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WAR, ICE & PIRACY: THE REMARKABLE CAREER OF A VICTORIAN SAILOR. Dominick Harrod (Editor). 2000. London: Chatham Publishing. 192 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-86176-138-4. £16. 99.

With so many recent books regurgitating old familiar stories of polar exploration, it is refreshing to see something new and different, something that adds to our knowledge of events and participants. This collection of letters illuminates the career of an officer involved in the Franklin search, Samuel Gurney Cresswell. The letters provide a perspective quite different from the often self-serving published narratives and official despatches. Addressed mainly to his parents, they comprise a more personal, and perhaps more honest, view, one in which there are some frank criticisms of senior officers.

The letters span the two decades in which Cresswell served in the Royal Navy. He entered as a volunteer apprentice in 1842, took up his first command in 1856, and retired in 1863. It is sobering to realize that he began his career as a youth of 14, quit the service at the age of 35, and died before his fortieth birthday. This was not the usual experience; in fact, many senior officers were remarkably long of tooth, as editor Dominick Harrod points out in his introduction, and this may have produced a harmful conservatism in naval operations. But, sadly, Cresswell was struck down by an undisclosed illness well before his time.

Reading history often gives a skewed impression of the careers of the intrepid naval officers who played such a prominent role in the exploration of polar regions. We may tend to think of the 'Arctic worthies' such as Edward Parry, George Back, John and James Ross, and many others whose names now decorate the map, as Arctic specialists, men whose experience was confined to the Arctic. While there is no denying that many of them served in several northern expeditions and became very proficient in what they did, it is also true that these men usually served in many other theatres of operation as well, sent by the Admiralty to various far-flung parts of the world to fight wars, blockade ports, quell uprisings, subdue pirates, support native rulers, defend colonies, protect trading interests, and show the flag. They knew how to cope not only with ice floes, icebergs, severe cold, and frostbite, but also with coral reefs, hurricanes, debilitating heat, and sunstroke.

Cresswell's career, notwithstanding its brevity, illustrates this. He served with naval forces in southeast Asia during the signing of the Treaty of Nanking (1842),

which gave Britain control of Hong Kong and access to trading ports on mainland China. During more than three years in the region he participated in military actions against pirates in Brunei, operations carried out in conjunction with Sir James Brooke, the famous English Rajah of Sarawak (readers of Fraser's Flashman novels will know all about him). From the humid tropical rainforests of southeast Asia he was sent next to the treeless Arctic tundra zone of North America, serving on HMS *Investigator* in Sir James Clark Ross' search expedition of 1848–49. When the ship returned to England, Cresswell remained on board to undertake another search, under Robert McClure. This required a voyage round the Horn and north through the Pacific to enter the Arctic islands by way of Bering Strait, after which he experienced three winters frozen into the ice before another expedition rescued the crew and got them back to England. Cresswell's next appointment was on HMS *Archer*, blockading Russian ports on the Baltic Sea during the Crimean War. Then in 1856 he commanded HMS *Sparrowhawk*, a despatch vessel in the Channel Fleet. When more troubles in China led to another British show of force, Cresswell sailed for Hong Kong in command of HMS *Surprise* and participated in the bombardment and capture of Canton, which led to the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858. All this in 16 years!

Published collections of letters require some editorial input to transcribe and organize the letters, bridge the gaps between them, explain references to obscure events, identify unfamiliar persons, and provide biographical information about the author. This has been done conscientiously by Harrod, a great-great-great nephew of Cresswell, who has happily accomplished these tasks in what has clearly been a labour of love. Harrod was formerly a journalist and BBC correspondent.

Approximately a quarter of Cresswell's naval career was spent on the two Arctic voyages in search of Sir John Franklin. But unfortunately for readers of *Polar Record*, the longest breaks in his letter-writing occur during these expeditions, when there was no opportunity to send letters out. In the first there is a blank period of more than a year after the ships left Greenland, and in the second there is a gap of more than three years after the ship advanced beyond the mouth of the Mackenzie River. For the first of these gaps Harrod summarizes the expedition of James Clark Ross, but only in one short paragraph (page 60), which tells disappointingly little about its achievements or about Cresswell's role. For the second gap Harrod fills in with his own text and with excerpts from the writings of McClure, Johann Miertsching, and Sherard Osborn, and from an unpublished journal by Cresswell himself. One wonders where Cresswell's journal (presumably unpublished) exists, and why it was not reproduced in its entirety to cover this period of his career. One also wonders which specific publications or manuscripts by Miertsching and McClure provided the quotations. In any case there is a serious imbalance here; James Clark Ross' expedition is dismissed in a dozen lines but McClure's receives 27 pages.

Unquestionably McClure's expedition was more noteworthy than that of Ross, because, by connecting Parry's discoveries of 1819–20 with known territory on the mainland coast, it revealed a potential Northwest Passage, one that McClure and his men actually traversed — partly by ship, and partly on foot after being rescued from their ice-bound ship at Banks Island. Because Cresswell preceded his shipmates to Beechey Island, he was able to reach England a year before McClure and the others, becoming 'the first man to traverse the North-West Passage' (page 7). (The first of two men, actually, for he was accompanied by Lieutenant Wynniatt.)

In *The Arctic grail* (1988) Pierre Berton pointed out that the providential rescue of the *Investigator*'s men was in part attributable to Cresswell's own father, whose plea to the Admiralty to look for them at Melville Island led to Belcher sending two of his ships westward.

The book includes five rather pathetic maps showing regions in which Cresswell served. The Arctic map contains the misspellings 'Byan Martin Island,' 'Dealey Island,' 'Barrow Straight,' and 'Davis Straight.' In the text Nanking is spelled two ways (pages 13, 34), and Cresswell's name is once given as 'Creswell' (page 23n). John Barrow (page 125n) was not 'Admiralty Secretary' but Keeper of Records. 'Capt. John Rea, Arctic explorer' (page 124n) apparently refers to Dr John Rae.

The illustrations are superb. One is a painting of Cresswell making his naval debut at the age of 14, all decked out in dress uniform, his gaze resolute beyond his years, ready to unsheath the huge sword hanging from his belt and fight to the death against swarms of fierce pirates. With one exception, all the other 30 illustrations are black-and-white copies of sketches (possibly watercolours) by Cresswell himself, beginning with one done at the age of seven! Twenty represent Arctic scenes. In 1854 Cresswell personally exhibited lithographs of eight of his works to Queen Victoria.

In *Lobsticks and stone cairns* (Davis 1996), Leslie Neatby suggested that Cresswell was not an officer who stood out on HMS *Investigator*; he was scarcely mentioned in the diaries of Armstrong and Miertsching. But, he conceded, his paintings of Arctic scenes 'do more than the liveliest prose to bring home to us what was endured by the stalwarts of the British Navy in the mapping of Canada's northern archipelago with wind-jammers and man-hauled sledges.' This opinion is supported in the strongest way by Harrod's publication of many sketches that Neatby evidently did not see. One wonders which eight were made into lithographs, and whether other sketches exist. (W. Gillies Ross, Department of Geography, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec J1M 1Z7, Canada.)

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ICE SHEETS AND LATE QUATERNARY ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE. Martin J. Siegert. 2001. John Wiley and Sons. xv + 231 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-471-98570-8. £19.99.

Martin Siegert's aims in this book are threefold: to explain how former ice sheets can be reconstructed; to present the dimensions and dynamics of these former ice sheets; and to show how Late Quaternary ice sheets were an interactive element of the global environment. The target audience is an undergraduate one, but the author believes some researchers may find it useful for an up-to-date summary, particularly as the book is an explicit attempt to update the CLIMAP ice-sheet reconstructions presented in Denton and Hughes (1981).

The book does achieve all three aims and the first two are dealt with particularly well. In trying to cover the broad range of material necessary to explain Late Quaternary environmental change, Siegert has inevitably been forced to shorten some accounts and in places perhaps has tried to cover too wide a subject (for example, the explanations of glacial geology and geomorphology in chapter 4 sit a little uneasily with the rest of the book). Overall, the book takes an undergraduate reader quite rapidly through some of the basic principles of global environmental change. It does provide some good explanations of the latest hypotheses of the potential causes of ice ages and the mechanisms of environmental change. Several hypotheses published in late 1999 and 2000 are included, and for a textbook it is unusually up to date.

For these reasons, I believe it is an excellent undergraduate text for any course incorporating ice sheets, but as a more general reference for global environmental change it would be better placed as an addition to Lowe and Walker (1997) and would provide some of the more current and, in some cases, controversial ideas about the initiation of ice sheets and causes of glacial cycles. Similarly, I would recommend undergraduates to Benn and Evans (1998) or Bennett and Glasser (1996) for basic glacial geology/geomorphology and use Siegert as a way of introducing some of the newer ideas (for example, potential of cold-based ice to erode) and for a good explanation of ice-sheet modelling.

For researchers this book does provide a useful reference work on ice-sheet dynamics and dimensions, and has a number of useful diagrams reproduced together, which show the detailed structure of glacial–interglacial (and shorter) cycles. Any researcher interested in a starting point for diving into the literature on reconstructions of any particular ice sheet would be well advised to start here. Siegert's aim to update CLIMAP is admirable and he does it well. However, the recent development of a successor to CLIMAP, namely the Environmental Processes of the Ice Age: Land, Ocean, Glaciers (EPILOG) program (Mix and others 2001), means that his attempt to provide the most comprehensive discussion of ice-sheet reconstructions may well be superseded by EPILOG publications. It is likely that EPILOG will become the new research-level