

Climate

The Group lies within the hurricane belt. Hurricane damage occurs in some parts of the Group roughly once every two years. Within recent years the most destructive storms have occurred in 1935, 1943, and 1946.

The climate of the Lower Group is mild and equable, except in the summer months. At Rarotonga the mean annual temperature is 74.5 degrees. February, the warmest month, has a mean temperature of 78.6 degrees, while July and August are the coolest months, both with a mean temperature of 70.8 degrees. The average annual rainfall is 84 in. In the Lower Group the rainfall is adequate and there is little danger of serious drought. In the Northern Group, however, the problem of water-supply is acute. Although the annual rainfall may appear to be adequate—the average for Penrhyn over ten years is 71 in. —the fall is very unreliable. For example, the total for the twelve months commencing August, 1941, was 151 in., yet only 36 in. were recorded for the corresponding period commencing August, 1938.

Meteorological services in the Group are provided by the New Zealand Meteorological Service, hurricane warnings being issued when necessary from the Meteorological Office, Nadi, Fiji.

B. HISTORY

According to the traditional history of Rarotonga, the island was settled by Karika from Samoa, and Tangiia from Tahiti. The two warriors are said to have met at sea and, joining forces, landed on Rarotonga an estimated twenty-six generations ago.

The European discovery of Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Takutea, Mitiaro, and Manuae was made by Captain Cook in 1773 during his second voyage of discovery. Rarotonga and Mauke were not discovered for another fifty years, when the Rev. John Williams successfully located them from information supplied to him in Aitutaki and other adjacent islands.

The London Missionary Society won many adherents in the Lower Group during the early years of the nineteenth century, and until 1891 the predominant governing and law-making organization in the Group was the Church. The laws were a mixture of ecclesiastical rules and secular enactments imposed by the necessities of the day.

On 20th September, 1888, a Protectorate was declared over Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, and Manuae. In the same year British sovereignty was assumed over Penrhyn. A British Consul was stationed at Rarotonga and remained until the end of 1890, when he was replaced by Mr. F. J. Moss as British Resident. Mr. Moss proceeded to establish organs of government, and in 1891 a system of local Island Councils was inaugurated, together with an elective Federal Parliament meeting at Rarotonga, and an Executive Council. In 1900 the British Resident, Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Gudgeon, conveyed a petition from the Arikis, Mataiapos, and Rangatiras of Rarotonga, Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro praying that the Federal Parliament be abolished and that the islands be annexed to New Zealand. Accordingly the sovereignty of the Lower Group was ceded to Her Majesty Queen Victoria. On the 13th May of the following year the British Government issued an Imperial Order in Council under the Colonial Boundaries Act, 1895, extending the boundaries of the Colony of New Zealand to include the Cook Islands, as the Lower Group were then loosely termed, and other islands (the Northern Group and Niue) within certain defined limits. A Proclamation issued in Auckland on 10th June, 1901, formally applied the Imperial Order in Council, and from that date the Cook Islands became part of New Zealand.

C. PEOPLE

The Cook Island Maori is a Polynesian and is closely related to the New Zealand Maori. There is a strong resemblance between these two peoples in tradition, language, and custom. Many of the tribes in both places are able to trace their descent back to