

in the area between Repulse Bay and Lord Mayor Bay between 1846 and 1847. Unfortunately for Franklin and his men, Dr. Rae was unaware that there was any need to look for them. The first Franklin search expedition, led by James Ross between 1848 and 1849, came ever so close. Man-hauling sleds with such later search veterans as M'Clintock and M'Clure, the party headed southward along the west coast of Somerset Island, closing in on the trapped *Erebus* and *Terror*. With most of his men utterly exhausted and suffering from the initial ravages of scurvy, James Ross discontinued the march about 80 km north of the yet-to-be-discovered Bellot Strait and about 270 km from Victory Point, where he had erected his cairn in 1830. Had he been able to continue, he probably could have saved at least a few of the Franklin men. Looking out over the strait, James Ross decided that no ships could have been forced through the heavy ice pack, which stretched southward as far as he could see. It was a fatal decision for any possible survivors, as it determined the direction future search expeditions would take.

In 1851, Dr. Rae searched the southeast coast of Victoria Island, again tantalizingly close (80 km) to the scene of disaster on King William Island. Although he discovered two pieces of wood that were clearly derived from a naval vessel, no connection to Franklin's ships was made. When Dr. Rae finally returned to England in 1854, he brought not only Inuit accounts of meetings with white people along the west coast of King William Island, but also convincing relics from the Franklin expedition obtained from the Natives. For his efforts he received £8000, while his men shared £2000. A final, private expedition was launched by Lady Franklin under the leadership of M'Clintock. In 1857, he and Hobson finally reached King William Island, where they located two Franklin expedition records on the west coast. The first message was found in a cairn not far from the one built by James Ross. The record, originally deposited a few kilometres farther north in 1847 by then Commander Graham Gore (promoted in November 1846), had been brought to Victory Point and, with the addition of a few sentences scribbled in the margins, redeposited by Crozier in 1848. The second record, found farther south along the coast, was a copy of the 1847 message with no further additions. Although the prize of discovery had already been paid out to Dr. Rae, M'Clintock and his men were given a second reward of £5000.

Part III is a fairly detailed analysis of the information Cyriax extracted from his sources. Somewhat repetitive in its presentation, this section examines in some detail the questions of quantity of supplies, the possible contamination of the tinned food, the extent of use and usefulness of lemon juice for the prevention of scurvy, and the surprising lack of messages, which usually would have been deposited along the way. In particular, one would have expected a report concerning the state of the expedition and its future plans to have been deposited on Beechey Island, the 1845–46 wintering place of the expedition.

Chapters 9 to 12 provide the reader with a well-thought-out theory about the fate of the ships and the men from the moment of final besetment on 12 September 1846 to the

(initial) abandonment on 22 April 1848, nearly a year after Franklin's death on 11 June 1847. Cyriax provides convincing arguments for the possibility that Franklin ordered Lieutenant Gore to march south along the shores of King William Island to Simpson Strait in the spring of 1847, in order to establish the final link of the Northwest Passage, and that Gore had returned to the ships before Franklin died. It would be up to Crozier, close friend and second in command of James Ross's Antarctic expedition in the *Erebus* and *Terror*, to see the expedition to its conclusion, one way or another. By the spring of 1848, surviving men and officers were in a poor state of health. Abandonment was essential. There followed a desperate attempt to reach fresh supplies of food and help to the south. Crozier's decision to take his party to the Back River and beyond has puzzled many and received a good deal of armchair criticism. Cyriax makes a good case in support of Crozier's decision not to head for Fury Beach and supplies left there by Parry. An equally convincing case is made for the return of a small party to one of the ships following the abandonment in April. It is thought that at least five men returned to one of the ships, initially to get more provisions for the sick and starving men scattered along the shores of King William Island. Lacking strength to return to shore, the men remained on board for the following winter, while the ship drifted farther south. By the spring of 1849, it reached the vicinity of O'Reilly Island, where it was discovered by a group of Inuit hunters. The ship had been housed over with awnings and carried five boats. A gangway led down to the ice. One body was found on the deck, and footprints on the adjacent shore indicated that four men and a dog had left the ship. Their fate, along with so many other twists of the Franklin story, remains a mystery.

For the well-read connoisseur of Arctic exploration lore, this book obviously presents nothing new. However, for the novice who wants to delve into the more esoteric details of the Franklin story, the book is a worthwhile acquisition and highly recommended.

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ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC: THE WILL AND THE WAY OF JOHN RIDDOCH RYMILL. By JOHN BÉCHERVAISE. Huntingdon, United Kingdom: Bluntisham Books, 1995. x + 230 p., 4 maps, b&w illus., notes, bib., index. Softbound. £14; US\$22.00.

When I first visited the Antarctic in the late 1960s, my office and laboratory at the Australian station Mawson were in a hut named *Rymill*. Other buildings named *Shackleton*, *Ross*, *Balleny*, *Wilkins*, etc. had obvious Antarctic connections, but

at that stage I knew nothing of Rymill. Even today, although recent publications have marked the 60th anniversary of his most important achievement, the British Graham Land Expedition (BGLE) of 1934–37, John Rymill remains largely unknown to those without specialized polar interests. Yet Rymill, who took part in three polar expeditions in both hemispheres, was a giant of a man, both physically (he was 6' 5" tall) and as a methodical and accomplished leader. He was a reserved and private man who did not indulge in self-promotion, and he was dyslexic: the report of the BGLE, *Southern Lights*, was in effect ghostwritten and is workmanlike rather than inspiring.

To John Béchervaise, the author of this biography, Rymill is a personal hero. Béchervaise rightly considers that the little known explorer's story and achievements require wider exposure. Uniquely placed to write this book, he has extensive Antarctic experience himself and led early Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions in the 1950s to sub-Antarctic Heard Island and to Mawson station (it may well have been Béchervaise who named the building *Rymill*). In his subsequent career as a schoolteacher at one of the most prestigious private schools in Australia, he taught John Rymill's sons and met and discussed polar interests with Rymill himself. For this book, he has researched the archives of the Scott Polar Research Institute and the Royal Geographical Society and interviewed friends, colleagues, and fellow expeditioners.

The book divides Rymill's life into four broad phases. Chapters 2 to 5 cover his family background and early life; nine chapters deal with his two expeditions to Greenland; seven chapters with the British Graham Land Expedition; and the last part of the book covers his subsequent life as a pastoralist in Australia.

John was born in 1905, the second son of Robert and Mary Edith (née Riddoch) Rymill. The Rymills and the Riddochs were two of the pioneering and more successful pastoralist families in the southeastern corner of South Australia, around Coonawarra, an area now known also for its fine red wines. His father was killed in a motor accident when he was only 14 months old, and John was raised by his mother, initially on the family property, Old Penola Estate. His mother shifted to Melbourne in order to broaden her social aspirations when he was 10, and John had an undistinguished academic record at a private school in Melbourne. He had difficulty in both reading and writing, but through reading developed an ambition to become a polar explorer. In 1923 Mary Rymill, long an Anglophile, moved to London with her sons and established a busy social life, financed by the income from Old Penola Estate. Here John was able to advance his ambition by training in skills that would be required for polar exploration, including surveying and navigation, flying and aircraft maintenance, accountancy, and cooking.

He also established valuable contacts at Cambridge and at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), and it was through the latter that in 1930 he was introduced to Gino Watkins, then preparing a major Greenland expedition with RGS sponsorship. Watkins, impressed by Rymill, asked him to

join his British Arctic Air Route Expedition (BAARE), which aimed to map parts of the east coast of Greenland and to gather meteorological data required for planning a possible great circle air route between England and Canada. BAARE, manned predominantly by enthusiastic amateurs like Rymill himself, established and maintained a base station near Angmagssalik between July 1930 and August 1931. During this expedition, Rymill clearly demonstrated his practicality, meticulous attention to detail, and steadfastness. It was his careful survey to establish the position of the ice cap station that enabled the expedition to relocate it after the trail markers became buried, and to rescue the lone meteorological observer, August Courtald, entombed within. Rymill gained new skills and experience, including dog-sledging, kayaking, and travelling over sea ice. These were all required when, at the end of the expedition, he made a late-season crossing of the ice sheet near 67°S, with the expedition's pilot Wilfred Hampton: an understated epic of survival and endurance.

Watkins returned almost immediately to Greenland in 1932, one of the declared "Polar Years" but during the Great Depression, with a poorly funded four-man expedition. This expedition was based in the same area of the east coast, and Rymill was deputy leader. Early in the expedition Watkins was drowned in a solo kayaking accident, and John Rymill led the work of the small party for a further 13 months.

On his return to England in 1933, Rymill took on the task of planning and implementing an expedition to Antarctica that he and Watkins had first dreamt of in Greenland. Professor Frank Debenham at the Scott Polar Research Institute advised that the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula, or Graham Land, was ripe for new discoveries, and one of the expedition aims was to verify the existence of channels connecting the Weddell Sea to the east with the Bellingshausen Sea, reported by Hubert Wilkins from aerial observation. This undertaking was much larger than either of the Greenland trips; but again, apart from the ship's captain and chief engineer, it was to be staffed by dedicated amateurs, many of whom had been with Watkins and Rymill in Greenland. The RGS and the Colonial Office in London made donations to the expedition, but Rymill was ultimately responsible for finding funding for the entire venture, which was to spend two winters in the Antarctic. The total expedition, including purchase of a ship, renamed the *Penola*, and of a De Havilland Gipsy Moth aircraft, was to cost only £20,000, remarkably cost-effective for what it achieved.

The BGLE left England in September 1934, and 1935 was spent at winter quarters in the Argentine Islands (65°S, 64°W). However, the major achievements of the expedition were made during the second winter, when a more southerly base was established at Debenham Islands in Marguerite Bay (68°S, 67°W). It was necessary for the *Penola* to return to the Falkland Islands for a refit during this period, and for much of the expedition Rymill was troubled with financing necessary repairs to the vessel. As a leader, Rymill demonstrated a cautious and methodical approach, and although life was undoubtedly hard, there were none of the disasters or privations suffered by earlier expeditions. The BGLE

successfully integrated reconnaissance using traditional sledging techniques with aerial photography and surveys from a motorboat, and Rymill ensured that aerial discoveries were always supported by accurate ground control surveys. A major achievement of the expedition was the discovery and mapping of George VI Sound and Ice Shelf: Rymill unselfishly withdrew from this survey party in order to provide back-up depot support. The BGLE also confirmed that Graham Land was a peninsula rather than a series of islands as suggested by Wilkins, and Rymill completed a sledging trip across the spine of the Peninsula to within sight of the Weddell Sea. The work of this expedition set the scene for many of the postwar government expeditions.

Rymill planned further polar explorations, but marriage in 1938, the Second World War, and the death of his mother intervened. He spent the rest of his life restoring the business and property at Old Penola Estate, and in a developing interest in equestrian sport. Not even Sir Douglas Mawson's entreaty that he be involved in establishing an Australian presence in Antarctica convinced him otherwise. John Rymill, like his father, was killed as a result of a car accident, in 1968.

The book is thoroughly researched and an accurate and complete biography. Béchervaise is precise and correct in his use of English, but his style is somewhat formal and stilted, and the result is a volume that is thorough, but not exciting. He uses his own knowledge of Antarctic conditions to provide background information, in footnotes, on the physical environment experienced by Rymill. These are not always strictly scientifically correct, but they provide a useful lay description. A fuller appreciation of the achievements of Rymill's expeditions would have been helped by the inclusion of simplified and better maps, rather than the poorly reproduced versions taken from the original expedition reports. But overall, this biography provides an excellent portrait of a great polar explorer and fills a void in polar history. It will provide a valuable resource for the polar specialist and enthusiast, but will probably do little to popularize Rymill with the general reader.

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COOK & PEARY: THE POLAR CONTROVERSY, RESOLVED. By ROBERT M. BRYCE. Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Press, 1997. 1105 p., maps, b&w illus., notes. Hardbound. US\$49.95.

Several years ago in these pages, Moira Dunbar of McGill University wrote that the Cook-Peary controversy over the discovery of the North Pole "was one of the most dismal and undignified episodes in the history of exploration" (Dunbar,

1957:54). Reading one thousand plus pages of this prodigious tome will not lead most hard-core Polar history buffs to dissent from that assessment. It is the latest—and by far the weightiest—to make the shelf of those who have followed the great debate on the attainment of what Farley Mowat (1967:238) called "that peculiarly non-objective yet passionately desired Holy Grail of so many men."

Dr. Frederick A. Cook and his rival, U.S. Navy engineer Robert E. Peary, evoked all of the passions and actions of early twentieth-century America and Europe. Their names were associated (after well-managed publicity campaigns and the participation of endorsing newspapers) with images of heroism, self-sacrifice, and patriotism. In truth, both of these driven men would in time succumb to the temptations of all heroes and would-be heroes: incompetence, occasional deception, commercial gain, and alleged failure would tarnish their achievements. The popular appeal of the last of the dog-team explorers of the Arctic swept both rivals into their respective niches of history.

Robert M. Bryce is a librarian at a community college in Maryland, which offered him a good logistical base from which to journey to the National Archives and the Library of Congress, where access to both the Peary and Cook papers was opened to scholars in 1989. The author's fascination with the subject is said to have spanned two decades, but we may assume that his "thousands of hours spent [and] hundreds of thousands of pages read" (p. xv) were concentrated upon the previously restricted papers of both explorers. What becomes apparent in the reading of this book, however, is what may be called a publisher's choice in title and promotion which expands its scope beyond the author's declaration in the preface: "[this story]...is of an extraordinary life...because by choice and by chance, Frederick Albert Cook was no ordinary man" (p. xiv).

Is this, then, a biography of the physician-explorer consigned to the footnotes of history as a pretender, a geographic charlatan, and an outright faker? Or is it an account of two Arctic travellers who spent years in the most inhospitable environment on earth seeking what the Inuit called "The Big Nail"? Because Cook and Peary were—as countless others have observed—inexorably tied to each other, any serious account of Cook must deal with his rival. The author's prologue (p. xi) suggests that both sought "one last heroic deed...before the romantic age departed."

Bryce has exhibited the patience and attention to detail of a meticulous researcher and has mined information never before made available about the controversy (he even told this reviewer why his invited biographical sketch of Cook was shelved by an encyclopedia many years ago). His book not only walks away with the girth award, but its 1814 reference notes must achieve landmark status among biographers. *Cook & Peary* might have been a candidate for a definitive category—except that those familiar with the debate and the two historic figures recognize that much was simply ignored or dismissed without substantive discussion. Bryce, defending his research at a symposium at the Byrd