University of Sheffield Library. Special Collections and Archives

Ref: MS 252

Title: Rudmose Brown Collection

Scope: A small collection of correspondence and other material of Robert Neal Rudmose Brown, Professor of Geography at Sheffield University, relating to his writings on and interest in Polar exploration in the period 1922-1937

Dates: 1922-1937

Level: Fonds

Extent: 26 letters plus some ephemera

Name of creator: Robert Neal Rudmose Brown

Administrative / biographical history:

The collection consists of letters, together with some ephemera, formerly in the possession of R. N. Rudmose Brown. The letters are mainly written to Rudmose Brown by others, including fellow Polar scientists and explorers, about his books on Polar exploration: “A Naturalist at the Poles: the Life, Work & Voyages of Dr. W.S. Bruce the Polar Explorer” (1923), and “The Polar Regions” (1927), and related matters, though one letter by himself - to the Polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen whom he invited to write a foreword for his life of Bruce - together with the reply by Nansen, declining the invitation - is also in the collection.

Robert Neal Rudmose Brown (1879-1957), Professor of Geography at the University of Sheffield from 1931 to 1945, and an authority on Polar studies, was born in London, 13th September 1879, and educated at Dulwich College, Aberdeen University and Montpellier University. He took pride in his Aberdonian and Scandinavian parentage, 'Rudmose' being his mother’s maiden name. His university training was in biology at Aberdeen (1896-1900), following which he found a post as assistant to the Professor of Botany at University College, Dundee, Patrick Geddes, from 1900-1902. However, in 1902 he sailed as naturalist on board the converted Norwegian whaler “Scotia” with the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition (1902-4), led by William Speirs Bruce, which surveyed in extreme conditions the unexplored Antarctic seas, for which work he was awarded the medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. An account of this expedition, “The Voyage of the Scotia”, was written by three members of the expedition, including Rudmose Brown, and published in 1906. In 1904 he was appointed assistant at Bruce’s Scottish Oceanographical Laboratory in Edinburgh, and in 1906 visited Burma to report to the Indian Government on the pearl oyster fisheries of the Mergui Archipelago. In 1907 he was elected Vice-President of the International Polar Congress; in 1909 he was awarded a doctorate by Aberdeen University.

In 1908 he was appointed the first head of the new Department of Geography at Sheffield University, which he served for 37 years, in 1924 establishing there an Honours course in Geography, retiring in 1945 as Emeritus Professor.
During his time at Sheffield he was involved in many other activities. In 1909 he served as surveyor and naturalist on Bruce’s Scottish Arctic expedition to Spitsbergen, making other visits to the area in later years, and received in 1919 the Cuthbert Peek Grant of the Royal Geographical Society for this work. During the First World War he was seconded to the Admiralty Intelligence Division, some of this work continuing during the Second World War, for which service he was awarded the Insignia of the Commander of the Order of St. Olav by King Haakon of Norway. Having been in 1932 elected President of the Antarctic Club, he was elected in 1949 President of the Arctic Club.

Rudmose Brown published many books and papers on Polar geography, though his textbook on Economic Geography, published in 1923, also became a standard reference work. His scholarship brought him wide academic recognition: President of Section E of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1927, a member of its Council 1933-1938; President of the Institute of British Geographers 1938 and 1939; member of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society 1925-1928 and 1945-1946.

He died in Sheffield on the 27th of January 1957.

[Notes based on the obituary by A. Garnett, University of Sheffield Gazette, No. 28, March 1957, and appreciation by T.W. Freeman, Geographers Bibliographical Studies, Vol. 8, 1984]

Related collections: Russell Slide Collection
Source: Donated by Professor J.A. Lee
System of arrangement: By topic

Subjects: Arctic regions - Discovery & exploration; Antarctic regions - Discovery & exploration
Names: Brown, Robert Neal Rudmose (1879-1957); Bruce, William Speirs (1867-1921); University of Sheffield - Department of Geography

Conditions of access: Academic researchers by appointment
Restrictions: None
Copyright: According to document

Finding aids: Listed
Rudmose Brown Collection

**Itemised list:**

MS 252 Files:


- **252/2** Material relating to “A Naturalist at the Poles: the Life, Work & Voyages of Dr. W.S. Bruce the Polar Explorer” (1923)

- **252/3** Other W.S. Bruce material

- **252/4** Material relating to “The Polar Regions” (1927)

- **252/5** Peary material

- **252/6** Miscellaneous material

Newscuttings

1/1 The Athenaeum

1906 Oct 27

Review: “The Voyage of the Scotia”

1/2 Glasgow News

1906 Oct 18

Review: “The Scottish Antarctic Expedition”
File 252/2: Material relating to “A Naturalist at the Poles: the Life, Work & Voyages of Dr. W.S. Bruce the Polar Explorer... With five chapters by W. G. Burn Murdoch” (1923)

Letters by Rudmose Brown

Nansen, Fridtjof
2/1 1923 Jun 9
Requesting Nansen to write a preface for “A Naturalist at the Poles”. Ms., signed. 2p.

Seeley, Service (addressed to ‘Mr. Service’)
2/2 1923 Mar 1
Draft letter, re debate over payment to Burn Murdoch. Ms. 2p.

Letters to Rudmose Brown

Geddes, Patrick
2/3 1922 Dec 5
Re enclosed memoir on Bruce [next item], and Sheffield. Ms., signed. 2p.
2/4 ?1922
“W.S. Bruce” [Memoir of Bruce, perhaps intended as a preface]. Ts., with ms. amendments, unsigned. 3 l.[].

Hyne, Charles John Cutcliffe Wright
2/5 1924 May 4
Congratulations on “A Naturalist at the Poles”, with correction and information on Bruce’s attire on the 1896 the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition to Franz Josef Land. Ms., signed. 2p.
2/6 1924 May 22
Re an “Arctic yarn” and “mild leg-pull of Sheffield University”. Ms., signed. 2 p.
Isachsen, Gunnar
2/7 1924 Mar 15
Re information on certain points re Bruce in the published “A Naturalist at the Poles”. Ms., signed. 1 l.
With envelope

Mill, Hugh Robert
2/8 1922 Jul 15
Proposing cooperation, as he is writing a life of Shackleton and Rudmose Brown is writing a life of Bruce. Ms., signed. 6p.

2/9 1922 Jul 25
Re Bruce, Shackleton and Peary. Ms., signed. 2p.

2/10 1922 Aug 28
Re Shackleton and Bruce. Ms., signed. 1 l.

2/11 1922 Oct 5
Re Bruce and Shackleton. Ms., signed. 1 l.

2/12 1923 Oct 19

Murdoch, William G. Burn
2/13 [n.d.]
Re proposed biography of Bruce, and low payment offered by publishers Seeley, Service. Ms., signed. 2p.

Nansen, Fridtjof
2/14 1923 Jun 21
Declining request for him to write a preface to “A Naturalist at the Poles”. Ts., signed. 1 l.
With envelope

Wilton, David W.
2/15 1923 Nov 11
Acknowledgement of copy of “A Naturalist at the Poles”. Ms., signed. 4p.
Newscuttings

*The Englishman*, Calcutta
2/16 1924 Apr 3
   Review: “Moving Quest of An Explorer”

*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*
2/17 1923 Oct 5
   Review: “Thrills in Polar Seas”

[A Sheffield newspaper]
2/18 Date?
   Review: “Polar Exploration: A Sheffield Life of a Great Scientist”

*The Times*
2/19 1923 Sep 25
   Review: “Dr. W.S. Bruce”

*The Times Literary Supplement*
2/20 1923 Sep 27
   Review: “A Naturalist at the Poles”
Letters to Rudmose Brown

Christian Salvesen & Co., Leith
3/1 1922 Nov 17
Copy letter re Dr. W.S. Bruce’s Trust, agreeing to a ceremony in honour of Bruce before their steamer sails to South Georgia and that it should carry Bruce’s ashes. 1 l.

Mill, Hugh Robert
3/2 1922 Dec 30
Enquiry re his book on Shackleton: was McNeish [Mcnish] the carpenter on the “Scotia” with Bruce? Ms., signed. 2p.

3/3 1923 Jan 8
Acknowledgement of information that McNeish was not on the “Scotia” with Bruce, and suggestion re naming part of Coats Land ‘the Bruce Coast’. Ms., signed. 2p.

Urmston, G.B.
3/4 1923 May 27
Re bagpipes presented by Bruce to the Royal Scots and played on the Somme battlefield, 1916. Ms., signed. 4p.

Obituary

Nature
3/5 1921 Nov 10
Proof copy of obituary by Rudmose Brown
Bruce Memorial Appeal

Subscription form
3/6 [n.d.]

printed appeal for funding for a Bruce Memorial Prize. Signatories Rudmose Brown and others
File 252/4: Material relating to “The Polar Regions” (1927)

Letters to Rudmose Brown

Mill, Hugh Robert
4/1 1927 Feb 9
    Suggestions on manuscript of “The Polar Regions”. Ms., signed. 2p.
4/2 1927 May 8
    Acknowledgement of copy of “The Polar Regions”, and mentions Hobbs is due to lecture at the Royal Geographical Society. Ms., signed. 2p.

Murdoch, William G. Burn
4/3 1927 May 8
File 252/5: Peary material

Work by Rudmose Brown

5/1 1929?


Hayes is described as “prejudiced against Peary”

Letters to Rudmose Brown

Hobbs, William H.

5/2 1935 Jly 24

Re Rudmose Bown letter on Peary and Hobbs’s life of Peary, and meeting with Hayes. Ts., with ms addition, signed. 1 l.

Lewin, Walter Henry

1926 Sep 27

5/3 Re murder of Professor Ross Marvin, member of Peary Expedition support party. Ms., signed. 2p.

5/3A With newscutting attached [origin unidentified]

Other material

Bliss, William

5/4 1937 Aug 1

Copy letter to Lewin re his “North Pole book”, with criticisms of Peary. Ts. 1 l.

Bears ms. note: “Not wanted back. Add to Peary archives”
Lewin, Walter Henry
5/5 1925 Dec 24

Copy? letter to Noel and Mona Odell (Mr and Mrs N.E. Odell), re comment by Professor Wordie that Peary failed to reach the Pole. Ts., with ms. addition, unsigned. 2p.

Bears pencil note ‘From Henry Lewin’
File 252/6:  Miscellaneous material

Letter to Rudmose Brown

Binney, Sir Frederick George
6/1  1925 Dec 10
    Covering letter for enclosed copy of his book [probably: With Seaplane and
    Sledge in the Arctic... [An account of the 1924 Oxford University Arctic
    Expedition, [1925.]] Ms., signed.  1p.

Holograph (?)

Hopkinson, Sir Alfred
6/2  [n.d.]
    “Romsdal Horn-Aak”, by Sir Alfred Hopkinson. Poem in ms.  1 l.
    Bears ms. note by unidentified hand: [Given me by Dr. Albert Hopkinson]

Photograph
6/3  [n.d.]
    Bearded man (unidentified) aboard a sailing vessel
Binney, Sir Frederick George (1900-72)

Educated Eton College and Merton College, Oxford. Organiser and Secretary of Oxford University Spitsbergen Expedition 1921; Leader, Merton College Arctic Expedition, 1923; Leader, Oxford University Arctic Expedition, 1924. Served with the Hudson’s Bay Company 1926-31. Awarded many honours, including Founder’s Gold Medal, Royal Geographical Society, 1957.

Author of: With Seaplane and Sledge in the Arctic.... [An account of the 1924 Oxford University Arctic Expedition]” [1925.]; The Eskimo Book of Knowledge (1931)

Bliss, William

[No information available at present]

Bruce, William Speirs (1867-1921)

Oceanographer and Polar explorer. Director of Scottish Oceanographical Laboratory, Edinburgh, and recipient of many honours awarded by scientific institutions. Studied medicine at Edinburgh, and was a student of Geddes, but did not qualify in medicine. The “Challenger” Expedition (1872-6) awoke an interest in the sea and exploration, and in 1892-3 sailed as surgeon in the Dundee whaler “Balaena” on the Scottish Antarctic Expedition to the South Shetlands and Graham Land. In 1896 sailed as a Zoologist, at the suggestion of Mill, with the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition to Franz Josef Land. The party came across Nansen, whom Bruce met then and on later occasions. Naturalist on the Prince of Monaco’s Expeditions to Spitsbergen, 1898, 1899, and 1906. Leader of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902-4, surveying the South Atlantic Ocean and Weddell Sea, which discovered and named Coats Land. Member of subsequent Scottish Arctic Expeditions to Spitsbergen. In 1908 made plans to cross Antarctica, but was unable to raise funds. Medallist of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and recipient of the Cuthbert Peek Award of the Royal Geographical Society for exploration in the Antarctic and Spitsbergen.

Author of: Scientific results of S.Y. “Scotia”, 1902-4 (1907-20); Life in the Antarctic: sixty photographs by members of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition. [Compiled by W. S. Bruce.] (1907); Polar Exploration [1911]; The Weddell Sea: an historical retrospect ... Reprinted from The Scottish Geographical Magazine (1917)

Geddes, Sir Patrick (1854-1932)

Biologist, Social Scientist and Town Planner. Studied Zoology in Paris, where he developed an interest in Social Science. Worked at Edinburgh University as a demonstrator in Biology, but temporary blindness intervened, leading him to discover ‘mankind’, funding University halls and the rebuilding of neighbourhood and community in Edinburgh. Professor of Botany 1889-1914 and 1919 at University College, Dundee, where Rudmose Brown was Assistant Professor in 1900-02. Worked in Civics and Town Planning 1914-1923, mainly in India, where he was Professor of Civics and Sociology, University of Bombay, 1920-23.
Hayes, James Gordon

Author of: Antarctica: a treatise on the Southern Continent (1928); Robert Edwin Peary: a record of his explorations, 1886-1909 [1929]; The Conquest of the North Pole: Recent Arctic exploration (1934); The Conquest of the South Pole: Antarctic exploration, 1906-1931(1932)

Hobbs, William Herbert (1864- )

American Geologist and Geographer, and author of many books. Director of the University of Michigan Greenland Expeditions.

Author of: Characteristics of the inland ice of the Arctic regions (1910); Characteristics of existing glaciers (1911); Reports of the Greenland Expeditions of the University of Michigan, 1928-33 (1931, 1941); Peary... [A biography] (1936); Explorers of the Antarctic (1941)

Hopkinson, Sir Alfred (1851-1939)

Lawyer, Educationalist and Politician. Educated at Owens College, Manchester, and Lincoln College, Oxford. Professor of Law at Owens College, and the College’s Principal, and first Vice-Chancellor of the new Victoria University of Manchester.

Author of: Rebuilding Britain: a survey of problems of reconstruction after the world war (1918); A Selection of Verses from the Manchester University Magazine, 1868-1912. With a preface by Sir Alfred Hopkinson. [Edited by O. C. de C. Ellis and H. B. Charlton.]. (1913)

Hyne, Charles John Cutcliffe Wright

Novelist. According to his letters appears to have been, with Bruce, a member of the 1896 Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition to Franz Josef Land, and describes Bruce’s lack of suitable kit on joining that expedition.

Author of: Through Arctic Lapland (1898); as well as many popular novels

Isachsen, Gunnar

Norwegian explorer of Spitsbergen. Went with the Prince of Monaco to Spitsbergen in 1906, with Bruce. Led the Isachsen Spitsbergen Expedition, 1909-10.

Author of: Astronomical and geodetical observations... (1907); Rapport sur l'expédition Isachsen au Spitsberg, 1909-1910... (1910); Exploration du nord-ouest de Spitsberg entreprise sous les auspices de S.A.S. le prince de Monaco par la Mission Isachsen (1912-14)
Lewin, Walter Henry

Author of: Did Peary reach the Pole? By "an Englishman in the Street" (1911); The Great North Pole Fraud [On the Arctic expeditions of Robert Edwin Peary]... With a monograph by Capt. Thos. F. Hall on the murder of Professor Ross G. Martin (1935)

McNish or McNeish, Harry “Chippy”

Carpenter with Shackleton’s epic Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-16 on the “Endurance”. Veteran of Scott’s 1901 National Antarctic Expedition. According to the H.R. Mill correspondence (above) he claimed to Shackleton’s men to have served as a carpenter on board the “Scotia” with Bruce, a claim rejected by Rudmose Brown, although he was thought to have done preparatory work on the “Scotia”. On the “Endurance” voyage, after the loss of the ship in the ice of the Weddell Sea, he temporarily refused to accept Shackleton’s orders on the grounds that as member of the ship’s crew his contract was no longer in force. He played a crucial part in reconstructing the boats in which the expedition sought safety, and sailed with Shackleton’s party of six in search of help on the “James Caird”, which he adapted for the purpose, a highly dangerous crossing by open boat from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Because of his earlier insubordination he was, with two others, ultimately denied a Polar Medal by Shackleton.

There is some doubt about the correct spelling of his surname. Mill and various bibliographical sources give it as McNeish, but a Channel 4 documentary on the Shackleton Expedition (November 2000), which includes interviews with his grandson, has it as McNish.

Marvin, Ross G.

American Professor. Secretary and assistant on the Polar Expedition of the Peary Arctic Club, 1905-6. Killed whilst a member of Peary Expedition support group in 1909. Subject of anonymous work: The Murder of Professor Ross G. Marvin [n.d.], and a monograph by Capt. Thos. F. Hall on the murder of Professor Ross G. Martin [in W.H. Lewin’s “Did Peary reach the Pole? (1935): these are possibly the same work].

Mill, Hugh Robert (1861-1950)

Geographer and Meteorologist. Appreciated literature and poetry, friend of Shackleton and inspirer of Scott and others, and lifelong friend of Bruce. Participated in the preparation of the “Challenger” reports, contributing a history of Oceanography. Joined in forming the Geographical Association, and member of the Royal Geographical Society. Instrumental in introducing Bruce to Polar exploration. Expert on Rainfall, and Director of the British Rainfall Association. In 1895 suggested the adoption of a resolution to the 6th International Geographical Congress “that the exploration of the Antarctic regions is the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken”. Sailed in the “Discovery” to Madeira to instruct the scientific staff of the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-4.

Murdoch, William G. Burn (1862-1939)

Artist and Writer. Contributor of five chapters and illustrations to Rudmose Brown’s “A Naturalist at the Poles”. Author of: From Edinburgh to the Antarctic: an Artist's notes ... during the Dundee Antarctic Expedition of 1892-3. ... With a Chapter by W. S. Bruce (1894); Modern Whaling & Bear-Hunting ... With 110 illustrations... ( 1917)

Nansen, Fridtjof (1861-1930)

Norwegian Explorer, Oceanographer, Statesman and Humanitarian. Led several expeditions to the Arctic (1888, 1893, 1895-6). For his relief work after World War One he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1922. The 1888 Expedition was intended to cross the Greenland ice cap, which it succeeded in doing, returning home in May 1889. In 1893 he sailed in the “Fram” intending to demonstrate that the ice of the Polar sea drifted from Siberia towards Spitsbergen, by allowing his specially designed ship to freeze in the ice. Leaving his ship once the drifting was under way as expected, he explored with one other man the frozen seas towards Franz Josef Land, overwintering on Frederick Jackson Island, which he named after the British explorer. He met up with Jackson’s party, where Bruce met him, and returned with it to Norway, whilst the “Fram” also returned safely. Following this success a Professorship in Zoology was established for him in Christiania, changing in 1908 to Oceanography. He undertook further scientifically-based expeditions in Northern waters

Author of: Fram over Polhavet (Farthest North) (1897); Nord I Takeheimen (In Northern Mists) (1911)

Odell, Noel Ewart

Author of: The Structure of the Kejser Franz Josephs Fjord Region, North-East Greenland, (1939).

Peary, Robert Edwin (1856-1920)

American Arctic Explorer, usually credited with leading the first expedition to reach the North Pole. During his naval career he was given leave to carry out Arctic exploration. In 1886 he travelled over the Greenland ice-sheet for 100 miles, returning in 1891 and sledger 1300 miles to north-east Greenland.. In 1893-4 he made a first attempt to reach the Pole, and between 1898 and 1902 reconnoitred routes to the Pole from northwestern Greenland and the Canadian Northwest Territories. A second attempt in the ship “Roosevelt” was also unsuccessful. In 1908-9 he undertook a further attempt, in which he succeeded. A claim was made by Frederick A. Cook to have reached the Pole in 1908, though this claim is generally discounted.

Author of: Northward over the “Great Ice” (1898); The North Pole (1910); Secrets of Polar Travel (1917)
Shackleton, Sir Ernest Henry (1874-1922)

Polar explorer best remembered for his epic Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914, which he discussed with Bruce who was then planning a similar undertaking for scientific purposes (Bruce was unable to raise the necessary financial support), using two ships, the “Endurance” and “Aurora”. Despite the outbreak of war the Expedition proceeded as planned, but “Endurance” was caught in the heavy pack ice of the Weddell Sea and, after drifting for nine months was crushed in October 1915, 200 miles from land. The party, using sledges and boats, reached Elephant Island in April 1916. Shackleton, with two companions, set off to get help from South Georgia, navigating through 800 miles of stormy seas in a 22 foot boat the “James Caird”, and then crossing the mountainous interior of South Georgia before reaching a Norwegian whaling station. In August 1916, after three attempts, Shackleton succeeded in rescuing the rest of the “Endurance” party and brought them to Chile. He then went to New Zealand to rescue the Ross Sea party. An account is given in his book “South” (1919). In 1921 he sailed again in the “Quest” to explore Enderby Land, reaching South Georgia again in January 1922. He died suddenly of heart failure, and was buried in South Georgia. As a memorial to his heroic achievements a statue of Shackleton was placed outside the Royal Geographical Society, South Kensington.

Urmston, A.G.B.

Lieutenant-Colonel, 15th Battalion of the Royal Scots, at the time of the Somme offensive. The bagpipes of the “Scotia” were lent by Bruce to the Battalion in the early months of the First World War, and were carried in the Somme offensive, 1st July 1916, by Pipe Major-Sergeant Anderson, who was severely wounded. The pipes were lost on the field of action.

Wilton, David W.

Zoologist, and expert in dogs and sledging. Had extensive experience of the Arctic, and lived for some years in the north of Russia. Member of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902-4. Also a member of the 1896 Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition to Franz Josef Land.

Contributor to: Zoological Log [of the "Scotia"]. By D. W. Wilton, J. H. Harvey Pirie and R. N. Rudmose Brown ... Thirty-three plates and two maps, including 100 photographs... (1908).

Wordie, Sir James Mann (1889-1962)

Polar Explorer, Geologist and Geographer. Educated Glasgow Academy and University, where he gained a BSc (with distinction) in Geology in 1910. In 1914 joined Shackleton’s Antarctic Expedition as Geologist and Chief of the Scientific Staff, spending a year on “Endurance” in the ice of the Weddell Sea and a futher winter marooned on Elephant Island. In 1919 and 1920 went to Spitsbergen as Geologist and second in command of the Scottish Spitsbergen Expedition under Bruce. Later undertook a long series of Polar expeditions. Close association with the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was President 1951-4, welcoming home the successful British Everest Expedition of Sir John Hunt.