

**FOUR TRAVEL JOURNALS: THE AMERICAS, ANTARCTICA AND AFRICA, 1775–1874.** Herbert K. Beals, R.J. Campbell, Ann Savours, Anita McConnell, and Roy Bridges (Editors). 2007. London: The Hakluyt Society (Series III, Volume 18). x + 404 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-0-904180-90-9. £55.00.  
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The volumes published by the Hakluyt Society always give a sense of pleasurable anticipation even before one opens them. The solidity of the binding, the engraved symbol on the front cover, the fine gold lettering on the spine, the sober blue cloth of the cover, the imposing length of the list of publications of the Society (this is volume 18 of the third series) and its great reputation, the quality of the paper, all betoken a book that has to be taken seriously. And that is even before one familiarises oneself with the contents. The book has won over a reviewer before a word is read!

And in this case, the anticipation is even more fulfilled because, instead of the usual edition of the works of one traveller, we have the relatively short works of four, only one of which is not of some relevance to *Polar Record*. The four documents presented are the 1775 journal of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra concerning his expedition northward along the Pacific coast of north America, Pringle Stokes' journal on board HMS *Beagle* in the Straits of Magellan in 1827, the journal of Midshipman Joseph Henry Kay during the voyage to the Antarctic among other destinations of HMS *Chanticleer* in 1828–1831, and, finally, Jacob Wainwright's diary of the transportation of Dr Livingstone's body to the coast of Africa in 1873–1874. The point is made in the general introduction that Kay might be the youngest writer ever to appear in the Society's publications, he was 14 at the time of the voyage, while Wainwright was the first black African to be so featured.

Four texts imply four editors or, in this case, five, since Kay's journal has two. The first section, on Bodega y Quadra is the most substantial and its editor, Herbert Beals, faithfully follows a Hakluyt Society tradition by prefacing his text by a long and discursive essay, covering approximately 70 pages, which does far more than merely set the scene for what is to come. He starts with the Treaty of Tordesillas and proceeds to the late eighteenth century with sections on Magellan and other explorers of what became a Spanish lake, leading to the preparations for the expedition in which Bodega y Quadra was master of the schooner known as *Sonora*, but officially named *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, which reached a latitude of 57°58'N on the coast of Alaska. It had been intended that *Sonora* was to sail as consort with a larger vessel, *Santiago*, but they were separated and *Sonora* accomplished most of the voyage alone.

Bodega y Quadra's text reveals him to have been a typically competent, no nonsense, Spanish captain of the sort that did so much to maintain that nation's dominance in the Pacific for so long. It is extremely matter-of-fact,

but Beals has illuminated it with a comprehensive critical apparatus together with several well-selected maps. One cannot believe that any other edition of Bodega y Quadra's journal will ever be necessary.

The second text in the book has a background that will probably be more familiar to readers of *Polar Record*. Pringle Stokes was captain of HMS *Beagle* before Robert Fitzroy, who replaced him because he had shot himself and had died on 12 August 1828. He was captain during the great expedition in which the crew of *Beagle* accomplished so much surveying in the notoriously difficult waters of the Straits of Magellan and adjacent waterways. This text is comprehensively prefaced by the editor, R.J. Campbell, in this case by a 'hydrographic history' of the straits, again starting with Magellan and lavishly illustrated with charts. This covers some 20 pages. Then Stokes' journal is presented. The main impression derived from this is that here is a mariner at the top of his powers with no trace of the mental problems that appear to have driven him to such a premature end. The other impression is that of the extraordinary difficulty of the task *Beagle* had been given and of the diligence with which it was tackled. The critical apparatus is comprehensive. But one has a slight caveat in that no map is presented in which the tracks of *Beagle*, and her boats are set out together with the names of the various points referred to in the text. This seems an omission that renders the edition somewhat less valuable that it could have been.

There is no such problem with regard to the third text, that of Midshipman Joseph Henry Kay on board HMS *Chanticleer* under the command of Commander Henry Foster in the years 1828–1831. The editors, Ann Savours and Anita McConnell, include a chart of the whole voyage as the first illustration. The focal point of this expedition, at least for readers of *Polar Record*, was the stay of the vessel at Port Foster in Deception Island for the purpose of making pendulum observations helping to a calculation of the figure of the Earth. In this case it is necessary to recall that Kay was 14 when he wrote the journal. He had clearly been well educated; it is no normal lad of that age who can quote *King Lear* (page 315) with such aplomb, and indeed the whole diary might be the work of a much more mature pen. Of all the texts in this volume, this is the one that is the most delightful to read. Kay's journal was personal and did not have the official overtones of the two previous ones. The whole experience seems to have been character forming, but enjoyable, although anyone who has ever been to Pendulum Cove will easily be able to read between the lines with regard to the vicissitudes of their stay there. Indeed this reviewer has never read a better one-paragraph description of Deception than that set out on page 317.

The final text merits shorter notice in this journal, although one imagines that few who pick up the book will fail to read it. Jacob Wainwright's journal is the only first-hand record of the great journey towards the east African coast accomplished by the leading followers of Dr

Livingstone after his death, during which they transported his body on the first stage of its journey to Britain. Edited by Roy Bridges, it is at once an informative account of conditions in the areas through which the party made its way and a monument to human decency.

In brief, this is a superb selection of documents to incorporate in one volume. Each text is full of interest and being relatively short can be read in one sitting. It is a wholly worthy addition to the Hakluyt Society list. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**WITH THE 'AURORA' IN THE ANTARCTIC 1911–1914.** John King Davis. 2007. Norwich and Bluntisham: Erskine Press and Bluntisham Books. xiv + 183 p, illustrated, hardcover. ISBN 978-1-85297-096-0. £27.50. doi:10.1017/S0032247408008103

This is a facsimile reprint of the fascinating account by the young master of an old Dundee whaling ship in the 'heroic era' of Antarctic exploration (Davis 1919). The ship, *Aurora*, operated for longer, and farther to the unknown west, than did her sister ex-whalers *Nimrod* or *Terra Nova*. The master, John King Davis, was on his second of what would be four Antarctic expeditions, a career longer than even that of his friend, Douglas Mawson. Arguably the greatest of the polar navigators of this period, he described this venture as 'My main life's work' (*The Age* 1959). By any reasonable measure then, it is an important subject.

Davis was with SY *Aurora* for the duration of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE). (The book does not cover his later *Aurora* relief voyage following the debacle of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition's Ross Sea operations.) As second-in-command, he had a unique role and perspective on this most ambitious of Antarctic ventures, with *four* planned land bases, all entirely ship-dependent. Importantly, *Aurora* also carried out pioneering oceanographic scientific work. Davis not only successfully satisfied these demands, he described this in a compelling narrative. It was his motivation, as he stated in the preface, for writing 'from a sailor's point of view, [which] may be useful to future explorers . . . and not without interest to the general public.'

The rapid rise of Davis through the ranks was impressive by peacetime standards. Serving in polar waters, with similarities to that of war, only partly explains his promotions. Having first run away to sea around the turn of the last century, he had passed his Board of Trade exams up to and including that of first mate by 1907. The Antarctic factor kicked in after his persistence secured the appointment as chief officer on Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition. This was for the outward voyage from England, but by the return, his proved abilities had led to a first command. (In fact, he was unfortunate not to be in command earlier, as his published diaries reveal (Crossley 1997).)

Those abilities had certainly impressed Mawson, also a veteran of the Shackleton venture. Mawson had to

combine the organising of the AAE in Europe with a full-time academic career in Australia. This was only possible after the first few intense months because of Davis, who remained in Europe until *Aurora* was fitted out. What began as a personal friendship was above all a sound working relationship.

*With the Aurora in the Antarctic* begins in London, after an introduction to Antarctic exploration, and a brief history of the vessel (including Greeley expedition relief work in 1884). This is followed by details of the voyage to Australia, often in diary form, and the exploratory work required of them. Included are nearly 150 detailed sketches and informative photographs. One slight criticism concerns the quality of some reproduced photographs, which is not always of the highest standard. However, this does not compromise their value in highlighting the central role of the all-important deep-sea programme, noted in early reviews (Taylor 1921). One important addition to the facsimile is the excellent introduction by Beau Riffenburgh, which gives additional background to the book.

Davis explains the thinking behind the course taken after reaching Macquarie Island. This was based on the frequently unreliable data gleaned from earlier voyages. A synopsis of these voyages is one of the more informative aspects to this publication, and sets the huge parameters of their operations. This is Davis at his best, still in his mind's eye at the helm of *Aurora*, and providing a comprehensive maritime narrative not found elsewhere.

The expedition's Western Base, the second and last of what was originally to be three continental bases, was always a major concern for Davis. Perched on an ice-shelf that was by its very nature unstable, it was also considerably more remote than originally planned, and (having been persuaded by base commander Frank Wild to set it up there) relieving it was always at the back of his mind. After dealing with the sub-Antarctic deep-ocean trials in the southern winter and spring of 1912, Davis resumes his account. Having safely voyaged back to Commonwealth Bay and within sight of the Main Base, he recounts the agonising delay while waiting for Mawson's missing sledging party. This, perhaps the most well-known aspect of the whole expedition, was something for which Davis was criticised. Always balanced in his comments, his decision to leave is covered well. These actions are best understood by a 22 February deadline. This was the date that *Gauss*, the only other ship to have really explored this region, was trapped in the ice for a winter, a contingency that *Aurora* had not been provisioned for, and needed to avoid at all costs. As it was, *Aurora* was very nearly lost, his entry for 22 February 1913 revealing:

The bergs were now so numerous, that there was some difficulty in avoiding a collision, even during day-light . . . In the afternoon, a blizzard came on, and at 8 p.m. the darkness and the falling snow made it impossible to see any distance ahead . . . For the next seven hours we threaded a passage through this sea