

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
CANADA



REFER TO FILE NO.

NATURAL RESOURCES INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

OTTAWA

*Admiral Sir G. St. May K.C.B.
Baginbyg
Helsinki*

Feb. 1925

Dear Sir,

To you and the four other surviving officers of the Mares' Arctic Expedition I am sending herewith a memorandum relating to a small leather case, mounted with H. M. Queen Victoria's monogram in gold, which was picked up by a member of the party sent by the Canadian government in the C.G.S. "Arctic" to Smith Sound and beyond in 1924. The memorandum may interest you and, if not giving you trouble, I shall be glad if you would criticise the statements in it and suggest any other solution of our little problem.

Yours very truly,

Enc.

*W.S.P.
for*

F.C.C. Lynch,
Director.

Memorandum - re a small leather case having the monogram V.R.I. in gold picked up by Mr. Livingston, of the North West Territories Branch of the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, Canada, on Elm Island in Smith Sound while on the expedition sent out in C.G.S. "Arctic" in 1924.

Statement - This relic is a spectacle case dropped by one of the 22 officers serving in the "Alert" and "Discovery" on the Mares' Arctic exploration expedition sent by Her Majesty's Government in 1875 in an effort to reach the North Pole. It was a gift from Her Majesty Queen Victoria when the ships left Portsmouth dockyard on May 29, 1875, and was lost between the dates July 30 and August 4, 1875.

The article belonged to one of the following officers:

Alert

- Capt. George S. Mares,
- Commander Albert H. Hargrave,
- Capt. H. W. Fielden, Naturalist,
- Sen. Lieut. Pelham Aldrich,
- Lieut. A. A. G. Parr,
- Lieut. George Augustus Giffard,
- Lieut. William Henry Bay,
- Fleet Surgeon Thomas Colan, M.D.,
- Rev. W. H. Pullen,
- Sub-lieut. George Leclerc Egerston,
- James Bootman, Engineer.

Discovery

- Capt. Henry S. Stephenson,
- Sen. Lieut. Lewis Anthony Beaumont,
- Lieut. Robert H. Archer,
- Lieut. Wyatt Hawson,
- Lieut. Reginald B. Falford,
- Staff Surgeon Belgrave Hincks, M.D.,
- Surgeon Richard W. Coppinger, M.D.,
- Charles E. Hodgson, Chaplain,
- Chichester Hart, B.A., Naturalist,
- Sub-lieut. C. J. M. Conybeare,
- David Cartmell, Engineer.

Of the above officers, eight were surviving in 1921. (Lieut. Wyatt Hawson fell mortally wounded at Mel-el-Kebr, while serving as A.D.C. to Sir Garnet Wolseley). Since 1921 Admiral Beaumont, K.C.B., Inspector-General Hincks and James Wooten, Sen., C.B., have died. The names and addresses of the five still living in 1924 are as follows:

- Admiral Pelham Aldrich, C.V.O.,
The Croft, Great Bealings, Suffolk,
- Admiral Geo. Augustus Giffard, C.M.G.,
Hartfield, Bishop's Walkham, Hants,
- Admiral Sir William Henry Bay, K.C.B., K.C.V.O.,
Baginbyg, Helsinki,
- Admiral Sir George Le Clerc Egerston, K.C.B.,
The Manor House, Ringwood, Hants,
- Gen. Adm. Crawford Berkeley Conybeare, R.F.C.,
United Service Club, London, W.,

Authorities - "Official Report of the Recent Arctic Exploration," by Capt. Hayes, R.N., London, 1876.

"Voyage to the Polar Sea," by Capt. G. S. Hayes, 2 vols. 1876, (Sampson Low)

"The Great Frozen Sea," by Rear Adm. A. Hastings Mackham, R.N. 1894, (Kegan Paul)

"The Lands of Silence," by Sir Clements Mackham, Cambridge, 1921.

"Four Land - Four Years in the Arctic Regions," 2 vols. 1904.

"How I Found Livingston," by H. M. Stanley, (Sampson Low),

Map of Exploration in Northern Canada, James White, P.N.G.S., Dept. of the Interior, Ottawa, 1904.

"Who's Who?" - 1924 edition.

Evidence for the statement

(1) "This relic is a spectacle case." Indicated by size and shape. Had it been a pouch attached to a belt, the belt would have been picked up also; there are no signs of loops or fastenings; a spectacle case is always dropped; the velvet or silk interior lining enclosing the glasses has naturally vanished in 80 years exposure. The leather piece, on which the monogram V.R.I. is very securely fastened by rivets, is the flap of the case. On page 206 of "The Great Frozen Sea," Mackham says "the men take kindly to their snow goggles and never attempt to take them off whilst on the march."

(2) The "Alert" and the "Discovery" were the only two ships under British naval officers which are recorded as landing parties on Pin Island, of which Cape Sabine is the eastern point, or on the three islets, Stallmoat, Rayer and Brewster adjoining. In the reign of H. M. Queen Victoria. Through H.M.S. "Valorous" (an old paddle-wheel sloop) accompanied the expedition from Portsmouth, she was instructed not to proceed beyond Disco Island and returned home on July 16, 1876. (Mackham's "Great Frozen Sea," p. 55). The "Pandora" under Sir Allen Young, was exploring in this region in 1875 and in 1876 was sent to search for Hayes. Though it was intended to leave a packet of letters (duplicates of those left at Cape Isabella) at Cape Sabine, Mackham (p. 385) states that the "Pandora" had been "unsuccessful in her efforts to reach Cape Sabine." The cruise of Capt. Inglefield who gave the name to Sillemore Island, in the "Isabel" during the summer of 1852 is put out of court by the facts that (1) the cruise was undertaken and that (2) on the map of Smith's Sound printed in Hayes' "Voyage to the Polar Sea," Inglefield's furthest north" is marked at a spot about 12' S. of Cape Sabine and that (3) Sir G. Mackham in "The Lands of Silence" (p. 298) states that "Capt. Inglefield's extreme northern point was 70° 26' 21" N."

(3) The expedition of Otto Sverdrup in the "Fram" (1892-4) is also put out of court because his list of officers and men shows that the whole ship's company were Norwegians. He did, however, land at least three times on Pin Island, and says "I climbed to the highest point of Pin, whence I had a splendid view both north and south" and he also anchored "just north of Cape Sabine between Cocked Hat Island and Pin Island" and made an excursion along the shore of Pin Island to look for Greedy's camping ground at Camp Clay but failed to find it." He also visited Pin Island in June, 1899, for a "look out" and in the August of that year deposited supplies at the northernmost point of Pin. (see "New Land" pp. 25, 50, 166, 194).

In this book there is a plan showing the relation of Pin to the 3 islets and Cape Sabine.

Attached to this memorandum is a map showing the various places named in it, and the spot at which the relic was picked up by Dr. Livingston.

(5) "It was a gift from H. M. Queen Victoria, etc." That Queen Victoria made such gifts is shown by an engraving of a snuff-box set with diamonds presented to the explorer Stanley in Aug. 1872. (p. 719, "How I Found Livingston"). In the centre is the Royal Monogram V.R. (surmounted by a crown) similar to the monogram V.R.I. in question.

In the "Great Frozen Sea" (p. 6) Mackham says "We received many useful and valuable gifts" and "Her Majesty and the members of the Royal Family testified in a substantial manner the deep interest they took in the enterprise."

The ships cast off from Portsmouth Jetty at 4 p.m. on May 29. The last official visit was from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in the forenoon of that day (Mackham p. 91).

The only difficulty that arises in connection with this relic as being a gift to one of the officers serving in the Hayes expedition of 1875-6 is that H. M. Queen Victoria was not officially proclaimed Imperatrix until the Royal Titles Act was passed in 1876, i.e. the year of Hayes' return. The following is a suggestion to meet this difficulty:

Disraeli came into office in 1874 with a very large majority in the House of Commons, and for the next two years was what P. P. O'Connor styles "Dictator." H. M. Queen Victoria is known to have been very much in sympathy with Disraeli's Imperialist policy, and it is at least probable that even before the Royal Titles Act became law, he had the usual monogram V. R. changed to V.R.I. If this were so, it is an interesting sidelight and quite in keeping with Disraeli's well known methods.

The only other solution of the difficulty would be that some British officer, who later than 1876 received this memento from the Queen, gave it away to one of the Norwegian officers on the "Fram" or to a member of one of the American expeditions that came after 1876 to this locality.

Each of these latter suggestions is equally improbable.

(4) "Lost between the dates July 30 and Aug 4, 1875."

"Early in the morning of the 30th July," says Hayes "having run our distance for Cape Sabine I stopped steaming and at 5 a.m. I observed the "Discovery" near the land As I did not wish the ships to separate I bored through the pack.....until we gained the land in company with the "Discovery" and secured the ships in a convenient harbour, named after Lieut. Payer, the successful and energetic traveller, two miles to the southwest of Cape Sabine."

"A depot of 240 rations was established on the southernmost of the islets in a convenient position for travelling parties, a cairn being built on the summit of the highest and outer one, and a notice of our movements deposited there."

"The ships were detained at Payer Harbour for large days watching for any opening in the sea;" this resting place proved to an excellent station well protected against the entrance of heavy floss, possessing a lofty look-out."

"Early in the morning of Aug. 4 the main pack moved off... fall was immediately made."

(Official Report pages 8 & 10).
 "On the return journey the ships did not stop at Cape Sabine. "I ran past our station near Cape Sabine without visiting it." (P. 92 Official Report), and Capt. Kernham also says "at 6 p.m. (Sept. 9, 1875) we passed Cape Sabine and distinguished our cairn at the top of Brevoort island apparently untouched." (p. 355 Great Frozen Sea.)

The spot at which the relic was found could be easily reached by land, along the east and north shores of Elm Island, which are mostly low or flat. Had the excursion party continued west and south from this point it would have discovered that Cape Sabine was on an island and not on the mainland, as shown in the map published by Hayes. The spot in question would be the limit of a land excursion, for, owing to the precipitous nature of the western shore of the island, return would be made by the same route as when coming.