

FOREWORD

The year 1931 will go down in history as one of unusual activity in the Greenland sector of the Arctic, evidence of which is shown on the outline map in this issue. It records no less than six major sledge journeys on the ice-cap, three of them being crossings of the island continent, but the many efforts ancillary to the main journeys cannot be shown on so small a scale. Probably the most profound and important of the results of this activity is the sounding of the ice-cap by the Wegener Expedition, the details of which are eagerly awaited by geophysicists concerned with the elasticity of the earth's crust.

A second consequence of the events of the year has been thought worthy of our first illustration. It is forty years since Nansen proved that the European could use the Eskimo kayak as well as the native himself, but his example had not been followed by others until some ten members of the British Arctic Air Route Expedition learnt the art this summer, and used it in their subsequent journeys. The white man has always been slow in adopting Eskimo methods of transport, and it is to be hoped that the dexterity gained by the members of the Watkins Expedition will be passed on to others.

Of recent years the question of national ownership in the Polar Regions has frequently been a matter of diplomatic discussion. The International Arbitration Court at The Hague is now called upon to consider the case of the national claims of Denmark and Norway to parts of East Greenland. The matter has been brought to a head by the temporary occupation by Norwegians of places between Latitudes $71^{\circ} 30'$ and $75^{\circ} 40' N$. This journal cannot go into detail over the dispute, which is still *sub judice*, but records the fact.

The year now past was the centenary of two events of importance in polar history, which claim a brief reference here, though they have received but little notice in the press.

It was on May 31, 1831, that Captain James Clark Ross attained the North Magnetic Pole, an event which was to have more than a sentimental interest for posterity, since it had much to do with the planning of his great Antarctic Expedition of 1839-43, and his selection of the Magnetic Pole sector of that continent as his main goal.

Less noticed at the time, but perhaps more fundamental, was the discovery of Enderby Land on February 28, 1831, by John Biscoe. Now that Wilkins has shown that the Trinity Land discovered by Bransfield in 1819 is part of an archipelago, Enderby Land becomes the first part of the Antarctic continent to be sighted by man. Those capable explorers, Cook and Bellingshausen, had forced their way right round the Antarctic, looking for the continent guessed at behind the barriers of ice, but they had returned with nothing but islands as earnest of what might lie beyond. James Weddell, too, in 1823 had found his way to Lat. 74° S., but in an open sea, and it was left to the sealer, Captain Biscoe, to be the first to sight the continent itself, and immortalise some unknown lady by naming its most prominent point Cape Ann.

It is curious to reflect that this first landfall on the vast continent remained a mere point on the chart for nearly one hundred years, till revisited and confirmed by the *Discovery* and the *Norvegia* in 1929.

Domestic events claim a passing note in this issue of *The Polar Record*. It gives us great pleasure to announce a gift from the Trustees of the British Museum to the Scott Polar Research Institute of £2000. The money is a balance left from that part of the Scott Mansion House Fund which was allotted to publication of scientific reports, and the Trustees have suggested that it be used as a publication fund in turn by the Institute. This wise and generous addition to the funds of the Institute will therefore be reflected to some extent in *The Polar Record* itself.

The gift of £4000 from the Pilgrim Trust, announced in a former issue, has made it possible to proceed with plans for a permanent home for the Institute. A Syndicate of the University is engaged upon the matter, and it is hoped that its findings will be published in the next issue, together with detailed plans for the proposed building.

It will probably interest readers of *The Polar Record* to learn that the sledging equipment of Sir Douglas Mawson's *Discovery* is available for purchase at a reduced price, the greater part of it never having been used. Enquiries should be addressed to the Financial Adviser, Australia House, Strand, London, from whom detailed lists can be obtained.