

helped them pull their kit to the starting point, from which it followed that he is (recognisably, by hindsight) the left-hand man in the traces, standing in for Shackleton, who took the photo.

The necessary alterations will appear in any new edition of *Antarctica unveiled*. In the meantime, it is hoped that this letter will serve to correct the identities of the men in these photographs, and particularly, for the first time, that of George Vince, in the centenary of his death.

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Disposal of unissued Polar Medal

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In the *London Gazette* of 1 May 1934 it was announced that a number of Polar Medals in bronze were to be awarded to those who took part in the British, Australian, New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) under Sir Douglas Mawson. This expedition in RRS *Discovery* (Robert Falcon Scott's old ship) explored some 2500 miles of the Antarctic coastline between Kaiser Wilhelm II Land and Coats Land during two extensive cruises between 1929 and 1931.

In addition to the scientists and ship's officers, the company of *Discovery* was made up of sailors from a number of different countries, including one Finn, an able seaman apparently named Louis Parviainen, who was on board for the second cruise in 1930–31.

When the time came to issue the medals three years after the end of the expedition, no address could be found for this seaman, and the medal roll in the Public Record Office had 'No address – Sent to RGS Sept 1934' against his name. Although the medal was sent to the Royal Geographical Society, in common with a number of other Polar Medals awarded to seamen during the 1930s, the medal eventually found its way to the Admiralty, where it languished until 1970, before being sent to the Army Medal Office, where it remained until early in 2001.

The officer-in-charge of the Army Medal Office then informed me that he had no requirement for it amongst his representative display of medals, and that he would like it to go to a more appropriate home. As it had never been presented to the recipient, and was thus still the property of the Crown, he sought my advice.

It was thought that if Parviainen could not be traced in 1934, to attempt to trace him or his family in 2001 — when, if he were alive, he would have been about 100 years old — would be a fruitless exercise. As a medal that never reached its recipient, it would not have been proper to sell

it, and issuing it to a polar institution or museum for display would have achieved nothing, as the appropriate ones — such as the Scott Polar Research Institute or the National Maritime Museum — already had examples of Polar Medals in bronze. An alternative course was therefore proposed.

Parviainen was the only Finnish citizen to be awarded the British Polar Medal, and it was felt that it would be a very friendly and appropriate gesture to present his medal to the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki, where it could be displayed as a unique award to a Finn amongst the polar collection of artifacts housed there. In the late spring of 2001, this idea was submitted by the Defence Services Secretary to Her Majesty The Queen, who firmly sanctioned the proposal and 'was genuinely fascinated' by the story. Correspondence was thereupon opened with the National Museum, and in the middle of May it was learned that the Museum would be delighted to receive the medal. Miss Alyson Bailes, the British Ambassador, recommended the autumn as a good time for the presentation.

In June, the Keeper of Coins and Medals, Mr Tuukka Talvio, indicated that his research showed Parviainen's name connected him with an east Finnish 'clan,' and that some 6000 people bore the same last name. He also reported that he had been in contact with a board member of the Parviainen 'family association.' Meanwhile, having told Mr Talvio that the only information available in Britain was that Parviainen had been born in 1898 in Helsingfors and that he had joined *Discovery* in Melbourne, it was decided to examine the ship's papers in the Public Record Office. Here it was found that his forename was actually 'Lauri,' and that a careless clerk in the 1930s had transcribed this as 'Louis' in all papers relating to the medal, and that 'Louis' had also been engraved on the medal.

In August, there came news that the Parviainen archivists had also identified the seaman as Lauri Parviainen, and that he had died childless in 1940, although his brother had a family. A week later this background was revised when it was discovered that he had actually lived until 1978 and

that in 1965, at the age of 67, he had married. His widow was still alive, although unwell, at the age of 92. Moreover, after his service in *Discovery*, he had passed the exams for mate and master (serving for a while as master of a South African millionaire's yacht), and had later become a ship-owner himself.

It was now abundantly clear that if the issuing authorities in 1934 had done rather more research, it should have been possible to locate Parviainen at that time. There was also no question that the Parviainens had to be fully involved in the presentation of the medal to the Museum. But there was the risk that the family might enquire why the medal was being presented to the Museum and not to Parviainen's widow. Time was getting short, arrangements had been made and invitations issued for a reception at the British Ambassador's residence, and it was felt that there had to be the complimentary presentation of a memento of some kind to the family to mark this unusual occasion.

It was decided that the officer-in-charge of the Army Medal Office should inquire of the Royal Mint whether there was any possibility that a polar medal in bronze of the correct period was held as a specimen there, or whether the dies for this medal still existed. By this means an unnamed but otherwise authentic duplicate might be presented to the

family whilst the original would be displayed to the public in the National Museum. To my enormous relief, an unnamed replica of the original medal was received direct from the Mint, shortly before I departed for Helsinki.

The presentation of Lauri Parviainen's medal duly took place in the National Museum on the afternoon of 5 October 2001 in the presence of the British Ambassador and several members of the Parviainen family. Parviainen's eldest nephew, Mr Pekka Parviainen, was invited to join me in making the presentation on behalf of Her Majesty, thereby associating the family with the presentation. At a reception at the Embassy later in the evening, I presented the duplicate to Pekka Parviainen and asked that he explain all of the circumstances to his aunt, Lauri Parviainen's widow.

Thus concluded what turned out to be a much more involved tale than was originally anticipated. Although there was a lamentable failure to issue the original medal correctly in 1934, it is now in the Finnish national collection as a unique award to a Finn, his family has an authentic although unnamed replica, and research has revealed that 'the man behind the medal' had a long and interesting life and career that would not otherwise have received such visibility.

In Brief

SCHWATKA'S SEARCH NARRATIVE. Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka is commonly believed not to have published an account of his sledging expedition to King William Island in search of Franklin relics (1878–80). However, one has recently come to light. It can be found in *Good Company*, an obscure periodical published in Springfield, Massachusetts. The narrative is entitled 'In the land of the midnight sun' and is contained in four consecutive issues:

- Vol 6, No 18 (February 1881): 550–560
- Vol 7, Nos 19–20 (March–April 1881): 1–21
- Vol 7, No 21 (May 1881): 202–222
- Vol 7, No 22 (June 1881): 306–318

At a glance, the narrative appears to resemble Schwatka's manuscript published by the Marine Historical Association of Mystic, Connecticut in 1965. However, there are

numerous passages that do not appear in the 1965 publication. Among these is a six-page description of events leading up to the expedition, crew members, and the voyage from New York to Hudson Bay. (James Farfan, Baffin Land Books, 1400 Descente 20, Ogden, Quebec J0B 3E3, Canada)

ARCTIC CONVOY MEDALS. The government of the former Soviet Union issued the Commemorative Medal of Forty Years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War 1941–45 to thousands of British armed forces and merchant navy servicemen (*Polar Record* 30 (173): 159). Arctic convoy veterans may now claim a further medal commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Victory by applying to the Embassy of the Russian Federation. (Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith)