mediately taken as will most conveniently and effect-
vitively secure the incorporation with the British Em-
pire of so much of New Guinea and the small islands
adjacent thereto as is not claimed by the Government
of the Netherlands;

(3) That although the understanding arrived at in the
year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight,
between Great Britain and France, recognising the
independence of the New Hebrides,⁴ appears to pre-
clude this Convention from making any recommend-
ation inconsistent with that understanding, the Con-
vention urges upon Her Majesty's Government that
it is extremely desirable that such understanding
should give place to some more definite engagement
which shall secure those islands from falling under any
foreign dominion; at the same time the Convention
trusts that Her Majesty's Government will avail it-
self of any opportunity that may arise for negotiat-
ing with the Government of France with the object of
obtaining the control of those islands in the interests
of Australasia; and

(4) That the Governments represented at this Conven-
ton undertake to submit and recommend to their
respective legislatures measures of permanent appro-
piation for defraying in proportion to population
such share of the cost incurred in giving effect to the
foregoing resolutions as Her Majesty's Government,
having regard to the relative importance of Imperial
and Australasian interests, may deem fair and reason-
able:

And whereas we, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal sub-
jects, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queens-
land, are desirous of making permanent provision for de-
fraying, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queens-
land, a proportionate part of the cost to be incurred by your
Majesty in giving effect to the foregoing resolutions or any

⁴Morrell, op. cit., p. 199

of them: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Ex-
cellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the
Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Queens-
land in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the
same, as follows:

1. There shall be issued and paid to Her Majesty out of
the Consolidated Revenue Fund, in each and every year
during the continuance of this Act, for and towards the ex-
penses incurred in respect of the maintenance of a naval
force in the waters of New Guinea, and the exercise of pro-
tection in Her Majesty's name over the eastern shores of that
island, and over any other island or islands in the Western
Pacific Ocean over which Her Majesty may be pleased to
exercise protection, a sum bearing the same proportion to
the sum of fifteen thousand pounds as the population of the
Colony of Queensland bears to the total population of the
Australasian Colonies which for the time being contribute
towards such expenses.

In case of any difference arising as to the amount of such
contribution, the same shall be referred to and decided by
one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

2. The Colonial Treasurer shall issue and pay the amount
of such contribution to such person, and in such manner, as
the Governor by any warrant or order under his hand shall
direct.

3. The Colonial Treasurer shall, in his accounts from
time to time, be allowed credit for any sum or sums of
money paid by him in pursuance of any such warrant or
order, and the receipt or receipts of the person to whom
the same shall be so paid, shall be a full and valid discharge
to him in passing his accounts for any such sum or sums as shall
be therein mentioned, and he shall receive credit for the
same accordingly.

4. This Act may be cited as "The New Guinea and
Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Act of 1884."

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other
Islands, C-4217, London, 1884, pages 47, 48

PROCLAIMING THE BRITISH PROTECTORATE: DOCUMENTS D18 to D21

On 21 August 1884 the Colonial Office was informed
by telegram that 'The New Guinea And Pacific
Jurisdiction Contribution Act Of 1884' (D17) had
been passed by the Queensland Legislature.¹

Previously, on 8 August, the British Foreign Secre-
tary, Lord Granville, had discussed New Guinea
affairs with Count Munster, the German Ambassador
in London, and had hinted that a British Protectorate
would shortly be established in New Guinea.² (D28)

On 11 August Gladstone promised in the House of
Commons that a Protectorate would be established
'...sufficient to afford protection to the natives
against lawless action,'³ (D43) while on 19 September
the German Government was told that it was in-
tended to establish a British Protectorate over all of
Eastern New Guinea, apart from the north coast of
the mainland between the meridian 145° East of
Greenwich, and the Dutch border.⁴ (D29) The

¹C-4217, op. cit., p. 3
²C-4273, op. cit., p. 4
³C-4217, op. cit., pp. 35-36
⁴C-4273, op. cit., pp. 11-12
Germans raised objections to the protection of the north coast,⁵ (D30) and the British Government, anxious to avoid any conflict with Germany over an issue of comparative insignificance, decided that the Protectorate would be limited to the southern coast and adjacent islands.⁶ (D31)

The Admiralty was then asked, on 8 October 1884, to arrange for the Proclamation of the Protectorate, and the raising of the Union Jack in New Guinea.⁷ The same day, Commodore Erskine, commanding the Australian station of the Royal Navy, was instructed by telegraph to sail to New Guinea and establish the Protectorate.⁸ He performed the necessary ceremonies at Port Moresby on 6 November 1884, (D19) and subsequently, the Protectorate was proclaimed at other points along the coast.⁹ After the announcement of the establishment of the German Protectorate in December of that year, the British Protectorate was hastily extended to what is now the north coast of Papua, completing the partition of Eastern New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago.¹⁰ (D21)
D18  Romilly’s Proclamation of 23 October 1884

After it had been decided to establish a British Protectorate in New Guinea, confusion arose as to who was entrusted with the task of officially hoisting the British flag, and proclaiming the Queen’s protection. Hugh Hastings Romilly performed this ceremony on 23 October, 1884, at Port Moresby, while Commodore Erskine repeated the whole thing on a more elaborate scale on 6 November of that year.

Romilly was a Deputy Commissioner serving under the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and had been posted to eastern New Guinea before the establishment of the Protectorate. His jurisdiction, like that of the High Commissioner was derived from Orders in Council made under The Pacific Islanders Protection Acts of 1872 and 1875, and his jurisdiction was limited to British subjects.

He was in Cooktown when he received a telegram dated 9 October, 1884, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The telegram read enigmatically,

‘British protectorate, New Guinea, from Dutch boundary to East Cape and Islands to Kosman Island. Notify settlement and purchase land forbidden.’

In a subsequent letter to his mother he described what followed.

1C-4217, op. cit., p. 36

‘I made rather an ass of myself, or rather other people made an ass of me, as I received a telegram from Lord Derby giving me the limits of the Protectorate and other information about it, while I was kept in utter ignorance that the Commodore was coming up here with orders to hoist the flag himself.

We therefore came up here and did it before the Commodore arrived. However, it did not make much difference, as he did it all over again when he arrived.’

Romilly’s Proclamation follows.

I, Hugh Hastings Romilly, Deputy Commissioner for the Western Pacific, acting under the authority and command of Her Majesty’s Imperial Government, do hereby proclaim that part of the island of New Guinea from the Dutch boundary, namely the 141st degree of E. longitude to the East Cape, and also the islands adjacent to it eastward to Kosman Island, to be from this day, 23rd October 1884, under British Prosectorate. [sic]

And I further proclaim that all purchase of land from the natives by white men is absolutely prohibited.

God save the Queen
Port Moresby, October 23, 1884

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, C-4273, London, 1885, p. 121


D19  Erskine Proclaims the Protectorate a Second Time

There follows a report, taken from the Sydney Morning Herald of 15 November 1884, concerning the establishment of the Protectorate of British New Guinea by Commodore Erskine. After it had been decided to establish the Protectorate, the Colonial Office asked the Admiralty to arrange for the performance of the necessary ceremonies on the spot. The task was given to Erskine.

James Elphinstone Erskine was born in 1838, and joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1852. In 1882 he held the substantive rank of Captain, and was also Commodore of the Australian Station of the Royal Navy, having been appointed to this post in 1881. In January 1885 he returned to England and married.

1Colonial Office to Admiralty, 8 October 1884, C-4217, op. cit., p. 35
2Admiralty to Colonial Office, 11 October 1884, C-4217, op. cit., p. 37

He was appointed a Rear Admiral in 1886 and was an Admiral of the Fleet when he retired.

He died in 1911 at his home in Scotland.

Commodore Erskine in H.M.S. Nelson, arrived at Port Moresby on Sunday, the 2nd of November, and the Union Jack now flies from the flagstaff at the mission station, the proclamation of a British protectorate having been made with much ceremony on Thursday, the 6th instant. The Nelson entered Port Moresby at midday on Sunday, followed shortly afterwards by H.M.S. Espiegle, from Cooktown, with Mr H. M. Chester on board. In the harbour at anchor were H.M.S.S. Raven, Swinger, and Harrier. The last named vessel had on board Deputy Commissioner Romilly, who, when the Nelson had come to anchor, startled everybody by coming on board and informing the Commodore that the ceremony of proclaiming the British protectorate

3The Australian Encyclopaedia, op. cit., sub. nom., Erskine
and the hoisting of the British flag had been already performed at Port Moresby. It appears that Mr Romilly received at Cooktown a telegram from Lord Derby informing him of the establishment of the protectorate, and directing him to notify that the settlement and purchase of land were forbidden. Conceiving that this meant an instruction to proclaim the protectorate, and not knowing that Commodore Erskine was on his way to New Guinea, Commissioner Romilly, who came to Port Moresby in H.M.S. Harrier, from Cooktown, made arrangements for issuing a proclamation, and marking the event with a ceremony. A proclamation was accordingly drawn up in accordance with the telegram from Lord Derby, which described the extent of the protectorate as from the Dutch boundary to the East Cape and islands adjacent to it, eastward to Kosman Island, and on the day after H.M.S. Nelson left Sydney, and in the presence of the Port Moresby natives, and Captain Wilcox and 20 blue jackets from H.M.S. Harrier, the proclamation was read. The flag was hoisted, and the blue jackets fired a feu de joie.

It was evident the moment the news was received on board H.M.S. Nelson that this ceremony could not be recognised as authoritative or legal, and it was decided that it should be explained to the natives as being only preliminary to the duly authorised and proper ceremony to be performed by the Commodore, whose preparations were therefore proceeded with as though nothing had happened. It was the Commodore's desire that the establishment of the protectorate should be made known among as many of the native tribes as it was possible to visit, and to carry out that idea it was necessary that as many chiefs as could be induced to come should be got together, and that this should be done by H.M.S. Nelson visiting the various native centres along the south coast, and then, with the assistance of one or more of the other men-of-war and the missionaries collecting from around those centres the chiefs of the different tribes, and proclaiming the protectorate in their presence. The first and principal ceremony, it was arranged, should take place at Port Moresby, and, accordingly, early on Tuesday, the 4th instant, H.M.S. Espiegle and H.M.S. Raven left their anchorage for the purpose of collecting the chiefs of the branches of the Motu tribe and the tribes adjacent within a certain distance east and west of Port Moresby. The Espiegle, on board of which was the Rev. J. Chalmers, going east as far as Round Head, and the Raven, taking with her a native teacher, going west as far as Redscar Bay. The other chiefs were to be brought in overland by the Rev. W. G. Lawes. The Espiegle and Raven returned on the Wednesday, both with chiefs on board, and the former with two who had been at war with each other the day before the vessels arrived, the quarrel having arisen through a dispute in reference to payment for a girl who had been stolen, and having ended with the killing and wounding of several natives and burning of a village. On Wednesday afternoon the chiefs and a number of other natives were brought on board H.M.S. Nelson, and a grand assembly took place, with a feast for the chiefs and an address from the Commodore, a presentation of gifts attractive to the native eye, and the firing of some of the ship's guns. The flags of various nations were hung over the quarter-deck in the form of an awning, and the officers wore frock coats and swords; most of the chiefs were destitute of clothing, the mop-like hair and foreheads of some of them being bound round with bands of small shells, and the hair ornamented with tufts of feathers. Two or three wore old shirts, and one Boe Vagi, the chief of the Port Moresby natives, who was appointed by the Commodore to be the head chief of the Motu tribe, was dressed in a shirt, with a handkerchief round his loins, and a red felt hat on his head (the hat having been given to him by Mr Chester when the flag was hoisted in 1883), and some green leaves through the lobe of his left ear. Evidently he had been attired specially for the occasion, as his usual dress is as scanty as that of his fellows. There were in all about 50 of the chiefs, most of them being representatives of the Motu tribe; and after being permitted to look around the ship they were directed by the missionaries, Messrs Lawes and Chalmers, to seat themselves upon the deck. Then a great tub of boiled rice, sweetened with brown sugar was brought
on deck, and basins of this mixture were handed round to the chiefs, who received them, and devoured the rice with evident satisfaction. Ship biscuits were also served out, and the scene presented by the feasting savages and by the grouping of the Nelson's officers and the parading of the blue jackets on the opposite side of the deck—so that a photograph might be taken of the whole assembly—was exceedingly interesting and picturesque.

When the feasting was over Commodore Erskine, attended by Mr H. L. Warren, his secretary, Captain Bridge, of the Esquille, Deputy Commissioner Romilly, Mr H. M. Chester, and Messrs Lawes and Chalmers, came upon deck, and the Chief, Boe Vagi, having been invited by Mr Lawes to come forward, the Commodore addressed him and his fellow-chiefs, and said: 'I have asked you to come on board to-day in order that I may explain to you about the ceremony which will take place tomorrow on shore. I have been sent to this place to notify and proclaim that Her Majesty the Queen has established a protectorate over the southern shores of New Guinea, and in token of that event I am directed to hoist the British flag at Port Moresby and at other places along the coast and islands. To-morrow, therefore, I intend to hoist the English flag here, and to read a proclamation which will be duly translated to you, and copies of which I hope to be able to send you printed in your own language, and in the meantime our English copy will be given to each chief for the information of the people. I desire, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, to explain to you the meaning of the ceremonial which you are about to witness. It is a proclamation that from this time forth you are placed under the protection of her Majesty's Government; that evil-disposed men will not be able to occupy your country, to seize your lands, or take you away from your own homes. I have been instructed to say to you that what you have seen done here today on board Her Majesty's ships of war, and which will be done again to-morrow, on shore, is to give you the strongest assurance of her Majesty's gracious protection of you, and to warn bad and evil-disposed men that if they attempt to do you harm they will be promptly punished by the officers of the Queen. Your lands will be secured to you, your wives and children will be protected. Should any injury be done to you, you will immediately inform her Majesty's officers, who will reside amongst you, and they will hear your complaints, and do justice. You will look upon all white persons whom the Queen permits to reside amongst you as your friends and her Majesty's subjects. The Queen will permit nobody to reside here who does you injury. You will under no circumstances inflict punishment upon any white person; but if such person has done you wrong you will tell her Majesty's officers of that wrong in order that the case may be fairly inquired into. You must know that it is for your security, and to prevent bloodshed, that the Queen sends me here to you, and will send her officers to live amongst you. And now I hope that you clearly understand that we are here amongst you as your friends; you will all keep peace amongst yourselves, and if you have disputes with each other you will bring them before the Queen's officers, who will settle them for you without bloodshed. Should bad men come amongst you bringing firearms and gun-powder, and intoxicating liquors, you are not to buy them, and are to give notice at once to the Queen's officers, so that such men may be punished. Always keep in your minds that the Queen guards and watches over you, looks upon you as her children, and will not allow anyone to harm you, and will soon send her trusted officers to carry out her gracious intentions in the establishment of this Protectorate.'

At the Commodore's request Mr Lawes read a translation of this address in the Motu language, the chiefs listening attentively, and when Mr Lawes had concluded, the Commodore, again addressing the chiefs, said, 'I want to inform you that I have been sent here to proclaim this Protectorate, and that the Queen will very shortly send a high officer to take charge of this Protectorate, and that I am ordered when I depart from New Guinea to place the Protectorate in the charge of this officer, Mr Romilly. This officer (pointing to Mr Romilly) will be the representative of the Queen until the high officer the Queen appoints comes here to undertake your protection.'

Then calling the chief Boe Vagi forward, Commodore Erskine shook hands with him, and introduced him to Mr Romilly and the Commodore's intimations of the appointment of a High Commissioner for New Guinea, and his explanations of Mr Romilly's position, were interpreted to the chiefs by Mr Lawes. This was followed by the appointment of Boe Vagi as head chief of the Motu tribes. It appears that the chiefs of a tribe of natives on New Guinea recognised no one of their number as head or principal chief; and as the continuance of such a custom might make it very difficult for the High Commissioner or his deputy to deal effectually with matters connected with the natives which from time to time required attention, Commodore Erskine saw the necessity for selecting from a tribe the chief possessing the highest claim to be regarded as the most important chief in his district, and investing him with such authority as would make him the means of communication with the commissioner respecting any matter which any branch or member of the tribe might desire to bring to the Commissioner's knowledge. Accordingly Boe Vagi was selected for the position of head chief of the Motu tribe. To make his appointment more distinct, he was presented with an emblem of authority in the form of an ebony stick with a florin let in at the top, the Queen's head being uppermost, and encircled by a band of silver. Handing to Boe Vagi this stick, the Commodore said:—

'I present him with this stick, which is to be an emblem to him of his authority; and all the tribes who are represented by the chiefs here are to look to the holder of the stick, Boe Vagi. This stick represents the Queen's head, the Queen of England; and if at any time any of the people of these tribes have any grievance or anything to say, they are through this man, the holder of the stick, Boe Vagi, to make it known to the Queen's officer, in order that it may be inquired into. This stick is to be the symbol of his authority, and all the
tribes are to have communication through him with the Queen's officers.' This was interpreted by Mr Lawes, and photos of the scene were taken, one of the groups representing the Commodore shaking hands with Boe Vagi, who stood with his emblem of authority in his left hand.

Directed then to descend to the main deck, the chiefs walked one after the other into the Commodore's cabin, where each received a present, consisting of tomahawk, butcher's knife, coloured shirt, or a piece of coloured cloth, and some figs and twist of tobacco. It was a curious sight to see these chiefs, some of them very old men, but others young, erect, and muscular, filing in at one door, and, after shaking hands with the Commodore and receiving a present, leaving by the other; and it was very amusing to notice how startled some of them were at suddenly discovering themselves in a large pier glass, which they had to pass before leaving the cabin. The Commodore did not fail to point out, through Mr Lawes, to the chief who had burnt the village of another, that for the future he would not be allowed to commit such an act, and must through the Queen's officers seek redress for any grievance he might have, and the man was evidently impressed by what was said to him.

After the chiefs had received their presents, the firing off of some guns of the ship took place, so that the natives might be interested by seeing what could be done in the way of firing at long distances. A Nordenfeldt was directed at a target in the water, and a Gatling was placed in the foretop, and several rounds of ball cartridges were fired, to the evident astonishment of the natives; but what filled them with the greatest wonder was the firing of a shell, and afterwards a shot from one of the 18-ton guns, at a range of nearly 4000 yards. This ended the day's proceedings, and the chiefs left with the missionaries for the shore, but at night the Nelson was brilliantly illuminated with blue lights at the yard-arms and at the ports facing the village, and the electric light was displaced. Rockets shot up in the air from the Nelson and the Espiegle, and the Nelson's steam fog-horn, known on board as the 'Siren,' and possessing the power of making a most unearthly noise, was sounded at half-past 6.

Next morning the landing of officers and men from the squadron for the purpose of publicly proclaiming the establishment of the protectorate and hoisting the British flag commenced. The general order issued by the Commodore directed that the dress for officers should be cocked hat, undress coat, and epaulettes; the dress for seamen white frocks and hats, and that for marines white tunics and helmets. There was, consequently, a very attractive display of uniforms, and altogether it was an exceedingly interesting spectacle. The early hour appointed for the landing permitted of the ceremony being performed at a time of day when the heat, which has been intense since the Nelson has been on the coast, was not likely to be very trying to the men.

The water of the harbour lay placid as a lake, with the ships of war far out from the shore, and here and there native canoes moving slowly along or resting idly on the surface; and the hills and valleys were green and shaded from the sun, and wore a freshening appearance, which is notable when the trees and the grass have been bathed in dew, and when the sun's rays are strong enough only to make the dew-drops sparkle and to deepen the shadows in the recesses where the sunlight has not yet penetrated. The boats conveying the officers and men to the shore, each flying the white ensign, imparted life and colour to the scene upon the water, and nothing could be more picturesque and beautiful than the view on shore, where the houses of the native village bordering the beach, with their brown occupants gazing in amazement on what was taking place before them, were shaded by a grove of cocoanut palms, whose refreshing dark-green fronds were rivalled only by the lighter green of native loveliness, and robed in delicately tinted morning mist. Inside the enclosed ground around the mission house, and on a spot commanding a view of almost the entire harbour, was the flagstaff on which the flag had been hoisted by Mr Chester and by Mr Romilly, and which was now to display the flag hoisted with the authority of the Queen by Commodore Erskine, and it was around the flagstaff that the troops were drawn up in a hollow square, the men facing inwards, with the officers to the front, and the Commodore and his suite standing with the missionaries and Mr Chester on the verandah of the mission house. The native chiefs who had been on board the Nelson were seated in a picturesque group on the ground, immediately in front of the Commodore, and other natives and a few white spectators stood in a crowd at the rear of the blue-jackets. The only representative of English women was Mrs Lawes, wife of the Rev. W.G. Lawes, who was accommodated with a chair, and sat near the Commodore, and the officers on either side of him. Among the spectators were Mr J.F. Mann, who is travelling with the Nelson as the representative of the Geographic Society of New South Wales, to collect information with reference to the nature of the country and its inhabitants, and the facilities it may offer for settlement or trade; and also Mr K.R. Stuart, son of the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales.

The landing party from the ships consisted of two companies of blue-jackets, numbering 90 men, and one company of marines to the number of 46 men belonging to the Nelson, 50 blue-jackets and marines from the Espiegle, 25 from the Raven, and 10 from the Harrier. Besides them there was a band and colour party from the Nelson . . .

Immediately the blue-jackets had landed they were marched up the hill to the mission compound, and drawn up in a hollow square with the officers and the colours of the battalion to the front. The marines remained upon the beach until the Commodore landed, when they presented arms and afterwards, with bayonets fixed, marched with the band to join the blue jackets in front of the mission house. The structure is a large weather-board building of one story and wide verandah, the principal portion of which faces the harbour, but the eastern end is towards the hills and the palm-trees, and it was at this end where the Commodore stood and proclaimed the establishment of the Protectorate. The Commodore then read the proclamation.

This was interpreted to the natives by the Rev. W.G. Lawes, who, at the request of Commodore Erskine, had translated it into the Motu language, and then by direction of the Commodore the Union Jack was slowly raised to the truck of the flagstaff by Sub-Lieutenant Gaunt, who fills the position of Flag-Lieutenant of H.M.S. Nelson. The troops immediately presented arms, and as the flag was ascending the band played a bar of the National Anthem. The salute of 21 guns was fired from the Nelson, and the ships of war were almost instantaneously dressed with flags from stem to stern, the royal standard flying conspicuously from the Nelson's main. When the Nelson had saluted the flag and the firing had ceased, the troops fired a feu-de-joint of three rounds, the band playing a bar of the National Anthem, after each of the first two rounds and two bars after the third. All this not a little astonished the natives, though some of those whose homes were at Port Moresby had witnessed the firing of a feu-de-joint before; but though the firing
started some of them, it had with the general display the effect of impressing them all with some sense of the solemn importance of the ceremony that was being performed. The firing party were then ordered to shoulder arms, and the Commodore, addressing all present at the ceremony but the natives, said,—"Officers and Men, Mr Romilly and Gentlemen, this interesting and important ceremony being now formally concluded, it only remains for me, in her Majesty's name, to express the fervent hope that under the blessing of Almighty God the establishment of this protectorate may conduce to the peace, happiness, and welfare of the people of this vast territory. May the British flag, which we have this day planted on these shores, be to the people of this portion of New Guinea the symbol of their freedom and their liberty, and the proclamation which I have just read the charter of their rights and privileges. May it be to them a protectorate in deed as well as in name, protecting them alike from the encroachments of foreigners and the aggressive or unlawful actions of persons of any other nationality; may the blessings of civilisation and Christianity, the seeds of which have been already sown by English hands in the persons present on this occasion, increase and multiply exceedingly amongst them! And lastly, as the Union Jack, which has on several former occasions been hoisted on the shores of New Guinea and the adjacent islands, on this day for the first time displayed and hoisted on New Guinea under the authority and by the command of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, I most fervently pray that the establishment of a British protectorate on these shores may tend to ensure the integrity and inviolability of the great Australian colonies, and promote the best interests of their people; and I trust that this important step may be attended with the happiest results, and rebound to the honour of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, for whom I now invite you to give three hearty cheers."

The call was right loyally responded to, and, with Captain Bridge leading, three British cheers rang out and echoed among the hills; and then, with a royal salute, the troops once more presenting arms, the ceremony was brought to a close.

Source: The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November 1884

D20 Erskine's Proclamation: The Final Version

The wording of this official published version of the Proclamation establishing the British Protectorate over the southern shores of New Guinea, and the adjacent islands is not quite the same as the wording of the Proclamation read by Erskine at Port Moresby on 6 November 1884. The original Proclamation did not refer to the D’Entrecasteaux Group. It was decided to add this Group to the Protectorate later, and the technique then adopted was to add a reference to the D’Entrecasteaux Islands to the original Proclamation, without amending its date—6 November 1884.1

It is of interest that the map published in the British Blue Book, Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, C-4217, published in October 1884, clearly excludes the D’Entrecasteaux Group from the British Protectorate. This Blue Book also contains the original instructions given to Erskine before he proclaimed the Protectorate at Port Moresby on 6 November 1884.2

Proclamation on behalf of Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India, establishing a Protectorate of Her Most Gracious Majesty over a portion of New Guinea and the islands adjacent thereto. To all to whom these presents shall come,

Greeting:

Whereas it has become essential for the protection of the lives and properties of the native inhabitants of New Guinea, and for the purpose of preventing the occupation of portions of that country by persons whose proceedings, unsanctioned by any lawful authority, might tend to injustice, strife, and bloodshed, and who, under the pretence of legitimate trade and intercourse, might endanger the liberties, and possess themselves of the lands of such native inhabitants, that a British Protectorate should be established over a certain portion of such country and the islands adjacent thereto.

And whereas Her Majesty having taken into Her Gracious consideration the urgent necessity of Her protection to such inhabitants, has directed me to proclaim such protection in a formal manner at this place: Now, I, James Elphinstone Erskine, Captain in the Royal Navy and Commodore of the Australian Station, one of Her Majesty’s Naval Aides-de-Camp, do hereby, in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty, declare and proclaim the establishment of such Protectorate over such portions of the coast and the adjacent islands as is more particularly described in the schedule hereunto annexed.

And I hereby proclaim and declare that no acquisition of land, whosoever or howsoever acquired, within the limits of the Protectorate hereby established, will be recognized by Her Majesty: And I do hereby, on behalf of Her Majesty, command and enjoin all persons whom it may concern to take notice of this Proclamation.

Schedule

All that portion of the southern shores of New Guinea commencing from the boundary of that portion of the country claimed by the Government of the Netherlands on the 141st meridian of east longitude to East Cape, with all islands adjacent thereto south of East Cape to Kosmann Island inclusive, together with the islands in the Goschen

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1C-4275, op. cit., pp. 148-150
2C-4217, op. cit., pp. 37-38
The Extension of the British Protectorate

On 19 December 1884 the British Ambassador in Berlin was told of the establishment of a German Protectorate on the northern coast of New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. Erskine had already telegraphed this information two days previously. The immediate reaction of the British Government was to complete the partition of New Guinea by establishing a Protectorate over what is now the north coast of Papua, up to the southernmost boundary of the German Protectorate on the Huon Gulf. On 21 December, the Admiralty was asked to take the necessary steps to extend the British Protectorate, and Commodore Erskine was told to do so the same day, by telegraph. Further instructions were telegraphed the following day, to include adjacent island groups in the Protectorate. The following telegram was sent by Erskine to Lieutenant-Commander Ross of H.M.S. ‘Raven’, telling him to extend the Protectorate.

It had been decided to include the D’Entrecasteaux Group in the original Protectorate before the establishment of the German Protectorate had been announced, but this had not been done by the time the hasty decision was made to extend the British Protectorate to the Huon Gulf. Accordingly, Ross was instructed to include the D’Entrecasteaux Group in his Proclamation. There is thus some inconsistency between Erskine’s Proclamation dated 6 November 1884, which, in its amended form, includes a reference to the D’Entrecasteaux Group, and the Proclamation that Ross was instructed to make on 23 December 1884, which includes a reference to these islands, clearly implying that they were not previously included in the Protectorate.

TELEGRAM

COMMODORE, Sydney, to Lieut-Commander Ross, H.M.S. ‘Raven,’ Cooktown, dated 23rd December 1884

Her Majesty’s Government have decided that British Protectorate shall be extended between East Cape and Huon Gulf up to German boundary, and have ordered that British flag shall be hoisted at various places along that shore; D’Entrecasteaux Group and smaller islands adjacent are also to be included. Proceed with all despatch to Port Moresby. Inform Romilly. Request Chalmers render all assistance communication with natives and interpreters. Then proceed without delay to extreme limit of German boundary, Huon Gulf. Hoist flag there and at various places up to East Cape and on D’Entrecasteaux Islands. Leave report of movements at East Cape, where ship will meet you with printed proclamations. When hoisting flag, read following proclamation:

Proclamation on behalf of Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India, establishing a Protectorate of Her Most Gracious Majesty over a portion of New Guinea and the islands adjacent thereto. To all to whom these presents shall come, Greetings: Whereas by a Proclamation dated 6th November 1884, Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, was pleased to establish a Protectorate over a certain portion of the southern shores of New Guinea, with adjacent islands there­to, together with the islands in the Goschen Straits, and also the D’Entrecasteaux Group and smaller islands adjacent, I (blank), Senior Naval Officer, do now hereby declare and proclaim in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty that the British Protectorate shall include the coast of New Guinea between East Cape and Huon Gulf inclusive. Given on board Her Majesty’s Ship (blank), (date), (signed name and rank). God save the Queen!

Acknowledge if thoroughly understood, and report by telegram hour of departure.

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands In the Western Pacific Ocean, C-4273, London, 1885, p.149