

## 12. Founders of the South Sea Islander Community



**Plate 12.1:** The names of the participants are unknown, but this Islander wedding occurred at the Blaxland's coffee plantation at Mt Jukes in the 1890s. It is likely that they attended the nearby Anglican Mandurana Church.

Source: State Library of Queensland.

This chapter provides around 30 mini-histories of Mackay's main Islander families which, as well as describing their different origins and paths, illustrate many of the collective characteristics of the labour trade years outlined in the previous two chapters on Islander history. Other single men are included, as up until the 1930s they were also an integral part of the Islander community. The oldest families are from the Loyalty Islands and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). However, by the mid-1880s labour recruiters had begun to focus more on the Santa Cruz Group and the Solomon Islands, and from 1894 to 1904 Solomon Islanders predominated in the new intakes. Untangling the web of family names, places of residence and events is extremely difficult, as oral and written sources available do not always agree. I have been as consultative as possible, and I have been assisted by my 1970s computer sorting of baptismal, marriage and death records, oral testimony, and some Islander family reunion histories.

First, a few explanatory notes. My interpretation of marriage is couples living together, not necessarily through a Christian or state-sanctioned ceremony. As well, I have deliberately chosen not to mention the circumstances of children who were adopted, or from irregular liaisons. This is irrelevant to acceptance into a family. And I have also not named sorcerers and assassins, who were among the forebears of current families. Somethings should remain private in any community. I apologise if I have made any errors, or caused offence, or if the simplification demanded from shortage of space is misleading in any way. While I celebrate the survival and perseverance of these families, there are no Islander farmers today, testament to the continuing social imbalance in the district.

### **The Finances of the Community**

As further background for the biographies below, it is worth first outlining the finances of the Islander community early in the twentieth century. As much as possible they lived subsistence lifestyles. They trapped animals such as bandicoots and wallabies for food, and they grew their own taros and yams, other vegetables, and fruit trees, which supplemented salted beef purchased from the local butcher, flour, rice, tea, and cocoa. Water was usually carried from local creeks in old kerosene cans or galvanised iron buckets. Almost all of them smoked tobacco and quite a number were partial to alcohol, which they could only afford when paid by the mills for their cane. They had no betel nuts or kava, favourite drugs for relaxation in the islands. They ‘booked’ up food at the local stores, and paid their bills when the mills paid them, or after they had earned money from their fruit and vegetable gardens. There were also Sinhalese (Sri Lankan) hawkers, among them Kissing Singh, Bye, Doolican, and Sunnican, who travelled around the district in wagons, selling essentials and fancy goods. They too allowed the Islanders to book up their purchases. Many of the old men had bicycles, which they used to travel about. Some never quite mastered the art of riding. Tommy Kumai’s name still brings a smile today as he never knew how to get off—he just fell off. Getting back on required a handy stump to put one foot on while he mounted. When very old, they often used the bikes as a support to help them walk, rather like modern ‘wheelie-walkers’.

Some had substantial bank savings, owned land or leased small farms, and had good houses, the equivalent of many poorer European-origin rural families. Jack Marau owned land at Slade Point, the Fatnownas owned land at Andergrove, and others owned land in various rural areas. Many leased land from mills and farmers, usually stony hillsides not of much use for other purposes, where they dug holes in which to plant cane. Others lived on the farms of supportive European farmers, usually in grass-thatch houses, and grew their own cane while also working for farmers. Significant numbers squatted on flood-prone river-bank land.

Luke Logomier, a Malaitan, and an Anglican lay-preacher at St Mary’s Anglican Islander Church at Pioneer, is an example of the more financially stable. In 1913, he was growing 65 acres (26 ha) of cane and harvested 30 acres. He also paid for music lessons for his teenage stepdaughter Eva. During the 1900s, three Islanders ran boarding houses in Chinatown: Arro (Aru Tavorie) from Aoba Island, Antonius Tui Tonga, and Henry Diamuir Tongoa, the latter two officers-holders in the Pacific Islanders’ Association, 1901–06. There were other Islander boarding houses in the 1910s and 1920s. Given the ageing adult population and legislative and trade union discrimination aimed at forcing them out of the sugar industry, many were poor and destitute. The Australian *Invalid and Old-Age Pension Act, 1908*, introduced the age pension in 1909 for people over 70 years of ‘good character’. It was subject to a means test. The age pension was not available to the Pacific Islander immigrant generation, nor could they receive the invalid pension, although they received free medical treatment at the Mackay hospital in the ‘coloured ward’.

The Islander farmers benefitted from the sub-division of the large estates and plantations in the early 1900s. They farmed around Farleigh and Habana and Sunnyside, often on stony hill land using ‘flying-foxes’ (wire ropes slung high on trees, to which the cane bundles were tied) to bring down the cane. They also leased land from Palms Estate on the riverside, and some lived in isolated areas in the western end of the valley, such as Finch Hatton Gorge, where a number of Islanders fled at deportation time in the 1900s. At Federation, a sugar bounty was introduced to bolster the industry. When it was abolished in 1913, non-European growers received the same price for their cane as Europeans: all growers received an extra 9s. 8d. on each ton of cane. However, Queensland’s 1913 *Sugar Cultivation Act* included a dictation test, effectively banning many non-English-speakers from the

industry. In 1916, the Queensland Labor Government allowed non-Europeans to continue to grow cane. Further restrictions were imposed on employing 'coloured' labour in 1919 and 1920, which did not affect Islander farmers, as they only employed their own kin. However, they still received occasional antagonism from government officials, and Islander cane-cutters—even those born in Australia—were harassed by the Australian Workers Union. There are many stories about Islanders of all generations avoiding the union officials by stripping and cutting cane for farmers at night by the light of kerosene lanterns.

As Patricia Mercer recounts, the Islander community suffered badly during the 21 January 1918 cyclone at Mackay. For instance, the Kia family at Dumbleton, and the Malachi family at Te Kowai lost their homes in the flood when the river burst its banks. The cyclone also affected the cane crops, and none of the Islanders appear to have received government flood relief made available to all other farmers. This was followed by the 1919 Spanish influenza epidemic which struck all over Australia. Many, particularly the elderly, died. The Farleigh Islander community was hit badly: at least eight of the Islander farmers in that area died, including Luke Logomier and two others who had been among the largest Islander suppliers to Farleigh mill. Understandably, the two events depressed the Islander community.

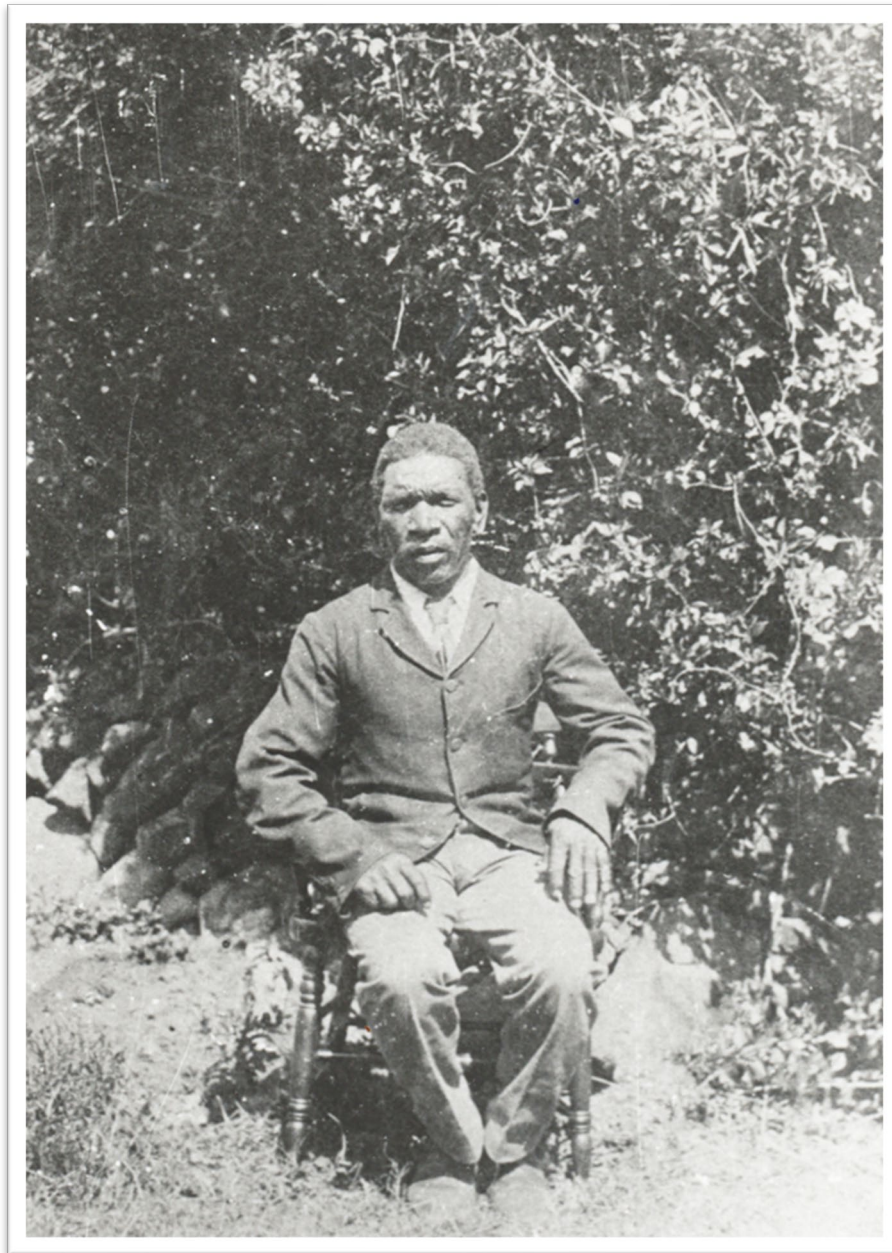
Some struggled on with farming the hill slopes, although in 1925 raw sugar prices began to fall, and were at their lowest during the 1930s depression, not fully recovering until World War II. They could not own land unless naturalised. The Agriculture Bank would not lend money to the Islanders, and private banks did not consider them a good risk, even though they were generally prompt at repaying loans. Significantly, poor Maltese and Italian migrants who arrived in the district after World War I were able to receive bank loans, and today their descendants are wealthy farmers and business and professional people.

The events of 1918 and 1919 thinned the Islander ranks. Mercer identified several who farmed between 1925 and 1936: Aymboan, Thomas Marlee, A.J. and S. Bobongie, Joseph Sambo, Robert Talonga, Robert Kia, N. Vice, Jack Marau, Harry Mooney, and Henry Quakawoot, all at Pleystowe; and Bob Allin, Matthew Malachi, Harry Fatnowna, Rarro and Tom Serika at Farleigh. On average, the 21 Farleigh growers harvested 17 acres each, although 10 harvested five acres or less. At Pleystowe, the average was 11 acres each, although one Pleystowe man harvested 35 acres, skewing the figures. By the 1930s, several of the older men and women farmers were no longer able to fill their cane 'assignments', and their yields were decreasing, probably because of lack of fertiliser, and that the areas leased were too small to allow regular fallow rotation. They subsisted on their Commonwealth Government indigence allowances, provided for those living in extreme poverty.

In the 1920s and 1930s, an increasing number of the original Islanders became too old to work. Mercer's research found that onwards from the late 1920s elderly Islanders received an indigence allowance of 5s. per week, paid monthly by the police or at a local post office. This limited 'pension' for non-citizens was funded by the Commonwealth to alleviate destitution, with the States responsible for its delivery. Initially, Pacific Islanders made up one-third of the total number in receipt of the allowance. In 1937, 163 Islanders in Queensland received the allowance. The next year the state-wide number in receipt was only 151, an indication of deaths. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Islanders' right to access a full or partial 'pension' was advocated by Edward Denman, Florrie Morgan and others at Mackay and elsewhere in other sugar districts. Forty-five of the indigence allowance payments in 1937 were made in the Pioneer Valley, the largest number in any one district. Denman also gathered about 20 of the old men and invited them to live out their final days on his property at Etowrie. Jimmy Go Go, Sam Barlip, Beno, Jimmy Handi, and Willie Boom Boom, Joe Russell, and Jimmy Chiller, mostly Solomon Islanders, along with John Moona, Willie Ambrym, and Sam Balik from the New Hebrides, were among the men who took up his offer.

Interestingly, some of the indigence allowance payments were made to Islanders living in Indigenous communities (Bamaga on Cape York, and Badu, and Thursday islands in Torres Strait), which shows the interconnections with First Nations Australians, and in government health facilities. such as Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on North Stradbroke Island and Eventide Home for the Aged at Charters Towers). The indigence allowance was also occasionally paid to Pacific Islanders who had been brought into Queensland to work for Christian missions in Torres Strait during the nineteenth century.

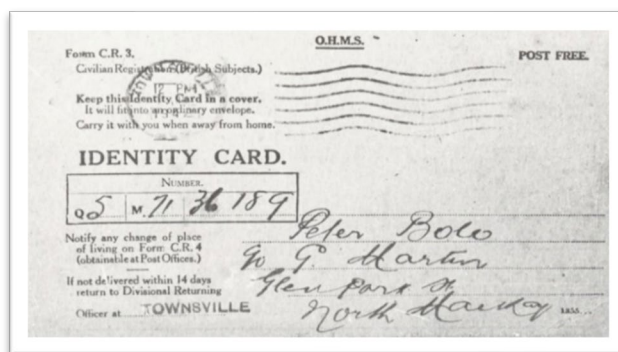
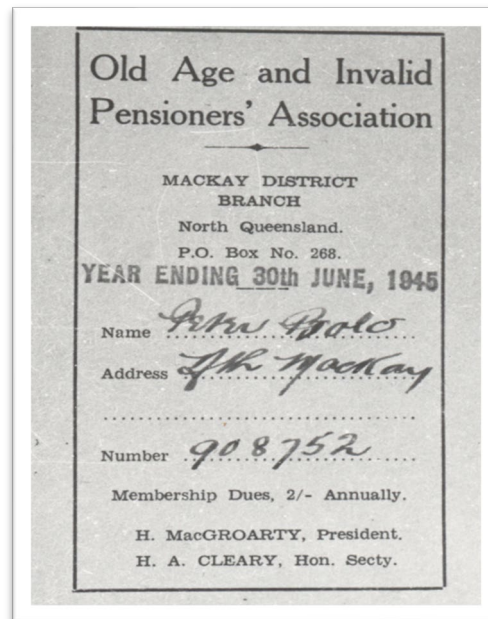
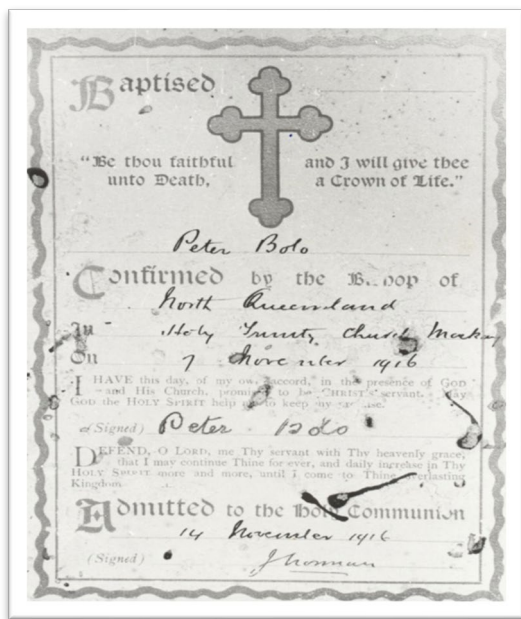
The old age and invalid pensions were a low £1 a week, but still a fortune to anyone previously receiving only 5s. a week. The pensions were extended to both First Nations Australians and Pacific Islanders in 1942.



**Plate 12.2: Peter Bolo from Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands lived at Mackay between 1894 and 1945.**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Peter Bolo was one of the few Islanders in Queensland from Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands. He is also one of the best documented. He arrived in Queensland in 1894, presumably then in his 20s, and died in 1945. His first job was with Robert and Elizabeth Martin at Mandurana. Elizabeth Martin ran a small Anglican mission at Mandurana Church. As Isabel Island is an early Anglican stronghold, he may have been Christened before he came to Australia. He was Confirmed in the church in 1916. After he worked for the Martins, he was employed at Barnes' Cremorne Gardens, and later by Joseph Norris, Mackay's first schoolteacher at his home at Mt Oscar in North Mackay. For several years, Bolo was his 'buggy boy', in charge of the family's horse and buggy. Norris, who died in 1915, also let Bolo farm his own small plot of cane, which was processed at Farleigh mill. In old age, Bolo returned to live with the Martins. He never married and always associated with the Malaitans at Mackay.



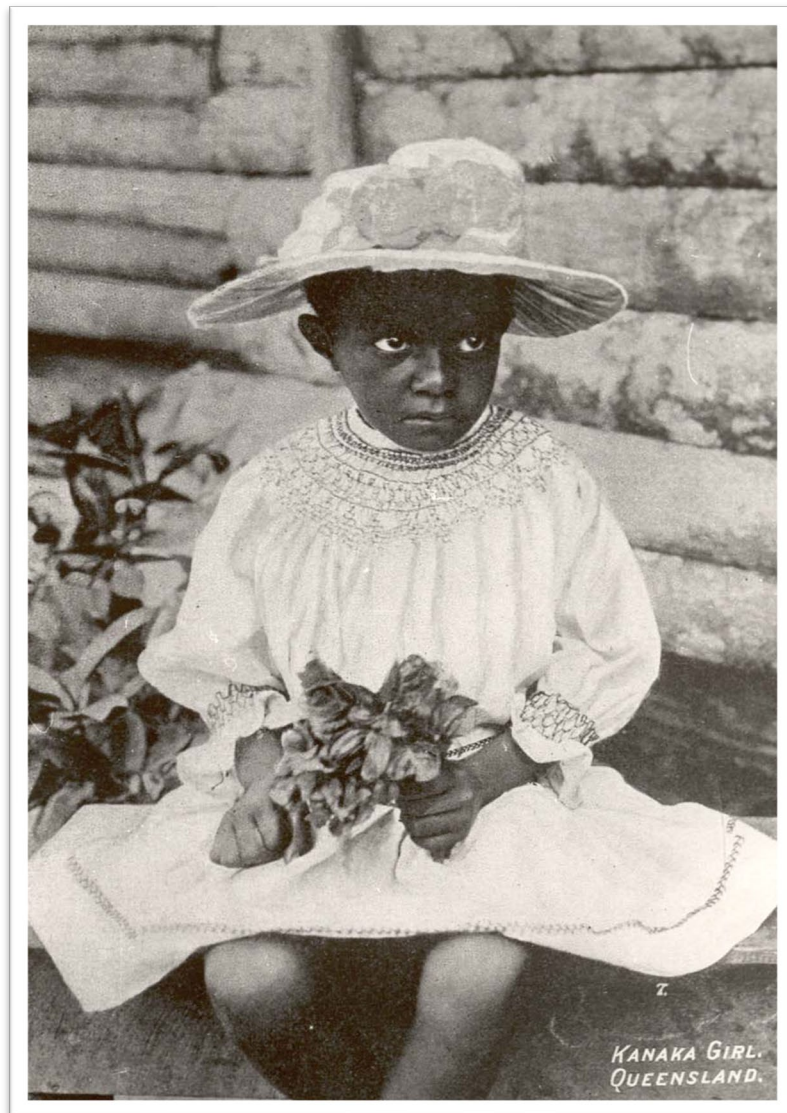
Plates 12.3–5: Peter Bolo was Confirmed by Bishop John Feetham at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Mackay in 1916. His 1916 Confirmation card, his 1942 Registration as an Alien card, and his 1945 Old Age Pensioners' Association card have survived.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

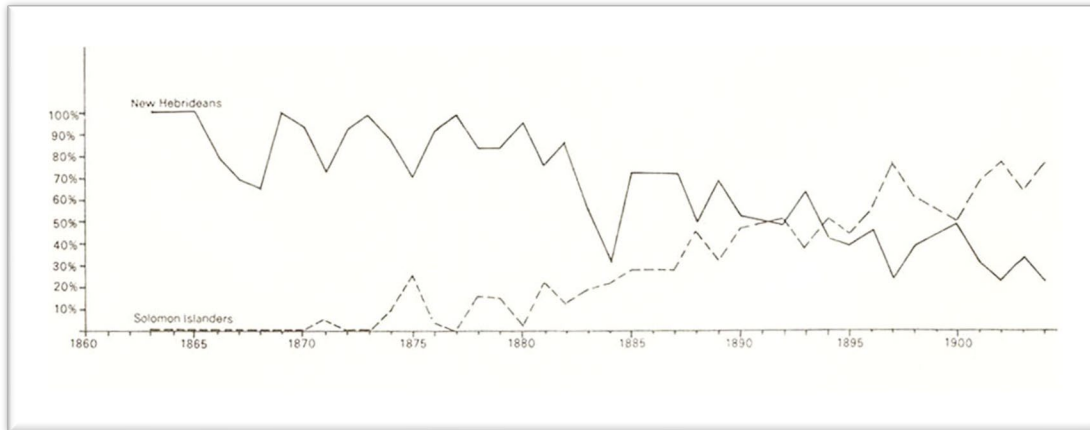
Islander families were large. Modern European-style education began in the mission schools, concentrating on reading the bible, and basic English, and maths, available for all ages. Onwards from the 1890s, a few Islander children attended State schools, where they felt very isolated, surrounded mainly by European children. There was a provisional school



system in Queensland, where schools were established at mining camps and newer rural areas; these sometimes became State Schools or closed if attendance dropped too low. An attempt was made to begin a 'Polynesian' Provisional School, using the old Presbyterian mission building at Walkerston in 1932–33. This experiment was abandoned due to the economic depression, and because some Islander leaders (Harry Fatnowna for one) opposed it as segregation. The Islander children mainly attended the Alligator Creek, Bakers Creek, Dumbleton, Eimeo Road, Farleigh, Habana, Homebush, Sunnyside, and Walkerston State Schools.

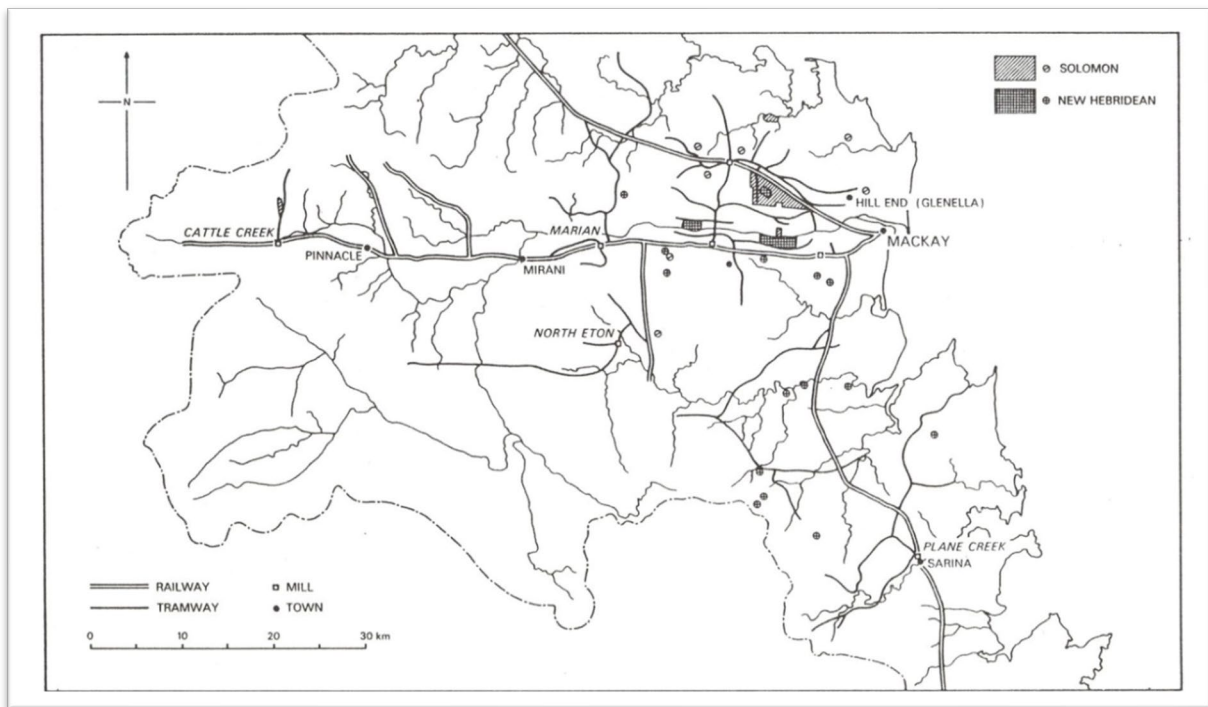


**Plate 12.6: An Islander girl from Mackay, probably in the 1890s or 1900s.**  
Source: Clive Moore Collection.



**Graph 12.1: Comparison of New Hebridean (Vanuatu) and Solomon Islands recruiting to Queensland, 1863–1904. By the early 1890s, the Solomon Islanders were in ascendancy and New Hebridean migration was in decline, although overall New Hebrideans were still the dominant group in the Queensland Islander communities. Only at Mackay were the two groups of about equal size.**

Source: Dutton 1980, xii.



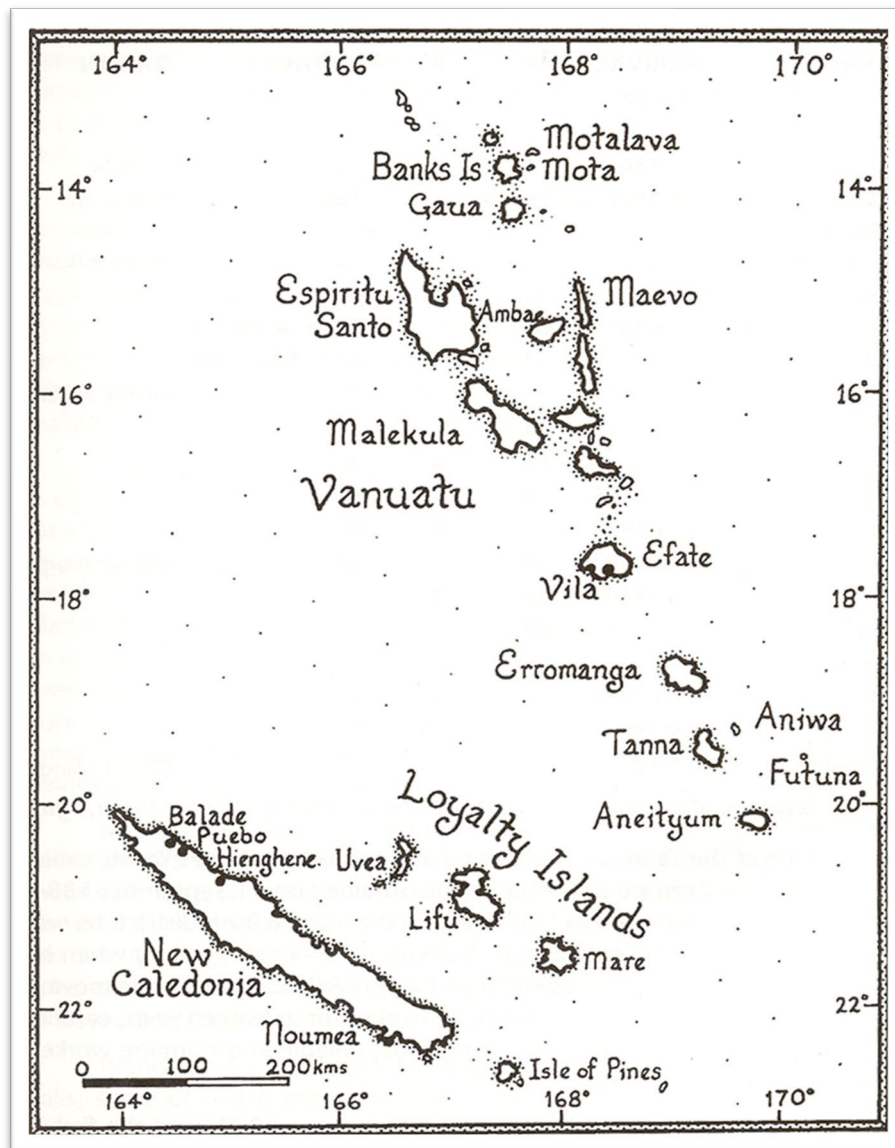
**Map 12.1: The Islander geographic division of the Pioneer Valley. The distinction between the southern (Loyalty Islands and New Hebrides/Vanuatu) Melanesians and those from the north (now the Papua New Guinea islands, and Solomon Islands) is important. Those who remained, once free of regimented indentures, unbeknown to the other inhabitants, divided the Pioneer Valley between them. Most of the southern Melanesians, mainly from the New Hebrides, lived on the south side of the river, and Solomon Islanders (including the PNG Bougainvilleans and Bukas) lived mainly on the Northside. Those living on the banks of the river on flood-prone Crown land leases were of mixed origin. While intermarriages occurred between the two groups, these were much rarer in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth century and today.**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

### **Loyalty Islands and Vanuatu**

It is impossible to be definitive about where individual Islanders lived. Under indenture they moved between plantations and farms, and from district to district. Those who stayed on in the twentieth century, although they were inclined to live with others from the same island, also moved about because they were leasing pieces of land, or as they got older felt more comfortable living for support with a larger group who spoke the same language. Single older men often attached themselves to Islander families, who looked after them.

The Loyalty Islands (now part of France's New Caledonia) provided 1,123 of the early Queensland indenture contracts, all before the mid-1870s, after which France enforced its colonial rights, refusing to allow British ships to recruit there. Modern Vanuatu (consisting of the New Hebrides, Shepherd, Banks, and Torres groups of islands) provided 39,931 of the indenture contracts. The main islands involved were Epi (5,084), Tanna (4,244), Ambae (Oba, or Omba, 3,658), Ambrim (3,464), Malekula (2,934), Espiritu Santo (2,806), Gaua (Lacon) (2,537), and Pentecost (1,960).



**Map 12.2: Vanuatu and the Loyalty Islands, now part of New Caledonia.**  
Source: Gistitin 1995.



All of the Loyalty Islanders arrived in Queensland between 1863 and about 1874 when there were no restrictions placed on the type of labour Islanders could perform. They were never banned from working inside the mills. Lifou, a Loyalty Island, provided 715 recruits to Queensland (excluding those who entered through Torres Strait for work with the London Missionary Society). William Francis Seekis grew up on Lifou under the French administration, and the Marists. A Catholic, he arrived in Brisbane in 1871, reaching Mackay in 1873. As a pre-1879 arrival, he was a ticket-holder, exempt from later extra regulations and deportation, and he was also French. Seekis married an English woman and they had four children, three boys and one girl. Onwards from 1894, he leased a 50-acre (20 ha) farm for £20 a year at Beaton's paddock, Chelona. When CSR closed their Homebush mill in 1921, the company allowed him to continue to live on their land at Bakers Creek and in 1927 granted him an annuity of 10s. a week. He also received an indigence allowance from the Government. The 1925 electoral roll shows Seekis as naturalised and a voter. He is said to have thought of himself as 'White' and been supported in this by local Europeans who described him as 'one of ourselves'.<sup>1</sup>

James Weir was another Loyalty Islands man married to a European woman, Sarah Boiler. They later parted, and Sarah married Jack Manjack from Ngela, known as a 'medicine man'. She was known as the 'White Kanaka'. Weir worked in many jobs around Mackay, at one stage helping transport bagged sugar to Paxton's wharf. Later he worked at Homebush mill as a fireman and in other roles. At the same time, he leased a small block on Sandy Creek from CSR, growing fruit trees and sweet potatoes, which he sold around Homebush. Next, he moved to nearby Sunnyside and leased land from George Sunderland, again only a small area, on which he grew pineapples and watermelons. He also grew cane on a slope at Scrubby Mountain. He was a keen fisherman, riding his horse down to Sandy Creek where the salt water met the fresh, catching mullet, bream and flat head.

Harry Choppy (Choppe) was also from Lifou. A ticket-holder, he married Annie Runhoa from Gaua in the Banks Group, now part of Vanuatu. After early years at Rockhampton, and on plantations around Mackay, the Choppys lived on the river at Dumbleton, and later on Griffith's farm at Wallingford, and Luscomb's farm at Mt Vince. The pattern of White farmers allowing Islander families to live on their land for decades was widespread, resulting in close relationships between the families through until today.

During the years in which the Loyalty Islanders arrived, most of Queensland's Islander immigrants came from the New Hebrides. Henry Arrow (Aru Cogona or Corcon) was kidnapped from Ambae (Oba, or Omba) Island onboard the labour ship *Stormbird* in the early 1880s, while still a teenager. Initially, he worked for CSR at Homebush, and in the 1910s for Richard Atherton on Blue Mountain pastoral lease, which had once been part of Mt Spencer station. His first marriage was to Anna (Lena), with no children resulting, and his second to Ruby Sima, which produced six children. Ruby died when the last child was born, the children becoming wards of the state.



**Plate 12.7: Elaine Choppy (nèe Arrow) and her daughters Elsie and Thelma, outside Harry and Phyllis Arrow's home in Homebush Road, 1942. The house is typical of those constructed in the early twentieth century.**

Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 45.

More of the labourers came from Epi than any other Vanuatu island, although the island is not strongly represented at Mackay. John Gorman (Corman) is thought to have been born on Epi in the 1860s. Records show him at 28-years-old marrying a widow, Sarah Louise Youngam, whose parents are thought to have been from England and Germany. They had six children and lived in the Bakers Creek area. Around 1907, they changed their name to Gorman.

Ambrym Island also provided large numbers. Robert Francis Boah was kidnapped from Ambrym when he was about 13. He married Florence Balepp, born in 1888 on neighbouring large Espiritu Santo Island. They escaped deportation and in 1909 were living at Palms Estate, while leasing a farm at Alexandra. Florence died when their son Frank was young; he was brought up by family friends, Robert and Elizabeth Kia. After his lease expired, Robert Boah moved to a squatter area at Town Beach and ended his days in the Government's Eventide Home for the Aged in Charters Towers.

Said to have been born on Malekula Island in about 1871, Robert Kia arrived in Queensland in 1883. If these years are correct, he was underage. In 1905, he married Elizabeth Headman, born in 1889 into a Gaua Island family in Rockhampton. Kia worked at Racecourse mill, then leased land from the Turnor family at The Ridges. Robert had a Certificate of Exemption from deportation. In 1913, he was leasing 40 acres of land at the old Nebia mill site neighbouring Dumbleton, growing only six acres of cane. He took up the land in 1906, and in 1913 requested and was granted exemption from the terms of Queensland's 1913 *Sugar Cultivation Act*. Baptism records show their children were born between 1913 and 1929. Unfortunately, their river-side home was swept away in the 1918 cyclone, including Robert's papers establishing his 1906 exemption status, and his 99-year lease. They continued to live at Dumbleton, where their daughter Winnie was born in 1907. Robert Kia died in 1926 and Elizabeth re-married in 1930 to Peter Bickey (Timoti Biki), who helped



raise her five previous children and another four from their marriage. He was born on Buka Island near Bougainville (now in Papua New Guinea) in about 1880, to Manofun (Magopan) Bickey and Filifu (Chilpee). Bickey had worked on a ship, travelled in the Pacific, then decided to settle at Mackay. He was baptised Anglican in 1906, when he was working at Palms Estate.

[Form B.] DEC 8 1914

"THE SUGAR CULTIVATION ACT OF 1913."

### Application for Certificate of Exemption.

To the Clerk of Petty Sessions,  
Petty Sessions District of

1112

I, Robert Kia, of Yebia Hill, near Dumbleton, Mackay, farmer, hereby apply for a Certificate of Exemption from examination under the abovementioned Act on the following grounds:—\* I have resided continuously in Mackay during the last thirty years. I am a married man with two children. I have cleared 40 acres of land from F.C. Hornbrook, and 20 acres from Cook on the former I have effected the following improvements—shower (iron), electricity, fence (3 bar wire) and fruit trees. On the latter I have erected a fence (3 bar) have had two acres under cane fit for cropping during the present season. I have had two acres under cane fit for cropping during the present season. I declare that the following particulars with respect to myself are true:—

CERTIFICATES ISSUED, JAN 25 1914

1. Name in full: Robert Kia
2. Country of origin: South Sea Islands
3. Place of birth: South Sea Islands (Malicoula Is.)
4. Nationality: South Sea Islander
5. Age last birthday: Forty-two years
6. Married or single: Married: 2 children (1 girl byrs, boy 2 mon)
7. Date of arrival in Queensland: Arrived at Mackay by the "Lassie"
8. Date of arrival in Commonwealth: 1883
9. Previous place or places of residence in Commonwealth, if any: None
10. Present place of residence: Yebia Hill, near Dumbleton, Mackay
11. Occupation: Farmer

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the "Oaths Act of 1867."

Robert Kia  
Applicant.

Signed (or signed with his mark) and sworn by the abovenamed Robert Kia before me at Mackay the fourth day of December 1913; and I certify that this affidavit was first read to the said Robert Kia in my presence, and that he seemed perfectly to understand the same, and that he made his signature (or mark) thereto in my presence; and further that I personally know the said Robert Kia, and that I have, as far as I am able, ascertained the truth of the statements contained in this affidavit.

E. Haines J.P.



THE SUGAR CULTIVATION ACT OF 1913.

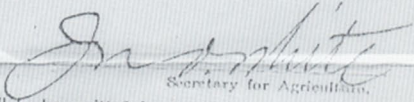
## Certificate of Exemption.

I hereby certify that (a) **Robert Kia.**  
particulars as to whom are hereunder set forth, is exempted from examination  
under the abovementioned Act for the following reasons:—(b)

**Length of residence in Queensland.**


1. Name in full: **Robert Kia.**
2. Country of origin: **South Sea Islands.**
3. Place of birth: **Malicoola Is.**
4. Nationality: **South Sea Islander.**
5. Age last birthday: **42 years.**
6. Married or single: **Married.**
7. Date of arrival in Queensland: **1883.**
8. Date of arrival in Commonwealth: **1883.**
9. Previous place or places of residence in Commonwealth, if any: **Nil.**
10. Present place of residence: **Nebia Mill, Dumbleton, Mackay.**
11. Occupation: **Farmer.**


Dated at Brisbane this **Twenty-second** day of **December**, 19 **13.**

  
Secretary for Agriculture.

N.B.—Every certificate shall be in duplicate, and shall be transmitted by the Under Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, Brisbane, to the Clerk of Petty Sessions for the District, who shall cause the applicant to mark with his finger print in Indian ink every such certificate and duplicate thereof. The said Clerk of Petty Sessions shall then deliver one copy to the successful applicant and return the other copy to the said Under Secretary, who shall file such copy and record the same.

Print of **Robert Kia**  
finger, **right** hand,  
of **Robert Kia**  
taken this **22nd**  
day of **December** 191**3**

Witness—  




Plates 12.8–9: Robert Kia's application for a Certificate of Exemption from the 1913 *Sugar Cultivation Act*, and the Certificate.

Source: Courtesy of Winnie Boah.



Percy Harrison Darr (Darmelib), born in the early 1840s, and his wife Polly Mudoon, both from Ambrym Island, arrived at Mackay separately in about 1880. Percy Darr had previously worked at Bundaberg. The couple married, and one child was born at Mackay, before they chose to return to Ambrym for ten years before re-recruiting. Other children were born in Ambrym before they returned to Mackay, where their last two children were born. Living and working at The Chase and Sunnyside, Branscombe, and in the Palms Estate area, they were allowed to stay at deportation time. In later life, they lived at Bakers Creek. In 1921, their 35-year-old son James married Annie Tonga, a woman of Islander and Yuwibara Aboriginal ancestry, born at St Helens in 1890. Percy Harrison Darr was living with his son at Bakers Creek when he died in 1925 at the age of 83.

Ambae was the home island of several Mackay families. Katie Natofelinga Oba was born there in the early 1860s. At about 15 years old, she was on Walourigi beach collecting shells to make necklaces. She was kidnapped by the crew of the *Borough Belle* and taken to work on Alexandra plantation on the south side of the Pioneer River, during which time she had a daughter, Rose Tamar. Katie's memory was of helping to clear scrub land and planting cane. After she had worked there for several years, Katie decided to return home with Rose. Nine months later she and Rose returned to Mackay; Rose had been unable to cope with village life. Katie worked on Alexandra plantation again, where she met and married Willie Marlla, a Fijian. The most significant piece of evidence of manacling of Islanders relates to Natofelinga. She ran away from Ashburton plantation where she was working. Located hiding in Mackay cemetery, her feet were manacled, and she was forced to walk back to Ashburton. The deep indentations caused by the irons remained on her ankles for life.

Katie and Willie had two children, Ivy and Sandy, and although they were granted Certificates of Exemption from deportation, Willie decided to join a substantial group of Islanders allowed to leave to work for CSR in Fiji in 1907. He kept in touch for several years, then all contact lapsed. In the 1910s, Katie worked as a house servant for the Innis family at Alligator Creek near Sarina. Ivy and Sandy attended the local State School, the only Islander children there.

Her eldest daughter Rose Tamar married Phillip Choppy, an Australian-born Lifou-Gaua (Lacon) Islander born in Rockhampton, who lived at Homebush and worked in that neighbourhood for many years. They had 10 children and later moved to Sunnyside. As Cedric Andrew recounted, once Rose and Phillip were established, Katie and the two younger children moved to live with them. Katie worked for Mr Harris on a big farm near the mill, and did washing and ironing for the mill staff, until the mill closed in 1921. Ivy (born at Alexandra in 1904) and Sandy attended the Homebush State School, then Katie and her children moved with Rose and Phillip to Scrubby Mountain at Sunnyside. Katie was assisted to build a small house made from blady grass and scrub timber. They cleared the land, digging out the lantana (an introduced noxious woody shrub) before cane could be planted. Ivy, who began working as a domestic servant when she was nine years old, later married William (Bill) Thomas, and they had three children. Sandy married Ada Baggow.

A small woman, Katie was tough, resourceful and worked hard. Unable to get her first crop of cane carted to the tramway, in the second year she purchased a horse, harness and dray to transport her cane. Katie farmed until 1939, then found it beyond her and went to live with Ivy and her husband and their daughters Irene and Rowena. Katie was in her late seventies when she died in 1944 and has many descendants.

Joe Thomas Malatio Marlo left Marlo Island in the New Hebrides when he was 13 years old because of a fight in which a woman died. He is said to have travelled to New Caledonia, then Guadalcanal, and finally Queensland on the 73-ton *Lyttona*, first working on Barrie plantation from 1875 to 1878. He married a New Hebridean woman whom he met in Queensland. They both were ticket-holders, exempt from the 1900s forced deportations. J.T.M.

Marlo died in May 1944, and his wife in 1965. Bill Thomas was born at the mill site at Farnborough in north Yeppoon in 1911, a sugar plantation until the early 1900s. He began work in 1921, moved to the Pioneer Valley and began working on a farm at Homebush in 1928. By 1933, he had purchased Netoka's farm (see below) at The Leap for £650, with a £20 deposit, then moved to Dumbleton, and by 1935 was working at Sunnyside for Mr Sunderland. Next, he purchased a farm at Dumbleton for £900 on a £260 deposit in 1945, purchasing a series of farms over the next 20 years.

Charles Thomas Tarryalla (Tarralla) was also from Ambae. He is probably the 'Tarryall' recorded as working for the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Co. in 1897, and he also worked on the Butt brothers farm at Homebush. He married May Baggow of Ambae parentage, daughter of Simon Baggow. They and their 11 children lived in a house on the bank of the Pioneer River at Dumbleton and were one of the Islander families who lost all of their possessions in the 1958 flood.

Gaua provided one of the largest numbers of labourers. Willie Wommerang was from Gaua. He was one of the final labour recruits in the 1900s and was the youngest immigrant Islander on the south side of the Pioneer River. How he managed to stay in Australia is unclear, but he worked for Sri Lankan Peter Anthony, a cane farmer at Tara Creek near Sarina. It was hilly land with the cane planted in holes at 2s. 6d. for each 500 holes. He wanted his own land, which he obtained with a five-year lease on the south side of Koumala, while continuing to work for Anthony. His cane was sent to Plane Creek mill. Next, he purchased 60 acres of freehold land in Sunnyside at the foot of Mt Alice. He was helped by Egbert Choppy, as well as his countryman Billy Woolfa from Rockhampton who over many years came up for the crushing season, and other Gaua Islanders. Willie always spent his Christmas break in Rockhampton with the Vea Vea family, drinking heavily, although when he returned home, he always ceased consuming alcohol. He became old and ill and when he died Mervyn Vea Vea is said to have inherited the farm, although it was sold for £56 by the Public Curator to William (Bill) Bargo Tonga. Bill Tonga was assisted with finances by the farmer for whom he was working.

I met Bill Tonga in January 1973, 88 years old and the first South Sea Islander I ever interviewed. I have never forgotten his kindness, nor the warm soda squash he gave me to drink while we sat on his verandah. (He had no refrigerator.) I still have the notes from our conversation. The house had once been a gambling den near Mackay's Town Common, then was transported on drays to Sunnyside. He was born at St Helens station north of Mackay on 16 May 1888, to George John Bargo Tonga and his wife Pawl. The origin of 'Tonga' is probably Tongoa Island in Vanuatu. He had a brother George who was three years older, both baptised at the Anglican Selwyn Mission in 1896, and a younger sister Annie. His father John became an overseer on Homebush plantation and owned or leased 20 acres of land on Sandy Creek. In February 1916, with the permission of the Magistrate (as she was underage), William Bargo Tonga married 17-year-old Rockhampton-born Gladys Mezzan, daughter of Jack Mezzan and Rose Ponnell. He gave his parents' names as George Tonga and Noknorira. Their first child Rose Maud was born in May 1916, followed by seven others between 1917 and 1933. In 1921, 35-year-old James Darr of Sunnyside married Bill Tonga's sister 31-year-old Annie from St Helens who named her parents as George Tonga and Molly. Bill Tonga's father George John Bargo died in 1927 at the age of 89. In 1974, Noah Sabbo told me that William Bargo Tonga was the last person who knew the secrets of the old New Hebridean men who had lived at Sunnyside. If only I had had the presence of mind to ask Bill Tonga the year before. The records show three different names for his mother, which is not unusual, but is important as descendants of Yuwibara woman Molly Tonga were among the claimants in the successful Yuwibara land rights judgement.

*Founders of the South Sea Islander Community*

In 1975, I interviewed Cecilia Tarryango, born in 1900, one of nine children of John Edmund Cissivie and Roartovie-Bena, both from Gaua. Both died in 1927. The family lived at Bundaberg in the 1890s, and later Rockhampton, where Cecilia completed six years of primary schooling. Some of the children were adopted out; Cecilia was brought up by Islanders Thomas and Mary Lowe. She moved to Mackay with her parents in 1922, and the next year she married Jack Vincent Tarryango whose parents were from Ambae Island. They grew a small amount of cane, and fruit and vegetables, on land at Alexandra that they leased from Palms Estate in the early 1920s.



**Plate 12.10:** The photograph carries the poignant inscription ‘Be for I Go’, and he is holding a bunch of flowers. This man is either about to depart for Fiji in 1905 to work for CSR, or being deported in 1906.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.



**Plate 12.11:** This is Katie Natofelinga Marlla Oba when she was working on the Innis family farm ‘Pratolino’, south of Mackay in the 1910s.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

The Andrew family are one of Mackay's best known Islander families. Goomas from Erromango Island worked in Fiji where he married Mary from Tanna. They had one son while there, Harry Andrew. At a young age, Harry worked as a cabin boy on ships, as an indentured labourer at Bundaberg, at Byfield, 25 kilometres north of Yeppoon, and then at Rockhampton where he married a Tanna woman, who died not long after. Harry moved to Mackay where his first job was cutting cane at Ashburton plantation. In 1910, he met his second wife, Nellie Querro, whose parents were from Ambae Island. They married in December that year, their first child Cedric born the next year. Harry worked for the CSR mill at Homebush until 1916, when he moved to Sunnyside to begin clearing a small piece of scrub land. He continued to cut cane for nearby farmers, while planting bananas, yams, taros, and fruit trees. Harry and Nellie raised 11 children.

Harry Andrew was a hard worker who began with five acres of dense scrub land at Sunnyside, which he cleared to grow yams, taros, banana palms, and other fruit trees, while also planting, trashing, and cutting cane on farms nearby. These Islander farmers often had to walk a few kilometres to their jobs, which began at 7.00 am, stopping only for an hour lunch break, and working until the sun went down, then walking home. Their son Cedric, born in February 1911, lived until he was 101 years old in October 2012, the oldest South Sea Islander in Australia. His memories are recorded in his daughter Cristine's book, *Fields of Sorrow*. The Andrew farm sustained the family, enabling Cedric to work on his parent's farm until 1930, when it could no longer support the growing family.



**Plate 12.12: Harry and Nellie Andrew with baby Cedric, 1911.**

Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 15.

**Plate 12.13: Willie Querro standing at the back, Harry Andrew seated with his son Cedric alongside.**

Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 20.





**Plate 12.14: Harry and Nellie Andrew in old age at Sunnyside, 1950s.**  
Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 30.

Charles Querro and Lucy Mata (Wata), both from Ambae, seem from one source to have arrived at Mackay in the early 1880s, although Cedric Andrew said that Lucy arrived on the *Borough Belle* in 1875. Some stories say that Lucy was from the same village as Natofelinga Katie Marlla Oba. Charles first worked at Ashburton, where he met Lucy. They married, and their three children were Nellie, Harry, and Willie. They also worked at Alexandra, then moved to Homebush where in about 1906–07 Charles leased 25 acres on the north bank of Sandy Creek from CSR. When Charles Querro died in 1923, Lucy Mata took out a five-acre cane lease in her own name. Their children were the first Islanders to attend Homebush State School. Willie married a woman of Gaua descent from Cudgen in northern New South Wales, who lived with the Querros until Willie died from tuberculosis in 1918, after which she moved to Rockhampton with their boys, Douglas and Andrew.

Querro was one of a group of Islanders mainly from Ambae (Joe Toverley, Joe Alla, and Jimmy Simmer), along with Jimmy Warrow from Motlav, and Harry Marung from Tongoa, and others from Santo, Ambrym and Marlo, all of whom had worked for CSR at Homebush. Once the mill closed in 1921, they arranged to lease land at Sunnyside from the Osborne and Sunderland families. Eventually, Harry Querro owned a 160-acre (65 ha) farm at Running Creek, Sunnyside. He built a slab-walled home, growing cane, taro, and fruit trees, including an acre of bananas.



**Plate 12.15: Willie and Harry Querro (circled) at Homebush State School, 1906.**

Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 17.

Charles (Charlie) Tass (Gillietarse, Siletarse, or Siletass) was from Maewo Island, which provided only 575 labourers to the Queensland total. Born in the early 1860s, he arrived in Queensland with Nora (Norah, or Boo) Rewarra, who was about the same age. They had eloped, a quite usual occurrence for couples who could not obtain family permission to marry. The couple arrived in Mackay with Charlie's sister Ella in about 1873. Charlie and Nora (Norah) had three children, Peter, Eliza, and Ned. Charlie Tass died in 1913, aged in his fifties. Boo's father is said to have sent an assassin to Australia to kill his daughter for disobeying; he landed at Bundaberg but was, luckily, unable to locate her at Mackay.

Tass farmed at Sandy Creek with Tom Sabbo-Togo from Epi Island. Noah Sabbo-Togo, son of Tom Sabbo-Toga was born in Queensland in 1884 (or possibly 1881, dated from his burial details). When Noah Sabbo-Toga gave evidence to the 1906 Royal Commission he was literate, having attended the Mackay State School, not married, and had been leasing a 35-acre farm since 1900. His mother had already died, and his father was still alive. Even though Tom was not a ticket-holder, the family were able to remain in Australia. Noah Sabbo-Toga married Eliza Norah Tass in 1920, renewing the link to the Tass family, and died in 1923 at the age of 42. Charles and Boo's descendants belong to the Tass, Baggow, Mooney, Simpson and Sabbo families.



**Plate 12.16: The wedding of Ned and Lena Tass, 1910s. Circled left to right: Aru (Arro) Tavorie, a boarding-house keeper from Chinatown, Simon Baggow, Tom Sabbo-Togo, and Lucy Querro.**  
Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 28–29.

Charles Sallitara Wass-Miller was from Valua (Motlop) in the Banks Islands, an island which provided 1,036 labourers. He remembered coming to Queensland on the *Lootima* (possibly the *Rotuma*) although there are no similar ship's names in the Government records. His family also claim that he worked at Robert Towns' cotton plantation at Townsvale near modern Beaudesert, which, if true, would mean he arrived in Queensland in the 1860s. Eventually Sallitara met and married Mary (Molly) Roomas. They settled in Rockhampton, where they had a family of eight. Two of the children, Charlie Jr. and Henry moved to Mackay, where Charlie married Rose Kia, and Henry (born in 1896) married her sister Winnie Kia. Their descendants remain in the district.

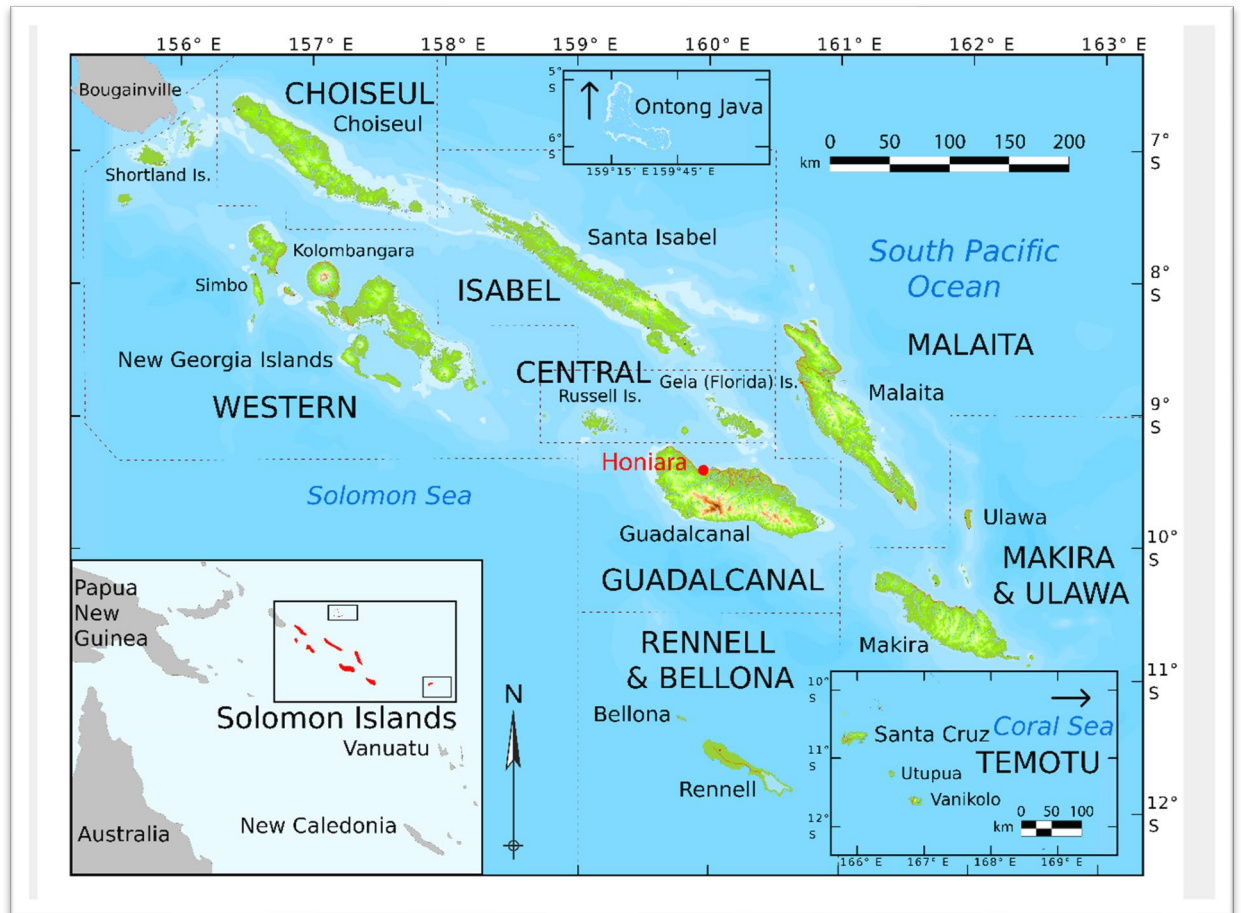
Robert William (Willie) Talonga was born in the mid-1870s on Pentecost Island, the son of Bobo Talonga and Toi. Able to read and write while still on Pentecost, he enlisted along with his brothers Jacob and Peter, probably in the 1890s. His brothers returned to Pentecost and all communication was lost. Robert married Jessie and they had two children, only one of whom survived. Jessie died young, probably in the early 1900s, and Robert remarried two more times; one of the marriages to Louise Bosso in 1911. Records from 1913 and 1915 show three children: Jessie, Duley, and Robert. The family lived near Alexandra, then Palms Estate, and Walkerston. Willie Talonga was a lay-preacher at the Walkerston Presbyterian Mission, until it closed in the 1900s, later joining the SDA Church. His son Robert married a daughter of Frank Fewquandie. Willie Talonga died at Mackay on 24 August 1959.

### **Solomon Islands**

Vanuatu descendants predominate entirely in most Australian South Sea Islander districts, but not at Mackay, which has the only large Solomon Islander community in Australia descended from the labour trade years. About 17,900 came to Queensland from islands now included in the Solomon Islands nation. The largest numbers of Solomon Islands indentured labourers in Queensland came from Malaita (9,186) and Guadalcanal (4,188), followed by 2,069 from Ngela (Florida). Around Mackay, in the 1890s and 1900s the New Hebridean and Solomons groups were about equal in numbers. Inter-marriages now make the distinction irrelevant, although some Malaitans still give preference to their male line. During the early decades of



the twentieth century, there seem to have been more single men from the Solomons than the New Hebrides.



**Map 12.3: Solomon Islands**

Source: Cartography by Vincent Verheyen. Clive Moore Collection.

The most significant extended Solomon Islands family are descended from Kwailiu and Orrani. John Kwailiu Abelfai Fatnowna (Fatanahoona) from Malaita, was the son of Luifera and Sauroro. Born at Rakwane in the east of the Fataleka language area in the mid-1860s, he was kidnapped along with his brother Karai in about the mid-1880s. The Fatnowna family believe they both worked on Meadowlands plantation, and after three years returned to Malaita, where Kwailiu married Maggie Orrani Olerum from west Fataleka. The couple returned in about 1890, this time to the Johnstone River, Innisfail, where the first two of their children were born. Family stories suggest that the family tried to return home, but the ship was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef. If this is true, the only possibility is the *Foam* in 1893. By 1895, they had moved to Mackay where the next three children were born. Kwailiu was clearly one of the leading Malaitans at Mackay in the 1890s. He died on 25 March 1906, and despite his ornate Christian burial, his family firmly believe that he was never baptised. On 27 August the same year Maggie Orrani re-married, to her kinsman Luke Logomier. Baptised in 1889, naming his parents as Letter and Parlooman, Logomier was an Anglican lay-preacher with a substantial farm. They both died in 1919 during the Spanish influenza epidemic.

Why would Kwailiu, an illiterate non-Christian man have been given such respect? The only conclusion that comes to mind is that his customary status and actions were



sufficient for him to be given the trappings and respect similar to that of Christian Islander leaders. His European-style funeral was unique in the district up to that date, except for that of Tui Tonga in the previous year.



**Plate 12.17: John Kwailiu Abelfai Fatnowna (Fatanahoona) and Maggie Orrani Olerum and family in about 1905. The children are (L to R back): Cicely (b. 1895), Lucy (b. 1893), Joy Kwau (b. 1891), and Harry (standing on a box, b. 1897), with Gracie Eva (b. 1901) in the front.**  
Source: Clive Moore Collection.



**Plate 12.18: The funeral cortege for John Kwailiu Abelfai Fatnowna (Fatnahoona) in March 1906.**  
Source: Clive Moore Collection.



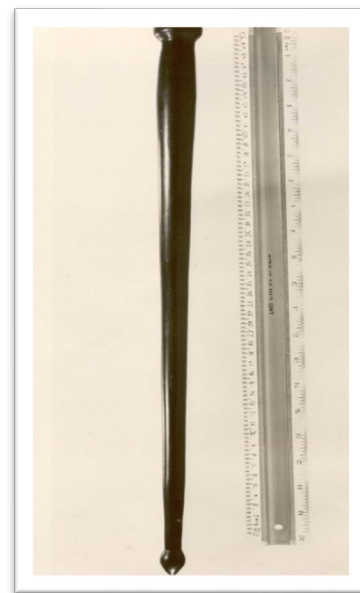
**Plate 12.19:** The grave of John Kwailiu Abelfai Fatnowna (Fatnaoona) who died in 1905, along with his daughter Gracie Eva who died in 1916, and his son Harry Norman who died in 1967, along with Harry's wife Grace (née Kwasi) who died in 1968.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.



**Plate 12.20:** Taken after Kwailiu died and Orrani remarried to their kinsman Luke Logomier in August 1906. Luke is sitting in the centre, with Orrani and her daughter Gracie Eva (born in 1901) are on his right.

Source: State Library of Queensland.



**Plate 12.21:** The Fatnowna Staff is the only artefact of islands-origin known to have survived in the Australian South Sea Islander community. This brown highly polished wooden staff, which once had a tail piece attached, is thought to have belonged to Kwailiu. It is now held at James Cook University in their material culture collection.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Five other Islander families (Kwasi, Bobongie, Kwaitaka, Fewquandie, and Mooney) are direct descendants of the children of Kwailiu and Orrani. Harry Fatnowna, the only son, married Gracie Kwasi (whose parents were from Ngela). Their eight children created

marriage connections to the Bobongie, Choppy, Coakley, Corrie, Fewquandie, Kwaitaka, Miller, Mooney, Motto, Vice, Viti, Tass, and Williams families. Initially, Harry and Grace lived at Kangaroo Hill near Farleigh, not far from the Ngela Tarunga hut mentioned in Chapter 11. In about 1922, they moved to Peter and Carl Christensen's farm at Eulbertie near Eimeo, where the family lived for 30 years, growing their own cane, and working for the Christensens and other farmers nearby. The Christensen brothers gave the Fatnowna's five acres of land on which to live and farm. The older of their 10 children lived with Matthew and Lizzie 'Grannie' Malachi (Malaga Gule), and then after Matthew's death with Lizzie at Miclere Hills while they attended Dumbleton School. When Eimeo School opened in 1934, they all moved to Eulbertie.

Another Malaitan, Andrew Bobongie, was born in north Malaita in either Lau Lagoon, or at Bitama in To'ambaita language area. Oral history suggests he first worked at Innisfail and Cairns, before moving to Mackay. An 1895 baptismal record from Mackay presents him as 22 years old, the son of Gwamgey and Tungohea. In 1906, at the age of 33 he married Joy Kwau Fatnowna, the 19-year-old daughter of Kwailiu and Orrani. On this occasion he provided different names for his parents: Bulioro and Tauoriquu (possibly Tungohea?). They had three sons, Luke (1908), John (1909), and Sam. Luke died in infancy. The family lived at Summer Hill near Farleigh, and later at The Leap. Joy died in 1912 and Andrew remarried to his distant cousin Emma Fewquandie (Fiukwandi) in 1917, a marriage which produced eight children. In the marriage register his parents are listed as Quangie and Tangdia. Andrew Bobongie had a 140-acre (57 ha) farm near a saltpan called Coast Paddock at Habana. He died in 1946, thought to be over 70 years old. Today, a road through the area is named Bobongie Road. In 1974, Willie, a son from the second marriage, was the first Australian Malaitan to return to their home island, followed by Noel Fatnowna (the son of Harry Fatnowna) and his wife Minnie (née Choppy) and family the next year. I first visited Malaita in 1976, researching this relinking process.

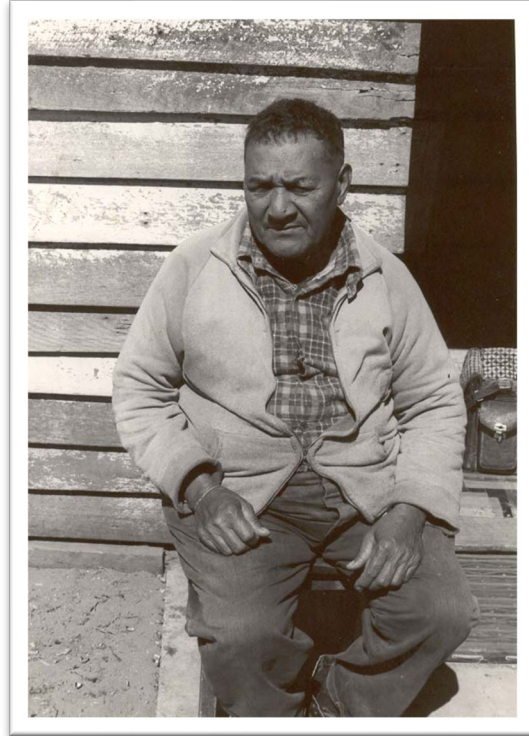
Emma was the daughter of Kavisi Fewquandie, who was born in east Fataleka, Malaita, in the mid-1860s. He enlisted twice, voluntarily both times. On the first occasion he joined a ship at Fuaaibu in west Fataleka, spent three years in Queensland, returned to his island and married Annie Myterrafear, only to enlist again. The second time he and his wife were escaping inter-group fighting. He is probably 'Fequardie' who enlisted on the *Fearless* in 1887 and came to Mackay with 67 other recruits. The couple spent the rest of their lives at Mackay, working around Farleigh, Nebia Creek, and Dumbleton, raising a family of six. Kavisi died in the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1919 at the age of 54.

Bobongie may have arrived in Queensland at about the same time as Henry Sippie and his wife Dora Gwyner, and Campini (captain), from Lau Lagoon, Malaita. They seem to have arrived on the *Nautilus* in 1889. Sippie and Gwyner first worked around Bundaberg and had six children. They moved to Mackay, probably in the early 1900s, as two of their children were baptised there in 1903 and 1904. Harry, one of their sons, married Ada, a part-Aboriginal woman from Cooktown whose White father ran a cattle station. At 15 years old, she was taken by the Government to live at Yarrabah Reserve near Cairns. Her husband, Jack Baker, an Aboriginal man, enlisted during the First World War and was killed. Kathleen Florence Gwyner Sippie, born in 1921, who married Sam Bobongie, was their daughter (Plate 12.25).

Kwaitaka (Quaytucker) married another of Kwailiu and Orrani's daughters. He was born in the late 1860s, descended from both the Kwarae'ae and Fataleka language areas in east Malaita. Kwaitaka lived in Kwarae'ae until he was a young man, when an incident caused him to flee back to neighbouring Fataleka. He killed a lover of his sister and the family fled to be protected by the Rakwane descent group, from which John Kwailiu Fatnowna came. Kwaitaka hurriedly enlisted on the *Myrtle* 1888, with 92 other recruits. Initially, he worked at



Cairns, Bundaberg, and Gympie, then shifted to Mackay where he worked on plantations and farms. He married Lucy Coquash, daughter of Kwailiu and Orrani. They had two sons, Luke who died young, and Henry Stephen (Stevo) Quaytucker, born in 1910 or 1911. Kwaitaka died in 1918, followed by Lucy the next year during the Spanish influenza epidemic.



**Plate 12.22: Kwaitaka married Lucy Coquash Fatnowna and they had one surviving son, Henry Stephen, who lived in Mackay all of his life and died in 1985.**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

**Plate 12.23: Henry Stephen (Stevo) Quaytucker, 1977.**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Another Mackay district resident, Billy Kissier-ola, was born at coastal Uru in the Kwaio language district on Malaita in about 1880 and died at Mackay during the Spanish influenza epidemic. He enlisted at Sinalagu in 1897 on the *Helena*, on its thirty-fourth voyage, its twelfth to Malaita. The ship berthed at Bundaberg. At a later stage, he worked in north Queensland, where he married an Aboriginal woman, Fanny Bota from Tinaroo on the Atherton Tablelands, who died giving birth to their son Moses in 1905. Billy and Moses moved south to Mackay and lived in the Ashburton and Farleigh area. Moses married a widow, Maud Tallis (née Yasserie) from a Malekula Island family, and they helped raise three of Maud's brothers and sisters, plus 11 children of their own. They lived near Palms Estate at Amerin.

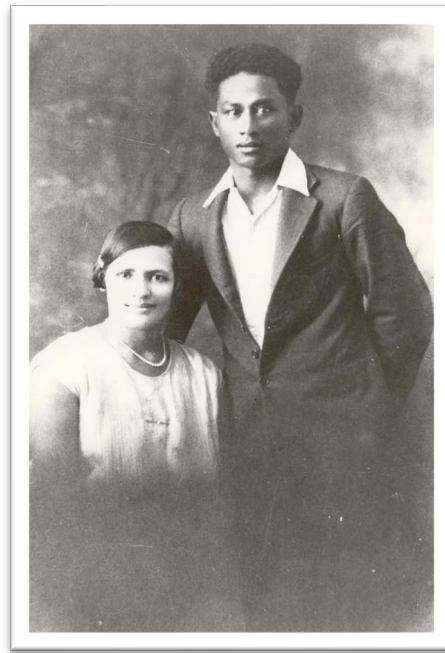


**Plate 12.24: Johnny Bobongie, Sammy Bobongie and (seated) Hugh Manaway.**  
Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 110.



**Plate 12.25: Joyce Sabbo (née Mooney), Rex Ringi Angofia visiting from Malaita, Solomon Islands, and their daughter Florence and her child, with her parents Sam and Florence (Flo) (née Sippie) Bobongie (seated), at Mackay in 1994. Sam is the son of Andrew and Joy Kwau (née Fatnowna) Bobongie.**  
Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Henry Netoka was kidnapped. He was from the Suraena descent group at Ataa, northeast Malaita, although through migrations his family also have close connections with the Walande area in South Malaita. His parents are said to have been Anua and Foley. He was taken away with three other youths by the *Jabberwock* in 1881 when he was about 20 years old. Out in a canoe, they were beckoned to the ship, then their canoe was grappled with hooks, and they found themselves thrown into the hold. One was killed resisting. Netoka worked at Branscombe plantation and became a lay-preacher at the Presbyterian Mission at Walkerston. Later, he had his own farm at Mt Eagle near The Leap. He married Elizabeth Romas Moyet from Gaua Island, daughter of Motrey and Outot. Netoka leased the land, growing cane, along with a large vegetable garden. The house had a ripple iron roof and wooden floors, with a detached kitchen. There were other unmarried Islanders living close by. The Netokas were still at the Mt Eagle property in 1919, when Elizabeth, who lost her sight in the 1910s, died in the Spanish influenza epidemic. They had one child, Mabel Edith, born in 1904. In 1921, she married a Sri Lankan, William Deshong, descended from indentured labourers who arrived in Bundaberg in the 1880s. When he died, Mabel married Jerome 'Chappy' Pelayo, a Filipino from Thursday Island. Netoka sold his farm to Bill Thomas of Marlo Island descent in 1933 and in old age moved to North Mackay where he had a market garden. He died in 1948. In 1988, some of Netoka's descendants made their way back to Malaita and met his family, who confirmed the kidnapping story.



**Plate 12.26: Henry Netoka from Atta, Malaita, born in the early 1860s.**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

**Plate 12.27: Mabel (née Netoka) and William (Billy) Deshong**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Three current Mackay district families seem to have come from Buka Island north of Bougainville, now part of Papua New Guinea. The records show only 58 recruits from Buka to Queensland between the early 1870s and about 1886, after which Buka was part of German New Guinea. Gilbert Manaway (Manawei) and Charlotte (Nodawoda) came from Buka in the late 1870s, or early 1880s. Gilbert worked on two farms near Habana and also as an overseer at Habana mill, which may indicate that he was a pre-September 1879 ticket-holder. In 1905, one daughter, Sarah, married Harry Quakawoot (Kwotamot), from Tarryu on



Buka. They had 13 children and lived around Mandurana and Habana on the Northside. The other Manaway daughter married a Japanese, Yokichi Matsuura. The family lived at Habana and Farleigh, and in Nelson Street, Mackay, part of Chinatown, which probably explains the marriage to Yokichi as there were many Japanese there. Gilbert is buried on North Stradbroke Island near Brisbane, spending his final years at the Government Benevolent Home for the Aged there, and Charlotte is buried in Toowong cemetery, Brisbane. Another family with Buka connections is that of Peter Bickey, first mentioned above with the Kia family. He is said to have been taken as a young boy to work on a ship and ended up in Queensland. In the 1900s, he received an exemption certificate which allowed him to stay in Australia with his wife Elizabeth.

Quite large numbers of recruits came from the Ngela (Florida) Group, where the Anglican mission and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate both had their headquarters. The Ngela community's Tarunga (spirit) hut at Miclere was the spiritual/ancestral centre for Solomon Islanders on the Northside, mainly those from Ngela, Guadalcanal, and Malaita. The small Ngela group living on a hill slope consisted of two 'devil men' who seldom left the hut, Matthew and Lizzie Malachi, who lived at the foot of the hill, Jimmy Langui and his Aboriginal wife, Jimmy Chilla, Bob Massing, Dick Mannis, Matthew Gena, Joe Gandi, Jimmy Go Go, and Jimmy Tarragwana. Charlie Viti and his wife Polly Viraloni, the latter from Espiritu Santo Island, and their family lived nearby. Another was Jimmy Kalmani who had long straight hair down to his waist, worn in ringlets, with pierced earlobes with large sleepers, and tatoos on his face and arms. He may have been from a Polynesian 'Outlier' island in the Solomon Islands.

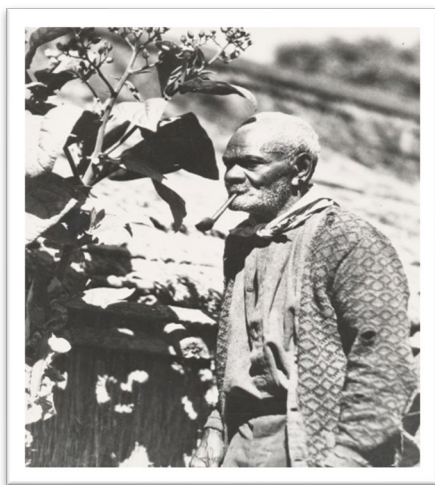
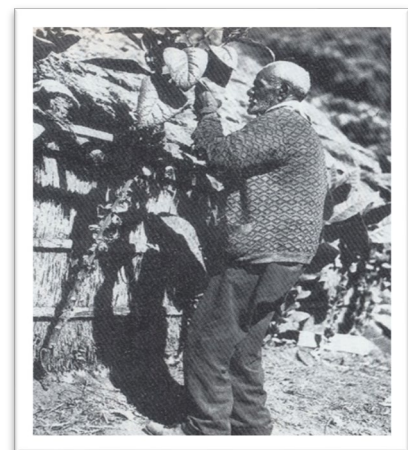
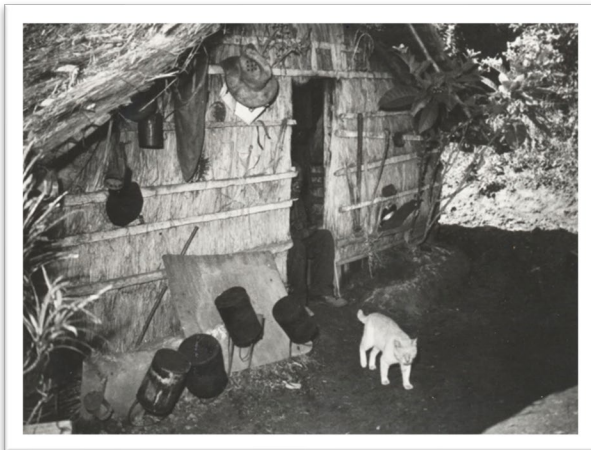
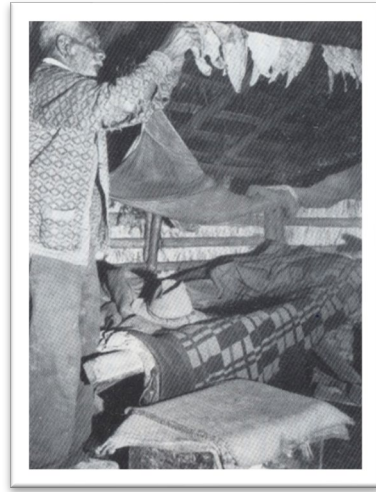
Alec Lekki Mooney was a Ngela man, who arrived in Queensland when he was about 20 years old. Most of his working life was spent around Eton, Mt Vince and Wallingford. In 1886, he married Rose (Rosy) Were, a woman of Aboriginal and Irish descent born in St George, where she was brought up by Police Magistrate George T. Mowbray and his wife Elizabeth. When G.T. Mowbray was posted to Mackay, Rose accompanied the family as nursemaid to their children. Alec Lekki had been working under indentures in the Mt Vince area, then decided to purchase land at Wallingford. He was told that he should have a European name, and an Irishman suggested Mooney, which he adopted. The couple met through a swimming excursion to Bakers Creek, married and had five children, born between 1888 and 1907. Their grandson Percival Henry (Percy) Mooney married Jessie Madeline Darr, a daughter of Annie Darr (née Tonga), a woman of Islander and Yuwibara descent, from the Pioneer Valley's First Nations people.

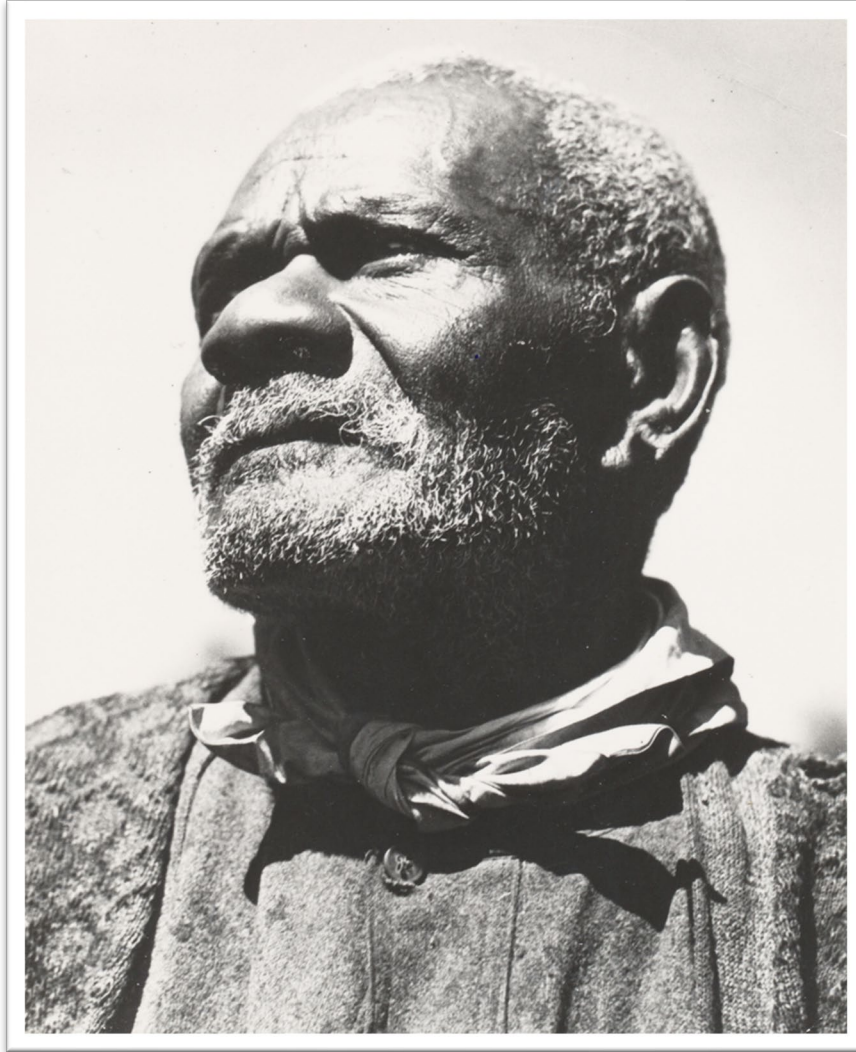
Henry William Mooney, the second child, born in 1893, married Cecily Fatnowna in 1918. The couple met while both were working on Richard Atherton and Albert Cook's Blue Mountain pastoral property west of Sarina. They had 12 children. The Mooney family house at Wallingford was destroyed in the 1918 cyclone. Like so many others, Alec died during the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1919. Rose continued to operate the farm until it passed to her second son Henry. They were forced to sell the farm in 1935 during the Depression, then purchased land near Reliance Creek on the Northside.

Malaitans were the largest group from the Solomons Islands in Queensland, and those from Guadalcanal were the second largest. Jack Manjack from Guadalcanal and his European wife Sarah Boiler lived near the Tarunga hut (mentioned in the previous chapter), as did Willie Willie, from the same island. Second generation Guadalcanal man, Jacob Penola, son of Tom and Elizabeth Solomon, mentioned below, lived there with his family. Malaitans Dick Suvi, Jack Marau (Mumios), Thomas (Tommy) Kumai and Beno Beno lived nearby. Other men there looked after the 'devil house', as the Tarunga hut was known. It was a spiritual place but had also been built to protect an Australian-born New Hebridean Harry Querro from Homebush, who in 1935 married Australian-born Ngela woman Eva Viti. Such

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marriages were unusual, and clearly some Solomon Islanders were not in favour of the match. However, the Viti parents were also of mixed (Ngela and Espiritu Santo islands) descent.





**Plates 12.28–34:** This 1941 set of photographs of Ngela man James (Jimmy) Tarragwanna is typical of the lifestyle of the ageing Islanders in the 1920s to 1940s. Outside his home at Miclere near the Tarunga spirit hut (28). Inside his home, showing his bed and drying tobacco leaves (29). Outside his house, showing his cooking equipment (30). Tending his tobacco plants (31–32). Outside his home (33). Portrait of Jimmy Tarragwanna (34).

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

The Kwasi family were also from Ngela. When James Kwasi married Lizzie Nego Weekon from Buka in 1900, he was 37 and she was 35. They had a family of three girls, Grace, Evelyn, and Dolly, the latter said to have returned to Buka in 1906 at deportation time and was never heard from again. James died, and Lizzie re-married in 1908 to 28-year-old Matthew Malachi from Ngela, whose father was Gunnit and his mother Helena. Like Luke Logomier, he was a lay-preacher at St Mary's Anglican Church. Grace married Harry Norman Fatnowna, the only son of Kwailiu and Orrani, and Evelyn married Harry Querro. After she died, he married Eva Viti, a sister of Joe Viti. There is also a record of a third marriage, to an Irish woman, Beryl Maloney, and to two children from the marriage.

Charles Viti was born about 1853 at Haleta, Ngela Island, and arrived in Mackay on the *Stanley* in July 1881, at 28 years old. He worked for James Finlayson on Seaforth pastoral lease in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1906, Viti was already married to Polly Viraloni. One of their children was baptised late that year when the family was living at Palymra. Like the Kwasi family from Ngela and Buka, one daughter returned to Ngela during the mass deportation. Unusually, she then returned to Mackay. Two of their children married into the



Quakawoot family, and others into the Querro, Tallis, Tarryango and Youse families. Charles Viti, who died in 1923, was remembered by Christy Fatnowna for patrolling at night with his bow and arrows to keep intruders away.



**Figure 12.35: The children of Charlie and Polly Viti at their home near the Ngela Tarunga hut settlement in the Miclere hills, Mackay, 1930s. Joe Viti is at the left back. The family had three houses, one serving as a kitchen and eating place, with a big fireplace. The main grass thatch house had four rooms**

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

There were a large number of labourers from Guadalcanal. David Penola (aka Tom or Boppa Venolla) arrived at Mackay in the 1880s when he was in his twenties, from the southern Weathercoast of Guadalcanal. By the 1900s, he was a self-employed farmer, married to Elizabeth and with one son, Jacob (Plate 12.36). In 1906, he signed a petition against the planned deportation.

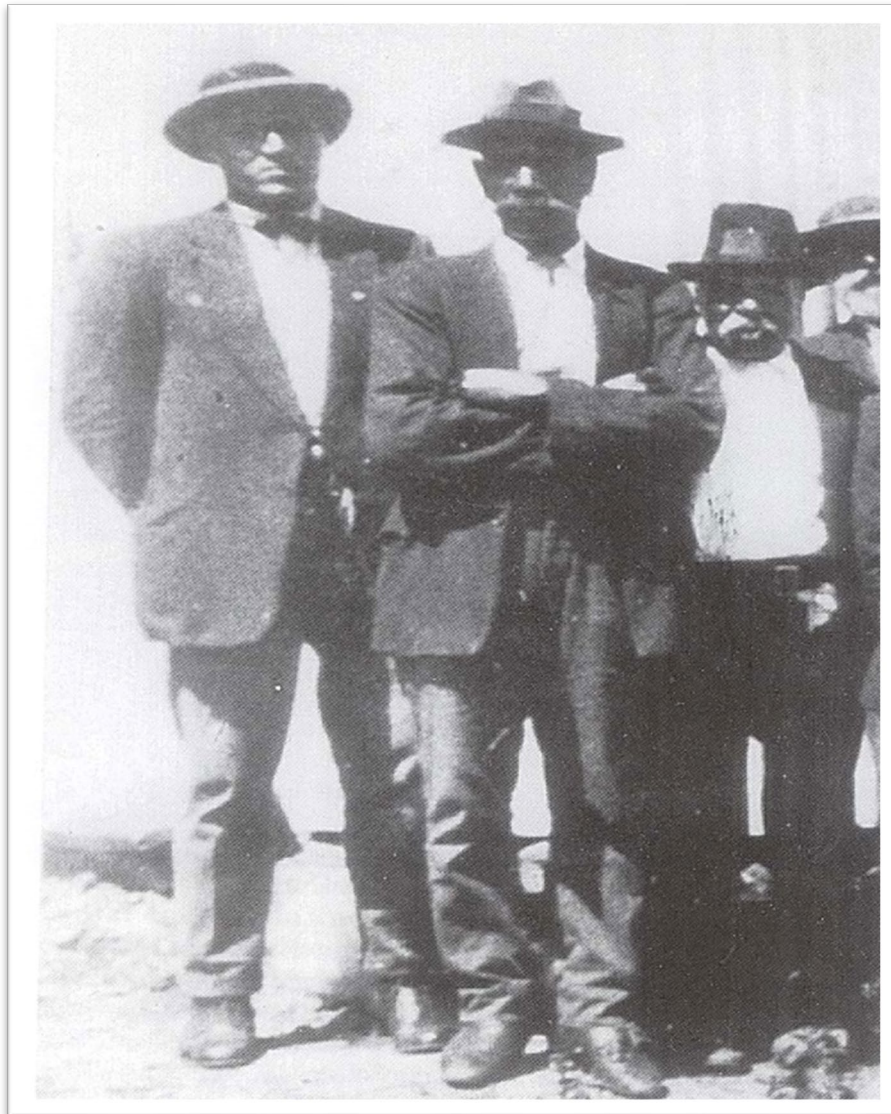
Another was Jack Marau, presumably from the Malaitan colony at Marau Sound on the south coast of Guadalcanal opposite Malaita. The family says that he and some other young boys were lured by a ship's crew and stolen away. In 1930, he married Nellie Ellen Mylung and became stepfather to her children from her earlier marriage to Willie Vice, who was born at Mackay in 1886. The Vice children were Willie, born in 1886, Elizabeth, born in 1893, and Hazel Mizpah, born in 1920, an adopted member of the family. Elizabeth (Lizzie or Lilly) Vice married a British man, Peter Smith in 1918. In his old age, Jack Marau lived with Norman Fatnowna and his wife Hazel Mizpah. Jack Marau created a model of a ship he had seen, which remains with the family (Plate 12.37).

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This convoluted set of relationships is revealing of the nature of these early large families and the often multiple marriages. Women seldom remained single for long. There is much we will never know, although modern finding aids and digital and family sources linking back to the islands can explain some of the complexity. There are many puzzles and contradictions, not least that names change, or are misspelt in records through mishearing by officials and clergy. Exemption from deportation seems to have been granted to many families who did not qualify under the 1901 Act or its 1906 revision. It may be that the local officials chose to

interpret the existence of families as reason enough to allow them to remain. (There was a clause that said that exemption could be granted if there was the possibility that harm could come to them if deported.) And the number of kidnappings mentioned seems to be higher than my earlier calculations, although the sample here is too small and random to be deemed contradictory. However, the re-enlistments mentioned support the earlier interpretation, as does the number of movements between sugar districts.

Australian South Sea Islander history is never simple, although these 30 families encapsulate the Australian South Sea community. The number of families broken up during the deportation years is one of the sad results of it all. As discussed in Chapter 9, the present-day view by many Australian South Sea Islanders, and other knowledgeable Australians, follows a political, not an historical interpretation. At the beginning I called it a Gordian Knot that could only be unravelled with difficulty. They are a unique Australian ethnic group. No one living in the Pioneer Valley could think otherwise.



**Plate 12.36: Jacob Penola, Jack Marau, and John McLeo.**  
Source: Andrew and Cook 2000, 54.





**Plate 12.37:** Christie Fatnowna, grandson of Kwailiu and Orrani from Malaita, with the model ship made by Jack Marau. It is a clipper ship, not a standard labour trade ship. The photograph was taken in 1988.

Source: Clive Moore Collection.

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## **Bibliography**

The bibliographies for all chapters are in a separate file.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Mercer 1995, 252.