

**CAPTAIN FRANCIS CROZIER: LAST MAN STANDING?** Michael Smith. 2006. Cork: Collins Press. xvi + 242 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-905172-09-5. £17.99; EUR23.99. doi:10.1017/S0032247407006870

There appears to be no limit to the public's willingness to purchase and, presumably, read books on polar history that are aimed at a popular but serious audience. As a result, it is an unusual issue of *Polar Record* that does not have, in the Book Reviews section, comment on at least one such contribution to literature. Few writers have, in recent years, produced more books of this type than has Michael Smith, whose works include biographies of Crean, Oates, Wordie, and now Crozier, as well as children's books on Crean and Shackleton. His works have received notice not only in the public print — and especially in Ireland, since his subjects have, with the exception of Wordie, all had an Irish connection — but also in more heavyweight publications such as this journal.

The present book is the only substantial biography of Francis Rawdon Moira Crozier, an officer in the Royal Navy, who participated in William Edward Parry's 1821–23 and 1824–25 expeditions to find the Northwest Passage, in Parry's North Pole expedition of 1827, in the *Cove* expedition of 1836 under James Clark Ross, in Ross' expedition to the Antarctic in *Erebus* and *Terror*, the second of which he commanded, and, finally, in Sir John Franklin's last expedition, again in command of *Terror*. He was in command of an expedition itself only once. This was on Franklin's last expedition, when he assumed command after the death of Franklin on 11 June 1847. By that time, the expedition was almost over and all that could realistically be attempted was to extricate as many of the men as possible from the place where the ships were beset. Crozier died after the abandonment of the vessels, presumably in 1848. The 'last man standing' of the sub-title relates to the 'legend' that Crozier was the last survivor.

Crozier was a native of Banbridge, County Down, in Northern Ireland. He was born in 1796 into a prosperous Protestant family, and entered the navy, for reasons that are obscure, in 1810. His career was distinguished by his participation in the expeditions listed above and by his close friendships with other officers engaged in the same activity and, in particular, with James Clark Ross. In character, he appears to have been 'modest and unassuming' and he never wrote a book about his voyages, nor did he receive a knighthood or other public recognition for his efforts. There is no doubt, however, about his competence as a sailor, and as commander of *Terror* he set the highest standards of leadership.

Therefore, this book is to be welcomed as filling a prominent gap in the long list of books on the Arctic and Antarctic explorations by the Royal Navy in the first part of the nineteenth century. Much of the material presented will be familiar to those with a knowledge of the expeditions themselves but the author has unearthed

much that is new about the parts played specifically by Crozier in them, as well as a great deal relating to aspects of his personal life, and in particular that concerned with his affection for Sophia Cracroft, Franklin's niece.

For this reviewer, the most interesting parts of the book relate to the misgivings felt by Crozier during the preparations for Franklin's last expedition and to speculation — for that is all it can be — concerning the reasons for Crozier's selection of the escape route southwards towards the Great Fish River for the crews of *Erebus* and *Terror* once the ships were abandoned. The obvious alternative was northwards towards the stores left behind on Fury Beach after the destruction of HMS *Fury* in 1825. Crozier had been present when that event had occurred, on board HMS *Hecla*, and was well aware of their volume and location. However, the author points out that, in 1845, at about the time of the departure of Franklin's expedition, there were suggestions that 'rogue whalers' were planning to recover the stores with the awful prospect for the survivors of the expedition arriving there and finding the supplies gone. No reference is stated to support this contention but it certainly seems reasonable enough. In addition he notes that the area around the Great Fish River 'was a known source of game and offered the near certainty of nourishment for men facing starvation' (page 186). That is, of course, assuming that they still had sufficient energy and skill to shoot the animals in question. In fact, the Fury Beach stores had not been plundered, but in view of the distance to them and the enfeebled condition of the men after the abandonment of the ships, one is entitled to doubt that, had Crozier opted for this destination, any would have had sufficient strength to reach it.

Sufficient has already been written in this review to indicate that here is a book worthy of the attention of polar historians, and there is no doubt whatever concerning the diligence of the author in unearthing his sources. There are, however, three reasons why an encomium of the book is not forthcoming from this reviewer.

The first is that the author subscribes wholeheartedly to what might be called the anti-establishment view of the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century. And he does not mince his words. For example: '[Crozier's] service was shamefully undervalued by his blinkered superiors at the Admiralty and cruelly overlooked by history' (page 226). There is little evidence of the former; after all Crozier held the same high rank as Franklin did when they died and while Franklin had commanded several expeditions, Crozier had never done so. With regard to the latter, 'history' has only 'overlooked' Crozier because he was always in a subordinate position until right at the end, when he was in circumstances from which there could be almost no 'historical' evidence. A further example of this mindset occurs a few pages previously (page 210), when a parallel is drawn between 'the greatest military blunder of the Victorian age,' the 'infamous' Charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava in the Crimea and the

'disastrous' charge into the ice of Franklin's expedition. This is ludicrous. The author is apparently unfamiliar with Isandhlwana, a much greater Victorian military blunder, nor has it occurred to him that while the charge certainly took place due to error, it was actually a part of a stunning victory. This is because, for the sacrifice of an under-strength brigade, a vastly stronger force of Russians were induced to depart from a position in which they had been threatening the allied rear and from which they could, had they been resolutely handled and not intimidated by the charge and other actions by small units, have cut the allies off from their supply bases, with appalling consequences. The conclusion one derives from the attitudes implicit throughout the book is that the writer is simply unable to get inside the worldview of the first part of the nineteenth century, a view in which words like 'sacrifice,' 'duty,' and 'resolve' had totally different connotations to the ones they have today. These attitudes lead one to reflect that, from what we know of Crozier's personality, he, himself, would not have associated with them.

The second reservation relates to the number of infelicities and errors that litter the work. The author consistently uses 'top' or 'above' when he means north, and 'below' when he means south, for example that the Northwest Passage is across the 'top' of America, or that Smith Sound is at the 'top' of Baffin Bay, or that Igloolik is at the 'top' of Melville Peninsula or that *Erebus* and *Terror* spent 63 days 'below' the Antarctic circle. Spitsbergen is always Spitzbergen (why do authors so seldom get this simple point right?) in the text, but it is labelled correctly in Map 6, on which what is claimed to be Hecla Cove is actually Wijdefjorden. HMS *Dorothea* was not *Dorethea*. Constantine Phipps' expedition certainly failed to reach the North Pole but to describe it as 'particularly unsuccessful' is unfair. Phipps, who was a Captain, and not a Lieutenant, was the first to provide a scientific description of the polar bear and named the ivory gull, among his other scientific achievements. The author uncritically repeats, although he does not attribute it, the old allegation of George Simpson that Franklin was incapable on his first expedition of travelling more than eight miles per day. This is incorrect. During their first 250-mile journey on foot in the northern winter, Franklin and his men 'averaged each day more than double the eight miles mentioned by Simpson' (Houston 1974: xxviii). He also asserts that Bellingshausen, whose name is incorrectly stated, was an Estonian: true he was born in what is now Estonia, but his ethnicity was that of a Baltic German. In the same paragraph we are assured that Bransfield was a Lieutenant: he was a Master, RN. With regard to Parry's 1827 expedition, the second sledge boat was named *Endeavour* not *Investigator*. The support vessel of Franklin's last expedition was *Baretto Junior*, not *Barretto Junior*. It would be tedious to continue to list everything to which exception might be taken, but the important point should be made that if an author permits such legions of errors, each one no doubt trivial in itself, to appear in his work, then he cannot reasonably

complain if those readers who have sufficient knowledge to detect them have suspicions concerning the validity of his judgements on more important matters.

A more subjective reason for adverse comment is that the author's prose is pedestrian. It simply does not grip the reader, and, in view of the fascinating events that are recounted in the book, that is a pity.

To sum up: this could have been an excellent book. The author is to be commended for determining on producing a biography of Crozier and on the research he has done on the life of a man who deserves to be better known than he is. If he had enlisted the services of an eagle-eyed editor competent in polar history and had made a serious attempt to look at the events he recounts through the eyes of the participants in them and not through those of a liberal commentator of the early part of the present century, his book would have been much more convincing as a portrayal of one of the most important polar explorers of the first part of the nineteenth century. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

#### Reference

Houston, C.S. 1974. Introduction. In: Houston, C.S. (editor). *To the Arctic by canoe, 1819–1821: the journal and paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press: xxiii–xxxv.

**ANTARCTICA FROM SOUTH AMERICA.** Bernard Stonehouse. 2006. Originator Publishing. x + 182 p, illustrated, soft cover.  
doi:10.1017/S0032247407006882

In an age when many books carry obtuse titles that try to be clever (for example, the best-selling self-help book *Who moved my cheese?* (Johnson 1998), which is in no way dedicated to the shifting of cultured dairy products), it is refreshing to find a book title that tells it to you straight. And, with more than 95% of all Antarctic tourists starting their journeys to the deep south from South America, Bernard Stonehouse's *Antarctica from South America* is sure to appeal to many.

Anyone who has read Stonehouse's previous title, *The last continent: discovering Antarctica* (2000), will be familiar with the contents of this new book because they have been pretty much lifted straight out and republished. The author acknowledges this directly, stating that the new title and its streamlined focus, which now omits the Ross Sea and East Antarctica, is essentially a second edition of the earlier book from 2000. *Antarctica from South America* follows the same basic outline and many of the comments made in a review of that earlier work (Carey 2000) are still valid with this new book. The introductory chapters provide descriptions of the southern region, including the land, ice, and surrounding seas, as well as the soils, plants, and wildlife. Background