

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

JOHN W. BLENCOE

Papers, 1908-32

Reel M824

**Mrs Monica Blencowe
The White House
Piltdown
Uckfield, Sussex**

**National Library of Australia
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Walcot Blencowe (1886-1964) was the son of the Reverend Alfred Blencowe, a Canon of Chester Cathedral and Rector of West Kirby, Cheshire. He was educated at Radley College in Oxfordshire and Oriel College, Oxford, graduating in 1908. In 1909 he joined the Melanesian Mission as a teacher. Soon after his arrival he had an accident, which necessitated his return to England, but in 1910 he sailed back to the Pacific. He was mostly based at Santa Cruz in the Solomon Islands. In 1911 he had another serious accident when a leaking whale-boat overturned on a coral reef and he was flung onto rocks. With a broken collar bone and ribs, he was marooned on an island for six weeks before being rescued by the mission ship *Southern Cross*. He was treated in New Zealand and returned to England in 1912.

Blencowe intended to return to the Pacific, but decided first to take holy orders. He attended Cuddesdon Theological College and was ordained a deacon in 1913 and a priest in 1914. In World War I he joined the Army as a chaplain and in 1915 served at the Dardanelles. In France he served with the 2nd Devonshire Regiment and he was present at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. He was buried by a shell explosion and only just survived. Invalided home, he was chaplain at Queen Mary's Hospital at Sidcup, Kent. His disabilities prevented him from returning to the Melanesian Mission and he was persuaded to take up school teaching. In 1919 he opened a boys' preparatory school at Sidcup Place. In 1925 he married Monica Long, who assisted him with the school. In 1933 they decided to move to Brambletye, near East Grinstead in Sussex. During World War II the school buildings were requisitioned by the Army and the school was moved to Lynton in Devon. It returned to Brambletye in 1945 and the Blencowes had the arduous task of restoring it to working order. They retired in 1947. Their son Peter was headmaster of Brambletye School in 1958-75.

In retirement, Blencowe moved to Chagford and later Pewsey in Wiltshire. Shortly before his death, he returned to Sussex and settled at Piltdown. His book *Thoughts we all share* were was written in the last two or three years of his life for old boys of Brambletye School and was published posthumously.

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Published works

J.W. Blencowe. *Thoughts we all share*. Guildford, Seven Corners Press, n.d. (98pp)

Guy F. Bury. *Home letters*, with addendum by J.W. Blencowe, n.d. (23pp)

Bishop Cecil Wilson. *My last voyage*, London, Melanesian Mission, n.d. (25pp)

Manuscripts

Notebook kept by Blencowe, May – October 1910, with brief entries arranged by village. (160pp)

Notebook of Blencowe comprising a Mota–English vocabulary. (24pp)

Correspondence

Blencowe (SS *Moldavia*) to his mother Sophia Blencowe, 19 Jan. [1909]: voyage from England; visit to Gibraltar.

Blencowe (Fremantle) to Sophia Blencowe, 15 Feb. [1909]: voyage; visit to Colombo; lack of news about England.

Blencowe (Adelaide) to Sophia Blencowe, [Feb. 1909]: visit to Perth; voyage across Great Australian Bight.

Blencowe (Sydney) to Sophia Blencowe, 28 Feb. [1909]: visit to Melbourne and Sydney; Sydney Harbour; 'Australian children are hideous and very forward'; fondness of Australians for spitting; imminent departure for Norfolk Island.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to Sophia Blencowe, 4 April [1909]: little spare time; learning the language; work with Melanesians on a farm; the heat; fleas; news from England.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to his father Canon A.E. Blencowe, [11 April 1909]: hopes of working at Santa Cruz; lack of translations; hopes of translating Mota Bible; no white men at Santa Cruz; harsh treatment of Islanders by traders; infrequency of posts.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to Sophia Blencowe, 30 April [1909]: departure of Bishop and six others; progress in learning language; his work on Norfolk Island; Bishop J.C. Patteson's old house; a recent crime.

Blencowe (Marseilles) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 3 Feb. 1910: waiting for embarkation on SS *Mongolia*.

Blencowe (SS *Mongolia*, Red Sea) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 13 Feb. 1910: heavy seas; friends to visit on his way through Australia.

Blencowe (SS *Mongolia*) to Sophia Blencowe, 27 Feb. [1910]: approaching Fremantle; weather; suicide of an Indian prince.

Blencowe (Auckland) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 22 March 1910: proposed posting to Santa Cruz; Bishop Cecil Wilson; resignation of Archdeacon T.C. Cullwick of Norfolk Island.

Blencowe (SS *Southern Cross*) to Sophia Blencowe, [25 March 1910]: voyage to Vila and Raga.

J.W. Blencowe (Auckland) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 7 April [1910]: about to leave for Norfolk Island and then Santa Cruz for six months; H. Drummond to accompany him; financial matters.

Blencowe (Pileni) to Sophia Blencowe, 16 May – 1 June [1910]: life on Pileni; daily routine; sermon in Mota; most of inhabitants come to Church; only one white man on twenty islands; tour of all Reef Islands. (incomplete)

Blencowe (Santa Cruz) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 19 June [1910]: late arrival of *Southern Cross*; his pessimism concerning large number of islanders who have been trained to teach but who do not practise it after they leave Norfolk Island; limited power of chiefs; cases of immorality by Norfolk Island boys; diocese may be split in two and mission at Norfolk Island closed; hard work; monotonous meals.

Blencowe (Namu, Santa Cruz) to Sophia Blencowe, Sept. [1910]: illness of C. Turner; progress with schools; killings in Santa Cruz villages; his first attack of malaria; life on the island; scenery; shark fishing.

Blencowe (Namu, Santa Cruz) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, Oct. [1910]: in charge of mission; trouble in the villages; power of evil spirits; optimism of Bishop Wilson; settlement of disputes among islanders.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to Sophia Blencowe, 10 Dec. [1910]: replacement of a drunken doctor; news of Alan Blencowe; attacks of fever; may take Berry [Rev. Guy Bury] to Santa Cruz but Bishop's promise of additional staff will probably not be kept; island mails.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 2-12 Feb. [1911]: Berry [Bury] on his way to help him; C. Turner will leave; imminent resignation of Bishop Wilson.

Blencowe (Norfolk Island) to Sophia Blencowe, 27 Feb. – 13 March [1911]: improved health; new fellow worker Guy Bury; doctor for new hospital in the Solomon Islands; an attack of fever; thanks for books; R. Freeth called back to England and Drummond staying on.

Blencowe (SS *Southern Cross*, near Vila) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 15 April [1911]: selection of a new bishop.

Blencowe (Nibi, Santa Cruz) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, May 1911: new schools; situation in his area generally good but his party involved in fighting with Otivi people

Blencowe (Pileni) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 5-16 June 1911: news of his mission; plans to visit Vanikolo; fighting among the islanders in which he had had to fire his gun.

Blencowe (Matema) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 26 July [1911]: warship requested to help confront the Otivi did not arrive; new school to be built; assistance of Guy Bury; progress of the mission; hopes to visit England in a year's time.

Bishop Cecil Wilson (Cambridge) to Blencowe, 12 Nov. 1908: inquires if Blencowe's father approves of his departure in January 1909.

Bishop Cecil Wilson (Bromley) to Canon A.E. Blencowe, 26 Nov. 1908: appointment of John Blencowe to Melanesia; need for university men; passage on *Moldavia*; arrangements for meeting.

William Sinker (Auckland) to Blencowe, 9 Aug. 1912: Sinker's illness; his departure for England; Burgess will take command of *Southern Cross*; visit of Bishop Cecil Wood; memorial for Guy Bury; boat for Santa Cruz.

W.J. Durred (Banks Islands) to Blencowe, 5 Oct. 1912: news of Santa Cruz and Reef Islands boys; Bishop Cecil Wood; marriage of R. Freeth.

H.V. Adams (Bournemouth) to Blencowe, 16 Sept. 1913: thanks for letter; congratulations on passing Bishop's exam; Lucy of Motalva.

Letters to Blencowe in Melanesian languages, 1910-15. (16 letters)

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

Inina 1911. List of Melanesian Mission personnel. (In Mota, 4pp)

Map of Santa Cruz group of islands. (printed)

Typescript list of voyages made by Blencowe, 1909-18. (1p)

Drafts of speeches and letters. (9pp)

Report headed 'Conversations with J.W. Blencowe June 16 1932: experiences in Melanesia'.

Deed of conveyance of land at Santa Cruz from Nevlau, a Melanesian, to Blencowe and C. Turner for the Melanesian Mission, 21 Sept. 1910.

Photograph of four chiefs who sold land to the Bishop.

Invoice of Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd for food sold to Blencowe, 4 Nov. 1911.

Newspaper cutting on HMS *Torch*, n.d.

Newspaper cutting on RMS *Mongolia*, [March 1910].

Page from a letter referring to supplies of food; departure of Drew for Auckland, and the Bishop.

Four sheets of paper written in a Melanesian language.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Bishops John C. Patteson, John Steward and Edward Wilton.

Banks Islands.

New Hebrides, including Torres Islands.

Norfolk Island

San Cristoval (San Cristobal), Solomon Islands

Santa Cruz and Reef Islands

Mala, Solomon Islands.

A large proportion of the photographs were produced by J.W. Beattie of Hobart. They depict islanders, European houses, churches, canoes, the mission ship *Southern Cross*, beaches and landscapes. They are not dated.