



*to India's coral strand, Ann Savours describes the journeys and motivations of geographer and historian Sir Clements Markham.*

**C**LEMENTS ROBERT MARKHAM was born in the Yorkshire village of Stillingfleet on July 20th, 1830, the son of the Reverend D.F. Markham, vicar of Stillingfleet and a Canon of Windsor. He died in 1916 in the midst of the First World War. As a young man, he served as a cadet and midshipman in the Royal Navy. Though he did not make his career in the service, he retained an affection for it throughout his life. During his years in the India Office (from 1854) he was instrumental in the preservation of the records of the East India Company. He was also a prolific biographer, his book on Richard III in 1906 being a pioneering attempt to rehabilitate that monarch. His interests and publica-

**'After Escape off Devil's Thumb':** Watercolour by J. Hamilton from original sketches made by E.K. Kane on the first US Franklin Search expedition of 1850-51. Markham made his first Arctic voyage also in 1850-51.

tions were wide-ranging, encompassing South India, Persia, Ethiopia and Tibet. But his first love was Peru, which he encountered as a fourteen-year-old naval cadet, and the polar regions his second. Later in life, he became Hon. Secretary of both the Royal Geographical Society and the Hakluyt Society. Elected President of the Royal Geographical Society in 1893, it was Markham who picked Robert Falcon Scott to command the National Antarctic Expedition of

1901-4, which made the first extensive inland journeys on the icy southern continent.

The Markham family moved to Essex when Clements was eight years old, but he never lost his allegiance to Yorkshire. Educated away from home at a private school in Cheam and then at Westminster School in London, he seems to have had a happy childhood and to have shown an early interest in history and geography. At the age of ten Clements wrote a history of England, which his father printed and bound. He was just fourteen when he left Westminster to enter the navy aboard the old wooden sailing warship HMS *Collingwood*, bound for the Pacific under the command of Sir George





No looking back: the 14-year-old naval cadet Clements Markham, by Thomas Richmond, 1844.

Seymour. Accompanied by his own young family and even a cow (for the children's benefit) Seymour and his wife kept a kindly eye on the young cadets during the long voyage round Cape Horn to Callao, the port of Lima on the west coast of South America. On arrival in Valparaiso in December 1844, Admiral Seymour took over command of the Pacific Station. Young Markham never forgot his first sight of Peru, from the decks of the stately line-of-battle ship in Callao harbour. In old age, he described 'the bright green plain rising by a gentle slope to the mountains, with the white towers of Lima appearing on its further skirts, and behind, the mighty cordillera rising

into the clouds'. The cadets at that time were taught not only navigation, but French and Spanish, so that Markham was able to make friends ashore, conversing for instance with an old priest and with Señora O'Higgins, sister of the Liberator of Chile.

Four years later, and after voyages of over 83,000 miles, the *Collingwood* entered Portsmouth harbour on July 10th, 1848. Markham had departed a child and returned a young man.

The next two years were spent in rather routine duties in British and Mediterranean waters, but in April 1850 Markham sailed for the Arctic in HMS *Assistance*, commanded by Captain Erasmus Ommanney. Together with another well-strengthened wooden sailing ship, HMS *Resolute*, they formed the Arctic Squadron, which was sent by the



Callao Harbour, 1866. Markham got his first glimpse of Peru when his ship, the HMS *Collingwood*, berthed here in December 1844.





Markham's own pencil and ink sketches of the Peruvian landscape, from his *Travels in Peru* c.1853.

Admiralty to search for Sir John Franklin. Franklin and his well-equipped expedition had disappeared while seeking the last link in the North West Passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans north of the Canadian mainland. Franklin's ships, the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, had departed from the Thames in May 1845, with three years' supplies, and it was still hoped that they might be found.

In a rare little book, *Franklin's Footsteps*, published on his return from the Arctic in 1853, Markham not only recounted his own experiences, but wrote about earlier voyages and the history of Greenland. He was particularly intrigued by the centuries-old remains of deserted Eskimo encampments and burial places, in high northern latitudes, puzzling as to where the ancient inhabitants had gone, there being no living descendants nearby. In a paper given to the Royal Geographical Society in



1865 'On the origin and migrations of the Greenland Esquimaux', Markham was the first to put forward the now generally accepted theory that these 'ancient wanderers' had migrated from west to east across the continent of North America to people Greenland.

During the dark months of the Arctic winter, when the ships were beset in the sea ice, housed in with waggon cloth and warmed by special stoves, classes in writing and arithmetic were run for the men, while the officers took advantage of the excellent libraries on board. Regular meteorological and other observations were made. Musical evenings, masquerades and theatrical works performed by both officers and men enlivened the winter and helped to

keep up morale. In his book, Markham included the lines of a pantomime, *Zero, or Harlequin Light*, played at the 'Royal Arctic Theatre' in February 1851 aboard HMS *Assistance*. In this first publication, we see young Clements Markham as a writer of history and a recorder of events. He also contributed to the ship's newspaper, *Aurora Borealis*, published in London as *Arctic Miscellanies* (1851).

However, he had not forgotten Peru. He had taken a Quechua dictionary to the Arctic and was able to borrow a grammar of the Inca language from the surgeon of the *Assistance*, having already devoured *The History of the Conquest of Peru* (1847) by the distinguished American scholar W.H. Prescott. During the Arctic expedition, Clements decided to leave the Royal Navy and return to Peru. Despite disapproving of this course, Canon Markham gave his son £500, bidding him what was to prove a last farewell on August 20th, 1852, the day Clements' journey to America began. After crossing the Atlantic, Markham spent ten days in New Hampshire with W.H. Prescott (who was blind), who taught him about historical method and encouraged him to see for himself the places he planned to write about.

Markham aimed to visit Cuzco –



Markham found himself as charmed by the living Peruvians he encountered on his travels as he was intrigued by their Inca ancestors. (From *Cuzco and Lima*.)



the ancient capital of the Incas, largely destroyed by the Spanish conquistadores, high in the Andes and far inland – especially as no English traveller had written about it; but he also wished to study the Inca ruins and to explore Peru more widely. His visit went extremely well. He travelled with two mules and was made welcome in all parts of the country, making many friends along the way. He threw himself into Peruvian life, attending mass or going to parties and festivals with the families who offered him hospitality. Many characters from all levels of society grace the pages of his journal, (published for the first time in 1991). Of particular interest were his conversations with the *curas* or Roman Catholic priests, who usually knew the Indians well, and were learned in Quechua and the traditions and dramas of the Incas. The young man stayed in *haciendas*, shepherds' huts, the homes of the priests, in caves at sea level and on mountain sides thousands of feet high, withstanding tropical heat and bitter cold. Sometimes he was entertained in style, and at other times he shared a last crust with his guide on the wild and lofty, treeless snow-covered plain, where



they endeavoured to sleep without shelter, wrapped in ponchos. Markham was particularly interested in the Indians, whose dress, occupations, houses, crafts, food and drink he described in detail, including their use of aloe as timber and to make rope bridges across the great rivers. He spent several evenings copying the manuscripts of the venerable *cura* of Lares, an Inca descendant, which included a book of Quechua songs and the drama *Apu Ollantay*, which he later translated and published in London. He also visited a number of Inca ruins, which he sketched and described, and he spent a period in Cuzco itself.

On his return to Callao, Markham was shocked to learn of his father's death from an old copy of *The Times*. He hurried home and landed at Southampton in September 1853. The book which resulted from these travels appeared in 1856. It was almost divided in two, covering both the Incas and modern Peru. The long title outlines its scope: *CUZCO, a journey to the ancient capital of Peru, with an account of the history, language, literature and antiquities of the Incas, and LIMA, a visit to the capital and provinces of modern Peru, with a sketch of the viceregal government, history of the republic and a review of the literature and*

'Bridge across the River Apurimac, Peru', from Markham's book on *Cuzco and Lima*, 1856. He was fascinated by the use of aloe in making rope bridges.



A Catholic *cura* receiving Peruvian women c.1800. Markham found the priests' knowledge of the native peoples, their language and culture, invaluable.

*society of Peru*. He ended the book with the following words:

The writer of the preceding pages, undertaking a journey to Peru solely with a view to the examination of its antiquities, and the enjoyment of its magnificent scenery, soon found that the unaffected kindness of its warm-hearted inhabitants was even more attractive than the deeply interesting history of the Incas; and in conclusion he can only say that a journey through the land of the Children of the Sun is one of the most enjoyable expeditions that can possibly be undertaken.

Markham was to publish and correspond on Inca and Peruvian subjects for the rest of his life, with such works as *The War between Peru and Chile* (1882) and *The Incas of Peru* (1910).

Outside Lowther Lodge, the house of the Royal Geographical Society in London, stands a bust of Markham. Its inscription reads:

This monument to the memory of Sir Clements Markham, K.C.B., F.R.S. and for 12 years President of the Royal Geographical Society, was erected in the year 1921 by the PERUVIAN NATION in gratitude for





Three natives of the island of Disko photographed by the Nares expedition in July 1875. Markham reluctantly had to leave the expedition at this point to return to England.

his services as Historian of their country.

Markham met his future wife Minna Chichester, daughter of the Rector of Arlington, in July 1856 and proposed to her in November. They were married in April 1857 and their only child, May, was born in October 1859. The couple had many interests in common, including languages. Minna was able to help Clements in many of his translations from Spanish or Dutch. She herself translated from the Dutch a book edited by her husband about the sixteenth-century Mogul Emperor Akbar (1879). They were happily married for nearly sixty years.

Markham's third visit to Peru differed greatly from his previous ones. In 1859, he was sent by the newly established India Office, which had

superseded the Honourable East India Company in ruling British India, to collect seeds and young specimens of varieties of the cinchona tree. This was a project which he himself had suggested, following on from earlier proposals. He had become aware of the ruthless destruction of the trees, from whose bark quinine was manufactured, in both Peru and Bolivia. The only source of the drug at that time was South America. Markham emphasised in all his writings that his aim was to transplant the trees in sufficient quantity to India, so that the ordinary people could buy quinine cheaply and combat the scourge of malaria.

In the pages of his *Travels in Peru and India*, published soon after his

**Markham aimed to transplant the cinchona tree to India so that the poor could buy quinine cheaply.**

return from India in 1862, and in *Peruvian Bark* (1880) can be read the story of the often perilous journeys to collect the plants from the thickly forested valleys and mountain sides of the Andes in Ecuador and Peru, and of the subsequent travels of the precious specimens themselves, followed by their establishment in South India and Ceylon. Markham was joined in South America by the celebrated botanist Dr Richard Spruce, assisted by the Scottish gardener Robert Cross, and by G.J. Pritchett, formerly agent of the Ecuador Land Company, who was already familiar with the Huanuco province of Peru. Both of them col-

lected in different areas from Markham. Towards the end of April 1860, Markham, with John Weir, the gardener from Kew, a mestizo and two pack mules descended from the pass over the eastern Andes and travelled from an arctic

to a sub-tropical climate, losing nearly 7,000 feet in thirty miles, the scenery increasing in grandeur as they travelled. His party spent a fortnight in the tropical forest and by mid-May had collected 529 cinchona plants during their

The lure of the Arctic proved enduring for Markham (by J. Hamilton from an original sketch by E.K. Kane, 1850-51).







'The Most Northerly Encampment of HMS Alert', by R.B. Beechey, 1877.

laborious travels among giant forest trees, matted undergrowth, great ferns, rapid streams, yellow mud, fallen bamboo, rotting leaves, biting flies and hornets' nests. The cinchona was eventually established in the hill regions of India, mainly under Markham's supervision from the India Office, in co-operation with Kew. As a result, the price of quinine dropped from twenty shillings an ounce to a few pence, becoming affordable to the poor people of India, as Markham had hoped. It also benefited members of the Indian Civil Service and the British Forces in the Far East.

Donovan Williams has drawn attention to Markham's successful efforts during the years 1867-77 to bring order out of chaos at the India Office, as far as the geographical records were concerned. On his appointment to the Geographical Department in 1868, he found a sorry state of affairs – an archivist's and historian's nightmare.

The old correspondence books had been destroyed, survey reports lay ignored, there was no arrangement for utilising the work of the surveys; and the invaluable collection of maps and geographical documents were

heaped in a corner of a passage. Many of the maps looked like much used coffee-house tablecloths; folded in unequal sections, the margins frayed, and the edges tattered and worn away ...

[Since 1836] all the maps, journals and other records had been cast aside to rot and perish ... Ancient journals of great navigators ... have disappeared, and many of the later memoirs and surveys ... are missing.

So Markham wrote in his *Memoir on the Indian Surveys* (1871 and 1878).

He later edited and published some of the surviving documents and also wrote a history of Persia published in 1874.

His years at the India Office were not entirely desk-bound. In 1867, he was appointed Geographer to a British punitive expedition to Abyssinia, to which an archaeologist, a meteorologist and a geologist were also appointed. On his return, he wrote *A history of the Abyssinian expedition*, published in 1869, which contains a lengthy introduction on the country's history. His descriptions in the narrative of the old Christian churches are particularly interesting.

Another absence from his desk was made to accompany the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-76, commanded by Sir George Nares who was a veteran of the Franklin Search and Captain of HMS *Challenger* during the early years of her famous oceanographic voyage in the 1870s. Markham had played a prominent part in the campaign to get official approval for the expedition, one of whose aims was to reach the North Pole. A notable contribution was his history of Arctic exploration, *The threshold of the unknown region* (1873 and later editions.) It was also at this time that he compiled the *Arctic Navy*



The British naval expedition to the Arctic, 1875-76. Markham campaigned for the voyage. Combining science with exploration, one of its aims was to reach the North Pole.





Sir Clements Markham by George Henry, 1913. The painting on the wall depicts the foliage and flower of the cinchona (quinine) plant.

*List, 1773-1873* (1875). Markham sailed in HMS *Alert*, commanded by his cousin and subsequent biographer, Albert Hastings Markham, who relates that Clements became a great favourite with both officers and crew, being described by one officer as a 'peripatetic encyclopaedia' and that he quickly got to know the life story of every soul on board. He transferred to HMS *Valorous*, the supply ship, off the coast of West Greenland for the return voyage and reached England again after three months' absence in late August 1875. He had far exceeded his leave of absence from the India Office and was more or less obliged to resign from his post there in 1877. He seems to have found it almost impossible to fit into the strait-jacket of the government department established to take over the administration of British India from 'John Company'.

During the years after his departure from the India Office, Markham still continued as Honorary Secretary of both the Royal Geographical Society and the Hakluyt Society. He edit-

ed and translated more volumes for the latter, including the travels of Pedro de Cieza de Leon, 1532-50, chronicler of the Incas and their Spanish conquerors, and the voyages of William Baffin, the old Arctic navigator. His boundless energy was taken up with other literary works, including two volumes for the Navy Records Society, a life of John Davis the Navigator and the lives of Edward VI (1907) and of Richard III (1906), not to mention a history of Majorca and Minorca, published in 1908 and *The Incas of Peru* (1910). Markham

was a spirited biographer, conscious of the need to refer to original sources and to visit the battlefields of the Wars of the Roses and the Civil War for his lives of Richard III and the 'Great Lord Fairfax' (1870). He was always interested in the

genealogy of his subjects and also of his shipmates in the navy, one of whom was Sir Leopold McClintock, who discovered the fate of the lost Franklin expedition, and whose life was written by Markham in his old age (published 1909). He had earlier published a life of James Rennell (1895), 'the greatest geographer that Great Britain has yet produced', who was an eighteenth-century pioneer in both geography and oceanography. Markham's writings were far-ranging and he may have depended on them to make a living (despite a pension from the India Office), since he held only honorary office in the Royal Geographical and Hakluyt societies. However, one gains the impression that he was driven to write because he had something worthwhile to say. His numerous works for the Hakluyt and Navy Records societies were unpaid.

In 1896, Markham was knighted at Windsor Castle by Queen Victoria 'in recognition of his great service to geographical science', having been elected President of the Royal Geographical Society three years earlier and having presided over the International Geographical Congress of 1895 in London. He was thus in a prominent position to advocate (together with the well-known oceanographer Dr John Murray) the renewal of Antarctic exploration.

**As an old man, Markham was to mourn the tragic deaths of Scott's South Pole party.**

The Antarctic regions were then very little known and the interior of the icy continent had not been explored at all; in fact it was uncertain whether such a continent existed. Markham eventually became 'Managing Owner' of *SY Discovery*, an auxiliary bar-

que, specially designed for the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-04, jointly organised by the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Society.

The story has often been told of Markham's role in the choice of





Markham with his ill-fated protégé Robert Falcon Scott and his wife Kathleen aboard *Terra Nova* in 1910.

commander – Robert Falcon Scott – whom he saw win a cutter race in the West Indies as a cadet in 1887 and met by chance again in London in 1889. Markham was conscious of the need for the leader to be a young naval officer, a good sailor with experience of sailing vessels, a navigator with a knowledge of surveying. He should be of scientific turn of mind, having both imagination and enthusiasm. According to Markham his temperament should be cool, he must be calm, yet quick and decisive in action, a man of resource, tactful and sympathetic. Captain Egerton, who had both Arctic experience and a knowledge of the younger generation of naval officers, thoroughly recommended Scott, who was then the 'Torpedo Lieutenant' of HMS *Majestic*, Egerton's ship. In June 1900, Scott was appointed to the command of the expedition.

The *Discovery* made her winter quarters in McMurdo Sound at the head of the Ross Sea. Extensive sledging journeys were made during two summers – the first ever. Much pioneering scientific work was done and the results published by the British Museum (Natural History) and the Royal Society. The *Discovery* herself was to make two further

expeditions to the Antarctic in 1925–27 and 1929–31. She is now berthed in Dundee, where she was built.

As an old man, Markham was to mourn the tragic deaths of Captain Scott's South Pole party, during his second and last expedition in the *Terra Nova* of 1910 to 1913. Clements was writing a lengthy history of polar exploration, published in 1923 as *The Lands of Silence* at the time of his death on January 29th, 1916, as well as editing yet another volume for the Hakluyt Society, also posthumously

published. He died from the shock of setting his bed-clothes on fire, while reading by candle light as he had done as a mid-shipman (ignoring the electric light installed in the room).

Markham's two passions, Peru and polar exploration, were symbolically united on July 20th, 1921, when the bronze bust presented to the RGS by the government of Peru was first covered by the flag of the *Discovery* and then unveiled at the entrance to Lowther Lodge, to reveal, in the then librarian's words, 'the old President on guard at the portals of the Society he loved so well'. He stands there still.

#### FOR FURTHER READING

Peter Blanchard, ed. *Markham in Peru: the travels of Clements R. Markham, 1852–1853* (University of Texas Press, 1991); Clive Holland, ed. *Clements Markham: Antarctic obsession* (Bluntisham, 1986); Albert Hastings Markham, *The life of Sir Clements R. Markham, K.C.B., F.R.S.* (John Murray, 1917); Ann Savours, 'Clements Markham: longest serving officer, most prolific editor' in R.C. Bridges and P.E.H. Hair, eds. *Compassing the vast globe of the Earth: studies in the history of the Hakluyt Society, 1846–1996* (Hakluyt Society, 1996); Ann Savours, *The Voyages of the 'Discovery'* (Virgin, 1992 and 1994; Chatham Publishing 2001).

Ann Savours is a historian of polar exploration. She is the author of *The Search for the North West Passage* (Chatham Publishing, 1999). She is currently working on a new life of Sir Clements Markham.

### DISCOVERY'S CENTENARY

In 2001, *Discovery* celebrates her centenary in Dundee, where she was built for the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901–04.

*The Antarctic was still virtually unknown at the time: its coast had been sighted by a number of vessels, but no one had explored inland across the 'Great Ice Barrier'. Scott's expedition was the first to do so. Ann Savours' book The Voyages of the Discovery: the Illustrated History of Scott's Ship is being*

*Discovery leaves Cowes, 1901.*

*republished in a new format by Chatham Publishing to mark the centenary. ISBN 1-86176-149-X.*

