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## THE WRECK OF THE *LIBELLE* and other early European Visitors to Wake Island

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Wake Atoll, even though off of the main shipping lines between Hawaii and the Philippines or Hong Kong, had been a navigation hazard in the nineteenth century, largely because it was so isolated, so low lying and thus hard to see, and because its position had often been incorrectly reported. This paper details the early European history of the atoll and focuses on a shipwreck and the subsequent salvage events

Until more recently, many of the small and isolated atolls in the Central Pacific Ocean were bypassed by human settlement and development. On occasion voyagers from nearby island groups went to them, but then only for comparatively brief periods of time. These atolls were in climatic zones that produced little reliable rainfall and were too small to develop a ground water lens of sufficient size and depth to sustain a human population or to allow even the growth of coconut palms. As a result the vegetation cover was also very sparse and the soil undeveloped. Atolls such as these were of little interest to both Micronesians and the European navigators who happened to stumble upon them on their voyages. Yet the isolation meant that if and when people were stranded there by accident, their stay on the atoll was bound to be a very trying one. Such is the case of Wake Atoll in the Central Pacific.

### WAKE ATOLL

A 3.5km<sup>2</sup> speck of land in the middle of the Central Pacific Ocean attained world fame in the closing days of 1941. Wake Island was the

much publicised and much heroicised scene of US resistance against the Japanese onslaught (cf. Cunningham 1961; Devereux 1947). It is comprised of three small sand cays of changing shape. Its low-lying nature means that it was subject to the impact of storm surges during typhoons, which, although uncommon at that latitude, nonetheless occur.

Oral traditions claim that the Marshallese knew of Wake Atoll prior to contact with European navigators. The Marshallese name for the atoll was Eneen-Kio or Ane-en Kio, "Island of the *kio* flower" (Heine and Anderson 1971). The atoll was a source of feathers and plumes of seabirds. Prized were the wing bones of albatross, from which tattooing chisels could be made (Spennemann 1992). In addition, the rare *kio* flower grew on the atoll. Bringing these items to the home atolls implied that the navigators had been able to complete the feat of finding the atoll using traditional navigation skills of stars, wave patterns and other ocean markers.

Like the Marshallese visits to the atolls of Bikar and Bokak, the voyages to Wake occur-

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red once a year or even less frequently. It is thus not surprising that none of the Europeans visiting or landing on Eneen-Kio mention the presence of Marshallese or any signs of permanent or temporary human habitation on this atoll.

### THE SPANISH

It is possible that Wake was first seen for European eyes by the early Spanish vessels, at that time before the discovery of the "great circle route" between the Philippines and Latin America, still moving through the northern Marshall Islands. It lies, however, on a straight route between Honolulu and Guam, and vessels on that route are bound to come close to or see Eneen-Kio. Once the great circle route, pioneered by Arellano in the *San Lucas* and Urdaneta in the *San Pedro*, both vessels of Lagazpi's expedition of 1565 (Hezel 1983, p. 29) had been established, the atoll was bypassed by almost all later Spanish galleons plying that route for centuries. It has been speculated that Wake Island is San Francisco/San Francesco Island (Bryan 1959, p. 2; Beaglehole 1966, p. 54; Dierdorff 1943; Hager 1886, p. 43; Hobbs 1945, p. 75; Manchester 1951, p. 65; Votaw 1941), seen and described by the Spanish Explorer Alvaro de Mendaña on October 4, 1568 (Beaglehole 1966, p. 54).<sup>1</sup>

Later Spanish and English maps, such as Arrowsmith's Chart of the 1820s, show two islands at the latitude and approximate vicinity of Wake, named *Lamira* (take care) and *Discierta* (desert). It has been advanced by some authors that these names and the absence of other land within several hundred miles suggest that each may represent an independent (Spanish) discovery of Wake (Votaw 1941; Dierdorff 1943). Given the number of Spanish vessels plying the waters, this is quite feasible.

### THE RE-"DISCOVERY" OF WAKE

The rapid development of the China trade, of the Pacific whaling industry and of the north-west American and Siberian fur trade meant that an increasing number of vessels plied the waters of the Central Northern Pacific in the eighteenth century. The rediscovery of Wake is

credited to Captain William Wake who encountered it in 1792 in the British trading schooner *Prince William Henry en route* from Port Jackson (Australia) to Canton in China (cf. Hobbs 1945, p. 75). According to other sources the discoverer was Samuel Wake (cf. Dierdorff 1943, p. 500; Johnson 1935; but see name in Pierpoint 1797).

Apparently in the same year it was also "discovered" and mapped by a British fur trading vessel, the *Halcyon*. The *Halcyon*, under the command of Captain Charles William Bakeley, is listed in a ship list for Hawaii between 8 and 15 November 1792 (Judd 1974, p. 5).

Both reported and named the island, after the Captain, as in case of the *William Henry*, and after the ship, as in case of the *Halcyon*. The discovery of Wake Atoll by Captain Wake in the *Prince William Henry* is, however, disputed by Ward (1967, III, pp. 417-418). The *Boston Gazette* of 18 September 1797 carried an item by a Joseph Pierpont (1797), traveller on the *Prince William Henry*, who mentions that they discovered a coral reef and two sand islands at 16°45'N 169°38'W. A similar press notice with identical co-ordinates was carried in several other U.S. newspapers, namely the *Massachusetts Mercury (Semi-Weekly)* (Boston 19 Sept, 1797), *Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* (Boston, 11 Sept. 1797) and the *Columbian Sentinel* (Boston 13 Sept. 1797). When discussing the newspaper story, Ward argues that the coral reefs discovered by Wake are those of Johnston Atoll (16°53'N, 169°31'W), as the co-ordinates given in the newspaper do not even remotely tally with those of Wake Atoll (19°18'N 166°38'E).

### WAKE AS A DANGER

In the early 1800s a number of vessels, apparently fruitlessly, tried to locate Wake Island, such as the Russian Captain Otto v. Kotzebue in the *Rurick* in 1817 (Kotzebue 1830, p. 269), Captain F.W. Beechy in HMS *Blossom* in March 1827, and Captain Brown in the *Morning Star*. The atolls coordinates were given with a great variation (Table 1). While in those days the latitude could be determined with reasonable accuracy by the observations of stars and sun, the

determination of longitude depended on the accuracy and reliability of the chronometers carried on board and on the intensity of currents encountered *en route*.

The habit of exchanging even hearsay data as fact resulted in considerable chart confusion, and Wake suffered this along with the other islands. By 1828, besides being variously located, it carried a number of names: Douglas Island, Halcyon Island, Helsing Island, Haystrous Island, Halverd Island, Wake's Island, Waker's Island, Weeks Island, Wilson Island, Wreck Island. For reasons unclear it its also named "Eceuil" on French charts.<sup>2</sup>

This inaccuracy posed navigational dangers to the unwary captains. Amasa Delano, in the *Perseverance* in September 1806 reiterated a common sentiment:

*"There are several islets and rock, which lie directly in the track of vessels bound from the Sandwich*

*Islands [Hawaii] to Canton [in China], that are dangerous if fallen in with the night, two of which were discovered by captain Wake and are called Wake's Island and Rocks. I did not fall in with them"* (Amasa Delano, quoted after Dickson 1939).

In a similar vein, Captain Sproule, in the barque *Maria* in 1858 commented that:

*"At 5 P. M. the lookout on the foretop-gallant yard saw low land on the starboard bow. I went aloft and saw from the topsail yard a very low island, rather higher in the centre than at the ends, and covered with low bushes. It was dark before we approached it sufficiently near to make observations, but I am confident that would not be seen more than five miles off deck by daylight and in a dark night never in time to avoid it."* (Sproule, barque *Maria* in 1858, quoted after Anonymous 1898c)

Table 1. Co-ordinates that have been reported for Wake Atoll. The position given in the *Pacific Islands Pilot of 1956* is shown in bold.

Position	Source
16°49'N 169°40'W	as 'Week's Reef' U.S. Congress 1835
16°49'N 169°40'W	U.S. Congress 1835
17°48'N 186°12'W [=173°48'E]	Wake's Rocks; Delano, quoted after Dickson 1939
19°00'N 193°12'W [=166°48'E]	Wake's Island; Delano, quoted after Dickson 1939
19°06'N 163°33'E	Halycon I., U.S. Congress 1835
19°10'54"N 166°31'30"E	Wilkes 1845; Findlay 1886
19°10'N 166°23'E	Hunneywell 1824; 29 December 1824
19°10'N 166°48'E	Riddell 1854; 7 March 1853
19°11'N 166°31'E	Kaucher 1941, p. 124; <i>The Friend</i> (Honolulu) 1 Sept 1866
19°14'N 166°30'E	Logbook U.S.S. <i>Beaver</i> 19 June 1921
19°15'N 166°28'E	Logbook U.S.S. <i>Newport News</i> 30 October 1920
19°15'N 166°30'E	Wilkes 1840; Brigham 1900
19°15'N 166°32'E	Gardner ( <i>Bellona</i> ) in U.S. Congress 1835
19°15'N 166°33'E	S.S. <i>China</i> , Anonymous 1898d
19°16'N 166°37'E	Hobbs 1945
<b>19°17'N 166°37'E</b>	<b>Pacific Islands Pilot 1956</b>
19°17'N 166°48'E	unnamed island unsuccessfully searched for by Wilkes 1845
19°18'40"N 166°35'20"E	U.S.S. <i>Nitro</i> 1935 H.O. Chart No. 162
19°19'N 166°39'E	mean of positions; Anonymous 1898c
19°20'N 165°20'W (E ?)	'Maloon's Island' unsuccessfully searched for by Wilkes 1845
19°20'N 166°50'E	U.S. Congress 1835, p. 33
19°21'N 166°55'E	'Week's Island' or 'Wilson's Island' U.S. Congress 1835
19°23'N 165°33'E	'Halcyon I., acc. to a US captain, quoted in Kotzebue 1830
19°23'N 166°48'30"E	Gardener 1823; 5-6 May 1823
19°26'N 166°45'E	Bennett in U.S. Congress 1835
19°30'N 167°E	Vandervord 1870 ( <i>The Friend</i> 1 April 1871)
20°30'E 166°42'E	'Lamira' U.S. Congress 1835
?N 167°42'E	Andrews 1830; 30 April-2 May 1829;

As mentioned earlier, Halcyon is likely to be identical with Wake. In addition, a Helicon island was reported to be at  $22^{\circ}28'N$   $177^{\circ}05'E$  (U.S. Congress 1835, p. 25). During his exploring expedition, Wilkes also searched for "Maloon's Island" reported to be in position  $19^{\circ}20'N$   $165^{\circ}20'W$ , and for another island, reported to be in position  $19^{\circ}17'N$   $166^{\circ}48'E$  both of which he could not locate (Wilkes 1845, V p. 245). It is possible, given the general similarity of the positions with these of Wake,

that these islands were incorrectly reported independent discoveries of Wake.

Although most coordinates vary only little, it needs to be kept in mind that the atoll reportedly can only be seen from 5-10 miles and that at that latitude  $10'$  are equivalent of 9 miles. The variously reported positions of Wake, plotted in figure 1, show that the variability in longitude is quite large. The grey-shaded area indicates the visibility of the atoll from the topgallant mast head of a normal sailing vessel of the day during ideal conditions.

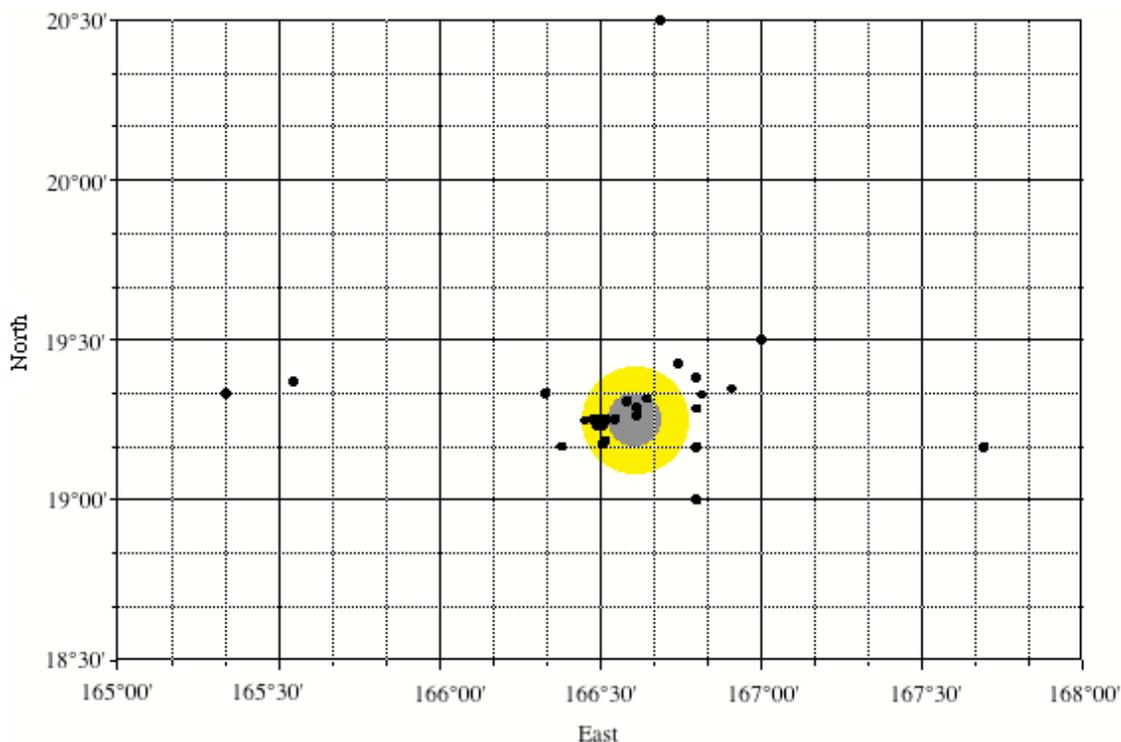


Figure 1. The various positions of Wake Atoll as reported in logbooks and the literature plotted against a 5-mile (dark shaded) and 10-mile (light shaded) visibility radius.

### THE WHALERS

During the heyday of Pacific whaling in the 1820s to 1850s, Wake Atoll was well known to the captains and first mates of the New England whalers (table 2). The island, however, was lacking water, low and barren of substantial vegetation, and so it is not surprising that only a few landed there for the island's sake. Wake was never made a major port of call, and apparently its treacherous reefs and surf only

served as a landmark better to be avoided. Some captains seem to have seen the island only from afar and did not properly adjudge their distance, for Captain E. Gardner of the *Bellona* mentions that he saw the island in 1823 and that it was wooded and about 20 to 25 miles long, which is quite an exaggeration (Aiman 1944, p. 41; Bryan 1959, p. 2; Votaw 1941, p. 52; U.S. Congress 1835).

A number of whaler's logbooks could be consulted which contain entries referring to Wake:<sup>3</sup> logbooks of the vessels *Foster* (Gardener 1824), *Lima* (Andrews 1830), *Pioneer* (Hathaway 1851), *Marengo* (Devoll 1851), *Harvest* (Riddell 1854), *Maria Theresia* (Swift 1851), *Mentor* and *Ocean Rover* (Veeder 1858). One of these whalers describes the atoll also as wooded while two others (*Lima* and *Bellona*) actually landed on Wake for "wooding". The entry for 30 April 1829 in the logbook of the *Lima* contains a very small sketch of Wake, with the annotation "don't forget Wakes Island" (Andrews 1830).

These descriptions appear rather surprising given the descriptions of the atoll in the botanical literature (see Fosberg 1959b; Fosberg & Sachet 1969) as well as by other whalers (cf. Ridell 1854) and other vessels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—for example, the whaler *Oracle* reported in 1865 that "[Wake] was covered with a low and sparse vegetation" (quoted after Dickson 1939). However, it is quite possible that in the early nineteenth century Wake Atoll was substantially more heavily vegetated and wooded than today. It can be expected that the environmental balance in such an arid area was rather fragile and could easily be upset by the human impact during the (unsustainable) wood collecting exercises.

Some of the whalers such as the *Foster* (Gardener 1824) and the *Rajah* (U.S. Congress 1835) observed that the shallow lagoon contained *beche-le-mar*, edible holothurians or "sea cucumbers", which could be dried and sold to China. It seems, however, that unlike other areas of the Pacific the resources on Wake were never continually exploited—or that they were overexploited by the first visitors.

### THE U.S. EXPLORING EXPEDITION

Wake's coordinates had been given with a great variation and, in addition to Wake, another island, Halcyon, was reported to exist in the vicinity. The U.S. Exploring Expedition under Commander Ch. Wilkes could finally ascertain in 1840 that there was no island in Halcyon's purported position, and that Halcyon and

Wake were one and the same. The first detailed descriptions of the atoll stem from this voyage. Staff of the U.S. Exploring Expedition vessel *Vincennes* spent a total of five hours on the atoll, conducting scientific investigations (Pickering 1858, p. 246-247; Peale 1848; Wilkes 1845, V, pp. 284-285) and making a map of the atoll (Wilkes 1858: map 94). Wake was a welcome diversion from the monotony of life at sea and provided the Wilkes expedition with "some recreation for a few hours, and much satisfaction in obtaining a series of observations on magnetism" (Wilkes 1845, V, p. 285).

However, not everyone of the *Vincennes* crew was enthralled by the appearance of Wake. Lieutenant James Alden, for example, does not find Wake worth inclusion in his otherwise quite detailed journal (Lieutenant James Alden, 1842).

Although it has been frequently asserted by various authors (Anonymous 1898d; Pratt 1964, p. 76), there is no evidence in Wilkes' account or the papers of other members of the expedition that the atoll was formally annexed on behalf of the United States, most likely because of its rather desolate nature (cf. Votaw 1941, p. 52; Heintz 1947, p. 65).

### THE GUANO HUNTERS

Following the discovery of sizeable guano deposits on islands off the coast of Peru and the discovery of deposits on other islands in the Central Pacific, the U.S. Congress enacted the Guano Act of 1856, which allowed U.S. civilians to take possession of such islands, provided they were uninhabited, not yet claimed by other countries, and a concession was applied for. Although some sources claim that Wake was exploited by guano collectors (Anonymous 1898b), the list of over 50 islands for which concessions were actually applied for does not include Wake Atoll (Moore 1906, p. I 567-577).

### THE WRECK OF THE LIBELLE

As mentioned, because of the low-lying character of its islands, Wake could not be seen from afar and thus proved to be a considerable shipping hazard. The fears by Sproule (1858) that a

vessel at night might not see the reef until it was too late was to come true less than ten years later, on the night of March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1866. The barque *Libelle*, of Bremen (Germany), commanded by Captain Tobias, had been *en route* from San Francisco to HongKong via Honolulu, when it ran aground on the east reef. The *Libelle*, sometimes addressed as *La Belle* in the U.S. references of the time (*cf.* references quoted in Ward 1967, VII, p. 481ff.), was a 650-ton iron-hulled barque with a reputation of being a fast and reliable vessel on the San Francisco–HongKong run. According to some sources, the *Libelle* was the third vessel lost by Captain Tobias (*Hawaiian Gazette* Honolulu 18 August 1866; quoted after Ward 1967, VIII, p. 485 ff.).

On board were among others four members of an English opera troupe *en route* to commence a tour of the Far East. The group was comprised of the then 50-year old opera singer Anna Bishop-Schultz (see below), her husband Martin Schultz, a diamond merchant from New York, her assistant-cum-maid Maria Phelan, and Charles Lascelles, her musical accompaniment.

In addition, on board were Eugene Miller Van Reed, a 28-year old American, being the Hawai'ian Consul General to Japan, and Kisabo a Japanese, being the envoy from the Shogun of Japan.<sup>4</sup> Both were travelling to Kanagawa (Japan) to negotiate a treaty between Hawai'i and the Shogunate, and to arrange for the recruitment of Japanese labour for the cane fields on Hawai'i (Van Reed 1866, cited after Ward 1967). The two parties had met up on board the *Ajax*, which had taken them from San Francisco to Honolulu, and decided to continue the voyage from Honolulu to Hongkong together. Further, there were five unnamed Europeans (three men and two women) in the cabins, and ten Chinese (six men, two women, two babies) in the steerage.

### 'Life' on Wake

The vessel had struck the reef in a gale during the night, when visibility was very low and there was little chance of avoiding the disaster. The vessel was firmly run aground with little

water coming in even though the hull had been pierced. Throughout the night the ship gradually filled with water and the stern settled. This allowed the swell frequently to crash over the wreck, eventually washing off one of the three boats.

Some bedding and a few utensils had been taken from the cabins, and passengers and crew spent the night on board the vessel stuck on the reef. The next morning passengers and crew reached the shore without casualties despite the heavy surf. Because the ship had filled below deck, the cabins were inaccessible and only a few items and that bedding that had already been taken on deck could be taken ashore. The provisions taken ashore were quite limited, namely of a barrel of beef, several bags of flour and some kegs of wine.

A brushwood shelter was erected for the four European women and a camp organised. The island was found to be barren and no water could be found despite repeated digging for wells on various spots of the island. Even though the sailors caught seabirds and fish for breakfast on the morning of the second day, the lack of water became a serious problem, as the issue of wine in lieu of water was unsatisfactory and anyway, in view of the limited supply, a short term solution.

After three days of digging holes for wells, the crew succeeded in hoisting a 200 gallon water tank from the wreck onto dry land. Sea birds, which were found to be unafraid of people, could easily be caught and became a staple in the diet of the 30 stranded people.

All valuables and some of the cargo, especially the mercury, were brought ashore as well. The Captain, having salvaged the valuables and the mercury, buried the material on the atoll. Finally, after three weeks on the island without finding food or water (even though the prospecting for wells continued), it was decided to leave the island and to try to reach the Marianas in an open boat. The wreck of the *Libelle* had since sunk, and with it went any chance of a further salvage of food items.

Much consideration seems to have been given in finding a suitable point of departure, as the encircling reef and surf were prohibitive.

The boats were dragged across the sand cay into the lagoon, and launched from there. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, they set out for Guam, some 1400 miles to the west, taking along all provisions that had been saved from the wreck. The 22 passengers and some crew were in a 22 foot longboat under the command of the first officer (or chief mate), while the Captain and the remainder of the crew sailed in the 20 foot gig. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1866, after thirteen days of sailing and depredation the longboat safely reached Guam, centre of the Spanish colony of the Marianas Islands (Ibanez del Carmen, *Chronicles of the Marianas*. Entry 9-4-1868. Quoted after Davis 1996). The Captain with eight crew, however, perished in the gig. Subsequent searches mounted by the Governor of Guam failed to find any trace of either the gig or its crew. It was assumed that the gig had been swamped in the cross seas three days after leaving the atoll. Some sources claim that the perished party consisted of the Captain, four crew and three Chinese, the latter either crew or, more likely, passengers (Votaw 1941, Dierdorff 1943, p. 500).

### **Anna Bishop**

We are so well informed about the event because a then famous opera star was among the party, and the story of the open sea voyage was carried by a great number of newspapers of the day.<sup>5</sup>

Anna Bishop (née Riviere), born London 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1810, was an English soprano, who made her debut in 1831 shortly before her marriage to the British opera and song composer Henry Bishop. She sang mainly sacral music and English songs written by her husband, and, touring the provinces quickly attained a reputation. In 1839 she sang Italian opera, in Dublin, Edinburgh and London accompanied by Harpist Nicholas Bochsa. Soon after, she eloped with Bochsa to Hamburg, leaving her husband and three children, and beginning a life on the road. The public scandal of the elopement and the somewhat shady reputation of Bochsa (as a forger and bigamist) brought her immediate fame in the press. From 1839 she and Bochsa gave performances in all

major European towns (except in France, where Bochsa would have been arrested). They performed in St. Petersburg for a year, where she gave 260 concerts, and in Naples for 27 months, where she appeared 327 times in 20 different operas. After a brief stint back in England, she toured from 1847 to 1852 New York, Mexico, Cuba and California, New York again, San Francisco and then Sydney. After Bochsa's death in Sydney (6 Jan 1856) she toured Chile, Argentina and Brazil, returning to New York in 1858, where she married Martin Schultz, a diamond merchant. In 1858-59 she toured England again, followed by a tour of North America including Canada and Cuba. Leaving from San Francisco via Honolulu on a tour of the Far East, they came to be stranded on Wake.

As a traveller on concert tour she carried with her a voluminous wardrobe, some special stage costume pieces, props and stage-jewellery as well as a great deal of real jewellery. The main loss, however, were her music scores, many of them originals, specifically written for her by Bochsa, and her scrap books and letters. All of these things were lost in the wreckage on Wake and had to be replaced, where possible.

After her stay on Guam, she continued her tour and sang at Manila, Hong Kong, Singapore and various locales in India, returning to England via Australia. After a return to New York she embarked on another world tour, including paces such as Sydney, Cape Town and Madeira. She died on 18 or 19 March 1884 in New York. Anna Bishop has been called one of the most popular English singers of her generation, and judged to have possessed a brilliant voice and a masterly technique.<sup>6</sup>

### **The cargo**

The cargo of the vessel, as cleared at San Francisco on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, consisted of 1 case of cigars, 4098 qt. sacks of flour, 30 cases of hardware, 150 packages of old iron, 1000 flasks of mercury (quicksilver), 1 case of seeds, 2050 sacks of wheat and 10 kegs of wine – a cargo in total valued at \$51,555.27. In addition, the vessel carried “treasure”, *ie.* coins, precious stones and the like, with a value of \$93,943.08, dis-

patched by Messrs. Macondray & Co, of San Francisco on consignment for a trading house in Hongkong. The treasure was buried on the island to await further salvage (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 August 1866 quoted after Ward 1967, p. VII 481ff.).

Several secondary sources mention that the cargo or the “treasure” was valued at \$300,000 (Votaw 1941; Dierdorff 1943, p. 500; Heinl 1947; Kaucher 1941, p. 126; Bryan 1959). Unless the dollars referred to a different currency, for example the (cheaper) Bolivian or Peruvian Dollars versus the U.S. Dollars there seems to be some confusion and exaggeration over the years. The total value of the cargo including specie was about \$150,000, which at the exchange of 2:1 to the Chilean Dollar could account for the discrepancy in reporting.

### Initial salvage

After arrival in Guam, the shipwrecked were hospitably received by the Spanish governor, Francisco Moscoso y Lara. The Spanish, “hav[ing] no store there” provided the survivors “with a few materials to make up a little clothing” (Bishop-Schultz 1866). A schooner, the *Ana*, incidentally owned by the son-in-law of the Spanish governor, the British citizen Johnston, was chartered and dispatched by the governor of Guam to search in the vicinity of the central Marianas and further east for the gig with the Captain and the remaining crew. The *Ana* was also given the orders to sail for Wake and, with the first officer as a guide, to recover the treasure buried on the atoll (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 August 1866 quoted after Ward 1967, VII, p. 484; Anonymous 1898c). By the laws of salvage at the time, the salvage party, *ie.* Johnston and his crew, had the rights to one third of the proceeds, while the Spanish crown would claim the remaining two thirds (Davis 1996). Until the search for the crew had been completed, and until some sort of inquest had been held into the loss of the vessel, the passengers were bound to stay on Guam. It would appear that only Mr. van Reed because of his “official position” (*Hawaiian Gazette*, Honolulu 18 August 1866; quoted after Ward 1967; VIII 485 ff.), and the Japanese citizen were allowed

to leave Guam. After four weeks they left for Hong Kong on board of the Sydney barque *Finculo* which had stopped over en route from Australia.

The others were kept back in Guam until the treasure had been safely recovered. Apparently the salvage party took two days to find the treasure, as all marks left had been “thrown down and washed away by the sea”. It seems that what was recovered was the specie, but not the general cargo. Davies in his biography of Anna Bishop claims that 800 flasks of mercury were recovered by the *Ana*, which, in the light of the subsequent salvage operations and their successes, appears to be unlikely. According to several secondary sources the “treasure” has never been recovered. This seems to be more a lore of “hidden treasures” than reality, especially in the light of the *Ana* recovery party and subsequent salvage missions. In addition, given the reasonable secrecy with which sea voyages could be undertaken in those days, the specie could well have been recovered but not declared.

The *Ana* returned on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1866, and on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1866 the passengers were allowed to leave Guam—on board the *Ana* which took them to Manila.

As a result of the Spanish government’s action of taking two thirds of the salvage proceeds, litigation ensued that involved the San Francisco agents, the Hong Kong merchants for whom the consignment was destined, and the Spanish government in Guam (Davis 1996).

### Salvage operations

The event, as well as the amount of specie involved, could not be kept secret for long, and vessels going from Guam to Honolulu must have brought news of the event. Following this a number of vessels, mainly from Honolulu, but apparently also from China, went in the following two years to Wake to salvage some of the cargo, mainly the flasks of quicksilver. These wrecking voyages were not uncommon at the time, often conducted on a speculative basis, and many isolated atolls and reefs provided rich pickings.



Table 2. Chronology of events of the wreck of the Libelle

Date	Event	Newspaper reports
1866, January 23	<i>Libelle</i> clears customs in San Francisco	
1866, January 24	<i>Libelle</i> leaves San Francisco	
1866, February 16	<i>Libelle</i> arrives Honolulu	
1866, February 18	<i>Libelle</i> leaves Honolulu	
1866, March 4	Libelle wrecked on Wake	
1866, March 27	Shipwrecked leave for Guam	
1866, April 8	Longboat arrives at Guam	
1866, April 10	Schooner <i>Ana</i> sails to search for survivors and to salvage some of the cargo	
1866, May 7	Eugene Van Reed and Kisabo are allowed to leave Guam for Hongkong in the <i>Finculo</i>	
1866, May 7	Anna Bishop writes letter to San Francisco	
1866, May 13	Eugene Van Reed writes letter to US press from Hongkong	
1866, May 31		<i>China Mail</i>
1866, June 21	<i>Ana</i> returns from Wake	
1866, June 25	Passengers are allowed to leave, depart for Manila	
		<i>Alta California</i>
1866, July 31		<i>Boston Daily Advertiser</i>
1866, July 31		<i>New York Semi-Weekly Times</i>
1866, August 1		<i>Boston Daily Advertiser</i>
1866, August 1		<i>The Daily Herald</i> (Newburyport, Mass.)
1866, August 2		<i>New York Observer</i>
1866, August 4		<i>New England Farmer</i> (Boston)
1866, August 18		<i>Hawaiian Gazette</i> (Honolulu)
1866, August 23		<i>Boston Daily Advertiser</i>
1866, September 1		<i>The Friend</i> (Honolulu)
1866, October 15		<i>Evening Standard</i> (New Bedford, Mass.)
1867, January	<i>Caroline Mills</i> leaves on wrecking voyage	
1867, April 22	<i>Caroline Mills</i> returns to Honolulu	
1867, April 27		<i>Pacific Commercial Advertiser</i> (Honolulu)
1867, May 1		<i>The Friend</i> (Honolulu)
1867, May 9	<i>Hokulele</i> leaves Honolulu for Wake	
1867, May 31	<i>Hokulele</i> arrives at Wake	
1867, June 7		<i>Boston Daily Advertiser</i>
1867, June 7		<i>Daily Evening Traveller</i> (Boston)
1867, June 7		<i>The Boston Daily Evening Transcript</i>
1867, June 22	<i>Hokulele</i> arrives at Honolulu	
1867, September	<i>Moi Wabine</i> from Hawaii arrives at Wake, a salvage party is landed	
1867, September	<i>Moi Wabine</i> blown off in gale and perishes	
1868, March	Salvage party rescued by <i>Cleo</i>	
1868, April 29	<i>Cleo</i> arrives at Honolulu	

At least five vessels are on record as having gone to Wake (table 2). The first was the *Hokulele* of Hawaii under the command of Thomas

R. Forster, which sailed on 9<sup>th</sup> May and returned on 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1867 having salvaged 247 flasks of mercury, while a vessel from

China had salvaged another 248 flasks (Bryan 1959). Little is known about the latter vessel, but it is possible that this trip was brought about by the returning Chinese survivors of the *Libelle* wreck.

It appears that the teams camped on Wake or Peale Islands for the duration of the individual salvage exercises. Some even stayed longer: the vessel *Moi Waibine*, which had brought one salvage party, was blown away three days after arrival and apparently perished in a gale, marooning the salvage party on Wake for five or six months until another, different salvage vessel, the *Cleo*, arrived. In view of the problem encountered by the *Libelle* survivors one wonders how this group managed to obtain enough water to survive.<sup>7</sup> The salvage party returned to Honolulu on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1868 with some anchor, copper and 240 flasks of mercury.

Early salvage parties, such as that landed by the *Moi Waibine*, comprising Captain English, T.R. Forster, who had already come some months previously with the *Hokulele*, and 8 Hawaiian divers, simply used skin diving techniques to salvage the cargo from the sunken wreck. Other salvage parties, such as that of the *Caroline Mills*, Capt. Nicholas (or Nickols), brought state of the art diving equipment ('submarine armour') in order to retrieve the cargo, indicating the importance and value which was attached to it.<sup>8</sup> The *Caroline Mills* had left Honolulu in January 1867 on a three months wrecking cruise. While the main objective had been to salvage from the wreck of the *Libelle*, the voyage also included a visit to Bokak Atoll in the Marshalls. The *Caroline Mills* returned on April 24<sup>th</sup>, with some flasks of quicksilver, as well as material garnered from Bokak (or Gaspar Rico on old charts). At the latter place the *Caroline Mills* encountered the remains of a 'several hundred ton' teak-built shipwreck dating to after 1840 as the hull sheeting plates had been made of 'composition metal' (ie. Muntz Metal) (*The Friend*, Honolulu 1 May 1867).

But despite all these salvage operations the shipwreck of the *Libelle* was not 'picked clean.' Brass fittings of the vessel, anchor chains, a

ship's block and some lava rock carried as ballast in the vessel, as well as lignum-vitae dead-eyes were found on the beach as late as 1940. The anchor of the *Libelle*, found by Taussig in 1898 had been salvaged in 1935 by members of the Pan American Airways construction team and placed as a marker before the entrance of the PAA hotel (Taussig 1935[1898]); Dierdorff 1943, p. 500; Heidl 1947, p. 65; Votaw 1941; Anonymous 1898c; Dierdorff 1943, p. 500; Heidl 1947, p. 65; Kaucher 1941, p. 126), which subsequently became one of the few attractions available to trans-Pacific air travellers on their stop-over on Wake (Kaucher 1941, p. 126; Drummond-Hay 1939, p. 338; Parr 1941, p. 97).

#### ANOTHER SHIPWRECK

Four years after the wreckage of the *Libelle* another vessel, the British China tea clipper *Dashing Wave*, commanded by Captain Vandervord, ran aground on the reef, again in the middle of the night. When the vessel began to break up, the captain and twelve crew took to the long-boat. The evacuation appears to have been rather chaotic: while the captain secured a chart and nautical instruments, he left a compass behind. The crew loaded a case of colonial wine, a bag and a half of bread, as well as two buckets, but no drinking water.

With a makeshift sail made from blankets and suspended on an oar, they slowly sailed and drifted westward. For the first five days without rain, the crew survived on a bottle of 'Cawarra' (Coonawarra?) a day.

After 30 days the boat reached Kosrae, where they were met by a canoe taking provisions from one island to another. Captain Vandervord apparently tried to trade so that he could sail on. As the Kosraean in the canoe declined, they had to put in to Kosrae, where they were very hospitably received. After the boat had been fitted out with the support of King George with a mast and sails and provisions, Captain Vandervord and some of the crew set sail for Kiribati, but after running into a storm had to return to Kosrae. Eventually they were picked up by a British trader which took them to Fiji (*The Friend* 1 April 1871; *Fiji*

*Times* 7 January 1871. Quoted after Ward 1967, VIII, pp. 500-502).

### US ANNEXATION

Following the Spanish-American war the U.S.A., having acquired overseas Pacific territory in the form of Guam and the Philippines, found themselves in the dire need of reliable communications between the mainland and its new trans-Pacific possessions (cf. Scrymser 1900). Wake Island, suitably located in the centre of the northern equatorial Pacific, was seen as the ideal spot for a submarine cable relay station (Clyde 1935, p. 24; May 1973, p. 133). Thus, Wake was several times claimed for the U.S.A., when several vessels going to or returning from the Philippines stopped and raised the American flag. According to some sources (cf. Anonymous 1898b) these landings only occurred in order to give Army troops time to get off the ship and let them have some firm ground under their feet.

General F.V.Green, commanding the 2nd Detachment of the Philippine Expedition Force annexed it from the S.S.*China* on the Fourth of July 1898 (Anonymous 1898c). In the same month Wake was reputedly again annexed by the U.S., this time by General Merritt from the U.S. Army Transport *Thomas*.<sup>9</sup> Apparently again in 1898 the U.S. Revenue cutter *McCulloch* landed a few men on Wake with a launch using the channel between Wilkes and Wake (Dickson 1939; Taussig 1935). In none of these cases the annexation had been authorised by the U.S. President or the U.S. Congress.<sup>10</sup>

Formal annexation occurred on 17 January 1899,<sup>11</sup> when the U.S. flag was hoisted by crew from the gunboat U.S.S. *Bennington*, commanded by Commander Edward D.Taussig (Taussig 1935). The vessel had been sent by the U.S. President to Guam to attend the administration of the newly acquired possession there (Carano & Sanchez 1964, p. 179), and had been ordered to stop over at Wake to formally annex that island for the U.S.A. Reputedly, the orders had been given on 24 December 1898 (Anonymous 1898a). A flagstaff was erected, a flag nailed to the mast and a brass plate with an in-

scription nailed to the base of the flagstaff. The position of the flag staff (19°17'50" North, 166°31' East) was determined and the landing party and transport vessel left, apparently on the same day.<sup>12</sup>

E.Taussig conducted a survey and saw some evidence of wreckage on the eastern reef of Wake Island, namely an anchor and a lower mast (Taussig 1935, p. 807). These remains are likely to have belonged to the wreck of the *Libelle*, which had gone ashore at that part of the shore. During Taussig's investigation of the islands no evidence of human habitation was encountered on the western or eastern part of the atoll.

The annexation of Wake by the USA marks the beginning of the modern history of Wake and ship visits to Wake increased manifold, culminating in the 1935 development of the Pan American Airways flying boat station.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 In some sources October 2<sup>nd</sup> is also given as the date of sighting.
  - 2 The Tanager Expedition of 1923 first named the individual islets of the atoll. While the main island was Wake, that to the southwest of it was called Wilkes, and that to the north east Peale, both chosen in honour of prominent members of the 1840 U.S.Exploring Expedition (Bryan 1959). Upon the capture of the atoll in December 1941 the Japanese called the atoll Otori-Shima/Otori-jima (Otori Jima - from verb *ot-toru* = to snatch or seize in a hurry, *jima* = Island). Peale was renamed to Hani-Shima/Hani-jima and Wilkes to Ashi-shima/Aji-jima.
- In addition to Wake proper (Eneen-Kio), there are Wake's Rocks (reported by Delano [quoted after Dickson 1939] to be in 17°48'N 186°12'W [=173o48'E]), One source (Anonymous 1898c) mentions that Wake should not be confused with "Week's" Island off the western coast of Patagonia (South America). In addition, there is a Walkers Island, position 3°58'N 148°10'W, off the coast of South America.
3. A large number of whaler's logbooks has been made available on microfilm by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in Canberra. For the index see Langdon 1978; 1979. As can be seen from table 2, there were also several other whalers, the logbooks of which have not been filmed. In

- the 1850s some 50-60 whalers were operating these waters each year. It is probable that many of them landed on the atoll.
4. The name of the Japanese envoy is given as Kisaboro or Kisabow, most likely a phonetic distortion.
  5. Such as the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston 31 July 1866; 1 August 1866; 23 August 1866); *Evening Standard* (New Bedford, Mass. 15 October 1866); *Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu 18 August 1866); *New England Farmer* (Boston 4 August 1866); *New York Observer* (New York 2 August 1866); *New York Semi-Weekly Times* (New York 31 July 1866); *The Daily Herald* (Newburyport, Mass. 1 August 1866); *The Friend* (Honolulu 1 September 1866) (all quoted after Ward 1967).
  6. For biographical sketches of Anna Bishop see Temperley (1980), Rosenthal & Warrack (1979:50-51) and Squire (1917); Davis 1996.
  7. In later times a Japanese group of bird poachers used a distill (Bryan 1959).
  8. *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Honolulu 27 April 1867; similar report in *The Friend*, Honolulu 1 May 1867. See also *Boston Daily Advertiser* 7 June 1867, and *The Boston Daily Evening Transcript* 7 June 1867, both of which also carried a note on a shipwreck discovered on Bokak Atoll. Quoted after Ward 1967: III 496-498.
  9. Several files were searched for material on these annexations, as the U.S. National Archives (Washington) do not hold the logbooks of the U.S. Army Transports (which seem to have been discarded by the Army). A number of files were found in Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Water Transportation 1834-1900, Box 107 Theobald-Tioea, but no pertinent material was located.
  10. Some sources purport that this was the official annexation. Cf. Webster 1949:1233.
  11. In the same year Japan seized Marcus Island (24°34'N 154°E; 1000 miles NW of Wake) from Spain in order to utilise it as a cable station (Freeman 1951:362).
  12. Report of the Secretary of the Navy 1900 (House Document 3, 56th Congress, 2nd Session, Page 453). The date in this report is erroneously given as January 17, 1900. See also Report of the Secretary of the Navy 1899 (House Document 3, 56th Congress, 1st Session, Page 415).—The U.S. then frequently stated sovereignty over Wake: Letter Mr. Hill, Acting Secretary of State to Messrs. Perry, Ma-  
son & Co. 18 April 1900. 244 Ms. Dom.Let. 381. Letter Mr. Hill, Acting Secretary of State to Mr. Page. 17 February 1900. 243 Ms. Dom.Let. 246.

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