



## SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB

### Newsletter - Summer 2014

*President: John Peden,  
Vice Presidents: Douglas Anderson and Anthony Walker  
Secretary: Iain Allison, Treasurer: Chris Calver,  
Committee members: Chris Bartle, Ashley Buchan, Jenny Newall,  
David Shaw and Fraser Sutherland*

[www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk)

*New members are welcome: the Club is for people of all ages and nationalities who have an interest in the Arctic, particularly if they have already been, or are planning to travel there. See the web site for an application form.*

### **45<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Supper 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014 The Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William Phone number 01397 702331.**

[salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com](mailto:salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com)

The Gathering and Supper will be held on Saturday 15 November, though members are also invited to an informal get-together on Friday evening. The hotel has reserved rooms for us for 45 people on the Friday night and 80 on the Saturday night. Please book early quoting Scottish Arctic Club

**Accommodation and Supper Costs for Hotel Residents:** The cost of Dinner, Bed and Breakfast for both Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November is £37 per person per night sharing a twin/double room. For bed and breakfast only on Friday night the price is £32 per person sharing a twin/double room. For singles there is an additional single supplement of £10 per person per night. Please note that the price for Saturday night includes the cost of the Supper for hotel residents.

**All this should be paid direct to the hotel by the individuals.**

**Supper Costs for those not staying in the Hotel:** If you are attending the Supper but not staying at the hotel, the price of the Supper will be £20 per person.

**A booking form will be circulated in October detailing all the options**

**The Gathering**, with talks and presentations, will be held on Saturday afternoon from 2-5 pm, followed by the AGM. For this there will be a charge of £10 per person, to include tea/coffee/biscuits, conference costs and the costs of our guests.

**Subscriptions:** The subscription year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August. All members should pay their subscriptions using the booking & subscription form to be circulated in October whether you are attending the Gathering or not.

For alternative accommodation over the Supper weekend, see [www.visit-fortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.visit-fortwilliam.co.uk)

**Meantime BOOK DATES in your diaries and  
RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM.**

#### **Note from the Secretary**

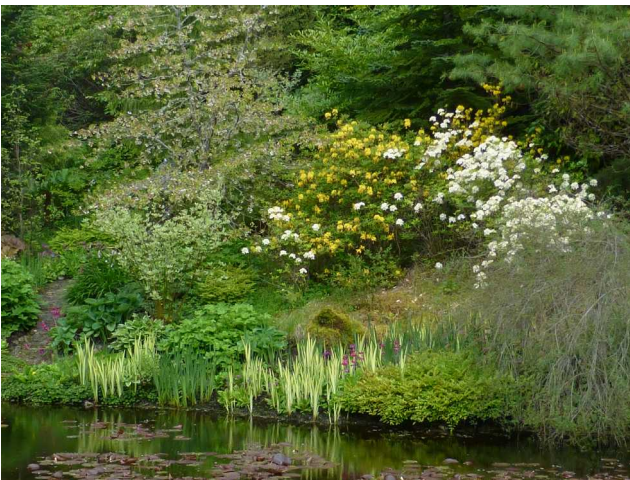
The next **Newsletter** should be with you in October along with the subscription renewal notice and booking form for the Gathering. Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome - short book reviews, news items, interesting web sites etc.

## 2014 SPRING MEET – Attadale

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014

This year a total of 23 members enjoyed another spring meeting at Attadale. The weather was kinder than it was last year with some sunny days, much less snow on the tops and very little wind. We even managed pre-dinner drinks outside with Golden Eagles soaring overhead. The garden at Attadale was looking its best and on the first Sunday several of us enjoyed supporting a charity day, with lunch included, in the garden and house, hosted by the Macpherson family. Several members tackled the hills whilst others explored the coastline and some of the tracks in Applecross, Torridon and around Loch Carron. Five kayakers/canoers had days on Lochs Carron, Torridon and Kishorn and Louise Hollinrake had the good fortune to follow an Otter which surfaced in front of her kayak and swam ahead oblivious of her. Several of the local hostelrys and restaurants were sampled and we had three communal evening meals with Edda and Frank Loesch treating us to an extremely tasty traditional north German supper made with ingredients which they had brought with them from Bremen and John Hay provided and cooked a delicious venison roast. As usual there were excellent cakes, puddings and cheeses all provided by the members. Many thanks to everyone involved.

Kathleen Cartwright.



Spring colour at Attadale

Members relaxing in the sun (unless the sunglasses are just for show!)

Two views of members having one of the three communal meals

A decision about the 2015 Spring Meet has yet to be made and currently we are investigating a different venue. A decision will be made shortly.



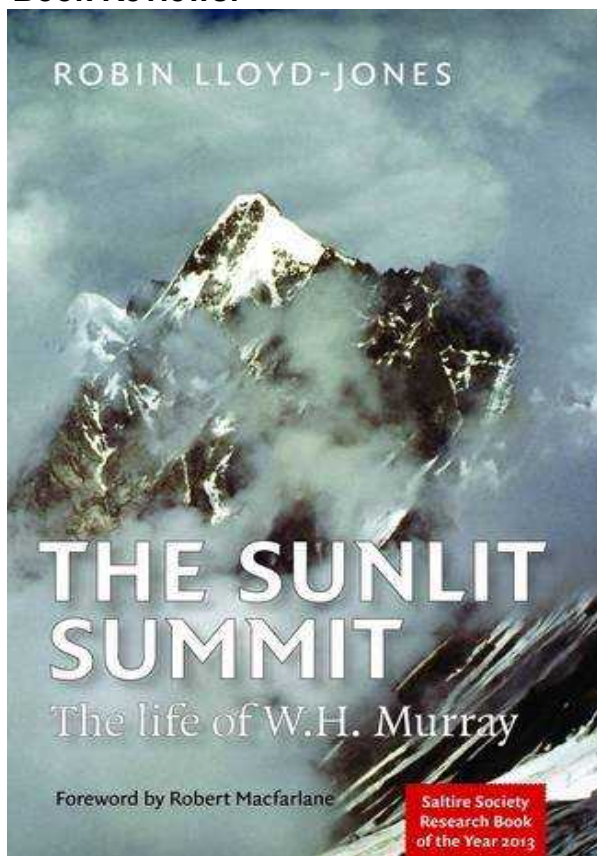
## SAC Expedition Awards 2013

This year, through the generosity of members, we were able again to increase the total sum to £3200. The awardees were:

- Ashley Buchan & Ronan Dugan, 4-person, self organised, late-winter circular tour of Iceland
- Matthew Burke, Northern Exposure, Polar skills course, Svalbard.
- Joseph Cook, University of Derby, Kangerlussuaq, West Greenland
- Adam Davies, Banchory Academy, Harding Icefield, Alaska.
- Laura Duncan, BES participant, Arctic Finnmark Expedition, Northern Norway.
- Eleanor Hopkinson, BES participant, Arctic Finnmark Expedition, Northern Norway.
- Cameron Mackay, self-organised, 6-person, research expedition, Russell glacier, Kangerlussuaq
- Victoria Slaymark, Northern Exposure, Polar skills course, Svalbard..
- Alistair Walker, Students on Ice, Canada, Baffin Island & West Greenland
- Emily White, Ocean Youth Trust, Inverness to Lofoten Islands

Hear all about their adventures at the Annual Gathering in Fort William on Saturday 15 Nov.

### Book Reviews:



### **The Sunlit Summit: The life of W. H. Murray by Robin Lloyd-Jones**

Published by Sandstone Press

RRP: £19.99 ISBN: 978-1-908737-38-0

Paperback edition due mid-October

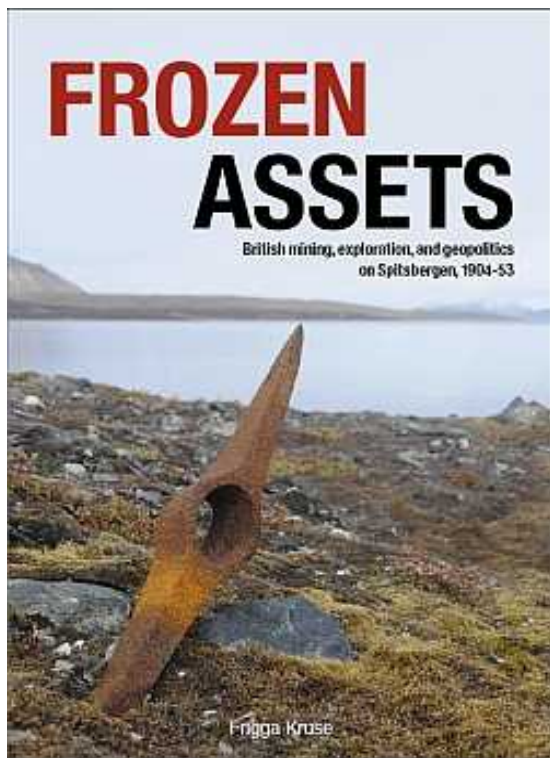
“an exceptionally fine biography”, “a truly great book”, “a joy to read”, “fitting tribute to a great human being”, “a very in-depth, almost educational, journey”, “a very important biography”, “should be read by every climber and rambler”, “such a worthy addition to the field of mountaineering literature”, “a brilliant culmination of much research”, “written in Robin Lloyd-Jones' illuminating style”, are some quotes from previous reviews of Robin's book. A member of the Scottish Arctic Club for over 15 years, Robin Lloyd-Jones has gifted a copy of his 2013 book to the Club. Robin's Arctic interests centre on Inuit culture and the history of Arctic exploration. We are familiar with the heroic age of Arctic and Antarctic exploration; W.H. “Bill” Murray represents the heroic age of Scottish winter climbing and Robin Lloyd-Jones' authoritative biography was the 2013 winner of the Saltire Society's Research Book of the Year.

In 358 pages and 34 chapters with 50 photographs (18 in colour) Robin Lloyd-Jones traces Murray's life from his childhood in Glasgow to his important conservation work in later life. The foreword is by Robert Macfarlane. Murray's own autobiography, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, was published in 2002, six years after his death. *The Sunlit Summit's* publication celebrates his life in the centenary year of his birth. Murray's widow, Anne, did not want a biography published of her husband, an intensely private man, and Robin Lloyd-Jones therefore did not have access to whatever remains of his written material but was able to speak to many who knew him. Focussing on aspects of Murray's life, the biography deals with his Scottish winter climbing and his rise to be among the pre-eminent climbers of the late 1930s, his internment as a prisoner of war and the destruction of the manuscript of his book, “*Mountaineering in Scotland*”, which was rewritten after the war, his Himalayan experiences, his work for four organisations dealing with the

Scottish landscape, the National Trust for Scotland, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Scottish Countryside Activities Council and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

Robin Lloyd-Jones investigates Murray's drive, his own philosophy and his studies of eastern religions and philosophies, and his commitment to serving the people of Scotland through his committee work. This is a very well researched, authoritative biography of one of the giants of Scottish mountaineering. Extensive footnotes, appendices and on-line resources permit further investigation if wished. My over-all impression is of wonder at the breadth of coverage and depth of detail that Robin Lloyd-Jones has managed to bring to his subject, William Hutchison Murray OBE.

Iain Allison



**Frozen Assets: British mining, exploration and geopolitics on Spitsbergen, 1904 – 53**  
by Frigga Kruse

University of Groningen, The Netherlands, 2013

This is volume no 9 of a series of Dutch research papers published by the Arctic Centre of the University of Groningen. The research entailed archaeological fieldwork with 2 LASHIPA (Large scale Historical Exploitation of Polar Areas) Projects as well as extensive archival research both in Scandinavia and Great Britain.

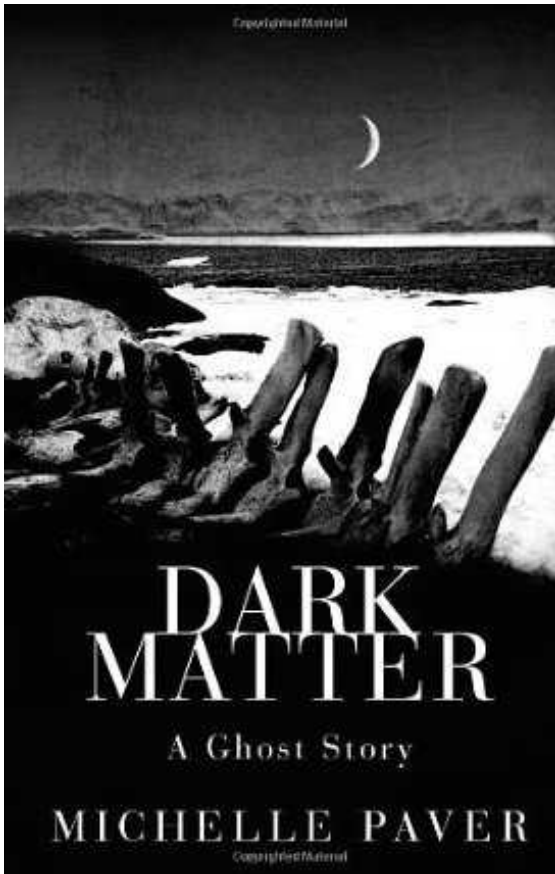
The book examines the activities of four British companies over a period of fifty years at the beginning of the twentieth century starting when Spitsbergen was still a No Man's Land, so open to exploitation by adventurers and financial interests from numerous countries, until after the Second World War, by which time it was firmly under Norwegian sovereignty.

This is a subject on which there is very little information readily available but which merits being more widely known about. After all if the companies had had their way with the UK government Spitsbergen, or Svalbard as it is now known, would have been part of the British Empire.

All four companies went to Spitsbergen with high hopes of discovering valuable coal and other mineral resources. The author starts off with an examination of the physical evidence still remaining on Spitsbergen to this day, then proceeds to explain, with the help of the archive material, what happened to each company and why they all failed in the end.

Since it is a thesis the book is written as an academic study, rather than a historic account, which makes it quite a heavy but a very authoritative read. One might like to have known more about the American, Norwegian and Russian companies who were also present and what happened to them but the author sticks strictly to her subject of British interest. There is quite a lot of specialised language (i.e. network builders) which is not easy for the lay person to follow. But for anyone wanting to know more about the industrial history of Spitsbergen this is a very interesting read. The main thing missing is a good map, showing all the places mentioned, but this a fault with many books these days. There are several small maps, copies of the originals which the companies produced as part of their mining claims, or, as with the Scottish Spitsbergen Syndicate, a fundamental part of their exploration activities on the islands. There also numerous contemporary photos which give a good idea of the companies' activities and a good bibliography for anyone wanting to research further into the subject.

Christine Simm



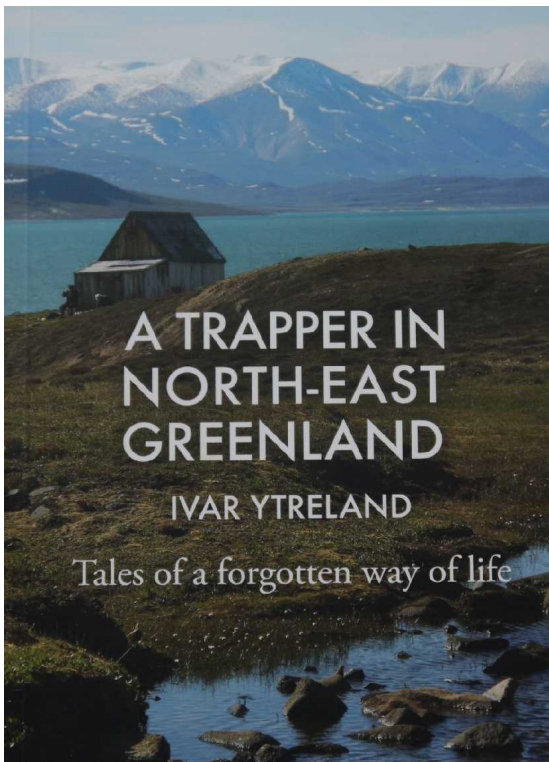
## **Dark Matter by Michelle Paver**

Orion, London, 2010  
ISBN 9781409121183

Michelle Paver is best known for her bestselling series of children's books The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness, set in prehistoric times but she also writes for adults.

Dark matter is a ghost story set in Spitsbergen in 1937 when five men set off from London to do research overwintering on the island. One by one the men are forced to return home for various reasons leaving Jack on his own with the dogs. To say more would spoil a very gripping and suspenseful story but the book captures the feel of the islands as the winter approaches and the light gradually fades.

Christine Simm



## **A Trapper in North-East Greenland: Tales of a forgotten way of life by Ivar Ytreland**

Translated and amended by **David Matthews**  
Original published 2010, this translation 2014  
ISBN: 978-0-9550773-1-9

In this very attractive book Ytreland chronicles his time as a trapper in NE Greenland for about 3 years from 1946. In 240 pages with about 100 illustrations, many in colour in this translation, not only is the hard life of the trapper described but also the variety of wildlife, some of the characters he encountered and the vessels which supplied them during the short ice-free period in the summers. We are indebted to Club member, David Matthews for this readable and flowing translation allowing English-speakers a glimpse of a way of life few have ever experienced. Recently on BBC television Adam Nicholson presented two programmes on another forgotten way of life of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that of the Antarctic whalers. One man with his dog team covered an area of about 100 km by 100 km and by 1960 the trappers' way of life became

uneconomic. About the same time the Antarctic whaling industry ceased because the use of factory ships with their fleet of whale catchers drove the whale almost to the point of extinction and in the 50 years since the blue whale has yet to recover. Starting with the author's and translator's introduction there is then an historical background before the main part of the book – the trapper's tales and stories about polar bears taking up about half the book. Then come details of the huts, some of the characters including the Sirius Patrol, more on the animals and the book finishes with



the author's returning to the area in the 1990s. A rewarding read for anyone interested in the human history and the natural history of North-East Greenland.

Iain Allison

Signed copies of the book are available at £18 from Glacier Books ([www.glacierbooks.com](http://www.glacierbooks.com)) but Club members may order directly from David Matthews at a slight discount £15 + £2 for P&P to UK addresses. Order through the web site ([www.tswpublishing.co.uk](http://www.tswpublishing.co.uk)) or by emailing him at <[david.matthews@cantab.net](mailto:david.matthews@cantab.net)>. Payment can be via Paypal (a/c the steading workshop), or simply a cheque posted to him payable to "The Steading Workshop".



Long-standing Club member, Susan Aikens is one of the stars of a reality TV programme, Life Below Zero° which is currently in the middle of its 2nd season run on the national Geography Channel. From the website: "Life Below Zero follows seven people as they battle for the most basic necessities in the state with the lowest population density in the United States. Living at the ends of the world's loneliest roads and subsisting off the rugged Alaskan bush, they battle whiteout snow storms, man-eating carnivores, questionable frozen terrain, and limited resources through a long and bitter winter. Some of them are lone wolves; others have their families beside them. All must overcome despairing odds to brave the wild and survive through to the spring. Only the mentally fit will be able to endure the extreme test of isolation and endless work required to survive the many months of winter in the Alaska bush." See

<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/life-below-zero/>



"Sue lives 500 miles from the nearest city and 80 miles from the closest road. She is the warden of Kavik River Camp, a base for hunting groups, that she also calls home. She has lived there for seven years, but has been in Alaska for 30 years. She loves to share the unique experience of her camp with people during hunting season, and it can house up to 83 hunters at a time."

Sue uses social media site Facebook to interact with her fans and has now reached Facebook's limit of 5000 "friends"!

An interview with her appeared in the magazine Alaska and the link is below. Thans to Ronan Dugan for finding this one.

<http://www.alaskamagazine.com/index.php/november-2012-summary/450-alaska-interview-sue-aikens>

Not many members write books or appear on reality TV, but many have interesting stories to tell of their Arctic experiences which would be of interest to the membership. The newsletter is your opportunity to upend the bear barrel and let the light shine out.

## **Svalbard Polar Bear Tragedy 2011**

In the June newsletter from the British Exploring Society (formerly BSES), there is this statement:

### **Svalbard Inquest**

The Coroner's Inquest into the tragic death of Horatio Chapple, on our 2011 Svalbard expedition will take place between **July 7th-11th** in the Salisbury Coroner's Court. It is expected to last the full five days. The report from Sir David Steel, a retired high court judge, which followed the independent inquiry he carried out, will be coming out on the morning of the 7th. It will be available on the British Exploring website, alongside a statement from our Chairman Edward Watson.

The society's web address is: [www.britishexploring.org](http://www.britishexploring.org)

## **Finding Franklin\***

Fresh analysis of forensic and other historical data by University of Glasgow scientists has cast new light on the fate of Captain Sir John Franklin's Royal Navy expedition to find the Northwest Passage nearly 170 years ago.

The disappearance of the Franklin expedition, which set off in 1845, made international headlines and led to the biggest search and rescue mission in history.

The expedition was the first to use canned supplies, and in the 1980s Canadian scientists found high levels of lead in ice-preserved remains, prompting the theory that lead poisoning played a large part in the men's deaths. But Professor Keith Millar of the Institute of Health & Wellbeing and Professor Adrian Bowman of the School of Mathematics & Statistics, working with their colleague, archaeologist and author William Battersby, have found that while there was evidence of lead poisoning, rates were in line with normal rates for 19th-century Britain.

Statistical estimation showed great variation in lead levels, suggesting that only some of the men had symptoms. This is backed up by written records from the expedition, showing that the first two years went well, with the crew doing extensive exploration on land and building winter camps. This would not have been possible if they had all suffered from lead poisoning, which causes psychological and neurological damage.

It is now known that the expedition set out at a time when Arctic climatic conditions were unusually harsh. The two ships became trapped for two winters in a remote region where neither rescue nor escape was possible.

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[www.glasgow.ac.uk/avenue](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/avenue)*

## **Finally ...**

The Club is actively seeking a new secretary to take over at the AGM in November. The Club would not exist but for members sharing in its running and with activities delegated among the committee members none of the positions is too onerous. To find out what the secretary's role is please just email.

Club secretary: Dr Iain Allison  
Club email address - [sacsecretaryia@gmail.com](mailto:sacsecretaryia@gmail.com)  
Web site: [www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk)