

transferred their energies to handicrafts production for cash once it was not necessary to keep cattle.

Circumpolar lives and livelihood is a significant contribution to the growing literature about circumpolar peoples that has been made possible by the end of the Cold War. (Pamela Stern, Centre for Sustainable Community Development, East Academic Annex 2100, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6, Canada.)

ROBERT AND FRANCES FLAHERTY: A DOCUMENTARY LIFE, 1883–1922. Robert J. Christopher. 2005. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. xxiv + 453 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7735-2876-8. \$Can44.95; \$US39.95. doi:10.1017/S0032247407256347

Ask any person with polar interests what they associate with the name Robert Flaherty and the answer will be immediate: *Nanook of the north*. This is the classic film, made in 1922, that chronicles one year in the life of an Inuit family in the Hudson Bay area. When screened, the film has the ability to grip the attention of the viewer and to wring his or her emotions from sadness to hilarity, seemingly within a few seconds, in a way that may be paralleled by no other film. And there is the wonder of how it was made in such difficult circumstances and the skill with which it was done. Cinematography was, in 1922, a technological leap ahead from what it had been in the great days of the heroic expeditions in the south, but, discounting this, many viewers might conclude that Flaherty was even better at his craft than had been Herbert Ponting or Frank Hurley, those two giants of the previous era. An additional point, and one that is fundamental to the film, is that it was made at precisely the time when cinematography had arrived at the level of technological advancement at which it *could* have been made and at which Inuit life *could* be portrayed as it originally was before outside influences became excessively intrusive. As put by the author, the far north was 'in a state of transformation and steep decline from its indigenous ways, while... [cinematography] was in an awkward but nascent ascendancy' (page xiv). They coincided with felicitous results that will endure forever in the canon of great works of the cinema.

But ask the same person what else is associated with the name Robert Flaherty, who he was, and what he did before the making of the film, and you are likely to receive a puzzled smile. For in truth no name so well known to the polar community in general has so few actual facts commonly attached to it, other than the mere four words of the film title.

This book seeks to remedy this deficiency with regard to the period before 1922 when Flaherty leapt into fame on the back of *Nanook of the north*. And it does so not simply by presenting the biography of Flaherty but by employing lengthy extracts from the diaries and other prose writings that he made from 1906 until 1922. The book is, in a sense,

a double biography since the same strategy is adopted with regard to Frances Flaherty, Robert's wife, who was far more than a mere satellite in the filmmaker's career, but a talented person in her own right. She also maintained a diary, and this affords fascinating parallels with the diaries of Flaherty himself.

Flaherty was born in 1884 in Iron Mountain, Michigan, the son of a successful mining engineer, who soon moved to Canada and whose work took him from one mining site to the next, thus preventing the young Flaherty from having a settled home life in one place but giving him a taste for life in remote areas. Flaherty's formal education seems to have been minimal but he did acquire an excellent practical knowledge of geology, mining, and surveying from his father and this stood him in good stead in later years. He travelled widely in northern Ontario and this naturally led him into the area of Hudson's Bay, where he met his first Inuit. He undertook four expeditions to the area on behalf of Sir William Mackenzie, a prominent entrepreneur with mining interests, for whom his father had worked. These were, at the start, primarily geological, and Flaherty's major achievement was the 'rediscovery' of the Belcher Islands. However, Flaherty, who had developed artistic tastes, had become interested in photography and the possibilities offered by the new motion picture business, and Sir William funded the necessary equipment. Flaherty's early effort, film taken in Baffin Island, was destroyed in a disastrous fire in 1918 and so he had to start again. The result was *Nanook of the north*.

Frances Flaherty, whose maiden name was Hubbard, was born into more elevated social circles than those of her future husband, being the daughter of a well-known academic geologist. She attended Bryn Mawr College and met Flaherty in 1903, while she was travelling in Canada. The attraction was immediate but they did not marry until 1914. She was a woman of considerable enterprise and used her comprehensive network of social contacts very much towards the advancement of her husband's career.

The book is organised into chapters each of which has an introduction, setting the scene, and this is followed by long sections from the relevant accounts by Flaherty, many of which were explicitly intended for Frances to read. She is the diarist in the case of one chapter.

Flaherty's diaries were maintained for much of the time in situations of considerable difficulty, during exhausting sledging trips with Inuit companions, for example, and they are extremely informative about the conditions that he encountered. The style improves throughout the sequence until the last, entitled in the book 'The Port Harrison diary.' This was from 14 August 1920 to August 1921 and covers the period during which the film was made. It is a considerable work of literature: the writing is full of 'lyric power and acuteness of observation' as, for example, in the descriptions of the landscape around Cape Smith (page 379). But the main interest of this diary is that in it we meet Nanook

himself. He was an Inuit named Allakariallak, who was far removed from the cheerful *persona* presented in the film. He was ill with tuberculosis and a sad and weary figure. As the author observes: 'The Nanook of the film made this figure of Allakariallak invisible, but he was real nonetheless, and this diary allows us to reflect on what efforts he must have made to realize his vision of himself as the heroic figure whom Flaherty was so desirous of giving to the world' (page 380). In the event, Allakariallak died on 26 May 1923, not long after the completion of the filming.

The book is, at one and the same time, a primary and a secondary source for the study of the lives of the Flahertys up to 1922, and is to be welcomed as filling a lacuna in the literature. The author's comments are always well considered and his judgements impeccable. There is a full critical apparatus and the notes alone cover 48 pages. Buried away in them are some interesting vignettes. For example, it seems that the Flahertys had attended a lecture in Toronto delivered by Douglas Mawson, who showed Frank Hurley's film of his expedition as part of it. Unfortunately there is no record of what Flaherty thought about Hurley's effort, although Frances was very impressed with the photography (pages 232, 418). And, on page 425, we are informed that Flaherty actually owned a Guarneri, which indicates a considerable level of interest in the violin, an instrument on which he was a good performer.

The illustrations are wonderful. Most are from Flaherty's own camera and his expertise is evident in all of them. There are three maps and each refers to an expedition or expeditions that took place in the area presented. It would have helped the reader if they had had Flaherty's routes inserted on them but, unfortunately, this is not the case. There is a full bibliography and the lists of publications by Flaherty and Frances are informative in their own right. For Flaherty there are more than 30, and the shift from travel as a main focus of interest to film is evident. For Frances, her most interestingly entitled publication appeared in 1952 and is the trenchant 'Bob Flaherty Was an explorer.' Reading this book is not to be undertaken lightly, as it is a dense and long work of historical scholarship, but anyone who reads it in its entirety will be in no doubt about the truth of that contention. The reader will have been in the company of an attractive and interesting person who deserves rather more than simply being known as the creator of *Nanook of the north*. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

HEARD ISLAND: SOUTHERN OCEAN SENTINEL. Ken Green and Eric Woehler (Editors). 2006. Chipping Norton, New South Wales: Surrey Beatty & Sons. viii + 270 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-949324-98-1. Aus\$77.00.
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Heard Island is certainly remote and even today is probably one of the least visited islands in the world. Dominated by the volcanic cone of Big Ben, it is a small island largely covered with permanent snow and ice. Despite its distance from Australia (4000 km), it is formally administered by the federal government as a sub-Antarctic reserve and is now a World Heritage Site. Discovered in 1853 by Captain John Heard and claimed for Britain, it was quickly exploited by sealers. Aside from isolated visits by scientists en route to elsewhere (for example, on HMS *Challenger*, *Gauss*, and *Discovery*), there was little serious investigation until ANARE established a station at Atlas Cove in 1947.

There have been periodic efforts since then to document the flora and fauna of the island, describe the geology and the marine biology of the water around it, and most recently to develop science-based management plans for this remarkable place. The editors of this book have both been closely associated with research on the island and in 15 chapters have tried to bring together a synthesis of everything that is currently known, using virtually all the experts available. Many chapters also deal with the nearby McDonald Islands.

The chapters are gathered together in three groups — 'Origin geology and physical setting,' 'Life on the island,' and 'Human occupation' — with seven appendices listing marine algae, marine invertebrates, terrestrial invertebrates and plants, birds, and marine mammals, as well as a map and an index.

There is no consolidated bibliography, as each chapter has its own references, but I could find no publication known to me about the island that did not appear in at least one of the chapters. Adding to its overall bibliographic value, the various authors have also listed a wide variety of unpublished reports that will be unknown to many readers, although, sadly, they do not always say where a copy can be consulted.

The regional geology is described by P.G. Quilty, whose broad-brush approach at the level of the Kerguelen Plateau is complemented by a more detailed account of the volcanic geology (complete with colour plates) by J. Stephenson and others. There have been reports of some localised fumarole activity during the past 100 years, and a new lava flow broke out only 20 years ago. Despite the small size of the island, the geologists consider it to be poorly known, not least because geologising is such a dangerous affair there! A. Ruddell's chapter on glaciers indicates the rate of recession has been measured, showing that almost 10% of the island has become ice-free in the last 50 years, apparently all attributable to global change, a pattern seen on all the other glaciated sub-Antarctic islands. The limited meteorological data reviewed by D. Thost and I. Allison supports this, suggesting an overall warming of about 1°C in the last 50 years.

The chapter dealing with vegetation, by J. Scott and D. Bergstrom, has two pages of colour pictures but at such a small scale that you need to be a botanist to appreciate them at all. Four large pictures would have made a much