

# The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham : Papua New Guinea in the 1870s

by Clive Moore

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In excess of 500 foreigners were killed in what is now Papua New Guinea in the thirty years preceding the proclamation of German and British spheres of influence in 1884, more than were killed on the North Queensland frontier in the same time period.<sup>1</sup> The deaths of William Ingham and six of his crew on 28 November 1878, murdered and eaten on Brooker (Utian) Island in the Calvados Chain of the Louisiade Archipelago, is an isolated case, but it provides a convenient window into Papua New Guinea in the 1870s and 1880s.

Ingham's name lives on through the prosperous North Queensland sugar town named after him, but little is known of the man himself or of the circumstances of his death. And much of the known detail contains exaggerations, so it is difficult to separate fact from fiction.<sup>2</sup> This paper traces his careers in Queensland and New Guinea and assesses his death, within an ethnographic context, relating the incident to the development of British authority in New Guinea, to marine industries in North Queensland and violent encounters on the northern frontier.

W.B. Ingham was born on 4 June 1850, the fourth son of substantial land owner and stock holder, Joshua Ingham<sup>3</sup> of Blake Hall in the Parish of Mirfield in County York, England, and his wife Mary née Cunliffe. He was educated at Malvern College and matriculated aged nineteen, into University College, Oxford University, but left without a degree. He seems to have spent a short time in the Royal Navy<sup>4</sup> before joining his brother Thomas Lister Ingham at his property Malahide at Fingal in Tasmania in 1873. Tasmania was not to his liking and he struck out on his own, visiting Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane before heading further north to consider investment possibilities.<sup>5</sup> The booming sugar cane industry attracted him, and he chose to settle on the bank of the Herbert River, purchasing 700 acres of virgin scrub country from F.C. Gardiner. This he named Ings plantation, a play on his surname.

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The venture ended in disaster. He employed Islander labourers in the arduous task of clearing the land and was in the process of erecting a crushing mill when the cane in that district and many others was attacked by what was then called rust: whole crops were destroyed.<sup>6</sup> His losses extended well beyond the destruction of his mature but unharvested crop. He had graduated from a grass and bark humpy to a two room house, planted coffee trees for decoration and harvest, and begun to plant fruit and vegetable gardens. Ingham had also purchased the *Louisa*, a small<sup>7</sup> flat bottom stern-wheel steamer, to carry his supplies on the Herbert river.<sup>8</sup> It is said that Ingham had £ 60,000 to invest, and lost all but £ 600 of the amount in Ings plantation.<sup>9</sup> There is no indication of where the twenty-four year old could have obtained £ 60,000 ; his father was wealthy, but at his death in 1866 he had nothing like £ 60,000 in his estate. While there is doubt that his investment was considerable it is doubtful that he ever had clear title to the land;<sup>10</sup> and half that amount would have bought a well equipped small plantation and mill in any southern sugar district in the early 1870s. The size of his funds and the subsequent loss is probably exaggerated.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, he had minimal assets after the collapse of Ings plantation, other than his youth, general ability, seamanship skills, and an enterprising zeal. All accounts on W.B. Ingham stress his trusting good nature and great charm. He was not tall, but of muscular athletic build. He was a fair horseman and a crack shot, possessing an envied range of small arms.<sup>12</sup> Governor Kennedy described him as “an enterprising, steady and cultivated gentleman”, and S.W. Griffith, then Attorney General and later Premier considered him “an educated gentleman”.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Mathewson who knew him on the Herbert river described him as “extremely nice fellow, strong, courageous, cheerful and universally esteemed”. A. Temple Clerk, also a friend from the Herbert, described him as “sunny natured, trusting, forbearing, prompt in action, but slow to anger” and “the most loveable man” he ever knew.<sup>14</sup> Certainly the residents of the embryonic settlement on the Herbert thought enough of him to give his name to their town after his death, even though his was neither the founder nor major planter of the district.<sup>15</sup>

After his plantation failed Ingham used his only remaining useful asset, the *Louisa*, as tender to coastal steamers, ferrying passengers and stores on the river and accepting commission work around the nearby coast. By 1876 he was bored and ever hoping for larger rewards. He closed up his house, leaving most of his possessions behind, and set out for Trinity Inlet and the newer settlement, Cairns, proclaimed a port in October and fast developing as the service centre for the new Hodgkinson gold field. He helped explore the inlet, began a regular service between Cairns and Smithfield, operated a saw mill, and built a small ship, the *Vulcan*.<sup>16</sup> In 1876 he took the *Louisa* to

Cooktown, some 400 kilometres, and in 1877 explored in Hinchinbrook Channel, Mourilyn harbour and the Moresby river.

## FROM NORTH QUEENSLAND TO NEW GUINEA

By 1878 Ingham moved his operations to Cooktown: typical of small-time frontier entrepreneurs he was always indomitably adventurous and looking for better prospects.<sup>17</sup> Cooktown was the port for the rich Palmer River gold fields, where the gold rush began in 1873. By 1878 the Hodgkinson field was certainly a greater magnet than the Palmer, but Cooktown, the leading port in the north, was a good base for a man whose interests focused on the sea.<sup>18</sup> Miners were searching all of North Queensland for new fields, and at the same time European exploration, exploitation of maritime resources and settlement was moving through the islands of Torres Strait into south east New Guinea, then claimed by no European power.<sup>19</sup> W.B. Ingham was drawn north on the wave of enthusiasm that led prospectors to search for gold on the Laloki River just outside the London Missionary Society (LMS) settlement at Port Moresby.

His motivations were probably various and they all have a bearing on the circumstances of his death. He was making a bare living through the *Louisa*; adventurous perhaps, but not living in the manner of William Ingham J.P. planter of the Herbert River, son of the squire of Blake Hall. He was entrepreneurial and willing to try new schemes. Too little recognised is that in the second half of the nineteenth century settlement in southeast New Guinea developed from Queensland and is best viewed as an extension of the North Queensland frontier. Over roughly the same years as Queensland was colonised New Guinea was visited by exploration expeditions; and also a few cedar-getters, general traders and collectors of flora, fauna, artifacts and marine products: it was dangerous work but also financially rewarding. The south coast of New Guinea through to the archipelagoes to the east had, since the late 1860s, become the haunt of *bêche-de-mer* and pearl fishermen, operating out of Cooktown and Somerset.

The only permanent European settlers on the south coast were Andrew Goldie, a naturalist who first visited Port Moresby in 1875, returning as a trader from 1876, and European and Pacific Islander representatives of the LMS. The LMS moved into Torres Strait in 1871, headed by Archibald Murray and Samuel MacFarlane, with a team of Loyalty and Cook Islanders. Their first base was Mer (Murray) Island but they soon retreated to Somerset. Evangelists from the Loyalty and Cook Islands were established on the New Guinea mainland in 1872, and in December 1874 William and Fanny Lawes arrived at Port Moresby, joined by medical missionary William Turner and his wife Mary in March 1876; but Mrs Turner died in childbirth in November and William Turner returned to England. The Lawes returned to England on furlough<sup>20</sup> from December 1877 to 1881.

James and Jane Chalmers arrived in October 1877 and the next month went with Samuel MacFarlane and ten Islander teachers to open a new mission station at Sua'au at South Cape, extending the eastern mission stations opened in 1876.<sup>21</sup>

The existence of substantial deposits of gold on the mysterious rather inhospitable island had long been supposed. Captain Stanley on HMS *Rattlesnake* found a few grains in pottery at Redscar bay in 1848 and in 1873 Captain Moresby in HMS *Basilisk* found gold quartz in Halifax bay, later Port Moresby, and at Moresby Island.<sup>22</sup> The missionaries also found some gold but chose to keep their discoveries quiet rather than precipitate a rush which would jeopardise their work and change the lives of the people. Their worst fears were confirmed in about September 1877 when Jimmy Caledonia, who had mining experience in New Caledonia, New Zealand and Queensland, found signs of gold at the junction of the Laloki and Goldie Rivers. He alerted Andrew Goldie who sent a sample to Sydney with William Lawes in December the same year.<sup>23</sup> To Ingham and other settlers in the north, moving on to Port Moresby and the Laloki goldfield was no different from moving from the Herbert River to Cooktown and the Palmer. Any new rush was worth a risk.

The abortive Laloki gold rush of 1878 meant, briefly, that large numbers of Europeans arrived at Port Moresby: parties of miners set out from Sydney and Cooktown. Between April and August around 100 miners descended on Port Moresby, ill-equipped for dealing with the environment, malaria, and the indigenous people. Ingham never seems to have been interested in gold prospecting but he certainly



*Completing a hut on Brierly Island in the Louisiades  
J. MacGillivray, Voyage of the Rattlesnake*

wanted to become a trader and government official. He told the Colonial Secretary that he intended “to settle in New Guinea and . . . purchase land from the natives.” Ingham seized the opportunity the Laloki rush offered. He borrowed money from F.J.W. Beardmore, appointed him as his agent in Cooktown and on 21 January 1878 set off with naturalist Kendall Broadbent<sup>24</sup> on a chartered vessel carrying supplies to set up a store, across Torres Strait via Thursday island and Daru, following the coast east around to Port Moresby.<sup>25</sup>

### PORT MORESBY

The first twenty-five prospectors arrived on 22 April, on the *Colonist* out of Sydney and Cooktown; Ingham had almost two months start on them, establishing his store and beginning learning Motu, the local language. Assistance would have been given him by the four LMS evangelists from the Cook Islands and their wives, led by Ruatoka.<sup>26</sup> Ingham, Broadbent and Goldie were the only European inhabitants of Port Moresby in early 1878 which was to Ingham’s advantage in establishing his authority. The day he left Cooktown he had offered his services to the Queensland government as “representative at New Guinea... to act under instruction . . . without remuneration until affairs take a more definite course”,<sup>27</sup> but had heard nothing. When the *Colonist* arrived he received a copy of his appointment of 27 March as published in the Government Gazette, his only formal notification:

His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to appoint William Bairstow Ingham Esquire, J.P. to be Agent for the Government of Queensland at Port Moresby, New Guinea.<sup>28</sup>

The nature of his appointment was totally unclear. The original northern border of New South Wales was at 10.37° south latitude, running through Muralag (Prince of Wales) Island. In 1855 when New South Wales was granted representative government the Governor’s commission gave him jurisdiction over all islands west to 154° east longitude, which cut through Rossel Island and included the Louisiade Archipelago; but no northern limit was ever stated. When Sir George Bowen was appointed as Queensland’s first Governor he assumed that he had jurisdiction over the Barrier Reef and Torres Strait islands, but in 1863 the Colonial Office informed him that Queensland’s northern boundary only extended to three miles (4.8 kms.) off Cape York. Queensland and Britain established a magistrate as their official representative in the north at Somerset on Cape York in 1864. Although the Somerset magistrates tried to control the Strait they had no authority to do so. Until 1872 the Royal Navy Australian Station

(RNAS) fleet had no jurisdiction above 10° south latitude, which included the Louisiade Archipelago but excluded most of southern New Guinea and northern Torres Strait. Then in 1868, to the annoyance of Queensland, New South Wales was given the right to grant mining and occupational leases west of 154° east, to regulate the guano trade on islands on and inside the Great Barrier Reef.

In 1872 the Imperial government agreed to move Queensland's northern border to sixty miles (96.5 kms.) off Cape York, thus regulating some areas of the *bêche-de-mer* and pearling trades which had developed in Torres Strait since the mid-1860s, but excluding important fishing areas around Saibai Island, Warrior Reef and Erub (Darnley) and Mer (Murray) Islands. The RNAS limits were expanded to include all of New Guinea, north as far as Micronesia, and to 160° east longitude. Plans to move the government headquarters in northern Queensland from Somerset to Waibene (Thursday) Island, under way since 1870 were completed in 1877 when the Somerset Magistrate H.M. Chester shifted there, the new settlement officially opening early in 1878.<sup>29</sup> Britain had established the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) in 1877, based on the colony of Fiji with the Governor as High Commissioner and Consul-General. The High Commissioner had certain authority over British subjects, unclear authority over natives in conflict with British subjects; and an uneasy relationship with the RNAS, the Commodore of which until then had wielded the only real British power in the islands beyond the Australian and New Zealand colonies.<sup>30</sup> To circumvent Chester's lack of authority over Mer and Erub, in March 1878 he was appointed as Judicial Commissioner for these islands under the auspices of the WPHC.<sup>31</sup> Finally in 1879 the Queensland border was extended to include the northern islands of Torres Strait, adjacent to the New Guinea mainland.<sup>32</sup>



*J.H. Shaw's sketch of Port Moresby from the 1878 voyage of the Voura.*

From June 1878 moves were *en train* to have Ingham appointed as a Deputy Commissioner of the WPHC, but the High Commissioner Sir Arthur Gordon was on his way to Scotland on leave and no decision was made. During his time in New Guinea Ingham was legally no more than a confidential correspondent of the Queensland Colonial Secretary, a shadow of government authority without substance beyond the northern sixty mile limit.<sup>33</sup>

Ingham took his appointment as Agent seriously, addressing the miners, offering advice on how to deal with the natives. He also met with local leaders, presumably with the help of the LMS teachers, to explain the situation; and claimed to have received their support on a petition asking for British protection. He set up a post forwarding service and reported on various occurrences which might be of interest to the government of Queensland, particularly violent behaviour by the people of the Calvados Chain of islands in the Louisiades, and the prospectors antagonism to the possible arrival of any Chinese settlers. The miners were impressed by his generosity and helpfulness and presented him with an address of thanks. Reading through his correspondence with the Queensland government the impression is of a calculated move to make himself seem indispensable, at least until it was clear that the gold rush was a failure.<sup>34</sup> Both Ingham and Chester anticipated a large migration from North Queensland to New Guinea; if payable quantities of gold were discovered possibly 10,000 settlers before Christmas. Ingham had the confidence of Chester and the Queensland government and would have been a sensible choice for magistrate if Queensland's authority had been extended to Port Moresby, or for appointment as Deputy Commissioner under the WPHC. But this was not to be and Ingham seems to have lost interest as the gold fever waned.

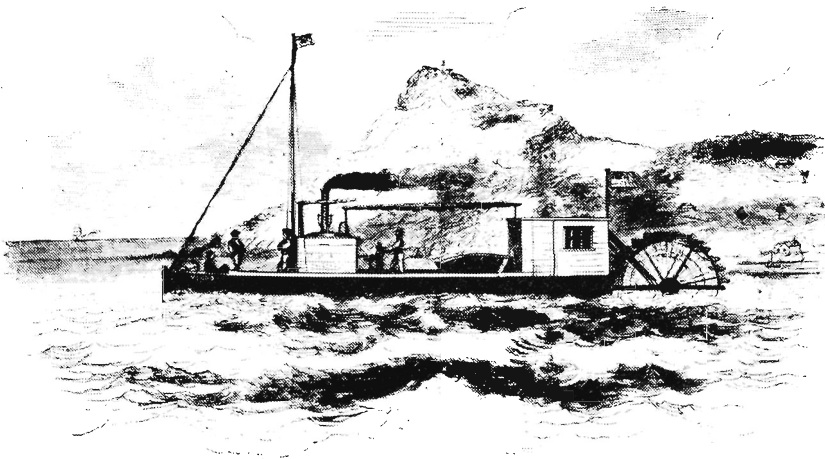
He left Port Moresby on 8 June 1878 for Cooktown, arriving on the 14th. The next day he wired the Colonial Secretary John Douglas asking for instructions, not knowing that a detailed letter had been written on the 3rd, which must have reached him in late June. By the 17th he was in Cairns, refloating *Louisa* which had been sunk in the mud of Trinity Inlet for several months.<sup>35</sup> The *Louisa* was refitted and renamed the *Voura*. Once described as "a wheelbarrow crossed with Noah's Ark",<sup>36</sup> the flat-bottomed, iron-plated, stern-wheeled steamer, was about twelve metres between perpendiculars, with a 4.8 metre beam, a two metre depth of hold, and capable of carrying twenty tons of cargo. The *Voura* had sails but did not perform well under canvas alone, needing her seven-horse power engine which could propel the ungainly but highly serviceable craft, when lightly loaded, at seven knots. Her beauty lay in her shallow draft, giving

her superiority in dealing with reefs and sand bars. Accompanied by her 6.7 metre gig, and armed with one nine and two four pounder guns, Ingham had created the best equipped floating fortress in New Guinea waters.

### THE CALVADOS CHAIN

The *Voura* cleared Cooktown on the 1st September, crossed the Strait and hugged the coast to Port Moresby, arriving in early October.<sup>37</sup> The rush was over and the miners were retreating to Queensland disenchanted by New Guinea and defeated by sickness. Ingham spent barely a month in Port Moresby before setting out for the Louisiade archipelago off the eastern end of New Guinea.

The major industry in New Guinea waters in the 1870s was fishing for and curing *bêche-de-mer*, the smoke-dried flesh of the several edible species of the class *Holothurioidea*, the sea-cucumber or trepang, used by Chinese in soups and famed for its supposed aphrodisiac qualities. *Bêche-de-mer* had been collected in Southeast Asia for centuries, along the northern Australian and west New Guinea coasts for some hundreds of years,<sup>38</sup> and all through the nineteenth century in the South Pacific.<sup>39</sup> In Polynesia and southern Melanesia the *bêche-de-mer* trade was connected to the sandalwood trade, providing an alternate income as the trees became depleted. In Torres Strait the *bêche-de-mer* trade grew up alongside the pearling trade from the 1860s, but in the Louisiades it proceeded other trades. The inhabitants had passing contact with a few early explorers, and more extensive contact with whalers and traders beginning in the 1800s, becoming quite substantial by the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>40</sup> But in the main their contact with the *bêche-de-mer* fishers was their first



*J.H. Shaw's sketch of Ingham's Voura at Port Moresby, 1878*  
Sydney Mail



continuous exposure to Europeans and Asians. Collecting bêche-de-mer was done on the reefs and shallows but processing required the establishment of smoke-curing huts on shore as the curing, drying, sorting and bagging operation took several days.<sup>41</sup> Men and women from the islands were employed to gather and cure the bêche-de-mer, and traded for wood, water, provisions and artifacts; women became sexual partners for the crews.

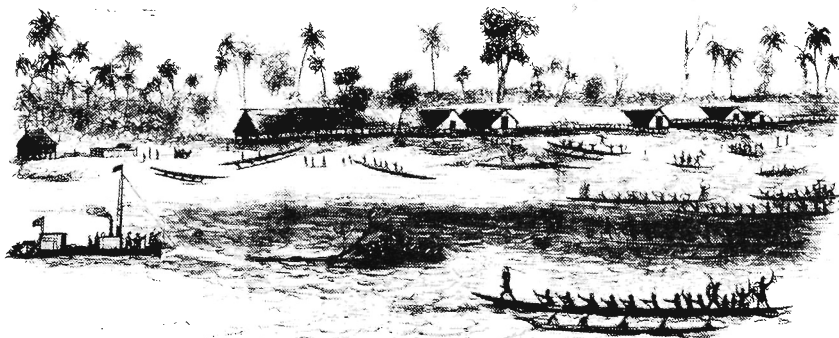
The Louisiades archipelago is an extensive group of islands stretching almost from the eastern end of New Guinea to Rossel Island, between 10° 40' and 11° 40' south latitude and between 151° and 154° 30' east longitude. Of the more than 80 islands, only Rossel, Misima and Tagula (Sudest) are large; a few others are a couple of kilometres in extent, but most are low coral atolls. The remarkable feature of the Louisiades is their reefs and lagoons, the most extensive anywhere in Papua New Guinea, particularly those stretching east and northeast from Tagula, surrounding the Calvados Chain and on east to Bramble Haven and the Kosmann Group. Viewed from above the reefs and islands appear an interrupted chain cut by numerous deep water passages, perfect conditions for bêche-de-mer. The Louisiade bêche-de-mer traders were based at Cooktown, Somerset and later on Thursday Island. In 1877 the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act* was passed to regulate the thriving marine industries there,<sup>42</sup> which had the effect of focusing interest even more on the bêche-de-mer rich and uncontrolled Louisiade reefs, particularly those surrounding the forty or so islands of the Calvados Chain northwest of Tagula (Sudest) Island.

The standard practice was to erect curing houses on beaches in several places, leaving limited staff to supervise the curing at each station, while local people were employed to gather bêche-de-mer on the reefs and process it for export ashore. Schooners plied back and forth between Queensland and the Louisiades, and cutters and gigs were used for communication along the reefs and between islands. As the 1870s progressed bêche-de-mer fisherman constantly moved through the Louisiades, removing £ 1000s of bêche-de-mer, but not without cost in human lives. Henry Chester, Resident Magistrate at Somerset and later Thursday Island, and the LMS missionaries grew increasingly concerned at the attacks perpetrated by the Islanders of the Calvados Chain. European sources attribute most attacks on foreigners in the Calvados Chain in the 1870s and 1880s to the Brooker Islanders.<sup>43</sup> Their motivations were seen as malevolent: they were depicted as a “nest of cannibal pirates”,<sup>44</sup> preying on innocent traders. But the foreigners wishing to exploit the reefs had unknowingly intruded upon a well-established maritime society based on subsistence trading and raiding.

The inhabitants of the Calvados Chain are one cultural group, inter-linked by marriage, economy and trade. There are two languages,

Misima spoken by the inhabitants of the western end of the Chain, and used as the *lingua franca*; and Saisai, spoken in the east, related to the Tagula language. Last century the major settlements were on Panasia (Real), Brooker (Utian), Motorina (Mewstone), and Bagaman (Stanton) Islands: people constantly circulated between the major and minor islands and atolls, exploiting the resources of the reefs and what fertile land they had. Except for Pana Tinane (Joanette) and Pana Wina in the east, all of the Calvados Chain are small, infertile and drought-prone: the peoples' major resource is their reefs and the ocean. They share a common link of hardship and challenge and some, particularly the Brooker people, were almost totally dependant on trade and exchange for their continued existence. Typical of Melanesian subsistence traders they manufactured clay pots which they traded to Misima and Tagula for sago, yams and carved wooden platters, and were also skilled in the manufacture of sailing canoes, fishing nets and shell bracelets. The Calvados Chain is at the southern edge of the important Kula exchange system which links the Massim region, but their role was more in accessory trade, linking Tagula and Rossel to the Kula system.<sup>45</sup> Raiding accompanied trading: the Brooker people roamed from the Engineer Group and the mainland of east New Guinea to Misima, just as capable of killing and kidnapping, and plundering villages and gardens as trading.<sup>46</sup>

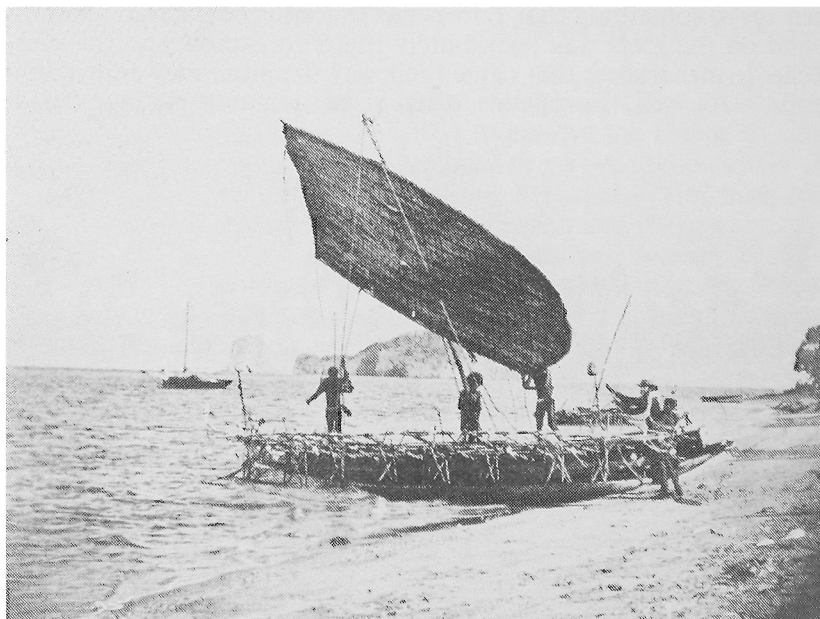
They are a maritime people skilled at sea travel, more at home on the water than the land. In the Louisiades they still enjoy a reputation as a competitive tough people skilled in trade, and sorcery. They owned their reefs, something that Europeans did not understand: anything found on the reefs was legitimately theirs to exploit and the more *bêche-de-mer* traders that came their way the more they enjoyed the spoils.<sup>47</sup> As well, Europeans often used a major passage beside



*J.H. Shaw's sketch of the Voura in the Gulf of Papua, 1878, surrounded by the local fleet.*

Brooker Island to enter into the Tagula lagoon area, which drew ships to the island. The Brooker people were best positioned to patrol the reefs and passages, and as Ingham and others before and after him found they regarded foreigners as fair game. They best compared, not with the people of the surrounding large fertile islands, but with other archipelago-dwellers such as those of the Sulu archipelago<sup>48</sup> between Borneo and Mindanao: the strategic location and poor natural resources of the small islands in both archipelagoes encouraged their inhabitants towards trade and piracy.

The bêche-de-mer traders had no idea of the complexity of the society of the Calvados Chain and suffered accordingly. Early in 1878 the Brooker Islanders murdered a party engaged in shifting Edwin Redlich's bêche-de-mer station from their island to Panasia (Real) Island nearby. Redlich had lost close to £3,000 worth of ship, boats and equipment, not to mention his crew. He visited the island with Andrew Goldie on 7 April, found evidence of the attack and the remains of his stations on Brooker and Punawan (Duperre), but was afraid to land on Brooker. He then sent his employee John McOrt, with four other Europeans, nine Solomon Islanders and ten Torres Strait Islanders, four of them female, to remove his property. McOrt was on the beach when he was killed along with the other Europeans and some of the Melanesian crew. The culprits seem to have included



*A trading canoe on the beach, Teste Island, with Bell Rock and Cliffy Islands in the distance.*

*J.W. Linst, Picturesque New Guinea, 1887*

his employees, in collaboration with the Brooker people: Chester and MacFarlane both believed that the deaths had been due to misconduct by McOrt, and that the Brooker Islanders were willing accessories but not the main players in the event.<sup>49</sup>

The two 1878 attacks left them in possession of large quantities of guns and ammunition. Two houses had been built as lookout posts on the summit of the island; no vessel could approach without the alarm being raised with a blast from a conch shell. There were outsiders on the island, of uncertain influence: other Pacific Islanders led by Sam from New Britain, and Billy from Paremar (Coconut) Island in Torres Strait. Chester complained that the Brooker Islanders had killed ten visitors from the Engineer Group, shot the sister of a Bigman of Wari (Teste) Island, and were marauding about the seas from China Strait to Misima Island causing terror. In September during a tour of the east end of New Guinea he wrote to the Queensland Colonial Secretary that they had to be disarmed and pacified as soon as possible.<sup>50</sup>

The LMS missionaries, also, were worried that their teachers, newly established in east New Guinea at Sua'au, Samarai and Wari (Teste) Islands would be killed. MacFarlane, Chalmers, Redlich, Goldie and Chester had ample opportunity to discuss the situation in the Louisiades with Ingham; it would have been common talk amongst New Guinea's small European community. Ingham wanted to make a name for himself and favourably impress the Queensland and Imperial governments. Certainly Chester owed his position to similar circumstances as he had spent five years in Torres Strait, sending useful reports to the government while operating a pearling vessel, before being offered a permanent appointment as Resident Magistrate in 1875.<sup>51</sup>

But by his own statement to MacFarlane, Ingham's main purpose was to salvage as much of Redlich's equipment as possible, knowing that he could not recover any of the vessels but setting his hopes on reclaiming the iron house, the bêche-de-mer pots and tanks, and some of the arms and ammunition. He set out from Port Moresby on the *Voura*, his crew consisting of William Ailes, an Englishman serving as engineer, Harry Condiotti, a Greek who had been one of the gold prospectors at Laloki, now serving as cook, James Shaw from Sydney, Ingham's secretary and artist, two Chinese deck hands, Ah Sing and Hung Gar, three South Sea Islanders (indentured labourers from Queensland, one being Jack Wieu from Lifu Island) as boat crew, and Joe, a Wari Islander as pilot. The *Voura* reached the main LMS station on Samarai (Dinner) Island in China Strait on 19 November: the crew took on wood and water and Ingham spent two pleasant days with Rev. MacFarlane, during which time the missionary tried to dissuade him from his venture, making clear that six previous

groups had been killed and eaten on Brooker. Not to be deterred Ingham's party left on the 23rd, first sailing east down to Leocadie islet where Ingham left Shaw and Ah Sing to prepare a new bêche-de-mer station while he went to pick up the equipment. Although well armed with muskets, revolvers, snider rifles, and the one nine pounder and two four pounder guns mounted on his vessel, Ingham's party now numbered only seven.

MacFarlane was later able to piece together what occurred. The Brooker Islanders had planned to kill the party on the first evening but decided instead on initial co-operation to allay fears. A feast was staged in Ingham's honour and two pigs killed. The firearms were collected and brought to Ingham, and the bêche-de-mer pots were carried on board the *Voura*. Then on the third day, with all hands busy taking down the iron smoke house on the beach the attack took place: all save Joe, the Wari Islander, were killed without the three Europeans even taking their guns from their belts. Joe escaped in a boat to Misima from where MacFarlane received news of the massacre on 5 December.

The next morning MacFarlane set out with Captain Dudfield on the LMS steamer *Ellengowan*, picking up two teachers at Wari Island, and going first to Bramble Haven, reefs around the tiny Punawan (Duperre) Island to the west of Brooker, as the information he received from Misima wrongly suggested that two of the *Voura's* crew could be found there. Ingham had obviously been on Punawan cutting wood but the island was deserted. On the 7th *Ellengowan* proceeded to Brooker, passed by several canoes which they later found were carrying away booty. In a bay on the northwest side of Brooker they found the *Voura* being dismantled, its deck house and sails in a village and the iron plates being stripped off its hull. Tanks, masts, spars, sails, rigging and cabin fittings were strewn about, but the inhabitants were hiding.

The night brought bizarre events: *Voura's* bell was rung and calls made for the *Ellengowan* crew to come onto the beach; then came an Australian cooee call and in English "Who are you?", spoken by Billy, one of the Torres Strait Islanders from Redlich's crew. A shouted conversation in Wari language ensued over the next several hours, from the beach to the boat. The Brooker Islanders first denied any part in the massacre and blamed their neighbours in the Calvados Chain. Then they admitted what they had done but claimed that the crew had molested their women and that one of the Europeans had threatened to shoot a man for stealing. They laughed when questioned if they had any casualties from the attack, and answered "nigere" (none). There were still five men and four women on Brooker from the Torres Strait and New Britain; they refused to leave but suggested the LMS might like to place a mission teacher on the island.

*Ellengowan* steamed away the next day, having failed to recover any of Ingham's possessions. The Brooker people waved farewell with sheets of calico, shouted goodbye and fired a salute with their sniders.<sup>52</sup>

News of the massacre reached Cooktown on 21 January 1879 and was telegraphed to Brisbane. Details were sent to Governor Sir Arthur Kennedy on 28 January, and on 3 February Colonial Secretary Douglas officially asked Governor Kennedy to request an immediate visit to Brooker by a man-of-war from the Royal Navy; but Kennedy had already acted on the 27th on the basis of a newspaper report of the 25th.<sup>53</sup> Further news reached Australia. MacFarlane knew that Ingham's party would have been eaten; this was confirmed by Joe from Wari Island who hid and escaped: he watched the entire party roasted in stone ovens and eaten.<sup>54</sup> The Australian press took up the horrible tale of cannibalism. Then Commodore Wilson of the RNAS showed lack of tact by saying that Ingham had brought the attack upon himself: James Shaw, by February back in Sydney, denied this, as did Captain Turpie of the LMS barque *John Williams*. Questions were being asked about why such a "nest of cannibal pirates" was allowed to exist?<sup>55</sup>

Matters were not improved by the visit to Brooker by HMS *Cormorant* under Captain James Bruce in April 1879. Bruce was under strict instructions not to land any of his crew on Brooker. At Samarai he gained the co-operation of R.F. Watson, mate of bêche-de-mer vessel *Annie*, and his crew, who accompanied HMS *Cormorant* to Brooker, but the LMS teachers at Samarai and Wari, under orders from MacFarlane, refused to aid the investigation or the proposed retaliation. Watson and his party went ashore and met up with the



*East New Guinean Catamaran, Brumer Island.*

*J. MacGillivray, Voyage of the Rattlesnake, 1852*

mutineers from Redlich's crew, all armed with sniders. Billy, their leader, blamed Redlich for everything but refused to explain further, denied the existence of any papers belonging to Ingham, and said that no Europeans were allowed to land. Watson wisely retreated to the *Cormorant* which then steamed half way round the island firing about twenty shells at random. The Brooker people boasted that they had chased away the man-of-war, and would kill all Europeans in the islands. MacFarlane had been correct not to allow his newly-established LMS teachers to join the *Cormorant's* expedition: in the next month Brooker men physically threatened the LMS teacher at Samarai; and also Ned Blakesley, Captain of the *Annie*, while he was at Leocadie Island. A general uprising was feared and Cooktown seethed at the incompetence of the Royal navy.<sup>56</sup>

The visit of HMS *Cormorant* was so unsatisfactory that in June Commodore Wilson took the matter into his own hands and visited Brooker in his 17-gun flagship 2,431 ton screw corvette HMS *Wolverine*. On 10 June the ship anchored out of sight of Brooker at Panuluwaluwaia (Duchateau) Island on the southern edge of the reefs. At midnight Commander Bridges took a well armed crew in the steam pinnace and four smaller boats to Brooker, capturing the large sailing canoes to prevent escape. Wilson landed at daybreak, taking hostages. Nine escaped in an overlooked canoe; they were pursued in a cutter and one killed and one wounded in the capture. Although Wilson was able to regain what remained of Ingham's papers, he failed to identify the ringleaders. The dangerous currents and winds around the reefs were endangering his large ship so on the 14th Wilson ordered huts and coconut trees destroyed and sailed away.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Boswell's biography of Samuel Johnson, the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, a biography of Oliver Cromwell (awarded as a school prize in 1866), *Chandos*, a novel by Ouida,<sup>58</sup> a cookery book, a sextant box engraved W. Ingham R.N., the *Vouras* wheel stand for a Bell 6 inch portable gun, one electro-plated spoon, and some Masonic regalia.<sup>59</sup> These were the only personal effects of William Bairstow Ingham recovered, other than his skull, surrendered to H.N. Chester, Resident Magistrate of the Louisiades in October 1892.<sup>60</sup>

The bêche-de-mer industry continued to flourish and the attacks on crews continued. Missionary endeavours increased, and by the late 1870s the Queensland blackbirders had turned their attention to the islands and archipelagos off eastern New Guinea.<sup>61</sup> The Brooker Islanders and the other inhabitants of the Calvados Chain remained guardians of their reef empire. The Torres Strait and New Britain Islanders were absorbed into the local population. Europeans blamed the "foreign" Islanders for leading the Calvados people astray, but as MacFarlane pointed out they had already been capturing, killing

and eating shipwrecked and bêche-de-mer crews, and pillaging their property for fifteen to twenty years before 1878. Capturing Redlich's and Ingham's guns and ammunition in 1878 made them more dangerous but their appetites for mayhem and human flesh were already well established.

Ingham was foolhardy to attempt to deal with them given the small size of his crew. He was naive and too trusting, no match for such skilled warriors. He had ambitions to rebuild his failed fortunes in New Guinea, with pretensions to official office that were based on shadows not reality. Yet one can not help but think of the result if he had subdued the Brooker Islanders and earned the gratitude of Queensland. He was on the way to becoming a Deputy Commissioner of the Western Pacific High Commission for New Guinea, and would have been Britain's first representative in what was in November 1884 to become British New Guinea.

#### NOTES

1. N. Loos, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European relations on the North Queensland frontier, 1861-1897*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982, pp 189-247; H. Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, settlers and land*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987, pp 29-30.
2. The size of his investments in North Queensland has been exaggerated. As well he was wrongly reported as sailing the *Voura* as far as New Ireland and possibly the Solomon Islands. And the circumstances of his death have become embroidered over time. E.B. Harris, 'William Bairstow Ingham, Tasmania, Eastern Australia, New Guinea, 1873-1878', Manuscript held in the files of the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB), Australia National University,
3. Will and Testament of Joshua Ingham, died 16 May 1866, document is held in the files of the ADB.
4. In researching W.B. Ingham for ADB, H.J. Gibbney could find no proof that he ever served in the Royal Navy, and certainly he could have only served for a short time, but he was acknowledged by his contemporaries as having a naval background and as a competent seaman and navigator.
5. Harris, *op.cit.* p. 25. The other major secondary sources on Ingham are H.J. Gibbney's entry, *ADB* 4, 456-7, and H.J. Gibney, 'The New Guinea Gold Rush of 1878', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 58:4 (1972), pp 284-296.
6. D. Jones, *Cardwell Shire Story*, Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1961, pp 217; C.R. Moore, *Kanaka: a history of Melanesian Mackay*, Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and the University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985, p. 109.
7. It was variously reported as being of seven and fifteen tons. A.T. Clerk in Harris, *op.cit.* p. 6; Jones, *op.cit.* p. 215.
8. *ibid* p. 147; Neame Diary, held by John Oxley Memorial Library, p. 59; Thomas Mathewson in Harris, *op.cit.* p. 5.
9. *ibid* p. 2 .
10. *Queenslander* (Q) 10 January, 21 February, 24 October 1874.
11. Harris, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-7, information supplied by A.T. Clerk, T. Mathewson and Sir Alfred Cowley, all early settlers on the Herbert river.



12. Gov. Kennedy to Rt. Hon. Michael Hicks Beach, Colonial Office, 27 January 1879, 234/39; Minuted note by S.W. Griffith, 8 February 1878, on letter W.B. Ingham to Col. Sec., 26 January 1878, letter 1018 top-numbered to 2167 of 1878, QSA COL/A259.
13. Harris, *op.cit.*, pp. 3, 38.
14. Q 11 October 1879.
15. Jones, *op.cit.* pp 212-3.
16. Jones, *op.cit.* p. 212.
17. There were many European adventurers in the Pacific in the nineteenth century, similar to Ingham; optimistic but often naive, attempting trading and settlement ventures beyond their capabilities. Not all failed. Wilfred Powell was a successful itinerant trader around New Guinea at the same time as Ingham, as was W.D. Pitcairn ten years later. W. Powell, *Wanderings in a Wild Country: or, three years amongst the cannibals of New Britain*. London: Sampson Low, 1883; and *'New Guinea and the Western Pacific'*; Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, 15 (1883-84), 7-39; W.D. Pitcairn, *Two Years Among the Savages of New Guinea*. London: Ward and Downey, 1891.
18. G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: a history of north Queensland to 1920*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1963, pp 53-61; N. Kirkman, 'The Palmer River Goldfield' in K.H. Kennedy (ed.), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol. 1: Townsville: History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1980, pp. 113-144; and 'Mining on the Hodgkinson' in K.H. Kennedy (ed.), *op.cit.* Vol. 2, pp. 171-193.
19. The Dutch claim to the western half of the island dated back to 1828 but they had done almost nothing to substantiate their claim.
20. Initially he resigned but was persuaded to take long leave instead.
21. P.A. Prendergast, 1986. A History of the London Missionary Society in British New Guinea, 1871-1901. PhD thesis, University of Hawaii, pp. 75-88, 104-107, 132, 238; T. Dutton, *Police Motu: inea sivarai*. Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, pp. 165-166, 189.
22. N.D. Oram, *Colonial Town to Melanesian City: Port Moresby 1884-1974*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976, p. 17; J. MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake . . . 1846-1850*. London: T. & W. Boone, Vol.2 p. 69; Q 28 June, 12 July 1873; *Brisbane Courier* 30 January 1886; O. Stone, *A Few Months in New Guinea*, London: Sampson Low, 1880, p. 177; J. Moresby, 'Discoveries in Eastern New Guinea, by Captain Moresby and the Officers of H.M.S. *Basilisk*', *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 45 (1875), p. 158.
23. *Australasian* 29 December 1877; *Australian Town and Country Journal* 5, 12 January, 9, 23 March 1878.
24. Broadbent, a professional bird hunter, survived the ill-fated *Maria* voyage of 1872 which was wrecked on its way to New Guinea, returned on the 1875 *Chevert* expedition, stayed and then accompanied Octavius Stone on his New Guinea expedition of 1875-76. Dutton, *op.cit.* p. 155; Stone *op.cit.* p.14.
25. W.B. Ingham to Col. Sec., 26 January 1878, QSA COL/A259, In letter 1018 top-numbered to 2167 of 1878.
26. M.T. Crocombe, 'Ruatoka: a Cook Islander in Papuan history', in R. Crocombe and M. Crocombe (eds), *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: from Samoa, Cook Islands and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, pp. 54-78.
27. as for 25.
28. *Queensland Government Gazette*, Vol. 22, p. 799, 30 March 1878.
29. G. Evans, Thursday Island, 1878-1914: a plural society, BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1972, p. 23.

30. D. Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: a history of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967, pp. 38-52; J. Bach, *The Australia Station: a history of the Royal Navy in the South West Pacific, 1821-1913*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1986.
31. *Queensland Government Gazette*, Vol. 22, p. 753, 23 March 1878.
32. P. W. Van der Veur, 'Papua Irredenta: Queensland's northern boundary and the Territory of Papua', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 10:2 (1964), pp. 183-195; J. Farnfield, 'Queensland and the Annexation of the Torres Strait Islands', *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 27:2 (1973), pp. 215-226. The clearest assessment of the movement of the border is S. P. Mullins, *Torres Strait 1864-1884: a history of occupation and culture contact*. PhD thesis, University of New England, 1988, pp. 240, 263-4, 267-279, 397-401.
33. Governor Kennedy to J. Douglas, 17 June 1878, QSA COL/A257, Letter 2228 of 1878; Governor Kennedy to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 June 1878, Queensland Col. Sec. to W.B. Ingham 3 June 1878, Colonial Office (CO) 234/38/119-130; Queensland Col. Sec. to H.M. Chester 15 June 1878, QSA COL/A259, Letter 2167 of 1878; F.J.W. Beardmore to Col. Sec., 8 March 1878; QSA COL/A279, In Letter 2167 of 1878.
34. W.B. Ingham to Col. Sec. 29 April 1878, with enclosures, COL/A259, QSA In letter 2433 of 1878.
35. W.B. Ingham to Col. Sec., 16 June 1878; F.J.W. Beardmore to F. Rawlins, Col. Sec. Dept., 17 June 1878, QSA COL/A259; *Sydney Mail* 10 May 1879.
36. *Sydney Mail* 10 May 1879.
37. *Sydney Mail* 10 May, 14 June, 12 July, 2, 16, 30 August 1879.
38. C.C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege': Macassan trepangers in northern Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976; 'Macassans and Aborigines', *Oceania*, Vol. 42 (1972), pp. 283-321; J. Urry and M. Walsh. 'The Lost 'Macassar language' of northern Australia', *Aboriginal History*, 5:2 (1981), pp. 91-104.
39. R.G. Ward, 'The Pacific Bêche-de-mer Trade with Special Reference to Fiji', in R.G. Ward (ed.), *Man in the Pacific Islands: essays on geographical change in the Pacific Islands*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 91-123; D. Munro, *Fijian Sandalwood and Bêche-de-mer*. MA Qual. thesis, Australian National University, 1973.
40. Mullins, *op.cit.* pp. 27-35, 223-225.
41. A.G.E. Jones, 'The British Southern Whale and Seal Fisheries', Part 1, *Great Circle*, Vol. 3:1 (1981), pp. 20-29, and Part 2, *Great Circle*, Vol. 3:2 (1981), pp. 90-102; D.A. Affleck, *Murua or Woodlark Island: a study of European-Muruan contact*. BA Hons. thesis, Australian National University, 1971. Appendices B and C.
42. Munro, *op.cit.* pp. 53-60; Pitcairn, *op.cit.* p. 274.
43. In letter 3484 of 1876, QSA COL/A231; Capt. Pennefather to H.M. Chester, 10 October 1882, QSA COL/A348, In letter 5730 of 1882; H.M. Chester to Colonial Secretary, 31 October 1882, In letter 5869 of 1882, QSA COL/A349.
44. *Australasian* 25 January 1879, quoting Rev. MacFarlane.
45. *Sydney Mail* 30 August 1879.
46. The Massim culture complex covers the eastern end of New Guinea, the Louisiade and D'Entrecasteaux archipelagoes, and the Trobriand, Marshall Bennett and Woodlark Islands. J.W. Leach and E. Leach (eds), 1983. *The Kula: new perspectives on Massim exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; J. Allen, 'Comments on Complexity and Trade: a view from Melanesia', *Archaeology in Oceania*, Vol. 20:2 (1985), pp. 49-56.
47. D. Battagila, 'Syndromes of Ceremonial Exchange in the Eastern Calvados: the view from Sabarl Island', pp. 445-465; and M. Lepowsky, 'Sudest Island

- and the Louisiade Archipelago in Massim Exchange', pp. 467-501, in Leach and Leach (eds), *The Kula*.
48. J.F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: the dynamics of external trade, slavery, and ethnicity in the transformation of a Southeast Asian maritime economy*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981.
  49. Q 22 June 1878.
  50. *Australasian* 22 June 1878; T. Bevan, *Toil, Travel and Discovery in British New Guinea*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1890, pp. 112-3, 118; CO 234/39, H.M. Chester *ibid*.
  51. H.M. Chester to Col. Sec., 6 September 1878, 234/39.
  52. H.M. Chester was temporary Resident Magistrate at Somerset in 1869-1870, after which he worked in the pearling industry, making several voyages along the New Guinea coast. G.C. Bolton, ADB 3,386-7.
  53. MacFarlane to Col. Sec., 10 December 1878, and MacFarlane's sworn statement 14 April 1879, Ecclesiastical File 2012 (1880), QSA SCT/P58.
  54. Comm. J. Wilson to Gov. Kennedy, 19 June 1879, In letter 2509B of 1879, QSA COL/A280.
  55. Sydney Mail 15 February 1879.
  56. *Cooktown Herald* 27 February 1879; Sydney Mail 2 March 1879.
  57. *Cooktown Herald* 21, 24 May 1879; Q 9 August 1879.
  58. Wilson was responsible for another of the exaggerations concerning Ingham. Based on his interview with Joe from Wari Island, Wilson reported that Ingham's party were all on board the *Voura* when the massacre took place, except for Ingham who was swimming near by. Ingham is said to have swum back to the ship and had his right hand severed at the wrist by an axe blow as he reached up to get back onto the *Voura*. MacFarlane's much more accurate account denies this. Comm. J.C. Wilson to Gov. Kennedy, 19 June 1879, In letter 2509B of 1879, QSA COL/A280.
  59. Pseudonym of Louise de la Ramee.
  60. Comm. J.C. Wilson to Col. Sec., In letter 2509B of 1879, QSA JUS/103, 36/3882.
  61. *British New Guinea Annual Report* 1892/93, p. 48, in *Queensland Votes and Proceedings* 1894 Vol. 2, p. 822.
  62. B. Jamison, Blackbirding in New Guinea Waters? The 1884 voyage of the *Hopeful* and the Queensland labour trade. BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1990.