than those of Malaya [Malaita] and I believe this would not be at all a bad place to stay at, with the idea of making an excursion into the interior and up the high peaks of the island’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 6 June 1886). The mountains and long rivers behind Aola fascinated Woodford from the beginning and he was later to spend some time in the area. It was during this visit that he decided to base himself at Aola in his future
expeditions, for he ‘formed such a favourable estimate of the capabilities of the locality as a collecting ground and also was as favourability impressed with the natives’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5 Revised Diary 7 June 1886).

He took numerous photographs of the region and wrote: ‘I saw some cycads growing straight up to a height of fifty feet and the stems of them thicker than most cocoa-nut palms’. These tall forests of sago palm are commonly found in the lower river mouths along the south-east coast of Guadalcanal. On 12 June 1886 the Christine called in to Marau Sound where ‘the natives of this place speak the same language as is spoken on the S.E. coast of Malaya and the canoes constantly pass to & fro’. In Marau the people from south Malaita resettled on the coastal atolls and islets many centuries ago. They remain culturally distinct from the mainland dwelling people of Guadalcanal. Here was the profitable trading station of Oscar Svensen. Woodford also noted that 10s was equal to 100 sticks of tobacco, 100 clay pipes and a little calico. This is comparable with the values for trade goods sold wholesale by Hoffnung & Co with a small margin of profit for the trader. From Marau Sound the Christine continued its way along the dangerous Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. Here Woodford wrote in his diary: ‘It is a very bad coast to be caught upon as the water is deep right up to the shore and there is no anchorage or protection of any kind’, apart from Wanderer Bay which he considered a ‘capital anchorage and well protected from prevailing winds’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5 Revised Diary 15 June 1886). More returnees were then landed at Tangarere north of Wanderer Bay. On June 19 Woodford sighted Rendova, Simbo and Ranongga off New Georgia.

Collecting at Alu and his host, Gorai

Charles Woodford arrived at Alu in the Shortland Islands off Bougainville on 23 June 1886. Here he met Gorai dressed ‘in a red flannel shirt and pair of trousers, and an old sun helmet on his head’ (Woodford 1888a: 358). In his diary he wrote ‘The traders gave him [Gorai] a very bad character, the officers of the Men O’ War on the other hand speak very well of him’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2. Diary 23 June 1886). Gorai was descended from a grandfather who had come from Bougainville to the north. This warrior leader subsequently installed himself as chief of the Mono and Alu islands after defeating the local people there (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 9 July 1886). Gorai may have appeared to a visiting European to be strangely dressed but he was a shrewd businessman and drove a good bargain. When Woodford requested a separate house for himself and all his field equipment the price was: ‘1 axe, 4 knives, 3 necklaces of beads, 3 fathoms of cloth, 20 sticks of tobacco, 1 flannel shirt’ (Woodford 1888a: 358). A conservative estimate based on prices at that time would value this at £1 10s (£600 in current values). With the house came
two women to cook and clean and a regular supply of garden food. Woodford was put ashore on 24 June and wrote: ‘At daylight having taken leave of all on board the captain brought me ashore and left me taking on board with him two natives to pilot the ship to Fauro. At seven o’clock the ship sailed and I was left alone with the natives’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5. Revised Diary 24 June 1886). He was to remain there from 24 June to 7 August 1886 and during this time he made a large collection of ‘Lepidoptera and Coleoptera as well as the birds, mammals, reptiles and batrachians (frogs &c) of the locality’ (Woodford 1888a: 358). Both Woodford and Gorai would have been pleased with the outcomes of the arrangement, for in addition to payment for the house, which would have been shared with the owner who may or may not have been Gorai, the chief also received 1 axe, 1 knife, some cloth, some tobacco, an umbrella and some sugar (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 24 June 1886).

Gorai had his village Ta’ai/Maleai (Irwin 1973: 228, 238) on Magusaiai Island close by and Woodford was left alone with the local people on a small coral island off the coast. The large island, generally called Shortland Island, is known locally as Alu, and the three smaller islands off the south-east of the main island are Morgusaiai, Pirumeri and Poporang. It is most likely that Woodford lived on Pirumeri Island where the old village, called Paramata, had a population in 1894 of about 300 people (Irwin 1973: 231). All these islands were a short canoe trip to Gorai’s village that consisted of about 300 huts with a population of around 1,500 and Guppy noted that around the village was almost a mile of continuous cultivation (Irwin 1973: 239 quoting Guppy 1887b: 81). Gorai’s house was quite substantial. Guppy measured it as being 40 feet by 20 feet and near it was a house for his wives that measured 60 feet by 30 feet and was 20 feet in height (Anon 1888a: 559). Woodford’s host and protector, Gorai, had built up considerable wealth from his position as chief. He had a house with ‘thirty pairs of sash windows … A room set apart for entertaining foreign visitors contained “a small ship’s cannon, a dozen rifles of all types, a picture of the Queen of England, a variety of wall clocks, some large mirrors”‘. His dining room was well lighted with kerosene lamps imported from Sydney (Bennett 1987: 96; Sack 2005: 340; Johnston 1980: 58). Gorai had built this wealth by acting as a ‘passage master’ for men like Captain William Hamilton who, when promised 120 men for plantation work, had to provide weapons, knives and building materials including the window sashes noted above (Johnston 1980: 58).

Woodford photographed this house with Gorai and some of his wives in front. Gorai’s brother was the chief of the Mono (Treasury Islands), but on Alu the main village probably Haleta, belonged to a son, Kupanne who, it was said in German accounts did not like whites (Sack 2005: 343 quoting from Parkinson 1887–1888). Woodford never seemed to be in any difficulty during his stay in the area although he had some reservations at first. He wrote: ‘the “Christine”
sailed away and left me; nor will I conceal the fact that I had some slight feelings of regret as I saw the last link connecting me with civilisation disappear below the horizon’ (Woodford 1890b: 18). This was indeed the reason for his success both as a collector and a man living in the islands unprotected. He was prepared to take the risk and live alone with the people. Most especially he lived his daily life in front of them and not apart. He ate their food and entertained them as he must have done by his strange collecting and hunting habits. He also showed that he was not afraid of the people. Unlike the traders, he did not isolate himself on an offshore island and travel in his own trading vessel. He took an especial interest in the daily activities of village life and made numerous comments on what was happening around him. His diaries are full of surprised asides starting with ‘I forgot to mention’ as if he were writing to himself in absentia calling up the experiences of the day. He found some of those experiences humorous and some strange but all of them interesting. Most of all he did not drink and did not abuse the people, especially the women. He was polite.

Figure 2. Gorai’s house at Alu with Gorai and family in front.
Source: PMB Photo 56–067.

Woodford took the opportunity of the departure of the Christine to forward a letter to Thurston in Fiji informing him of his safe arrival in Alu. He would not have another chance of reporting back to Thurston until much later in the year. In the meantime he collected each day and prepared and skinned his animals at
night. His efforts at photography were unsuccessful at first as the developing water was invariably poor. Although collecting proceeded well in Alu and the nearby islands by 1 July he was feeling his first attack of malaria. It was at this time that he met the trader John Champion Macdonald based on nearby Fauro. Macdonald had paid Gorai £10 in cash and £10 in trade for the entire island (£4,000 in cash and another £4,000 in trade goods in current values) and Gorai arranged a marriage between a daughter, from one of his supposedly 100 wives, to John Macdonald, John Champion Macdonald’s son (Bennett 1987: 60). This was yet another way of cementing his relationships with white traders and planters.

![Woodford’s house at Alu.](PMB Photo 56–065)

**Figure 3. Woodford’s house at Alu.**

Source: PMB Photo 56–065.

**German annexation of the northern Solomon Islands**

While at Alu, Woodford found out that the German government made claim to the northern Solomon Islands of Choiseul, Isabel and the Shortland Islands and on 15 November 1886 the German flag was hoisted on all the islands by Captain von Wietersheim of the German gunboat the SMS *Adler* (Sack 2005: 344). The Anglo-German Demarcation agreement signed in Berlin on 6 April
1886 defined the English and German spheres of influence in the Western Pacific (see *The Queenslander* 3 July 1886 for a full copy of the Declaration of 6 April 1886; *Evening Post* [New Zealand] Vol. 31, Issue 104, 5 May 1886: 2; see also Scholefield 1919: 320–321; Woodford papers PMB 1381/035). As a result of the demarcation, Germany was free to establish protectorates north and west of the line while Britain could annex territory to the south and east, except for Tonga, Samoa and Niue, which were to remain neutral (Great Britain. Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Bureau (1943–1945): 324). The separation of the Solomon Islands into a German northern group and a British southern group was to remain in place for another 14 years.

Under the agreement German firms could continue to recruit indentured labourers in the southern Solomon Islands, which now belonged to Britain, but British planters could not recruit in the northern German islands. The cost of labour recruiting had grown in a tight labour market. Payments to beach captains and to relatives of recruits had increased as recruiters had tried to gain the advantage over each other. British labour vessels were prohibited from trading in guns and ammunition but German and French vessels were not restricted. Colonial governments were attempting to reserve special areas of operation for their vessels and the only way to do this was by direct annexation of islands. The trading firm *Godeffroy und Sohn* was declared bankrupt in 1879 as the result of poor investments in Europe following speculation on the German money markets. Its Pacific interests were then taken over by the newly created *Detusche Handels-und Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südsee-Islen zu Hamburg* (DHPG) (Bollard 1981: 16). DHPG became a major political player in Samoa. Although the size of the labour needed for the plantations was small compared with Queensland and Fiji, the company was anxious to restrict Queensland and Fijian labour boats access to the Bismarck Archipelago, Buka and Bougainville.

The development of the German colonial empire was, more than anything, a commercial venture (Henderson 1938). Germany suffered a severe economic depression between 1882 and 1886 and the Imperial government in Berlin thought colonial expansion using the chartered company model would help solve the social and economic woes of the Reich (Kennedy 1972: 262). It was believed that colonies would keep emigrating Germans within the confines of the German Empire and ‘divert the masses from the appeal of social revolution by providing them with an alternative Utopia’ (Firth 1972: 361). The colonies were seen as reservoirs of raw materials for German industry and as the future markets for the manufactured products of German factories. In the late 1880s a number of powerful political lobby groups that promoted the establishment of colonies were created, among them the *Kolonialverein*, established in 1882, and the *Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation*, formed in 1884. They combined into a single powerful association in 1887, *Die Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*. These
influential and well-connected societies pressured Bismarck to establish a formal colonial policy for the German empire and Bismarck skilfully used the economic imperative as a way of arousing chauvinistic patriotism in Germany against threatening encroachments from Britain.

At first, German policy was to annex territories by grants of charter to private commercial companies rather than by direct Imperial annexation (Townsend 1921). These companies were then responsible for funding administration, thus relieving the Imperial government of the costs of colonial rule. The German New Guinea Company (Neu-Guinea Compagnie), financially backed with a capital of £375,000 by one of the largest banks in Germany, Disconto Gesellschaft, was given a charter by Bismarck in 1885 with rights over the northern New Guinea mainland and the Bismarck Archipelago. By declaring a protectorate (Das Schutzgebiet der Neu-Guinea Compagnie) over northern New Guinea (Kaiser Wilhelmsland), New Britain (Neu Pommern) and New Ireland (Neu Mecklenburg) and the valuable trading posts on Duke of York Islands (Neu Lauenburggruppe), the German government was able to have the establishment and administrative costs of the colony borne by the Neu-Guinea Compagnie. This haphazard experiment, administered from headquarters at Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) was costly in both economic terms and in terms of human life. In 1899 the German government was forced to assume control of the territory although it continued to be developed as an economic enterprise (Ohff 2008).

However, the Protectorate of the New Guinea Company in Kaiser Wilhemsland was largely a commercial failure. Only large plantations on the Gazelle Peninsula around Kokopo and the Duke of York Islands were commercially viable. Mainland plantations, apart from some around Madang (Friedrich Wilhelmshafen), were abandoned in the face of malaria, a shortage of willing labour, attacks by landowners and simple lack of understanding of the nature of the land and climate. The Neu-Guinea Compagnie relinquished control to the German government in 1899 after considerable debate in the Reichstag, the Budgetkommission and the Kolonialrat, all of whom criticised the Neu-Guinea Compagnie for its mismanagement of the protectorate. In the end, the people of German New Guinea remained largely unaffected by attempts at force, the inducement of trade goods or the assumed benefits of long-term plantation labour (Firth 1972: 377). German protectorates in the Western Pacific were disappointing from a commercial view as they had little capacity to absorb manufactured goods. Apart from copra, tropical products found a limited market in Europe and freight charges, despite the concessions, made it almost impossible for German merchants in the Pacific to compete with Australian and American rivals (Henderson 1938: 13–14). The lonely islands of the Pacific were, for the most part, poor territories with few natural resources.
In 1885 Buka and Bougainville Islands were added to the territory of the New Guinea Company. Germany also annexed the Marshall Islands in 1885 but the cost for administration were born by Jaluit-Gesellschaft, the combined trading interests of Robertson and Hernsheim and DHPG (Firth 1973: 24). The northern Solomon Islands of Choiseul, Isabel and the Shortland Islands were later added to German territory in 1886. Thus DHPG was able to retain access to labour for German plantations both inside German New Guinea and for German plantations in Samoa, notably from the Gilbert Islands (Munro and Firth 1987 and 1990). When DHPG was threatened by a lack of indentured labourers in Samoa in 1882 it refused to repatriate time-expired workers and consequently lost even more workers who chose to go to the Queensland cane fields rather than to Samoa (Kennedy 1972: 266). Working expenses were kept low and labour cheap and the steamers of the Norddeutscher-Lloyd shipping company transported produce to Europe at favourable terms (Overlack 1973: 131).

The northern Solomon Islands were a source of contention between the British and the Germans. Initially seen as a rich area of labour recruitment early in the Anglo-German talks it had been marked out early as a territory for annexation by Germany (Munro and Firth 1990: 93). In fact, few labourers came from there, for German companies found New Guinea islanders more amenable to recruitment. In 1885 DHPG anticipated the conclusion of the negotiations by buying land and harbours in Buka, Bougainville, the Shortland Islands and along the southern coast of Isabel. Shortland Harbour just north of Poporang Island was planned to be a major recruiting area. Woodford was based nearby. DHPG came to an ‘agreement with a passage master named Gorai, who regularly supplied labourers to recruiters from Queensland and Fiji’ (Munro and Firth 1990: 93). Woodford came one day to Gorai’s village and found the old man counting knots on a piece of string. It appeared that it recorded the time away from the village of an indentured labourer: one knot for each day and one loop of knots for one month. When Woodford counted the loops he found it almost equalled three years (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/3 Diary 17 July 1886).

Peter Edmund Pratt, the trader, travelled as an interpreter and pilot for the German expedition that surveyed the islands. He provided Woodford with a copy of the deed by which the Germans were buying land from local people. A copy of the deed was attached to his report to Thurston (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 12/6, PMB 1381/020, see also PMB 1381/022b). The agreement is complex and convoluted but in essence gave DHPG access to ‘the foreshores and adjacent Reefs and Isles to a distance recognized by International Law together with all trees and plants and together with all and singular the hereditaments and appurtenances belonging or in anywise appertaining thereto’. The agreement was written in complex legalistic Hochdeutsch unfathomable to local people. The promise of trade goods and other supplies would have been
sufficient reason for someone like Gorai, in a complex web of obligations and responsibilities, and supposedly having 100 wives, to sign such an agreement. As for the annexation of the northern Solomons by the Germans, Woodford wrote: ‘the whole thing may be traced to Lord Derby and Mr Gladstone who refused to sanction the annexation of New Guinea by the Queensland Govt.’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/3 Diary 1 August 1886).

With the signing of the Anglo-German demarcation agreement DHPG was free to recruit anywhere in the northern Solomons and payments were made in axes, guns and tobacco. This was a major destabilising factor in local, social and political relationships, especially after Gorai died. Sack (2005: 345 fn31) writes that this probably occurred in 1891 but Graham Officer (1901– MS 9321), reporting that J. C. Macdonald from Fauro had witnessed the death, stated it was most likely in 1899. Parkinson (1999: 214) wrote in 1907 that Gorai (called Korai by Parkinson) was ‘the deceased chief’, and his death, along with that of the other warrior chiefs in the western and north-western islands between 1900 and 1906, signalled the end of the inter-island raiding, and large-scale trading expeditions. This was also a time when widespread epidemics of influenza and dysentery were killing off many people, especially the elderly. Certainly, guns and ammunition from the northern islands made their way into southern Solomons. Moore (1985: 79) records that: ‘In 1893 SM Smith, Government Agent on the “Helena”, had the problem stated to him bluntly in Olomburi [Malaita]: “No sniders, no boys”’ (Moore 1985: 79; Munro and Firth 1990: 96). The German position was that guns and alcohol were the items most coveted by Islanders and that prohibiting the traffic in them would seriously damage German commercial interests.

As a result of this international political theatre being played out around him, Woodford found himself working in German territory. Woodford was no friend of the Germans. In his later career in Samoa he saw German intervention in action and when he came to plant the English flag on these northern islands in 1900 he took some delight in doing so. Woodford later wrote in a revised version of his diary of early 1886 that he ‘never had cause to regret the confidence that I placed in Gorai and his people when I landed a perfect stranger among them’. He ‘left with feelings of regret and a certainty that I should meet with a cordial welcome if I ever had occasion to visit the island again’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/5 Revised Diary 24 June 1886). Having finished his work in Alu and the Shortland Islands, and now with malaria, he moved to Fauro Islands where he remained until 17 September 1886 in the company of Macdonald and his family. Macdonald had established a large plantation there and his brother had settled on a nearby island. On 14 August 1886 Woodford wrote:

Today I have an attack of fever and it is an effort to drag one leg before another. Nevertheless I spent all day in the bush and cleared a space
to take a photograph of a large ficus which I propose doing tomorrow morning. I was not successful in collecting, getting only a few of the usual type, nothing new. I shot a ‘Tigeno’ [lizard] which I skinned in the evening. Just as I was going to shoot I had a fit of cold shakes which lasted some hours (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 14 August 1886. See also Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 for copy).

Woodford’s health did not improve, and so when the steamer the Ripple arrived at Fauro he moved across to Rubiana [Roviana] in New Georgia. He arrived there on 24 September 1886 and was to remain for two weeks.

Figure 4. Woodford’s house at Fauro, located on the Macdonald plantation at Siniasoro Bay.

Source: PMB Photo 56–110.

Roviana and meeting with Hiqava

Roviana was one of the most complex and confusing parts of the Solomon Islands at that time. A range of domestic and foreign factors, social, cultural and economic, had led to the expansion of the coastal communities. The completion of a new men’s house, new canoe houses and the construction of larger war canoes meant an increase in the need for human heads for use in ritual inauguration by village priests. More than any other area of the Solomons,
the New Georgia region was highly destabilised. It was a highly dangerous place for an independent natural history collector. Woodford wrote: ‘It may be considered the centre of the head hunting district, for the natives of this and the adjacent islands are the most notorious head-hunters and cannibals’ (Woodford 1888a: 360). He spent most of the time in the Roviana Lagoon visiting the coastal and island communities. Despite the dangers, a few small trading stations had been established around the Roviana Lagoon and Woodford stayed with a local trader, probably William Harland or Thomas Woodhouse, at Nusa Zonga a small island off Munda. Woodhouse lived on Nusa Zonga when not captaining his steamship the *Ripple* and it was the head station of the traders T. G. Kelly and J. Williams of Sydney (Bennett 1987: Appendix 5; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 3 October 1886). Munda had become the centre of European commerce in the New Georgia region but it had also been one of the main centres for head hunting. The two occupations were not incompatible. The traders supplied the tools and weapons that assisted ritual building and warfare and in return local people provided the trading stations with the products needed for sale, especially turtle shell and copra.

![Image of Nusa Zonga](image-url)

**Figure 5. Nusa Zonga. The Kelly and William’s trading station, Roviana.**

Source: PMB Photo 56–108.

In Roviana, accompanied by a trader referred to as ‘Peter’ and ‘French Peter’—most definitely Peter Edmund Pratt—and Robert Cable the master of the *Lizzie*, Woodford travelled around the lagoon on a copra buying expedition. He remarked: ‘at every place we landed we were careful to take our loaded revolvers with us’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 28 September
4. A naturalist in the Solomon Islands

1886). The first call was at Nusa Roviana where Frank Wickham and Pratt had local trading partners. Wickham bought the island of Hombupeka in 1875 and Pratt purchased Hombuhombu in 1886 but they also had copra depots on Nusa Roviana. Woodford photographed the interiors of men’s houses and canoe houses and recorded: ‘At the principal canoe-house in another village we visited there [Sisiata now part of Munda] were five large head hunting canoes, profusely ornamented and inlaid with pearl shell’ (Woodford 1888a: 360; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 26 September 1886). The war canoes had high prows and sterns decorated with cowrie shells and carvings, in particular the ubiquitous ṼuzuṼuzu (Roviana) (toto isu Marovo). This figure attached low on the canoe’s prow served to protect the canoe from malevolent spirits of the water for its eyes were always open (Hess et al. 2009). War canoes were also used in bonito fishing (Barraud 1972).

Woodford was at Sisiata when he saw a canoe house (paele) that was about 80 feet long, with a high pitched roof and with the front end closed in except for two long narrow slits left for the high prows of canoes to pass through. This was the paele of Ingava (Hiqava) the warrior chief (baṼara warane). Hiqava later paid Woodford a visit on Nusa Zonga. Hiqava said that if the people of Sydney saw a photograph of the tomoko that Woodford had just taken they would want to take the canoe away. At Sisiata Woodford also noted the many stone jetties: ‘about eighty to a hundred yards long built out into the sea and on the shore are tanks fenced with stones for keeping turtles and fish’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 26 September 1886). Coastal villages were aggregating along the shore. This consolidation gave the impression that large numbers of people, and war canoes, were concentrated in the lagoons. Massive war fleets of 1,000 to 1,500 canoes were supposedly seen in 1880 by Captain Ferguson departing from New Georgia but this was most likely an exaggeration (McKinnon 1975: 303). Dureau estimates that if large canoes could hold between 15 and 30 men then each these war parties would have contained from 15,000 to 30,000 men. She has some justifiable reservations about the actual number of canoes sighted (Dureau 1998:207). Schneider (1996: 114–115, 117) dismisses the idea that massive fleets of war canoes could be assembled in the Roviana Lagoon area. He estimates that the combined population of the Nusa Roviana villages would have been 400 people and, of that, the population of adult males would have been only about 100–150 men. Sisiata would also have contained about 400 people and the whole coastal Munda region, Kekehe, supported about 1,200 people. Of that the adult male population would have been about 300. He estimates that one good sized tomoko would have held between 15 and 20 men. Schneider (1996: 117) calculates that 1,000 tomoko would need a population of 20,000 adult men and the entire region a clearly unsustainable population of more than 40,000 people. Indeed Graham Officer was later told by local men at Roviana that fleets of 30
or 40 canoes had regularly departed on head hunting raids and this tends to
disprove the idea that fleets of 1,000 or more canoes could have been dispatched
from the region (Officer 1901- MS 9321 Box 4332/5).

Certainly, the area was still volatile. Woodford wrote in his diary:

October 5. Tuesday. Early this morning a large *tomoko* and Wange’s
boat [Wange was Hiqava’s ritual specialist, *hiamo*, see Woodford 1890b:
150–152] called at the station on their way from Sisieta to Isabel on a
turtle-hunting & head hunting expedition. Wange also came in a small
canoe but is not going with them. He told me they might be away for
two months. Wange, Ingava and some others had come to see some
photographs I took of them the other day and appear to be amused
with them especially with that of the one legged and one armed boy
(Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 5 October 1886).

This boy was photographed earlier, not because of his deformities, but because
he was wearing a particularly interesting ear decoration of palm leaf bent in a
circle. Woodford wrote: ‘they will not give up the idea that I am a missionary
although I repeatedly assured them to the contrary’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290
Item 1/4 Diary 3 October 1886). He gave up wearing a large Indian pith helmet
(shola topee) and changed to wearing a Panama hat so as not to be confused
with the missionaries. He then crossed the lagoon to Honiavasa Island where he
photographed the interior of a men’s house with posts carved in the shape of
crocodiles and ‘along the rafters was a row of heads’, and took a now famous
photograph of an old man standing in front of a *beku*, a carved pole representing
a dead ancestor (Woodford 1888a: 360; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4
Diary 28 September 1886). He had to develop his own photographs at Frank
Wickham’s station and fitted up a darkroom. Some of these are his best images.

But he could not get rid of his malaria, so he went to Aola on Guadalcanal on
the *Ripple* stopping at various places in the islands on the way. In his diary he
wrote: ‘I also hear a good account of Nielsen the trader at Aola on Guadalcanar,
both from McD[onald] and McLiver of the *Christine*. [John] Stevens of Uji [Uki ni
Masi] I formed an unfavourable opinion of on our visit there and I have heard he
bears an unenviable character for sharp practice’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290
Item 1/4 Diary 1 September 1886). He made up his mind quickly about basing
himself at Aola on Guadalcanal for the start of his second expedition. It was
wise for an independent young collector to have a resident trader living nearby.
From Aola he took the schooner *Lizzie* to Sydney. The *Lizzie* was a 230-ton
barquentine built in Maine that had been a coastal trader before Robert Towns
bought her in 1882 and refitted the vessel for the Pacific labour trade. It had
been captained by William Wawn between 1883 and 1884 [Wawn and Corriss
1973; Wawn 1893; Stevens 1950: 391; The Vagabond [Julian Thomas] 1886;
Queensland State Archives ID7866). Since 1884 the *Lizzie* had been owned by the trading firm TG Kelly & J Williams, used on the Australia to Solomon Islands run. The *Lizzie* was to be Woodford’s regular means of transport to and from the islands until it was wrecked in December 1888. While on board, travelling between the Solomon Islands and Sydney, he wrote yet another long letter, dated November 1886, to Thurston in Fiji on his observations and opinions of life and conditions in the Solomon Islands. In this letter he reported on the German presence in the northern islands and the way in which the German traders had offered Gorai £100 and a new cutter boat in exchange for the small islands off Alu and for rights to half the big island as well. Peter Edmund Pratt had been open about the German purchases. He reported to Woodford that most of the coast of Isabel had been bought for two large knives, six fathoms of calico, 100 sticks of tobacco, a few pipes, machetes, one tomahawk, and two or three Jew’s harps, and the Germans were actively recruiting for Samoa in exchange for Snider rifles and ammunition. The trade in firearms was also carried on illegally by the English traders in the Solomon Islands and in order to keep communities bonded a trader would make advance payments of goods and guns, thus making people indebted to him. Woodford estimated that Gorai was in debt to the extent of 120,000 copra kernels, about 20 ton, or approximately £200 worth of trade goods (£85,000 in current values). This of course made the people who were indebted to Gorai tied even more tightly to Gorai’s chieftainship and may explain why the old man was reported to have 100 wives (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary attachment: Letter to J. B. Thurston dated November 1886).

![Figure 6. The schooner *Lizzie*, Woodford’s regular transport to and from Sydney.](Source: PMB Photo 56–111.)
Figure 7. Communal canoe house (*paele*) at Sisiata, Roviana.

Source: PMB Photo 56–114.

Note: Another photograph of this *paele* (see Woodford 1890: 159) was modified with the removal of the large coconut tree in front of the *tomoko* and published in *The Illustrated London News* 23 February 1889, *Popular Science Monthly* 1889: 479 fig 2, and Brunt and Thomas 2012: 13).

Figure 8. Gemu standing in front of a *tomoko*, Sisiata, Roviana.

Source: ANUA 481 G.
4. A naturalist in the Solomon Islands

Figure 9. Sisiata village, Roviana.
Source: PMB Photo 56–112.

Figure 10. Ceremonial food trough (*hao*), Sisiata, Roviana.
Source: PMB Photo 56–119.
Woodford’s greatest personal concern was a moral one, and it would concern him for much of the first decade after the establishment of the protectorate. It was the ‘extent to which the horrible practice [of head hunting] is carried [out]’ in Roviana. He reported to Thurston that between 25 September and 4 October men from the village of Kokorapa, the central village on Nusa Roviana, from Sisieta on the mainland of New Georgia, and other villages in Roviana Lagoon had taken 24 heads and five captives (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary attachment: Letter to J. B. Thurston dated November 1886). In addition to the murders of local people, the killing of European traders was discussed in some detail with his suggestion that the practice of head hunting might be suppressed by the destruction of all large *tomoko* in the area or the permanent presence of 15 to 20 armed police, presumably from Fiji.

The destruction of *tomoko* would be both a physical and a moral confrontation, for the war canoe was the physical embodiment of cosmological beliefs and a visual representation of the wealth, power and status of the chiefs. The destruction was also a challenge to the power of the ritual priests who rendered
the canoe sacred through ritual and human sacrifice. This, Woodford believed, would be the most effective way to eliminate head hunting and would also eliminate the need for the Royal Navy action that was so ineffective. The *modus operandi* later developed by Woodford and his assistant Arthur Mahaffy during the early stages of the establishment of the protectorate was swift retribution for head hunting and the destruction of the war canoes used in raids. His justification for the presence of armed and mobile police was that: ‘The native character being cowardly in the extreme they will only attack white men and even other natives when they can take them at a disadvantage or even surprise them by a coup de main’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary attachment: Letter to J. B. Thurston dated November 1886). Woodford and Mahaffy made the suppression of head hunting their first priority. The aim was to secure a stable and permanent peace for mission and plantation expansion. His plan for the destruction of *tomoko* has been widely criticised but it was a plan submitted to Thurston in 1886 long before the formal establishment of the British Solomon Island Protectorate in 1897. As a policy it may well be seen that ‘the government compensated for what it lacked in consistent and balanced administration by massive overkill’ (Bennett 1987: 109). Certainly there would be well-documented incidences of poor leadership and wanton destruction of villages and gardens during the pacification campaigns, but the destruction of *tomoko* was to be the final act in the suppression of head hunting and the power of the old *baṉara*. O’Brian (2011: 46) makes a considered judgement that the policy introduced by Woodford, and practiced by Mahaffy, of destroying all *tomoko* and burning other canoes had a significant and disruptive impact on interisland trade. However, many *tomoko* were successfully hidden from punitive expeditions and they were not the common trading canoe used by people from the New Georgia area. By the end of the 19th century, the dynamics of inter-island trade had also changed. Resident traders and copra buyers had made inroads into customary trading systems. People now desired imported goods and had substituted many trade goods for local produce. The many European whaleboats bought in from Australia became a logical and practical replacement for locally made canoes.

**Second expedition**

Woodford arrived in Sydney on the *Lizzie* in November 1886 and remained in New South Wales for two and a half months. During this time he travelled the state ‘having been given a free pass by the Railway Department’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/6 Diary 24 January–5 June 1887). Fortunately, the *Lizzie* was once again in Sydney Harbour and he was able to leave on 22 January 1887, almost immediately after arriving back in the city. After a stormy passage he arrived at Nusa Zonga in Roviana in February 1887. Thomas Woodhouse
had by now become a partner in the trading firm—now Kelly, Williams and Woodhouse—that bought the island in 1881. Woodford’s friend Lars Nielsen had also bought Banga (Mbanga) Island in the Diamond Narrows in 1882. Despite its reputation as the most dangerous place in the Solomon Islands, the Roviana Lagoon was also the centre of commercial transactions between European traders and islanders. It would have been an exciting place for a young adventurer. He later wrote about Hiqava’s paele at Sisiata:

It is about seventy feet long and thirty wide. It is covered entirely in sago-thatch, the ridge of the steeply sloping roof being perhaps thirty feet from the ground. The ends are closed with screens made of sago-leaves, and the seaward-facing end [this was the entrance for men, women could only enter from the back] two singular-looking slits are left to allow the high-pointed ends of the tomakos or large head hunting canoes, to be carried in and out (Woodford 1890b: 152; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 26 September 1886).

At this time, Sisiata had five tomoko, some English-built whaleboats and a ‘large arsenal’ (Jackson 1978: 96).

Woodford spent a fortnight in Roviana revisiting Sisiata village that had about 24 houses where he saw and photographed the inauguration of a large trough (hao) for use in preparation of ceremonial food composed of yams, taro and ngali nuts (Canarium indicum). This trough was about 30 feet long and was carved to represent a crocodile. As it was too dark in the canoe house to be photographed Woodford arranged for the food trough to be moved outside into the light the next day. According to Woodford, 22 men could sit on each side. He wrote: ‘the big trough was in the centre of the house with the end representing the crocodile head with a carved human head in the jaw facing toward the seaward entrance’, and ‘[a]bove were the grinning heads on the rafters, eight of them, besides turtles’ heads & the heads of frigate birds’. To demonstrate to Woodford and the others, an old man, possibly the hiama, wearing full ceremonial ‘fighting rig’, and then Hiqava himself came from the ceremonial house nearby and made a speech to the men seated around the hao. At a signal the men then began to pound the taro and ngali nuts in the trough (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/6 Diary 10 March 1887; Waite 2000: 119–122). Woodford was then asked to leave but not without taking more photographs. Later James Edge-Partington (1903) was to report details of a large food trough removed from Roviana by the crew of the HMS Royalist that he presumed was the one seen and photographed by Woodford. In fact, the food trough taken by Captain Edward Davis and presented to the British Museum had been removed from Kalikoqu, the inland village on Nusa Roviana. The one seen and photographed by Woodford was located at Hiqava’s village of Sisiata on the mainland. The earlier statement by Edge-Partington was later qualified by Woodford and Thomas Edge-Partington.
(Edge-Partington 1906: 121; Wright 2009: 231 fn13). The food trough taken by Davis was kept as personal property and he attempted to sell it in England before it was placed in the British Museum. Davis falsely claimed that it was used to cook the bodies of captives (Brunt and Thomas 2012: 230–231).

Woodford wrote that the men of the Roviana area had recently brought back six heads from Bugotu on the south of Isabel island and one of the heads belonged to the native teacher from the Melanesian Mission station there (Woodford 1888a: 361). The Melanesian Mission had established a base in southern Isabel. The local people there were also a maritime culture who lived around Thousand Islands Bay, a fine natural harbour. However, the consequences of head hunting by men from Roviana had destabilised the entire southern end of Isabel and this continued for some time (Woodford to O’Brien 17 April 1897 WPHC 4/IV 8/1898). The mid-east coastal people, the A’ara, moved inland to fortified villages or went to safety at the southern end under the protection of Big-men like Bera and Soga. Dr Henry Welchman, known as Dokita (Doctor), was successful in converting many people from the southern end who saw the mission as a way of securing peace, release from the victimisation of the head hunting raiders, and a means for achieving economic prosperity and a new worldly status as Christians (White 1983: 123). Peace for the Big-men established new alliances and brought in trade goods to the local people. This increased chiefly mana that was further enhanced by the presence of the mission in the area controlled by the chief. The church had ritual and symbolism that filled the void left by the old moral order and while Bera remained pagan, his son Soga converted with his wife and 70 followers. ‘Soga was undoubtedly a remarkable character who perceived mission teaching as a way of building prestige and influence’ (White 1983: 127). The population of the entire south-eastern end of Isabel converted to Anglicanism. Soga even led armed groups to Nggela and Savo to negotiate peace but his prestige was such that he sailed there on the old war canoes. Peace, significantly, was marked by feasting and oratory. Soga was an able leader who could transfer his Big-man status, derived from warfare, wealth and prestige, into a Europeanised form of civil, judicial and administrative control, encompassing all Mbughotu (Jackson 1975: 73). But men like Soga, and Hiqava at Roviana, took advantage of the rivalry between missions and traders to gain bargaining power. As a result the Melanesian Mission, and not the protectorate government, was the real face of the administration in Isabel, and after Soga died the power and authority of political leadership passed to the church.

In his diary during his second expedition, Woodford also noted that Thomas Woodhouse had purchased large tracks of land on the north-east end of Guadalcanal—presumably near the present day Visale mission—in exchange for muskets, Snider rifles, cartridges and ammunition. Woodford wrote: ‘This end of Guadalcanar has the appearance from a distance like an English countryside
as there are large patches of grass interspersed with belts of wood in the gullies’. Woodhouse was one of the more successful traders of the early period. But even successful traders had runs of bad luck. His boat, the Ripple, was later lost off the coast of Isabel but without loss of life. Woodhouse and his business partners were bankrupt by 1896 (Bennett 1987: 55 and Appendix 5). Thomas Woodhouse, the ‘Old Commodore’, ended his life as a crippled old man on Uji ni Masi off Makira and his estate was valued at just £12 (Bennett 1987: 55).

Settlement and work at Aola

On 30 March 1887, the Lizzie, Woodford’s regular means of transport, arrived at Roviana to take him to Aola on the northern coast of Guadalcanal where he was to remain for six months. He had visited the village before on his way south after his first expedition to the islands. Aola was recommended as a safe location by Lars Nielsen who had a small trading station on Gera (Mbara) Island just off the coast and within easy contact of the village. The location was logistically sound. Trading boats passed Aola on the way to Oscar Svensen’s station at Marau Sound. It was healthy, with a large river behind the village and an open, wide bay in front. It appeared to be a good base for collecting in the mountains of Guadalcanal that arose from the hinterland behind the village. From Aola, Woodford thought it would be possible to reach Mount Lammas (6,791 feet or 2,070 metres) via the Bokokimbo (Mbokokimbo) River nearby.

Figure 12. Aola village, Guadalcanal.

Source: PMB Photo 56–017. See also Woodford 1890: 92. Original photograph is PMB Photo 56–041.
Figure 13. Brodie with a dead hornbill.

Source: PMB Photo 56–024 and PMB Photo 56–126; Woodford 1890b: frontispiece and front engraving. Caption reads: ‘Boy, native of Aola, Guadalcanar, one of my best hunters, with dead hornbill’. Photograph also sent to Lord Ripon 7 September 1893.

Just before the *Lizzie* left for Sydney, Woodford wrote yet another long letter, dated 3 April 1887, to Thurston in Fiji, this time detailing the lack of regulation in the firearms trade and its disruptive effects on Solomon Islands society. These personal and confidential letters to Thurston indicate that the two men had a close relationship of trust, for the letters describe the business dealings of many resident traders. This bond did not continue with other High Commissioners and Woodford’s career as an administrator was often marked by years of conflict with officials in Suva. In this personal letter he told Thurston that the majority of British traders obeyed the laws but the major culprit breaking the regulations was a trader named Farrell sailing the schooner *Eudora* under the American flag based out of New Britain in the Protectorate of the German New Guinea Company. However, despite being warned and fined by the captain of HMS *Diamond*, J. Hawkins of the *Fairlie* also continued to supply Snider rifles to traders in Roviana in exchange for turtle shell (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/6 Letter to Thurston 3 April 1887). The campaign against the gun
trade eventually forced Hawkins out of business but he sold his stock to Peter Pratt, an even more unscrupulous dealer (Bennett 1987: 55). Another issue worrying Woodford was the casual disregard that captains of labour vessels had for dropping off returning labourers at any part of the island from which they originated. The case he spelt out for Thurston described one man who had been landed at Savo and was immediately robbed and then killed on the beach by fellow islanders. In the letter to Thurston, Woodford enclosed another letter he addressed to the Agent-General of Polynesian Immigration in Brisbane highlighting this continuing practice (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/6 Attachment to letter to J. B. Thurston dated 3 April 1887). In fact the practice was well known and little was done to stop it, so it continued until the end of the Pacific labour trade (Woodford to Salisbury 20 August 1895 CO225 49 18609).

![Figure 14. Woodford and men at Aola.](image)

Source: PMB Photo 56–010.

In Aola the old chief Ululu arranged for the sale of a disused house for which Woodford paid 20 sticks of tobacco. This price was considerably less than the profitable rent gained by Gorai in Alu. At that time 25 sticks of tobacco constituted about one pound in weight and cost two shillings (Bennett 1987: 81). As part of the arrangement the villagers in Aola built Woodford a new kitchen and he engaged the services of a local boy, Hogarè, to cook and clean for him. Hogarè was from Buka, to the north, and had worked as a plantation labourer in Fiji but was now working for one of the traders so was presumably living on the nearby island occupied by Nielsen. Nielsen was also trading in partnership
with John Champion Macdonald from Fauro in the Shortland Islands. Woodford was sensibly using his growing network of associates and friends in facilitating his life in the islands. It appears that other people in Aola who worked either for Nielsen or for Macdonald also spoke some Fijian so they too would have been returned workers from the plantations there. Hogarè and his family may have been willing to remain at Aola rather than return home to Buka, that had now become part of the German territories.

Figure 15. Aola ‘My daily afternoon visitors bringing birds, insects, etc’.


Woodford felt perfectly safe in the Aola community although he reported that in the first weeks after his arrival the men from Aola and Ruavatu nearby had killed a number of bush men in recent raids inland. His photographs from that period show him completely at ease among the people. By mixing with the young men and talking regularly with the elders he would have come to be accepted by the women who would have been nervous with a white man living near them. They would certainly have found his habits and work amusing for he wrote: ‘They were of course inquisitive as to my occupation and the things that were being brought to me created great merriment. I shewed them the skinned parrot and the snakes in spirits and explained to them what they were for, one boy then said he had been in the Museum in Sydney and understood me’. Later he saw, and the men captured, a large crocodile that had been seen swimming past. This he measured and photographed. He would later skin it as well. On April 14 he wrote: ‘Bye & bye however Yoni arrived with a large Hornbill that
he had shot with bow and arrow and another boy known as Brodie had a very pretty new flycatcher with black breast spotted with white. This Brodie is a very bright intelligent boy and I took his photo with his bow and arrows and Hornbill in the foreground’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/6 Diary 13 April 1887). Woodford subsequently used this image in the frontispiece of his book (Woodford 1890b) and an engraving of the image was used on the leather binding of all three editions. It is a striking portrait and was obviously one of his favourite images.

Attempts to climb Mount Lammas

From Aola, Woodford planned three inland trips hoping to climb Mount Lammas, located on the Weather Coast side of Guadalcanal. The mountain was named by Lt John Shortland in 1788 in honour of the ‘Loaf Mass’, the harvest festival celebrated on the first day of August, when he passed through the islands on the Alexander returning to England from Botany Bay. Woodford’s plan to access the mountain via the Mbokokimbo River on the northern side was ambitious, perhaps too ambitious as it turned out. To gain access to the river he needed support and approval from the Ruavatu people, further along the coast. Fortunately they were allies of the Aola people. Woodford took his camera with him and photographed the mouth of the river near Ruavatu and described the vegetation as ‘most luxuriant, and composed of large ficus and other large forest trees with occasional clumps of sago and areca palms, but few coco-nuts’. Woodford’s mission, explained to other inland people by his two guides, was: ‘I was buying butterflies, birds, snakes and stone-axes and measuring the water’ (Woodford 1888a: 362). It would have been totally incomprehensible to bush peoples that a white man was buying the uneatable animals, useless stone axes now superseded by valuable iron tomahawks, and measuring water. At Reko village along the Mbokokimbo River the guides refused to travel further and so the party was forced to return to the coast. This was his first unsuccessful attempt.

The second trip inland was equally unsuccessful. Woodford and his party went inland along the Kobua River behind Aola where they came upon a group of men returning from a raid on villages along the exploration path. Woodford wrote: ‘It is these constant raids of the coast natives upon the bushmen and retaliatory ones on the part of the bushmen upon the coast natives that render it difficult and dangerous to penetrate any distance into the interior’. He convinced a bushman, Turapara, to take him inland as far as Mount Vatupusau. At 4,360 feet (1,329 metres) Vatupusau was lower than Lammas but still visible from the coast. For this trip Woodford took along his gun, ammunition and revolver as well as a prismatic compass, aneroid, standard and boiling thermometers, a blanket,
three boxes of sardines, one dozen biscuits, a tea billy, 200 sticks of tobacco, a dozen pipes, three knives, matches, and ‘nothing else’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/7 Diary 19 July 1887). To stop his boots from flooding when crossing streams he cut open the heel and back seams and tied the legs with laces and added a strap that buckled over the instep. With such a complicated arrangement he had to take his wash with his boots on, as they took so long to put on and off. After arriving at the lower slopes of Vatupusau and overnighting in Natalava village on the Nggurambusu River—marked as the Kombua River (Woodford 1888a)—his guides sensibly demanded that he return to the coast. On the way he made some collections and noted that the inland heights of Guadalcanal may be good for planting tea.

Figure 16. Trader and house. Possibly Lars Nielsen at Gavutu.

Source: PMB Photo 56–054.

The third and final trip from the northern coast left on 20 August 1887 when Woodford, a larger party of 11 men including one man, Beta, from the slopes of Vatupusau, made yet another attempt to climb the interior mountains. They reached Beta’s village, Valemenga, located at 800 feet and remained there the night. Woodford’s gift to the community was one axe, one knife, some clay pipes, matches and the necessary tobacco. These were all items difficult for bush people to obtain. There were again sensible reasons for not climbing the mountains for ‘they were afraid of the devil and of bushmen’, and ‘[n]o one had ever been there, there was no road’ (Woodford 1888a: 367). In local communities people were afraid of spirits. Attacks by bush men could occur at any time. In truth it was probable that no one had ever been there before, for there was
no reason to go, and there were most definitely no roads, tracks or paths. The journey itself opened up a new world to the explorer. ‘Every bend of the stream disclosed some fresh beauty, and I regretted that I had no one with me whose pen could better describe the lovely nature of the scenery through which I was passing’ (Woodford 1888a: 368). His long attachment to the Solomon Islands was beginning to take root. However, the brutal nature of intertribal fighting was evident when Woodford learnt that only four days later the village of Valemenga was attacked and of the 40 people who entertained him earlier, only 11 survived. Woodford would have to wait until much later before he could gain access to the inhospitable mountains of Guadalcanal.

While stationed at Aola, Woodford made a visit to Nggela, presumably on the boat owned by Lars Nielsen who claimed ownership of the island of Gavutu near Tulagi. Nielsen later registered three claims to the islands of Gavutu, Tanambogo and Gaomi off Tulagi for which he paid local Nggela chiefs £20 in trade goods (Woodford to Thurston 27 July 1896, WPHC 4/IV 288/1896). Nielsen and Woodford had by now become friends and Nielsen was by all accounts a sensible and well-liked man. Rev Turnbull from the Melanesian Mission lived in a split bamboo house and church of similar construction at the nearby village of Honggo on the Mboli Passsage and the Melanesian Mission had established yet another mission at Gaeta village on the eastern coast of Nggela. It was here that Woodford heard the story of the HMS Sandfly massacre on Mandoliana Island and the assistance given by Bishop Selwyn in the arrest of the killers by the Royal Navy (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/2 Diary 12–13 June 1887).

Results of the first and second expeditions

Just before he left to return to England, Woodford received mail from home and he wrote in his diary: ‘My collections sent from Alu safely received and making a splash. What will they say to the present one!’. He also wrote

My menagerie [at Aola] is increasing and at present they are all doing well. The Hornbill is most voracious and so is the pigeon. The Parrot not so savage. The three cuscus who sleep all day make up for it at night and the crocodile has slept all the time. After dinner skinned a small green parrot and read the newspapers brought by the ‘Lizzie’ (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/7 Diary 5 and 9 August 1887).

However, before leaving he had to deal with a major medical incident at Nielsen’s trading station on Mbara when one of the workers, Pewa, a man from Lord Howe (Ontong Java), injured himself while dynamite fishing off the reef. He held the dynamite in his left hand and a fire stick in the right and failed to release the lit dynamite stick in time. When the dynamite exploded it shattered
his right hand, which was left hanging from the wrist. The right cheek was laid open, the jawbone broken in two places, the right eye damaged and a hole about the size of a half crown piece (32 mm) was blown in the left breast. The skin around the throat and breast was also torn. Woodford cleaned and dressed the wounds and visited the man over the next few days. After his return from his third expedition to the mountains he again travelled to the offshore island to treat the wound. Pewa continued to live on despite his injuries but on 23 August Woodford wrote in his diary that the sight of the darkening wounds was one of the most sickening things he had ever seen. Pewa did not die until 26 August, ten days after the accident (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/7 Diary 16–26 August 1887). It was probably with relief that Woodford spent the next few days soldering up his large metal collection trunk that contained the bird skins, the insect collections and his documentation. Packing and making up boxes took up most of the next few weeks for the Lizzie did not arrive at Aola until 15 September. On 18 September he heard that William Macdonald, brother of his host at Fauro, John Champion Macdonald, had killed himself while dynamite fishing.

After saying goodbye to his friends at Aola, Woodford left for Sydney on 25 September 1887 and arrived there on 23 October. After a fortnight in the city he left quickly for England on the SS Austral and arrived in Plymouth on 22 December 1887. From the first and second expeditions he amassed 17,000 specimens that included three new genera, eight new species of mammals, 15 new species of birds, six new species of reptiles, and 100 new species of Lepidoptera. His collecting expeditions had been remarkable successes (Tennant 1999: 425, Lever 1974). On 4 April 1888 Woodford, now a newly returned naturalist and explorer, gave a public lecture in the Town Hall at his home of Gravesend and called it A Naturalist’s Exploration in the Solomon Islands. The Mayor, supported by Henry Pack Woodford and other dignitaries, opened the evening and the press reported that the hall was packed with local people. Woodford’s lecture was very comprehensive and reported in considerable detail by the Gravesend Journal, Dartford Observer and County Intelligencer of 7 April 1888 (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/7/1). Woodford was a young man of the town who had done exciting things in a faraway, rather obscure part of the Empire. This lecture summarised his travels and experiences during the trips made in 1886 and 1887 and Woodford was able to advertise his collecting successes with displays of some of the 17,000 specimens brought back to England. The lecture was illustrated by ‘views from negatives taken by Mr Woodford during his explorations, several of the places having never previously been visited by a white man’, and a ‘collection of native weapons, stone axes, ornaments, together with several cases containing remarkably fine specimens of butterflies and birds also added to the interest of the lecture’. It was this lecture and the report in the Gravesend newspaper that attracted the attention of his former school friend,
Arthur Pattison, then living in the Drakensburg Mountains of South Africa. He was obviously a subscriber to the local town papers (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/7/1).

The scientific collections, mostly butterflies, moths, bats and mammals made by Woodford, would occupy the time of the curators at the British Museum of Natural History for several years. O’Brien (2011: 128–129) rather critically assessed Woodford’s collecting style as ‘running and grabbing’ but this neglects the scale and size of his natural history collection—and this, not artefact collecting, was his primary objective—the care and documentation that went into making the collection, the physical dangers faced in the field as a lone, self-funded operator, and the irregular, unpredictable nature of travel arrangements in the islands. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History contains the results of collecting in six papers published in 1887 and five in 1888 (Thomas 1887a, 1887b, 1888a and 1888b; Butler 1887a, 1887b, 1887c, 1887d, 18887e; Godman and Salvin 1888a and 1888b; Gahan 1888). Another paper published by Hamilton H. Druce (Druce 1890) may be assumed to be the description of an item given or sold to Herbert Druce, a collector who also wrote a paper on the large moths that Woodford collected at Suva (Druce 1888a). Woodford’s collection was all the more important in that few substantial collections of natural history had been made in the Solomon Islands by that time. It was of considerable use to scientists back in London. William Hemsley from the Kew Herbarium later wrote that he used Guppy’s book The Solomon Islands and their Natives (1887b), and Woodford’s article published in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society (1890c) to identify the many specimens of plants later donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens (Hemsley 1891: 502).

In 1887, the Transactions of the Zoological Society of London published details of the collection of butterflies made by Gervase Mathew, a Staff Paymaster on board the HMS Espiègle that had been part of Royal Navy patrols between 1882 and 1883. The fact that the Mathew collection was made in the Shortland Islands also served to make Woodford’s well-documented collections valuable. It was not until 1890 that the Transactions of the Zoological Society published details of Henry Guppy’s collections of reptiles and frogs made between 1883 and 1884, for although Guppy had given his collections from San Cristobal (Makira), Santa Ana, Ugi (Uki ni Masi) and the Shortland Islands to the British Museum in 1883, they had not been reported on until Woodford’s collections had been received (Boulenger 1890a and 1890b). The results of Woodford’s collections were presented in three papers of the Proceedings of the Zoological Society in 1887, seven in 1888, and one in 1890 (Thomas 1887a, 1887b, 1888a and 1888b; Ogilvie-Grant 1887 and 1888; Boulenger 1887, 1888 and 1890; Salvin 1888; Sharpe 1888; Woodford 1888b; Druce 1888a and 1888b). The collections were
obviously considered important by natural history scientists in London at the
time although Tennant (1999) considers Woodford a ‘forgotten Solomon Islands
naturalist’.

Other collectors and agencies were becoming interested in Solomon Islands
natural history during this important phase. Much of this interest was stimulated
by Woodford’s collecting. The *Entomologist’s Monthly Magazine* published a
description of some of the new butterflies collected in the Solomon Islands by
Woodford (Grose Smith 1888–1889) and the *Records of the Australian Museum,*
Sydney contain a description of a small zoological collection from Howla Island
(also called Howlah) obtained by purchase from a collector then resident in
the Shortland Islands group (Ramsay and Ogilby 1890). Howlah is the local
pronunciation of Aola and was used by traders to refer to the wider Aola district
on Guadalcanal. Howla or Aola Island was also known as Mbara Island. The
name of the collector is not given in the published records but archival papers
show that it was purchased from Mrs Macdonald on 16 July 1890 for 6 pounds
and 5 shillings, the money collected on her behalf by Robert Cable, formerly
master of the schooner *Lizzie*. John Champion Macdonald, his wife Melinda
and family were then resident at Siniasoro Bay on Fauro. Woodford had been a
guest living in a house on the beach near their newly developed plantation and
trading station. Melinda Macdonald was obviously a keen amateur collector
who may have been encouraged by Woodford during his stay. The Macdonalds
had been traders at Santa Ana and at Aola before they established the Fauro
plantation. In 1890 Melinda Macdonald and her daughter had to seek safety at
Aola during trouble at Fauro. It would have been possible to make a small natural
history collection at Aola as Woodford had done the groundwork there and
local people would have been willing to assist in collecting. Melinda Macdonald
had also been a passenger on the *Lizzie* when it was struck by a cyclone off San
Cristobal (Makira) in November 1888 on its way back to the Solomon Islands
from Sydney. The ship was badly damaged during the storm but managed to
reach Guadalcanal. It was subsequently condemned and allowed to sink off
Howlah (Mbara) Island on 1 December 1888 (*Te Aroha News* VI (334) 16 January
1889: 6; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 3 January 1889: 8).

By 1890 Woodford had established a creditable reputation in London as an
explorer, photographer and scientist during his expeditions to Fiji, the Gilbert
Islands and now the Solomon Islands. He had also established a useful network
of contacts both among the rather rough and ready trading community in the
Solomon Islands as well as among the urbane scientific elite of London. On 26
March, Woodford gave a paper to the evening meeting of the Royal Geographical
Society in London on the same topic, *A Naturalist’s Exploration in the Solomon
Islands*, but more detailed and better suited to his more academic and
distinguished audience (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/7/2). In the paper
he outlined his collecting experiences and successes but gave more emphasis to social, economic and cultural issues in the Solomon Islands at that time. The paper describing the first and second expeditions was subsequently published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* (Woodford 1888a). This was the first serious study of the Solomon Islands that Woodford was to publish in his long working career. At the end of his lecture and published paper he presented some general, and for the time fairly accurate, ethnographic notes under the title *The Natives and their Customs*, in which he wrote of the problem caused by the unregulated trade in firearms and his particular dislike of head hunting and cannibalism (Woodford 1888a: 371). Woodford also expressed his dismay at the use of ‘Commodore Justice’ and told his audience that the people simply fade into the bush at the sight of the men-of-war and that shelling the villages caused little if any inconvenience to coastal people who simply rebuilt their houses and replanted their trees.

Woodford was by now an accomplished photographer and would have had shared a common interest in photography with Thurston in Fiji. Much later, when Woodford was Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands and based in Tulagi, he published the first of two *Handbooks of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate* (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/5) in which he had the opportunity to present details of the fauna and flora of the islands in condensed form. He wrote that the only large mammals in the islands were the native pig and the wild dog. The wild dogs in the mountains of Guadalcanal, he said, were known to hunt in packs and were capable of running down and killing a man. Later Woodford and Svensen on their successful climb to Mount Popomanaseu in 1898 would come upon evidence of these dogs in the high ranges. Guadalcanal also had large bush rats that were ‘as large as rabbits’. Domestic rats, commonly carried across the world in ships, were found around trading stations where cargo was stored. The common cuscus occurred on most islands with the exception of Makira and the southern Santa Cruz group. There were many species of bats peculiar to the islands. Whales and porpoises were common. Woodford noted the ‘teeth of the latter [porpoises] are highly prized as currency by the natives. At certain seasons of the year the natives of parts of Malaita organize hunting parties, and drive the porpoises into shallow water, where they smother themselves in the mud. As many as four hundred have been known to have been taken at a single drive’ (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911: 28). Dugongs were also plentiful in the waters around the islands.

Although there were a great many birds and ‘some of them are of great beauty’, the Bird of Paradise, common to Papua and New Guinea, did not exist in the Solomons. Mostly the birds consisted of cockatoos, parrots, loriheets, pigmy parrots and kingfishers. There were also many ducks, eagles, ospreys, hawks
and buzzards and hornbills, but the most common bird was the large fruit-eating pigeon. In some cases many thousands of these exist on small islands off the coast. On Savo, off Guadalcanal, the most interesting bird was the Megapode. This relative of the brush turkey was about the size of a large pigeon and laid an egg the size of a duck’s egg that was buried in a mound and left to hatch in the warm volcanic sand in laying yards apportioned to particular owners who had rights to collect the eggs (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911: 28–29). There were many reptiles. Crocodiles were found especially along the coast of Guadalcanal and many large monitor lizards existed in the islands. There were also many smaller lizards and geckos. There were numerous snakes and frogs and although sea turtles, both green turtles and hawksbill turtles were common, there were no land turtles. Commercially the hawksbill turtle was important for its shell—it was collected during head hunting raids—but the green turtle was used for food. The large leather-backed turtle was only rarely seen in the waters around the Nggela islands. Woodford was very keen on insects and his collection of Lepidoptera was very comprehensive and he noted his success in collecting the large bird-winged butterflies, *Ornithoptera victoriae* and *Ornithoptera D’Urvillieana* in the Handbook, during his first and second expeditions (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911: 30–31).

The first male holotype of the large birdwing butterfly, *O. victoriae*, had been collected at Sinalanggu on Malaita in 1886. This was subsequently named *Aethoptera victoriae reginae* (Salvin 1888) (syn. *A. victoriae* [Salvin and Godman 1887] & *A. buinensis* [Grose Smith 1887]). *Aethoptera* is a sub-genus of *Ornithoptera*. This species of large birdwing butterfly, obviously named after Queen Victoria, is restricted to the Solomon Islands. The *Ornithoptera D’Urvillieana*, now known as *Ornithoptera priamus urvillianus*, was first described by Félix Guérin-Ménéville in 1838, although the specimen collected by Woodford carries the synonym *O. durvilliana* (Woodford 1888b). The butterfly is named after its first collector, Jules Sébastien César Dumont D’Urville, the French explorer, botanist and cartographer who found the wreckage of la Pérouse’s ship at Vanikoro (see www.nagypal.net/images/zzprialmu.htm#urvillianus). Much of this material on butterflies has been published in the authorised papers of the British Museum of Natural History and the Zoological Society of London (see Godman and Salvin 1888a and 1888b; Druce 1888a and 1888b and Druce 1890) and has been recently described by Tennant (1997 and 1999). Over the years many papers relating to the collection and identification of butterflies and insects from the Pacific and the Solomon Islands in particular were sent to Woodford by correspondents in various museums and botanic gardens across the world (see Woodford papers PMB 1381/021, 1381/028 and 1381/031s).
Photographing the Solomon Islanders

Victorian colonial photography, from travel images and landscapes to natural history and ethnography, was broadly about geography and difference (Ryan 1997: 24). In 1889 Charles Woodford published a summary of the first and second expeditions—with four photographs—in a paper published in the May-October edition of *Popular Science Monthly* (Woodford 1889). The rather grainy sketches taken from original photographs were those of the Roviana man wearing a plaited coconut-leaf sun-shade (*toropae*) with a sacred image (*beku*) of a dead ancestor or chief that was considered to be the ‘seat’ of the ancestor (Wright 2005: 221), a head hunting canoe (*tomoko*) and canoe house (*paele*) also at Roviana, sago palms and trees on the Mbokokimbo River on Guadalcanal and a photograph of the Aola villagers, possibly with the chief, Ululu, in the background behind a dead crocodile (see also Amherst and Thomson 1901, Vol. 2: 372). This was a good promotional opportunity where a young collector of promise could display the success of his work. The same photographs, with two others—a clump of coconuts at the Aola River and a canoe house with a large group of villagers—had previously been published in February 1889 as a single page montage in the *Illustrated London News* (Anon 1889b: 246–247).

Missing from the family albums (Woodford papers PMB Photo 56) are the original images of the *Illustrated London News* sketches, except for a copy of ‘Sacred image at the village of Oneavesi, Rubiana Lagoon’ (Woodford 1890b: 150) and ‘Sago palms on the Bokokimbo River’ (Woodford 1890b: 128). The original of the famous photograph, ‘Head hunting canoe and canoe-house. Village of Sisieta, Rubiana Lagoon’ (see Woodford 1890b: 159) was modified for publication in the montage with the removal of the large coconut palm in front of the *paele* and *tomoko*. The process of retouching or removing extraneous material from images was a common practice done for publication and in some cases the entire image was retouched and enhanced (see Ryan 1997: 220 for an excellent example of this form of visualisation). This image is also missing from the family albums, although a copy exists in the British Museum photographic archives. Another image of Gemu standing in front of a *tomoko* at Sisieta held in the British Museum has been found in a series of framed photographs (A ANUA 481/g). Once again in these articles, Solomon Islanders were depicted as inveterate head hunters and cannibals, although Woodford’s moral justification for this was the people’s exasperation at ‘the wanton outrages of European kidnappers and the licentious crews of whaling-vessels accustomed to visit this region’. In Victorian eyes these photographs and short articles enabled the reader not only to familiarise themselves with foreign regions but also to symbolically travel through, explore and even possess, those alien spaces without leaving the comforts of the metropole (Ryan 1997: 214). These articles in the popular, scientific, human interest magazines then much in vogue among
late-Victorian society would have helped to make Woodford’s name as a young explorer. Nevertheless, breaching the gap between gifted amateur and well-known professional was a difficult step.

Figure 17. *The Illustrated London News*, 23 February 1889.

Figure 18. Old man wearing plaited sun shade (*toropae*) with *beku* (chief’s grave marker) at Honiavasa.


In addition to the itemised field equipment from the Royal Geographical Society, Woodford had to transport his own dry plates for photography along with stock of developing solution, which included pyrogallic acid, methyl-alcohol, and glycerine, that had to be mixed together. The pyrogallic acid could also be mixed with citric acid and water if the other materials were not available, but the resulting solution was inferior in quality. A second developing solution that was commercially available used potassium bromide, distilled water and ammonia. The advertisement by B. J. Edwards and Co of London states: ‘The above [solutions] will keep good, if well corked, for months’ (Woodford papers PMB 1381/022 Diary 20 October 1885–8 April 1886). In a good environment, with access to clean water, no humidity and no insect problems and stored in an airy cool room perhaps the advertisements may have been correct, but
in the Solomon Islands, where travel was difficult and dangerous, and the climate continuously wet, hot and humid, the problems associated with taking photographs were enormous.

Figure 19. Sago palms on Mbokokimbo River, Guadalcanal.

Source: PMB Photo 56–020; Woodford 1890b:128; see also Popular Science Monthly 1889: 481 fig 3.

The Woodford descendants in Australia have two cameras owned by Charles Morris Woodford during his time in the Solomon Islands. The oldest is a No. 4 Folding Kodak Box Camera, c.1890, with a Bausch and Lomb Optical Co shutter, dated 6 January 1891. The Bausch and Lomb shutter was considered one of the finest lenses of its time and the camera could use either 4 inch or 5 inch glass plates. It could be updated to take rollfilm that produced 48 exposures. At that time, the camera could be fitted with an Eastman-Walker roll holder that used gelatin paper dry plates but as the roll film had a tendency to produce grainy images it is likely that Woodford used glass plates and developed his photographs himself. It is possible that this camera was the one used by Woodford in some of his early expeditions but was later modified. As the camera was expensive for its time (US$50 in 1890 or US$1,250 in current values) modifying it was a rational economic option. The second camera is a No. 3 Folding Pocket Kodak Model
F. The Folding Pocket camera was produced with a number of modifications between 1900 and 1914. The camera had a flat rectangular front door and a covered lens board concealing the rotary shutter. The camera used Kodak No. 118 rollfilm and the exposure format was 3 1/4 inch by 4 1/4 inch. It was one of the most popular and most successful cameras made by Eastman Kodak and its popularity made the firm one of the most prominent camera makers in the world. It too was relatively expensive for its day. In a deluxe version in 1914 it cost US$75 (US$1,250 in current values) and in a standard version it cost US$68 (US$1,150 in current values). It is also possible that Woodford had a much earlier camera as well as these but the quality of the extant cameras does indicate that he was a keen photographer who purchased good equipment.

In the late-19th century, natural history and ethnography were part of an intellectual continuum. Woodford began his career in the Solomon Islands as a natural history collector before becoming a colonial administrator. William MacGregor, formerly a medical doctor, became both Receiver General and Chief Medical Officer for Fiji, then Administrator of British New Guinea. Rev George Brown of the Methodist Mission was formerly an ornithologist in Samoa, and Alfred Cort Haddon, who became the most important ethnologist of his time, was a Professor of Zoology. These men also made substantial collections of photographs and artefacts. MacGregor's artefact collection formed the basis for the Papuan collection at the Queensland Museum, although much has been repatriated to the National Museum in Port Moresby (Quinnell 2000: 81–102). George Brown's extensive collection of 1,287 albumen photographs is held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney (PXA 435). In addition to photography, Brown made an extensive collection of 3,000 objects that were, at first, located in Brown's home town in north England but then sold to the Osaka Museum of Ethnology (Gardner 2006: 150–154; Reeson 2013). The Haddon archive and collection of Torres Strait material culture at the University of Cambridge is the foremost collection in the world (Davis 2004; Herle and Rouse 1998). The underlying aim of photography and collecting, both natural history and cultural history, was the purposeful determination to collect ‘before it has become too late’ (Quinnell 2000: 81–83).

Photography had been used extensively by Alfred Cort Haddon during his first expedition to the Torres Strait in 1888 (Philp 2004: 90). His primary purpose for this trip was to record the fauna, structure and the growth of coral reefs in the region. He was drawn to ethnology because of the way in which he felt Torres Strait Islanders were perceived by Europeans living on Thursday Island and by his interest in salvage ethnology: the documenting, recording, collecting and photographing the cultural knowledge of the people before the past disappeared (Philp 2004: 91). Salvage ethnology—now subject of much obloquy—was vogue in the late Victorian period, and photographing native
communities and collecting artefacts both had important roles to play in this methodology (O’Hanlon 2000: 1). Salvage ethnology was predicated on the view that living conditions among indigenous peoples were unsustainable and while their cultures were doomed, it was the duty of European scientists to understand this as part of human evolution. This disappearance was a ‘vexing moral issue’ (Bell 2009: 151). The images became an aide-mémoire for Haddon’s research when he returned to his post in Dublin and he used them as a form of exchange between colleagues. Photographs of native peoples and the display of their artefacts acted as a ‘kind of moral if exotic tourism brought to European audiences through photographs and objects for public consumption’ (Philp 2004: 99). Middle class Victorian society was eager for education and improvement, and moral uplift, and the rise of Christian humanism with the rise of the Aboriginal Protection Society and the Anti-Slavery Society that highlighted concern with the relationship between the so-called ‘Uncivilised Tribes’, especially in the British colonies, and the colonisers. The photographic construction of the Empire was undertaken on a number of levels: exploration, survey, art, witness to change, progress, acceptance of Christianity, political domination as well as for personal means (Ryan 1997: 224).

In 1898 Haddon returned to the Torres Strait—this time with six fellow academics, William McDougall, William Halse Rivers Rivers, Charles Seligman, Sidney Ray and Charles Myers, and junior assistant and photographer Anthony Wilkin—members of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits (Haddon 1901/03–1935; Herle and Rouse 1998). This expedition was instrumental in many ways. It was the first multi-disciplinary field expedition to Melanesia by British ethnologists and the first ethnographic motion picture, shot in five sequences on Murray Islands between 1–6 September 1898. It records a short sequence in the Malo-Bomai dance, secular dances and fire-making (National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra Film number 8879; Lawrence 2010b). Some still frames of this dance were also included in the Reports of the Expedition (Haddon 1908 Volume 6: Plates 25–27, 29–30). The Cambridge Museum holds over 2,000 objects from the Torres Strait region.

At the same time, photography was used in Australia as an exercise in attracting settlers and securing ownership of the vast alien continent. Between 1886 and 1888 a collection of engravings and photographs were published by Andrew Garran in subscription format under the title, *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. This also played a role in developing a sense of nationalism in late-19th century (Garran 1886-1888; Hughes-d’Aeth 2001). John William Lindt, one of the most important figures in early colonial photography, published a series of illustrations titled *Picturesque New Guinea* that was part of a group of photographic studies of Pacific island communities that supported Australian sub-colonial expansionism in the Pacific (Lindt 1887). His photographs were a
means of opening up landscapes where ‘even in savage New Guinea the blessed light of the word of God is gradually dispelling the darkness of barbarism and cannibalism’ (Lindt 1887: 30; Ryan 1997: 72). The use of the term ‘picturesque’ in the titles gives some indication of the style, and orientation, of these publications but underlying the subtlety of the term was the message that through photography it was possible to open up these alien landscapes and their inhabitants to colonial improvement and the order of civilisation.

The political and social power of the image was beginning to be recognised early in the life of ethnographic photography. Following his period as Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Everard im Thurn was very influential in anthropological circles in England and published an important paper on the anthropological use of the camera in 1893 (im Thurn 1893: 184–203). His paper on the anthropological uses of the camera contains a great deal about im Thurn and his approach to colonial questions but very little on the actual uses of a camera to ethnology apart from his philosophy that imagery should be naturalistic not posed or stylised (im Thurn 1893; Ryan 1997: 181; Dalziell 2007: 97–116). Certainly im Thurn disapproved of the use of static anthropological studio photography and promoted realistic, naturalistic images shot on location. He acknowledged a debit to ‘that useful little book, “Hints to Travellers”, published by the Royal Geographical Society’ and wrote of his own personal hints on the need for portability of camera equipment and his recommendations on the best lens to use. He also had comments about the problem of excessive light in the tropics that made changing glass plates a difficulty. He recommended that the photographer use a smaller still camera using quarter plates rather than the rollfilms then available (im Thurn 1893: 200–203).

To his credit, im Thurn was one of the first to actually describe and recommend photographic material to travellers and ethnologists. For his earlier work in British Guiana (Guyana) he used both a smaller hand-held camera for immediate photographs and a larger fixed view camera. He wrote that the small hand cameras of that time ‘are an abomination and are really much more difficult to work with [for] satisfactory results than are fixed cameras’ (im Thurn 1893: 201). The view camera of the period consisted of a front standard that held the lens plate, the shutter and the lens joined to a back standard by means of a bellows, and a flexible, accordion-pleated box that had the ability to accommodate the movement of the two standards. The rear standard held the film plate. This rear standard was a frame that held a ground glass used for focussing and composing the image before exposure. The whole apparatus could be collapsed for transportation but required the solid support of a fixed base. Quarter plate stand cameras were still in use in 1914 but required considerable expertise, especially in the isolated tropics (Bell 2009: 155). Im Thurn recommended the
use of tele-photographic, concentric lenses, and although film substitutes based on xylonite (celluloid) were becoming available, he preferred the use of the heavy glass-plate mainly because the lighter films of that time did not keep their condition in tropical regions. His recommendation was: ‘On the whole it seems best at present to take a certain number of good glass plates for the special work’ (im Thurn 1893: 201). It was then necessary to have a dark room or darkened tent and a changing bag to keep the plates after exposure. Dry developing chemicals, such as amidol, a colourless crystalline compound, were also available. But in addition to this cumbersome equipment and clean water and chemicals, it was essential to have good ventilation to counter the effects of heat, damp and insects. All these discussions were current when Woodford commenced his field expeditions in the Solomon Islands.

Whether posed or naturalistic, photography as a field research tool was also a technology that allowed for objectivity combined with commonly held evolutionist values. ‘Native’ or ‘primitive’ peoples were photographed in various performances, actions, dances or rituals to illustrate the hierarchy of human evolution. The positivist assumption was that if culture was something that could be seen to be happening it would be embedded in observable gestures, ceremonies and artefacts that could be recorded. Early ethnologists and scientists sought out subjects that followed a taxonomic classification inherited from the natural sciences. Images of physical types and facial structures of local people were keenly sought and social customs, rituals and performances were important subjects that were recorded either as they happened or were ordered to be performed for the photographer’s benefit. The other major subject was material culture of all types such as clothing, body decoration, house and building styles, weaponry and means of transport. These photographs could then act as a ‘transparent method of visual note-taking’ (Young 1998: 4). The idea that photographs could form neutral, transparent and objective data—a documentary mode of interpretation—ignored the social role of the subject and the inherent power of the ethnocentrism of the photographer (Ruby 1996; Quanchi 2007: 11). What the camera sees depends on who is using it. Photographs need to be examined for forensic evidence of the history behind the image, its importance to local people, how, when and where the image was made—a reflective mode of interpretation (Eves 2006).

Photographs recorded visual facts for later use in lectures, publications and magazine articles. Photography was seen to be able to deliver pure facts as part of broad scientific knowledge. The Royal Geographic Society, positioned at the nexus of science, journalism and colonial officialdom, was an important venue for the display of photographs and evening meetings at Burlington Gardens, the theatre of the University of London. These events were rarely held without the use of lantern slides (Ryan 1997: 22). Woodford’s presentation
at the evening meeting on 26 March 1888 was accompanied by a display of photographs and Guppy, then present, remarked that Woodford’s ‘collection of photographs was certainly the best ever obtained in the islands, and perhaps in the Western Pacific. His [Guppy’s] own experiences in photography were not very successful’ (Woodford 1888a: 375; Woodford papers PMB Photo 56 and Photo 58). These lectures and photographic shows allowed the Royal Geographic Society to consolidate itself as the national centre of geographic science and endow exploration and geography with an aura of national usefulness: the understanding and mapping of the vast resources of Empire (Ryan 1997: 31).

Photographic techniques used by Woodford varied. Wide framed images of people in groups situated in the middle distance recorded their place within their natural environment. This positioning in the optimal distance meant that the image contained both the subject and enough situational background for the observer to read the social and cultural context of the image. It was in effect a ‘methodologically driven style’ rather than a sign of reticence or modesty (Young 1998: 17). The aim was to produce a natural relationship between people, action and place. There are numerous portraits of men, women and children whom Woodford obviously knew but few are personally identified. These proximate images are personal and empathetic. Likewise Woodford took many photographs of places that he visited, where he stayed and even of the sailing ships he used. Images taken at a distance naturally present a detached point of view; in the case of landscapes, the intention is deliberate. All photographs show the entanglement of traditional societies with the traders and the encroaching colonial world. They are not primitivist images that seek to remove the western materials, clothing, hats, guns or other traded goods from view. They illustrate many cross-cultural encounters. These photographs required the active participation of the local people, but once removed from the islands the images circulated in many ways.

Haddon used his images of the Torres Strait Islanders as a sort of currency for the exchange of information between institutions (Philp 2004: 99). Images from the colonial periphery moved to become the visual information of the metropole in the same way that artefacts collected in the field became the objects of interpretation in London. Natural history objects collected in the field also became the objects of research and interpretation in the centre of colonial power. Woodford similarly exchanged his images with other writers and institutions as can be seen by the extensive use of his images in the Hakluyt Society publication of the Spanish journals of discovery (Amherst and Thomson 1901), newspaper articles and papers submitted to scholarly journals. Photographs, as evidenced in the use of images by the Popular Science Monthly and the Illustrated London News, also have social biographies. They were projected into different spaces and performed different roles, moving between the place of production and
Photographs document a fleeting moment in time that becomes a fixed event: ‘possibly no other historical form except oral histories has that fluidity’ (Edwards 1998: 109). Haddon, in the Torres Strait work of the Cambridge Expedition, used photography like scientific drawing. It became a visual representation of scientific data and a means of ‘virtual witnessing’ that could be used not just as images of things but as something to think with—active entities in the making and unmaking of histories and science (Edwards 1998: 134). For this reason it will be important later in this book to consider the fine photographs taken by Walter Henry Lucas, Island Manager for Burns, Philp & Co, within the context of Woodford’s photographic collection for they are frequently taken at the same place and time.

Touristic photographs of native types, of marginal areas and indigenous material culture became scientific through order, archiving and display. Photographs are the products of the vision and preoccupations of the photographer. This is important to acknowledge when using historic images. By examining the documentary content and context of the image we can understand the history and condition of the Solomon Islander peoples at a particular point in time (Edwards 2012: 231; Gardner and Philp 2006: 189–190; Eves 2006: 743). Images contain both an intended meaning, established by the subject matter, composition or framing at the site of taking the photograph and an unintended meaning, that is, the one discerned by the reader at the site of use or exhibition of the image (Quanchi 2007: 21, 85, basing his interpretation of historical photographs on the theory developed by Roland Barthes 1981). According to this interpretation, photography undertaken by colonial officials, missionaries and early anthropologists served as a metaphor for colonialism that is predatory, acquisitive, presumptuous and sought to objectify the subject. Certainly, photographs expose the privileged field of view of the European photographer (Poignant 1992: 65). Colonised peoples were often presented bound within their natural world and this served to distance the wild savage from the civilised coloniser (Ryan 1997: 139).

Woodford took his photographs from a position of power. Despite the warmth and friendliness of the villages where he stayed, especially in Aola, Alu and Fauro, he was a white man working in a pre-colonial society where his subjects, black men and women, were not in a position to challenge his privileged place and purpose in their communities. His sense of humanity in the diaries of the first two expeditions to the islands between 1886 and 1888 shows that he was a man of perception, humour and decency. Some images are posed but not contrived. The images taken at Aola, where he is surrounded by village men who have just returned with him from the mountains, show him as a strong Anglo-Saxon white male at the peak of his physical, intellectual and moral
development. This would not be denied by Woodford nor does it denigrate the
people of Aola. His other photography was experimental, as his notes report.
There are landscapes, vertical as well as horizontally framed images, portraits,
some posed groups of people and a few images of Woodford relaxing or in the
company of young men. There are some dramatic, powerful images. All images
are now historically important to the Solomon Islander people. They are socially
constructed artefacts that tell us not only about Solomon Islands societies and
their contact with the West at a time of change but they also tell us much about
the society and culture of the photographer. There is a great deal of information
on the subjects of the images that can only now be discerned with better access
to sites, our greater ease and ability to communicate with people in the region
and with over a century of documented history.

Third expedition

Woodford would be very busy in London for the next five months displaying
his collections and talking to meetings of learned societies. Then on 8 June
1888 he left for Sydney on the Ormuz, a modern 6,000-ton steamship built in
Glasgow for the Orient Steam Navigation Company’s United Kingdom–Australia
run (C. B. 1889). On this trip he was not only returning as a successful natural
history collector, and by now a known face in the Solomon Islands, but he was
to meet his future wife, Florence Palmer of Bathurst, returning to Australia from
a long holiday in London. Not long after the Ormuz landed in Sydney on 23
July 1888 Woodford secured passage on the schooner Marshall S owned by G. J.
Waterhouse. The boat left for the Solomon Islands on 6 August. On 16 August,
Woodford wrote in his diary: ‘I was glad to see once more the familiar green
of the tropical bush and to hear the sound of the waves breaking on the coral
reef’ (Woodford papers PMB 129. Item 1/8 Diary 16 August 1888). Next day the
Marshall S met with other schooners, the Lizzie captained by Robert Cable, the
Emma Fisher owned by Thomas Woodhouse, and the Minnie Mack. All were
anchored off the trading station on Nusa Zonga.

There was still no effective enforcement of British law and order in the Solomon
Islands. Life remained precarious for local people. In his diary, and later in his
main book on the Solomon Islands, Woodford (1890b: 150–152) described the
torture and killing of a woman accused by Hiqava of putting illness upon him.
With the woman’s death, following her gruesome punishment and the return of
a small quantity of hidden tobacco, Hiqava was somehow miraculously cured.
Woodford also wrote that head hunting appeared to be worse than ever in the
Roviana Lagoon and despite their power and position even chiefs did not survive
head hunting raids. Paravo, a chief from Marovo Lagoon, led a head hunting
raid to the Russell Islands and the north-western tip of Guadalcanal but on
the return journey the raiders were caught by bad weather and forced to seek shelter on Murray Island (Mborokua) in the often dangerous seas between the Russell Island group and Nggatokae Island. Paravo died here and the men, short of food, ate his body and buried his head. Frank Wickham, in a calculated move to gain reciprocity and support from the local communities, sailed to Mborokua, retrieved the head and returned it to Paravo’s people (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/8 Diary 20 August 1888; Woodford 1890c: 393–394).

At Nusa Zonga, Woodford secured the services of another servant boy, Barakosa, originally from Treasury Island (Mono) part of the Shortland group (see Woodford 1890b: 101 for photo of Barakosa in forest). Barakosa was about 10 years old but had been kidnapped from his home island by four men—presumably returning indentured labourers—from the Dobeli (Ndovele) village on north Vella Lavella. They had been left stranded at Mono by a returning German labour ship. When the men fled back to Vella Lavella they took Barakosa with them. Frank Wickham called into Ndovele on a trading trip and Barakosa hid on board Wickham’s vessel. He was taken to Nusa Zonga where, presumably, he was working as a servant. Woodford wrote: ‘He wishes to go with me and I shall send him home if I get the opportunity by a man of war or otherwise. He is a bright little fellow’ (Woodford papers. PMB 1290 Item 1/8 Diary 30 August 1888). Barakosa was also pleased that Woodford could speak some of his Mono/Alu language and he in turn could speak a ‘good many words of English’.

The Spanish explorations

Instead of returning to natural history collecting, Woodford spent this third expedition plotting the voyages of Mendaña and other Spanish explorers using translations of the journals supplied by Lord Amherst (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 5/12). At the end of August the Marshall S left Woodford and Barakosa at Lars Nielsen’s station on Gavutu. Accompanied by Nielsen and his crew in the trading boat, Woodford commenced a survey of the east coast of Isabel searching for the locations of Mendaña’s settlements starting at Estrella Bay (Ghehe Bay) (Amherst and Thomson 1901, Vol. 1: end piece shows Woodford’s photograph of Estrella Bay). They surveyed about 60 miles of Isabel’s east coast and then travelled across to Guadalcanal and Savo. At Savo Woodford, Nielsen and some of his men climbed the 1,800 foot (600 metre) volcano and examined the many megapode nests. Recent research indicates that these megapode fields on the north coast of Savo were probably formed around 1560–1570 AD (Petterson et al. 2003) and that people living on the island have been forced to relocate a number of times due to volcanic activity. In his paper on his third expedition, Woodford mentions his interest in the geological formations around the crater of Savo Mountain and he apparently took photographs of the landslips of huge
blocks of stone. Some unnamed photographs in his albums show landslips and stone cliffs and they may be from Savo (Woodford papers PMB Photo 56/39, 40 & 41). He also made a sketch of Savo for Amherst and Thomson so that they could compare the island’s shape with that of Sesagar, an island off the Spanish coast (Amherst and Thomson 1901, Vol. 1: 30, sketches by Woodford and Lady William Cecil, daughter of Lord Amherst). It was Mendaña who had originally named Savo, Sesagar.

Basing their findings on oral testimony and sound geological research, scientists have recently determined that there have been three eruptions of the Savo volcano (Petterson et al. 2003). A cataclysmic eruption, called the Toghavitu, meaning either 7,000 or 1,007—being the number of deaths reported—forced the complete evacuation of Savo in the late 1500s. In 1568 Mendaña observed volcanic plumes and ash clouds coming from Savo but he also reported that the island was then well inhabited because his brigantine was visited by 16 canoes containing approximately 100 men (Guppy 1887b; Amherst and Thomson 1901, Vol. 1: 30–31, 49). This would date the first major eruption to post-1570. Another eruption occurred between 1600 and 1700 according to block-and-ash flow fan association (Patterson et al. 2000: 168). Guppy (1887b) reported that another sustained period of volcanic disturbance occurred between 1830 and 1840 (The Queenslander 26 January 1907: 7). A more recent period of mudflows following heavy rains occurred in 1953 (Petterson et al. 2000: 169). All these disturbances added to the size of the island. The long oral history of volcanic activity on the island means that the nervousness of Woodford’s guides, who declined to climb into the volcano’s crater, is now understandable. From the diaries it is not possible to determine how much information Woodford had of Savo’s history. Certainly the island, when dormant, looks innocent enough and Guppy’s reporting was largely anecdotal. No doubt, to a young adventurer, Savo looked like a good climb and he was always keen to collect endemic species from mountain regions to send back to London. Most likely the success of the climb stimulated the desire, once more, to attempt to scale Mount Lammas.

Further attempts to climb Mount Lammas

Woodford based himself at Gavutu utilising Nielsen’s house and access to boats and stores. He took Barakosa to church at Halavo on the mainland of Nggela on Sunday 23 September and remarked that the boy behaved well, ‘but was, I think, a little overawed’ by the service conducted in Gela language by local pastor Alfred Lombu (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/8 Diary 23 September 1888; Hilliard 1978: 94, 95). He also crossed back to Aola to do more natural history collecting while Nielsen and his traders gathered cargo from villagers. In Aola his main collector, Pengoa, assisted with the supply of material. By
15 October he had undertaken enough collecting. Woodford, accompanied by Lars Nielsen, who would have been well known to local people, once more set out for Mount Lammas by ascending the Mberande River from Tasimboko and then crossing the Mbalisuna River. After travelling about 30 miles inland the party ascended the hills from which they could see to Pari Island and Mount Vatupusau in the south. Woodford wrote: ‘Nielsen was, of course, described as the trader from Gavotu [Gavutu], while I was said to be the man who previously lived at Aola and ate snakes’ (Woodford 1890c: 399). Woodford later reported to the Royal Geographical Society, incorrectly in fact, that his friend Lars Nielsen and his men were killed and eaten (Woodford 1890b: 21 fn1). It was Carl Nielsen (or Nelson) the second mate on the schooner Enterprise who was killed at Lokokongo on Rendova in September 1889, not Lars Nielsen (The Sydney Morning Herald 5 November 1889: 8).

The party was aiming for Mount Lammas again, or at any rate heading for the mountainous range that contained the Lion’s Head and Mount Popomanaseu. At 7,661 feet (2,335 metres), Popomanaseu, the highest mountain on Guadalcanal, is a saddle plateau and the home of endemic and restricted high range species. It would have been an ideal place for Woodford to continue his collecting for it was the unusual animals and plants of the tropical mountains that were of interest to the specialists in the British Museum of Natural History rather than the well-known coastal species. The mountain is also of significant cultural importance to local people and his guides would have been at some risk in taking him there even if the material rewards appeared beneficial. The distance inland along the Mbalisuna River and difficulty of climbing the hinterland again thwarted plans for a successful climb. His longed for goal to ascend Mount Lammas would have to wait for a time chosen by the local people. The party returned to the coast on 19 October and then crossed back to Gavutu on Nielsen’s vessel. The time was not wasted for Woodford had undertaken a successful survey of the Guadalcanal coast from Visale to Tandai (Point Cruz) and the Lungga River region (also known as the Tuumbuto River). At Point Cruz, the site later chosen to be Honiara, Woodford wrote: ‘As to Point Cruz I cannot call it a good harbour and the bottom is uneven. We had 7 fathoms just ahead of us and 15 just astern … Still it was better than an anchorage on an open coast’. He also discovered that Aola, his previous home, had been visited by the Mendaña and although the Spaniards noted, with their usual exaggeration, that the local population was 3,000, Woodford was pleased to write: ‘It is a matter of considerable satisfaction to me to find that, upon the three occasions that the Spaniards communicated with the natives of Aola, they were enabled to do so on a friendly footing’ (Woodford 1890b: 411).
Figure 20. Senior man with shell decorations and trade tomahawk, Ulawa.

Source: PMB Photo 56–049; Lord Amherst of Hackney and Thomson 1901, Volume 2 frontispiece. Photograph also sent to Lord Ripon, 7 September 1893.

Return to Aola

At the end of his third expedition he wrote in his diary:

Reading this evening in Thackeray’s Paris Sketch Book (Page 109 Pocket edition) about the ignorance of Englishmen of French Society even after a residence in France of many years (unless for the purpose of making a book then 3 weeks are sufficient). This is very true and equally applicable to our knowledge of the natives of Fiji and other parts of the Western Pacific. It is only after years of residence among them that one finds how little one really knows (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/Diary 29 October 1888).

This was another prophetic note in the margins of his papers. On 21 November 1888 Woodford once again crossed to Aola. Here he found the old chief Ululu
in fading health and wrote in his diary: ‘He had been a good friend to me’. He stayed for one month in his old house while waiting for transport back south. It was here that he received news that the *Lizzie* had lost its main mast in a cyclone not far from the village and so he had to wait until the *Renard* arrived on 13 December to take him away via Sa’a on Malaita, then Ulawa and Santa Ana. He reached Sydney on 3 January 1889.

**Marriage**

From Sydney, Woodford had personal business to attend to before he returned to London. He married Florence Margaret Palmer, the second child of grazier John Palmer and his wife Margaret Yates Beatty, at the All Saints Cathedral, Bathurst on 2 March 1889 (NSW Marriage Certificate 1889/003725). The Palmers lived in ‘Moreauvia’, a large Victorian country house located at 135 Lagoon Road in Orton Park, south of Bathurst, designed by Benjamin Backhouse. Margaret Yates Beatty’s mother was from the Moreau family and it was from this association that the house was named (Woodford papers PMB 1381/005b). The Palmers were a prominent Bathurst family and the house, built for Palmer in 1876 on a Crown grant of 320 acres of good agricultural and grazing country, was a two-story filigree mansion with verandahs on three sides with cast iron columns, balustrade and frieze. The house, in its heyday, would have been a substantial mansion surrounded by mature gardens and trees. It was a local showpiece and a visible indication of wealth and confidence presented by the squatters of the Western Plains. Severely damaged by fire in the 1980s it is now in ruins. But when John Palmer died in 1884 he left a widow who was mother to 12 children (NSW Death Certificate 1884/006762). It would appear that following John Palmer’s death, Florence Palmer travelled to Britain with her mother in order to visit family. Subsequently, ‘Moreauvia’ was advertised for sale and sold in early 1891 ([*The Australian Town and Country Journal* 27 December 1890: 4, 3 January 1891: 4]).

Woodford had married well, but for someone who had just spent two years as an adventurer-collector-explorer, living with tribal groups and making one of the largest collections of natural history of the Solomon Islands, it is curious that he gave his profession on his marriage certificate as ‘wine merchant’ resident in ‘Sydney’ (New South Wales, Marriage Certificate, 1889/003725). The next year was to be another busy one for Woodford for he was not only a newly married man, an established natural history collector and a published author of some well-received articles, but he was also writing a book of his experiences in the Solomon Islands. Woodford and his new wife returned to London in August
1889. He had been elected to the Royal Geographical Society in 1885 and became a Fellow of the Linnaean Society of New South Wales in 1887. He was listed as a gentleman of independent means (Heath 1974a: 31).

Results of the third expedition

At the conclusion of his third expedition to the Solomon Islands, Woodford was once again invited to present a lecture to the members of the Royal Geographical Society in London. This was given at an evening meeting on 24 February 1890 (Woodford 1890c). He told the attending members that the ‘principal object in visiting the islands mentioned above [in the lecture] was for the purpose of endeavouring to identify the places visited by the Spanish expedition, under Mendaña, that discovered the Solomon Islands in the year 1568. In this I think I may say I have been entirely successful’ (Woodford 1890c: 397). It was also obvious that he found the islands beautiful. His words describing sailing though the Hathorn Sound between Kohinggo and New Georgia are pure romance:

The trees tower on either side high above the ship’s masts, overhanging and dropping their ripe fruit and blossoms into the water. Cockatoos scream defiance from the trees at the invaders of their solitudes, and startled fruit-pigeons take flight with a great clatter of wings as the unwonted appearance of the ship disturbs them from their repast among the nutmegs. Crimson lories in flocks of half a dozen fly across high in the air with ear-piercing screech on their way to a honeyed feast from the bright crimson blossoms of the coral-tree (*Erythrina* sp.), a conspicuous object among the uniform green of the surrounding forest, rivalling in brilliance of colouring the plumage of the lories themselves (Woodford 1890c: 394).

In almost the same spot, Boyle Somerville (1897: 359–360) on the survey vessel HMS *Penguin* later wrote: ‘to look down upon the lagoon from the summit of any of the hills of the large islands is to have spread before one the strangest and most picturesque scene imaginable ... The middle distance is filled with the lagoon itself, dark blue in the deeps, pale blue in the shallows, light brown over the labyrinthine reefs—a feast of colour’.

Woodford was also invited to make a short presentation to a meeting of the Zoological Society of London where he spoke about the fauna he had collected for the British Museum and displayed many of his photographs (Woodford 1890a). Another address, this one also accompanied by lantern slides and an exhibition of artefacts, was again presented to the people of Gravesend in the Town Hall, but this was a charity lecture given in aid of the Gravesend Hospital. It was comprehensively reported in the *Gravesend Journal, Dartford Observer*
and County Intelligencer and in the other local paper The Gravesend and Dartford Reporter on 15 March 1890 (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/29 Press cuttings 1886–1911). His work was highly praised and his natural history collecting the subject of much comment.

The results of the third expedition, published as a substantial paper with map by the Royal Geographical Society, appeared around the same time as his new book (Woodford 1890c). The paper details much of Woodford’s expedition in search of the Spanish discoveries and the places and names visited by Mendaña and his men. Among those in attendance at the meeting of the Society was Lord Amherst who was naturally interested in the results of the third expedition for he was preparing the Spanish manuscripts for publication by the Hakluyt Society. Amherst was a curious choice for this work. He was a wealthy collector of incunabula and rare books and a Conservative Member of Parliament, and although he had serious financial difficulties and was forced to sell most of his collection, he was an important ally in the world of status and class that bound English society together. However, he was a tardy worker. Much to the annoyance of Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society in 1893, the two volumes would take Amherst and Thomson another 11 years to produce. As Markham was also President of the Hakluyt Society his opinion was an important one. When the books were finally published much of Woodford’s work had been incorporated into the text along with many photographs by Woodford, Thurston and Walter Henry Lucas included as illustrations but with little reference to their origin. At the Society meeting, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, the then President of the Royal Geographical Society, complimented Lord Amherst for having contributed to the success of Woodford’s expedition by lending him copies of the translations of the Spanish manuscripts when in fact Woodford had used the translation of the Gallego journal previously published by Henry Guppy (1887b). Only a copy of the journal written by Gomez Catoira, the chief purser of Mendaña’s fleet, was provided by Amherst (Woodford 1890c: 401). It appears that Guppy and Woodford subsequently had a falling out over the use of these Spanish journals (O’Brien 2011: 132, quoting from Royal Geographical Society archives RGS/CB7/Guppy). The importance of the work, besides the obvious value of the Spanish translations, is that it is possible to identify many of Woodford’s photographs and compare them with those illustrations available in his archives (Woodford papers PMB Photo 56).
Henry Guppy, The Westminster Review and Littell’s Living Age

The late-Victorian era was one of intellectual and cultural vigour stimulated by new scientific and commercial discoveries. The intellectual vigour of naturalists, navigators, explorers and collectors extended the reach of British power and knowledge across the globe and the knowledge gained supported expansionist ideals. One particular quarterly publication, the Westminster Review, began in 1823 and continued to be important to the intellectual elite of the British Empire right through the late-Victorian era until it ceased in 1914. The journal was closely associated with the philosophical views of John Stuart Mill. In 1851 it was acquired by the publisher and editor John Chapman and based in his home and office at 142 Strand, London. This became known as the most radical address in Victorian London (Ashton 2006).

Chapman was to remain owner and publisher until his death in 1895 when it was acquired by his wife who continued to publish the review until its demise in 1914 (VanArsdel 1968). The Westminster Review was the pre-eminent periodical of radical opinion in British journalism in the 19th century (Turner 2000: 273). Articles in the review promoted liberalism, scientific naturalism over theology, and the extension of suffrage for working class men and women. It also supported movements for national independence in Europe and demands for reform in education and government. In a conservative era it supported theories of evolution following publication of Darwin’s On the Origin of Species in 1859 (Rosenberg 2000: 225). Thomas Huxley contributed to the Westminster Review and he first used the term ‘Darwinism’ in an 1860 issue.

Two substantial articles on the Solomon Islands were published in 1888. Both articles summarise the two volumes published by Henry Brougham Guppy in 1887 on the cultures and customs of the Solomon Islanders and the general physical features of the islands and their suitability for colonisation (Guppy 1887a and 1887b). The articles present Guppy’s opinions rather in the fashion of a condensed book. For the general public such articles saved the cost of purchase of the large expensive tomes and offered much of the information in easy-to-read sections. The fact that the books were chosen indicates that Guppy’s status as a botanist, geologist, ethnologist and author was high. It also shows that the Solomon Islands, and presumably the many articles on head hunting, were common topics in newspapers at the time. Guppy’s works were well received back in London (W. H. H. 1888 and Anon 1888). He was later awarded a gold medal by the Linnaean Society in 1917 for his botanical studies and was elected to the Royal Society in 1918. Guppy had also received instructions on collecting by Günther at the British Museum and it was through Günther that he had received £150 (£60,000 in current values) from the Royal Society to pay for
exploration into the interior of Guadalcanal (Guppy 1887b). Guppy would have encouraged Woodford to attempt the assent of the mountainous ridges of Guadalcanal to collect montane plant species because he was prevented by a serious illness, possibly malaria, from achieving that aim and so would have been particularly pleased to be Woodford’s mentor and advisor. He would later attend Woodford’s formal presentation to the Royal Geographical Society and no doubt influenced the Society in its presentation of the Gill Memorial to Woodford. Guppy was a useful contact in London.

The articles in the *Westminster Review* were called ‘The Discovery of the Solomon Islands’ and ‘The Natives of the Solomon Islands’ (Anon 1888a and 1888b). ‘The Natives of the Solomon Islands’ article also included information taken from *Ten Years in Melanesia* by Alfred Penny of the Melanesian Mission (1888) and the *Jottings during the cruise of HMS Curaçoa among the South Sea Islands in 1865* by Julius Brenchley (1873). The anonymous author of the articles wrote:

> Descriptions of newly discovered countries and their inhabitants are extremely attractive to almost every one who is not exclusively preoccupied with his own affairs, or those immediately around him. But of all the habitable parts of our little globe few now remain to be described, and still fewer to be discovered. Among those of which the public know next to nothing, and concerning which geographers and ethnologists knew but little until recently, are the Solomon Islands (Anon 1888b: 457).

The writer remarked that the considering public must thank Dr Henry Guppy for the little information then available.

These articles are significant for they were published at the same time Woodford was returning to England with substantial collections of zoological material and was writing detailed papers on his explorations. Woodford’s book, *A Naturalist Among the Head-hunters* (1890b) was just about to be published. It was an opportune time both for Woodford and for the Solomon Islands. Interest in the Solomon Islands was spreading beyond the confines of intellectual circles in London. In the United States, the Littell family of Boston commenced the publication of a general magazine containing selections from English and American magazines, journal and newspapers in 1844. It was designed for general American interest, rather like the *Popular Science Monthly* that was published in New York. Unlike the *Westminster Review*, *Littell’s Living Age* was not a magazine appealing to the intellectual or radical elite but for general readership. In May 1888, the magazine reprinted the entire article ‘The Discovery of the Solomon Islands’ taken from the *Westminster Review* (Anon 1888c). The second article on the Solomon Islanders and their culture was not reprinted. It would appear that in America there was interest in the details of the Spanish discoveries of the
islands but little interest in the ‘native’ peoples who lived there. The poaching of articles from other journals when there were no international copyright laws was standard practice, especially between popular magazines. Woodford would have his main book published by three separate publishers on three continents to avoid this problem.

Publication of The Naturalist Among the Head-hunters

Charles Woodford’s narrative of his expeditions to the Solomon Islands was published simultaneously in Australia, England and the United States in 1890. The first edition was published by Edward Petherick & Co in Melbourne, the second edition, the one commonly available from rare book dealers at present, was published in London by George Philip & Sons of 32 Fleet Street, one of the oldest publishers in Britain and a specialist in exploration maps, atlases and textbooks. An American edition published in 1890 by Longmans in New York also became available at the same time. The Petherick edition is extremely rare but two copies are held in the general collection at the National Library of Australia. Edward Petherick had been the London-based agent for the successful Australian publisher, George Robertson & Company, in the late 1880s and he and Robertson built up a solid reputation as agents for British publishers wishing to sell their books and journals to colonial audiences (Rukavina 2010). In 1887 Petherick left Robertson’s employment. Still based in London he opened his own firm trading as the Colonial Booksellers’ Agency in Paternoster Row with a capital of £800 and additional stock in lieu and loans from other publishers of more than £2,500.

The Colonial Booksellers’ Agency opened branches in Melbourne and Sydney in 1889 and in Adelaide in 1891. Petherick acted as an intermediary. He purchased stock from other publishers, shipped it to the colonies and then paid his accounts when the books sold. The problem with this was that the lack of swift money transfers from the colonies and the delays in clearance of cheques made cash flow extremely tight unless the agent had substantial capital reserves. In 1889 Petherick ambitiously started his own imprint, EA Petherick & Co, and at the same time published a substantial catalogue Petherick’s Collection of Favourite and Approved Authors for Circulation in the Colonies Only (Rukavina 2010: 111). Of course this stimulated demand for the books, but once again substantial capital was needed. Petherick’s titles of Australiana were published with distinctive covers embossed with animals: a kangaroo for Australia for example. Woodford’s book has dark green covers, with the image of Brodie and the Hornbill engraved on the front cover and used as the frontispiece with the title ‘Boy, Native of Aola, Guadalcanar, one of my best hunters, with dead Hornbill’. On the spine is a black etching of a young Roviana man with
extended ear lobes. The map in the back of the book shows all four expeditions undertaken by Woodford in the Pacific: three to the Solomon Islands and one to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

Reading in the Victorian era was central to English society and a major social and leisure activity; the possession of books and a home library was seen as a sign of respectability and social rank (Rukavina 2010: 106). There was much enthusiasm for novels that depicted the Australian experience and a keen desire to comprehend the world, but in strictly European terms. Mapping, museology, archaeology, and ethnography were all becoming democratized. The written form that most suited the urban middle classes was travel writing for ‘[i]n the case of ethnographic writing, the reader was the traveller’ (McDougall 2007: 49). In principle, Woodford had chosen a good publishing firm to produce his first book but this was also a time of economic depression in the Australian colonies. His book was retailed at the Petherick bookstore at 333 George Street Sydney for 8/6 (The Australian Town and Country Journal 12 April 1890: 46). This was expensive for the small local market. By late 1891 Edward Petherick was bankrupt. He had borrowed large sums of money from various creditors including the failed Federal Bank of Australia and when the Official Receiver realised on his assets he had debts of more than £50,000 with assets of only £20,000 (South Australian Register 5 January 1895: 6). Petherick was a widely read man, a life member of the Royal Geographical Society, a member of the Hakluyt Society and the Linnaean Society as well as the Royal Colonial Institute. He had a keen interest in the exploration of the Pacific. Woodford’s work in the Solomons would have appealed to him and they would have moved in the same social circles for a time. In 1893 Petherick wrote to a colleague interested in collecting historical accounts of exploration and explained the difficulties in marketing Woodford’s book:

I was particularly interested, as you know, in Mr Woodford’s volume on the Solomon Islands having purchased 250 [copies] and [for] the Australian market. That liberal order induced others to order and the Publishers to supply more to Australia, and the 1st ed, it was soon dispersed. And, the London publisher’s representative forgetting another condition I had made, printed a second edition without consulting me & I had a lot left unsold and he too. Result, loss to all of us.

Yours very truly, Edw A. Petherick

(Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 2/303 EA Petherick to Silver 9 December 1893).

Fortunately, the editions published by George Philip in London and by Longmans in the United States sold well.
In the late-19th century travel, exploration and knowledge of the periphery was opening up the wider world to the general public of the metropolis. Woodford was only one of many men, and a few women, combining the goals of scientific exploration with adventurous travel and making the boundaries merge between the sober and the sensational, and between the analytical and the aesthetic. However, the sensationalist exploits of men like Henry Morton Stanley in Central Africa caused deep concerns about social change and the impact of European civilisation on local peoples. In his descriptions of the natural environment, botany and biology of the Solomon Islands, Woodford also commented on the impact of traders, missionaries and labour recruiters on islander life. Publication of travels and scientific findings was also important for Woodford in establishing himself as a writer and a collector (Driver 2004). It was essential to publish quickly and to present his findings to scientific bodies back in London where the raw material of nature was imaginatively synthesised and transformed into true knowledge (Driver 2004: 82). Science was still characterised by patronage and little government support, and there were limited employment opportunities in the major cultural institutions.

**Employment in the City of London**

In the meantime, Woodford had to find an occupation that would support his new wife and the child they were expecting in early 1890. He subsequently joined a firm in the City of London trading on the London Stock Exchange (Heath 1974a: 32). Industrial capitalism reached its peak in England by the late 1870s but was followed by a short economic crisis between 1873 and 1876. The outstanding feature of the period of transition following this crisis was the growth of ‘capitalist overseas empires’ when the major industrial nations of Europe completed the seizure of the small countries and islands in places like the Pacific to use as markets for manufactured goods and as suppliers of raw materials (Eckstein 1991: 308). This expansion needed to be financed. As a result of this dynamic growth London and the south-east of England changed from a production to a financial service centre and grew to be the most important commercial region in the world. From this developed ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ that suited men whose entry into the City of London was facilitated by meritocratic selection from the best schools and universities (Cain and Hopkins 1987: 2). In this way the intelligent sons of the middle classes were able to push through the social barriers imposed by aristocratic patronage. But despite their wealth and its economic power the great mercantile families still suffered under the disapprobation ‘trade’. There remained a marked social and class distinction between those in ‘trade’ and the landed gentry. Two-thirds of the £6 billion raised on the London financial markets between 1865 and
1912 went into enterprises in foreign countries or those of the British Empire. The majority of the investors were from wealthy landed families or were from ‘service’, that being from financial backgrounds. Gradually the educated elite mixed and married into the aristocratic elite and created a new affluent moneyed class based in the home counties.

The growth of the City of London trading centre established the importance of London as a global banking centre (McGowan and Kordan 1981: 56; Cain and Hopkins 1987: 3). Free trade made the city a world market place and the spread of sterling, upon which the city depended, was possible through the use of the gold standard. But the Imperial government needed to keep expenditure low and budgets balanced. Budgetary policy was not made in the city but in the Bank of England and the Treasury but the officials in both institutions were from the same class and background as those of the city merchants. This gave the city enormous prestige and influence. Britain’s ability to control international finance increased her global influence. Through substantial loans and credit, and the very real threat of credit suspension, the City of London manipulated the economic power that fed Britain’s political power (Cain and Hopkins 1980: 486; McGowan and Kordan 1981: 58).

For Woodford, accustomed to the freedom of travel and with a keen interest in the Western Pacific, the four years he spent in the city did not appeal. By 1893 he was looking for a way to return to the Pacific as a collector, colonial official or both. While his expeditions to the Solomon Islands had earned him credit there was little financial reward in scientific collecting and authorship of one book of travel experiences. Woodford approached Sir Robert Henry Meade, the Under Secretary of State in the Colonial Office, with a request that he be considered for the post of Resident or Deputy Commissioner of the newly declared protectorate of the southern Solomon Islands (Woodford to Meade 8 August 1893 CO 225 44 13694). He reported to Meade that Sir William MacGregor in British New Guinea had said in a letter dated 19 October 1892 that Woodford was as well suited as anyone for the post. Then again MacGregor may have been merely obtuse, for that comment could be read two ways. In his letter to the Colonial Office Woodford nominated Captain Wharton of the Royal Navy, the Council of the Royal Geographical Society and Lord Amherst as referees. He enclosed copies of his papers published by the Royal Geographical Society and referred Meade to his newly written account of life in the islands. It would appear the Colonial Office requested a supporting statement from the Royal Geographical Society for the new President, Sir Clements Markham, wrote back to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to say that Woodford was ‘one of our best explorers’ (Markham to Ripon 10 August 1893 CO 225 44 13694).

Enquiries were then made about Woodford’s employment in Fiji but the note states only that ‘he held a small appointment in the Treasury which is not noticed
in the Blue Books of the time’. Woodford’s letter was subsequently copied to Thurston in Suva while the Colonial Office annotated the file with: ‘The islands were protected on the understanding that they should cost nothing & it may be long before any understanding with the chiefs can be arrived at’ (Fuller to Fairfield 10 August 1893 CO 225 44 13694). Woodford was informed personally that his application for appointment was premature but undismayed he wrote to Lord Ripon from his home ‘Rubiana’ at Epsom. This time his approach was made through a long descriptive account of the islands, their exports and imports, the climate, the natural products and his opinion of the natives (Woodford to Ripon 7 September 1893 CO 225 44 15492). To this statement, he wisely attached copies of some photographs taken during his three expeditions. These at least appear to have reached Lord Ripon for they are appended to the file. Colonial Office officials annotated the file with the remark: ‘The natives seem (generally) to wear at least what decency requires, & the children take to smoking pretty early’ (Fuller to Bramston 13 September 1893 CO 225 44 15492). Woodford’s comments on the Solomon Islander people not only reflect attitudes of the time but also reflect the personal values that were to guide his work in Tulagi. He wrote that although the Malaitans were ‘physically the finest [they] bear perhaps the worst character of any natives in the group’, and that the Solomon Islanders are ‘as a race highly intelligent, fairly industrious and certainly capable of great improvement’, for ‘they can be led but not driven’, and when ‘left to do things their own way their work is characterized by a faithfulness & thoroughness that begets admiration’. Woodford wrote honestly that he sought to improve conditions in the islands in order to get people to live peacefully among themselves and their neighbours (Woodford to Ripon 7 September 1893 CO 225 44 15492).

Woodford also made a personal approach to Thurston in Fiji requesting appointment to the Solomon Islands in an official position that Woodford would fund privately. Thurston declined the offer (Heath 1974a: 33–34). Thurston obviously had some respect for Woodford as a person but rather doubted his seriousness as a colonial administrator. He wrote back to the Colonial Office to say that he did not know if Woodford possessed any legal training or any administrative abilities though he ‘is by no means wanting in capacity, when he chooses to exercise it’. Thurston privately thought Woodford was seeking an excuse to return to the islands to continue his work as a naturalist (Thurston to Ripon 30 March 1894 CO 225 45 9079). At that same time Thurston was preparing for a tour of inspection of the Solomon Islands and took a copy of Woodford’s book *A Naturalist Smong the Head-hunters* with him on the HMS *Ringdove* when he left Suva on 8 September 1894 (Scarr 1973: 276). In the meantime, Woodford approached the Royal Geographical Society with a request for official assistance for a scientific expedition to Dutch New Guinea (West Papua). The proposal was to equip a 150-ton schooner and steam launch in England and to sail via Christmas Island and the Malay Archipelago to Seram, Kei and the Aru Islands
north of Australia. The aim was to explore the coastal regions of Dutch New Guinea around Etna Bay, Bintuni Bay and Gelvink Bay. The purpose was to collect zoological and ethnological specimens presumably for sale back in London. The Malay Archipelago was the area in which Alfred Russel Wallace had explored between 1854 and 1862 and for a recognised natural history collector it would have been an ideal place to continue that investigation. The ambitious project failed when sufficient financial backing was not forthcoming (Heath 1974a: 34). Once again Woodford approached Lord Ripon directly canvassing, but to no avail, the possibility that a position as Resident Commissioner was available in the Solomon Islands (Woodford to Ripon 11 January 1894 CO 225 46 746).
This text taken from *The Naturalist and His ‘Beautiful Islands’: Charles Morris Woodford in the Western Pacific*, by David Russell Lawrence, published 2014 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.