11. Woodford and the Western Pacific High Commission

In his 18 years as Resident Commissioner, Woodford served under six High Commissioners and three acting High Commissioners (Heath 1974a: 94). These relationships were mostly cordial. Given the distance from Suva and the inadequate communication of the day, he was largely left to manage the Protectorate independently. But the Western Pacific High Commission was a complex political institution and distant Resident Commissioners had to maintain good relations not only with the High Commissioner but also with his official Secretary. Woodford had trouble with two senior officials who served at the same time and who both served in their powerful positions for considerable periods. His relationships with Everard im Thurn, High Commissioner from 1904 to 1910, and Merton King, Secretary from 1898 to 1907, were far from cordial. King subsequently became British Resident Commissioner in the New Hebrides from 1907 to 1924, a long service of 17 years. King and Woodford did not agree and, considering the length of service each man would serve in the Pacific, this mutual dislike would be long lasting.

When Woodford first came to Suva seeking a position in the Solomon Islands, John Bates Thurston was Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. The Secretary under Thurston was Wilfred Collet. A man of some ability, training and expertise in colonial affairs, Collet appointed Woodford to a temporary position in the High Commission between November 1896 and January 1897. Collet approached Thurston with a proposal to pay Woodford out of surplus votes in the judicial and travelling accounts while Woodford was drafting new land regulations for the southern Solomon Islands Protectorate (Collet to Thurston 30 November 1896 WPHC 4/IV 478/1896). Collet also offered to go without extra salary, presumably allowance payments, if Woodford could be retained in Suva while the High Commissioner negotiated with the Treasury to fund a position at Tulagi (Collet to High Commissioner 30 November 1896 WPHC 4/IV 478/1896; Heath 1974a: 94). Fortunately, Woodford’s relationship with Thurston appears to have been warm and he supplied a number of personal accounts to the High Commissioner during the trip to the Gilbert Islands and the three scientific expeditions to the Solomons. Woodford carefully made copies of these reports and inserted them into his personal diaries. Thurston was not from an elite background. He had been a first mate on the sailing ship James and a sheep farmer in Australia and was interested in the botany of the Pacific. His father-in-law, John Barry of Albury in New South Wales, was appointed to the Survey Department of the Fiji government in 1877 and rose to be Commissioner of Land, Works and Surveys. Thurston, by now well connected to colonial
gentry, settled at Thornbury on Viti Levu and a property, ‘St Helier’s’, on Taviuni Island. He established the Suva Botanical Gardens, now the Thurston Gardens, and published a small booklet on the plants and shrubs that could be acclimatised to grow in the islands (Thurston 1886; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 7/37). He was an important mentor for Woodford.

Thurston was the fourth High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and served from 1888 to his death on 7 February 1897. During Woodford’s not so successful period of employment in Suva in 1883 he had been a minor clerk under Sir William MacGregor. Under Thurston and Collet he had been given a certain amount of freedom to act independently in Tulagi but Thurston’s death came at a time when Collet too left Suva. Thurston was replaced by Sir George O’Brien and Collet by Merton King. Under these two men the working relation deteriorated. O’Brien had been Colonial Secretary in Hong Kong and was Governor of Fiji from 1897 to 1901. This was a time when the pacification of the Solomon Islands was being intensified, the Treasury parsimonious with grants-in-aid, and officials in Tulagi still trying to establish a physical presence in the Protectorate. While O’Brien was punctilious and found constant errors in the financial accounts sent from Tulagi, King was pedantic and the combination of the two only served to aggravate Woodford. Woodford appears to have little tolerance for people he disliked and his ‘methods were rarely painstakingly or carefully thought out, he acted (and re-acted) quickly and decisively, an ideal man-on-the-spot for a demanding task, but a poor subordinate’ (Heath 1974a: 96). For Woodford, the greater problem was the sarcasm and petty comments made by Secretary Merton King.

Under Sir Henry Moore Jackson, who followed O’Brien, relations improved although at this stage Merton King was still official Secretary. Woodford believed the limited freedom given to him by Sir Henry was a sign of Jackson’s beliefs in the development of the islands but ironically they stemmed from Jackson’s complete indifference to the future of the Solomons (Heath 1974a: 97). Woodford clashed with Jackson over a mistaken belief that Certificates of Occupation gave the holders exclusive fishing rights in waters along the boundaries of their properties. Woodford took up the cause of native fishing rights but it would appear to have been a misinterpretation of the licensees’ rights in the first place. The terms of the Certificate state the ‘Occupier [has] a Certificate of Occupation in respect of the unoccupied pieces of land … together with the right to fish the produce of the waters marching with the coast boundary (if any) of such land’ (Pacific Islands Company Certificate of Occupation enclosed in WPHC 4/IV 91/1898). The meaning is unclear but it certainly does not state the lessee has exclusive rights. The minor debate over fishing rights lasted for some time (Allardyce to Colonial Office 4 June 1902 CO 225 63 30786). Finally the discussion was meant to be resolved by the Solomon Islands (Fisheries) Regulation of
1902 (King’s Regulation No 2 of 1902) but the matter of exclusive rights claimed by holders of Certificates of Occupation, the rights of owners of vessel licenses and the rights of local people to artisanal fishing in coastal waters only became more muddied (Woodford to Colonial Office 28 February 1903 CO 225 65 20094).

If relations had been cool under some previous High Commissioners things would turn for the worst with the appointment of Everard im Thurn. Both im Thurn and Merton King were not happy to be appointed to the Pacific. In a private letter to the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew im Thurn even went so far as to write ‘I am not pleased at having been sent here—but have made up my mind to bear my exile with equanimity’ (Heath 1974a: 98). He was most certainly a complex character. One would have thought a man with his experience in British Guiana, where he had been curator of the museum, who was the author of a number of scientific books and papers on botany and who had a reputation as an amateur anthropologist—he was to be the President of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1919 and 1920—would have had more in common with Woodford. Both men came to their positions as administrators after long experience in the field. Im Thurn, like Sir Arthur Gordon, had his own high self-regard as a champion and protector of the ‘loyal Native subjects of the British Crown’ (Heath 1974a: 98). When Mahaffy was transferred to Suva in 1904 he too would find im Thurn difficult. Mahaffy’s antipathy to im Thurn, like that between Woodford and im Thurn, ‘seems rather to have been that the High Commissioner himself—an able, vigorous man with literary powers and some evident self-satisfaction in his own abilities—preferred to surround himself with comparative cyphers, rather than men capable of meeting him on equal terms’ (Scarr 1967a: 287). Both Mahaffy and Woodford found im Thurn unpredictable. Commenting on im Thurn’s administrative style in dealing with developments in the Gilbert and Ellice islands, Macdonald (2001: 125) wrote: ‘For a time, while im Thurn remained High Commissioner, it seemed that reforms might be implemented but when changes did take place, it was seldom in the manner expected’. At least for Woodford, im Thurn’s appointment came at a time when some small signs were showing of economic growth in the Solomon Islands.

The two men met for the first time more than seven months after im Thurn’s appointment. At this meeting in Suva in April 1905 they found little to agree upon. Woodford was on his way to London for long leave and im Thurn forwarded a long critical memorandum to the Colonial Office at the same time. In the confidential memo to London, im Thurn wrote that Woodford had a habit of thought that ‘was almost excessively philoprogressivist [implying Woodford had strong ideas about the direction of social and economic change]; his work is the only good work (and it really is good work) and his islands are almost the only part of the British Empire worth preserving’ (Heath 1974a: 100 quoting
im Thurn with original emphasis). When im Thrun had occasion to criticise Woodford for what was called ‘grave disobedience of orders given’, Woodford’s reply was ‘that the laws of the Medes and Persians were not for him and that if the Government did not want his work they must do without it’ (Heath 1974a: 100 quoting im Thurn). The quote, no doubt well known to im Thurn, implying that the laws of the High Commissioner were rigid and unbending, comes from Daniel 6:8: ‘Now, O king...sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not’. Being called unbending and rigid like a Persian king would be guaranteed to rile a person like im Thurn with a very high opinion of himself. At this time 21 leading white citizens of the Protectorate presented Woodford with an illustrated testimonial of esteem and respect. This was a well intentioned, but undoubtledly political, statement of support.
Figure 40. Illustrated testimonial presented to Charles Morris Woodford in March 1905 by 21 leading white settlers in the Solomon Islands.

Source: ANUA 481 D.
The Oliphant affair

Woodford took long leave in 1905. He left in early March and met with im Thurn in Suva in April on the way to London. A poor choice of temporary replacement for his position was made that further alienated Suva from Tulagi. Mahaffy, who would have been the logical choice of Acting Resident Commissioner, had gone to Fiji by then and the only other officers in the islands were newcomers. On the recommendations of Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin, who both should have known better, Arthur Oliphant from South Australia was appointed. Soon after he and his family arrived in April 1905 they were installed in the residency (Oliphant to im Thurn 1 April 1905 WPHC 4/IV 243/1899 and 9 June 1905 WPHC 4/IV 26/1905). Oliphant, in his short time in Tulagi, managed to make a mess of the administration and involved the Protectorate in small scandals and bad publicity that eventually resulted in legal liability. For Woodford the scandal and financial liability would have been sufficient to cause acute anger at a time when his status with Suva was low.

In what the newspaper reports call a romance worthy of Robert Louis Stevenson the full account of Oliphant’s pomposity becomes evident. Upon arrival in the Protectorate Oliphant went to the Shortland Islands to investigate the death of a Mr McConville who had disappeared on Bougainville (Oliphant to im Thurn 24 July 1905 WPHC 4/IV 122/1905). While at Faisi he charged Alfred Hearnes, a business partner of William Hazelton, with supplying alcohol to the natives. Hearnes was fined £20 with a surety of £100 on two breaches of the Liquor Regulation of 1893. Hearnes could not pay and immediately left the islands. Contrary to regulations Oliphant returned some of the fine to finance his exit to Australia (Oliphant to im Thurn 24 July 1905 WPHC 4/IV 131/1905). Hazelton, who had previously joined Mahaffy in police operations in the New Georgia area, had since left the colonial service and gone into trading. He was also trying to secure the purchase of 1,400 acres of land in Marovo Lagoon but he was believed to be acting as an agent for Lever’s Pacific Plantations Ltd (Woodford to im Thurn 27 October 1906 WPHC 4/IV 134/1899). Following the deportation of his business partner it was apparent he was about to rile Oliphant.

On 15 June, at Gavutu, convinced that the boat contained contraband firearms, Oliphant attempted to board Hazelton’s schooner Lindsay. When he made to board the vessel he was pushed back into the government launch by Hazelton who told him he would throw him overboard if he were to come on the yacht. Oliphant found Hazelton flying a skull and cross bones flag apparently ‘in a sportive spirit’ but Oliphant considered this an official breach of the peace (The Mercury [Hobart] 11 July 1905: 3; The Sydney Morning Herald 6 July 1905: 3). Subsequent to this farce, Oliphant served Hazelton with a warrant for his arrest, found him guilty of assault and insult and fined him £10. This was later
increased to £30. Hazelton was eventually sentenced to be deported to Suva and imprisoned for three months. Oliphant, however, had been both the judge of the case as well as the magistrate who signed the warrant and appointed court assessors, as he had in the Hearnes case, who were ordered not to have anything to say during the court proceedings. The amount of the fine was reduced to £4/15/- when Hazelton signed a formal apology to King Edward VII for insulting one of His Majesty’s officers and another apology to the High Commissioner in Suva (The Sydney Morning Herald 13 July 1905: 6). After Hazelton signed these documents he was still deported to Suva for imprisonment. Both Oliphant and Hazelton then sailed together for Suva via Brisbane and Sydney. On the voyage both men were seen drinking heavily, presumably in each other’s company according to many press reports, but Oliphant in an inebriated state dictated a new, second, warrant for the arrest of Hazelton while the ship was in Brisbane (The Brisbane Courier 14 July 1905: 3). Hazelton’s solicitor in Sydney issued an application of habeas corpus and at a hearing before Justice Cohen, Hazelton was released from custody because the warrant, signed on board the ship, had been issued outside the jurisdiction of the Protectorate. This was just the ‘decadent white men in the tropics’ story that newspapers loved. Confidential memos following the affair also pointed out, snobbishly but no doubt accurately, that Oliphant was a weak character much dominated by his wife (Heath 1974a: 108). In the middle of this low drama Oliphant wrote to im Thurn requesting that he not be called ‘Acting’ Resident Commissioner as no one would take his advice seriously while Woodford was on leave. The file is clearly marked: ‘there will be no necessity to reply to this despatch’ (Oliphant to im Thurn 3 May 1905 WPHC 4/IV 119/1905). The Oliphant fiasco even became the subject of some mention in the Burns Philp records at the time (AU NBAC N115/589). Oliphant was subsequently removed from office and replaced by Thomas Edge-Partington.

Relations with Suva would have been further strained by the aftermath of the affair. In October 1905 im Thurn was forced to travel to Tulagi on HMS Torch to give Hazelton a written apology that stated:

As High Commissioner and in virtue of the power given me under the Pacific Order-in-Council 1882, section III (9), I hereby remit any order of deportation from the Solomon Islands that may have been made by Arthur Oliphant, lately Deputy Commissioner and Acting Resident Commissioner for the British Solomon Islands Protectorate against William Henry Hazelton.

(Signed) Everard im Thurn, Gavutu, 24th August 1905 (The Sydney Morning Herald 18 October 1905: 9).

Hazelton not only won a case of wrongful arrest but he received his letter of apology from im Thurn in person. This would have insulted the most high
dignity of im Thurn even more. Not only did im Thurn have to make the official apology but he chose, deliberately, to go to Tulagi while Woodford was on leave. Consequently, im Thurn and Woodford’s relationship did not improve. In June 1906, Hazelton was granted damages for the wrongful arrest. Although he initially sued the Inspector of Police in Tulagi for £1,000 he was awarded £229. Woodford returned from leave in January 1906 in the middle of this embarrassing mess. For a man with strong opinions of Australia and Australians in general, despite having an Australian wife, he would not have been amused to read the minor island scandal that was printed, and reprinted, with some amusement in the ‘colonial’ press.

Postal services in the Solomon Islands

While this minor charade was being acted out in Tulagi, Woodford had been advancing the case for Levers in the Solomons in London and importantly, and often not recognised, laid the foundation for the first postal service in the Solomon Islands using stamps that he had himself designed (Woodford papers PMB 1381/007). There is much available on the subject of the postal history and the design of the stamps of the early British Solomon Islands Protectorate. The best papers are by R. P. Croom-Johnson (1928), Harold Gisburn (1956) and a series of articles by Don Franks (2000a and 2000b). Some of these articles have been summarised, and illustrated, by Roland Klinger (www.ro-klinger.de/tulagi).

The postal service had humble beginnings. In the early years on Tulagi, Woodford sent letters with a personal cheque for the cost of the stamps on the regular steamers operated by Burns Philp to Sydney. The letters and parcels were stamped—British Solomon Islands Paid—and in the Sydney GPO were stamped and franked with Australian postage stamps. Later Woodford kept a stock of Australian postage stamps at Tulagi but as the Protectorate was outside Australia, the stamps were not defaced. That was done in Sydney. Many of the covers sighted by Gisburn (1956: 25) are in Woodford’s own handwriting. Woodford introduced the first locally identified stamps in 1907 and this coincided with the establishment of the first post offices in the islands. In addition to the office on Tulagi, post offices were located in the district headquarters at Aola on Guadalcanal, Gizo in the New Georgia group, Faisi at Shortland Harbour in the north and at the trading station of Gavutu off Tulagi. Gizo and Shortland Harbour were important trading areas. Most of these post offices were operational by 1908. They were declared ports of entry in 1907 to facilitate trade through German New Guinea (WPHC 10/V Item 131; British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1909: 21). This however was another source of contention between Tulagi and Suva. Gavutu was declared a port of entry rather
than Tulagi and it took Merton King another six months to correct the minor but financially important mistake (Woodford to im Thurn 15 April 1907 WPHC 4/IV 75/1905; WPHC 4/IV 73/1906).

Woodford wrote later, in what appears to be correspondence with Gisburn (1956: 27) on the subject of the stamp design: ‘The postal work had so much increased that in my estimates for the year 1906–07 I had asked [the High Commission in Suva] for an issue of postage stamps, and had estimated a revenue of £600 to be received from the sale. This estimate [said to be only £300 according to Croom-Johnson (1928: 7)] was subsequently reduced to £100 by the office of the High Commissioner’. While waiting for the response from Suva, Woodford ordered the first stamps in 1906 but they were badly printed on poor quality paper by W. E. Smith of Sydney. Although W. E. Smith was a general printing firm with no expertise in postal stamp design they advertised themselves as high-class stationers and printers. The choice of this firm was perhaps governed by convenience and reputation. They were located at 30 Bridge Street, not far from the Sydney headquarters of Burns Philp at 5–11 Bridge Street. The Burns Philp Building, one of the notable city constructions built in a grandiose, richly carved and decorated Romanesque style, was a major meeting place and business centre for traders and planters from the Western Pacific. Woodford wrote that he could not wait for the decision of im Thurn, for ‘if I had waited for the High Commissioner to order the stamps I should have had to wait certainly another two years, but by forcing his hand he was bound to get the stamps recognised’ (Gisburn 1956: 28).

The first set of stamps designed by Woodford is known by philatelists as the ‘Large Canoe’ series. These stamps show a composite image of the Tulagi in the background, coconut palms on either side in the foreground and in the middle distance, a New Georgia *tomoko*. This series of stamps was printed in denominations of ½d (ultramarine), 1d (rose-carmine), 2d (indigo), 2½d (orange-yellow), 5d (emerald-green), 6d (chocolate), and one shilling (bright purple) in order to conform with the postage rates used in Australia (Howard-White 1972). The problem with the stamps was twofold. Not only was the paper course white stock and the stamps printed by lithography, but the glue backing was not suitable for the tropics and caused constant problems. Woodford wrote that the stamps were ‘very poor workmanship’ and constant type errors occurred due to the use of printing transfers (Gisburn 1956: 32). The stocks were rather large for such a small population: 60,000 stamps of each denomination between ½d and 2½d, and 30,000 stamps of each denomination between 5d and one shilling were printed. These went on sale at Tulagi on 14 February 1907 (Croom-Johnson 1928: 6). This series remained in use until 1 November 1908 when all remaining stamps, carefully itemised by Woodford, were destroyed in front of witnesses. As postage stamps are a form of taxation paid to facilitate the transportation of
mail, unused stamps are in effect equivalent to their face value. Any attempt to forge stamps, print them illegally or steal them is a criminal offence. The process of demonetisation of postage or revenue stamps that rendered them no longer valid is a rare event.

When the remaining stocks were destroyed Woodford specified that all printing plates should be defaced and no reprints made. Apparently this was not done and some unauthorised reprints were made by a confidential employee and sold to a London stamps dealer (Gisburn 1956: 35). W. E. Smith sold his printing business in Sydney in 1910 and the Company Secretary of the new firm found the original printing stones that had not been cleaned off. It was this person referred to as a ‘confidential employee’ who had new sheets of the old stamps printed and passed them onto London dealers (Croom-Johnson 1928: 8). Woodford took legal action and had the illegal stamps seized and destroyed. There was considerable correspondence between Woodford and notable stamps dealers, such as Fred Hagen of Sydney, Stanley Gibbons in London and Oswald Marsh in Norwood, London at this time. It may have been Marsh who was the dealer referred to above (Franks and Forrestier Smith 2001: 61). Howard-White (1972: 218) also reports that correspondence between Woodford and a collector in London refers to another dealer, W. H. Peckitt of 47 Strand London, but the date, 1912, is much later. It is unlikely that Peckitt was involved in the illegal trading.

When the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was accepted as part of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) on 3 September 1907 the Colonial Office gave permission for a second series of stamps to be issued. As a member of the Union, the new stamps had to conform to agreed style and colour schemes. The General Post Office in London wrote to the Colonial Office specifying, in some detail, the formalities and requirements of the Protectorate in now adhering to the UPU conditions. As the British postal service now assumed responsibility for all postal transactions in the Solomon Islands the Protectorate post offices had to adopt British postal rates and services (General Post Office to Colonial Office 24 December 1907 CO 225 80 44799). New stamps had to be officially approved by the Office of the Crown Agents in London and then printed and designed by Thomas De La Rue and Co, the official printers of postage stamps in England.

Although postal historians agree that the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was admitted to the postal union in 1907 it appears that the formalities were not completed by the High Commissioner’s office in Suva (Croom-Johnson 1928: 6). Writing to the Secretary of the General Post Office, then based in Melbourne, the office of the High Commissioner deferred the settlement of various questions relating to the postal service pending Woodford’s return from leave in 1909.
Woodford and the Western Pacific High Commission

... upon the subject of Postal matters in this Protectorate, I have the honour to observe that my views had already been stated as to the expediency of the Protectorate being admitted to the Postal Union. I believe that at the time the new emission of postage stamps [1908] was issued a certain number of specimens were retained by the Postmaster General in London for distribution to the countries constituting the Postal Union, with a view to the Protectorate’s early admission. 2. If therefore the necessary formalities are still incomplete, I would ask you to take the steps requisite for the inclusion of the Protectorate among the list of countries adhering to the Postal Union as soon as possible

The High Commissioner’s excuse for the delay in clarifying the date of admission was that the Postmaster General in London suggested the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate should be admitted to the UPU at the same time. He then passed the decision-making over to the Australian Postmaster-General.

The design and printing of what is called the ‘Small Canoe’ series was approved by the Crown Agents on 31 March 1908 and the Protectorate would certainly have been admitted to the UPU by then. The role of the Office of the Crown Agents is important in considering the internal management of British protectorates and colonies. The office was the sole official commercial and financial agent for the Protectorates and Crown colonies. Prior to 1833 colonial governors and administrators had appointed private individuals to act as their agents in London. Following creation of the sole office much of the new capital raised by the Crown Agents came from floating loans on the London securities market. These transactions were not underwritten by government guarantees. After 1880, the Colonial Office enforced a policy that all official purchases and financial transactions had to be approved by the Office of the Crown Agents. From that time the agency held a virtual monopoly over government retail supply. It was the only route for capital investment in the British territories and the agents held the grants made to the colonies by the Treasury. The agency also recruited some staff for the colonies, and purchased general government supplies. It was a powerful financial and commercial entity that acted as a broker between the Treasury and the colonial financial institutions. For these reasons, the Office of the Crown Agents became the official intermediary in the printing and design of the future stamps of the Protectorate. One of the main impediments to economic growth in the Protectorate was the separation...
of powers between the official brokers. The Western Pacific High Commissioner facilitated access to and from the Colonial Office and the Office of Crown Agents facilitated access to and from the Treasury. Imperial policy makers could agree on the major points of interest—peace, prosperity and Imperial power—but could rarely agree on process.

The second series of stamps was printed on paper supplied to the Crown Agents by Roughway Mills from Tonbridge in Kent and the stamps printed under license. When these reached Tulagi in 1908 they came in a much larger supply: 100,000 stamps of denominations ½d, 1d, 2d and 2½d, 30,000 stamps of denominations 5d, 6d and one shilling, and later stamps of denominations 4d, two shillings, two shillings and sixpence, and five shillings were printed. These stamps also conformed with Australian postal charges (Gisburn 1956: 42–43). Writing in praise of the composition of the ‘Small Canoe’ series, Gisburn (1956: 44) stated: ‘In summary, this issue, both in design and printing, may be said to have been one of the neatest and most satisfactory series ever to have emanated from the House of De La Rue’. The ‘Small Canoe’ remained in circulation for only five years. The remaining stock was demonetised in July and August 1914 and replaced by less picturesque but more economical stamps with the image of King George V. Croom-Johnson (1928: 12) comments: ‘It would be hard to find a cleaner country from a stamp man’s point of view … All the fascinations of philately are to be found over a period of eighteen years, with the added certainty that the total possible supply of stamps is known and quite small’. To commemorate the opening of the new post office in central Honiara in 1970 a first day cover was issued that featured a portrait of Charles Morris Woodford and a copy of the a 2d ‘Large Canoe’ stamp with the words: ‘British Solomon Islands 14c’. Woodford’s role in the postal history of the Solomon Islands is an important and interesting annex to his story.

**Education and health services in the early years**

During the establishment period, social services received little attention from the administration. Pacification, police patrols, routine administrative duties, and attempts to secure economic stability based on copra plantations absorbed the attention of the small staff. The first obvious social service needed was medical care. Mahaffy had been appointed to help deal with problems associated with a smallpox outbreak in German New Guinea. The problem for the northern Solomons was that people crossed between Bougainville and the Shortland Islands, then part of German territory. If guns and ammunition could flow openly south, then so could epidemics. Medical problems in the islands were ‘stupendous’ (Boutilier 1974: 5). Malaria was endemic, even in Tulagi, and amoebic dysentery, beri-beri, blackwater fever, hookworm and yaws were all
common. In the New Georgia area people had a long history of building leprosy
shrines during the pre-contact period so this disease too may have been common
throughout the islands (see Nagaoka 2011: 33). The shipping services, and the
Labour Trade, introduced foreign diseases like influenza, venereal diseases and
polio into the islands. The first regulation (Queen's Regulation no 1 of 1897)
was a quarantine law but this was ineffective against the spread of disease
coming from the north. A new regulation implemented in 1907 (The Solomons
(Quarantine) Regulation of 1907; King’s Regulation no 1 of 1907) that repealed
the first one was designed to prevent the introduction of disease by making
all vessels perform pratique at Gavutu. In some cases this meant pratique took
more than two weeks.

The climate was considered hard on white people. Woodford was so ill with
malaria in 1900 that he had to be helped on board the vessel taking him to Sydney
for treatment. Requests for leave had to be approved by the High Commissioner
in Suva. Hazelton threatened to resign if his leave were not granted. In the end
he resigned anyway. Woodford, Mahaffy and Hazelton all suffered from the side
effects of large doses of quinine. Eczema on the body, face and hands, insomnia
and partial deafness were only a few of the health problems encountered in
such a hot, humid environment (Woodford to O’Brien 28 December 1901 WPHC
243/1899). The greatest danger was to young unmarried men stationed on Tulagi
whose diet was poor and who no doubt drank heavily. Medical attention was
first devoted to keeping administration staff on Tulagi healthy. The need for a
hospital at Tulagi was raised as early as 1897. At a meeting held on Gavutu to
discuss the imposition of ships’ license fees in late November a subscription of
£14 guineas was raised from traders. This was given to Dr Henry Welchman
who used it to construct a small clinic at Siota attached to St Luke’s College.
Welchman had been undertaking most of the emergency medical work at Siota
and he cared for Jean Pratt there after he was attacked by Zito. For this Pratt had
given the mission a new boat and a contribution to the hospital fund (The Sydney
Morning Herald 16 February 1898: 4). The distance from Tulagi to Siota, 12 miles
along Mboli Passage, was a problem for emergency cases. It was agreed that a
hospital should be built on Tulagi at government expense because Siota would
not always be served by a medical missionary. Welchman himself preferred to
work at Bugotu on southern Isabel.

As with other social services, the progress of hospital construction either by
missions or by the government was slow. The first hospital building was a leaf-
hut construction that was found to be inadequate. Then two wooden buildings
were built on the beachfront a few hundred metres from the south-east end of
the main Tulagi wharf (Boutilier 1974: 11). One building contained a large, 18-
bed ward for native male patients, an isolation ward, a ward for native female
patients and a ward of four beds for the ‘better class’ natives and Chinese
The Naturalist and his ‘Beautiful Islands’: Charles Morris Woodford in the Western Pacific

(Boutilier 1974: 11). These ‘native’ wards were for local people on Tulagi who worked for whites as domestics or office staff, or men sent there by Department of Labour inspectors (Bennett 1987: 210; Moore 2009b: 9). The other building constructed was the main hospital to serve the needs of the white community with separate wards for men and women. There was also a Medical Officer’s office, an operating theatre and nurses’ quarters. Some doctors sent to Tulagi were found to be unsuitable. During the early years of the First World War Dr O’Sullivan was considered to have ‘qualities inherent in the Irish peasant’ but his real problem was a wife with ardent Sinn Fein associations. The longest serving Doctor-in-Charge was Dr Nathaniel Crichlow, a part-Chinese, part-Scottish doctor who served as Government Medical Officer from 1914–1923 and as District Medical Officer from 1923–1942 (Boutilier 1974: 14; Moore 2009b: 22).

For local people in the villages and on outer islands the nearest medical attention was at clinics belonging to plantations or at mission stations. Although the Methodists established one of the first rural hospitals at Sasamungga (Sasamuqa) on Choiseul in 1906, most mission stations did not construct suitable hospital facilities for local people until well into the 1920s (Boutilier 1974). The Melanesian Mission opened the Welchman Memorial Hospital in 1912 at Hautabu, near Marovovo at the north-western end of Guadalcanal, under the direction of Dr Russell Marshall. Patients paid for their medicine in-kind. When they were discharged they were required to work at the hospital plantation for two weeks cutting copra for the hospital fund (Boutilier 1974: 21; Waiapu Church Gazette Volume 3 (9), 1 March 1913: 131; Anon 1926). However the hospital closed in 1916 when the doctor married the matron and went off to the First World War. In the early years the administration relied on the missions to provide essential services because money was scarce, distances were great, and staffing was limited. But while the missions often had qualified people and good organisational structures that reached into the small villages, there was a fatal flaw in this relationship. Reliance on the missions to deliver services became institutionalised and was an excuse for not tackling the major health issues on the islands.

The situation regarding the provision of education services in those early days mirrors that of health. Again, education was left to the missions but the guiding principle behind the religious institutions was the development of Industrial Missions. The major preoccupation for the Catholics, Anglicans and evangelical churches was conversion, not education. Even though local people were keen for education in English, it conflicted with mission policy. As a result, educational opportunities for people varied. The Melanesian Mission’s idea was to teach in Mota language and for students at the schools, mostly men, to learn ‘industry, regularity and responsibility rather than learning’ (Boutilier 1974:
The Methodists at their large profitable industrial mission at Kokeqelo on the Munda coast in Roviana Lagoon stressed the ‘importance and the reward of honest labour’. Kokeqelo—meaning sweet-smelling flowers—may have seemed a prophetic name for the Methodists but it was a place of spirits for the local people. When local baṈara sold the land to the mission it may have been to test the quality of Christian efficacy and power (Bennett 2000a: 50). Adherents of the mission could learn boat building, carpentry, timber milling and plantation work—all employment that supported the mission while contributing to personal and village prosperity. They thereby gained access to medical services, recreational facilities and ministry, but access to good education was late in coming. The fundamentals of mission doctrine are clearly illustrated in the film *The Transformed Isle: Barbarism to Christianity* with its subtext that there is no such thing as a lazy Christian (Boutilier 1974: 39–40; Bennett 2000a: 51–53 for photographs of Kokeqelo circa 1905).

The Catholics saw their main task as conversion, an ‘activity which achieved its purpose when the convert was baptised, safely ensconced in a Christian marriage, and beyond the reach of Protestantism’ (Boutilier 1974: 41 quoting Laracy 1969: 195). The Society of Mary had established missions at Rua Sura under Father Bertreaux and at Poporang in the Shortland Islands supervised by Fathers Forestier and Hausch (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1909: 13; *The Queenslander* 22 December 1906: 25). The Catholics had purchased land at Rere on the north coast of Guadalcanal and Bertreaux used this land, mostly sago swamp on the coast, for leaf material used for the construction of houses on Rua Sura. He repeatedly complained to Woodford that thatch and ivory nuts were being stolen by local people from inland villages (Bertreaux to Woodford 20 March 1911 WPHC 4/IV 134/1899). Arguments over ownership of the Rere land continued and the Catholics wished to sell it to Lever’s Pacific Plantations. This was refused on the grounds that Lever’s already had more land than they could use. When the Malayta Company made tentative interest in the land Woodford wrote: ‘the whole question [land ownership] hinges upon keen competition and bitter animosity existing between Lever and the Malayta Company and between the Catholic and Evangelical Missions’ (Woodford to Major 27 September 1910 WPHC 134/1899). His final recommendation to Major was that the Rere plantation ‘land should revert to the natives and should not be permitted to be sold again to anyone at present’.

The South Seas Evangelical Mission was even more rigid in its perception of the value of a good education. In 1909 the Malayta Company established a training school for workers at Baunani plantation north of Onepusu, but the level of education was basic. Students were instructed in reading and writing in English and Pijin. They were also given religious instruction. Missionaries there believed that the ‘main objective, which is to preach the gospel and
establish an indigenous church on a knowledge of the word of God’ was the sole criterion for the establishment of schools. The aim of basic education was for the students to be able to read the Bible. Norman Deck, nephew of Florence Young and a leading missionary, stated categorically that he was ‘afraid … of a secular education which lifts a considerable proportion of natives out of their natural environment unless such natives can be usefully absorbed, lest such natives may form a disloyal and dissatisfied class’ (Boutilier 1974: 49 quoting Norman Deck to Ashley 29 October 1931 WPHC 4/IV 2594/1931). Village teachers sent out by the South Seas Evangelical Mission were to teach Godliness, cleanliness and industry. The motto of the mission remained staunchly ‘salvation before education or civilisation’ (Boutilier 1974: 50).

By the end of the 1930s there was little real educational progress in the Protectorate. As a result of parsimony, other priorities, the vagaries in copra prices, and a low regard for the intellectual qualities of islanders generally, official indifference left the Solomon Islands far behind even other colonies in the Western Pacific. ‘The failure of the Administration and the missions to provide adequate education and medical services was in many ways a tragedy’ (Boutilier 1974: 64). It was a tragedy for the many islanders who saw Christianity as a new beginning and a secular and useful education as a way into the European-dominated world. The various Christian churches and missions with their array of beliefs and attitudes, often in competition for the souls of the people but most often in conflict with each other, also served to confuse people at a time of great change.

**Personal health crisis**

In 1907, Woodford’s health failed. Memos to im Thurn indicated that he may have had a severe case of cerebral malaria and anaemia. Woodford wrote: ‘For the last ten days I have been in bed with a shaved head suffering from inflammation of the brain, brought on by anxiety and worry occasioned by the continuous and repeated mistakes and delays which have arisen in the Fiji Office’ (Heath 1974: 102). The health crisis was exacerbated by errors made in Suva when the High Commissioner’s office procrastinated in preparing new customs regulations (WPHC 10/V Item 132). While the *Solomons (Customs) Regulations of 1907* (King’s Regulation no 2 of 1907) were being prepared and the *Solomons (Tobacco) Import Duty Regulations of 1906* were being repealed, matters came to a head. Officials in Tulagi watched as large qualities of dutiable goods, mostly tobacco and alcohol, landed at various parts of the Protectorate. The customs duties levied for imported alcohol were particularly heavy and it is likely that attempts to circumvent the charges were frequent (*The Argus* 9 September 1908: 9). To make matters worse some of the tax evaders were German merchants.
When the customs regulations were finally issued, an incorrect port of call for customs had been entered. In hindsight, a minor bureaucratic error meant that there were no customs regulations in place for about six months. The cost to the Protectorate was about £1,900 (Woodford to im Thurn 3 May 1907 WPHC 4/IV 59/1907).

Lacking caution, no doubt when he was ill, Woodford told im Thurn and Merton King that it was impossible for the High Commissioner to exercise control over the British Solomon Islands Protectorate from Fiji. To compound this he added that the High Commission was unable to manage the affairs of the entire Western Pacific. He then sent a copy of his complaint to the Colonial Office in London. This was not the first intemperate letter to pass between Woodford and im Thurn. When stranded in Albany on the way to London in May 1905, Woodford unwisely voiced his complaint that the High Commission in Suva had lost touch with the affairs in the Western Pacific following the death of Thurston and the retirement of Collet. Instead of a series of short requests for action on a number of separate points, Woodford harangued im Thurn on a wide ranging series of issues—land regulations, labour recruitment, house, pay and staffing problems, the use of private money for entertainment of visitors, and personal family concerns. Individually most were legitimate complaints at the time but im Thurn could not have solved them without direction and money from London (Woodford to im Thurn 24 May 1905 WPHC 4/IV 82/1898). They sowed the seeds of distrust, but it should have been clear to Suva that Woodford had health problems.

Personal antagonism between the two men became clear in correspondence after Woodford was admitted to St Malo Private Hospital in North Sydney in April 1907. Florence Woodford, living in Silverleigh at Tonbridge in Kent where her sons were being educated, appealed to the Colonial Office for information on her husband’s medical condition only to be told that any telegram sent to Sydney had to be at full rates and at her own expense. Once again the Colonial Office illustrated its famous parsimonious attitude (Florence Woodford to Colonial Office 2 May 1909 CO 225 80 15710). On the other hand, im Thurn was anxious to have evidence Woodford was suffering mental health problems. He only received assurances from Dr Clarence Read, Woodford’s specialist, that he was experiencing physical problems caused by overwork and climate. The High Commissioner then contacted the office of the Governor General Lord Northcote. Northcote’s personal physical, Dr Thomas Fiaschi, interviewed Woodford in hospital. He too stated the conditions were physical and not mental. Northcote’s Private Secretary, H. H. Share, also interviewed Woodford in hospital and wrote to Merton King that Woodford’s health was improving. All this was again supported by correspondence from Robert Gemmell-Smith, a former manager with Colonial Sugar Refining in Fiji, now retired to Sydney.
From his home in Parramatta James Burns wrote to Atlee Hunt, the Permanent Head of the Department of External Affairs, on 23 July 1908 that ‘accounts from the Solomons say that Mr Woodford is far from well, and unless he goes away for a change things may be serious’ (AU NBAC N115/601). Woodford’s health crisis was becoming a matter of some high level correspondence in Australia. But im Thurn continued to press for a medical certificate before allowing Woodford to return to Tulagi.

While in hospital, Woodford received a curt letter from im Thurn acknowledging that the High Commission had been in error over the customs regulations. This passage of memos between Suva and Woodford in hospital further inflamed passions. The result was that im Thurn wrote to the Colonial Office suggesting Woodford be retired on a pension. Im Thurn used the opportunity provided by the enforced hospitalisation to send a message to the Colonial Office detailing calculations for a pension entitlement. Im Thurn’s estimates of a lowly £233/6/8 a year, increased to a possible £250 or even £300 were duly noted but not actioned (im Thurn to Colonial Office 7 March 1908 CO 225 81 14096).

Woodford lied to London and stated that his age was 54—he was actually 55, the recommended retiring age. From then on, once he was back in Tulagi, relations between Suva and Tulagi could never be mended. The Colonial Office made Woodford apologise to im Thurn conditional to an enforced retirement. This formal apology was forwarded on 18 May after which im Thurn informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that Woodford, in a private letter, had written: ‘I desire therefore to apologize in the fullest and most unreserved way for any improper expressions that I may have made use of any to beg you to accept my most solemn assurances that nothing of the sort shall occur again’. Nevertheless im Thurn made it clear to the Colonial Office that only official correspondence was now undertaken between Tulagi and Suva. Woodford, it appears, had also written to London requesting that administration of the Solomon Islands be transferred to Tulagi but this would have meant the Solomon Islands becoming a Crown Colony. Woodford was accused of a lack of discipline (im Thurn to Colonial Office 11 June 1907 WPHC 4/IV 65/1907).

The Bernays incident

During his hospitalisation in Sydney Woodford was replaced by Claude Lewis Bernays, a clerk in the Tulagi office. This in itself would have caused further questions to be asked in London for Bernays, a young Queenslander whose father was a highly regarded clerk of Parliament in Brisbane, was only 23 at the time. Like many Pacific adventurers, Bernays had a short but interesting life. He went to the Solomons at age 16 and worked for Oscar Svensen at Marau. He then
became a manager for Levers at the Gavutu station and later joined the colonial service on Tulagi. He read a paper on developments in the Solomon Islands before the Royal Geographical Society in Queensland that promoted a bright future for the islands (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 7/44; *The Queenslander* 5 June 1909: 32). Unfortunately, Bernays himself would not have a bright future there. He was Acting Resident Commissioner when Zito attacked the Binskin family on Mbava Island. Panicked by the incident, pressured by traders and planters and guided by Edge-Partington on Gizo, the inexperienced officer launched the second failed attempt to arrest Zito. It appears he worked for the administration for about 5 years.

After relieving Woodford on emergency leave, he applied for a Certificate of Occupation for Mandoliana Island off Nggela Pile which had been the site of the massacre of Lt Bowers and the HMS *Sandfly* crew. His application was supported by Woodford on the grounds that the Gaeta people had given the island to the government (Woodford to High Commission 13 April 1908 CO 225 82 32932). It is most likely that the villagers were glad to dispose of an island with such a bad reputation. Bernays subsequently went into partnership with Norman Wheatley in a coconut plantation near Ilaroo (Ilemi) in Viru Harbour. He was killed by his own rifle which discharged when he was seated on a log during a hunting trip in the bush in June 1911 (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 6 June 1911: 7, *Cairns Post* 12 June 1911: 7). Fortunately for Woodford, no more questions about being replaced by incompetent newcomers or junior officials would be asked. Everard im Thurn retired in August 1910. Relief in the release from control by im Thrun was considerable with Woodford writing to his brother-in-law Dr Harold Hodgson: ‘My bugbear Everard im Thurn, Judas as we call him, has retired thank goodness. The Colonial Office has accepted my Land policy and rejected his proposals and I believe that after years of misrepresentation, they are realising that I am right after all’ (Woodford papers PMB 1381/004 Letter to Harold Hodgson 12 March 1911).

Im Thurn was succeeded by the more accommodating Sir Francis Henry May who was more willing to permit Woodford’s foibles. Under May’s successor, Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet-Escott, relations improved further. In 1911, almost 14 years after establishment of the Protectorate, the first audit of the financial affairs was undertaken. This audit document, dated 6 May 1911, has survived (BSIP 3/1/1) and is a historically important file. It is comprehensive and detailed. The first entry is for 29 July 1897. The Colonial Auditor commented that he ‘found them [the financial records] on the whole accurately kept’ and that ‘Mr Woodford’s own accuracy is well known’. A comment that surely shows criticism of Woodford’s accounting practices is mistaken. The audit found that the Protectorate was in debt to the High Commission for £68/8/11. On 1 September 1911 Woodford wrote requesting an explanation of figures held in
the Deceased Estates ledgers. These were divided into two sets of figures: the
deceased estates of Europeans, and the records of unpaid wages owed to the
estates of deceased labourers and other locally employed indentured workers.
Woodford wrote correcting the audit figures and supplied long pages of accounts,
many countersigned by the Treasurer, Richard Russell Pugh. His opinion was
that ‘instead of money being owing to the High Commission office, I have, on
the contrary overpaid the amount’. The difference was over the supply of 75
Martini-Enfield rifles for the police to be supplied by the Crown Agents through
the Fiji government. These guns, costing £197/13/7, were paid for but never
received. In their place Woodford received guns costing £60/19/- but had not
paid for them, a difference owing to the Protectorate of £136/14/7. This, after
some time, was accepted by the Colonial Auditor with criticism being directed
at the Treasurer instead of the Resident Commissioner. The Crown Auditor
found that the Treasurer showed a ‘lack of financial management’ when the
Protectorate owed money to the Crown Agents in London but held money in
the Bank of New Zealand in Sydney and nearly £6,000 in interest earning fixed
trusts (Colonial Auditor 22 November 1915 BSIP 3/1/1).

These seemingly pedantic comments over small financial matters and clashes of
personality were not uncommon in small colonial states. The hot-house nature
of small administrative units and the constant demands made by financial
restrictions, bureaucratic entanglements and settler aspirations led to many
conflicts that resulted in bitterness and enmity. This was not just confined to
Woodford and his relations with im Thurn and his Secretary, Merton King. A
copy of the Merton King/Woodford enmity almost occurred in the 1930s with
the Secretary to the High Commissioner H. Vaskess and the then Resident
Commissioner F. Ashley actively disliking each other: ‘Vaskess was a very
meticulous and pedantic civil servant … he seems to have entertained a deep
and abiding anti-pathy towards Ashley and his scant regard for the Resident
Commissioner is constant source of bias in W.P.H.C. material during the 1930s’
(Boutilier 1974: 36 fn104).

Honours and recognition

In the King’s Birthday Honours list of 14 June 1912, and in recognition of his
services first as Deputy Commissioner and the as Resident Commissioner of the
British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Charles Morris Woodford was made an
Ordinary Member of the Third Class, a Companion of the Order of St Michael
and St George (The Supplement to the London Gazette of Tuesday, the 11th of June
1912: 4299; The Manchester Guardian 14 June 1912). The announcement was also
published in New Zealand and Australian papers (Evening Post [Wellington] 83
(141), 14 June 1912: 8; The Sydney Morning Herald 15 June 1912: 15). Woodford
was recommended for the order by Sir Francis May who was mindful that, during
the stormy period under im Thurn, many of Woodford’s recommendations for
the Solomon Islands went no further than Suva (May to Harcourt 8 December
1911 WPHC 4/IV 2161/1911; Heath 1974a: 106). May was one of the very few
High Commissioners to ever visit the Solomon Islands.

On 13 June 1912 John Campbell, the Duke of Argyle and Chancellor of the Order,
write to Woodford to inform him that the King had appointed him a Companion
to the Order of St Michael and St George. From other correspondence it appears
that Woodford’s name had been proposed to the King by Lewis, Viscount
Harcourt, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Asquith government
(Woodford papers PMB 1381/008i–j). Woodford was notified by May’s successor,
Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet-Escott, that he would invest Woodford with the Order
on a personal visit to Tulagi (Woodford papers PMB 1381/008). Appointment to
the Order, and mention in the Colonial Office honours list, allowed Woodford to
put CMG after his name. The Order was traditionally awarded to members of the
colonial service. It continues to be awarded to former ambassadors and senior
consular officials from the Foreign Office. Membership remains limited by the
number who can be appointed at the different levels and so Woodford joined a
select group of highly regarded officials.

Recognition came late in his career. The Rev George Brown, who had a warm
personal relationship with Woodford, had even written to Lord Stanmore on 26
April 1911 suggesting Woodford be given the CMG, but considering Stanmore’s
role in the failed Pacific Islands Company fiasco and Woodford’s anger over the
dealings on Banaba, it is not surprising that Brown received a pessimistic reply
(Woodford papers PMB 1381/004 and 1381/008i). Just prior to the announcement,
Woodford had been the subject of a brief, and decidedly uncritical, article in
The Lone Hand on 1 March 1911. Under the title ‘Good Australians’ it reported
that although Woodford had been born in Kent, and remained staunchly English
all his life, the magazine felt that his successful work in the Solomon Islands
meant ‘that there would seem to be rather more than mere justification for our
claim to him as a Good Australian’ (Anon 1911b: 378; Woodford papers PMB
1381/018d). The readers were told that with staff of not more than four white
assistants he ruled over 400,000 natives—a gross exaggeration—‘who have for
many years borne an unenviable reputation for savagery and bloodthirstiness’.
The population figure was a complete guess and by 1911 head hunting was a
fading memory. Woodford was ‘the man who, literally almost single-handed,
has won the Islands for the Empire’. The article is not signed but Arthur Jose,
collaborator with Walter Henry Lucas in the articles British Mismanagement
in the Pacific (1907), was an occasional contributor to The Lone Hand, a sister
magazine to The Bulletin. Both journals followed common themes of aggressive
Australian nationalism, mateship, the cause of labour politics, and the White
Australian Policy. *The Lone Hand* was a popular newsy magazine containing literature and poetry designed to appeal to readers who did not subscribe to *The Bulletin*. Articles were solicited and authors paid for their stories. Some who contributed were C. J. Dennis, Steele Rudd, Henry Lawson and Norman Lindsay. *The Lone Hand* also printed articles on working class social conditions in the cities—such as scandals about illegal sweatshops in Sydney. Much later, a more balanced article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* noted that a bronze memorial plate had been placed on a lamp standard on Tulagi waterfront in Woodford’s memory by J. C. Barley. This presumably was between 1919 and 1921 when Barley was Acting Resident Commissioner (Lever 1974: 59, 101). The plaque is unlikely to have survived the Second World War.

**Legacy**

Two themes are evident in examining Woodford and his vision for the Solomon Islands. First, he saw a prosperous future for the islands and sought to encourage that goal by pacifying head hunting and advancing a plantation economy. These goals can be easily criticised today. Pacification was often heavy-handed and much property was destroyed. The goal was achieved when European military, naval and policing actions intersected with the local people’s perceptions of that power and with the new social, religious and economic forces that grew up around colonialisation. The plantation economy certainly deprived Melanesians of much land. On Guadalcanal especially that land still remains alienated from customary owners. Much of the land was also neglected and degraded, for the copra industry did not provide the promised economic blessings. In the period before the First World War when tropical products like rubber and copra were used for important industrial purposes, the plantation economy supplied those resources. Large-scale European dominated companies that employed contracted or indentured agricultural labour were not considered exploitative. The theory was that they provided employment for semi-illiterate, semi-skilled people who, when necessary, had the village to fall back upon in cases of economic downturn. The fallacy of this thesis is that the subsistence economy is not an economic safety net. In times of high population growth and poor governmental services people do not return to their villages. Rather, they make a poor life in squatter camps around regional towns and cities. This is now evident in both the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Secondly, Woodford saw himself as the creator of that glowing future. After all, he had written his own job description in 1890 when he stated: ‘I know of no place where firm and paternal government would sooner produce beneficial results than in the Solomons’ (Woodford 1890b: 23fn). His ownership of the future of the islands was understandable. But even for Woodford the Solomon
Islands was not a stepping-stone to career success. Men like Mahaffy, with well-established family backgrounds and a solid university education, more often ended their life in small outposts of civilisation. They too rarely made it to the top echelons. Mahaffy died early in the West Indies. Thomas Edge-Partington, an able man from an old establishment family, died in 1920 at the age of 36 in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Woodford spent a large part of his life in the islands, his health suffered and he was forced to spend long periods away from his wife and two sons. When he left the islands for the last time in July 1914 he was heading for a quiet retirement in rural England.

Woodford received notification from the Colonial Office on 8 January 1915 that his resignation from the post of Resident Commissioner had been officially accepted. In January 1914, communicating with Lewis Harcourt, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the High Commissioner Bickham Sweet-Escott acknowledged that Woodford’s original pension estimate may be raised due to ‘service of particular and extraordinary merit’. However he rejected this. He contended that Woodford was adequately compensated for his service in the islands but wrote: ‘Mr Woodford is on safer grounds in urging the climate of the Solomon Islands as a reason for his being granted a higher pension’. Based on Woodford’s final salary of £1,000 a year the pension was minutely, even pedantically, calculated at £466/13/4 a year (Sweet-Escott to Colonial Office 30 January 1914 WPHC 4/IV 183/1914). With less than extraordinary generosity it was raised by £33/6/8 a year to £500 a year (£140,000 a year in current values). This was considered to be higher than the rate originally proposed but one that Harcourt approved ‘to recognize the value of the special services which you have rendered in connection with the administration of the Protectorate from the first days of its establishment’. It was exactly half Woodford’s annual salary (Woodford papers PMB 1381/008k). Harcourt rejected the difficult and dangerous climate as justification for a pension increase and chose the recognition of special services option instead (Lambert to Woodford 8 January 1915 Woodford papers PMB 1381/008k). It had been a long, often arduous career.
Figure 41. Charles Morris Woodford wearing dress uniform and insignia of the Companion to the Order of St Michael and St George, July 1916.

Source: PMB Photo 56–014.
Woodford and his wife settled on a substantial country estate of 22 acres of pasture, gardens and woodlands called ‘The Grinstead’ (now known as ‘The Grinstead House Farm’) in Littleworth Lane near the village of Partridge Green in Horsham, West Sussex. Woodford purchased the house for £1,400 from the deceased estate of James Andrew Mack at auction in 1914 (Woodford papers PMB 1381/013; *The London Gazette* 12 December 1913: 9209). It is a fine country house with five bedrooms located at the end of a long carriage drive surrounded by gardens, an orchard and a small wood with ponds. From there he continued his interest in natural history (Woodford papers PMB 1381/021e). Along with other former colonial administrators he served for a period as Vice-President of the English Committee of the Melanesian Mission (Woodford papers PMB 1381/01, 1381/021e and 1381/032; Hilliard 1978: 256 fn84)). He was not an uncritical representative of the mission, for he decried its neglect of young missionaries who had to face overwork, poor housing, a difficult climate and ill-health (Hillard 1978: 149). He contributed articles on ethnographic interest to noted anthropological journals and planned a book on Solomon Islands history that never materialised. His contribution to the early development years in the Solomon Islands was significant. Heath (1979: 146–147), commenting on that period, wrote:
The Woodford years had seen the growth of European control from a one man symbol of empire to a flourishing, albeit small, colonial administration. Under Woodford’s direction, the Solomons had been largely pacified. Head hunting had disappeared and it was generally safe on most islands for Europeans to engage in trading or agriculture. By 1914 Woodford’s vision of a prosperous and growing plantation economy had been realised … However, the seeds of future difficulties had been planted in the generally prosperous and peaceful Protectorate … In one sense, the uncertainty of European titles was the result, ironically, of the shift in colonial policy away from protecting ‘native interests’ towards supporting European enterprise.

At the end of Woodford’s career as Resident Commissioner in 1915, the Solomon Islands remained a minor part of the wider British Empire. It had never been seriously considered for Crown Colony status. Economically it had not prospered. Socially it remained a small outpost of expatriate white colonial officials who ruled over a population of less than 90,000 people. Following the expansiveness of the Victorian era, the Edwardian period from 1901 to 1910 was one of consolidation leading to the devastating First World War. From the early-Victorian period Britain had climbed steadily to the pinnacle of Imperial power. By the early-20th century Britain had reached that apex of economic and political domination. Imperialism and expansionism had changed the entire social and economic fabric of the ‘Motherland’. For the national government, the main sources of income were income tax, property tax, legacy and succession duties, and post office receipts, including postage and telegraph services. The late-Victorian and Edwardian eras in England saw increases in real incomes and enfranchisement for all middle class men and many working class males, but not for women. The rising population only served to emphasise the inherent problems of social class and inequality. Nearly 87 per cent of the British people were classed as ‘struggling and poor’, ten per cent were comfortably middle-class and only 3 per cent rich or very rich (McGowan and Kordan 1981: 52). The population in England and Wales had increased to over 30 million, Scotland had about four million people but Ireland had lost nearly 80 per cent of its people to overseas migration. In the 50 colonies of the British Empire there was a staggering 345 million people (Butlin 2009: 50).

In the early-19th century Britain was an agricultural land that raised its own food. There were few large towns outside the main capital areas. By the turn of the 20th century Britain was industrialised, imported much of its food, and large cities had grown up, especially across the industrialised north. The main increases in national expenditure were on a more professional civil service and on an increasingly large army and navy serving in foreign regions. British colonies were important sources of raw materials but food imports were mostly sourced
from France, Germany, Russia and the United States rather than the colonies. Public transportation, especially the railway, had changed the landscape and steamers slowly replaced most sailing ships (Ireland 1901). By the latter part of the 19th century, long distance postal and telegraphic communications and the expansion of trade were the most obvious embodiments of the spirit of Western science in the powerful British Empire (Macleod 1993: 131).

Better transportation resulted in a dramatic fall in freight costs. Industrialisation at the centre of the Empire meant that raw products from the periphery states could now be imported more cheaply. Imperialism was partly generated by economic forces from within the metropole. The colonial empire served as an outlet for the surplus capital and produce that capitalism generated. This wage-labour based European capitalism led to the full development and economic predominance of market trade. The late-19th century saw the escalating volume, speed and intensity by which capital, knowledge, commodities, technology and people moved about the globe. The power of the Imperial government in London travelled outwards and downwards and supported the paramountcy of the West (Wolfe 1997). The numerous British colonies were socially, economically and psychologically tied to the apron strings of mother England.

The Australian colonies benefited from this economic expansionism. Australia was caught up in this rapid growth when trade increased and overseas finance was invested in service industries and the development of regional towns. It was in this period that the Queensland sugar plantation economy emerged (Graves 1993: 10). But to support this growth, capitalism required the necessary relationship between development and underdevelopment. Where did this geopolitical structure leave small, obscure protectorates like the Solomon Islands? When Britain and Australia industrialised, these Western economies changed socially and politically, but the marginalised tropical colonies remained non-industrial and producers of primary products where people remained poorly educated, contract labourers in unskilled or semi-skilled plantation employment. The Solomon Islands, like other colonies in the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific, were left with a colonial legacy of poor infrastructure and an urgent need for land reform. Inadequate health and education services were maintained by the missions. Internal migrant labour and a rising population created many social problems. Today, more than 30 years after independence, the Solomon Islands is still struggling to overcome with many of these problems. But despite its many problems, the Solomon Islands remain, in Woodford’s words, ‘these beautiful islands’.
Museum collections

Aoife O’Brien (2011) has made a comprehensive study of the collections made by Woodford and Mahaffy during their time in the Western Pacific. Her thesis also contains a valuable photographic catalogue of museum objects examined. In all, 545 objects in the British Museum provenanced to the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Samoa can be associated with Charles Morris Woodford (O’Brien 2011: 74, 113–176). One object in the British Museum has not been positively identified. Of these, 516 objects are from the Solomon Islands, the remaining 29 are from New Guinea, Fiji, The Ellice Islands (Tuvalu), Samoa, New Britain, Manus and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). Woodford collected ethnographic material as supplementary to his original natural history collecting and this is evident in the range of objects that he donated or sold to museums.

It is interesting to note the geographical distribution of the 516 objects from the Solomon Islands collections made by Woodford. He visited Rennell and Bellona Islands in 1906 at a time when little ethnological or natural history collecting had been done there. He later contributed a short paper on the islands (Woodford 1907) and one on the use of a ceremonial mace (Woodford 1910). His largest collection of artefacts from the Solomons comprises 94 objects from Rennell and 11 from Bellona. During the visit he made notes on a new species of Honey-eater endemic to the islands that he called Woodfordia superciliosa (North)(Woodford papers PMB 1290 Items 3/14, 5/4, 7/12, 2/13 and 6/1; Woodford 1916). It is not so surprising that he collected 72 objects from New Georgia considering his two trips to Roviana in 1886 and 1887 and the time spent during the punitive expeditions when objects were removed from raided villages. Woodford obtained 46 objects from Malaita, 25 from Ontong Java, 25 from Guadalcanal—most likely concentrated on the Aola district—and 23 from the Shortland Islands where he spent considerable time in 1886. He collected 15 objects from Bougainville that may have been obtained from Shortland Islanders, 15 from Sikiana that he visited in 1906 and the rest from Santa Cruz, Makira and Vella Lavella (O’Brien 2011: 74, 80).

The Woodford collection in the British Museum comprises 483 objects, mostly donated, to the museum although 10 objects were sold to the museum by a solicitor in 1906 for £10, and Mary Jane Woodford, his sister, sold 92 items to the British Museum in 1908 for £25. Prior to leaving the islands for retirement in 1914, Woodford dispatched a collection of artefacts from Tulagi to Charles Hercules Read at the British Museum (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 2/110). In 1915, now in retirement in Sussex, Woodford sold the Museum 44 items for £95. Harry Beasley was a private collector who established the Cranmore Ethnological Museum in Chislehurst, Kent in 1928 and a substantial collection of 118 objects collected by Woodford, but part of the Harry Beasley museum,
was sold to the British Museum for £100 in 1929 (O’Brien 2011: 80). Beasley’s museum collection was further sold off or donated on his death in 1939 (O’Brien 2011: 343; Carreau 2009). Woodford also sent 30 objects to the World Museum in Liverpool, 12 to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, 12 to the Australian Museum in Sydney, seven to the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and two objects to the Royal Geographical Society in London (O’Brien 2011: 74).

Mahaffy also made a valuable collection of ethnographic objects from the Solomon Islands and his collection is especially important for the association between Mahaffy and Graham Officer (Richards 2012). Their time spent together in the New Georgia area in 1901, documented in the Officer diaries, serves to emphasise the link between the Mahaffy collection in Dublin and the Officer collection in Melbourne. Mahaffy collected 530 objects according to O’Brien (2011: 95) although this includes the war canoe (tomoko) in the Museum of Victoria (MV X8042). O’Brien states this was donated to the museum, presumably through Officer, by Mahaffy. As this is one of the 600 objects brought back to Melbourne by Graham Officer it may more correctly be called part of his collection rather than from the Mahaffy collection. Apart from this war canoe, 519 objects were donated to the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin and 10 were sent to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Of this collection, 341 came from the Solomon Islands although 49 have no accurate provenance. The Solomon Islands collection comprises 98 objects from New Georgia, understandable given Mahaffy’s work centred on Gizo, but 32 have not been provenance to any specific island or area of the western Solomons. 52 objects come from Santa Cruz, 43 objects are from Bougainville and the Shortland Islands, 20 from Malaita, 18 are from Vella Lavella, and 10 from Ontong Java. The rest are smaller collections from other districts (O’Brien 2011: 101). Rhys Richards has recently published a new study of the collecting habits of Mahaffy and Officer, and an examination of the work undertaken by Arthur Hocart on Simbo. His provenancing of the canoe collected by Officer and housed in Museum Victoria to the village of Kumbokota, now Pienuna, on Ranongga establishes its origins and maker (Richards 2012).

Collections like those made by Woodford, Mahaffy and Officer grew out of the attitudes of the time that considered it the duty of colonial administrators, and officially sanctioned museum curators like Graham Officer, to engage in sourcing material culture objects. It was what men of science and education undertook. The concept of ‘salvage’ ethnology encouraged collecting from indigenous communities that were considered to be rapidly disappearing. For men like Woodford and Mahaffy collecting material culture was a way of having greater knowledge of the people (Schaffarczyk n.d.). Collecting and displaying objects promoted the idea that pacification and control of new territories was largely completed. With the removal of traditional weapons, charms and objects of
ritual newly pacified peoples were now part of a new regime, a new civilised Christianised colony. The display of traditional material culture emphasised the success of the economic and political mission.

The British Museum in particular was the exemplar institution where ethnographic materials of the colonial areas were displayed by geographical regions. The public visitors to these galleries were attracted by the exoticism of difference represented by these artefacts. Visitors defined their own European identity through contrast. The public was little interested in deeper understandings of the cultures that had created the objects (Owen 2006: 14). Artefacts illustrated the ‘dualistic perceptions of human nature’—them and us, superior and inferior—that underpinned ideas of Empire and Western progress. Ethnographic collections and displays in major museums supported the liberal progressivist philosophies of the West. These gradual social, political, and economic ideals emphasised that European cultures, with greater technological advancements, higher cultural values and moral structures, were moving towards Utopian states of perfection. Museum displays served both to support evolutionary typologies that promoted this progressive ideology as a scientific fact while educating the wider population about their place in society and nature (Owen 2006: 21). From these amassed displays it was possible for the British public to feel economically, culturally, politically, morally and socially superior to the peoples they colonised (Stanley 1989: 119). Now the very value of those collections, both artefact and photographic, is that they relate not only to the past, but to the present and, hopefully, to the future of the peoples of the Solomon Islands. Perhaps, the common humanity of mankind is best described by Barthes (1973 quoted in Eves 2006: 738): ‘Any classic humanism postulates that in scratching the history of men a little, the relativity of their institutions or the superficial diversity of their skins … one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature’.

Published papers on the Solomon Islands

In addition to the popular account of life in the Solomon Islands published in the *Popular Science Monthly* (Woodford 1889) and his book on the expeditions to the Solomon Islands made between 1886 and 1889 (Woodford 1890b) Charles Woodford published two important articles on his explorations. The first describes those made between 1886 and 1887 and the second details his travels in search of the landing places of the Spanish fleets under Mendaña. This expedition was undertaken in 1888. These articles were published in *The Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society* (Woodford 1888a, 1890c). As a result of these expeditions and their findings Woodford was awarded the Gill Memorial in 1890. He continued to contribute to scholarly journals until after retirement.
in 1915. Following the publication of *A Naturalist Among the Head-hunters*, the first article published was his account of the voyage to the Gilbert Islands on the labour vessel returning labourers to the northern islands (Woodford 1895).

Many articles contributed during his tenure as Resident Commissioner were short papers describing material culture published in *Man*, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. They are useful descriptive accounts of artefacts and cultural practices that would have informed museum curators in London. Woodford forwarded artefacts to the British Museum during his years in the islands and these pieces would have been useful background information (Woodford 1905, 1908a, 1908b, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1918, 1921 and 1922a). His account on the manufacture of shell money by women from the Langa-Langa lagoonal villages of northern Malaita was one of the first articles to examine this practice (Woodford 1908b; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 4/38). It is particularly important for Woodford sketched all the implements used for the manufacture of shell beads used in *Tafuli’ae* (*Bata*: Solomons Pijin). Lengths of 1.5 metres of shell money are still made today especially for bride wealth payment, compensation, or for general presentations to dignitaries. Woodford was particularly interested in Polynesian *tatu* patterns on Ontong Java (Woodford 1901), the manufacture of stone clubs (Woodford 1908a and 1910) and the use of bone for spear heads (Woodford 1918). He collected details of social customs such as totemism, witchcraft and magic (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Items 4/29–4/34). Using photographs published in *Man*, Woodford was able to get Hiqava to identify artefacts taken from Kolokongo (Kolikongo or Kalikoqu) on Nusa Roviana by Captain Edward Davis of HMS *Royalist* in 1891 and now housed in the British Museum (Woodford 1905).

Occasionally, Woodford had time to write a more personal descriptive piece on the geography or natural history of more isolated islands in the region such as Leueneuwa (Ontong Java) (Woodford 1906a and 1909a; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 3/34) and Sikaiana (Woodford 1906b and 1912; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 3/27, 2/121) and Rennell Island (Woodford 1907, 1910 and 1916a). He was in a position to be able to visit these outlying islands and fortunate to be senior enough for local people to be polite and respectful around him. In this way he was able to have people willingly recount origin stories, language and customs to him. A substantial paper on the canoes of the Solomon Islands was written for *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (Woodford 1909b) and very brief notes on the names for the parts of a canoe on Sikaiana (Woodford 1912; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 4/25). Like all early visitors to the islands, Woodford was impressed with the elegance and grace of the large canoes, especially of those from New Georgia and Makira, made from planks rather than dug-outs, neatly joined and beautifully decorated with nautilus, cowries and pearl shell. Woodford considered the construction
of the canoes of the Shortland Islands to be the neatest but gave the prize for decoration to those of New Georgia. He wrote: ‘It is difficult to understand how the natives were able, before they became acquainted with iron tools, to adze down the canoe plants to the requisite degree of thinness and shape them with the aid of only stone implements, but it appears from the descriptions … that they undoubtedly did so, and that the canoes have changed [in 1909] but little in type since the days of Mendaña’ (Woodford 1909b: 508).

It appears from this article that the tomoko confiscated in 1900 and used as a ‘police boat’, came from ‘an island near Oneavisi’ (Honiavasa Island next to Nusa Roviana) in the Roviana Lagoon. It was captured during the suppression of head hunting and in retaliation for a raid made at Pirihadi Bay in the southern Bugotu district of Isabel (Woodford 1909b: 511). The raid on Honiavasa was also part of a larger raid on the Kolokongo area (Kolikongo or Kalikoqu) of Nusa Roviana Lagoon led by Woodford, Mahaffy and his police. The raid on Kalikoqu was made on 21 January 1900. Mahaffy, Woodford and 20 police attacked the village at 5 o’clock in the morning in heavy rain. One man was killed and five wounded. The man killed was presumed to be the one who led the raid on Isabel Island, ‘and the canoe in which the raid was made was captured. It was a very fine specimen of a head hunting canoe, being nearly new, with a capacity of forty men’ (The Morning Bulletin [Rockhampton] 3 March 1900: 6). Perhaps because of the association with the earlier head hunting raid at Pirihadi, the illustrations in Woodford’s article drawn by Thomas Edge-Partington incorrectly call it a canoe from ‘Ysabel’ rather than from New Georgia (Woodford 1909: plates 41–44).

Woodford wrote that the police canoe was captured from Kalikoqu and ‘after its capture it was used at the Government Station at Gizo, but having become leaky and almost beyond repair, I offered to pack it and to deliver it in Sydney at my own expense, if it could be conveyed home from there to London for the British Museum’. Funds were not forthcoming and the canoe, with a good provenance and history, was bought by a dealer for a German museum collection (Woodford 1909b: 511; Jackson 1975: 77; The Morning Bulletin [Rockhampton] 3 March 1900: 6; The Brisbane Courier 27 February 1900: 6; O’Brien 2011: 88). Honiavasa was again raided in March 1901 and another tomoko confiscated (Jackson 1978: 127). Certainly the sight of numerous confiscated, and decaying, war canoes on the front beach at Gizo would have given the impression that the government was powerful, and that power was moving away from the chiefs towards the police and the administration.

The more substantial paper on Polynesian settlements in the southern islands was published by The Geographical Journal (Woodford 1916b; Woodford papers PMB 1381/031r) with a long discussion between contributing authors including Sir Basil Thomson, Alfred Cort Haddon, C. G. Seligman and Sidney Ray published following the paper (Thomson et al. 1916). Woodford maintained a close relationship with Ray and they corresponded for many years on topics
relating to Polynesian linguistics (Woodford papers PMB 1381/031). The paper on Polynesian settlements was presented at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society on 6 March 1916 and published following Woodford’s retirement in England. The paper was a more substantial contribution that included detailed accounts of European discovery of Ontong Java, Sikaiana and a shorter account of Rennell and Bellona Islands, as well as including photographs taken by missionaries George Brown, the Methodist, and Northcote Deck from the South Seas Evangelical Mission. Woodford (1922b) also contributed to the volume published by William Rivers on depopulation in Melanesia. His final paper (Woodford 1926) published in The Geographical Journal was a short piece containing notes on the Solomon Islands that were really only annotations to a paper on Spanish discoveries published in the journal by Rev W. G. Ivens (1926). This was the last paper published by Woodford, who died the following year. In all, he published 24 papers and one book on the material culture and cultural life of the Solomon Island people and the geography of the region.
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