

RUBBER BULLETS FOR BEARS

Increasing human activity in Canada's Northwest Territories has resulted in increasing numbers of interactions with bears; numbers of 'nuisance' Polar bears killed to protect human life rose from 16 in 1978/79 to 42 in 1981/82. In an effort to avoid further killings a combined government and industrial deterrent programme has been developed, using microwave detection units to indicate the presence of bears, and 38 mm riot guns to scare them away. In tests carried out at Cape Churchill, Manitoba, where bears gather in autumn, they were attracted to lures of seal meat and whale oil, and fired on by marksmen, usually from a steel protective cage. Some 250 bears hit by rubber bullets are reported to have run from the baits; the experiment is judged successful. (Source: *NWT Wildlife Notes*, 8 (March): 1-3, 1983).

RECORD ANTARCTIC LOW TEMPERATURE

The lowest air temperature recorded at the earth's surface has hitherto been -88.3°C , measured at the Soviet Antarctic station Vostok on 24 August 1960. This station has now broken its own record with a temperature of -89.2°C on 21 July 1983. (Source: *Vodnyy Transport*, 26 July: 4, 1983).

Obituary

WILLIAM LAIRD MCKINLAY, last-known survivor of the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-14, died on 9 May 1983, aged 94. A native of Clydeside and graduate of the University of Glasgow, McKinlay was a mathematics teacher when, on 23 April 1913, he received a telegram from Vilhjalmur Stefansson inviting him to join an expedition to explore the coasts of Canada and Alaska. The post offered, unpaid, was that of meteorologist and magnetician. McKinlay had not previously travelled from Scotland; his only contact with the polar world had been to help W. S. Bruce in working up the results of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, and it was Bruce who had recommended him to Stefansson.

McKinlay accepted, despite near-complete ignorance of the area and of what was expected of him, and within a few days he was on board the *Grampian* heading for Canada to join the ill fated expedition. Even without hindsight, little care seems to have been taken in the selection of scientific staff or crew. Mackay the doctor and Murray the oceanographer (who were both to die on the expedition) had been to the Antarctic with Shackleton, while Bob Bartlett, who command the expedition vessel, had sailed with Peary on his Arctic voyages. Most of the remainder had little or no experience of what was in store. The main expedition vessel too left much to be desired. *Karluk* was over 20 years old and not designed for polar seas. According to Bartlett 'she had neither the strength to sustain pressure or the engine power to force her way through the ice'. The expedition sailed in June 1913 and by August the vessel was in difficulties in pack ice; *Karluk* eventually became stuck, drifted, and was crushed. Stefansson left on a hunting trip and did not return. In the meantime Bartlett led the survivors of the expedition over the ice to Ostrova Vrangelya (Wrangel Island) off the north Siberian coast: from there he travelled 700 miles to get help, and in September 1914 the survivors were relieved.

Two books about the expedition were published soon after it returned. Stefansson's *The friendly Arctic* (1921, London, Macmillan) gave a mainly second-hand account of

what happened as he saw it, including much criticism of those involved, in particular Bartlett. Bartlett himself wrote an account of the affair, including his journey for help (R. A. Bartlett, and R. T. Hale, *Northward Ho!*, 1919, Boston, Small, Maynard). McKinlay felt very bitter about the disaster, blaming Stefansson and doubting his ability to lead such an expedition, which itself was ill conceived and badly planned. Over the succeeding years McKinlay became determined to 'set the record straight'. Throughout the whole expedition he had kept a diary, the only record of what happened during all those months on Wrangel Island. Thanks to pressure from friends, McKinlay was persuaded to publish his account. His book *Karluk* gives a clear account of the venture, and although written 60 years after the expedition, and with hindsight, its graphic descriptions are the only first-hand account of the harrowing months of isolation. Despite his criticism of Stefansson's handling of the expedition he is not bitter about the man's achievements; 'I do not wish to detract in any way from the achievements of Vilhjalmur Stefansson,' he writes, 'but to put the record straight. I owe that to the memory of my dead comrades, and to Captain Robert Bartlett, who saved my life.'

On his return to civilisation he served as an officer in France with the 51st Highland Division. In 1917 he was wounded and returned home to take up once again his career as a school-teacher, retiring as head master in Port Glasgow. During his teaching career he played an important part in the development of outdoor education. McKinlay saw this as a real need, especially for school-children in the industrial areas.

Just before his death he recorded a programme for BBC Radio Scotland describing his feelings in the Canadian expedition, which gave a good insight into McKinlay himself. With his death another link with the polar exploration of the early part of the century has been lost; however, his writing has told a graphic story of hardship and endurance which in its own right can stand beside other polar classics.

J. Conroy

Dr WILLIAM WILSON INGRAM, MC, MD died in Sydney, Australia on 25 November 1982, aged 93. Born in Scotland in 1888, Ingram qualified in medicine in 1912 and served with distinction in World War 1. In 1920 he moved to Sydney where he practiced medicine, and from 1929–31 was medical officer to the British, Australian, New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition under Sir Douglas Mawson.