

In order to inform club members about matters of interest in the Arctic it was decided that a short mimeographed bulletin, the *Arctic Circular*, would be published during the winter months. The *Circular* aims to provide concise and accurate information on current events in the Arctic and to assist research by including requests for information on particular regions or subjects. The emphasis throughout is on events in the Canadian Arctic, but other news is also included when available. By the end of the year eight numbers had been issued, making a first volume of 102 pages.

As it was believed that a number of people closely connected with the Arctic, but living outside Ottawa, were interested in the club, it was decided that non-residents might become members by subscribing one dollar a year, which is half the Ottawa subscription. Non-resident members receive the *Arctic Circular* and may attend all meetings. Originally fifty persons, living outside Ottawa but personally known to members, were invited to join. Since that time a number of requests for membership have been received from those living elsewhere in Canada, in the United States and in Europe. At the time of the annual general meeting on 13 January 1949 there were 175 Ottawa members and 188 out-of-town members, making a total of 363. The membership includes practically all Canadian scientists and explorers who have spent any length of time in the Arctic, and a number of these contribute notes to the *Circular*.

DIANA ROWLEY

#### AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN

[Sir John Franklin's last letter to his friend and comrade, Dr (later Sir John) Richardson, is in the possession of Lt.-Col. P. V. W. Gell, of Hopton Hall, Wirksworth, Derbyshire. Colonel Gell, who is a great-grandson of Franklin, has kindly supplied the Institute with a copy and given permission for it to be published in the *Polar Record*. It throws much light on Franklin's plans for his final expedition and we are grateful for the opportunity to give it publication.]

Whale Fish Islands,  
Disco Bay,  
7th July 1845

My dear Richardson,

You will be glad to know that we made our passage to this place in good time. We anchored early on the morning of the 4th, and having got the transport alongside, began very soon to unload her. We have, however, some doubt whether the ships, the *Terror* in particular, will be able to take all she has brought for us without being too deep in the water. Time and care are also requisite to make the best stowage we can in our very limited room. Crozier and James [Fitzjames] resolved to carry all the provision and fuel we can. We have been favoured with the most beautiful weather for the observations on shore and various sets of officers are busy at the Magnetic Instruments, the observations for Latitude and Longitude and in getting Angles for the survey of the Islands, if our stay permits. Specimens of the rocks and of the few plants and birds have been taken. Mr. Goodsir has been very assiduous throughout in his dredging and has caught great numbers on our passage of crustaceae—

acalepha with some Annelides and Molluscae—many of which are rare. He has kindly supplied me with the enclosed drawings of two fish which he thinks you would be desirous of having. He is now fully installed at a table in my cabin where he draws and describes his animals as soon as they are taken. Everyone, officer and man, is happy to collect for him; in fact he is a very general favourite on the ship. His immediate senior behaves kindly to him, and I have seen no symptoms as yet of his being jealous of his Assistant. I perceive that Stanley is willing to take his part in collecting and skinning birds, with which products of Natural History he is perhaps most acquainted.

The place where we are anchored is a mere fishing station for the Esquimaux who are employed in catching seals for the Danish Government. There are about 130 of them when all assembled—but not more than 30 at this time. They are like those in Hudson's Strait, but stouter, and their clothing manner and appearance bespeak that care is taken of them by their masters. Several of them read the Bible—men and women. Some can do questions of simple Arithmetic—and I am informed that the children are kept at school when the whole are assembled—the teacher being a half-caste Dane who acts under the Minister. One of their turf huts was shown me in which seats and stools were placed and the school is held.

The Danish Governor of Disco as well as the next officer in rank are absent, and I hear that a super cargo is left in charge from whom I received a note in reply to one I had written to the Governor, acquainting me that he could not read English and therefore could not understand my letter. This answer being in Danish I had to get it translated by one of my men. I found that it offered me any assistance, but referred me to the cockswain of their Government boat now at this place for information. This I had already obtained from this man as well as from another person who appeared more intelligent than him. Both, however, told me that the winter had been severe, the strongest winds being from the East. The ice broke away in the bay at the close of April, and the latest accounts from the North West state that it is also broken up as far as 74° or the Women's Island, where our whalers have been catching fish. These men argue from all these circumstances that the prospect is favourable for us as far as getting in good time into Lancaster Sound is concerned—beyond that they know nothing about the matter. The main point for us at present is to get as quickly as we can across the Barrier of Ice in Baffin's Bay and it is satisfactory for all of us to know that we are in proper time for doing that.

We must pray for the guidance of the Almighty in this as in every part of our course—and having the hope of his protection and blessing, put forth our best exertions. The weather is now remarkably fine, and even warm on shore—so that the mosquitoes are troublesome to the thin-skinned members of our party—They are of the large kind.

Mr. Stanley begged me to remember him to you and I am sure Mr. Goodsir wishes me to do so on his part, though he is too diffident to make the request of me.

When we have completed our provision from the transport we shall have full three years' supplies of everything needful on board—so that if we should be

foiled even after this winter, we can without apprehension remain a second winter. I have been thinking much of the probability of there being a chain of islands, if not a continued shore, which connects Wollaston Land with that of Banks as I remember you always imagined would prove the case. I cannot else see how the musk oxen got to Melville Island, which cannot swim far, I suppose. These would hardly cross over the ice, though the Reindeer would; besides, the latter animals can swim, and would perhaps cross over wide channels. Should these exist a chain of islands in the direction we are speaking of I shall consider the circumstance as favourable and that we shall have the best prospect of getting to the westward through the channels between them. I cannot agree with Sir John Barrow in supposing that the open water is to be found apart from land. I shall, of course, despatch parties on boats and by land to examine into and find out passages in places where it may be difficult and only productive of delay in taking the ships. I have had much pleasure in reading over a letter I received from Krusenstern soon after my return from Russia and Sir John Ross had sailed—to find that he feels certain of an expedition succeeding in the N.W. passage if the ships can be got to any point we were at on the coast of America. I admit with you that Regent's Inlet seems to be the most certain way of attaining that point, but the more I reflect upon the voyages hitherto made into that inlet the more convinced I am that James Ross and Parry are right in supposing that ships of our size if they even once got down among the islets and strong tides at the bottom of that Inlet, they would never be got out again. The coast in that part must be surveyed in boats. But once to the west of Point Turnagain our ships might with safety go. Should we be entirely obstructed in forcing our passage between the parallels of Banks and Wollaston Lands, we must try the Wellington channels or some other of the channels to the North, but I cannot find any good reason for [supposing that] we are to find open water th[ough] [Barrow w]ill have it. I trust to your kindness in keeping my dear Jane and Eleanor as much at ease as possible on the subject of the difficulties that may attend our progress, and especially if it should turn out that we find it necessary to prolong our stay beyond the time they may have fixed for our return. Your own experience will suggest to them many causes of detention quite consistent with our being in perfect safety and health. I have an excellent set of officers and men who have embarked with the best spirit in the cause. It will be my study to keep them united and happy, and to encourage them while they put forth their own strenuous endeavours—to commit the issue of their safety to God.

I hope my dear Richardson your dear children are proving themselves a great comfort to you. It is one of the trying circumstances of my present absence that I am so far separated from you and them and unable to assure you by my personal presence and help, how deeply I sympathize with you all. May God bless and preserve you shall be my frequent prayer as well as that I may, in God's good time, be permitted to return and enjoy your society. Give my affectionate love to the children and believe me ever most. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I think Lt. Fairholme intends. . .

<sup>1</sup> Blanks are due to excision of signature—Eds.