**Book Reviews**

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**William Speirs Bruce, Polar Explorer and Scottish Nationalist**

*Peter Speak*


Many readers of Antarctic Science will have at least a nodding acquaintance with the voyage of the *Scotia* in 1902–04, carrying the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, organised and led by Dr W.S. Bruce. The expedition discovered Coats Land, which borders the Weddell Sea, and also set up the meteorological observatory on Laurie Island, one of the South Orkney Islands, whose work has been continued by Argentine and other observers ever since. However, unless they have read the biography of Dr Bruce by his friend and admirer R.N. Rudmose Brown, readers are unlikely to know much of that ardent Scottish Nationalist and reticent polar explorer, Dr Bruce himself. Rudmose Brown's biography of Bruce, *A naturalist at the Poles*, was published in 1923, not long after the Bruce's death in 1921. It has 316 pages, and two folding maps of the polar regions in contrast to the book under review, which is a paperback of 144 pages

Its author, Peter Speak, tells us that the aim of his far shorter and less personal biography "is to celebrate the centenary of Bruce's finest achievement, the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, and to recall for a modern readership the outstanding qualities and achievements of one of Scotland's finest polar explorers and scientists who carried the Saltire, with little reward, to some of the most inhospitable environments of the Earth".

Peter Speak has already done great service to the memory of Bruce by editing *The Log of the "Scotia" Expedition*, 1902–04, published by Edinburgh University Press in 1992. This was the first volume of the scientific results, which never managed to get into print. He is thus very well qualified to write this commemorative booklet on a polar scientist and oceanographer, who has rarely emerged from the shadow of the more charismatic figures of Scott and Shackleton. In the foreword to this new life, the former librarian of the Scott Polar Research Institute, H.G.R. King, points out that Bruce led eleven expeditions to the Arctic and two to the Antarctic. His papers were brought to Cambridge in 1947, by James Wordie, at that time chairman of the Institute's committee of management and a fellow Scot. It was through the study of the Bruce collection that Peter Speak was inspired to edit the Log of the "Scotia" expedition and now to publish a fresh, well illustrated biography. There is much of interest in it regarding Bruce's background and character. The approach is chronological, so that we become aware of the explorer's aims, scientific work, difficulties and enthusiasms during the expeditions in which he took part, and the problems at the Scottish Oceanographical laboratory in Edinburgh, which was unable to survive the crisis of World War I. Bruce's Scottish Nationalism proved to be a help in getting sponsorship in Scotland, but a hindrance in his relations with London.

Well researched, well written and well produced, this book is a "snip" at less than £10. One minor detraction: it is sad to see a ship become "it", not "she".

*ANN SAVOURS*

**The Climate of the Arctic**

*Rajmund Przybylak*

ISBN 1402011342. 99 euros, £63, US$95

This book, the second in a row for this author in the Kluwer series *"Atmospheric and Oceanographic Sciences Library"*, describes climate features of the Arctic basin and the adjacent land masses. It does so in a transparent fashion, starting off with the general atmospheric circulation and then following the "classical" order of radiation, temperature and other meteorological variables such as cloudiness and precipitation. It ends with chapters on Holocene climate variability and projected future climate changes. The book has a pleasant layout and the plentiful figures, almost one on each page, are generally of good quality. I felt the author could have combined chapters instead of assigning separate chapters to each meteorological variable since this has led to some very short chapters: the chapter 'Air Humidity', for instance, covers only seven pages, and that on 'Cloudiness' 11. I was also slightly disappointed to note that little use was made of modern meteorological model data sets, like the ECMWF re-analysis data. A nice chapter is that on Holocene climate variability, where historical records (e.g. from ice cores) blend nicely into the present-day research of the North Atlantic Oscillation. All in all the book is a commendable effort to update the existing review literature on Arctic climate, perhaps less useful for the Arctic climate specialist, but certainly of value for those seeking a review of the topic.

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