

## Book Reviews

**THE DICTIONARY OF FALKLANDS BIOGRAPHY (INCLUDING SOUTH GEORGIA): FROM DISCOVERY UP TO 1981.** David Tatham (Editor). 2008. Ledbury: published by editor. 576 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-0-9558985-0-1. £42 (including postage and packing). doi:10.1017/S0032247409008481

One might imagine at first instance that a dictionary of Falklands biography up to 1981 would be a fairly slim volume. After all, the population of the islands over that period never exceeded 2000 persons and the inclusion of South Georgia would not enhance the population by much. But a moment's thought would disabuse one of that idea. Think, for example, of all the great Antarctic explorers who have been associated with the islands, Bellingshausen, Biscoe, and Weddell being just three. Then think of all the characters from South America who have impinged on the history of the islands and of the British colonial and military officials, merchants and clergymen who have done the same. Lastly think of the 'kelpers' themselves, that body of rather larger than life men and women that made, and still make, such a profound impression on visitors. Once one has done all that, then it becomes apparent that the preparation of such a volume would be a major task indeed. And when the volume itself lands on one's desk, in all its intimidating bulk, one finds oneself lost in admiration for the compiler, even before one opens a page.

And when one does, what does one find? A remarkable compilation of facts that will not only act as a reference volume for all time but one from which a great deal of instruction and even entertainment may be derived. The introduction sets out the plan of the book and this is fairly traditional for a work of this nature. The criteria adopted for the selection of persons to be included are indicated and, in this case, some of them were living at the time of compilation. The editor took the brave and somewhat unusual step of inviting such persons to prepare their own entries, and in those cases in which the results seemed to indicate undue modesty, he invited others to embellish them. He notes a problem usual in such compilations in which a list of persons to be recorded is sent out to potential contributors for them to volunteer to prepare text on their chosen persons. This is that some characters due to appear in it are much more attractive to contributors than are others. So some persons were oversubscribed, while others, notably 'doctors and company managers', did not secure a contributor willing to write about them and were omitted. Moreover it should be noted that some

persons were omitted at their own request. It should be noted here that the editor himself prepared some 50 of the entries. This naturally leads to a statement of the total number of such and there are no fewer than 476 entries on individuals, with a few group entries, and of the total, some 350 are illustrated.

When one turns to the list of contributors, one is struck by how wide ranging this is. There are more than 170 of them of which 2 are families. Academics are prominent, from Britain and a large number of other countries, and some very famous names have thought the project sufficiently worthwhile to deserve support and in which to involve themselves. Former members of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey are also prominent in this regard as are the religious and a number of people for whom it might reasonably be stated that the history of the islands is a consuming hobby. Some contributors are resident on the islands and several of these are writing about relatives. From this one might expect a compilation of very uneven quality. However, the editor has obviously maintained a firm grip and, while there are differences in quality of writing, these are not obvious and this does not mar the integrity of the work as a whole.

Some of the entries contain real surprises. This reviewer was astounded to be informed that McDonald Hobley, 'the face of BBC television' in the 1950s was a Falklander as he was to learn that Eliza Jane McAskill, the famous Mrs Mac, had only visited Stanley twice in 60 years of residence at Chartres! There is no doubt that many of the entries required considerable research and there is a quite reasonable variation in length largely in proportion to the relative importance of the person being written about. An interesting example of this occurs on pages 464 to 468 where we have a brief article, covering 16 lines on John E. Rowen, US Consul in Stanley for 10 years from 1898, indeed the last holder of that post. The next entry is of the British politician Edward Rowlands, written by himself, and in the third person, who in the years following 1975, initially as parliamentary under-secretary of state under Jim Callaghan as foreign and commonwealth secretary, had responsibility for British relations with Central and South America. A good summary of the 'treadmill' of British/Argentine relations over that important period is presented with only the slightest, and in the circumstances reasonable, suggestion of self-justification especially with regard to his challenging the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, in the House of Commons immediately after the Argentine invasion in 1982.

But it should not be thought that the writing is of the fairly anodyne type that compilations of this nature

usually call forth. Trenchant opinions are expressed at times, as for example in the editor's piece on John Quayle Dickson, a Manxman, as is evident from his middle name, and as is the present reviewer, and colonial secretary from 1913, who seems to have been particularly tiresome. We are told that he was resident commissioner in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands where he demonstrated 'administrative incompetence' and 'financial ineptitude.' Matters did not improve when he arrived in Stanley 'with bumptious confidence' announcing 'that he intended to reform the machinery of government.' Suffice it to say that Dickson's services were terminated by the colonial office in September 1914 but the editor permits himself the wry observation that his pension was still being paid in 1944!

There are some curious omissions and one wonders if all of them can have asked not to appear, or if it was impossible to find contributors willing to write about them. For example, Ian Strange, prominent in Falkland conservation, John Smith who founded the wonderful museum in Stanley, the Napier family of West Point Island, and with regard to South Georgia, Bernard Stonehouse, are all conspicuous by their absence.

Sufficient has been written to make it plain that this book is a major contribution towards the history of the Falkland Islands. It does however have two deficiencies. References do not appear in any of the entries although it seems plain that some writers have attempted to import them by the back door so to speak, by including notes on relevant works in the texts. This deficiency seems very curious and this reviewer is at a loss to explain it. It would certainly have involved some extra work but in proportion to the labour of the whole this would seem relatively insignificant. A further difficulty is presented by the lack of an overall map of the Falkland Islands. True, there is an attractive colour map of landholdings as in 1868 in the front inside cover and there is a colour map of the southern part of South America showing the position of the Falkland Islands with regard to that land area inside the back cover. There is also a British Antarctic Survey map of South Georgia. But there is no map on which a reader can identify the location of major places in the islands, many of which are referred to in the text, and one suspects that the reason for not having such a map might be the additional cost if one were specially prepared. Indeed it is made plain that the book was prepared on the proverbial shoestring which makes the overall achievement all the more remarkable.

The presentation of the work is excellent. It is substantially bound in attractive blue cloth and the printing is first class. The illustrations are carefully selected and each one enhances the article in which it appears.

To sum up, this is a very significant contribution towards any history of the Falkland Islands and when one considers that the compilation of it was all the more or less the unaided work of the editor it is apparent that he deserves our warmest congratulations. The price of the book is astonishingly modest when one considers its quality. All with interests in the Falkland Islands

should have it in their libraries. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**CARL WEYPRECHT (1838–1881) SEEHELD, POLARFORSCHER, GEOPHYSIKER. WISSENSCHAFTLICHER UND PRIVATER BRIEFWECHSEL DES ÖSTERREICHISCHEN MARINEOFFIZIERS ZUR BEGRÜNDUNG DER INTERNATIONALEN POLARFORSCHUNG.** Frank Berger, Bruno P. Besser, and Reinhard A. Krause. 2008. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 587 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 978-3-7001-4019-1. (Veröffentlichung der Kommission für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften, Mathematik und Medizin 57). doi:10.1017/S0032247409008493

The name of the Austrian born naval officer and polar explorer Carl Weyprecht (1838–1881) is well known to all polar researchers. Under his leadership, the Austro-Hungarian expedition on the vessel *Tegetthoff* was intended to sail to the Bering Strait crossing the North Pole. Unfortunately the expedition which took place in 1872–1874 did not achieve that as the ship was trapped in the ice and the expedition had to be limited 'only' to the discovery of Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa [Franz Josef Land]. In addition, Weyprecht initiated the organisation of the International Polar Year (IPY) (1882–1883) in order to obtain a more systematic survey of the climate and geophysics of the polar areas of the earth. These are the undertakings associated with the name of Weyprecht in general and special encyclopedias (for example Holland 1994). A systematic study of Weyprecht as a polar researcher and an organiser of the International Polar Year is absent in the literature in English. Even in German *Weyprechtiana* is also rather scanty. However, the surveys and investigations about Weyprecht compiled by Heinrich von Littrow (1881), Alexander Burger (1910) and Egon Ihne (1913) and an exhibition catalogue compiled in the National Library of Austria on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the polar expedition guided by Weyprecht and Julius Payer (100 Jahre 1973) deserve attention. The latest publication appeared 'only' 36 years ago.

This recently published volume represents an important addition to the limited literature on the life and activities of Weyprecht. It enables the reader to follow in detail the career of a young man, fascinated with the sea, from a being naval officer to becoming an important figure in the history of science. Due to the diligence of the authors, 338 letters and archival documents, mainly in Gothic script which was the predominating literary form in Germany in the 19th century, have been deciphered and are presented. The letters and documents belonging to the period of 1856–1881, mainly contain Weyprecht's letters (325 in total) to his parents, to the German geographer and publicist August Petermann and to Count Hans Wilczek, an enthusiastic supporter of polar exploration