

The *Karluk*'s Lost Men: The Alexander Anderson and Alister Forbes Mackay Parties, 1914

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Introduction

On 11 January 1914, the Canadian exploring vessel *Karluk* sank in the Chukchi Sea, about sixty miles northeast of Herald Island. The ship's company, numbering twenty-five people, were temporarily safe on the sea ice. The captain, Robert Bartlett, assumed that the land they could see in the distance was Wrangel Island, which would be a suitable refuge for them. Herald Island, however, was small, rocky, and ringed with steep cliffs, so that landing there was possible only at a few spots. On 21 January Bartlett sent out an advance party, consisting of first mate Alexander Anderson, second mate Charles Barker, and sailors John Brady and Archie King (whose real names were Thomas Hogg and Edmund Lawrence Golightly). Their bodies were discovered on Herald Island ten years later. On 5 February Dr Alister Forbes Mackay, oceanographer James Murray, anthropologist Henri Beuchat, and sailor Thomas Stanley Morris also left the main party in an attempt to reach land on their own. No bodies from this group were ever found, but it is unlikely that they survived for long.

The remaining expedition members later proceeded to the real Wrangel Island. From there, Bartlett and Kataktovik, an Inupiaq hunter, crossed Long Strait to Siberia for help. Three more men died on the island before rescue came. According to the narratives published by Bartlett and by the expedition's magnetician and meteorologist, William Laird McKinlay, none of these eleven deaths were in any way Bartlett's fault.¹ The loss of the Anderson party was attributed to errors made by Anderson himself or by another scientist, Bjarne Mamen, who accompanied the group as far as Herald Island and then returned to the camp on the ice. Mackay and his group were the targets of even more severe criticism for their alleged recklessness and insubordination. Not only has this version of the *Karluk* story never been challenged, it has been enthusiastically promoted by popular historians such as Jennifer Niven.²

The unpublished primary accounts by Bartlett and McKinlay do not support their published claims. Indeed, the diaries and other writings of these two men are highly problematic, untrustworthy sources. There are two very different versions of Bartlett's journal and three of McKinlay's. When these texts are compared to one another, to other surviving primary sources, and to the published narratives, it is clear that both men revised their stories to cover up serious errors by Bartlett – and even perhaps indirect murder by them both.

¹ Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*; McKinlay, *Karluk*.

² Niven, *Ice Master*; Levy, *Empire*.

The evidence: primary sources on the *Karluk* tragedies

Only one volume of Bartlett's original expedition journal remains, covering the dates 11 September 1913 to 23 February 1914.³ There is also a 'journal' of the entire expedition that Bartlett submitted to the Canadian government in November 1914. In the accompanying letter, he vaguely and cryptically described this version not as a copy of his diary but rather as an 'Account of my Diary'.⁴ The revised entries are short, often not very informative, and several key episodes are not mentioned at all. Bartlett's two diary texts are referred to in this article as the 'original' journal and the 'rewritten' journal.

In 1915, Bartlett quickly produced a manuscript account of the *Karluk* voyage. Part of an early typewritten draft survives among the papers of his friend and co-author, Ralph Tracy Hale.⁵ This version seems to be very close to Bartlett's original wording. Hale later made extensive changes, in the process editing out or softening some indiscreet and self-serving remarks. The draft is therefore in many ways a more useful source than the published book, which appeared in 1916.⁶ Comparing the original journal, the draft, and the book shows that, like his rewritten journal, Bartlett's public account was untruthful in many respects.

McKinlay's original diaries are in the National Library of Scotland.⁷ In 1915 he made what he claimed was a copy of the entries from 25 July 1913 to 22 March 1914 and sent it to Ottawa as his official report.⁸ Like Bartlett's rewritten diary, it omits and distorts a great deal. Then in the early 1970s McKinlay produced another version (also now at the NLS), which he called an 'annotated and amplified' transcription.⁹ It is in fact an extensive rewriting of the originals, broadly similar but with many important differences, and it gives a highly misleading picture of the expedition. These three sources are referred to here as the original, the 1915 text, and the 1971–3 text. Still further changes appear in the draft manuscript of McKinlay's book and the book itself.¹⁰

³ PMAM, AM2017.1.1.

⁴ Bartlett to G. J. Desbarats, 18 November 1914, and typed enclosure, LAC, RG 42, vol. 475, file 84-2-27. This version was printed in *Report of the Department of the Naval Service, 1914–1915*, pp. 22–54.

⁵ RPA, MG 931, files 931.9–931.21. An outline in file 931.16 shows that fourteen chapters on the *Karluk* were planned. Of these, four draft chapters survive, covering the period from 27 July 1913 to 28 May 1914. The draft thus does not contain Bartlett's comments on the expedition's early stages or on the rescue of the survivors from Wrangel Island.

⁶ Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*.

⁷ NLS, Acc.12696/28.

⁸ McKinlay to G. J. Desbarats, 31 July 1915, and typed enclosure, LAC, RG 42, vol. 475, file 84-2-28. McKinlay later formally affirmed that this version was a 'true copy' of the original, which was very far from the truth. McKinlay attestation, 5 January 1927, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 10, file 28.

⁹ NLS, Acc.12696/29.

¹⁰ Second draft, LAC, MG30 B25, vol. 2; *Karluk*.

There are no surviving records from the eight men in the two lost parties. However, it is possible to piece together what really happened by drawing on primary sources from other members of the expedition (for example, Mamen's diary) and by reading the Bartlett and McKinlay texts against the grain. Doing so provides an important corrective to the popular accounts by Niven and others.

Broader significance of the *Karluk* story

From a more academic point of view, a thoroughly researched account of the *Karluk*'s lost men adds nuance to the general belief that misrepresentations in exploration narratives were driven by the nationalist and imperialist dictates that animated the writers themselves.¹¹ The *Karluk* voyage was part of the 1913–18 Canadian Arctic Expedition (CAE), which aimed to find and annex new land and to scientifically survey northern territory already held by Canada, with a view to future resource development.¹² Yet far from being dedicated primarily to expanding and strengthening Ottawa's grasp on the region, many individual members were motivated above all by their desire for personal fame and glory. Polar explorers figured prominently as heroes in popular mass media, and the need to create or enhance personal renown (and also to preserve an existing reputation from harm) was an overriding consideration. Indeed, the *Karluk* story shows that men would go to extraordinary lengths of dishonesty for these purposes.

Only a few members of the expedition were in fact Canadian or had any feelings of loyalty to Canada. The leader, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, was Canadian-born but had become an American citizen; he simply saw greater opportunity for himself when Ottawa became interested in his plans.¹³ Bartlett, a Newfoundlander by birth (Newfoundland was not then part of Canada), had devoted himself to assisting the American Robert Peary's efforts to reach the North Pole, and he became a United States citizen in the hope of leading US expeditions.¹⁴ Mackay, Murray, and McKinlay were all Scots. They joined the CAE through the efforts of their countryman, the oceanographer William Speirs Bruce – a strong nationalist, who believed that polar expeditions were an ideal way to promote an image of Scottish excellence.¹⁵ Mamen, a young Norwegian with Arctic ambitions, considered the CAE as a way to gain experience that he could later put to use in his own country's service.¹⁶ Beuchat was French and interested only in furthering his anthropological work.¹⁷ Accordingly, in many ways the aims of these individuals were consistent with the CAE's broader purposes, but in other ways they were not. In fact, Stefansson had not even informed Canadian officials about key aspects of his plan.

¹¹ Many such studies derive their conceptual framework from Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

¹² Jenness, *Stefansson, Dr. Anderson*; Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic*; Sowards, 'Claiming Spaces'; Stuhl, *Unfreezing the Arctic*; Zaslow, *Opening of the Canadian North*.

¹³ Cavell and Noakes, 'Explorer Without A Country'.

¹⁴ Horwood, *Bartlett*, p. 114. Horwood believed that Bartlett changed his citizenship after the *Karluk* voyage, but it was actually in 1911. Naturalization records, New York Eastern District, roll 135, vol. 20, Ancestry.com.

¹⁵ Brown and Murdoch, *Naturalist at the Poles*, p. 281.

¹⁶ Mamen diary, 4 October 1913, translation in LAC, MG30 B20.

¹⁷ Barbeau, 'Henri Beuchat'.

Stefansson's goals and plans

The CAE's primary aim was to locate an 'Arctic continent' that had allegedly been glimpsed by Peary in 1906. The supposed continent (sometimes called Crocker Land or Harris Land) was then thought by some scientists to extend from the Beaufort Sea almost to the North Pole, with its southern coast lying not far from Alaska.¹⁸ Stefansson had originally intended to do ethnographic work around Coronation Gulf, but he soon realized that the Arctic continent was a matter of far greater interest to the press. Two of Peary's former subordinates, George Borup and Donald MacMillan, planned to seek it from a base in northwestern Greenland. They were to have started in the spring of 1912, but Borup's death caused a year's delay. If Stefansson mounted a rival search from the western Arctic and left in the spring of 1913, his chance of finding the continent would be as good as MacMillan's. Winning the race would immortalize his name.

Stefansson originally had funding from US institutions, but early in 1913 the Canadian government took over the venture as a way to secure any new land he might discover. Despite the change, Stefansson was adamant that the CAE must depart that year. He did not want MacMillan to get a head start; moreover, in January 1913 Roald Amundsen, the 'conqueror' of the South Pole, announced that he would attempt a transpolar drift, starting the next year.¹⁹

The theory of a transpolar current had arisen in the aftermath of George Washington De Long's tragic voyage in the *Jeannette*. In 1879 the *Jeannette* was caught in the ice near Herald Island. It drifted northwest and sank approximately 500 miles north of Siberia in 1881; many of the party, including De Long himself, did not survive the retreat to the mainland.²⁰ The *Karluk's* fate would be eerily similar, except that it did not withstand the ice for nearly as long as its predecessor.

Three years after the *Jeannette* sank, debris from the wreck was found in Greenland.²¹ In the 1890s, Amundsen's fellow Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen theorized that if a ship were deliberately frozen into the ice north of Siberia, the current would carry it to the North Atlantic. While the drifting vessel probably would not reach the exact North Pole, it might well pass close enough for a sled party to visit the top of the world.²² Nansen himself tried such a voyage without success, but the soundness of his general theory was proved by two Americans, Rear Admiral George Wallace Melville and Henry Grier Bryant. Between 1899 and 1901, Melville and Bryant had fifty casks placed on the Arctic ice north of the Yukon Territory, Alaska, and Siberia. Most were never recovered, but one was found in Iceland, another in Norway.²³

Given these results and theories, it seemed entirely possible that Amundsen's drift attempt would succeed and that he would also find the Arctic continent. Stefansson now had not one but two rivals, and he began to consider making a polar drift himself. As Nansen had pointed out

¹⁸ Harris, 'Evidences of Land' and 'Undiscovered Land'.

¹⁹ 'Amundsen to Seek North Pole'. In the event, Amundsen's plans were delayed by the outbreak of the First World War.

²⁰ De Long, *Voyage of the Jeannette*; Melville, *In the Lena Delta*.

²¹ Brooks, *Arctic Drift*.

²² Nansen, 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?'

²³ Bryant, 'Drift Casks'; 'Another Melville-Bryant Drift Cask'.

long before, the first requirement for such an attempt was a specially constructed ship that could resist ice pressure. Nansen's vessel, the *Fram*, survived the Arctic pack unscathed; Amundsen planned to use the same ship. But Stefansson had only an old whaler, the *Karluk*. The *Karluk* was suitable to carry men and supplies to a northern base during the summer months, but it was utterly unfit for a drift expedition. Yet, Stefansson reasoned, the *Karluk* might take them a long way before it was crushed; after that, the party could survive on the ice floes if they had enough supplies. Stefansson knew that the government would never agree to such a risky plan, and that he would have difficulty finding volunteers to attempt a drift in an ordinary ship like the *Karluk*. He therefore kept quiet about his intentions.

Stefansson told Bartlett the truth about the drift plan, but he gave a misleading account of the *Karluk*'s strength.²⁴ Once Bartlett's services were secured, Stefansson began to suggest in press interviews that the *Karluk* might accidentally be caught in the pack. The CAE would then end up 'doing involuntarily what Amundsen intends to do purposely'.²⁵ With hindsight, it is plain that Stefansson intended to make sure such an 'accident' happened. But when Bartlett saw the *Karluk* for the first time, he was appalled. Bartlett's only options at this point were to resign or to accept the situation. He chose the latter, presumably so that he could share in the fame of finding the continent. As he explained in a private letter to Peary, 'I am going to do all I can and I shall never say come back no by God I would rather walk all over the Arctic Ocean ... It's the New Land or bust. ... Hope to God she stays afloat long enough to get near it.'²⁶ Bartlett apparently did not stop to consider that by taking this attitude, he was helping to endanger men who – like government officials but unlike him – had no idea what the leader's plans actually entailed.

The *Karluk*'s drift begins

The *Karluk* sailed from Esquimalt, British Columbia, in June 1913. After stops at Nome and Port Clarence in Alaska, the expedition headed for Herschel Island in Canadian territory. However, it was a particularly bad year for ice, and in August the *Karluk* was caught in the drifting pack off the north coast of Alaska. On 20 September, as colder weather set in and it seemed that the ship would not move again until the next summer, Stefansson and a few others went ashore. Shortly afterwards, a gale started the ice moving again.²⁷ The *Karluk* drifted west along the coast, then out to sea and towards Siberia.

In late September and the first few days of October, Bartlett could have abandoned the *Karluk* and made for the nearby Alaskan shore. That he did not do so was undoubtedly due to his determination to 'never say come back'.²⁸ As he later wrote in his book draft, he expected the

²⁴ Bartlett to Rudolph Anderson, 6 February 1922, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 3, file 4.

²⁵ 'Stefansson Gets Peary's Captain'.

²⁶ Bartlett to Peary, 16 July 1913, NACP, Adm. Robert E. Peary Papers, box 49, file Bartlett 1913.

²⁷ On these controversial events, see Cavell, 'Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Robert Bartlett, and the *Karluk* Disaster'.

²⁸ Cavell, 'Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Robert Bartlett, and the *Karluk* Disaster', pp. 15–16. Possibly as an indirect response to this article, Levy alleges that Bartlett considered going ashore but concluded it would be too dangerous. *Empire*, p. 74. He cites no primary source evidence, and I am not aware of any document that would support his

ship to follow the *Jeannette*'s path, and this 'was just the thing which I wanted to do.'²⁹ Although Bartlett never publicly admitted to this motive, he evidently hoped to reach the Arctic continent before MacMillan, before Amundsen, and even before Stefansson. Unsurprisingly, many on board disagreed with his decision, and Mackay became their spokesman. Bartlett refused to listen, but he could not dispel the anger and resentment of men who justifiably feared for their lives (the ship's library included De Long's posthumously published diary of the *Jeannette* tragedy, which found many readers).

From the evidence of the McKinlay and Mamen journals, it is clear that Bartlett suddenly began to flatter the younger scientists, hoping to enlist their support. Mamen's entry for 2 October recorded that Bartlett praised him lavishly for his work making ski boots, saying, 'With a staff of Norwegian boys like you I could go everywhere and get good results.' The next day, Bartlett complimented McKinlay for having repaired a lamp. The captain had always favoured Mamen and geologist George Malloch, but his politeness to McKinlay was new.³⁰ (Both Mamen and Malloch later died on Wrangel Island, and while Mamen's diary was preserved, unfortunately Malloch's was not.)

Conflict between Bartlett and Mackay

On 6 October Mackay said he did not expect to see Scotland again. In his original journal, Bartlett jeered that 'Scotland however will get along even if he doesn't see it again.' In the captain's opinion, 'seeking for new land and gleaning information from virgin territory' was an enterprise which 'ought to appeal to anybody that has red blood in his veins'.³¹ By implication, anyone who questioned him was an unmanly coward. Following Bartlett's example, the next day Mamen ridiculed those who would not support the drift: 'I have never seen a bigger crowd of cowards in my life, they fear for both their lives and their limbs, why should such people go up to the Arctic, they ought to know the risks'.

On 8 October Mackay presented a formal letter to Bartlett. It asked the captain to call a meeting and discuss the situation fully with the staff. In his original diary, Bartlett briefly described this incident and commented that he 'would have none of' the proposal for a meeting, without giving any reason for his attitude. Bartlett's rewritten journal (that is, his report to the government) does not mention the matter at all, and he does not appear to have preserved Mackay's letter. In other words, Bartlett refused the scientists a hearing, did nothing to address their entirely legitimate concerns, drove their dissatisfaction underground, and destroyed the record of their protest. His only attempt to justify his action came in his book draft, where he

claim. The distance to shore would then have been about ten or twenty miles; any danger that such a trip might involve was negligible compared to the risks of drifting hundreds of miles from land.

²⁹ Bartlett draft, RPA, MG 931.18, p. 25.

³⁰ In a draft of his book, McKinlay admitted that until then, Bartlett had frequently teased him and hinted that he was not suited for Arctic exploration (presumably, because of his small stature and purely academic background). Second draft, part 1A, p. 66, LAC, MG30 B25, vol. 2.

³¹ Bartlett draft, RPA, MG 931.18, p. 25.

stated that he ‘did not want to have the doctor running the ship’.³² However, the entire episode was omitted from the published version. Both to the government and to the public, Bartlett simply pretended that the incident had never happened.

McKinlay had backed Mackay’s request, but soon afterwards he joined the group that supported Bartlett. According to his original diary, by 13 October he was in Bartlett’s ‘special favour along with Mamen & Malloch’. Worried though he might be about the possibility of disaster, McKinlay was unable to resist the prospect of entering an inner circle, and he knew that Bartlett’s favour might lead to future Arctic opportunities if they returned safely. There were also more immediate benefits; for example, Bartlett suddenly became more generous with supplies. The lure of the unknown continent, combined with Bartlett’s sudden friendliness, overcame McKinlay’s hesitations. Probably the decisive factor was that Bartlett made McKinlay believe his support was crucial to a great enterprise and would in due course be given high public recognition.

When the glory in which McKinlay hoped to share failed to materialize and eleven deaths had to be accounted for, he responded by exalting Bartlett as a great hero, whom no one could be blamed for following. Indeed, he frequently suggested that those who had questioned Bartlett were disloyal and irrational. McKinlay claimed in his book that Bartlett’s authoritarian response to Mackay proved the captain was ‘in complete control of the situation’.³³ In his private correspondence, McKinlay explained his decision by emphasizing Bartlett’s Arctic knowledge: ‘I had no doubt whatever that [Mackay’s and Murray’s] antarctic experience [on Ernest Shackleton’s 1907–09 expedition] did not justify their opposition to Bartlett and I was bound because of my own lack of experience to go along [with] the highly experienced skipper.’³⁴ Yet it was not a matter of control or of experience versus inexperience, but rather of the obvious fact that the *Karluk* was unlikely to reach the Arctic continent even if such land existed. Nothing over which Bartlett had control could alter this simple truth. Instead, the captain was determined to continue despite the risks.

Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat began to discuss possible ways to save themselves, which was condemned by Mamen as potential ‘mutiny’ and by McKinlay as a ‘plot’.³⁵ On 18 October Mackay presented a second letter; Bartlett refused to accept it. McKinlay claimed that he never knew what it contained, yet he may have briefly wavered back towards Mackay’s side. According to Mamen’s entry for 5 November, Mackay, Murray, McKinlay, and Beuchat had ‘begun preparations to leave “Karluk” in the spring, they wish to have me with them, but as long as it is not necessary to leave the ship I stay on board.’ Even if Mamen was correct, McKinlay soon returned to Bartlett’s camp, this time for good.

Clearly, these episodes had repercussions about which McKinlay chose not to write. His diary does, however, offer some indirect evidence. Until October 1913 he was very friendly with the *Karluk*’s cook, Robert Templeman (known in the journal as Bob or Cookie) and the chief engineer, John Munro (whom McKinlay called Inverary). By late October these chummy

³² Bartlett draft, RPA, MG 931.18, pp. 27–8.

³³ *Karluk*, p. 38.

³⁴ McKinlay to A. G. E. Jones, 24 October 1976, NLS, Acc.12696/44.

³⁵ Mamen diary, 8 October; McKinlay, *Karluk*, p. 56.

nicknames had vanished from McKinlay's entries, which instead recorded some mildly negative comments about Munro and much stronger criticism of Templeman.³⁶ It is, of course, highly likely that the crew resented not only Bartlett but the scientists who supported him, and that slights from his former friends hurt McKinlay's pride, causing him to retaliate in the only available way.

If, as McKinlay alleged in his book, Bartlett once found one of Templeman's cigarette butts in his coffee, the captain's unpopularity was probably the reason. In 1959 the second engineer, Robert Williamson, set down some reminiscences; they certainly depict a situation in which morale suffered. The crew members noticed how Bartlett 'avoided' and 'hardly spoke to' Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat. 'I guess they asked to [*sic*] many pointed questions,' Williamson concluded. He named McKinlay as one of the men who 'were always around' Bartlett, while the captain became 'quite unsociable' towards others on the ship. Significantly, Williamson did not condemn Mackay's group. For example, while McKinlay and Mamen derided Beuchat as lazy and cowardly, Williamson liked him because 'he was so gentle & quiet, yet he would always be ready to explain questions that were put to him, he had a wonderful memory'.³⁷

The northwesterly drift was likely to bring the *Karluk* within reach of Wrangel Island, which was occasionally visited by whalers and hunters and which lay not too far from the Siberian coast. Beyond that point, the distance between the ship and Asia would increase with every passing day. Accordingly, Mackay and his group intended to leave the *Karluk* if it drifted close to Wrangel. McKinlay referred in his original journal to the danger of such a move,³⁸ without any written reflection on the still greater danger that would be involved if the *Karluk* sank far from any land.

McKinlay may have been playing something of a double game at this point, sitting in on the discussions to keep the option of going with Mackay open. According to Mamen, McKinlay was still one of the group that planned to leave.³⁹ In his own journal, however, McKinlay claimed that he was not impressed by the others' forebodings. He offered the rationalization that 'one can never count on the behaviour of the ice, nor can we say where our drift may land us'. In other words, the ice *might* take them back to the southeast, or they *might* reach new land. Although such outcomes could not be ruled out as impossible, McKinlay must have known how very improbable they were.⁴⁰ Yet in his later texts, he dismissed the 'midnight cabals' even more emphatically as 'morbid', pointless exercises in gloom and doom.⁴¹

The truth seems to be that during this period McKinlay wavered uncomfortably between his awareness that staying on the ship might well be fatal and his hope that a fortunate turn of events would save him from the need to take decisive action. McKinlay must also have realized that if one group broke away and both factions returned safely, controversies and recriminations

³⁶ McKinlay diary, 19–21, 22–4, and 30 October 1913; see also *Karluk*, pp. 64, 99 (Templeman), pp. 129–30 (Munro).

³⁷ Williamson to Stefansson, 30 April and 17 May 1959, LAC, MG30 B44, vol. 1, file 2.

³⁸ For example, see entry for 29 December 1913.

³⁹ Mamen diary, 5 November 1913; see also 13 October 1913.

⁴⁰ McKinlay diary 24 November 1913.

⁴¹ McKinlay, 1971–3 text, 6 December 1913.

would be inevitable. In all likelihood, Mackay would allege foolhardiness and misuse of authority, while Bartlett would make charges (or at least insinuations) of disloyalty and cowardice.

Bartlett, too, must have reflected on this possibility. Only a few years earlier, he had been closely involved in the bitter dispute between Peary and Frederick Cook over the discovery of the North Pole. Peary, the ostensible victor, had suffered many blows to his reputation in the course of the scandal.⁴² Knowledge of this outcome would have made another such controversy all the more unappealing to Bartlett. It seems, indeed, that the captain had made up his mind well before the *Karluk* sank that it would be preferable for Mackay and the others not to return from the Arctic.

According to expedition member John Hadley, Bartlett confided to him that Mackay's group had thoughts of leaving the ship. Hadley offered to dissuade them, but the captain instructed him 'never to say a word about it but to Let them go if they wanted to'.⁴³ This account might be dismissed as a story made up to discredit Bartlett, but it was indirectly confirmed by both Mamen and McKinlay. Mamen did not believe that Mackay and the others would ever reach land if they set out on their own, yet he wished they would go, so that those who remained would be 'rid of' them and their complaints.⁴⁴ Bluntly put, Mamen wanted Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat to die. Quite possibly, Bartlett had expressed this view and Mamen was simply echoing the captain. Certainly, Mamen would not likely have written as he did if Bartlett had showed concern for the Mackay group's safety and asked Mamen to help him keep everyone together. McKinlay, too, was aware that 'Captain will not oppose their going'.⁴⁵

Yet by the second half of November, even Mamen was starting to see Wrangel Island as a possible haven. The *Jeannette* had experienced heavy pressure in the shallow area north of Wrangel, and it was unlikely that the *Karluk* would survive a similar ordeal. Although Mamen was determined not to leave the *Karluk* while it remained afloat, if the ship went down close to the island both his life and his honour (as he saw it) could be saved.⁴⁶ Mackay, Murray, and the rest obviously decided to take a wait and see attitude, hoping that necessity would force Bartlett to abandon his quest in a spot from which land could fairly easily be reached. In that event, they could avoid the risks of striking out on their own. Exactly when the *Karluk* would pass Wrangel Island was therefore a matter of great interest to everyone on board.

Wrangel Island or Herald Island?

From the beginning, there had been concern about the accuracy of the ship's chronometer. In early December Malloch made a number of celestial observations in an effort to determine whether it was keeping time properly. The matter became even more urgent after strong winds

⁴² Bartlett, *Log*, pp. 199–212.

⁴³ Hadley report to Stefansson, undated [c. 1917–18], SC, MSS-98, box 8, folder 2.

⁴⁴ Mamen diary, 7 October 1913, 5 and 6 January 1914.

⁴⁵ McKinlay diary, 29 December 1913. In his book, McKinlay asserted that he had felt sure Bartlett would warn them about the dangers before letting them go. *Karluk*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ See Mamen diary, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29 November and 26 December 1913.

between 18 and 24 December drove the *Karluk* farther to the northwest. On Christmas Eve, Malloch concluded that the chronometer was seven minutes wrong, a serious error that put all his longitude calculations into doubt.⁴⁷ The calculations showed that they were approaching Herald Island, but if these figures were incorrect, Wrangel itself might lie just out of sight to the southward.

When land was sighted in the period of midday twilight on 29 December, McKinlay proclaimed in his journal that it could 'be no other than Wrangell Island'. The longitude according to the chronometer was 174°8' W, yet Mamen assumed that the correct figure was 175°50'. Both Bartlett and Mamen cited the fact that the day's sounding, 23½ fathoms, matched the data collected north of Wrangel by the USS *Rodgers* in 1881, while north of Herald both the *Rodgers* and an earlier exploring vessel, USS *Vincennes*, had found depths in the range of 30–40 fathoms. However, the difference was hardly enough for a solid identification. The island appeared to be a large one, but optical illusions were common in the Arctic regions. Even the experienced Bartlett does not seem to have considered this factor.

Malloch was the only sceptic on board. On 8 January he concluded that the rate error was only one and a half minutes. Both McKinlay and Mamen recorded the revised estimate in their diaries; both refused to accept it. Mamen argued that if Malloch was right, they would have been too far from Wrangel to see it on the 29th. In his mind, the soundings proved that the land was 'undoubtedly' Wrangel. The next day, Mamen speculated that the chronometer might be ten minutes or more wrong. According to Mamen, Malloch had found an error in his 8 January calculation, and he was continuing to wrestle with the problem. Mamen did not record anything further on the subject, but Malloch must have proved to his own satisfaction that the chronometer was reliable. Confident in this assessment, he marked a position northeast of Herald on his map (see Fig. 1).

All Bartlett's decisions from this point onward were based on the assumptions that they had already drifted past Herald and that the land was Wrangel, even though one of his most trusted associates told him otherwise. As a result of his mistake, eight men would lose their lives. Rather than admit that they had too easily dismissed Malloch's longitude figures, both Bartlett and McKinlay revised their later accounts to obscure the issue. On 26 and 27 December McKinlay originally wrote that the *Karluk* was close to Wrangel Island, which might be sighted any day. In his 1915 and 1971–3 texts and his book, however, he claimed that they were on the lookout for either Herald Island or Wrangel Island. Bartlett's original entries for 27 and 29 December emphasized that while the longitude as calculated from the chronometer reading placed them east of Wrangel Island, the soundings were the same as those shown on the chart north of Wrangel. Nevertheless, Bartlett's rewritten entry for the 29th stated that he was 'rather inclined' to believe that the longitude observations were correct and that the land was therefore Herald, even though 'one cannot tell what error in our chronometers'.

The *Karluk*'s imminent fate was more or less clear to everyone on board, yet it was just possible that the ship would survive the ice pressure and drift onwards. In his original diary entry for New Year's Eve, Bartlett solemnly wrote that they were 'now on the Threshold of 1914'. He 'earnestly' prayed that they would find land and be 'free from uncertainties'. According to the

⁴⁷ McKinlay diary, 8–10 October and 15 December 1913; Mamen diary, 10 and 24 December 1913.

assistant steward, Ernest Chafe, on 1 January speeches were made after dinner, and Bartlett said that he hoped 1914 ‘would see us on or near the new lands, which we must all unite in one great effort to accomplish’.⁴⁸ If the ship continued to drift, it was certain that Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat would try to reach Wrangel Island on their own, and fear that others would join them may well have led Bartlett to make this plea for unity. Soon, however, there could be no doubt that the *Karluk*’s end was near.



Figure 1: George Malloch’s plotting of the *Karluk*’s drift, detail. Courtesy of Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum, Bowdoin College (gift of the Dove family).

⁴⁸ Chafe, ‘Voyage of the *Karluk*’, first instalment, p. 23.

More conflicts after the *Karluk* sinks

Between 4 and 8 January, the wind pushed the *Karluk* yet farther to the northwest. On the 8th, Malloch marked a position on the chart for the last time – roughly 72°12'N, 174°48'W (see Fig. 1). They were still east of Herald Island. On 10 January the ship was fatally nipped by the ice, and it sank the next day. The sounding on the 11th was thirty-eight fathoms, which was consistent with the previously recorded findings north of Herald. Nevertheless, everyone but Malloch apparently still believed that the island they could see was Wrangel. It was of course Herald, about sixty miles away, while Wrangel remained out of sight, over thirty miles farther to the southwest. The island appeared to be much closer, as well as much larger, than it actually was.⁴⁹

On 10 January, McKinlay wrote in his diary that Bartlett intended to stay at the site of the wreck only 'for a day or so' before setting out for Wrangel Island.⁵⁰ Yet Bartlett's first report to the Canadian government alleged that he had never considered starting before the sun returned. He recounted that his prudent determination to remain until travelling conditions improved had been recklessly challenged by Mackay and Murray. Bartlett stated that the two scientists 'kept the men continually agitated ... by telling them there was danger of our drifting northward, and insisting that we should start for the land during the dark days, which I considered dangerous.'⁵¹ In other words, Bartlett claimed that his own plan was precisely the opposite of what it had in fact been. It was no doubt true that Mackay and the others disagreed with him, but in doing so they must have taken the position that Bartlett later attributed to himself. McKinlay nevertheless backed up Bartlett's version. He removed the comment about Bartlett's intention to leave in 'a day or so' from his later texts and inserted a new passage in his 1915 'entry' for 10 January: 'There is much talk of what we will now do, but no one can say until we hear what the Captain decides upon.' In his book, McKinlay claimed that 'with the possible exception of the doctor and his friends, everybody seemed to be perfectly content to spend some time in what were really comfortable and relatively safe quarters'.⁵²

In his original entry for 11 January, McKinlay accused Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat only of constant grumbling, adding angrily that they would be responsible if any trouble occurred, 'for everyone is strained to breaking pitch with their conduct'. There was unquestionably strain between Mackay's group and the captain's allies, for other reasons besides their disagreement

⁴⁹ Mamen diary, 13 and 17 January 1914. Mamen estimated the distance to the land as 25–35 miles. Herald Island is roughly six miles long and two miles wide at its widest point, while Wrangel Island is about ninety miles from east to west and fifty miles from north to south.

⁵⁰ Mamen and Maurer gave similar accounts. Mamen diary, 11, 13, 14, and 15 January 1914; Maurer, 'Tragedy of the "Karluk"', 6 June 1915, p. 19.

⁵¹ Bartlett to Desbarats, 1 June 1914, LAC, RG 42, vol. 468, file 84-2-5 sub 11. Bartlett told the same story to various people he later met in Alaska. Dempwolf, 'Karluk's Survivors Say'; McConnell diary, 21 August 1914, LAC, MG30 B24. In his book, Bartlett made no reference to Mackay's and Murray's alleged opinions, but he maintained the pretence that he had never intended to leave Shipwreck Camp before the sun returned. *Last Voyage*, p. 98.

⁵² *Karluk*, p. 68; see also second draft, part 1A, pp. 160–61, 167.

with the plan to head for shore as quickly as possible. On 14 January an open quarrel developed between Mackay on one side and McKinlay and Mamen on the other. Mamen recounted that Mackay 'gave both McKinlay and me hell' for supporting Bartlett. He also hinted that Mackay would have liked to replace Bartlett as leader after the *Karluk* sank (in strict legal terms, the loss of the ship had terminated the captain's authority over the crew).

Now that there was no longer any chance of new discoveries to justify the risks Bartlett had taken, worries about what Mackay and the others might say if they all got back safely would naturally have intensified. In a long and angry journal entry, McKinlay wrote that Mackay had accused him and Mamen of trading their support for extra supplies from the captain; McKinlay retorted 'that if the time came to make charges, I would take my say'. McKinlay presented this response as a triumphant last word to which Mackay had no answer, but the truth was probably much less satisfactory from his point of view.

The Anderson party departs

On 13 January, the day before the quarrel with Mackay, Mamen had written that he thought it was 'futile ... to start now when the days are so short' and he expressed a preference for remaining at Shipwreck Camp (as they called their new abode) until February. Evidently, he had realized that Mackay was right. On the 15th, both Mamen and McKinlay recorded the details of Bartlett's current plan for the journey, without mentioning the proposed departure date. There were to be six sleds, each pulled by four dogs and carrying between 600 and 625 pounds, which Mamen considered 'a rather heavy load' for such small teams on rough ice. It was likely because of this concern about weight that a new proposal was formulated on 17 January. According to McKinlay's original entry for that date, it was his and Mamen's joint idea. Mamen, however, presented it as something he and Bartlett had worked out. In the two versions of his journal, Bartlett said nothing about either McKinlay or Mamen.

The plan was to send Mamen in charge of a party including First Mate Anderson, Second Mate Barker, Malloch, and one of the sailors, King (Golightly), plus the two Indigenous hunters, Kurruluk and Kataktovik. Mamen would lead this group to the supposed Wrangel Island, then leave Anderson and the three other white men there. Mamen himself would return to Shipwreck Camp with Kurruluk and Kataktovik, taking two of the group's three sleds and all the dogs. As McKinlay described it, Mamen would 'command the whole party until he makes his return, when the mate will take command of the shore party'.⁵³ Anderson was supposed to search for game and collect driftwood in preparation for the arrival of the full party later on. Mamen, meanwhile, would lead another journey, transferring more men and supplies to the island. Mamen therefore considered that the ultimate fate of the entire group rested on his shoulders.

The new plan led directly to the deaths of four men. Bartlett later attempted to shift the responsibility for the decision away from himself and also to exonerate Mamen, who, if he did not originate the plan, at least wholeheartedly supported it. In his first report to Ottawa after reaching Alaska, Bartlett claimed that the 'agitators', Mackay and Murray, 'kept the men so stirred up, that in desperation, I at last decided to send a party to land, which was visible in the

⁵³ McKinlay diary, 19 January 1914.

south and which I thought was Wrangell Island, to see if it was a game country and to find out the conditions of travel as well as to learn whether or not there was drift-wood on the shore.⁵⁴ In fact, as Mamen recorded in his entry for 17 January, Mackay spoke against the plan, pointing out that if the wind moved the ice significantly, Mamen's party might have serious difficulty in finding their way back to Shipwreck Camp. Mamen, entranced by the leading role he had been offered, merely shrugged that 'one must take chances and risk something to win'.

When he visited Malloch's bereaved family in November 1914, Bartlett told the same lurid tale. He stated that both the lost parties left Shipwreck Camp 'against his wishes & his warnings' and lamented that 'if they had only stuck to him he could have brought them all out alive', but there was 'a panic' and Bartlett let the mate's group go 'to control the others'.⁵⁵ In his rewritten journal (which he knew would be published), Bartlett was more restrained. He did not mention Mackay, Murray, or Anderson by name. Instead, he claimed that he sent the party 'ostensibly' to find game and driftwood, to find out about ice conditions, and to make a trail to the island, even though he 'would rather have waited another week for the light would be better for travelling'. He thus hinted that pressure had been brought to bear on him, resulting in an unwise decision.⁵⁶ The next year, McKinlay evaded the issue in his 1915 text. He resorted to a passive construction, writing merely that it had 'been decided' to send out a party under Mamen.

Bartlett's book draft, also written in 1915, is so vague and garbled that no clear explanation emerges, except for allegations that Barker, King, and Brady all wanted to go to the land.⁵⁷ His 1916 book stated that the journey's purpose was to end 'the men's enforced inactivity and the natural uneasiness of some of them'.⁵⁸ Again, there was a hint that 'some of' the men had been unwilling to stay longer at Shipwreck Camp. Readers would be likely to assume that Anderson, Barker, and the others who were sent to stay on the island were the men who expressed uneasiness, and that the captain had simply allowed them to do what they themselves preferred. Bartlett made this implicit accusation explicit when he provided statements to the lawyers settling the dead men's estates. He declared in a sworn affidavit that: 'Some of the members of the expedition, including the deceased Charles Barker, chafed under the inaction of remaining on the ice and expressed a strong desire to proceed to land. Accordingly ... an advance party including the deceased Charles Barker set out to effect a landing on Wrangel Island'.⁵⁹ There is no evidence that this claim was true. Chafe and one of the stokers, Fred Maurer, wanted to leave

⁵⁴ Bartlett to Desbarats, 1 June 1914.

⁵⁵ Archibald Malloch to Belle Anderson, 26 November 1914, and Grace Malloch to Belle Anderson, 30 November 1914, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 7, file 12.

⁵⁶ When Anderson's father wrote to the Department of the Naval Service requesting financial compensation for his son's death while following orders in government service, the official assigned to the case read Bartlett's 'diary' and concluded that the captain had let Anderson go 'against his better judgment'. Therefore, Anderson's death was held to be his own fault. J. O. B. LeBlanc to Deputy Minister, 4 December 1918, LAC, RG 42, vol. 471, file 84-2-5 sub 49.

⁵⁷ RPA, MG 931.19, pp. 29, 35.

⁵⁸ Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, p. 105.

⁵⁹ BCA, Charles Barker probate file, microfilm reel B08937, folio 8858.

as soon as possible, but they were not selected.⁶⁰ Moreover, both Mamen and McKinlay recorded that at least one of the men chosen for the shore party was quite emphatically unwilling to go.

On 19 January, McKinlay noted that Malloch had twice approached Bartlett to express concern that the risk was 'too great'. Bartlett's attempts to reassure him failed, and late that evening the captain agreed that a sailor, Brady (Hogg), should go in Malloch's place. The next day, Mamen fumed about what he saw as Malloch's cowardice. But the real blame, in Mamen's view, lay with Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat, who had evidently continued to campaign against the attempt. Mamen wrote that he had told them 'several times' that they could 'stay here and die' if they liked, but they should not 'hinder those who stake everything on getting out of it alive' – meaning, of course, himself. Malloch may well have been influenced by Mackay and the others, but he was probably alone in wondering just how far away the land was, and also whether it was Wrangel Island at all. On 17 January, Mamen estimated the distance as twenty-five to thirty miles; he hoped to get there in two days and return in one. If Malloch expressed scepticism on these points, his views had no influence on Bartlett, Mamen, or McKinlay (who, although not quite so optimistic as Mamen, wrote on 19 January that the party would likely reach the island in three days).

As for the plan itself, its main and glaring defect was that Bartlett did not provide for the possibility that the land was not Wrangel Island. That he failed to outline what Mamen and Anderson should do if it proved to be Herald was a major lapse of judgement. In his autobiography, Bartlett admitted that 'we had to be careful not to lose contact' with the parties sent out from Shipwreck Camp,⁶¹ yet at the time he was not nearly careful enough to prevent such an outcome. Then there was the selection of the party. It is far from clear why Bartlett chose to send both of the mates to the land, since they would normally have been crucial links between him and the crew. Perhaps this was the problem. If a majority of the men were unhappy with the captain's plan to set out soon, they would have expressed their view to the mates so that Anderson and Barker could bring the matter to Bartlett's attention. If the mates shared the men's apprehensions, Bartlett might have been all the more unwilling to talk to them. It certainly seems significant that Bartlett placed Mamen in authority over Anderson during the journey to land. This move went against all maritime protocol, and it must have been felt as a humiliating insult by Anderson himself. Presumably, Anderson was far less keen on the plan than Mamen, and therefore Bartlett did not trust him to push forward whatever the obstacles.

The real sources of the opposition to an early journey were of course Mackay and Murray, but Bartlett would not have dared to order them to go in case they defied him. Malloch, with his conviction that they were farther north and east than the others believed, was a source of more potential trouble. Bartlett may have assumed that Malloch would comply because of their friendly relationship. Although Bartlett miscalculated on this point, Malloch settled the matter through private conversations with the captain rather than through open defiance. Finally, there was 'King', who was in fact no sailor but a wealthy upper-class English youth with a taste for adventure.⁶² It seems unlikely that Golightly could have truly deceived his shipmates about his

⁶⁰ Chafe, 'Voyage of the Karluk', first instalment, p. 25; Maurer, 'Tragedy of the "Karluk",' 13 June 1915, p. 5.

⁶¹ Bartlett, *Log*, p. 270.

⁶² 'Presumed Death'.

identity or origin, and although young, he had the status that class and education gave. He was a likely ally among the crew for Mackay, who came from a similar background.

It seems, then, that Bartlett met a challenge to his leadership by dividing the party, forcing four of the men who opposed an early start to leave before the others. McKinlay would evidently have liked to go, envisioning himself as the commander of the shore party.⁶³ But Bartlett knew that McKinlay would always uphold his authority; accordingly, there was no reason to send him to the land even though McKinlay would gladly have acquiesced. The same was true of Chafe, a fellow Newfoundlander who always looked up to Bartlett.

Bartlett's strategy achieved its aim, but at an unacceptably great risk to the shore party's lives. The only sound argument for his plan was that several of their dogs had recently been lost, leaving too few to carry adequate loads to the island on a single journey. However, there was no need to begin so soon or to go all the way to land on the first foray.

After a delay caused by bad weather, Mamen's party left Shipwreck Camp on 21 January, ten days after the sinking. They had a map of Wrangel Island, which McKinlay had copied from the Admiralty chart the night before; in his 1915 text, he falsely claimed that he had included both islands. Bartlett's written instructions to Mamen and Anderson, dated 20 January, were short and inadequate.⁶⁴ When he made his first report to the government, Bartlett attached copies of some expedition documents, but the 20 January orders were not among them.⁶⁵ His rewritten journal for 21 January reproduced the letter to Anderson but did not mention that any instructions at all were given to Mamen. In his book, Bartlett printed the entire letter to Anderson, but he merely quoted part of the letter to Mamen.⁶⁶ Luckily, both Mamen and McKinlay had copied the full letter in their diaries.

Neither document specifically referred to the matter of command, but the full letter to Mamen made Bartlett's choice of the young Norwegian as leader clear when it instructed him to leave Anderson and his group on shore. Instead of reporting the facts plainly, Bartlett seems to have done all he could in both his rewritten journal and his book to give the impression that Anderson was in charge until the two groups separated, at which point Mamen took over responsibility for the returning party. In both the rewritten journal and the book, Bartlett described Mamen, Kurruluk, and Kataktovik as a 'supporting party'.⁶⁷ Readers were no doubt expected to conclude that the loss of the shore group was Anderson's fault.

To reinforce this impression, Bartlett claimed in both texts that he gave Anderson oral instructions to turn back if he met open water.⁶⁸ However, such orders ought to have been given to Mamen, since he was the leader. McKinlay's original entry for 19 January repeats what he described as Bartlett's oral summary of the instructions that Mamen would receive in writing the

⁶³ McKinlay diary, 17 January 1914.

⁶⁴ Bartlett to Mamen, copy in Mamen's diary, 20 January 1914; Bartlett to Anderson, printed in Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, pp. 108–09.

⁶⁵ Bartlett to Desbarats, 1 June 1914.

⁶⁶ Bartlett, *Last Voyage*, pp. 108–10. The quotation from the letter to Mamen related only to the return journey, stating that if Mamen could not locate Shipwreck Camp, he should go back to Wrangel Island.

⁶⁷ Bartlett, rewritten diary, 19 January 1914; Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, p. 107.

⁶⁸ Bartlett, rewritten diary, 21 January 1914; Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, p. 108.

next day. These orders were considerably more detailed than the actual letter that Bartlett subsequently wrote. According to McKinlay's record of the conversation, Mamen was told to give up the journey 'should he, at any point, come to open water'.⁶⁹ However, two days after Mamen and Anderson left, McKinlay noticed water sky to the south; this observation led him to expect that Mamen would 'be delayed', not that he would come back early.⁷⁰ In fact, the party had been stopped by an open lead and saw 'no chance of getting across'. Mamen decided to wait for the lead to close and then continue southwards, even though he had fallen into the water halfway up his thighs, and his wet feet were both frostbitten before the party made camp.⁷¹ Either Mamen knew that he was not really required to follow this particular order, as it had never been put into writing, or no such order was given.

On 25 January part of the sun briefly appeared over the horizon. Mamen, Kurruluk, and Kataktovik were expected back at Shipwreck Camp by the 25th or the 26th. The camp seemed to be drifting north at the time, which increased worries about the absent party's safety. Small groups went out frequently to improve the trail near camp, leaving empty pemmican tins to mark the way even more plainly and caching stores to be picked up later and carried to the land. On the 29th Bartlett had a flare lit, burning gasoline, oil, and alcohol to make a signal that lasted for many days.

Mamen's party did not get near the land until 30 January, after more than a week of bitter cold and difficult travel. A day earlier, Mamen had finally admitted to himself that it must be Herald Island, yet he clung to the idea of placing Anderson and the others on shore. He was supposed to take Anderson's group right to the land, but a stretch of open water barred their way, and Mamen could barely walk because his kneecap was out of joint. Assuming that Anderson's group could eventually get their loads to the island on their own, Mamen turned back on 1 February and reached Shipwreck Camp on 3 February. Anderson seems to have supported his decision to leave. Clearly, Mamen and Anderson had never been warned that landing on Herald Island was extremely difficult because of its steep coastal cliffs.

The Mackay party departs

Before Mamen's return, one of the most mysterious episodes of the entire expedition occurred at Shipwreck Camp. On 31 January, the Mackay group announced their intention of separating from the main party. Sailor Stanley Morris had agreed to go with them. They would set out for the land on their own, although it appears that they were willing to place themselves under Bartlett's leadership again once everyone was on Wrangel Island. The reason given by Bartlett and McKinlay in their later accounts was that Mackay and the others were afraid to stay on the ice any longer, fearing a northward drift that would increase the distance between Shipwreck Camp and safety. However, this claim cannot possibly be true. Mackay stood against Bartlett's

⁶⁹ See also McKinlay to David Anderson (brother of Alexander Anderson), 14 March 1915, NLS, Acc. 12696/17; *Karluk*, p. 73.

⁷⁰ McKinlay diary, 23 January 1914.

⁷¹ Mamen diary, 22 January 1914.

original intention to start on a journey to the land before the sun returned, and he opposed Mamen's early trip.

Bartlett had long wanted to be rid of the three scientists who did not support his decisions, but once the *Karluk* sank they seemed to have no further reason to break away. Staying with the captain's group was obviously safest, and Bartlett had delayed the main journey to land in accordance with their wishes. Yet he did hold one powerful bit of leverage. Murray would naturally have been eager to save the records of his oceanographic researches; Mackay and Beuchat would just as naturally have supported him strongly on this point. Possibly, Bartlett refused to take any records on the grounds that they weighed too much, leaving Mackay's group with a choice between risking a journey on their own or abandoning the only scientific fruits of the *Karluk*'s voyage. It may seem difficult to believe that Bartlett was capable of such a cold strategy, yet there is evidence to prove that his attitude to the scientists was exceptionally callous: after his return to Alaska, he wrote to his mother that if Mackay's party was never heard from again, he did not care.⁷²

Like Mamen, Mackay and the others probably thought that the land was only about thirty miles away, making success seem more likely than it actually was. In 1920 Stefansson, who had received oral and written accounts of the *Karluk* disaster from Hadley, asked McKinlay about 'the amount and character of scientific records carried off by Mackay's party'.⁷³ Stefansson's wording indicates that he felt no doubt they had in fact taken such records, yet neither Bartlett nor McKinlay ever mentioned the matter in their diaries or publications, and McKinlay did not respond to Stefansson's letter. Long afterwards, however, McKinlay told Canadian scientist J. R. Weber that Murray had indeed taken all his records with him.⁷⁴

Bartlett's original entry for 31 January is brief: 'Doctor and Murray Came to me wanting their Share of Supplies I told them to sign a paper clear of [i.e., clearing?] us Etc.' According to McKinlay's original diary, the captain immediately vetoed their proposal to later rejoin the main party: 'if they are unwilling to fall in with his plans, they must act altogether on their own responsibility & must not look to him to take them over when they please.' Possibly Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat reconsidered their plan after Bartlett's ultimatum, forcing the captain to either withdraw it or have them stay. On 1 February McKinlay recorded that Bartlett told Murray he 'would not see them beaten, but would always be ready to help them out of a hole'. In contrast, Bartlett's rewritten journal claimed that when he first heard of the group's decision, he immediately assured them that they could return to camp if they ran into difficulties and that he would help them out 'later on' if they needed it. However, it is evident that this claim was fabricated and that a day elapsed before Bartlett changed his initial stance.

Mackay and the others duly provided the statement asked for by Bartlett; it was dated 1 February.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, they intended to wait until they learned the details of Mamen's journey before they departed. In his book, McKinlay shifted their initial announcement to 3 February, which made it seem as if they already knew these details when they made their decision, but

⁷² Bartlett to Mary Bartlett, 21 July 1914, RPA, MG 142.30.

⁷³ Stefansson to McKinlay, 9 August 1920, NLS Acc.12696/16.

⁷⁴ Weber, 'Maps of the Arctic Basin Sea Floor', p. 123.

⁷⁵ Reproduced in Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, facing p. 128. It is now in the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum.

were foolish enough not to be deterred.⁷⁶ Just how much Mackay and the others ever did know about Mamen's experiences is unclear.

When Mamen returned on the evening of 3 February, he was immediately taken to the shelter occupied by Bartlett and McKinlay. Mackay, Murray, and Beuchat presumably did not hear his report, since they lived in a different shelter. The main points were that Mamen estimated the distance to the land as about eighty-five miles; that he believed it was Herald Island, although even close up it still appeared larger than Herald Island was reported to be; and that he had left Anderson's party on the ice, separated from the shore by between a mile and three miles of open water. He seemingly defended the decision to leave Anderson behind by pointing out that 'it is land and that is the most important thing'.⁷⁷

In his book, McKinlay claimed that Murray came in during Mamen's oral report and announced his group's plan. Supposedly, Bartlett tried to dissuade him but Murray was adamant. Bartlett allegedly then said they could go if they gave him a signed statement absolving him of responsibility.⁷⁸ Yet McKinlay's own diary indicates that the statement had been requested on 31 January and provided on 1 February. According to Hadley, who was in the same shelter as Bartlett and McKinlay, that evening Mackay and the others were 'all ablaze for news', which Bartlett asked the others present at the report not to give them. Hadley claimed that he disregarded this request, but he himself does not seem to have heard (or at least understood) the full report. Hadley stated that Murray asked him for his opinion of their chances; he replied that the land was 'plain in sight' and could probably be easily reached with dogs. However, since they would not have any dogs it might be difficult for them, and Hadley therefore advised them to stay until the main party departed.⁷⁹

The alleged scene between Bartlett and Murray on 3 February was in fact a revised version of an incident that took place the next day and was recorded in McKinlay's original diary. Mamen had brought a letter dated 1 February from Anderson to Bartlett, in which Anderson stated that he would 'proceed under original instructions as if it were Wrangell Island and await developments'.⁸⁰ On 4 February Bartlett, Mamen, and McKinlay talked privately in the tent used for stores. Bartlett said that he thought the land was neither Herald nor Wrangel but a new island. Nevertheless, 'he would proceed on the assumption that the chronometer was correct, & that it was Herald Island.' He would send Mamen back with Kurruluk and Kataktovik to check on Anderson's party; Mamen would take a sextant and Anderson would be instructed to determine the latitude (their chronometer had been so badly damaged while the ship was being abandoned that it was useless, leaving no way to check on the longitude). Apparently hoping that the 'new island' would be easy to land on, Bartlett intended to keep sending supplies, in accordance with

⁷⁶ *Karluk*, p. 77.

⁷⁷ Mamen diary, 3 February 1914.

⁷⁸ *Karluk*, p. 77.

⁷⁹ Hadley, report to Stefansson, undated [c.1917–18]. Bartlett always insisted that the party did not want dogs. *Last Voyage*, p. 123.

⁸⁰ Mamen copied this letter into his entry for 1 February 1914. Bartlett made no reference to the letter in his book, but McKinlay printed it (apparently copying it from Mamen's diary with a few small changes) in *Karluk*, p. 76.

the original plan. What steps Mamen was expected to take if he could not find the Anderson party, no surviving source reveals.

During this conversation Murray entered and, according to McKinlay's equivocally-worded diary account, Bartlett 'gave him some information as to the results of the first trip'. Murray then announced that his group had decided to leave the next day, '& Capt said that was all right'. In other words, Bartlett made no effort at dissuasion, but instead stated that it was 'all right' for them to go. Later that day, McKinlay made a map of Wrangel Island for the Mackay party. The fact that McKinlay provided a map of Wrangel rather than Herald proves that the departing men did not realize the land they were headed for was not Wrangel. Accordingly, it is clear that Bartlett did not give them the most crucial piece of information brought back by Mamen. The episode also proves that McKinlay actively aided Bartlett in deceiving Mackay and the others. Later, in his book, McKinlay stated ambiguously and misleadingly that he gave them copies of 'the chart' and 'all the information' from the pilot book that might be useful.⁸¹

Mackay, Murray, Beuchat, and Morris left Shipwreck Camp on the morning of 5 February, following Mamen's trail to Herald Island. Mamen set out again two days later, accompanied by Kurruluk and Kataktovik. As on the first journey, their sleds were fully loaded with supplies. Chafe and a sailor, Hugh Williams, went along as a supporting party; they were supposed to return after a few days. Bartlett apparently did not provide Mamen with any written orders, but he did hand him a letter for Anderson.⁸² It is extremely vague, giving the impression that Bartlett simply hoped for the best and chose not to think about the possibility that eleven men – Anderson, Barker, Golightly, Hogg, Mamen, Kurruluk, Kataktovik, Mackay, Murray, Beuchat, and Morris – might soon be in a very dangerous position, faced with open water off a high, rocky, and almost inaccessible coast. He blandly asked Anderson to give Mamen a share of any fresh meat he might have acquired, and stated that on the 'next trip' everyone still left at Shipwreck Camp would go to 'the Island'. 'Herald Island is no place for a party to land upon,' Bartlett would eventually declare in his rewritten 'entry' for 3 February, but clearly he did not grasp the importance of this fact until nearly two weeks after he heard Mamen's report.

Chafe's journey to Herald Island

Mamen's knee gave out again within hours of his second departure. Rather than take the entire party back to Shipwreck Camp, he decided on the spot that Chafe should lead the journey in his place. Bartlett does not seem to have objected to this action, even though Chafe had no knowledge of navigation and would have been lost if ice movement or a blizzard eradicated the trail. While Chafe was gone, the captain and McKinlay received an unpleasant shock. On 14 February, another island was just visible to the southwest. Assuming that it was Wrangel, the relative positions of the two meant that the first island had to be Herald. In his original diary, Bartlett stubbornly referred again to the evidence of the soundings, but he admitted that he was 'quiet [*sic*] anxious till Chafe comes back'. In his rewritten journal, Bartlett would claim that he had known it was Herald Island since 27 January. His rewritten 'entry' for 3 February implied

⁸¹ *Karluk*, p. 77.

⁸² Copy in Bartlett's handwriting, inserted in NLS, Acc.12696/29.

that the decision to stay there had been an unwise move by Anderson. Under the date 7 February, Bartlett falsely reported that Mamen's mission on his second journey was to locate Anderson's party and bring them back to Shipwreck Camp. Bartlett subsequently recorded the first sighting of Wrangel in the rewritten version as if it had been nothing unexpected, omitting his worries about Chafe.

On 16 February Chafe returned with a harrowing tale. His party was confronted by the same open water as Mamen and Anderson; then the ice cracked in all directions and they drifted on a small floe for two days before they finally scrambled back to safety over new ice. There was no trace of Anderson's party, either on the ice or on Herald Island, which Chafe carefully scrutinized with binoculars.⁸³ McKinlay and Bartlett responded to the news in remarkably similar terms. 'The island is certainly Herald', wrote McKinlay, 'because they could distinctly see Wrangell to the westward. They could see no sign of the mate's party on the island & we presume they have gone on to Wrangell Island'. Either then or later, he inserted the words 'as per instructions' after 'to Wrangell Island'. Bartlett's original entry for this date has an added passage at the end; the first part of the entry is in pencil but the addition is in ink. His wording is almost identical to McKinlay's: 'We presume they are gone [on?] per instructions'.

Chafe, however, did not mention having seen Wrangel Island in any of his later accounts, nor did he think that Anderson's party had continued their journey. Rather, he believed they must be dead, having encountered the same difficulties with open water as he did, but with a less fortunate outcome. When Chafe's returning party was seen from Shipwreck Camp, Bartlett went out to meet them. Chafe immediately reported that Anderson and the others had almost certainly drowned. As Chafe later wrote, the captain was so 'astounded' that he 'did not speak for several minutes'. Before they reached the camp, Bartlett warned Chafe 'not to say anything that would discourage the other men'.⁸⁴ The explanation that Anderson had probably gone to Wrangel 'per instructions' was no doubt concocted by Bartlett with McKinlay's help. Mamen soon joined in the fiction, writing on 17 February: 'I wonder how it's going with Andersen's [*sic*] party, and where they are, they have probably gone over to Wrangell Island.'

Later explanations by Bartlett and McKinlay

Bartlett and McKinlay both later clung to and further developed the storyline that since Anderson had been ordered to go to Wrangel Island, he was wrong to stay near Herald Island and instead ought to have continued to his real goal. According to Bartlett's rewritten 'entry' for 7 February, Mamen was told that if he could not find Anderson and the others on Herald Island, he should assume they had gone to Wrangel. In his book draft and the published version, Bartlett wrote almost as if ending up at Herald instead of Wrangel had been an error on Anderson's part. Again, he hinted that Anderson was foolish to remain there, claiming that the mate had done so against

⁸³ Chafe, 'Voyage of the Karluk', first instalment, pp. 28–9. In his rewritten diary for 16 February, Bartlett downplayed the danger Chafe's party had been in. Instead, he wrote that they could not land on Herald Island, but had 'stayed round' it for two days, with the implication that they had spent the time searching for Anderson with binoculars.

⁸⁴ Chafe, 'Voyage of the Karluk', second instalment, p. 36.

Mamen's better judgement. In the draft, he even alleged that the mate's party had stubbornly refused to come back.⁸⁵ According to the published version, immediately after hearing Mamen's news Bartlett hoped Anderson's party 'would keep on to Wrangell Island and carry out their instructions'. On a later page, he stated that Chafe believed they had done this, which allegedly 'seemed likely' to Bartlett himself.⁸⁶ He never acknowledged that he was to blame for having sent the advance group out without being completely sure of the island's identity and without specifying what they should do if it was not Wrangel.

In 1915 McKinlay wrote to Anderson's brother that as soon as the real Wrangel Island appeared (that is, while Chafe's party was absent), 'Bartlett anticipated that on realising that we had been deceived by the distortion produced by refraction, the advance party would proceed to Wrangell Island'.⁸⁷ In his draft manuscript and his book, McKinlay told a similar story, but in a way more favourable to Anderson and much less so to Mamen. In other words, he kept some aspects of the earlier rationalization but discarded others. In the new versions, McKinlay acknowledged that Anderson had willingly remained near Herald Island, but he argued that this interpretation of their orders was 'mistaken'. Mamen was in command of a party that had been ordered to go to Wrangel Island; therefore, he should not have turned back until he had escorted the shore group safely to Wrangel. In the draft, McKinlay declared that in Anderson's place, he would not have accepted Mamen's decision to retreat.⁸⁸

Mamen was, of course, one of Bartlett's favourites, while the captain does not seem to have felt any great regard for Anderson. He therefore preferred to place responsibility on the mate. McKinlay, in contrast, did not especially care for Mamen but considered Anderson a friend (although their friendship may have cooled somewhat during the drift). Even though McKinlay was unwilling to speak up for Anderson during Bartlett's lifetime, he later revised the fictitious story to suit his own preference. Targeting Mamen allowed him to do so without criticizing Bartlett. In fact, by blaming Mamen McKinlay indirectly exonerated Bartlett. He unequivocally attributed the plan for an advance party to the captain, but then he suggested, quite unrealistically, that Mamen could and should have brought this plan to a successful conclusion by changing course once he realized that the island was Herald. And, in contrast to his 1915 letter, McKinlay's draft and book made it clear that Anderson could not have gone to Wrangel on his own even if he wanted to, since Mamen had taken all the dogs back to Shipwreck Camp.⁸⁹

What happened to the missing parties?

The fate of Anderson and his men was not discovered until 1924. They had landed on a small gravel beach near the southwest corner of Herald Island – one of the only two feasible landing places – with at least some of their supplies. Given the ice conditions around the island, this relatively short journey was an impressive feat. The bodies were found by the American trader

⁸⁵ RPA, MG 931.19, pp. 29-30; see also pp. 37, 43-4.

⁸⁶ Bartlett and Hale, *Last Voyage*, pp. 126-7, 134.

⁸⁷ McKinlay to David Anderson, 14 March 1915.

⁸⁸ Second draft, part 1A, pp. 174-6; *Karluk*, pp. 72, 76-7.

⁸⁹ Second draft, part 1A, p. 175; *Karluk*, p. 76.

Louis Lane; all four men had died in their tent. Lane was puzzled about the cause, which was probably inadequate ventilation and carbon monoxide poisoning from the primus stove.⁹⁰

What happened to Mackay's party remains a mystery. The last person to speak with them was Chafe, who met them on 15 February, during the first march of his journey back to Shipwreck Camp. They were then about twenty miles from Herald Island. Although they had set out two days before him, they were going much more slowly because without dogs, they had to relay their loads over the rough ice. Assuming that Chafe's account is accurate and not something else that he was asked to say by Bartlett, they were in extremely poor shape. Beuchat's feet were frozen and Morris had injured his hand badly with a knife. Chafe tried to persuade them to go back with him, but they all refused, even Beuchat.⁹¹ McKinlay's unpublished texts give a list of items that Mackay's group had discarded along the trail, including notebooks. His published narrative, however, excludes notebooks from the list.⁹² Presumably, these notebooks were Murray's scientific records, and McKinlay did not want to bring their fate to readers' attention.

According to all of McKinlay's accounts, Chafe's news made the Mackay party alter their course for Wrangel.⁹³ It is unclear whether the news that influenced them was the difficulty of landing on the island or its identity. Chafe's own account does nothing to clarify the matter, for he believed that the party had originally aimed for Siberia, but 'were now endeavouring to reach Wrangell Island'.⁹⁴ However, they were unquestionably heading towards Herald Island when Chafe met them. In his rewritten journal, Bartlett stated ambiguously that the Mackay group told Chafe 'they were bound for Wrangell Island'. Possibly Chafe never understood that they had set out still mistakenly believing the land was Wrangel. He himself seems to have always thought it was Herald (and that Herald was where Bartlett wanted Anderson to land), while Hadley believed that the visible land included the peaks on both islands. Maurer, in contrast, was apparently convinced that the land seen from Shipwreck Camp was Wrangel, and that Anderson and Mamen had gone to Herald Island through their own mistake. Williamson thought the same. In 1914 he told a journalist that the party 'had probably mistaken Herald Island for Wrangel Island'; in 1959 he remarked to Stefansson that 'they were a long way off their course' when

⁹⁰ LeBourdais, 'Bodies of Arctic Explorers'; account by Lane, printed in Lomen, *Fifty Years*, p. 163. Publicly, Lane always stated that the bodies were found at the northwest corner of the island. He hoped to go back and make further researches, and this misrepresentation seems to have been intended to prevent others from finding the site. On a visit to Ottawa, Lane confirmed to government officials and others that the camp was at the southwest corner. See undated memo by Franklin McVeigh, enclosed in Alexander Johnston to G. J. Desbarats, 13 February 1925, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5672, file 84-2-1; Belle Anderson to Joseph Bernard, 23 February 1925, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 8, file 12. Sidney Snow, the photographer on Lane's voyage, sent pictures of the camp site to the United States government. His notes on the back of one of these photos identify the place as the 'South west point' of the island. NACP, microcopy 316, roll 77, RG 59, file 861.014/71.

⁹¹ Chafe, 'Voyage of the Karluk', first instalment, pp. 29–30.

⁹² McKinlay diary, 16 February 1914; 1915 and 1971–3 'entries' for the same date; *Karluk*, p. 79.

⁹³ McKinlay diary, 16 February 1914; 1915 and 1971–3 'entries' for the same date; *Karluk*, p. 79.

⁹⁴ Chafe, 'Voyage of the Karluk', first instalment, p. 30.

Mamen turned back.⁹⁵ Evidently, the debates about their position among the members of Bartlett's inner circle were kept from the men, who as a result had only the vaguest ideas on the subject.

Without a map that showed both islands, Mackay and the others probably did not know that when they changed their course, they were heading into an area of exceptionally bad ice pressure. A rocky reef extends from the northwestern tip of Herald Island and continues underwater for several miles in the general direction of Wrangel Island. The whaler *Lucretia* had been wrecked on this reef in 1889, and it was marked on the Admiralty chart as a place for ships to avoid.⁹⁶ Murray would certainly have had no difficulty in realizing from the chart that when ice was pushed into this shallow area by northerly winds, it would pile up into immense ridges. If the party had had this information, perhaps they would have gone back to Shipwreck Camp with Chafe.

Alarmed by Chafe's report of breaking ice and open water, Bartlett decided to move the main party to Wrangel as soon as possible. He announced that on 19 February he would send out yet another advance party, led by Chief Engineer Munro. This detachment would follow the first part of the trail to Herald far enough to pick up some of the cached stores, then turn towards Wrangel.⁹⁷ The captain, along with McKinlay, Mamen, the Inupiat, and Templeman, were to follow later.

The plan omitted any attempt to search Herald Island for Anderson and his party, relying on the convenient fiction that they must have proceeded to Wrangel. It appears, therefore, that Bartlett had either privately given them up for dead or decided to abandon them to their fate. Possibly because some of the men objected, a detour to Herald Island was added a few days later. On the eve of the new advance party's departure, Bartlett assured them that his own group would 'go first to Herald & if possible one or two of us will land & make certain that the mate's party is not there & then proceed to Wrangel'.⁹⁸ However, no serious effort to do so was made.

Bartlett's party caught up with the advance detachment at a series of extremely high pressure ridges north of Wrangel Island. Here Munro's group had found an important clue to the Mackay party's fate, which however was not mentioned by Bartlett, Mamen, or McKinlay in their diaries. In 1959 Williamson described how, as they approached the ridges, he and his comrades saw 'a black flag waving' on a makeshift staff amid 'very rough ice'. They found that it was a sailor's scarf. Williamson supposed that it belonged to a member of Anderson's party.⁹⁹ However, since Anderson and the others all died on Herald Island, it must have been Morris's.

⁹⁵ Chafe, 'Voyage of the *Karluk*', first instalment, p. 25; Chafe to Robert Laird Borden, 6 March 1916, LAC, RG 42, vol. 470, file 84-2-5 sub 24; Hadley report to Stefansson, undated [c. 1917-18]; Maurer, 'Tragedy of the "*Karluk*"', 13 June 1915, p. 5; 'An Unknown Region'; Williamson to Stefansson, September 1959, LAC, MG30 B44, vol. 1, file 2.

⁹⁶ *List of Reported Dangers*, p. 1; Admiralty Hydrographic Office, *America, North Coast, Mackenzie River to Bering Strait*, 1912 edition.

⁹⁷ McKinlay diary, 16 February 1914.

⁹⁸ McKinlay diary, 18 February 1914; *Karluk*, p. 80. See also Bartlett to Munro, 18 February 1914, SC, MSS-92.

⁹⁹ Williamson to Stefansson, 11 June 1959, LAC, MG30 B44, vol. 1, file 2.

McKinlay had read Williamson's letter before he wrote his book, and he declared that the find 'was never reported' to Bartlett.¹⁰⁰ This statement gives the impression that McKinlay himself knew nothing about the marker either, but he was not telling the truth. In a draft report to the government, written in November 1914, McKinlay included the note: 'Black flag picked up by party on way in to Wrangell.'¹⁰¹ The flag is not mentioned in his next draft or in the final version of his report. Since Bartlett and McKinlay were together in Ottawa at the time when the drafts and the final report were written, they must have agreed never to mention it.

In the early draft of his report, McKinlay suggested that the flag (which he did not identify as a scarf) was a marker placed by Chafe on the ice north of Herald Island in mid-February, which supposedly must have drifted all the way from Herald. This was not a likely explanation. In his book, McKinlay indirectly acknowledged as much. Instead, he put forward the theory that Mackay's party had been trying to make their way through the rough ice near Wrangel and that they were drowned when a lead opened up.¹⁰² Williamson's unwelcome record had forced McKinlay into an admission he would have preferred not to make: that Mackay and the others must nearly have reached Wrangel Island. Yet it is hardly plausible that they could have done so if, as Chafe reported, they were already weak and struggling badly only ten days after they left Shipwreck Camp. The account of the Mackay party's quick collapse may, therefore, be as much of a fiction as the tale that they agitated against Bartlett's determination to stay at Shipwreck Camp until the sun returned.¹⁰³ It is certainly very difficult to believe that men in the condition described by Chafe would have chosen to die pointlessly rather than return to Shipwreck Camp.

¹⁰⁰ *Karluk*, p. 88.

¹⁰¹ Drafts, NLS, Acc.12696/18; final report, LAC, RG 42, vol. 464, file 84-2-3 part 2.

¹⁰² *Karluk*, pp. 88–9.

¹⁰³ The various accounts of the party's condition by Chafe, Bartlett, and McKinlay are inconsistent on many points. For example, Chafe said that Morris injured his hand while opening a tin of pemmican with a knife. McKinlay's 1915 and 1971–3 texts and Bartlett's book mention that to save weight, before they left Shipwreck Camp Mackay's party took their pemmican out of the tins and placed it in canvas bags. In his original diary and his 1971–3 text, McKinlay claimed that Morris's injury occurred when he tried to cut the (frozen) pemmican with a knife. In his original diary and his 1971–3 text, McKinlay stated that the party left their stores on young ice overnight and half of them were 'lost', but in 1915 he wrote only that the bagged pemmican became wet and salty. In his rewritten diary and his book, Bartlett referred to Morris's injury but did not explain how it occurred; in the book, he claimed that the sled went into the water while the party was crossing young ice, wetting the pemmican bags. Chafe, 'Voyage of the *Karluk*', first instalment, pp. 29–30; McKinlay, original diary and other texts, entries for 16 February 1914; Bartlett, rewritten diary and *Last Voyage*, p. 134. The comment about Morris's hand seems to have been added to McKinlay's original diary at a later date. Supposing that McKinlay made up the incident after he knew that Morris must be dead, he would not have suggested that the fictitious injury happened while opening a tin, because he knew that the pemmican was in bags. Chafe, however, apparently did not know this, and he easily might have misremembered the agreed-upon story when he wrote his article a few years later. (Mamen's entry for 16 February mentions the hand injury, but since his original diary has been lost, there is no way to be sure that the relevant passage was not interpolated later. Therefore, Mamen's account cannot be taken as proof that Chafe did in fact make such a report in February 1914.)

Years later, Chafe could explain it only by the unconvincing claim that a ‘half-insane obsession’ had ‘gripped’ them all.¹⁰⁴

After the survivors landed on Wrangel Island and Bartlett left for Siberia, Munro and McKinlay made a brief attempt to reach Herald Island (23–27 March). On the 26th, having realized that they could not get through the extremely rough ice, they scanned its northwest point with binoculars. Seeing no signs of life, they concluded that Anderson’s party was not on Herald Island and must have perished. McKinlay always maintained that according to their pilot book, the northwest point was Herald’s only possible landing spot, so that if the men were not there they could not be on the island at all. However, the book said no such thing. It did not specifically describe any landing places, but those used during the previous visits of HMS *Herald* in 1849, USRC *Corwin* in 1881, and USS *Rodgers* in 1881 were on the south and southwest coasts.¹⁰⁵

Following the rescue from Wrangel Island, McKinlay told members of the Anderson family that the mate’s party could not possibly have landed on Herald. These interactions left Anderson’s father and sister with a poor impression of McKinlay; his sister, Isabella, was still angry decades later.¹⁰⁶ When the bodies were found in 1924, Bartlett explained to a reporter that Anderson and his party ‘were sent under orders ... to proceed leisurely to Wrangel Island and there await our coming. Their instructions were to return to our camp if conditions did not warrant proceedings [*sic*]. But they never came back’.¹⁰⁷ In his autobiography, published four years later, Bartlett mentioned the party’s departure, but he said nothing at all about their deaths.¹⁰⁸ Nor did McKinlay acknowledge in his book that Anderson and the three others had landed on Herald and died there. Instead, he gave the impression that their exact fate remained unknown in the 1970s.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

It is quite possible that the four men in Anderson’s party were still alive when Munro and McKinlay abandoned their search effort in March 1914. In 1924 Louis Lane concluded that the

¹⁰⁴ ‘Men Against the Arctic’.

¹⁰⁵ According to Bartlett, the pilot book they were using was American. *Last Voyage*, p. 111. However, the first such book with entries for Wrangel Island and Herald Island did not appear until 1917 (*Arctic Pilot*, vol. 1). It includes text quoted by McKinlay in his original entry for 3 February 1914. Since this exact wording does not seem to have been used in any earlier US or British publication, Stefansson may have been given a draft version of the 1917 book by courtesy of the United States Hydrographic Office. On the earlier landings, see Seemann, *Narrative*, II, 116–17; Hooper, *Report of the Cruise*, pp. 51–3, 141–2; Muir, *Cruise*, pp. 150–56; Rosse, ‘First Landing’, pp. 165–8; USS *Rodgers* log, 28 September 1881. On the spot where the Anderson party landed, see note 90, above.

¹⁰⁶ McKinlay to David Anderson (brother), 14 March 1915, NLS, Acc. 12696/17; David Anderson (father) to G. J. Desbarats, 16 March 1925, LAC, RG 42, vol. 371, file 84-2-5 sub 49; Isabella Anderson, quoted in Wadden, ‘Lost Scotsman’, pp. 25, 38–9.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Says Bones Found’.

¹⁰⁸ Bartlett, *Log*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁹ See especially *Karluk*, pp. 76–7.

group had been on the island for some time before they died.¹¹⁰ Both Bartlett and McKinlay must have been well aware that a more determined effort might have saved them. Whether the men on Wrangel had the resources to make such an effort is not clear. However, it is plain that if Bartlett had not sent out the mate's party, or if he had given comprehensive orders, the fatal situation would never have arisen.

As for the Mackay party, it is impossible to prove definitively that Bartlett pushed them into going, but the circumstantial evidence that he did so – and that he later also withheld information which could have changed their minds – is strong. Niven and others laud Bartlett as an ideal leader, but the geographer Isaiah Bowman, who knew him well, made a different assessment. Bowman would not back Bartlett's efforts to organize a new drift expedition precisely because he was not suited to lead such a venture. As Bowman explained, 'In a crisis he becomes tense, and if he meets human contrariness he sometimes becomes violent.' Bowman further pointed out Bartlett's inability to deal well with unexpected difficulties. Bartlett, he wrote, was 'in his element as an ice navigator, not as a thinker or manager of scientific men.'¹¹¹

After the *Karluk* voyage, Bartlett became increasingly reliant on alcohol, although he made a recovery in the late 1920s.¹¹² By his own account, McKinlay suffered from depression for the rest of his life.¹¹³ The fact that both men crafted narratives in which they were blameless may simply show their intense need to deny or explain away the bitter truths that haunted them. In any case, no matter what their degree of actual guilt, their writings cannot be taken as reliable guides to what actually happened on the *Karluk* voyage. Unlike the flamboyant, openly self-promoting Stefansson, Bartlett and McKinlay presented themselves to readers as exemplars of quiet determination. The wide disjunction between their original diaries and their published narratives stands as a reminder that all tales of polar heroism must be carefully scrutinized, including those that appeal to current tastes.

Successful nineteenth-century polar explorers could win both fame and money through media coverage of their exploits and through their own writings.¹¹⁴ Most of these men, however, were naval officers or scientists with careers to which they could return no matter what the outcome of their efforts might be. Later 'freelance' explorers such as Stefansson and Bartlett had no such security to fall back on, and their pursuit of renown was accordingly more intense and ruthless. After the CAE and service in the First World War, McKinlay gave up his dream of making a career in exploration and went back to his previous occupation of schoolteaching, even though he yearned for 'another opportunity of making good'.¹¹⁵ Bartlett, in contrast, persisted for the rest of his life. In 1931, as he sought to remain in the public eye, the captain reflected sadly on

¹¹⁰ LeBourdais, 'Bodies of Arctic Explorers', p. 4.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Putnam, *Mariner*, p. 135. McKinlay's unpublished writings contain a few references to Bartlett's violent temper; these were left out of his book. For example, see his original diary, 28 February–3 March 1914, and the 'entry' for 11–13 October 1913 in his 1971–3 text.

¹¹² Horwood, *Bartlett*, pp. 122–4.

¹¹³ Second draft, part 1A, p. i; McKinlay to Belle Anderson, 29 September 1915, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 7, file 15; McKinlay to Dorothy Anderson Smith, 23 April 1974, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 36, file 8.

¹¹⁴ See Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*.

¹¹⁵ McKinlay to Belle Anderson, 13 May 1925, LAC, MG30 B40, vol. 8, file 13.

how he had to cultivate the goodwill of scientific and geographical institutions just to eke out a living. A man without a permanent job, he wrote, had ‘to be in with the Crowd or Else he is finished’.¹¹⁶ This context helps to explain (although it can hardly excuse) Bartlett’s actions in 1914 and the many falsehoods he later told about the *Karluk*’s lost men.

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