

Labrador Huskies in the Falkland Islands Dependencies and Antarctica

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RESEARCH NOTE

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ANTHONY B. DICKINSON

INTRODUCTION

The use of huskies for transport in polar regions began with northern Indigenous peoples. Their subsequent contribution to Arctic exploration, particularly those nineteenth-century American ventures attempting to be first at the geographic North Pole, is well documented. Huskies arrived in Antarctica on the privately funded British *Southern Cross* Expedition of 1898–1900 led by the Anglo-Norwegian Carsten Borchgrevink, the first party to overwinter on the continent. Thereafter, most expeditions of the so-called “Heroic Age” of Antarctic exploration — characterized by the travels of Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen — relied on them for laying depots and for general expedition travel. Their ability to pull sledges under extreme conditions, and the fact that they could be eaten by other dogs, and humans, when food supplies ran low, combined *inter alia* to get Amundsen to the South Pole before Scott, who relied primarily on ponies, which could not eat each other, and on energy-sapping and mind-numbing man-hauling.

Although the dogs used by pre-World War II expeditions came from Northern Europe, Greenland, and Siberia, the huskies of Labrador were considered by

some to have superior pulling power and stamina. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, for example, described the Labrador husky as being:

a very slightly modified wolf. A good specimen stands two feet six inches, or even two feet eight inches high at the top of the shoulder, measures over six feet six inches from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail, and will scale a hundred pounds. The hair is thick and straight; on the neck it may be six inches in length. The ears are pointed and stand directly up. The appearance is that of a magnified Pomeranian. The legs look short, compared with the massive body. . . . For speed and endurance it is difficult to surpass these wonderful animals.¹

However, it was not until late 1944 that the first of these “wonderful” animals were dispatched to Antarctica, particularly to Graham Land, the northern part of the Antarctic Peninsula and then part of the Falkland Islands Dependencies (South Georgia, South Orkney Islands, South Sandwich Islands, South Shetland Islands, Graham Land).² Their presence provided British personnel with the ability to make field journeys to survey and name hitherto poorly described or unmapped features, thus strengthening the Crown’s claim to the region, and to carry out various scientific initiatives. What was the reason behind this essentially political wartime British presence, and why was Labrador chosen to supply the huskies?

Although British mariners had made the first undisputed sightings of the Falklands and claimed the archipelago and other South Atlantic islands for the Crown, Argentina maintained, and still does, sovereign claim on the grounds, for example, of inheritance of the Falklands from Spain, first continuous settlement, and proximity. The continuous Argentine presence on the South Orkney Islands from 1904 after the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition handed over its meteorological base at Laurie Island, now Base Orcadas, and on South Georgia from 1904 to 1963 in the form of a whaling station set up by the *Compañía Argentina de Pesca* also contribute to the perception of ownership.³

Argentina made little substantial representation to Great Britain on its claim before World War II, and when it did the Crown paid little heed to the protestations of this non-threatening power. However, the preoccupation of the British government with hostilities during the war provided Argentina with a prime opportunity to forcefully demonstrate its claim, thereby galvanizing the Crown into action. In January 1942, Argentina’s recently established National Antarctic Commission dispatched the naval vessel *Primero De Mayo*

to raise the flag and deposit notices of possession at Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands and on the Melchior and Argentine Islands off the Antarctic Peninsula. The post office at Base Orcadas, closed in January 1905 after the Scots left, was also reopened as a further expression of sovereignty. Another voyage in early 1943 implemented more acts of possession in “Antártida Argentina” as far south as Stonington in Marguerite Bay.

After Argentina informed the British government of its actions, it became clear to the war cabinet in London that if a permanent foothold was established, Germany might be allowed by a neutral but Axis-friendly Argentina to use the abandoned British whaling station on Deception Island in the South Shetlands as a base for its southern surface raiders. An abandoned station on Îles Kerguelen in the southern Indian Ocean had already been similarly used. Recognizing that permanent occupation and use are central components to international recognition of a territorial claim, the war cabinet decided that it now had to take steps to counter Argentina’s claim and presence, and on 28 January 1943 approved the formation of Naval Party 145 under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office but with operational oversight by the Admiralty. Subsequently renamed Operation Tabarin after a decidedly non-clandestine nightclub in Paris to de-emphasize its semi-military nature,⁴ the 14-man expedition left England in December 1943 with the mandate to consolidate British sovereignty by establishing a meteorological and logistics base at the abandoned whaling station on Deception Island, and a sledging, surveying, and scientific base at Hope Bay on the northeast tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. To give a “non-political” explanation for the presence of the party in case Argentina, and more importantly the anti-colonial United States, became aware of it, a cover story was concocted that the expedition was being sent to look for, and combat, any German incursion.⁵

Although the surveying work would necessitate extensive sledge travel, the Operation Tabarin planning committee decided not to provide huskies until the base at Hope Bay was built. Nor, given the short time period between approval and dispatch of the expedition, was there time to find the required dogs at the outset of the undertaking. Most important was the need to get a British presence into the field, particularly on continental Antarctica, which Argentina especially coveted. However, this took longer than expected, since the vessels used in the south by Operation Tabarin were prevented by pack ice from putting construction materials ashore at Hope Bay in January 1944 as projected. The base on the South Shetland Islands was established, and an alternative to Hope Bay was set up at the more accessible Port Lockroy on a small island off the west

coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. Not until 13 February 1945, therefore, was the base established at Hope Bay, largely because of the charter from Bowring Brothers Ltd. of St. John's (widely known as Bowrings) in September 1944 of the ice-strengthened Newfoundland sealing ship, SS *Eagle*, and its ice-experienced crew.⁶ Hopeful that the Newfoundlanders would succeed in their mission, the Crown started to source huskies soon thereafter so that they could be shipped south for the beginning of the 1945 sledging season.

THE FIRST HUSKY GROUP

Labrador was chosen as the source due to the inability to get them from Northern Europe and Siberia because of the war, the need to maintain secrecy, and the logistics of getting them to Antarctica. As a result, and following the advice of one experienced polar adviser to Operation Tabarin that "nothing but failure can result from the ordering of dogs through an agent,"⁷ two new expedition members destined to go south for the 1945 field season left the United Kingdom on 19 September 1944 on a Royal Air Force flight to Gander with instructions to spend up to £150 to buy 20 dogs for £40 in total, three dories with oars at £50, dried fish at £10, two bags of Indian meal for £3, four dog whips at £6, and 50 pairs of kamiks (soft caribou or sealskin boots) at £30. The leader, 43-year-old Surgeon-Commander Edward William Bingham, was eminently suited for this task, since in addition to having polar and Labrador experience he was the only expedition member with any knowledge of huskies. Bingham had left Trinity College, Dublin, in 1926 with a medical degree, then joined the Royal Navy and volunteered to become the medical officer on the 1930–31 British Arctic Air Route Expedition, which, while investigating the possibility of a new and shorter air route between England and Canada, used huskies during its survey of part of the east coast of Greenland. Thereafter, Bingham went on the 1933–34 surveying cruise of HMS *Challenger* to the West Indies and Labrador, and wintered at the Hudson's Bay post in Nain. With other party members he surveyed the Labrador coast from Indian Harbour to Cape Chidley using dog teams, and sledged to Hebron at the request of the company to arrest and bring back for trial the leader of a group of Inuit supposedly causing trouble at the company store. Bingham then volunteered as the medical officer for the British Graham Land Expedition of 1934–37, and in February 1945 he was to be appointed the first field leader of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS), which arose from Operation Tabarin in

July 1945.⁸ The inexperienced Captain Norman Bertram “Freddy” Marshall accompanied him to Labrador on the grounds that as a zoologist he was presumed to have an empathy with dogs and could look after them on his subsequent voyage to Hope Bay.⁹

Still under strict secrecy, due to the nature of the mission but also to reduce the chance of sale prices increasing if the reason for their visit became known on the Labrador coast,¹⁰ Bingham and Marshall continued from Gander to the Royal Canadian Air Force base at Goose Bay, then went on to Hopedale where they boarded the Newfoundland government revenue cutter *Administratrix* and arrived at Hebron on 10 October 1944. They returned to Hopedale 10 days later with 26 huskies, 32 hundredweight of salted sun-dried cod for food, 62 pairs of kamiks, one barrel of cod oil, and three dog whips.

With this part of the first husky-procuring mission completed, the Operation Tabarin committee was now faced with the problem of getting the animals south. Sending them aboard *Eagle* proved impossible because of space limitations, so the decision was taken to get them to England to connect with the liner/troop ship *Highland Monarch* on its scheduled voyage to Montevideo, in part carrying supplies and personnel for the 1945 season of Operation Tabarin/FIDS.¹¹ The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were asked to carry them across the Atlantic from St. John’s but refused for operational reasons, and no doubt the problems of looking after 26 huskies on an aircraft or warship. A suggestion that they be shipped from St. John’s to New York, and then on to Montevideo, was vetoed by the Admiralty on the reasonable grounds that the sudden appearance of a large group of huskies and their handler, Marshall, in New York would not go unnoticed by Argentina, Germany, or the US and would reveal the British incursion into Antarctica.¹² Consequently, the *Administratrix* was sent on to Sydney, Nova Scotia, where the huskies were transferred to a local vessel bound for Montreal. They then left for Liverpool on 7 November 1944 on the Free French cargo vessel SS *Indochinoise*. All survived the rigours and uncertainty of a transatlantic convoy, and after a short quarantine period the dogs left for their new southern home on 22 November 1944 aboard the *Highland Monarch*, still under the care of Marshall.¹³ Bingham, who had flown back earlier to attend to issues related to his forthcoming field leadership of Operation Tabarin and the first season of the FIDS, seems to have thought that Marshall was not the best dog-minder, and recommended that a new southbound expedition surveyor, Lieutenant David James, should care for them after they arrived at Hope Bay.¹⁴ Although also without previous experience of huskies, James found himself in charge of 24 of the original

Labrador animals. Two had died on the voyage south, and one was born. To his credit, he learned how to handle them using only a guide written by Bingham from his time on the British Graham Land Expedition.¹⁵

After arriving at Port Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands, the huskies were quarantined and then segregated by age and gender into pens built on the deck of *Eagle* after it arrived from St. John's on 17 January 1945. The bigger and more dominant males (Captain, Popeye, Jimmie, Scottie, Jumbo) were housed in the starboard aft pen, with a bitch, Beauty, and her four pups (Jock, Lady, Shaggy, Lamb) adjacent. In the port aft pen lived another bitch, Dainty, and four young dogs (Mutt, Jeff, Jack, Ginger). On the fore deck was an old dog, Rover, along with Trott, Bully, Widgeon, Sydney, Gus, and "the Drinks" family of Punch, Whiskey, Gin, and Bitters, so named by Marshall on the voyage south.¹⁶ The first huskies of Labrador origin were ready to be transported to their new homes on continental Antarctica.

After being unloaded from *Eagle* at Hope Bay later that month, the huskies were divided into three teams whose composition subsequently changed as animals were lost, died, or did not work well with others. The first ex-Labrador team of six, "the Big Boys," was harnessed on 7 May 1945, and as Captain Andrew Taylor, RCE, the Canadian base leader and surveyor at Hope Bay, later described:

Captain and his henchmen Jimmie, Jock and Popeye were the best dogs we had, [although] Popeye seemed to have had much of the spirit knocked out of him after he was severely trounced by Captain when they were both younger, making him ill-tempered and eccentric. The other two were Jack and Ginger, short-legged animals that were Matheson's [the boatswain] favourites. Ginger was supposed to have been a lead dog, but he didn't show much evidence of this as he made a bee line for underneath the back steps [of Eagle House, the base living hut named after the Newfoundland ship] with Jack scuttling along behind him, their traces taught [*sic*] and tangled. The team was unmanageable with these two in it, and they were released. The others soon became accustomed to the pulling, and moved several loads during the day, a fine sight as they flashed over the brow of the hill above the base and dashed down the slope with one man lying flat atop the load and the driver on the runners at the back clinging to the handlebars with his clothes and whip flying in the breeze.¹⁷

Subsequent additions to “the Big Boys” team were the bitch Beauty, and Shaggy and Jock, two of her now well-grown pups. The latter was renamed Colonel to avoid confusion around the base with the Operation Tabarin bosun, “Jock” Matheson.

On 16 May 1945 the second ex-Labrador team, “the Drinks,” was put into service with Punch as the lead. “The Odds and Sods” team of Mutt, Jeff, Sydney, Rover, and Widgeon was harnessed later, but according to Taylor, as their name suggested, they:

did not coalesce into a team. Rover was a powerful old animal who had taken Widgeon under his wing, while the other three were a group to themselves. Although they pulled well, the driver had to be constantly alert to prevent them fighting.¹⁸

Subsequent additions to these teams were Jack and Ginger, “a short-legged pair that got along reasonably well with most of the others despite a marked reluctance to work with them.” Unfortunately for Ginger, he broke a leg when sledging and had to be shot by James. Trott and Shaggy also died in March, the former from food poisoning and the latter in a fight, and Lady became unable to pull since she could only walk on three legs because of an injury that would not heal. A major disaster also struck on the day “the Odds and Sods” were harnessed when “the Drinks” team disappeared, probably following their leader Punch, who often escaped from his tethering line. When they did not return in the next two days, it was assumed that they had drifted away on new sea ice. However, their tracks were later found on a nearby glacier, suggesting they had climbed it and got lost.

As a result of these depletions, only two teams of the original group from Labrador remained for the season’s sledging trips. Then, on 1 July 1945 Rover died from heart failure during a fight with Mutt, Jeff, and Sydney, a particularly sad event for most of the party, since:

Rover had been a great favourite, for he was a good natured friendly dog and a good worker as he shambled along with his great shaggy head wagging from side to side. He had the heart of a lion, and none of the others would ever tackle him alone.¹⁹

The exception to this general air of sadness following the loss of Rover was Lieutenant Eric Back, the base doctor and meteorologist, whose rooftop sun recorder was often mistaken by Rover for a tree despite nail-studded boards

being fitted around it to discourage his visits.²⁰ The last of the Labrador animals to go that year was Mutt, shot in September when he could not continue a particularly exhausting sledge journey.

These deaths were countered when the first pups of Labrador heritage were born in Antarctica. Beauty produced Hobbs and Hinks in April, and Pretty gave birth to five in May, of which three survived. As a result, by late



Jeff from Labrador. (A. Taylor, "Two Years below the Horn," unpublished manuscript, 1948, Andrew Taylor Fonds, MSS108, Box 14, Folder 1, UMA)

1945 the base had 23 huskies, including 17 of the original Labrador complement. Although this field season had been shortened by the late arrival of *Eagle* in Port Stanley due to delays experienced before and during the voyage south, the need to train the teams and their handlers, and issues related to construction of the base hut, two extensive mapping journeys were made that would not have been possible without huskies.



Labrador husky Pretty (centre) and three pups. (RPAD, R.C. Sheppard, [n.d.], *Antarctica. Voyage of the SS Eagle, 1944-1945*, Photograph Album, VA10-60)

THE SECOND HUSKY GROUP

The end of hostilities in Europe in May 1945 led to Operation Tabarin being replaced by Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) in July. This extended the scope of the expedition from primarily political to, at least on the surface, primarily scientific. The requirement to continue monitoring Argentine, and to a lesser extent Chilean, sovereignty incursions remained. The “survey”

connotation also gave the Crown a non-political rationale for extending its presence further south on the Antarctic Peninsula, including continuing the surveying work started by the pre-war British Graham Land Expedition, which had been halted by hostilities and which, if the war had not intervened, might have been extended into a new organization such as the FIDS. Five new bases were to be built in 1946, including the furthest south at Stonington, adjacent to the East Base set up by the United States Antarctic Expedition in 1939–41, largely to get a political foothold on the continent but abandoned due to the likelihood of the United States entering the war.

With this expanded British surveying (but essentially still political) mandate, more huskies were required.²¹ A second group, therefore, was sought from Labrador during October–November 1945, a process that proved logistically more difficult than previously. The FIDS wanted the MV *Trepassey*, chartered by them for the 1945–46 season from the Newfoundland Railway/Newfoundland government, to replace the *Eagle*, which had been severely damaged by calving glaciers while at Hope Bay, to go north and collect the huskies before sailing directly with them to the Falkland Islands. However, the need for the vessel to go into the St. John's dry dock for pre-voyage modifications meant that by the time it came out in mid-October, sailing north first would delay the arrival of the huskies past the beginning of the Antarctic sledging season. In its capacity as Newfoundland agent for the chartering UK Ministry of War Transport, Bowrings proposed that its contacts in Labrador should buy the animals while *Trepassey* was in dry dock, and ship them to St. John's to be boarded when the refit was finished. Captain Robert Carl Sheppard, the master of the *Eagle* and for the forthcoming voyage of the *Trepassey*, also suggested to the FIDS that an experienced dog handler should accompany the ship south to look after them. Bowrings recommended that an Inuit known to them in Nain should be contracted to do this at \$1,000.

But the FIDS did not agree with either proposition,²² and sought advice from Bingham, now leading the operations in the field. Bingham concurred with the original plan that the refitted *Trepassey* go north to Hebron, then turn south and collect up to 60 huskies depending on their availability and the amount of deck space that could be converted into holding pens. As in the past, two FIDS members would fly from Great Britain to St. John's, then either go north on *Trepassey* or meet it at Hebron, depending on when they arrived in Newfoundland. A member of the Newfoundland Ranger Force with experience of huskies would also be needed to negotiate with prospective sellers.²³

But Bowrings continued to find flaws in this reasoning, pointing out to

London that the dockyard schedule would make it impossible for *Trepassey* to get back to St. John's from Labrador before 20 November, further delaying her departure south and reducing husky time in the field. Bowrings again suggested that the FIDS should let it handle the matter by having its representative in Hopedale buy the animals and send them to St. John's on local schooners. If the FIDS did not wish to do this, the only way matters could be expedited was by chartering another vessel to collect the animals while *Trepassey* was being refitted.²⁴

The FIDS team was now confounded, since all they really wanted was to get huskies from Labrador to Antarctica as soon as possible, especially to begin surveying from a new furthest-south base, to be set up in early 1946 from *Trepassey* at Stonington in Marguerite Bay as the FIDS field headquarters. Consequently, they finally decided that it was in their best interests to leave things to Bowrings, albeit with the stipulation that FIDS personnel should be on hand to inspect the animals before they were bought, that at least 10 per cent should be bitches, and that all would be vaccinated against the canine distemper prevalent in Newfoundland before leaving Labrador. A supply of whale meat also had to be made available for food during the voyage south, which the Newfoundland Department of Natural Resources obtained from the whaling station at Hawke Harbour, Labrador, then operated by Polar Whaling Co. Ltd.²⁵

Bowrings accepted these conditions, and two new FIDS members, Surgeon-Lieutenant Robert Stewart Slessor and Sub-Lieutenant Thomas P. O'Sullivan, left Prestwick on 11 October and arrived at St. John's on 15 October 1945, via Montreal and Halifax,²⁶ with instructions to buy up to 60 animals. Neither had experience with polar travel or huskies, hence the reliance on a member of the Newfoundland Ranger Force. Slessor had joined the FIDS earlier that year after wartime RNVR service, and was to overwinter in 1946 as Bingham's second-in-command at Stonington. Thereafter he became the Senior Medical Officer for the Falkland Islands and deputy governor.²⁷ While both were in transit, the Newfoundland government asked the RCAF Eastern Air Command in Halifax if it could fly the huskies to St. John's from Labrador. It would not, so the government's Mahone Bay-built revenue cutter *Shulamite* (Lieutenant F. Hounsell, RNVR) was made ready to leave for Labrador when Slessor and O'Sullivan arrived. Inspector W. Rockwood of the Newfoundland Ranger Force²⁸ was seconded to advise them, and became the only person on board with any knowledge of huskies. At the recommendation of Bowrings he was to be subsequently recompensed the princely sum of \$50 by the Ministry of War Transport for his diligence.²⁹

Shulamite left St. John's on 16 October 1945³⁰ and arrived at Hopedale three

days later. Although Slessor and O'Sullivan were authorized by the FIDS to pay up to \$10 per husky,³¹ those offered were in such poor condition that they decided not to buy any until they saw what was available elsewhere. The Inuit handler known to Bowrings came on board, and the party left Hopedale on 20 October for Nain, where 22 animals were bought at \$7.50 each for bitches and \$10 for dogs. Poor weather prevented *Shulamite* continuing to Hebron, so she went instead to the Inuit settlements of Port Manvers, Black Islands, September Harbour, Young's Harbour, Kamarsuk, and Kauk, where 12 more were bought. Hopedale provided 11 better-quality animals on the return visit, and one was bought at Makkovik. The whale meat and another husky were collected from Hawke Harbour, and visits to Francis Harbour Bight, George's Cove, Raxon's Cove, and William's Harbour provided five more for a final total of 52.

Slessor and O'Sullivan took great care to keep the animals healthy as *Shulamite* returned to St. John's, feeding them on fresh cod, salted seal, blubber, and whale meat. However, the 120-foot *Shulamite* was not well suited for its new role as a husky carrier since the small amount of deck space was surrounded only by an open rail. This meant that the hold had to be converted into three large pens with smaller ones in each to minimize the animals being thrown around in bad weather. Since it was impossible to hose the pens out without fouling the bilges and making living even more unpleasant for the crew, a liberal layer of absorbent straw was laid in each. After being fed in the early morning, the animals were let out on to the deck to exercise if the weather co-operated, and their pens cleaned out. But despite the care lavished on them, two died before *Shulamite* arrived back at St. John's on 11 November 1945, one from pneumonia and the other when it choked gorging on seal meat after chewing its way out of a pen. The remaining 50 were immediately quarantined in guarded naval property on the south side of the harbour away from the general public and the possibly distemper-infected local dogs. But although they had managed to buy most of the 60 allowed, Slessor and O'Sullivan were not entirely happy with the process. The asking prices were double what they considered appropriate because the well-intentioned Rockwood had informed those on the coast of the reason for the FIDS visit; most of the animals offered were of poor quality since the "eskimo owners seemed to have a complete disinterest in their welfare"; the hired handler was of little use; and *Shulamite* was too small to properly accommodate them.³²

With her refit finished and acceptable pens now in place, 55 huskies, including five pups born in St. John's, were loaded onto *Trepassey* for her departure on 20 November 1945 for Recife, the first port of call on the way to the Falklands.³³

During the first three days of the voyage the pens were constantly awash and could not be cleaned, but when the weather improved Slessor and O'Sullivan were able to implement a standard care routine. The pens were opened at 0400 hours and the animals brought forward to give them fresh drinking water, followed by food at 0700 hours. After the pens were cleaned, a bucket of fresh drinking water was hung in each and the occupants reinstalled. The deck was then washed down and scrubbed, and about 20 dogs at a time were allowed on the foredeck in the afternoon sun if the crew were not doing maintenance work. For food, the huskies were given whale meat stored in cod oil and herrings. A daily ration of one pound of meat and three herrings for each husky was thrown onto the deck from the bridge in the hope that each would get enough. This first part of the trip occurred without any major incident. Nonetheless:

Much distress was experienced by the vessel's personnel . . . when many of the barrels of dog meat, which had been packed in cod oil, became putrid and burst in the hold. The gas sent off from the decomposed whale meat permeated all the cabins, and in the tropical heat sleeping in them was impossible.³⁴

After water and fuel had been taken onboard and the huskies given a run ashore, *Trepassey* left Recife for Montevideo, where the vessel was cleaned and fumigated, and the fore hold lime-washed to remove the decomposing whale meat and rancid oil. Understandably, it was difficult to find shore labourers willing to work in the stench and filth, and higher wages had to be paid. The crew quarters were also repainted since fumes had blackened the paintwork. Fresh meat was then brought on board for the huskies and the ship left for Port Stanley, where it arrived on 31 December 1945. Despite the lack of fresh food and the cramped conditions and tropical heat, only one died during the voyage, a post-mortem examination showing an extensively lacerated stomach lining caused by ingesting oil-soaked canvas from the hatch covers! Eight pups were born, resulting in 62 huskies being moved into the government quarantine station.

Their diet was now changed to more nutritious and plentiful fresh mutton, which restored them to the extent that on 9 January 1946 they could be put back on *Trepassey* for the voyage to Deception Island. The weather made this a difficult trip, and the vessel had to heave-to for nine hours to prevent the animals being washed overboard. Unfortunately, two pups perished, resulting in 60 huskies being put ashore on 13 January to cause havoc among the local penguin population. Fourteen were later taken to Hope Bay on *Trepassey* to supplement

what remained of those huskies that had been brought in from Labrador by *Eagle* during the previous season. Others were put ashore on 21 January 1946 at a new base built at Cape Geddes on Laurie Island in the South Orkney Islands, again to the detriment of the penguins, with most going ashore on 24 February 1946 at Stonington, which replaced Hope Bay as the main sledging base.

FURTHER REMARKS

The contribution made by these Labrador huskies and their offspring to the work of the FIDS and the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), which replaced the former in 1962 after the Antarctic Treaty became operational the previous year, was immeasurable. Although only a few of these two shipments of huskies from Labrador survived for five years,³⁵ the progeny were considered by their handlers to be superior to others, being larger and better tempered. Seventy-two males weighed at Hope Bay in 1955 averaged 96 pounds for those of Labrador heritage compared to 85 pounds for three donated by the RCMP in 1954 from the eastern Arctic, 80 pounds for 20 that arrived in 1954 out of the British North Greenland Expedition, and 101 pounds for three of Labrador ancestry that had come from Great Britain. The females were 15–20 pounds lighter.³⁶ Labrador has provided British operations in Antarctica with a superior blood-line for what was to be the main method of field transport until they were gradually replaced by aircraft and snow machines from the mid-1960s.

The final demise of huskies in Antarctica came after the Antarctic Treaty was amended in 1991 by the Protocol on Environmental Protection, the Madrid Protocol. This required, in part, that all non-indigenous animals except humans be removed from the continent by 1 April 1994, and be prohibited from entering, to prevent the spread of disease to indigenous populations, especially canine distemper to seals. However, by then only Great Britain, Australia, and Argentina had husky teams, in the case of Great Britain and Australia largely for sentimental reasons.

As part of the BAS compliance with the Madrid Protocol, over 100 adults and pups were shot in 1973,³⁷ and the last team of 14 was flown out to the Falkland Islands on 22 February 1994. After a period adapting to the warmer climate, they left for Great Britain on an RAF flight, and after quarantine were flown to Boston by British Airways. The younger animals were trucked as far north as possible into the Hudson Bay region, then put into harness and driven to their new home in the Inuit settlement of Inukjuak in northern Quebec. The older

ones followed by air. It was hoped that this locally welcomed and much heralded return to the North would let them become the precursors of a new generation of huskies to replace those shot by the RCMP as part of their policy of exterminating stray dogs to reduce the possible transmission of diseases. However, of the 13 that actually arrived in Canada, five died in their first year from infection and disease and the rest all succumbed by 2001. The legacy of the two shipments of huskies from Labrador to Antarctica had come to an end.³⁸

In memory of the valuable contribution made by all of the huskies to the operation of the British bases, a statue to them was unveiled on 4 July 2009 outside the British Antarctic Survey headquarters in Cambridge. It now resides in the grounds of the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge.



The husky memorial, Cambridge. (Author photo)

CONCLUSION

The north coast of Labrador contributed some 80 huskies to support consolidation and expansion of the Crown's sovereignty claim to parts of continental Antarctica. Although it cannot be claimed that they were especially central to particular discoveries or events, they provided those on the initial bases with the ability to make the long surveying, mapping, and scientific trips necessary for meeting the "use" component of a territorial claim, and gave the subsequent British husky teams a bloodline that led them to be considered superior to those with a heritage elsewhere. Although considered "smaller and unwanted beasts" by the original buyers, without these dogs and their descendants the exploration of the territory claimed, and the valuable scientific work done, would have been severely compromised.

NOTES

Abbreviations: BAS (British Antarctic Survey), CO (Colonial Office), NA (National Archives, Kew), GN (Government of Newfoundland), RPAD (Rooms, Provincial Archives Division, St. John's), SPRI (Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge), UMA (University of Manitoba).

- 1 W.T. Grenfell et al., *Labrador: The Country and the People* (New York: Macmillan, 1909).
- 2 British governance of the islands, and the extent of the Dependencies, is prescribed in Letters Patent: 1843, *Charter for the Government of the Falkland Islands*, 23 June, Patent Roll 7, Vict., Part I. C.66/4690, NA. Falkland Islands. 1908a, Letters Patent, *Falkland Islands Gazette* 18, 9: 106–08. Falkland Islands. 1917, Letters Patent for the further definition and administration of certain islands and territories as Dependencies of the Colony of the Falkland Islands, *Falkland Islands Gazette* 26, 2: 69–70. The Dependencies ceased to exist as such in 2002 when South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands were given British Overseas Territory status. The others were already part of the British Antarctic Territory, formed on 3 March 1962.
- 3 The most detailed recent treatment of the political landscape is in J.R. Dudeney and D.W.H. Walton, "From *Scotia* to Operation Tabarin: Developing British Policy for Antarctica," *Polar Record* 48, 4 (2011): 342–60. See also, for example, Anon., "Argentine and Chilean Territorial Claims in the Antarctic," *Polar Record* 4, 32 (1947): 412–17. Also A. Howkins, "Icy Relations: The Emergence of South American Antarctica during the Second World War," *Polar Record* 42, 221 (2006): 153–65.
- 4 For a more detailed description of Operation Tabarin, albeit with a militaristic rather than colonial slant, see S. Haddelsey and A. Carroll, *Operation Tabarin, Britain's Secret*

- Wartime Expedition to Antarctica, 1944–46* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2014).
- 5 Several conspiracy theories have been put forward as to what the Germans did, or might have done, in Antarctica leading up to World War II. These have been soundly debunked by C. Summerhayes and P. Beeching, "Hitler's Antarctic Base: The Myth and Reality," *Polar Record* 43, 224 (2007): 1–21.
 - 6 The voyage of *Eagle* is described in H. Squires, *SS Eagle: The Secret Mission, 1944–45* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1992). Harold Squires of St. John's was the radio operator and last survivor (d. 2010) of the voyage. Also A.B. Dickinson, "The Voyage of the *Eagle* into Antarctica: Excerpt from the Private Journal of Capt. R.C. Sheppard, MBE," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 98, 3 (2006): 28–33; A.B. Dickinson, "The Voyage of the *Eagle* into Antarctica: Excerpt from the Private Journal of Capt. R.C. Sheppard, MBE, Part II," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 98, 4 (2006): 23–29.
 - 7 B.B. Roberts, "Memorandum on the provision of dogs," MS1308/22/1-11, 10 May 1994, SPRI.
 - 8 Bingham was invalided out from Stonington on the *Trepassey* in 1947. After a period advising the FIDS in England, he was the principal medical officer at the Royal Naval Air Station in Eglington, UK during 1948–52. He was promoted to Surgeon-Captain in 1951 and retired in 1957. The holder of Arctic and Antarctic polar medals and an OBE (1947), Bingham died on 1 September 1993. See A. Stephenson and E.W.K. Walton, "Surgeon-Captain Edward W. Bingham," *Polar Record* 30, 172 (1994): 68–70. His personal diary of the 1933–34 survey cruise of HMS *Challenger* to the West Indies and Labrador is at SPRI, MS 1509/2/1. Reports are also in the *Daily Telegraph* (London), 5 Apr. 1933 and 1 Sept. 1934.
 - 9 Marshall subsequently had a distinguished career as an ichthyologist.
 - 10 Ministry of War Transport to Director of Sea Transport, Ministry of Shipping, 11 Sept. 1944, CO 78/217/2, NA.
 - 11 Ministry of War Transport, St. John's, to Director of Sea Transport, Ministry of Shipping, 16, 23 Oct. 1944, CO 78/216/6, NA.
 - 12 Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 3 Oct. 1944, CO 78/ 217/2, NA.
 - 13 Ministry of War Transport, St. John's, to Director of Sea Transport, Ministry of Shipping, 7 Oct. 1944, CO 217/78/3, NA. Ministry of War Transport, St. John's, to Director of Sea Transport, Ministry of Shipping, 31 Oct. 1944, CO 78/216/6, NA. Ministry of War Transport, Montreal, to Director of Sea Transport, Ministry of Shipping, 2 Nov. 1944, CO 78/217/3, NA. Colonial Office to Governor, Falkland Islands, 14 Nov., 2 Dec. 1944, CO78/217/3, NA.
 - 14 Colonial Office to Governor, Falkland Islands, 21 Nov. 1944, CO 78/217/3, NA. Also D. James, "The Sledge Dogs of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, 1945–46," *Polar Record* 5, 33/34 (1947): 40–43. D. James, *That Frozen Land* (London: Falcon Press, 1949).
 - 15 E.W. Bingham, "Sledging and Sledge Dogs," *Polar Record* 21 (1941): 367–85.
 - 16 The names are in A. Taylor, "Two Years below the Horn," unpublished manuscript,

- 1948, Andrew Taylor Fonds, MSS108, Box 14, Folder 1, UMA. Unless otherwise noted, operational descriptions for the huskies at Hope Bay are from this source.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 K. Dodds, "Putting Maps in Their Place: The Demise of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and the Mapping of Antarctica, 1945–1962," *Cultural Geographies* 7, 2 (2000): 126–210.
- 22 Governor, Newfoundland, to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 28 Sept. 1945, GN 1/3/A, 1/45, RPAD. Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Governor, Newfoundland, 29 Sept. 1945, GN 1/3/A, 1/45, RPAD.
- 23 Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Governor, Newfoundland, 5 Oct. 1945, GN 1/3/A, 1/45, RPAD.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 A.B. Dickinson and C.W. Sanger, *Twentieth-Century Shore Station Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).
- 26 Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Governor, Newfoundland, 11 Oct. 1945, GN 1/3/A, 1/45, RPAD.
- 27 www.fraserburghheritage.com. See Slessor's journal of his Antarctic experiences, 10 Oct. 1945–11 Nov. 1946, transcribed by K.D. Holmes, 3 Sept. 2003, AD6/2E/1946/B2 and G20/3/1-4, BAS.
- 28 Rockwood, Regimental Number 34, held the rank of Acting Inspector. <http://home.ca.inter.net/~elinorr/ranger-mem.html>.
- 29 W. Rockwood to Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources, St. John's, 11 Jan. 1945, GN 31/14, RPAD.
- 30 Governor, Newfoundland, to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 19 Oct. 1945, GN 31/14, RPAD.
- 31 Clarke (Lieut.) to Secretary, Natural Resources, St. John's, 23 Oct. 1945, GN 31/14, RPAD.
- 32 R.S. Slessor, Trip report to E.W. Bingham, 1946, AD6/2E/1946/R3, BAS.
- 33 Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor, Falkland Islands, 28 Nov. 1945, AD8/1/12(2), BAS.
- 34 R.C. Sheppard, [n.d.], "Report to the Governor, Falkland Islands, on the Work of M.V. Trepassey," Taylor Collection, Box 8, File 19, UMA.
- 35 R.J. Adie, "Sledge Dogs of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, 1947–1950," *Polar Record* 6, 45 (1953): 631–41. The number surviving is not given.
- 36 R.G.F. Taylor, "The Breeding and Maintenance of Sledge Dogs," *Polar Record* 8 (1957): 56, reprinted in *The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International* 6, 3 (2004). For information on the shipment of other huskies from Canada, see K. Holmes, "Mountie, Allouette, and Moose," *The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International* 5, 1 (Dec. 2002).

- 37 H. Jones, "A Time to Remember the Dogs," *The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International* 9, 1 (2006).
- 38 P. Gibbs, "The Contribution of Dogs to Exploration in Antarctica," *The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International* 5, 2 (2003); J. Killingbeck, "A Lost Heritage," *The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International* 5, 4 (2003). For removal of the BAS huskies from Antarctica, see <http://www.Antarctica.ac.uk>. Also K. Walton and R. Atkinson, *Of Dogs and Men: Fifty Years in the Antarctic, the Illustrated Story of the Dogs of the British Antarctic Survey 1944–1994* (Malvern, UK: Images Publishing, 1996).