

FOREWORD

Lincoln Ellsworth, whose photograph appears as our frontispiece, was a traveller of the first rank. An obituary notice appears elsewhere in this issue. Here we simply pay tribute at the passing of a distinguished citizen of the United States of America. Ellsworth was in the forefront of the development of exploratory air travel in polar regions: by his courage, by his curiosity to see what had never been seen, and by the fortunate chance of personal affluence, he succeeded in demonstrating the use of aircraft in arctic and antarctic exploration.

We welcome the quickening of the British North Greenland Expedition which is to explore Dronning Louises Land in north-east Greenland. The initiative for this enterprise comes from a small group of naval officers, led by Commander (L) C. J. W. Simpson, D.S.C., R.N., under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth. The expedition is being organized in co-operation with the Admiralty, the Royal Geographical Society, the Scott Polar Research Institute, the Royal Society, the Air Ministry and the War Office.

A first contribution of £1000 has been given by the vice-patron, the Right Honourable Winston Churchill, out of the Sonning prize recently awarded to him in Denmark for furthering Anglo-Danish scientific interests. The expedition, which will winter in Dronning Louises Land, is to do glaciological, geological and meteorological work and make a topographical survey.

The rapid progress of technique and knowledge in particular fields of research makes many feel that a 25-year span since the Second International Polar Year of 1932-33 is sufficient prelude for its successor. The Third International Polar Year has appeared in its embryo stage: plans are afoot for field work in 1957-58. Its success will be assured if research workers now begin to consider the possibilities of this third venture in wide international co-operation for the advance of polar studies, and to reflect upon the lessons which can be learnt from its precursors.

We welcome the birth of the vigorous New Zealand Antarctic Society which, phoenix-like, succeeds the older society of a past decade. To it, and to the newly formed Icelandic Glaciological Society, we wish success and offer our full co-operation.

The publication, in August 1951, of *Portrait of Jane. A life of Lady Franklin* (London, Hodder and Stoughton), by Frances J. Woodward, marks another stage in the history of the Scott Polar Research Institute. Since its foundation one of the aims of the Institute has been to collect and preserve the raw materials of polar history and eventually to make them available for research purposes. This biography of the widow of the discoverer of the North-West Passage is based on a study of some 200 private journals and nearly 2000 letters bequeathed to the Institute by Miss Jessie Lefroy in 1941. Miss Woodward

has now provided not only a picture of a very lively personality, but an understanding of the Franklin Search, one of the greatest episodes in British polar exploration, as it appeared to a wife and widow, waiting and planning and finally triumphing, at home. In so doing, Miss Woodward has also thrown much light on the individual attitudes and characters of many of the most prominent "Arcticists" of the period.

In historical studies, the motives which have inspired any activity are often as interesting as the resulting achievements. Failure, indeed, may have a greater significance than success. The published narratives of polar expeditions seldom give a true picture of what really happened: they are rather a version upon which men have agreed, or the interpretation which an individual author considers correct or wishes to advocate. Convention has frequently demanded that unpalatable truth should be suppressed, but the results of this attitude need not persist for ever. Historical research aims at a synthesis of conflicting opinions, by turning to the original documents.

The Scott Polar Research Institute possesses an ever-growing collection of manuscripts. It is now possible to attempt evaluation of some of the nineteenth-century archives, for most events which occurred before 1900 no longer arouse personal animosities or controversy. An editorial note of this kind should not fail to emphasize the value of these archives. We take this opportunity to appeal to readers of the *Polar Record* for help in the task of locating and preserving such records. The Institute provides facilities for preserving contemporary confidential manuscripts as well as those which can suitably be made public.

The discerning reader will long have realized that the minor expeditions from the United Kingdom whose summer efforts are so briefly, and yet so regularly, recorded in the pages of the *Polar Record* must have some special significance. The historian recognizes that they have an importance which often transcends their apparent scientific results. An island race thrives in proportion to the vigour of its people and their knowledge of distant lands: it depends upon readiness to undertake new ventures, to discover for oneself, and to run certain risks. This requires the development of youthful initiative, curiosity and boldness in innumerable fields. The Arctic is such a field, and has the immense advantage that it is not too distant for exploitation during the long vacations of British universities. Small expeditions, at first only from Cambridge and Oxford, but later from other universities as well, have annually visited northern Scandinavia, Iceland, Svalbard, Greenland, and occasionally even North America, in the inter-war years, and again since 1945. These expeditions have given experience to the young, stature to the scientist, and satisfaction and some understanding to all participants.

Here is a process and a tradition which have amply proved their worth over 80 years, both in peace and in war, and which must be encouraged by this Institute. Others, however, do not see these minor expeditions in this light and, in our view, lay too great a stress on particular aspects of particular expeditions, so failing to regard the whole in perspective. Some would prefer

a greater proportion of the small funds available to be given to scientists of proved rather than potential worth. Some would favour a more regulated and stricter system of apprenticeship, the young and enthusiastic student being attached to and disciplined by the older research worker and leader: our Scandinavian friends are largely of this opinion. Others again would prefer to see all prospective expeditions pass through a standard administrative machine, so hoping that some kind of official sanction, or at least priority of worth, might emerge: dare we mention here University Exploration Societies? It is further argued that this systematization would be of great advantage to those diverse financial bodies and industrial firms which have been so generous through the years. Still others lay special stress on complete freedom of action, judging that the struggle for funds, the need for enthusiasm and ingenuity, the very organization of an expedition in its practical details, are of worth in themselves even if the venture at the last is abortive.

The Scott Polar Research Institute appreciates these varied views, but feels that each demonstrates but a partial understanding of the problem. Often, it is true, the novice has much to gain from closer or more regular contact in the field with a senior man of wider experience, and this needs fuller recognition. But sometimes there is ultimate loss, for first love in research, as in affection of the heart, may not prosper under supervision. Admittedly too it may be demonstrated that tenuous funds have, on occasion, been ill-divided between applicants; that a worthy competitor has been stinted while a lesser has received the lion's share. The theoretical convenience of centralization, of joint consideration, of an advisory committee assessing relative worth in advance, and of dividing available finances accordingly, are very clear to some. Others having, we believe, a better perspective, treasure above all freedom of enterprise in these matters. They claim that the proof of their contentions is clear for all to see in the subsequent careers of so many whose earliest work lay with university expeditions. Further there is in fact already more assortment and assessment of the embryo small expeditions than is often realized: those who are in a position to help, with finance or advice, have their own standards built on experience, and there is comparison by discussion and correspondence. The system must remain elastic if the exceptional is to have its chance to flourish.

Being financed for the furtherance of research in the polar regions, through the accumulation of knowledge rather than by paid participation in the field, the Scott Polar Research Institute encourages and advises before the work begins, and welcomes and helps those whose field work has been completed. The Institute also endeavours to teach perspective and to ensure the proper recording and availability of knowledge. It rebuffs those who would use it as a travel agency, but, conscious of the virtue of developing the individual as well as furthering research, helps by loans of instruments and equipment from the Gino Watkins Fund those who have the vigour to help themselves. It is only regretted that funds are not available for the direct execution of work in the field as well as for its stimulation.

G. C. L. B.

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