

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01293-5 - Danish Arctic Expeditions, 1605 to 1620: In Two Books,
Volume 2

Edited by C. C. A. Gosch

Excerpt

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NAVIGATIO SEPTENTRIONALIS:

THAT IS, A

RELATION
OR DESCRIPTION OF A VOYAGE
In Search of the North-West *Passage*, now called
NOVA DANIA, through *Fretum Christiani*;

WHICH VOYAGE

OUR MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY KING
CHRISTIAN THE FOURTH WAS GRACIOUSLY PLEASED
TO COMMAND IN THE YEAR 1619;

And, in order to accomplish it, sent out his Majesty's Sea
Captain, Iens Munk, together with a Crew numbering in all
64 Persons, in two of His Majesty's ships, *Enhiörningen*
and the Sloop *Lamprenen*;

WHICH SAME

EXPEDITION WAS, SO FAR AS WAS POSSIBLE,
Carried out with most implicit obedience to the *Instructions*
Graciously given; but the Commander, after incurring great Peril,
returned back to Norway with the Sloop and only two others;

COMPRISING AN ACCOUNT OF ALL THE CIRCUM-
stances, Courses, Directions, and Occurrences, concerning that
Sea and the Particulars of that Voyage;

BY THE SAID

IENS MUNCK

Diligently observed on the Journey there and back, and
published by His said Royal Majesty's Most
Gracious Command.

ECCLUS. 43.

Navigantes mare, enarrant ejus pericula.

They that sail on the sea tell of the Dangers thereof; and, when we hear it
with our ears, we marvel thereat, etc.

Printed in Copenhagen by Henrich Waldkirch.

ANNO M. DC. XXIII.

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Most Mighty, Highborn Prince
and Lord, Sire,

CHRISTIAN THE FOURTH,

King of Denmark, Norway, the Vends, and the
Goths, Duke of Sleswick, Holstein, Stormarn, and
Dithmarschen, Count of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, etc.,
My most gracious Lord and King :

Grace, Prosperity and Peace from God by Jesus
Christ our Lord.



MOST GRACIOUS LORD AND KING.

Inasmuch as Your Royal Majesty, in the year of 1619, now past, after gracious consideration, commanded that I should sail forth with two of Your Majesty's ships, *Enhiörningen* and the sloop *Lamprenen*, in

order to search for the North-West Passage, and, with regard thereto, graciously gave me instructions, which, by the help and assistance of God, I have followed, in most submissive obedience, as closely as human energy and power, with the utmost diligence, could on that sea and in that difficult navigation. And, although, after having returned from that voyage, I at once presented myself before Your Royal Majesty, in order most humbly to report on the events of the said journey, I had, nevertheless, the intention afterwards to put into writing a further description of the said journey, with all its circumstances, for publication, in order that Your Royal Majesty might be enabled graciously to hear a much clearer account thereof; and this I should long ago have humbly caused to be submitted to Your Majesty, but I have been occupied in consequence of other pressing

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commands of Your Majesty and in journeys, to which I am most humbly in duty bound towards Your Royal Majesty; so that I have not been able before now to publish this written account. I have now, therefore, revised and looked through my observations concerning the said voyage, the navigation, the sounds, known and unknown countries, harbours, straits, courses and directions, with all the circumstances, and whatever happened upon it, from the beginning to the last event, as far as this said passage could be searched for with the most careful possible examination and investigation, which I have truthfully written down day by day, according to the changes of the navigation and the incidents of the voyage; and I have thereupon described it all in this small treatise, in the most humble hope that Your Royal Majesty will graciously approve of it, and that every right-minded man who obtains knowledge of the circumstances of this endeavour will rightly consider and judge, that it has been done to the honour of Your Majesty's name and government, and that Your Majesty will graciously understand the good of the kingdom, and choose as far as possible that which now and ever can serve the welfare of the subjects. I, at the same time, most humbly pray that Your Royal Majesty will graciously accept both me and this small work of mine into Your favour and gracious protection, and always be to me a kind Lord and gracious King; and may God Almighty preserve Your Royal Majesty in lasting health and prosperous government.

Given at Copenhagen, the 1st of November,
1624.

Your Royal Majesty's

Humble and dutiful servant,

IENS MUNCK.

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A

RELATION

Or Description of a Voyage and Expedition in search
of the North-West Passage, now called NOVA DANIA,
through FRETUM CHRISTIAN,

Wherein are Described all the Circumstances of that
Expedition, the Navigation, Straits, known and unknown
Countries, Harbours, Sounds, Courses and Directions,
which occurred upon that Voyage and all that happened
worth knowing, from the Beginning
to the End.

In the Name of the Holy Trinity,
AMEN.



INNO DOMINI, 1619: His Royal
Majesty our most gracious Master's
ship *Enhiörningen* and the sloop
Lamprenen having, according to His
said Majesty's gracious orders, been
properly made ready, provided, and
prepared with crew, equipment, provisions, ammunition and
other necessaries for the voyage and expedition to search
for the North-West Passage: I, Iens Munck, in the name of
God, sailed with the said two ships, from Copenhagen into

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the Sound, on the 9th of May; and there were then on the ship *Enhiörningen* forty-eight, and, on the sloop *Lamprenen*, sixteen persons.

I waited for wind in the Sound until the 16th of May, which was Whitsunday. I then sailed out of the Sound.

On the 18th of May, it happened, early in the morning, while we were sailing along, that one of my men, as he was walking on the deck, suddenly jumped overboard a distance of quite two fathoms and plunged his head under water, without, however, as it appeared, sinking so quickly as he desired. But, as it blew hard, no one could save him, which I should much have wished. He, therefore, went down and was lost.

On the 25th of May, when off Lister,¹ the sloop sprang a leak, so that I was obliged to run into Karmsund,² in order there to discover the leak in that vessel; and, on examination, I found that three bolt-holes had been left open by the carpenters, and afterwards filled with pitch; which defect I thereupon caused to be remedied without delay, in order to be able to continue the voyage. While I stayed there at Karmsund, one of my two coopers died; wherefore I caused three young men to be engaged at Skudenes,³ in the place of those who had died, so as to maintain my full complement of men.

On the 30th of May, I sailed from Karmsund, further to continue my voyage, and shaped our course West-North-West for Heth Land,⁴ which we accordingly passed on the 2nd of June.

On the 4th of June, in the morning, steering to the

¹ An island situated close to, and west of, the southern extremity of Norway.

² A sound between the Island of Karmö and the main-land, branching off from the north side of Bukken (or Stavanger) Fjord.

³ The principal village on Karmö.

⁴ Old Danish for Shetland.

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OUTWARD VOYAGE.

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West, we sailed round the East end of Ferrøe, which is called Syderøe,¹ about four miles² to the West of it,³ and then shaped our course West and West-by-North, until we came alongside Greenland.

On the 11th of June, I ascertained what quantity of provisions had been consumed, and gave definite orders as to how the stores should be served out for consumption—*viz.*, in this wise: the steward's book showing the provisions received by him was, according to the tenour of my instructions, always to be kept in the cabin; and, whenever he opened a barrel of goods, he was to enter it in the book, and, in his weekly return, to state how long it had lasted, with indication of the day and hour when it had been finished, as well as of the weight or measure, according to the kind of goods, which all was to be in keeping with the orders and rules he would receive with regard to the board, befitting the circumstances of the time. In this way, I secured always an accurate account of what had been consumed and of what still remained in store of all kinds of Provisions and Drinks.

Item: we sailed on thus, in a westerly direction, until the 20th of June, when we found ourselves some miles to the North of the southern promontory of Greenland, in 61 degrees 25 minutes, though about 15 or 16 miles from land, where we encountered much ice, so that we were obliged to turn Eastwards again, towards the sea. Finally, we kept sailing to and fro, with gales and bad weather, until the 30th of June, when we sighted the southern Cape of Greenland, which the English call Cape Farwell, and which is situated in 60 degrees 30 minutes. Doubtless, whoever named that place thus, did not intend to return thither. The

¹ The southernmost island of the Færø group.

² Ancient Danish sea-miles, equal to 4'6807 English miles. About fifteen, therefore, go to a degree.

³ For explanation of this obscure passage, see the Commentary.

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southern promontory of Greenland is a high land, very rugged and uneven, with high jagged mountains; but it was not possible to obtain a true drawing or exact knowledge of those high mountains on account of the great quantity of ice which covers them and renders the said countries quite unrecognizable. We had then arrived at *Fretum Davis*; and, as regards the entrance to the said *Fretum Davis*, much ice was encountered there, and one must be particularly attentive here, carefully to avoid the ice. The reason is that, on the eastern side, Greenland trends mostly to the North-East-half-East, so that all the ice which comes from the East is turned into a South-Westerly direction; similarly, in *Fretum Davis*, Greenland trends mostly North-West-half-North, as also, upon the whole, does *Fretum Davis*, out of which unspeakably much ice comes forth, all of which meets off Cape Farewell, which projects as a triangle; for on both sides of the country there is floating an abundance of ice, which emerges from the numerous large fjords which exist in those countries.

Item: if one shapes one's course too much to the west, towards the American side, much ice is likewise encountered, and one may then easily be driven out of one's course, because the current with the ice sets principally to the South-West. Likewise, whoever intends to sail into *Fretum Davis* or *Regis* must keep to $60\frac{1}{2}$ degrees from Cape Farewell; and, if it is possible to have Cape Farewell in sight, then he may choose his course as he thinks best into that said water, being particularly careful in calculating and noting exactly what variation there is, otherwise he will steer a wrong course: and this he must observe and pay great attention to, before he proceeds beyond 56 degrees with a westerly course.¹

Now, to resume the account of my course and the con-

¹ For explanation of this passage, see the Commentary.

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tinuation of my journey: When I had got free of the ice in 60 degrees and a half, the longitude of Cape Farewell, I steered my course West by North, according to a true course, two points allowed for the variation; on which track we, at times, encountered much ice; being, however, then in open sea, we were able in a measure to avoid it. A portion consisted of large masses, attaining to near 40 fathoms above the water, which, to those who have not seen them, may perhaps appear incredible, but which, nevertheless, is according to truth.

On the 8th of July, we sighted the land on the American side, but could not reach the shore for the quantity of ice. That same midday, we were in $62\frac{1}{2}$ Degrees latitude¹; and we then sailed to and fro outside the ice and could not effect anything.

On the 9th of July, in the night, there was such a fog and great cold that icicles were hanging from the rigging one quarter long,² so that none of the men could stand the cold. On the same day, however, before three o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was shining in the same place so hotly that the men threw off their overcoats, and some of them their jackets as well. Then I stood in amongst the ice, into a great bay, which, in the opinion of the pilots, according to the latitude we were in, should have been the proper entrance to *Lomblis*, or *Hotson*, Strait, but which, after long investigation, we found not to be the right entrance. We found there much ice, which comes out of three large fjords; for which reason we have named the said places *Iisefiorde*, as they may properly be called.³ It is situated in the latitude last mentioned, *viz.* $62\frac{1}{2}$

¹ The land seen was probably Lock's Land (see the Commentary).

² That is, a quarter of a Danish *alen* (= 2'059 feet, English measure) A "quarter" would, therefore, be a trifle over 6 inches.

³ That is, "Ice Fjords", together forming, no doubt, Frobisher's Strait or Bay; by Davis called Lumley's Inlet.

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degrees, and extends as far as *Munckenes* trending South-South-East-half-South and North-North-West-half-North. We shaped our course southerly along the coast, which we found to consist everywhere of broken land and high rocks, until we came to *Munckenes*, as it is now called, which forms the real North side of the entrance into *Hotson* or *Lomblis* Strait, which is now called *Fretum Christian*.¹

On the 11th of July, we had beautiful clear weather with sunshine, in the middle of the day, though there was much ice; and we then obtained the true latitude in which *Munckenes* is situated: *viz.* 61 degrees 20 minutes; and that island which, in my Instructions, is stated—as a guide for finding the entrance—to be situated at the said entrance, in $62\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, we found in 60 degrees 40 minutes.² In this respect, however, there may possibly be an error, because we could not come sufficiently near to the said island on account of the ice. This is here particularly to be noted: that whosoever happens hereafter to navigate the said *Fretum Christian*, or *Hotson*, should always shape his course so that he does not get below $61\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, in order that he may not be drawn from his course by the powerful current which sets the hardest towards the South, or by the strong ebb which comes from *Freto Christian*; because, in that same *Freto*, the water rises and falls, with an ordinary tide, five fathoms or more, the water being, at the same time, very deep; according to which anyone intending to sail that way may know how to guard himself. Concerning our entering into, and sailing through, the length of the said water, *Fretum Christian*, and what happened there, what course we steered, what ice we found, what occurred in the channel,

¹ Munckenes is, doubtless, the southern extremity of Resolution Island, probably Frobisher's Hatton's Headland. The question of Munk's names for Hudson's Strait is fully discussed in the Commentary.

² This would be one of the Button Islands.

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as well as in divers places on shore—all this took place *ut sequitur*.

On the 12th of July, I sent my lieutenant¹ with some of the crew on shore at *Munckenes*, in order to fetch water and to ascertain what was to be found there, because it seemed a likely place for finding harbours and for obtaining water. In the evening, they returned with water, and reported that there were harbours but no anchorage ; nor could we lie there in safety from ice. We were, therefore, obliged to choose the better of two bad alternatives, because nowhere in the channel could we see open water. Half a mile from *Munckenes*, I caused the lead to be thrown, and reached the bottom at 150 fathoms. On the same day, I shot two or three birds with a gun ; but, at the last discharge, the same gun burst into pieces, and took the brim clean off the front of my hat.

On the 13th of July, towards evening, we were in the greatest distress and danger, and did not know what counsel to follow, because we could not advance any further by tacking, the ice pressing us hard on all sides. Being, then, in such a perilous situation, all the officers considered it most advisable to take in all the sails and fasten the sloop *Lamprenen* to the ship *Enhörningen*; which, accordingly, was done. We then commended all into the hand of God ; and, trusting to God's merciful assistance, we drifted along and into the ice again. This incident of the attack of the ice and the distress of the ships in the ice are shown on the plate accompanying this treatise.²

While we thus drifted forwards and backwards in the ice, in great danger of our lives, the ice displaced a

¹ Mauritz Stygge (see the Introduction).

² This incident is represented farthest to the right on the first woodcut, facing page 14.