

Correspondence

The Husvik–Stromness debate

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One would hope that the juxtaposition of the three notes on Shackleton's South Georgia route (*Polar Record* 28 (166): 233–237) will evoke some helpful responses. I studied Figure 2, the illustration to M.K. Burley's 'Was Shackleton Valley the passageway to Stromness?' with great interest, for it clearly demonstrates the point that I made in my following article, 'Husvik or Stromness? A South Georgia enigma.' This is that the obvious route over from Fortuna Bay is the 'U-shaped entrance' above the figures on the right of the print. This is the col of the valley leading to Husvik, and not the entrance to the, perhaps, questionably named Shackleton Valley.

In late December 1991 I had the pleasure of being able to retrace the route from Husvik to Stromness over the terrain shown in this view in the company of some 20 others. We were able to examine not only the terrain but the various waterfalls in the two valleys. The unanimous consensus of those present was that, taking the published

details and what one might call 'inherent geographical probability' into account, the weight of the evidence is for the Husvik route and station.

The Stromness station is visible from the moment of reaching the col into the Stromness valley (the left-hand V-col in Figure 2), and the only waterfall even remotely of a size to present an obstacle, even to exhausted men, is very far off to the left of the visible line to the whaling station buildings.

It seems clear, however, that the discrepancies are such that it is questionable to what extent reliance can or should be placed on the detail of the topographical descriptions in Shackleton's *South*. This was largely ghosted from Shackleton's notes and conversation, and it is only on matters such as that there actually was a waterfall that we can rely.

There is no doubt that the verbal tradition of surviving whalers supports the Stromness station destination, but an interesting verbal report from Norway suggests that the two young boys met by the party at the outskirts of the whaling station were in fact not whalers but Sørllø's two daughters. It appears that there are still surviving relatives in Norway, and efforts are being made to contact them. However, given the contradictions that exist in the literature, some documentary support is imperative.

In Brief

NEW DIRECTOR FOR SPRI. On 1 December, Dr John A. Heap took up his appointment as Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) — the seventh full-time Director in the Institute's history.

Born in Manchester in 1932, Heap was educated at Leighton Park School in Reading and the University of Edinburgh, where he received his MA in Geography. In 1953 he was the leader of the University of Edinburgh's first-ever undergraduate-initiated expedition, to the Lyngen Peninsula in Norway.

Heap spent seven years conducting sea-ice research for the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (later the British Antarctic Survey), and his resultant thesis, 'Sea ice distribution in Antarctica between longitudes 7° and 92° west from 1898–1962,' was submitted for a PhD at SPRI; he was awarded his doctorate in 1962.

After two years as a research associate at the University of Michigan, Heap was appointed Deputy Head of the Polar Regions Section of the Foreign Office, later renamed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In 1975 he succeeded Dr Brian B. Roberts as Head of the Polar

Regions Section, a position that Heap held until his retirement in 1992. As Head of the Polar Regions Section, he was a member or the leader of UK delegations to all meetings of the Antarctic Treaty. He was also responsible for the FCO policy relating to the Antarctic Treaty system, and specifically for the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Convention for the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

In 1991 Heap was awarded a CMG for his services in the FCO. At SPRI, he succeeded Acting Director Peter Friend, who had held the post for a short period following its relinquishment by Dr Peter Wadhams on his appointment as Reader in Polar Studies. (Sources: University of Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute.)

POLAR MEDALS AWARDED. The following two awards of the Polar Medal were announced in the spring of 1992. Polar Medal: John Patrick Croxall, marine ecologist