

culture in the same area, published in 1991 (Sandell and Sandell 1991). This latest volume reports on work undertaken between 1989 and 1995, during which time the authors turned their attention to the location and recording of the Palaeo-Eskimo sites of the region.

The book begins by describing the Scoresby Sund fjord area and in particular draws attention to the resource base available to the Eskimo. The second chapter documents previous investigations of Palaeo-Eskimo settlements in the area. The brevity of this chapter reflects the limited work previously undertaken on the early occupation of this region, therefore effectively making the case for the value of the investigations recorded here. The main section of the book documents the evidence for settlement recovered from the 27 sites investigated. Most of the sites cluster around the mouth of the fjord, but a few sites are described from other areas, including Hurry Fjord, the south coast of Jameson Land, Sydkap, and Hekla Havn on Danmarks Ø. This distribution of sites reflects the opportunities presented to the authors to travel in the region, and is clearly related to the favoured hunting locations of contemporary Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoresbysund) hunters.

The book is a record of the evidence found. At each location the surface archaeology is described and the recovered artefacts grouped, listed, and discussed. Numerous photographs help to give a feel for the landscape, and the text is supplemented by an extensive range of site plans and drawings of artefacts. In many ways this volume should be considered an interim report, recording sites in close proximity to current favoured hunting locations. The authors state that they have now moved their area of operation into the less accessible inner fjords, and their research in this area will produce a more comprehensive picture of Palaeo-Eskimo activity in the whole region, which will, hopefully, in due course, be reported in a subsequent volume.

The evidence for Palaeo-Eskimo settlement varies from the compelling to the insubstantial. At some sites, such as Røde Hytte on Jameson Land, the authors had time to carry out a more extensive survey, and the results are spectacular. As well as the identification of the features, a large number of artefacts were recovered, including two endblades, unique to Greenland and with the nearest parallels in Alaska. At the other end of the scale, a site near Kap Hope, Aamarsuit Nuuat, was found to be in such a poor state of preservation that drawing any substantial conclusions from the limited evidence was difficult. That this task of recording is an urgent priority is demonstrated by reports on recent damage to sites both from natural causes, such as ice movement at Narsakajik, and human interference, such as boat repairing and road building at Ittoqqortoormiit. Little can be done about damage from natural causes, but with so many of these important sites located near favoured hunting sites it would be reassuring to know that the local community was involved in the recording process and that opportunities to undertake a programme of education were being sought.

The book concludes with a useful discussion in which the authors resist any temptation to overstate their case. They are conscious that the evidence that they have found raises more questions than it answers. They provide frequent pointers to further areas for research, and at the end they identify four issues to which future investigations should be directed. Although the extent of Palaeo-Eskimo activity in the fjord complex can be ascertained by a programme of continuing recording of surface features and other finds, issues of chronology, cultural change, and the relationships between cultures can probably only be answered through excavation. The data collected by the authors and documented in this volume (as well as the hoped-for sequel) will enable sound decisions to be made regarding future archaeological research priorities in the area. (Robert David, Department of History, St Martin's College, Lancaster LA1 3JD.)

#### References

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**THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE.**  
Ann Savours. 1999. London: Chatham Publishing. x + 342 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-86176-059-0. £25.00.

When I spotted *The search for the North West Passage* in a bookstore in Greenwich, I wondered what had motivated someone to write yet another book on a subject that some would say has already been thoroughly discussed. Ann Savours (biographer of the famous polar ship *Discovery*) explains in her introductory remarks that her career has been connected closely with polar matters, that she has been influenced by other scholars in the field, and that having already written a few chapters for a book that was never published (owing to the death of the principal author) she decided to expand her contribution and publish it in this form, rather than let it go to waste. But what about the book? How does it differ from its many predecessors, such as *The North-West Passage* by John Brown (1860), *Life of Franklin and the North-West Passage* by Albert Markham (1891), *In quest of the North West Passage* by Leslie Neatby (1958), *The Arctic grail: the quest for the North West Passage and the North Pole* by Pierre Berton (1988), or *Across the top of the world: the quest for the Northwest Passage* by James Delgado (1999), to name but a few?

The book covers a very long period. It begins with the voyages of Martin Frobisher in 1576–78 and ends with those of Henry Larsen in 1941–44. It therefore presents a complete picture of European attempts to trace a sea-level route from the Atlantic to the Pacific, poleward of the North American continent. Indeed, the book does much

more than its title indicates, because the search for a passage had really been completed by Sir John Franklin in his final and tragic voyage. By bridging a gap of unknown territory between Barrow Strait and the central mainland coast, he had revealed a navigable route — the first of several Northwest Passages. Several years later, approaching from Bering Strait, Robert McClure demonstrated the existence of a second navigable route up the west coast of Banks Island to Viscount Melville Sound, and a third along its east coast, in Prince of Wales Strait. Providentially rescued from their wrecked ship, they were transported back to England, and achieved fame (and money!) for actually having travelled through the Northwest Passage, although if they had been left on their own they would likely have provided a tragedy to rival Franklin's. So by 1859, when Francis Leopold McClintock confirmed John Rae's report that most of Franklin's men had reached King William Island, and some the continental shore, the search for a passage was really over. Three potential routes through the Arctic archipelago were known (a fourth, via Fury and Hecla Strait, had repelled William Edward Parry in 1822), and it was clearer than ever before that the old idea of using an Arctic passage for trade was a pipe dream.

None of the sea passages from Baffin Bay to Bering Strait had been navigated in its entirety by 1859, and none would be traversed during the remainder of the century. For a decade exploration had been channelled into the search for Franklin and his men; even after the bleaching bones and a pathetic cargo of personal belongings told the sad story of their failure to escape from the Arctic, there were occasional searches for records and relics of the unfortunate expedition. Savours has quite rightly included the Franklin search expeditions in her book. They came about as a direct result of Franklin's attempt to prove that a passage existed, and they provide some wonderful stories of human endurance.

There is a big difference between knowing where a path goes and actually travelling it from one end to the other. One might be able to plot a route to the summit of Mount Everest by using binoculars from an adjacent valley, but that would not deter mountaineers in the least from attempting to reach the top, nor would it diminish the burning human desire to be the first to attain the objective. So, although various routes through the Arctic archipelago were known, there were some who wished, as Franklin so fervently had, to be the first to traverse the Northwest Passage by ship. Alan Young tried in 1875, but he was brought to a stop by the same ice that had beset Franklin. It was the Norwegian Roald Amundsen who accomplished the feat. He selected the most promising route, the same one that had defeated Franklin and Young, and he rose to the challenge in the quietly effective way that would make him famous later in Antarctica. After spending three years in the ice, his small vessel *Gjoa* reached Alaska in 1906. At last! The first successful Northwest Passage, after three and a half centuries of effort.

Inevitably, others followed. Savours brings the story up to the Second World War, during which Larsen (also born in Norway, but by then a naturalized Canadian) became the first to travel the passage from west to east, the first to do it in both directions, and the first to complete a transit in one season. This is a fitting place to end her text, but for the benefit of readers who are curious about subsequent events, she adds an appendix (compiled by icebreaker captain Tom Pullen and glaciologist Charles Swithinbank) listing 50 known transits from 1906 to 1990. There have been more since.

Thus the book discusses not only the search for a sea route through the Arctic, but also the search for Franklin and the first successful transits of the Northwest Passage in each direction. It therefore extends the scope of most earlier books (which are now out of print), and this should be an attraction to readers of today. The whole story is presented in one volume.

Eighty-five percent of Savours' text deals with events of the nineteenth century, and almost half of this relates to the search for Franklin or relics of his lost expedition. In this era many expeditions entered the North American Arctic, many of them failed to reach their objectives, and most of them resulted in published narratives, replete with tales of hardship, misfortune, endurance, valiant effort, and sometimes tragedy. Many of the individuals in the story have long ago achieved heroic stature, and may yet meet a second death due to over-exposure in print. I would like to read more about some of the less-familiar figures. Franklin, who died attempting to make the passage, is discussed in 19 pages; McClure, who was rewarded for finding another passage, is given 12 pages; and McClintock, who reached the site of Franklin's disaster, receives 18. But Young, who got almost as far as Franklin in 1875 but returned home safely, is dismissed in a tiny paragraph. And Amundsen, the first man ever to take a ship through the passage, the man who capped centuries of effort, is allotted only seven pages. Poor chap, he had the misfortune to succeed without fuss or catastrophe, while others, by losing their ships or failing or dying, created immortal stories of courageous endeavours (and, of course, he was not British).

Savours relies heavily on first-person accounts by the explorers themselves, and she often enlivens the text by quoting from their journals and letters, describing their appearance, and assessing their personalities. Sometimes she connects past and near-present in interesting ways, remarking on the recent exhumation of bodies at Beechey Island, the discovery and analysis of skeletal material from King William Island, the existence of a boat abandoned a century and a half ago, and so on. Another appealing feature is the rich assortment of skilfully selected illustrations, of which there are more than 100, many of them unfamiliar, and nine of them in gorgeous colour, beautifully reproduced. Two other colour photographs adorn the dust cover of the book. Readers who are not yet addicted to the habit-forming literature on Arctic adventures

may experience the first twinges of temptation on being exposed to this handsome book.

Savours' text is pregnant with facts, dates, and unfamiliar place-names (very few of which appear on the location maps), and sometimes the trees obscure the wood. The book does not grip the reader with the same intensity as Berton's *Arctic grail* or Fergus Fleming's *Barrow's boys* (1999), but those word-masters have been journalists by profession, and it is difficult to match their story-telling skills. Savours knows her subject well, however, and she documents her sources carefully. She cites more than 400 references for the 17 chapters, and their diversity indicates the breadth of the research carried out. Most relate to published books and articles, some of them old and rarely read or quoted, and others almost fresh from the printer. A number of relevant North American publications appear to have been overlooked, but for a topic so extensive as this one there are limits to what one can do. There are many references to unpublished manuscripts, in the Scott Polar Research Institute (where she worked for 12 years), the National Maritime Museum (where she worked for 17 years), the Royal Geographical Society, and the British Library. In her use of manuscript resources she has gone further than most other writers.

Davis Strait and Hudson Bay whalers played a role in the searches for the Northwest Passage and for Franklin, and they are referred to in the text from time to time. But the reader deserves better guidance than Savours provides in note 9 to chapter 4, which recommends only two works on the entire subject, neither of which discusses whalers in the context of exploration and discovery in the Canadian Arctic. Again, a number of North American publications on the subject do exist.

I have often thought of how interesting it would be to read a book on recent voyages through the Northwest Passage, or to the North Pole, or elsewhere in the Arctic. It would reveal the extent to which adventure travel has replaced — or succeeded — exploration. Savours (page 142) remarks that the turbulent Back River has been descended 'only a few times since Back's expedition' of 1834, but this is incorrect. In fact, remote Arctic rivers notorious for their rapids no longer discourage travellers; they now attract them. I spoke recently to a man in Massachusetts who has canoed the Back River seven times since 1976, and has written two books about his experiences. He tells me that a few canoe parties go down the river each season, making a total of 50 or more trips in the last 30-odd years. Similarly, the Northwest Passage has beckoned to adventurous yachtsmen; in an appendix Savours lists seven yacht transits before 1990, and there have been more since then. Although technological advances in boat construction, clothing, camping gear, communications, and perhaps climatic change, have made Arctic travel easier, it is part of the ethos of the adventure traveller to keep things a bit on the wild side, so there have been voyages through the Northwest Passage by umiak (Inuit skin boat), by kayak, and alone.

In the book's prologue, Savours quotes four lines from a 'seafarer's song, provenance unknown to me.' Will Canadians ever forgive her? Those unforgettable lines were written and sung by Ontario-born folk-singing legend Stan Rogers. He died in a plane crash during a North American tour, but his wonderful song 'Northwest Passage' (published on cassette in 1981) lives on.

The first and last illustrations in the book provide effective bookends for this history of the Northwest Passage. The first (page 6) shows Frobisher's men in an open boat, discharging muskets at Inuit on a headland, while the Inuit retaliate with bows. Elizabethans were seeking the passage because they thought it would provide a short sea route to the Pacific for purposes of trade, a concept that was dead by 1800. The last illustration (page 316) is a photograph of the super-tanker *Manhattan* cutting a swath — apparently effortlessly — through solid Arctic ice during a voyage intended to demonstrate the feasibility of shipping oil from northern Alaska to the Atlantic — a commercial use of the Northwest Passage such as Europeans dreamed about centuries ago.

The long search for a Northwest Passage has resulted in many books and countless articles. And why not? It is a great story, and it will continue to be told, in different ways and by different writers, for many years to come. Tales of adventure and of human courage in the face of adversity, whether real like Franklin's disappearance, Shackleton's boat journey, and Scott's death, or fanciful like Jack and the beanstalk and Little Red Riding Hood, achieve a kind of immortality and become part of our culture. Among the various accounts of the Northwest Passage, this book will stand high up on the list for its scope, accuracy, and lavish illustrations. (W. Gillies Ross, Department of Geography, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec J1M 1Z7, Canada.)

**THE LAST CONTINENT: DISCOVERING ANT-ARCTICA.** Bernard Stonehouse. 2000. Burgh, Norfolk: Shuttlewood Collinson Publishers. x + 278 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-9537907-0-3. £14.95; US\$24.95.

One of the nice things about a good travel guide is that it informs and delights the reader. This is true regardless of whether one is researching a holiday destination or just trying to give daydreams a boost while piloting an armchair around one's bedsit in Cheltenham.

While several Antarctic guidebooks have hit the shelves in recent years, none of them has really done the job justice. However, the standard has now raised with the publication of *The last continent: discovering Antarctica*, by Bernard Stonehouse. In short, and despite its flaws, this is probably the best available single-volume source geared toward the would-be Antarctic traveller. Sadly, its faults in some areas still mean that the Antarctic tourist will need to pack more than one book if true completeness is to be obtained, but this guide is a big step closer to the 'one book covers all' goal that many travellers desire. *The last continent* introduces the region and its many delights in