Polar Record 52 (267): 732–737 (2016). © *Cambridge University Press 2016.*

Book Reviews

Discovering the north-west passage. The four-year Arctic odyssey of H.M.S. *Investigator* and the McClure expedition. Glenn M. Stein. 2015. Jefferson: McFarland & Co. 388 p, illustrated, softcover. ISBN 978-0-7864-7708-1. $39.95
doi:10.1017/S0032247416000097

On 22 July 2010 a party from the underwater archaeology division of Parks Canada flew in to Mercy Bay in Aulavik National Park, on Banks Island, Nunavut – its mission to try to locate H.M.S. *Investigator*, abandoned here by Commander Robert McClure in 1853 (Cohen 2013: 30). Two days later underwater archaeologists Ryan Harris and Jonathan Moore took to the water in a Zodiac to search the bay, towing a side-scan sonar towfish. Three minutes after switching on the sonar, 450 m from shore, they located the wreck of *Investigator,* sitting upright in 11 meters of water, largely intact although missing the masts. Harris and More returned again in July 2011 to dive on the wreck, examine it at close quarters and to photograph it. They were the first people to see and touch the wreck in almost 160 years. The complex story of how *Investigator* came to be on the bottom of Mercy Bay is the subject of Stein's book.

In May 1845, under the command of Captain Sir John Franklin, and with combined complements of 134 officers and men H.M.S. *Erebus* and *Terror* sailed from the Thames, bound for Baffin Bay and with hopes of discovering the Northwest Passage to the Pacific. When no news had been received from the expedition by the end of 1847, in 1848 the Admiralty dispatched the first of many seagoing expeditions, under the command of Captain Sir James Clark Ross, to search for the missing ships. His ships *Enterprise* and *Investigator* returned in 1849, having penetrated only a relatively short distance into what is now the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, and having found no traces of the missing ships.

In 1850 the Admiralty mounted a two-pronged seagoing attack: a squadron of four vessels (H.M.S. *Resolute* and *Assistance* and the steam tenders *Pioneer* and *Intrepid*) under the command of Captain Horatio Austin was again dispatched to Baffin Bay and Lancaster Sound. Meanwhile H.M.S. *Enterprise* and *Investigator* under Captain Richard Collinson and Commander Robert McClure respectively, set off for Bering Strait via the Strait of Magellan and the Sandwich islands (Hawaii), in order to approach the search area from the west. This was McClure's third Arctic expedition, having served as Mate on bard H.M.S. *Terror* during Captain George Back's disastrous attempt at surveying the Arctic coast via Hudson Strait and Foxe Channel in 1836–37, and as First Lieutenant on board *Enterprise* under James Clark Ross in 1848–1849. A specific item in Collinson's sailing orders cautioned him 'against suffering the two vessels placed under your orders to separate' (Barr 2007: 15), and there was an identical article in McClure's sailing orders.

Having been towed through most of the length of the Strait of Magellan by the paddle-steamer H.M.S. *Gorgon,* despite their specific orders the two expedition ships became separated soon after emerging into the Pacific – and would never sail in company again. Collinson in *Enterprise* reached Hawaii first, on 24 June 1850. Worried that he might already be too late to get into the Arctic before freeze-up, despite his orders and although there was no sign of *Investigator* Collinson sailed without waiting for her, on 30 June. *Investigator* reached Honolulu the very next day, and sailed again on 4 July. Over-cautious concerning the hazards of the passes through the Aleutian Islands, Collinson swung west of the entire chain, reaching the Bering Sea west of Attu Island. McClure, by contrast cut through the chain via the Seguam Pass, and as a result reached Bering Strait and the next specified rendezvous, Cape Lisburne, well ahead of *Enterprise.* Pretending that he was convinced that Collinson was still ahead of him, although he'd learned at Honolulu that Collinson was planning to take the much longer route past the Aleutians, McClure pushed on north without waiting, delighted at having thus ensured that thereafter he would have an independent command.

Having encountered ice long before reaching Point Barrow, McClure managed to round that cape and to continue east by taking advantage of shore leads between the fast ice and the pack. Beyond the Mackenzie Delta, from just east of Cape Bathurst he headed north across what is now Amundsen Gulf and soon sighted Nelson Head, the southern tip of Banks Island. Swinging east McClure next headed north along Prince of Wales strait. Halted by ice just south of Viscount Melville Sound, *Investigator* drifted back south, and ultimately wintered just off the Princess Royal Islands in the middle of Prince of Wales Strait. In the spring of 1851 McClure led a sledge party north to the northwest tip of Banks Island (which had earlier been seen by Captain William Edward Parry across what is now McClure Strait from Melville Island in the spring of 1820), and on this basis McClure made the claim that he had discovered the Northwest Passage, even although it was totally covered with multi-year ice. Later in the summer of 1851 McClure ran back south, then round the south and west coasts of Banks Island, then east into the west end of McClure Strait. Shortly afterwards *Investigator* was trapped by the ice in Mercy Bay and was forced to winter there (winter of 1851−52).

McClure was forced repeatedly to reduce rations. Scurvy and a range of other ailments became widespread among the men despite the fact that their hunting efforts (for caribou, hares, ptarmigan and seabirds) were quite effective. In April 1852 McClure led a sledge party across to Winter Harbour on Melville Island and there left a message at Parry's Rock, near the site of Parry's wintering in *Hecla* and *Griper* in 1819−1820.

The ice in Mercy Bay did not move out in the summer of 1852. In September McClure revealed his plan for the following spring; half of the men, those in the worst health, would leave the ship, one group of them to sledge east to Beechey Island under Lieutenant Haswell, the other group under Lt. Creswell to head south by sledge and boat to the Mackenzie Delta and up that river to the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fort Good Hope. With the men remaining on board the ship McClure hoped that *Investigator* would be able to escape from Mercy Bay later in the summer of 1853 and that he would be able

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000097 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to take the ship east through the Northwest Passage, thus guaranteeing him his place in history. His plan almost certainly represented a death sentence for most if not all of the sick men who were to leave the ship.

In the autumn of 1852, however, a party under Lieutenant George Mecham from H.M.S. *Resolute*, commanded by Captain Henry Kellett, wintering with H.M.S. *Intrepid* at Dealy Island, off the south coast of Melville Island, reached Winter Harbour and found McClure's message. It was too late in the year to mount a rescue operation, but at the early date of 10 March a party under Lieutenant Bedford C. T. Pim set off westwards from Dealy Island, crossed McClure Strait and reached Mercy Bay on 6 April; he arrived just before McClure was about to put his near-homicidal plan into effect. McClure then crossed to Dealy Island to consult with Kellet, as being his superior officer. The latter decided that *Investigator* must be abandoned unless (following medical examinations) McClure could find 20 men who would volunteer to stay with him on board the ship for another winter. Only four men volunteered, and therefore the ship was abandoned. McClure and his men sledged across to *Resolute* and *Intrepid* at Dealy Island. These ships got under way later in the summer of 1853, heading back east, but again became beset in the ice off Cape Cockburn on the southwest coast of Bathurst Island After a further winter (the fourth winter for *Investigator's* men), in the spring of 1854, on orders from Captain Sir Edward Belcher (Kellett's superior officer), wintering with *Assistance* and *Pioneer* in Wellington Channel, Kellett very reluctantly abandoned *Resolute* and *Intrepid* and he and his crews and that of *Investigator* sledged east to Beechey Island where the depot ship *North Star* had wintered. When the supply ships *Phoenix* and *Talbot* arrived later in the summer Kellett's men and the *Investigator*'s crew were distributed among the three ships for the voyage home to England. The *Investigator*'s men were the first to travel through the Northwest Passage, although they walked for about 43% of the distance between the Beaufort Sea and Baffin Bay.

These are the bare bones of the story which Stein relates in his book. But he has gone to remarkable lengths to flesh out this skeleton. In his acknowledgements he records his debt to 34 institutions and organizations, at most of whose premises he has consulted primary documents. His text is enhanced by a total of 1233 endnotes; while some simply indicate the source for a particular statement, the bulk of them add an additional useful dimension to the text. Thus, while the main text stands alone as a lively, readable account, consulting the endnotes adds many more, fascinating layers of information to the story and greatly repays the minor effort of switching from main text to endnotes. Stein provides details of the earlier and later careers of most of the officers, and even cites details from the service records of crew members. As an example of thorough historical research, Stein's work has few equals. Stein has also included seven appendices, including quite a detailed one on his sources and one on the 'Creation of the Arctic Medal 1818–55'. The latter comes as no surprise, given that Stein has established a solid reputation as an expert on polar medals.

All in all McClure emerges as a selfish, autocratic tyrant, in some ways even more so than his fellow-captains engaged in the Franklin search, namely Captain Sir Edward Belcher and Captain Richard Collinson. While Collinson's tyrannical behavior extended only to his officers, McClure was prepared to sacrifice the lives of about half his crew in order to give him a chance to achieve his ambition of taking *Investigator* through the Northwest Passage. One of the recurring themes is McClure's despicable treatment of his First Lieutenant, William Haswell. Stein argues, convincingly, that the initial cause of McClure's dislike was that Haswell had previously served on several steam vessels, and because Sir James Clark Ross had repeatedly warned McClure against having such a person on his ship. An indication of McClure's unfair treatment of Haswell was that when the ship was partially dismasted in a storm during Haswell's watch, McClure unfairly blamed him for it and placed him under arrest.

Nor was it just the officers who incurred McClure's displeasure. When only four members of the crew volunteered to stay with the ship for a further winter, so that he might have a chance of taking *Investigator* through the Northwest Passage during the following summer, those who refused to volunteer felt the rough edge of his tongue.

One aspect which Stein has brought to the fore (on the basis of Dr, Armstrong's medical records) is the very poor state of the crew's health especially during their third winter, an aspect which McClure played down in his official reports. The number of men on the sick list steadily increased, and included two cases of insanity Scurvy was widespread, despite the addition to the ship's provisions of a substantial amount of fresh meat (muskoxen, caribou, hares, ptarmigan and seabirds). Although Stein does not introduce the comparison, this provides a fairly accurate picture of conditions which must have prevailed, in terms of morale and health, on board Franklin's ships especially during the final winter, prior to their suicidal attempt to walk south from their icebound ships in the spring of 1848.

A further noteworthy feature of Stein's book is the picture which he paints of McClure's unscrupulous machinations in order to gain the award of £10,000 for 'discovering the Northwest Passage', even although he and his men had walked on the ice from Mercy Bay to Dealy Island and from off Cape Cockburn to Beechey Island. The only rational definition of discovering the Northwest Passage (or indeed of any navigable passage), is to take a ship through it. This was specified in the wording of the earlier Acts of Parliament which offered £20,000 for discovering the Northwest Passage, but the offer of that award was repealed in 1828. Undaunted, by shamelessly lobbying Members of Parliament, McClure managed to persuade Parliament to convene a committee to consider 'the circumstances of the expedition to the Arctic Seas, commanded by Captain McClure of the Royal Navy, with a view to ascertain whether any and what reward may be due for the service rendered on that Occasion' (Great Britain 1855) Note that there is no mention of the Northwest Passage whatever. But in the second paragraph of the Committee's report, despite the fact that a substantial proportion of the Passage was travelled by walking on the ice, one reads that 'They (McClure and his officers and men) are undoubtedly the first who have passed by water from sea to sea and have returned to this country as living evidence of the existence of a North-west Passage'.

The committee recommended an award of £10,000, £5000 for McClure and 5000£ to be distributed among his officers and men, the distribution of this latter amount to be left to the Admiralty. One suspects that McClure was not very happy at having to share the award, and that the distribution of the £5000 to officers and crew was not left to him. One can hazard a guess that Lt. Haswell would not have received anything, had that been the case.

In summation Stein's book represents an extremely valuable addition to the ever-growing literature on the Franklin search, and one which I recommend highly to both the general reader

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000097 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and to the scholar. (William Barr, Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB T2N 1N4, Canada (circumpolarbill@gmail.com)).

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The new Arctic. Birgitta Evengård, Joan Nymand Larsen and Øyvind Paasche (editors). 2015. Berlin: Springer. xxii + 352 p, illustrated, hardcover. ISBN 978-3-319-17601-7. 129.99€.
doi:10.1017/S0032247416000139

I must be brutally honest with the readers of this review: when I first laid my eyes on this volume with the simple title *The new Arctic* I was not utterly impressed. And I can tell you the reason why this is the case. First, the book aligns itself with many other anthologies on Arctic change that I have reviewed over the last few years. Second, the *Introduction* by one of the editors, Birgitta Evengård, unsurprisingly clarifies that the book brings together 'a variety of Arctic scholars, each with their own scientific background, approach, and understanding of the Arctic, and with their views on what drives change, why, and how, in an effort to create composite picture where insights from different disciplines can be intertwined and woven together' (page 3). So far so good and certainly nothing groundbreaking. Upon a closer look, however, one element comes to the fore that indeed make this volume stand out: while confined to merely 350 pages, the book contains 24 chapters, all written by well-known and not-so-well-known experts of the Arctic. And one will immediately notice the truly inter- and cross-disciplinarily of this volume, tackling Arctic change from a multitude of angles.

As can be expected by the vigilant reader of this review, a short review like this does not allow for a summary and evaluation of each single chapter, so some degree of cherry-picking as well as broader summarising of the book is necessary. Thus, let us take a step back and take into consideration Evengård's introductory sentence cited above and the range of topics, or snapshots thereof, covered in this volume: narratives about Greenland, reindeer husbandry in Sweden, fleeting glaciers of the Arctic, the Arctic carbon cycle, the Arctic in fiction, human development and tourism in the Arctic, the 'race' for resources, circumpolar health, infectious diseases in the Arctic, or the emerging Arctic humanities. Given the volume's twenty-four chapters, the list goes on.

And one can argue that in the diversity of the book lies its greatest strength as well as its greatest weakness. Let us start with the weakness-part of the argument and let's get it over with: it appears as if the book lacks a focus and merely combines a plethora of different elements of Arctic research. One could imagine some chapters just being replaced by different ones dealing with Arctic change without changing the book itself. The absence of a summarising or concluding chapter that weaves the red threads of the book into a comprehensive whole further adds to this point of view. Therefore, one might argue, the book is a compilation of surely interesting research, but a scattered one, reminding of a music compilation on which it is easy to skip a song that doesn't interest you.

While I can see this line of argument coming up, my personal view is different – the strength-part of the argument. Because while indeed presenting research snapshots of the 'new' Arctic, the book is a fascinating account of the differences in how the Arctic is perceived, evaluated and scientifically approached. Since I am personally utterly interested in a multitude of topics, I found this volume not only incredibly exciting (and worrying at the same time), but it furthermore deepened my understanding of processes in the Arctic which I, as an Arctic governance scholar, would not have come across that easily. Especially the chapters dealing with natural science-phenomena of Arctic change are written in a way easily understandable to those not overly familiar with earth sciences and, luckily for me, do not contain much mathematical data. Surely, some diagrams can be found, but also these are easily understandable for the earth-scientifically untrained. At the same time, the book breaks away from the climate-change-resource-narrative and includes topics that are not commonly covered in Arctic anthologies. Take Nina Wormbs' chapter on *The assessed Arctic: how monitoring can be silently normative*, for instance. She challenges commonly applied interactions between natural and social sciences and applied political changes based on natural scientific findings. One passage struck me in particular. Wormbs writes: 'Would it be possible to write about human societies elsewhere [...] defining them as vital and resilient, or on the contrary lame and doomed? Probably not. Imagine a statement on New Yorkers, or inhabitants of the French city Lyon talked about in the same language' (page 297). She explains this approach with the science-focus the Arctic has had that can still be found today even despite the diversification of research in the north. In terms of 'decolonising methodologies' (Tuhiwai Smith 1999) however, Wormbs could have asked whether Arctic communities would talk about themselves as being 'vital and resilient'? Notwithstanding, Wormbs' critical contribution is certainly noteworthy and should (both in conjunctive and imperative sense) open up critical pathways of thinking about scientific findings and their application.

Indeed, the absence of a summarising chapter is therefore probably a good thing. Because the book provides doors to many rooms, pathways, and maybe mazes of Arctic research. The well-referenced articles provide solid background literature on specific research topics that *The new Arctic* could serve as a starting point for. It is thus to conclude that the editors have done an outstanding job in putting together a book that is engaging, challenging, eye-opening and somewhat different than other anthologies on the Arctic! This proves, once again, that first impressions are not always what they seem to be. One

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