

Reviews

VOYAGES IN SEARCH OF A NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1741–1747; VOLUME II: THE VOYAGE OF WILLIAM MOOR AND FRANCIS SMITH 1746–1747. William Barr and Glyndwr Williams (Editors). 1995. London: Hakluyt Society (Second series 181). xv + 393 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-904180-41-7. £30.00.

In March of 1744, less than two years after the return of Captain Christopher Middleton's unsuccessful, Admiralty-sponsored voyage to Hudson Bay in search of a Northwest Passage, the Irish MP and promoter Arthur Dobbs once again petitioned King George II 'to give Orders for preparing two proper Vessels to proceed upon the Discovery of a Passage through Hudson's Bay to the Western American Ocean which is so near being brought to perfection....' Dobbs' petition came amidst his long, drawn-out pamphlet war with Middleton, whom he accused of being in the pay of the Hudson's Bay Company, encouraging the King to support this latest endeavour 'least other Nations, who must soon be acquainted with the certainty of a Passage should anticipate Britain and claim a Right to the Commerce by making the Discovery and possessing those Countrys.' Volume I of *Voyages in search of a Northwest Passage* described the Middleton expedition of 1741–1742, as well as the controversy that followed its failure to locate a passage along the northwest coast of Hudson Bay. Volume II, *The voyage of William Moor and Francis Smith 1746–1747*, also edited by William Barr and Glyndwr Williams, turns to the Dobbs-sponsored second expedition and covers the exploits of Moor and Smith as they searched the bays and inlets of the same region.

Failing his attempt to secure royal support for the Moor and Smith expedition (although successfully convincing the British government to offer £20,000 as a reward for the discovery of a Northwest Passage), Dobbs turned to private subscribers and a group of merchants known as 'the North West Committee.' Once again, however, his hopes for the discovery of a passage were dashed. Quarrelsome captains of perhaps dubious ability, competing agendas, and the usual problems of bad weather and scurvy (coupled, of course, with the fact that no passage existed in the Hudson Bay region) doomed the expedition to failure. And it was an expensive failure; the £10,000 cost of the voyage was some £1500 more than the amount raised by Dobbs' subscribers. Like the Middleton voyage, the failure of the Moor and Smith expedition resulted in recriminations and accusations among the North West Committee sponsors, the expedition captains, and the chroniclers of the voyage, who accompanied the two ships to Hudson Bay. This time, however, Dobbs concentrated his attack upon the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in the region, accusing the secretive fur-trade con-

cern of frustrating all attempts to discover a passage, while impeding the development of British commerce in Hudson Bay and its vast watershed. Having the 1670 charter of the HBC revoked by Parliament had become something of a *cause célèbre* for Dobbs and one that consumed almost all his energies. The aftermath of the Moor and Smith voyage led directly to the 1749 Parliamentary enquiry into the Company's monopoly, perhaps the most serious challenge to its 1670 royal charter ever endured by the 'Company of Adventurers.'

With a format similar to that of the first volume in this series, *The voyage of William Moor and Francis Smith 1746–1747* is largely comprised of a series of documents relating to the expedition. These include extracts from royal petitions, correspondence, ships' logs and published accounts from the period, primarily the narratives of Henry Ellis, T.S. Drage (the 'Clerk of the *California*'), as well as excerpts from James Isham's *Observations on Hudson's Bay*, first published in 1949. Introductory remarks accompany each of the book's sections, along with detailed annotations on sources, personalities, and geographical locations. The text is organized according to three distinct segments: 'Preliminaries of the voyage,' 'The voyage,' and 'Aftermath.' In the first section the editors have reprinted, among other extracts relating to Dobbs' efforts to secure financial support for the expedition, an account of the strange voyage of Bartholomew de Fonte, the 'Vice-admiral of Peru and Mexico,' whose seventeenth-century voyage, according to Dobbs, demonstrated the existence of a navigable passage between Hudson Bay and California. The 'Fonte Letter,' however, was clearly a hoax and had more to do with the then-fashionable literary genre of apocryphal voyages and speculative geography (in the tradition of Defoe and Swift) than with documented exploration. Documents relating to Section 2, which deal with the actual voyage of *California* and *Dobbs Galley*, are subdivided in the text by the titles 'Outward bound,' 'Wintering at York,' and 'On discovery.' The account of the expedition's stay near York Factory at the mouth of the Hayes River comprises one of the longest and most interesting sections of the book and provides detailed information on the considerable tensions that existed between the captains of the two ships, as well as the reaction to their quarrelling of James Isham, the newly arrived HBC factor at York. Moor and Smith wintered at York between August 1746 and June 1747 and constructed temporary quarters at Ten Shilling Creek on the south bank of the Hayes River a few miles upstream from the factory. Throughout the long, cold months of boredom and scurvy, Isham did his best to supply the men of the discovery ships with Indian hunters and fresh game, interceding on a regular basis in the sometimes dangerous

disagreements between Moor and Smith over access to supplies and provisions. The documents chosen by the editors to illustrate this unhappy wintering relate a sad tale — the journal accounts of Isham, Smith, the ‘Clerk of the *California*,’ and Henry Ellis are laced with petty jealousies, accusations of theft and preferential treatment, and even the sniff of a murderous conspiracy. Weakened by scurvy and squabbling, the crews of *California* and *Dobbs Galley* finally sailed from York Factory in the spring of 1747 to continue their explorations along the northwest coast of Hudson Bay. Little was accomplished during the next few months as the discoverers explored Wager Bay (a narrow body of water that Dobbs had accused Middleton of failing to adequately investigate), examined portions of Rankin and Chesterfield Inlets, and measured tides off Roes Welcome Sound. The friction between Moor and Smith resulted in the lack of any coordinated plan for the expedition, and the documents show *California* and *Dobbs Galley* operating almost independently during much of the voyage along the Hudson Bay coast north of the Churchill River. By the middle of August 1747, the discoverers sailed for home, entering Hudson Strait by the end of the month and reaching the Orkney Islands near the end of September.

Frustrated again in his search for a navigable passage, Dobbs blamed ‘the Timidity, ill Conduct, or bad Inclinations of some of the Commanders and Council’ of the Moor and Smith expedition and launched his campaign for a Parliamentary review of the HBC charter. An enquiry was convened in 1749 and heard evidence from a number of quarters. The Company maintained that no passage existed within its coastal territories and argued that any further investigation represented a waste of time and money. Dobbs’ petition was eventually defeated in the House of Commons by a margin of more than two to one, the government’s verdict effectively putting an end to privately financed expeditions in search of a Northwest Passage through Hudson Bay. If the expedition of Moor and Smith added little to the geographical knowledge of northwestern Hudson Bay, however, the publicity that Dobbs and others brought to the search for a passage increased interest in the Canadian sub-Arctic as well as the workings of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

In *The voyage of William Moor and Francis Smith 1746–1747*, Barr and Williams have organized a disparate, and often contradictory, collection of documents into an effective narrative of flawed exploration. These accounts contain the seeds of the expedition’s failure, laying bare the rival agendas, poor planning, and personality clashes that marked both the voyage and its aftermath. Short introductory segments, along with a judicious use of footnotes and two short appendices, provide context for the documents and help the reader piece together the story of the expedition. Although the voyage of *California* and *Dobbs Galley* added little to the eighteenth-century quest for a navigable passage to the Pacific, *The voyage of William Moor and Francis Smith 1746–1747*, together with Volume I of the series, which deals with the voyage

of Christopher Middleton, succeeds in providing interesting insights into British perceptions of western Hudson Bay and its hinterland. (Robert Coutts, Parks Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3E8, Canada.)

THE SCHIRMACHER OASIS, QUEEN MAUD LAND, EAST ANTARCTICA, AND ITS SURROUNDINGS. Peter Bormann and Diedrich Fritzsche (Editors). 1996. Gotha: Justus Perthes Verlag. 448 p + 8 annexes in separate volume, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 3-623-00760-9. DM128.00.

This book represents the research efforts of scientists from the former German Democratic Republic, who collaborated with their colleagues in the Antarctic Programme of the USSR between 1976 and 1989 in the Schirmacher Oasis and its surroundings. Its major value lies in the fact that it is the most complete summary of the work done that is likely to be available at any time. In many ways, it also reflects the history of the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. After unification, this group of researchers was transferred to other institutes and organizations, mainly in the ‘new,’ unified Germany, and it is likely that much of the information in *The Schirmacher Oasis* would have been lost if this monograph had not been published. Considering the difficulties these changes presented, the editors have to be commended for bringing together and publishing years of research work in this format.

The Schirmacher Oasis consists of 10 chapters, with numerous subdivisions, illustrations, maps and diagrams, and a separate volume containing maps and colour plates. Chapter 1, ‘The Schirmacher Oasis as a part of Queen Maud Land,’ places the area in its regional setting. It is introduced by background information on Antarctic oases in general and a history of discoveries and research in the region. Much of this is interesting and, although none of it is new, it sets the context in which the research was conducted. The only small criticism I have is that the chapter has been subdivided excessively, which I found rather irritating. An example is ‘Geophysical investigations,’ which is identified as section 1.3.2.1.3.2. The rest of the chapters are reports of investigations within a number of scientific disciplines. Each of these chapters has a brief introduction that includes the rationale for doing the specific type of research in the Antarctic, and a useful outline, in relatively simple terms, of the research that has been carried out. The remainder of each chapter consists of more detailed reports for the specialist.

As an Earth scientist, I was particularly interested in the sections on geology and solid Earth geophysics. The chapter on the geology of the region is the most detailed of the reports in this book. The high-quality photographs are very effective for giving the reader a good concept of the field geology of the region. Unfortunately, some of the diagrams and maps have been reduced to such an extent that they appear cluttered and are difficult to interpret. Although the authors have integrated the geophysical and geological data in their conclusions, the data presented are