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THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

THE ARCTIC WHALING JOURNALS OF WILLIAM SCORESBY THE YOUNGER

VOLUME III

THE VOYAGES OF 1817, 1818 AND 1820

Edited by

C. IAN JACKSON

With an Appendix by

FRED M. WALKER

Hakluyt Society

SERIES III VOLUME 21

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THIRD SERIES
NO. 21
(Issued for 2009)

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Model of the *Baffin*.
Constructed by Stanley Hogarth of Bradford from the original plans in Whitby Museum, the model (SCO97) was presented to the Museum by the Chapman Trust in 1957, to mark the centenary of William Scoresby's death. Photo courtesy of Whitby Museum.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Like the two earlier volumes, this final volume devoted to the voyages of William Scoresby the Younger, from his first command in 1811 until the publication of *An Account of the Arctic Regions* in 1820, is based on the manuscript transcripts that form part of the Scoresby Papers in the Whitby Museum of the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society. The 1817 journal forms part of WHITM:SCO1254; that for 1818 is WHITM:SCO1255.1; and the 1819–20 journal, describing the construction of his new ship, the *Baffin*, and the 1820 voyage, is WHITM:SCO1255.2.

Throughout the decade of this editing project, the officers and staff of the Museum and the Society have provided me with great support; particular mention should be made of the Society's Registrar, Denise Gildroy. Professors Joyce Lorimer and Will Ryan have saved me from many errors through their final editing. Any that remain are my own, exemplified in the quite irrelevant caption to Figure 2 in volume II, for which I apologize.

Because the 1819–20 journal contains a detailed and perhaps unique day-by-day account of the construction of a new whaling vessel, it was an opportunity to include an appendix that could set the *Baffin*'s construction in the context of commercial shipbuilding in the heyday of wooden sailing ships. With his background as both a shipbuilder and shipping historian, Fred Walker has enhanced the value of Scoresby's account.

In Whitby's maritime pantheon, the William Scoresbys, father and son, yield only to James Cook. It seems somehow fitting, and was certainly a personal pleasure, while I have been preparing the present volume for publication, that I have also assisted Whitby's Captain Cook Memorial Museum to arrange an exhibition on 'Cook in Canada'. Both Cook, the surveyor and chart-maker of the Newfoundland coast, and the younger Scoresby, the arctic scientist, were so much more than superb navigators. It has been a privilege to be able to bring knowledge of their achievements to a wider public.

Finally, I should like to express my great personal gratitude to the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation of New York for its generous grant, through the American Friends of the Hakluyt Society, towards the publication of this third and final volume of Scoresby's voyages.

Montreal, Quebec
April 2009

IAN JACKSON

Table of Quantities and Conversions

(approximations in most cases)

Length

1 inch = 2.5 cm | 1 foot = 30 cm | 1 yard (3 feet) = 91 cm
1 fathom (6 feet) = 1.8 m | 1 mile = 1.6 km

Weight

1 pound (lb) = 0.45 kg | 1 quarter (28 lb) = 12.7 kg
1 hundredweight (cwt, 112 lb) = 50.8 kg | 1 ton (20 cwt, 2240 lb) = 1016 kg
1 chaldron (Whitby measure) = 4927 lb or 2235 kg

Temperature

A difference of 10°C is equivalent to a difference of 18°F and the Celsius and Fahrenheit scales converge at –40°, so:

0°F = –18°C | 10°F = –12°C | 20°F = –7°C | 32°F = 0°C
40°F = 4°C | 50°F = 10°C | 60°F = 16°C

Atmospheric pressure

One inch of mercury is equivalent to 33.864 millibars or hectopascals. Therefore:

Inches of mercury	Millibars	Inches of mercury	Millibars
28	948	29.5	999
28.5	965	30.0	1016
29	982	30.5	1033

Cask capacities

In Scoresby's day, volumes and other dimensions were generally imprecise. The cask capacities listed below are therefore very approximate, and it is the hierarchy of cask sizes (e.g. as listed in the 'Manifest' at the end of the 1811 voyage) that is more important than the measure of capacity, especially because the casks contained blubber and not liquids.

Leaguer = 159 imperial gallons | Butt = 126 gallons, wine-measure
Puncheon = 72 gallons | Barrel = 31½ gallons

Miscellaneous

1. According to Scoresby (see note to journal entry for 26 May 1813),'Four tons of blubber by measure, generally afford three tons of oil.' and 'The ton or tun of oil is 252 gallons wine measure.' A butt cask could hold half the latter amount of oil.
2. Value of the pound sterling. Using the data in Grahame Allen's *Inflation: the Value of the Pound 1750–2002*, the equivalent purchasing power in 2002 in each of the years from 1811 to 1820 was: 1811: £49.65; 1812: £43.72; 1813: £42.64; 1814: £48.95; 1815: £54.73; 1816: £59.92; 1817 & 1818: £52.66; 1819: £53.88; 1820: £59.41.

Glossary

These entries supplement those in the glossaries of volumes I and II of these *Journals*. Most definitions are from Smyth's *Sailor's Word Book*, with others from Layton's *Dictionary of Nautical Words and Terms*.

Black-strake. 'The range of plank immediately above the wales in a ship's side; they are always covered with a mixture of tar and lamp-black ...'. (Smyth)

Breast-hooks. 'Thick pieces of timber, incurvated into the form of knees, and used to strengthen the fore-part of a ship, where they are placed at different heights, directly across the stem internally ...'. (Smyth)

Broach-to, To. 'To fly up into the wind. It generally happens when a ship is carrying a press of canvas with the wind on the quarter, and a good deal of after-sail set. The masts are endangered by the course being so altered, as to bring it more in opposition to, and thereby increasing the pressure of the wind. In extreme cases, the sails are caught flat aback, when the masts would be likely to give way, or the ship might go down stern foremost.' (Smyth)

Caboose, or *camboose*. 'The cook-room or kitchen of merchantmen on deck ... It is generally furnished with cast-iron apparatus for cooking.' (Smyth)

Cat-harpings or, *catharpin legs*. 'Ropes under the tops at the lower end of the futtock-shrouds, serving to brace in the shrouds tighter, and affording room to brace the yards more obliquely when the ship is close-hauled. They keep the shrouds taut for the better ease and safety of the mast.' (Smyth)

Clench, To. 'To secure the end of a bolt by burring the point with a hammer.' (Smyth)

Cut-water. 'The foremost part of a vessel's prow ... It cuts or divides the water before reaching the bow, which would retard progress.' (Smyth)

Deadeye. 'Hard wooden block, pierced with holes, fitted in lower end of shroud to take lanyard for setting up.' (Layton) There is also a lengthy definition in Smyth.

Dubb, To. 'To smooth and cut off with an adze the superfluous wood.' (Smyth)

Fife-rails. 'Those forming the upper fence of the bulwarks on each side of the quarter-deck and poop in men-of-war. Also the rail round the mainmast, and encircling both it and the pumps ...'. (Smyth)

Frames. 'The bends of timbers constituting the shape of the ship's body – when completed a ship is said to be *in frame*.' (Smyth)

Gammoning. 'Seven or eight turns of a rope-lashing passed alternately over the bowsprit and through a large hole in the cut-water, the better to support the stays of the foremast ...'. (Smyth)

Gut. 'A somewhat coarse term for the main part of a strait or channel.' (Smyth)

Hogged. '[I]t implies that the two ends of a ship's decks droop lower than the midship

part, consequently that her keel and bottom are so strained as to curve upwards.' (Smyth)

Martingale. 'A rope extending downwards from the jib-boom end to a kind of short gaff-shaped spar, fixed perpendicularly under the cap of the bowsprit; its use is to guy the jib-boom down in the same manner as the bobstays retain the bowsprit.'

Nankin. 'A light fawn-coloured or white cotton cloth.' (Smyth)

Outward. 'A vessel is said to be entered outwards or inwards according as she is entered at the custom-house to depart for, or as having arrived from, foreign parts.' (Smyth)

Pooping, or *being pooped*. 'The breaking of a heavy sea over the stern or quarter of a boat or vessel when she scuds before the wind in a gale, which is extremely dangerous, especially if deeply laden.' (Smyth)

Spring. '[A] hawser laid out to some fixed object to slue a vessel proceeding to sea.' (Smyth)

Tender.'Said of a vessel having small righting moment; so being easily moved from her position of equilibrium, and slow in returning to it.' (Layton)

Tierce. '[A]pplied to provision casks, ... the beef-tierce contains 280 lbs., or 28 galls., whilst that of pork only contains 260 lbs., or 26 galls. Now [1867] the beef-tierce often contains 336 lbs., and the pork 300 lbs.' (Smyth)

Victualling-bill. 'A custom-house document, warranting the shipment of such bonded stores as the master of an outward-bound merchantman may require for his intended voyage.' (Smyth)

Waft. '[M]ore correctly written *wheft*. It is any flag or ensign, stopped together at the head and middle portions, slightly rolled up lengthwise, and hoisted at different positions at the after-part of a ship. Thus, at the ensign-staff, it signifies that a man has fallen overboard ... At the peak, it signifies a wish to speak; at the mast-head recals [*sic*] boats; or as the commander-in-chief or particular captain may direct.' (Smyth)

Wales. 'Strong planks extending all along the outward timbers on a ship's side, a little above her water-line; they are synonymous with *bends* ... The channel-wale is below the lower-deck ports ...'. (Smyth)

Editorial Note

The transcription of the manuscript text follows the original with the following exceptions:

1. Occasionally missing punctuation or letters are supplied in square brackets for greater clarity.
2. The layout of the original text in columns has been simplified for economy and ease of reading. Variations in layout are indicated in editorial notes in square brackets in the text. Marginal headings giving dates, coordinates, wind direction etc. have been placed at the head of the entry to which they refer. Dates in headings have been emboldened for ease of location, and the form of coordinates in headings has been standardized.
3. Asterisks in square brackets indicate unreadable words.
4. Words in square brackets with a question mark indicate an uncertain but probable reading.
5. Where Scoresby himself uses brackets this is normally indicated in a footnote as ('Brackets in transcript').

Introduction

In the two earlier volumes devoted to William Scoresby's whaling journals, we have seen the development of a successful whaling captain and a competent and resourceful navigator, as well as the emergence of a careful and respected arctic scientist. The journals have also provided evidence of the growing importance of religion in Scoresby's life. The pattern was one of steady progress and the maturing of Scoresby himself. The journals, mostly devoted to his months away from Whitby and his family, could not be a complete mirror of the man and his activities, but it seems reasonable to suggest that they reflect the main elements of his life between 1811 and 1816.

The journals in the present volume, though they are as detailed and eventful as the earlier ones, are much less of a self-portrait. More was happening to Scoresby between the voyages than during them. In particular, in the seventeen months between August 1817 and the end of 1818 Scoresby seriously considered giving up his sea-going career; this option was made impossible by a substantial financial loss; he became a whaling partner rather than merely a hired captain; his relationship with his father changed profoundly; he declined the opportunity to participate in the renewal of naval exploration of arctic waters; he began the move from Whitby to make his home in Liverpool; his religious convictions were powerfully strengthened; and he completed arrangements for the publication of his major work, *An Account of the Arctic Regions*. The journals show the effect of all these events, but the journals need to be read in the context of this broader background of Scoresby's life.

The Voyages

1817. After Scoresby's amazing return to Whitby in 1816 following the holing of the *Esk*'s hull at 78°N, the voyage of 1817 was a disappointing anticlimax. It began with protests on wage-cutting across the Whitby fleet, as owners took advantage of a peacetime oversupply of sailors.[1] The *Esk* was then unable to leave the port due to weather conditions until the beginning of April. The stay in Lerwick was brief and despite bad weather the *Esk* was north of 75°N by 21 April. The ship was lucky to avoid a storm in early May that caused the loss of four ships, but the first whale was not caught until 1 June. A second was caught five days later, but these two were the only successes of the entire summer. By 18 July, Scoresby was complaining in his journal that

> The fishery of the present season has been the most singular, partial, unsuccessful of any occasion witnessed of many years. Where it has been profitable it has been partial [in

[1] The cuts in sea pay were substantial, as can be seen from a comparison of the table of wages in 1813 (see vol. I, p. 138) and that included by Scoresby in the 1817 journal.

> the?] extreme & singularly accidental. The places of resort & habits of the fish have differed so much from what is usual that it is allowed that success in the fishery has been the result of chance only; … hence we can account for the fact how the experienced & judicious fishers have in general failed whilst almost every master of his first year has succeeded. This remark is not splenetic or for excusing our failure, … as far as we know at least ¾ of the fishing ships which have not cargos sufficient to [answer?] their expences supposing the price of oil to be above the average.
>
> The ostensible reason of the scarcity of whales & their pecular [*sic*] habits, is the singular state of the ice which lies at a distance from the land greater than was ever known by any fisherman now prosecuting the business … . Hence the whales not finding their usual shelter are dispersed & prompted to the pursuit of diff*eren*t routes & the adoption of original retreats.[1]

The unusual expanse of open water where sea ice was normally to have been expected may have been a major reason for the lack of success, but the *Esk* seems also to have been particularly unlucky. Unusually for Scoresby, he spent a substantial part of the season sailing in company with his father in the *Mars* and his brother-in-law in the *John*. As he remarked later in his autobiography,

> I was indeed completely 'at fault', and for once gave up all dependence on my own judgment for near two months together, and followed my Father. Hitherto I had always made a practice of acting independently.[2]

Perhaps, though there is no evidence for this in the journal, Scoresby was dogged by memories of 1816, when the assistance of the *John* proved vital in escaping from the ice and bringing the *Esk* safely home. What is clear is that, during this period, both the *Mars* and the *John* were catching whales, but the *Esk* was not.

Scoresby's scientific experiments also had misfortune. On 28 June, after lowering his marine diver, a marine thermometer, and wood specimens to what he believed was a depth of over 7200 feet (2000 metres) without reaching the seabed, the rope broke as it was being raised, and everything was lost. 'My mortification was excessive.'[3]

One consequence of the open water was that the *Esk* sailed in longitudes west of the prime meridian from 10 June until 15 July, and again from 25 July until the ship headed homeward. Since he became a captain in 1811, Scoresby had never entered western longitudes in the whaling area until 1816, and only briefly in that year. On 9 July Scoresby estimated his longitude at 10°W which, if accurate, would, at 75°N, have put the *Esk* within about 130 nautical miles of the islands along the east coast of Greenland. Certainly there is clear evidence that the *Esk* had entered the southward-flowing East Greenland Current.

By the end of July, Scoresby gave up the search for whales. A venture in the middle of the month to the east of Spitsbergen, 'a track of the ocean which has not been

[1] Journal entry 18 July 1817.

[2] Scoresby's unpublished autobiography covers the years from his birth in 1789 until 1823, and is in ten parts (WHITM:SCO843.1–10). A complete transcript is available in the Whitby Museum Library. Cited hereafter as 'Autobiography'.

[3] Journal entry 28 June 1817.

visited of many years & in which we read in the Dutch authorities of much profitable fishing for whales and walruses'[1] had been blocked by ice at 12½°E, and by 29 July the *Esk*, with the *John* and the *Venerable* of Hull, was back within sight of the Greenland coast. Two days later, 'As our companions were now determined on proceeding homewards, and as we had for a long time been unable to find a single whale',[2] the three ships headed south and on 3 August arrived off the southeast coast of Jan Mayen.

Scoresby's lengthy account of the landing on Jan Mayen that he included in his journal has been omitted from this edition, because it became the basis for a revised and extended text that he included in *An Account of the Arctic Regions* (vol. I, pp. 154–69).

Sailing eastward, the *Esk* separated from the *John* and *Venerable*, probably because the other ships needed to land crew members in Shetland, and reached harbour in Whitby on 15 August. Scoresby can scarcely have been surprised that he received a very different welcome from that of a year earlier. As he wrote in his autobiography,

> I found the owners of my ship not altogether satisfied with my success & exertions. They said it was a cruel thing for me to follow my Father all the season & thus lose the chance of success which a separation of two ships, the Esk & Mars, would have afforded at least to one of them.

Scoresby's situation was not helped by the fact that his father in the *Mars* had returned with fourteen whales[3] and another Whitby ship, the *William and Ann*, brought home twenty-two.[4] The owners may also have begun to wonder whether Scoresby's scientific activities during the voyages were distracting him from their principal purpose.

If Fishburn and Brodrick intended their comments as no more than understandable grumbling about the poor returns, they may have been surprised by the reaction they provoked.

> My Father ... had had some disturbance with his crew & had been annoyed with several acts of obstinate disobedience which he was disposed to punish by withholding the wages of the offenders agreeable to law & paying them into Greenwich Hospital. The owners, however, refused their sanction to this measure, though obviously important for preserving any sort of good government on board of their ships – and declared their determination not to be troubled with any quarrels but to pay the men their wages & dismiss them. My Father felt himself so agrieved [*sic*] by this refusal of support from the owners of the ship, that he immediately gave up his command; and I, for the same reason, together with the apparent want of approbation of the owners respecting myself, and some little circumstances in their conduct that were rather unpleasant to my feelings, also gave up my Command.[5]

[1] Journal entry 16 July 1817.
[2] Journal entry 31 July 1817.
[3] 'Autobiography'.
[4] Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, p. 205.
[5] 'Autobiography'.

Both father and son were, by this time, impatient with the reluctance of the Whitby owners to make them partners in the whaling enterprise; had the owners done so they would have less justification for complaining about their loss, since it would have been shared with their captains. Fishburn and Brodrick were also unaware of a profound change in the son's attitude to whaling, absent from the 1817 journal, but clearly expressed in the autobiography about his return home on this voyage.

> The view of the English coast along which we were sailing produced a train of reflections on expected happiness, checked by the recollection of our scanty cargo that was productive of much manifestation to my pride & disappointment of my desire of soon gaining a comfortable independence. Methought God was working against me. My labours for three years had been increasingly unprofitable. They now hardly promised to me the supply of my necessary wants. 'I shall leave off the sea', thought I. 'The little property I have acquired will provide me 120 or 150 £ a year, and on this, with any accidental acquisition from finding out other employment, I may live in an economical manner at least, entirely on shore. I shall then be no longer exposed to the freaks of fortune …'.[1]

1818. As explained later in this Introduction, Scoresby quickly learned that he could not afford to give up the sea, but it was not until the end of January 1818 that he and his father agreed that Scoresby should take command of the *Fame*, a vessel in Liverpool purchased by Scoresby, Senior two months earlier. Ownership of the vessel was agreed as one-half Scoresby, Senior, one-third his son, and one-sixth Thomas Jackson, Scoresby's brother-in-law. Strengthening and adapting the vessel for northern whaling did not begin until mid-February and when the *Fame* put to sea on 2 April Scoresby noted in his journal that 'I never experienced relief on getting to sea on any former occasion'; nevertheless, as he remarked in his autobiography, 'We were too late in starting [the conversion] & were greatly harassed in getting ready in time, and after all we were obliged to sail in a very disordered condition'.[2]

The journey through unfamiliar waters from Liverpool is described in detail in the journal. Scoresby took the *Fame* west of the Outer Hebrides, and west even of St Kilda. Instead of the usual visit to Lerwick, the ship went west and north of Shetland, pausing briefly at Baltasound on 16–17 April to complete the crew. The voyage northward was marked by adverse winds from the east, so that Scoresby was back in sight of Jan Mayen, and of volcanic activity on the island, at the end of the month, and noted in his journal on 5 May that, with the wind from the southwest, the *Fame* was making 'good speed, with the first fair wind since we passed the Isle of Man!'

By 8 May Scoresby was in familiar waters in sight of Spitsbergen; the first whale was taken on 16 May and by the end of the month the *Fame* had taken four bowheads and a narwhale. The ship was briefly beset in the ice at 79°N, and the whaleboats had dangerous encounters with whales on 1 and 22 June. By the latter date seven bowheads had been caught. Other ships had been even more successful: Thomas Jackson in the *John* had twenty-nine whales by 13 June and started homeward before the end of the month.[3]

[1] 'Autobiography'.
[2] 'Autobiography'.
[3] According to Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, p. 209, the *John* returned with 31 whales.

Much of July was spent in unsuccessful searching for whales, but by the 17th Scoresby was writing a lengthy description in the journal of the west coast of Spitsbergen and especially the glaciers that calved icebergs into the sea. On 23 July Scoresby landed on Spitsbergen, for the first time since 1809 and he and his colleagues climbed to a height of about 850m (2800 ft). Returning to sea-level, they had the good fortune to find a dead whale that had apparently escaped after being harpooned by a German whaler. Flensing the whale on shore and conveying the blubber to the *Fame* in whaleboats was a difficult task, but the 20 tons of blubber, or 12–13 tons of oil, that it provided probably made the difference between a marginal voyage and a successful one.

The *Fame* set sail for Whitby on 1 August, discharged the hired Shetlanders on the 14th, and arrived off Whitby on the 17th. On the following day, there was a near-catastrophe as the ship attempted to enter the harbour, and even after reaching the inner harbour on the 19th, the *Fame* 'grounded on a sandbank … strained considerably, and opened several of her bilge seams'. At over 370 tons, the vessel was only marginally capable of using Whitby harbour, and Scoresby's father thereafter sailed her from Hull.

1820. After the disagreements with and separation from his father following the 1818 voyage, described later, Scoresby found new partners in Liverpool. The city became his home in 1819 when, for the first time since 1802 at the age of twelve, he did not sail to the Greenland Sea. As the 1820 journal tells, one of his tasks during 1819 was to monitor the building of the *Baffin*, from laying the keel on 25 June until her launch on 15 February 1820. The care that he put into the design and construction of the ship did not apparently extend to hiring a crew, something that he probably regretted during the voyage.[1] Scoresby also seemed unconcerned by the fact that as the ship set sail on 18 March, five members of the crew, including the cooper and a line manager, were missing.

Why Scoresby chose to replace the missing members at Loch Ryan, in southwest Scotland, rather than in Shetland is not clear. It seems likely, however, that one factor may have been that the *Baffin* would not head for Whitby on her return, but would return to Liverpool. The ship would necessarily pass close to Loch Ryan, but need not be constrained in her return route to visit Shetland. Scoresby was also following the example set by the two other Liverpool vessels engaged in the whaling trade, the *Lady Forbes* and the *James*.

Stranraer, at the head of Loch Ryan, was also the home of Captain John Ross, the leader of the Royal Navy's 1818 voyage of discovery. Scoresby's introduction to Ross was unexpected, but quickly developed into a warm acquaintance. Sailing from Loch Ryan on 26 March, Scoresby again took a northward course that was to the west of both the Hebrides and St Kilda, 'to guard against the danger and inconvenience of a westerly wind' (27 March). Scoresby described just such a storm two days later, though his belief in the influence of 'the moon in expelling

[1] In none of the journals from 1811 onwards is there any significant comment by Scoresby at the outset of the voyage about his method of crew recruitment.

dense vapours and its power in breaking through dense strata of clouds' was meteorologically unsound.

Although Scoresby was pleased by the performance of his new ship, two calamities occurred on the journey northward. On 30 March, the deck caught fire, just above 20 tons of coal, because the cooking unit was too close to the deck. 'Providentially the discovery was made in time – and only just in time'. Much more tragic was the loss of the ship's carpenter who fell overboard on 4 April and was drowned.

With a strong southwesterly wind, and a ship capable of nine or ten knots, the *Baffin* reached 75°N as early as 7 April. This brought no advantage and some hardship; on 21 April Scoresby recorded in his journal that

> The preceding five days have been a continuous series of the most disagreeable and trying weather that occurs in the arctic regions ... During this period it was continually stormy, not always blowing heavy but sometimes a hard gale. During this interval the thermometer was never above 11°, the average temperature being 6¼°.

The *Baffin* did not take her first whale until 13 May, but was very successful later in the month; seven whales, most of them small, were taken between 22 and 25 May. The success was general: 'It is probable that near 120 fish have been killed around the field . . during the last 4 or 5 days' (26 May).

The ninth bowhead was not captured until 20 June, by which date Scoresby had taken the *Baffin* westward to 8°W. This was a large whale, and its capture, like two of those described in the 1818 journal, involved the whaleboat in great danger:

> In the killing of this fish it rose beneath one of the boats, forced the keel upwards until the planks on each side burst out, gave the boatsteerer a toss in the air, threw the harponeer on his back, and cut, by means of an oar, the cheek of one of the rowers completely through into the orbit of the eye.[1]

It was during the flensing of this whale that Scoresby was faced with what amounted to a potential mutiny, described in detail in the journal entries for 20 and 22 June. Scoresby acted quickly and firmly, and although there were another 'four or five more unprincipled men' besides the ringleader, John Wright, there were no further problems until early August, when the *Baffin* was homeward bound. In the interim, Scoresby had learned something of the mutineers' background, and recorded this in the very long journal entry for 9 August.

Because of the serious nature of these events, it may seem surprising that Scoresby apparently took no action to prosecute Wright or the others after the *Baffin* returned to Liverpool.[2] In a recent paper, however, Margarette Lincoln has emphasized that the legal power of the British state, unlike many other sea-going countries, did not at

[1] See Fig. 1, p. xlii. There has been a tendency among later commentators to regard such illustrations as exaggerated, but it is clear that the power of a large whale made such events, though unusual, a constant possibility.

[2] It is also surprising that Scoresby-Jackson, in his *Life* of Scoresby, stated that 'Few circumstances of interest occurred during this voyage' (p. 157)! It is possible that Scoresby-Jackson was adapting a remark in Scoresby's 'Autobiography', 'Little remarkable occurred during the voyage', but that remark was made about the 1818 voyage in the *Fame*.

this time extend to merchant vessels. In describing how John Meares resisted a mutiny in the Pacific in 1788, she noted that

> The merchant captain's authority was undefined by statute, although subject to the law. Meares argued that Britain should emulate other nations by including merchant ships in the general legislation dealing with discipline at sea, which would provide a legal code that would help govern all seamen, 'a class of men who are so necessary to the commerce, the strength, and the glory of the British empire.' The integration Meares envisaged never took place: the navy's disciplinary code is part of statute law, but the legal agreement signed by merchant seamen relates only to conditions of service.[1]

Scoresby did at a later date add to the journal a separate note, adding to his knowledge of the mutineers' background (see p. 204, note 2).

Three more whales were taken in late June, and the *Baffin*'s good fortune continued in July, culminating on the 19th with the capture of the seventeenth bowhead of the season. 'This fish being calculated to fill all our casks, the boats towed it on board with flags flying, in token of a "full ship" – thanks to God for all his Mercies!'

This whale was taken within sight of the east coast of Greenland, though Scoresby's longitudes (or his estimates of the ship's distance from the coast) are unreliable. Thereafter, however, fog, gales and ice combined to prevent the *Baffin* from beginning the homeward voyage. The forefoot of the ship had been damaged earlier in the voyage (probably on 11 May), and in the journal entry for 30 July Scoresby noted that

> the keel projecting now in front without any defence, appeared liable to be struck off by a very slight blow from a tongue of ice: which danger, became very appalling, when we had the prospect of being obliged to force through a sea stream of heavy ice & in a swell, where numerous pieces appeared having tongues projecting from their corners, of 10 to 20 or 30 feet deep!

By careful navigation, however, the *Baffin* escaped into open water and by 3 August had reached the Langanes peninsula, in what was then a very remote corner of northeast Iceland. The *Baffin* continued around the northern and eastern coasts of the Faroes, landed the sailors from Loch Ryan on 20 August and reached Liverpool three days later.

Scoresby's Personal and Religious Life

As described in the Introduction to volume II of these journals, Scoresby had by 1816 come under the influence of the evangelical minister of the Anglican chapel in Baxtergate, Whitby, James Thomas Holloway. Scoresby was always ready to attribute events in his life as indications of the hand of God working directly. On the 1816 voyage, this explained the *Esk*'s remarkable escape from disaster and successful return to port; in 1817, in the same passage of his autobiography as that, already quoted, in which he contemplated giving up a seagoing life, he attributed his lack of

[1] Lincoln, 'Mutinous Behavior on Voyages to the South Seas and Its Impact on Eighteenth-Century Civil Society', pp. 63–4. The 1788 mutiny occurred, however, while Meares was sailing under a Portuguese flag.

success to divine influence. 'Methought God was working against me ... [M]y conscience smote me – it suggested it was not owing to the freaks of fortune that I was no longer prosperous – it was the hand of God.'

The autobiography also claims that 'the most complete surrender of heart to God, and the most perfect abandonment of reserved sin that I had ever made' took place on Sunday 13 July 1817, as a result of using one of George Burder's *Village Sermons*, though Scoresby did not mention the significance of this in his journal entry.[1]

If Scoresby was serious about his intention to give up whaling after the 1817 voyage, as he appears to have been, this was made impossible by a devastating blow to his financial situation at the end of September. His wife's brother, George Lockwood,

> to whom I had lent large sums of money, amounting in all to £1537.3s.5d,[2] for assisting him in starting business as a linen draper, had failed ... . Thus at a single & most unexpected blow, were all my hopes of competence ... blasted in a moment. This was the chief of my property – and it was probably gone.[3]

Once again, however, Scoresby chose to see this disaster as evidence of divine intervention.

> By the blessing of God, whose providence it evidently was, that brought about this event, the effect of this news was not either anguish or despair – it was resignation to the Divine will.

Having also resigned his command of the *Esk*, lost the hope of a shore-based life, and been unsuccessful in his ambition to lead a voyage of arctic exploration, Scoresby probably had little choice but to enter an agreement with his father to become commander and co-owner of the *Fame*. Even this was only possible because Scoresby, Senior, gave his son a 'gratuity' of £1000[4] towards the price of co-ownership. This placed father and son in a closer formal relationship than had existed since the son's last voyage under the command of his father in 1810. In the interval, however, the son had matured, whereas his father may only have aged; Scoresby, Senior was 58 in 1818. That year was one of only two in the thirty-three between 1791 and 1823 when the elder Scoresby did not command a whaling ship in the Greenland Sea, and he may not have welcomed the enforced idleness.

In any event, the partnership did not survive the 1818 voyage. As the end of that year's journal records, the *Fame* had a near-miraculous escape from wreckage on the

[1] The sermon, entitled 'Irresolution Reproved, and Decision Recommended' was published as Sermon LX in volume 5 of Burder's *Village Sermons*. It does not seem, to a modern eye, particularly well-suited to a service for a whaling crew in arctic waters, but as its title suggests, it is easy to see how it had a powerful influence on Scoresby, who was already close to making a commitment as a 'born again' Christian. In 1831 some of Scoresby's own sermons were published under the title *Discourses to Seamen*; extracts from several of these were reprinted in Scoresby-Jackson's *Life*, pp. 250–58.

[2] Equivalent to almost £81,000 in 2002, see Allen, *Inflation*, Table 2. According to Scoresby's 'Autobiography', although the details are missing, he eventually recovered 'nearly half of my debt'.

[3] This and the following quotations relating to the dissolution of the partnership between Scoresby and his father are from the 'Autobiography'.

[4] Equivalent to about £52,660 in 2002, see Allen, *Inflation*, Table 2.

Rock outside Whitby harbour, but was then damaged on a sandbank within the harbour. As Scoresby recounted in his autobiography, what followed led to his separation from the *Fame*, and indirectly to his departure from Whitby and his father.

> After the necessary repairs had been accomplished, my Father proposed and entirely against my [advice?], executed, several alterations in the vessel, which though they were very expensive, effected little more than an improvement in her appearance, but added almost nothing, in my view, to her already excellent qualifications as a whale-ship. Hence arose several instance of disagreement between us, and I was always obliged to submit to the inconvenience and expence, as well as the mortification of being subject to a constant and arbitrary control. My Father no doubt acted in his opinion for the best, and I allow made very great improvements in the ship; but he acted against our mutual interests, these improvements not being essential. But differences also occurred respecting the manufacture of the oil, which proceeded to a disagreeable length. My spirit and my pride, which were probably too great, prevented me from giving up my opinion with that frankness and that submission which it was possibly my duty to have done to a parent. Hence arose so many unpleasantnesses that I found our confidence and affection, and my duty daily injured, if not weakened. I was convinced that we should be more comfortable, & indeed more happy, were our co-partnery dissolved.

Scoresby offered his father two options. One would have transferred command and management of the *Fame* entirely to Scoresby, Senior, leaving his son as a co-owner. Alternatively, Scoresby was willing to give up command and his share of the ownership, 'thus returning to my father the gratuity of 1000£ with which he had presented me'. His father accepted this option.

From the autobiography, it is clear that Scoresby did not dissolve the partnership with his father because he had another prospect in view. 'I was now without a situation, and had not the most distant idea where to look for a new connection.' He was, however, determined that future partners would need to have religious convictions as strong as and similar to his own.

> I daily laid my case before Him … I felt myself completely passive in the hands of God; I found myself willing to wait on shore for a year rather than join any [worldly?] persons … . But the Lord did not put my faith to such a long trial. I had scarcely been separated from my Father a month, when I received through the hands of a gentleman of Whitby with whom I was not personally acquainted, an offer of a ship from Mess^rs^ Nicholas Hurry and Gibson of Liverpool. These gentlemen being total strangers to me I made instant enquiries respecting their character, and particularly their religious views – when to my much surprise & satisfaction I was informed that both of them were men of piety: – that M^r^ Hurry was a deacon of the most respectable congregation of Independents in Liverpool, under Mr (now D^r^) T Raffles[1] and that M^r^ Gibson was a zealous and consistent Methodist. This proposal appears to me to be in answer to my prayer – the hand of God seemed in it.

Liverpool had other attractions for Scoresby. His experience with converting and sailing the *Fame* had given him knowledge of the port's facilities, and the city offered

[1] Thomas Raffles (1788–1863) Congregationalist minister of the Great George Street Chapel in Liverpool. See entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ODNB*).

far more opportunity for scientific and similar interaction than Whitby. In 1818 Scoresby had already begun a friendship with Thomas Stewart Traill, a founder of both the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society in 1812 and the Liverpool Royal Institution in 1817.[1] Of similar significance at the time, and in Scoresby's eyes further evidence of the guiding hand of providence, was the fact that his spiritual mentor, Dr Holloway, had moved to Liverpool just as Scoresby returned from his 1818 voyage.

Hurry, Gibson and Scoresby had similar moral and religious convictions, but this did not avoid some hard bargaining over the terms of the proposed partnership. Negotiations continued up to the day before Scoresby was due to leave for Edinburgh, and he had meanwhile two other offers from potential partners in Liverpool. Hurry and Gibson eventually agreed to Scoresby's terms, 'I to take command with wages, nearly the same as I had in the Esk and Fame, and to hold one-third share of the concern'.[2]

One consequence of this new partnership that is evident in the journal of the 1820 *Baffin* voyage is the strengthened emphasis on Sabbath observance. This had of course been a feature of the earlier voyages, with the owners' knowledge and assent:

> it is but justice to those who were latterly united with me in the adventure, – Messrs. Hurry and Gibson, of Liverpool, – to mention that they … most fully accorded … in the practice I had adopted, – having given, indeed to another of their Captains, engaged in the same pursuit, very strict directions to sanctify the Sabbath as a day of holy rest. And not these gentlemen only, but others with whom I was previously engaged, Messrs. Fishburn and Brodrick … most cheerfully acceded to the plan … .[3]

Nevertheless, Scoresby wrote that 'it was not until the year 1820, that I was enabled, undeviatingly, to carry the principle into effect', and the partners' enthusiasm was not initially welcomed by the crew.

> Several of the harpooners – whose interest in the success of the voyage was such, that even a single large whale being captured yielded to them an advantage of from £6. to £8. each – were, in the early part of the voyage, very much dissatisfied with the rule … [T]hey reasoned that our chance of a prosperous voyage was but as six to seven, when compared with that of our competitors in the fishery. The chief officer, however, was frequently known to remark, that if we, under such disadvantages, should make a successful voyage, he should then believe there indeed was something like a blessing on the observance of the Sabbath.

By mid-July, with fifteen whales already caught, he and others were apparently persuaded. 'The men were now accustomed to look for a blessing on Sabbath observances. And within the succeeding week … the blessing was realized.'[4]

[1] See the entry for Traill in *ODNB*. Both Traill and Scoresby were elected Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the same day in 1819, with Robert James as one of the proposers for both of them.

[2] 'Autobiography'.

[3] Scoresby, *Memorials of the Sea*, p. 31.

[4] This and the preceding quotations are also from *Memorials of the Sea*, pp. 35, 36, 42.

Scoresby and Arctic Exploration[1]

The voyages in this volume took place against a background of renewed British interest in arctic exploration, and especially the search for a northern passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. With his long experience and scientific understanding of arctic waters, Scoresby had a personal interest in such discovery and an expressed desire to take a leading role. That he did not do so has frequently been attributed to antagonism and obstruction on the part of John Barrow, Second Secretary of the Admiralty for most of the years from 1804 to 1845. Scoresby's biographers, for example, claimed that

> Barrow had taken all credit for suggesting the polar expedition, wilfully suppressing Scoresby's name, and this mean act coloured all their future relationship. Barrow was a mean-spirited sycophant who had wormed his way upward by devious means and he was determined not to give way to anyone, least of all a whaling captain … .[2]

That is not the view taken in this Introduction, and that characterization of John Barrow is not consistent with the biographies of a man who occupied an important position in the British government for four decades.[3] Because many writers have tended to accept that Barrow behaved in this way towards Scoresby,[4] and because Scoresby's own ambitions and objectives in regard to arctic exploration have been relatively neglected, a reappraisal seems necessary and overdue.

Scoresby's first suggestion of such exploration was contained in a paper for the Wernerian Society of Edinburgh in 1814. He still thought it feasible when *An Account of the Arctic Regions* was published in 1820.

> I yet imagine, notwithstanding the objections which have been urged against the scheme, that it would by no means be impossible to reach the Pole by travelling across the ice from Spitzbergen … . As the journey would not exceed 1200 miles (600 miles each way), it might be performed on sledges drawn by dogs or rein-deer, or even on foot … . With favourable winds, great advantage might be derived from sails set upon the sledges; which sails, when the travellers were at rest, would serve for the erection of tents. Small vacancies in the ice would not prevent the journey, as the sledges could be adapted to answer the purpose of boats; nor would the usual unevenness of the ice, or the depth or softness of the snow, be an insurmountable difficulty, as journeys of near equal length, and under similar inconveniences, have been accomplished.[5]

He envisaged the round trip as taking about two months, or slightly less if dogs were used. It was an imaginative proposal, but the thought that Scoresby might actually attempt it in 1815 was promptly vetoed by his family, and especially by his wife. The Stamps suggested that 'Had Mrs. Scoresby concurred, her husband might well have reached the North Pole nearly a hundred years before Peary.'[6] It is far more

[1] Some of the material in this section was published earlier in Jackson, 'Three Puzzles from Early Nineteenth Century Arctic Exploration'.
[2] Stamp and Stamp, *William Scoresby*, p. 67.
[3] See, for example, Lloyd, *Mr. Barrow*; Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*.
[4] See, for example, Martin, 'William Scoresby (1789–1857)'.
[5] Scoresby, *Account of the Arctic Regions*, 1, pp. 54–5.
[6] Stamp & Stamp, *William Scoresby*, p. 53.

likely that such an attempt in the early nineteenth century would have been rapidly abandoned, or ended in disaster. At that time nothing was known about the south-westward drift of the arctic pack ice and, with longitude measurements difficult or unreliable, Scoresby might have found it very difficult to reach Spitzbergen on the return journey. Eight decades later, Nansen and a colleague attempted a polar journey very similar to that proposed by Scoresby, but abandoned the attempt within a couple of weeks. They did understand the probable ice circulation pattern, they were better equipped, and they had the advantage of starting at 83°N, much closer to the Pole than Spitsbergen, yet they were quickly defeated by what Scoresby envisaged as the 'usual unevenness of the ice' but what Nansen described as 'Lanes, ridges, and endless rough ice, it looks like an endless moraine of ice-blocks; and this continual lifting of the sledges over every irregularity is enough to tire out giants'.[1]

As Constance Martin and others have recognized, a crucial question in arctic exploration during this decade was whether the central arctic basin was permanently ice covered or whether, beyond the apparent ice barrier at about 80°N in the Greenland Sea, there was an 'open polar sea.' Scoresby had no belief in such open water, and said so, both in his 1814 paper and in *An Account of the Arctic Regions*, but many others, including John Barrow, were equally convinced that, if there was no land in the arctic basin, then there would also be no permanent ice.

Scoresby's 1817 journal understandably focused on the effect that the unusual absence of ice in the whaling grounds had on the catch, but he was also quick to recognize the scientific significance of the event, and he reported on it to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, in a letter dated 2 October 1817.[2] He also used the opportunity to make clear his own interest in exploration.

> *I do conceive there is sufficient interest attached to these remote regions to induce Government to fit out an expedition, were it properly represented. …*
>
> I should have much satisfaction in attempting an enterprise of this kind, namely to examine and survey the islands of East Greenland or Spitzbergen, especially the eastern part, which has not been visited [for] many years past; and to ascertain, for the benefit of the whalers, whether the whales resort thither; to endeavour to reach the shore of West Greenland, determine its position, prove its insularity, and ascertain the fate of the Icelandic colony together with making researches … relative to the north-east and north-west passages, &c. for the performance of which objects, I could point out a method by which the enterprise could be conducted with little, or possibly no expense to the nation. This would be accomplished by combining the two objects of discovery and fishing.[3]

[1] Nansen, *Farthest North*, II, p. 140.

[2] This was a response to a request from Banks, which is letter 132 in Chambers, *Letters of Sir Joseph Banks*, p. 329.

[3] Quoted in Scoresby-Jackson, *Life*, p. 126. Emphasis as in Scoresby-Jackson. Note that Scoresby was restricting his proposals to the latitudes where the ice had disappeared, i.e. between 74° and 80°N. By 'East Greenland', Scoresby meant Spitsbergen; similarly 'West Greenland' meant what we would now term the east coast of Greenland. Although both the Norse colonies, the 'Western Settlement' and the 'Eastern Settlement', had been on the west coast of Greenland, the notion that the latter was on the east coast, and its fate undetermined because of the difficulty of access, persisted into the 19th century. See Gad, *History of Greenland*, II, p. 6.