

The absolute hut, roughly a 6 ft [1.8 m] cube, was built into a gap in the country rock which offered some small protection and, more particularly, prevented it from being blown away.

My memory of the locality was refreshed vividly in December 1977 when, flying in at a low altitude from the east, sitting in the pilot's cockpit I was able to spot Cape Denison and to identify it by my magnetograph hut standing out on the level platform well clear from the toe of the ridge. Published photographs of the 1911–14 era and subsequently serve to confirm this.

Because the magnetograph hut is a little west of the axis of the adjacent ridge and the almost constant wind direction was a few degrees east of south, the hut was slightly in the lee of the ridge. However, the only appreciable lessening of the wind force came from 'drag' on the rugged rock surface of the ridge. After daily excursions to and from the huts by day and night, full light to pitch darkness and nil visibility due to drift snow, one learned to sense and assess wind velocities with surprising accuracy and thus to know the windiest places.

Also on p 486, line 3 describes 'the cliffs of Commonwealth Bay extending 30 km NNW and NNE to form a shallow indentation.' In fact, two such directions would produce a gulf rather than a wide shallow bay. The writer appears to have confused the points of the compass and intends WNW and ENE.

In his reply Mr Ledingham writes:

The absolute hut lies in a hollow or gap in the country rock. On the ridge—I agree, and Eric would be a better authority than I to tell whether it was well sheltered or not. The magnetic hut was at the seaward end of the ridge on the flat, and was protected mainly by the rocks which the expedition members had piled against the windward wall. I agree that the directions NNW and NNE are incorrect; they should be as he says WNW and ENE.

WATKINS'S COMPANIONS

Sir,

On page 394 of the January 1983 *Polar Record*, the Executive Director of the British Schools Exploration Society states that Cozens and Stephenson were on the 1932 Expedition when Watkins lost his life. This is not true. Watkins's three companions at that time were Rymill, Chapman and Riley, all of whom are now dead. They as well as Cozens, Stephenson and others were on the 1930–31 British Arctic Air Route Expedition.

Yours truly,
ANDREW CROFT
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Reviews

ROSS IN THE ANTARTIC

[Review by H. G. R. King* of M. J. Ross's *Ross in the Antarctic; the voyage of James Clark Ross in Her Majesty's ships Erebus & Terror 1839–1843*. Whitby, Caedmon of Whitby, 1982, 276 p, £12.50.]

Epitomized by no less an authority than Roald Amundsen as 'the man whose name will ever be remembered as one of the most intrepid polar explorers and one of the most capable seamen the world has ever produced', Sir James Clark Ross has received surprisingly little attention from historians who,

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understandably, have been more attracted to his rumbustious uncle Sir John. It has fallen to his great grandson, Rear-Admiral M. J. Ross, to redress in part the balance with this new account of Ross's Antarctic voyages of 1839–43. It could be argued that, in his own *Voyage of discovery and research*, published in 1847 and reprinted as recently as 1969, Sir James Ross had himself pronounced the last word. Unfortunately James, when he finally came to put pen to paper on his return from the far south, was an utterly exhausted man. His prose is rather Victorian and pompous; though valuable for research, few would read it for sheer enjoyment. Admiral Ross's retelling of the story is altogether more compelling. As a result of much original research he has succeeded in highlighting the principal events of this voyage with reference to contemporary correspondence, some from his family's own archives, and from narratives of Ross's shipmates. These include not only those close to Ross—McCormick and Hooker for example—but such lesser luminaries as Cornelius Sullivan, blacksmith on *Erebus*, and John D. Davis, second master of *Terror* whose *Letter from the Antarctic* was subsequently privately printed. Several of Davis's charming vignettes have been employed by Admiral Ross to embellish the chapter headings of this book. Each of these diarists reacts typically to nature's sublimest revelations as displayed in the smoking volcano Erebus and the awesome cliffs of the Great Ice Barrier. Perhaps more topical are their reactions to an unwelcome wintering in the Falklands Islands—'this vile place' as Ross described them.

As to Ross the man, perhaps we catch the more perceptive glimpses through Hooker's correspondence with his father Sir William Hooker and his own Antarctic journal. In his old age Hooker criticized the expedition saying (to Captain Scott) that 'science was starved on board'. He faulted Ross for failing to involve his naval officers in scientific pursuits, thus prejudicing not only morale but the very success of the expedition. Such grievances, as M. J. Ross stresses, are understandable on a protracted and demanding voyage. But a commander's chief concern must be for the safety of his ships, and to ensure this routine observations and maintenance had to take priority. In the event, as a chapter devoted to results clearly shows, the scientific work was often first rate and forms the basis of much of our present-day knowledge of the region. Hooker's magnificent *Flora Antarctica*, Sabine's report on magnetic data, Richardson's and Gray's work on fish, seals and birds were all of the first order of magnitude. Only Ross's own painstaking collections of marine biology came to naught, ending up in a pile of broken glass bottles on a garden rubbish dump, sad evidence of the mental decline of his final years.

Admiral Ross is to be congratulated on a scholarly and objective account of his illustrious ancestor. He shows a scrupulous regard for the facts, and his account is throughout illuminated by his own professional association with the sea and with his enthusiasm as an amateur botanist for the work of Hooker. A single reference to Weddell (p 23) where he is associated with Enderby & Sons is incorrect; Weddell was in the employ of Messrs Asquith. Congratulations must also be extended to the publishers, to whom polar historians must ever be indebted.

HUNTERS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

[Review by Ian Whitaker* of Hugh Brody's *Maps and dreams; Indians and the British Columbia frontier*. Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981; London, Jill Norman and Hobhouse, 1982. 297 p, illus, £7.95.]

Hugh Brody has written a fine book, which I believe will have a wide appeal. Following his work for the Inuit, especially relating to land-use, and his term as an adviser to Mr Justice Thomas R. Berger and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, he here addresses the problems facing a group of Indian hunters in northern British Columbia. These northern Athapaskan-speakers are generally called 'Beaver Indians'; he first met them in 1978, and he was followed into the field by a team commissioned by the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. We have here the results of two-and-a-half years' work. It is not, however, a conventional anthropological monograph. Although we are led through a year in the life of a forest hunter, this is counterpointed by alternate chapters which treat their problems more analytically.

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