SECTION C
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Sustained Contact and Early Settlement

An important period in the history of eastern New Guinea lies between the virtual completion of its coastal exploration by European navigators and the imposition of European government. Rowley has traced the history of the important influence of government on the New Guinea villager. Some people on the coasts and islands of New Guinea underwent sustained contact with Europeans for as long a period before European government was imposed on them as they have since the imposition of that government. It is this first period in the main that the documents in this section explore.

By the end of the eighteenth century enough had been discovered by European navigators about the shores of New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland and adjacent islands, reefs and waters to enable commercial maritime traffic to sail through the region with a fair assurance of safety. Contact between European ships' crews and the people of the coasts and islands contiguous to shipping routes changed from a transitory to a sustained form. For a period of almost a century of time before the assumption of political control by a European power, some people in coastal and island regions were in sustained contact with sea-borne Europeans of various nationalities. These people of the coasts and islands were thus exposed for a considerable period of time to European influences before any effective legal means to regulate the nature of the contact was imposed by any European government. Significant attitudes amongst the native peoples were created towards Europeans in this period.

Moreover, the Christian missions which might have been expected to influence relations between European and native were remote from New Guinea while sustained contact was occurring. New Guinea was low on the scale of missionary priority in the Pacific islands. It was not brought under permanently sustained missionary contact until the 1870's. The Christian missions entering New Guinea in this period followed the lines of entry already much used by commercial shipping, and Christian missionary contact ensued with people who had already absorbed European influences from a variety of sources. Missionaries in the Bismarck Archipelago and in Papua established themselves in these areas only a short time before permanent European settlers. Neither missionaries nor European government officials were brought into relationship with a people who had not already been brought under the influence of other Europeans. This had its effect on the task of both missions and government.

Part 1 of this section contains selected documents illustrating the process of sustained contact between the indigenous people of New Guinea and Europeans and the process of early European settlement, in particular, mission settlement. Part 2 illustrates some of the results of this sustained contact and early settlement. The documents have been selected not only to illustrate the themes but also to indicate the main world locations of New Guinea historical source material. New Guinea, in the period under examination in this section, attracted Europeans of many nationalities and who belonged to a variety of classes and callings. The records which they made of their actions relating to New Guinea are deposited around the world and the variety of such records is evident from the selection made.
The voyages of the navigator explorers into New Guinea waters were isolated events and contact between Europeans and the people of the coasts and islands was sporadic and transitory. In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, some peoples of New Guinea began to experience sustained contact with Europeans and this occurred because New Guinea, or at least certain parts of it, began to be influenced by the world-wide movement, the expansion of Europe overseas. This expansion brought the Portuguese into the Indonesian Archipelago in the sixteenth century, and later, the English and the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The movement of these Europeans through the archipelago tended to be from west to east, that is towards the western part of New Guinea. The same world-wide movement of European expansion brought the British into the

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1 For a chronological enumeration of these voyages see A. Wichman, Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu Guinea, Leiden, 1910
south Pacific Ocean at the end of the eighteenth century and was to bring other Europeans, the Germans and the French, for example, in the nineteenth century. All this was to have an effect, either direct or indirect, on the process of sustained contact in New Guinea. In some places in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sustained contact reached its ultimate of intensity with the attempted settlement of Europeans amongst the indigenous people. None of these attempts was successful in establishing permanent European settlement. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, sustained contact in some places did merge into successful permanent settlement.

In the history of sustained contact and early settlement in New Guinea three areas stand out in importance; the Vogelkop and Geelvink Bay in the north west; the region of Torres Strait and the southeast coast to the Louisiades; the Bismarck Archipelago in the north east. In the first area, the north west, sustained contact resulted from Dutch and British rivalry in the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago for the control of profitable tropical commodities and for control of lucrative Asian trade. This rivalry tended to manifest itself in a series of out-flanking movements towards western New Guinea. The attempt by Thomas Forrest in 1775 to establish a trading post and plantation in Dorei Harbour, Geelvink Bay, was one such movement. (B61) In 1793 Captain John Hayes of the Bombay Marine, English East India Company, succeeded in establishing a post on Dorei Harbour which he renamed Restoration Bay and this was maintained by a few officers and men for a period of two years. (B63) The main purpose of this venture was to acquire locally grown spices for delivery to Calcutta but in the course of urging the Company’s support for the settlement Hayes’ supporters stressed its value as a possible entrepot port on the newly established Port Jackson to China sea route. (B63) This was a reference to one of a number of sea routes through New Guinea waters which developed as a result of the founding of Sydney. (Pl. 45 and C1; C3) Further to the west a sea route through Dampier Strait between Waigeo Island and the north-west coast of the Vogelkop had been recognized as early as 1758 as a convenient passage for English ships sailing from the Indian Ocean to China. (B56)

In the nineteenth century renewed commercial rivalry between the British and the Dutch in the Indonesian Archipelago led to the establishment in northern Australia of British settlements, first on Melville Island in 1824 and at Raffles Bay in 1827 and later at Port Essington (P. 45) in 1838. The Dutch response to the first, affected New Guinea when in 1828 sovereignty was proclaimed over the south-west coast from 132° 44' E to 141° E. At the same time a government post was established at Triton Bay. The post, named Fort Du Bus, was manned by a military garrison consisting of thirteen European officers and men and twenty Indonesian soldiers and their families. The post was abandoned in 1836. The founding of the British settlement at Port Essington in 1838 was motivated by considerations similar to those which had led to the establishments at Melville Island and Raffles Bay, namely, to gain an outlet for articles of

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5D. C. Gordon, op. cit., p. 41

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PLATE 46: The shipping route through St George’s Channel in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century

Drawn by E. Ford
British manufacture in the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. A settlement in North Australia could attract Malayan bêche-de-mer fishers who would trade for British goods and so gain their entry to the Indonesian islands. The problem of British trade facing stiff customs duties in centres of Dutch control would thus be obviated. 3 This and other hopes for Port Essington did not succeed, but in striving to build up an entrepot for trade the British government gave high priority to improving the sea passage through Torres Strait. It is possible that Dutch action in 1848, asserting the claims of the Sultan of Tidore to all the territory of New Guinea west of 141° E, had a connection with the British maritime activity along the south coast of Papua. 8

The quest for a safe sea passage through the dangerous shoal waters of Torres Strait was pursued throughout much of the nineteenth century. The important Admiralty surveys of Captain Blackwood in H.M.S. Fly along the south coast of New Guinea in 1842-46 and of Captain Owen Stanley in H.M.S. Rattlesnake in 1848-49 were associated with this. In 1862 Governor Bowen of Queensland established a government station at Somerset on Cape York which was designed to act as a coaling station and as a port-of-refuge for ships using the Torres Strait. In 1873 the first regular steamship mail service began to use this route on the passage from Eastern Australia to Britain. 9 In response to this the government station at Somerset was moved to Thursday Island in order to supervise better the growing maritime traffic and also the developing pearling industry of the Torres Strait islands. The survey voyages of Captain Moresby in H.M.S. Basilisk in 1871 were connected with these developments and these led to important discoveries along the coasts of New Guinea. (B117; Plate 44)

In the Bismarck Archipelago the proximity of sea routes which ran between Eastern Australia and China and Bengal was the important factor influencing sustained contact of European and indigene. Whereas the north-west sea route led by indirect means only to sustained contact along the south coast of Papua, the sea routes through the Bismarck Archipelago led to direct, constant and sustained contact wherever they touched land at anchorages used for ships’ refreshment. (C1-C4) As the South Pacific Ocean was opened up for European commercial activity and for evangelization in the nineteenth century these shipping routes brought commercial enterprises and Christian missions into this part of New Guinea.

The development of the Pacific whaling industry in the nineteenth century had its effects in New Guinea. This industry at its height employed about four hundred whaling ships on the Pacific grounds. The majority of these came from the whaling ports on the eastern seaboard of the United States of America —Nantucket, New Bedford and Salem. British and Australian ships also worked the Pacific grounds for the sperm whale. There were three extensive whaling grounds in New Guinea waters (C5 to C8 and Pl. 47) and although there were larger and more important grounds in the central and north Pacific regions the New Guinea grounds performed a useful role in the pattern of what was essentially a seasonal industry. 10 There is evidence from Bougainville and Buka Islands and from New Ireland for an important connection between whaling and sustained contact. At the moment the evidence for a similar connection between the use of other New Guinea whaling grounds and sustained contact along the northern coast of the main island is lacking. There is no reason why such contact should not have occurred and why it should not have been as consistent as that between European whaleship crews and the coastal people of New Ireland and of Buka and Bougainville Islands. 11

The pattern of shipping routes through New Guinea waters explains the pattern of distribution of individuals who settled for significant periods of time amongst the indigenous people. New Guinea was not unusual amongst the Pacific Islands in acting as host to individual Europeans cast voluntarily or otherwise upon its shores. Some were shipwrecked mariners (C12), others were runaway convicts and there were also those who were attracted to New Guinea because it offered opportunities for original scientific research. (B43 to B55; C13, C14) All had some impact it seems on the people amongst whom they lived and they themselves were influenced by their experience of contact. (C114)

The evangelization of New Guinea commenced by missionaries advancing along the established shipping routes (compare Pl. 45 with Pl. 48). The first Christian missionaries to enter the field were those of the Society of Mary (Marists) in 1847. A plan to begin the New Guinea mission at Waigeo Island on the sea route

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4 Paul W. Van der Veur, op. cit., p. 11
5 D. C. Gordon, op. cit., p. 98
through Dampier Strait in north-west New Guinea was not pursued. (C15, C18) The Marist missionaries adopted the plan of sailing along the Sydney to China sea route as far as the southern Solomon Islands and reconnoring these as a base for further advance towards New Guinea. (C19) Later the advance to Woodlark Island and Rooke Island took place as the advantages for supply and communication of having mission stations sited along regular shipping routes was recognized. (C20)

The London Missionary Society (C32 to C51) advanced to New Guinea from the Loyalty Islands via the islands of Torres Strait. The choice of site for the beginning of the L.M.S. mission in New Guinea was connected with the use of Torres Strait as a regular sea route. (C32) Somerset on Cape York became the first headquarters of the New Guinea mission and Captain Moresby’s survey in H.M.S. Basilisk along the south coast of New Guinea and his discovery of the China Strait led the L.M.S. into Port Moresby in 1873 and later to the eastern extremity of the island.

The Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (C52 to C70) illustrates above all the connection between direction of evangelical advance into New Guinea and the pattern of existing shipping routes. The Rev. George Brown in 1875 took his mission party of Fijian and Samoan teachers along a shipping route that had been in use for about 85 years by ships on the Sydney to China run. He established his mission headquarters at a refreshment port (Pl. 46) which had been used for that purpose for a similar period of time. The people amongst whom he began his work had been in contact with Europeans for three generations and some could speak English. (C107)

A feature of Christian missions in New Guinea common to them all was the choice of an island for the beginning of evangelical effort. So the Marists chose Woodlark and Rooke Islands in 1847. In preliminary planning Waigeo Island had been considered. (C15, C18) The L.M.S. placed its first teachers on Darnley and Murray Islands and the Wesleyan Methodists began their work first on the Duke of York Island. All these islands were on established sea routes with proven safe anchorages, and ease of supply and communication were considered the advantages of an island site by at least one mission leader. (C18) Bishop Epalle stated these reasons and also expressed the idea that an island people could be ‘mastered’ (C18) and from such a firm base an advance to the larger land masses could be undertaken. 12

By the end of 1886 there were five different missionary groups at work in New Guinea. Besides those already mentioned there was a Lutheran mission established near Finschhafen (C72 to C74) and at Geelvink Bay a station of the Utrecht Mission Society which had been established in 1885 was still working in the same area. (C71) Evangelization within the Vicariate Apostolic of Melanesia and Micronesia was the responsibility of the missionaries of the Sacred Heart who entered New Britain in 1882 and established a station on Yule Island, Papua, in 1885. (C29 to C31) Christian mission work in parts of Polynesia had been notable for bitter rivalry among the different sects. In New Guinea this situation did not arise. The Protestant missions were well separated from one another and the L.M.S. and the Wesleyan Methodists were careful not to let the position arise in New Guinea which had marred their relationship in Samoa. There is evidence that the L.M.S. was perturbed over the intrusion of the Sacred Heart mission into Papua and the government of British New Guinea tried to regulate the situation by marking out separate spheres of operation. This was not achieved and Protestants and Roman Catholics worked in close proximity to one another but with little evidence of rivalry. The size of the task in New Guinea accounted no doubt for this.

In the second half of the nineteenth century New Guinea attracted the attention of groups of speculators and would-be colonists around the world. English, French, Italian, Russian, 13 colonial Australians and New Zealanders14 were planning colonial ventures for New Guinea. Of a large number of schemes put forward at various times only two reached the stage of implementation. One of these was devised in Sydney in 1871 by the New Guinea Prospecting Association. An expedition sailed for New Guinea in 1872 but its ship the Maria was wrecked on a reef in the Coral Sea. (C80, C81) The other was more successful insofar as some hundreds of intending colonists did reach their destination in New Ireland. The Marquis de Rays succeeded over a period of two years, 1880-1882, in transporting several hundred colonists from Europe to the southern part of New Ireland and in establishing some of these for short periods of time on the shores of Port Breton. (C95 to C106) In all these schemes the attraction of New Guinea was the availability of cheap or unoccupied land, a seemingly fertile soil for the cultivation of tropical produce, possible mineral wealth and an indigenous manpower for a labour force. The schemes need to be looked at against the background of the intending colonists’ home countries. In France, for example, the policies of the Third Republic as administered by Jules Ferry against the religious teaching orders brought the response of the missionaries of the Sacred Heart to the request to go out to the colony at Port Breton.15 The concept of a free, Catholic colony with a conservative social order appealed to those who rejected all that the Third

13 The Nicholas de Miklosho-Maclay Papers, 1863-1888, Mitchell Library, MSS. Newspaper Cuttings
14 ibid., Mitchell Library, MS. Vol. 4, item 11, draft of letter, Miklosho-Maclay to Sir Arthur Gordon, dated, Melbourne, 1887
Republic stood for. To the poor of Western Europe the terms of settlement of the Marquis de Rays’ scheme must have looked like opportunity. Similarly, social and economic conditions in the countries of origin of other colonization schemes are able to explain the attractiveness of New Guinea to their promoters and subscribers.

The effect of the ephemeral success of the Marquis de Rays’ scheme was to focus the attention of the British and Australian governments on the area and in the case of the latter no doubt had its connection with the events of 1884. Certainly the attempt to colonise southern New Ireland brought about the re-occupation of the Vicariate Apostolic of Melanesia and Micronesia after its relinquishment over twenty-five years.

So often the Marquis de Rays’ attempt to colonise Melanesia is dismissed as little more than a fraudulent scheme planned for the enrichment of its promoter. In fact four expeditions were despatched across the world and reached their intended destinations without mishap. These expeditions did not have the resources of any government on which to draw. Indeed they had to contend with the opposition of government to their leaving Europe at all. At least one observer commented on the generosity shown by the promoters in supplying equipment to the colony although another could remark on its unsuitability for the conditions of southern New Ireland.

The Marquis de Rays’ greatest error of judgement was his choice of site for the central point of his colony. Here, like others before him who planned the strategy of entry into New Guinea, he followed the line of the established sea routes and chose a known refreshment anchorage used by mariners and in the centre of an extensive unclaimed territory. (C97) Certainly the publicity used to attract subscribers to the scheme was inaccurate but not fraudulently so. The unsuitable location of the colony, poor leadership, the extended line of supply were the main reasons for failure. In the history of organised European colonial schemes of the nineteenth century however, the free colony of Nouvelle France was one only of a number of failures of attempted colonization in tropical areas.

In addition to crews of ships plying the New Guinea sea lanes, whalmen, castaways, scientists, missionaries and would-be colonists, all important in the history of sustained contact, were those who went to New Guinea for economic gain. There was never a large influx of Europeans into New Guinea, attracted there by any one valuable commodity. The hopes of great mineral wealth, encouraged by a showing of gold near Port Moresby in 1877, were never borne out in our period. Rather a number of naturally occurring commodities, not one of them (except Bird of Paradise feathers) peculiar to New Guinea, were exploited by European traders and entrepreneurs. Béche-de-mer for the China market was collected on the shores and reefs and after copra was the next most valuable commodity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Copra which came to be the most valuable commodity was first of all gathered by the indigenes from their own trees on their own land and exchanged with European traders for manufactured goods. This kind of trading was going on in the Bismarck Archipelago in the 1870s and in 1875 the first trader took up residence at Matupit on Blanche Bay, New Britain.

Other products, trochus shell, tortoise shell, cedar wood, coconut fibre and pearl shell also played a part in European interest in the New Guinea economy. Some necessitated the close and sustained contact of European entrepreneur and native. For instance, béche-de-mer required at least tolerance from the indigenous people of the coasts and islands, and sometimes the co-operation of the people was required wherever processing works had to be set up. Traders in other commodities had to meet indigenous people in the market place, a contact conducive to mutual respect or to mutual antagonism.

Copra as the staple product in some parts of New Guinea, for example in the Bismarck Archipelago, led to the ultimate step in sustained contact, the buying of land by Europeans and the production of copra by plantation culture. Europeans who took this step became an important group of permanent European settlers in New Guinea. Together with missionaries, resident traders, and after 1884 in British New Guinea and German New Guinea, with government officials respectively, they made up the small European expatriate community. By 1887 the points of concentration for this community were Port Moresby, Blanche Bay (New Britain) and Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula.

In pursuit of their religious, economic or governmental aims in New Guinea, Europeans bought land from indigenes identified by them as the owners of the soil. (C92 to C94) In some parts of New Guinea this process was more rapid and widespread than in others. For example in the region of Blanche Bay the buying of land by Europeans seems to have been more rapid and widespread than anywhere else in New Guinea before the entry of government. The capability of the area for copra production was a reason

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17For example, the British settlements in northern Australia; the ‘New Australia’ colony in Paraguay; South Australian settlement schemes in the Northern Territory.
for a rapid alienation of native land on the shores of Blanche Bay. (C85, C89) Even in the early stages of land alienation here and on the Duke of York Islands there is evidence of misunderstanding between the original possessors of the soil and the expatriate purchasers. (C92, C93)

By 1886 there were three places in eastern New Guinea which had European communities living in permanent settlements. These were at Port Moresby, Blanche Bay in New Britain and at Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula. Here lived a handful of people remote from the centres of European civilization and facing the extreme difficulty of living in a malarial area. Malaria was a constant presence to most of them but in the nineteenth century the cause of it was not known. Little allowance was made in dress or in housing for a tropical climate. Gradations in comfort in housing ranged from a fair degree of comfort as with the household of Emma Forsyth (C87) through the austerity of a Wesleyan Methodist missionary’s house, to the fairly primitive conditions of a single male trader living by himself in a remote place. Only in 1886 were rudimentary services, such as a regular mail service from Australia and a town water supply, beginning to appear in Port Moresby. It was not very much for a European from a centre of civilization but even the barest possessions of the least materialistic European were without doubt a wonder of wealth to the indigenous observer living in close and sustained contact with the expatriate community.

**SHIPPING ROUTES AND WHALING GROUNDS IN NEW GUINEA WATERS: DOCUMENTS C1 to C11**

The development of shipping routes and whaling grounds in New Guinea waters in the nineteenth century was important in the growth of sustained contact between Europeans and the indigenous coastal peoples of the islands. The position of New Guinea lying athwart the direct sea route between the east coast of Australia and East Asia meant that her waters were traversed regularly by sailing ships from 1788 onwards. (Pl. 45; 46) Ships, seeking a return cargo for Europe after unloading at Sydney, sailed to China or Bengal by the fastest and safest route. In the development of the Pacific whaling industry New Guinea waters were fished for the sperm whale in three extensive whaling grounds. (Pl. 47)

The voyages of Carteret (1767; B57) and Bougainville (1768; B58; B126) through New Guinea waters provided basic information for the first ships making the passage from Sydney to China or Bengal. Shortland (1788; B40; B41) and Hunter (1791; B102) added to this in more detailed sailing directions which were published. Thereafter as the various routes through New Guinea waters were delineated by ships’ captains new navigational details were included in the Sailing Directions published at frequent intervals throughout the nineteenth century.¹

By the beginning of the nineteenth century three routes north-eastwards from Sydney towards China were being used regularly. The easternmost route avoided New Guinea waters and swept out east of the Loyalty Islands and the New Hebrides and then north to cross the Equator west of the Gilberts. The route west of this passed about mid-way between the coast of Australia and New Caledonia, skirted the western side of the Solomons, then followed the eastern coast of New Ireland. (B105). A still more western route skirted the Louisiade Archipelago, went to the west of the Solomons and thence made the passage of St. George’s Channel between New Britain and New Ireland. Variations of the two inner routes could be the passage of Bougainville Strait between Bougainville and Choiseul Island or the passage of Dampier Strait between New Guinea and New Britain. The latter passage was a difficult one and does not appear to have been used very much.

The choice of route depended on the season of the year and possibly on the type of ship. Large and fast ships used the outer easternmost route, seeking as far as possible the open sea where maximum sail could be maintained with safety. Smaller ships chose the shorter inner routes, particularly where a landfall was desired for the purpose of refreshment. The route using St. George’s Channel was the best for this purpose. (Pl. 46) In practice the two easternmost routes were the most frequently used. The dangers of the route through Torres Strait precluded its regular

¹For example, James Horsburgh, *Sailing Directions etc.*, published in six editions between 1809 and 1852.
use until the second half of the century following the surveys of Blackwood (1845) and Owen Stanley (1849) and even then the dangers of its navigation remained formidable.

New Guinea waters were important too in the first half of the nineteenth century in the Pacific whaling industry. There were three important whaling grounds adjacent to New Guinea. (Pl. 47) The most extensive of these was on the northern coast of the main island on either side of the 140° east longitude. Killings on this ground were made from October to November. Another important ground stretched from the northern tip of New Ireland to Bougainville in the Solomons east of the islands and this was fished in February and March. Another ground on the north-east coast of the main island was used in the season October to January.

The New Guinea whaling grounds were used probably in conjunction with whaling in the northern Pacific and the central Pacific. In the season April to September the coast of Japan and the Japan grounds were used. For the remainder of the year the On the Line ground which lay on either side of the Equator across the central Pacific was used. The New Guinea grounds which were fished in the same season could be used as ancillaries to this large and important ground.

Evidence for sustained contact between European mariners and whaling ship crews and coastal people of the New Guinea islands is clear for some areas. The people of New Ireland and the Duke of Yorks, of Buka and Bougainville were brought into sustained contact because of the proximity of shipping routes and whaling grounds to them. Certain refreshment points along the shipping routes, Gower’s Harbour (Port Praslin or Port Breton) on the southern tip of New Ireland and Port Hunter in the Duke of Yorks were used from the late eighteenth century onwards by ships making the passage of St. George’s Channel. The eastern coast of New Ireland was also used as a refreshment point, the people coming out to the ships in canoes. Evidence for contact with the coastal people of the main island by whalers using the north coast grounds is not known but there is no reason why it should not have been as sustained as that in the Bismarck Archipelago. Parkinson says that Bougainville men were forced to serve as crewmen on whaling ships and that the bloodthirsty reputation of the Bougainville islanders resulted from this practice.²

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²Richard Parkinson, Dreissig Jahre in der Süßsee, trans. N. C. Barry, 1926, pp. 415-6

Plate 49: Monsignor Jean-Baptiste Epalle, titular Bishop of Sion and first Vicar Apostolic of Melanesia and Miconesia
Mitchel Library

C1  New South Wales and the China Trade, 1812

Up until 1833 the East India Company held the monopoly of British trade with China. The following form of permit was commonly issued to ships wishing to obtain a return cargo to England after bringing convicts or government stores to New South Wales. The nearest place to obtain such a cargo was Canton or Bengal and shipping routes near or through New Guinea waters resulted.

Your letter of the ... tendering the Ship ... of ... Tons which has been engaged by the Transport Board to carry Convicts to New South Wales, to bring home a Cargo for India or China on the Company's Account having been laid before the Court of Directors of the East India Company and the Court having taken the same into consideration I am directed to acquaint you the Court having resolved to engage the Ship ... to bring home a Cargo from China on the Company's Account at a freight of sixteen Pounds sixteen shillings per Ton for the Tonnage delivered into the Company's Warehouses in London and in every other respect the terms and conditions which were shewn you in the Office of the Clerk to the Committee of Shipping.

SOURCE: East India Company Records, India Office Library, Letter, W. Ransay (Secretary) to ... dated, East India House, 20 February, 1812. Microfilm, East India Company Records, reel 1, No. 105, Research School of Pacific Studies, Canberra

C2  Port Jackson towards Bengal via St George's Channel, 1800

In May 1800 the East India Company ship Friendship sailed from Port Jackson for Bengal and went by Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island, Anamot in the New Hebrides, Stewart Island (Sikaiana), Bougainville Island to enter St. George's Channel on 10 June 1800. The log book entries given here are typical of those of many ships making the passage through New Guinea waters, entries being short, unadorned and to the point.

11 JUNE 1800
At noon the Duke of York's Island between New Britain and New Ireland.

12 JUNE 1800
Procured a number of coco nuts and plantains from the natives of Duke of York Island. Spoke the Walker Whaler—Captain Nichol. At noon the Mother and Daughter bore N B N 4 leagues...

18 JUNE 1800
At 2 P.M. a number of natives came off from one of the Admiralty Islands from whom we got many trifles and they were very friendly. At 7 P.M. we passed to leeward of a dangerous reef of rocks. We were alarmed by the roaring of the breakers. Lat. 2°50'S. Long. 146°55'E.

SOURCE: East India Company Records, Log Books, Log of the ship Friendship, Port Jackson towards Bengal, May-June, 1800, microfilm, Research School of Pacific Studies, A. N. U., Canberra, M. 106

C3  Sailing Directions for New Guinea Waters, 1811

The Best Route from Port Jackson toward Hindoostan, (when that by Torre's Strait is not to be adopted), seems to be round New Guinea, then through the Pitt's Passage and Java Sea, or out through the Ombay Passage into the open sea in time of war; which route, like the other, ought only to be followed when the S. E. monsoon is prevailing, to the the southward of the equator.

A ship intending to proceed by the route round New Guinea, may from Van Diemen's Land or from Port Jackson, steer to the E. N. E. and N. E. until in longitude about 160° E. then to the northward, keeping nearly on the meridian with the S. E. trade. A good look out will be requisite in the vicinity of the islands or dangers that are situated near the track, and as dangers probably exist, not
yet discovered, a good look out ought never to be omitted.

When latitude 23° S. is approached, the prudent navigator will be more particularly on his guard, for several dangerous reefs lie between latitude 23½° and 18° S. and it is probable that other unknown dangers may exist in their neighbourhood, in that part of the ocean formed between New Caledonia and the opposite coast of New Holland.

Having got into latitude 13° or 14° S. a N. Westerly course should be steered for the entrance of St. George's Channel, formed betwixt New Ireland and New Britain, taking care to give a birth to the western coast of Bougainville's Island, and the shoals that block it to a considerable distance. The westernmost of these coral shoals are in latitude 6° 11' S. longitude 154° 22' E. but there are others to the southward, and also to the northward, contiguous to Winchelsea's, or Bouka Island.

Cape St. George, in latitude 4° 54' S. longitude 152° 59' E. is the southern promontory of New Ireland, and as the current often sets in North and Westward when near the southern coast of New Britain, it is prudent for ships bound through St. George's Channel to keep well to the eastward in steering for the Cape, and to round it pretty close. If a supply of wood and water is wanted, it may be got at Gower's Harbour, Carteret's Harbour or at Port Hunter.

Gower's Harbour, situated a little way within Cape St. George, is formed between the shores of New Ireland and Wallis Island, called Marteaux by the French, having a small green island fronting the southern entrance. The depths are from 46 to 30 fathoms in this harbour or gut, which is about ½ a mile wide. There is also anchorage on the North side of the West point of Wallis Island, in 28 or 30 fathoms in Turtle Bay; but the two coves opposite to the North point of this island, are the most convenient places to moor, and procure water.

The easternmost, called English Cove, has a brook of fresh water that falls into it, and they lie close to each other.

Carteret's Harbour, situated about 2 leagues to the N. Westward of Wallis Island, is not easily discerned unless a ship keep near the shore; it being formed by a concavity in the coast, and Cocunot Island at the entrance being low, is obscured by the adjoining high land of New Ireland.

Leigh's Island is small, and lies near the South end of Cocunot Island; betwixt the former and Booby Rock, fronting the southern mouth of the harbour, is the passage in, by the South channel. The North channel, is formed between the western point of the harbour and the N. W. end of Cocunot Island, and both channels are narrow, although there is plenty of room inside, a ship may anchor in 25 or 30 fathoms soft mud, close under the North side of Cocunot Island, and be well sheltered. Wood is got on this island, and very good water conveniently, on the coast of New Ireland, to the northward of the anchorage; but this harbour affords no other refreshments.

The latitudes of the anchorage 4° 48' S., longitude 152° 46' E. variation 7° E. The tide flows once in 24 hours, and rises about 6 feet.

Port Hunter, in latitude 4° 7½' S. is a small bay formed at the N. W. part of the Duke of York's Island, where a ship may anchor in 20 or 25 fathoms soft ground, within ½ cables length of the shore; but farther in, the bottom is not good. Fresh water is got on the East side of the bay, where it issues out of the front of a high bank, very close to the sea; and it should be filled from ½ ebb to ¾ flood for the tide rises about 6 feet, and flows up to the place from whence the water spouts.

A ship touching here for water, ought to cover the water-
C4 Sailing Directions for the Passage of St George's Channel, 1816

The following sailing directions were based upon the voyage of Captain Hogan in the Marquis Cornwallis in 1796 from Port Jackson to Canton—by way of St George’s Channel. The route of the journey was as follows—Port Jackson, Norfolk Island, New Hebrides, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands and Shortland’s Straits.

On the 8th of July Captain Hogan descried New Ireland and on the 9th New Britain. Several canoes and a great number of natives were seen on the sandy beaches of New Britain, as well as on York Isle, on the south-west point of which (a projecting cliff) a very stout man stood waving to them with an instrument such as that described by Governor Hunter, in use among their people of consequence. Another man stood in the water, below him, with a green bough waving to them also to come near. “Did I want water”, adds the Captain, “I would certainly prefer Port Hunter, on this isle, to any other place, for a supply of that article. I saw this forenoon many fires on the coast of New Ireland, which appears a ridge of mountains, as far as I have hitherto seen of it. But New Britain, to all appearance, corresponds with Old Great Britain; the land appears good, and the country beautifully formed, well wooded, and I believe watered, from the number of fine valleys, rising ridges, and hillocks inland. I saw about 200 of the natives dancing and playing round a large fire on the beach, which I suppose they made in consequence of the great numbers assembled to see us pass by. I also saw two of their very large canoes under sail going along shore. Since opening St George’s Channel, I have experienced a very strong current to the westward, by which we have been set since yesterday noon (the 8th) 19 miles more than the account gives. The Latitude of Cape St George was found to be 4°52’ South—its longitude 153°11’. E. Duke of York’s Isle—0°49’ South Ditto 152°42’ E. By Earnshaw’s Time-Keeper.

Coming out of St George’s Channel, the ship pursuing her course to the westward, saw, on the 14th July, the Portland Isles, laid down by Governor Hunter in Latitude 2°30’ South and longitude 148°8’ East and sailed along the north coast of New Guinea, the high land of which was seen on the 21st bearing S. S. E.

Source: The Oriental Navigator or Directions for Sailing to, from and upon the coasts of, the East-Indies, China, Australia, etc. Composed for the use of ships Trading in the Indian, Malayan, and Chinese Seas; and for those engaged in the Fisheries of the Pacific Ocean, etc., London, 1816, pp. 67-8

C5 European Contact with the People of Buka and Bougainville, 1840

The following four documents are made up of extracts from the log and private journal of Dr D. Parker Wilson, who compiled it during a voyage as ship’s surgeon on board the London whaleship Gypsy on a voyage between 23 October 1839 and 19 March 1843. In the course of the voyage over approximately 3½ years the Gypsy worked the whaling grounds of the north Pacific Ocean, of the central Pacific and the New Guinea ground off New Ireland, Buka and Bougainville Islands. A significant proportion of the total of 71 whales caught was made up of whales from operations in New Guinea waters.


The natives of Bougainville seldom or ever come off to the ships, afraid to venture near vessels the like of which have vomited forth lightning and death! The natives of Bouka it is, who come off and by treating them fairly a pretty constant supply of refreshments can be depended on while cruising there, a desideratum in a long cruise in rainy, wet weather and a hot, exhausting climate.

There are the Straits of Bouka, a tortuous channel, and narrows formed by the two islands of low land, at the west part of the head of the Bay. It is beset with large shoals and is not navigable. Through a strong current sets into the Bay to the eastward, running out to the S. E. In consequence, ships drift towards Bougainville and are placed in considerable jeopardy as a long, heavy swell sets in from the N. E. at all times, heaving the ship towards the land and opposed to the current. In this manner a Sydney Whaler was lost in this Bay and abandoned by her crew. She was speedily taken possession of by the natives and plundered. Subsequently to that it was to be the custom with vessels from that Port, to fire at natives on approaching the ship in their canoes, sinking them, and wounding and killing the natives! Owing to that they were deterred from coming off to the ships, a serious drawback as pigs are scarce on New Ireland, and vegetables obtained with much risk and trouble. Now, however, they venture off but approach with caution, but having once become satisfied no harm is intended them, they come off whenever there is an opportunity.

C6 Sailing Ships off New Ireland, 1840

Light winds and clear. Running along the north side of New Ireland as far as Cape St. Mary. At noon about 4 miles off shore, sent 1 and 3 boats (White and Smith) on shore to trade, being furnished with iron hoop and axes for that purpose. They got abundance of taro and yams, bananas, plantains, mangoes and but one pig. They could obtain no more, though proffered an axe. The third mate (White) ventured ashore (although not deemed altogether safe); he placed himself under the protection of a chief and was introduced to his wife and child and to some other sable damsel with whom he cohabited at the cost of a common clasp knife. The women held a leaf, bunch of grass or small piece of tappa to hide their shame. As for the men, they had none and therefore they were naked, the more comfortable in so hot a climate. The boats returned at 4 p.m. At 10.30 a.m. two sail seen to the east. At 5 p.m. spoke to Barque *Onyx* (Capt. Brown) of London, 16 months out, 650 barrels of Sperm Oil (Owners, ... and Cruikshank). The master supped with us and [we] learned that the other ship is the Barque *Kitty* (Benson) of London, 24 months out, 1,050 barrels of oil. Capt. Brown when he has got 1,000 barrels of Sperm Oil goes to Sydney and from thence freights it home and returns to sea for more. He had lost several men from fever andague and was obliged to put four of his men ashore at some Dutch port owing to their violent and outrageous conduct. Captain Brown, the previous voyage, lost his ship, the *Gladstone*, on Ocean Island upon a reef which extends some distance from the island. It was about 11 at night when she struck before she could be veered. They built a boat and were 14 days at sea when they fell in with an American ship and were taken to Woako Id.

Light inconstant winds and clear weather; the two barques in sight. Sent letters brought by us from England on board the *Kitty*. Thermometer 85°; the land bears S. by E. and W. N. W. Captain Brown informed us that the *Caroline* and one other Sydney craft had been at anchor in Gower’s Harbour (4°47’ S., 152°49’ E.) which is close to Cape St George, the east point of New Ireland, to procure wood and water, and there 14 of the crew of the *Caroline* deserted her and 4 other men from another ship, all from Sydney, probably runaway convicts afraid to return. They have formed a settlement near the *Gower*. As there were but few natives thereabouts.

It is by such worthless and reckless characters that the numerous islands in the tropical seas become peopled with white men and are the first to reconcile the dark savage to hold a friendly intercourse with the white. Such is the benefit they confer and eventually it paves the way to this civilization. But then what fatal habits they introduce among them! It is startling to contemplate the ultimate fate of numerous island natives who have acquired a taste for European vices! Rum and tobacco and disease! Ah! there’s the rub: more powerful means and the destruction of the savage could not be devised, nor any more pernicious and fatal, being so contrary to their simple modes of life and obnoxious to a stamina never subjected to exciting agents.


C7 A Comment on the Likely Effects of Sustained Contact, New Ireland, 1840

Light winds and fine. At 7 a.m. the 1st and 3rd boats were sent ashore to trade with the natives. Each boat had an anchor and warp, two muskets and cartridges. They had orders to anchor off shore with the boats, and not to venture among the natives. They were furnished with iron hoop and a few axes, the latter to buy pigs with. At 3 p.m. the boats returned with plenty of taro, yams, bananas, plantains and a few cocoanuts, also two small pigs. These latter must be scarce among them as there were but few to be seen and not easily parted with. There was one Englishman seen ashore. He had left a Sydney vessel along with three more who had since gone away in ships. Some of the natives spoke broken English which they had learnt from runaway sailors, a number of whom (twelve or more) had formed a settlement at Gower’s Harbour, where there are few or no natives.

Stated it was a feast day with the natives who were going to have a dance (which are the most lascivious and disgusting sights imaginable) and then a fight; whether in sham or earnest I know not. I rather suppose if they once began whirling their clubs about each other’s heads, sundry stunning blows would follow and a fierce contest result. Their wars must be decided by personal encounter as I have not observed any bows or arrows or slings among them, only spears, which they certainly dart with wonderful precision and force.

Several natives ashore were observed parading the beach with a musket thrown over their shoulder. Already are they stooping before the invincible power of civilized man. They now crave for muskets and powder and tobacco! The last great step is yet to be made. Rum has not, as yet, obtained footing amongst them. Soon I surmise it will, in the shape of Aquardente and then their fall will be certain. From being fierce and barbarous they will become meek and servile. All their native ferocity and indulgence will vanish under the poignant craving for rum, tobacco and powder!! How inescapable are the ways of God! That the greatest evils to man should yet work out eventually the civilization of the heathen, and the instrument of their introduction and origin of their conversion should be a sailor, a good-for-nothing else.

20 DECEMBER 1840
Light wind and thick heavy weather. Finbacks, grampus, blackfish and porpoises have been seen lately.

21 DECEMBER
Moderate breezes and cloudy. P.M. squalls, rain and thicker, very dull. We are off the north end of Bougainville. Westerly current since we came here.

22 DECEMBER
Light winds and calms; sometimes thick and squally with rain.

23 DECEMBER
Light variable winds. Last night it rained in torrents and the lightning and thunder flashed and pealed tremendously. Saw the Vigilant and Serigapatam in the Bay close under the land. The former made signals for our skipper to go on board but (he) would not. P.M. Captain Courtney of the latter ship came aboard in his boat to enquire for letters. He is very young, middle size and thin. Stated he was out 24 months with 1,600 barrels of Sperm Oil.

24 DECEMBER
Light airs and calms; both ships in sight.

25 DECEMBER
Light winds, cloudy, gloomy and rainy; the Vigilant is to leeward, both evidently desirous to speak to us, but it would not do. Captain Gibson is rather an unsocial and reserved character! In England it is a day of rejoicing. With us all days are alike. Christmas Day: how dull to be sure!

26 DECEMBER
Moderate breezes and cloudy. The two ships to leeward about 2 leagues off. The Vigilant with her signals flying for whales and her boats lowered, got whales and is hove to with her main yard aback. The Serigapatam has also her signals flying and is in chase of whales. But we did not go near them. We waited upon a wind and stood away! Rain and squalls towards evening.

27 DECEMBER
Gentle breeze, cloudy, gloomy weather. Whales observed in the Bay close inshore. Lowered the four boats which chased them in company with the three boats from the Barque Harriet (Bunker) of London who had that day hove in sight. The mate came aboard to ask for letters. I learned that they had been out from England 19 months and had got 280 barrels of Sperm Oil!

The whales were going quick out to the north point of the Bay so that the boats could not get near. The fifth lowering and not a whale got!

30 DECEMBER
Light winds and cloudy. At 2 p.m. saw Sperm Whales off the N.W. point of Bouka, not far from the land. Lowered the four boats. The 1st boat (White) fastened to a whale, when the line broke or was cut; darted an iron into another whale when it stoved the boat which returned on board and was twisted in at the waist. The 3rd boat (Smith) fastened again to the same whale and killed it and it was 'cut in' the same day; a stout 'school' whale. The other took off. At 6 the 2 and 4 boats returned from the chase unsuccessful. The two ships passed us.

31 DECEMBER
Light winds and clear. P.M., occasional squalls and rain. Finished 'boiling out' 24 barrels of oil. The last day of the year 1840.


C9 A Ship's Passage through St George's Channel, 1842

The Schooner, Lady of St Kilda, sailed from Port Phillip on 2 August 1842 and reached Macao in China on 18 October of the same year. Approximately half way through the voyage the ship watered at English Cove near the Southern tip of New Ireland. Horsburgh's 'Direction Book' was used (see ship's log entry for 18 September 1842) and the route was via Lord Howe Island, along the 160°E. meridian of longitude to a position about mid way between New Caledonia and Australia and then a direct course for Cape St George avoiding the Louisiade Archipelago and the Solomon Islands. After leaving St George's Channel the course lay N. W. parallel to, and within sight of, the coast of New Guinea towards the Halamaheras. See also, the Argus, Melbourne, 14 June 1913.

SATURDAY, 27 AUGUST 1842
At 8. squally—wet. Cape St George bearing North dist. 4 miles and shortened sail with the intention of watering ship in Gower's Harbour.

Midnight—raining in torrents with thunder and lightning. At 2 a.m. ... for the Cape.

Calm with high rippling caused by the current setting S. W. about 2 1/2 miles per hour.

At 6 close in with Cape St. George saw Green Island and bore away for Gower's Harbour. At 8 saw a Brig in shore—fired a gun. The Brig then sent his boat out and the Captain came on board and reported his vessel to be the Gemi, Captain Aldridge, out from Sydney nine months with 50 tons of oil belonging to T. Mitchell. At 9 bore away for English Cove to fill our water. Captain Aldridge having reported it to be from his surveys much better place than where he had with his vessel. At 10 as we were rounding the North point of Hall's I.d took in the Royal and fore top gallant for topsail jib and Mainsail the hr. being squally
and raining heavy. At 11 saw the Cove and the wind being sh y had to make aboard to the South. and at Noon stood into the Cove and came to anchor in 10 fathoms, soft mud and well sheltered being quite land-locked.

**SUNDAY, 28 AUGUST 1842**
Commenced fine. At 5 p.m. the Captain of the Genii left us. At 6 raining heavy. At 8 loaded all the guns and set the watch with strict orders to call if any boats approached the vessel during the night but Capt. Aldridge reported the natives to be friendly and we found them to be as he reported them as some of them were on board in the afternoon and left us at dark. Raining heavy all night.

At daylight turned the hand off and cleared away to water the vessel.

At noon all clear for watering but did not send the watering party away as it was very stormy.

**MONDAY, 29 AUGUST 1842**
Commences with heavy rains and thunder and lightning and continued very strong all night. At 6 a.m. finer but still raining. Sent the mate and 6 hands on shore with the water casks but the tide being out and the mud very soft in the creek could not get far enough to find fresh water. He then returned on board to keep the people out of the rain through fear of sickness.

**TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 1842**
The tide having flowed sent watering party away again and the carpenter to cut spars. At 4 p.m. the watering party returned with all the casks filled with excellent water and a spar for the Gib boom. Took in the water, spar etc. and made all clear for sea but the weather being calm could not get underweigh. At 8 set the Watch well armed. At 5 a.m. got underweigh with a light air of wind right out of the Cove. At 7 all clear and shaped a course for York Island and hoisted the boat in.

At 10 going past Carteret's Harbour set a fore top mast studding sail.

**WEDNESDAY, 31 AUGUST 1842**
At 3 p.m. saw York Island ahead. At daylight running along the coast of New Ireland. About a miles off the land. At 9 saw a canoe with one native in it—hauled close to the wind and spoke to him but he appeared unfriendly and would not come alongside.

**1 SEPTEMBER 1842**
At 8 close in with the Island several canoes came off and came alongside but would not come on board but sold cocoa nuts to the crew.

**SOURCE** Log of the Schooner 'Lady of St. Kilda' from Port Phillip towards Canton in China; Master, Gildon Manton; Chief Mate, James William Usher, entries for the dates shown, National Library, Canberra, MS. 55

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**C10 Port Jackson to Hongkong via Buka Island, 1844**

The trade between this (port) and Sydney seems increasing. The Emerald Isle arrived here yesterday and with other articles of merchandise brings over 150 sheep and two houses for sale. She has made a very quick passage of forty five days from Sydney, not withstanding being becalmed about ten days. The day of reaching our port she had run 255 miles. The captain informs us that both on this and a preceding voyage he has felt the advantage of keeping a more westerly course than is usually done, passing to the westward of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. We sincerely trust he will find his cargo afford sufficient remuneration to encourage the continuance of the intercourse. Captain Curling reports having spoke off Bouka, on the 1st January, the whaler Margaret of London, out eighteen months, having 1001 barrels of sperm oil on board and all well. Hongkong Register, January 30.


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**C11 Europeans in the Western Pacific, 1839**

There are upwards of thirty men now on Ascension and two on Nuttei, and by accounts derived from several of them, there are European and American Seamen at present domiciled on the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea, on New Ireland, New Georgia, on Pleasant Island, Ocean Island, on some of the Kingsmill Group, on Navigator's Island, on the Fiji Islands and many of the Friendly Islands...

The majority of Europeans scattered about the Islands is undoubtedly composed of seamen who have deserted from or been wrecked in whalers, but there are others who have left small trading vessels chiefly connected with New South Wales or the Sandwich Islands employed in collecting tortoise shell 'bêche-de-mer' etc. and no small portion of their numbers is composed of runaway convicts from the penal settlements. It appears their occupation is divided between collecting tortoise shell and breeding stock for the supply of whalers or others that may call for refreshment.

**SOURCE** Despatches of Secretary of State to Governor of New South Wales, 1840, Mitchell Library, MS. No. A1282; report, Capt. P. Blake to the Rear Admiral, Sir T. L. Maitland, February, 1839, as enclosure in Lord John Russell's despatch No. 73, 1840, to Sir George Gipps, dated 19 June, 1840