

Book Reviews

NIMROD: ERNEST SHACKLETON AND THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THE 1907–09 BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION. Beau Riffenburgh. 2004. London: Bloomsbury. xxiv + 360 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7475-7254-2. £17.99.
DOI: 10.1017/S0032247404214115

It takes some effort today to remember that, less than a decade ago, the exploits of Ernest Shackleton were largely forgotten in Britain and America. Roland Huntford's 1985 *Shackleton* was almost the only new book on the polar explorer published between the Fishers' 1957 biography and the end of the 1990s. Then, in 1999, an exhibition in New York's Natural History Museum and a book by Caroline Alexander fixed attention on Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition and the astonishing story of his journey to safety. Books about Shackleton and a host of other explorers from the 'Heroic Age' have proliferated over the last five years, while Shackleton himself has inspired an IMAX movie and an award-winning television mini-series. Yet, amidst this torrent of publications, the Antarctic expedition that propelled Shackleton to fame in 1909 has been largely neglected.

Beau Riffenburgh's readable and superbly researched *Nimrod* presents the first detailed history of Ernest Shackleton's greatest expedition. It has been worth the wait. After a brief prologue, chapter one opens with a dramatic account of Shackleton's participation in Robert Scott's earlier *Discovery* expedition, in which Scott, Shackleton, and the surgeon and naturalist Edward Wilson achieved a new 'farthest south,' around 480 miles from the Pole. The three men barely survived the return march, with Shackleton suffering most of all. The chapter is highly effective, providing the book with a dramatic opening, and establishing the feelings of failure and personal rivalry that would drive Shackleton back to the Antarctic.

Chapters two to ten narrate Shackleton's early life, interspersed with discussions of the history of exploration, the political climate, and the popular culture of imperialism, which, Riffenburgh argues, dominated British society before the First World War. These discussions effectively locate the young merchant seaman in a rich historical context, 'A Product of Empire' at the Empire's zenith. Scott insisted Shackleton return to England with the relief ship *Morning* after their southern march. The relationship between the two men appears to have remained healthy after the return of the *Discovery* in 1904. But the stain on his reputation festered, and, after drifting through a number of positions, Shackleton resolved to return to the south at the head of his own expedition, a resolution that would fracture his friendship with both Scott and Wilson. Throughout, Riffenburgh enlivens the narrative with illuminating facts, anecdotes and well-chosen quotations:

we learn that Shackleton went rhino hunting in Madras in the 1890s (page 33); that on *Discovery* he was 'both fore and aft' (page 66), popular with officers and men; and that his Tory counterpart on the hustings in Dundee in 1906 was a prophetically named Duncan Smith (page 100).

Shackleton stretched his considerable powers of persuasion to the limit in scratching together the finance for his expedition, which sailed for the Antarctic in 1907 on board a battered 40-year-old sealer, *Nimrod*. Chapters 11 to 22, the heart of the book, chronicle *Nimrod's* voyage and the experiences of the seamen, scientists, and adventurers, who spent 14 months in the Antarctic between January 1908 and March 1909. The party established their base camp at Cape Royds, on the west coast of Ross Island. Although poorly funded and hurriedly prepared, the expedition achieved wonderful results, including the first ascent of Mount Erebus and the location of the South Magnetic Pole. But the expedition's most memorable achievement was the southern march by Shackleton, his second-in-command Jameson Adams, the surgeon Dr Eric Marshall, and his friend from *Discovery*, Frank Wild. Supported only by a pitiful four ponies, the men succeeded in marching to within 97 geographic miles of the South Pole. Explaining his decision to turn back, Shackleton famously indicated to his wife Emily, 'I thought you'd rather have a live donkey than a dead lion' (page 233). The party pioneered a route from the barrier up through the great glacier, which they named after their principal patron, William Beardmore, to the polar plateau, a route that Scott would follow three years later. Shackleton noted they had beaten the previous southern record by 366 miles, and the northern by 77 miles, the greatest advance towards either Pole that had ever been made. The final chapter presents a fascinating account of the 'Heroes Return,' with Shackleton féted throughout Britain and the world, and receiving a Knighthood from King Edward VII.

The book is based on a thorough survey of the journals and correspondence of the principal actors, now held in Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Institute. Riffenburgh marshals his impressive array of sources with considerable skill, keeping the narrative moving and holding the reader's attention throughout. He should also be praised for acknowledging rather than obscuring a couple of instances where the archival record is unclear (e.g. Shackleton's confrontation with *Nimrod's* Captain England, pages 162–163). He is sympathetic to Shackleton, but works hard to offer a balanced interpretation of a complex man, and the book includes the inevitable critical comments generated under the strain of polar hardship. Although I think he underestimates the demands of loyalty in the Edwardian mindset, Riffenburgh's clear and thoroughly referenced analysis of the wrangling

between Shackleton and the Scott faction before *Nimrod's* departure (Chapter 9), and Shackleton's fateful decision to make camp in McMurdo Sound (Chapter 12), will become essential reading on a dispute that has been raked over by so many authors. Riffenburgh also rescues the *Nimrod's* scientific achievements from neglect. He persuasively argues that Shackleton's own lack of enthusiasm for the research programme has overshadowed the very real achievements of David, Mawson, Murray, and Priestley. (Mawson's account of rescuing David from a crevasse (page 241), retrieved by Riffenburgh from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, also provides a comic highlight.)

The book includes five excellent new maps of the expedition's sphere of operations, and 35 well-chosen photographs. Although illuminating, the compositions lack the dramatic impact of the work of Herbert Ponting and Frank Hurley; a visual record much less striking than that produced on *Terra Nova* and *Endurance* may partly explain why the exploits of *Nimrod's* crew have been relatively neglected.

Riffenburgh makes much of Shackleton's courageous decision to turn back, rather than press on to the Pole (pages 232, 311–312). Although he is not explicitly mentioned here, the contrast with Scott is clearly implied. Scott's party, however, was in much better shape than Shackleton's at the same stage of the journey. On 7 January 1911, two days before passing Shackleton's 1909 record, Scott wrote 'Our food continues to amply satisfy.' Had Shackleton come so close to his dream in such condition would he still have turned back? I do not think so. The final chapter on the response to Shackleton's achievement works well, drawing on Riffenburgh's expertise on the press coverage of exploration. But this reviewer was eager to read more than 18 pages on the aftermath of the expedition. Why did a leader who showed such compassion for the well-being of his men in the Antarctic appear so indifferent to their financial health on his return? One of the most memorable images of the period (not reproduced here), shows three men in furs holding a sandwich-board advertising 'Cinematograph Pictures of Lieut. Shackleton's Wonderful Journey.' We learn that Shackleton's pioneers shot 4000-feet of film in the Antarctic (page 184), but the exhibition of these films is not discussed. The chapter includes some tantalising glimpses of Shackleton's global impact, but the international response to his achievements is not analysed in detail. I would also have been interested to hear Riffenburgh's comments on the trajectory of the Shackleton legend since 1909.

But, then, a successful text should always leave the reader wanting more. In *Nimrod* Riffenburgh has produced a book that both entertains and informs the general reader, and provides polar specialists with a definitive account of one of the most important expeditions in the history of exploration. For this achievement, he deserves our admiration and our thanks. (Max Jones, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, University of Manchester, Oxford Road Manchester M13 9PL.)

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CONTACT, CONTINUITY, AND COLLAPSE: THE NORSE COLONIZATION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC. James H. Barrett (Editor). 2003. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers. xvi + 254 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 2-503-51291-7.

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James H. Barrett is the editor of a new book on, as the subtitle says, 'the Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic.' In the introduction he states the intention of the collected papers is to: 'attempt to construct models of culture contact informed by the instrumentalist school of Frederik Barth, which views ethnicity "as a dynamic and situational form of group identity".'

This is an interesting approach, and the Norse history of colonization and contacts across the northern seas would certainly lend itself to such analyses. There are the Norse contacts with Lapps in northern Scandinavia and with the Inuit in Greenland and North America. Furthermore the questions on 'ethnicity' and 'identity' seem applicable in analysing contacts between Norse settlers and the Scots, Picts, and Irish peoples.

The papers, organized into chapters, try to address these questions, although with varying degrees of success. The first chapter by Bjørnar Olsen (entitled 'Belligerent chieftains and oppressed hunters? Changing conceptions of interethnic relationships in northern Norway during the Iron Age and early medieval period') is highly interesting, and also sticks to the aims specified by the editor. The paper discusses the concepts, and tests them against archaeological assemblages, as well as presenting and using explanatory models, such as Schanche's model of spatial relationships, between Saami and Norse.

This first excellent chapter is followed by a rather less interesting one, 'The early settlement of the Faroe Islands: the creation of cultural identity' by Steffen Stumann Hansen. The paper meanders from accounts of 'the birth of Faroese archaeology' over Viking-age artefacts and architecture to, finally, some (little) discussion of the 'Norwegian link,' the 'Scottish link,' and the role of Norse settlements in Ireland. It does not quite seem to be the kind of paper the editor had in mind.

The editor himself presents a chapter entitled 'Culture contact in Viking age Scotland.' This paper is the only one also to mention some of the new techniques and finds of DNA research, although Barrett quite rightly states that 'it is appropriate to reiterate the distinction between biological populations, speech, communities, material culture, and ethnic groups.'

Ireland is dealt with by Harold Mytum in a chapter entitled 'The Vikings and Ireland: ethnicity, identity, and cultural change.' This chapter does include a good discussion on ethnicity and self-identity in Ireland, followed by an overview of settlement phases.

And that's about it concerning the Barthian ideas and models on ethnicity. In the following chapters, nothing is really done to address the stated goals of the editor.

Fridiríksson and Vesteinsson are the authors of the chapter 'Creating the past: a historiography of the settlement of Iceland.' It is probably impossible to have anyone write about Icelandic history without mentioning the sagas, but it may be worth, at least once in a while, considering the archaeological evidence *per se*.

Arneborg writes about Greenland in the chapter entitled 'Norse Greenland: reflections on settlement and depopulation.' Only two pages out of 13 are devoted to the Norse–Inuit contacts, although these pages mostly deal with the archaeological finds and their context.

The following two chapters are Schlederman's and McCullough's on 'Inuit–Norse contact in the Smith Sound region,' and Wallace's on 'L'Anse aux Meadows and Vinland: an abandoned experiment.' The former is really an archaeological paper, carefully presenting the various finds in this area, while the latter also gives (good) analyses of saga sources, as well as a presentation of the L'Anse aux Meadows archaeology. But, as already mentioned, it is as if the editor's call for ideas on ethnicity and identity goes somewhat unheeded in these chapters.

The final chapter, 'Epilogue: was there continuity from Norse to post-medieval explorations of the New World,' by McGhee is certainly interesting. I'm not quite sure, though, why it is entitled an epilogue, since it does not address either the preceding chapters or the aim of the book (as stated by the editor).

Generally, the positive aspect of this book is the presentation for a general, English-speaking readership of otherwise not well-known or accessible primary sources (for example, 34 of the 65 references in Bjørnar Olsen's chapter are to Norwegian papers and publications), and the collation of specific archaeological material. Also, although not new, one is once again forced to recognise the rather vast cultural and ethnic contacts the Norse had. However, many of the papers fall short of the stated purpose. Also, many of the chapters still operate with what may be the bane of Norse historical and archaeological studies: the frequent mixture of historical sources and archaeological finds (for example, Arneborg starts her paper with a reference to the *Islendingabók*, and towards the end of the paper discusses various archaeological finds indicating contacts between Norse and Inuit). This may be a minor problem when this is done openly as Arneborg does it, but it is much more problematic (hence the bane) when such a mixture is made unacknowledged and perhaps even unnoticed, which I think happens in several of the papers. Maybe we need more carefully to isolate these two source materials. I suspect that at times there is a bias imposed on analyses

of the archaeological finds by historical sources, or vice versa.

In conclusion, I think one needs to ask the question whether this is a necessary book? The turn of the millennium has seen several publications (and exhibitions) about the Norse and the North Atlantic. As with many such books with multiple contributing authors, the answer is yes and no: some of the papers are excellent and timely, while others unfortunately have that feel of being re-writes of earlier published material. (Niels Lynnerup, Laboratory of Biological Anthropology, The Panum Institute, Blegdamsvej 3, DK-2200 Copenhagen, Denmark.)

THE LAST GREAT QUEST: CAPTAIN SCOTT'S ANTARCTIC SACRIFICE. Max Jones. 2003. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xv + 352 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-19-280483-9. £20.00; US\$35.00. Soft cover ISBN 0-19-280570-3. £8.99.
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On this reviewer's eighth birthday, he was presented by his father with a slim volume on Captain Scott, which he immediately started to read, much to the annoyance of his mother who expected him to pay heed to a bevy of clucking aunts. He has felt grateful to his father and to Scott ever since. This sort of experience at an impressionable age cannot be unique, and one suspects that more polar enthusiasts than might be prepared to admit it acquired their first interest in the subject by some similar event, and that a large number of these must have had to do with Scott. Indeed, as the author shows persuasively in this book, at least two generations of Britons could hardly fail to have been influenced in one way or another by the Scott story.

The author seeks to tackle a central question: 'why did the death of five men in the Antarctic cause such a sensation ninety years ago, not only in Britain but around the world?'

The bulk of the book relates to events that took place in the aftermath of the Scott expedition, 'the impact of his death' in the author's words, and in this respect it is original and compelling. Before reaching this, however, approximately 100 pages are devoted to an account of exploration before that time, stressing the role of the Royal Geographical Society, and to Scott's first and second expeditions. Much of this is familiar material, but there is some, especially with regard to the RGS, that is not. Examples here are the pivotal role of John Coles, appointed by the RGS as 'Instructor in Practical Astronomy and Surveying' in 1881, in training a whole generation of explorers, and the details of the evolution of the Society's famous *Hints to travellers*. A further fascinating point, and one that deserves to be better known, is that it was a dispute about the admission of women to the Fellowship of the RGS that led to Clements Markham being appointed President with a consequent

reorientation of its efforts from education to exploration 'fixing on a grand Antarctic expedition to reconcile the warring factions and restore the Society's reputation.'

Robert Falcon Scott, himself, enters on page 60, and there follows a fairly straightforward account of the *Discovery* and *Terra Nova* expeditions, with, of course, reference to Amundsen's expedition and the British response to it. Here the author points out that this was, on the whole, fair-minded and reasonable.

The author then proceeds to an analysis of the immediate response to the deaths of Scott and his companions. Much fascinating material is presented, including details of the extraordinary efforts that were deployed to ensure absolute secrecy when *Terra Nova* arrived in New Zealand. So efficient was this that the inhabitants of that country only learned the truth when it was cabled back thence from London. The importance of the official report, compiled by a group of officers under the chairmanship of E.R.G.R. (Teddy) Evans, while on board during the trip north from the Antarctic, is referred to with the point that this 'was the founding text of the story of Scott of the Antarctic.' Details of the presentation of the story in the press are given, as are those relating to the public appeals for funds that were launched immediately after the news became public. The author points out that this was uncoordinated at the start, and therefore unsuccessful, but that once the four appeals had been condensed into one, money flowed in, eventually reaching some £75,000. The deployment of this money is of interest, £34,000 going to the families, £5100 to pay the debts of the expedition, £17,500 to publish the scientific results, and £18,000 to erect memorials, including, of course, the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge.

Then there was the question of the allocation of blame, with the allegation that the 'collapse' of Petty Officer Edgar Evans was a major cause. Much of the contemporary writing on this seems appallingly distasteful nowadays. Another recipient of blame was, of course, Apsley Cherry-Garrard. The author makes the point that the large amount of comment on this subject served to deflect blame for the disaster away from Scott.

Equally informative sections cover questions of the use of dogs, which it seems the British press was happy to admit gave Amundsen a profound advantage, of scurvy as an influence in the later stages of the march, of the 'edition' of Scott's journals, and of the publication of *Scott's Last Expedition*. In this section the author suggests that 'Bowers and Wilson could have made a last, desperate, attempt to reach the One Ton depot, but chose to die with Scott in the tent.' To this reviewer, at any rate, this seems questionable. On firmer grounds, the author concludes, with regard to the dissemination of Scott's story, 'that there was no concerted establishment cover-up,' which is surely correct.

A major section of the book is devoted to the memorial service in St Paul's Cathedral, attended by the King, on 14 February 1913, and this passes, quite naturally, to the various memorials that were erected to Scott and to other

members of the expedition, most notably to L.E.G. Oates. This is probably the most original part of the book and there are many fascinating illustrations of designs, etc. There is a deficiency here in that the author's map does not include Ireland where there is at least one relevant memorial. This is to Oates, presented by his regiment, the Inniskilling Dragoons, and it is, at present, in the Fermanagh County Museum in Enniskillen.

The author passes on to consider how the explorers were portrayed as 'martyrs of science,' thereby subtly reinforcing the difference between the Scott and Amundsen expeditions, and how the story was deployed in refutation of those who believed that Britain was a nation in decline with regard to its position in the world. He shows that Scott did not only have appeal to what one might regard as a 'conservative' constituency, but that the story also resonated with 'socialists, suffragettes and Irish republicans.' He does, however, make the rather startling comment that 'the overwhelming whiteness of the story of Scott of the Antarctic must have reinforced colour prejudice in Edwardian Britain.' This is surely stretching matters too far. At that time, it would simply never have occurred to Britons that any other than 'whites' could have participated in such a venture.

The book ends with a chapter setting out the evolution of the influence of the story through the First World War and afterwards. In the epilogue, the author concludes that while 'Captain Scott is out of fashion today,' 'in our jaded ... times, some will always seek enchantment in the south' with him, 'turning the pages of the last great quest.' Flawed character that Scott might have been, he seems almost perfect compared with the popular 'icons' of today and so the 'some' might turn out to be rather more than one might expect at first sight.

The illustrations are exceptionally well chosen and many have rarely appeared in print before. Considerable effort must have been involved in unearthing them. There are no fewer than 54 plates, seven text figures, and two maps. It seems a little unfortunate that one of them, 'the track chart of the main southern journey,' which appeared in the 1923 cheap edition of *Scott's last expedition*, is presented three times, it being on page 2 and inside both end-papers, where there is also a modern map of the route. There is a useful and comprehensive critical apparatus.

There are one or two slips. Neither Bellingshausen nor Bransfield were lieutenants at the time of their great achievements, and it is incorrect to imply that Biscoe was the first circumnavigator of Antarctica or, alternatively, that he circumnavigated it more than once (page 18). H.R. Bowers was not 'an indefatigable Royal Indian Marine.' 'Indefatigable' he certainly was, but he was a lieutenant in the Royal Indian Marine (page 77).

Finally, and stretching reviewer's privilege to the limit, one laments the use of the wretched word 'showcasing' and, even more, that of the new invention 'foregrounded.'

This is a most original and satisfying book on an aspect of Scott's expedition that has not been the subject of a detailed study before. It answers many of the questions

that must have occurred, even if only subliminally, to all those interested in the Scott story, or indeed in Antarctic history in general. The author has succeeded in the task that he set himself, and one must admire both his diligence in the research that he undertook and the skill with which he has interwoven a complex tale. It should command a wide readership. (Ian R. Stone, Laggan Juys, Larivane Close, Andreas, Isle of Man IM7 4HD.)

NEGOTIATING THE ARCTIC: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL REGION. E.C.H. Keskitalo. 2004. New York and London: Routledge. xiii + 282 p; maps; hardcover. ISBN 0-415-94712-X. £55.00.

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How did the region-building process come into existence and define the Arctic? This is the question Carina Keskitalo takes up in her book, *Negotiating the Arctic: the construction of an international region*. Drawing on an understanding of region-building as discourse, she provides a social constructivist discussion of Arctic region-building with a focus on the development of the Arctic Council. Keskitalo addresses how Arctic discourse developed, how the region was delineated for policy purposes, how the discourse and delineation became prominent, and how they accommodate different participants.

The Arctic has emerged as a policy-relevant region as the result of several interlinked processes, including globalization, the restructuring of East–West relationships, and the efforts of states to redefine their foreign policy roles since the end of the Cold War. What has emerged from this process is an Arctic conceptualized internationally in environmental, indigenous, and traditional terms. This conception relies on a frontier discourse that draws on the history of polar exploration and research in the natural sciences and anthropology. Keskitalo convincingly demonstrates that this discourse is largely North American in origin and is especially influenced by Canada’s history and strong national identity related to the Arctic, which forms the mythic heartland of Canada (‘True North Strong and Free’). As a frontier, the Arctic is described from the outside, not from the inside, and is predicated on distance, geographical, socio-economic, and cultural.

Keskitalo argues that significant differences across the so-called ‘Arctic Eight’ are not brought out through the focus on Canadian descriptions and Canada’s major role in Arctic international cooperation, splitting the states into two groups. The first comprises those who have traditionally viewed their northern regions as wilderness and have an established frontier discourse (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Russia, and the United States). There is also a relatively clear distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in the northern areas of these states. The dominant conception is not shared by the Old World members that have a more integrated relation to their northern lands and populations

(Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland). The indigenous distinction has less purchase here. Iceland, for one, has no aboriginal population. In northern Fennoscandia, both aboriginal and other immigrants have lived in the region as long as recorded history; they are also more ethnically and socially integrated, and today share social equality, proportional representation, and socio-economic parity.

Keskitalo concludes that these differences can serve to explain current conflicts in Arctic cooperation, as the current discourse constrains who may be seen as an Arctic participant and what may be seen as an Arctic issue. In the case of participants, the discourse has served to legitimize those linked to the environmental and traditional indigenous foci. One of the most notable features of the Arctic Council is the unique Permanent Participant category created to give indigenous groups a prominent place alongside state representatives at the negotiating table. Here, discourse allowed what Neumann (2002) would describe as a groundbreaking practice turn in international diplomacy. But the institutionalization of this practice (indigenous inclusion) is contrasted by what Keskitalo describes as ‘silences’ in the regional discourse, which to date have not given voice to regional governments or other northern — that is, non-indigenous — residents. This is especially remarkable given that more than 90% of the total population in the Arctic is not considered indigenous, and is in marked contrast with practice in the Barents-Euro Arctic region (see Neumann 2002).

The conflicts over the relevant focus of Arctic work are brought out in chapters on sustainable development and the University of the Arctic. The environment–indigenous nexus became an argumentative position of Arctic discourse during heated debates on sustainable development. The discourse locked the development of the Arctic Council and related cooperation into this exclusive orientation, obscuring and politicizing the question of what was an Arctic regional issue and how to approach such an issue. For example, the Council’s task force on sustainable development received a limited mandate to work on conservation and utilization with an emphasis on indigenous issues. The task force did crack one of the silences in the regional discourse by mentioning other northern residents, but their interests remained undefined and unrepresented. Indeed, Keskitalo points out that the exclusivity was even strengthened in the end, by combining ‘indigenous’ with ‘traditional knowledge’ as a means of excluding other local or traditional knowledge.

Negotiating the Arctic is a detailed and insightful analysis of the Arctic as a socially constructed region, constituted and institutionalized through discourse and social practice. As a discourse can be seen as ‘constituted by all that was said in all statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating its name’ (Michel Foucault, quoted on pages 9–10), discourse analysis is a tall order. Keskitalo carries this off convincingly well by drawing

on a substantial wealth of material, with perhaps the exception of Russian sources. Reference to the Russian perspective seemed sparse compared to that of other participants, leading me to wonder whether this was because Russia took a passive role in the Arctic region-building discourse, or because relevant materials were difficult to obtain.

This volume is also well organized, well documented, and very readable. Unfortunately, two of the three maps are difficult to read owing to the poor quality of reproduction. And stylistically, the use of quotation marks to bracket the term 'Arctic' (to highlight the constructed nature of the term) is tiresome if not unnecessary in a text devoted to understanding how discourse has defined contemporary conceptions of the Arctic as a region. But these are minor complaints. This remains a tightly focused, persuasive, and scholarly work, full of meaty quotes gleaned from primary sources that other students of Arctic politics and social discourse will find most valuable. It challenges those of us who, as analysts, are participants in Arctic discourse to assess how dominant conceptions of the Arctic color our own work. (Steven G. Sawhill, Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL.)

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IN THE GHOST COUNTRY: A LIFETIME SPENT ON THE EDGE. Peter Hillary with John E. Elder. 2004. Edinburgh & London: Mainstream Publishing. 343 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-84018-835-9. £15.99.
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The bookshops of the western world are full of choices for readers interested in outdoor pursuits, and the personal memoirs of would-be adventurers are a genre of their own. It's easy to find stories of the ascent of this mountain, the descent of that river, or the traverse of some sparsely populated region. More often than not, the recent books will also trumpet some strange boast of primacy, like the First Honduran Woman to kayak over Angel Falls, or the First All-Vegan Expedition to cross the Greenland ice cap. Some tell tales of courageous endeavours, while others merely tell tales of unbridled egos and publishers who should have said 'no.' The skill of the writer is often what separates a story worth sharing from one that's a self-indulgent ego-trip. An adventure can be a simple local ramble or a journey that boasts no truly novel feats, but if the writing is up to scratch, it's a welcome addition to the genre. *In the ghost country*, by Peter Hillary with John E. Elder (the copyright credit has the order of authors reversed), is just such a book. Ostensibly the story of a walk to the Geographic South Pole — an adventure that has been completed by dozens of other expeditions before this one — this book is much more than an account of that trip.

In the summer of 1998–99, Peter Hillary, Jon Muir, and Eric Philips man-hauled sledges from New Zealand's Scott Base on the shores of the Ross Sea, to the South Pole. Their original plan was to walk back the way they came, but their progress heading south was so slow that they were forced to cancel the return trip and accept a flight out from the Pole. It was a high-profile undertaking, with lots of media coverage before, during, and after. It was also not without its share of political intrigue as the US Antarctic Program and Antarctica New Zealand both provided logistical support to an enterprise that most of the world saw as a private expedition (both government bodies have strong policies about not assisting private adventurers). The half of the journey that they completed was obviously a very demanding trek as the men had to deal with huge sledge-loads, very cold temperatures, equipment failures, and the sheer brutal expansiveness of the Antarctic. But pretty much any account of a polar journey will tell you about those things while taking you along for the ride. What *In the ghost country* does differently is take you inside the mind of one of the travellers — and, man, is there a lot going on in there!

Simply put, Hillary and his colleagues did not get along with one another. They formed their team through a number of superficial connections that did not really allow each man to properly know with whom he was hitching his wagon, and this problem was exacerbated by the sponsors' schedule, which left no time for the appropriate level of testing and tweaking that usually precedes a successful expedition. Personality conflicts and acrimony reared their divisive heads before the group even reached Antarctica, but it wasn't until they returned to their homes in New Zealand and Australia at the end of the expedition that the depth of discord became evident to the public. Indeed, for anyone following the news in early 1999, the discord between these men was far more widely reported than the facts of the journey itself. All of this ill feeling flared up again in 2000 when Eric Philips published his account of the expedition in *Ice trek: the bitter journey to the South Pole*. By waiting a few more years before writing about the expedition, Hillary has benefited from the sense of perspective that those who have been in arduous field situations know all too well, that is, the faults and annoyances of others tend to fade with one's return to the comfortable, non-cloistered life back in the 'real world.' But this book is not Hillary's rebuttal, nor is it really about the trek to the Pole. That expedition is really just the skeleton on which the meat of this memoir is hung, for as his body trudged painfully southwards across the viciously monotonous landscape, Hillary's mind wandered. A lot. He was visited by daydreams of climbing partners (both extant and deceased) and family members from his very adventurous and occasionally tragic past. In reading the descriptions of his conversations with these figures, the reader also learns a great deal about other epic trips to such places as Ama Dablam, Mount Everest, K2, and New Zealand's Southern Alps. Holding all these seemingly

disparate threads together is an exploration of adventuring as a lifestyle; the whys, wherefores, and ‘what’s-the-points?’ of making yourself uncomfortable, and then writing about it to make a living. The book acknowledges the contradiction in undertaking what Hillary calls ‘a mad, unnecessary quest that proves nothing’ (page 318), with the very fact that he pretty much does these things for a living. Elder and Hillary do a good job of exploring this contradiction and, by providing insights into the mind of a seasoned campaigner such as Hillary, they take the reader a little bit closer to understanding the ‘why do you do it?’ that so frequently baffles those of us who don’t take life-threatening holidays.

Most of the book is written in the words of Elder, with frequent asides from Hillary or extracts from his journal. The style works well, for it allows the adventures to be told without the self-consciousness that often accompanies a first-person account, and yet the stories are properly fleshed out with the authenticity of a man who was there. This combination allows for a fresh approach to expedition memoirs, and the quality of both writers elevates the book beyond the usual adventure account. The writing is largely free from the stagnant prose of the adventurer’s tale, while at the same time earlier visitors like Amundsen, Shackleton, and especially Scott, are woven into the narrative, providing a touchstone. And, while it may seem odd to write a travel story where most of the action takes place in a man’s head, isn’t that where most expeditions fail or succeed? (Peter W. Carey, SubAntarctic Foundation for Ecosystems Research, 318 Pine Avenue, Christchurch, New Zealand.)

LATE THULE CULTURE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE CENTRAL EAST COAST OF ELLESMERE ISLAND. Peter Schledermann and Karen M. McCullough. 2003. Copenhagen: Greenland Research Centre at the National Museum of Denmark and Danish Polar Center. 203 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 87-90369-64-5. DKK 248.
DOI: 10.1017/S0032247404264117

Archaeological fieldwork in the Arctic is a difficult and expensive proposition. Field seasons are short, teams are usually small, and progress can be very slow, hindered by weather, permafrost, and even polar bears. Research on the scale and thoroughness of that undertaken by Peter Schledermann and Karen McCullough is rare, although desperately needed. Even more rare is the full publication of the results of such research, and so it is a great pleasure to see this volume, the third and final report on 11 years of fieldwork by the authors in the Bache Peninsula region of Ellesmere Island. In two previous publications the authors separately reported on the Palaeoeskimo findings (Schledermann 1990) and the initial Thule (Ruin Island) occupations of the region (McCullough 1989). In the volume reviewed here, the authors jointly report on the later Thule and historic Inuit remains, defined

as those post-dating the pioneering Ruin Island phase, generally dating from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century.

The monograph follows the traditional pattern of descriptive archaeological site reports, with a brief introduction to the history of the project, an overview of the region, and other introductory material. The authors identify three main objectives for the late prehistoric aspect of their overall research (pages 9–10): identifying those elements that distinguish these later sites from the earlier Ruin Island phase; identifying to what extent the observed changes are due to in situ development or diffusion and/or migration; and examining the dramatic population decline in the region in the mid-nineteenth century. The bulk of the report following this is largely descriptive and it is for these data that scholars will return to this book long after the conclusions have either become widely accepted or superseded by subsequent research.

In chapter two the authors systematically describe the five sites where the majority of the excavations were carried out, along with briefer descriptions of a number of other sites where surface indications or test pits indicated some late Thule presence. For each site, they document the excavated features in detail, describe the unexcavated portions, and discuss the intra-site chronology, supported with radiocarbon dates where these are available. The detailed floor plans of the houses will, without a doubt, endure as valuable comparative data for future researchers. It would have been useful, however, to have a table summarizing all the radiocarbon dates in one place.

In chapter three, the authors describe the artefacts recovered, using the standard functional types derived from ethnographic accounts common to virtually all archaeological reports in the region. These are illustrated with copious plates following the text. Presenting this sort of information from a number of sites, each with a variety of specific feature contexts, presents problems that are not easily solved in paper-based publications. The authors have chosen to describe all the artefacts of each type together, rather than site by site, presumably to reduce redundancy. They note in the descriptions which site and feature specific objects are from, and a multi-page table provides the frequency of each type for each excavated feature. Reconstructing the details of the assemblage from any one feature is possible, but laborious.

In keeping with the primarily descriptive nature of the monograph, the authors present fairly minimal interpretations of the data in the fourth chapter. They describe temporal changes in architecture, artefact form, and site location that document the ‘settling in’ of the Ruin Island people and their transformation from Alaskan whale hunters to the more diversified Inuit hunters familiar from historic and ethnographic accounts, and discuss the pattern of migrations and abandonment. The data from the Bache Peninsula appear to support linguistic data suggesting that a rather late migration in the seventeenth or eighteenth century from around Baffin Island was the source of the contemporary Inughuit

population of the region. They also link features from one site to the well-documented nineteenth-century migration of Qitdlarsuaq and his followers, also from Baffin Island, whose descendants, having intermarried with the Inughuit, are common in the region today. Finally the authors consider the question of how the Bache Peninsula regions came to be abandoned in favour of the east side of Smith Sound sometime in the early nineteenth century, concluding that a number of factors were important, but that European contact was the most devastating, accounting not only for the abandonment of the Bache Peninsula region, but for the dramatic decline in population and subsequent loss of important technologies such as kayak building by the ancestral Inughuit.

Taken altogether, this report is a valuable contribution to Arctic archaeology. The data are presented clearly and thoroughly, the quality of the maps and photographs is high. The authors conclude the text by remarking on the many fascinating questions that remain to be answered about the prehistory of this region. With this book, and their two earlier reports, they have provided an excellent base upon which future research can build. (Genevieve LeMoine, The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center, Bowdoin College, 9500 College Station, Brunswick, ME 04011-8495, USA.)

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THE SILENT SOUND: TWO YEARS IN ANTARCTICA AND THE STORY OF THE FIRST WINTER OCCUPATION OF ALEXANDER ISLAND. Cliff Pearce. 2004. Lewes, East Sussex: The Book Guild. xvi + 256 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-85776-845-0. £16.95.

DOI: 10.1017/S0032247404274113

On Saturday, 4 March 1961, Cliff Pearce, John Smith, and Brian Taylor were deposited from two of the first Otter aircraft to be used by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey on the ice shelf of King George VI Sound, hard by the cliffs of Fossil Bluff. They were to winter there — the first time anybody had done so — and carry out a geological and meteorological programme pending the arrival of a strong sledging party supported by both dog teams and Muskeg tractors in the following spring.

The early 1960s were a time of transition in British Antarctic operations. The period of territorial assertion in which the flag was flown from many small bases, and dog teams sledged long distances to map terrain and geology was coming to its end. The success of

the International Geophysical Year in 1957–58 and the signature of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 ‘froze’ territorial claims and emphasised the dominant role of science. The British Antarctic Territory was split off from the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and FIDS became BAS, the British Antarctic Survey, on 1 January 1962. At the same time, mechanical transport was edging its way in to supplant dogs (whose dependence on seal meat upset the conservationists who were also becoming more and more interested in the region), and air support was proving its potential.

Cliff Pearce’s book is a vivid evocation of life in FIDS/BAS in this transitional period, and he and his companions experienced the uncertainties and rapid changes of plan that were typical of those days. When he went south in the summer of 1960 in *Kista Dan*, he was supposedly bound for Horseshoe Island in Marguerite Bay. Heavy ice blocked the way and the ship had to be helped from the pack by the US icebreaker, *USS Glacier*. The ship-borne Beaver aircraft — one of the Survey’s only two planes in that season — lost a wing when *Kista Dan* and *John Biscoe* collided. The Otter, based at Deception Island, demonstrated the potential of aircraft by relieving the Marguerite Bay stations, but in the inevitable redeployment of personnel Cliff Pearce found himself wintering at Deception. It was not until his second season that he reached his intended area of operations, and even then it was touch-and-go. Ice prevented the establishment of a planned new station at Rothera Point, and the southwest corner of Adelaide Island was occupied instead as a summer operational base for the Otter aircraft. At last, that mission accomplished, *John Biscoe* was able to edge through the pack and reach Stonington Island in Marguerite Bay on 1 March — already very late in the season. Only three days later Pearce, Smith and Taylor were airlifted to Fossil Bluff.

The Fossil Bluff hut was the first FIDS/BAS station to be established by air. The location was chosen because — as the name implies — it was close under a remarkable exposure of fossil-bearing sedimentary rocks that make up this section of Alexander Island, and because it was well placed for access both along and across King George VI Sound (the ‘silent sound’ of the book’s title) and up into the mountainous interior of Alexander Island. The hut — measuring only 6 × 4 m — and all the stores had been flown in, together with the party that built it. Inevitably, late in the season as it was, the wintering party had to start by getting the hut fitted out and their stores sorted — to find that the constraints of weight and time inevitable when using small aircraft late in the year meant that the stores were deficient in staples like flour and sugar, though rich in peppercorns, glace cherries, tinned tomatoes, and caraway seeds! They were also so short of coal that they had to let their Rayburn cooker go out at night, leading in mid-winter to interior temperatures down to –20°C. Their diesel generator failed in April, leaving them dependent on paraffin lamps and a hand-cranked generator for radio communications.

It all sounds what a FID would call ‘pretty dodgy,’ but they were undaunted, and one of the most impressive things about this book is its record of the priority given to supporting Brian Taylor in his geological work. Slowly but steadily he worked his way up the fossil exposures near to the hut, getting in five weeks of almost unbroken fieldwork in March and April. When the early spring Sun returned he moved to a camp some 5 km from base and 400 m above sea level — and this meant not only regular back-packing of supplies but the splitting of the party so that one man always supported Taylor in the tiny pup tent that was his field base and the other was alone at the hut. Many journeys were made alone, down a snow slope, across a glacier head, and over rock and scree, and although the route was well chosen one wonders what modern cautious standards of health and safety would have made of the procedure! But it worked, and the testimony to the work of the team as a whole lies in the 12 scientific papers that came out of Taylor’s two years at the Bluff.

This book is not without criticism of those in authority. Clearly, Pearce — who had put in a year as a schoolmaster between graduation and going south — found Sir Vivian Fuchs’ attitude to rowdy bar parties in *Kista Dan* a bit — well — schoolmasterly! The chain of command led, he noted, to decisions by John Green, SecFIDS, aboard ship being over-ruled by London or by Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, Governor of the Falklands and nominal C-in-C of the Survey, with resulting confusion and frustration. There was no formal safety training — the attitude of the time was, indeed, to let the ‘new hands’ learn from the ‘old hands’ and John Smith, officer-in-charge at Fossil Bluff, had had a previous tour in the Antarctic. Yet the high death rate in FIDS/BAS at that time — recorded factually in this book — might have indicated to an outsider that standards could have been improved even though Antarctica is inevitably a dangerous place.

All these things are modestly but clearly told in a book that evokes the atmosphere of its time. Because it is based on a narrative written in the hut at Fossil Bluff during the winter of 1961–62, it largely escapes the selectivity of hindsight — and the author makes clear when he is describing things as they seemed at the time and when he is evaluating from the perspective of someone with 40 years of added experience of life. The book is also made more interesting by addenda to many chapters written after the author and 34 other ex-FIDS had paid a return visit in the Russian cruise ship *Lyubov Orlova* in February 2000.

Although I did not share experiences with Cliff Pearce and his companions at the time, I, too, was south in the southern summer of 1961–62 and many of the events and personalities in this book are familiar. I commend it as a vivid sketch of life during an important period in Antarctic history, and a testimony to the teamwork and commitment of the young men who worked for FIDS and BAS at that time. (Martin Holdgate, Fellbeck, Hartley, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4JH.)

THE FRANZ JOSEF LAND ARCHIPELAGO: E.B. BALDWIN’S JOURNAL OF THE WELLMAN POLAR EXPEDITION 1898–1899. P.J. Capelotti (Editor). 2004. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland and Co. ix + 186 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-7864-1776-5. DOI: 10.1017/S003224740428411X

Between 1898 and 1905 three American expeditions headed for Franz Josef Land (Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa): the Wellman Polar Expedition of 1898–99, the Baldwin-Ziegler Polar Expedition of 1901–02, and the Fiala-Ziegler Polar Expedition of 1903–05. All had two characteristics in common: they were generously, even lavishly, funded and equipped (especially the last two), and they achieved remarkably little in the way of meeting their goals, whether it be the exploration of the archipelago (already fairly comprehensively mapped) or trying to reach the Pole. Baldwin was a member of the first two of these expeditions (and leader of the second); this book deals with a small part of his participation in the first of them.

Led by journalist Walter Wellman and funded by the National Geographic Society, after a false start the expedition travelled north from Tromsø and called first at Jackson’s base camp at Cape Flora (Mys Flora). Here Wellman dismantled one of Jackson’s buildings and re-erected it as his main base at Cape Teggetthoff (Mys Teggetgof) on Hall Island (Ostrov Gallya) and named it Harmsworth House. The ship then departed for the south at the incomprehensibly early date of 3 August, leaving a wintering party of nine men.

Wellman ordered Baldwin to push north with dog sledges and boats and to establish a forward base as far north as possible (preferably at 82°N), from which he would make an attempt at the Pole in the following spring. This operation was incomprehensible in many ways: Baldwin was attempting to travel by dog sledge at a date when there was no snow on the land and when breakup had already started throughout most of the archipelago. He was supplied with only two boats — a canvas boat and a ‘Lapp boat’ — and he bemoaned the fact that he did not have a steam launch. It would have made better sense if the expedition ship, *Frithjof*, had been retained for a few weeks for this northward thrust.

Having set off on 5 August, after endless trips to and fro with sledges and dogs and boats, Baldwin and his companions decided they could safely go no farther due to open water and built the advanced base, a primitive hut of rocks, roofed with driftwood poles and walrus hides, at Cape Heller (Mys Gellera) on Wilczek Island (Zemlya Vil’cheka), only some 80 km north of the base camp; it was given the pretentious name of Fort McKinley. Having laid in enough walrus meat to feed the dogs throughout the winter, arguing that they must stay at Fort McKinley since there was no food for them at Harmsworth House, Baldwin left two men, Paul Bjørvig and Bernt Bentsen, to winter at Fort McKinley, while he and his other companions returned to Harmsworth House for the winter.

Wellman set off on his attempt at the Pole on 18 February 1899. On reaching Fort McKinley he found that Bentsen had died on 2 January. Bjørvig now joined the polar party. Off the east coast of Rudolph Island (Ostrov Rudol'fa) Wellman slipped into a crack in the sea ice and broke his left leg; the polar attempt was then abandoned. In the spring, during the period 26 April to 30 May, Baldwin mounted a very creditable expedition on which he discovered, explored, and mapped the last remaining large island of the archipelago, Graham Bell Island (Ostrov Greem Bell).

By publishing Baldwin's journal of his journey northwards in the summer and fall of 1898, during which he built Fort McKinley, P.J. Capelotti has made a contribution to the literature in that detailed, accessible information about Wellman's expedition is noticeably lacking. Previously the only published source on the expedition was Wellman's own remarkably vague account (Wellman 1899). One hopes that other journals by expedition members will surface in due course; details of Baldwin's spring journey to Graham Bell Island would be very valuable in that the only information at present available is his route as marked on the map in Wellman's article.

Unfortunately, however, Capelotti's contribution is somewhat flawed. The maps he has included leave much to be desired. No scale is indicated on any of them. Although there is no indication of this (since not even a north-point is provided), the maps have been rotated significantly counter-clockwise. Some of the coastlines are indicated as dotted lines, suggesting that they have not yet been explored, whereas detailed Soviet maps of the archipelago have been available for at least 30 years. Perusal of such maps, for example that in the monograph by Grosval'd and others (1973), immediately reveals that the islands indicated on this book's maps are seriously distorted as shape, size, and relative position. And perhaps worst of all, in light of Baldwin's very detailed descriptions of his party's complicated travels as it worked its way north, is the fact that, of the place-names mentioned in the text, numbering at least 75, only 20 appear on any of the maps

and only nine in the area of Baldwin's journeys, making it almost impossible to follow his account.

Capelotti was working from a typescript of Baldwin's diary held in the archives of the Library of Congress. There are at least a dozen cases of obvious errors in transcription, obvious in that the text as rendered makes no sense; if these were made by the original transcriber of the document they should be identified as such; if they were made by Capelotti they should have been caught by him or his copy-editor while proof-reading.

Finally, while Capelotti annotates the diary with a dozen endnotes (including a lengthy and largely irrelevant one on the Spanish-American War), he leaves the reader guessing as to references to such things as, for example, specialized equipment. There are numerous references to 'copper tube sledges' and even several pages of detailed inventories of the contents of each. But what are they? To cite another example, the measurement of a 'rod' is mentioned quite often (16 1/2 feet), but not explained; while older readers may have a vague memory of this measurement from their early schooldays, few would be able to relate it to any modern measurement.

In brief, this is a somewhat flawed presentation of a diary from the least important of three journeys made during this expedition — an expedition that in the overall scheme of Arctic exploration was really of little significance. But in that it is the only published journal from that expedition and in that it demonstrates the level of disorganization and the very strained interpersonal relations involved, it has some merit. (William Barr, The Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.)

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