

Reviews

THE LOG OF THE SCOTIA BY WILLIAM SPEIRS BRUCE. Peter Speak (editor). 1992. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 306 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7486-0293-3. £85.00.

From 1901 to 1904 the attention of the English public tended to be concentrated on the activities and achievements of Robert Scott's expedition to the Ross Sea aboard *Discovery*, an expedition promoted largely by Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, and aimed at reaching the South Pole. In Scotland, by contrast, public attention was focused on the activities and achievements of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition led by William Speirs Bruce, an expedition quite erroneously characterized by Markham as representing a 'mischievous rivalry.' Bruce was first, foremost, and always a scientist, probably the most experienced polar scientist of his day, and the aims of his expedition were entirely scientific. Attempting to reach a record high latitude purely for its own sake had absolutely no place in Bruce's plans.

Bruce's background had equipped him superbly for the task of leading a scientific expedition to the Antarctic. In 1892–1893 he had first gone to the Antarctic as naturalist aboard *Balaena*, one of four vessels that made up the Dundee Whaling Expedition, the aim of which was to assess the whaling potential of the Southern Ocean. Then for a full 12 months (1895–1896) he supervised the operation of the weather observatory at the summit of Ben Nevis, surviving year-round the rigours of what is essentially a sub-Antarctic climate. From there he went to the Arctic for a full year (1896–1897) as zoologist on the Jackson–Harmsworth expedition, wintering at Mys Flora on Ostrov Nortbruka in Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa. In 1898 he went north again, firstly as scientist on Andrew Coats' yacht *Blencathra* on a cruise to Novaya Zemlya, and then, later that same season, as a scientist aboard Prince Albert of Monaco's superbly equipped research yacht *Princesse Alice*, on a cruise to Svalbard. In 1899 he again sailed north aboard *Princesse Alice*, once again to pursue oceanographic research in the waters around Svalbard.

Having obtained the financial support of the Coats brothers of Paisley, wealth cotton-thread manufacturers (the expedition was entirely funded from Scottish sources), Bruce purchased the Norwegian whaling ship *Hekla*, renamed her *Scotia*, and had her refitted as a polar research vessel at Troon, Ayrshire. *Scotia* sailed from Troon on 2 November 1902 with a crew of 27 and eight scientists (one of whom was an accomplished piper). Ship's captain was Thomas Robertson of Dundee, whom Bruce had encountered previously, both on the Dundee Whaling Expedition and in Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa. The expedition was headed for the Weddell Sea, Bruce's objective being to establish

a wintering station as far south as possible on the eastern shores of that sea, and to pursue high-latitude oceanographic, zoological, and geological work from *Scotia*.

After calling at the Falklands and the South Orkney Islands, where a landing was made on Saddle Island, *Scotia* pushed southeast into the Weddell Sea. But on 22 February 1903, at 70° 21' S she encountered impassable ice; there was no prospect of reaching land and, rather than letting his ship become beset (and thus of spending a winter adrift, which he considered pointless from the point of view of oceanography), Bruce took her back north to the South Orkneys. A snug wintering harbour, named Scotia Bay, was found on the south coast of Laurie Island. An extensive programme of meteorological, ornithological, and marine biological observations was pursued throughout the winter, the latter based on a trawl hauled between two holes in the ice. Whenever the weather permitted, Bruce and his colleagues would pursue a programme of sounding and surveying with a view to producing a detailed topographic and bathymetric map of the island and surrounding waters. At the same time, a substantial, comfortable stone-built house was erected on shore and was named Omond House. In the spring, sledge and boat expeditions allowed the whole of the coastline of Laurie Island to be surveyed and detailed soundings to be taken in many of its bays.

Leaving a party in residence at Omond House, in November 1903 *Scotia* sailed for the Falklands and Buenos Aires, with regular series of oceanographic stations being occupied along her route. At Buenos Aires she underwent a thorough refit. Bruce arranged with the Argentine government that it should take over the operation of Omond House (which has operated as an Argentine research station ever since), and to this end three Argentine meteorologists came on board when *Scotia* sailed again on 21 January 1904. At Scotia Bay, Bruce re-embarked the shore party (with the exception of Robert Mossman, who had volunteered to stay as base leader), landed the three Argentines, and continued south for further work in the Weddell Sea.

On 3 March, at 72° 18'S, 17° 59'W, as *Scotia* was working through heavy ice, land was sighted to the south-east, entirely covered in glacier ice and with no rocks visible. Bruce named it Coats Land, and correctly deduced that it was part of the continent of Antarctica and not an island. As *Scotia* steamed and drifted southwards over the next few days, the land was constantly in sight to the east and southeast, but ice prevented the ship from getting closer than about 3 km from the land. For six days *Scotia* was beset, but on 13 March Captain Robertson managed to get her free and returned north. After calling at Gough Island (where extensive scientific studies were made),

Cape Town, St Helena, Ascension Island, and the Azores, *Scotia* reached Kingstown in Northern Ireland on 15 July 1904.

From 1907 to 1919 Bruce edited and published the scientific results of the expedition in six volumes; these were mainly zoological papers, written by an impressive range of experts. A popular general account of the expedition (*Three of the Staff* 1906) was published soon after its return, but in addition to this Bruce edited his log from the voyage, which he intended to appear as Volume I of the scientific results. By 1921 it had reached page-proof stage, but due to financial difficulties it was not published in Bruce's lifetime. In due course these page proofs (and many more of Bruce's papers) found a safe resting place in the archives of the Scott Polar Research Institute, and, fortunately, Peter Speak took it upon himself to add the necessary introductory chapters and a postscript to place the journal in its context. Speak's contributions include an excellent introduction to Bruce the scientist and to the preparations for the voyage, as well as a postscript that deals, among other things, with the political implications of Argentina taking over operation of the Omond House base station.

The log itself is a fascinating document that all polar scientists should read. The dogged determination displayed by Bruce and his colleagues in pursuing an ambitious programme of survey work, ornithology, meteorology, and oceanography, despite the execrable climate of the South Orkneys with its wild fluctuations in temperature, gale-force winds, and drifting snow, has rarely been matched by any polar expedition. A small, but well-chosen selection of photos from the expedition's collection greatly enhances the text.

There are few faults to be found in this long-lost edition of Volume I of the papers of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition. One of them can be laid at Bruce's door: for some reason he decided to begin the published version of his journal only on 2 February 1903 when *Scotia* first encountered the edge of the pack in the Weddell Sea, thus excluding, for example, details of the first visit to the South Orkneys; and (apart from the details of the visits to St Helena and Ascension) the journal ends when *Scotia* sailed from Gough Island. Thus we have no details of the entire outward and much of the homeward voyage.

Peter Speak has clearly made a deliberate decision not to annotate the journal, but to leave it in the unadulterated format of Bruce's page-proofs (and in the original type-face). Instead Speak has added a glossary of specialized terms, but this is quite selective. For example, Bruce uses names such as 'black-throated penguin' and 'ringed penguin,' but these are not included in the glossary.

There is a further minor area of possible confusion that might have been clarified by entries in the glossary. Bruce, an ardent Scottish nationalist, uses the occasional Scotticism that, while completely familiar to any Scot, will probably be quite opaque to readers from south of the border or overseas. Examples include references to a sledge 'couping' (capsizing); to Bruce having a 'good crack' with the

captain (a convivial conversation); to the pilot at Port Stanley 'havering' about some topic (talking nonsense); and to a damaged piece of equipment being 'sorted' (repaired). One wonders, given Bruce's excellent command of English, whether these Scottish usages were not included deliberately, just to emphasize (as he did at every opportunity) that this was *not* an English expedition.

In summation, we (and the memory of William Speirs Bruce) are enormously indebted to Peter Speak. Ninety years after the departure of the expedition, he has made available the leader's own narrative of one of the most impressive scientific expeditions ever to head for the Antarctic. By retaining the original format and type-face of the long-lost page proofs he has strengthened the bond that links the reader to one of the most talented, yet most neglected, polar scientists of all time. (William Barr, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0W0.)

References

Three of the Staff. 1906. *The voyage of the Scotia*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons.

MESSAGES FROM EARTH: NATURE AND THE HUMAN PROSPECT IN ALASKA. Robert Weeden. 1992. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. 189 p, soft cover. ISBN 0-912006-56-0. \$16.95 (US).

Throughout the circumpolar north, as indeed in many other regions of the globe, the economic exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources has been underpinned morally by the ethics of social and economic development and by the authority of rational scientific knowledge. In short, western belief in the inexorability of human progress, the transcendence of nature by culture, the desire for wealth and power, and a frontier ideology have shaped both the course of economic development in the Arctic and the post-contact history of its indigenous peoples. In this book, Robert Weeden focuses on Alaska, argues that deep and pervasive changes are needed in human understanding, and offers guidelines for sustainable living now and in the future at the close of 250 years of Alaskan frontier history.

The large-scale commercial exploitation of Alaska's natural resources began with the Russian trade in sea-otter furs, which developed following Vitus Bering's voyage in 1741. Alaska remained important for the Russian and later the British fur trades, and, over a period of 140 years, sea otters, fur seals, and several species of fur-bearing land mammals were hunted nearly to extinction. From 1847 New England whalers hunted the Bowhead in Bering Strait; gold mining was the foundation for the expanding Alaskan economy from the 1880s; and in 1968 Alaska's future economic development was determined by the discovery of oil and gas on the Arctic North Slope.

Thus the contact history of Alaska, as in other parts of the circumpolar north, has been one of boom and bust. In a wider global sense, the whole of human history has been a history of exploitative societies, and Weeden argues that we need a revolution in our way of thinking and behaving