

they would be fed a specific ration of meat or pemmican each day, and at an early stage of the expedition, Franklin was not able to fulfill these obligations as their employer. When some of the voyageurs—who were largely French—threatened to quit their employment, Franklin imposed military rule, treating the men as if they had enlisted in the British Navy. According to George Back’s journal (published in 1994 by a major academic press in Canada and, hence, easily accessible to anyone writing a book on the subject), Franklin threatened anyone who refused to work with “blowing out his brains” (Houston, p. 81). Because he relies solely on Franklin’s public narrative for information, however, Beardsley can do little more than parrot what Franklin reported, and because Franklin himself could not understand that he had failed to hold up his end of a contract, it is unlikely that Beardsley would see the matter differently. Besides, Beardsley presents the situation in sharp black-and-white, with the voyageurs taking on the same unsavoury role as the “thoughtless” Yellowknives.

Beardsley’s treatment of the second land expedition is equally troubled by arrogance and error. One illustration must suffice. Beardsley asserts that “on the return journey [from Foggy Island] ... they met Eskimos from the group that had attacked them, and from whom they received confirmation about the murderous intent of their fellows” (p. 133). Once again, this is simply incorrect. A reading of Franklin’s journals—or even a careful reading of his narrative—will disprove Beardsley’s claim. The warning came from a group of Inuit distinctly different from the group that attacked the expedition on its outward journey. Given that Beardsley does not risk complicating his enshrined idea of history by reading multiple accounts, one would think he could at least get the facts straight from Franklin’s public narrative, which has been in print since 1828.

If this were a far better book than it is, a judicious reviewer would remark favourably about its treatment of Franklin’s relationships with his two wives. Beardsley assures the reader at the outset that this is “to be the story of Sir John Franklin’s life” (p. xii), and not simply another account of all the public ventures that made him famous. To his credit, Beardsley devotes more than the usual space to Franklin’s personal relations with Eleanor Anne Franklin and Jane Franklin, but there is really little else of a personal nature. And I am certain many women readers would take exception to Beardsley’s flippant assumptions about gender, in the same way that aboriginal readers might wonder in what cosmic isolation Beardsley has been living for the past century. Yet despite the author’s intention to do something different, *Deadly Winter*, like most books about Franklin, moves steadily through the commonly delineated stages and arenas of Franklin’s professional career. And if it were a better book, a reviewer would have to remark on the serious problems with the printing of the book itself: for example, the text of footnotes sometimes appears unexpectedly as part of the main body of Beardsley’s prose (p. 113, 137).

But these problems are of little consequence compared to the author’s wrong-headedness, something that evolved from his limited knowledge of his subject and his unwillingness to learn from any work on Franklin produced outside Britain and after 1900. This is an odd way to come to grips with a Lincolnshire lad who circumnavigated the Australian continent by the time he was 15 years old, who was the first to chart more than half of the northern coast of continental North America, and who established his reputation by going out into the world, rather than by retreating to the small island on which he was born.

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FROM BARROW TO BOOTHIA: THE ARCTIC JOURNAL OF CHIEF FACTOR PETER WARREN DEASE, 1836-1839. Edited by WILLIAM BARR. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-7735-2253-0. xxiii + 330 p., 8 maps, 3 b&w illus., bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$49.95.

The efficient and economical explorations of Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson (1836–1839) mapped two

large, previously unexplored segments of the northern continental coast, thus completing the “roof” on the map of Canada. More than a century and a half later, Dease’s journal has been edited by Bill Barr, whom William C. Wonders (inside dust cover) rates as “the leading authority today on Arctic exploration in Canada.” Barr’s thirteenth book, one of the best of its genre, fills a big void in the Northwest Passage literature and adds credence to Wonders’ statement. As with previous Barr books, a hallmark is the high quality of the maps prepared by Keith Bigelow.

Thomas Simpson’s account of these two journeys, published posthumously in London in 1843, was followed in 1845 by Alexander Simpson’s compilation on his brother’s life. Now, thanks to Barr, we can share for the first time the daily journal of the loyal and modest co-leader of the expedition, Hudson Bay Company chief factor Peter Warren Dease.

Barr built on the initial research of Dr. Ian MacLaren of the University of Alberta, who had located Dease’s field journal, in the possession of Warren Baker of Montreal, and Dease’s finished journal, in the possession of the McCord Museum at McGill University. After transcribing both journals, MacLaren magnanimously invited Barr to prepare the material for publication.

Barr has organized his material in the best possible way. Each chapter begins with an explanatory introduction. The major document is Dease’s journal, but Barr intersperses it almost seamlessly with letters written to and by members of the expedition, and with entries from Hudson’s Bay Company fur trade journals at posts where the expedition stopped. Some of the letters had already been published in 1845 in Alexander Simpson’s book. There is inevitable repetition among the different sources, but I did not find it obtrusive. In fact, the interspersed letters and post-journal entries make better reading than Dease’s factual but often bland journal. For ease of consultation, Barr’s appropriate notes appear at the foot of each page.

Peter Dease was steady but colorless. Yet, as Governor George Simpson said to John Franklin in 1825, Dease had “much firmness of mind joined to a great suavity of manners” (p. 10). Thomas Simpson had a sharper mind, honed by experience in the Debating Society at King’s College, Aberdeen, where he graduated with an M.A. when only twenty years old. Differing from Dease in almost every respect, Thomas Simpson was “unboundedly egotistical” (p. 16), haughty to the extreme, and a racist who wrote of his aversion to “the extravagant and profligate habits of half-breed families” (p. 280). He was more enthusiastic than Dease; before starting from Fort Chipewyan he wrote, “No traveller I believe ever started on a voyage in higher spirits” (p. 60). He damned his traveling partner with faint praise: “Mr. Dease is a very worthy man but [an]...indolent, illiterate soul” (p. 295). While his level of literacy paled in comparison with Thomas Simpson’s, Dease had sufficient skill to keep the accounts for a fur trade post and to write a satisfactory explorer’s journal.

For naturalists, Dease’s journal provides accounts of a passenger pigeon being shot on the Churchill River north of Lac la Ronge, of wandering flocks of pigeons depredating barley crops in late June at Fort Simpson, far to the north of their known breeding range, and of a golden-plover nest near the mouth of the Coppermine River. However, Barr fails to inform the reader that a “bustard” was a Canada goose. In medical terms, Barr fails to speculate that Thomas Simpson’s behaviour suggests that he was a cyclothymic personality, probably a full-fledged manic-depressive.

Between 23 July and 6 August 1837, the previously unmapped western segment of Arctic coastline was mapped accurately from Return Reef, Franklin’s 1826 farthest west, to Point Barrow, the last leg of 52 miles by Thomas Simpson without Dease. For their efforts, the Company rewarded Dease and Simpson with £400 each and their men with £20 each.

In 1837–38, Dease, Simpson and party wintered at Fort Confidence, near the northeastern corner of Great Bear Lake, descended the Coppermine, and reached Franklin’s 1821 farthest east, Point Turnagain. The boats beset by ice, Simpson continued on foot eastward another 100 miles to Cape Alexander at 106° 12’ W. The return trip from Point Turnagain to the mouth of the Coppermine took only four days, as compared to 25 days of fighting ice on the outward journey. All arrived safely at Fort Confidence on 14 September.

The next winter was also spent at Great Bear Lake. On 13 April, Ouligbuck, the Inuk interpreter who had served with Franklin’s second expedition, arrived from Ungava via Red River. The party left Fort Confidence on 15 June, a week later than in 1838. In the second summer, eastward exploration moved much more quickly, reaching Cape Alexander on 28 July. They attained Point Ogle, Back’s farthest in 1834, on 13 August, and Montreal Island on 16 August. They crossed Chantrey Inlet to Cape Britannia and went on to the Castor and Pollux River on 20 August. On their return trip, they reached the mouth of the Coppermine on 16 September and Fort Confidence on 24 September, making this one of the most successful polar boat voyages ever.

The final two chapters, entitled “Aftermath” and “Assessment,” are followed by a useful 11-page appendix called “Biographical Sketches.” The Aftermath provides considerable insight into the character of the enigmatic Thomas Simpson and his macabre and controversial death in Minnesota, en route (via St. Paul, MN) from Red River to England. What a pity that he died without knowing that permission had already been granted for him to follow his detailed plans in 1841 and thereby complete the exploration of the unmapped portions of Arctic coastline. Had he lived, he would have received a generous, lifelong royal pension.

Barr tells us how Dease, retired on a generous pension of £100 per year, built a substantial home in Outremont, which still survives as the Hôtel de Ville in that portion of present-day Montreal. His name is commemorated by

Dease Lake, Dease Arm, Dease Strait, and two rivers, one flowing into the Liard in northern British Columbia, and the other flowing into Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories. Barr states: “One should not underestimate the contribution made by Dease’s steadiness, tact and experience” and his ability to get “the most out of the voyageurs.... It was one thing for Dease modestly to admit his own limitations, and quite another for Simpson to slander a competent, reliable veteran...Dease’s journal...reveals him to be a competent organizer, a perceptive observer, and a careful diarist, and in general gives the lie to Simpson’s jaundiced and self-promoting comments” (p. 295, 297).

The Dease-Simpson journeys cost only a minimal £1000. Their success triggered the knighthood of Governor George Simpson, in appreciation of Dease and Thomas Simpson’s “successful exertions in furtherance of Arctic Discovery” (p. 292). Thus, though Dease modestly declined his offer of knighthood, Governor Simpson was somewhat vicariously but amply rewarded for his support of the expeditions.

For any Arctic exploration collection, this book is a must.

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**THE ARCTIC VOYAGES OF MARTIN FROBISHER: AN ELIZABETHAN ADVENTURE.** By ROBERT MCGHEE. Montreal: Canadian Museum of Civilization/McGill-Queen’s, 2001. 210 p., maps, b&w & colour illus., bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$49.95.

*The Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher: An Elizabethan Adventure* represents the culmination of Robert McGhee’s ten years of personal involvement with the Frobisher story, as an archeologist and interpreter for the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The book fits nicely into the McGill-Queen’s Native and Northern Series, dealing with both the early exploration of the North and the inauguration of the often contentious British-Inuit relationship.

The basic history of Frobisher’s explorations in Canada had been documented in a number of previous works, many of which McGhee has included in his excellent list of sources and selected readings. The purpose of this book is not to tell a new story, but to provide an accessible and appealing version of the Frobisher voyages, interpret the historical and cultural settings in which they occurred, and draw out their historical ramifications. Through his engaging writing style and judicious use of primary sources and archeological evidence, McGhee admirably meets these objectives.

The book begins with an introduction to the main players behind Frobisher’s voyages, including John Dee, scientist and “navigation expert”; Michael Lok, merchant and financial backer; and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, whose

early writings on the Northwest Passage proved influential. A short description of Frobisher’s background as privateer and explorer sets the stage for in-depth discussions of each of his three voyages to Arctic North America between 1576 and 1578. Details on the preparations for each voyage include itemized lists of supplies taken and the means used to obtain financial backing. McGhee weaves a lively narrative, including discoveries and missteps, events at sea, and interactions with the native Inuit population. The 1578 voyage receives special attention because of its massive failure as a mining venture and its eventual place in the British claim on the northern regions. A final section on archeological fieldwork at Frobisher-related sites in the North, many of which McGhee personally worked at, makes an interesting and informative addition.

McGhee’s ability to interpret actions and events in their cultural and temporal situations constitutes a major strength of the work. Frobisher’s error in assuming the bay named for him to be a passage to Asia is more understandable in light of the firm European belief in the existence of a Northwest Passage and the difficult climactic conditions he faced. The two later Frobisher expeditions mined tons of useless black rock, convinced (mistakenly, or by fraudulent evidence) of its richness in gold, and maintained these convictions even in the face of mounting contrary evidence. Instead of simply blaming greed and venality for the mining fiasco, McGhee attempts to understand the time and situation. As he explains, the 16th-century European belief that unexplored regions of the New World held vast, untold riches had predisposed the group to assume that great mineral deposits awaited discovery. McGhee further endeavors to demonstrate how the personal interests and social positions of the individuals involved led the affair to take on a life of its own. In doing this, he draws an analogy to the recent Bre-X scandal in Canada, showing how present-day individuals acted in similar situations. The analogy, although unusual, effectively provides contemporary cultural relevance. One must question the staying power of the reference, however, as the Bre-X affair quickly fades from collective memory.

Another strength in the work is the author’s evenhandedness in dealing with individuals and their human interactions. McGhee neither vilifies nor lionizes Martin Frobisher. The explorer emerges as brave, impetuous, a man of action (if sometimes misguided), a man with a checkered past and a violent temper, who performed heroic feats when required. In relating the interactions between the British and the native Inuit, McGhee outlines the cultural assumptions and experiences that each group brought to the meetings. The Inuit, likely from past experience with Norse seamen and Basque fishermen, would not initially assume hostile intent and came to trade. Frobisher and his men, for their part, carried prevalent beliefs of the savagery of the “unexplored world” and staunch cultural beliefs in their own national and racial superiority. The meetings, initially friendly, turned hostile through misunderstandings and language barriers. While