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THE FORGOTTEN EXPEDITION – 1885: THE STRICKLAND RIVER, NEW GUINEA

Peter D. Dwyer, Monica Minnegal and Chris Warrillow

The A. S. N. Company's S. S. Gunya arrived here [Cooktown] today. She brings news that it was reported at Thursday Island by two black-fellows, that the whole of the party despatched by the Geographical Society of Australasia for the exploration of New Guinea had been murdered by the natives of the Fly River.¹

It might almost be called a forgotten expedition for with the exception of Captain Everill's Official Report read before the members of the Geographical Society in 1886 and a small pamphlet 'The Voyage of the Bonito' published by William Bauerlin, botanical collector in the Expedition, the inner life of the party was never previously written. Even the zoological & botanical specimens brought to Sydney were never fully described because they were distributed among the museums of the States which had financed the expedition. The large ethnological collection was as far as I am aware ... never listed.²

The Geographical Society of Australasia was established in 1883 initially in New South Wales and, a year later, with a branch in Victoria.³ On 2 April of that year "a meeting of gentlemen interested in geographical science took place ... for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of either reorganizing the Geographical Section of the Royal Society [of New South Wales], or forming a new and entirely independent organization on a co-operative basis to apply to all the Australasian Colonies".⁴ That meeting favoured formation of a new organization that would "foster knowledge of the Geography of Australasia" and undertake exploration to further this end, promote geographical knowledge within the community at large, elevate the "aboriginal races of the Southern Hemisphere" and contribute to the development of commerce both within and beyond Australasia.⁵ E. Marin La Meslée argued that "the formation of a Society with such a programme might be called a national work, as it is intended that it should be to all that is Australian what the Royal Geographical Society of London is to all that is English, and that of Paris to all that is French". "With us in Australia," he said, "geography is a science that cannot wait, as our very future depends upon the more or less perfect acquaintance which is gained of the natural resources of the country".⁶

The stated aims of the Constitution of the newly formed society were "scientific, commercial and educational" and, with reference to the first, stressed the importance of completing "the geographical exploration of unknown and imperfectly known parts of Australia".⁷ With this aim in mind, at the inaugural meeting of the Society, held in Sydney on

22 June 1883, La Meslère, now Honorary Secretary of the Exploratory Committee, read a paper which he opened by noting that 'the Colony of Queensland had a few weeks ago annexed part of the great island of New Guinea to the Colonial Empire of Great Britain'.⁸ He argued forcefully for 'the necessity of an expedition on a large scale' with a party 'of sufficient strength, properly equipped and armed, whose object should be the geographical exploration of New Guinea'.⁹

La Meslère's proposal was accepted but the expedition that ensued was not a success. Before, during and afterwards it generated negative reports to the effect, for example, that it was inadequately equipped, that it failed to go where it was supposed to go, that the leader was an incompetent navigator, that the explorers had been killed and that many native New Guineans had been shot.¹⁰ There were uncomfortable disputes between branches of the society – South Australia and Queensland had formed additional branches – each of which wanted a share of the limited ethnological material that had been collected. There was uncertainty concerning the veracity of the expedition leader and uncertainty about the extent of their travels. The outcome was that no detailed report by expedition members was ever published. Indeed, the only formal reports are published talks presented to the Geographical Society of Australasia by Henry C. Everill,¹¹ leader of the expedition, and to the Agricultural Society of Shoalhaven by William Bäuerlen,¹² botanist to the expedition. With the exception of a detailed manuscript by Roy Mackay the expedition has received only brief comment in accounts of New Guinea exploration.¹³ It seemed, in fact, that the expedition had been an embarrassment to its sponsors and that they were content to let it be forgotten. The present contribution seeks to resolve just one of many unknowns associated with the expedition by showing where the explorers reached in their journey up what Everill named as the Strickland River. Uncertainty with respect to this particular matter resulted in missed economic possibilities, and concerns about the overall success of the expedition had implications for the institutional development of the geographical sciences in Australia. First, however, some background is needed.

Planning and Departure: Sydney to New Guinea

The Geographical Society of Australasia moved rapidly to fulfil La Meslère's recommendation to send an expedition to New Guinea. The society established an Exploration Fund and, by July 1885, had appointed Captain Henry C. Everill as leader together with expedition members comprising Johann Wilhelm Haacke (chief scientist), Sidney A. Bernays (surgeon), Godfrey Hemsworth (nautical subleader), R. Gethin Creagh (subleader on land), James H. Shaw (photographer and general assistant to the leader), Kendall Broadbent (general collector, taxidermist), Walter W. Froggatt (special zoological collector), Wilhelm Bäuerlen (botanical collector), A. Hastings W. Senior (surveyor), Arthur J. Vogan (supernumerary, artist) and William McGechan (engineer of the steam launch).¹⁴ After much discussion it was agreed by both Sydney and Melbourne branches that the expedition should proceed 'up the Aird River, thence inland; and that the inland exploration start from the first high land met with up the river, shown on the map as Aird Hill'.¹⁵

Some members of the expeditionary party left Sydney on June 10, 1885 with the chartered steam-launch *Bonito* under tow to the steamer *Egmont*; others left on June 13th in the steamer *Wentworth*. By this time Britain had declared the southeast portion of New Guinea a protectorate and Germany had annexed the northeast as Kaiser Wilhelmsland. The two groups rejoined in Brisbane and proceeded via Rockhampton, Bowen, Townsville and

Cooktown to reach Thursday Island on 25 June (Figure 1). Here Everill was advised that at this time of the year entry to the Aird River was difficult and that it would not be safe for the *Bonito* to cross the Gulf of Papua. With the telegraphed agreement of members of the Council of the Society plans were changed and the expedition was redirected to the Fly River with the aim of entering a large, as yet unnamed, tributary which joined the Fly River on the east about 250 km from the coast. Everill was advised to ‘consult with ... competent authorities as to the best route to reach high lands in the interior of New Guinea’.¹⁶ The party left Thursday Island on 17 July – it had been necessary to undertake repairs to the *Bonito* – having added a ‘seaman’ named Peter Waddick, 11 ‘Malays’ and a ‘Cingalese’ cook to the group but with the loss of Broadbent who was too ill to continue.¹⁷ The *Bonito*, now under tow to the *Advance*, reached the mouth of the Fly River on 18 July, landed at Kiwai Island, engaged three local men from ‘Auti’ village as interpreters and headed up that river on 23 July.¹⁸ From this date, until 28 November, they had no communication with the outside world.

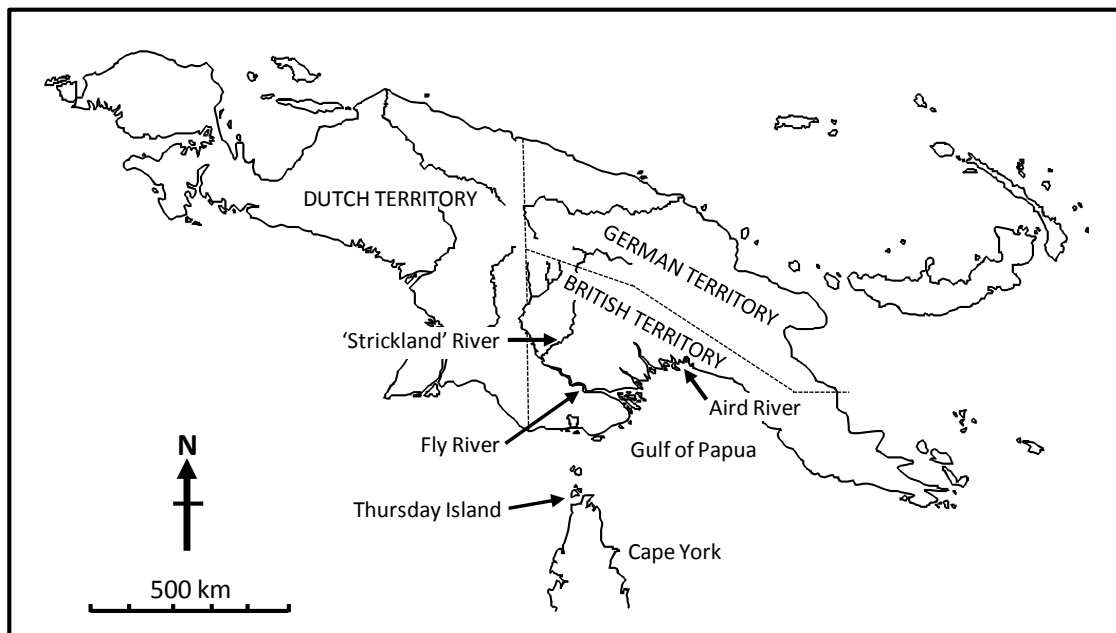


Figure 1. Map of New Guinea showing political divisions in 1885.

On the Strickland River

The *Bonito* turned into the eastern branch of the Fly River on 29 July. Everill named this the Strickland River after Sir Edward Strickland, president of the New South Wales branch of the Society.¹⁹ On 2 August they collected many ethnological specimens, including a stuffed human head, from a canoe that local people abandoned when they sighted the *Bonito*.²⁰ The next day they had a hostile encounter in which perhaps as many as 100 men shot arrows from the shore, expedition members returned fire and, in Vogan’s account, some New Guineans were killed.²¹ Soon after that encounter the *Bonito* ran aground and was stranded for five days. It was stranded again, for 10 days, on the 10th. During this period the three interpreters took a canoe and departed at night. The *Bonito* got away on the 21st but was stranded for the third time on the 27th. At this time the region was in drought and the river was low. These conditions, combined with Everill’s failures as a navigator – he cut

across shoals of gravel when he should have been on the other side of the river – contributed to the strandings. The camp site of 27 August was named Observatory Bend and here the *Bonito* remained until 25 October.

Everill was anxious to fulfil his brief to the Society and reach the mountains but there were none within reach at Observatory Bend. On 16 September he headed up the river in the whaleboat. He took five of the white men and six of the Malays. Senior, the expedition surveyor, was very ill and could not travel. In fact, seven of the 12 who remained with the *Bonito* were sick or injured; one of the Malays later died. It was hard work in the whaleboat. The men – except Everill – were often in the water, pushing and hauling. There was little time for collecting, though Haacke and Froggatt did what they could. There were many signs of people; dugout canoes, houses, recently abandoned hearths, fish traps and other artefacts. On 22 September they

dropped upon a recent camp of natives on a gravel spit where the river makes a junction and receives a large tributary apparently directly from the mountains. ... This tributary goes to the north-north-east, while the main river takes a westerly bend.²²

Everill named this tributary Cecilia River and its confluence with the Strickland Carrington Junction.²³ The latter was named for Lord Carrington, then Governor of New South Wales; the river was named for Lord Carrington's wife. In an unpublished manuscript, dated 1936, Froggatt stated that the river had been named Carrington.²⁴

On 27 September they reached their northernmost point and named their last camp site Fossil Camp. From here Everill, Haacke, Shaw, three Malays and two expedition dogs climbed a ridge to the north to a measured altitude of 750 feet (228.60 m) 'but to our great disgust we found that other [*sic*] hill still higher obscured our view to the N.W. and N.N.E.'. ²⁵ Froggatt noted that there was now little food left and that

we could not take the boat further up this gorge with such a rapid current. Without a base camp supplied with food, it was hopeless to think of cutting a track through scrub to the mountain range: so, we reluctantly decided to start back next morning.²⁶

Fossil Camp

Everill read his official report to the New South Wales branch of the Society on 4 February 1886.²⁷ In the published report he wrote: 'I estimated the highest position reached to be latitude 5' 30" S, longitude 142° 22' E'. That estimate was made on 27 September 1885. Everill continued: 'Unfortunately we had very heavy thunder-storms at night while up here, which prevented good observations being taken; but I have a fair position ... taken on Monday, September 28th, on our homeward journey'.

The published version of Everill's report recorded the latitude of the 'highest position' in minutes and seconds; degrees were not stated. Nor did Everill provide details of the 'fair position' recorded on 28 September. Everill's misreporting of latitude has received no comment in subsequent literature. Rather, it has been assumed that 'latitude 5' 30" S' was a misprint for 'latitude 5° 30' S' and that, as implied by Everill, his party reached the border with German territory.²⁸ This implication is reinforced by the inset map that accompanies one of the available expedition maps.²⁹ The inset sketches the Fly and Strickland Rivers to show the 'relative position of Strickland R^r. to British Territorial Boundary' (Figure 2A). The Strickland River is shown as reaching approximately latitude 5° 30' S and as intruding slightly beyond British Territory into German Territory. The inset also

shows a river joining the Strickland from the west slightly south of latitude 7° S. The expedition did not enter or map this river but Everill named it the Service River and thought that it would 'be found to connect with the river Fly at Snake Point, opposite the junction of the Alice River' (p. 177). The Alice River, named by Luigi D'Albertis in 1876,³⁰ is now known as the Ok Tedi and the Service River, which drains Lake Murray and is not connected to the Fly River, is now known as the Herbert River. Further, on the expedition inset map, the middle reaches of the Fly River are shown as approximately 13' (24 km) west of their actual position (Figure 2B) and expedition members were under the mistaken impression that the west bank of the Fly River opposite the Strickland junction was in Dutch territory.³¹

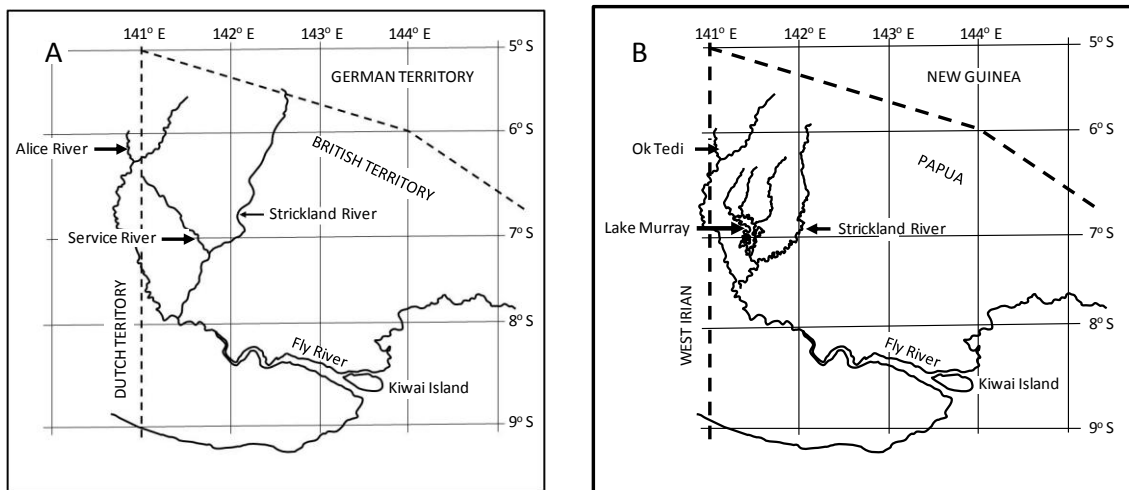


Figure 2. A, inset map redrawn from an expedition map with then current names of places and rivers added. B, the area shown in map A correcting the position of the Fly River relative to longitude and the location of the Strickland River, and using modern names for places and rivers.

Latitude 5° 30' S, longitude 142° 22' E, is in mountains at approximately 2000 m ASL and 33 km east of the Strickland River. If longitude is ignored – in 1885 it was difficult to obtain accurate readings of longitude – latitude 5° 30' S intersects the Strickland River at an altitude of approximately 1000 m. As noted above, at Fossil Camp, Everill climbed a ridge to an estimated maximum altitude of 228.60 m.³² Thus, he did not reach latitude 5° 30' S and his own account is unreliable. The inset map referred to above appears to have made concessions to Everill's understandings but is not an accurate representation of the facts.

Our interpretation of the location of Fossil Camp combines details from a map drawn by the expedition surveyor Senior and an unpublished account written by Froggatt 50 years later.³³ We are concerned here only with that section of the Strickland River traversed in the whaleboat. Senior was not a member of the whaleboat party. He prepared the map after the men in the whaleboat returned to Observatory Bend. A note on the map reads: 'That portion of the river above Observatory Bend was explored by leader and party in the whaleboat, and was plotted and drawn from notes by M^r Froggatt'. The note states that bearings were 'taken from point to point' (i.e. compass bearings) and that distances were estimated. In his unpublished manuscript, Froggatt provided estimates of distances travelled each day, reported river conditions and commented on terrain near the river.

Figure 3A reproduces Senior's map from south of Observatory Bend to the northernmost camp site, Fossil Camp. It shows the location of camp sites and positions at which astronomical observations were recorded. Figure 3B shows the same portion of the

Strickland River traced from a combination of Papua New Guinea topographic maps and Google Maps. The two maps are drawn such that Observatory Bend is aligned. Everill reported the position of Observatory Bend as latitude $6^{\circ} 38' 30''$ S, longitude 142° E. A Papua New Guinea topographic map gives the position as latitude $6^{\circ} 39' 00''$ S, longitude $142^{\circ} 06' 00''$ E.³⁴ These are essentially the same. Senior's map traces the course of the Strickland River as trending virtually due north from Observatory Bend. This is consistent with present day maps on which this region of the river is shown as being from 2 to 8 minutes east of longitude 142° E. On Senior's map the junction of the Cecilia River with the Strickland River corresponds to the position shown on present day maps both with respect to latitude and with respect to a major curve in the river immediately north of that junction. This gives confidence in Senior's map.

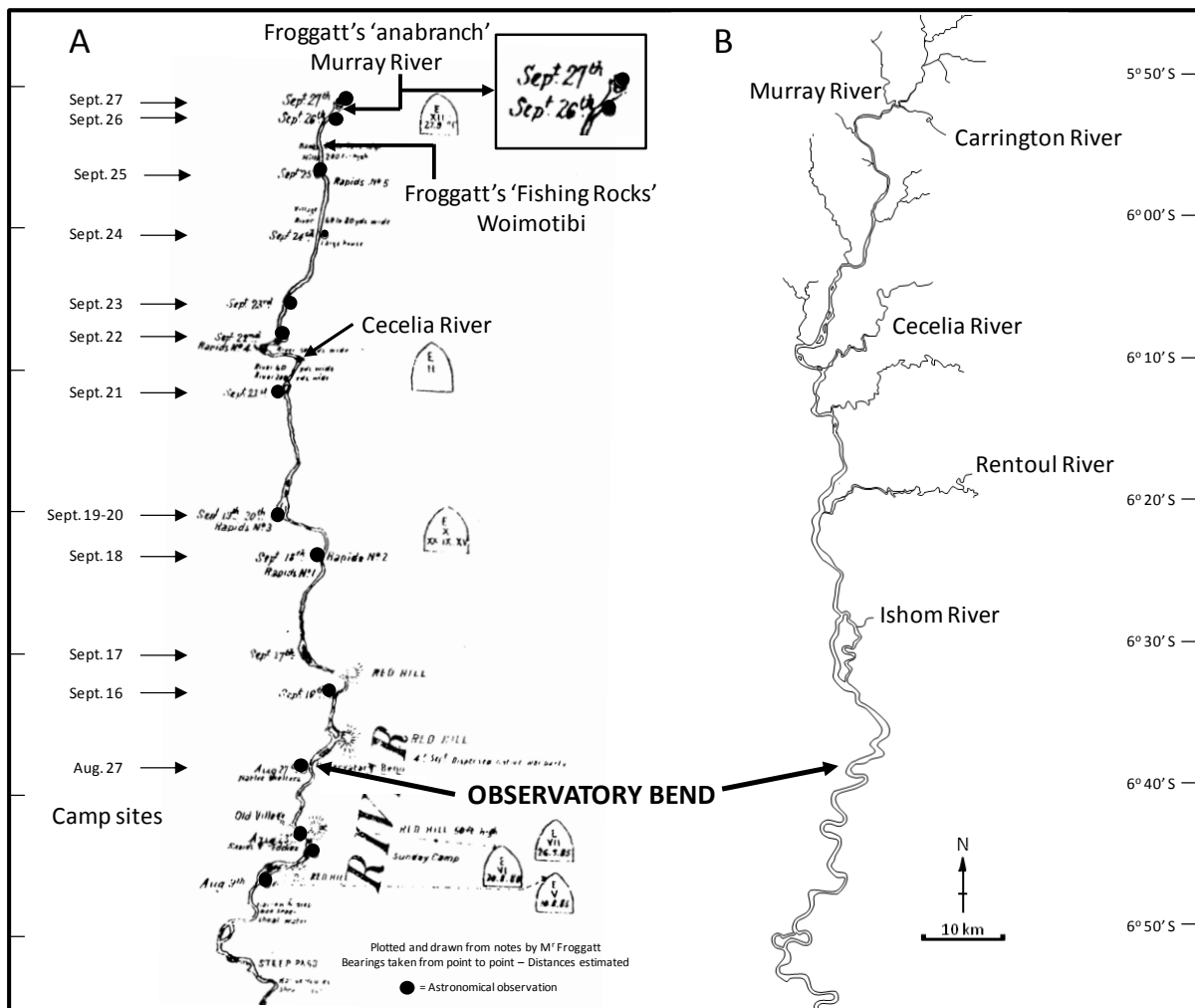


Figure 3. A, expedition map showing that portion of the Strickland River north of Observatory Bend that was traversed in the whaleboat. The drawing has been annotated to clarify the location of several sites including all camp sites. The map indicates locations at which six trees were blazed. An inserted enlargement shows the 'anabranche' (Murray River) reported by Froggatt. B, the portion of the Strickland River shown in map A traced from a combination of Papua New Guinea topographic maps and Google Maps.

Froggatt's estimates of distances travelled each day are shown in Table 1. With one exception, these are river distances not straight line distances. The table also shows distances, by river, between camp sites on Senior's map and corresponding distances

measured from a present day map. Froggatt’s aggregated distances are the greatest; those on Senior’s map are the least. On three days, in particular, Froggatt appears to have overestimated considerably. On these days the explorers were obliged to either turn back because a channel of the river was blocked or spend much time in the water hauling the boat across rapids and gravel.

Date of travel	Froggatt ms Est. distance (km) ¹	Expedition map Est. distance (km)	Google Maps Est. distance (km)
16 Sept 1885	12.88	10.64	13.14
17 Sept 1885	9.67 ²	7.86	5.71
18 Sept 1885	12.88	12.86	13.36
19 Sept 1885	12.88	8.64	5.79
21 Sept 1885	16.09	15.29	18.86
22 Sept 1885	9.66	11.64	10.79
Observatory Bend to camp of 22 Sept above junction with Cecilia River: total distance			
	74.06	66.93	67.65
23 Sept 1885	14.48 ³	4.14	5.07
24 Sept 1885	11.27	9.71	11.07
25 Sept 1885	9.66	7.86	8.86
26 Sept 1885	8.05	6.93	10.36
27 Sept 1885	3.24 ⁴	2.93	2.36
Camp of 22 Sept to camp of 27 Sept: total distance			
	46.66	31.57 ⁴	37.72
Observatory Bend to camp of 27 Sept: total distance			
	120.72	98.50	105.37

Table 1: Distances travelled by whaleboat on the Strickland River as estimated by Froggatt, measured by authors from an expedition map and measured by authors from a combination of Papua New Guinea topographic maps and Google Maps. 1 Distances recorded by Froggatt have been converted from miles to kilometres; 2 ‘straight line’ distance; 3 conversion based on mean of Froggatt’s estimate of eight to 10 miles; 4 Froggatt’s estimate was ‘not more than two miles from our previous camp’, Haacke judged the distance to be only about ¾ mile.

September 17: Owing to the twisting and turning of the river, and to the fact that we had taken the blocked channel and so had to retrace our steps, we estimated that we had not gone further than six miles in a straight line.³⁵

September 19: A long reach of the river ahead to the North east, grassy islands; and then later, rapids. ... We were all in the water half our time, pulling the boat up rapids among the boulders, or else pushing it into deeper water along the bank.³⁶

September 23: We struck camp early, and leaving Captain Everill with the Javanese to tow the boat, we walked ahead. We found that their route was barred by another rapid, we retraced our steps, and had a pretty stiff time, all hands pulling and hauling, grating on the gravel between

boulders. As the current was very strong, our progress was very slow. ... After a reach of clear water, we were again among boulders, wading and pushing.³⁷

The distances measured from Senior's map tend to be less than those taken from the modern map, particularly north of the Cecilia River. This is likely to be because the information available to Senior did not make it possible for him to map all bends in the river. One discrepancy, however, stands out. On 23 September Froggatt estimated distance travelled as eight to ten miles (mean = 14.48 km) but the distance shown on Senior's map is only 4.14 km. Senior's map plots positions at which 'astronomical observations' were taken but there is no record of these measures of latitude and longitude. The discrepancy of 23 September suggests that either Froggatt misreported this distance in the manuscript he wrote in 1936 or Senior had access to measures of latitude. What is clear, however, is that both the course of the river and latitudes shown on Senior's map of the Strickland River between Observatory Bend and Fossil Camp are at odds with the impression conveyed by the inset map.

On 25 September Froggatt noted that there were 'steep clay banks on either side' of the river which 'had now contracted to a width of 80 yards across' and described a rocky promontory where they disturbed a man who had been fishing.³⁸ On the 26th he noted that 'the banks were getting higher' and 'we came to an anabranch of the Strickland River: it was barricaded across with a great wall of logs, washed down from the upper reaches and forming a huge rampart. We turned back'.³⁹ On the 27th, the last day of northern travel, Froggatt noted that 'the channel was only 40 yards across'⁴⁰ and, on the 28th, as they left Fossil Camp and headed south, 'our difficulty lay in keeping the boat steady through the first whirlpool'.⁴¹ Everill noted, similarly, that by the afternoon of 24 September 'the river ... now ran between high steep banks'.⁴² From Fossil Camp the terrain rose steeply to the north.

Froggatt's account of the river and terrain is consistent with the authors' knowledge of the Strickland River in the region of, and to the immediate south of, its junction with what is now known as the Murray River. The rocky promontory described by Froggatt matches a fishing place known to the local, Kubo-speaking people as Woimotibi and visited often by two of the authors in 1991 and later years (Figure 4). North of Woimotibi the river narrows and the banks become higher and steeper as the mountains become closer. And the junction of the Strickland and Murray Rivers is marked by whirlpools that, when water levels are higher than those experienced by Everill's party, are very dangerous.⁴³ What Froggatt reported as an anabranch of the Strickland River was, in fact, the lower reaches of the Murray River. Its junction with the Strickland is shown on Senior's map. In this foothill terrain there are no anabranches.

The final camp, as shown on Senior's map and as stated by Haacke, was on the west bank a very short distance beyond the junction of the Murray River and the Strickland.⁴⁴ Both Froggatt and Haacke reported that the distance travelled on the 27th was short. There is no reference to a river entering the Strickland from the east which indicates that they did not reach what is now known as the Carrington River.⁴⁵ This is a substantial river and, given that the Strickland River is now relatively narrow, it is extremely unlikely that its junction with the Strickland would have been missed. It was certainly noted by Jack Hides in 1937 as an eastern river 'as large as the Murray'.⁴⁶ This, then, is our judgement of the location of Fossil Camp: on the west bank of the Strickland River between the junctions of the Murray and Carrington Rivers at approximately latitude 5° 51' 20" S, longitude 142° 8' 50" E. This understanding is reinforced by Froggatt's comment that Senior's map showed Fossil Camp



Figure 4. Woimotibi, Strickland River, 1991 (aka 'Fishing Rocks', Froggatt 1936). In September 1885 river level was very low and, just past this point, expedition members were wading and guiding the whaleboat between boulders. (Photo: P. D. Dwyer)

to be 'about fifty miles [80.5 km] north of the *Bonito's* position' and our own measure of that distance as 84 km.⁴⁷ Froggatt added, however, that 'with the windings of the river we had travelled nearly twice that distance'. The distance from Observatory Bend, using Everill's reported measure of latitude, to latitude 5° 30' S is 126 km and, hence, even taken alone, the expedition map reveals that the whaleboat party did not reach the position reported by Everill.

The Return and Consequences

The whaleboat party returned to Observatory Bend on 29 September but it was not until 25 October that the river flooded, the *Bonito* floated free and they could start their return journey. There were several delays when Everill again stranded the *Bonito*. They reached Kiwai Island on 12 November, met the three interpreters who had left the party many weeks earlier, received a bag of mail, collected a deposit of coal and, under their own steam, headed for Thursday Island. At Thursday Island they learned that it had been reported that they had been massacred. The three interpreters had spread the rumour, missionaries relayed it from Kiwai to Thursday Island and, from there, the story reached the Geographical Society in Sydney. A rescue mission had departed Thursday Island to bring back the expeditioners' remains, just before the *Bonito* arrived.⁴⁸ The boats had crossed paths in Torres Strait but those on board had not seen each other.

Mr Senior volunteered to head back to Kiwai and forestall the unnecessary rescue. The other men headed south, the *Bonito* under tow, stopping at Queensland ports on the way and reaching Sydney on 3 December.

In Sydney and Melbourne expedition members were publically welcomed and praised at civic receptions. The expedition was declared to be a success and, though senior members of the Society made statements to the effect that negative press reports were false or greatly exaggerated, they were unable to dispel doubts about the value of the expedition, the collections it had made or the competence of Everill. On 30 November 1885, for example, the *Brisbane Courier* reported that 'the expedition has been a lamentable failure. ... But after the long preparations made, the large sums of money expended, and the clamorous flourish of trumpets which heralded the enterprise, its results are so meagre as to be almost ludicrous'.⁴⁹ Much of the blame for the perceived failures was attributed to the Sydney Branch of the Society. The article disparaged 'the Council of the Sydney Geographical Society' for doing little more than issuing 'a pamphlet of instructions which must have excited many a smile among those members of the expedition who had previous experience of the tropical bush' and delivering 'many speeches ... whenever an opening presented itself'. It continued:

There is to be a meeting of the local 'Council' [i.e. Queensland branch] of the Geographical Society this week, at which an inaugural address is to be delivered by the veteran explorer, Mr. Gregory. Let us have the address, by all means, but for the credit of the colony, let it be followed by a resolution, winding up the local association as a branch of the Sydney Society. We can do better ourselves than in union with Sydney, and if alliances are necessary, they can be found elsewhere.

The demands from different branches of the Society to receive a share of the collections aggravated tensions and, as noted by Froggatt in the quotation that heads this article, contributed to the fact that published material is meagre. Everill's address to the Society did not help. Charles Woodford was in the audience. He was a naturalist who was soon to depart to the Solomon Islands. He sat next to the Reverend William Wyatt Gill – the latter with considerable experience in New Guinea – and, after hearing Everill, they agreed that the expedition was a 'fraud'.⁵⁰ In his address Everill made brief mention of the hostile encounter on the Strickland River reporting that 'after we were saluted with a perfect shower of arrows ... I reluctantly gave the order to fire, and they were dispersed after some shots'.⁵¹ He made no mention of men being killed but stated that 'the story of the attack ... is fully written in my journal'. Everill's journal, however, was neither published nor made available to the Society. Some Diaries, or parts thereof, kept by members of the expedition were lodged with the Society and 'handed to Mr P.R. Meggy, an experienced journalist, for preparation for the public' but no such publication appeared.⁵² Of diaries currently held by the Mitchell Library, some have been 'edited' such that certain sections have been covered and cannot be read and other sections have been crossed out to indicate, presumably, that they should not be published. In all cases these sections refer to Everill.

Behind the scenes, senior members of the Society were very dissatisfied. Sir Edward Strickland and Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, respectively presidents of the New South Wales and Victorian branches of the Society, exchanged letters. Strickland, for example, referred to Everill's 'unpardonable delay in furnishing to us his report' and, with deep concern about the public response to the expedition, asked 'will it be possible to excite a scientific spirit into Australians?'⁵³

The Geographical Society of Australasia's expedition to New Guinea, and the manner in which it was reported by both Everill and the press and received by the public, contributed to the emergence of tensions between the scientific communities of the colonies of Australia. Those tensions, and their outcomes, await further investigation.

Everill, it seems, constructed his own written and oral reports to maximize the impression that he had fulfilled his obligation to reach the mountains. One outcome of this was that it was never clear how far north on the Strickland River the whaleboat party had travelled. That is the particular matter that we have tried to resolve in this article. Our resolution, however, directs attention to a paradox in implying that the expedition had, in fact, returned with clues to potential economic resources within British Territory.

A year after the expedition returned to Australia, C. S. Wilkinson, published a brief report on the geological specimens.⁵⁴ He identified metaliferous cobbles collected from the upper Strickland and Cretaceous fossils from Fossil Camp. The former had been washed down river from higher up, the latter were in situ. He concluded that because the expedition had reached the border of German territory that would be where the wealth was; there was little point in further exploration. But the expedition had not reached that far north and the fossils hinted at possibilities with respect to oil and gas. It was not until the 1980s that oil was found at Juha, east of Fossil Camp and currently the most remote, and as yet unproductive, gas field associated with the 19 billion dollar Papua New Guinea Liquefied Natural Gas Project.⁵⁵ The 1885 findings had not contributed to its discovery.

Acknowledgements

We thank Peter Ogilvie for providing photographs of, and details from, an important map, James Menzies for providing a copy of the Froggatt manuscript and Roy Mackay for the loan of his manuscript.

Notes

¹ *The Argus* 9 November 1885, p 5.

² Walter W. Froggatt, *New Guinea 50 Years Ago: records from my old diary kept during the Geographical Society of Australasia's expedition to the Strickland River, New Guinea 1885*, unpublished manuscript, 1936, University of Papua New Guinea Library (Special Collections), AL-4.

³ In July 1886 the Geographical Society of Australasia became the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia.

⁴ 'Preliminary meeting to establish a Geographical Society, 2nd April, 1883', p 1, in A. C. MacDonald, J. H. Maiden and T. H. Myring (eds), *Special Volume of the Proceedings of the Geographical Society of Australasia, with maps and illustrations*. Thomas Richards, Government Printer, Sydney, 1885.

⁵ E. Marin La Meslère, pp 2-15, in A. C. MacDonald, J. H. Maiden and T. H. Myring (eds), 1885.

⁶ La Meslère, 1885, pp 4-5.

⁷ 'Constitution of the Geographical Society of Australasia', p 19, in A. C. MacDonald, J. H. Maiden and T. H. Myring (eds), 1885.

⁸ La Meslère, 'Past exploration of New Guinea, and a scheme for the scientific exploration of the great island', p 21, in A. C. MacDonald, J. H. Maiden and T. H. Myring (eds), 1885; Paul W. van der Veur, *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries: From Torres Strait to the Pacific*, Canberra, ANU Press, 1966, p 15.

⁹ La Meslère, pp 34-35.

¹⁰ 'The New Guinea expedition', *Brisbane Courier*, p 5; 26 November 1885; 'Geographical Society's New Guinea exploration', *Brisbane Courier*, 30 November 1885, pp 4-5; The Vagabond (Julian Thomas), 'The catastrophe in New Guinea', *The Argus*, 9 November 1885, p 6; 'The practical results of the New Guinea expedition', *The Argus*, 29 December 1885, p 7.

¹¹ Henry C. Everill, 'Exploration of New Guinea – Capt. Everill's report', *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, NSW Branch*, 1888, 3&4, pp 170-186.

¹² William Bäuerlen, *The voyage of the Bonito: an account of the Fly River expedition to New Guinea*, Gibbs, Shallard, London, 1886, 34 pp.

¹³ Roy D. Mackay, 'The Bonito expedition: the New Guinea exploring expedition of 1885', Belair, SA, Crawford House Publishing, 2012 (ISBN 9781863333368). A very small 'proof copy' run of this book was printed on behalf of the author but the publisher then chose not to proceed to a full run. Jude Philp provides a brief account of the expedition with particular reference to the ethnological collections and the dispersion of this material across a number of museums ('The Royal Geographic Society expedition to the Western Province of British New Guinea in the 1880s', pp 16-30, in S. Cochrane and M. Quanchi (eds) *Hunting the Collectors: Pacific Collections in Australian Museums, Art Galleries and Archives*, Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011); Noel Tunny provides a summary account in *Taubada Time, Papua New Guinea* (Boolarong Press, Brisbane, 2014, pp 149-156).

¹⁴ Administrative Council of the Geographical Society of Australasia, 'Special record of the arrangements for the exploration of New Guinea', pp 163-167 in *Special Volume of the Proceedings of the Geographical Society of Australasia*, 1885, pp 157-253.

¹⁵ Administrative Council of the Geographical Society of Australasia, p 162; the Aird River is now more often treated as one egress of the Kikori River and flows into the Gulf of Papua east of the coastal settlement of Daru.

¹⁶ Administrative Council of the Geographical Society of Australasia, pp 162-163.

¹⁷ In 1885 'Malays' was used in reference to people from what is now Indonesia and 'Cingalese' – now more often spelled as 'Sinhalese' – to people from what is now Sri Lanka.

¹⁸ Everill, 1888, p 174, used the name Sumauti for what is now known as Auti village.

¹⁹ J. Wilhelm Haacke wrote 'It was proposed to name the river first entered by the Bonito the Bonito River. Although this would have been in accordance with the desires of the rest of our party, the Captain said he wanted to name the river after Sir Edward Strickland, K.C.B., etc., etc., etc. I quietly told him that that would savour of toadyism' (Diary, New Guinea Exploration Expedition, 1885, MLMSS 1090, Microfilm – CY 656A, Mitchell Library, Sydney, p 53). Zoological specimens collected by Froggatt as late as 27 October 1885 record location as 'Bonito River' though, 50 years later, Froggatt wrote, generously or forgetfully, that 'all hands unanimously agreed to name it the Strickland River' (1936, p 20).

²⁰ Philp, 2011.

²¹ Mackay, 2012, pp 51-52; Haacke reported an additional encounter when, higher up the river, the party was stranded at Observatory Bend. On two successive days about 30 men fired arrows from the opposite bank. On the second day 'Captain Everill decided that we had better disperse the dancing warriors by some rifle shots, which, however, did not inflict any damage. The natives stood the firing for a little while, and then went away, and we did not see any others in that place' ('The New Guinea Expedition: interview with Dr Haacke', *Adelaide Observer*, 19 December 1885, pp 26-27).

²² Everill, 1888, p 182.

²³ Everill, 1888, p 182.

²⁴ Froggatt, 1936, p 60. The surveyor Senior drowned in Sydney Harbour on 1 January 1886 and the final expedition map was completed by Hemsworth and subsequently presented to the Royal Geographical Society, London (Froggatt, 1936, introductory note; *Proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the Victorian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Victoria*, 18 January 1886, p 108). It is likely that Hemsworth relied upon Froggatt's knowledge and that this is the source of subsequent confusion concerning the attribution of the names 'Carrington' and 'Cecilia' to a river or a junction (see Note 40).

²⁵ Everill, 1888, p 184.

²⁶ Froggatt, 1936, p 57.

²⁷ Everill, 1888, p 184. An introductory note to Everill's report states that it was read at a public meeting of the Society on Friday 5 February 1886 (*Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, NSW Branch*, 1888, 3&4, p 169). However, a detailed account of the meeting is provided in the 5 February 1886 issue of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (p 12). That account states that the meeting was held on 4 February 1886.

²⁸ It was reported, with reference to the altitudinal reach of their travels, that 'Captain Everill showed what he called frost bites on his hands', *Brisbane Courier*, 26 November 1885, p 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 2 December 1885, p3; J. H. P. Murray, *Papua or British New Guinea*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1912; D. H. Blake, 'Western District', in Peter Ryan (ed) *Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea*, Volume 2, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p 1187.

²⁹ Map, Strickland River, New Guinea surveyed by S.S. Bonito Expedition under Captain Everill, 1885, Mitchell Library, Sydney, Z/M2 921.46/1885/1; in a paper presented in Britain in 1886, Everill is reported as stating that the expedition 'ascended that river [Strickland] as far as lat. 5° 30' S., long. 142° 22' E., a point near the boundary between British and German New Guinea' ('Recent explorations in New Guinea', *Report of the Fifty-Sixth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held at Birmingham in September 1886*, London, John Murray, 1887, p 730).

³⁰ Luigi M. D'Albertis, 'Journeys up the Fly River and in other parts of New Guinea', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography New Monthly Series* 1879, 1(1), pp 4-16.

³¹ The Fly River is similarly misplaced on D'Albertis' map of his travels in New Guinea (Fly River, New Guinea as surveyed by L. M. D'Albertis on board the steam Launch 'Neva' 1876, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fly_River#/media/File:Fly_River_Map_1876_NLA.jpg, accessed 24 February 2015); Haacke, *Adelaide Observer*, 19 December 1885, p 26; Arthur J. Vogan, *Diary*, 8 November 1885, New Guinea Exploration Expedition, 1885, MLMSS 1090, Microfilm – CY 656A, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

³² Everill, 1888, p 184.

³³ Froggatt, 1936.

³⁴ PNG 1:100,000 Topographic Survey, Tomu, Sheet 7384 (edition 1) Series T601, Printed 1979.

³⁵ Froggatt, 1936, p 46.

³⁶ Froggatt, 1936, p 47.

³⁷ Froggatt, 1936, p 50.

³⁸ Froggatt, 1936, p 52.

³⁹ Froggatt, 1936, p 54.

⁴⁰ Froggatt, 1936, p. 55.

⁴¹ Froggatt, 1936, p 57.

⁴² Everill, 1888, p 183.

⁴³ Charles H. Karius, 'Appendix A. Report of north-west Patrol', *Annual Report of Papua for 1926-27*, pp 91-101; Jack G. Hides, *Beyond the Kubea*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1939, pp 135-136.

⁴⁴ J. W. Haacke, *Diary*, p 53.

⁴⁵ Some early maps show a river coming from the northeast to join the Strickland River at approximately latitude 5° 50' S and name that river either Carrington or Cecilia and the junction either Cecilia Junction or Carrington Bend (Map of New Guinea based on 'the latest information supplied by the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia', A. Garran, Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, 1886, http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:217831/AU0021_Picturesque_Atlas_Australasia_Maps.pdf, accessed 20 March 2015; Map of New Guinea, <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/bull-allen/map-of-new-guinea-1934>, accessed 1 March 2014). These maps do not show another river joining the Strickland at approximately 6° 10' 20" S, in the position where the expedition map shows the Cecilia (see Figure 2A). This error is perpetuated in the detailed map accompanying Karius' account of his 1927 exploration in the Murray River area ('Exploration in the interior of Papua and north-east New Guinea: the sources of the Fly, Palmer,

Strickland, and Sepik Rivers', *The Geographical Journal*, 1929, 74, 305-320.) On this map 'Carrington River' and 'Cecilia Junction' contact the Strickland at approximately latitude 5° 51' S when the true position, with river and junction names reversed, is latitude 6° 10' 20" S and, further, the Murray-Strickland junction is shown at approximately latitude 5° 32' S when the true position is latitude 5° 51' 30" S. The error has arisen because it was assumed that Everill had reached the border with German territory (i.e. latitude 5° 30' S) and, as a logical consequence of accommodating distances travelled to days travelled, it followed that the Cecilia (or Carrington) was considerably further north than its actual position. The error has been compounded in later maps and reports by use of the name Carrington River (local name Asia) for a tributary of the Strickland that enters from the east-south-east at approximately latitude 5° 50' S and assuming that it was named by Everill (see Figure 2B; J. S. Ryan, 'Early place names in New Guinea – the non-indigenous strand', *Kivung* 1974, 7(2), pp 67-81). On the assumption that this was true, Mackay (2012, p 88) inferred that Fossil Camp was just north of the junction of the Carrington with the Strickland. But Everill did not name a river the Carrington; nor did he see or name the river that currently carries that name. Remarkably, however, a paper published in 1912 reproduces an 1892 map in which both the Fly and Strickland Rivers are positioned correctly with respect to longitude and, though the text states that Everill reached 5° 30' S, 142° 22' E, the extent of the latter river as mapped by Everill's party is shown as reaching approximately 5° 49' S, 142° 6' E, in agreement with our conclusion (Arthur Wichmann, 'Henry Charles Everill 1885 "Bonito" Expedition', Fig. 38 in 'Nova Guinea. Résultats de l'expédition scientifique Néerlandaise à la Nouvelle-Guinée en 1903 sous les auspices de Arthur Wichmann, Vol. II, 2eme partie', *Entdeck ungs-geschichte von Neu-Guinea (1885 bis 1902)*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1912, pp. 383-388). The original map, produced by the Queensland Surveyor General's Office, is annotated as 'Map of British New Guinea compiled from the latest Official Maps and Charts, and embracing the recent Explorations and Discoveries' (Queensland State Archives Item ID631470, Map, Sheet 1). It was apparently ignored, or overlooked, by later interested persons. Indeed an 1896 map, also produced by the Queensland Surveyor General's Office, shows the Strickland River reaching the border of German Territory (Queensland and British New Guinea 1986, MAP RM 1111, <http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview/?pi=nla.map-rm1111-al-v>, accessed 31 March 2015). Misapplication of, or confusion and disagreement about, names and locations reported by explorers is not uncommon (e.g. John Douglas, 'The exploration of New Guinea: Mr. Bevan's modest land claim', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1888, p 3; Theodore Bevan, 'The exploration of New Guinea', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1888, p 3; Barry Craig, 'How Karius found a river to the north: the first 1927 attempt to cross New Guinea from the Fly to the Sepik', 2013, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/205965231/Karius-Patrol-1927>, accessed 20 July 2014). For example, on 24 September 1885, Everill named a distant range of mountains the von Mueller Range. On modern maps the Muller Range (*sic*) is shown east of the Strickland River though, in fact, on the basis of available reports, it cannot be known whether Everill was referring to mountains to the northeast or the northwest of the river.

⁴⁶ Hides, 1939, p 187.

⁴⁷ Froggatt, 1936, p 61.

⁴⁸ There were some dramatic responses to the reported massacre. The Vagabond (Julian Thomas) wrote: 'There must be a party large enough to overawe the natives. And first the blood of our fellow colonists cries out to us for atonement. The flag of England has been raised over British New Guinea for other purposes than to make it a close borough for three missionaries, a few converts, and some thousands of savages. The latter must be taught that we are great and powerful, and that the person of a white man is sacred. When they have acquired this lesson they will also learn that we are just and merciful, and that they too will receive the protection we give to our own race' (*The Argus* 9 November 1885, p 6). It was men from Thursday Island who initiated the rescue for 'while others were talking they were acting, and before larger plans for rendering assistance could be got under way, the little band of dauntless spirits who formed the relief party from Thursday Island had started to the rescue' (*Brisbane Courier*, 26 November 1885, p 4).

⁴⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 30 November 1885, p 4.

⁵⁰ David R. Lawrence, *The Naturalist and his 'Beautiful Islands': Charles Morris Woodford in the Western Pacific*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014, p 80.

⁵¹ Everill, 1888, pp 178-79.

⁵² Letter from the Geographical Society of Australasia to von Mueller, 11 January 1886, in Mackay, 2012, p 122.

⁵³ Mackay, 2012, p 124. In 1886 G. Seymour Fort, private secretary to Sir Peter Scratchley, Special Commissioner to British New Guinea, presented a report to the New South Wales and Victorian Houses of Parliament. He noted the 'two most important explorations undertaken during Sir Peter Scratchley's administration' and, with reference to 'the expedition of the Australasian Geographical Society, under Captain Everill', commented only that 'the whole history of this expedition is so well known that remark is unnecessary' ('British New Guinea: report on British New Guinea from data and notes by the late Sir Peter Scratchley, Her Majesty's Special Commissioner', Parliamentary paper (Victoria, Parliament), No 32. Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1886, p 11).

⁵⁴ C. S. Wilkinson, 'Report on the geological specimens from New Guinea, collected by the exploring expedition of the Geographical Society of Australasia', *Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, New South Wales Branch. Transactions and Proceedings*, Volumes III and IV, 1885-86, pp 203-206.

⁵⁵ Frank Rickwood, *The Kutubu discovery. Papua New Guinea, it's people, the country and the exploration and discovery of oil*, Glenroy, Victoria, Book Generation Pty Ltd., 1992, p 92, pp 141-143; Oil Search, PNG LNG Project overview, <http://www.oilsearch.com/Our-Activities/PNG-LNG-Project/PNG-LNG-Project-Overview.html>, accessed 13 March 2015.



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Author/s:

MINNEGAL, M;DWYER, PD

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