

SOUTH POLE ODYSSEY: SELECTIONS FROM THE ANTARCTIC DIARIES OF EDWARD WILSON. By HARRY KING. Dorset: Blandford Press (Link House, Weat Street, Poole), 1982. 176 p. incl. epilogue, biographical notes, index. £3.95.

Harry King of the Scott Polar Research Institute has edited a small volume entitled *South Pole Odyssey* which brings to print selections from the Antarctic diaries of Dr. Edward Wilson. Published by Blandford Press in the U.K., this collection offers a unique appendage to polar literature, especially that written about the Scott expeditions of 1901-1904 and 1910-1913.

What concerns me is that such a volume, as edited here, may become the exclusive property of polar historians and those few others interested in polar literature. The diaries of a man such as Wilson deserve a prominent place in the literature of the day, not only because he was a prominent member of a famous national expedition but rather because he displayed a combination of qualities so rare in one person: he became an inspiration to all who knew him. I would like to think that some editor would feel moved to present these diaries in a form that would appeal to the largest possible audience, and that would be required reading in schools.

I say this thinking of what Lansing made of the boat journey of Shackleton, which resulted in the best-selling story "Endurance". I have the feeling that the same treatment could be given those endeavours in which Wilson played so prominent a part.

Edward Wilson served under Scott on both the *Discovery* and the *Terra Nova* expeditions. He was one of the three men who made a sled journey in midwinter to collect the eggs of Emperor penguins (the story, written by Apsley Cherry-Garrard, was called "The Worst Journey in the World"). Wilson was scientist, doctor, zoologist, artist, and perhaps above all, a great expedition companion. He was a man of great sensitivity and understanding and became the confidant of many expedition members, who often referred to him as "Uncle Bill".

The manner in which Wilson expresses himself, his attention to detail (listing each item of clothing, for example), and his comments and little embellishments give the reader a unique opportunity to understand what a polar journey really means in terms of daily routine, physical effort, the tedium of man-hauling sleds and the discomforts imposed by terrain and an inhospitable climate. On the other hand, aided by Wilson's excellent sketches and paintings, we catch a glimpse of the inspiring beauty of the polar landscape and are able to comprehend the very special relationships that develop between party members.

While the British explorers of that time lacked the skills of the Norwegians as polar travellers, they made up for it by sheer, indomitable courage and determination. Many mistakes were made, particularly in relation to a lack of understanding of the value of dogteams and a reliance on alternative and at best experimental means of transport. What does come through loud and clear is the calibre of these men in terms of personal integrity and endeavour, and physical and mental achievement. We must all be the richer for the inspiration the entries afford, and certainly grateful for the meticulous sketches and watercolours depicting the Antarctic scene.

Someone, please expand these diaries in such a way that all may benefit by the reading.

Monty Alford
2 Kluhini Crescent
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada
Y1A 3P3

MANUSCRIPTS IN THE SCOTT POLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND. A CATALOGUE. Edited by CLIVE HOLLAND. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982. ISBN 0-8240-9394-1. 815 p. US\$100.00.

The value of any archival collection is only as great as the accessibility of its holdings, irrespective of its size. For many years, indeed decades, the manuscript collection of the Scott Polar Institute has been generally recognized as one of the best, possibly *the* best, in the world in terms of polar history. By the publication of this catalogue, Clive Holland has emphatically confirmed this stature and at a stroke has increased the value of the collection tenfold by vastly increasing its accessibility.

The catalogue contains approximately 5750 entries, listed alphabetically usually by author, and represents primarily a record of British polar exploration and research. Understandably the bulk of the material is in English. The collection has two main foci: first, and not surprisingly, the "heroic era" of Antarctic exploration from ca. 1900 to the early 1920s, with a special emphasis on Scott's expeditions; and second, the British search for the Northwest Passage in the 19th century and the closely related search for Franklin. Lady Jane Franklin's journals and correspondence form a notable component of the collection in this area. However, the catalogue also lists a wealth of manuscript material from many other periods and areas, ranging from 1766 to 1976.

Not all of the materials listed are held at the Scott Polar Research Institute. Some are held in other repositories, including such better-known ones as the Stefansson Collection at Dartmouth College and the Center for Polar Archives in Washington, D.C., but also ranging from the Glenbow Foundation in Calgary to the Town Docks Museum in Hull, England; from Broughty Castle Museum, Dundee to the Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart; and from the Public Archives of Manitoba to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. If one were to isolate one minor weakness, and it is no more than that, it is that there is no explanation of how these items held in other collections were selected for inclusion. Clearly this is not a complete catalogue of all the polar holdings of any of these repositories. And one wonders why such an indispensable polar collection as the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg does not appear to be represented. As a further search tool, chronological indices of expeditions and of whaling and sealing voyages in both the Arctic and the Antarctic are appended.

We already owe Clive Holland a very great debt for his contribution to that invaluable research tool (co-authored with Dr. Alan Cooke), *The Exploration of Northern Canada: A Chronology, 820-1920* (Toronto: Arctic History Press, 1980). By the painstaking effort he has invested in this catalogue of the Scott Polar Institute's manuscript collection, of which he is curator, he has placed us even further in his debt. Henceforth no serious scholar will tackle any research project concerning Britain's role in the exploration of either of the polar zones without first consulting this catalogue.

William Barr
Department of Geography
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
S7N 0W0