

Frederick J. Krabbé, last man to see HMS *Investigator* afloat, May 1854

William Barr¹ and Glenn M. Stein²

Abstract

Having ‘served his apprenticeship’ as Second Master on board HMS *Assistance* during Captain Horatio Austin’s expedition in search of the missing Franklin expedition in 1850–51, whereby he had made two quite impressive sledge trips, in the spring of 1852 Frederick John Krabbé was selected by Captain Leopold McClintock to serve under him as Master (navigation officer) on board the steam tender HMS *Intrepid*, part of Captain Sir Edward Belcher’s squadron, again searching for the Franklin expedition. After two winterings, the second off Cape Cockburn, southwest Bathurst Island, Krabbé was chosen by Captain Henry Kellett to lead a sledging party west to Mercy Bay, Banks Island, to check on the condition of HMS *Investigator*, abandoned by Commander Robert M’Clure, his officers and men, in the previous spring. Krabbé executed these orders and was thus the last person to see *Investigator* afloat. Since, following Belcher’s orders, Kellett had abandoned HMS *Resolute* and *Intrepid*, rather than their return journey ending near Cape Cockburn, Krabbé and his men had to continue for a further 140 nautical miles (260 km) to Beechey Island. This made the total length of their sledge trip 863½ nautical miles (1589 km), one of the longest man-hauled sledge trips in the history of the Arctic.

Introduction

On 22 July 2010 a party from the underwater archaeology division of Parks Canada flew into Mercy Bay in Aulavik National Park, on Banks Island, Northwest Territories – its mission to try to locate HMS *Investigator*, abandoned here by Commander Robert McClure in 1853.³ Two days later underwater archaeologists Ryan Harris and Jonathan Moore took to the water in a Zodiac to search the bay, towing a side-scan sonar towfish. Three minutes after switching on the sonar, 450 metres from shore, they located the wreck of *Investigator*, sitting upright in 11 metres of water, largely intact although missing the masts. Harris and Moore returned again in July 2011 to dive on the wreck, examine it at close quarters and to photograph it. They were the first people to see and touch the wreck in almost 160 years. The last people to see her afloat were a party of men led by Frederick Krabbé, Master on board HMS *Intrepid* in May 1854.

Frederick John Krabbé was born on 26 October 1824 at Falmouth, Cornwall. His father was Charles Frederick Krabbé, originally Carl Friedrich Krabbe, a German-speaking Danish citizen, born on 24 March 1774 at Rendsborg (now Rendsburg, Schleswig, Germany). He may have reached England as a prisoner-of-war, and decided to stay on his release. One

¹ Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB T2 N 1N4, Canada. circumpolarbill@gmail.com

² 646 Park Forest Court, Apopka FL 32703-1970, U.S.A. eloasis@earthlink.net

³ Cohen, *Lost beneath the ice*, p. 30.

may hazard a guess that it was at this point that he added the acute accent to the German name Krabbe (in which the final 'e' was sounded), to ensure that it continued to be sounded, now that the family was English. Frederick's mother (Charles Frederick's second wife) was a Cornish woman, Mary John, born on 26 October 1783 at Helston. Frederick John Krabbé had five siblings: two brothers, two sisters and a half-brother.

His father, who had acquired a medical background, had joined the Royal Navy, and just over a year after Frederick's birth, on 12 November 1825, was made Assistant Surgeon.⁴ Given his father's profession it was only to be expected that Frederick would also pursue a naval career. Along with his brother Charles he attended the Greenwich Hospital School, and thereafter made his way up the ranks of the Navy, making the rank of Second Master (i.e. Second Navigation Officer) on 4 December 1845. In that capacity (or in two cases as Acting Master) he served on board HM ships *Penelope*, *Styx*, *Rolla*, and *Sharpshooter* between 1 January 1846 and 29 March 1850.

Krabbé had the misfortune to be the ranking officer on the deck of HMS *Sharpshooter* when she ran aground on the Sussex coast between Worthing and Lancing, just west of Brighton, in the early hours of 14 December 1848. The result was that the ship's captain, Lieutenant-Commander John Crawshaw Bailey, who had been below, sick, at the time, the gunner William Coles, who was officer-of-the-watch, and 2nd Master Frederick Krabbé were summoned before a court martial on board HMS *Victory* on 27 December 1848. A member of the court was Captain Horatio Thomas Austin who

...begged to say a few words in favour of Mr. Krabbé, whom he had seen performing the duties of second master on board the *Sharpshooter*; during the late experimental cruise. It afforded him the greatest satisfaction to state the ability, zeal and watchfulness which he had observed in the general conduct of that officer; indeed so much was he impressed with his deserving conduct that he had determined, on the first opportunity, to recommend him for promotion to the rank of master.⁵

Despite this very positive recommendation the court 'found the charge of negligence in part proved' against the captain and Krabbé, 'inasmuch as they had received on board the *Sharpshooter* a pilot without having properly ascertained his qualifications, and further the lead had not been kept going so constantly as it should have been while standing in for the land'.⁶ Since he was ill at the time, Lieut.-Commander Bailey was only sentenced 'to be admonished to be more careful in future' whereas Mr. Krabbé was 'severely reprimanded',⁷ while Mr. Coles was acquitted. This verdict does not appear to have seriously injured Krabbé's career, however.

First Arctic voyage

Krabbé's first foray into the Arctic was as Second Master on board HMS *Assistance*, to which he was appointed on 30 March 1850, under the command of Captain Erasmus Ommanney.

⁴ Stein, *Discovering*, p. 343, n. 41

⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 'Court martial'.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Assistance was one unit of a squadron of four vessels under the overall command of Captain Horatio Austin, and it appears very likely that Krabbé owed his appointment to some degree to the latter officer. The squadron was dispatched by the Admiralty in 1850 in search of Sir John Franklin's expedition which had disappeared in 1845 while searching for the Northwest Passage from Atlantic to Pacific. The squadron consisted of the sailing vessels *Assistance* and *Resolute* (the latter under Austin's own command) and the steam tenders *Pioneer*, commanded by Lieutenant Sherard Osborn and *Intrepid*, commanded by Lieutenant Bertie Cator.

The squadron spent the winter of 1850–51 beset in the fast ice off Griffith Island, off the southwest coast of Cornwallis Island. From there in April 1851 Captain Erasmus Ommanney, captain of HMS *Assistance*, mounted an impressive sledging campaign, involving seven sledges, which travelled southwest to and beyond Cape Walker, a site specifically identified in Franklin's instructions as to where he should go.⁸ Krabbé was in charge of one of the support sledges, travelling as a unit of this remarkable cavalcade to Cape Walker, from where he then returned to the ships off Griffith Island. In May to June he made a second sledge trip to Cape Walker, where he left a depot of provisions for various of Ommanney's sledge crews which were still in the field further south, and also built a massive cairn on the summit of the cliffs at Cape Walker.⁹ By 11 August Austin's entire squadron had broken free of the ice and was homeward bound. It reached England on 8 October 1851.

On his first sledge trip Krabbé and his men had covered 120 nautical miles (222 km), and on their second trip 110½ nautical miles (204.8 km). He was thus an experienced Arctic traveller, having coped with rough pressure ice, deep snow, blizzards, and afflictions such as frostbite and snow-blindness among his men.

Second Arctic voyage

Soon after his return to England, on 11 October Krabbé received notification that he had been promoted Master, and it would not be long before he would be heading back to the Arctic again. In the spring of 1852 he joined a ship with which he was already quite familiar, namely the screw steamer HMS *Intrepid*. For this expedition it would be under the command of Captain Francis Leopold McClintock, who had also participated in the earlier expedition and who now had specifically asked for Krabbé as his Master, i.e. navigation officer.¹⁰ *Intrepid* was scheduled to return to the Arctic as a unit of a squadron under Captain Sir Edward Belcher to continue the search for the missing Franklin expedition. The squadron consisted of five ships, the same four as on the previous expedition, namely HMS *Assistance* (Sir Edward Belcher), *Resolute* (Captain Henry Kellett), *Pioneer* (Captain Sherard Osborn) and *Intrepid* (Captain Leopold McClintock), plus HMS *North Star* (Captain William Pullen). Krabbé would thus be serving under McClintock, an officer whom he had been able to observe at fairly close quarters on the earlier expedition, in that McClintock had been First Lieutenant on board *Assistance*. On this latest expedition *Resolute*, to which *Intrepid* was again attached as tender, was to be commanded by Captain Henry Kellett, an Irishman known to be a congenial captain, and one who had already spent several summers in the Arctic, on board

⁸ Barr, 'Searching'.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ McClintock, 'Private journal'.

HMS *Herald*, searching for Franklin in the Chukchi Sea. By contrast, as Krabbé would soon learn, if he was not already well aware, Sir Edward Belcher had a dubious reputation; his treatment of the officers and men on two of his earlier ships had been the subject of courts of enquiry.¹¹

Belcher's sailing orders, dated 6 May 1852,¹² stipulated that he should proceed to Beechey Island, where *North Star* was to remain as a depot-ship, while one ship and tender were to push north along Wellington Channel, while the other ship and tender were to head west to Melville Island where they were to leave a depot, if possible at Winter Harbour, in case parties from *Enterprise* (Captain Richard Collison) or *Investigator* (Commander M'Clure) were in distress. These two vessels had been dispatched to the Pacific in 1850 to enter the Arctic via Bering Strait. Collinson's vessel *Enterprise* had ultimately entered the Arctic in July 1851 and had not been heard from since then.¹³ M'Clure's *Investigator* had not been heard from since she happened to encounter Kellett's HMS *Herald* in the Chukchi Sea in July 1850.¹⁴

Krabbé joined the *Intrepid* at Woolwich some time in March 1852 but he had some important business to attend to before the squadron sailed. His wife Mary had died, possibly while Frederick was in the Arctic, and over the winter he had met a lady by the name of Jane James. They were married in St Martin in the Fields, on Trafalgar Square on 27 March.¹⁵ They probably had very little time for a honeymoon before he had to return to his ship.

While Krabbé had been able to observe what the ship was capable of (especially in terms of tackling ice) during the previous expedition, as his first posting to a steamer it still was something of a novelty. All four ships from the previous expedition had been re-commissioned at Woolwich on 12 February,¹⁶ and since then had been undergoing repairs and renovations either in dry-dock or alongside at the wharf in the dockyard. *Intrepid* spent some time on dry-dock while her false keel was being repaired; much of it had been lost during a collision with an iceberg in Baffin Bay.

On 15 April all five vessels left Woolwich and were towed downriver by steamers, including *African*, to Greenhithe. There, on the 19th they were inspected by the Lords of the Admiralty, led by the First Lord, the Duke of Northumberland. The squadron left Greenhithe in the early morning of the 21st, the three sailing vessels towed by *African*, *Monkey* and *Lightning*; *Pioneer* and *Intrepid* proceeded under their own steam.

Just as with the earlier expedition the squadron first called at the Orkneys, anchoring off Stromness on 25 April.¹⁷ The ships were watered from Login's Well and a supply of fresh provisions was taken aboard. They put to sea on 29 April. From 3 May until the 10th the squadron was battling a westerly gale, resulting in various towlines breaking, and on the 6th

¹¹ Stuart-Stubbs, 'Belcher'.

¹² Great Britain, *Arctic expedition*.

¹³ Collinson, *Journal*; Barr, *Arctic hell-ship*.

¹⁴ Osborn, *Discovery*.

¹⁵ TNA, ADM 13/70/296, ff. 296-298.

¹⁶ McClintock, 'Private journal'; Mumford, 'Private journal'.

¹⁷ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 9.

it was even hove-to for a while.¹⁸ On the 8th the steam tugs departed, taking with them mail for England¹⁹, no doubt including some letters from Krabbé.

On that same day Captain Kellett was reported sick and was confined to his cabin. The word was passed around the squadron that he was ‘seriously indisposed.’ He was still sick on the 13th and to get a second opinion *Resolute*’s surgeon, Dr William Domville, invited Dr David Lyall, *Assistance*’s surgeon, aboard. The situation caused a great deal of anxiety for many of the officers and men since Kellett was very popular. Fortunately he soon recovered completely

On the evening of the 17th an ice-blink to the north indicated the presence of ice in that direction. On the 20th observations revealed that the ships had reached the longitude of Kap Farvel, although they were well south of that cape; the first drift ice was observed on that date. It snowed on the following day, and the first land-sighting was made – Kap Desolation.

Just as with Krabbé’s previous expedition the squadron dropped anchor off Kronprinsens Ejland (Imerissoq) in the Whalefish Islands (Hvalfiskeøyane) on 29 May. And just as in 1850 local Greenlanders came off in kayaks and umiaks and a lively trade began for skin jackets, trousers and sealskin boots.²⁰ Having seen the advantages of sealskin boots Krabbé would probably have done his best to acquire one or more pairs.

On the morning of 5 June the squadron moved north to Godhavn on Disko. On 10 June the squadron headed for the Vaygat, hoping to find coal from the convenient coastal outcrops, but parties sent ashore were unable to find them. On the 13th, cutting his losses Belcher ordered that the ships run back around the south end of Disko and north along its west coast. The squadron reached Upernavik on the 19th and sailed again next day, officers and men having purchased more skin garments and boots. On 24 June *Resolute* and *Intrepid* had to take evasive action as a large iceberg drifted towards them.²¹ With the steamers towing the other three vessels much of the time, by 26 June the ships were in quite heavy ice, and to shelter from ice pressures had recourse to cutting docks in the ice, using ice-saws. On the 28th *Resolute* was caught in a nip, and her rudder was smashed,²² but when the pressure eased the ships got under way again, the men tracking, i.e. towing the ships by brute force as they marched along the edges of leads. On 1 July they came up with the whaling fleet, 14 vessels, all British except for a lone American, *McClellan*. On the 8th, all were subjected to ice pressures again, and *McLellan*, driven by surging ice, fouled the bowsprits of *North Star* and the whaler *Alexander*. Thereafter *McLellan* was crushed and sank. With the ice slackening, all the ships were able to make some progress westwards, but nevertheless the whalers decided to cut their losses and to head south to find easier ice conditions in order to push west to the Baffin coast. But the Navy squadron persevered and by 30 July had reached ice-free water, the edge of the large polynya known as the North Water, occupying the northern reaches of Baffin Bay.

Pushing west, by 1 August the Navy ships were off Kap York, by 3 August off Cape Horsburgh, the eastern tip of Philpotts Island, by 5 August off Dundas Harbour, and by 10

¹⁸ Mumford, ‘Private journal’.

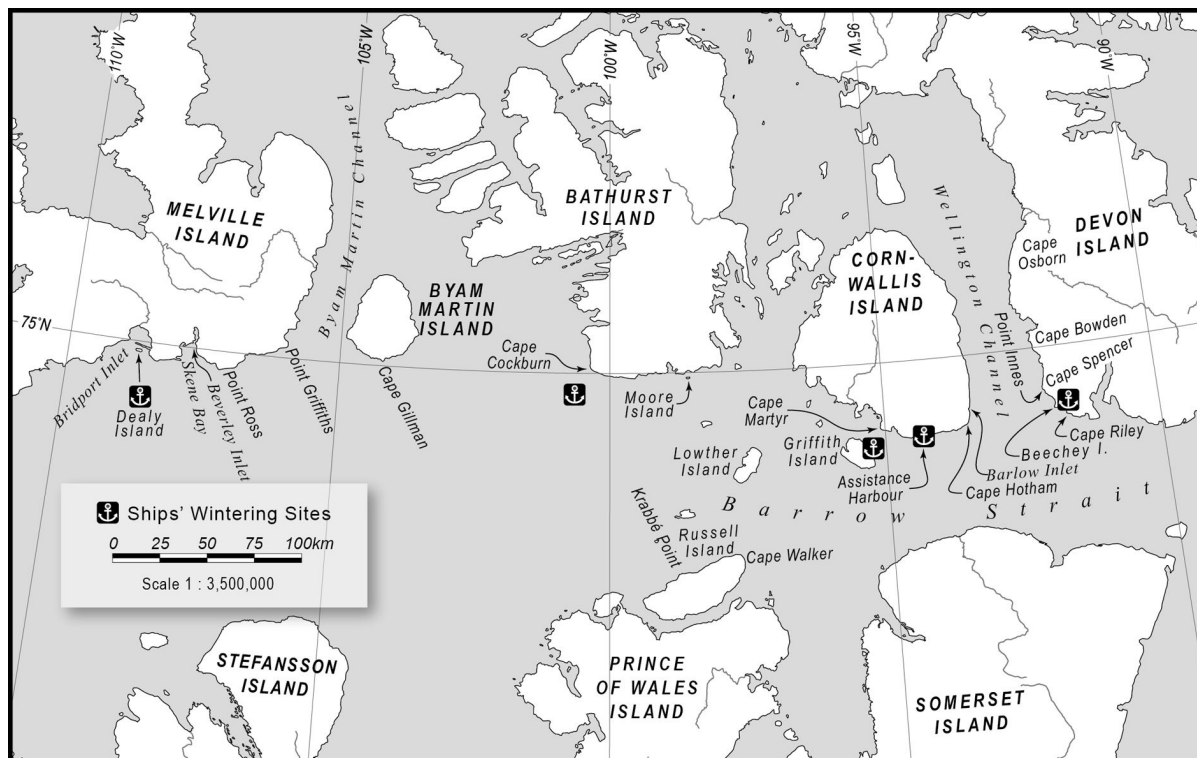
¹⁹ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 13.

²⁰ McClintock, ‘Private journal’; Mumford, ‘Private journal’.

²¹ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 27.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

August had reached Beechey Island. From here Belcher decided that he would take *Assistance* and *Pioneer* north up Wellington Channel, while Kellett would head west to Melville Island with *Resolute* and *Intrepid*. Following Belcher's written instructions from the Admiralty, *North Star* would remain at Beechey Island as a depot ship.



Map 1. From Beechey Island to Dealy Island

Crossing Wellington Channel, by 16 August *Resolute* and *Intrepid* were off Cape Hotham, and Kellett sent two boats ashore to check the depot and a cairn and message which Krabbé had left two years previously. Later that day, at the entrance to Assistance Harbour *Resolute* ran solidly aground; the driving ice pushed her even more solidly aground. Having passed her a towline *Intrepid* managed to pull her afloat again²³ at the price of losing half of her false keel.

By 17 August the two ships were back at Griffith Island, so familiar to Krabbé and many of his shipmates from the previous expedition. Next day they were off Lowther Island, but any further westward progress appeared to be totally blocked. But after a patience-trying wait, ice conditions improved and on the 28th, towed by *Intrepid*, *Resolute* was able to head west again. By 3 September they were off Beverley Bay on the south coast of Melville Island. Kellett came aboard *Intrepid* and ordered McClintock to reconnoitre Beverley Bay as a possible wintering site. It proved to be too shallow; *Intrepid* ran aground and only got off by laying out a kedge anchor and warping off.²⁴ Meanwhile Lieutenant Mecham and Dr. Domville had taken a party ashore from *Resolute* and had shot four muskoxen. Then in the evening Krabbé took another hunting party ashore and had even better luck, shooting an

²³ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

entire herd of eight animals, including two calves.²⁵ As is common with muskoxen (but not always guaranteed) they had simply stood, making no attempt at fleeing.²⁶ Since this herd was shot 5 miles (8 km) from the ships, the carcasses were left until next morning when they were hauled on carts to the beach and then by sledges to the ships.

By 7 September the two ships were off Winter Harbour, Sir Edward Parry's wintering site, in *Hecla* and *Griper* in 1819–20, but found it completely blocked with ice. Three sledges were sent ashore with provisions to be cached in a depot, in case *Investigator's* crew were in need of it, or for the use of the spring sledge parties. It was placed at Parry's cairn at the entrance to Winter Harbour. On 8 September the two ships started back east, and next day, about half a mile east of Dealy Island (at the mouth of Bridport Inlet) the crews started cutting docks in the edge of the fast ice, where the ships could be frozen in as the winter ice formed; this was to be the wintering site.

The usual preparations for wintering were set on foot, once the ships were frozen in: banking up the sides of the ship for insulation, housing in the upper decks and so on. On 22 September five sledge parties were sent off in different directions to place depots in anticipation of the spring sledge trips. One of these parties, led by Lt Meham (*Resolute's* First Lieutenant) returned on 14 October with startling news. Two days before, at Winter Harbour, on his way back from establishing a depot at Liddon Gulf, he had examined a cairn on top of Parry's Rock.²⁷ To his amazement he found a message from Commander Robert M'Clure of HMS *Investigator*, which he had left there in May 1852. It was to the effect that his ship had wintered, solidly beset in the ice of Mercy Bay on the north coast of Banks Island.²⁸ Kellett decided that it was too late in the season to send a sledge party across M'Clure Strait to check whether *Investigator* had managed to get free during the intervening summer. But plans were made to send a party as early as possible in the spring of 1853.

On 18 October a very sad event occurred. Thomas Mobley, the wardroom steward on board *Resolute*, who had been suffering from heart problems for some time, had a heart attack while out on deck, and died. He was buried on Dealy Island on the 26th. The sun disappeared for the winter on 4 November and on the following day both crews went to considerable lengths to celebrate Guy Fawke's Day. By this point schools for the men had already started on both ships, the officers teaching reading, writing, mathematics and navigation. Then on 23 November the first performance of the Theatre Royal, Melville Island took place. Krabbé played the role of Captain Copp in 'Charles II'.²⁹

This was not Krabbé's only contribution to the social life of the wintering ships. As in the case of many of the other ships involved in the Franklin search, there was a printing press on board, producing playbills, programmes for dramatic performances, messages to be left in cairns, messages to be sent off by balloons. On board Kellett's wintering ships most of the printing was handled by the team of Krabbé, carpenter William Dean and carpenter's mate William Mumford.³⁰ They were sufficiently skilled to be able to print on silk. Thus for the

²⁵ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 120.

²⁶ McClintock, 'Private journal'.

²⁷ Meham, 'Proceedings'.

²⁸ Osborn, *Discovery*.

²⁹ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 161.

³⁰ Hoag, *Caxton's*, p. 95.

invitations for the next dramatic performance on 7 December ('The Taming of the Shrew' and 'The Two Bonnycastles'), the captains received programmes printed on red silk, the officers on blue silk and the men on paper.³¹ On the previous expedition the team of Krabbé and Dean had been even more ambitious printing on such materials as a linen shirt, handkerchiefs, a blanket, chamois leather cartridge paper, as well as silk.³²

There was still sufficient light by 5 December to allow Krabbé and William Ibbets, *Intrepid's* engineer, to go hunting on the north side of Dealy Island. They spotted a brace of ptarmigan which 'were reported to be very sluggish in their movements, scarcely deigning to take wing, but proving more than a match for their pursuers'.³³

On 12 December the second death on the expedition occurred — that of George Drover, Captain of the Forecastle on *Resolute*. He had been in poor health ever since he had fallen ill right at the start of McClintock's sledge trip north across the island to Hecla and Griper Gulf, and had had to return to the ships on 7 October.³⁴ He was buried on Dealy Island, alongside Mobley on 19 December.

A few days later, on 23 December the officers of *Intrepid* hosted a variety evening, at which 'Mr. Krabbé made his first appearance as a conjuror'.³⁵ Under the stage-name of 'The Wizard of the North' he was assisted by Lieutenant Pim as Senor Cigazzi.³⁶ One of his tricks was especially popular; it involved an 'inexhaustible bottle' which 'to the intense delight of the recipients of its contents, proved to be something beyond mere fiction'.³⁷ Another trick which proved a real hit involved 'the drawing of rum from an old drunkard's elbow'.³⁸ The earlier theatrical performance on board *Resolute* had been staged on the main deck, and although the temperature had been raised somewhat by strategically placed stoves, the temperature was still only -5°C, and the players and audience had been severely chilled. For this reason the variety evening on board *Intrepid* was held on the orlop deck since the outside temperature was -27°C. Afterwards *Intrepid's* officers hosted a supper for their counterparts from *Resolute*. In return *Intrepid's* officers were invited to *Resolute's* wardroom for Christmas dinner on the 25th. It featured mainly the products of Melville Island: muskox, hare, ptarmigan and especially 'an enormous roast of reindeer (21 lbs) [9.5 kg] which was certainly the most delicious venison I have ever tasted'.³⁹ Meanwhile, on board *Intrepid* McClintock was particularly impressed by the good behaviour of his men. 'I have never seen so orderly a Christmas on board ship, nor one so much enjoyed. It very rarely happens that the day passes without a single case of inebriety, but such was the fact here.'⁴⁰

On 14 January another variety evening was held on board *Intrepid* when 'to feats of legerdemain, songs, recitations etc., were added phantasmagorical figures, a description of

³¹ Neatby, *Frozen ships*, p. 213.

³² Hoag, *Caxton's*, p. 91.

³³ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 166.

³⁴ McClintock, 'Journal of second overland journey', p. 589.

³⁵ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 83.

³⁶ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

³⁷ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 169.

³⁸ McClintock, 'Private journal'.

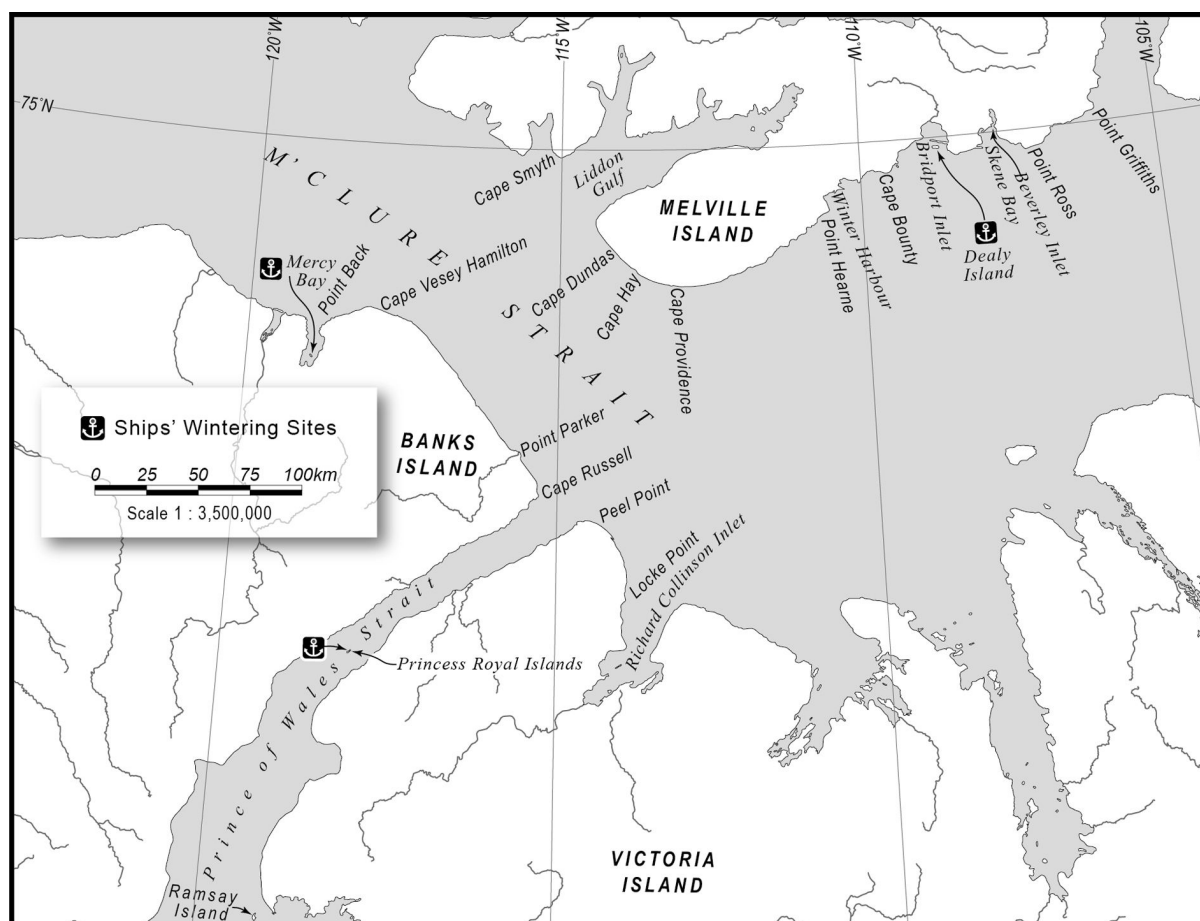
³⁹ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 84.

⁴⁰ McClintock, 'Private journal'.

these being undertaken by Mr. Krabbé, whose quaint and facetious sayings elicited roars of laughter from the much delighted audience'.⁴¹

The second theatrical performance was held on board *Resolute* on 1 February. The men performed the farce 'Raising the Wind' while the officers performed another farce 'King Glumpus' written in verse by John Barrow. In this latter play Krabbé played the part of Lady Popkins. Once again the players suffered severely from the cold. While waiting for their cues the ladies were 'obliged to have recourse to a posture decidedly unlady-like – sitting with their legs extended over the stove'.⁴²

On the following day, 2 February, to everyone's great relief, the sun reappeared. Meanwhile Captain Kellett was becoming anxious about *Investigator's* officers and men. Concerned that their ship might not have escaped from Mercy Bay over the summer of 1852, in which case they had been enduring their third winter in the Arctic, he was worried that they might be trying to escape on foot as early as possible in the spring. He therefore decided to send a sledge party across to Mercy Bay early enough to anticipate that eventuality. This party, led by Lieutenant Bedford Pim and Dr William Domville, set off on 10 March,⁴³ with *Resolute's* mate, Richard Roche, leading a support sledge.



Map 2. From Dealy Island to Mercy Bay and south to Ramsay Island

⁴¹ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 174–5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁴³ Pim, 'Journal', p. 550.

Then, on 4 April the main spring sledging campaign began, with four sledges setting off together. One sledge, led by McClintock headed north across Melville Island to Hecla and Griper Bay once again; from there he was to search northwestwards.⁴⁴ His sledge was accompanied by that of French officer Emile Frederic de Bray, who would turn back from Cape de Bray at the northwestern tip of Melville Island.⁴⁵ Meanwhile a third sledge, that of Lt G. F. Meham, headed west to Winter Harbour then across to Liddon Gulf once more, and westwards from there.⁴⁶ His sledge was accompanied for part of his journey by that of *Resolute's* Mate, G. S. Nares. A few weeks later, on 27 April, Lt R. V. Hamilton set off north across Melville Island to Hecla and Griper Bay, and would explore Sabine Peninsula.⁴⁷

In the interim, on 19 April, Lt Pim arrived back from his trip to Mercy Bay, accompanied by Commander M'Clure. The latter was hoping to persuade Kellett, as being his superior officer, to allow him and the healthier of his men to stay on board *Investigator* in the hope that his ship would be able to break free of the ice in the summer of 1853 so that he might achieve his greatest ambition, a transit of the Northwest Passage. Kellett stipulated that he might be allowed to stay with his ship only after a thorough medical examination of his crew, and only if twenty fit men volunteer to stay with him. Some idea of the state of health of his crew was provided to everyone on board *Resolute* and *Intrepid* when a party of invalids from *Investigator* arrived on 3 May, led by Lt S. G. Cresswell.⁴⁸ As Miertsching has reported two of the men, Anderson and Ross, were so sick that they had been hauled on sledges all the way, while five were 'so miserable and lame that they can scarcely stand upright and follow the sledges that we draw'.⁴⁹ They also included two men who had become seriously mentally unbalanced, Mate Robert Wynniatt and seaman Bradbury.

On 5 May Commander M'Clure, Dr Domville and Mr Stephen Court (*Investigator's* Second Master) started back across M'Clure Strait to Mercy Bay. Then on the 7th Lt Cresswell set off eastwards to Beechey Island, with a party of invalids, including Wynniatt and Bradbury. Krabbé and William Dean, *Resolute's* carpenter, went ashore to hunt on 18 May and encountered a herd of 17 muskoxen near Skene Bay.⁵⁰ They shot two cows and a calf and captured one calf alive. They took it back aboard and fed it on 'preserved milk' but it died after only a few days.⁵¹

De Bray returned from his sledge trip on 18 May, with his men hauling the body of one of their mates on the sledge; this was Thomas Coombes who had died suddenly, almost without warning. His funeral was held on 22 May; this made the third grave on Dealy Island.

Commander M'Clure returned with the remainder of *Investigator's* complement on 17 June.⁵² As Kellett had insisted, Doctors Domville and Armstrong had made a careful medical examination of *Investigator's* entire crew and although some of them were declared

⁴⁴ McClintock, 'Journal of H.M. Sledge'.

⁴⁵ De Bray, *Frenchman*, pp. 101–24.

⁴⁶ Meham, 'Travelling journal'.

⁴⁷ Hamilton, 'Journal'.

⁴⁸ Stein, *Discovering*, p. 220.

⁴⁹ Neatby, *Frozen ships*, p. 195.

⁵⁰ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

⁵¹ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, pp. 243–4.

⁵² Stein, *Discovering*, p. 226.

physically fit, not enough of them volunteered to stay with the ship to allow M'Clure to achieve his greatest ambition of taking the first ship through the Northwest Passage. The 'refugees' from *Investigator* were accommodated on board *Resolute*, which must have meant some overcrowding.⁵³ In July the last of the major spring sledge parties returned, Meham's party on the 6th, McClintock's on the 18th.

In the meantime work had been proceeding on building a substantial stone-built storehouse on Dealy Island to accommodate a massive depot of provisions, clothes, etc., as specified in Belcher's orders. This task was complete by 1 August. The still quite imposing ruins of this structure were stabilized by a party from the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre in Yellowknife in 1978.⁵⁴

With the ice breaking up *Resolute* and *Intrepid* were able to get under way, eastward bound, on 18 August, but not for long. They were brought to a halt by ice off Point Griffiths in Byam Martin Channel on the 20th. The ice held them prisoner here for about three weeks. One saving grace was that on three occasions hunting parties were able to go ashore and kill a total of 15 muskoxen.⁵⁵ This source of fresh meat was important in terms of combatting the lingering traces of scurvy among the *Investigator*'s crew.

A general slackening in the ice allowed the two ships to make some eastward progress on 9 September but then they became beset again, and started drifting eastward with the ice. This drift continued until 16 October, by which time the ships were located 28 miles (44.8 km) southwest of Cape Cockburn, the southwestern tip of Bathurst Island. This was to be the site of the second wintering (and of the fourth wintering for *Investigator*'s men). As usual the ship's upper decks were housed-in and the ships' sides were banked with snow for insulation.

Even now however, the effects of this fourth wintering were making themselves felt among the *Investigator*'s men. On 14 November Herbert Sainsbury, *Investigator*'s mate, died at the age of twenty-six. He was buried through a hole in the ice on the 16th.⁵⁶ Two weeks later, on the 30th, the first theatrical evening of the wintering was held on board *Resolute*. The men performed Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and the officers *The Two Bonnycastles*. Krabbé played Mr Bonnycastle, and McDougall⁵⁷ described him as 'the acknowledged Buckstone of these regions' whose performance 'would have reflected credit on that talented comedian.' The reference is to John Baldwin Buckstone (1802–79), actor, comedian and playwright, who managed the Haymarket Theatre from 1853 until 1877.

On 22 December *Intrepid*'s officers and men reciprocated. Two crew members performed the play *Box and Cox* and then 'Mr. Krabbé, the incomparable conjuror, continued to astonish us with all kinds of tricks'.⁵⁸ During the intermissions a group of crew members in black-face sang some songs; one of them was Charles Anderson, from *Investigator*, the only black member of this group and the only black man on board. After the performance *Resolute*'s officers were invited to *Intrepid*'s wardroom for a good glass of punch. No doubt Krabbé received many compliments on his performance from the visiting *Resolutes*.

⁵³ Barr, 'Warrant officer', p. 110.

⁵⁴ Janes, 'Preservation'.

⁵⁵ De Bray, *Frenchman*, pp. 142–4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 346.

⁵⁸ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 153

In late December De Bray and Hamilton had been working on an electric telegraph between the two ships, and it was inaugurated on 30 December. Since New Year's Day was a Sunday *Resolute's* officers held their New Year's dinner on the 31st. They invited their own captain, Captain Kellett and also Commander M'Clure, as well as Frederick Krabbé of *Intrepid*, to whom McDougall refers somewhat enigmatically as 'my old schoolfellow'.⁵⁹ *Resolute's* theatre orchestra was invited to give a concert to close the dinner, but since there was a blizzard blowing some members of that orchestra from *Intrepid* had difficulty in making the crossing between the two ships. When they arrived it was noticed that one of them was missing. Using the telegraph, *Resolute's* officers were able to contact *Intrepid* and, luckily were able to establish that the missing man was back on board his own ship, having abandoned the attempt to reach *Resolute*. At the close of the evening the weather was still so bad that Krabbé and the musicians from *Intrepid* had to stay on board *Resolute* for the night.⁶⁰

A more sombre event occurred only two days later – the death of Thomas Hood, one of *Intrepid's* seamen. He had been with Sir James Clark Ross in his 1848–9 expedition, and with Austin's expedition in 1850–51. In the spring of 1853 he had started as a member of McClintock's sledge crew on the major journey to Prince Patrick Island, but had ruptured himself, and returned to the ships at Dealy Island with De Bray's party.⁶¹ An autopsy revealed that the cause of death was a heart attack, aggravated by a liver condition. His body was buried through a hole in the ice on 3 January. A month later yet another funeral occurred – that of James Wilkie, *Intrepid's* ice quartermaster who, like Hood, had earlier been on both Ross's 1848–9 expedition and Austin's 1850–51 expedition. He had been ill for some time, and died on 2 February, and was buried through the ice on the 3rd. Just as the funeral was taking place the sun reappeared after an absence of 88 days.

A month later, on 4 March a party set off eastwards to Beechey Island. Led by Lt Hamilton, it consisted of a man-hauled sledge, commanded by Stephen Court, *Investigator's* Master, and a dog sledge under the command of Richard Roche, Mate on board *Resolute*. Roche had already made one round trip to Beechey Island, having accompanied Lt Cresswell and his parties of invalids in May 1853. He had arrived back at Dealy Island on 18 June with a dog sledge; the dogs had been left at Beechey Island in August 1852 by William Kennedy and Lieutenant-de-vaissseau Joseph-René Bellot at the conclusion of their expedition in search of Franklin, sponsored by Lady Franklin, on board *Prince Albert*.⁶² Hamilton's orders were to make contact with Sir Edward Belcher who, with *Assistance* and *Pioneer*, was spending his second winter near Cape Osborn in Wellington Channel. Roche returned to the ships two days later, having been accidentally shot in the thigh. His place was taken by Nares.

On 20 March, work began on removing the insulating snow walls around the ships, and by the 29th the housing over the after deck of *Resolute* had also been removed 'and it is a great pleasure to have daylight in our wardroom again'.⁶³

On 27 March Captain Henry Kellett handed Krabbé his orders for what would be the most significant and longest sledging journey of his career:

⁵⁹ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 355.

⁶⁰ De Bray, *Frenchman*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Kennedy, *Short Narrative*; Barr and Forestier-Blazart, 'Last duty'.

⁶³ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 160.

Taking command of H.M. Sledge *Newton*, manned with seven men, and provisioned for twelve days, you will leave this ship on 1st April next (weather permitting), and proceed in company with Lieutenant Mecham as long as he requires your services, placing for him a depôt in the position he requires it, and proceed to the depôt in the Bay of Mercy.

In the cairn left there you will deposit the record which you will receive from me, as well as one of your own, describing the position you find *Investigator* in, the state of the depôt, and any information that might be useful to a party visiting that bay.

From the *Investigator*, you will bring back the articles of medical stores mentioned in the accompanying list.

You will be most careful that those of your crew who enter that vessel are never out of your sight; that her hatches are closed as before, and that everything is left undisturbed; but should *Investigator* be found in such a position that the provisions on board her would be spoiled or destroyed, you will endeavour to place them, as well as the stores most useful to a retreating party, in safety on the shore. .

The quantities of provisions you take away from any depôt are always to be noted on the records you deposit.

Having performed this service you will return to your ship (touching at Dealy Island) by the 10th June.

The zeal and ability with which you have performed all duties committed to your charge, both on last voyage and whilst under my command give me great pleasure in being able to place this important service under your guidance.

Given under my hand, on board HMS *Resolute*, in Barrow Strait, Cape Cockburn, N.E. b. N. 28, 27th March 1854.

(Signed) H. Kellett, Captain.⁶⁴

From the reference to ‘stores most useful to a retreating party’ it seems probable that Kellett was thinking of Captain Richard Collinson’s expedition on board HMS *Enterprise*, which had not been heard from since it parted from HMS *Plover* at Port Clarence, Alaska, on 10 July 1851.⁶⁵ According to Miertsching, Krabbé also had ‘orders to bring back the journals of the officers which were left on the *Investigator*’.⁶⁶ It would appear that such an order must have been delivered verbally.

Lieutenant Mecham’s orders were to proceed with a sledge crew of seven men to the store-house on Dealy Island, and from there to the Princess Royal Islands. ‘The object of your journey is to gain intelligence of ‘*Enterprise*’, failing in that to leave information for her’.⁶⁷ In preparation for their trip, on 29 March both sledge teams were exercising.⁶⁸ Then on the afternoon of 2 April both teams packed their sledges.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Kellett, ‘Copy of orders to Krabbé’, p. 95.

⁶⁵ Collinson, *Journal*; Barr, *Arctic hell-ship*.

⁶⁶ Neatby, *Frozen ships*.

⁶⁷ Kellett, ‘Copy of orders to Mecham’, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Mumford, ‘Private journal’.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Accompanied by Lieutenant Mecham's sledge *Discovery*, Mr Krabbé and his men set off from the ships at 7.45 am on 3 April, heading west.⁷⁰ Initially a fatigue party under Lieutenant Bedford Pim, hauled both sledges until 10.15, for a distance of 4 miles; at that point the two groups exchanged cheers and Mecham's and Krabbé's men were thus able to start fresh from this point, while Pim's men headed back to the ships. In the afternoon Charles Nisbett, one of Mecham's men, fell and hurt his knee and was unable to walk, and for his benefit both crews pitched camp at for the night at 4 pm.

Despite a strong head-wind with the snow driving in their faces, and rough ice, they made steady daily progress (12, 14 and 17 miles (19, 24 and 27 km)). By the end of the third day (5 April), they were within sight of Byam Martin Island to the north, although not close enough to distinguish or identify any features, largely because the land was completely snow-covered. By 10.30 am on the 6th, however, they were able to identify Cape Gillman, the southern tip of the island, some 1½ to 2 miles (2.4 to 3.2 km) away. That evening William Walker was troubled by a painful knee and Krabbé bandaged it.

On the following day (7 April) the two sledges were crossing the southern entrance to Byam Martin Channel, and by the time they camped the coast of Melville Island was vaguely visible. Next morning they were passing within 1½ or 2 miles (2.4 or 3.2 km) of Point Griffiths, the southeastern tip of Melville Island. Around noon 'Saw ... a fox about 30 yards [27 m] off us, which coolly seated himself on a hummock at that distance as we passed'.⁷¹ That afternoon Krabbé and Mecham had to deal with three medical cases: Richard Kitson was complaining of severe pains in his chest and legs, which Krabbé diagnosed as rheumatism, while William Walker and Thomas Joy (the latter of Mecham's crew) were suffering from snow-blindness. The latter cases were treated with wine of opium

To give the invalids some respite Mecham decided that the following day (9 April) should be a rest-day. Solicitous as to his health Krabbé 'Put four bottles of hot water on Kitson's chest, which appeared to give him a little relief'.⁷² Two men went ashore hunting, but saw nothing to shoot at.

Since all three invalids were showing improvement the sledges got under way again next morning. Kitson was still suffering somewhat and therefore Mecham 'directed him to walk beside, or sit upon the sledge as he felt inclined'.⁷³ In order to be able to maintain the usual speed Krabbé took Kitson's place in his hauling belt, hauling along with the men, until the end of the day on the 13th.⁷⁴ Since the ice was particularly rough, the sledges travelled along the beach, winding around patches of bare ground, or at times cutting across the mouths of bays. The sledges passed Point Ross that afternoon, and camped for the night in the mouth of Skene Bay, leading to Beverley Inlet.

On the 11th Kitson was still suffering and to give him 'as much rest as possible while our sledges are light, I ordered a bed to be prepared for him on his sledge'.⁷⁵ The sledges passed Point Palmer in mid-morning, and came within sight of Dealy Island in mid-afternoon; the cairn built on the summit of the island was clearly visible. When they camped

⁷⁰ Krabbé, 'Journal'.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 708.

⁷² Loc. cit.

⁷³ Mecham, 'Journal', p. 691.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 692.

⁷⁵ Loc. cit.

for the night at the east end of the long spit which almost completely closes Bridport Inlet, not only the cairn, but also the depôt house was visible through a telescope. Mecham went inland and shot a caribou (the first and last that they would see); the meat was divided between both crews.

They reached the house at 8 am next morning (12th) and camped close to it. The house was almost entirely clear of snow except, unfortunately, the end with the door. Krabbé's description of their efforts at gaining access and of checking the contents of the house reads as follows:

The roof of the house had no snow on it. We commenced with our own two pickaxes and shovels to dig away the embankment at the door, which was frozen as hard as a rock.

At the end of five hours work, the three points of our pickaxes were broken, and door about three parts clear. We then tried to haul down the spar [used to bar the door], and carried it away short off, having at the commencement carried away both drag-ropes of our sledges in the same attempt. We then took the door off its hinges, and entered. Everything was in excellent order, and scarcely a particle of frost or drift in it.

We at once commenced provisioning, Lieutenant Mecham completing his sledge to 26 days, and myself to 22, with a depot of 11 days for him, according to scale given.

On opening the left-hand bread tank [one of three tanks which formed the rear wall of the house]⁷⁶ which had to be done by lighting a fire on the lid to thaw the edges, we found a small portion of the biscuit at that part about the spindle of the waste-valve to be wet and decayed, having spread along the top of the tank a little also; otherwise the bread was all good. All bad that was seen was at once removed, and the lid replaced with grease.

On going to drum (No. 41) in the ground tier, we found an open spile-hole [bung-hole] in top, and two in the head, which were 'weeping'; it was apparently a quarter empty. After we had finished the spile holes were well secured.

At 6.30 we were all completed, and the house door was again put on its hinges, leaving two pickaxes, a shovel, hammer, and chisel outside the door. The turf, which was like adamant, was piled against it, and we retired to our suppers, quite ready for a sleep.⁷⁷

In the evening some of the men visited the three graves while Mecham walked up to the cairn on the summit of the island, as Krabbé had done the previous evening.

Next morning there was a very strong wind blowing, and as a result the start was delayed until 10.30. Kitson was still not fully recovered and, following orders, walked beside the sledge instead of riding on it. By the following morning, however, he resumed his place at

⁷⁶ Janes, 'Preservation', p. 364, Fig. 6.

⁷⁷ Krabbé, 'Journal', p. 709.

the drag-rope. The two sledges passed Cape Bounty that afternoon, and pitched camp 1½ miles (2.4 km) further west.

When the sledges started on the 15th, Krabbé and Mecham walked ashore. They found an area where muskoxen had been digging up the snow to browse on the vegetation, but saw none of the animals. Having rounded Wakeham Point they cut straight across for Point Hearne, rather than going into Winter Harbour. However they could see Parry's Rock (a large sandstone boulder) clearly, and a herd of five muskoxen grazing on the hill beyond it.

Next morning (16 April) Krabbé hoisted a sail on his sledge, but using just a cotton sheet. At 9 am Mecham set off on his own for Parry's Rock. There he read the messages that had been left the year previously and checked that there were no new ones. Having left a message of his own, he rejoined the sledges. They meantime had reached the coast just north of Point Hearne, and he caught up with them as they were lunching on the spit at the point. There were three snowy owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) in sight, perched on prominent rocks or hummocks.

Continuing to the southwest on the 17th both sledges hoisted sails. While Krabbé found that his cotton sail was too thin a material to be of much use, Mecham found that his sail kept his crew 'at a rapid pace.' Navigation was difficult due to poor visibility in snow and drifting snow. By the end of the day Mecham's crew were all complaining of sore eyes, due to the wind eddying past the sail.

Next morning (18th) Krabbé abandoned his light-weight sail; he 'had the mackintosh floor-cloth fitted this morning, and used it successfully, thus returning to the sailing gear of 1851'.⁷⁸ The two sledge parties now left the coast of Melville Island near Cape Providence, cutting straight across M'Clure Strait towards Cape Russell at the northeastern tip of Banks Island. They stopped earlier than usual, at 2.50 pm, with a view to switching to night travelling, since snow-blindness was becoming a serious problem.

They got under way at 3 am with sails set on both sledges. Visibility was very limited – not more than 20 yards (18 m) and this exacerbated the snow-blindness. By 7 am Mecham 'was perfectly snow-blind. I therefore walked blindfolded beside the sledge, leaving Mr. Krabbé to lead'.⁷⁹ Krabbé was not much better, and some of the men were also affected and the party therefore stopped early, at 8.30 am and camped. 'After a good dose of wine of opium all round, we gladly bagged our heads and found great relief in the darkness of our bags'.⁸⁰

Over the next few days they made steady progress as they headed across M'Clure Strait, covering daily distances of 9, 11, 9, 8, 6, 10 and 15 miles (14.4, 17.6, 14.4, 12.2, 9.6 and 24 km). They were out of sight of land for almost the entire distance, in calm, misty conditions and among old, hummocky ice for much of the time. Thus on the morning of the 22nd April Krabbé describes some of the hummocks as 'large glassy mounds from 2 to 10 feet [0.6 to 3 metres] high, having somewhat the appearance (on a gigantic scale) of the old 'bull's eye' as it formerly lay in decks, with the convex side upwards'.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 710.

⁷⁹ Mecham, 'Journal', p. 693.

⁸⁰ Loc.cit.

⁸¹ Krabbé, 'Journal', p. 710.

By the morning of the 24th they could see land indistinctly through a telescope, and identified it as part of Banks Island, between Cape Russell and Point Parker. In point of fact, as they discovered over the next few days, what they thought was Point Parker was Point Peel, what they thought was Cape Russell was Locke Point, and what they thought was the mouth of Prince of Wales Strait was Richard Collinson Inlet. In other words they were heading for Prince Albert Land (now Victoria Island) and not Banks Island. Krabbé later ascribed their error to the difficulties of navigating among very rough ice with very limited visibility.

Their landfall on the evening of 25th April was thus Locke Point and not Cape Russell. Still unaware of their error a depôt was landed and buried on the Point. Then the two sledge parties parted, Krabbé heading northwest (along the north coast of Banks Island, as he thought), and Mecham south (along the west shore of Prince of Wales Strait, as he thought). Mecham did not discover his error until he reached the head of Richard Collinson Inlet in the afternoon of the 28 April; he then retraced his steps and headed west and round into the real Prince of Wales Strait.⁸²

Meanwhile, as Krabbé and his men headed west towards Point Peel, they saw plenty of evidence of wildlife: tracks of a bear, a fox and a wolf, the latter two following the bear, tracks of a caribou, plus two ptarmigan and a hare. It was snowing heavily when they woke on the evening of the 26th. Unfortunately they had left their buffalo-skin robe out to dry and it was now covered with snow, and very wet. Waiting for the wind and snow to decrease they did not get started until 11.20, when they continued under sail. At 3.30 am on the 27th they stopped for lunch on a point (in fact Peel Point). Visibility was very poor – only 1 to 2 miles (1.6 to 3.2 km), but when the coast thereafter was running to the west-southwest four miles (6.4 km) beyond the point, Krabbé realized that it had to be Point Peel and that he was heading along the east shore of Prince of Wales Strait, and camped.

As a result of this significant detour from his intended route, Krabbé cut the daily rations by one third, so that the provisions would last until they reached the substantial depot left by M'Clure on shore at Mercy Bay.

They had seen two hares and a fox during the day and Krabbé makes the interesting observation that the hares 'evidently live under the large hummocks on the beach, their forms being found there in abundance, and come to the beach to feed'.⁸³

That evening he and his sledge-crew started across Prince of Wales Strait, but in poor visibility with strong winds and thick, drifting snow. They reached Cape Russell around midnight on the 28th/29th and camped on the beach about 3 miles (4.8 km) further west. Their next march took them west, parallel to the impressive cliffs which started just west of Point Parker. Shortly before camping they saw a bear but it raced off at high speed 'leaving a toe-nail behind, as a memorial of his flight'.⁸⁴

Progress westwards along the north coast of Banks Island was steady, much of the way being on smooth new ice. They achieved daily distances of 18, 15, 16, 8 and 12 miles (28.8, 24, 25.6, 12.8 and 19.2 km). On the evening of May 3rd Krabbé was puzzled by a scattering of leaves of dwarf willow (*Salix arctica*) and of small flakes of coal on the sea ice.

⁸² Mecham, 'Journal', p. 696.

⁸³ Krabbé, 'Journal', p. 711.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 712.

Intrigued he went ashore and walked up a ravine; there he found numerous pieces of coal, in thin slabs measuring 6 to 18 inches (15 to 45 cm) in diameter. He found that it burned well and could be ignited easily, using a match. He was particularly impressed by the cliffs at this point:

We could see their structure more plainly, and a grander range of cliffs I never remember having seen.

This was the highest part, and they rise here to an elevation of at least 700 feet [213 metres]; they incline backwards as they ascend to an angle of 15° from the perpendicular, leaving like turrets seven or eight rows of square towers, or blocks of sandstone harder than the rest, many of which are 20 to 30 feet [6.1 to 9.1 metres] in height, all placed so regularly at intervals from each other horizontally of 30 or 40 yards [27.4 to 36.6 metres], and so perfectly level, that they seem more like the ruins of old fortresses, than placed there by the hand of nature.⁸⁵

By 9.20 am they were passing Cape Vesey Hamilton. Three miles (4.8 km) beyond it Krabbé spotted four muskoxen on shore. Taking one man with him he tried stalking them, while the crew member tried to divert their attention. Despite this, somewhat unusually, they took fright and raced away before he could get within firing range. At the end of that march, at 4.45 am on 5 May they camped two miles (3.2 km) northeast of Point Back, at the eastern entrance to Mercy Bay. One of the crew walked to Point Back and spotted the *Investigator*, beset in the ice of Mercy Bay.

Krabbé and his men reached the ship at 10.30 pm the 5th. His journal entries covering the six days they spent at Mercy Bay read as follows:

The stacked spars on the beach I could see plainly with my naked eye at 4 or 5 miles [6.4 or 8 km], but the cairn not until I was within a mile [1.6 km] of it. The ensign and pendant were still flying, but in a wretched condition; a few remnants of the former remained on the head, whilst some 18 inches [46 cm] only of the latter was left, and that level with the top-gallant-mast head, the remains of it being around the mizzen mast. There was a large accumulation of [snow] drift on the starboard or northern side, and we were able to walk in over her gunwale, in the waist. On the port side there was none, and sludgy ice only showing. Under the pinnace there was none, but a long ridge, as high as the gunwale, lay fore-and-aft in each waist; I saw no traces of animals about, except a solitary fox track on deck.

We soon opened the fore hatchway, and on going below I found everything in good shipshape order, and very little frost accumulated on the lower deck, except at the hatchways. The orlop deck [the lower deck, immediately above the hold] overhead had a great deal however; and on going to the store-rooms and holds, I soon found that the ship had leaked so much during the preceding summer, that she was full of solid ice to the level of the orlop deck forward, the tops of tanks in the main hold, and to within 10 inches [25 cm] of the orlop beams abaft.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 713.

This at once decided me on clearing her of all useful stores, as per orders from Captain Kellett.

As our own kettles wanted repair, and tent furniture drying, I concluded I had better bring my crew in board; so allotting them a mess forward, and taking the captain's cabin for myself, we soon had fires in this place and the galley, with coal from the shore, that in the ship being frozen in.

Previously to bringing the men in board I had cautioned them respecting stores, &c., whilst on board, and strictly forbade any one entering a cabin unless in my presence, an order which I have every reason to believe was strictly adhered to.

The self-registering thermometer in cabin gave from zero to 55° [-17.8 to 12.8°C], but not being graduated below zero, of course the register was not much use. It was reset.

In the lockers of the cabin I found ale in bottles frozen and broken; stout frozen, but not burst; sherry a thick sludge and very sour; and port somewhat thick, but not frozen.

We tried after our supper to warm up some of the malt, but it proved quite undrinkable, even to sailors two years out from the land of beer. I gave them some sherry, however, but it was not much relished.

Saturday, 6th May. AM Having spread our gear to dry, overhauled holds, &c., at 2.0 we had our supper, and retired for the day, the men making use of the hammocks and bedding found stowed on lower deck; for which most of them paid pretty dearly, however, if I might judge from their crying out with the cramp during the day; no doubt from dampness of the bedding. I gave the crew their back provisions we were short of in coming in to the ship.

First day's work.

PM Although calling it a day's work, we still continued the system of working at night and sleeping by day, that we might, when we had finished, be ready for travelling.

3.30. Commenced work; preparing tackle and opening holds preparatory to clearing them, and after breakfast cleared after-hold of all provisions. The blacksmith repairing our travelling kettles.

Sunday, 7th May. Landed the provisions got up today, and placed them by themselves, about 15 feet [4.5 metres] inland of those landed by *Investigator's* crew, all of which are visible above the snow, being in a very good spot; brought on board some empty casks for putting biscuit in. I took some angles to ascertain distance of the ship &c., and visited the cairn, where I found the cylinders duly secured to the staff, and cairn in good order; and evidently no one had been there since the ship was abandoned. Angle elevation of main truck above starboard gunwale from the nearest point of the beach abreast 4° 31' 30". Ditto from cairn 1° 24' 30". Height of truck to gunwale 100 ft 6 in [30.6 metres]. Gives cairn to ship S. 12° E. 1400 yards [1280 metres]; and near point of beach to ship 426 yards [389.5 metres]. The ship's head was N. 30° W (true); she was heeling about 10° to starboard, and a little by the head.

Under the stacked spars I found the stores &c. stowed, and close to them, by themselves, the casks of rum, brandy and wine; these were much covered with [snow] drift (which prevented getting sufficient empty casks from under the platform without destroying it); the boats were showing clear, and their covers undamaged. A few fox tracks were the only signs of animals having been there at all.

On going to the spirit-room to get some spirits, I scuttled a working cask (it being frozen in and unable to get at bung), and on pumping it out, found it to contain almost 3 gallons [13.6 litres] of port wine, not at all frozen, and being pretty good, I issued it to the crew in lieu of spirits. A cask partly full of lime-juice in the after-hold was not frozen.

I sorted out thermometers today, and overhauled [searched] for journals for bringing back to the ship. Lieutenant Haswell's was the only one I could find. [This is a real mystery since M'Clure had forbidden anybody to take their journals with them when they left the ship.⁸⁶ The present location of Haswell's journal is unknown. For a detailed analysis of what may have been its fate see Stein.⁸⁷] 4. Supper.

Second day's work.

PM 4. Landed a sledge load of casks, and then cleared slop-room of all slops [seamen's clothing], landing all whole bales, and leaving ullages [bales which had been opened] in warrant officers' mess place. Then cleared port preserved-meat room of 1290 lbs. [585 kg] of preserved meat, being all we could get clear of the ice; the starboard room was full of ice, and in them both, according to the accounts there must be 3,300 lbs. [1497 kg] left frozen in. All wine and spirits, and a cwt. [112 lb] tin of potatoes are in same condition in the spirit room.

Monday, 8th May. AM Landed 11,550 lbs. [5239 kg] of meat. On opening a case of the doctor's in the main hold, to get 4 gallons [18.2 litres] of spirits of wine said to be there, the jar was found secured properly and upright, but empty. Packing biscuit in casks ready for landing. I was personally employed nearly all day in packing the medicines as per list sent, all of which were brought, except one small powder which I could not find. The thermometers I packed with them, and all weighed 50 lbs. [22.67 kg]. 3.30 Supper.

Third day's work.

4.30 PM Landed a load of biscuit and slops; then employed packing biscuit in available empty casks. Two hands making a sail and repairing tent. Myself collecting a few botanical and zoological specimens from the cases in bread-room, but could not find the stoats [Short-tailed weasel (*Mustela erminia*)]. After dinner landed a load of biscuit, being in all 1,232 lbs. [558.8 kg] in 12 casks; being all that could be obtained empty.

Tuesday, 9th May. Landed the remaining housings [Canvas tents rigged over upper decks], a main course and a royal; placing them on the casks, meat and slops,

⁸⁶ Neatby, *Frozen ships*, p. 192.

⁸⁷ Stein, *Discovering*, p. 264.

and lashing a tarpaulin over all. Opened the rum on the beach, and took 6 gallons [27.3 litres] from it; and a case of potatoes and took out 20 lbs. [9 kg]; this was a good deal caked from wet. I took the case on board, and had it re-soldered before replacing it. 4. Supper.

Fourth day's work.

4. PM. Cleared bread-room of all bread, and stowed 18½ bags in the library. Employed clearing up everything under hatches, packing 16 days' provision for sledge, making a sail for ditto, and cutting a hole under the stern for soundings.

7.20. Sounded in 11 fathoms. I therefore presumed the ship had dragged a little S.E.-ward, as the cable was hanging slack under bow, and thence could not be seen under the ice. Ship was in 9 fathoms previously, I believe.

Wednesday, 10th May. AM Deposited record from Captain Kellett and from myself (a copy of which has been transmitted), in a gutta-percha and tin cylinder, and secured it to the staff on the cairn. Put a board on the skids over the capstan, stating the time of the visit.

4.30. Supper. Gave the men (7 in number) three yards [2.74 metres] of duck [tightly-woven cotton canvas] each.

Fifth day's work.

PM Employed preparing for travelling, and cleaning lower deck, captain's cabin and ship generally.

Thursday, 11th May. AM Employed repairing personal clothing of the crew. 4. Packed the sledge, limiting each man's knapsack to an extra 5 lbs. [2.27 kg] weight.

Abstract of weights on leaving

Constant weights as at first	400	lbs.	[181 kg]
Gun and gear, shot &c.	12	"	[5.4 kg]
16 days provisions and fuel, with packages	402	"	[182 kg]
Medicines &c. in cases	50	"	[22.7 kg]
Specimens, journals, books, &c.	56	"	[25.4 kg]
5 lbs. per man extra in knapsacks	80	"	[36.3 kg]
Total	1,050	"	[476.3 kg]
Per man	50 lbs.		[68 kg]

Thirty-first journey

PM 5.0. Breakfasted, then inspected the ship and saw fires and lights out, and ship clean and stowed as before. Saw the hatches in precisely the same manner.

5.40. Proceeded out of the bay.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Krabbé, 'Journal', pp. 714–16.

Having read Krabbé's report of his visit to the ship Dr. Alexander Armstrong, *Investigator's* surgeon, reached some interesting conclusions:

The inferences to be deduced from this report are, that the 'Investigator' moved a little in the summer of 1853; that the ice never broke up in the Bay, and that we consequently should have failed to liberate her had we remained; and that she will, from the accumulation of ice and water, ultimately sink at her anchors and find repose at or near where we left her. We had, therefore, every reason to congratulate ourselves that we abandoned her at the period we did.⁸⁹

By midnight Krabbé and his men had reached Point Back where they stopped for lunch. Here Krabbé found the cask in which M'Clure had left a message. It had been left standing on its head (i.e. upright) and filled with stones and with rocks heaped around it. He found it lying on its side and frozen solidly to the ground. He assumed it had been knocked over by a bear or some other animal, but does not mention whether he found the message left by M'Clure.

He and his men camped 4½ miles (7.24 km) east of Point Back, and thereafter Krabbé wandered inland to hunt, but saw nothing in the way of game. During the following day's journey, while the sledge continued east on the sea-ice, Krabbé travelled parallel to it on land, and had better luck at hunting: he saw ten ptarmigan, of which he shot seven.

At 1.20 am on 13 May they pitched camp near Cape Vesey Hamilton. Krabbé and a party of men walked up onto the first terrace and started building a cairn at a height of about 120 feet (36.6 metres). By the time it was complete, at 4 am, it was 5 feet (1.5 metres) high and 5 feet (1.5 metres) in diameter at the base; a broken pickaxe was stuck in the top. Krabbé left a rubber record case attached to the pickaxe, containing a standard printed notice, plus another note about his visit to *Investigator*.

From here the party struck northeast across M'Clure Strait towards Cape Dundas on Melville Island. It took them 6½ marches to cross the strait, the distances involved being 10, 8, 8, 10, 9½ and 7 miles (16, 12.9, 12.9, 16, 15.3, and 11.3 km). These are significantly shorter marches than those they had made along the north coast of Banks Island, this being an indication of the much more difficult ice conditions which they encountered. Long distances consisted of very heavy old (i.e. multi-year) ice, this being ice from the Central Arctic Basin on the start of its slow progress east and southeast down M'Clure Strait, McClintock Channel and Victoria Strait to finally butt up against King William Island. Krabbé recorded (on the evening of 15 May) that the mounds or ridges ('monster hummocks' to use Krabbé's phrase) were up to 12 and 14 feet (3.66 and 4.27 metres) high. Among this multi-year ice were zones of badly shattered young ice, with deep snow in the intervening hollows, representing equally difficult terrain for the sledge-haulers. The sledge suffered some damage, but fortunately not so severe that it could not be repaired.

The high land of Cape Smyth, located beyond the mouth of Liddon Gulf, was in sight from the second march across the straits, and this was the landmark which Krabbé used to get

⁸⁹ Armstrong, *Personal narrative*, p. 592.

his bearings. Cape Dundas, for which he was heading, was perhaps obscured by clouds for much of the time.

At 4.15 am on 19 May they camped three miles (4.8 km) off the shore at what Krabbé thought was Cape Dundas, although he was not sure which of the headlands was the actual cape. At the start of the next march they moved right in to the shore, and began working their way along on level ice between a zone of very rough young ice and the coast. For a short time this led to an almost impassable situation:

At first we went tolerably along the beach inside the high ridge of grounded hummocks, but after half an hour we came to a part where the steep debris of the cliffs and the high hummocks met each other at such an acute angle, that it appeared impossible to get along; to go out on the floe was quite impracticable, as the ridge of hummocks was very old, and quite 30 and 40 feet [9.1 and 12.2 metres] in height at this part. But by literally crawling on hands and knees to prevent slipping, whilst the sledge made a somewhat crab-like progress, we finally got out of our difficulties, and on the 3 were on the floe again; after passing a little rough young ice, we were once more on our good level floe.⁹⁰

Despite this obstacle they covered an impressive 14 miles during this march. They camped about 2½ or 3 miles (4 or 4.8 km) east of Cape Dundas, although Krabbé was still not sure which was the actual cape. When they reached Cape Hay, early in their next march, they again found a situation similar to that at Cape Dundas, i.e. very rough pressure ice extending right in to the cape, but fortunately there was enough room – barely – for them to get past on relatively level ice. Soon after midnight on the 21st they saw two glaucous gulls, one of which they spotted disembowelling and eating a ptarmigan.

The next campsite, which they reached at 3.15 am, lay close inshore 1 mile east of Cape Providence. The distance covered in this march was a really impressive 21 miles (33.6 km). ‘This was partly owing to the beautiful hard floe, and perhaps partly owing to a stimulant in perspective, having for once promised to ‘splice the main brace’ if they reached Cape Providence that night; a promise I duly fulfilled’.⁹¹ After they had pitched camp one of the men went inland and managed to shoot a muskox from a small herd of bulls about quarter of a mile from the camp. This provided some very welcome fresh meat.

After two further marches they camped about 1½ miles south of Point Hearne, but they noticed that the intervening hummocks were so high that they hid the point itself. The following march took the party past Winter Harbour (Krabbé made no attempt to check if there were any further messages at Parry’s Rock) and the next camp site lay 5 miles (8 km) S.W. by W. from Cape Bounty

Two more marches took them to Dealy Island at 0.30 on the morning of 26 May. It took them three hours to dig away the snow blocking the door of the house but on entering they found a message from Captain Kellett which had been brought here by Lt Hamilton,

⁹⁰ Krabbé, ‘Journal’, p. 717–18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 718.

travelling with one man and a team of five dogs only a few days previously, having left the icebound *Resolute* and *Intrepid* on 8 May.⁹² Kellett's orders were as follows:

Having received orders to proceed to Beechey Island for further instructions with the crews of both vessels under my command, you will, on receipt of this order, use every exertion to reach Beechey Island with all dispatch, so that your men will be exposed as little as possible to the ill effects of travelling after the thaw commences. You will, therefore, on no account lose time by attempting to reach the ships; they will by that time be abandoned, and their hatchways securely sealed. Your messmates will have packed such articles as they think you value, or would be useful, which will either be taken on to Beechey, or placed under the boat left at Cape Cockburn for your use.

You will not forget to leave at Dealy Island full information relative to your present expedition.

The depôt at Dealy Island I am anxious should be as little broken into as possible. Rum is not to be touched at all, as it may be required for travelling fuel. Fuel to bring you to Cape Cockburn will be sent to Dealy Island. In case of having game, preserved meat is not to be touched at all, but under circumstances half a pound [227 g] of that article per man per day is all that is to be taken.

Given under my hand on board HMS *Resolute*, in Barrow Strait, 8th May 1854.

(Signed) H. Kellett, Captain.

Mr. Krabbé will deposit the medicines he was directed to bring back from the Investigator in one of the cases left in the house; leave a Six's thermometer there also, and bring on the rest. As his crew's clothing will be left at Cape Cockburn, he will leave there also all clothes and stores that he can spare.⁹³

These instructions meant that Krabbé and his men would have to travel a minimum of an additional 140 nautical miles (260 km) beyond where they had expected to find their ships. In his official report Krabbé did not record his initial reaction to these orders!

The explanation of Kellett's opening remarks is that, having received a direct order from his superior officer, Captain Sir Edward Belcher, he had been forced, very reluctantly, to abandon *Resolute* and *Intrepid*, which were still in perfectly good condition, at the site where they had wintered, off Cape Cockburn, Bathurst Island. Hamilton had left Dealy Island on 21 May, i.e. only five days earlier.

Krabbé and his men camped right beside the house and 'went at once to our supper, and tried to sleep, although for some of us vainly I know, the amount of news being too much for the brain to digest at once'.⁹⁴

Getting up at 5.20 on the evening of the 26th, Krabbé took 12 days rations from the house; with a day's rations still on the sledge, this gave him 13 days rations with which to reach the depot which he knew had been left at Cape Cockburn. Having closed the house

⁹² Scott, 'Journal'; De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 168.

⁹³ Kellett, 'Copy of orders Dealy Island House', p. 95–6.

⁹⁴ Krabbé, 'Journal', p. 719.

securely again and having lunched they set off eastwards at 9.30 am, immediately setting the sail to a light wind from the W.N.W.

At 3.30 am on the 27th the party camped some 5 miles west of Point Palmer. Krabbé had walked along the land for part of the way and had shot eight ptarmigan. One of the men, William Walker had tried to bag some more after they camped. When he fired at his second bird his gun exploded leaving only a 6 inch long (15 cm long) section of the stock in his hands. Amazingly (and luckily) he was unhurt, if somewhat shaken. The gun was one he had taken from *Investigator*.

During the following days' marches the tracks of Hamilton's dog sledge were a useful aid to navigation since visibility was poor. On the evening of the 28th the first pools of water were seen on the land, giving the men a welcome drink.

Around midnight on the 29th/30th the party reached Point Griffiths, the southeast tip of Melville Island. Half an hour later Krabbé spotted Mecham and his men coming up astern. He stopped to wait for them, and they camped together at 4.15 am on 30 May.

After parting from Krabbé and his men, Mecham and his party had headed south along Prince of Wales Strait to the Princess Royal Islands.⁹⁵ There Mecham had found messages left by Captain Richard Collinson (HMS *Enterprise*) which he had left in August 1851 and later, during a sledge trip in the spring of 1852. The latter message revealed that Collinson had wintered in 1851–2 at Walker Bay on western Victoria Island and that he had left further messages on Ramsay Island at the south end of Prince of Wales Strait. Mecham therefore continued south to Ramsay Island. The latest of the messages from Collinson was dated August 1852, to the effect that he had left his winter quarters and planned to explore Prince Albert Sound, which he hoped was a strait extending right across Victoria Island. In fact he had proceeded west to Cambridge Bay where he had wintered again, and after surveying the southeast and east coasts of Victoria Island had returned west, and as Mecham was reading his message on Ramsay Island was approaching the end of yet another wintering, at Camden Bay on the north coast of Alaska.⁹⁶

On his way back Mecham had also visited the store-house on Dealy Island. There, like Krabbé he had learned that his trip would be longer than anticipated and that rather than returning to the ships off Cape Cockburn, he would have to plod on all the way to Beechey Island.

From this point Krabbé's and Mecham's sledges travelled together. They headed across Byam Martin Channel in foul weather — heavy wet sleet and snow. The men reported the unpleasant sensation of water in their boots for the first time. By 10 pm on 31 May they were passing Point Griffiths at the southern tip of Byam Martin Island. By 2 June the snow and sleet had turned to rain and the ice was covered with slush. Two of Krabbé's men, Walker and Miles had badly blistered feet — so much so that Krabbé camped early at 2.50 am, and bandaged their feet with flannel.

With the two sledges still in company, when they started their march on the evening of 3 June they could see Cape Cockburn on Bathurst Island ahead, but then it disappeared in fog. In the early hours of the 4th some fairly level ice and a fair wind allowed both crews to

⁹⁵ Mecham, 'Journal'.

⁹⁶ Collinson, *Journal*; Barr, *Arctic hell-ship*.

set sails. And, as an encouraging sign of spring, for the previous three days flocks of geese had been seen, flying west.

Both sledges reached the depot at Cape Cockburn at 2.15 am on 5 June. They stowed the 12 days provisions which had been left for them there by two sledge teams led by George Nares and Richards Roche, both mates on board *Resolute*, on 5/6 May.⁹⁷ But to their disappointment, when they looked under the overturned boat which had also been left, there was no sign of the clothes and belongings which they had been promised would be left for them. At this point Mecham informed Krabbé that he would be travelling independently from now on.

Krabbé and his crew pitched their next camp in the strait between Moore Island and Bathurst Island, and only 400 metres from Mecham's camp. Then early in the next march, on the evening of 6 March both teams, surprisingly, caught up with Hamilton's dog team, on its way back from Dealy Island to Beechey Island. All three parties camped together at the end of the march. Once they had pitched camp Krabbé made the unpleasant discovery that some of the pemmican they had picked up at Cape Cockburn was rancid; when they had eaten it some of the men suffered from diarrhea and vomiting. They gladly donated 32 lbs (14.5 kg) of it to Hamilton's dogs, which devoured it ravenously.

On the evening of 7 June a sharp drop in temperature produced a crust on the snow about 1½ inches (3.75 cm) thick; the men's feet broke through at every step, making progress very laborious. To add to their misery at the start of the following march (on the evening of 8 June), six of Krabbé's men were suffering from severe snow-blindness. Since it was also snowing heavily and drifting Krabbé stopped to camp after only four hours of progress and did not resume the march until 3.30 pm on the 9th. Their camp at the end of that march was at Cape Martyr (near the site of the present settlement of Resolute Bay) on Cornwallis Island. When the party got under way again on the afternoon of 10 June a favourable wind allowed them to set a sail, but since there was still a crust on the snow, running to keep up with the sledge was far from easy. Nonetheless on that march Krabbé and his men covered a very respectable 19 miles (30.4 km), camping just west of Cape Dungeness near the southeast tip of Cornwallis Island.

They passed Cape Hotham soon after the start of the next march. But then they encountered an awkward obstacle — a lead 10 feet (3.3 metres) wide:

In attempting to run lightly over it, as we had all done with the other cracks, I had the pleasure of a thorough ducking, which detained us half an hour, whilst I had the somewhat cold and unpleasant task of shifting everything on the floe. Crossed finally, by making a bridge of our tent-poles, and launching the sledge over that, the men having jumped from the sledge when it was half over, with the other end held by remainder of crew.⁹⁸

Their final camp was in the middle of Wellington Channel. To avoid reaching *North Star* in the middle of the night, on the final march Krabbé delayed his start from the usual

⁹⁷ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 168.

⁹⁸ Krabbé, 'Journal', p. 721.

time of 4 pm until 8.45 pm. Swinging round the north end of Beechey Island he and his men reached *North Star* at 4 am on 13 June, 71 days after leaving *Resolute* and *Intrepid* off Cape Cockburn.⁹⁹ In that time they had covered a distance of 863.5 nautical miles (987 statute miles or 1589 km).

This compares well with Commander McClintock's trip from Dealy Island to Prince Patrick and Eglinton islands in the spring of 1853, a distance of 1030 n. miles (1184.5 statute miles or 1907 km), that of Lt Meham, also from Dealy Island to Prince Patrick Island and also in the spring of 1853 (1006 n. miles, 1163 statute miles or 1872 km) and Meham's record-breaking trip from Cape Cockburn to Ramsay Island and back to Beechey Island (1157 n. miles, 1336 statute miles or 2151 km). This latter trip almost certainly represents the longest man-hauled sledge trip in the history of the Arctic. Krabbé's sledge trip was thus almost certainly the fourth-longest man-hauled sledge trip ever accomplished in the Arctic.

The officers and men of *Resolute* and *Intrepid* had all arrived at Beechey Island prior to this, the last and largest group of them on 28 May¹⁰⁰ and thus *North Star* was starting to get crowded. Meanwhile there was quite a regular traffic between *North Star* and *Assistance* and *Pioneer*, which had just spent their second winter just north of Cape Osborn on the east shore of Wellington Channel.

On Krabbé's arrival he found that *North Star*'s men were involved in several major projects. Over her two winters at Beechey Island the ship had been heaved up by ice pressure and was lying in an ice cradle. On 23 May work had begun at cutting and blasting in hopes of accelerating the process of getting the ship afloat again.¹⁰¹ It was a slow process since the ice was found to be 12 to 13 feet (3.66-3.96 metres) thick in places. Once the ship was afloat work began on cutting a channel (using ice-saws and explosives) towards the nearest lead.

The other project was that of putting the final touches to Northumberland House. This was a fairly substantial wooden house, which would contain a dwelling and depot of provisions for possible use by survivors of the Franklin expedition and/or by members of Collinson's expedition. In the second week of June *North Star*'s carpenters were busy roofing the house with canvas and installing the windows.¹⁰²

On 16 June a work party of six men led by Johnson, *Resolute*'s acting bosun, was detailed to rebuild the cairn built by Franklin's men on the summit of Beechey Island, which had been pulled apart in a search for possible messages.¹⁰³ The final cairn was an impressive 23 feet (7 metres) in height.¹⁰⁴

Another project was the erection of a monument near Northumberland House to commemorate the thirty-two men who died on the various Franklin searches.¹⁰⁵ It consisted of an octagonal column (the recycled drum of the capstan of the wrecked American whaler *McLellan*) surmounted by a ball; it was nick-named 'the parish pump' by the men.¹⁰⁶ It is still a prominent feature of the various historic sites at Beechey Island.

⁹⁹ McDougall, *Eventful voyage*, p. 407.

¹⁰⁰ Pullen, 'Journal'.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

¹⁰⁴ Neatby, *Frozen ships*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁵ Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

On 27 June William Shellabear, *North Star*'s Second Master reported that Krabbé, Lt William May and Joseph Paine (*Investigator*'s Clerk-in-charge) were surveying provisions on shore, although he provides no further details.¹⁰⁷

Three weeks later, at 2 am on 17 July, Captain Sir Edward Belcher arrived from *Assistance* and *Pioneer*, riding in his gig which was mounted on a sledge.¹⁰⁸ As a mark of respect he was met by a welcoming committee of captains Kellett, M'Clure, Pullen and McClintock.¹⁰⁹ Belcher then took up residence in Northumberland House.

On 7 August Krabbé was dispatched northwards with a small party and six days provisions to make a survey of Cape Bowden on the east shore of Wellington Channel.¹¹⁰ On the 11th one of Krabbé's men arrived back at *North Star*, with the message from Commander Richards that on the 9th *Assistance* and *Pioneer* had managed to break out of their winter quarters, and had moved south about 10 miles (16 km). As Thomas Pullen, *North Star*'s Master reported on 12 August 'Mr. Krabbé returns from fixing the position of Cape Bowden and Pt. Innes, abandoning his gear about Cape Spenser owing to the ice having broken up. Cannot get round'.¹¹¹

Meanwhile the tedious work of cutting a channel with ice-saws continued. Fortunately a lead opened, greatly reducing the amount of ice-sawing that would be required to reach open water. Finally, on 20 August the channel reached this lead; this had involved cutting a channel 1280 metres long and 15 metres wide.¹¹² *North Star* was warped out to the open water and moored to the ice edge. Towards the end the men were advancing the channel about 100 metres per day and Mumford calculated that in total they had made 6.4 km of saw-cuts.¹¹³

After a brief visit to Beechey Island, Belcher had returned north to his own ships, but even before he and his party reached *Assistance* and *Pioneer* he had concluded that 'without a heavy gale, and probably a fatal result to the vessels, not the remotest chance of their extrication offered this season in time to reach England'.¹¹⁴ Moreover he was forced to abandon the idea of leaving skeleton crews for another winter since of their crews 'none volunteered to remain out'. Therefore in the early hours of the 25th the officers and men of the two ships started south to *North Star*. On the 26th Captain Pullen was ordered 'to embark everyone, and to hold himself ready to set sail for England with a total complement of 263 men'.¹¹⁵ The overcrowding on board on the transatlantic crossing would have been almost intolerable. Fortunately, just as the last of the boats arrived from *Assistance* and *Pioneer*, a steamer and a sailing vessel were spotted rounding Cape Riley. These were the steamer *Phoenix* (Captain Edward Inglefield) and *Talbot* (Captain Robert Jenkins), bringing supplies for Belcher's squadron.

¹⁰⁷ Shellabear, 'Private journal'.

¹⁰⁸ McClintock, 'Private journal'.

¹⁰⁹ Belcher, *Last of the arctic voyages*, II, p. 21

¹¹⁰ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 175; Scott, 'Journal'; Mumford, 'Private journal'.

¹¹¹ Pullen, 'Journal'.

¹¹² De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 175.

¹¹³ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

¹¹⁴ Belcher, *Last of the arctic voyages*, II, p. 219.

¹¹⁵ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 176.

Krabbé, along with all the other officers and men from *Resolute* and *Intrepid* now transferred to *Phoenix*, and those of *Assistance* and *Pioneer* to *Talbot*. Officers and men of *Investigator* remained on board *North Star*.¹¹⁶ All three ships got under way on the afternoon of 27 August.

On the 29th the three ships reached Navy Board Inlet, where *Phoenix* coaled from the depot which had been left there by Captain James Saunders on an earlier voyage on board *North Star*, in August 1859.¹¹⁷ By 5 September *Phoenix* had reached Godhavn on Disko, where she coaled again and watered while waiting for the two sailing vessels.¹¹⁸

Phoenix's next port-of-call was Cork in Ireland where she arrived on 28 September. Captains Belcher, M'Clure and Kellett, i.e. the three captains who had abandoned their ships, left *Phoenix* here to travel by steamship and train to London to report to the Admiralty as soon as possible.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile having coaled and watered yet again¹²⁰ *Phoenix* continued round Land's End and through the Channel, reaching Woolwich on 2 October. John Frederick Krabbé's second arctic voyage had come to end. As a result of his involvement in the search for Franklin he was awarded the Arctic Medal.¹²¹

Later career

Krabbé's next posting (on 30 November 1854) was to the iron screw troop ship, HMS *Perseverance*, then on dock at Woolwich, under the command of Captain William Pullen, who as captain of *North Star*, would have become relatively familiar to Krabbé. After a brief period as Master on board HMS *Melampus*, on 1 April 1855 Krabbé joined HMS *Leander*, a 50-gun fourth rater, bound for the Crimean War. While she lay in Balaclava harbour Krabbé was possibly among the substantial number of officers and men drafted to the Naval Brigade and involved in the siege of Sebastopol. Fortunately, he was not among the twenty-two who were killed or died of their wounds or the eighty who were wounded.¹²²

As a result of his service in Crimea Krabbé was awarded the Crimea Medal (with Sebastopol clasp) and the Turkish Crimea Medal.¹²³ Thereafter he served on board HMS *Wellesley* (briefly), HMS *Cumberland* on the Brazil and South America station from 2 April 1857 until 17 August 1859, HMS *Princess Charlotte*, HMS *Arrogant*, and finally, from 21 January 1860 until 26 December 1862 on board HMS *Meander*. For much of this period *Meander* was lying at Ascension as a store-depot, with Krabbé in command. He was also in charge of the dockyard.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ Neatby, *Frozen ships*, p. 233–4.

¹¹⁷ Cyriax, 'Voyage'.

¹¹⁸ De Bray, *Frenchman*, p. 179.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 180.

¹²⁰ Mumford, 'Private journal'.

¹²¹ Stein, *Discovering*, p. 231.

¹²² Duckers, *Crimean war*.

¹²³ Stein, *Discovery*, p. 231.

¹²⁴ Markham, *Arctic Navy List*, p. 28.



Fig. 1. Krabbé's medals; from left to right: Crimea Medal (with Sebastopol clasp); the Arctic Medal (1818-1855); the Turkish Crimea Medal (British Issue) (copyright Spencer J. Fisher, 2014; Glenn M. Stein Collection)

Since this was a semi-permanent shore posting Krabbé's wife, Jane, was able to join him at Ascension, and it was there on 19 July 1860 that his son Frederick James was born. He too pursued a career in the Royal Navy, ultimately reaching the rank of Paymaster Rear Admiral. Remarkably, while at Ascension Frederick Krabbé Sr. had the good fortune to make sextant observations on two separate comets: Comet III, 1860 on 22 July 1860 and Comet II, 1861 on 4, 8 and 29 July. He communicated these observations to the Royal Astronomical Society via the Hydrographer of the Admiralty.¹²⁵

In the interim he had been promoted Navigating Lieutenant, and in 1866 was made Staff Commander. He died on 21 January 1869. Krabbé Point at the northwest side of St George Bay, São Nicolau Island, Cape Verde Islands, was named after him, following his visit as Acting Master on board HMS *Rolla*. During his sledge trip with Captain Ommanney in the spring of 1851, Ommanney named another Krabbé Point, on Russell Island after him. Then three years later Cape Krabbé, the northernmost point of Prince Patrick Island, was named after him by his captain, Captain Leopold McClintock during his sledge trip in the spring of 1854.

Frederick John Krabbé was awarded three medals during his career (Fig. 1): the Crimea Medal 1854–56, with Sebastopol clasp, the Arctic Medal 1818–1855, and the Turkish Crimea Medal (British issue).

¹²⁵ Royal Astronomical Society, 'Hydrographer', p. 18 and 48.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Mr D. Hannan for bringing to our attention the newspaper article on the court-martial of the officers of HMS *Sharpshooter* for letting that vessel run aground. We are also indebted to Mr Robin Poitras, cartographer with the Department of Geography, University of Calgary, for producing the excellent maps which accompany our article.

List of repositories

LAC: Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa ON

TNA: National Archives, Kew, London.

SPRI: Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge

References

Armstrong, A., *A personal narrative of the discovery of the North-West Passage; with numerous incidents of travel and adventure during nearly five years' continuous service in the arctic regions while in search of the expedition under Sir John Franklin*, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1857.

Barr, W., 'A warrant officer in the Arctic. The journal of George Ford 1850-1854' in Alan Frost and Jane Samson, eds, *Pacific empires. Essays in honour of Glyndwr Williams*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1999, pp. 101–23.

———, *Arctic hell-ship. The voyage of HMS Enterprise 1850-1855*, Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 2007.

———, 'Searching for Franklin where he was ordered to go: Captain Erasmus Ommanney's sledging campaign to Cape Walker and beyond, spring 1851', *Polar Record* 52(265), 2016, pp. 474–98.

——— and Forestier-Blazart, N. and J. C., 'The last duty of an officer': Lieutenant de vaisseau Joseph-René Bellot, 1826–3, in the Franklin search', *Polar Record*, 50(252), 2014, pp. 1–30.

Belcher, E. 1855, *The last of the arctic voyages, being a narrative of the expedition in HMS Assistance under the command of Captain Sir Edward Belcher, C.B., in search of Sir John Franklin during the years 1852–53–54*, 2 vols, London, Lowell Reeve, 2014.

Collinson, R., *Journal of HMS Enterprise, on the expedition in search of Sir John Franklin's ships by Behring Strait*, London, Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1889.

Cohen, A., *Lost beneath the ice. The story of HMS Investigator*, Toronto, Dundurn, 2013.

Cyriax, R.J., 'The voyage of HMS *North Star*, 1849-50,' *Mariner's Mirror* 55(1), 1964, pp. 23–32.

De Bray, E. F., *A Frenchman in search of Franklin. De Bray's arctic journal 1852–54*, trans. and ed. William Barr, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Duckers, P., *The Crimean war at sea : The naval campaigns against Russia 1854–6*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books, 2011.

Great Britain, *Arctic expedition, Return to an order of the Honourable House of Commons dated 4 May 1852, for: A return of the sailing orders given to Sir Edward Belcher relating to the arctic expedition. Admiralty 6 May 1852. J.H. Hay, Chief Clerk. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 7 May, 1852, 1852.*

Hamilton, R. V., 'Journal of the proceedings of H.M. Sledge 'Hope' from 27th April till 21st June 1853' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855, 1855, pp. 627–41.*

Hampshire Telegraph, 'Court martial on the officers of the Sharpshooter' in *Hampshire Telegraph*, 30 December 1848.

Hoag, E., 'Caxton's of the North: mid-nineteenth century Arctic shipboard printing', *Book History*, 4, 2001, pp. 81–114.

Janes, R. R. 'The preservation and ethnohistory of a frozen historic site in the Canadian Arctic', *Arctic* 35(3), 1982, pp. 358–85.

Kellett, H. 'Copy of orders to Mr. J. F. Krabbé, Master of HMS *Resolute*, to proceed to Bay of Mercy, Banks Land' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, p. 95.*

—, 'Copy of orders to Lieutenant Meham to proceed to Princess Royal Islands, Prince of Wales Strait' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, p. 87.*

—, 'Copy of orders deposited in Dealy Island House, for the guidance of Mr. Krabbé on his arrival there', in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 95–6.*

Kennedy, W. *A short narrative of the second voyage of the Prince Albert in search of Sir John Franklin*, London, W. H. Dalton, 1853.

Krabbé, F. J., 'Journal of the proceedings of Her Majesty's Sledge *Newton*, detached from Her Majesty's Ship *Resolute*, between 3rd April and 13th June 1854, under the command of F. J. Krabbé, Master' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 708–21.*

Markham, C. R., *The Arctic Navy List; or, A century of Arctic and Antarctic officers 1773–1873*, London, Griffin & Co., 1875. (Reprinted, Portsmouth, the Royal Naval Museum, 1992).

McClintock, F. L. 'The private journal of F. L. McClintock, Commander, H.M. Steamer *Intrepid*, 1852–4'. SPRI, MS 1.

——, 'Journal of the second overland journey from winter quarters to the north shore of Melville Island and Point Nias with sledges' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 587–96.

——, 'Journal of H.M. Sledge 'Star of the North', Commander McClintock, whilst searching to the North-west of Hecla and Griper Bay for the missing expedition under the command of Captain Sir John Franklin' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 540–87.

McDougall, G. F., *The eventful voyage of H.M. Discovery Ship 'Resolute' to the arctic regions in search of Sir John Franklin and the missing crews of H.M. Discovery Ships 'Erebus' and 'Terror', 1852, 1853, 1854*, London, Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1857.

Mecham, G. F., 'Proceedings of the sledge 'Discovery' between the 22nd September and the 14th October 1853 under the command of G.F. Mecham, Lieutenant, HMS *Resolute*, in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 491–7.

——, 'Travelling journal of H.M. Sledge 'Discovery', South-west Melville Branch, G. F. Mecham, Lieutenant, commanding the party, in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 505–37.

——, 'Journal of H.M. Sledge 'Discovery' between 3rd April and 12th June 1854' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855. London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 690–706.

Mumford, W. T., 'Private journal of an expedition to the arctic regions to ascertain the fate of Sir John Franklin and his crews, under the command of Sir Edward Belcher, Kt., C.B., consisting of Her Majesty's Ships Assistance, Resolute, Pioneer, Intrepid and North Star in the years 1852, 3, 4'. LAC, MG 24, H80.

Neatby, L. H., trans. and ed., *Frozen ships. The Arctic diary of Johann Miertsching 1850–1854*, 1967, New York, St. Martin's Press.

Osborn, S., ed., *The discovery of a North-west Passage by HMS Investigator, Captain R. M'Clure, during the years 1850–1851–1852–1853–1854*, 1856, London and Edinburgh, William Blackwood.

Pim, B. C. T., 'Journal of the proceedings of Her Majesty's Sledge 'John Barrow' detached from H.M. Ship 'Resolute' between 10th March and 19th April, under the command of Bedford C.T. Pim, Lieutenant' in *Great Britain. Further papers relative to the recent arctic expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of HMS Erebus and Terror. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty. January 1855*, 1855, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, pp. 550–60.

Pullen, T. C., 'Journal, T. C. Pullen, Master, H.M.S. 'North Star'' [2 vol., typescript], Arctic Institute of North America Collection, University of Calgary Library, FC 3961.P85.

Royal Astronomical Society, 'Observations of the same comet (III, 1860)', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (November 1860–June 1861)*, 21, 1861, p. 48.

—, 'The Hydrographer of the Admiralty has communicated observations', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (November 1860–June 1861)*, 22, 1861, p. 18.

Scott, R. C., 'Journal of Robt. C. Scott, Assistant surgeon, HMS Intrepid, 1852–4'. SPRI MS 79.

Seemann, B. C., *Narrative of the voyage of HMS Herald during the years 1845-51, under the command of Captain Henry Kellett...*, 2 vol., London, Reeve & Co., 1853.

Shellabear, W. B., 'Private journal of W.B. Shellabear, Second Master of HMS North Star, employed on the expedition under Sir Edward Belcher in search of Sir John Franklin, 1852–4', SPRI MS 711.

Stein, G. M., *Discovering the North-west Passage. The four-year arctic odyssey of HMS Investigator and the McClure expedition*, Jefferson NC, McFarland & Co., 2015.

Stuart-Stubbs, B., 'Belcher, Sir Edward' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 10, 1972, pp. 42–3.