

Thomas Edge-Partington 1909-1914 British Solomon Islands Protectorate Cylinder Collection (C83)

By Vicky Barneclutt, updated 14 June 2022. With thanks to Tim Thomas and David Akin for their help.

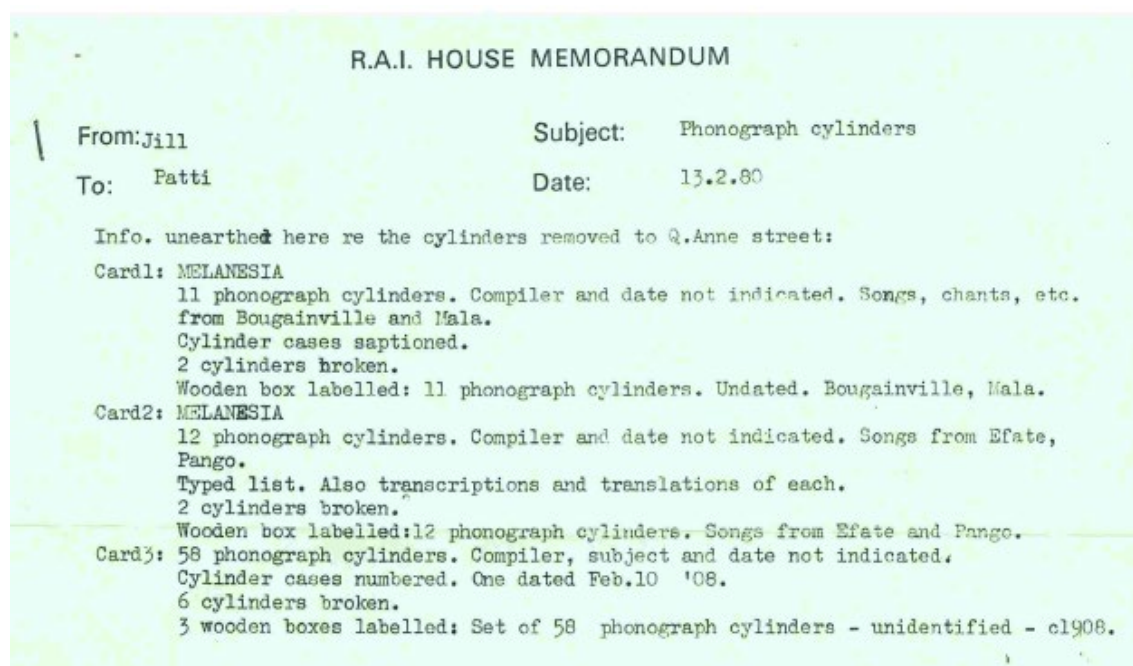
This is a set of eleven wax cylinders recorded in the Solomon Islands, with British Library shelfmarks **C83/1510–1520**. The cylinders came from the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in 1983, and the collection was previously called the R.A.I. Bougainville Cylinders within **C83 Royal Anthropological Institute Cylinder Collection**. Although we have not yet been able to find a document explicitly naming the recordist, all other available evidence very strongly suggests that they were recorded by Thomas Edge-Partington, probably between September 1909 and February 1912.

Warning

The description of one of the items included in this paper reproduces an original term from the collection item description which is now considered discriminatory, harmful or offensive.

The collection

These dark brown wax cylinders came to the British Institute of Recorded Sound (BIRS)¹ in 1983, along with two other cylinder collections.² The collections were accompanied by a memo card, dated 13 February 1980, from the RAI which listed “Info. unearthed here re the cylinders moved to Q. Anne Street”. The memo noted that this collection included “Songs, chants, etc. from Bougainville and Mala”, and that the “compiler and date” were not indicated.



Memo included with letter from Jonathan Benthall, Director of the Royal Anthropological Institute, to Alan Ward, British Institute of Recorded Sound, 18 January 1983, held in the British Library's Sound & Vision box file archives

¹ BIRS was founded in 1955, and became part of the British Library in 1983; it is known today as the British Library Sound Archive.

² The collection noted first on the list is currently known as **C83 RAI Bougainville Cylinders** and the collection noted last is the **C83 RAI Seligman Vedda Cylinders**.

The information that we have comes from writing on the lids and sides of the cylinder boxes. At some point, it was suggested to the British Library that the recordist was either Gerald Wheeler or Richard Thurnwald (Prentice 2001); they were both catalogued as the recordist in the British Library. Wheeler was thought to be the most likely recordist, as some of the recordings have spoken announcements in an English accent, and a number were made on the island of Mono, where Wheeler did anthropological fieldwork. However, research by the True Echoes team at the British Library, helped by Tim Thomas, has led to the conclusion that the cylinders were recorded by Thomas Edge-Partington.

The distinctive handwriting on the labels of the cylinder boxes matches examples of Edge-Partington's handwriting in the archives of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, and in the annotations of photographs he collected, copies of which are now in the British Museum. The seven performers that are identified by name on the cylinder lids were all listed by Edge-Partington as being employed by him between 1909 and 1911; they probably worked as part of his police force.



Photo of C83 Edge-Partington collection, British Library Sound Archive UID 0251-C83B_0031-ZZ02M0



Photos of cylinder C83/1520, British Library Sound Archive UID 0251-C83B_0044-ZZ02M0

The recordist

Thomas William Edge-Partington (1883–1920) was the eldest son of James and Ada Edge-Partington. James (1854–1930) was a renowned collector of Pacific artefacts, who was active in both the British Museum and the Royal Anthropological Institute. After a short career in the British Royal Navy, Thomas joined the British Colonial Service and was sent to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP) (Neich 2009:91). He served as Resident Magistrate at the government station of Gizo, on the island of Ghizo in the Western Solomons, from December 1904 to May 1909, and then at the government station of Auki on Malaita, from 1 September 1909 to January 1915 (Bennett 1987:401; Akin 2013:39). He spent periods away from the Solomon Islands on furlough. Thomas' family donated the photograph albums from his time in the Pacific to the British Museum, and we have used these photographs to illustrate this document.

This photograph shows Thomas Edge-Partington. Although it is undated, contextual information indicates that it was taken at Government House, Auki, Malaita, between February 1913 and January 1915.



"T.W.E.-P." British Museum Oc,CA45.130

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca45-130

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Gizo

Edge-Partington arrived at Gizo as Resident Magistrate in December 1904 and stayed there until 31 May 1909, with two periods of furlough (August 1905 – January 1906, 12 May – 20 July 1908) (Bennett 1987:398). Whilst stationed at Gizo, Edge-Partington evidently travelled at least once to Roviana Lagoon, as he described the funeral of Ingava, “Chief of Rubiana”, in 1906 (Edge-Partington 1907:22–23). In the same short article, he also noted that there had been “a tremendous lot of sickness among the natives, both in Simbo and Rubiana ... It is carrying off all the old men and women.”

During this period, Edge-Partington had a relationship with a woman from Simbo Island (Moore 2019:294); it is not clear whether she lived on Ghizo or Simbo. He was transferred away from Gizo in July 1909, when colonial officials became aware of this relationship. He had to apologise to both the Resident Commissioner, Charles Morris Woodford, and the High Commissioner for his behaviour, and received an official reprimand from London (Moore 2019:294).³ Presumably due to his young age and otherwise good behaviour, Edge-Partington was not dismissed, but instead was placed on probation and moved to Malaita to establish the first government station there. Woodford (1852–1927) was stationed in Tulagi, the capital, during this period.

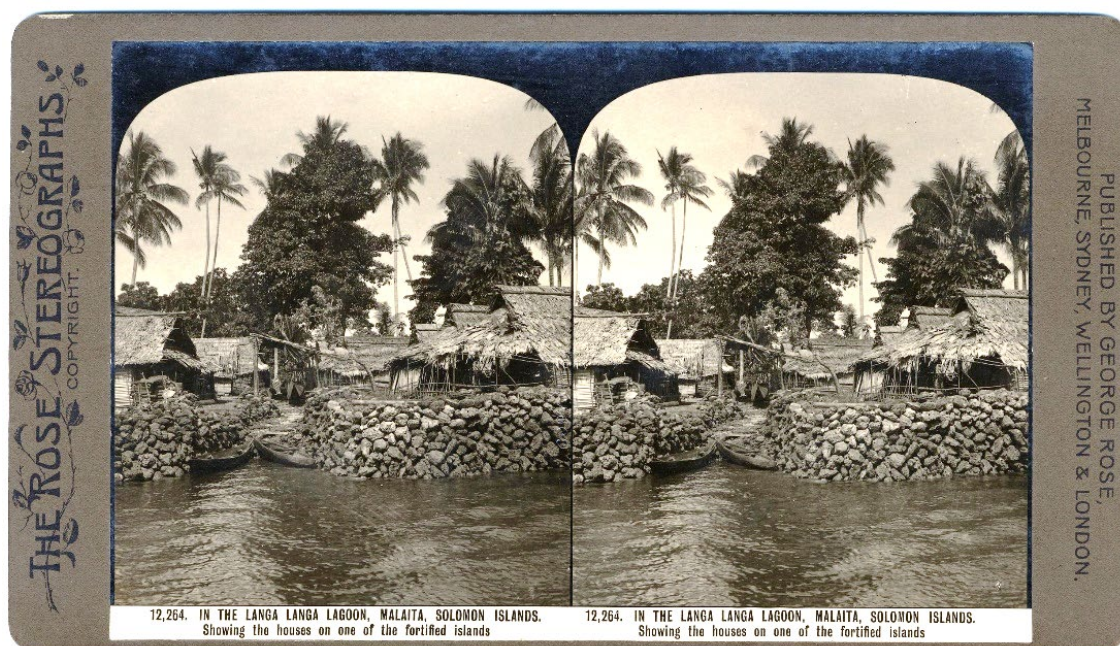
Malaita

When he arrived on 1 September 1909, Edge-Partington, as District Magistrate, was Malaita’s first resident government officer. The government station was established at Rarasu on the central-west coast of Malaita, and was named Auki after the nearby island of ‘Aoke, Auki, or Kwaibala (Akin 2013:37). Edge-Partington wrote his address as Quaibala, Mala. Rarasu / Auki was at the northern end of the Langelanga Lagoon. Also known as Akwalaafu, the lagoon is 21 km long and just under 1 km wide. The people of the lagoon have referred to themselves as, and been called, “saltwater people” since the nineteenth century, to distinguish them from the “bush” people of the mainland.⁴ They live on small islands that have been artificially built up over the years with coral blocks on the sand bars of the lagoon.

This photograph of houses on one of the islands of the Langelanga Lagoon was taken in 1907 by the Australian photographer George Rose. Thomas included many of Rose’s photographs in his albums.

³ The High Commissioner of the Western Pacific High Commission was at this time Sir Everard im Thurn, Governor of Fiji.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langa_Langa_Lagoon. In local languages, “*Ta`a i asi*.”



"IN THE LANGA LANGA LAGOON, MALAITA, SOLOMON ISLANDS. Showing the houses on one of the fortified islands" British Museum Oc,CA47.65

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca47-65

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Edge-Partington brought with him about 28 policemen and some convicts from the Western Solomon Islands. These men worked to help establish the station as he could not find Malaitans willing to work for him (Akin 2013:35, 38). Letters between Edge-Partington and Woodford in the archives of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate indicate that Edge-Partington had a difficult task trying to extend government control into the Malaitan mainland. He evidently found his job frustrating, in particular the lack of adequate support from his superiors and the presence of just a small police force (Akin 2013:39).

This photograph of the government station at Auki, Malaita, is not dated, but must have been taken sometime between 1909 and January 1915; with a probable date of around 1912-1914.



"Govt: Station. Mala." British Museum Oc,CA45.106

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca45-106

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On 28 February 1910, Edge-Partington listed 28 men as the "labour on the Government Station, Mala." Most of these men had signed on in September 1909 for a period of one year, at a wage of £1 a month. Included in this list was a man named Kurura from the Shortland Islands on 1 September (Edge-Partington 1910a). On 9 June 1910, Edge-Partington wrote to Woodford discussing the possibility of recruiting men from Rubiana [Roviana Lagoon], Saikile, Lukuru [on Rendova], Simbo, Treasury [Mono], Shortlands [Alu], Vella Lavella, and Choiseul [Lauru] (Edge-Partington 1910c). It is not clear whether he managed to visit all of these places.

On 1 November 1910, responding to a request from Woodford to list "all police, prisoners, arms and accoutrements on [Mala] Station," he enclosed "a complete list of everything and everybody" (Edge-Partington 1910d). This list included six prisoners and 37 workers; it is not clear whether these were all policemen. They were each paid £1 a month, apart from one man called Sibiau from Alu who received £2 a month. He had been recruited in September 1909. The list included:

- Kurura (Sept 19th, Alu)
- Pilot (Sept 19th, Alu)
- Kaga (Sept 24th, Alu)
- Kamanda (Sept 1st 1910, Banietta)
- Osopo (Sept 1st 1910, Banietta)
- Angabili (Sept 1st 1910, Banietta)
- Peloko (Sept 1st 1910, Vangunu)
- (Edge-Partington 1910d)

Edge-Partington previously noted that he employed Kurura in September 1909. It seems likely from

the information listed that Pilot and Kaga started work at the same time, but they were not listed on the document from 28 February 1910. The others started in September 1910. All these men were noted as performers on the cylinder recordings, and their places of origin roughly correspond with the languages of the recordings. This is discussed further in the Performers section. On 30 March 1911, Edge-Partington wrote to Woodford noting that he was sending three of the police “whose times are up and who wish to be paid off” to Woodford at Tulagi. These three men were Pilot, Kaga, and Sakuri.

It is possible that these men appear in this photograph of the British Solomon Islands Police Corps from Edge-Partington’s photograph album, but no names, place or date is recorded:



“The Police Officer and a squad of B.S.I.P.C” British Museum Oc,CA45.136

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca45-136

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Edge-Partington noted that he visited all the islands in Langalanga Lagoon on 21 March 1910 and met with the “principal” men of each island (Edge-Partington 1910c). He also noted in the District Officer’s Diary for 1910 that he visited Alite Island, Langalanga Island, Kwala Fou Island, and Laulasi Island (Edge-Partington 1910f).

He remained at Auki until January 1915, with one year of furlough between 22 February 1912 and 26 February 1913 (Bennett 1987:401). During this furlough, he got married and his new English wife,

Mary (1883–1971), accompanied him on his return to Malaita. He resigned his position on 5 Dec 1914 (Akin 2013:39) and left the region on 26 January 1915.

This photograph, again undated, shows Thomas and Mary Edge-Partington, presumably in Malaita, between February 1913 and January 1915.



"M.E-P., + T.W.EP." British Museum Oc,CA45.73

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca45-73

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Death

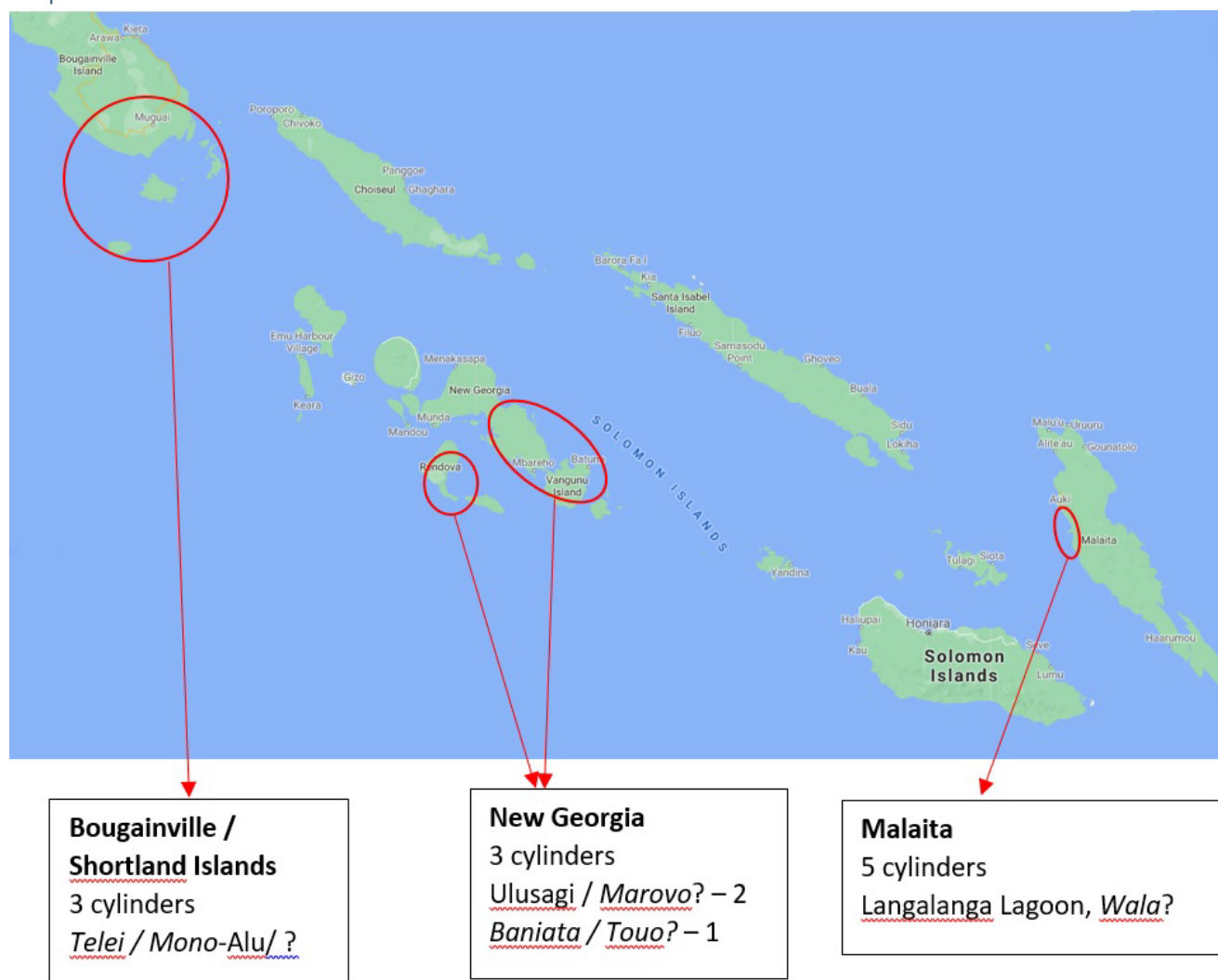
In 1915, Thomas and Mary moved to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where he worked for a plantation company. He died there of influenza on 20 April 1920 (Neich 2009:92); his widow, Mary, was pregnant with their son, Thomas Keppel, at the time.

The recordings

The recordings are from three different areas of the Solomon Islands. The labels indicate that five recordings are from Malaita, three from the Bougainville Straits area, including the island of Mono

and three from the New Georgia area. Our research suggests that the recordings may all have been made in Auki and the surrounding area by performers from these areas.

Map



Map of the locations of the performers of the C83 Solomon Islands cylinder collection

Dates

The information above on the performers and Edge-Partington's travels suggests that he made all of these recordings at some point after 1 September 1909. It is unlikely that he visited Langalanga Lagoon for anything other than a fleeting visit before he moved to Auki in 1909. Some of the performers left Mala in March 1911, and the performers who started to work for Edge-Partington in September 1910 are not mentioned again after February 1912, when Edge-Partington left Mala for his long furlough in England. Therefore the most likely date range for these recordings is 1 September 1909 – 22 February 1912, or 1 September 1909 – January 1915. It is possible that they were made any time between December 1904 and January 1915.

There is a small piece of newspaper crumpled up inside one of the cylinders, C83/1510. This piece of newspaper cannot be securely identified or dated, and it seems likely that it was torn from a news summary or digest. It can be dated to November 1912 as it includes a review of a concert in London

from 9 November 1912. However, the piece of newspaper was probably added when the cylinders were being prepared for travel, so it is not clear what this date of November 1912 relates to.

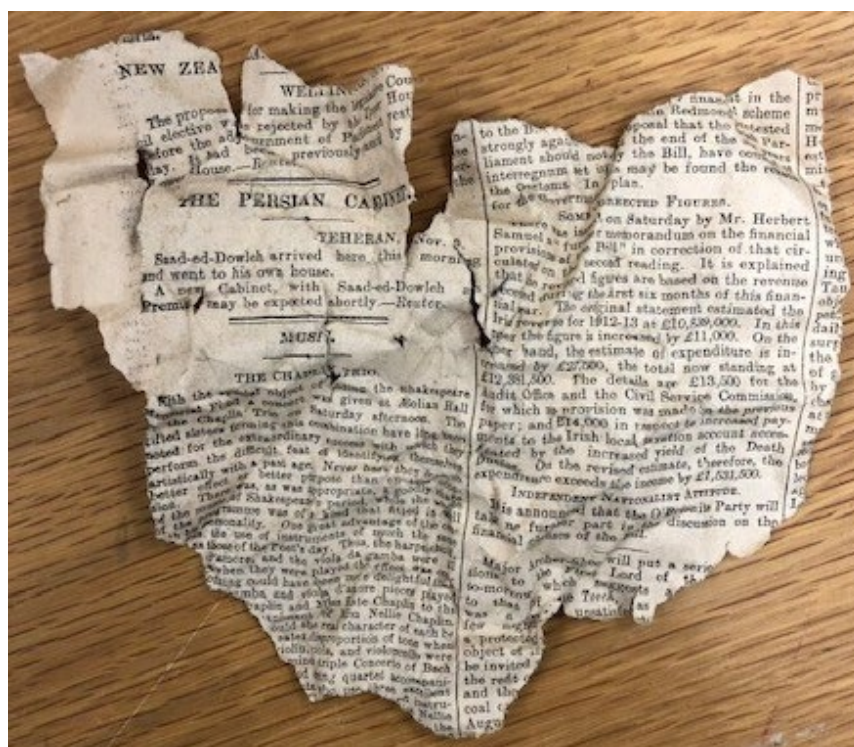


Photo of insert of cylinder C83/1510 at the British Library

There is no information on where the phonograph used to make these recordings was from, whether Edge-Partington owned it or if he borrowed it from someone else. There is no record of where he may have obtained the cylinders either. It is also not clear whether it was also used to play pre-recorded cylinders.

Motivations for recording

Edge-Partington may have been encouraged to make phonograph recordings by Arthur Hocart, W. H. R. Rivers or the trader, Fred Green. Hocart and Rivers arrived on Simbo Island on 14 May 1908; Edge-Partington was away when they arrived, but he returned to Gizo on 20 July 1908 and remained there until May 1909. Rivers left New Georgia in September 1908, but Hocart was there until 5 January 1909. At the end of August 1908, Hocart and Rivers chartered a yacht from a trader, probably Joseph Binskin, for a month to travel around the island of Vella Lavella. Binskin had stations on Simbo, Gizo, and Vella Lavella, and the route from Simbo to Vella Lavella passes by the island of Ghizo. It is likely that they would have stopped at Gizo station en route.

Edge-Partington almost certainly knew Fred Green, the trader stationed on Simbo who assisted Hocart and Rivers. Green was married to Tiro, a woman from the hamlet of Tumbi on Simbo; he owned a coconut plantation and trade store on the island.⁵ Green made and sent wax cylinder recordings to Rivers in 1909, after Rivers had left the region. In the accompanying documentation Green noted that he had trouble as the cylinders were “very mouldy and make a lot of noise while recording”; he noted

⁵ Tim Thomas notes “Tumbi is a hamlet in the Narovo district on the island of Eddystone/Simbo/Mandegusu. It is located on the shore of Narovo bay, and is where Green had his house, trade store, and jetty for loading copra etc.” – the remains are still there (email to Barnecutt, 12 March 2021).

that there were only “4 good records” out of twenty (letter from Green to Rivers. 5 January 1909 in Haddon papers bundle 12018 Cambridge University Library).⁶ We do not know if these four cylinders have survived, and we do not know where Green obtained the phonograph that he used to make these recordings, or what happened to it subsequently.



Fred Green, his wife Tiro and son Philip.

Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology P.70937.ACH2.

There are a number of photographs showing Thomas and Mary's life in Auki from 1913 to 1915. One photo shows that they had a piano at their house (Moore 2019:204, n. 7) which suggests that they were interested in music.

⁶ <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1121894961/view>.



Piano in the corner of the drawing room, probably of Thomas and Mary Edge-Partington's house at Auki
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca45-37

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The cylinders

The cylinders in this collection are all brown wax cylinders. The cylinder boxes for eight of the eleven cylinders are labelled Edison Gold Moulded Records,⁷ which were used for black wax cylinders manufactured from 1902 by the Edison Phonograph Co.⁸ The cylinder boxes for the other three are labelled Edison Amberol Records. Both Gold Moulded and Amberol cylinders were pre-recorded and mass-produced, and could not have been shaved for reuse. They typically had the title printed on the lid, as well as embossed on the rim of the cylinder. The Gold Moulded cylinders had a two-minute playing time, whereas the Amberol cylinders had a four-minute playing time. It is evident that all of these cylinder boxes were re-used to house the brown wax cylinders that make up the collection. The brown wax cylinders may have been sold without individual boxes.

Handwritten labels on the side of the cylinder box of **C83/1510** and the lid of **C83/1514** note the titles of pre-recorded tracks, suggesting that the original lids had been mixed up or misplaced at some point, or that the cylinder boxes contained brown wax copies of these pre-recorded tracks that may have been shaved down to be reused.

Labels and metadata

The cylinders are listed here with information extracted from the British Library's SAMI catalogue and edited by the True Echoes team after a visual inspection of each cylinder. In bold is the shelfmark of the recording, followed by the Item Title from the Recording level entry in SAMI, edited by the True Echoes team.

The next paragraph contains information from the Product level entry, which is information about the physical holding. This includes anything written on the lid or body of the cylinder box or tin. All of these cylinders except **C83/1514** have a round label attached to their lid. The handwriting, in ink, and the layout is the same on all of the labels; the consistency of the labels suggests that they may have

⁷ <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/history-goldmoulded.php>

⁸ https://www.cylinder.de/guide_black-wax-cylinders.html

been written at the same time. **C83/1514** has lost its label, and information about the recording is scrawled across the cylinder lid in pencil. **C83/1510** also has some writing on the side of the cylinder box. Written on or near the label on the cylinder lid is the British Library shelfmark, a four-digit number written in pencil, and an earlier British Library identifier, in pencil. Two of the cylinders have a date written on the lid in ballpoint pen, '6-7-83' (i.e., 6 July 1983), which is the date that the cylinders were dubbed at the British Library.

The last paragraph in the information below contains performance notes, the Recording level entry which lists information for each track on the cylinder, identifying any announcements, comments on the performers, and also includes a statement on the quality of the recording and the condition of the cylinder. It is not clear why there are no performance notes for **C83/1511–1514**.

The cylinders have been organised into three groupings here, based on where we think the performers of the recordings came from.

Offensive language

Cylinder **C83/1510** has a label on the cylinder lid that contains information about the recording. However, on the side of the cylinder box is another title, originally deciphered and catalogued as 'The Bullfrog and the Poor', that further research has identified as 'The Bullfrog and the Coon'. This was a song from the 1905 stage show of the *Wizard of Oz* in New York; the song was commercially released on cylinder in 1906.⁹

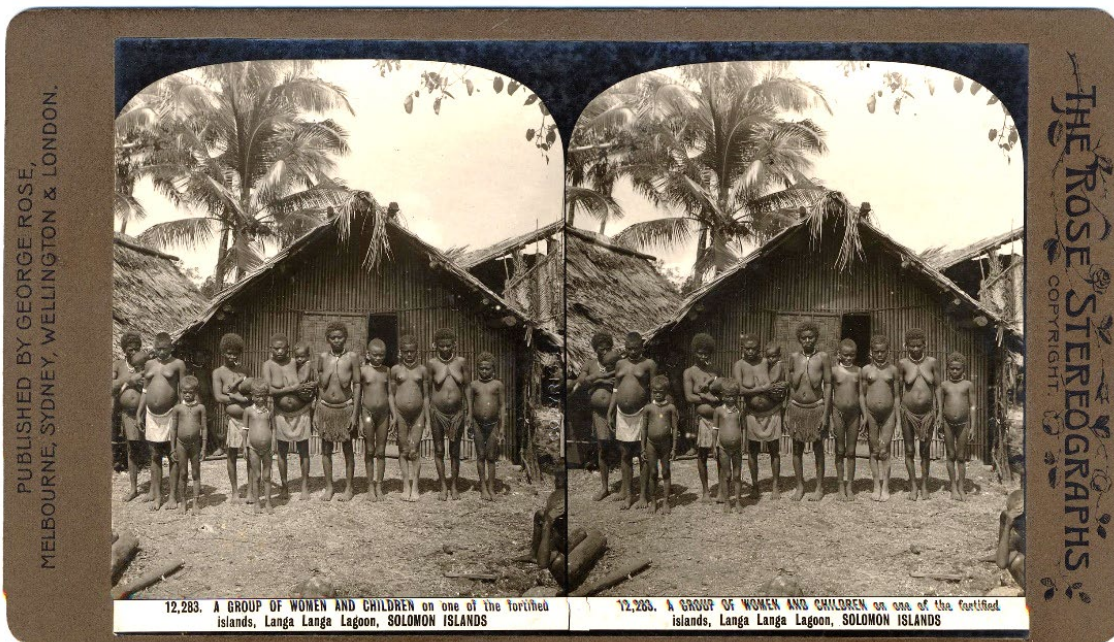
This almost certainly references a pre-recorded track which bears no resemblance to the current content of the cylinder. The 'Bullfrog' track was most likely on a black wax cylinder previously kept in that cylinder box, or perhaps it had been copied onto a brown wax cylinder that was subsequently shaved down and recorded over with the current recording. The British Library follows best practice in not altering historical record and acknowledges the offensive nature of the language used in the original.

Malaita

Information from the lids indicates that **C83/1510–1514** were recorded on "Mala", the old name for the island of Malaita (Moore 2017:2; Rivers 1914:233). Malaita is one of the largest of the Solomon Islands, lying to the east of Guadalcanal. The lids record that the songs **C83/1510–1513** were sung by "saltwater" women; **C83/1514** is the same kind of song, but seems to have been sung by men. The inhabitants of two lagoons on Malaita, Langalanga and Lau, call themselves "salt water" people to distinguish themselves from the "bush" people who live on the mainland. The language of Langalanga is called Wala [lg] and there are 6980 speakers (Eberhard 2021:25).

These two photographs of women of the Langalanga Lagoon were taken by the Australian photographer George Rose in 1907, so it is not known whether they feature any of the women in the recordings, as the recordings were probably made between September 1909 and January 1915. Edge-Partington included many of Rose's photographs in his albums.

⁹ There is more information about the song: <http://www.hungrytigerpress.com/tigertunes/bullfrogblues.shtml>
The original recording is available for listening:
<http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/search.php?queryType=@attr+1=1020&num=1&start=1&query=cylinder3101>



“A GROUP OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN, on one of the fortified islands, Langa Langa Lagoon, SOLOMON ISLANDS” British Museum Oc,CA47.84

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca47-84

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“A STREET IN BENA, SOLOMON ISLANDS. Bena is one of the fortified islands in the Langa Langa Lagoon” British Museum Oc,CA47.80

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/EA_Oc-Ca47-80

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Notes from Pei-yi Guo, anthropologist at Academia Sinica, Taiwan:

In Langalanga (along the central west coast), 'nu' means 'to sing', and 'gala' is a kind of singing after the death of a person. 'Nu li gala' means 'singing the gala'. Gala is the women's singing after death, the reason is to 'faoka' (making good). Before the corpse is buried, in custom, female relatives would gather at the deceased's family every night (sometimes in daytime too) and sing a kind of song called 'gala'. The act is then called 'kwaigala'. They beat sticks as they sit and sing together. The pattern works as follows: one woman comes up with a sentence to sing, and then the others join her and repeat it over and over again. Then another woman would come up with another sentence and they repeat it again and again. This is a way of mourning for women. Usually they sing about the history of the deceased, the cause of his death, or his/her tribe's action; the lyrics usually reveal the history and recall the past with things the deceased said. They also praise the deceased (e.g., he looked after the church, etc.), give comfort words for the mourning relatives, 'odulia' (defending the deceased's name), or even challenge others. (email to Don Niles, 13 August 2001)

C83/1510 *Gala Part 1*

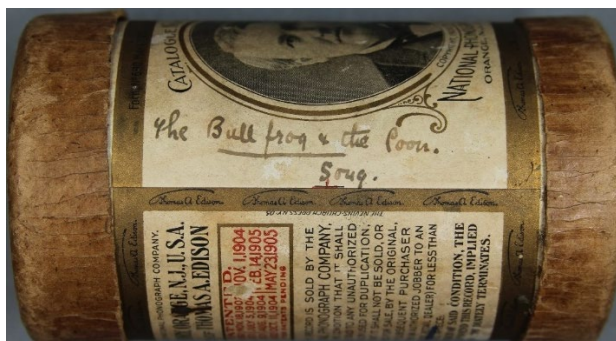
On lid: 'Native song / "Gala" / by / 30. Saltwater / Women of Mala / Part 1' (ink)

'1510' (pencil)

'C83/3/1' (pencil)

On box: 'The Bull frog & the Coon. / Song.' (ink)

Performance note: Female vocal group, unaccompanied. Cylinder chipped and bandaged, but reasonable quality recording.



C83/1511 *Gala Part 2*

On lid: 'Native Song / "Gala" / by / 30. Saltwater / Women of Mala / Part. 2' (ink)

'1511' (pencil)

'C83/3/2' (pencil)



C83/1512 Nu Part 1.

On lid: 'Native Song / "Nu" / by / 30. Saltwater / women of Mala / Part 1.' (ink)
'1512' (pencil)
'C83/3/3' (pencil)



C83/1513 Nu Part 2.

On lid: 'Native Song / "Nu." / by / 30. Saltwater / women of Mala. / Part. 2.' (ink)
'1513' (pencil)
'C83/3/4' (pencil)
'6-7-83' (ballpoint pen)



C83/1514 *Male vocal group.*

On lid: 'Sun. Dance. Orchestra.' (ink)¹⁰

'Nu gala (2)' (pencil)¹¹

'1514' (blue pencil)

'C83/3/5' (pencil)

Performance note: Vocal group, unaccompanied. Reasonable quality recording.



Bougainville/Shortland Islands

The recordings of these three cylinders, C83/1515-1517, probably come from Alu / Shortland Island or nearby areas in the Bougainville Strait. The performers noted for **C83/1515** and **C83/1516**, Pilot, Kurura and Kaga, were men from Alu, employed by Edge-Partington in September 1909 (Edge-Partington 1910d). Pilot was probably a nickname or title that came from this man's work on ships. The Alu provenance indicates that the recordings may be in the Mono language [mte], which has 2940 speakers across the islands of Mono, Alu, and Fauru (Eberhard 2021:28).

The song noted as Kombena on **C83/1516** may be related to a song referenced by Wheeler "73 KOMA KOMPENA (Text of a song from Lavelai in Buim [sic]: probably in Telei speech)" (1926:150). Wheeler noted elsewhere that "Buim" was the Mono name for the southern part of Bougainville (1913:739); the town and area is known as "Buin." Wheeler noted that he heard the song on the island of Alu, but did not publish the text. It is possible that this song features the Telei language. The Telei or Terei language [buo], also known as Buin, has 26,500 speakers (Eberhard 2021:140).

Edge-Partington did not record the names of the performers for **C83/1517**; the voices seem to be male. The lid notes both "Woman Taligiri Mono" and "Bugarville", but it is not clear exactly what these

¹⁰ The cylinder box indicates that it originally housed an Edison Gold Moulded cylinder, which would have been black wax, so 'Sun. Dance. Orchestra' probably refers to this pre-recorded track. The Sun Dance, performed by the Edison Symphony Orchestra, was released in 1903.

http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/detail.php?query_type=mms_id&query=990025788060203776&r=16&of=20.

¹¹ The words 'Sun Dance Orchestra' are crossed out in pencil. 'Nu gala' is written in pencil over the middle of the label, along with the blue pencil number – it does not show up well in the photograph, but was clear on visual inspection. It seems likely that all the cylinders have this label underneath with the "proper" label glued on top. In this case, the "proper" label appears to have been lost.

refer to, although it seems likely that the performers were from Mono or elsewhere in the Bougainville Straits.

It is not known whether Edge-Partington visited Alu, or how he recruited Pilot, Kurura, and Kaga. There are 11 objects from Bougainville in the Edge-Partington collection at the Auckland Museum (Neich 2009:91), and 15 armbands from the Shortlands-Bougainville region in the British Museum, donated by Mary Edge-Partington.¹² However, as Tim Thomas points out, these armbands may also have been available in the Western Solomon Islands as trade items (Tim Thomas email to Vicky Barnecutt, 23 February 2021), and there were many connections between the regions at this time, encouraged by trader, colonial, and mission activity. David Akin notes that armbands were traded a lot across the archipelago as they were easy to transport (Akin email to Barnecutt, 27 July 2021).

C83/1515 Upalau.

On lid: 'Native Song / "Upalau". / Bugainville / by / Pilot, Kurura, / + Kaga' (ink)

'1515' (pencil)

'C83/3/6' (pencil)

Performance notes: 1. Recordist announcement: "Upalau" 2. Male vocal trio, unaccompanied. Reasonable quality recording.



¹² British Museum numbers Oc1921,1102.15–29.

C83/1516 *Kombena.*

On lid: 'Native Song. / "Kombena" / by / Pilot, Kurura, / + Kaga' (ink)
'1516' (pencil)
'C83/3/7' (pencil)

Performance note: 1. Recordist announcement: "Kom, Kombena by Pilot, Kurura and Kaga". 2. Male vocal trio, unaccompanied. Good quality recording.



C83/1517 *Woman Taligiri Mono.*

On lid: 'Native Song / "Woman Taligiri / Mono" / Bugainville' (ink)
'1517' (pencil)
'C83/3/8' (pencil)

1. Vocal group, unaccompanied. Reasonable quality recording.



New Georgia

Information on the lids of **C83/1518–1520** indicate that the cylinders include material performed by individuals from the New Georgia region. The lids from **C83/1518** and **C83/1519** both record "Chant –

Ulsagi", performed by Peloko, Usopo, and Kamanda. The lid of **C83/1520** notes the recording as "Talking – Banietta dialect by Kamanda and Angabili." Edge-Partington noted that he employed these four men from 1 September 1910, and that Kamanda, Osopo (Usopo), and Angabili were from "Banietta" whilst Peloko was from "Vangunu" (1910d).

Baniata is an area on the south-west of Rendova Island; the language is known as Touo [tqu] or Mbaniata, and is spoken by 1870 people (Eberhard 2021:24). Vangunu is one of the islands of the New Georgia group, between New Georgia itself and Nggatokae Island. Marovo Lagoon lies off the coast of these islands. Tim Thomas notes that Ulusage or Ulusaghe is the old name for Marovo, or at least the main eastern part from Viru Harbour to Gatokae Island. Hocart referred to Ulusage as the area around the Marovo Lagoon on the west side of New Georgia (Hocart 1922:292; 1931:304). Ulusagi was noted as "the language of Viru and all through the Lagoon" on the east coast of New Georgia (*The Australasian*, 8 March 1915), by the Adventist missionaries who worked there in 1914. There are 8090 speakers of the Marovo [mvo] language (Eberhard et al. 2021:19). Kamanda and Osopo presumably spoke both Baniata and Ulusagi / Marovo languages.

Notes from Edvard Hviding, anthropologist at University of Bergen:

[T]he performer Peloko was a well-known ritual specialist in the eastern New Georgia (ie. Ulusaghe) around the time of the first Methodist missionaries (and his group was indeed missionized by them). (email to Don Niles, 10 August 2001)

[I]n Ulusaghe they speak the Marovo language, not Roviana (but related to it). Nowadays old people of Roviana (Munda, Vonavona and thereabouts) still refer to the Marovo language as "zinama Ulusaghe"; "Ulusaghe language". So this must be Peloko et al. demonstrating their Marovo vernacular. (email to Don Niles, 13 August 2001)

C83/1518 *Chant Ulsagi.*

On lid: 'Native Song / Chant / Ulsagi / by / Peloko, Usopo, / Kamanda.' (ink)

'1518' (pencil)

'C83/3/9' (pencil)

Performance notes: 1. 1. Announcement: "Peloko, Usopo [indecipherable]". 2. Male vocal trio, unaccompanied. Reasonable quality recording.



C83/1519 *Kera kera.*

On lid: 'Native Song / Chant / Ulsagi / by / Peloko, Usopo, / Kamanda' (ink)

'1519' (pencil)

'C83/3/10' (pencil)

1. Recording announcement: "Kera kera [indecipherable.] Ulsagi; Peloko, Usopo, Kamanda". 2. Vocal trio, unaccompanied. Reasonable quality recording.



C83/1520 *Banietta Dialect.*

On lid: 'Talking / Banietta Dialect / by Kamanda + / Angabili' (ink)

'1520' (pencil)

'C83/3/11' (pencil)

'6-7-83' (ballpoint pen)

1. Male vocal dialogue. Good quality recording.



History of the cylinders within the British Library

This collection of cylinders came into the British Institute for Recorded Sound from the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1983, with two other cylinder collections, **C83 RAI Vanuatu** and **C83 RAI Seligman Vedda Cylinders**. There was no accompanying documentation for this collection, apart from a memorandum noting all three cylinder collections. It was originally documented as **C83 RAI Bougainville**.

Thomas Edge-Partington's cylinder collection may have been given or sold directly to the RAI by his father James, or it may have been transferred first to the British Museum, and from there went to the RAI. Further research on this matter is being conducted.

Two of the cylinders have a date written on the lid in ballpoint pen, '6-7-83' i.e. 6 July 1983. This indicates that the collection was dubbed on or around that date at the British Library. The cylinders were copied onto DAT at some point before 1993, when Ward offered Benthall DAT copies of all of the C83 recordings (letter Ward to Benthall 3 November 1993). Don Niles at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies received a CD of the recordings and photocopies of the cylinder lids in 2006 (email from Niles to Janet Topp Fargion, 9 June 2006).

At some point, it was suggested to the British Library that the recordist was either Gerald Wheeler or Richard Thurnwald (Prentice 2001); they were both catalogued as the recordist in the British Library. Wheeler was thought to be the most likely recordist, as some of the recordings have spoken announcements in an English accent, and a number were made on the island of Mono, where Wheeler did anthropological fieldwork. Tim Thomas suggested that the recordist might have been Thomas Edge-Partington; Edge-Partington's distinctive handwriting provided evidence for this connection (Thomas email to Barnecutt, 10 December 2020).

The True Echoes team contacted Dr Caroline Adams, an archivist, a historian, and an expert in deciphering old handwriting. She compared the labels on the cylinder lids with copies of Edge-Partington's handwriting from the archives. She replied that in her opinion, the cylinders are labelled by Edge-Partington. Her reasons are graphology-based:

His 'u' and 'n' look the same; His 'l' is looped the same way at the top; He has a distinctive 'v' which rolls over, as in 'bougainville' on the cylinder and 'every' in the correspondence; His upper case 'G's are formed in the same way; So are his 't's; The 'g' has a straight tail with no loop; The 'i's are consistently dotted over the minim; The upright stroke of the 'p' goes slightly higher than the loop. (Caroline Adams email to Barnecutt, 28 April 2021)

As a result of the historical research undertaken by the True Echoes team, the British Library decided to rename the collection the **Thomas Edge-Partington 1909-1914 British Solomon Islands Protectorate Cylinder Collection (C83)** to reflect the recordist and recording location, using the country name contemporary to the recordings.

Related sound collections

The British Library cylinder collection **C83 RAI Vanuatu** and **C83 RAI Seligman Vedda Cylinders** also came from the Royal Anthropological Institute, although there is no indication that the recordings or recordists are connected. The British Library has two other cylinder collections from the Solomon Islands which were probably recorded around the same time as, and in some similar locations to, this collection: **C108 Rivers** and **C680 Unidentified (Solomon Islands)**. Both of those collections were made by W. H. R. Rivers and A. M. Hocart. Hocart also sent nineteen cylinders to Carl Stumpf at the Berlin

Phonogramm-Archiv that he recorded in Roviana Lagoon between 2 and 15 October 1908 (Ziegler 2006:155).

Related artefact collections

Thomas Edge-Partington made an extensive artefact collection for his father, James, during his time in the Solomon Islands. James wrote to Augustus Hamilton at the Auckland Museum in May 1912 noting that “My son has just landed from the Solomons on long leave and has brought home some good things for my museum” (quoted in Neich 2009:92). James collected around 423 objects from the Solomon Islands in total, retaining 326 of them (Neich 2009:86). In the final manuscript of his collection, James noted that around 120 artefacts were collected by Thomas during his time in the Solomon Islands. He supplied artefacts to the British Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum and the Horniman Museum (Rubenstein 2013:338), and after the First World War, his remaining collection was acquired by Auckland Museum. However, we could not identify any musical instruments or ritual paraphernalia related to the sound recordings among the artefacts collected by James or Thomas.

The British Museum holds around 40 objects from the Solomon Islands that were either purchased from or donated by James, including objects received from his son (Rubenstein 2013:338). It is possible that the cylinders recorded by Thomas were donated or sold by James to the British Museum at the same time as these artefacts. The Pitt Rivers Museum has around 9 objects from James; it is not clear which artefacts came from Thomas. The Horniman Museum also has objects collected by James.

Of the 90 artefacts collected by James Edge-Partington in the Auckland Museum, “about 37 are from Malaita, 4 from Choiseul, 20 from Rubiana, 4 from Simbo, 2 from Vella Lavella, 11 from Bougainville, and about 12 unlocalised beyond ‘Solomon Islands’” (Neich 2009:92).

Thomas’ widow Mary donated an important collection made with her husband to the British Museum in 1921. This consisted of “some 40 Solomon Islands artefacts – including body ornaments, figures and dance-shields” (Rubenstein 2013:338). The body ornaments comprise 14 armbands from the Shortlands-Bougainville region and a number of beaded belts and ear ornaments from Malaita. The dance-shields were also from Malaita, but no further provenance information was recorded, so we do not know if these came from the Langalanga Lagoon.

The British Museum holds digital copies of most of Thomas Edge-Partington’s photographic collection. Thomas collected approximately 600 photographs of the islands from various sources, including both photographs he took himself and prints from John Watt Beattie, George Rose, and others. Beattie was State Photographer of Tasmania, and he visited the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu on the Melanesian Mission ship Southern Cross in 1906. He took hundreds of photos and kept a diary of his tour. Rose was also an Australian photographer who travelled through the Solomon Islands in 1907 as part of a world tour. Edge-Partington acquired a number of prints and stereograph cards from Rose (Burt 2016:214), and a number of plates from Beattie, presumably when they passed through Gizo on their voyages.

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