

SECRET.

H.M.S. "Wellington",
at Suva,

No. 018.

15th September, 1936.

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to forward the attached reports on the islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington" from July to September 1936.

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2. Painted boards were nailed up in the main hut of Caroline Island and on the flagstaff at Malden Island, with the following words:-

"This Island belonging to His Britannic Majesty King Edward VIII. was visited by H.M. Ship "Wellington" on (Caroline 22nd August 1936) (Malden 27th August 1936).

J.B. Hall (signed and printed).

Commanding Officer."

Flags were not left, as there was already a Union Jack flying at Caroline Island which is at present inhabited by four Tahitians, and a complete set of flags exists at Malden Island.

3. The labour at Flint and Caroline Islands has, so far, always been recruited from Tahiti, but this year when Mr. Bunkley returned his labourers to Tahiti in June, the French authorities have forbidden him to recruit any further French labour for British islands, in consequence unless he can obtain labourers from other British islands, it would appear that these two islands will shortly be uninhabited.

The

His Excellency
The High Commissioner for the Western Pacific,
Suva, Fiji.

The reason for this action of the French authorities is not known, but I am of the opinion that they may have designs on these islands and also on Christmas Island, which is the only other British island that I am aware of which employs Tahitian labour.

4. I should like to draw your attention to the frequent visits of so called American yachts to many of these remote islands, ostensibly for scientific reasons.

5. I should also like to point out that the remarks in the attached reports are mostly impressions obtained from a very short visit to each island, and in particular, although a canoe landing is reported, it is quite practicable to embark copra, and so it should be possible to land supplies, although to land bulky cargo e.g., petrol, etc., would be a long and tedious task.

I have, etc.,

(Sgd.) J.B. Hall,

Commander, R.N.

Commander-in-Command.

Report on smaller Islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington" July to September 1936 - including report on air suitability.

"A". Palmerston Island (Cook Group) Visited 29th July 1936.

- (1). General Information. A low atoll $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles by $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles sparsely planted with cocconut trees, and now consists of six islets instead of eight as two were washed away in the 1935 hurricane. Settlement in good order and clean.
- (2). Anchorage. Reported good in fine weather, two cables from reef.
- (3). Boat Landing. Through narrow and shallow crack in reef near settlement.
- (4). Population. 15 men, 20 women and 60 children, all half caste descendants of J. Marsters, Manager of the Island, and who appeared fairly healthy and happy, with a well deserved reputation as "cadgers".
- (5). Trade. Visited by schooner from Raotonga about once a year when about 25 tons of copra is exported.
- (6). Water. Cisterns from catchment roofs only.
- (7). Supplies. Fish and cocconuts only.
- (8). Communications. Nil.
- (9). Air Suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Very shallow, and useless owing to coral sand banks and heads.
 - (b) Open Sea. Practicable emergency landing on lee side.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil.

Report on smaller Islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including Report on air suitability.

"B". Hervey Island (Manuae), (Cook Group). Visited 4th
August 1936.

- (1). General Information. Two low islands, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles apart, covered with cocconut trees, surrounded by reef. Settlement appeared to be in good order.
 - (2). Anchorage. Nil.
 - (3). Boat Landing. Through narrow and shallow crack in reef near settlement.
 - (4). Population. 20 labourers, 6 women and 7 children, under a half caste (Carl Marsters), who reported them healthy and contented.
 - (5). Trade. Visited by schooner from Rarotonga about every three months, by which 200 tons of copra is exported annually.
 - (6). Water. Nil, except catchment roofs.
 - (7). Supplies. Fish and cocconuts only.
 - (8). Communications. Nil.
 - (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Between islands. Deep but studded with coral heads, some of which might be blown up to afford an emergency landing.
 - (b) Open Sea. Impracticable under most conditions, as swell works round the reef.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil.
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Report of smaller Islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including Report on air suitability.

"C". Atiu. (Cook Group). Visited 5th August 1936.

- (1). General Information. An elevated coral island, three miles in diameter, maximum height 394 feet, and well wooded. Settlement in centre of island in very good order and clean.
 - (2). Anchorage. Nil.
 - (3). Boat Landing. Through surf and over reef. Difficult and dangerous except in native canoes.
 - (4). Population. 4 whites and about 900 natives under Resident Agent (Mr. Hempleman). All natives were healthy and cheerful.
 - (5). Trade. Schooner from Barotonga visits island fairly frequently except during hurricane season, when about 9000 cases of oranges, a few bananas and tomatoes, and about 150 tons of copra are exported.
 - (6). Water. Fairly plentiful from wells and tanks.
 - (7). Supplies. Fish, poultry and pig in limited quantities. Fruit in abundance.
 - (8). Communications. W/T station.
 - (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Nil.
 - (b) Open Sea. Useless owing to permanent swell.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil, but it might be possible to clear sufficient area in the centre of the island for a landing ground.
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Report on smaller Islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including Report on air suitability.

"D". Flint Island. Visited 21st August 1936.

- (1). General Information. A low island covered with coconut trees, lying in a North and South direction, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles by $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Settlement, copra sheds and old phosphate tramway now used for transporting copra appeared to be in excellent condition.
 - (2). Anchorage. Nil.
 - (3). Boat landing. Boat channel. Difficult in any swell.
 - (4). Population. Uninhabited but copra labour (15?) only removed in June 1936. (See general remarks, paragraph 3.)
 - (5). Trade. Normally visited by schooner every three months from Tahiti, by which about 120 tons of copra is exported annually. The island is run, together with Caroline Island, by Mr. Bunkley for Messrs. Maxwell's Ltd.
 - (6). Water. Cisterns from catchment roofs only.
 - (7). Supplies. Fish and coconuts only.
 - (8). Communications. Nil.
 - (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Nil.
 - (b) Open Sea. Useless owing to permanent swell.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil.
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Report on smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including Report on air suitability.

"E". Caroline Island. Visited 22nd August 1936.

- (1). General Information. A low atoll 7 miles by 1 mile in the shape of a crescent, fairly well covered with cocoanut trees. The small settlement on the South Island was in excellent condition and spotlessly clean.
 - (2). Anchorage. Nil.
 - (3). Boat Landing. No canoes. Landing effected in crack of reef near settlement, but this still entailed wading for a quarter of a mile.
 - (4). Population. At present 2 Tahitian labourers and their wives. About 12 labourers returned to Tahiti in June 1936. (See paragraph 3 of general remarks).
 - (5). Trade. Normally visited by schooner every three months by which about 100 tons of copra is exported annually. The island is run, together with Flint Island, by Mr. Bunkley for Messrs. Maxwell's Ltd.
 - (6). Water. Cisterns from catchment roofs, also a well reported on North Island.
 - (7). Supplies. Fish and coconuts only.
 - (8). Communications. Nil.
 - (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Very shallow and many coral sand shoals rendering it useless for aircraft.
 - (b) Open Sea. Owing to its length and crescent shape, landing in the open sea on the West Coast is quite feasible in the prevailing winds, but there is no shelter, and no shore landing ground could be made.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil.
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July to September 1936 - including report on air
suitability.

"F". Vostock Island. Visited 23rd August 1936.

- (1). General Information. A small low guano island, thickly wooded, triangular in shape with sides about a quarter of a mile long. A bird sanctuary for boobies, frigates and tern. Reported to be overrun with rats and a few very large land crabs.
- (2). Anchorage. Probably possible off Western point but very exposed to swell.
- (3). Boat Landing. Possible in calm weather in a crack in the reef on the Western side.
- (4). Population. Uninhabited.

Trade, Water, Supplies, Communications. Nil.

Air suitability. Quite useless except as a possible D/F station.

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Report on smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including report on air suitability.

"G". Penrhyn Island (Tongareva). Visited 25th August 1936.

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- (1). General Information. A very large low atoll 12 miles by 8 miles, lying in a South Easterly direction, whose islets are covered with cocconut trees. Settlement at Omoko was clean and tidy but native huts rather dilapidated. Village at Tautua was not visited.
 - (2). Anchorage. Schooners, etc., can secure alongside the pier at Omoko, and vessels up to 300 feet long can anchor inside the lagoon about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile inside West Pass. There is also anchorage for larger ships in Easterly winds $1\frac{1}{2}$ cables from the reef, just South of West Pass.
 - (3). Boat Landing. There is a well beaconed passage for boats up to 14 feet draught from West Pass close inside the reef to Omoko Pier.
 - (4). Population. About 520, divided between villages of Omoko and Tautua under a half caste Resident Agent (Mr. P. Woonton). Natives appeared contented but not as happy as in other islands, probably due to avariciousness from the pearl industry.
 - (5). Trade. Schooner from Harotonga visits the island about every three months, when pearls and about 50 tons of copra annually are exported. The copra trade could be greatly increased if the natives were made to work. American yachts frequently visit Penrhyn, four have already visited it in 1936.

(6).

- (6). Water. Catchment tanks at both settlements, Omoko has water supply down main street to pier.
- (7). Supplies. Fish and coconuts only.
- (8). Communications. Resident has private radio gramophone.
- (9). Air suitability.

(a) Lagoon. The North West Part of the lagoon was very patchy with coral shoals and heads, but it is considered probable that in the middle and toward the South East straight runs of at least one mile could be found, but the lagoon would have to be properly surveyed before any decision is made.

(b) Open Sea. Probably quite practicable on the lee side whichever direction the wind is blowing. Seaplanes could taxi in by any of West, North West, or North East entrances round about slack water.

(c) Other requirements. Nil - but it would be quite easy to construct hangars, slipways, etc., at Omoko, where there was observed to be one mile of clear water in a South Easterly direction. Information re possible landing ground for land planes not obtained but islets are very narrow.

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"H". Starbuck Island. Visited 26th August 1936.

- (1). General Information. A very low guano island, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles by about one mile. Lying in an East and West direction, without any trees or scrub. Eastern end frequented by millions of tern and a few other sea birds. Settlement on Western point is in ruins but beacon appeared to be in good condition. Eastern end is covered with wreckage.
- (2). Anchorage. Nil.
- (3). Boat Landing. Landing was effected in very calm sea just to the Westward of North Cape, but it would be impossible to land anywhere in any sea or swell.
- (4). Population. Uninhabited.

Trade, Water, Supplies, Communications. Nil.

- (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Nil.
 - (b) Open Sea. Unsuitable as swell swings right round the island.
 - (c) Other requirements. The centre of the island is generally flat, and without much levelling could probably be easily made into a landing ground, but it is possible that in heavy rain it may become marshy.

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"I". Malden Island. Visited 27th August 1936.

- (a). General Information. A very low guano island, 4 miles by 3 miles without any trees or scrub, with a brackish lake in the centre. Settlement on Western Point, (evacuated in 1926) is still serviceable but becoming delapidated. Flagstaff was in good condition, and gantry pier 20 feet high is still intact. There was quite a quantity of stores, including three serviceable surf boats, moorings, lamps, flags and some medical stores. The old guano tram line could easily be put into serviceable condition, but the distilling plant has deteriorated beyond repair. The ancient temples were searched for, and one found near North West point, but it would require careful excavation by experts to be worth seeing. A burial ground was found about one mile East South East of settlement, containing many graves, amongst them being the following:- W. Nicolson, Chief Mate of "Racer", 1869; E.M. Walker, Wharfinger for 4 years, died 19th May 1876; Malden McCullough, aged 1 year 4 months, taken by the sea 1876, and Abraham McCullough, (Father of above) died 1897, for 23 years manager of the island.
- (2). Anchorage. Might be possible at western end but strong currents make it dangerous.

(3).

- (3). Boat Landing. On soft sandy beach about 30 yards North of gantry pier, but swell makes it difficult.
- (4). Population. Uninhabited.
- (5). Trade. Nil.
- (6). Water. None was found but the presence of domestic pig, gone wild, indicated its presence. Large storage well was dry.

Supplies and Communications. Nil.

(9). Air suitability.

- (a) Lagoon. Lake in the middle of the island is much too shallow and patchy to be of any use.
- (b) Open Sea. Swell too large and swings round the island.
- (c) Other requirements. The ground is extremely rough due to the extensive guano workings, and would require an impracticable amount of work to make it serviceable.
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Report of smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including report on air suitability.

"J". Fanning Island. Visited 20th August to 1st September 1936

- (1). General Information. A large low lying atoll 9 miles by 5 miles, well planted with coconut trees with a large and mostly shallow lagoon. It is administered by an Administrative Officer (Mr. E.L. Leembruggen) whose residence is at the cable station on the North West corner. The settlement for copra workers is at Baerau, on the Southern Point of the entrance to the lagoon, and was in very good condition.
- (2). Anchorage. Good open anchorage for ships of any size is available at Whaler anchorage, off the cable station. Ships up to about 250 feet drawing less than 12 feet, can enter the lagoon and anchor well inside but entering the pass should be done at slack high water only, owing to very strong current and eddies even in the calmest weather.
- (3). Boat Landing. Through a break in the reef and on soft sandy sheltered beach at Whaler anchorage. There is a pier with about 10 feet of water at Baerau alongside which schooners secure.
- (4). Population. 20 British, 18 Chinese and 75 Gilbertese. (There are also 4 British and 55 Gilbertese working copra on Washington Island). Most of the British and all the Chinese are employees of the Cable Company whose Manager is Mr. G. Edwards.

- (5). Trade. Fanning Island Ltd., went into liquidation in 1935, and the copra is now worked by Messrs. Burns, Philp under the name of Fanning Island Plantations, Ltd. In the past up to 7000 tons annually have been exported but it is not thought that it is as much as that now, although I have no doubt that the very able Manager (Mr. Gow) will soon work it up again.
- (6). Water. A fair supply of water from wells and catchments tanks at both Whaler anchorage and Baerau.
- (7). Supplies. Only coconuts and fish. All supplies are imported from Honolulu, mainly by the American Cable Company's Steamer "Dickinson", chartered by the British Cable Company. Schooners frequently call for copra and the island is occasionally visited by passing steamers and American yachts.
- (8). Communications. Connecting link of the Pacific cable from Bamfield (Canada) to Suva. Small W/T station transmitting up to about 300 miles.
- (9). Air Suitability.
- (a) Lagoon. The Admiralty chart appears to be correct. A two hour trip in a motor boat proved that there is only two feet of water anywhere to the North and West of English Harbour, and I was informed that the South and Eastern portion was similar. The only practical landing is in an East North East direction from the entrance of the lagoon for a distance of one mile, and possibly East South East for one mile.
- (b) Open Sea. During most of the year it would be quite practicable to land off Whaler anchorage as the swell does not appear to work round the island. If the very infrequent Westerly is blowing, landing would be possible on the East side but there is no entrance into the lagoon for shelter.

(c) Other requirements. Sheds and slipways could easily be constructed either at Whaler anchorage or at Baerau, a small amount of blasting coral would be required at the former. Mooring buoys for aircraft could easily be laid at Whaler anchorage. A shore landing ground, about two miles long in an East and West direction, and about half a mile broad could probably be made on the Southern side at Peao, but would require considerable drainage to make it practicable after rains. A resident reported that this land had once been flooded by the tide in the last twelve years.

(10.) Financial. The heavy duty charges on imports, especially foodstuffs, is much discussed by the British population, also the incongruous situation whereby they have New Zealand stamps, Australian currency, and most of their imports have to be paid in either sterling or dollars.

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"K". Christmas Island. Visited 2nd to 4th September 1936.

(1). General Information. An extremely large atoll 14 miles by 12 miles, with a tongue 17 miles by 5 miles extending to the East South East, with a lagoon on the Western side, and many lakes. Coconut trees have been planted on the North and West sides, the remaining land is mainly covered with scrub. The entrance to the lagoon is on the Western coast, the settlement London is on the Northern side, and that of Paris, now uninhabited, on the Southern side of the entrance. The settlement was clean and tidy and the labourers happy and well looked after. The island is owned by Mons. P.E. Rougier, a Frenchman, who is very much at loggerheads with the French authorities at Tahiti, and he says he is trying to lease the island to Messrs. Burns, Philp Ltd., and to give up his French nationality and become a naturalised Englishman or American. His manager, who is at present in charge, is an extremely nice and capable Czecho Slovakian, Frank Yerabek.

(2). Anchorage. Good open anchorage for any class of ship is available outside the reef off London, and another is reported off Paris, but the lagoon is too shallow for any ship drawing more than 8 feet.

(3).

- (3). Boat Landing. There is a small pier, 3 feet alongside at London, but the approach to it is narrow and studded with coral heads, another boat landing is reported off Paris.
- (4). Population. 14 men, 7 women and 2 children, all Tahitian except Mons. and Mme. Yerabek, and two Penrhyn women, the latter are endeavouring to obtain passports to go to Tahiti.
- (5). Trade. About 500 tons of copra is exported to Tahiti annually, the island being visited by schooner about three times a year. The American motor trading schooner "Islander" also calls about three times a year to collect fish for Honolulu, and occasionally it is visited by American yachts.
- (6). Water. Catchment tanks at London and a good well is reported at Paris.
- (7). Supplies. Fish and coconuts only.
- (8). Communications. Nil.
- (9). Air suitability.
- (a) Lagoon. A three hour trip in a motor boat revealed that the whole of the lagoon North and East of London has only about two feet of water. Further South and East of Paris there are many lanes of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, about 15 feet deep, running in several directions, and if properly surveyed it is considered probable that good landing and taking off stretches could be found.
- (b) Open Sea. Quite practicable anywhere in the bay on the west side as the swell does not work round the island, but not advisable to land on the Eastern side (Bay of Wrecks) owing to strong current which always sets to the Westward, and there is absolutely no shelter.
- (c) Other requirements. It would be difficult to construct slipways or sheds at London but probably easier at Paris. Mopring buoys for seaplanes could be laid outside the reef at London and also inside the lagoon. It is considered that a good landing ground about two miles square could fairly easily be made on the North fringe. It would mean cutting down a few coconut trees and not much levelling and there are no obstructions in any direction.

Report on smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including report on air suitability.

"L". Jarvis Island.

H.M.S. "Wellington" passed Jarvis Island at a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles at 0730, Saturday 5th September 1936, the American ensign was hoisted on a flagstaff erected on the beacon as soon as the ship was sighted. It is a very low guano island, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles by $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, with no trees or scrub. Two new houses had been erected close to the beacon, and two W/T poles 30 feet high were seen close to the houses. Trigonometrical beacons had been erected, one on North Coast, one on South Coast, and one on the South Western point, the latter appeared to have an anemometer. The landing place appeared to be close to the beacon on soft coral sand, where two gentle slopes had been cut in the bank leading up to the houses.

Three inhabitants were observed.

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Report on smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
July to September 1936 - including report on air suitability.

"M". Danger Island (Puka Puka). Visited 8th September 1936.

- (1). General Information. A low atoll 4 miles by 2 miles, consisting of three islets, well planted with coconuts, surrounding a triangular lagoon which is studded with coral shoals and pinnacles. A long sandy spit extends for three miles to the westward. The only settlement is on Puka Puka Island, and was in excellent condition, the natives appearing to be very happy and contented. It is run by a Resident Agent (Mr. G. Henry) who was absent at Apia owing to serious illness of his wife. I was shown round by an American essay writer, Mr. R. Frisbie, who apparently spends most of his life here.
 - (2). Anchorage. Nil.
 - (3). Boat Landing. Difficult and very shallow, land in native canoes over a reef.
 - (4). Population. 651 and increasing rapidly.
 - (5). Trade. About 150 tons of copra annually exported by occasional schooner to Apia or Herotonga.
 - (6). Water. Large catchment tanks only.
 - (7). Supplies. Fish, coconuts and good taro fields.
 - (8). Communications. Nil.
 - (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. Only possible in extreme emergency.
 - (b) Open Sea. Impracticable unless exceptionally calm, as swell works round island.
 - (c) Other requirements. Nil.
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Report on smaller islands visited by H.M.S. "Wellington"
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"N". Nukunono (Tokelau Group). Visited 10th September 1936.

- (1). General Information. A large low atoll 7 miles by 6 miles, with a large and fairly deep lagoon. It lies approximately 4 miles to the Eastward of its charted position, and is well planted with coconuts. The only settlement is on the large South West islet and was in excellent condition. A large Roman Catholic church has been built but not yet completed. The natives were most hospitable, happy, and in excellent health, especially the children.
- (2). Anchorage. Nil.
- (3). Boat Landing. Over the reef in native boats or canoes only.
- (4). Population. 250. There is no white man, the island being run by a native Faipule.
- (5). Trade. About 200 tons of copra annually by schooner about four times a year to Apia.
- (6). Water. Very large and modern catchment tanks.
- (7). Supplies. Fish and coconuts only. An effort is being made to grow bananas.
- (8). Communications. Nil.
- (9). Air suitability.
 - (a) Lagoon. This lagoon gave the appearance of being the most suitable of any visited during this cruise. It was obviously over two fathoms deep for most of the area and did not appear to have nearly as many coral sand banks or pinnacles. It should be quite easy to obtain a run of two miles in any direction with no obstacles at either end.

(b).

(b) Open Sea. Probably quite practicable on the lee side, but swell is apt to swing round the Southern end to the settlement - there is, however, no entrance to the lagoon.

(c) Other requirements. Sheds and slipways could easily be constructed on the lagoon side of any of the islets.
