

MASSACRE AT MANDOLIANA.

Mandoliana - and massacre: the concatenation of such a charmingly onomatopoeic place name and such a horrible crime may sound unlikely, especially since the place name suggests perhaps the sunny climes of southern Spain or maybe Portugal or, if not, possibly the Philippines; but such identification of the location of the place name would be wrong. Mandoliana is an island or, more properly, a small uninhabited islet off the south coast of Florida in the central Solomon Islands. One would like to think that it was so named by one of the early Spanish explorers such as Magellan, Mendana, Grijalva or Quiros who, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, turned the Pacific Ocean into a Spanish lake; but, alas, such is not the case, though the islet may have been so named by later Spanish visitors.

But, despite its attractive name, the islet became in late 1880 the scene of one of the worst and most humiliating experiences suffered by the Royal Navy in the exercise of its duties, primarily to enforce some degree of law and order, and peaceable conditions, in the Pacific, especially in such island groups as the New Hebrides, the Solomon, Marshall and Caroline Islands, as well as in Papua and New Guinea. But, as is mentioned later, on the one hand the powers of the Navy in those times were in fact strictly limited and somewhat ineffective whilst, on the other hand, those whom it was expected to restrain - the traders and beachcombers, but more especially the native populations - in their activities, customs and ways of life, rendered the task of the Navy extremely difficult. The principal reason for this was not far to seek; it was the trade in firearms and liquor, both sometimes furnished to the natives by the traders; but even more so was the fact that almost every native repatriated to his home island after working in the canefields of Queensland and New South Wales returned the proud owner of a firearm of some description and ample cartridges. Even the threat of a visit from a man-of-war in no way deterred the natives from seeking to conduct guerilla operations against any vessels, particularly in the hope of acquiring additional firearms and ammunition and, perhaps most prestigious of all, the skull of a European.

This then is the story of the Navy's humiliation at Mandoliana. But it is also the story of the coolness, initiative and courage of a very young Sub-Lieutenant, and how the Navy and the Anglican Church in a somewhat odd alliance successfully wrote finis to that humiliation.

In those reef-girt islands, it is hardly necessary to point out that one of the Navy's tasks in those early days was, whenever and

wherever possible, to conduct marine surveys and it was during one of these that the tragedy occurred.

H.M.S. Sandfly was at that time one of five small schooner-type men-of-war based on Sydney, which was expected to carry out the multifarious duties above-mentioned. It carried a crew of 30 men and, apart from rifles, its armament consisted solely of one small "Armstrong" gun, and a rocket apparatus. It was at the time under the command of one Lieutenant Bower, and carried a young Sub-Lieutenant, by name E.E. Bradford.

The opening chapter in the story of the tragedy is best told in a report by Sub-Lieutenant Bradford to Commodore Wilson in Sydney, of which the following is a summary in his own words (slightly shortened and edited where necessary):-

"On Wednesday the 13th (October), Lieut. Bower left the ship in the whaler, provisioned for five days, he armed with a pistol, and the boat's crew with their rifles and twenty rounds of ammunition a man. He mentioned to Mr. Coughlan (Boatswain) that he might expect him back on Saturday evening. He then pulled away in the direction of Sesarga, intending to survey them and the adjoining reefs, and the coast of Floridas, to the east of Barranago, which was yet untouched. He also intended to examine an anchorage near East Point. This he did and on Friday evening landed at the island of Nogu (Mandoliana), where he and all the boat's crew met their tragical death. Before leaving the ship he had left me orders to carry out the drills, if possible fill up with water, and to inquire into a trader's complaint; also to take the usual precautions against a surprise by the natives. On Saturday night as the whaler had not returned, I ordered a sharp look-out, fully expecting her back in the course of the night, but I did not feel anxious about her, on account of her having another day's provisions; thinking that Lieut. Bower might have found more work than he expected, and was consequently delayed another day and judging by his careful conduct on board the ship, I never thought he would in any way relax his watchfulness when away in a boat, it being so much more necessary in the latter case than in the former; also taking into consideration that I knew I should incur his severe displeasure if I moved the ship without his orders. On these grounds I decided to wait until Wednesday morning (20th), which would then make him absent seven days. In the meantime I was unable to send away another boat to search Sesarga, owing to the craziness of the gig, which is utterly unfit for such work. But I took the precaution to have her patched-up as well as I could.

On Wednesday morning (20th) I got the ship under weigh and stood up to leeward of the Sesarga Group, approaching to within a mile of it, and examining it through telescopes, &c., but as I could see no traces of the whaler or her crew, who I considered would be on the look-out, I proceeded on towards East Point, closing the land as I went. At 12.45 being about two miles off the "Asses Ears", I sent the gig away in charge of Mr. Coughlan, provisioned for four days, with instructions to proceed inshore and examine the coast and islands on the northern and eastern part of the island as far as Mboli Harbour, and then to pull through the gut and rejoin me at Barranago. At 2.15 he returned to the ship and reported that having overtaken a canoe near the beach the natives had told him that a boat corresponding to the whaler had pulled

"down towards Sesarga three days ago... I anchored at 2.45 and here I remained all night for want of wind.

The next morning a light breeze having sprung up, I weighed at 8 a.m. and ran down to Sesarga where I anchored on a coral patch at 11.45, and sent in the skiff with the chief petty officer and three men to examine the island (uninhabited). They returned at 1 p.m. and reported not a vestige of the boat or crew or gear to be seen; accordingly I weighed and ran down to Nogu Island, and sent the skiff in again to examine the beach and rejoin the ship at Barranago. I then stood off the coast, clear of all dangers, and proceeded for Barranago, keeping a sharp look-out on the land. After running about three miles a man on shore was pointed out to me waving a white flag. I stood in as near as convenient, and having made him out to be a white man, I stood out to sea and picked up the skiff which I sent in to bring him off, and as the tide had turned and the wind was falling I anchored. The skiff returned bringing off the man, who proved to be Francis Savage, A.B., and who reported himself as the only survivor of the whaler's crew, Lieut. Bower and the remainder having been massacred at the island of Nogu on the 15th October. The chief petty officer then reported to me that he had seen three bodies on the beach at Nogu, but, by their colour and the length of their feet, he had concluded they were natives. In the evening, a fresh breeze having sprung up, I weighed and ran down to Barranago as it was not desirable to remain in this place all night. At midnight the gig returned, having completed the circuit round the entire island. Mr. Coughlan reported that he had found no tidings of the crew or boat; he also said he had to be continually baling out water which leaked in at every seam.

On the morning of Friday, the 22nd, I weighed and beat up to Nogu Island, where I anchored, and landed in charge of a body of fourteen men, and searched the island throughout. Four bodies were discovered, of which three were identified; the fifth body is still missing, and the only conclusion I can come to respecting it is that it has drifted out to sea, as the man was in the water bathing when attacked. All the bodies were decapitated, and were in a fearful state of decomposition, some of them being mutilated. The body of Lieut. Bower was found under a tree, but as the sun had not touched him, the skin had remained white; the right arm was gone, besides several other injuries. Another body (that of Ben Venton, leading seaman) was triced up to a horizontal pole in a most conspicuous position being on an open point, and visible from the landward side. This body was also much mutilated, being cut at the arms, wrists, heels, &c. The other two appeared to have lain where they had first fallen. I had them buried in the sand beside each other, read the burial service, and proceeded back to Barranago.....

On Saturday, the 23rd, I got the chief Tambokow, of the village Lotoo (where Savage had been entertained) to come on board. I discovered from him and his people that the outrage had been committed by a tribe living at a place called Raita, about three miles from Nogu. The tribe is governed by two chiefs, Kallecona and Seebio. This tribe is at war with Tambokow's tribe, each being a strong tribe, and I endeavoured to persuade Tambokow to act in concert with me, but he did not approve of the plan. However, he undertook to send me a man the next day to show me where the whaler was hidden, also a war canoe of men to launch her, declaring, at the same time, she was only hauled up on the beach.

As by 9 o'clock the next morning (Sunday, the 24th) this guide had not arrived, I set off with eight men in the gig for Raita. In sailing back along the coast as near as possible, one of the crew saw a man's jumper hanging up on a pole. I landed a man with

"difficulty, the ground being all coral; and one moment he was up to his knees, and the next up to his waist. When he had returned, a man opened fire on the boat, which I returned with a rocket into the bush.....Having secured the jumper I proceeded along the shore in search of the boat but could see nothing, not even a native.

The next day (Monday the 25th) I got under weigh and beat up to Raita against a strong south-easterly breeze, which, acting against the tide, produced a nasty short sea; consequently on arrival off Raita I was unable to do anything through inability to land.....

I may here inform you that I had been suffering from ear-ache for nearly six weeks previous to this, but, as it is a common occurrence with me, I had hitherto taken no notice of it. Now, however, it came on with such acute pain as to incapacitate me for three days.

On the fourth day (Friday, the 29th) I weighed and proceeded over to Barranago, being nearer to Raita.....

On Sunday, the swell having subsided, I left the ship at 5 a.m. in the gig, with eight men, to continue the search for the whaler. Being off Raita, I pulled in to the shore, when about 150 yards from the shore the natives opened fire with rifles but their shooting was not good. I put three rockets into the bush, and having espied a break in the rocks, put the boat in and landed all but two men. I searched all the huts, about 40 in all, and found two water barricoes and two tarpaulins, but I could find no sign of the boat herself, which I considered might be stowed away in one of the huts. I then burnt the village and broke up all their canoes. I then returned to the boat and got her out again, when at about 200 yards from the shore the natives opened fire again, which I returned, but owing to the thickness of the bush I doubt if any execution was done, being unable to see anything but a few white puffs of smoke. However, the natives finding it a good opportunity, continued their fire with such effect that I regret to say that one man was shot and fell dead, another man being wounded in the arm. In this crisis the boat's rudder came to grief, and, under the circumstances, I considered the best thing to be done to get out of range when I was able to put things straight, the boat being loaded up, making it inconvenient to pull. So I made sail and returned to the ship, when I first dressed the wounded man's arm, (a flesh wound severing the artery and muscles, &c., in the left forearm) and buried the other man, who had been shot in the right breast, the shot passing through the body diagonally. Tambokaw now offered to get the boat back, but as he intended to buy her from Kallakona I discouraged him, as I would have rather have made another attempt myself than recover her in such a manner.

The next day I weighed and proceeded to sea..... and stood close hauled to the southward.

I would submit to you for your favourable consideration the conduct of Mr. H. Coughlan, boatswain of this ship, whose untiring energy and unfailing resource have always been of the greatest assistance to me, and whose advice has always been cool and considerate, and I can confidently recommend him to you as a man in every way worthy of advancement. As regards myself, I beg to inform you that, in accordance with the Admiralty Instructions, I gave myself the acting lieutenant's commission.

After the first week I am happy to say that the wounded man's arm progressed very favourably and he rapidly began to recover his strength. The rest of the ship's company were not in good health, two men being down with fever, two with island sores, and one man with a bad hand.

I beg to report my arrival in this port (Sydney) on the 29th instant (November)...."

The Commodore reported the massacre to the Admiralty in a despatch dated the 11th December, 1880, and it is worth quoting the main part of that despatch since he was obviously more experienced and skilled in securing a more detailed account of the incident after interviewing Mr. Coughlan, the boatswain, and Francis Savage, the sole survivor of the massacre. The Commodore's account is as follows:-

" It appears that Lieut. Bower made his camp for the night on the side of a small islet about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile in circumference, facing the main island of Florida. The islet though small was so thickly covered with bush that (as Savage describes it) it was quite dark when in it; the natives who must have been watching his movements landed on the sea or north side of the islet, and were thus able to get under cover of the thick bush to within three yards of the boat, whose bows nearly touched it. The arms were in a native fisherman's shelter, a mere shed a few yards from the boat, but as all the ammunition was in a magazine, the only man Venton who was near them could not load in time to resist and was only able to use the butt end of his rifle. Lieut. Bower at the moment of attack was taking angles with his pocket sextant, and so absorbed was he in his work, that Savage had to draw his attention to the yells of the savages before he became aware of the attack. It appears that Lieut. Bower would have ensured his escape, had he not, in the morning, worked his way to a tree within some 20 feet of where the boat was, and up which he climbed, to see whether the natives had left, which they had, but seeing him they returned and shot him. By the marks of the wounds and the way his body was lying, Mr. Coughlan thinks he was shot up through the length of his body, and fell from the tree across the root of which his body was found, decapitated, and with the right arm and large portions of flesh from the back gone. The headless body of Venton was hung up between two poles by the painter of the boat, the tendons of the wrists, arms and ankles (sic) being cut; and was a conspicuous object looking from the sea.

By Savage's account there are five large tribes in Florida, the one which committed the massacre being the most powerful and the chief of which has vowed destruction to the white man. The tribe which treated and sheltered Savage is also strong in fighting men but inferior to the one lying to the westward and it was fear of offending their strong neighbours which constituted Savage's greatest danger after being picked up. Having made up their minds on the return of their chief, the day after he was found, to spare his life, these friendly natives clothed Savage, and gave him a house, pistol with powder and ball to defend himself with, and supplied him with good food, pipes, and tobacco; the latter luxuries were in a store of trade in the chief's keeping, left by an English trader for the purpose of purchasing island produce and I particularly call attention to this fact, as probably the real cause of the man's life being spared. The trader may be at times, and no doubt is, much to blame in his dealings with the natives, but the bulk of them know that it is in their interest to conciliate and trust them. Another point of interest as showing great determination and pluck on the part of Lieut. Bradford and his small crew is that, finding it unsafe to take the Schooner higher up the bay, an estuary in which lay the place he intended to attack, he left the Schooner in a small leaky gig, pulled nearly eight miles to the village, landed under fire from the bush, which he checked by means of rockets and small arms, with only six men, examined the huts to make sure there was no mistake and, after finding a tarpaulin and boat's barricoes, burned the village, destroyed the canoes, and re-embarked; when about 150 yards off he was again engaged, steadily fighting yard by

"yard as he pulled to seaward, though one man had been shot dead, and another badly wounded in the left forearm. I am told by Mr. Coughlan that, besides Sniders, the natives had a small gun or blunderbuss, from which they fired showers of grape. He also informs me that our men fired away upwards of 300 rounds during the engagement, which by native report was not without doing considerable execution.

Too much praise cannot be given to Lieut. Bradford for the gallantry and energy displayed by him under most trying circumstances, and I am glad that their Lordships have seen fit to promote him for his services".

Another version of what transpired at the islet and the reason for the massacre is given by a Solomon islander, one J.P. Pindoke. It is of especial interest since it introduces on the scene the chief at whose behest the headhunting was undertaken, and the ringleader of the actual massacre. This version is as follows:-

" The ship that was measuring the sea and the reefs came to Legapolo and a boat came ashore, and they came to two men Taka and Paula. Now the people in the boat could not speak the Gela language and the people on shore could not speak English, and some of the sailors made lewd gestures that they wanted women. The people saw this and were offended. Then the boat went to Bulu and the same thing happened. This time the people were very angry. The women were particularly furious and teased the men calling them women. The complaints of the women reached the ears of the chief Holabosa and he too became angry.

About this time Talikona who was the chief of Gaita quarrelled with his wife and she ran away from him to her own people. Then Talikona became sorry and wanted his wife back but she would not do this unless he offered money or pigs or a victim in propitiation. So he sent Neburia to Holabosa to ask Holabosa what he intended to do. Holabosa said he would go after the boat. They followed it to Mandoliana.

Then Holabosa took four men in a small canoe. They landed unobserved and found the boat's crew resting and disarmed. Holabosa went first to see how the land lay. He found only one sentry and after carefully watching his beat he went back for the other four men. They took up a hidden position close to the sentry and fell upon him when his back was turned. Then they killed the rest of the crew having chased the last one up a tree where they shot him. They took the heads and Holabosa sent them to Talikona".

The last version is not entirely satisfactory; apart from the fact that the members of the crew were most unlikely to be so ill-disciplined as is suggested in the first paragraph, the account of the massacre in the last paragraph is vague and, for example, does not accord with other versions concerning the death of Lieutenant Bower. This version may well have been written long after the incident from hearsay and garbled accounts of what in fact happened.

Finally, there is another version, which relates that Kalekona had a great deal of money stolen from him and that, even though the money was finally replaced, he declared that he would not be satisfied unless a head of a victim were produced to him. For various reasons,

he made it clear that he would not be satisfied with the head of one of his own tribe, but chance presented itself when a boat left H.M.S. Sandfly for the shore at Mandoliana. At this point, so this version continues, Vuria, Kalekona's son, and a man named Holambosa, watched the boat as it passed Gaeta and, when they saw the party land on Mandoliana, they realized that the opportunity presented itself to collect a head, or possibly several heads, to satisfy Kalekona. They then found three others to join them - Tavu, Utumate and Puko. As Vuria told the story to a missionary two years after the massacre:-

"We landed on the other side of the point just as the sun was setting and we crept through the bushes until we could see the sailors on the beach. Three were bathing in the sea, one was cooking, and the captain was standing over there drawing in a book. We waited till we thought the right time had come, and then Holambosa gave the sign, and we all rushed out. I rushed out here, and there Utumate, and further on Holambosa and Tavu, and we fell on the men with our tomahawks. Their guns were in the boat or on the sand, and they had no time to take them up. One sailor and the captain ran along the sand, Utumate and Tavu followed them; we, the others, cut down the three who stayed. Presently Utumate and Tavu came back saying that the captain had turned on Utumate with his fists, on which he ran back, and that the sailor escaped Tavu by running into the thick bush, where he dared not follow. Then we cut off the heads of the three men we had killed".

Savage, who escaped into the thick bush presumably in this version, later took to the sea as related in Lieutenant Bradford's version. Lieut. Bower, who apparently made desperate efforts to launch the whaler, hid in a banyan tree near the shore, but was discovered at daybreak the next morning, according to this version, and was murdered and mutilated the following morning. His skull was duly delivered to Talekona.

The naval authorities were both deeply shocked and furiously angry at the news of the massacre and, only nine days after the arrival of H. M. S. Sandfly in Sydney, H.M.S. Emerald, under the command of Captain W.H. Maxwell, sailed from that port for the Solomon Islands and the Louisade Group to investigate four separate cases of murder, but, most importantly, that of Lieutenant Bower and the members of his crew. In his sailing orders to Captain Maxwell, Commodore Wilson dealt only briefly with the other four murders, but the depths of his feelings concerning the massacre at Mandoliana can best be illustrated by the following part of the sailing orders dealing with the massacre:-

" On receipt of these orders, and being in all respects ready for sea, complete with coals, provisions, and stores, you are to put to sea in H.M.S. Emerald, under your command, and proceed direct to the scene of the murder of Lieutenant Bower and five men of

"H.M. Schooner "Sandfly", the particulars of which have already been furnished you by Sub-Lieutenant Bradford.

On arrival, and having satisfied yourself as to who the murderers are, you are to follow them up wherever they may go, sparing neither time, trouble, nor a legitimate amount of risk, to deter you from pursuing them even into the interior of their country, and inflicting on them the severe punishment they so well deserve.

This is a case where the prestige of the Navy is deeply concerned, and one by which, if the murderers are not severely chastised, its power for good, and as a deterrent to crime among the islands, will receive a great shock.

You are to take suitable presents, and very liberally reward not only the chief himself, but his leading men, and all those who were concerned in the rescue of Savage.

I have appointed Sub-Lieutenant Bradford as Acting Lieutenant of the "Emerald": his presence will materially assist you in carrying out this service.

This question being settled, you are then to take the following cases in hand....."

H.M.S. Emerald, a much larger man-of-war than H.M.S. Sandfly, was in the Solomon Islands and the Louisade Group from the 17th December, 1880, to the 21st January, 1881. Arriving at Barranago on the 18th December, the local natives handed over the whaler of H.M.S. Sandfly with all her gear except the sails. On the following day, the chief, Tambokoro, came on board the warship and Captain Maxwell thanked him for his care of Savage and recovering the whaler, and presented him with gifts of axes, knives, tobacco, etc.; the headmen and the men who had recovered the whaler were also thanked and rewarded.

But the two attempts to locate and seize the murderers on the 21st and 24th December were unsuccessful, though every precaution was taken to ensure secrecy in respect of the landing parties. On the first occasion, a party of 60 marines and seamen was landed and the village of Raita and another village were destroyed, as well as all trees and other crops; but the inhabitants, instead of offering any resistance, simply retired further and further into the bush as the armed landing party advanced. The problems faced by the landing parties are described thus in Captain Maxwell's report:-

"The country is most unfavourable for such service (pursuit); of large extent, with high hills densely wooded, and divided by deep ravines and gullies. The work of climbing up to the high and inaccessible retreats of these savages is one of severe labour. Defence would be easy; and any defence would make attack most hazardous. However, the natives do not seem to attempt defence, but seek safety in flight, and to follow or find them in such a country is simply impossible".

On the second occasion, the landing force destroyed three villages and three "hamlets", including native arms, powder, bullets, shot and caps, clothes, pigs and items of food. On the occasion of each landing,

a number of articles such as barricoes, axes, coats, boots, etc., taken from H.M.S. Sandfly and identified by Acting Lieutenant Bradford were found and taken back to H.M.S. Emerald. They also, hopefully, brought back four skulls for possible identification.

However, retribution was not far off, with the visit of H.M.S. Cormorant, under the command of Commander Bruce, to the Solomon Islands in May and June, 1881. H.M.S. Renard, a small schooner-type man-of-war was already there. The report of Commander Bruce to Commodore Wilson, dated the 4th June, 1881, relates the beginning of the end of the story of the massacre at Mandoliana Island; the report follows (slightly edited and shortened):-

" On 10 May Bishop Selwyn and the Revd. Mr. Cummins, who were travelling on the mission schooner "Southern Cross" came aboard "Emerald". The Bishop having an intimate knowledge of the Florida Chiefs, some of whom including Kalikona and Takua have been to Norfolk Island (an Anglican Mission centre), and with which chiefs he has great influence; he also being strongly of opinion that the chiefs finding that all trade with their island was stopped, and that they would be perpetually harrassed by a man-of-war; it was arranged that the Bishop should meet me at M'boli, and the above measures resorted to; in this opinion the Bishop was corroborated by the others who were best acquainted with the chiefs at Florida. If when a murder is committed, the whole of the chiefs were held responsible, as they are all as a ruler directly or indirectly concerned, it would probably materially assist the surrender of the murderers; all trade should be stopped with the island, and all canoes going to and from the island and their chiefs and villages perpetually harrassed by the nearest man-of-war, until the murderers are given up; and it would have a most beneficial effect over the whole group.

As the natives have been well aware that the visits of men-of-war were very temporary and, if they could not sedure the murderers at once, pass on, they have held their presence with something of contempt; and as it is quite lately that a Chief of Florida made the remark on a recent fine of pigs inflicted by one of H.M. Ships for the murder of a white man on the north coast of Guadalcanar that the "man-of-war was very kind", it is manifest that more potent steps should be taken, which should directly affect the whole of the chiefs and tribes on whatever island a murder is committed.....

On the 14th May weighed with "Renard". Despatched her to enforce blockade of that part of the coast between Tesemboko and Langa.....

The Bishop came on board on the 15th May... In the afternoon the Bishop landed for the purpose of interviewing Takua (Chief of M'boli) and explained to him distinctly what was required of the chiefs.

On the 17th May the "Southern Cross" arrived with Bishop Selwyn who informed me that he had interviewed Kalikona on the beach at Gaieta the previous day, with the result of making him promise to use his best endeavours to capture and hand over the murderers of a subject of Her Majesty to the Captain of a British man-of-war.....

On the following day Tambakoro came on board..... I proceeded to M'boli. On arrival there I found Captain Nixon's schooner "Pacific" having Pomo, Chief of Vuturua, on board, he having gone to fetch him in his schooner at my request and he would not come

"for anybody else; he is one of the principal chiefs of Florida, and is allied with Tambokoro against Kalikona. I brought him and Captain Nixon back with me and had a meeting of Pomo and Tambokoro in my cabin, when I explained to them most distinctly that if Kalikona did not give the men up before, that I should allow them 7 days, and if the murderers were not on board me by that time, I should treat all the chiefs as enemies and resort to all the coercive measures of war; when having told every imaginable lie that the native character can supply, and made every available excuse without the effect of extending the 7 days, they held a consultation together and left the ship. I am informed through the interpreters that at last they mean to exert themselves.

On 20th May I sent "Renard" ...to M'boli for the purpose of being in immediate communication with the Bishop, and to watch the movements of Takua.

I offered the chiefs a reward of £10 a head for each of the murderers; this reward does not, of course, apply to Kalikona, but only in the event of not carrying out his agreement.

My principal reason for offering a reward is in case of my not being able to get the murderers, and cupidity being one of the chief characteristics of the natives, that as long as the man lives, he will never go to sleep without the fear of another native knocking him on the head and taking him to the first man-of-war, so that his life as long as it lasts will be a great curse to him, and eventually I believe he is certain to perish and as such an example would not only affect the whole of the group but would be equally well known all over the Western Pacific, I should trust that it might have the effect of intimidating future would-be murderers.

On the 22nd May Bishop Selwyn and Lieut. King (commanding H.M.S. Renard) came on board and brought the news that Holambosa, the ringleader of the massacre, had been taken by Kalikona and was then a prisoner on board the "Renard". On 23rd May I left the ship with Bishop Selwyn, Lieut. King ... and proceeded to M'boli landing on the beach, which was crowded with natives, most of whom were armed with bows, arrows, guns, but perfectly friendly, opposite to the Mission House where we held a meeting of the chiefs at M'boli. I told them through the interpretation of the Bishop that it was a good thing that Holambosa was caught but there were still four more and they must return to Kalikona's district and assist him and the other chiefs in scouring the bush until they were also captured. I also told them that the man-of-war was here for the purpose of protecting the natives against whites, as well as white against native; and they appeared perfectly in earnest in their desire to catch the other men and said they would start that night.

On the 24th May I heard that about 200 of Tembokoro's men returned last night having been searching the bush for 48 hours, but without success, and I sent to him to say that his men must go back until they are found.

Next day weighed anchor under steam from Port Purvis, anchoring under the lee of Mandoleana Island from 2 or 3 cables west of the cross marking Lieut. Bower's grave. Sent steam cutter away manned and armed to land the Bishop with my ultimatum to Kalikona - that he was to give up Lieut. Bower's skull, watch, &c., and the arms taken from the boat as well as his son (Vuria) at once, and the other three men as soon as he could find them; or I should land an armed party in his district, hunt down himself and his people in the bush, offering at the same time such reward for his body dead or alive as would make a certainty of the other Chiefs capturing him.

" In the afternoon, the boat's crew of this ship and "Renard" landed unarmed and armed on the beach of Mandoleana when Halambosa was shot by a file of marines and his body taken out in the whaler and committed to deep water.

I sent one of the natives of this ship up the tree in which Lt. Bower was shot to see if he might have left anything there, but nothing was to be found.

Anchoring close off Kalikona's village on the 26th May (lately destroyed by "Emerald") when the Bishop came on board bringing with him Kalikona, his son (Vuria), the skull of Lt. Bower, as well as his watch, compass, etc., and two rifles, one revolver, three other rifles having been taken by the men who had run away into the bush. Lieut. Bower's teeth were brought off to me during the afternoon, they having been used as beads as a necklace. I informed Kalikona that I should keep his son on board as a hostage until he had given up the three men, that he would be perfectly safe, but that if he tried to escape I should shoot him.

Kalikona is now living some 4 or 5 miles in the bush where he was when the "Emerald" was here, and has remained ever since; his statements generally agreed with the evidence given to the Bishop and it is my belief that he was not in any way concerned in the first massacre, and he strongly asserts that he told "Utumate" to spare the man in the tree.

And now that justice has been carried out in a way which will be considered satisfactory to the honour of H.M. Navy, and I trust of lasting benefit to the missionaries and traders of these islands, I have the honour to bring to your notice the assistance I received from Bishop Selwyn without whose great influence over the natives, energy and courage in landing unarmed on Kalikona's beach when that chief was surrounded by armed followers, whom no force employed by me could have brought from his lair in the bush; and without whose assistance I believe it would have been impossible to have achieved the result which has been, and certainly not without great destruction of life and property, and the loss of much valuable time.....".

So much for the ringleader of the massacre, though it was not long before one of his companions was caught. In a report to Commodore Wilson, dated the 23rd June, Lieutenant King of H.M.S. Renard wrote as follows:-

" On the 5th June I weighed at 9.30 a.m. and proceeded to M'boli off which place I arrived at noon the following day 6th and "Hove to" off the village. Bishop Selwyn shortly came on board and informed me that "Utumate" (the man that actually shot the late Lieutenant Bower, as well as the man in the "Sandfly's" boat afterwards) had been taken and was then a prisoner at M'boli.

According to Commander Bruce's orders I left him there in the custody of the local chief to await the "Cormorant's" arrival which would be in a few days.

The two remaining men were still in the bush and the Bishop informed me that they will certainly be taken alive or dead shortly, as the chief seems very anxious to have the affair settled and be at peace again".

The next chapter in the story is told in Commander Bruce's letter to the Commodore, No. 206 of the 20th July, 1881, as follows:-

" Monday, 13th of June. Anchored in M'boli Harbour, when Bishop Selwyn came on board and informed me that Utumate had been captured in Vuturua. When I told Sauvoc (fighting chief of M'boli) to send to Pomo (chief of Vuturua) and tell him he was to be sent over to me at once.

"Wednesday 15th of June. A canoe came alongside to say that Utumate was on the beach, having been brought down in the night. Sent Sub-Lieutenant Armstrong with cutter, armed, and brought him off smoking his pipe. Landed him with Lieutenant Luckraft, and boats manned and armed, when he was hanged to a tree on the beach by and in the presence of a large concourse of Florida natives. Committed the body to the deep".

The final chapter concerning the actual massacre is told in Commodore Wilson's despatch to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, dated the 21st September, 1881, as follows:-

" In reference to the "Sandfly" case, Commander Bruce has succeeded in capturing another of the murderers - Tavu, by name. He was caught by the M'boli natives, and sent off to the ship.

The "Cormorant" then proceeded to Ugi, and executed him there. Bruce observes 'My reasons for executing him at Ugi were, as an example to the natives of San Christoval, who are some of the worst in the group, and have now a reward out for a white man's head, and also as a safeguard to Mr. John Stephen (a trader there).'

There is now only one man (Puko) still at large, who was implicated in this case, and is supposed to have destroyed himself. That supposition is probably correct since, despite enquiries and searches for Puko later that year, and in 1882, no trace of him could be found and, as one missionary interested in the case, wrote:-

"I never heard any tidings of the missing man or even of later years a rumour of his existence".

But though the echoes of that massacre in 1880 soon died away, memories of that ill-fated incident were revived just over a century later.

Prior to the massacre, the island had been used by its customary native owners but, thereafter, it was in effect abandoned by them. This fact no doubt made the island attractive to expatriates for in 1908 one Claud Bernays applied for an occupation licence of the island. The then Resident Commissioner, one Charles M. Woodford, in seeking consent to the grant of a licence, stated that the island had been given to the Government by the local inhabitants as "some reparation for the murder and for the leniency in which they had been treated". But research in Fiji and London failed to reveal any such presentation by the natives, and the application lapsed.

However in 1911 another such application was made to the Resident Commissioner and this time he granted a lease to the Buffett Brothers. The latter had some very informal and desultory dealings with the then customary owners; some apparently agreed to the Buffett Brothers being allowed to occupy the island, whilst others said that the island was "sold" for trade goods, though not for money. But there was apparently no formal consent marked by any particular ceremony, and nothing in writing.

years
There matters rested for 63, when in 1974 the Commissioner of Lands applied to the Registrar of Titles for registration of the freehold title of the island in the name of the Crown. But such were the somewhat lackdaisical ways in which such matters were pursued, that a further eight years were to elapse before the Registrar agreed to the registration. But at that stage persons said to have interests in custom ("the customary claimants") opposed the decision and appealed to the High Court.

In his findings on the case, the Chief Justice expressed himself as satisfied that:-

- (a) the 1911 lease was granted by the Government at a time when it did not possess the freehold of the island and that it was therefore a nullity;

- (b) ownership in the island in custom continued to exist in the customary owners both before and after the lease was signed; and,
- (c) ownership of the island was not passed from the customary owners to the Buffett Brothers or to any other persons claiming under the 1911 lease.

The Chief Justice therefore quashed the decision of the Registrar to the registration of the island in the name of the Crown, thereby upholding the claims of the customary owners. But he made no decision (as indeed he was not called upon to do) as to precisely who the customary owners were, and at the time of writing that remains to be resolved.

Thus, as far as the ownership and occupation of the island is concerned, the wheel has come almost full circle just a century after the massacre. But, given that the tiny islet is the burial ground of those of H.M.S. "Sandfly" whose mortal remains lie buried there, the Royal Navy, which was so humiliated by the original massacre, might well feel that the present desire of the customary owners to establish a tourist resort there is somewhat incongruous in such a historical setting.