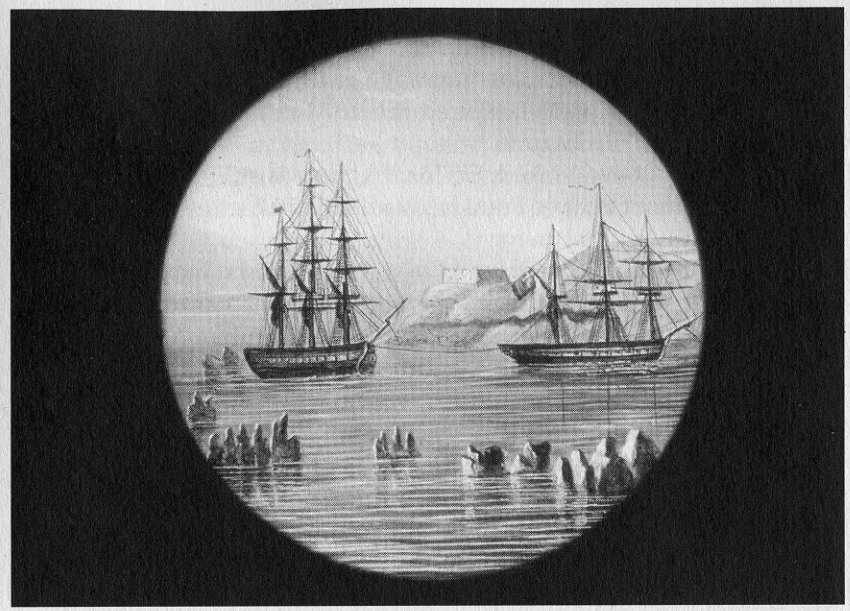
# 3 The Franklin Era: Burial of a Great White Shaman

'The way my father told it they buried their leader, the captain, on a hill – on the rocks – somewhere on the northwest of King William Island. They gave him a proper burial. They buried him with respect. There was a proper burial northside of King William Island. Or somewhere else. Nobody knows exactly where. A lot of people went looking for him but nobody ever found him. In the same place, they packed up his logbook or some papers. They wrapped them up properly so they wouldn't get wet or damaged by the weather, so that people who found him would be able to understand exactly what had happened. They probably didn't leave them on the ground so probably they covered them with rocks.

'We heard they buried the captain on a hill – a long narrow hill. So if people were looking in the right place, they would probably find him. If he was a captain, if he was buried properly, there should be signs of something – the ground stirred round, rocks as a marker. We heard they buried the captain carefully. That's the way we heard it. We heard he was buried on a long narrow hill. The people who went looking for him probably were not looking in the right places.'

Jimmy Qirqut of Gjoa Haven on King William Island is passing on a story he heard as a child from his father which he believes describes the burial of Sir John Franklin, commander of the last expedition which the Royal Navy, in 1845, sent specifically in search of the Northwest Passage. Only fourteen years after the expedition departed would information reach a British public, clamorous for news, that Sir John had died 11 June 1847, and that ten months later his crews abandoned their vessels *Erebus* and *Terror* amid unyielding ice.





'The Search for Franklin: H.M.S. *Assistance* in Tow of *Pioneer* Passing John Barrow Mount.' Painted on glass by an unkown artist and designed to be projected as a lantern slide. The *Assistance* and the *Pioneer* belonged to Captain Horatio Austin's squadron and numbered among some thirteen ships that in 1850 entered Lancaster Sound searching for Franklin. Manufactured by Smith and Beck, London, makers of telescopes. The great public concern for the fate of Franklin and his men kept the tragedy to the fore in the English-speaking world well into the twentieth century.

I ask Jimmy who were the witnesses to this story, and he says, 'We do not know. It happened years and years ago. The people who heard the story passed it on to the next people and these people to the next people. The people who told the stories never mentioned meeting the crew, or trading with them or anything at all. Nobody saw the ship – what happened to it; or how they died or how they starved. Other people tell the same stories. But everyone who heard the stories heard them passed on from someone else. They don't know who. Not many people have long stories – only short stories. Little stories, here and there. We don't know much at all.'

Like so much associated with Sir John Franklin's last expedition, the story raises questions.[1] Is it originally a King William Island tradition,

or did it make its way up from the coast of Hudson Bay to eventually become one? Give or take a rumour or two, Jimmy Qirqut's story has similarities to a story circulated among the Inuit whalers in Roes Welcome Sound which partly inspired the 1878 Schwatka expedition in search of the Franklin records.

Though many have looked, Sir John's grave is still to be found, and some investigators believe Franklin was buried at sea.

Certainly on King William Island the tradition exists that Franklin was buried ashore. 'They buried their great white shaman on the island, though which island we do not know,' says Tommy Anguttitauruq. This was the information his grandmother passed on, and his caveat allows for an Inuit rumour said to have been picked up in 1949 by Inspector H.A. Larsen of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police when he examined Cape Felix, the most northern tip of King William Island, that Franklin was buried on one of the two islets, not much more than reefs, which lie about two miles north of the Cape. Cape Felix was the nearest point of land to Franklin's two icebound ships and there was evidence here of a working camp. Tommy says only that the Inuit word for King William Island is simply Qikiqtaq – 'island' – and there are many islands around King William Island. Gjoa Haven's Louis Kamookak, who is the community's resident researcher on Franklin mysteries, and who has conducted his own searches for Franklin's grave, says the uninvestigated islets off Cape Felix are difficult of access because of ice and weather. Larsen found them so; he thought he could discern them about two miles north of the Cape, but the state of the ice prevented him going there.[2]

Jimmy continues with a story from the more recent past that used to be told by a well-remembered Ghoa Haven elder. It is suggestive of an honour guard, perhaps, and burial of an officer or officers. 'An old lady – her name was Joanne Humuuk – told a story that she and her husband [stories told by Louis Kamookak, her great-grandson, suggest she might have been with her father] were one time at the north side of King William Island looking for driftwood to make a kayak. They used to do that and it was in the spring when the snow was off the ground. They found a sandy beach and on the sandy beach they found a lot of pellets – musket pellets – along the shore on the sandy beach. At the time they knew these were coming from the people who lost their ship on the north side of King William Island.'

We don't know exactly where Joanne Humuuk found the musket



pellets, but if in the vicinity of Cape Felix, it has to be noted that the first searchers found 'numerous traces of a shooting or magnetic station near Cape Felix.' However, since Larsen's visit, investigators have agreed that Franklin (and also others who died before abandonment of the iced-in ships) may have been buried on land. At Cape Felix Larsen found, according to a report in the *Geographical Journal*, 'the remains of a human skull embedded in moss between some rocks about half a mile from the sea ... Larsen's discovery is of great interest, for none of the previous searchers [at Cape Felix] has found the bones of members of the Franklin expedition ... For this reason it has hitherto been generally believed that Franklin himself [and other officers and men who died before the ships were abandoned] ... were buried at sea. This discovery shows, however, and Larsen believes, that some may have been buried on land although, as he states, the finding of bones or graves would be only accidental, for the terrain is difficult to examine and any crosses or memorials would long ago have been removed by Eskimos.'[3]

Jimmy heard the Franklin stories he tells from his father when his family had their principal camp near the Kaleet River, which drains into the Sherman Basin. 'My father told the stories when we were children in the igloos and tents to entertain us and also so we would know something of the past,' he says. 'After I was married and we lived in houses in Gjoa Haven, he told my children that searchers had come to look for lost crews but never found them. He wanted someone to remember them.'

## The Lost Expedition

On 19 May 1845 the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, with Sir John Franklin as expedition commander and Captain F.M. Crozier as second-in-command, left England amid optimism and high hope. The journals of Parry and Ross had excited the public imagination, and the public at large and many in naval circles confidently believed this was the expedition that would complete the passage. After the last twenty-five years of exploration there was not, some thought, that much territory still unknown to be traversed. The expedition was the best equipped, the best supplied, of any to venture into polar regions. (The vessels had rather cumbersome auxiliary steam engines that had formerly powered locomotives.) Biographies of the vessels' officers show all were highly qualified, and second-in-command Captain Francis Crozier, captain of the *Terror*, was a veteran Arctic and Antarctic explorer; he had been with

Parry at Igloolik; with Parry on his 1824–5 attempt to make the Passage when he had had to abandon the *Fury* and her supplies at Fury Beach; and he had been with James Clark Ross on his successful Antarctic expedition. A significant number of officers and men had previous Arctic experience, including the ice master on the *Terror*, Thomas Blanky, who had been with John Ross during his famous four-winter ordeal. Before setting sail, Sir John and his officers had daguerreotypes taken (to be found today in the archives of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich), and on hand on shipboard for documentation purposes was photographic equipment. What stories photographs might have told if, as with the expedition's records, any had ever reached the outside world.

Amid the general euphoria, Sir John Ross, knighted after his miraculous return from four winters in the ice, was a realist: he counselled leaving notes in cairns en route and depots in case of necessary retreat; and promised to go in search of his old colleague if the need arose. (His advice was ignored – he would continue to irritate his contemporaries until the day he died – but he proved as good as his word: he was the first to raise the alarm, and he sailed on the Franklin searches in his seventies.) And in the public arena there was one highly audible naysayer: Dr Richard King, who had explored the Great Fish River – now renamed the Back River – with Sir George Back in 1834 on what had been initially a search for John Ross. King argued strongly for land expeditions, and his arguments – rudely expressed – gave offence. He invited the fellows of the Royal Geographical Society to reflect on the fact that most sea expeditions had been 'unsuccessful or attended with prodigious loss or risk – how great an expense they unavoidably incur compared with the amount of real advantage.'[4]

King had a point. Since Parry's great triumph in 1819–20, when he reached Melville Island (in 1845 still the farthest west), expeditions by ship had not furthered the search for the Passage by much. Many expeditions had been near disasters: Ross and also Parry on his last 1824–5 attempt on the Passage had lost their ships (Parry had left the *Fury* at Fury Beach, which saved the lives of Ross and his crew); both Lyon in 1824 and Back in 1836–7 had led expeditions that came to grief.

At the outset of the Admiralty's nineteenth-century quest for the Passage, it had, in fact, sponsored two overland expeditions under the leadership of the young John Franklin, and while the first journey had been a particularly horrific trek with a death toll of ten, the second, well-executed expedition in 1825–7 had mapped over a thousand miles



of the Arctic coastline, an outstanding achievement. Then, in 1836, as further support of King's contention, the Hudson's Bay Company had sent Thomas Simpson and Peter Dease on expeditions of negligible cost compared to the naval ventures. In 1837 and 1838 they travelled the Arctic coastline, discovering astounding amounts of new coast. However, at the end of their ventures, the two stubborn questions remained: Was King William an island? Was Boothia an isthmus? In addition, there was little knowledge of the Arctic archipelago farther north and west. Was there open ocean? Were there islands? Old Arctic hands held strong and contradictory opinions. But in 1839 the Admiralty's interest for the moment was in a new direction: it dispatched James Clark Ross on a successful discovery expedition to the Antarctic. It was only after his return in 1843 that a new Northwest Passage search was planned. The Admiralty was in the business of naval expeditions, and so, as the Admiralty favoured, it was by sea.

The command was given to Sir John Franklin, but there had been reservations. The Admiralty's first choice was James Clark Ross, but just returned from Antarctica, and newly married, he declared himself unavailable. Franklin was fifty-nine; Parry in 1819–20, when he sailed through Lancaster Sound to winter at Melville Island, had been twenty-eight. The men who pioneered the search for the Passage were growing old.

## The Disaster

*Erebus* and *Terror* and their crews entered Lancaster Sound in late July of 1845 and disappeared.[5] In 1847 the Admiralty began to organize a program of searches which got under way in 1848 and would number in the vicinity of forty by the time they ended. The British public waited for news from the searches with intense concern, as did many in the United States, where there was widespread sympathy. In *Sir John Franklin's Last Arctic Expedition*, a masterly assessment of all related published and unpublished documents and sources, which appeared in 1939 and would influence all future studies of the tragedy, R.J. Cyriax wrote, 'It is difficult to realize at the present day, more than ninety years after Sir John Franklin sailed on his last voyage, what a painful sensation was caused by his disappearance. His rescue became a national question of the first importance, and carried the good wishes of all civilized peoples.'[6] (It was discovered, fairly quickly, in 1850, that Franklin had spent the first winter at Beechey Island: after this, the expedition

vanished.)[7] The only official record ever found would be discovered after Britain had officially declared the searches ended. However, in 1854, after six years of searches – the costs had been enormous, vessels had been abandoned, crews had endured icy agony and impairment to health – the Admiralty received information that left little doubt of the expedition's fate.

In 1848, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trader and explorer Dr John Rae had participated in one of the first searches for the lost expedition, travelling along the North American continental coast by small boat. But it was only in the spring of 1854, while exploring for the HBC, that he heard the first accounts of the expedition's disastrous end. These came from an Inuk called Innookpoozheejook, whom he met in the Pelly Bay area, and later from Inuit who visited him at his base camp at Repulse Bay. Rae traded for a large collection of relics (Franklin's Badge of Knight Commander of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order, crested silver forks and spoons, and other shiny items) and returned to London to report his findings. During his exploratory journey, Rae had found the answers to two vital questions that had eluded earlier explorers and bedevilled the search for the Northwest Passage. Boothia was an isthmus. King William was an island. Had his geographic information been available earlier, there would not have been a Franklin tragedy. There was little interest, however, in these discoveries; they were completely overshadowed by the information contained in his letter to the Admiralty, datelined Repulse Bay:

'In the spring, four winters past (spring 1850) a party of "white men," amounting to about forty, were seen travelling southward over the ice, and dragging a boat with them, by some Esquimaux who were killing seals near the north shore of King William's Land (which is a large island). None of the party could speak the Esquimaux language intelligibly, but by signs the natives were made to understand that their ship, or ships, had been crushed by ice, and that they were now going to where they expected to find deer to shoot. From the appearance of the men, all of whom, except one officer, looked thin, they were then supposed to be getting short of provisions, and purchased a small seal from the natives. At a later date the same season, but previous to the breaking up of the ice, the bodies of some thirty persons were discovered on the continent, and five on an island near it, about a long day's journey to the N.W. of a large stream, which can be no other than Back's Great Fish River ... Some of the bodies had been buried (probably those of the first victims of famine), some were in a tent, or tents, others under the boat, which had been turned over to form a shelter, and several lay scattered about in different directions. Of those found on the island one was supposed to have been an officer, as he had a telescope strapped over his shoulders, and his double-barrelled gun lay underneath him.

'From the mutilated state of many of the corpses, and the contents of the kettles, it is evident that our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource – cannibalism – as a means of prolonging existence.'[8]



The Admiralty released his letter in the *Times* the day after receiving it, and immediately Rae became the victim of a shoot-the-messenger syndrome. (Almost alone among the major figures of Arctic exploration, he did not receive a knighthood.) His revelations of cannibalism among men of the Royal Navy were deeply shocking to the British public. To compound the Admiralty's problems, King, who considered the Admiralty 'manifestly the most inefficient of the Government boards,'[9] had urgently and frequently called for a relief expedition up the Back River (offering himself as its leader), but his counsel was not taken up. It proved to be correct, and a multitude of letters to the British press pointed this out. 'Half the tragedy of the Franklin search,' wrote Ann Parry, great-great-granddaughter of Sir Edward, more than a century later in her book *Parry of the Arctic*, 'is that the wrong people were so often right and the right people wrong.'[10]

With Rae's revelations, the Admiralty prepared to let the search lapse. England was at war in the Crimea, all members of the Franklin expedition were considered dead, and, last but not at all least, costs had been huge: a number of search vessels had been abandoned, some lives lost, and the lives of many of the searchers saved seemingly only by miracles. When the Crimean war ended in 1856, there were naval officers who pressed for another search. But the Admiralty put an end to this promptly: there was now no possibility of saving life, and the risks would not be justified. But the Admiralty was immediately confronted by one of the most potent personalities of the searches: Jane Franklin, Sir John's widow.

Even today on King William Island, Jane Franklin's story moves those who hear it. Says Louis Kamookak, who in the summer of 2000 guided the Canadian RCMP vessel *St Roch II* to graves of expedition members on the Todd Islands, 'She sent out searches and I respect that: she deserves that he's buried beside her.'

Lady Franklin had spent much of her personal wealth equipping, with the help of friends, two previous search vessels. Now, with friends,

she bought the *Fox* and organized her own expedition. She appointed as commander Francis Leopold McClintock, initially a protégé of Sir James Clark Ross, and a Franklin search veteran. McClintock was a willing recruit. 'Unless the search is completed I don't think the Arctic men will ever receive the credit they deserve, also ... I do not think any future Govt. will ever reopen the Arctic regions,' McClintock wrote to Sir James.[11] The Admiralty granted him a leave of absence and was generous with supplies. McClintock had expertise with steam, and during the searches he had developed and perfected sledging techniques. These proved to be exactly what was needed.

Early in 1859, eleven years, as they would learn, after the Franklin expedition abandoned their vessels, McClintock and his second-in-command, First Lieutenant William Hobson, set out on their epic journey. They left the *Fox* harboured at the eastern end of the dangerous waters of the Bellot Strait, which had been discovered during the searches, and with sledges and dogs travelled together towards King William Island, separating at Cape Victoria on the west coast of Boothia, with Hobson going north round King William Island to the west coast and McClintock south, first to the estuary of the Back River and then on up King William Island's west coast. In a cairn at Victory Point on the west side, Hobson was the first to find the vital record, the only official communication ever discovered: The *Erebus* and the *Terror* had been abandoned 22 April 1848, after having been beset in the ice northwest of King William Island for two winters. Sir John Franklin had died 11 June 1847, and in addition nine officers and fifteen men were also dead. Franklin's second-in-command, Captain Crozier, declared he was heading south with '105 souls' towards the mainland and the Great Fish River.

These snatches of information have occasioned endless speculation. Why did Crozier's men travel south rather than follow Sir John Ross's example and head north to Fury Beach, where they might have hoped for rescue by whalers? What accounted for the deaths of such a large proportion of officers in comparison with the men? At the time of abandonment, the expedition had already lost almost half of all its officers. With responsibility for 105 individuals – a little short of five times the number who retreated to Fury Beach with John Ross – Crozier faced formidable challenges. Fury Beach was a much closer objective than any Hudson's Bay Company post which might be reached some 1,200 miles away via the Back River, and there were still fairly large amounts of supplies at Fury Beach. In 1875, in a publication called *Smith's Arctic Expeditions*, John Rae expressed his opinion: 'What struck me at the time, as it still does, was the great mistake made by Franklin's party in attempting to save themselves by retreating to the Hudson's Bay territories ... when the well-known route to Fury Beach – certainly much more accessible than any of the Hudson's Bay Company settlements, and by which the Rosses escaped in 1832–'33 – was open to them ... Had the retreat upon Fury Beach been resolved upon, the necessity for hauling heavy boats would have been avoided, for during the previous season (that of 1847) a small sledge party might have been dispatched thither to ascertain whether the provisions and boats at the depot were safe and available ...'[12] (Crozier may have been uncertain about the quantity and quality of these, and with his men in bad health and scurvy a factor, he undoubtedly knew he needed fresh meat. He may have reasoned that this would be easier obtained on the Back River, though to feed such a number of men from the land was probably an impossible task. Ice master Blanky could certainly have informed him that game was scarce in the Fury Beach area, although somewhat less so in the spring.) The reasons for Crozier's decisions can never be known; he may have hoped that a rescue operation would be sent down the Back River; this, the suggestion of irritating Dr King, had after all been done before. Apparently Crozier decided on his plan of action well ahead and planned his retreat carefully – he had the heavy lifeboats he took with him lightened and adapted for river travel.[13] They had, of course, to be mounted on heavy sledges – and, as it turned out, pulled by dying men.



In discussing the retreat from the vessels, Cyriax notes investigators have concluded some men would have been rescued if the expedition had headed for Fury Beach; and some might have survived if the Admiralty had dispatched at an early moment a rescue mission down the Back River.[14]

Much has been surmised, but it is Inuit who have told most of what is known of the expedition's tragic history. They told their stories to John Rae; to Leopold McClintock; to Americans Charles Francis Hall, who persisting after his enforced sojourn on Baffin Island, spent the years 1864–9 in Hudson Bay in hopes of rescuing survivors, and William H. Gilder of the Schwatka expedition (1878–80) in search of the Franklin records; to Norwegian Roald Amundsen during his historic transit of the passage (1903–6); and to Inuktitut-speaking Knud Rasmussen of the Danish Fifth Thule Expedition in 1923. These and stories still current today paint a dark picture of the expedition's progress south.

# 4 The Death Marches: 'They were seen carrying human meat'

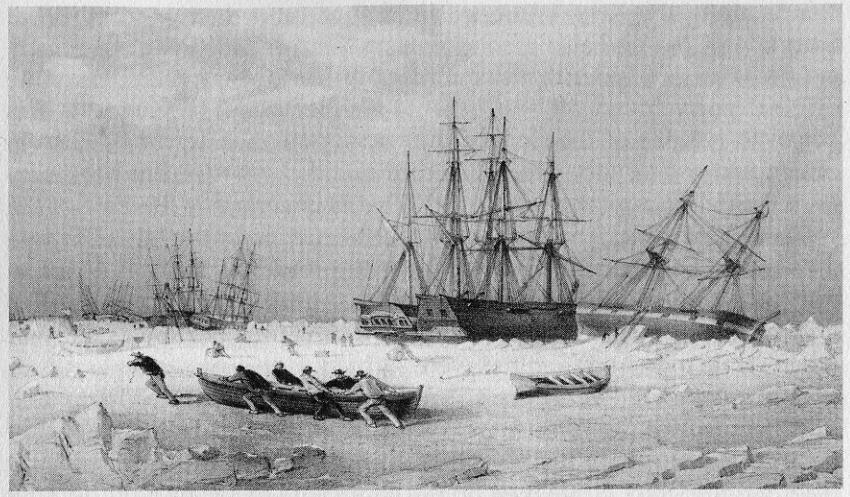
Skeletons of Franklin's crews still turn up on the shores of King William Island. Tommy Anguttitauruq has found one himself. 'About twenty years ago my brother and I were goose hunting around Douglas Bay. We found a skeleton with a clay pipe still there and we thought at the time it might be one of the Franklin people. Six or seven years later, we think some researchers found the same skeleton with the clay pipe and a button under him. When I was out next in the area with my ATV, the skeleton was gone. Either that or I wasn't in the right place.'

King William Island is the lode source for Franklin stories, but you hear Franklin stories everywhere. This is because of hunting and migration patterns in traditional times and the modern-day move to the settlements. Inuit who met Franklin survivors on their death marches (Tommy's ancestors were among them) moved with the seasons from King William Island in search of game and took their stories with them. Wherever they were told, the stories created indelible impressions.

When I visit Gjoa Haven, Tommy Anguttitauruq is directing the community oral history program. 'Some of the old people still know the stories,' he says, 'but sometimes it is difficult to get the stories. Some of the old people say it is better not to talk too much. The white men cursed the land, they cursed it.'

Tommy shares with me some of the stories he has collected and tells me traditions passed down in his own family. Generations of his family and extended family have hunted on King William Island, and as a child he heard from his grandmother (his father's adopting mother), Agnes Aknayak Alikamick, who died in 1969, stories she herself had





The Franklin searches: *Loss of the McLellan* (1852).

heard from her own grandparents and other elders. ('She was old and blind and my grandfather was deaf. He used to call her "my little ears."') She passed on stories of two ships beset in the ice northwest of King William Island and of groups of white men straggling southward over the land. 'They were all scattered,' Tommy says. 'The way I heard it, some of the crews went down the east side and some of the crews went down the west side. The ones I heard of [from family members] went through the west side. They were all scattered and some of the people were disoriented – something like that.'[1]

Tommy has heard the stories of cannibalism and says, 'Even before this, some of them already didn't seem to be right. Some of the Inuit would try to help some of these white people who seemed not quite right, but they wouldn't want to receive help. They would grab and burst out screaming. So something didn't seem right to the Inuit, though of course we couldn't understand what they were saying.' Researchers have concluded that illness, certainly scurvy but very likely in combination with other disease – lead poisoning and botulism have been postulated – contributed to the tragedy. In contrast, Sir John Ross's crews, after four winters in the ice, had the energy to row as much as twenty miles in a day in pursuit of the whalers who eventually rescued them.

On their trek, the crews dropped as they walked. They died at death

camps along the King William Island shore and died in numbers at Starvation Cove and also other points on the Adelaide Peninsula. Richard J. Cyriax concludes that as men died on the journey, members of the original party hived off and became smaller units. He suggests this began to happen at the time of the encampment at Terror Bay, when many men were by then too ill to continue and where it has been suggested a field hospital was set up.[2] What is uncertain is the date of the camp at Terror Bay. The traditional reconstruction of the fate of Franklin's crews has them struggling along the route to the Back River in 1848, but as we will see in chapter 5, new Inuit stories have come to light that suggest a later date, 1850, the date Inuit gave Rae as the year when white men in difficulties were sighted.

Encounters with hard-pressed crews have been preserved in the oral tradition. In 1999, Tommy Anguttitauruq heard the old shaman Nicholas Qayutinuaq, only shortly before his death, tell the story of Inuit meeting desperate white men on the south side of Terror Bay.[3] Tommy had Qayutinuaq tell the story three times:

'At this time there were four or five families with four or five separate igloos on the west side of King William Island to the south side of Terror Bay. The men were out seal hunting, and the women and children, and one elder too old to keep up with the younger men, were left in camp. At that time eight or nine white people came to the camp ...

'When the white men entered the camp, all the Inuit were inside one of the igloos; they started hearing people outside. One of the women says, "The hunters are here – they're back already." They didn't expect them back so soon. Then a woman went out to see them. She comes back very shaky and says, "They're not Inuit; they're not human." Everyone got scared, very, very scared and no one wanted to go outside. But the old man, when he hears something outside the igloo, he goes out to investigate – to see what's going on. When he sees what's outside, he says to himself, "No, I have never seen anything like this."

'He'd seen a shaman but he wasn't a shaman himself. He says to himself, "I've never in all my life seen a devil or a spirit. These things are not human; so if they are not human I cannot see them. I have never in all my life seen any kind of spirit – I've heard the sounds they make, but I've never seen them with my own eyes; these are not spirits."

'Then the old man goes over to touch one, to feel if it's cold or warm. He touched a cheek with his hand: cool but not as cold as a fish! They were beings but not Inuit. They were beings but he didn't know what they were.



'He had thought to himself, "If they are human, I can feel them. If they are human, they will be warm. If devils or spirits, they will have no heat." So he touched one and the being was cold – but not as cold as a fish! You know the fish is cold-blooded.

'These beings seemed disoriented – not too interested in the Inuit, more aware of the igloo building; touching it. The Inuk invited them inside and the women tried to give them something to eat – seal meat that was cooked already, and they gave them water to drink. They drank the water. But when they tried to give them seal meat, they'd take a bite and some of them swallowed; some of them wouldn't swallow, they'd spit it out. They gave them soup. Some drank a little; some didn't want to take any.

'Before the men came back, the old man instructed the women to bring these beings to one of the igloos – the biggest one. Then he walked to meet the hunters and told them what had been encountered; that there were strange beings in one of the igloos. They did not seem dangerous but they were "palakhonguliqtut" – getting weak, weak from hunger. The old man guided the hunters to the igloo where all the women and children were, so they could discuss.

'They had to be qallunaat, people thought – they had iron; guns and knives. In those days, iron was valuable and rare; you could sharpen it and make tools out of it or hunting equipment. These strange people had iron; they were probably qallunaat.

'The men decided to go and see them. These qallunaat were quite frightened when they saw the Inuit come in. But the men didn't harm them. They tried again to feed them with the cooked meat, but the qallunaat did the same thing as before – ate a little but not all.

'You hear people say sometimes that all Inuit eat raw meat. In the west when they're in their igloos, they like it cooked. So the Inuit started talking among themselves, saying if they come from the east they probably eat raw meat; we'd better try and see if they eat raw meat. So they gave them three whole seals. They built them an igloo and built a fire.

'Then the Inuit got together and talked to each other. They said, "We have heard that Indians kill Inuit. These could be Indians ... or white people. And we have also heard that qallunaat kill Inuit people sometimes. We'd better get going before they wake up."

'That night they got all their belongings together and took off towards the southwest. They never encountered those qallunaat again. But because they were in a hurry, they must have left a few of their

belongings behind. Later that winter, two or three of them decided to go back to their old camp to gather up their possessions; they saw four dead bodies in that igloo. Originally there had been nine or ten white men. The seals were never touched; but two of the men were partly eaten; the other two must have been the last survivors.'

Tommy Anguttitauruq also collected a story about the retreating white men from the Gjoa Haven sculptor Nelson Takkiruq, who died in 1999 on Nunavut Day.[4] In this story, the group of Inuit who meet qallunaat are further east than the former group, and they are seal hunting around the Ivory Islands. Tommy says this might be the same story Nicholas Qayutinuaq told, but passed on through a different family in a different manner:

'There were three or four families and the men were out seal hunting, south of the island and close to where they could see people coming to their camp. They rush home because they are afraid their women are being stolen by different people from the west or wherever different tribes might be coming from to steal their women. So they rush home and the people they met were quite strange. They noticed they were not Inuit, but they were not quite sure who they were. They tried to talk to them, but they made no sense. But they tried to talk to them; they were not afraid of them. They were afraid but not terrified. So they tried to talk to them, but they could not talk to them. They tried to trade with them, but these qallunaat wouldn't trade nothing. An Inuk asked for a knife and the white man just grabbed hold of it. The qallunaat wouldn't trade anything at all. The Inuit decided, "We better build them an igloo and we better give them some skins because their clothes are so wet." So they built them an igloo and they built themselves a little fire, but the smoke was terrible, so the Inuit said to themselves, "We'd better give them a kudluk so they can warm up. If they thank us we may get something from them." They did that and they tried to feed them; the qallunaat ate quite a bit. They also gave them two seals, so they could feed themselves. But that night the Inuit got together and took off and never went back.'

The shaman Nicholas Qayutinuaq also told his stepson Mark Tootiak about another encounter a group of Inuit had with more white men, this time further along on the route to the Back River. At the time he passed it on to me in an interview, he was Gjoa Haven's community constable.

'My stepfather was supposed to have been born in 1909, and according to him he heard these stories from his grandfather when he was a

*Cold and Hungry,* by Stanley Elongnak Klengenberg. Stencil on paper, printed by Elsie Klengenberg, Holman, 1986. 'The hunter has camped,' said Klengenberg of this work. 'He knows he must find game. His family and friends are waiting and are just as cold and hungry as he is.'

small boy. This group of Inuit was at a sealing camp in the month when the young seals are already born, hunting around the Etuk Islands off the Adelaide Peninsula, when they saw something black, a small group of people. Before they arrived, there was a shaman with the Inuit who said, "They are different people, they might be different people." The Inuit found out they were friendly and someone put up a small igloo for them. They gave them what they could, a little of what they could, because they didn't have much. One of the men was a big man and very friendly. He was hairy, they touched his skin and he had hair on his chest, a big man and friendly. After a few days they treated him specially – they gave him a woman. The Inuit were getting along well with the strangers and they might have stayed longer but they left – they themselves were so poor they could not take any of the strangers with them.

'Later, maybe a year later, these Inuit heard that people had seen more white people, a lot more white people, dying. They were seen carrying human meat, small pieces, because they were so hungry. They died on the morning side – where the sun comes up – of Richardson Point [Starvation Cove].'

Inuit who met Leopold McClintock on the sledging journey during which Crozier's record was discovered told him that the white men had been seen carrying skulls and also bones from legs and arms that appeared to be sawn off.

Scott Cookman, in his book *Ice Blink*, must certainly be right when he says the sight would have terrified the Inuit.[5] Who would be next? But Inuit have had to eat human flesh themselves, *in extremis.* 'I've heard such stories in connection with my own people,' says Cambridge Bay elder Moses Koihok.[6]

Some survivors appear to have reached the territory of the Back River people. Relics (some think they might have been from Inuit caches) were found on Montreal Island in Chantrey Inlet and, a short distance southeast, at the island known as Umiaktalik – 'the place of the boat' – which qallunaat call King Island. (An island called Umiaktalik appears on a map in *Schwatka's Search.*) Mark Tootiak says, 'There's a big wooden mast there you can see underground. My brother-in-law lifted it up and put one side on top of a rock. It's still there. My stepdad used to tell me that when he was young he found pieces of glass there.' And Mark once found a relic himself. 'I was looking around and I saw a big spike – old, old copper, all green with a square head.'

Tommy Anguttitauruq has hunted in the Chantrey Inlet area and knows the traditions of the people of the Back River. He and his brother Michael found old sledge runners there, which they thought came from the expedition, and his brother fixed them up and used them for years. 'The Back River people in the springtime, in March, April, and May and probably also in June, would go to the Chantrey Inlet area, near the Montreal Island, and around the area they found a lifeboat – I heard only one boat; I'm not sure if there was one boat or two. There were no people around it. Those Back River people used anything they could to break it up. They made all kinds of holes with rocks and broke up the boat as much as they could so the white people wouldn't be able to use it to attack them. They thought the white people were planning to attack – they thought they were hiding somewhere in the area. They were afraid of them. After a few years those boats were still there, so they started taking them apart in order to use the nails and the piece of steel on the bottom – the keel. That piece of steel they pounded up to make harpoons and spears.'



These people had never seen white people, Tommy says, but they had heard stories that caused them great fear. They had heard from Inuit on Baffin Island how two white people in the eastern Baffin region had killed two hunters sleeping under their kayaks. 'The white people killed them without waking them up. There was one survivor who escaped. As he ran off there was a big bang but he didn't get hit. At the time they didn't know about guns, but that was a gun. So these Inuit in the Chantrey Inlet area figured every white person was dangerous – too dangerous.'[7]

Mark Tootiak remembers how when he was a little boy on fishing trips to the Back River, his stepfather Nicholas Qayutinuaq always pointed out to him a great crack in the granite mountain at Qijuktakvik – 'the place to gather heather.' 'We'd see the crack below the rapids when we went fishing. He said that in that crack there are human bones. Therefore it is taboo. It is forbidden to go there and disturb the bones. I was five or so when I first heard the story, and my stepfather would repeat it every time we were in the area.'

There are undoubtedly animal bones in the crack. Are there human bones as well? How would Mark Tootiak feel if someone investigated the crack today? 'You know, my son and I talk about it a lot. We could go there with some good strong ropes.' His stepfather never said whose bones they were, only that they were human bones, and up until now, as far as he knows, no one has been inside the crack. 'There's a feeling "better safe than sorry."' And how does he think the bones got there? 'I

have often wondered.' The story, he says, is 'part of the information that has been passed on.'[8]

Did some members of the Franklin expedition come to a violent end in the hands of Inuit? The Central Arctic world was by no means a peaceable kingdom. Within Inuit society, blood feuds and revenge murder were the order of the day. While the Parry and Ross expeditions established good relations with Inuit, there were flashpoints that could have led to violence. The Back expedition left Inuit dead. Cyriax notes that some Inuit who met Dr Rae in 1854, at the time he heard the first reports of the Franklin tragedy, 'tried to lead him astray' and seemed opposed to his travelling west towards King William Island. Leopold McClintock met terror-stricken Inuit who 'would give him no information,' and 'Colonel Gilder [of the Schwatka expedition] believed that certain Eskimos would gladly have killed him and other members of his party in order to obtain their equipment.'[9]

In 1850, near the start of the Franklin searches, the possibility that some of Franklin's crew had perished in hostile action received considerable attention after Adam Beck, a Greenlandic Inuit interpreter employed by Sir John Ross, reported to British naval officers that he had been told by natives of the wrecks of two ships and a massacre of white men who had among them men who wore epaulettes. His stories indicated that a part of the crews from the ships drowned, and that the remainder 'were some time in huts or tents apart from the natives, that they had guns but no balls ...' and were killed by darts and arrows. Much confusion attended the tale (and its interpretation), particularly with regard to the location of the action, a place referred to as Omanek, a common name used widely. The story was dismissed as wilful fabrication and its teller ridiculed, although Adam Beck made a legal declaration that he had passed on only what he had been told.[10] Charles Francis Hall, when he met him, believed him.[11]

It is possible to find echoes of the Franklin tragedy in Adam Beck's story. As we will learn, there are Inuit traditions that say some of Franklin's crews died by drowning, and among Adam Beck's statements is a reference to 'a stone cairn under which bodies had been buried.' A violent incident accounting for the deaths of a few Franklin men cannot be ruled out, but no evidence has come to light to support one.

Crozier's last words to the outside world were that he had with him '105 souls.' Searchers have found skeletons all along the route of the journey to the Back River, many at resting places that became death camps. More bodies must have been washed away by the ocean as, in



the opinion of researchers, parties with boats on heavy sledges would travel along the ice whenever possible and would camp close to shore. However, investigators have usually put the number of skeletons recovered along the known route of the death march at less than fifty. Were there other routes that Franklin's men took to death?