

## Correspondence

### Another British pre-war expedition

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John Wright's article 'British polar expeditions 1919–39' (*Polar Record* 26 (157): 77–84 (1990)) missed the expedition from Cambridge to Spitsbergen in 1938, led by L. H. McCabe and including M. B. Adams, W. G. V. Balchin, P. M. M. Pritchard, N. Pye and myself. The expedition

studied glaciology, geomorphology and solid geology in Bünsow Land (Campbellryggen and Gipsdalen) and in southwest Ny Friesland (Lemströmfjellet). We packed boxes on the steps of the Scott Polar Research Institute where Dorothy Fetherstonhaugh (later Wright) worked, and the expedition was noted as a project in *Polar Record* 2 (16): 71–73 (1938), and reported more fully in *Polar Record* 3 (17): 4 (1939). At least two scientific publications arose from it. McCabe was killed in action in Hong Kong; Balchin and Pye were later professors of geography at Swansea and Leicester.

### Comments on articles by Lynch and Oszcewski

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In the abstract of Dennis Lynch's interesting profile of Herbert G. Ponting (*Polar Record* 26 (158): 217–24, 1990) there is a reference to 'Hillary and Tensing on Everest in 1953' but no mention of Mount Everest in the text. Lynch appears to have missed the close connection between the photographic work of Ponting and that of Captain John Noel on the 1922 and 1924 Everest expeditions (see my note in *Polar Record* 25 (124): 260, 1990, and a forthcoming obituary of Noel in *Alpine Journal*).

Noel often spoke of his high regard for Ponting, his senior by 20 years and his mentor in expedition photography. The movie camera he took to Everest was similar to Ponting's, having been designed by Arthur Newman but with improvements suggested by Ponting including aluminium casing and electric drive. The last ten lonely and rather embittered years of Ponting's life were lightened by his close friendship with Noel and his first wife, the West End actress Sybille Graham, for Ponting was a frequent week-end visitor to their house in Hertfordshire.

In his paper on Frederick A. Cook's polar journey of 1908–09 (*Polar Record* 26 (158): 225–32, 1990) Randall

J. Oszcewski advances an ingenious solution to what Vilhjalmur Stefansson called 'the problem of Meighen Island'. He suggests that Cook suppressed his discovery of Meighen Island because he had left on the island a cairn containing a record whose date would have been prejudicial to his claim to have reached the North Pole on 21 April 1908.

The island was officially discovered in 1916 by Stefansson, who left a cairn and a record, and it was the last known place reached by Dr H. K. E. Krueger on his ill-fated expedition of 1930. In 1957 Dr R. Thorsteinsson of the Geological Survey of Canada made a reconnaissance survey of the island, and in 1959 Dr K. C. Arnold, working under the Polar Continental Shelf Project, established survey ground control for photogrammetric mapping of the island.

It seems to me very unlikely that Thorsteinsson and Arnold, both experienced field officers who covered the island extensively on foot, could have failed to spot a standing cairn, presumably built in a prominent place. However, future visitors might look for a *collapsed* cairn, as an indication that Cook visited the island. I know of two collapsed cairns in northern Ellesmere Island, both of which contained historic records. One of these collapsed before our eyes after the upper rocks were removed to expose the record. Meanwhile, 'the problem of Meighen Island' remains.

### Wolves breeding in northeast Greenland

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Following the sad fate of the female breeding wolf *Canis lupus* at Hold with Hope, northeast Greenland, described by Turner and Dennis (*Polar Record* 25 (155): 353, 1989),

I am pleased to report that wolves have again bred at this locality.

A pair were spotted at a range of over 2 km by Rolf Dörnbach, a member of an Erskine Expeditions party on the evening of 18 July 1990. They were keeping to one spot on the eastern side of Badlanddal, about 5 km from where the female had been shot in 1988. On 23 July, when Herr Dörnbach spotted the wolves again in the same place, closer inspection revealed two cubs which disappeared into a burrow excavated in sandy soil.