

Could Captain Scott have been saved? Cecil Meares and the ‘second journey’ that failed

Karen May

27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AX (karenmay31@gmail.com)

Sarah Airriess

1519 1/2 W. Alameda Ave., Burbank, CA 91506, USA

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ABSTRACT. This is a follow-up to the article ‘Could Captain Scott have been saved? Revisiting Scott’s last expedition’, published in this journal in January 2012. Additional research in the expedition’s primary documents reveals that there was a clear opportunity for One Ton depot to have been re-stocked with dog food in January 1912, preparatory to the final relief journey to meet the polar party that February, and that the dog driver Cecil Meares failed to follow Scott’s relevant orders. The consequences will be examined in this article. All distances are given in geographical miles.

Introduction

The article ‘Could Captain Scott have been saved? Revisiting Scott’s last expedition’ (May 2012) examined the circumstances at base which contributed to the polar party’s deaths, in particular the mishandling of the ‘third journey’ specified by Scott on 20 October 1911 in his written orders to the expedition’s dog handler Cecil Meares. This journey was intended to meet the polar party on their return from the pole and rush them, or their news, back to base in time to catch the outbound *Terra Nova*.

Due to a combination of factors, the ‘third journey’ did not proceed beyond One Ton depot. First of all, the scientific assistant Apsley Cherry-Garrard, unskilled in advanced navigation, was sent out instead of the capable navigator Charles Wright. Secondly, when Cherry-Garrard and his companion Dmitri Gerof arrived at One Ton depot, 119 miles from base, they found no dog food to enable their further progress south. The dog teams might have pushed on had they fed the weaker dogs to the remainder (a method used during Scott’s 1901–04 *Discovery* expedition (Scott 2009: 436–437)). However, the scientific/medical officer Dr E.L. Atkinson had informed Cherry-Garrard that Scott had given verbal orders that ‘the dogs should not be risked’, which prevented travel beyond One Ton (‘My orders on this point were perfectly explicit; I saw no reason for disobeying them’ (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 434)). Consequently the dog teams did not proceed sufficiently far to intercept the polar party.

In May’s previous paper, the absence of dog food at One Ton depot was not addressed. According to Scott’s October 1911 orders to Meares, this restocking was to take place after the dogs’ return from assisting the Southern Journey. The question arises: did Scott’s decision to bring the dogs twenty days further south than originally planned prevent the restocking of the depot with dog food, limiting the range of the dog teams’ later operations, and forcing Scott’s party to reach as far as One Ton depot on foot and unaided? Further research

indicates that Scott’s decision to bring the dogs out further on the Southern Journey did *not* undermine the possibility of their going out for a ‘second journey’ to replenish One Ton around January 1912, a task which would have facilitated the ‘third journey’ to meet the polar party sometime in March. This ‘second journey’ never happened: we need to establish the reasons why. In this article, we shall examine circumstances leading to the failure to restock One Ton depot and the culpability of Meares.

Further evidence for Atkinson’s misrepresentation of Scott’s orders

The previous paper (May 2012) exposed three myths which have confused general understanding of Scott’s last expedition. The first myth was that Lieutenant E.R.G.R. Evans’ scurvy in January 1912 was caused by either his physical exertions or by a general failure of the expedition to take precautions against scurvy. May’s research indicated that Evans’ illness could have been caused by his refusal to eat the fresh seal meat recommended by medical officer Dr Edward Wilson as an anti-scorbutic, and that Evans’ scurvy was an anomaly in the context of the expedition.

The second myth was that Scott gave a verbal change of orders to Evans upon sending him back to base, belatedly instructing the dog teams to meet the polar party. This first appears in Roland Huntford’s *Scott and Amundsen/The last place on earth*, first published in 1979 (Huntford 2002) but is an error: Huntford had misrepresented Scott’s written orders from October 1911, given to the dog handler Meares before the start of the polar journey, as last-minute verbal orders delivered to Evans in January 1912, during the polar journey itself (May 2012: 8).

For ease of reference we reproduce the relevant sections of Scott’s orders here, starting with Scott’s 20 October 1911 orders to Meares:

Dear Meares, - In order that there may be no mistake concerning the important help which it is hoped the dog teams will give to the Southern Party, I have thought it best to set down my wishes as under: [. . .] The date of your return [from the southern journey] must be arranged according to circumstances. Under favourable conditions you should be back at Hut Point by December 19 at latest. [. . .] At some point during this month or early in January you should make your second journey to One Ton Camp and leave there: 5 units X.S. ration. 3 cases of biscuit. 5 gallons of oil. As much dog food as you can conveniently carry (for third journey). [. . .]

About the first week of February I should like you to start your third journey to the South, the object being to hasten the return of the third Southern unit and give it a chance to catch the ship. The date of your departure must depend on news received from returning units, the extent of the depot of dog food you have been able to leave at One Ton Camp, the state of the dogs, etc.

... [I]t looks at present as though you should aim at meeting the returning party about March 1 in Latitude 82 or 82.30. If you are then in a position to advance a few short marches or 'mark time' for five or six days on food brought, or ponies killed, you should have a good chance of affecting your object. You will carry with you beyond One Ton Camp one X.S. ration, including biscuit and one gallon of paraffin, and of course you will not wait beyond the time when you can safely return on back depots.

You will of course understand that whilst the object of your third journey is important, that of the second is vital. At all hazards three X.S. units of provision must be got to One Ton Camp by the date named, and if the dogs are unable to perform this service, a man party must be organised (Evans 1949: 186–188).

Scott's contemporaneous orders for Dr George C. Simpson, acting head of base, included the following:

I think you are fully aware of my plans and wishes beyond their expression in the various statements you have seen, and that it is needless to go further with written explanation (Scott 1911a; Evans 1949: 180).

In Scott's typewritten orders to Simpson is the following handwritten addendum:

It is probable that the dog teams will have little difficulty in carrying out the relief stores for the Southern party to One Ton Camp, but it is of vital importance that the stores should be depoted by the date named (Jan 10th). In case the dog teams are unable to perform this work it will be necessary to organize a man hauling party to undertake it and I must hold you responsible that this is done. The party should start about December 26th at latest and need only take 3 XS units of relief stores instead of 5. By December 26th Day and Hooper should have returned to the station. (Scott 1911a)

When the Motor Party turned north on 24 November 1911, Scott sent with them a written amendment to his existing orders:

[W]e are making fair progress and the ponies doing fairly well – I hope we shall get through to the Glacier without difficulty but to make sure I am carrying the dog teams farther than I intended at first – the teams may be late returning, unfit for further work or non existent – so don't forget that the 3 XS ration units must be got to One Ton Camp Lat 79 1/2 S somehow – owing to delays the latest date can be extended to Jan 15th (Scott 1911b).

This amendment does not mean that Scott 'had gone off without leaving final instructions' (Huntford 2002: 519). He left standing written instructions at base, which were to be followed unless circumstances made this impossible. In developing circumstances a plan may be subject to amendment; however, at no point on the Southern Journey did Scott *cancel* his established orders.

The third myth was Atkinson's statement that '[s]trict injunctions had been given by Captain Scott that the dogs should not be risked in any way' (Atkinson 1913: 208). Atkinson claimed to have received these verbal orders from Scott in December 1911, and that they limited the use of the dog teams; however, by following the recorded orders for the dogs, May concluded that this instruction originated not with Scott but with Atkinson, possibly to prevent Cherry-Garrard from going further than was safe for a non-navigator; that Scott had delivered no order for the dogs 'not to be risked'; and that on his return Scott expected to meet the dog teams in accordance with his original orders (May 2012: 11–13).

Atkinson's word cannot be taken simply on trust when challenged by surrounding evidence: May's article showed that Atkinson's account of Scott's supposed verbal orders in December 1911 did not enter the record until 24–25 February 1912, *after* Atkinson selected Cherry-Garrard for the relief journey. In Scott's own written orders and journal entries, and Atkinson's written correspondence previous to 24–25 February 1912, there is not one mention of Scott wishing not to risk the dogs in anticipation of the 1912–1913 sledging season. Not until Cherry-Garrard was selected to lead the dog teams, over the more capable Wright, did the notion of preserving the dogs enter the record, and then only as transcribed by Cherry-Garrard from Atkinson's verbal orders to him.

Further documentary evidence indicates that Scott's original emphasis on the dog teams meeting the Polar Party, rather than simply reaching One Ton depot, was widely understood, and was not countermanded by Scott at any time.

1. The journals of Dr George C. Simpson (Simpson 1911a; Simpson 1911b), acting head of base, contain no reference to Atkinson bringing a change or elaboration of orders from Scott upon the first returning party's arrival at base in January 1912. Simpson had recorded Scott's single (written)

- modification of the dog teams' instructions (Scott 1911; Simpson 1911b: 41–42), dated 24 November 1911, and delivered by the returning motor party on 21 December 1911. The lack of a corresponding update from Atkinson in January 1912 indicates that none was delivered at that time. When Simpson sent Cherry-Garrard to Hut Point on 23 February he thought Cherry-Garrard would meet the polar party, as per Scott's established plan. Simpson wrote that by 28 February 1912, 'Cherry-Garrard + Demitri [Gerof] had already gone south with the dogs to meet Capt Scott' (Simpson 1911b: 88).
2. On 3 April 1912 a freshly-returned Evans stated, regarding the polar party's return to base: 'The Southern Party . . . will return very easily . . . They will also be met and supported by two dog teams driven by Cherry Garrard and Demetrie [sic], who left the Discovery hut for that purpose on February 26.' (*The Scotsman* (Edinburgh) 3 April 1912: 9).
 3. In his letter home on 3 January 1912, Lieutenant Henry Bowers, a member of the polar party, refers to the prospect of meeting the dogs on the return journey in accordance with Scott's original orders: 'I am hoping that the dogs may meet us returning on the Barrier in which case they will run back with the news if we are too late to catch the ship. I shall be able to send you word & the remainder of my journal then' (Bowers 1912).
 4. Cherry-Garrard's journal for 28 January 1912 states that dogs were intended to meet the polar party: 'The dogs are very fit + the news for Atch with regard to going out to meet the Owner [Scott] is also cheery' (Cherry-Garrard 1911). Clearly at this point Atkinson had not mentioned to Cherry-Garrard any changes in Scott's plans which might have restricted the dog teams from meeting Scott's party.
 5. On 25 February 1912, at Hut Point, Atkinson wrote a list of instructions to Wright detailing the disposal of scientific equipment (sold at Christie's in 2010: sale 7869, lot 143). 25 February was the day before Cherry-Garrard left for One Ton depot, relying on Atkinson's verbal orders. This clearly-dated note to Wright proves that Atkinson was perfectly capable of writing down instructions that day, yet did not do so for Cherry-Garrard despite the much higher stakes involved in the latter's mission. This raises the possibility that Atkinson was reluctant to make his instructions for Cherry-Garrard a matter of permanent written record. Even if Atkinson had an aversion to writing, as suggested in *The worst journey in the world* (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 451), it is curious that the allocation of equipment should elicit written instructions from Atkinson, yet Cherry-Garrard's potentially life-saving mission, involving a 238-mile round trip on the Barrier and an absence of at least two weeks, should be left to mere verbal instructions.
 6. In a 1958 letter to *The Times*, Tryggve Gran remarked that 'Had Scott, *as planned*, been met by a dog party at the foot of the Beardmore, Wilson, Oates, Bowers and himself would have got through in a relatively fine condition' (*The Times* (London) 15 January 1958: 9).
 7. Fourteen new dogs were delivered when *Terra Nova* returned in 1912 (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 423), as per Scott's orders: 'Scott had arranged for this further transport to enable the expedition to explore the mountain range south of the Great Ice Barrier' (Bruce 2012: 15).
- These documents, corroborating Scott's original emphasis on the dogs meeting the polar party, with replacement dogs providing leeway in use of existing ones, further undermine Atkinson's assertion that in December 1911 'Scott had given particular instructions that the dogs were not to be risked in view of the sledging plans for next season' (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 430).
- It must be emphasised that One Ton depot was only identified as a rendezvous point *after* Evans' scurvy delayed the dog teams' departure in February 1912. Scott had calculated for the two parties to meet around 1 March, but with the dog teams behind schedule the polar party would have made further northward progress. A series of calculations involving average rates of travel for returning parties, the condition and speed of the polar party when last seen, and the extent of the dogs' delay, estimated that the polar party would have passed One Ton by the new projected rendezvous date (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 429–430). If the dog party's 'third journey' aimed for One Ton, they could expect to intercept the polar party on the way, so it looked like a reasonable farthest point. There was no doubt that the object of this journey was to meet the polar party: the problem arose not from erasing the idea of meeting, but in the subtle change of emphasis in Atkinson's orders to Cherry-Garrard, in which the artificial range-limit of One Ton became more important than finding the polar party if they were not where they were expected to be.
- It is evident that Atkinson was a good, well-intentioned man in a difficult situation: his decisions regarding the dog teams were not only made under duress but seemed prudent at the time, with the information he had. However, Atkinson's account of Scott's 'verbal orders' jars with Scott's habit of assiduous documentation, evinced by regular journals, memoranda, and hundreds of letters. Scott did not rely on verbal orders alone, and condemned others' failure to leave a written record: on 22 February 1911, when Hut Point was found vacant, Scott commented that 'Atkinson and Crean have departed, leaving no trace – not even a note. A very thoughtless proceeding' (Jones, M. 2008: 134–135, 460). None of Scott's written documents mention saving the

Table 1. A table showing the discrepancies between the conventional narrative and the factual narrative

| The conventional narrative of Scott's orders for the dog teams' third journey | Scott's actual orders for the dog teams' third journey |
|--|---|
| October 1911. Scott 'had gone off without leaving final instructions' for the dogs' third journey to meet the polar party (Huntford 2002: 519). | October 1911. Scott leaves written orders with Meares and Simpson for the polar party to be met by the dog teams on or around 1 March 1912, between 82° and 82° 30' S (Evans 1949: 186–188). |
| November 1911. In view of their progress, Scott sends written orders back for Simpson that the dogs will be brought further than previously arranged (Scott 1911b). | November 1911. In view of their progress, Scott sends written orders back for Simpson that the dogs will be brought further than previously arranged (Scott 1911b). |
| December 1911. Scott tells Atkinson that 'the dogs were not to be risked' (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 424). | December 1911. Scott does <u>not</u> change his mind about the dogs and does <u>not</u> give Atkinson any update to his plans. |
| January 1912. Scott changes his mind and on 4 January gives Evans verbal orders to bring the dogs out as far as 82° 30' S, but these orders were never conveyed to base due to Evans' scurvy (Huntford 2002: 457, 520). | January 1912. Scott does <u>not</u> change his mind about the dogs and does <u>not</u> give Lt Evans any update to his plans, as Scott's order to bring the dog teams as far as 82° 30' S had been given in writing in October 1911. |

dogs for the 1912–1913 sledging season, nor does any other expedition member mention such orders before Atkinson's instructions to Cherry-Garrard around 24–25 February 1912. Together with the polar party's hope on 27 February that the dogs would meet them on the Barrier ('We are naturally always discussing possibility of meeting dogs, where & when, &c.' (Scott 1913: 400)) and Scott's disappointment on 9 March upon discovering that Mount Hooper depot had not been restocked ('the dogs which would have been our salvation have evidently failed' (Scott 1913: 406)), a picture emerges of an expected course of action very different from what was carried out.

The tables above show the amount of confusion in the conventional narrative, compared with the facts as established by primary evidence (Table 1).

As stated earlier, the absence of dog food at One Ton depot, discovered by Cherry-Garrard and Gerof on 4 March 1912, was an essential element in the dog teams failing to intercept the polar party. Dependent on their own supplies, and prohibited from killing dogs, any southward advance consequently had a limited range. The reason there was no dog food at One Ton will now be examined in detail.

Why was there no dog food at One Ton Depot?

Given Scott's orders for a second journey to restock One Ton with '[a]s much dog food as you can conveniently carry (for third journey)', why did Cherry-Garrard and Gerof find none there? In her previous article, May admitted uncertainty. 'Why was there no dog food at One Ton? There are two possible scenarios. Did Simpson not carry out Scott's instructions, failing to send out dog food with the man-hauling team, or did the man-hauling team mistakenly unload the dog food at an earlier depot? We do not know' (May 2012: 9).

Further research has resolved this: the man-hauling party which took out the contingency load of '3 XS ration units', in lieu of the delayed dog party, did not take any dog food because it simply was not feasible. Cherry-Garrard mentions this in *The worst journey in the world* (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 426–427) though he does not elaborate; when we do the calculations, the picture becomes clear.

The maximum load for a man-hauling party, based on others' experiences (Evans 1949: 198), was about 185 pounds per man, so four men should pull around 740 pounds. The weight of the food and equipment necessary for four weeks puts the starting weight at 517–578 lbs. Three X.S. units, Scott's bare minimum for the 'vital' resupply, total just over 180 lbs. Added to the base weight, this brings the total to 697–758 lbs, around the maximum, leaving little or no room for dog food. This would not have been disobedience of Scott's contingency orders for the man-hauling team: these orders make no mention of dog food, but only that three X.S. rations must be brought. Additionally, at the time this party set out, there was the stated possibility that the dogs might later 'be unfit for further work or non-existent', so hauling dog food at this point might be wasted effort. (Food/equipment numbers are calculated from Cherry-Garrard 1994: 359, 572 and Wilson 1911: 1–16; the fuel averages per week, from Taylor 1913: 152, 156.)

The orders from Scott which reduced the load from 5 to 3 X.S. rations did not eliminate the dog food from all plans. Though Scott's amendment in November 1911 meant the man haulers had to omit the dog food, later events demonstrate that Meares understood that the difference was to be made up after the dogs returned from the southern journey. The 'second journey' should have been carried out by Meares in January 1912; had it been, it would have brought One Ton depot up to its full quota of rations, fuel, and the dog food necessary for later dog teams to meet the polar party further south as planned.

Had Scott wished this 'second journey' to be cancelled, he would have stated so; that he did not do so shows that the expectation still stood. Nevertheless, this 'second journey' did not happen.

The circumstances are laid out in Simpson's journal entry of 21 January 1912, which summarises events at Cape Evans dating back to 15 December 1911, and records Meares' original intention to set off for One Ton depot:

We had expected the dogs back on the 15th of Dec. and we were getting very anxious as time went on and they did not come, so we were very happy when they arrived safely [on 5 January] in very good form. In spite of their long journey the dogs were very fit; in fact they came from Hut Point here (15 miles) in two hours. On their return the dogs were rested, but there was more work ahead for them. Meares intended to go out to One Ton Camp again taking a little more food, but chiefly to take out a stock of luxuries like Irish Stew, Marmalade and Tinned Fruits . . . On the 17th of January Meares had his sledges packed with the idea of starting that evening (Simpson 1911b: 52–53)

Scott had warned in his update of 24 November 1911 that 'the [dog] teams may be late returning, unfit for further work or non existent' (Scott 1911b): this simply acknowledged the possible hazards in Antarctica, allowing Simpson to send out only man haulers in December 1911 if the dogs ran into trouble. This amendment did not automatically disqualify the dog teams from all future work, and Meares' readiness to go on 17 January shows that Meares did not misconstrue Scott's words. However, something happened which changed Meares' mind about departing. Simpson continues:

On the 17th of January Meares had his sledges packed with the idea of starting that evening. During the afternoon Anton [Omelchenko] rushed in to me saying 'the Terra Nova has come'. . . There was no doubt; there was the ship on the horizon. . . Naturally when the ship was seen Meares delayed his departure in the hope of being able to take home news with him (Simpson 1911b: 53–54, 56–57).

Though this was indeed *Terra Nova*, her imminent arrival at Cape Evans proved illusory: she sailed further up the coast, and did not return to base until 7 February.

Simpson, though an expedition diarist, did not update daily: usually he made a record on anything from a weekly to a monthly basis, chronicling the events of that period. Such a method of record-keeping can be subject to hindsight, and this is discernible in Simpson's write-up of the events of 17 January.

He begins by stating clearly that Meares intended to start south on the evening of 17 January. This was to have been the 'second journey', wherein the dog teams would make up what the man haulers could not carry. The need for more dog food was still imperative: Scott specified that this should only have been unfulfilled if the dogs were 'unfit for further work or non existent' (Scott

1911b). The dogs, though late returning, were certainly present, 'rested' and fit: Meares standing by with packed sledges on 17 January testifies to the imminence of their journey. Use of the plural 'sledges' implies that Gerof would have accompanied him. Between them they could have taken the needed dog food to One Ton. But Meares did not go out and, after 17 January, the whole idea of the dog teams' 'second journey' is dropped from discussion.

Simpson attempts to explain Meares' decision to remain at base: 'Naturally when the ship was seen Meares delayed his departure in the hope of being able to take home news with him.' (Simpson 1911b: 56–57) The wording is clumsy, but implies that Meares was waiting for the ship so he could take news from home to the returning parties. If so, it was not a vital task, nor does it explain aborting the mission. Within 48 hours they could have determined that the ship was headed elsewhere, and Meares could have started south as intended. A wish to wait indefinitely for 'news' was not sufficient justification to put off the explicitly vital restocking of One Ton. Due to Meares' refusal to leave, the depot remained unstocked.

In the next sections we shall examine Meares' role in the southern journey, and his role in the depots' depletion.

Meares on the southern journey

The main group of men and ponies undertook the southern journey on 1 November 1911, but Scott intended for the dogs to leave much later, as their speed would allow them to catch up with the ponies further south. As Wilson noted in his record of the plans, 'the dog party being self-contained can move independent of the ponies from camp to camp' (Wilson 1911: 7). Scott's orders to Meares of 20 October 1911 state: 'I leave you to fix the date of your departure from Hut Point, observing that I would like you to join me at One Ton Camp, or very shortly after' (Evans 1949: 186).

From Hut Point to One Ton (79°29'S) was 119 miles, or fourteen days' march with ponies. The ponies reached One Ton on 15 November 1911, two weeks after departing (Scott 1913: 320). As dog teams could cover at least 20 miles a day, Meares should have delayed at least a week at Hut Point, to join the main party around 14–16 November. Instead, Meares and Gerof departed early enough to meet them on 7 November. Their extended presence would deplete the rations for longer than Scott had calculated, and Scott was displeased at their early arrival ('Meares has played too much for safety in catching us so soon' (Scott 1913: 314)).

Additionally, evidence suggests that Meares exceeded his dogs' rations, leading to a dog food shortage which had to be remedied by the premature slaughter of ponies. On 15 November Bowers, the storemaster, recorded the circumstances explicitly:

A disquieting feature is the dog element. They are carrying about a week's pony food but as Meares has somehow overfed them to the extent of 50 lbs he has

rather cut down the range of his operations + cannot go forward more than a fortnight from here without killing dogs – unless he has ponies to feed on. We calculate that he can feed his teams for 2 days on one Pony + so Jehu + Chinaman which must be disposed of in the next 10 days will afford him 4 days dog food. I can't understand how he can have made such a mistake (Bowers 1911: 15; Bull and Wright 1993: 201)

A charge is sometimes brought against Scott that he should have known that bringing Meares, Gerof, and the dog teams farther than planned would deplete the depots and stretch supplies beyond what was feasible for the polar party's safe return. Scott's recorded surprise, on his return journey, that certain depots were short of food and fuel, has been cast against the argument that his own policy, often characterised as an unplanned last-minute move, created the deficiencies. In fact, Scott had not planned alone: his calculations were made with Bowers, as indicated by Bowers' journal entry above, and Scott's journal entries for 1 and 10 September 1911 (Scott 1913: 276, 277–278) describing days spent jointly formulating plans. Furthermore, before departing, Wilson recorded the plans in his sketchbook, which shows it had always been an option to extend the dogs' run. One proposed scenario had 'the dog teams taken beyond the calculated distance and fed on the remaining ponies. The dogs should be able to advance two extra days for every pony fed to them' (Wilson 1911: 8). This estimate proved conservative: Bowers recorded on 24 November that 'Meares + Demitri cut up Jehu + got 4 days dog food out of him – this is double the amount anticipated – + so is very satisfactory' (Bowers 1911: 25). Thus we see that the dog teams going further south was no last-minute vacillation of Scott's, but an option which had been calculated by Scott and Bowers well before the start of the southern journey.

The man haulers were aware of the strain that Meares and Gerof put on man food, though, and contributed from their own rations to extend his. Cherry-Garrard noted:

For the first week up the glacier we are to go one biscuit short to provision Meares on the way back . . . Meares has been brought on far farther than his orders were originally bringing him . . . The dogs, however, are getting all the horse that is good for them, and are very fit. He has to average 24 miles a day going back. (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 359)

Fourteen men relinquishing a biscuit a day for a week totalled 98 biscuits: if Meares and Gerof consumed 6 biscuits per day on their return (rather than the 8 biscuits demanded by man haulers), this would give them around 8 days' biscuit ration apiece. With the dogs expected to travel 24 miles per day, 8 days' journey would make 192 miles, so the 186 miles between Lower Glacier Depot and Mount Hooper was theoretically achievable. (These distances are taken from chief stoker William Lashly's mileage tables; Ellis 1969: 141.)

This was the extent of the strain placed on the party by the time of Meares' turning back on 11 December.

As Bowers wrote on 10 December, 'Meares will help us with the 2 dog teams for half a day more . . . He must then turn back as his provision allowance will not admit of his staying longer' (Bowers 1911: 47). When Meares headed north again, it was with his provisions calculated.

Unfortunately, estimates for the dogs' daily mileage proved over-optimistic, and the first stages fell short of the expected 24 miles per day. In his journal Cherry-Garrard recorded the despairing notes Meares left at the depots on his return journey:

[31 December 1911, Southern Barrier Depot] There was a note there from Meares – he had taken till the 15th to get there, three days, which is not promising going – had arrived in low drift and it was then blizzing.

[5 January 1912, Middle Barrier Depot] At the depot, where the flag showed up very plainly, we got a note from Meares dated Dec 20, i.e. 5 days from the last depot, and he seemed rather despondent. Thick weather and blizzards had delayed him . . . He was taking a little butter (half a day's whack we made out) from each bag, and with this would have enough to the next depot on short rations (Cherry-Garrard 1911).

From turning north on 11 December to reaching Hut Point on 5 January, the dog teams covered 379 miles in 25 days; an average speed of 15.16 miles per day. Cherry-Garrard recorded Meares as having covered '35 miles per day' in the later stretch between One Ton and Bluff Depot (Cherry-Garrard 1911), so the early section was very slow going; Meares was understandably frightened about his rations, so took more food from Mount Hooper than allotted. In an account of the expedition printed in July 1913, Evans stated:

To help us Meares had travelled farther south than his return rations allowed for, and for the 450-mile northward march to Cape Evans he and his companion Demitri went short one meal a day, rather than deplete the depots (Evans 1913: 21).

Meares and Gerof probably did go short, but Evans' claim of their self-sacrifice is refuted in Wright's diary. On 10 January Wright, with the first returning party, arrived at Mount Hooper depot to find less food than expected:

Sixty miles to next depot [with] two weeks grub about. Meares only two weeks ahead of us in a great panic. Has taken a lot of our grub which makes it doubtful if we can afford to go on beyond One Ton, if depot is not laid. Damn him! Took fifty biscuits for two men doing no work to go the sixty odd miles (Bull and Wright 1993: 235)

The sledging rations included 16 ounces of biscuit per man per day alongside pemmican and other items (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 359); these 16 ounces constituted 8 biscuits (Simpson 1911a: 74). Wright's anger stems from the fact that Meares took over six days' worth of rations to cover himself and Gerof for three days, more than a man hauler's full share of food for this stage, for

men expending less energy than the man hauling teams following behind. Cherry-Garrard confirms:

The dogs were going slowly but steadily in very soft stuff . . . [Meares] was running short of food, having only biscuit crumbs, tea, some cornflour, half cup of pemmican. He was therefore taking fifty biscuits, and a day's provision for two men from each of our units [these units were the rations for each of the three returning man-hauling teams]. I think he is taking too many biscuits at any rate, especially as he is only dog-driving (Cherry-Garrard 1911, 1994: 397).

Two days later, Wright wrote in his journal, 'All [of us] interested to know what grub is at One Ton and whether Meares has taken the lot' (Bull and Wright 1993: 237).

When the first returning party arrived at One Ton on 15 January, they found that Meares had not excessively depleted it. Of the X.S. rations, Cherry-Garrard noted in his journal that there were '3 of them instead of 5, since it had been brought out by a manhauling party: but to make up Meares has left quite a lot of extras' (Cherry-Garrard 1911). With regard to Meares' declared plans, he wrote:

He hoped to be able to run the other two X.S. rations out by the end of the month. This will give the other two parties more grub than we are taking, which is all right (Cherry-Garrard 1911, emphasis ours).

Thus Cherry-Garrard's journal unequivocally proves that when Meares arrived at One Ton during his return from the south, he knew exactly what was expected of him. Meares knew that the returning parties were dependent on further supplies being delivered to One Ton, and gave the deadline for replenishing the depot as the end of January 1912. Had he and Gerof left on 17 January as planned, they would probably have met this target.

Meares' appropriation of others' rations at Mount Hooper depot means he knew the importance of food on the Barrier. Because he left the depot understocked, he knew that the 'second journey' to restock One Ton was urgent: should the polar party arrive at Mount Hooper (61 miles south of One Ton) to find it short of food, the dog teams needed to intercept them there, or further south. Meares' momentary 'panic' during his return journey is understandable, but in taking extra food from Mount Hooper he was obliged to make good on that deficit. Even if he could not reach Mount Hooper himself in the time available, he could at least stock One Ton with the dog food necessary for the 'third journey' to meet the polar party. Despite knowing all this, Meares abandoned the crucial 'second journey.'

In the next section we shall examine his refusal to depart; why his superior, Simpson, did not force him to go; and later obfuscations of the depot laying issue.

Meares after his return to base

In 'Could Captain Scott have been saved?' May suggested that a naval officer should have been in charge of Cape Evans, rather than the civilian Simpson:

Had a naval trained officer such as Evans or Bowers been in charge he would have ensured, through explicit instructions and supervision of the loading of the sledge, that the dog food for the relief journey specified in Scott's orders would have reached One Ton Depot safely (May 2012: 16).

Furthermore, an officer could have used naval authority to ensure the orders left by Scott were executed in full. The problem appears to have been that Simpson misunderstood the arrangements to restock the depots and did not challenge Meares' failure to carry out his mission. Had a naval officer remained at base, he would not have considered Scott's standing orders negotiable, and would not have been fobbed off with Meares' prevarications.

Here, the personalities of the men were key. Evans and Bowers, both forceful personalities, could have matched Meares in argument. They could also have used the weight of naval authority to threaten to inform the British government of his disobedience. Meares had served in the Boer War in 1901–1902, and later divulged his service as an 'observer' (intelligence agent) there, in the 1900 Boxer rebellion, and in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese conflict (Crane 2006: 433). A charge of neglect of duty could have damaged his future employment prospects. Had Evans or Bowers been present, Meares might have conceded and restocked the depot as required.

Unfortunately, command was in the hands not of a trained naval officer but of the mild-mannered meteorologist Simpson, who was not only acting head of base but also head of the scientific programme in Wilson's absence. Simpson had a professional background within the esteemed Anglo-Indian governmental system; Scott even wrote in a 1908 letter to Simpson, 'It's a pity that some of your Indian efficiency cannot be imported into the London office' (Thomson 1977: 149). Tryggve Gran described Simpson as 'living in a separate world of science' (Hattersley-Smith 1984: 88), implying a certain remoteness from everyday events, but during his time in charge Simpson kept a clear written record of Scott's orders and how they had been followed. The question becomes one of intent: did Simpson genuinely misunderstand the supply arrangements, or was he complicit in excusing Meares' refusal to leave for One Ton?

Evidence collected by Cherry-Garrard in 1948 suggests that Simpson was genuinely confused rather than complicit. When presented with Meares' about-face, he apparently had not protested or questioned the other man's motivation. This concession arguably contributed to the final tragedy: Simpson's normalisation of Meares' reversal in his journal (with the word 'Naturally') masked an important detail in understanding the disaster.

After 17 January, obfuscations of the fact that Meares had neglected Scott's orders begin to appear in the written record, apparently originating from Meares himself. The first possible smokescreen is the idea, recorded in Simpson's journal, that Meares' sledges carried 'luxuries like Irish Stew, Marmalade and Tinned Fruits' (Simpson 1911b: 53), casting the journey as a favour and

non-essential. Scott never ordered this; also, Meares would not have filled two sledges exclusively with treats when he had already promised, in his written note left at the depot, to bring the remainder of needed rations to One Ton. Trivializing the cargo makes sense, however, if Meares wished to downplay the necessity of the mission.

The second obfuscation is recorded in Cherry-Garrard's journal on 28 January 1912, when the latter's party returned to base:

[T]wo miles back we met the 2 dog teams [. . .] [Meares] was thinking of going out with the other 2 XS rations, but the others had told him that with what they had left at 1 Ton + the 3 XS rations, + one taken out by Atch [Atkinson] there would be plenty for all parties. I think this is wrong (Cherry-Garrard 1911).

Here Meares presents himself as having initially wished to go out again, but having been dissuaded or overruled by 'others' at base. Among the men at Cape Evans were those who had restocked One Ton with 3 X.S. rations in December 1911, so they would have known it was understocked. Even if they had told Meares that between their efforts and the final journey 'there would be plenty for all parties', the packed sledges and intended departure on 17 January demonstrate that this opinion had no real power to sway. Set against Simpson's written record of Meares' about-face after sighting *Terra Nova*, Meares' statement here looks like retroactive justification and abdication of responsibility.

Cherry-Garrard's 1922 memoir *The worst journey in the world* holds the third obfuscation: 'I note in my diary [on 31 January 1912], after we had reached the hut, that Scott was to have sent back instructions for the dog party with us, but these have, it would seem, been forgotten' (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 425). At the back of his journal for November 1912, in a section titled 'Written on the Barrier after finding the Remains of the Southern Party', Cherry-Garrard elaborates: 'I heard that Meares was told that further instructions as to the dogs would be sent back by the 1st Return Party. These however were not sent' (Cherry-Garrard 1912c).

It appears that the idea of returning parties bringing orders for the dog teams originated with Meares. We have only hearsay that Meares expected such orders in late January 1912 and that their absence left him at a loss; however, surviving documents indicate that Meares understood precisely what he had to do. Scott's standing orders to Meares from October 1911 give clear instructions for the dogs after their return to base; the note Meares left at One Ton, summarised in Cherry-Garrard's journal, proves Meares originally intended to act upon these orders by delivering two further X.S. rations to One Ton by the end of January; Simpson's journal records Meares as ready to start this trip on 17 January; finally, neither Scott nor any member of the first returning party make any mention of the need for further orders. Thus Meares' claim on 31 January that he was waiting for orders from Scott is belied by his own behaviour two weeks earlier: when he had the sledges stocked and ready

to leave on 17 January, he was demonstrating that he knew full well what Scott expected of him.

Meares' excuses, after his failure to leave as scheduled, are self-contradictory and unconvincing. He simultaneously states that he was left uninformed of what was required, and that his mission of 17 January required him to transport luxuries. He goes too far when he claims that he wished to go but was talked out of it (Simpson's account shows otherwise), and that the existing depots provided 'plenty' of food 'for all parties'. From Wright's account we know the depots were depleted, and that Meares had played a role in their depletion. Meares knew first-hand that the 'second journey' was needed to restock the depots, yet he chose not to go.

Additional misinformation may have been laid afterwards. A legend in popular history (Smith 2002: 186; Fiennes 2004: 340; Rees 2006: 85; Mills 2008: 157, 168), erroneously repeated by May in her 2012 article (May 2012: 10), has Meares' premature departure excused by the need to return home in 1912 upon receiving news of his father's death. The earliest reference we can find to Meares' father having died before 1912 dates from 1978: '[Meares'] experiences and the news of his father's death decided him to return home, in the "Terra Nova"' (Jones, A.G.E. 1978: 65, 1992: 272). However, genealogical research shows that Meares' father, Henry John Meares of 'Acharra', Colinton, Edinburgh, actually died on 12 June 1919, seven years after Cecil Meares' return from Antarctica (Figs 1a, 1b).

Simpson's journal states, 'as far as I know, no losses of near relations are reported' in the mail received from the ship (Simpson 1911b: 63). Therefore Meares cannot have told Simpson this story at Cape Evans in February 1912: either it was invented by a third party (perhaps elaborating on the hint in *The worst journey in the world* that Meares 'was recalled by family affairs' (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 444)), or Meares himself at some point offered his father's death as retroactive justification for his departure.

On 28 January 1912 Cherry-Garrard registered his private doubt of the depots' 'plenty.' By 25 February, however, he had apparently been persuaded otherwise, as he wrote to Reginald Smith on that date: 'Luckily Scott was not dependant [sic] on the dog teams - he has lots of extra food even without them' (Cherry-Garrard 1912b). Unless this was simply an optimistic gloss for the home audience, it is difficult to understand how Cherry-Garrard could have changed his mind about the known food supply, given his previous doubts. Perhaps this was easier to accept than the possibility that Meares abandoned the requisite 'second journey' despite knowing that returning parties could have been left dangerously underprovisioned.

One might cast Meares as spiteful to have shirked his duty in these circumstances: however, his behaviour is plausible as a blinkered desire to let nothing interfere with returning home. Scott was aware Meares might wish to catch the ship: in his October 1911 instructions

(a)

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|----------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Henry John Meares | 1919 | 14 | 71 | George Francis Meares | Barbadoes | Ida P. Meares | 1919 |
| June | 12th | 1919 | deceased | deceased | deceased | deceased | June 12th 1919 |
| Wife of Major Genl. Sir John Meares | 86, 15 m. Ave | | | Margaret Meares | deceased | | deceased |
| deceased | | | | deceased | | | |
| deceased | | | | deceased | | | |
| deceased | | | | deceased | | | |

(b)

| 1915 . Marriage solemnized at <u>Acharra, Wells St. W.</u> in the Parish of <u>St. Mary Abchurch</u> in the County of <u>London</u> | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------------|------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| No. | When Married. | Name and Surname. | Age. | Condition. | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the time of Marriage. | Father's Name and Surname. | Rank or Profession of Father. |
| 196 | February 1915 | Cecil Henry Meares | 36 | Bachelor | Lieutenant R.M.A. | Acharra, Edinburgh | Henry John Meares | Major in R.M.A. (retired) |
| | 1915 | Annie Christina Spengler | 30 | Spinster | | No. 10, Acharra, Wells St. W. | Harry Conrad Spengler (deceased) | Merchant |
| Married in the <u>Church of St. Mary Abchurch</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Established Church</u> by <u>Alfred E. Rowe</u> or after by me, <u>J. C. Fay, Vicar, Acharra.</u> | | | | | | | | |
| This Marriage was solemnized between us, | | <u>Cecil Henry Meares</u> | | in the Presence of us, | | <u>Alfred E. Rowe</u> | | <u>J. C. Fay, Vicar, Acharra.</u> |

Fig. 1 (a) Death record for Henry John Meares of Acharra, Colinton, 12 June 1919. (b) Marriage record for Cecil Henry Meares, indicating paternity by Henry John and residence at Acharra, Colinton.

to Lieutenant Harry Pennell, the commanding officer of *Terra Nova* on her return to McMurdo Sound, Scott mentions that ‘Meares may possibly return; it depends on letters from home’ (Evans 1949: 178). Nevertheless, had Meares undertaken the ‘second journey’ on 17 January as planned, he could have caught the ship before she departed on 4 March (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 437). Unfortunately, Meares left no records of his own to explain his actions. With the exceptions of a provincial tour of Ponting’s lectures in early 1914 (Jones, M. 2004: 184) and his visit to Oates’ bereaved mother Caroline, telling her of ‘rows’ and ‘great trouble and unhappiness’ on the expedition (Huntford 2002: 542), he was silent on the subject until his death in 1937. Fiction and drama have presented their theories and have slanted perception of his character (most notably in the television series *The last place on earth* (Griffiths 1986)), but fictionalisations cannot be trusted as reputable sources of information.

The death of Meares material makes it difficult to ascertain his reasoning and motivations, but one episode sheds light on his general character. On 21 February 1911, returning from the initial depot-laying journey, two dog teams ran into a crevassed part of the Barrier. Scott and Meares’ team broke through a crevasse lid, losing two dogs which landed on a shelf 65 feet down. Scott ordered Meares lowered to retrieve them, but despite his responsibility for the dogs, his reputation as an expert adventurer, and the direct order from his superior, Meares refused. Cherry-Garrard described the incident:

Scott told Meares to go down and get the dogs. Meares refused. I said ‘I often went down the well at home let me go’. Scott said to Bill [Wilson] ‘What do you think?’ Bill said he didn’t think anyone ought to go, but if anyone went he could go down. Scott then said that he was going down: and he went (Cherry-Garrard 1914a: 125; Fiennes 2004: 214).

Scott retrieved the dogs because he knew the importance of preserving transport animals for the polar journey in October: on 9 January 1911 he had noted, after a dog’s death, ‘We can’t afford to lose animals of any sort’ (Scott 1913: 75). Despite the convivial atmosphere after the crevasse incident (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 130), the goodwill only went so far; the following day Scott wrote in his journal, in an entry posthumously edited for 1913 publication:

Meares is excellent to a point but a little pig-headed and quite ignorant of the conditions here . . . This journey has opened his eyes a good deal and mine too. It is evident that I have placed too much reliance on his experience (Jones, M. 2008: 460)

Scott was relying on Meares’ experience again during the polar party’s return journey in early 1912, and again Meares refused to follow through. Can Scott be blamed for this? Evidence that Meares was planning to return home when the ship returned in 1912 can be found in a letter from Captain Lawrence Oates to his mother, dated 24 October 1911: ‘Meares goes home in the ship . . . he told Scott he was going to clear out whatever happened. I don’t think there is much love lost between them’ (Oates 1911; Mills 2008: 157). With hindsight, this ‘whatever happened’ suggests Meares was unconcerned about the consequences of his early departure. Whatever Meares’ personal reasons may have been, what ultimately matters is that there is no objective justification for his deliberately shirking clearly-outlined duties on which the lives of other men depended. A clear line of causality links Meares’ negligence with the deaths of at least three men, and no amount of retrospective psychology can excuse him from shouldering his portion of the blame.

Why no one implicated Meares in the polar party’s demise at the time is a complicated mixture of the obfuscations starting in January 1912 and the expedition’s closing ranks upon returning to civilisation. Many

contributing factors of the tragedy were downplayed to avoid scandal. In 1912, when ignorant of the polar party's fate, Evans had stated publicly that they were to be 'met and supported by two dog teams' (*The Scotsman* (Edinburgh) 3 April 1912: 9), but after news of the tragedy broke in February 1913 he claimed that 'Captain Scott left instructions that no search parties should leave the base to look for him' and that 'it was humanly impossible for the base party to save Scott and his comrades' (Fiennes 2004: 389). In their analysis, the media chose to focus on Cherry-Garrard's futile and limited 'third journey' to One Ton depot in February-March 1912; in making Cherry-Garrard a scapegoat, the significance of lost relief opportunities was overlooked. The climate of shock and damage control made it indecorous to ask difficult questions or challenge official narratives.

Cherry-Garrard wrote to Meares asking for a copy of his exact orders from Scott (there is no record of a reply from Meares), and in 1918 he and Atkinson privately discussed the possibility that Meares had 'disobeyed orders' (Wheeler 2002: 202). His evolving thoughts and observations are written in bound transcripts of his 1910–1913 expedition diaries, alongside the relevant entries. A turning-point in his understanding came in December 1937, following *The Nottingham Journal's* review of *The worst journey in the world*, in which the reviewer accused Cherry-Garrard of concealing the fact that Scott's orders for the dogs were not obeyed:

... there are, by design, a few blanks in the narrative. Sir Edward Evans has filled in one of these by printing the instructions which had been left behind to a certain member of the expedition, now dead, who was to meet [Scott] with the dogs. No-one has said, however, that this member of the expedition, the most skilled of all its members in the management of the dogs, did start according to his instructions, but turned back when he was a day or two out, because he saw the relief ship miraged up, and did not want to lose the chance of an early return home. By so narrow a margin was the prospect of safety lost to the very gallant band who were returning from the Pole (*The Nottingham Journal* 15 December 1937).

This reviewer confused Meares' 'second journey' (to restock the depot) with the 'third journey' (to meet the polar party). The accusation of deliberate concealment evidently jolted Cherry-Garrard into reconsidering Meares' failure to restock One Ton, and to track down what had really happened, because on 4 March 1938 Cherry-Garrard met with Simpson to discuss the matter:

I then told Simpson I had been told at Cape Evans after we got in from the Polar Journey that Meares was ready to start and saw the ship miraged up and did not go.

To this Simpson replied: – That is quite possible: I would not say that is not true. I would not altogether blame Meares: he wanted to get home and did not want to miss the ship. And of course there was no idea (fear) of a disaster then.

This point of view amazed me. Afterwards I mentioned the conversation to [the playwright George] Bernard Shaw. . . He said, 'Didn't he realize that the laying of the depot was vital?' (Cherry-Garrard 1914b: 748)

From this, Cherry-Garrard concluded:

I am afraid it is becoming clear that the not laying of this depot by Meares was more or less deliberate. I have always had a feeling that Meares let the whole show down in some rather indefinite way: I have also had the feeling that he got off very lightly. I feel that Meares was never criticized because they did not want any criticism which could be helped; and a good many people have been sacrificed to a certain extent in order to shield Meares (Cherry-Garrard 1914b: 748).

Chief of these 'sacrifices' had been Cherry-Garrard himself. Meares had worked for British intelligence and, according to Meares' biographer Leif Mills, had come with an Admiralty recommendation for Scott's expedition (Mills 2008: 134). While we may never know whether the establishment knew of Meares' role in the Scott tragedy, Meares had been an intelligence agent and could not be publicly 'outed.' The civilian Cherry-Garrard was more convenient for public scrutiny.

In 'late 1948', Cherry-Garrard met Simpson again and ascertained Simpson's understanding of matters in January 1912:

Simpson thought that when Meares was ready packed to go out to One Ton on March [sic] 17 that all the food was at One Ton and Meares was taking out some extra luxuries . . . I finally told Simpson the real question was the dog food. This was apparently the first time Simpson had even heard of the dog food (Cherry-Garrard 1914b: 751)

This confirms that Simpson made two important errors on 17 January 1912: he had a flawed understanding of Scott's requirements, and believed Meares was telling the truth. In Cherry-Garrard's notes on their 1948 meeting, Simpson explicitly denies ever having a copy of Scott's orders to Meares, though we know from Scott's orders to Simpson that the latter had 'seen' the orders to various parties and was understood by Scott to be 'fully aware' of these. In addition, Scott's October 1911 orders to Pennell state that 'Simpson will inform you of the plan on which the Southern Journey is being worked' (Evans 1949:171), another indication that Scott expected Simpson to possess a thorough understanding of affairs. However, Simpson cannot be judged as culpable as Meares, who unquestionably knew his orders, and whose recent experience on the Barrier would have informed him of the importance of restocking the depots.

In his journal entry for 10 March 1912 (later posthumously edited for 1913 publication), Scott recorded his disappointment upon finding that Mount Hooper depot had not been restocked: 'Shortage on our allowance all round. I don't know that anyone is to blame, but generosity and thoughtfulness have not been abundant. The dogs that would have been our salvation have evidently failed.'

Meares had a bad trip home I suppose' (Scott 1913: 406; Jones, M. 2008: 471)

Scott appears charitable in his refusal to apportion specific blame or identify a culprit: perhaps he could not envisage Meares' deliberately refusing his orders. Sadly, Scott's leniency has worked against him. Had he stated more clearly here that Meares was supposed to have restocked the depots, his statement that the dog driver must have had 'a bad trip home' (with its implication that circumstances beyond his control prevented him from returning) would not have excused Meares from subsequent scrutiny, and Meares' culpability would not have taken so long to surface.

In the next section we shall examine what might have happened had Meares restocked the depot and Wright been sent out instead of Cherry-Garrard.

Could Captain Scott have been saved? An alternative scenario

Now that we know the importance of the 'second journey', we must re-examine the possible scenario had the dog food been depoted as Scott intended. If the dog food necessary for further travel had been available at One Ton, Atkinson would have had a stronger basis on which to send Wright rather than Cherry-Garrard, in defiance of Simpson's wishes. Because the depot had not been laid, whoever was sent could not go further south without killing some dogs to feed the remainder. Judging from his previous successful navigation, Wright was capable of pushing south, but with the depot unlaid it is unsurprising that Atkinson limited the 'third journey' by instructing Cherry-Garrard that the dogs 'should not be risked'.

In 'Could Captain Scott have been saved?', 13 March was suggested as the date an effective navigator could have met the polar party (May 2012: 13). However, we would like to revisit the visibility conditions in more detail. Scott's journals to 7 March state that conditions were generally clear and bright; Bowers' meteorological reports for 8 and 9 March record a Force 2 wind and 'calm' (Force 0), respectively (Simpson 1923: 462). From the afternoon of 10 March there is a marked change: Scott recorded poor conditions with strong winds and poor visibility, losing tracks, and once being confined to the tent. Thus a hypothesis which posits a late departure southwards from One Ton, on 10 March, is flawed: had Wright and Gerof departed so late, they might not have spotted the polar party in such poor conditions.

Cherry-Garrard's journals state that the dogs required rest on 24 February after the dash to Corner Camp to rescue Evans, and on 25 February visibility was poor, so the 'third journey' could not embark from Hut Point until 2 a.m. on 26 February (Cherry-Garrard 1912a). However, the selection of Wright could still have made a significant difference, because the day after Cherry-Garrard arrived at One Ton (at 5.30 p.m. on 3 March) he wrote in his journal: 'There is no sign of Scott here, and so perhaps he will get in soon and all will be well. I have decided

to wait 2 days and then settle what we will do. I think he must be in in 2 or 3 days' (Cherry-Garrard 1912a).

Given his undeveloped navigation skills, and Atkinson's orders not to risk the dogs, Cherry-Garrard's instinct on 4 March was to wait and see. After blizzards on 5 and 6 March, the clear but intensely cold weather, coupled with Gerof's complaints of ill health, settled Cherry-Garrard's decision to stay put.

Gerof's illness at One Ton in Cherry-Garrard's company, and his swift recovery upon returning to Hut Point, led Cherry-Garrard and Atkinson to believe he had been feigning illness. On 17 March, the day after their return, Cherry-Garrard noted in his journal, 'Demetri is quite well. It is sad that he has really been shamming ill' (Cherry-Garrard 1912a). If this were in fact the case, and Gerof's malingering had been intended to prevent Cherry-Garrard's advance beyond the depot (a move which would have endangered them both), there is no reason to expect he would have feigned incapacity, or achieved such success, with the strong-willed and practised navigator Wright in charge.

Had Wright been in Cherry-Garrard's place, Wright would have had no reason to remain at One Ton for a week. With sufficient dog food at hand, aware of the imperative to *meet* the polar party, and without orders preventing the killing of dogs, Wright and Gerof could have started south from One Ton late on 3 March or early on 4 March. We can estimate the dog teams could travel between 20 and 30 miles a day: by 29 February Cherry-Garrard had travelled nearly 90 miles in 4 days, including weather delays (Cherry-Garrard 1994: 432); on 26 February, he logged 30 miles 'in thick weather' (Cherry-Garrard 1912a). With this rate of progress, Wright and Gerof could have met the polar party 80–120 miles south of One Ton around 7–9 March 1912.

Had the depot not been restocked by Meares' 'second journey,' this team would have had movement south of One Ton limited, but not fatally so. 7–8 days' worth of dog food could have got them from Hut Point to One Ton, leaving them 4–5 days further southbound travel before being forced to head back. Four days' worth of dog food would theoretically have been sufficient to meet the polar party 80–120 miles south of One Ton depot.

Even allowing for severe conditions and a reluctance to slaughter dogs, with 4–5 days' dog food Wright and Gerof could have reached a point between 40 and 60 miles south of One Ton and there depoted food and fuel for the returning polar party. Would Scott and his party have spotted a new cairn on their route, given the intermittent visibility from 10 March onwards? If this extra food and fuel had given the three remaining members of the polar party the strength to reach One Ton, would the supplies there have given them sufficient strength to cover the remaining 119 miles back to safety? One cannot be certain of either scenario: however, had Atkinson sent the proactive Wright instead of the apprehensive Cherry-Garrard, the polar party's prospects would have improved.

Table 2. The second and third dog journeys, 1912: what happened, and what should have happened

| What actually happened | What should have happened |
|---|---|
| <p>21 December 1911: Simpson receives Scott's orders that he is taking the dogs further south.</p> <p>26 December 1911: Simpson sends out the man-hauling team to take out the 3 XS rations.</p> | <p>21 December 1911: Simpson receives Scott's orders that he is taking the dogs further south.</p> <p>26 December 1911: Simpson sends out the man-hauling team to take out the 3 XS rations; at the same time, he makes a note that there is now a shortfall in Scott's expectations, namely the remaining 2 XS rations and the dog food, and to rectify this at the earliest opportunity.</p> |
| <p>5 January 1912: Meares arrives at base with the dogs. He knows that as soon as the dogs have recovered, he must make a 'second journey' to restock One Ton depot with dog food so that the relief party can go further to meet Captain Scott on their 'third journey'.</p> <p>17 January 1912: <i>Terra Nova</i> appears as a mirage on the horizon. Meares refuses to leave for the depot, and Simpson fails to convince him to go. Simpson concludes that the restocking of One Ton depot with the remaining 2 XS rations and dog food is not essential.</p> | <p>5 January 1912: Meares arrives at base with the dogs. He knows that as soon as the dogs have recovered, he must make a 'second journey' to restock One Ton depot with rations for returning parties and dog food so that the relief party can go further to meet Captain Scott on their 'third journey'.</p> <p>17 January 1912: <i>Terra Nova</i> appears as a mirage on the horizon. Initially Meares refuses to leave for the depot, but Simpson threatens him with serious consequences if he does not go and gives his word that the ship will be there for him upon his return. Meares takes the dogs to restock One Ton depot with the remaining 2 XS rations and sufficient dog food to allow the final relief dog teams to proceed south of One Ton for a further 12 days before having to turn back.</p> |
| <p>28 January 1912: The first supporting party approach Hut Point. They meet Meares, whose dogs appear 'fit and well'. Meares tells them that he 'had been thinking of going out' to restock the depot, but had been told that there was 'no need' as there was already 'plenty of food for all parties' at One Ton. Cherry-Garrard protests in his diary 'I think this is wrong', but neither Atkinson nor Cherry-Garrard argue Meares into going out again: by now the window of opportunity has closed.</p> | <p>31 January 1912: Meares returns from his depot-laying exercise. The dogs are given two weeks to recover before they head out to Hut Point with Atkinson and Gerof.</p> |
| <p>7 February 1912: <i>Terra Nova</i> arrives: the dogs are set to work unloading the cargo.</p> | <p>7 February 1912: <i>Terra Nova</i> arrives: the unloading is done solely by man-hauling teams and the Indian mules brought down on the ship.</p> |
| <p>15 February 1912: Atkinson, Gerof, and the dogs move to Hut Point preparatory to leaving for the relief journey 'to meet Captain Scott'.</p> | <p>15 February 1912: Atkinson, Gerof, and the dogs move to Hut Point preparatory to leaving for the relief journey 'to meet Captain Scott'.</p> |
| <p>19 February 1912: Crean arrives at Hut Point with the news of Evans' life-threatening scurvy.</p> | <p>19 February 1912: Crean arrives at Hut Point with the news of Evans' life-threatening scurvy.</p> |
| <p>20–22 February 1912: Atkinson and Gerof rescue Evans and Lashly from Corner Camp, a 60-mile round trip. It is clear Evans cannot be left without medical care, so Atkinson sends a note to Cape Evans asking for Wright to take his place.</p> | <p>20–22 February 1912: Atkinson and Gerof rescue Evans and Lashly from Corner Camp, a 60-mile round trip. It is clear Evans cannot be left without medical care, so Atkinson sends a note to Cape Evans asking for Wright to take his place.</p> |
| <p>23 February 1912: Wright and Cherry-Garrard arrive at Hut Point, together with Simpson's recommendation that Wright should remain at base to take over the scientific observations. Cherry-Garrard is therefore appointed for this mission.</p> | <p>23 February 1912: Wright and Cherry-Garrard arrive at Hut Point. Atkinson sends Wright as the most suitable man for the job.</p> |
| <p>26 February 1912: Cherry-Garrard leaves with Gerof for One Ton depot at 2 am.</p> | <p>26 February 1912: Wright leaves with Gerof for One Ton depot at 2am. It is stressed to him that the depots may be short of rations for the polar party, so it is urgent that he reach at least as far as Mount Hooper as quickly as possible to compensate for the shortfall.</p> |
| <p>3 March 1912: Cherry-Garrard arrives at One Ton at 5.30 pm. With no cache of dog food present and mindful of Atkinson's orders that the dogs should not be risked, he does not venture further south.</p> | <p>3 March 1912: Wright arrives at One Ton at 5.30pm. As Meares has laid the dog food depot, Wright is able to proceed south after a short rest. Between the dog food carried from Hut Point and what was left by Meares at One Ton, they can travel for a further 12 days at least before they have to turn back.</p> |
| <p>10 March 1912: Cherry-Garrard leaves One Ton to return to Hut Point. At this point, the Polar Party is only 61 miles away.</p> | <p>7–9 March 1912: Around these dates, with the dogs travelling around 20–30 miles a day, Wright and Gerof encounter the polar party somewhere between 80–120 miles south of One Ton in conditions of good visibility. Scott, Wilson, Oates and Bowers are saved.</p> |

Table 2, the historical timeline juxtaposed with the ‘best case scenario,’ shows there was time and opportunity for Meares and Gerof to have made a ‘second journey’ to restock One Ton depot, and that, had Meares done so, subsequent events might have played out rather differently. Could Captain Scott have been saved? Scott’s, Wilson’s, Bowers’, and Oates’ chances of rescue in March 1912 would have been greater had Meares followed Scott’s orders.

Conclusion

Over a hundred years on, with some serious errors expunged and the facts properly understood, modern outrage at the expedition’s outcome is inappropriate. A succession of misjudgements were made by a number of men who were, for the most part, good and well-intentioned. In light of all the primary evidence, there can be no further credence given to the flattened version of events whereby all blame for the tragedy falls on Scott’s shoulders alone. Such simplicity is appealing but wrong.

Both this and the previous article (May 2012) demonstrate that a complex, specific and unpredictable combination of circumstances ensured that the dog teams of the ‘third journey’ were not sent far enough to save Scott and his companions. Also, it must not be forgotten that, as Scott declared in a farewell letter, ‘We could have come through had we neglected the sick’ (Scott 1913: 413). Scott knew that he, Wilson and Bowers could have maintained a faster pace and conceivably saved themselves had they abandoned Petty Officer Edgar Evans and Oates when they became burdens. That Scott, Wilson and Bowers risked their own safety to improve their companions’ chance of survival is the genuinely heroic narrative of which contemporaries such as Fridtjof Nansen were well aware (‘had it not been for the breakdown of some of his comrades, whom Scott could never think of leaving behind, he could have easily have pulled through’ (Nansen 1929: 6)), but of which modern revisionists appear to have lost sight.

We now know what Scott originally intended, that his written orders left at base in October 1911 were not obeyed, and that carrying out his orders faithfully could have resulted in his and his companions’ survival. We hope that posterity will judge Scott and his men on their actual decisions and actions, not on others’ misrepresentations of them.

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