

them.

Arthur was posted to a couple of different military hospital in Egypt, awaiting a hospital ship for evacuation back to New Zealand.

He finally boarded the ship on 1st September, 1941.

In the photo that he took on the deck, the woman on the left is probably a Captain in the Salvation Army. She would have been in charge of looking after the patients' recreations, including, as I mentioned, embroidering Walt Disney characters.

The patches on the lapels of the nurse, indicate that she was the matron, in charge of all the nurses on the ship. (Matrons were always a fearsome force, but Arthur, with his usual charms, has managed to get her to smile).

The elegant woman in the middle, is obviously a society lady, most likely an official of the Red Cross and looks very like Edwina Mountbatten, wife of Lord Louis Mountbatten. We know



that Edwina was very active in organizing charity things during the war, so it could be her.

The ship took exactly one month to reach Wellington, where Arthur disembarked on 2nd October. He was discharged from the army on 1st November, 1941.

Arthur Heads Back to London

Nine months after his discharge, Arthur had had enough of life back in New Zealand.

Other than recovering from his war wound, we do not know what he was doing during that time, but in August 1942, he applied for a passport and signed on as a purser on the MV Waipawa, bound for England.

Despite having been out of the army for nine months, we see that



Arthur's hair is still cut in the army style. By contrast, we see that his collar and tie are not arranged quite as neatly as we might expect if one was still entirely under the influence of military conditioning.

When Arthur had been evacuated from Suez in 1941, the hospital ship would most likely have steered a course that skirted around the bottom of India, then headed straight for the south-western corner of Australia and from there, through the Southern Ocean to New Zealand.

With the entry of Japan into the war at the end of 1941, shipping tended to keep further to the south, in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to avoid possible contact with the Japanese.

It was also usual at that time for ships from New Zealand to Britain, to travel either via the Panama Canal or around Cape Horn.

To cross the Atlantic, they would either take the relatively safe, unescorted route directly over to the north-west coast of Africa, to perhaps join a north-bound convoy from there, or skirt the American Atlantic coast to New York, then travel in convoy from there to Britain.

Because the Waipawa was a passenger as well as a cargo ship, it could have been carrying either NZ soldiers or primary produce to Britain.

The Waipawa sailed out of Wellington on 31st August, arriving at the Pacific Ocean end of the Panama Canal, seventeen days later. Going through the canal took two or three days. They then arrived in Liverpool on 7th October, where they stayed until the 29th, undergoing repairs.

Two weeks later, they were back in port at the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal, then reaching Wellington by 3rd December.

They spent that month loading in Christchurch and Dunedin, before spending New Year in Auckland, before sailing again from Wellington on 6th January, 1943, getting back to the Panama Canal on the 24th, then setting off into the Atlantic Ocean three days later, reaching Belfast two weeks after that. From there it was a one day sail down to Avonmouth, at the top of the Bristol Channel, on 11th February.

The Waipawa stayed there for a couple of weeks before heading back up to Liverpool for another couple of weeks.

You will notice in the report of the party broadcast by the BBC, that the fact that Arthur is in civilian clothing is mentioned, along with the justification thereof. It would simply not have been acceptable to have an ordinary civilian up there, unless they had a very good excuse.

The May date on the report, is that on which it appeared in a New Zealand newspaper. The party itself would have been held in February or March.

The reason for that combined concert, of performances by both American and British servicemen, was that with the arrival of so many GIs in Britain, preparing for the D Day assault of 1944, there was a certain amount of resentment, particularly amongst the British soldiers, that the Americans, with their much larger pay packets, their access to luxury goods and their swaggering polite manners, were winning the hearts of the local girls.

The British certainly appreciated the American presence in their time of need, but they did say that there were three problems with the American soldiers; that they were "over-sexed, over-paid and over here".

Arthur was back aboard the Waipawa when it headed out from the Clyde docks in the middle of March, 1943 for a rendezvous with another twenty four ships on 16th March.

The pattern that had been established for convoys, was to form the ships into a large box pattern, four, or perhaps three abreast, then line astern; in straight lines. On

Doughboys Meet The Empire

13 May 1943

(By ROBERT REID)

American soldiers stationed in Britain, and men of His Majesty's Forces from all parts of the British Empire have just held a party which the BBC broadcast to the world.

The party was held in a United States Army Camp in Britain and the broadcast programme-"The Doughboys Meet the Empire" was arranged and presented by Wilfred Pickles who also took part in his role of "Billy Welcome," the Yorkshire man with an enquiring mind.

Representing his fellow Dough-boys, Corporal John S. Stibbs, whose folk live in Lebanon, Ohio, met representative of the British Empire, at the microphone, with hundreds of Doughboys as the audience, in the assembly hall of the camp; and an interesting crowd of fellows he met.

In civilian clothes at the microphone was Mr Arthur Towsey from Auckland, New Zealand, Mr Towsey served with the New Zealand Infantry and went through all the fighting in Crete where he was blown up and eventually discharged from the army. He returned to New Zealand, but was not content to remain away from the hub of the Empire, so worked

his passage back to Britain in a cargo ship. He is now writing here. His brother is also in Britain as a pilot with Bomber Command.

In civil life Mr Towsey was a publicity man and salesman.

this occasion, the lines were seven ships long, by four wide, with a hole in the pattern here and there. The naval escorts might fit into the grid but would usually sail alongside and perhaps to fore and aft.

Despite the proven safety of this convoy system, they did suffer from being restricted to the speed of the slowest vessel, making the journey time a lot longer than it would otherwise have been for most of the ships on their own. The North Atlantic liners, such as Queen Mary, could even outrun any German vessel that might try to intercept them.

Being in a large convoy, would still not remove from the mind of anyone aboard, the constant worry that the enemy was out there, somewhere, hidden, waiting. They could be on any side or even beneath you.

When they sailed from off the coast of Scotland, they were escorted by seven Royal Navy Destroyers, until they reached a latitude adjacent to Gibraltar, five days later, at which point ten of the ships, with many of the Destroyers, turned left and went into the Mediterranean for the short route to North Africa.

Because there was still fighting in North Africa and the Mediterranean was not under Allied control, it was considered unsafe to risk carrying troops by that direct route, so the rest of the convoy, including the Waipawa, headed south, accompanied by four Destroyers.

They reached Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 27th March, where it was necessary to take on water and, for the ships powered by steam rather than oil, coal.

Freetown was not really equipped to deal with such a large scale resupply, but it was at about the limit of the range of the steam ships and, with so many men aboard the convoy, the limits of their water supplies.

It was, ironically, also at the range limit of some of the grandest liners, designed for the high speed Atlantic crossing between Europe and New York. They may have been big and fast, but did not require large fuel capacity for their normal routes.

With everything having to be brought out from Freetown to the anchored vessels, the resupply took three days.

Over all, the large scale troop convoys were remarkably free from casualties. They were rarely even harassed by German submarines. This would have been because with so many fast moving naval escorts, any submarine launching an attack would have had trouble escaping.

Unlike modern submarines, those of the Second World War proceeded quite slowly whilst submerged and would, whenever it was safe, move about on the surface, particularly at night.

Arthur did tell me though, about an incident that must have happened either during the first phase of that voyage, or during the earlier crossing of the Atlantic.

As they were chugging along in the back row of the convoy, one of the Destroyers suddenly veered out of position and started racing back and forth, like a cat after a mouse, not too far astern of the Waipawa.

After some time it launched depth charges, resulting in a great explosion. To everyone's surprise, a German submarine in its death-throws, dramatically broke the surface. The depth charge must have exploded close enough to rupture the hull, at which point the captain would have quickly blown the ballast tanks (using compressed air), in a desperate attempt to surface. This manoeuvre usually sees a submarine break the surface like a cork, but on that occasion, with water rushing in through the hull, no sooner had it tasted fresh air, than it sank back below the waves; a ready-made steel coffin, dropping rapidly to its permanent resting place in the silent darkness at the bottom of the ocean.

A great cheer went around the ship before the Captain came on the loudspeaker; "We will have silence. Fifty brave sailors just died."

It took eleven days to sail from Freetown to Cape Town, but only about half of the convoy stopped there. Because of the limited facilities, the rest went around and stopped at Durban.

The Waipawa was one of the ships stopping at Cape Town; a town with which Arthur must have become quite familiar by then.

Some of the ships which had travelled down the Atlantic, would have then headed off unaccompanied through the safe southern latitudes of the Indian Ocean to Australia and New Zealand.

After four days, the ships departed Cape Town and formed a new convoy of fourteen ships off Durban, escorted by two destroyers, a cruiser and two merchant cruisers.

This convoy travelled north, dispersing off the coast of Aden two weeks later. The Waipawa, and presumably most of the others, then sailed up the comparatively safe Red Sea to Suez. The Waipawa went through the Suez Canal and docked in Alexandria on 8th May, 1943.

This was five days before the final defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa. Although most of the German and Italian soldiers escaped back across the Mediterranean, 275,000 were taken prisoner.

This was the turning point of the war in Western Europe, and the Allied invasion of Sicily followed soon afterwards, in July 1943.

Although the start of the Italian campaign saw the Mediterranean being gradually cleared of enemy threats, at that time there was still a great deal of danger to Allied resupply convoys, particularly from German aircraft flying out of Italy, some of which used air-launched torpedoes against the Allied vessels.

At the time that Arthur visited Alexandria, in May 1943, his brother, Flight Lieutenant C P Towsey, was also based in Egypt, as was their cousin, Pat Cooper, who was with the New Zealand Artillery.

Whether or not Arthur was able to meet up with his brother and cousin on that occasion, I do not know, but I get the impression that he did not, though Pat Cooper and Pat Towsey did meet up in Egypt.

My guess is that having failed to meet up with his brother in May, Arthur probably sent him a message, before sailing, saying that he expected to be back again in about August or September. This would account for Pat Towsey saying, in a letter to his mother, dated 3rd September, that he believed Arthur to probably be in the area.

The Waipawa, with Arthur aboard, sailed directly from Alexandria to Sydney, arriving there on 23rd June. After a few days, they sailed north to several ports along the Queensland coast, loading supplies of food for the troops in Africa, who were preparing for the invasion of Sicily.

The Waipawa returned to Sydney at the start of August, ready to sail straight back to Egypt.

By then the Allied soldiers had landed in Sicily, so it was decided that the Waipawa should continue on from the relative safety of Alexandria, through the still dangerous Mediterranean to Malta, where they would deliver the food that they had collected in Queensland, to the Maltese people and to the troops who were by then pushing the Germans out of Sicily.

From there, the Waipawa was scheduled to continue across the Mediterranean to Gibraltar, before sailing out into the Atlantic.

Arthur knew the course on which they were about to embark and as the Waipawa was being guided out of Sydney Harbour, he was suddenly overwhelmed by a severe panic attack.

He became convinced that the ship would be sunk.

After the Greece and Crete campaign, and after living through a number of voyages with the ever-present threat of a sudden watery grave, it is obvious that the thought of heading back into that part of the Mediterranean where he had recently come so close to death from airborne German soldiers, triggered his sudden breakdown.

The attack was obviously so severe, that Arthur was taken off on the pilot's boat, after the pilot had finished guiding the ship out of Sydney Harbour.

The Waipawa did in fact complete its voyage safely, then sailed from Gibraltar down to Argentina to presumably collect a cargo of meat, which was taken back to Malta, before they sailed back down the Suez Canal, to Australia, before once more heading back to Britain, via the Panama Canal.

The Waipawa continued to sail back and forth with supplies for the war effort, being finally released from military service in 1946.

The next we hear of Arthur, is that he has arrived back in New Zealand, from Sydney, "a short time ago", to visit his mother, in September 1943.

Arthur stayed in Auckland for three months.

Just after Christmas, he signed on as Assistant Steward with another New Zealand registered ship; the MV Coptic, with which he travelled over to the Panama Canal, arriving in New York on 18th January, 1944, then from there by convoy across to Liverpool.

Unlike soldiers, who simply had their identity cards, merchant seamen did have passports, but because their movements were all a part of the official government war effort, they did not require visas, entry or exit stamps or

Evening Post, 2 September 1943

NEW ZEALAND GIRL B.B.C. "TALKS PRODUCER"

Mr. Arthur Towsey, who returned to New Zealand a short time ago to visit his mother, Mrs. Mary Towsey, the well-known Auckland singer, left New Zealand with the Second Echelon, saw service until November, 1941, when he was discharged from the Army, and then returned to England. He did a little broadcasting in London, under Miss Noni Wright's guidance, and also undertook the task of shepherding to the studio the men in uniform who send greetings home in her feature, "With the New Zealanders in Britain," every fortnight.

Mr. Towsey expressed great admiration of Miss Wright (whose married name is Mrs. F. N. Lloyd Williams), of the work she is doing, and of the individual attention she gives each man who broadcasts.

EXERTING A N.Z. INFLUENCE.

"She is exerting a New Zealand influence in an unobtrusive way," he said. "Her broadcasts go to Australia and sometimes to Canada. Her official position is that of talks producer on the permanent staff of the B.B.C., and every week she produces five programmes of 15 minutes each.

"Once a month she presents a programme from the New Zealand Forces Club, in which the men talk about their experiences, chat, and sing. She has visited men in hospital, Air Force squadrons, a naval college, bomber stations, and torpedo-boat and Fleet Air Arm bases.

"Not all her programmes deal with men in the forces, however. One which would be of special interest to New Zealand flax millers, described a visit to a flax mill in Scotland. Miss Wright stayed there a week to get a 15-minute talk."

EXAMPLE OF THOROUGHNESS.

Giving another example of this thoroughness, Mr. Towsey said that three 15-minute programmes covering the life of prisoners of war, the facts of which Miss Wright obtained through the International Red Cross, took her almost three months to complete.

Commenting on her popularity with the men who broadcast "under her wing," Mr. Towsey sketched a pleasing picture of Miss Wright, who is small and blonde, seated at the head of a table, helping shy and nervous men to write their messages.

"On Saturday mornings, after the broadcast, there is always a tea party," Mr. Towsey said, adding, with a smile, "and that's when they say all the things they should have said on the air!"

rationing registration in the ports that they visited.

An exception in Arthur's case, was an entry stamp at Alexandria in May, 1943. Sometimes immigration officials just get stamp-happy, by force of habit.

Arthur's plan was not to again become a merchant seaman, but getting back to London otherwise would have been very difficult.

It is worth remembering that during the war years, people did not travel abroad without a good reason and there was no such thing as visa-free travel, except between Australia and New Zealand.

Arthur Goes Back to London, Again

Arthur's time as a merchant seaman came to an end in February, 1944; a time by which there was no longer any doubt about an Allied victory; the question then being how soon it would all be over. The broadly accepted answer was that the Allies would be in Berlin within a couple of months. It in fact took eleven months.

It was at this time that Arthur started working with the British Council, in a role that was in some respects similar to that of his grandfather, Arthur John Towsey, eight decades earlier.

The British Council was set up in 1934 for the purpose of spreading English language, culture and values around the world. The initial reason for its establishment was to counter widespread propaganda campaigns by the Nazi and Italian Fascist regimes, particularly in southern Europe.

The efforts of the British Council were far more subtle than those of the Nazis and Fascists. Rather than hammering away at political propaganda, they simply presented an image of the British way of life, with its intellectual and artistic freedom and with its long history of parliamentary democracy.

The focus of British Council efforts changed from year to year, depending partly upon changing political tides and on where it was deemed that Britain had a chance of making an impact. Offices in Eastern European countries that were being pulled into the Soviet block, did not last very long after the end of the war.

Arthur would be working on projects in New Zealand and Australia, much of which was to do with producing and staging plays and concerts.

Dan O'Connor, his father's much younger cousin, who had built a successful career as a theatrical entrepreneur, might have had a hand in arranging Arthur's position at the British Council, through his contacts. They certainly worked together, several years later, in bringing a theatre company to Australia.

If one were cynical enough to look for a political motive in this British desire to entertain the colonials with high culture, an incident in 1942 would provide a logical rationale for the cultural mission of which Arthur Towsey was to be a part.

Before Japan entered the war, Australia had two army divisions over in Europe. When it looked like Australia might be invaded, the Australian Labor Party (and not at all Anglophile) Prime Minister, John Curtin, told Churchill that he would need his soldiers back home to defend Australia. Churchill's response was that they were needed elsewhere and, although I do not know if it was explicitly stated, the implication was that the war would have to be won in Europe first and then, if Australia had been taken by the Japanese, the focus would shift to winning the Asian war.

The compromise reached, was that Australia withdrew one of its two divisions from Europe, whilst Curtin turned to America for help. The American Pacific war commander, General Macarthur, who had recently been pushed out of The Philippines by the invading Japanese, consequently set up his headquarters in Australia and took command of the defence of Australia and New Zealand.

It is perhaps ironic, that the troops that Curtin pulled back from Europe, and other Divisions raised, were largely sidelined in the Pacific war.

Certainly Australians fought tough battles in New Guinea, but when it came time to push ahead towards Japan, the Australian soldiers were left behind, performing the probably unnecessary task of clearing the Japanese out of New Guinea and Borneo.

Evening Post, 9 September 1943

AIRMAN'S MESSAGE GRANTING OF A WISH

A New Zealand airman lay dying in a hospital in England. He seemed to have no will to live. Yet there was one thing he wanted to do, to send a message to his wife at home. At the B.B.C., a New Zealand girl who has made a niche for herself in the broadcasting world heard about the young airman, took a recording van to the hospital, and set up the necessary equipment. The patient was so ill that it took 30 minutes for him to say a few words lasting a minute. He was helped by injections. The granting of his wish worked a miracle—he is now flying again.

The sympathetic B.B.C. broadcasting girl was Noni Wright, whose married name is Mrs. F. N. Lloyd Williams.

The incident was related by Mr Arthur Towsey, who returned to Auckland from England a short time ago

Although in the 1940s, there was no question in the minds of most Antipodeans, that they were essentially British, it was probably calculated that efforts should be made to fan the slightly fading embers of this British sentiment.

On 24th November, 1944, Arthur set sail from Liverpool, aboard the S.S. Ruahine on a trip back to Australia, on behalf of The British Council, stopping firstly in New York, from where he planned to make his way to Canada, to visit his sons.

As I mentioned, because he was now a civilian, he needed all sorts of visas and permissions to make this, or any journey during war-time. These were readily obtained because he was now working for the British Government.

Speaking of Antipodean identification with Britain; at that time, New Zealand and Australian passports were in fact British passports, for British Subjects. It was not until 1949 that Australians and New Zealanders became citizens of their own countries, rather than British subjects living in Australia or New Zealand. Canada made the same transition in 1947.

You will notice on the American identity card, that Arthur's citizenship is shown as British, not New Zealander.

We get an idea of the controls that were placed on civilian travel during the war, by the stamps in Arthur's passport.

On 8th November, 1944; a stamp from the Foreign Office, validating the passport for Canada, USA, Panama Canal Zone & British Empire. On the same day, an Exit Permit valid until 8th February, 1945 to NZ and Australia via USA. The following day, another stamp from the Foreign Office. Then, on 18th November, another Foreign Office stamp, amending occupation from purser to British Council Regional Officer. Three days later he got a USA visa stamp,

Arthur arrived in New York on 10th December, 1944. The sixteen days that it took to cross the North Atlantic, indicates that the S.S. Ruahine was part of another slow convoy.

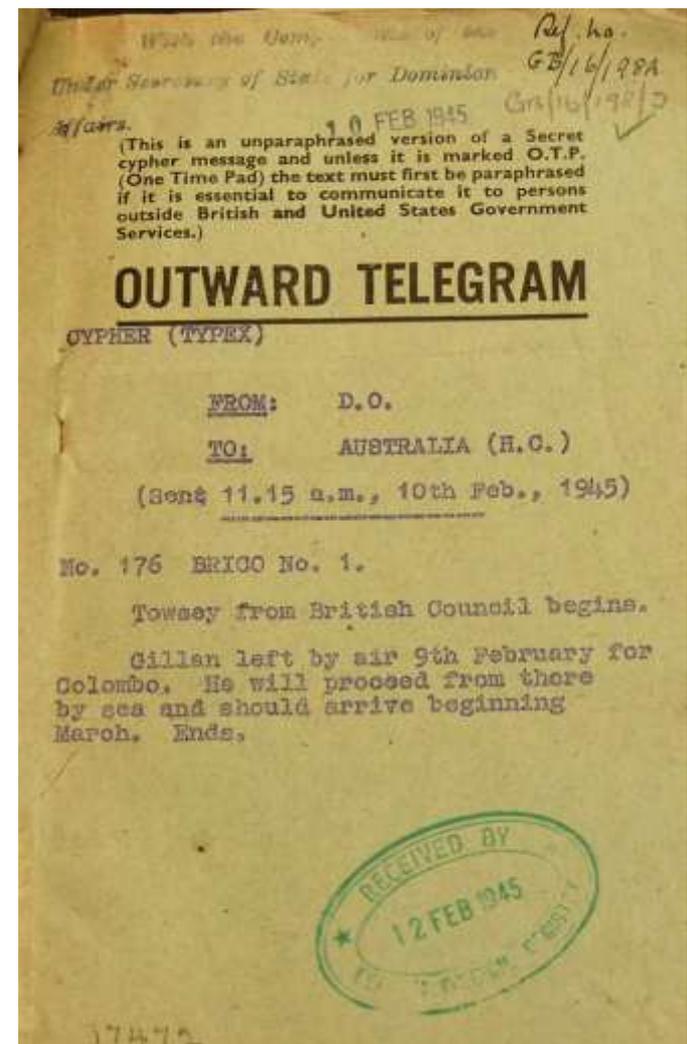
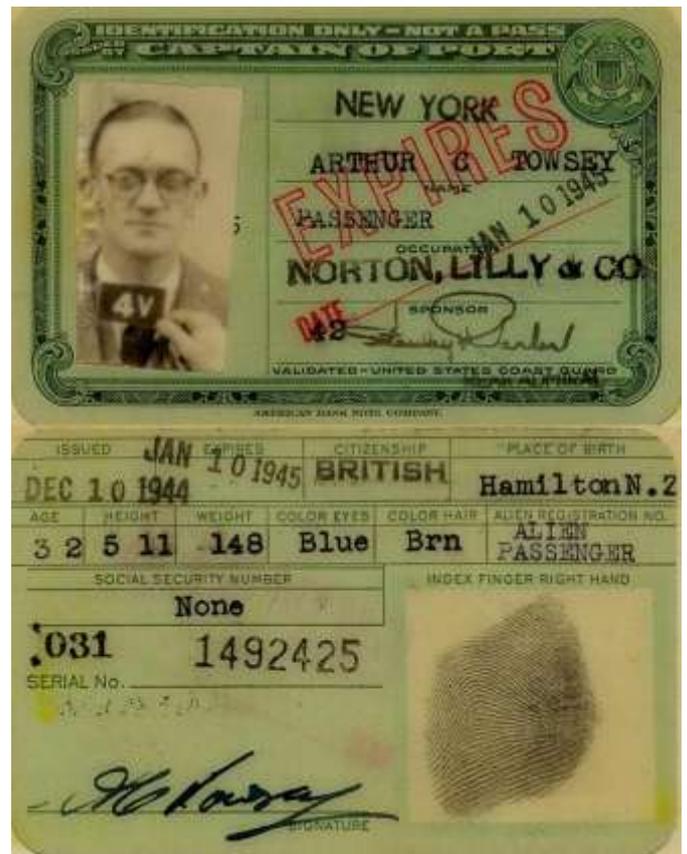
On the identity card issued upon arrival in New York, it states that Arthur's occupation is Norton, Lilly & Co.

This is a shipping agency and may well have had something to do with either the company arranging Arthur's travel, or perhaps it had something to do with his previous employment as a purser.

As I understand it, Arthur's intention was to go and see his children in Canada, but as Aline had told everyone in her small home town that her husband had been killed in the war, his sudden appearance would be an embarrassment, to say the least. She therefore somehow arranged for the Canadian authorities to prevent him from crossing the border from the US.

I am not sure if he actually tried, but I think that he might have found out before leaving New York and not tried to get into Canada.

To our 21st Century way of thinking, Aline's actions may seem inexcusable, but within a small, Catholic, rural community in the 1940s, having to explain that your marriage



had failed so quickly, would have been quite disgraceful. We also do not know the details of the troubles between Arthur and Aline that caused her to opt for a complete break with her children's father.

Arthur arrived in Wellington on 14th January, 1945 and then flew from Auckland to Sydney twelve days later.

The person in charge of this mission to Australia and New Zealand, was Sir Angus Gillan, a sixty year-old career diplomat who had rowed for Oxford and won a gold medal at the 1908 Olympics. He had then spent thirty years in the Sudan Political Service.

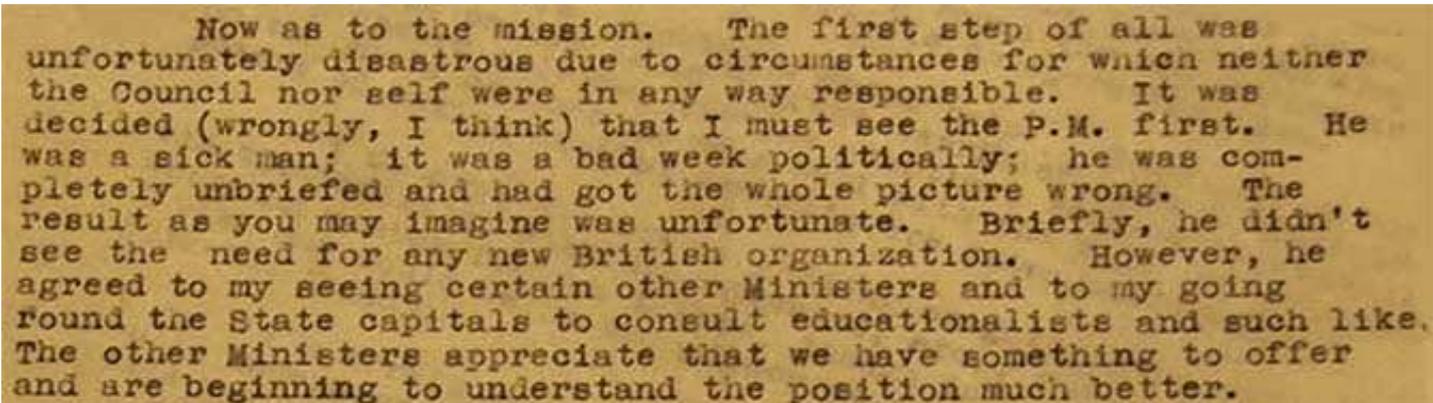
Arthur's job was to do much of the leg work of arranging contacts and meetings. Being a local, it was also considered that he might be better suited to dealing with certain persons who might not be so well disposed towards what some Australians might consider an English toff.

It is very likely that one of Arthur's first contacts would have been Colin Scrimgeour, a Towsey family friend from New Zealand, through whom Arthur would then have met Sir Benjamin Fuller, with whom he became friends and had dealings over the coming years. More on that later.

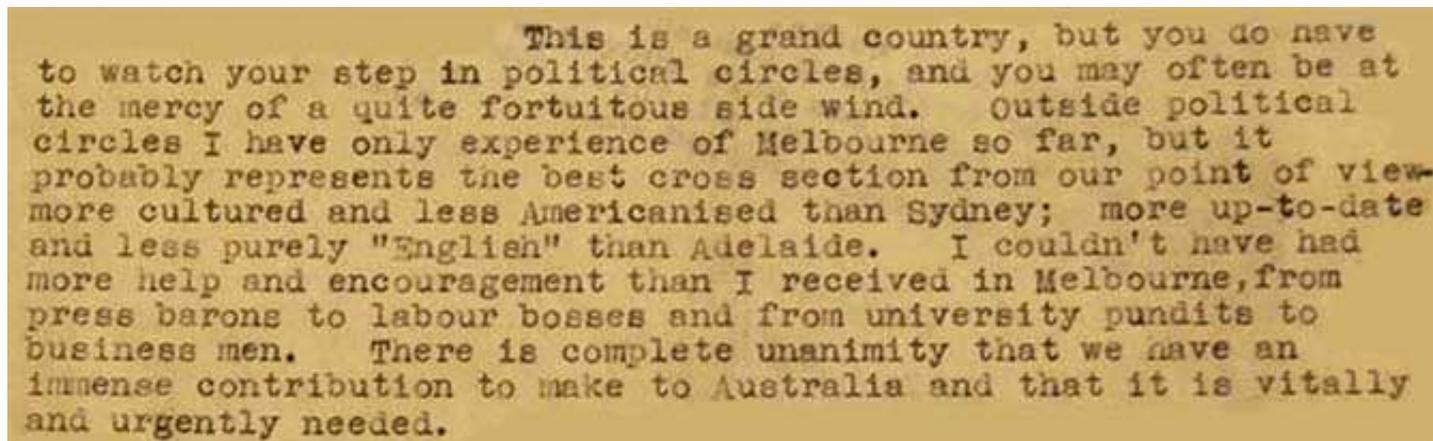
When Gillan arrived in Melbourne, he was suffering from pneumonia, so had to take some time off to recover.

A few passages from a letter that Gillan sent back to a friend at the British Council in London:

The PM referred to here is John Curtin, who was confined to his bed within weeks and died from heart disease just three months after this meeting.

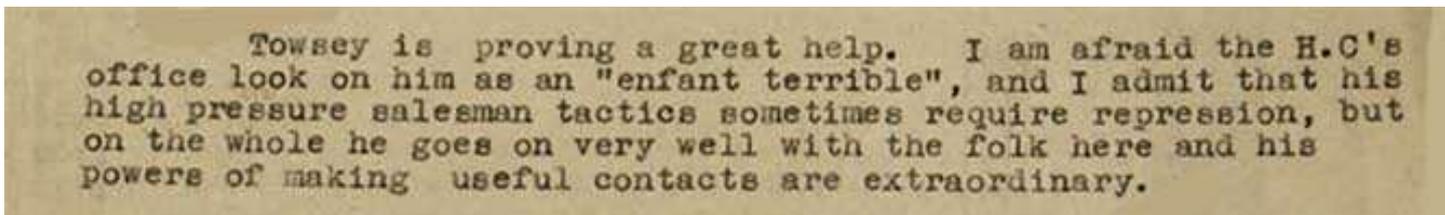


Now as to the mission. The first step of all was unfortunately disastrous due to circumstances for which neither the Council nor self were in any way responsible. It was decided (wrongly, I think) that I must see the P.M. first. He was a sick man; it was a bad week politically; he was completely unbriefed and had got the whole picture wrong. The result as you may imagine was unfortunate. Briefly, he didn't see the need for any new British organization. However, he agreed to my seeing certain other Ministers and to my going round the State capitals to consult educationalists and such like. The other Ministers appreciate that we have something to offer and are beginning to understand the position much better.



This is a grand country, but you do have to watch your step in political circles, and you may often be at the mercy of a quite fortuitous side wind. Outside political circles I have only experience of Melbourne so far, but it probably represents the best cross section from our point of view - more cultured and less Americanised than Sydney; more up-to-date and less purely "English" than Adelaide. I couldn't have had more help and encouragement than I received in Melbourne, from press barons to labour bosses and from university pundits to business men. There is complete unanimity that we have an immense contribution to make to Australia and that it is vitally and urgently needed.

One of the press barons to whom Gillan is referring, was Sir Keith Murdoch; father of Rupert Murdoch.



Towsey is proving a great help. I am afraid the H.C.'s office look on him as an "enfant terrible", and I admit that his high pressure salesman tactics sometimes require repression, but on the whole he goes on very well with the folk here and his powers of making useful contacts are extraordinary.

The above reference to Arthur is not just an accurate description of his personality, but also reminds us that in 1945, the British Civil Service, particularly people such as the officers of the British High Commission, to whom Gillan refers, were still very much products of a rigid class structure, where everybody "knew their place", where the school and university to which you went counted for more than your innate abilities, and where the Middle Class spoke with crisp, sharp accents that could be used to cut glass and which, a half century later, are only ever found in comedy sketches.

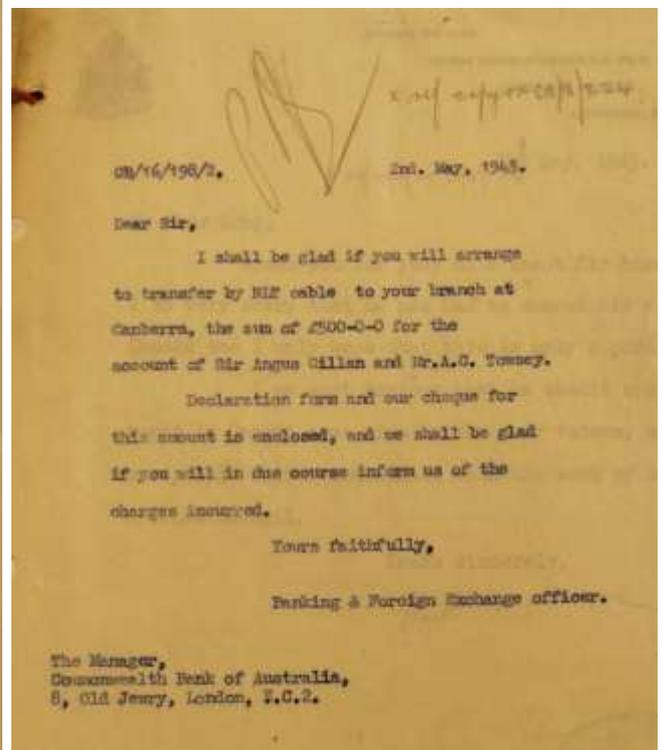
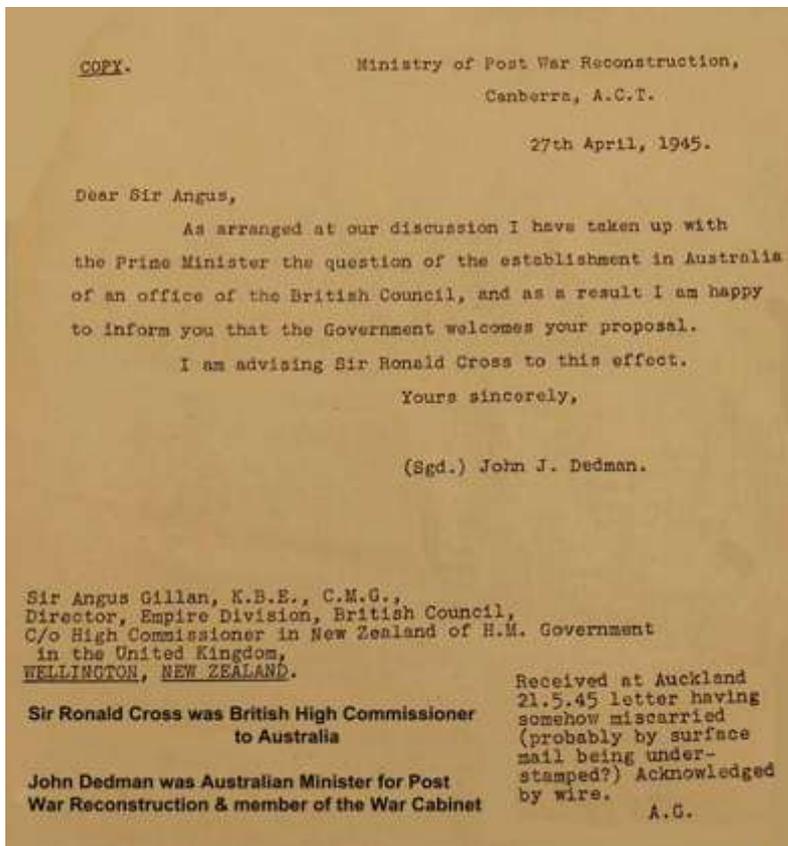
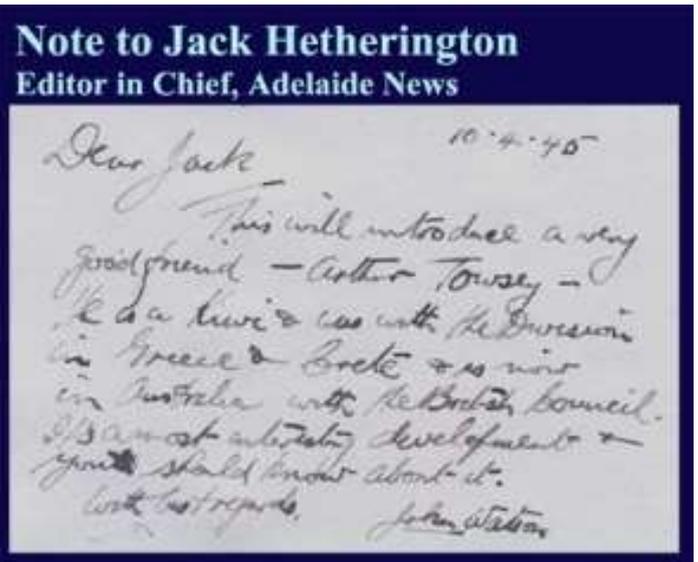
At this time also, anyone from the colonies, no matter how talented, was definitely looked down upon by the English gentry, looking down their upturned noses, past their weak, receding chins.

This note, to Jack Hetherington, is a good example of a different "old boys" network; those who served in the war. I remember well into the 1950s, or even 1960s, where somebody's war service would be used either as proof of their good character, or as an introduction.

Jack Hetherington may well have been a relative of Captain O. S. Hetherington, who was Medical Officer of 21 Battalion.

I do not know who John Watson might have been, but most likely someone in the media or some government department.

Arthur was back in Australia on VE Day; 8th May, 1945. The day that Germany surrendered. It would be several months more before the Japanese were finally defeated.



Whether or not it was intentional, the headline below, about 'Help If We Ask For It,' could be seen as an ironic comment on the fact that when Australia and New Zealand asked for help, three years earlier, for defence against a likely Japanese invasion, that help was not forthcoming.

After the meeting with the Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, Arthur left Sir Angus in Canberra and sailed to London, after a brief stop in Auckland, arriving in Britain, aboard the MV Empire Grace, on 5th July, 1945.

After returning to London, Arthur was living in a large house at 14 Belsize Park Gardens, NW3. This was probably a boarding house or bedsit.

We see that Arthur continued to work with the British Council after his return to London.

Whether or not they intended that he should be posted in Australia or New Zealand, I do not know, but I suspect that considering the conservative, very English nature of such an organization, it might well be considered that Arthur was a bit too much of a rough diamond to be entrusted with such a key role as a representative of the finest of British culture, despite his obvious geniality and natural ability to get along with the locals.

COPY.

New Zealand Prime Minister, Peter Fraser

Prime Minister's Office,

WELLINGTON.

7th May, 1945.

My Dear Sir Angus,

I was very interested to learn during the course of our discussion on Thursday last that the British Council now propose to extend their activities to Commonwealth countries with the object of informing our people, in the way that may seem most appropriate, of the manner of living, habit and thought of the people of the United Kingdom. Although it is probably true to say that the people of New Zealand have a knowledge and understanding of Britain as full as that of the people in any other overseas country, I consider that any activity which will widen and deepen mutual appreciation of the people in our two countries should be encouraged. I understand that it is the desire of your Council to set up a small establishment and to appoint a representative in New Zealand. We would welcome this and would gladly assist and co-operate with your representative in every way possible.

Sir Angus Gillan was certainly fulsome in his praise of Arthur's abilities and might, if it was his decision, have given Arthur such a job, but although Gillan may have been an entrenched member of the establishment, he was also a Scot, meaning that he would always have felt from his peers, a slight disdain for the fact that he was not English.

It might also be, that Arthur was only ever hired for that specific mission with Gillan.

As the war came to an end, the leadership of Britain, despite the hardships that the country had endured, was still

Your representative will, of course, wish to develop and maintain contacts with representatives of the Universities, cultural bodies and related organisations, and it will, of course, be open to him to communicate and deal with these organisations direct. The Head of the Information Section of the Prime Minister's Department would be happy, however, to consult with your representative on matters of this kind and would doubtless be able to afford him assistance in furthering the work of the Council.

COPY

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ACTING PRIME MINISTER.

Acting Prime Minister
Ben Chifley, became
Prime Minister until 1949

Canberra, A.C.T.

1st June, 1945.

EXTRACT

Dear Sir Angus Gillan,

The proposal to establish the British Council in Australia, from which point it would also cover the South West Pacific area, was discussed in your presence on the 29th May at a conference which, by arrangement between the Minister for Post War Reconstruction and the Minister for Information, set under the chairmanship of the Minister for Information and, during the latter part of the discussion, proceeded under the chairmanship of the Right Honourable J.H. Scullin, M.P. For purposes of record it might be useful if there were listed here the names of other gentlemen who attended the meeting:

Mr. W.C. Hankinson	- Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom;
Mr. L. MacBride	- Public Relations Adviser, Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom;
Mr. Kenneth Binna	- Commonwealth Librarian;
Mr. J.D.L. Hood	- Acting Secretary, Department of External Affairs;
Mr. Norman McCauley	- Chief Publicity Officer, Department of Information;
Mr. H.S. Tenby	- Prime Minister's Department;
Mr. A.C. Towsey	- British Council;
Mr. J.C.S. Kevin	- Department of External Affairs.

essentially the same old group of class-conscious conservatives who had been running things since the glory days of the empire.

Because of the war, there had not been a proper election since 1935, so with peace settling over the land, a general election was hastily called for 5th July; the day that Arthur sailed back into Liverpool. To the surprise of many, Churchill, who had so boldly led the country through its troubles, was defeated in a landslide victory for the Labour Party, led by the completely uncharismatic Clement Attlee.

What the people had voted for, was a complete change in direction for the country, with a better deal for the masses who had endured not just the privations of war, but the Great Depression before that.

But in 1945, the country was still broke and in the months and years that followed, the rationing with which the people had lived during the war, actually got worse.

B.2.

As from
The British Council,
3, Hanover Street,
London, E.1.

Hotel Esplanade
PERTH,
W.A.

12.6.45.

COPY.

Dear Mr. Chifley,

Thank you very much for your letter of 1st June which has just reached me here. I am most grateful for that useful record of the proceedings and recommendations of the conference held at Canberra on 29th May to discuss the proposal to establish the British Council in Australia.

I note with much gratification your approval of the proposed arrangements and your assurance of the goodwill and co-operation of the Australian authorities.

I shall have much pleasure in submitting the proposals to my Council at the earliest opportunity and my Chairman will doubtless communicate with you further through the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Australia in due course.

May I, both personally and on behalf of the British Council, thank you, your Ministers and departmental officials most sincerely for all the help and encouragement which have been accorded to me during my mission in Australia?

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) J. Angus Gillan

The Rt. Hon. J.B. Chifley,
Acting Prime Minister,
Canberra, A.C.T.



SIR ANGUS GILLAN

HELP IF WE ASK FOR IT

British Council Holds Out A Hand

SIR ANGUS GILLAN, Director of the Empire Division of the British Council, and Arthur Towsey, Regional Officer for the Pacific to the Council, have just completed an exploratory tour of Australia and New Zealand, with a view to initiating British Council activities here. A member of "The Listener" staff accompanied them on their short tour of New Zealand, in the joint capacities of escort and arranger of meetings with New Zealanders, and representative of "The Listener." The following article describes the nature and scope of the Council's work, and shows in what ways New Zealand may hope to benefit by it.



ARTHUR TOWSEY

"**B** BRITISH Council for what?" was the question I had to answer everywhere. The exceptions were journalists, professors and lecturers, and others who for special reasons had already heard of the Council and made use of some of its facilities. Very few New Zealanders have heard of it at all, and its name, as it now stands, is far from self-explanatory. Originally I think it was the "British Council for Cultural Relations with Other Countries," though I find no mention of that name in the Council handbook now in front of me. It was established by His Majesty's Government in 1925, to inaugurate British

Government in 1934, to interpose Britain in the widest sense to people not living in the United Kingdom. In the more formal words of the Royal Charter granted to it in 1940, its purposes are "the promotion of a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom abroad and the development of closer cultural relations between the United Kingdom and other countries." In the first place, it was started as a counter-measure to the culture-propaganda of the Fascists and Nazis, who were, to put it in the words of Sir Angus Gillan, "rather getting away with it, and leading the world to believe that all art came from Italy and all science from Germany."

The British resident abroad and the British traveller had noticed a meagre knowledge overseas of their country, of ordinary British people, how they lived and what they thought, the present organisation of the state, and the achievements of the nation in science, letters, art, and so forth. The British Council now supplies that knowledge in foreign countries all over the world. During the present war it decided to make its facilities available to Empire countries too, and though war conditions have limited its activities outside the United Kingdom, its Home Division has done a great deal with service personnel there.

Two Way Traffic

Sir Angus Gillan (who was administrative officer in the Sudan for 30 years) puts the Council's objects in

these words: "We don't come to shove anything down your throats. We don't say 'This is the way you ought to live.' We say 'This is the way we live. Have a look at it. Take what you want, and leave the rest. And if in turn you can tell us something about yourselves, so much the better. The traffic has to flow both ways.'"

The British Council is not a Government department. Its independent Charter gives it power to "accept, hold, and dispose of" moneys (mostly voted by Parliament) to these ends. Apart from occasional donations, almost all its funds come from a grant carried in Parliament on the Foreign Office vote. The lists of names on its Advisory Committees are perhaps the best and most concise way to indicate here the standards maintained in its various fields. On the Books and Periodicals committee, for instance, are Stanley Unwin (chairman), Edward Carter, Geoffrey C. Faber, Mrs. Mary Hamilton, and Rebecca West.

Mary Hamilton, and Rebecca West. The late Philip Goodall headed the Film committee. On the Fine Arts committee are Clive Bell, Sir Kenneth Clark, Captain Gerald Coke, Ernest Makower, Herbert Read, and others. Musical readers will note with interest some of the names of the Music committee—Arthur Bliss, Sir Adrian Boult, Leslie Boosey, Prof. E. J. Dent, Dame Myra Hess, Victor Hely-Hutchinson, William Walton, J. A. Westrup, and R. Vaughan-Williams. The president of the Executive Committee is Lord Tyrrell of Avon, and the Chairman, Sir Malcolm Robertson. The Executive committee includes several names from the special committees mentioned above.

The methods adopted have been these:

- (1) The formation of cultural centres abroad—"British Institutes," which as any New Zealander who has refuge inside any disaster, have a high reputation among action-minded people in the capitals and cities where they function.
- (2) The encouragement of Anglophil societies (new or existing) in foreign countries, and of cultural centres in British colonies.
- (3) The formation or support of British schools (where a demand exists) in foreign countries.
- (4) The provision of scholarships to enable foreigners to study English or other subjects in Britain.
- (5) The provision of facilities for foreigners and servicemen in Britain to gain a true picture of the national life.

Agencies Abroad

A British Institute is directly under Council control, and is a centre of British studies, giving first place to the English language. It has classes and lectures, a

library (literary and technical), club-rooms, and reading rooms. It receives distinguished men and women sent from England to lecture, shows documentary films, both general and technical, houses periodical exhibitions of paintings, photographs and so on. It may have an orchestra and choir, play-reading groups, social activities, even football and hockey teams. There are nine Institutes in Egypt, five in Palestine and Cyprus, others in Spain, Portugal, Ethiopia, the Belgian Congo, and so on. The Valetta one (Malta) has 3000 members. Those in Lisbon and Madrid have 2000 students and members each.

An Anglophil Society differs from an Institute in being a group of friends of Great Britain, supported by the Council. It has been the Council's policy to encourage such societies where they are founded by local initiative and not to attempt to create them where such initiative is lacking. In other respects they closely resemble the British Institutes.

Country resembles the British Institutes. Their activities follow the pattern just described.

In some countries there are no Institutes. In Sweden, for example, the Representative has his office in Stockholm, and makes arrangements for various activities in the capital and elsewhere. Lectures are given in many societies, universities and schools, and instruction is given to Swedish teachers of English. There are exhibitions of photographs, and the publication of books in English is arranged. Malcolm Sargent comes to conduct concerts, the poet T. S. Eliot, Sir Kenneth Clark (Director of the National Gallery), Sir Lawrence Bragg and C. D. Darlington (scientists) come to lecture, and learned bodies are encouraged to make contacts with their British counterparts. In other countries, the methods differ again (in Turkey, for instance, where for reasons of tact, the whole of the Council's educational work goes on within the Turkish educational system, and the rest goes on in the Halkedix, or People's Houses. In the Soviet and in China, the Council's work is still in the early stages. Even so, in China, it is already very extensive and very popular.

Plans for New Zealand

However, the New Zealand reader will be chiefly interested, not so much in how the British Council has gone about its work in foreign countries, as in those aspects of its work in general that we may expect to see in our own country. Although official approval from both sides has yet to be made final, after

Sir Angus has reported in England and our own Government has considered the matter, we may nevertheless expect to see a representative in New Zealand, and the provision of facilities if we ask for them, for widening our own cultural life and advancing our technical studies.

Australia and New Zealand are the first Dominions to be visited in this way by the British Council (although we have already won scholarships, received booklets and one art exhibition, seen films, and heard music, all without the general public being very much aware of the organisation that made them available), and the approach will, of course, be different from that adopted

in foreign and suspicious countries.

Perhaps the best way to explain these activities in detail is to classify them under the various spheres of interest, to show roughly what the Council has to offer to the man interested in education, law, British science and industry, agriculture, medicine, sport, seamanship, exploration, literature, philosophy, music, the fine arts, the theatre, ballet, and so forth.

EDUCATION

A RRANGEMENTS for the teaching of English have already been described. Many British schools abroad (mostly in the Mediterranean area) are supported. Scholarships are awarded to foreigners, and also to citizens of the Empire, enabling them to study in Britain. During the war, male scholarships were not made available to Empire students, but three women from New Zealand have gone to England, one to study architecture, one speech therapy, one industrial relations.

PUBLICATIONS

T HE series, *British Life and Thought*, and *Britain Advances*, are on sale here, as well as the periodical *Britain To-day*, in all of which the aim is to employ acknowledged experts, not lesser lights paid to do a job of propaganda. The Council's Book Export Scheme, which is not intended to operate in the United States or the Dominions, aims to

(continued on next page)

To: 1. Mr. Wilmot *W.W.*
 2. *Mr Young, 2/10/45*
 3. *Mr Paul Reed*
 4. *Mr Emma Russell* *20/5*

From: Mr. Towsey
 Date 1st August, 1945.
 B.F. to _____ on _____
 P.A. *20/5*

FILE REF.: GB/16/198/2

Arthur Heighway is anxious to publicise the Empire aspect of our work. As you will see by the attached letter he suggests our preparing a suitable statement for his paper. Can you assist?

act/nmb

20/5

Mr Young 2/10/45

In Mr Wilmot's absence this has come to me. I really think that P.H. is the best answer don't you?

Mr Paul Reed

I do not understand why this has been passed to me. Would you please arrange for appropriate action to be taken?

(300000) WY 17418/171 1000 Page 1/45 H.J.R.A.L. 4/2/41

PHONE CENTRAL 4040
 (Private Branch Exchange)

GB/16/198/2
 CABLES AND TELEGRAMS
 COSMOPRESS FLEET LONDON

WORLD'S PRESS NEWS PUBLISHING Co. Ltd.

WORLD'S PRESS NEWS ~ PHOTOGRAPHY
 ADVERTISING WORLD ~ BOOKS OF TO-DAY

DIRECTORS:
 C. GIBSON CLARIDGE
 A.J. HEIGHWAY
 BERNARD SHURTON
 LT COL. H.C. BURTON
 G.B.E.
 MAJOR H. BRUCE LOGAN
 LT COL. ER THOMAS MOORE
 C.B.E. & C.M.G.

20, TUDOR STREET,
 LONDON, E.C.4.

23rd July 1945.

AJH/ES

Sir Angus Gillan, K.B.E., C.M.G.,
 Director, Empire Division,
 BRITISH COUNCIL,
 3 Hanover St., W.1.

RECEIVED
 JUL 24 1945
 B. G. REGISTRY

Dear Sir Angus,

Now that you are back from your mission to Australia and New Zealand, I would be grateful if you could give me for publication in WORLD'S PRESS NEWS an authoritative interview of the reception given by the Press in those countries to the ideas you formulated and the plans that have been laid for expanding the work of the British Council in the overseas dominions.

I suggest with respect that the best procedure might be for such an account to be prepared and at a time convenient to yourself, I will call and collect it, and have a chat with you on various points, with a view to amplifying or expanding special angles.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur J. Heighway

ARTHUR J. HEIGHWAY,
 Managing Director and Editor.