

NEW BRITAIN.

NEW BRITAIN - the largest and most important unit in the Bismark Archipelago which consists of New Britain, New Ireland, the Admiralty Island and adjacent groups such as Lavongai and Duke of York Group.

LONG-CRESCENT shaped island, extending from East to West, with extension to North known as Gazelle Peninsular, at easterly extremity.

THREE hundred and seventy miles long - fifty miles wide. Total area estimated 13,000 square miles.

RUGGED Range of mountains run from end to end of island. Highest peak 7,500 feet.

VOLCANIC in origin. Evidence of volcanic action common throughout island, especially in north where are found Matupi Sulphur Springs. Highest peak - the Mother, 7,500 feet, is an active volcano. Close by are two other mountains - the North and the South Son on the north-west coast. Close to Rabaul are three peaks - the Mother, the South and North Daughter. The first named is extinct.

ERUPTIONS - Vulcan Island, 193 acres in extent, which lies on the south side of Blanch Bay, made its appearance in one night in 1878 during an eruption from the Mother. May 28, 1937, two volcanoes, one at Matupi and one at Vulcan, erupted suddenly. Rabaul evacuated. Two Europeans and over 200 natives killed. Whole district covered with ash and pumice. Vulcan Island formerly a flat island was now a cone 600 feet high.

RAINFALL:-

RABAU - North-eastern New Britain (average 17 years, 87.35in 89.97.)

GASMATA - Southern New Britain (average 13 years 248.14in) 133.99in.

TALASEA - North New Britain (average 13 years 175.17in) 171.17in.

TEMPERATURE - maximum and minimum temperatures in recent years were

Maximum100.2.
Minimum61.
Mean81.27.

HISTORY- discovered 16th Century,

ANNEXED by Germany when she asserted sovereignty over what is now called New Guinea. (About same time Great Britain annexed Papua)

SEAT of Govt. established at Rabaul and exercised through New Guinea Company until 1899.

1899-1914 Imperial German Govt. exercised control.

Sept. 1914 - Australian Expeditionary Force took over.

1914-1920 Military Govt. functioned.

1920 - Territory mandated to Australia.

Jan. 1942 - Invaded by Japs.

Jan. 1944 - U.S.A. troops attack at Cape Gloucester.

RESOURCES - Sulphur deposits, coconut growing, 1940 82,000 acres under cultivation. Other products - cocoa, coffee, kapok and rubber. Dedicated coconut factories at Fonda and Lindenhaven.

COMMUNICATIONS - No railways. 198 miles of vehicular roads. 1915 miles bridle paths. Main means of communication by means of sampans, cutters and sailing vessels. The island has been crossed by patrols at the northern and western extremities, and also near the centre, from Cape Bocchy on the South coast to Bangula Bay, on the north coast.

NATIVES - variety of types, mainly Melanesians. Population amounts to somewhere round 81,264. It is estimated that the uncounted natives may triple the number counted. The above count was taken in 1934.

DISEASES - Dysentery, yaws, hookworm, beriberi, tropical ulcers, tuberculosis, frambosia, malaria, syphilis, leprosy. The latter two are rare.

HEALTH - the Health Dept. in Rabaul possesses (1) staff medical orderlies, including travelling doctors. (2) well equipped Native Hospitals, at Govt. Stations and sub-stations. (3) A laboratory at Rabaul under an expert bacteriologist.

RIVERS - no rivers of importance - short streams only. Rabaul possesses one of finest harbours in Group.