



National Museums Scotland Solomon Islands Collection



MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION

Esmée
Fairbairn
Collections
Fund



COLLECTIONS LEVEL DESCRIPTION

Data Entry form

Title of the Collection	Solomon Islands collection, National Museums Scotland
Author(s)	Eve Haddow
Curator responsible for collection (if different from author)	Principal Curator, Oceania, Americas and Africa
Date Completed	23 rd September 2014
<p>There are 498 objects in the collection from the Solomon Islands (including the North Solomon Islands)</p> <p>This large collection dates mainly from the 19th and early 20th centuries. There are 118 items of clothing and personal ornaments, including an ear ornament strung with human teeth said to have been worn by Tarasow, head chief of Bambytanee, North East Coast of Ysabel, Solomon Islands. There are four ceremonial maces (<i>war i hau</i>), in one of which only the shaft remains. There are also three staffs and a ceremonial axe and adze. The collection includes two overmodelled skulls, one provenanced to Rubiana Island and bought from W Oldman.</p> <p>200 items can be classified as arms and armour including: 45 wooden clubs; 18 bows; 91 arrows; 39 spears and spearheads; two arm guards; and five shields. Four shields are of basketry. The fifth is a rare ceremonial type from Guadalcanal of woven cane, coated with plant resin, decorated with red and black pigment and inlaid with pearl shell (A.1948.425).</p> <p>There are nine canoe ornaments, five of which are prow figures (<i>totoishu</i>) with pearl shell inlay. One is from the University of Edinburgh collection which was transferred to the Royal Museum in 1854 (A.UC.586). A canoe ornament of feathers and trade cloth on a palm wood shaft was collected by Admiral Edward Henry Meggs Davis, commander of HMS <i>Royalist</i>, 1890-3 (Davis catalogue no. 579). There are eight wooden feast bowls inlaid with pearl shell, three are directly attributed to Makira from the collection of Admiral John Erskine who was in the Solomon Islands in 1850.</p> <p>61 items are from the Santa Cruz Islands including four woven bags and a loom, seven dance clubs, and six coils of feather currency (<i>tau</i>) one with a bundle of barkcloth wrapping. Ten items were collected by J Cumming Dewar on his voyage on the yacht <i>Nyanza</i> which visited the Santa Cruz islands in 1888. Eleven items are from the collection of Harry G Beasley including two carved male figures and a head rest in the shape of a double-headed animal decorated with red and black pigment.</p> <p>75 items from the Solomon Islands collection came from HG Beasley's collection in five acquisitions from 1935-54. This includes part of a wooden house post with figurative carving (A.1954.125), twenty-three items of body adornment, and a lidded fishing tackle box from Ontong Java atoll containing complete and partial fishhooks (eleven parts classified as one item).</p> <p>60 items are from North Solomon Islands, which politically form part of Papua New Guinea. This includes 19 ornamented paddle clubs used in dance from Buka Island. There are 17 spears carved and ornamented, most of which have red and yellow orchid stem binding. Another spear provenanced to the North Solomon Islands is of carved wood with some pearl shell inlay and plant fibre binding and was purchased from WD Webster in 1901. There are three fishhooks from the villages of Tapasanwata, Totei and Sikoto on Bougainville Island. These come from Reverend AH Voyce of the Methodist Mission via Harry G Beasley.</p>	

Produced as part of *Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums: Unlocking their knowledge and potential* project 2013-2014. For full information and resources visit www.nms.ac.uk/pacific

Three items are associated with John (Jack) Renton who lived on Maana'oba Island for seven years after being shipwrecked. The three items are a comb, a turtleshell finger ring in the style of a Scottish 'lovers knot', and a necklace of shell and human teeth given to Renton by a chief. These are on long term loan to Stromness Museum, Orkney.

There are three neck ornaments made in Fiji collected by Constance Gordon-Cumming that feature decorated shell plaques from the Solomon Islands. These have been included as part of the Fijian collection.

Have any aspects of the collection been published? Please provide bibliographic references if available.

Idiens, D (1982), *Pacific Art in the Royal Scottish Museum*. Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum (A.1893.300; A.1900.234; A.1902.48; A.1922.664; A.1924.858; A.1926.79; A.1933.40; A.1948.425; A.1954.125; A.1954.126; A.1954.129; A.1954.160; A.1954.161)

Kaepler, A, Kaufmann, C & Newton, D (1993), *L'Art Oceanien*, Citadelles and Mazenod (A.1948.425)

D'Alleva, A (1998), *Art of the Pacific*, London: Everyman Art Library, p.87 (A.1948.425)

Waite, D (2000), 'An Artefact/Image text of head-hunting motifs', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 109 (1), pp.115-144 (A.1924.448)

Gathercole, P & A. Clarke (1979), *Survey of the Oceanian Collections in Museums in the United Kingdom and Ireland*. UNESCO.

Kwasnik, Elizabeth (ed.) (1994), *A Wider World: Collections of Foreign Ethnography in Scotland*. National Museums of Scotland