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Of Poles, Pressmen, and the Newspaper Public: Reporting the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902-1904

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Abstract

Between 1902 and 1904, the Scots naturalist William Speirs Bruce (1867-1921) led the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition on a voyage of oceanographical discovery. Unlike other British expeditions undertaken during the 'Heroic Age' of polar exploration, Bruce's Expedition placed undivided attention upon scientific accumulation, and dismissed the value of territorial acquisition. As a consequence, Bruce and his Expedition were subject to a distinct interpretation by the press. With reference to contemporary newspaper reports, this paper traces the unique mediation of Bruce, and reveals how geographies of reporting served to communicate locally particular representations of him, and of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition.

Key words: William Speirs Bruce, polar exploration, newspapers, journalism, geography of reporting.

Introduction

In a career which spanned 30 years, William Speirs Bruce completed 13 high-latitude expeditions. Yet, until comparatively recently, his contributions to both polar exploration and oceanographical science were inadequately documented. The recent centenary of his Scottish National Antarctic Expedition has, however, encouraged a reassessment of his life, scientific work, and exploratory endeavours (see Conroy, 1999; Munro, 1999; Speak, 1999, 2003; Swinney, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). These texts have elucidated various aspects of Bruce's biography: his student training in Edinburgh, the emergence of his Scottish identity, the evolution of his scientific method, and his fractious dealings with assorted representatives of British political authority. In so doing, these works have contributed not simply to an understanding of Bruce as explorer, scientist, and nationalist, but also to an appreciation of the complex politics and disparate motives that characterised the 'Heroic Age' of polar exploration.¹

One important component of Bruce's story has, however, remained unexamined – that of the popular reaction to his exploratory work, particularly in terms of his press mediation. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who 'published accounts of their experiences addressed not only to their scientific colleagues ... but also to a popular audience', Bruce did not issue a popular narrative based on his expeditionary voyages (Rozwadowski, 1996, p. 429). As a consequence, apart from occasional lectures and exhibition displays, the public encountered Bruce, and the work of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, almost exclusively through newspaper reports.

From an examination of contemporary press coverage, this paper is

concerned to illuminate the ways in which Bruce was reported on, and to determine to what extent this journalistic mediation influenced the popular understanding of him, and of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition. In so doing, I refer to work by Felix Driver and Beau Riffenburgh on the complex relationship that existed between explorers and the press during the latter half of the 19th century (Driver, 2001; Riffenburgh, 1991, 1993). As these writers make clear, scientific and territorial exploration both encouraged, and profited from, sensational coverage in newspapers. I hope to demonstrate, however, that the reporting of Bruce was influenced not only by this dominant mode of representation, but that it was shaped by more parochial concerns. By this, I mean that in different locations, Bruce and the Expedition were reported on, and were represented, in different ways. It is my claim, then, that it is possible to describe a geography of reporting – to show that location mattered to the ways in which Bruce and the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition were written about, and were discussed.

In order to place Bruce in context, I begin by considering the connections between polar exploration and press sensationalism during the late-nineteenth and early-20th centuries, and by examining the degree to which particular cultures and styles of journalism influenced the depiction of polar explorers and scientists. I then go on to chart the development of Bruce's scientific method, and to reflect on his treatment by the press – local, national, and international – during the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition.

Creating a sensation: the British press and polar exploration

On 15 July 1840, *The Times* recorded in sober and matter-of-fact style that an 'interesting rather than important geographical discovery has been made this year in the Southern Antarctic Ocean'. This distinctly undramatic report – describing the simultaneous discovery of the Antarctic continent by Charles Wilkes with the United States Exploring Expedition, and by Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville with *L'Astrolabe* and *Zélée* – in no way prefigured the fevered and sensational press coverage which typified later polar reportage. In a relatively brief period during the late 19th century, the high latitudes became for the press and for the public an arena of heroic endeavour, synonymous with thrilling sensation (Riffenburgh, 1993).

For 19th-century explorers and the public, the encounter with the Polar Regions, particularly the Arctic, was negotiated within a framework of specific aesthetic conceptions. Drawn from traditions in European art and philosophy, particular notions of beauty, and of the relationship between nature and humanity, influenced the way in which the high latitudes were perceived, written about, illustrated, and discussed (Spufford, 1996). The sublime – which referred to the aesthetics of grandeur, and to the emotions of awe, marvel, and surprise engendered by particular landscapes – dominated descriptions of the Arctic. The northern high latitudes were regarded without question as 'somehow vaster, more mysterious, and more terrible than anywhere else on the globe' (Loomis, 1977, p. 96). This understanding of the Arctic as somewhere grand and terrible, yet a place that might also 'exalt the human mind and soul' was rehearsed and reinforced in travel narratives, newspaper reports, illustrations, and literary

fiction (Loomis, 1977, p. 99). From the autumn of 1854, however, sublimity was replaced by sensation, when the fate of Sir John Franklin's expedition in search of the North-West Passage was revealed to an astonished and disbelieving public.

Franklin's expedition had become trapped by advancing ice in the high Arctic during September 1846. The surviving staff and crew made repeated journeys south in search of rescue, but were subject to intense cold and lacked basic supplies. Despite resorting to cannibalism, no member of the party survived. News of this disaster did not reach Britain, however, until 1854, when the Scots explorer John Rae, who had led one of several expeditions in search of Franklin, reported to the Admiralty that not only was Franklin and his party dead, but that they had engaged in the morally-ambiguous practise of cannibalism (Withers, 2001; McGoogan, 2002). The news that Franklin's men were dead was greeted with shock; the suggestion that 'From the mutilated state of many of the corpses ... it is evident that our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource – cannibalism – as a means of prolonging existence' was met with incredulity (*The Times*, 23 October 1854).

Only gradually did the British press and public accept Rae's grim revelation – a recognition that was to change the Victorian's perception of the Arctic. The dreadful truth of Franklin's fate made grand and romantic representations of the Arctic appear unhappily naïve. As David frames it, 'The *frisson* of fear resulting from the sublime representations of the Arctic created by artists and narrative authors now seemed inappropriate in the face of a tragedy on an unparalleled scale' (David, 2000, p. 109). Franklin's expedition marked not only the demise of the Arctic sublime, but, perhaps more significantly, facilitated the subsequent sensationalisation of exploration.

The press and the explorer

The middle decades of the 19th century witnessed several important developments in the British newspaper press. Improving literacy and advances in print technology increased the audience for, and potential reach of, the press. The abolition of the Newspaper Stamp Duties Act in 1855 permitted the development of inexpensive, mass-circulation newspapers. The emergence of the penny press coincided with the adoption of novel stylistic, typographical, and rhetorical practices, pioneered first in the United States (Riffenburgh, 1991). These stylistic innovations were applied with enthusiasm to the reporting of geographical exploration, particularly that in the high latitudes, by newspaper proprietors who saw opportunities 'to increase circulation by stimulating the creation of heroic myths' (David, 2000, p. 83).

Perhaps the most celebrated example of this process – which reflected not only the trend towards sensational journalism, but also embodied the 'bold, brash and uncompromising' nature of the late-Victorian imperial project – was Henry Morton Stanley's expedition in search of David Livingstone (Driver, 1991, pp. 137-138). Stanley, in his capacity as travelling correspondent for *The New York Herald*, had been charged with locating Livingstone, or bringing back 'all possible proofs of his being dead', by the newspaper's editor, James Gordon Bennett (Stanley, 1872, p. xix). Bennett saw an opportunity, in so doing, to satisfy the American public's desire for sensational and heroic travel narratives, and to

exploit the animosity towards Britain which had emerged in the postbellum United States.

What was significant about Stanley's expedition, which culminated in 1871 with his famed meeting with Livingstone at Ujiji, on the shore of Lake Tanganyika, was that it represented the juxtaposition of two modes of travel: adventurous and scientific. Whilst Livingstone epitomised the institutional authority of British geography and of scientific exploration, Stanley was, as Driver explains, 'a thoroughly modern figure, an interloper among "gentlemen geographers"' (Driver, 2001, p. 126). Livingstone's exploratory approach contrasted fundamentally with that of Stanley's; it marked the difference between 'sober science and sensational discovery, "professional" fieldwork and "popular" travel' (Driver, 2001, pp. 1-2). As a consequence, Stanley, both personally, and in the guise of his writings, was received differently by the newspaper public, and by the representatives of British geographical authority.

For the latter group, Stanley 'lacked the credentials of either the gentleman or the scientist'; he was deficient in terms of 'social standing, scientific merit and moral legitimacy' (Driver, 2001, p. 129). Such inadequacies mattered less, if at all, to the public who read Stanley's newspaper dispatches, and later travel narratives. Indeed, Stanley's reports served both to increase the circulation of the *Herald*, and to convince its editor that he had discovered 'the most effective way to create news and grab an audience' (Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 58). The *modus operandi* pioneered by Bennett and Stanley, and their deliberate and calculated mediation of Livingstone, served, irredeemably, to alter the role of the press in reporting exploration, and in representing to the public the work of travellers, both scientific and adventurous.

The influence of these new journalistic practices, and advances in the technology of news gathering and dissemination, coincided with, and found expression in, the race for the North Pole – an era during which the most sensational Arctic expeditions were mounted, and the 'myth of the explorer' was fashioned (Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 2). Throughout this period, the symbiotic relationship between explorers and the press became increasingly significant. Whilst the former enjoyed the financial support and publicity provided by newspapers, the latter benefited from the increased circulation engendered by the promotion of heroic myths and sensational tales (David, 2000).

The rhetoric of sensationalism and accounts of heroism that had become a staple of Arctic reporting by the close of the 19th century were, however, largely absent from the press treatment of Antarctic exploration. Unlike the Arctic, which captured 'British people's fascination', the Antarctic was, in popular imagination, a literal and figurative *terra incognita* (David, 2000, p. 1). Although the Antarctic would soon after become the prime arena of heroic endeavour, during the early years of the 20th century it was abstract and enigmatic – a lure to science, but an unknown and unknowable quantity to the press and to the public. In this context it is, perhaps, unsurprising that news of Bruce's proposed Scottish National Antarctic Expedition engendered a relatively muted response from the British press.

No heroes, no sensation: reporting the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition

Since serving as surgeon/naturalist on board the *Balaena*, part of the Dundee Antarctic Expedition of 1892-1893, Bruce had been keen to revisit the high southern latitudes, and to conduct a programme of rigorous scientific investigation, free from the restrictions imposed by commercial activity (Mill, 1951). The Dundee Antarctic Expedition – a speculative voyage intended to establish the economic viability of the southern whaling grounds – had presented Bruce with an important opportunity for novel scientific research, and to put into practice the knowledge and investigative techniques he had acquired as a student in Edinburgh between 1887 and 1892 (Swinney, 2002a, 2003).

During this period, Edinburgh was the prime locus of polar and oceanographical science in Britain – a unique environment that refined Bruce's scientific method and directed his exploratory desire (Speak, 1992). Trained in the principles of oceanography by the naturalist John Arthur Thomson at the Scottish Marine Station in Granton, and provided with the opportunity to work on the results of the HMS *Challenger* expedition (1872-1876), under the guidance of its erstwhile naturalist John Murray, Bruce received an unparalleled instruction in the theory and practise of oceanography, and acquired a template for effective polar science. His attempts to apply these methods during the Dundee Antarctic Expedition were, however, frequently sabotaged by the commercial imperatives of the enterprise. As a consequence, Bruce's time onboard the *Balaena* served not only to cement his fascination with the Antarctic, but also to engender his strong desire for a purely scientific expedition. It was not, however, until the close of the century that Bruce was presented with a realistic opportunity for further Antarctic work.

Following the Sixth International Geographical Congress in London in July 1895, the Royal Geographical Society had been advancing plans for a national Antarctic expedition. By 1898, in an effort to more effectively secure funding for the proposed expedition, the Royal Geographical Society, together with the Royal Society, formed a Joint Antarctic Committee. The Committee, under the leadership of the Royal Geographical Society's President, Sir Clements Markham, formulated an ambitious programme of territorial exploration and scientific discovery (Huntford, 1999). Keen to secure a part in this enterprise, Bruce wrote to Markham, in April 1899, proposing himself as leader of the British National Antarctic Expedition. Although Markham agreed to meet with Bruce, there was little real prospect of him securing the post.

Markham formulated his views on the matter of exploration leadership in his *Considerations respecting the choice of a leader of the Antarctic expedition*. He noted that 'The appointment of a leader to the Antarctic Expedition is the most important step of all. He should be a naval officer, he should be in the regular line and not in the surveying branch, and he should be young, not more than 35; but preferably some years younger than that'.² Of these criteria, Bruce, then 31, satisfied only the last. After some months, Bruce was, in late 1899, offered the position of naturalist to the British National Antarctic Expedition. He rejected the offer. Bruce believed that, with the experience and expertise he had gained in five preceding polar expeditions, he was primed to realise his plan, conceived whilst

onboard the *Balæna*, of leading a purely scientific expedition to the Weddell Sea – an enterprise that might, in both form and function, better represent the ideals that he espoused.

Plans for the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition were officially revealed by Sir John Murray, Bruce's oceanographical mentor, at an address to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in Edinburgh on 22 March 1900. Although the news was in no way designed to create a sensation, it was the subject of much discussion in the Scottish press. Murray's initial announcement was reported on by two Edinburgh newspapers: *The Scotsman*, a penny daily, and its ha'penny companion, the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*. Published by John Ritchie & Co., *The Scotsman* and *Dispatch* both enjoyed large circulations, and were read throughout Scotland (Morris, 1992). The *Dispatch*, in particular, was sent 'to agents in all parts of Scotland by the afternoon trains' (North, 1989, p. 464). As a result, although the reporting of the Expedition's unveiling was local, its reading was national.

For *The Scotsman* (23 March 1900), there was 'much to be said for the proposal that Scotland should reserve for itself a special part in the task of attempting to unlock the "secret of the Antarctic", which is to mark the opening of a new century'. For the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (23 March 1900), the proposed expedition 'would assuredly be a great Scottish triumph'. *The Scotsman* and *Dispatch* together emphasised the quality of Bruce's character, and noted the desirability of instigating a Scottish expedition that would complement 'what might be called ... [the] Imperial Expedition' then being organised by the Royal Geographical Society (*The Scotsman*, 23 March 1900).

The Scotsman, in one elegant and prophetic sentence, conveyed the essence of Bruce's character, and in so doing made clear his suitability for leading such an expedition: 'Mr W.S. Bruce, who, in his explorations of the earth's surface and climate, has perhaps covered more degrees of latitude than any other man of his generation, is not a Scot who is likely to be daunted by cold and distant prospects of success when he has a scientific goal in view' (*The Scotsman*, 23 March 1900). The *Dispatch* expressed similar sentiments: 'If anybody is capable of overcoming all obstacles in the cause of Polar exploration, that man is Mr W.S. Bruce, whose enthusiasm in the cause is unbounded' (*Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 23 March 1900). Here is emphasised, I suggest, three important facets of Bruce's character, aspects that were reprised in, and even characterised, his later press treatment: his exploratory experience, his stoic devotion to science, and his Scottishness. Only very occasionally was it noted that Bruce, who had cultivated a strong Scottish identity since arriving in Edinburgh as a student, was born in London.

News of the proposed Scottish Expedition was, however, received less favourably by Sir Clements Markham, who, Bruce recorded, regarded the Expedition with 'suspicion and antagonism'.³ Fearing for the financial security and press celebrity of the British Expedition, Markham embarked on what Bruce described as a 'campaign of calumny against the Scottish Expedition'.⁴ Despite Markham's interference, the Treasurers of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition secured financial contributions from all quarters of Scottish society, including 'some little orphans who had saved their halfpennies to help the Expedition'.⁵

The press coverage of the Expedition, which had been rather sporadic during the period of fundraising, increased markedly as the departure date of the Expedition neared. The Expedition's inadequate funding was a common theme of these reports. In seeking sufficient funds to allow two summer seasons in the Weddell Sea, Bruce and the press together made an appeal to the Scottish public's patriotism by emphasising the national character of the Expedition. The *Edinburgh Evening News* reported Bruce's hope that 'those interested in the work of research ... [should] come forward and make the expedition a credit not only to Scotland but to the Empire'.⁶ For *The Scots Pictorial* (11 November 1902), it was 'not yet too late for Scotsmen interested to see that the Scottish Expedition should not be driven to the barest economy, and that it should set out with at least as fair a chance as the expeditions of other nations'. The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (2 November 1902) expressed its view that 'in the interest of science and patriotism, it is to be hoped that Mr Wm.S. Bruce and his staff will be able to wrest more secrets from these cold latitudes'. The previous week, *The Scotsman* (23 October 1902) had emphasised the Expedition's Scottish credentials:

Though the venture is the result of private organisation and enthusiasm, it partakes largely of a national character, for the money has been raised in Scotland, the ship had been all but rebuilt in Scotland, the scientific staff and crew, with perhaps one or two exceptions, are Scotsmen. Scotland has thus done her share in the work which is going forward in the Antarctic.

Readers of these newspapers could be in little doubt that the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition was representative not only of science but also of Scotland and, perhaps more significantly, were made aware that it was one's patriotic duty (for Scotland *and* the Empire) to contribute monetarily to its success.

These reports make clear the complex and apparently contradictory nature of Scottish national identity at the turn of the 20th century. Whilst the Scottish press deliberately underlined the Expedition's Scottishness – thereby distinguishing it from the British National Antarctic Expedition – they also emphasise its contribution to a wider imperial project. This mirrored Bruce's own view that 'Scotland is not a dependent country, but an individual nation working hand in hand on at least an equal footing with her partners in the Great British Federation' (Bruce, 1908, 196). Bruce's perspective on Scotland's national identity was not unusual. Morton makes clear, for example, that 'Scottish national identity in the Victorian and Edwardian period ... coexisted with a strong sense of loyalty to the British monarchy, British Empire, and British constitution' (Morton, 2001, p. 443).

The promotion and maintenance of the British Empire 'formed an important part in shaping Scottish national self-perception' (Finlay, 1997, p. 13). Indeed, for a 'nation of "empire builders"', the Scots' adherence to the British imperial mission was such that it surpassed the implicit rivalry with England (Finlay, 1997, p. 13). In this respect, Scottish identity was not a product of 'mere provincialism', but was a corollary of Scotland's position in a 'wider imperial family' (Forsyth, 1997, p. 10). As a consequence, the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition could be seen and understood as both a local, Scottish enterprise, and as a national, imperial undertaking.

The journey south

In the week before the Expedition departed, the press was invited to Troon, where the Expedition's ship *Scotia* was berthed. This was one of a series of press calls organised by the Expedition's secretary James Ferrier. As publicist, in all but name, Ferrier ensured, through a regular series of promotional opportunities – ranging from the testing of meteorological kites on the Braid Hills, to the exhibition of Russ, the Expedition's Samoyed sledge dog, at a canine fair in Edinburgh's Waverley Market (he took second place in the variety class) – that Scottish newspapers' interest in the Expedition was maintained. Those journalists who toured the *Scotia* at Troon, and who met with her scientific staff, appear to have been impressed by her outfit and purpose. One correspondent neatly captured the spirit of the Expedition:

The Scottish Expedition is not setting out on a wild, extravagant dash for the South Pole, but rather on a patient, economical voyage of investigation and discovery. The results may not affect prices on the Stock Exchange, but they will surely add to the world's store of scientific knowledge, and help men to understand of many things which, even in the twentieth century, remain mysteries.⁷

In his dealings with the press, Bruce appears to have been eager not only to appeal to the patriotism of the Scottish public, but also to arouse local pride. In a letter to an Aberdeen newspaper, most likely *The Aberdeen Free Press*, Bruce, under the *nom de plume* 'Argonaut', wrote that of the *Scotia*'s complement of thirty-nine staff and crew, fully eleven were from Aberdeenshire.⁸ In so doing, Bruce added an important local dimension to what was a national enterprise. In this way, I suggest, the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition acquired an added significance for the newspaper public of Aberdeenshire – it was local *and* national.

The *Scotia* slipped her moorings on the morning of 2 November 1902, and, with the crew giving a hearty rendition of Auld Lang Syne, headed south into the uncharacteristically placid waters of the Irish Channel. This rather anonymous departure, with 'no send-off, no visits from royalty and no cheering crowds' was, ironically, one of the few occasions on which the Expedition was criticised by the Scottish press (Rudmose Brown, 1923, p. 118). One local newspaper, scandalised that the sanctity of the Sabbath had been disrupted, questioned what had become of Scotland 'when a ship can sail on the Sabbath with pipes playing and people singing not psalms, but profane songs' (quoted in Harvey Pirie, Mossman, and Rudmose Brown, 2002, p. 14). The following day, the *Scotia* put in at Dublin where she enjoyed a warm and encouraging reception. *The Northern Whig* (Belfast), reporting the Expedition's layover, noted: 'Ireland is the original home of the Scots. Is it therefore too much to hope that those of Scottish descent will do something to forward this vast educational project?''⁹

The enthusiasm expressed by the Scottish and Irish press and public at the departure of the Expedition was not mirrored in England. The sailing of the *Scotia* went unreported by almost the entire London press, including *The Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and *The Pall Mall Gazette*. The Expedition was, however, reported on frequently and in detail by *The Times*. This disparity indicates, I suggest, that

the Expedition's insubstantial press coverage in England reflected editorial decisions rather than a genuine ignorance of its progress and departure. Yet, the fact that the Expedition coincided with the larger, better publicised British National Antarctic Expedition goes some way to explaining its unequal reporting by the English press.

Although framed in opposition by Clements Markham, the British and Scottish National Antarctic Expeditions were, for Bruce, 'cooperative rather than competitive'.¹⁰ In scope, method, and motive, the work of the *Discovery* and the *Scotia* was dissimilar yet complementary. Although scientific research was a primary spur to both expeditions, it was subordinate on the *Discovery* to geographical exploration and, indeed, discovery. Where the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition reflected the apotheosis of Bruce's approach to polar science, the British National Antarctic Expedition was driven by two occasionally conflicting motives: the Royal Geographical Society's desire for territorial discovery, and the Royal Society's call for scientific research (Kirwan 1959). With science as its single, and constant object, the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition stood in contrast to the dominant exploratory discourse – the race to the pole. As Bruce noted, 'Personally, I am not a pole hunter and I do not believe in urging men on till they drop in order to get a mile further north or south than somebody else, but I do believe in an effort to get to know the unknown wherever or whatever it is and thus add to the wealth of human knowledge'.¹¹

On 6 January 1903, the Expedition arrived at the Falkland Islands. It was from here that the staff dispatched the oceanographical collections they had amassed on their southward journey and sent final letters home. This was also the last opportunity Bruce had to appeal to the Scottish public's munificence. In a letter published in *The Scotsman* in late February 1903, Bruce wrote:

I only hope, now that we have been able to raise the money to equip an excellent ship and secure a crew for one complete year's work, that friends at home will see us through for the second year. If everybody who has been patriotic and enthusiastic enough to subscribe would now secure one additional subscriber the second year would be secured (*The Scotsman*, 25 February 1903).

In a sympathetic letter published the previous day, Bruce's friend and supporter William Gordon Burn Murdoch wrote: 'This Scottish expedition is so thoroughly complete and, in my mind, so much superior in organisation to any other expedition that it is to be sincerely hoped that subscriptions may come in still, so as to allow it to stay out a second year; and so add to our knowledge of the construction of our little world and ... to add honour to the flag they carry at their fore peak, the red lion rampant' (*The Scotsman*, 24 February 1903). With these final appeals for funding, the *Scotia* departed the Falkland Islands on 26 January and headed for Antarctic waters – and journalistic obscurity.

When the Expedition eventually emerged from the isolation of the southern high latitudes, after ten months of scientific investigation, it was welcomed with an enthusiastic and unexpected press reception. Having been scandalised by the high price demanded by the Admiralty to recoal the *Scotia* at the Falkland Islands, Bruce had chosen to redirect the ship to Buenos Aires where he could

refuel and refit at a greatly reduced cost.¹² To Bruce's bewilderment he, and the Expedition, were greeted with fevered enthusiasm by the Argentine capital's press, public, and politicians – a reception excelled only by that which marked the Expedition's return to Scotland.

Bruce and the Expedition were reported on with alacrity by Buenos Aires's leading (and rival) English-language newspapers: *The Standard* and *The Buenos Aires Herald*. Owned and edited by Thomas Bell, member of a wealthy Scottish family, *The Herald* was first to report the arrival of Bruce, on account of him being 'an old-time college mate of a member of the [newspaper's] staff' (*The Buenos Aires Herald*, 16 December 1903). Under the headline 'FROM THE FROZEN SOUTH', Bruce was described as 'a gentleman highly educated, having great experience in the work with which he is connected, is dark complexioned, tall, robust, in perfect health and apparently 40 years of age' (*The Buenos Aires Herald*, 16 December 1903). Bruce was, in fact, 35 years old.

Keen to celebrate the arrival of Bruce and the Expedition, the British expatriate community in Buenos Aires organised a series of entertainments (Fig. 1), which culminated in a gala banquet at the city's Grand Hotel – this despite the objection of one resident who believed that 'a banquet on a hot night is more Purgatory than pleasure, and it takes a lot to move men from their cool houses and gardens to suffer the unpleasant proximity of perspiring waiters' (*Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 3 February 1904). Despite the proximity of perspiring waiters, almost one hundred guests acquired tickets for the banquet. As *The Herald* (24 December 1903) reported:

The applications for seats have been numerous and it is evident that a great number of the British Community intend to show by their presence the warmth of their welcome to Mr. Bruce and his colleagues and their recognition of what these explorers have so quietly done and the credit they have brought their country's flag. Scotchmen will be interested in knowing, and the Scotch will surely be there to a man, that the 'Scotia' brings her own piper.

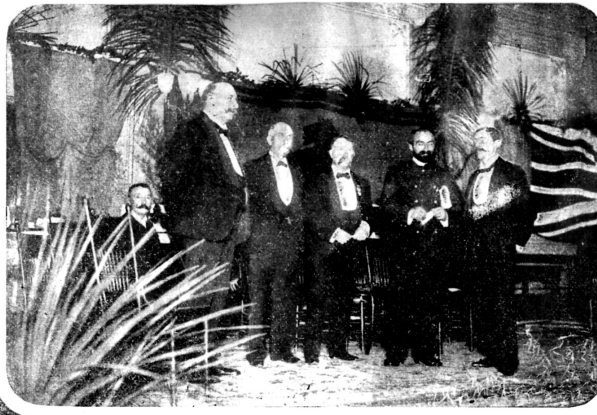
It is apparent that whilst the Expedition had a special appeal to those Scots living in Buenos Aires, it was, in its slow, plodding, rigorously-scientific spirit, regarded as a credit to the entire British community – an approval enthusiastically displayed at the Expedition's celebratory banquet.

For the banquet, which was held on 29 December 1903, the Grand Hotel was decorated in 'white and green to suggest ice' (*The Buenos Aires Herald*, 30 December 1903). For *The Standard* (30 December 1903), 'Rarely had there been a more enthusiastic gathering witnessed than that which assembled ... to do honour to Dr. Bruce [sic] and his brave officers'. After the meal, which ranged over nine courses, the Expedition's piper Gilbert Kerr discoursed a series of jigs, reels, and strathspeys which aroused 'indescribable enthusiasm' among the guests (*The Standard*, 30 December 1903). 'After the cigars had been lighted', the British Minister, W.H.D. Haggard, rose, and addressing Bruce and his officers, expressed hope that

the warmth of their reception would contrast with the chilliness of the regions from whence they came recently; that he was proud to welcome them in the name of the British community of Buenos Aires (Cheers) on the accomplishment of their heroic task which

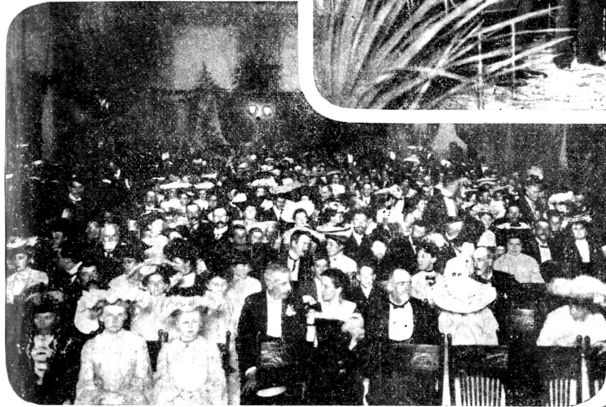
Fiesta á los expedicionarios del « Scotia »

En uno de los salones del Gran Hotel, se realizó la semana última el banquete con que lo más distinguido de la colonia inglesa, obsequió al Dr. Bruce jefe de la expedición polar efectuada en el vapor Scotia. Fué un acto simpático y de estricta justicia, pues bien se debía ese homenaje al intrépido expedicionario que ha vivido durante varios meses en la región de los hielos persiguiendo descubrimientos científicos y explorando aquellas regiones. Como se sabe, el Dr. Bruce ha de-



LA COMISIÓN DE FESTEJOS

jado instalado en Steland un observatorio magnético cuya posesión ha dado al gobierno argentino, previo un arreglo especial de condiciones, entre las cuales se halla la de que el Ministerio de Agricultura mantenga en aquel punto un personal competente, á objeto de continuar



LA CONCURRENCIA EN ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY

estudiando y haciendo las observaciones pertinentes. La demostración hecha al doctor Bruce ha sido soberbia. La falta material de espacio nos impide consignar la lista de los asistentes, pero se hallaban reunidos todos los residentes ingleses de alguna significación en la banca y en



EL BANQUETE EN EL GRAND HOTEL

el comercio. La sobremesa se prolongó hasta hora avanzada entre la amable *causerie* de los concurrentes. —La conferencia que el doctor Bruce dió en el local de la St. Andrew's Society, despertó natural interés, congregando numeroso público ávido de oír la descripción de las regiones desconocidas y tan de actualidad en estos últimos tiempos. El doctor Bruce, que tiene excepcionales condiciones de conferenciante, empezó por historiar á grandes rasgos las diversas expediciones polares, su organización y objeto y la utilidad que prestan para entrar luego á describir minuciosamente con variedad de detalles amenos las peripecias de su expedición.



FIESTA EN EL SAILORS' HOME

Fig. 1. Images from an unidentified Spanish-language newspaper depicting the reception of Bruce and the Expedition in Buenos Aires. This was the first photographic representation of Bruce to appear in a newspaper. Although the halftone process necessary for photographic reproduction had been pioneered in the United States in the 1880s, the Scottish press continued to rely upon engraved illustrations. Clockwise from top: banquet at the Grand Hotel, entertainments at the Sailors' Home, and a conversazione at the St Andrew's Society. (Reproduced with the permission of Edinburgh University Library.)

would be of such use to science and which reflected such honour on the name of Scotland; he said he did not think that anywhere else outside of British Dominions Mr. Bruce would find such a representative gathering to welcome him; he saw before him Englishmen, Scotchmen (Cheers) and men of British decent born in Argentina, and this brought him to mention the fact that he hoped...that a co-operation between Mr. Bruce and the Argentine authorities now under consideration would lead to a continuance of studies [which] under Mr. Bruce's superintendence had already afforded results of such value to science (Cheers) (*The Buenos Aires Herald*, 30 December 1903).

This speech was notable not only for the enthusiasm which it embodied, but that, for the first time, the work of the Expedition had been described as 'heroic'. Whilst at one level, Haggard's comments might be regarded merely as an effusive expression of admiration, brought on by food, music, and alcohol, they reflect, I suggest, the genuine pride and approval with which one overseas British community viewed the Expedition. Although of particular significance to the Scots of Buenos Aires, the Expedition was seen, in the first instance, as *British*. For Haggard, and for those gathered at the Grand Hotel, Bruce and his staff were, indeed, heroes.

Public enthusiasm for Bruce and the Expedition was not, however, confined to these organised events. Bruce's efforts to take a daytrip to explore the Parana River Delta, for example, were abandoned on account of him being 'fagged out by the autograph beggars who besieged all of the Scotia party with post cards' (*The Buenos Aires Herald*, 30 December 1903). The minutia of the *Scotia*'s refit (the cost of which was largely borne by the Argentine Government) and of the movements of her staff and crew were reported on in great detail – *The Herald* and *The Standard* frequently vying to outdo one another. In one instance, *The Herald* (5 January 1904) wrote: 'The suggestion of the "Standard" that the Scotia is badly in need of beer seems rather mean to several readers. The Scotia expedition has need of money most, not booze, dinner etc. The "Standard" evidently cannot distinguish a serious expedition of scientists from a picnic party.' Refitted and with a full supply of coal, the *Scotia* left Buenos Aires on 21 January 1904, and completed a second season of scientific work in the Weddell Sea.

After a journey of approximately 33,000 miles, the *Scotia* returned to the Firth of Clyde on the morning of 21 July 1904. Accompanied by 'a long triumph of flag signals, fog-horns and escorting vessels, and cheering crews' the *Scotia* sailed up the Clyde and anchored off the Marine Biological Station at Millport where she received a telegram of congratulations from King Edward VII (Rudmose Brown, 1923, p. 212). The enthusiasm which attended the return of the Expedition was reflected in the following day's press reports. The *Dundee Advertiser* (22 July 1904) spoke of the Expedition as 'a Scottish undertaking and a national achievement', whilst *The Daily Record & Mail* (22 July 1904) noted that the crew of the *Scotia* had 'secured for Scotland an honourable place in the records of Antarctic investigation'. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (30 July 1904) was more lyrical. It described the *Scotia*'s staff and crew as 'our small but determined band of heroes' who had braved 'that southern fringe of land ... which we speak of with bated breath as the Antarctic'. The *Magazine*'s reportage is here distinct from that of the mainstream press. Depicted as heroes, Bruce and

his men were said to have ‘seen and conquered’ Antarctica – the ‘most fearsome spot on the surface of the globe’ (*Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 30 July 1904). This is indisputably not how Bruce regarded the Expedition, and it would appear that, despite his efforts over the previous half decade to emphasise the Expedition’s scientific credentials, it was seen and reported on by the *Magazine* in heroic and sensational style.

Unlike its departure, the return of the Expedition attracted the attention of the London press. The events at Millport were reported on by the *Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Evening Standard*, the *Morning Advertiser*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Times*. These articles were, in essence, factual records and lacked the editorial assessments which characterised the Scottish newspaper treatment of Bruce and the Expedition. For readers of these newspapers, the Expedition was presented as an important scientific enterprise, crewed by ‘intrepid explorers’, rather than as a significant national achievement (*The Daily Mail*, 22 July 1904). It is, perhaps, unsurprising that there should have been a difference in emphasis between the Scottish and English press, but the fact that this was so, engendered what might be thought of as different geographies of understanding.

In different parts of Britain, the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition was reported on, and was understood, in distinct ways. In Scotland and in England, the Expedition had particular and different meanings. For the English press and public, the significance of the Expedition lay in its scientific accomplishments, whilst in Scotland, the Expedition acquired an additional significance – by doing credit to science, it had done credit to Scotland.

Conclusion

The tradition of sensation and of heroic myths which typified the reporting of the Polar Regions during the late-19th and early-20th centuries was, to a notable degree, absent from the press engagement with Bruce. In his desire to pursue science rather than adventure, Bruce failed to satisfy the apparent popular appetite for tales of heroism and of sensation. Yet, it is clear that Bruce and the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, despite their resolutely scientific characters, were reported on extensively, and aroused significant popular interest in consequence. It would be inaccurate to suggest, therefore, that because Bruce did not fit the myth of the explorer as hero, he was absent from public consciousness. Rather, Bruce came to represent, for the Scottish press, a particular facet of the Scottish character – self-reliant, resolute, dedicated, and, crucially, independent of the authorities of London. The image that the Scottish press created of Bruce contributed significantly to the ways in which he was understood by the Scottish populace.

The newspaper treatment of Bruce – what might be termed his press mediation – exposes the constitutive significance of place. Whilst Bruce was not actively reconstructed by the press to conform to a heroic ideal, he *was* presented and reported in ways that accentuated specific facets of his character. As such, Bruce occupied a number of distinct roles: that of scientist, explorer, Scot, and nationalist (among others). In different locations, these different ‘Bruces’ were written about, and were presented to different publics. A similar representational multiplicity is apparent in recent historiographical work on the commemoration

and memorialisation of Mungo Park, the Africanist, and of Isaac Newton (Withers, 2004; Fissell & Cooter, 2003). In contemplating the 'social meanings attached to the name of Newton', Fissell and Cooter have shown that, like Bruce, Newton and his texts existed in a variety of socially and geographically particular guises (Fissell & Cooter, 2003, p. 134). As such, Bruce and Newton were both subject to what McNeil has termed an 'active creative process' that informed the 'cultural meanings' associated with them (McNeil, 1989, p. 223).

The spatially varied reporting of Bruce meant that the popular conception of him, and of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, was both nationally made – as a question of Scottish science and Scottish national identity – and was a profoundly local construct, shaped by the parochial concerns of newspapers. This geography of reporting ensured that location *mattered* to the ways in which Bruce and the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition were presented, received, and understood.

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Notes

1. The 'Heroic Age' of polar exploration is taken to be the period between the International Geographical Congress in London in 1895 and the return of Ernest Shackleton's British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1917 (Kirwan, 1959).
2. Royal Geographical Society, Antarctic Archives 3/2/1. *Considerations respecting the choice of a leader of the Antarctic expedition*. Markham typescript, 1898.
3. Edinburgh University Library [hereafter EUL]. Gen. 1651 101/5. Bruce typescript, undated.
4. EUL Gen. 1649 77/3. *Recent Antarctic exploration*. Bruce typescript, undated.
5. EUL Gen. 1651 101/5. Bruce typescript, undated.
6. EUL Gen. 1672. Volume of press cuttings relating to the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. EUL Gen. 1646 19/20. *Introductory lectures to Saint Mungo's College*. Bruce typescript, 1904
11. Ibid.
12. EUL Gen. 1646 24/14. Bruce to Holdich, 15 March 1910.

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