

Pitt Rivers Museum ms collections
Spencer papers Box 1 E Haddon

Haddon letter 1

May 11 1900

[Anthropological Institute,
3 Hanover Square. W.]

Inisfail Hills Road

Cambridge

Dear Mrs Spencer,

Permit me to offer you my sincere congratulations on the well earned honour conferred on your husband.

Not only has your husband done extremely good work in Zoology but he has accomplished one of the best pieces of work in anthropology that has ever been done. His book on the Central Tribes is a model of accurate and exhaustive fieldwork and has done much to take away the reproach of British Anthropology – viz. that with all the opportunities of the Empire we do so very little to study the native races over whom we rule.

I hope that the gratitude with which all anthropologists here received his book will stimulate your husband to continue in his anthropological studies.

Although I have not had the pleasure of meeting you I could not refrain from adding my congratulations to the many you will doubtless receive.

If you can come to the Geographical on Monday, I shall feel gratified.

Believe me to be

Yours faithfully

Alfred C. Haddon

Haddon letter 2

[Royal College of Science,
Dublin.]

Oct. 23. 1900

My dear Spencer –

I was very pleased to hear from you this morning. It is very good of you & Gillen to devote so much of your time to studying the natives, though they are well worth it & I, for one, most certainly believe that you are doing the very best anthropological work that can at the present time be done in Australia.

Give my kind regards to your wife & tell her how I honour her for letting you go. My wife & I know full well the wrench this must be to her – and to you; but it is, after all, much worse for the waiter than for the worker.

I am in treaty with a publisher for the popular account of my expedition, but the publishing trade is thoroughly upset owing to the wars [1] & to election – I hope, however, it will be out early next year.

My colleagues & I are at work on the memoir, but it will be some time yet before it is published – It will come out in parts & will be published by the University of Cambridge

I wish we were more forward so that we might possibly have been of some use to you.

May I make a few suggestions. I hardly like to as your work is simply magnificent & you seem to be alive to everything

We got very interested in Cat's cradle [insert] or string puzzles & tricks [end insert] There may be something in it of comparative as well as intrinsic interest. I have a suspicion it is sometimes – or has been magical – & it may have been a mnemonic. The difficulty of drawing all the stages is very great & also unsatisfactory so we devised a method of describing the processes – so that any one can make them. It is always necessary to learn them first – you can't write it down from seeing a native do it – at least we could not. When one [insert] A [end insert] has learnt a fig. he must do it very slowly & dictate to the other [insert] B [end insert] & when A dictation is finished A. should read it out to B who has not learnt it previously & if B. can do it fr. dictation only it will probably do – even then it is as well to go over it again to preclude sources of error – as a description may stand for one more than one way of doing it – unless it is very carefully worded. The system we elaborated consisted simply of speaking of radial & ulnar strings is a loop over it thumb consists of a radial and an ulnar thumb string – or sympathetically a thumb loop – But I will send you an example or two shortly perhaps you

will be able to improve on our nomenclature – At present we have only our rough field notes & have not re-written them – we may possibly slightly alter the descriptions –

I have not yr. book by me as I write & forget whether you recorded constellation myths – These may prove important & it is very desirable to map the constellations this can only be done by learning them first & by taking star maps with you – or a celestial sphere. I found it impossible on my first exped'n to sketch the constellations so as to be recognisable at home. A star myth may alter but recognizing the same constellation would go a long way in an argument for racial & cultural affinities – for some are not very obvious.

I think you would find River's genealogical method of great value. One can get more numerous & more reliable information by that method, than by any other known to me – because one is always dealing with actual people It was published in the Report of the Dover Mtg of the Brit. Asscn (1899 Mtg.) I will get him to let me have a copy of one or two of his cards to send as a sample.[2]

I will ask Rivers to write to you re colour vision or any [illegible] psychology that he thinks you could do.

You really must take a kinematograph – or biograph – a whatever they call it in your part of the world – It is an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus. Get an ordinary commercial one If you order fr London – I think I would place myself in the hands of the Warwick Trading Coy 4 Warwick Court High Holborn W.C. – I have asked them to send you a catalogue & to write to you as well I have stated what you want it for I have no doubt that your films will pay for the whole apparatus if you care to let some of them be copied by the trade. I had my films packed in tin boxes with a deep flange & a false bottom, below the latter I placed calcium chloride to counteract the humidity of the damp atmosphere of Torres Sts. but you will not have this difficulty I suppose – Round the rim of the deep flange I placed india rubber stripping to keep it [illegible] air tight & to have it trouble fr unsolder [?] but I think I would in future have ~~at~~ [insert] each [end insert] film done up in a very thin tin box or case that cd. be cut with any knife or scissors & then thrown away: but you need not, I suppose, take this precaution either.

I hope you will take a phonograph. Our cylinders were badly attacked by a fungus – or something of that sort & we did not know how to prevent it. The new phonograph that takes a cylinder of 5" diam, is the best, as it fires an open or wider spaced puncture, which results in a louder & less tinny record & one in which the tone is very much better than in the small ordinary cylinder I persuaded Hose to take one out to Borneo with him this year & my colleague Wilkin [3] has bought one but it is a bit cumbersome as the trumpet is so large & it is very expensive. I think a small one will have to do for you -- but you should be all means take one

You will have a difficulty in getting your natives to sing loudly enough.

If I think of any thing else I will write to you from time to time.

Yours very faithfully

A.C. Haddon

Of course I need not press on you a study of decorative art: cicatrice markings & so forth

Haddon Letter 3
Inisfail Hills Road
Cambridge
July 27 1901

My dear Spencer,

I have often wondered where you were and how you were getting on – I suppose you will very soon strike civilization again –

All your English colleagues are eagerly looking for news of you and are anticipating grand results – that is if you have any luck at all Let us hope that no disaster will destroy or diminish your collections or notes.

The report of our Expedition is being published, but it takes a long time When you come to England next you will see the early volumes published.

I am having a trip to the U. States this autumn. I start on Sept. 21 & return by middle of December & am very desirous of studying the American Museums – course of study & methods I expect to return very dissatisfied with my own country.

Frazer has made a commotion with the 2nd edn. of the Golden Bough his explanation of the crucifixion has not unnaturally been strongly contested especially by Andrew Lang – who is posing as the apostle of orthodoxy – it is very amusing but I am afraid that Frazer takes it

rather hardly – I fancy Mrs Frazer makes far too much of it & aggravates Frazer's sensitiveness. His eyes are bad and he has gone to Germany to consult a specialist – his wife thinks it is very serious – but one can never trust her accounts of anything – It would be dreadful if it should prove to be serious.

When you come to England to write your new book you should come to Cambridge to work at it. It would be very jolly to have you handy & to compare notes & to yarn about our experiences.

I have now resigned my Dublin Chair in order to devote myself entirely to anthropology & to establishing the subject in Cambridge – It is slow & uphill work.

Tylor has not been very well but he is much better now – he is getting old. Balfour too has been seedy it is a great pity he is so delicate.

Do you know Prof Ridgeway – our Disney Prof. of Archaeology? He is a great man – you would be delighted with him.

Please give my kind regards to Gillen I hope he will come to England too so that the British anthropologists may make his acquaintance & congratulate him in person on all he has done

–

With the best of wishes

Believe me ever to be

Yours very faithfully

Alfred C. Haddon

Haddon Letter 4

[Anthropological Institute
3 Hanover Square. W.]

May 5 1902

My dear Spencer,

Anthropologists at home have been eagerly awaiting news of your Expedition and but very meagre accounts in the newspapers have reached us. We heard with alarm that towards the end you were in straits and now we are rejoiced to find that you have returned safe to your own home.

I mentioned these facts at the last meeting of the Anthropological Institute and as President I was authorized to convey to you the hearty congratulations of your colleagues in England – on the completion of your arduous and dangerous enterprise.

I have heard from time to time from Frazer that you have obtained good results – but this we all expected from you – and now we confidently look forward to the publication of a book that will rival your previous work. Your "Native Tribes of Central Australia" is reckoned by those whose opinion is worth having as being the best book of its kind about any people, and as Englishmen we are proud that you and Mr. Gillen have done such first class work in the field. It will be a great pleasure to us to welcome you back to England and to hear about your experience first hand.

Will you kindly forward the enclosed to Mr. Gillen as I have not his address.

My wife joins with me in sending kind regards to your brave wife, with whom we too rejoice in your home-coming.

Believe me My dear Spencer to be

Yours very faithfully

Alfred C. Haddon

Haddon Letter 5

3 Cranmer Rd

Cambridge

Sept. 4 1921

My dear Spencer,

Many thanks for your kindness in sending me your Presidential Address to the A.A.A.S. which I have read with much interest. It ought to advance the cause of Ethnology in Australia.

May I point out a little slip on p. 37 you speak of Mousterian "eoliths," but eoliths date long before the Chellian period. Frazer may not like having his second name with a wrong initial letter!

I saw in the papers that you had generously offered to be an honorary Reader in Ethnology [4] – I hope your Classes are well attended & that you will be able to enthuse some trained students to work in the field

Ethnology is going on well in Cambridge – though we have not attained to the large numbers that Marett [5] claims for Oxford.

I suppose you saw that A.R. Brown [6] has been appointed to the Chair of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town. I am very sorry that Hedley [7] did not get the Directorship of the Australian Museum.

My daughter Kathleen [8] – whom you met – 4 years ago married an Adelaide-Oxford man—Rishbeth—He has just got an appointment as Lecturer in Economic Geography at Aberystwyth. They have a fine little boy—3 yrs old –

With all best wishes, & kind regards to Lady Spencer.

Yrs. sincerely

A.C. Haddon

Haddon Letter 6

3 Cranmer Rd

Cambridge

May 13, 1923

My dear Spencer,

I have been meaning for a long time to write to you – but somehow or other it has never come off – I never seemed to think of it at a convenient moment –

I am much looking forward to attending the Pan-Pacific Science Congress & to seeing once again old friends in Australia.

It would be very appropriate if the Universities of Melbourne & Sydney took the occasion of the Congress to establish sufficiently paid teaching appointments in Ethnology – Surely—you, with your great influence in Melbourne ought to be able to get something done – I know you are Hony Reader in Ethnology – but there is room for two of you! Honorary appointments are a snare, as we found when Rivers died – He would not take a lectureship or any paid appointment as he felt it would tie him down too much & he wanted to be able to get away whenever he felt inclined. Well, he died just at the end of the Easter Term – when it was impossible to do anything done.

The Lectures had to be given in the Mich. Term – fortunately Armstrong [9] was just coming back from New Guinea – but there were no funds available – we managed to get a temporary grant – but if there had been a Lectureship, it would have continued automatically.

As you have done such magnificent work for Melbourne & as you have such fine Australian specimens in your Museum – It seems indicated that Melbourne University should specialise in Australian Ethnology – and Sydney in Papuan & Melanesian More thorough work could be done by limitation of areas in this way – Naturally one could not expect Sydney, for example, never to do any Australian work – or not to describe & publish Australian specimens, but intensive fieldwork might very well & with advantage be limited.

The Americans have practically taken over Polynesia, and it may very well be left to them – but we ought to work Melanesia as far as we are able – especially since so much British work has been done there & the same applies to British New Guinea.

You may already have considered some such plan – I do not want to “butt in” unnecessarily – but I would like to help if I can.

With kind regards to Lady Spencer

Yrs. sincerely

A.C. Haddon

Notes

[1] Anglo-Boer Wars 1899-1902

[2] Possibly that published in The Sociological Review vol III no 1 January 1910 ‘The Genealogical Method of Anthropological Inquiry’ W.H.R. Rivers see <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1910.tb02078.x/abstract>, see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._H._R._Rivers

[3] Anthony Wilkin, another member of the Torres Straits expedition

[4] At the University of Melbourne

[5] Robert Ranulph Marett (1866-1943) Reader in Social Anthropology at Oxford, see <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34872>

[6] Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) see <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/radcliffe-brown-alfred-reginald-8146>

[7] Charles Hedley (1862-1926) see <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hedley-charles-6628>, he had been acting Director of the museum since 1920, he was given the nominal position of principal keeper of the collections at the Australian Museum instead of director.

[8] Kathleen Haddon (1888-1961) see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathleen_Haddon

[9] Presumably Wallace Edwin Armstrong (1896-1980) see <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66809>

Transcribed by Alison Petch 2015