

My Dear Beaufort: A Personal Letter from John Ross's Arctic Expedition of 1829-33

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ABSTRACT. During his four years' residence in the Canadian Arctic in search of a Northwest Passage in 1829-33, John Ross wrote a private letter to Francis Beaufort, Hydrographer of the Navy. The letter, reproduced here, provides valuable historical insights into many aspects of Ross's character and of the expedition generally. His feelings of bitterness toward several of his contemporaries, especially John Barrow and William E. Parry, due to the ridicule suffered as a result of the failure of his first arctic voyage in 1818, are especially revealing, as is his apparently uneasy relationship with his nephew and second-in-command, James Clark Ross. Ross's increasing despair and pessimism with each succeeding enforced wintering and, eventually, the abandonment of the expedition ship *Victory* are also clearly evident. Finally, the understandable problems of maintaining crew discipline during the final year of the expedition, though downplayed, begin to emerge.

Key words: John Ross, arctic exploration, 1829-33 Arctic Expedition, unpublished letter

RÉSUMÉ. Durant les quatre années où il résida dans l'Arctique canadien à la recherche du Passage du Nord-Ouest, de 1829 à 1833, John Ross écrivit une lettre personnelle à Francis Beaufort, hydrographe de la marine. Cette lettre, reproduite ici, permet de mieux apprécier du point de vue historique, certains aspects du caractère de Ross et de l'expédition en général. Son sentiment d'amertume envers plusieurs de ses contemporains, surtout John Barrow et William E. Parry, en raison du ridicule qu'il endura suite à l'échec de son premier voyage dans l'Arctique de 1818, est particulièrement mis en évidence, de même que ses rapports apparemment difficiles avec son neveu et second, James Clark Ross. Le désespoir et le pessimisme croissants de Ross à la suite de chaque séjour hivernal forcé, qui se terminèrent par l'abandon du bateau de l'expédition, le *Victory*, ressortent nettement. Finalement, les problèmes qu'on peut facilement imaginer, reliés au maintien de la discipline de l'équipage durant la dernière année de l'expédition, bien que minimisés, commencent à apparaître nettement.

Mots clés: John Ross, exploration arctique, expédition arctique de 1829 à 1833, lettre non publiée

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INTRODUCTION

John Ross's voyage of 1829-33 in search of a Northwest Passage stands as one of the most remarkable arctic expeditions during the 19th century, and it is well documented in his published account *Narrative of a Second Expedition in Search of a North-west Passage . . .* (Ross, 1835). During the four years of the expedition, however, Ross wrote a long, expanded letter to Captain Francis Beaufort, Hydrographer of the Navy. This letter is significant because it not only serves as a second original historical document for the expedition, presenting a number of new facts and expanding on several of the recorded events, but also because, being written on the spot, it has a more immediate and personal quality. As Beaufort himself remarks in a note added to the end of the letter: "It is very interesting from being the unstudied picture of his feelings at different periods of his trying and extraordinary voyage."

A brief summary of Ross's expedition follows; more detailed summaries are given in Fraser (1957), Neatby (1970), Dodge (1973) and Thomson (1975), among others, while Huish (1835) provides a contemporary second-hand account (albeit extremely biased against Ross) based on information supplied by the expedition steward, William Light. Ross sailed on his private expedition on board the *Victory*, with the small launch *Krusenstern* in tow, in May 1829 and returned home more than four years later. Ross and his men were absent from home for far longer than any previous arctic expedition (and, indeed, for far longer than nearly all subsequent ones), and as the years passed without any news reaching the civilized world, fears for their safety increased. By 1832, it was widely believed that they must all have surely perished; when the veteran explorer John Richardson proposed leading an overland relief expedition by way of

the unexplored Back River, so great was the general mood of pessimism that he failed to find a sponsor. Another explorer, George Back, did set out to carry out Richardson's plan in February 1833, but, as events were to show, his efforts were superfluous.

After having sailed west through Lancaster Sound and then south down Prince Regent Inlet, Ross spent the winter of 1829-30 at Felix Harbour in Lord Mayor Bay on the east coast of Boothia Peninsula (see Fig. 1 for these and other localities referred to in the text). Here contacts were established with the indigenous Netsilik Inuit, and several extensive sledging trips were made, the longest, by James Clark Ross, to Victory Point on King William Island. After an unsuccessful attempt to leave Lord Mayor Bay during the summer of 1830, Ross was forced to spend a second winter (1830-31) in the region, this time at Sheriff Harbour, only a few kilometres northeast of Felix Harbour. Sledge journeys continued throughout the winter, and in May 1831 James Clark Ross travelled part way up the west coast of Boothia Peninsula, establishing the location of the north magnetic pole at Cape Adelaide.

Following another unsuccessful attempt to extricate the *Victory* from Lord Mayor Bay during the summer of 1831, Ross was forced into Victory Harbour (renamed Victoria Harbour upon his return). Here the expedition spent the winter of 1831-32, and in May 1832 the *Victory* was abandoned and Ross sledged north to Fury Beach on Somerset Island, a distance of approximately 300 km. From Fury Beach Ross sledged and sailed (in ships' boats) as far as Port Leopold on the northeast corner of Somerset Island, but he was prevented by ice from continuing further. He therefore retraced his steps to Fury Beach, where he spent the winter of 1832-33 in a makeshift dwelling of wood, canvas and snow. The following summer, in

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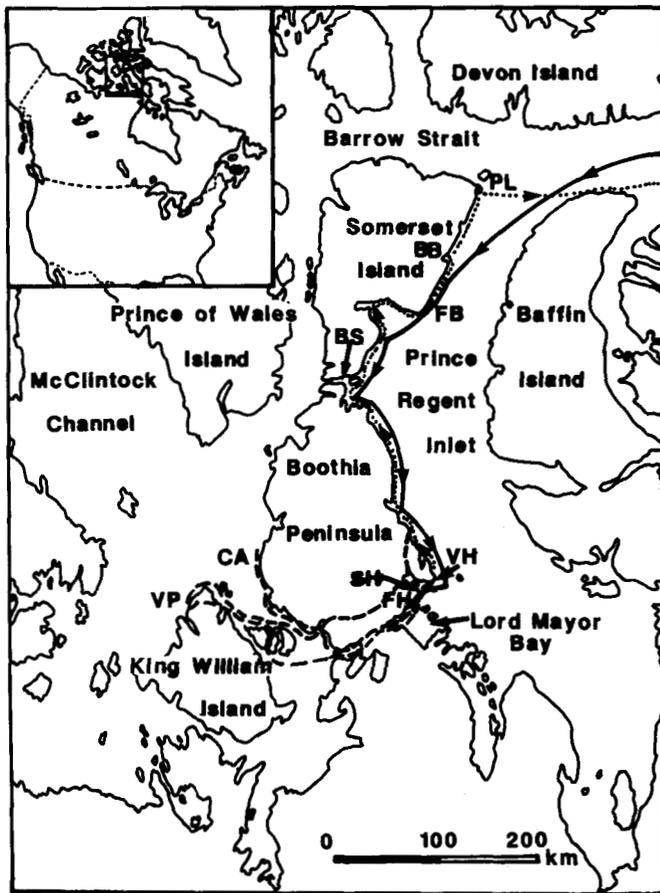


FIG. 1. The route of Ross's expedition of 1829-33 in the central Canadian Arctic. F = Felix Harbour; S = Sheriff Harbour; V = Victoria Harbour; BB = Batty Bay; BS = Bellot Strait; CA = Cape Adelaide; EH = Elizabeth Harbour; FB = Fury Beach; PL = Port Leopold; VP = Victory Point; solid line = track of the *Victory*, 1829-32; dashed line = sledge trips 1830-31; dotted line = track of the retreating crew on sledges/boats, 1832-33.

August 1833, Ross was finally rescued by the whaler *Isabella* in Lancaster Sound and arrived in London in October of that year.

Although the extent of his achievements by no means matched the duration of the expedition, Ross nevertheless produced some very useful results. As noted above, he and his nephew, James Clark Ross, explored widely throughout Boothia Peninsula and northern King William Island, and James Clark Ross established the location of the north magnetic pole at Cape Adelaide on the west coast of Boothia Peninsula. They were also the first explorers to make contact with the indigenous Netsilik Inuit, and Ross's ethnographic descriptions and sketches are among the most detailed of 19th-century arctic explorers. For these achievements, and also in recognition of his extraordinary courage, Ross was knighted and made a Commander of the Order of the Bath in 1834 and was further honoured by various geographical societies.

Ross's letter to Beaufort commences on 10 July 1829, in the early stages of the expedition, and after a long account of the outward voyage, the passage through Prince Regent's Inlet into the Gulf of Boothia and the entry into the first winter quarters at Felix Harbour, it continues in the form of four annual reports, written in January of the years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833. As their enforced detention in the Arctic continued, the situation of Ross and his men became increasingly perilous, and this state is

reflected in the tone of the letter. It becomes progressively more pessimistic until it ends, in January 1833, on a note of almost complete despair:

... you will excuse the bad writing for my fingers are very cold and ink has frozen several times — where I shall conclude this sheet God only knows!

BACKGROUND TO THE LETTER

The background to Ross's letter is complex, but it deserves some explanation here because it will elucidate several passages in the letter. In a sense, its history goes back some 11 years before the voyage, to 1818, when Ross was appointed to lead his first arctic expedition (Ross, 1819a). The purpose of that expedition was to explore Baffin Bay (which had never been visited since its discovery by William Baffin in 1616 and had disappeared from most maps) and from there to search for a Northwest Passage. It was the first of a long series of Northwest Passage expeditions undertaken by the Royal Navy in the first half of the 19th century and was the brainchild of the Admiralty's Second Secretary, John Barrow, who was to become Ross's most bitter and outspoken opponent. Barrow had studied Baffin's voyage and knew of his discovery of three large sounds leading from northern Baffin Bay. It was these three sounds, Smith, Jones and Lancaster, and particularly in Lancaster Sound, that Ross was instructed to search for a passage.

Ross sailed from London with HMS *Isabella* and *Alexander* on 18 April 1818. Ross was on board the *Isabella*, and Lieutenant William Edward Parry commanded *Alexander*. On arrival in northern Baffin Bay, Ross began with a brief examination of Smith Sound. He named the two capes on each side of its entrance after his two ships but decided that it offered no opportunity of a passage. He then turned toward Jones Sound, discovered Coburg Island at its entrance, but, deciding that the sound was only a small bay enclosed by mountains, made no attempt to explore it. Ross next moved to Lancaster Sound, and it was here that he made his most notorious misjudgement. On entering the sound on 30 August, he soon decided that it, too, was enclosed by mountains — the Croker Mountains, as he named them — and he turned back. It is now generally agreed that Ross was deceived by a mirage, an experience common enough for arctic travellers and usually of little consequence, but for Ross the consequences were catastrophic. Parry, following some distance behind him in the *Alexander*, did not see Ross's Croker Mountains and, after their return home in November 1818, continued to maintain that Lancaster Sound was an open strait.

In other circumstances, Ross's voyage might have been regarded as being of great scientific, geographical and commercial value; but the quarrel over Lancaster Sound so overshadowed the positive achievements that it quickly came to be regarded as a disaster. Ross's achievements were extensive: he confirmed Baffin's discoveries of 1616 at a time when they had been practically dismissed as fantasy, he opened up Baffin Bay to the whaling fleets, which brought considerable benefit to the industry, he made the first contact with, and extensively described, the Polar Eskimos of northern Greenland and he returned with a wide variety of scientific observations. But to many, and most particularly Barrow, none of this compensated for his failure to find an entrance to the Northwest Passage (Barrow, 1819). Barrow readily accepted Parry's view that Lancaster Sound was an open strait and used his influence to

ensure that Parry's account was preferred to Ross's. Ross's reputation was further damaged when he entered into a public dispute with his scientific officer, Captain Edward Sabine of the Royal Artillery, over the publication of the expedition's scientific results (Ross, 1819b; Sabine, 1819). The rights and wrongs in that affair are difficult to establish, but the Admiralty clearly felt that Ross's entry into a public squabble was in itself unseemly enough. Added to the doubts already surrounding Ross's account of Lancaster Sound, it was more than sufficient to bring him into disfavour. Thus, when it was decided to send out another expedition in 1819 to re-examine Lancaster Sound, Ross was passed over and Parry received the command.

Parry's voyage of 1819-20 need not be related here (see Parry, 1821, for a narrative of the expedition). The most important point is that Parry proved Lancaster Sound to be an open strait and indeed sailed through it to discover a route more than halfway through the Northwest Passage. The report of his discoveries served to complete the demise of Ross's reputation. From then on, his ability as an explorer was viewed with widespread contempt, and the Admiralty never again offered him an appointment.

This account of the circumstances surrounding Ross's first arctic expedition helps to explain why Ross felt compelled to restore his shattered reputation by launching a private expedition on the *Victory*. He spent much of the 1820s engaged in a study of steam navigation, which, he became convinced, would prove to be of great advantage in polar seas (Ross, 1828). Then, in 1828, he approached the Admiralty with a proposal for an arctic expedition by steamer: but of course his proposal was rejected. He then began to search for a private sponsor and eventually, after an initial refusal, received the substantial gift of £18 000 from Felix Booth, a sheriff of London and head of a prosperous firm of distillers that still today produces one of Britain's most popular brands of gin. Ross was later to express his gratitude by scattering variants of Booth's and Booth's sisters' names all over the map of his discoveries: Gulf of Boothia, Boothia Isthmus, Boothia Peninsula (or, in Ross's day, the land of Boothia Felix), Felix Harbour, Sheriff Harbour, Cape Felix, Brown's Island and Elizabeth Harbour. With Booth's grant, Ross purchased his *Victory*, a former Liverpool-Isle of Man packet, and after recruiting his crew of 22 officers and men, set off on his voyage of discovery.

The history of Ross's relations with the Admiralty, and with Barrow in particular, not only explains why Ross felt compelled to undertake this voyage, but it also illuminates numerous references in his letter to Beaufort. There are several references to Parry and to Barrow that, although couched in terms that appear innocent enough, are obviously meant to be slighting. Thus, early in his comments written at Felix Harbour in January 1830, he made much of a parallel, though with roles reversed, to his own situation in 1818: in Creswell Bay, he discovered open water where Parry (Parry, 1826), on an earlier voyage, had thought there was land. This enabled him to remark, rather patronizingly:

this was hailed by *some* of my friends as a complete victory over Parry . . . but by me it was viewed with far different feelings, and I am quite sure that those who have suffered as I have from a cruelly misled Public Opinion will never wish to transfer such misery to a fellow creature, if their hearts are in the right place! I could not help expressing my feelings of regret to my Nephew [James Clark Ross], in these words "I would far rather find a passage anywhere else" and in these sentiments I was joined by

him, he acknowledged having been himself at the Hecla's mast head [during Parry's voyage of 1824-25] and said that they had been deceived by the appearance of the ice!

Parry's mistake, of course, had not been by any means as catastrophic as Ross's in 1818, but Ross obviously gained some pleasure from being able to do to Parry, in a minor way, what Parry did to him. Similarly, in discussing the geography of inner Creswell Bay as observed during his sledging trip to Fury Beach in 1832, he remarks that:

. . . it was not navigable for a ship as the field of ice was evidently aground all the way across here and there the stones had broken through, so that I am sure it would not do even for our friend Barrow unless he chose to go in a canoe!

The letter is also revealing in its treatment of James Clark Ross, John Ross's nephew. A conflict had originally developed between the two following Ross's 1818 expedition when, during the ensuing inquiry concerning the Croker Mountains, James Clark had sided against his uncle. Although James Clark Ross is generally acknowledged to have contributed by far more than any other individual, including John Ross, to the success of the expedition and the health and safety of the crew members, he receives very little attention or acknowledgement in the letter. In particular, although James Clark had positively located the exact position of the north magnetic pole in 1831, John Ross, in January 1832, toward the end of the *Victory* Harbour section of the letter, states that:

. . . we have hitherto continued our observations, and those particularly on the subject of the magnet are very interesting. We were both very near the magnetic Pole and my nephew in his journey to the westward must have passed over it.

Ross's deprecation of James Clark Ross's achievements continued, for when the narrative, which included a chapter by James Clark on the discovery of the north magnetic pole, was published, John Ross felt it necessary to state that:

It must be hereafter remembered in history, and will be so recorded, that it was the ship *Victory*, under the command of Captain John Ross, which assigned the northwest Magnetic Pole, in the year 1831. . . . [Ross, 1835:570.]

THE LETTER

The letter consists of three double-page sheets (a total of 12 pages) of thick quarto size (24 × 19.2 cm) paper. The report, written on the first 9 pages, is in small, but generally legible, handwriting (Figs. 2 and 3). Beaufort added his note on the tenth page and on the twelfth page wrote "Letter from Captain Ross to Captain B."

The letter was donated to the Scott Polar Research Institute (Manuscript No. 1152) in 1975 by M. Craig Waller, a descendant of Francis Beaufort. The initial transcription of the letter was undertaken by Alfred Friendly and Jean Friendly and subsequently by M. Craig Waller and Clive Holland.

The following is a complete transcription of the letter. While the original spelling and punctuation have been maintained, paragraph breaks have been introduced for ease in reading. Notes are included only where specific events and/or localities need clarification insofar as they differ substantially from Ross's (1835) published narrative or where the supplementary information is deemed relevant and is otherwise not available or generally known. Finally, reproductions of several watercolours painted by Ross depicting events discussed in the letter accom-

pany the text (Figs. 4-9). These, and approximately 70 others painted by Ross during the expedition, are currently housed in the Archives of the Scott Polar Research Institute.

TEXT OF LETTER FROM JOHN ROSS

Baals River Greenland NE. 30 Leagues.
10 July 1829 — *Victory!*

My dear Beaufort

As we are now passing the Arctic Circle it is time I was beginning to make for the edification of my friends a few extracts from my journal, for our letters will no doubt be dispatched in a hurry by the first Whaler we meet — on board our little *Victory* I may say All's well, for altho' the untowards did not end at Loch Ryan¹ we have happily been able to overcome all, and so far have made an excellent passage.

To begin — our fair wind on leaving Scotland only carried us 10 leagues — and at Noon on Sunday the 14th June we had the Mull on Cantire North, and Ailsa East, the wind gradually increasing and veering to the westward as we passed Rachlin Island, before 10 PM it blew a gale and we had just weathered the Runs of Isla when the head of our Foremast gave way close above the lower rigging, 2 men were at the mast head sending down the top Gall! Yard but before the topmast and close reefed topsail went clean over the side, they were got hold of altho it was so close broken, that the runner and tackle pendants came down, it appeared to me possible to secure the rigging by frappings which being done I determined on continuing our voyage, and I have pleasure in adding that this disaster seemed

only to give new energy to Officers and Men, my decision made everyone cheerful and we were soon able to set a double reefed boom foresail and small jibb. The gale increased and blew hard for 3 days during which we were either under storm sails or lying to, screwing, and Tossing about in the most dangerous part of the channel, but without any further damage either to the *Victory* or *Krusenstern* which we had in tow, not being far enough to the westward to reach any of the lochs in the north of Ireland our nearest neighbour was *Skerivore* you may judge therefore that I was not very happy, altho' it was luckily a part of the coast I was well acquainted with — I am glad to tell you that our little bark proved an excellent sea boat. She never shipped anything like a sea and kept her ground wonderfully, on Wednesday it fell calm and at midnight a light breeze from NW enabled us to fetch the entrance of loch Swilly, and having only a months water I had some idea of putting in there to replenish it and by stepping our foremast on the lower deck and making a new masthead set all to rights. On the 18th however the wind came from the Southward, we got up a Top Gall! mast for a Top mast secured it by lashings, got the Topsail for a square foresail, the Top Gall! Sail for a Top Sail and bore "Tail Up" for Greenland, in this way, I may say under jury Masts we made our passage and without once using the engine we have reached the Arctic Circle having gained on all the former voyages.

30th July — a Summons from the deck made me lay down my pen, the wind changed and soon increased to a gale which lasted 10 days and being directly down Davis Strait we but barely held our own, and at last began to lose ground, my intention was to have refitted at Whale Islands, but hitherto we had seen no ice our water was all expended, and rather than strive any longer against the gale I was compelled to look for a creek to refit in, accordingly we put into a Cove about Lat 67° and were immediately visited by the governor of Holsteinborg who informed us that the harbour was only 3 miles up the inlet, instead of being to the Southward as we had supposed and that we might refit from the wreck of the *Rookwood*, a Whaler that had struck on a rock, had put in there and being found unrepairable was abandoned. Her stores and provisions having been landed and left in charge of the Governor. Here then we found at once a Dock Yard and Victualling office, the mizzen mast of the *Rookwood* was exactly the size of our foremast with 2 feet more hoist, we lost no time in removing to the Harbour in which there was 16 feet rise and fall of water and at ½ tide we had water alongside of the wreck, and soon had her mizzen mast out and in our foremasts place, being convinced that our engine was not to be depended on, I rigged the *Victory* now completely as a Sailing Schooner with a *Dandy* lugg mizzen taking the Driver Boom of the *Rookwood* for a Main Boom her driver for a Mainsail etc. we completed in provisions, fuel, and stores to 2 years from the 1st of Aug^t next and in the short space of 3 days were ready for sea, when a fair wind sprung up, which made me hastily close my accounts and after writing a few lines to my friend who had to pay for all, I departed. Nothing could exceed the kindness and hospitality of the Governor and Clergiman of Holsteinborg, they procured us Skin Clothing Esquimaux boots and mittens and on our departure loaded us with venison and every luxury they could afford, then saw us fairly at sea outside of the inlet where we parted with grateful hearts — we got in the mean time an excellent survey of this interesting and important place which on acc^t of the great rise and fall of water, is the best place for repairing any damage done to the bottom of a ship. The Latⁿ is 66°57' Long 54°13' W but the small islands called "the Reef"

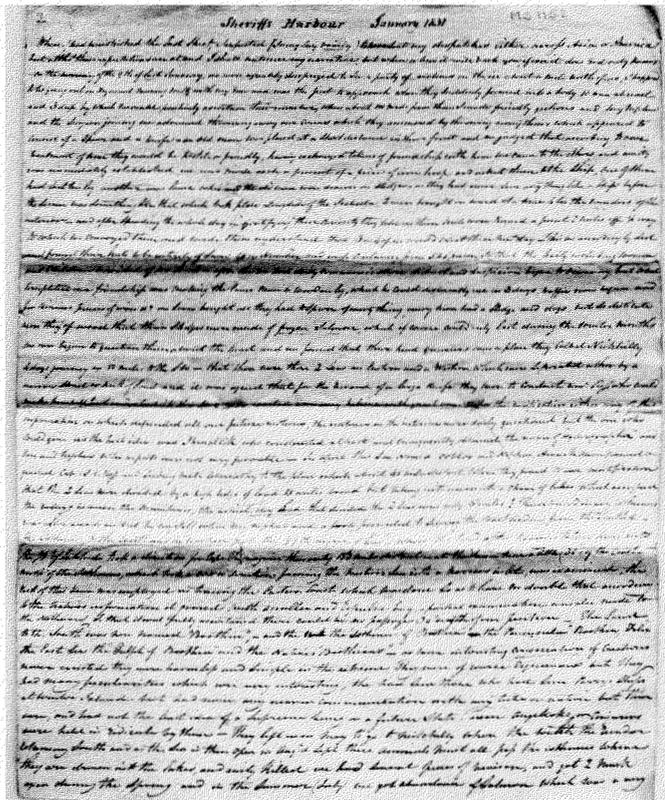


FIG. 2. Beginning page of the section of the letter written at Sheriff Harbour. Page measures 24 × 19.2 cm.

that the season had been the mildest ever known. The Governor said that "if we
 found it must be this year" — our fair wind has already carried us to Womans
 and we have chance to tell never yet seen a floe of ice, nor indeed any the
 early this morning (31) Mr Thoms who was on deck called me to say that a whaler
 was under all sail and I was glad that I had written so much of my letter
 pen, I went up to take a look with my long Glass, and discovered to my great
 at it was — an Iceberg! — Felix Harbour Jan^y. 1830 — Being now in snug winter quarters, I
 our passage was affected without ever seeing ice of any description, save here and there a lonely
 a sound on the 7 August but the wind being southerly we could not call at Possession Bay for a verifi-
 for depending on this, their comparison was only taken once a week and the division by 7, taken
 which I understand is the way it was done in all Parry's voyages, but not the way that he
 consequence was that we were so far out in our longitude that in hauling in for the land in
 we got imbayed in Adm^y inlet, (which is also out in Long^d) when we thought ourselves 20' past it
 morning a strong NE gale carried us into Barrows Strait where we first saw the ice, but it was
 obstructed by it in the course of the day we made the western shore of Regents inlet
 about 10' south of Batty Bay the sea apparently clear, but at one

FIG. 3. Detail of the letter, illustrating Ross's handwriting and comparing writing styles from July 1829 (Baals River, Greenland) and January 1830 (Felix Harbour).

lie 18 miles farther out it is easily distinguished by a remarkable
 peaked mountain, called the "Old Womans Hood" — here we
 learnt to our great satisfaction that the season had been the
 mildest ever known. The Governor said that "if the NW passage
 is ever to be found it must be this year" — our fair wind has
 already carried us to Womans Islands in Lat. 72° & Long 60° and
 we have chance to tell never seen a floe or ice, nor indeed
 anything but a few icebergs! — early this morning (31) Mr.
 Thoms who was on deck called me to say that a whaler was
 bearing down upon us under all sail and I was glad that I had
 written so much of my letter but before resuming my pen, I went
 up to take a look with my long Glass, and discovered to my great
 disappointment that it was — an iceberg!

Felix Harbour Jan^y. 1830

Being now in snug winter quarters I resume — our passage
 across Baffin's Bay was affected without ever seeing ice of any
 description, save here and there a lonely iceberg — we entered
 Lancaster Sound on the 7 August but the wind being southerly
 we could not call at Possession Bay for a verification of our
 chronometers for depending on this, their comparison was only
 taken once a week and the division by 7 taken as a daily
 comparison, which I understand is the way it was done in all
 Parry's voyages, but not the way I had been long accustomed to
 — the consequence was that we were so far out in our longitude
 that in hauling in for the land in the thick weather, we had never
 got imbayed in Adm^y inlet, (which is also out in Long^d) when
 we thought ourselves 20' past it this was on the 11th, on the next
 morning a strong NE gale carried us in Barrows Strait where we
 first saw the ice, but it was "Sailing ice" and we were not

obstructed by it in the course of the day we made the western
 shore of Regents inlet and about 10' south of Batty Bay the sea
 apparently clear, but at one we fell in with the Pack, and had just
 time to wear clear of it in the morning we found we had drifted
 past Fury Point and during the 13th we stood into what Parry
 called Creswell Bay,² you may judge what was our surprize, when
 after standing 8 miles farther than Parry has laid down the land
 "low Beach distinctly seen" both from the land and every day
 for 3 days from the Hecla, we could see no land from the
 masthead to the westward in a very clear day! in short instead
 of being a bay this had every appearance of a passage, certainly
 there could be no land within 30' this was hailed by some of my
 friends as a complete victory over Parry — and it was the more
 remarkable for being the very first discovery we made, but by
 me it was viewed with far different feelings, and I am quite sure
 that those who have suffered as I have from a cruelly misled
 Public Opinion will never wish to transfer such misery to a

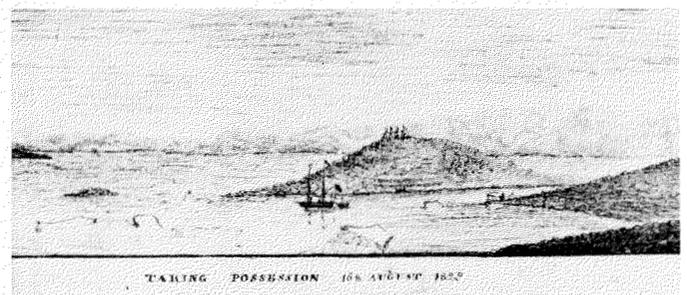


FIG. 4. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the "Old Woman's Hood," Holsteinborg, Greenland, 1829. Scott Polar Research Institute No. 66/3/6.

fellow creature, if their hearts are in the right place! I could not help expressing my feelings of regret to my Nephew, in these words "I would far rather find a passage anywhere else" and in these sentiments I was joined by him, he acknowledged having been himself at the Hecla's mast Head and said that they had been deceived by the appearance of the ice!

In the eve^s of the 13th it became quite moderate and as it was necessary we should complete in fuel, which had been a good deal expended on our passage across (I may say to little purpose) we proceeded to the northward keeping close to the shore and at 10 that night reached Fury Beach; here we had indeed a complete Dock Yard and Victualling office — every thing was in excellent condition but no vestige of the wreck remained and no doubt she had been carried off by the ice into deep water, we worked hard the whole of the 14th and crammed our little vessel as full as she could hold — in the evening it came on to blow strong from the Northward which would not do for the new discovered channel or inlet, but quite fair for Cape Garry which bore SW, and the appearance of the sky being much the best, we determined on trying round it first and accordingly bore up, at 8 on the 15th we reached Cape Garry from whence the land tended to SWbW, we kept the land close on our starboard side, and ran 40 miles without the smallest obstruction, we now found ourselves at the mouth of an inlet of considerable size on the North side of which we found a snug little harbour where we anchor'd and took formal possession of our first new discovery, from the top of a Hill we saw that there was no chance of a passage to the west^d here it appeared to be the firth of a great river & there was high land at no great distance all round³ — we spent 2 days here and found it Lat to be 71°59 and Long 94°W. — Ice appeared in a compact body from SW to East and it was evident that our difficulties were beginning.

On the 18th we got under way and crossing the inlet we found very shallow water, and a reef extending across it nor could we close the south Cape where the ice was all aground and several miles from the shore we had only 11 feet at high water — we were therefore obliged to try our fortune in the Pack which at first was pretty loose, but in the course of the day we were beset about 10 miles from the land and continued for some time to drive to the southward, The coast here was very low and all of limestone but at the distance of 5 or 6 miles inland there appeared high Blue mountains of granite and all entirely free from snow, in this helpless situation we were 10 days when a southy wind opening the ice we closed the High land in Lat 70° 47' and Long 93 for the coast had now taken a SSE direction we found a secure little bay and again landed here we found the land Granite, abounding with Hare & Ptarmigan and some small trout in a lake the extremity of the land appeared to be now an island, and we expected it would again turn to the westward The ice continued to drive to the northward for some days and on the 29th there appeared a chance of getting on we pushed out the moment the wind changed and got about 10 miles when being unable to regain the land we were once more obliged to take the pack for another week, our vessel during these trials sustained considerable pressure and the Krusenstern was several times pressed quite on top of the ice, we had snow for the first time and the Blue mountains put on their winter dress.

On the 5th Sept. the wind came again to the southward and we were able to push for the land to hinder our being carried back, and on the 6 we got a beautiful Harbour in Lat 70°33' and Long 92°50', here we saw reindeer, and killed one also hares and Grouse and this was the last place we saw whales, from the

Top of a High Hill our prospect as to the direction of the coast was better, the land taking a more southerly direction and ended at the distance of 16 miles in a Cape on the 9th Sept. the ice again opened and we were in hopes of getting through a narrow channel which led to some open water between a chain of islands and the main but the tide changing prevented us and we put into a very insecure place between 2 islands, the next morning in trying to push through with the tide we got beset and were drifting up and down this "perilous passage" on both tides among the rocks fortunately the ice in general drew more water than our vessel and always grounded first, which proves the absolute necessity of a vessel employed on this service drawing little water, we expected every moment to be dashed to pieces but all at once the heavy ice which was pressing in on the point of the island grounded and the other ice receding gave us an opportunity of escaping we gained the Center of the Channel but were again nearly carried into the vortex of a whirlpool when as a last resource we got a hawser to a large iceberg which seemed to be in the fair tide and we dragged through all into the open lane of water, in the evening we gained the opposite shore and found a snug place, which we called Eclipse Harbour, in consequence of the eclipse of the moon which happ^d that night — next morning we proceeded in hopes of rounding the Cape but were stopped by the ice at an island ½ way where we made fast till next days tide but we did not reach the Cape and were forced by the ice to take shelter in a small bay to the north^d of it.

It was now the 14 Sept: the winter began to set in with uncommon violence, and we had nothing but snow storms, one after another for 10 days and blocked up by ice from the point of the Cape we could see that the land began to bend due south and our anxiety to get on was painful, on the 24th it fell moderate and taking advantage of the tide we got round the Cape passing inside of a rock off it and running 24' got to an Island off the Easternmost point of the land which from thence took a SW direction, 3 islands appeared due East and as we were now exactly in the lat of Hecla & Fury Strait I called two of them Hecla and Fury Islands, and the other Isabella Louisa after Lady Parry in an acknowledgement of the friendship she showed to my nephew — our situation was however very insecure the tide here being rapid and as there appeared an opening among small islands in shore I determined on pushing in but we ? to be only Rocks on a dangerous reef and it was with great exertions we extricated our selves and happily we found an excellent harbour to the south of a High Island, into which we had scarcely escaped when it came on to blow a dreadful NWester, and we saw the ice make a fair breach over the reef we had just left — as this island was discovered on my little Boys birthday I named it after him and from its top we had a charming prospect — on the 30th the gale moderated and left a clear passage between all the Islands and the Cape which we soon passed, and every point of land led more to the westward, at the distance of 18 miles we were stopped by a solid compact body of heavy ice extending from the land to the Eastward which too plainly told us we could proceed no farther, happily we found an excellent harbour at the very extreme point into which we secured our ships and the very next day we were frozen up for the winter — This we named "Felix Harbour" after my worthy friend — The usual steps were taken for housing in an observatory was constructed and every thing was made comfortable before the end of October — our view from the top of the highest hill which was about 700 feet was rather cheering for the actual termination of the water could not be seen to the SW altho' about due south & and from



FIG. 5. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the *Victory* at Felix Harbour 1829. Scott Polar Research Institute No. 66/3/20.

that to SE at the dis of 40 miles to the Coast was distinctly seen lying East and West and as this must be in the Lat of $69^{\circ}20'$ there can be no doubt but it is in the Continent of America, and as we are now below the 70th degree and see *this* land 20 miles farther the passage if any cannot be more than 20 miles broad — This we trust we shall be able fully to determine next spring and summer by means of sledges and travelling parties, long before the disruption of the ice — The land now is entirely Granite in ridges and sugar loaf Hills the line of bearing about NNW and the dip generally vertical I have taken many sketches of the land and as I am provided with Ronalds invaluable perspective instrument the outline *must* be correct, and if nothing else they will at least be faithful illustrations — we have been tolerably successful in getting Hares and Grouse but we have seen no Reindeer and only one Bear — There is a large Inlet 3 miles north of our harbour which I shall examine in the spring but I do not think we'll find a passage there and no where else is there any possibility to the south of Creswell inlet.

I must now mention that our Engine entirely failed not in consequence of the principle on which it was constructed but owing to the very inferior materials of which the boilers were constructed, they leaked almost at every joint and it took the whole of the Crew to keep them supplied with water, and this being at the temp^o: of 36° generally it was impossible to keep up the steam so as to make her go even 1 mile an hour! you may guess then under what disadvantages we have navigated the vessel being constructed for steam was not easily navigated under sails, yet we have to *our own* surprise succeed in get 200 miles farther than any former voyage had we had the advantage of steam we would have been here a month before, and now God Knows how much farther, — I have now landed and broke up the boilers and will bring home a piece of one of them as a specimen⁴ — if it Pleased God that we ever get home the Engines were of themselves very good but the shaft was badly connected, the paddles answered admirably and were easily taken up and let down at pleasure, but we have not used the Engine since the 21 of August — Our Engineer & stokers & ^{ca} who are landmen are now therefore of little use to us and we find ourselves rather weakly manned, but there seems to be no dissatisfaction anywhere every thing as yet has gone on smoothly — by lightening the vessel we found out and repaired the leak — we have already made observations of much importance, and by the dip and variations the magnetic pole must be about 60 miles WbS of our present position which is in $69.59.11$ and $92^{\circ}41' W^t$ — we have only one sick man and as his complaint is consumptive he cannot hold out long. — adieu till next day

Sheriffs Harbour January 1831⁵

When I had finished the Last Sheet, I expected (I may say

vainly) to have sent my despatches either across Asia or America but altho' those expectations are at end I shall continue my narrative, but when or how it will reach you, if ever it does God only knows — on the morning of the 9th of *last* January, we were agreeably surprized to see a party of natives on the ice about a mile north of us, I happened to be going out on my usual morning walk with my gun and was the first to approach, when they suddenly formed into a body 10 men abreast and 3 deep by which we could positively ascertain their number, when about 100 yards from them I made friendly gestures and my nephew and the surgeon joining me advanced throwing away their arms,



FIG. 6. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the first meeting with the Netsilik Inuit, January 1830. Scott Polar Research Institute No. 66/3/48.

which they answered by throwing away theirs which appeared to consist of a spear and a knife — an old man was placed at a short distance in their front and we judged that according to our treatment of him they would be hostile or friendly, having exchanged tokens of friendship with him we came to the others and amity was immediately established, we now made each a present of a piece of iron hoop and asked them to the Ship, one of them had lost his leg another was lame so he and the old man were drawn on sledges — as they had never seen anything like a ship before the scene was something like that which took place alongside of the *Isabella*, 2 were brought on board at a time to see the wonders of the interior — and after spending the whole day in gratifying their curiosity they told us their huts were Round a point 2 miles off $\frac{1}{2}$ way to which we conveyed them and made them understand that 3 or 4 of us would visit them next day — This we accordingly did and found their huts to be entirely of snow 18^6 in number and each containing from 5 to 6 persons so that the party including women and children consisted of 100 souls — after this we had daily communication distrust and suspicion began to die away but what completed our friendship was making the lame man a wooden leg,⁷ which he could dexterously use in 3 days, traffic now began and for Kinives pieces of iron &c we soon bought all they had to spare of everything, every man had a sledge and dogs, but so destitute were they of wood that their sledges were made of *frozen salmon*, which of course could only last during the winter months we now began to question them about the land, and we found that their head quarters was a place they called Neitchilly 4 days journey or 50 miles to the SW — that there were there 2 seas an Eastern and a Western which were separated either by a

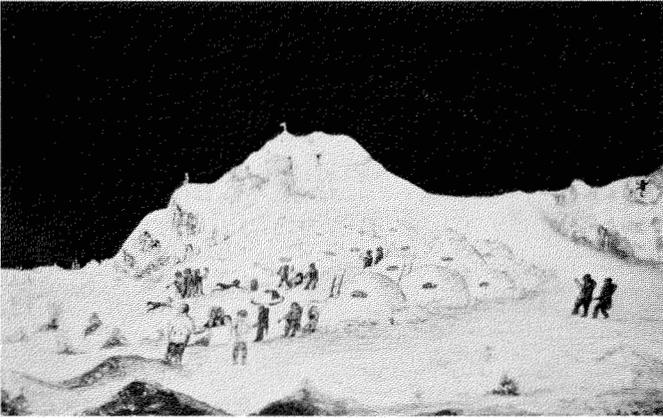


FIG. 7. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the Netsilik Inuit village at Cape Hendon, Lord Mayor Bay, January 1830. Scott Polar Research Institute No. 66/3/47.

narrow strait or neck of land and it was agreed that for the reward of a large knife they were to conduct Com^r Ross (who could make himself best understood) to this spot — we waited you may believe with great anxiety for the verification, either way of this information on which depended all our future motions, the natives in the interim were daily questioned, but the one who could give us the best idea was Ikinallik, who constructed a chart and consequently obtained the name of “Hydrographer” and son and nephew who reports were not very favorable.

In April this son named Oobloo and nephew Awack accom-



FIG. 8. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the Inuk Tulluahuu, with the wooden leg made by the *Victory's* carpenter. Scott Polar Research Institute No. 66/3/72.

panied & guided Cap. J.C. Ross and Leading Mate Abernethy to the place which about 45 miles distant where they found to our mortification that the 2 seas were divided by a high ridge of land 15 miles broad but taking into account a chain of lakes which occupied the valleys between the mountains, the actual span of *dry land* that divided the two seas was only 5 miles! This extraordinary isthmus was afterwards visited by myself when my nephew and a party proceeded to survey the coast leading from the south of the Isthmus, to the west^d — and he reached just the 99th degree of Long^o — where the land after having taken him into the 70° of latitude took a direction for Cape Turnagain then only 150 miles distant — at the same time a little (30') of the coast north of the Isthmus, which took a WNW direction forming the western sea into a narrow inlet, was examined, the rest of this year was employed in tracing the Eastern Coast, which was done so as to have no doubt that according to the natives information it joined with accullee and Repulse bay, a partial examination was also made to the northward so that it was fully ascertained there could be no passage 30' north of our position — The land to the south was now named “Boothia”, — and the neck the “Isthmus of Boothia” — the peninsula “Boothia Felix” the East sea the “Gulph of Boothia”, and the natives “Boothians” — a more interesting *consociation* of creatures never existed they were harmless and simple in the extreme, They were of course Esquimaux but they had many peculiarities which are very interesting, they had seen those who had seen Parrys ships at Winter Island but had never any nearer communication with any tribe or nation but their own, and had not the least idea of a Supreme being or a future state! even Angekoks or conjurors were held in ridicule by them — They left us in May to go to Neitchilly where they watch the reindeer returning south and as the sea is then open in Aug^t and Sept these animals must all pass the isthmus where they are driven into the lakes, and easily killed we had several pieces of venison, and got 2 Musk oxen during the spring and in the summer (July) we got abundance of salmon which was a very salutary change of diet to our crew.

The summer was uncommonly fine but like that of 1818 calm and very unfavorable for navigation, the Lat. and Long., was nearly the mean of the 4 different places where Parry had wintered, and so was our mean Temperature for the winter, we therefore made no doubt of being able to retrace our steps and more minutely examine the line of coast we had passed, the ice however did not begin to move until the 1. of August after which we had 6 weeks of constant northerly breezes which were not strong enough to break up the ice but sufficiently so to bring the ice from the northward so that as fast as it displaced here it was filled up by the fresh ice of a heavier description our best passage out of the harbours being blocked up we had to land everything and haul the vessel between a small island and the main where there was only 1 foot at low and 7 at high water and our utmost exertions did not succeed in extricating the ship more than 4 miles in September every storm brought in heavier ice and our vessel was for weeks in a very dangerous situation being forced up on the land so that she grounded every tide, when all hope of getting farther was at an end we cut into a small uncomfortable bay where we had just water to float, and got secure about the middle of November This wretched prison was (not inaptly) named “Sheriffs Harbour” — This winter now set in with a severity not on record and while I am now writing you the ther. stands 42° below the freezing point! adieu 'til next year — Your name has a place near the Magnetic Pole! —

Victory Harbour Jan^y. 1832⁸

I resume my narrative but whether it will ever come to your hands or not becomes yearly more doubtful fortune seems entirely to have deserted us — The severity of last Year was much greater than any on record, the summer particularly — early in April we began our operations — and after examining the inlet at the south point of which we were frozen in Comr. Ross with seven men proceed to examine the coast to the northward which he had not been able to finish satisfactorily last season, the result was that there was no passage to the south^d of Lat 71° — he returned on the 1 May having one of our best men so severely frost bitten that he lost a great part of his right foot and will no doubt be lame for the rest of the voyage if not all his life — our friends the *Boothians* returned to us with a good supply of salmon — and we determined on making another journey the main object of which was to trace the coast on the western side of the peninsula, guided by 2 of the natives we set out on the 17th May with 2 sledges having a months provisions, my nephew myself & 14 men we entered at the mouth of a river which we had not before seen called by the natives Cogaloktok — and which is never frozen over but runs the whole winter this river takes its rise in a large lake very near the sea and is the 1st of a chain of 4 lakes leading nearly due west, when after passing a ridge of high land another chain of 3 lakes reach nearly to the western sea into which a river flows from them, the distance here between the 2 seas is 45 miles and is 20 miles N of the isthmus at the western side my nephew and I parted he being supplied with all the provisions I could spare continued to trace the coast which here to a NW^y direction while I returned to the Eastward by the isthmus, and afterwards met men with a supply of provisions — This journey was extremely severe, owing to the constant fall of snow and lowness of the temperature which was generally below Zero — sometimes 8° our men were very much knocked up but all got round again.

Being now nearer to the fishing river than before a party was sent thither and caught by the net abundance what do you think of 6376 at one haul? — I am afraid I must not stick this in my publication⁹ unless I want a worse name than I have — we were however 2 miles off and the ice being covered with water and full of cracks and holes it was with difficulty we got 2000 to the ship these however were sufficient to make everyone in good condition, but one of our men entirely lost his eyesight, we lost one man Jan 7 1830, one being lame and one blind reduced our strength to 20 men — for a long time we had little prospects of

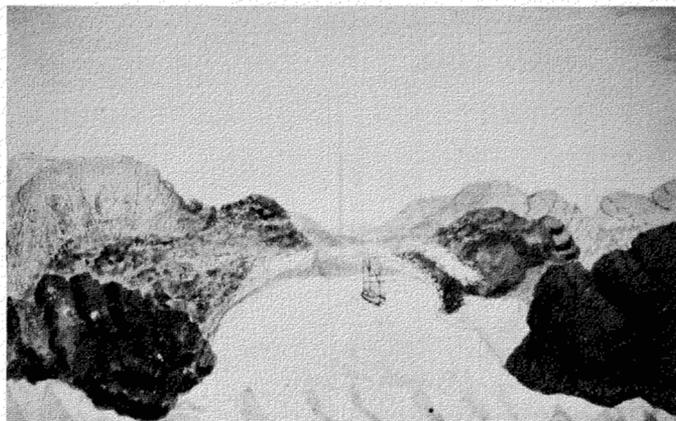


FIG. 9. Watercolour by John Ross depicting the *Victory* in Victoria (Victoria) Harbour 1832.

getting away at all but on the 29th of August a strong S Wester drove the ice out of the inlet and we crossed and finding a lane along the land got to this harbour which is 15 miles NNE of Sheriffs Harbour and unfortunately to the south of the Easternmost Cape, from a mountain on the cape we could see that the sea to the northward was yet full of heavy ice and that we had very little chance of escaping in short the ice never again left the land, we were blocked up in the harbour and the fate of little vessel finally decided on the 1st of October the winter set in with still more severity than it had done before, and as we had only provisions to last to the beginning of June next it was quite evident that we must leave our vessel next summer and try to save our lives by the *Fury*'s if they are still there, our distance from *Fury* beach being 200 miles, arrangements were accordingly made and we began immediately to land and conceal everything, we had however got farther north than the natives usually go and there was no chance of our seeing them any more.

We have hitherto continued our observations, and those particularly on the subject of the magnet are very interesting we were both very near the magnetic Pole and my nephew in his journey to the westward must have passed over it the amount of diurnal variation was often as many *degrees* as it was minutes with Parry and Franklin. I have now to regret the loss of our valuable collection of specimens of Nat Hist, Geology — & my oil paintings with which I took such pains are unfortunately all done on copper and are too heavy to be carried these and all my instruments and book £2000 in value must go — we have now no Nautical Almanack therefore our future observations must be reduced at home if ever we get there but I confess that the chances are now much against our being ever heard of — I shall leave the last of this sheet for the conclusion be as it may.

Somerset House Fury Beach — January 1833

By the date of this you will perceive that apprehensions were too true! The mean temperature of last winter and summer was no less than 10° below the former year, and it was evident that our operations must begin early to ensure our reaching *Fury* Beach one of our strongest hands died and our number was reduced to 21 including one lame and one blind besides 3 others who were so weak as to be unable to take any share in our labour — My plan was to carry 2 of our boats 40 miles in advance and there make a depot of provisions that is all we could spare which at ½ allowance would keep us alive until Sept. and leave the ship about the end of May — accordingly I set out about the middle of April while the ther. was 32° below Zero with 14 men and succeeded in getting the boat about 20 miles returning on the 1st of May — this journey was indeed severe not only in consequence of the extreme cold but the condition of the ice which was of the most rugged description — we slept or rather took rest when fatigued by digging a trench in the snow, which being covered with canvas on 2 oars laid across and then snow, we crept in at the lee-end & by keeping close together prevented being frozen to death — and we could get no water except melted snow we had therefore to carry fuel for that purpose — only 2 of our party were disabled — next trip was more favorable, we carried 6 weeks provisions — and the 3rd trip we carried 14 days provisions and the greatest part of 9 miles farther.

On the 29 of May having hauled up the *Krusenstern* on the land and moored the *Victory* so that she should sink in 10 fathoms water, we finally left her¹⁰ and proceeded on our dreary

journey the direct distance being near 200 miles, but the heavy ice obliging us to keep either on or close to the land our distance was increased by one half — Sometimes at a cape we could do no otherwise than drag everything over the hill which formed obliging us to make 2 or 3 trips, so that some days we only gained 4 or 5 miles, and several times the weather was so bitter that we could not show a *nose* out of our *holes* — When we arrived at the boats the men harrassed by the severe labour showed symptoms of disaffection, but this I soon put an end to by taking the most decisive measures, and as the boats were not either in a secure place or in a place we could retreat to I made them carry everything to Elizabeth Harbour about 35 miles distant from the ship — so that if the Fury boats had been washed away or found to be irreparable we could return to them for there was now no chance of our friends the Boothians, none of whom we saw since we left Sheriff's harbour, coming before next winter, we got everything here on the 8th June — and having secured the boats and 3 weeks provisions, we divided into 3 parties of 7 each, but not above 5 able to work, each party having a sledge and on the 9th proceeded along shore, the ice obliging us to make the round of every bay and neck — The weather was uncommonly severe in June snow fell every day excepting 4 near the end and so intense was the cold that we did not get even water to drink untill the last week in June and once or 2^{ce} where there was a rock exposed to the sun — and latterly we could only give the men $\frac{1}{2}$ allowance, and as we could not spare fuel water only once per day.

When we had got into Lat 71.55 where the low limestone land begins, I despatched my nephew with 2 men in advance to go to Fury beach and ascertain how things were there being thus deprived of 3 of our strongest hands (one from each sledge) our progress more slower — of course all this time officers and men took equal share in the labour, and with the belt over their shoulders drew the sledge, my own generally leading the way — and we averaged 9 miles per day, and I had generally both Lat^d and sights for the chronometer — and being *obliged* either to keep *on* or within musquet shot of the land, it could not be more completely surveyed, on the 19th we reached the mouth of the inlet in Lat 72' where we first took possession, the men being very much fatigued, I gave them a day of rest, and proceeded myself to survey it, the day was very favorable I walked to the very bottom of it & had good observations, it was 8 miles deep in a westerly and 7 in a SW direction having 2 arms and proved the mouth of 2 great rivers which were then open — we were now 82 miles from Fury Beach and calculated on meeting my nephew in 4 or 5 days we accordingly proceeded having crossed this inlet reached the land where we took possession — from this the ice owing to the shallow water was rather more favorable for travelling but the snow being generally a foot to 18 inches deep our labour was excessive — on the 25 we met my nephew who brought the news that the sea had up and washed away 3 of the boats and some of the stores but providentially the boats had been driven on shore a little to the north^d that only one of them was stove so as to be irreparable, and that there was still abundance of provisions, this showed however that my precaution in bringing on the boats was highly necessary — on the 26 we arrived at Cape Garry — I determined to look into Creswell Bay or rather inlet which my nephew had crossed over the hummocky ice, which indeed we were obliged to do on the 29th having travelled along the southern shore 27 miles the land became low and turned to the northward and we came to the mouth of a *firth* 2 miles wide but shallow all the way across and

on the north side of which was a high table mountain this took a westerly direction, and by going up its south side 2 miles I saw it turned to the north^d 8 or 10 miles farther on — of course I did not see the end of it but my nephew, who was a mile or 2 higher up than me thought he did at any rate by the appearance of the ice at its mouth it was not navigable for a ship as the field of ice was evidently aground all the way across and here and there the stones had broken through, so that I am sure it would not do even for our friend Barrow unless he chose to go in a canoe! I confess I was much better pleased that it so turned out than it had been found navigable passage as it made a complete finish of our survey and established beyond a doubt that there is no NW passage to the south^d of Lat. 74°N.

We now proceeded along the northern shore of the inlet and arrived at Fury Beach on the 1st July worn out completely with hunger and fatigue — The preserved meats were unfortunately so much scattered that it was impossible to prevent our hungry crew from getting at them, and in spite of the warning I gave them they suffer'd severely from eating too much, the evil however soon cured itself — I now looked with deep concern at the state of the ice which presented one solid unbroken mass, July arrived and not the least appearance of a thaw! we had not yet had even a shower of rain and the snow on the hills had just begun to melt — it appeared at once probable (to me) that we were doomed to pass our winter here and my first care was to build, or rather construct a house, by making a frame 30 feet by 16 of spars and 8 feet high for walls which were covered by the five main courses of the Fury on this a roof was placed by [couple?] & the usual way and covered with a topsail — and in 3 days we had a comfortable dwelling which I named Somerset House in compliment to Parry who had named the land N Somerset after his native county — Many thought I took too much trouble but the sequel proved the contrary — we next began to repair the boats, make sails for them and prepare provisions, which took all this month but they were ready by the time the ice began to move which was on the 31st and on the 1st of August a lane opening along shore we set out with 3 boats and 6 weeks provisions and the same day reach the ill fated spot where the Fury struck & received her mortal wound exactly 7 years before, and where our boats were now nearly crushed by the ice! — under this precipice we were detained by the ice 6 days after which we reached a place in Lat. 73°.

It now so evident that we have not sufficient provisions & the ice being close to the north^d and open to the south^d I sent Mr. Thoms with a strong party and one boat and he brought us three weeks of everything so that we had now provisions until the 1st of October by which time our fate must be decided, here we were detained until the 26 Aug^t when a strong west^y wind made a lane along the land of open water on the following day we reached Elwing Bay and on the 31 Cape Seppings and on the following day after making a fruitless attempt to cross we pitched on a low point to the south of what Parry has named Leopolds Islands, on the 3^d September I ascended to the top of the mountains about 500 feet high from whence I could scan the whole of Barrows Strait and Lancaster Sound to Cape Marwood and also Regents Inlet which presented one vast solid and unbroken mass of ice just as I had seen it in 1818 on the 31st of August. It was evident that nothing but a very strong gale from North or NW could have any effect on it the space of water along the shore never extended more than 6 miles and when the wind was from the North East or SE it was entirely filled up, in August we had snow almost every day and before we got here

the land was covered as in the middle of winter — our principal dependence was on the equinoxial gales, and my nephew was sanguine until the last while the other party gave up all hopes on the 12th which was the last time anyone could ascend the mountain, and when the ice was still firm & unbroken and after which the frost set in with unusual severity, It was my duty however to persevere as long as I could with safety I was therefore not sorry that there was a party for remaining — Twice when the wind was west^y we went out in the boats to the edge of the pack but found it quite solid and stationary — we waited in vain for equinoxial gales we had in lieu calm weather and it was evident that if we remained longer than the 25th we should have to leave our boats here and walk along shore to Fury Beach a distance of 80 miles which without sledges would be impossible at this season of the year with only a weeks provisions as we could not carry the lame man or tents to defend us from the weather for the snow was now not hard enough for us to burrow under it — fortunately for us a westerly breeze opened a small lane on the 25th and on the following day we reached Elwin Bay — and by cutting through bay ice & taking advantage of the tides we reached Batty Bay on the 1st of Oct. we had still 5 days provisions for we had killed a number of foxes & ptarmigan which went to make our store last longer — I should have been glad to have got our boats about 10 miles nearer our store but everything was now frozen up and we were obliged to haul them up on the south side of the bay and after constructing 3 *bad* sledges from the staves of casks which contained our bread we set out with the ther. below Zero. 2 days it blew strong and the snow was so heavy that we could not stir out of our wretched tents & it was the 7th of October before we reach Fury Beach, we had scarcely got snug into a dwelling before a snow storm came in which none of us could have existed 4 hours had we been caught in it, and those who thought lightly of *my Somerset House* were glad of it, bad as it is for a habitation, as we had been obliged to carry the lame man and the things of those who were unable to carry them we had left ½ of our things the first day finding we were unable to draw them without the proper sledges, when the gale abated my nephew went with 2 sledges, and in 5 *good* days brought the remainder — which consisted of a stove cooking things, & our 2^d suit.

As soon as we had more snow we began to build a snow wall round and touching the outside of our house, but owing to the badness of the weather the walls were not completed until the end of November, these were 7 feet thick, we then covered the roof with ropes & over them 3 feet of snow, — we now melted snow and saturated both walls & roof completely they immediately took the consistency of ice and effectually kept out the wind but when the Ther. is below 40° it is still miserably cold, — thus we have become literally the inhabitants of an Iceberg! — We keep fires constantly on and having constructed an oven we bake excellent bread and have plenty of flour, sugar, pease & preserved soups, but being short of meat we can only allow a pound a week served out Thursday and Sundays, but we have caught above a score of foxes in the traps, and as yet we have had a roasted fox every Sunday and on Xmas day we had an *Excellent* one, but we have had nothing but water to drink since we left the Victory — our men have all pretty well recovered from their fatigues and frost bites, excepting Mr. Thomas the carpenter, who I am sorry to say is in a very dangerous state, & there are no hopes of his recovery the lime juice which we found plenty of here having lost its antiscorbutic quality — and being a man advanced in life and had lived very hard his constitution

was quite broken, and he is now to much reduced to hold out long, he will be a great loss to us as he was a most excellent workman, and the 2 others we have are but very inferior, I shall now conclude for this year, you will excuse the bad writing for my fingers are very cold and ink has frozen several times — where I shall conclude this sheet God only knows!

— — — — —

Chimham Thomas, the carpenter, died at the end of April, bringing the total number of deaths on the expedition to three. The expedition members left Fury Beach in July of that year, travelled to Port Leopold on the northeast corner of Somerset Island, made their way by boat across Prince Regent Inlet and were eventually picked up by the whaler *Isabella*, by coincidence the very ship that Ross had commanded during his voyage of 1818 in search of a Northwest Passage. Ross finally arrived in London on October 19 and on the 21st presented the letter to Beaufort.

NOTE ADDED BY BEAUFORT TO THE END OF THE LETTER

Letter from Capt Ross to Capt Beaufort from Greenland 1829

This letter was delivered to me by the writer Captⁿ. Ross on the 21st of October 1833. — It is very interesting from being the unstudied picture of his feelings at different periods of his trying and extraordinary voyage, and affords abundant proof, of what may be effected by resolution, perseverance and unanimity, — still more — as Captⁿ. Ross himself says in his public letter, — of the gracious interposition of Providence in crowning his humble efforts with success and safety.

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NOTES

¹The “untowards” is in reference to the mutiny of the crew members of the whaler *John* at Loch Ryan in June 1829. The *John* had been purchased by Ross to accompany the *Victory* as a supply vessel as far as Prince Regent Inlet, after which she would take away the provisions left at Fury Beach by Parry in 1825 and “fish” or whale on her return journey, in order to recompense Felix Booth. As a result of the mutiny, however, Ross lost the services of the *John*, and the *Victory* sailed alone to Prince Regent Inlet with only the *Krusenstern* in tow (Ross, 1835:6, 22-29). As circumstances proved, however, Ross was indeed fortunate that neither the *John* nor any other vessel took away the provisions from Fury Beach.

²Creswell Bay was discovered by Parry in 1825 and named after a friend, Francis Cresswell (Parry, 1826:140). Ross dropped the second “s” in this letter as well as in his published narrative. While both spellings were in use during the 19th century (see, for example, the various reports in the Arctic Blue Books), current Canada N.T.S. maps show the single “s” spelling.

³This is Brentford Bay at the east entrance to Bellot Strait, which separates Somerset Island from Boothia Peninsula. Although Ross appears definite in his conclusions regarding continuous land at the head of Brentford Bay in both

this letter and his published narrative, there is evidence to suggest that he initially recognized it as a potential strait and that, but for his experience with the Croker Mountains and wanting to avoid the accusation of "over-reacting," he would not have been as positive in his dismissal of the potential of the bay (Savelle and Holland, 1987).

⁴As noted by Ross in his published narrative (1835:182), the *Victory's* engine was dismantled and much of it left on shore at Felix Harbour. Subsequent utilization of this and, later, abandoned material (including the *Victory* and *Krusenstern*) by Netsilik Inuit has been well documented (Gibson, 1929; Rasmussen, 1931), and the materials still remaining at Felix Harbour are discussed in Savelle, 1985.

⁵Sheriff's Harbour as described and illustrated by Ross is not the harbour identified as Sheriff Harbour on current Canada N.T.S. maps, where it is shown southwest of Cape Hendon. Ross's Sheriff's Harbour is immediately north of Cape Hendon and forms the southwest corner of the entrance to Thom Bay (see also Savelle, 1987).

⁶In Ross's original unpublished journal and in his published narrative (1835:249) the village is stated as consisting of 12 snow dwellings (Ross's watercolour painting of the village is given in Fig. 7).

⁷This was Tulluahi (see Fig. 8). Several items of a hunting kit from a grave beside which was lying the wooden leg were brought to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Spence Bay in April 1950 (Learmonth, 1950:127).

⁸Ross changed the name from Victory Harbour to Victoria Harbour in his published narrative in honour of Princess Victoria.

⁹Ross did indeed adjust this figure in his published narrative: ". . . I learned that they had taken 3378 fish at one haul" (1835:583).

¹⁰The *Victory*, *Krusenstern* and the landed stores were located by Inuit shortly after, and after having remained in the harbour for at least one further year, the *Victory* apparently drifted free (Gibson, 1929).

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