

medical aid to isolated communities, and the transport of government officials.

To that extent, this is a book that has long been awaited and that will be read with interest by Alaskan and polar historians. The book starts with a general introduction to Alaska and the service, which dated from 1790, and which was originally founded to enforce customs tariffs. This includes an analysis of the fur-seal problem, which led to the 1911 treaty between the US, the UK, Russia, and Japan. Later chapters cover such topics as the recruitment and employment conditions of the men of the service, and details of the career of *Thetis*, much of which was concerned with the Greely expedition and was before *Thetis* was taken over by the service. There is a chapter on exploration, and in particular the expeditions of J.C. Cantwell, and further chapters covering the efforts of the service in acting on behalf of American scientists and on its role in bringing aid to those in need.

Scattered throughout the book are sections and chapters devoted to the career of Healy, who rejoiced in the sobriquet 'Hell Roaring Mike.' There is a good deal of political correctness about this, since Healy had a mulatto mother who was a slave. Even though his subordinates and colleagues in the service had no suspicion of this, and indeed his origins were not detected until the 1960s, he is roundly labelled as 'black' in the blurb on the inside of the dust cover, which seems, to this reviewer at any rate, to be a plain usurpation of language. That Healy was a formidable, not to say difficult, character and an excellent navigator emerges clearly from the book, and enough information is presented almost to constitute a short biography. But the authors have deliberately chosen to omit material relating to other topics that are at least as interesting. These include the history of the ship *Bear* and of the overland relief expedition, on the grounds that they have been dealt with adequately elsewhere. The result is that the book is distorted; it would have been far better for the subjects omitted to have been included and then the volume would have had a claim to be a complete coverage of the subject.

A serious omission in the book is a statement of statistics relating to the service. Figures are scattered throughout, but there is no coherent presentation. How many cutters were there at any one time? How many of them visited the northern coast of Alaska? How much revenue and how many fines did they collect? Was this cost-effective? How many fur-seal poachers were intercepted? How many government officials were transported? And so on. This is the sort of material, often included in equivalent books as an appendix, that would enable the reader to gain an impression of the significance of the service as a whole. There is also no comparative element. Beyond a brief statement about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, there is no assessment concerning how effective the service was in comparison with the equivalents in Canada and Russia.

There are a few irritating slips. One was startled to see reference to Roland Amundsen, and the indexing is not as

thorough as it should be. For example, it includes reference to HMS *Osprey* and *Ospry*, with the latter being incorrect, and one of the two substantial notes on the overland relief expedition, on page 118, is not indexed at all.

Happily, and to balance these deficiencies, the book has great strengths. It is very clearly, even entertainingly, written by authors whose enthusiasm for their subject is obvious. This brings an immediacy to their prose that it would be difficult for those with less personal involvement to replicate. They have undertaken a major piece of research and are to be congratulated on their diligence. Readers will gain an appreciation of the work of this largely unsung service completed often in conditions of great difficulty and, besides, will have a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

As seems to be the case in all the publications of the Naval Institute Press, this book is very attractively presented. One would advise some other publishers to study their methods. There are many illustrations that are well-selected and convey a good impression of the work of the cutters. There are two maps that are helpful, but one would have wished for more detail to be included, and full source notes and selected bibliography. The binding is a delight.

To sum up: a good narrative account of the work of a very little-known service. It is hoped that a more substantial work, perhaps extended beyond 1915, may be forthcoming in due course. (Ian R. Stone, Laggan Juys, Larivane Close, Andreas, Isle of Man IM7 4HD.)

THE FIFTH MAN: HENRY R. BOWERS. C.H. Lagerbom. 1999. Whitby: Caedmon of Whitby. xii + 239 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-905355-51-2. £18.00.

This new biography of Henry Robertson ('Birdie') Bowers is timely in as much as George Seaver's standard biography was published as long ago as 1938 and is now out of print. A re-evaluation of this indefatigable little Scotsman, linchpin of Captain Scott's last expedition, is therefore to be welcomed. The author, C.H. Lagerbom, a schoolteacher from Belfast, Maine, was inspired to write about Bowers after experiencing something of the rigours of Antarctica while geologizing in the Dry Valleys and visiting the historic huts on Ross Island. The author has made good use of Seaver's 'life,' which contains numerous extracts from Bowers' letters home and his South Pole journal. He also quotes from Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The worst journey in the world*, which, likewise, reproduces extracts from the journal. Other secondary sources listed in the author's bibliography include Scott's own and other expedition narratives, as well as the recently published journals of Charles Wright, Frank Debenham, Trygve Gran, and Edward Wilson. There is no evidence that Lagerbom used the Bowers archive held by the Scott Polar Research Institute.

The opening chapters are concerned with Bowers' early upbringing and career. He was born in Greenock, Scotland, in 1883 and brought up along with two sisters by

his mother, his father, a sea-captain and trader, having died when Bowers was three. Emily Bowers was a deeply God-fearing lady whose religiosity was to be inherited by a son who put his Christian beliefs before all else and invariably carried the Bible in his kit. Both at school and as a cadet on the training ship *Worcester*, his short stature and beaky nose (hence the nickname) made him the potential butt of his fellows. He appears to have taken the banter well, in good part, compensating by exercising and hardening his body (witness the snow baths, taken with Wilson in Antarctica, likewise his ability to withstand extremes of temperature). The family being hard-up, Bowers opted to join the merchant navy, partly to satisfy a love of travel but also to support his mother and sisters. Subsequently he transferred to the Royal Indian Marine, his career in Burma in charge of a gunboat patrolling the Irrawaddy, followed by the pursuit of contraband smugglers in the Gulf of Oman, being well-summarized in this book. It was during this period that Bowers, an avid reader, became thrilled by Scott's *The voyage of the Discovery* and learned of Shackleton's attempt on the South Pole. Seizing upon an opportunity to widen his experience, he applied to join Scott's forthcoming British Antarctic Expedition and was accepted without interview, sight unseen. It is stated that Scott at first was 'taken aback' by Bowers' somewhat unprepossessing appearance, but any doubts as to his abilities were dispensed during the course of the long journey south on *Terra Nova*, on which Bowers displayed his talents at store-keeping and seamanship. These sterling qualities were soon to bring him to the attention of Scott, who promoted him from the ship's party to the shore party. Shortly before leaving New Zealand, Bowers demonstrated his powers of diplomacy, intervening in a battle between Kathleen Scott and her rival, Hilda Evans, regarding the latter's husband, Lieutenant Teddy Evans, and thereby helping to save the expedition from being aborted.

Further chapters that follow the fortunes of the expedition after leaving Port Chalmers cover the near sinking of the ship in a severe gale, in which Bowers displayed his customary *sang froid*, standing on the bridge alongside Scott and taking the wheel. Again we read of his organizational skills, supervising the unloading of the vessel at Cape Evans and seeing that a vast mountain of stores was safely ferried to the shore. The accidental sinking of one of three motor-sledges was due to a miscalculation by Scott. There follow a number of chapters covering the events preceding the departure of the Pole party on 1 November 1911. Bowers' part on the sledge journey to One Ton Depot is well-known. On it he proved himself a competent handler of ponies and a tough puller of sledges, leading Scott to describe him as 'a positive wonder. I never met such a sledge traveller.' Bowers' reaction to the news of Amundsen's presence at the Bay of Whales is not recorded. An ingrained distrust of foreigners would perhaps have been counterbalanced by his sense of fair play. Further talents were to reveal themselves during the long, dark winter months spent in the hut at Cape

Evans, where he was busily employed in working on rations for the Pole party, helping the scientists with their work, contributing poetry to *The South Polar Times*, and generally succeeding in keeping up morale with his unflinching cheerfulness. A whole chapter is devoted to the famous winter journey to Cape Crozier undertaken by Bowers, Cherry-Garrard, and Wilson to collect samples of the eggs of the emperor penguin, carried out in almost total darkness and in record low temperatures. The fact that they succeeded was almost entirely due to Bowers' inexhaustible stamina and capacity to survive.

Finally the author follows Bowers as he accompanied the fateful trek to the Pole and the return to the Ice Barrier, which culminated in the deaths of P.O. Evans, Captain Oates, and, finally, only 11 miles from One Ton Depot, Wilson, Scott, and lastly, according to hard evidence, Bowers himself. In his journal of these events, Bowers has no criticism to make of Scott's decisions. His interpretation of his own selection by Scott as the fifth member of the party planned for four is that Scott chose Wilson for England, Evans for Wales, Oates for Ireland, and Bowers for Scotland. Once at the Pole, confronted by Amundsen's priority there, Bowers, eschewing melodramatics, simply states in his journal that he is sad that they have been forestalled by the Norwegians, and that 'I am glad that we have done it by good British manhaulage.' Bowers has nothing of substance to say of the deaths of Evans and Oates, only in a last letter does he mention them by name.

In his final chapters the author is much concerned to lay the full blame for the catastrophe on Scott. Criticism there must be, but Lagerbom is apeing the iconoclasts when he accuses Scott of deliberately writing his journal with one eye on public opinion, attributing misfortunes to bad luck and the weather. And to suggest, as he does, that Scott privily doctored his companions' drinks with opium so that all three might die together stretches the imagination to the breaking point.

The concluding chapter deals largely and in a similar vein with the making of heroes touching on the sanctification of the British 'hero' at the expense of the Norwegian 'villain,' none of which has much to do with the subject matter. On the whole this is a useful life of Bowers, but much more work on original sources needs to be done before we can expect something more definitive. (Harry King, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

PALAEO-ESKIMO SETTLEMENTS IN SCORESBY SUND, NORTHEAST GREENLAND. Hanne Tuborg and Birge Sandell. 1999. Copenhagen: Danish Polar Center. 149 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 87-90369-35-1.

The authors of this volume are no strangers to the archaeology of the Scoresby Sund fjord region. This survey of Palaeo-Eskimo settlements significantly enlarges the database primarily recorded in *The Palaeo-Eskimo cultures of Greenland* (Grønnow 1996), which had been preceded by a report on the archaeology of the last Thule