

When we arrived at Daru I was questioned quite closely by the Resident Magistrate as to where we had landed and the attitude of the natives. When I asked him why he was so interested in the details he informed me that because of the attitude of the natives he had not sent an officer into the Gama River area for over two years. The last time he did so was to recruit village constables. Two men who were selected were sent off to a training course at Port Moresby but on returning to their villages were murdered by the local inhabitants. The natives obviously were not very kindly disposed towards the white man or his agents. Fortunately we knew nothing of this.

Leaving Daru on 2 December and after refuelling at Thursday Island and Flinders Island, we made Cooktown just at dusk, a distance of 530 miles, which involved 7 hours' flying. It was a good day.

We were now getting away from the tropics and the weather being good on the 3rd we made Port Alma, a distance of 710 miles with refuellings at Cardwell, Bowen and Mackay and involving 9¼ hours in the air; our aircraft was behaving quite well.

The next day we made Southport and on Sunday 5 December again with a tail wind and 7 hours in the air we covered the distance of 690 miles to Eden on Twofold Bay, but here we were held up for a day by bad weather, the first non-flying day on our return flight, which was completed at Point Cook on the afternoon of 7 December.

We had covered a distance of 10 000 miles, small today but not so then, and visited 23 localities outside the mainland where water suitable for the operation of seaplanes existed. Flying time was 126 hours. We had all gained a good deal of experience of the possibilities and needs for the operation of aircraft in the islands and of the meteorological conditions there and in the tropics generally and I became aware more than ever before of the limitations of aircraft operating from the sea. From the very beginning of Service aviation there had been arguments between pilots as to the relative merits of landplanes and seaplanes.

Seaplane pilots claimed that alighting places of almost unlimited area were always available to them throughout the world and that no amount of bombing could destroy them. They failed to mention the ease with which wind and tide could upset the surface of those alighting places, the danger of floating and submerged obstacles such as coral and the like, the work involved in loading, unloading and maintenance against salt water.

My view that seaplanes were properly employed only where landing places for landplanes were not available was confirmed. That, of course, was the position in most of the islands at that time; we could not have visited this area in a landplane.

The Prime Minister at this time was Mr S. M. Bruce. He was then in London and I received a cable from him reading:

Congratulations on splendid achievement in your flight of nine thousand miles. You have demonstrated the wonderful possibilities of aviation not only in linking Australia more

Colonel de Pinedo of the Italian Air Force flew a single-engined flying boat from Italy to Australia and on to Japan.

It is not possible to make sound recommendations to the Government regarding the necessary strength of any one of its defence Services without having given considerable thought to the possible and probable method and direction of attack by an enemy. For these reasons I considered it essential that I should know as much as possible of our east coast and the islands adjacent to it from an Air Force operations point of view.

Whilst people and the press often spoke of Darwin as a probable point of attack, this was not the principal thought in the minds of the Services. It seemed to me that, looking at the problem from the point of view of an attacker, Australia could only be effectively controlled after occupation of the large cities on the east coast and for this purpose a landing in Queensland from where communications by road, rail and telegraph to the south already existed would be the logical aim. Believing that an enemy attack on Queensland would not be from the west of New Guinea but rather from Papua as a jumping-off place, I felt that I must make myself acquainted with Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In seeking the Minister's approval to visit that area by seaplane I stated the object to be 'to gain a knowledge of the geography and flying conditions in the islands of the Pacific adjacent to Australia which owing to the rapid development of aircraft are fast becoming within range of the mainland of the Australian continent'.

The aircraft used was the DH50 with the float undercarriage, the pilot being Flight Lieutenant McIntyre and the mechanic Corporal L. Trist. Leaving Point Cook on the morning of 25 September 1926 we refuelled at Paynesville on the Gippsland Lakes then flew on to Sydney against a head wind which at times reduced our ground speed to 60 miles an hour. We were already experiencing leaks in the engine water-cooling system and decided to change it. This delayed us for four days in Sydney.

On 29 September we set off for Southport in Queensland refuelling at Port Stephens. When within about 6 miles of Southport that evening and a little out to sea the engine power died away and we had a forced landing in the open ocean. A fair sea was running and we were being tossed about considerably. We found that the throttle control had become disconnected and vibration had closed it. This was remedied but we were unable to take off. McIntyre's skill in handling the aircraft in the sea then running and through the surf saved us from getting a wave over a wing tip. We had no wing tip floats. We beached the aircraft on a sandy beach at the southern end of Stradbroke Island opposite Southport, safe but very wet.

It was now almost dark but a Very light fired into the air soon brought a policeman and some men in a boat from Southport and with their help, assisted by others collected from the local cinema by the police, we were able to drag the aircraft over a sandy spit about 400 yards wide which

separated the ocean from sheltered water. The aircraft had had a considerable buffeting whilst taxi-ing in the open sea but the only serious damage was to the airscrew which had been hitting the waves. We had to wait at Southport until a new one arrived — a delay of another four days. We were not getting along very fast.

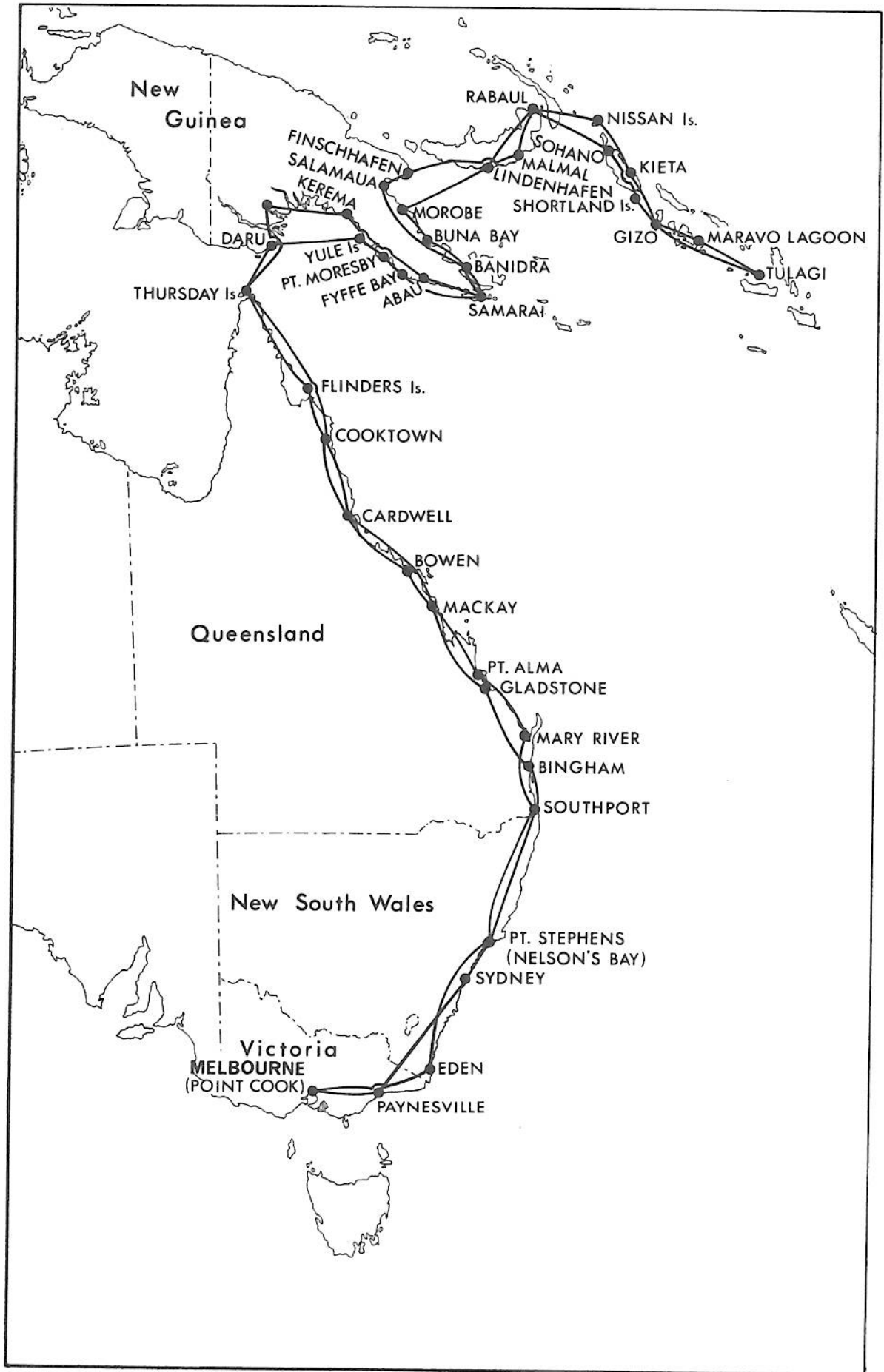
Leaving Southport on 5 October we made Gladstone and the following day reached Bowen. The next day via Cardwell we arrived at Cooktown. Here the whole town, a small handful of people, turned out to greet us and when proceeding to the hotel after refuelling the mayor asked me if we would like to attend a dance that evening. Personally I did not feel a bit like a dance but it was obvious that the local people would like us to do that, so I said we would. Whilst we were having dinner at the hotel I heard a brass band playing in the distance and commented on such a small community being able to raise a brass band. I was told it was playing at the hall where the dance was to be held.

When we arrived at the hall the band was playing outside, but before dancing commenced the whole band moved inside. The hall was built of corrugated iron without any lining and we certainly could hear the music, but we could not talk to our partners. Everyone was there including the children, some babies were in prams parked around the hall whilst here and there one was lying asleep on a form against the wall, quite capable of rolling off I thought but none did. It was quite a pleasant evening and seemed very quiet when the band had completed its program.

The next day we made Thursday Island by way of Flinders Island and stayed with the Garrison Artillery unit which was maintained there at that time.

Our first landing in Papua was at Daru on 11 October. The water round these islands seems never to be clear of driftwood or other rubbish and we damaged our airscrew in trying to take off. Fortunately it was repairable but we had to stay there the night. The next day we crossed the mouth of the Fly River to Port Moresby calling at the Catholic Mission on Yule Island where we met a number of young Australian nuns. It was dark by the time we got ashore at Port Moresby but we were met on the wharf by the Administrator, Staniforth Smith, who was acting for the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, who was on leave.

I stayed at Government House that night and my outstanding memory of it is of swarms of mosquitoes inside the house. Staniforth Smith seemed not to notice them on his hands and face whilst I found myself continuously on the move trying to keep them away from my head, ankles and hands. Noticing my discomfort Staniforth Smith gave an order to a native servant who soon after appeared with a metal pan on which were some coals giving off quantities of smoke. This was placed in front of me and I was told that the way to keep the mosquitoes off was to place oneself in the smoke. I tried it and found it difficult to decide which was the least uncomfortable, the mosquitoes or the smoke. I was glad to make an early move to bed where I was inside a mosquito net.



The Pacific islands flight, 1926

Sir Hubert Murray had apparently had one room (in which he appeared to live) made mosquito-proof, but had made no attempt to protect the rest of the house. There was no woman living there at this time.

Our next destination was Samarai, but en route we landed at the London Mission Station in Fyfe Bay, and accepted an invitation to lunch there. Up till now all the Papuan natives we had seen were what we call fuzzy-wuzzies, that is they wore a large quantity of curly hair.

Most of the missionaries we met seemed to live fairly comfortably. In the course of training the natives all the labour they needed, whether inside the home or elsewhere, was available to them. Here at luncheon two Papuan girls served at table; one had a full head of black curly hair, the other had what we might now call a crew cut.

As this was the first time I had seen a native with such short hair, I asked whether there were amongst the Papuans those who cut their hair short. I was told that there was no such division but that this girl had misbehaved herself in some way and the clipping of her hair was a punishment. This seemed to me rather a cruel punishment for although it caused no physical pain it would take some little time before her hair again reached its normal condition and during that time it was obvious to all who saw her that she had been a naughty girl — in what way I did not learn.

We arrived at Samarai that afternoon and I was invited to stay overnight with the Anglican bishop, Dr Henry Newton, who was I believe the Bishop of Melanesia. We were travelling in uniform and when in the air wore a pair of overalls. It was my custom when we had run the aircraft up on to the beach to step out on to the float and there remove the overalls before stepping ashore.

Everybody on the island of Samarai seemed to be assembled on the beach when we went ashore that afternoon. Apart from some of the natives in the Fly River area where Frank Hurley had a few years previously operated an aircraft (which he mentions in his book *Pearls and Savages*), Papuan natives had not previously seen an aeroplane nor indeed had many of the white residents. On the evening of our arrival at Samarai the bishop and I were invited to the home of the medical officer for a drink. The bishop was a bachelor but the medical officer had a wife and a little girl of about 3 years old. That afternoon the child had been taken by her nurse to see the aeroplane and she arrived back home anxious to tell her mother all about it. She had obviously seen me removing my overalls and having said something about the man in the aeroplane she said, 'And Mummy, he wears rompers'.

We met our first really bad weather at Samarai and were held up for a day. Next morning we set off over the China Strait, our destination Morobe via Baniara. It was fine at Samarai but we had not gone far before we were faced by cloud extending south-east for some distance and north-west into Milne Bay, in other words across our track. If we

of our coming and had instructed his native boys to look after us. We were there for lunch and the boys produced a tray on to which a large tin of cold sausages and onions had been emptied. We helped ourselves to this but did not make much of an impression on it, so it was on the table again for the evening meal and again for breakfast next morning. We did not seem to be very hungry that morning.

It had rained heavily during the previous afternoon and throughout the night but cleared in the morning. We had beached the aircraft and pegged it down when we arrived and it was not standing level on the beach. When we launched it next morning we were surprised to find water coming in streams from inside the wings through the breathing holes at the bottom of the trailing edge. We could not work out just how that water got inside the wings nor how long it had been there; we knew of course it was only since we landed the day before. Careful examination, such as was possible, showed no indication of any damage having been done and we acted on that assumption. Refuelling at Finschhafen and Salamaua we made Buna Bay and the next day we reached Samarai.

We were now experiencing rainstorms every day and although it was possible to get round many of them we got no further than Port Moresby by way of Abau on 29 November and to Kerema the next day. On 1 December we experienced deteriorating weather when attempting to cross the Gulf of Papua until before long we had no alternative but to turn back and alight on the first suitable water we could find, there to await the passing of a large storm ahead of us. We landed near the mouth of what I judged from our chart to be the Gama River which was wide enough to alight on or to take off from in any direction, and we were able to tie up to a tree on the steep bank of the river.

We had seen natives in the vicinity before we landed but they had all now disappeared. We had been warned to be careful if natives disappeared when we approached and particularly so if when they did subsequently appear they were not accompanied by women or children.

We were experiencing intermittent heavy showers and when one of these cleared we found a canoe containing several natives on the river and within shouting distance. We were able to persuade them to come ashore, no doubt prompted by curiosity to see the unusual looking white man's canoe which they could not have seen before the rain cleared. It was not long before other natives started to come out of the bush, but neither women nor children. We were unable to communicate with these men as they did not understand pidgin English nor had they seen matches or tobacco. But they showed no signs of being other than friendly.

After about three hours here the weather cleared and we took off for Daru. It would have been interesting to know the thoughts of these men who were obviously unacquainted with the ways of white men and could never have seen such a strange 'canoe' race along the surface of the water and then take to the air.

attempted to get round it to the north we would be heading over the land, which we wished to avoid.

We had found of course as we proceeded north from Melbourne, especially when we got into the tropics, that our aircraft performance fell off rapidly. Our ability to take off was controlled by the nature of the sea. This controlled the load we could carry and consequently our range. We could not take off at all with any reasonable load on the calm oily waters one often meets in the tropics. On several occasions we had to discard petrol in order to get off, but of course there was a limit to this as it was useless getting into the air if we had not sufficient fuel to reach our destination. The combination of all these factors meant that we could not wander off our direct course very much, nor did we have the ability to get much height.

The cloud in front of us this morning was too high to get over and it extended down to the sea. There was no object in our going lower. We had no knowledge of how far it extended horizontally and with the hope that it was not far we entered it. Almost immediately we ran into a most terrific rainstorm. We were literally hit by a barrage of water and at once there came from the engine a clatter and vibration far exceeding anything I had experienced previously (or since), making me feel that the engine must fly apart, and we were losing height. Knowing that clear air was only a few seconds behind us I immediately instructed McIntyre to make a 180-degree turn. When we came out into the clear air, to my amazement and relief the engine settled down to its normal purr. I had thought that the engine could not have escaped damage. The fuselage on each side of our engine was of plywood. The engine air intake was a pipe about three inches in diameter, and it came through the plywood but was cut off flush with it. When we ran into the storm, water running down the plywood side was sucked into the engine air intake with alarming results.

We now had no alternative but to try to get round this storm by flying into Milne Bay. Before reaching the head of the bay we passed the storm and were able to fly on to the north-east coast of Papua and after refuelling at Baniara arrived at Morobe, in New Guinea.

We had hoped to get as far as Finschhafen that evening but Morobe is so situated that in most winds it was necessary to take off from water open to the swell coming straight in from the ocean and because of the conditions we were unable to take off that day. The next day was hot and muggy and there being no breeze the surface of the sea was like glass and this with a ground swell from the ocean made it impossible for us to take off. On the following day changed conditions enabled us to reach Lindenhafen on the south coast of New Britain and the next day we made Rabaul. This was the headquarters of the administration of the Mandated Territory (previously German New Guinea) which was then quite separate from the Papuan administration. The Administrator was Brigadier General E. A. Wisdom with whom I stayed.

There are two definite 'seasons' so far as weather conditions in the islands are concerned, the south-east or 'dry' (comparatively) when the wind blows regularly from that direction and the north-west or 'wet' when the prevailing winds are from that direction. We were hoping to complete this flight before the north-west season set in and the Minister was now asking my views as to whether the flight should go beyond Rabaul. I recommended continuance to Tulagi, the headquarters of the Solomon Islands administration. This correspondence plus the collection of information I was seeking resulted in some days' delay at Rabaul and the opportunity was taken to give the engine a top overhaul. When the aircraft was being tested after this work a Customs launch in passing a line to the aircraft, while drifting, ran into the tail and damaged the rudder and elevators and that delayed us another two days.

So after a total of 11 days in Rabaul we took off on 29 October for Nissan Island, off Bougainville. Here we found that we had an internal leak in the water jacket of one cylinder of our engine and that water collected on the piston head when cold but that by soaking up this water with strips of cloth inserted through the plug hole the engine could be started up and we had no trouble whilst it was warm and operating.

From Nissan we proceeded by way of Kieta, Shortland Island where we had to stay for two days because of heavy rain, to Gizo, then to the Maravo Lagoon arriving at Tulagi on 5 November.

After leaving Nissan we found that our engine sump was cracked but it did not interfere with the engine operation and then an internal leak developed in a second cylinder and this had to be treated as did the other. While at Tulagi I stayed with the Resident Commissioner, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Captain R. R. Kane.

The question now arose as to what we were to do about our engine and finding that the *Mataram* which traded to the Solomons was due out of Sydney in a day or two we asked that another engine be sent to us, and when this arrived it was installed.

Whilst waiting for the engine at Tulagi I went down with malaria. The Resident Commissioner said he would bring his medical officer along to see me and when he did I found that he was Chinese. The only Chinese I had ever met up to that time had been market gardeners or laundry men, and I am afraid this did not fill me with a great deal of confidence. However, I found that the doctor had been trained at Edinburgh University and he proceeded to fill me with quinine until I felt I must burst. He obviously knew what he was doing for in a few days I was up and about and have not had a trace of the fever since.

Because the people along our route had not seen an aeroplane before there was consternation in the native villages as we passed over, men, women, children, pigs and dogs running in all directions. It was not long before the aircraft was being referred to by the natives as 'motor car belong Jesus Christ'.

I was not very favourably impressed by the operations of European

(principally Australian) storekeepers in the islands. Most of the stores were in two sections, one for Europeans and the other for natives, and in the latter the prices charged were higher for the same article than in the European section. For example, a hair comb which was sixpence in the European section was one shilling — twice the price — in the native section. When I inquired of the storekeeper as to the reason for this I was told that the natives did not understand anything but shillings. I found that very hard to believe. Probably the occasion which shocked me most was at Tulagi when I saw a native outside a store with a camera which he had just purchased. It was a folding camera and he was opening and closing it; obviously he did not understand it nor had he any knowledge of lenses or films, and of course he could get no photographs with it. It had cost several pounds.

Most of the natives employed by Europeans at that time were under contract for a period. They received a small weekly payment (perhaps in shillings), and were paid a lump sum, still not a large amount, on completion of their contract. The native I have mentioned could have had little more than enough to purchase his camera from such a final payment. I spoke to the storekeeper about the camera and told him what I thought of such a sale. His attitude was 'I'm here to sell things — it's not for me to refuse something a native or anybody else wishes to buy'. I am afraid this did not make me feel proud of being an Australian.

We called at several missions during this flight and sometimes I wondered just what the natives were being taught; at others I noted that they were being taught a great deal more of the Bible than I had been.

On one occasion at Tulagi I was being taken across the bay to Makambo Island in the Resident Commissioner's launch. The crew consisted of two natives, one attending to the operation of the engine and the other to the rudder. Natives who had had some training at a mission station were referred to as 'mission boys' and whilst sitting in the stern of the boat I said to the man on the rudder, 'You mission boy?' 'Yes', he said, 'me mission boy'; then pointing to the man at the engine I asked, 'Him mission boy too?' and was surprised to receive the answer 'No, him bloody heathen'.

It was now the last week in November and we were starting to get occasional breezes from the north-west. Although it rained heavily on the night of 23 November and was still raining at daylight we were able to get off soon after 6 a.m. with a south-west wind behind us and, refuelling at Gizo, Kieta and Soraken, arrived at Rabaul just before dark. With 7½ hours in the air and 3 refuellings we had covered 770 miles, our best run so far. Taking off early next morning we were forced by storms to return to Rabaul but were able to get to Lindenhafen later that day.

We were unable to get away from Lindenhafen on 26 November until after midday because of rain and got only as far as Arawe on the south-west corner of New Britain. Here we stayed at a coconut plantation, the manager of which was a bachelor and was away at the time but who knew