



SUPPORTING POLAR
SCIENCE AND HERITAGE

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POLAR BYTES

ISSUE 100 - JUNE/JULY/AUGUST 2021

Loyal readers since 1996



Celebrating our 100th issue



Our first issue of Polar Bytes was written back in January 1996 by the newly appointed chairman Philippa Foster Back. The newsletter was

created to communicate to the Friends all the fundraising, news and special events that were taking place over each quarter.

Image above: Philippa Foster Back

In issue 1, Chairman Philippa Foster Back wrote: "Welcome. Your Committee felt that in commemoration of the founding of SPRI by my grandfather, Professor Frank Debenham, and Sir Raymond Priestley, that we should be more communicative! I have taken over the Chair following the retirement of Dr Ray Adie, who so ably has managed the Friends for the last ten years. As you will see below, the Friends are busy and we have much to do. I will be writing to you with further news of the fund-raising for the new library, but in the meantime please take to heart a new slogan

Friends, please find a friend, two or three or more, to help us to play a more active role in supporting our very special, world renowned SPRI."

A big thank you to all the team that put each issue together and for all your stories and support over the years. Polar Bytes, is still going strong after 100 issues, here's to another 100!

Thank you to Argos Froyanes for their generous sponsorship





75 YEARS ON THE FRIENDS OF SPRI 1946 - 2021



Dear Friends,

I hope you and your families are safe and well, and enjoying the summer. At long last,

the national COVID-19

restrictions have been lifted and slowly life is beginning to get back to normal in the UK.

The Friends have a lot to celebrate, not just SPRI gradually re-opening once again to visitors following the long months of being closed because of the pandemic, but also our very own 75th birthday and the 100th issue of Polar Bytes!



Launcelot Fleming © SPRI

To commemorate these anniversaries, I've been looking back through the Archive records of the Friends held at SPRI to find out more about our rich history. It has been fascinating to go back in time, and to see why the Friends were formed, who was involved and how the organisation began.

To start at the beginning, the Friends were founded in 1946 by the then new Director of SPRI, the Reverend Launcelot Fleming,

who had been the chaplain and geologist of the British Graham Land Expedition (BGLE) of 1934-37. He played a leading role in helping the Institute grow and evolve in the immediate years following the end of WWII. But funds were very tight in the lean post-war years, and at that time the Institute was small and received little support from the University of Cambridge. Fleming realised that there was growing public interest in the polar regions and that there were many people outside of the University who wanted to assist the Institute and help put it on a more secure footing. So, he decided to establish the "Friends of the Polar Institute" to help organise and focus this support, and raise much needed funds.

Fleming was a man with an incredible variety of talents, skills and activities, from geology to theology, and from Antarctic explorer to Bishop and member of the House of Lords. He was the Director of SPRI between 1946 to 1949 when he left to become the Bishop of Portsmouth, becoming the youngest Bishop at the age of 43. He became a member of the House of Lords in 1956. In 1959, he became the Bishop of Norwich, and piloted the Antarctic Treaty bill through Parliament in 1967. In 1971 he became the Dean of Windsor and Domestic Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen. Fleming Glacier, which flows into Wordie Bay on the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula, was named after him. The glacier was first surveyed by Fleming and the BGLE in 1936. He died in 1990 and throughout his life was an avid supporter and mainstay of the Friends. You can read more about this wonderful and great man in "Launcelot Fleming: A Portrait" by Giles Hunt published by Canterbury Press in 2003.

My historical research discovered that the formal announcement of the formation of the Friends was made by the Committee of Management of the Scott Polar Research



Launcelot Fleming painted by David Poole in 1988. ©Trinity Hall

Institute in their annual report to the University, dated 13 July 1946. The report records: "For some time past it has been evident that many of those interested in the Institute would like to be more closely associated with its activities and to assist its work. With this in mind, the Committee have agreed to establish a society which will be known as the "Friends of the Polar Institute". Arrangements have been made for members to contribute by covenanted subscriptions, and the scheme was formally inaugurated on 27 April 1946. The fund will be used to make accessions to the Museum and Library, to finance special publications, and to meet any unforeseen expenditure, but not normally for general maintenance."



The report March 1947



The Friends published their first annual report on 31 March 1947. This recorded that membership stood at 164. In that first year, the Friends supported the Institute in a number of ways, including the purchase of a Ross epidiascope (a type of projector) for lectures at a cost of £62.14s, books for the Library at a cost of £54.7s, and steel cabinets for filing reprints and pamphlets at a cost of £82.17s. Funds were raised by the Friends through a minimum annual subscription set at one guinea, and by numerous individual donations, raising a total of £422.12s in the first year (about £16,890 today). The funds



James Wordie onboard the *Endurance* © SPRI

were administered by the Committee of the Friends of the Polar Institute, and the first Chairman was the famous polar scientist and explorer Professor James Wordie.

I'm proud to say that over the past 75 years the

Friends have stayed true to our origins and continued to encourage, support and fund the work of the Institute and its staff, and in so doing have helped it to develop into one of the world's leading polar research centres. Just as we did back in 1946, we raise funds through membership subscriptions and from individual donations, and continue to assist the Institute wherever we can. To give just one recent example, one of our long-standing Friends, Rick Dehmel, has given a donation of USD \$2500 (£1800). These funds have been given to the Library and will be used to help catalogue the papers of Dr Hal Lister who was a glaciologist on the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955-58. Thank you Rick for your generous donation!



Polar Bytes issue 1

Chairman's message was written by Philippa Foster-Back, whose grandfather Professor Frank Debenham had founded SPRI in 1920. Philippa reported on the celebrations at SPRI on 25 November 1995 to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Institute, which involved a great polar party for 400 guests, and the cutting of four different birthday cakes!

Phillipa also told the Friends about the exciting plans for the new Shackleton Memorial Library at the Institute. She explained that the Library needed to expand to house its increasing collections, and an extension was needed. Over the next two years the Friends held a number of fundraising activities to help pay for the new building. The final cost of the building and related work was about £1.5 million, and it was opened on 20 November 1998.

Our long tradition of fund raising for the Institute continues. Our current focus is to support the SPRI Centenary campaign, and to raise £250,000 to fund a research studentship at the Institute. The latest financial report, dated 16 July, shows that we have now raised the grand total of £183,319.52! We now only have to raise a further £66,680.48 to reach our target. Many thanks to Peggy Heap, a Friend for many years, for her recent generous donation of £500 to the campaign!. Any donation you might be able to give to the Campaign, big or small, will be gratefully accepted.

I've also been reading through the 1st issue of the Friend's newsletter *Polar Bytes*, which was published in January 1996.

Back then, the

The planned Friends expedition voyage to Spitsbergen and Northeast Greenland has now been rescheduled for 2022. It will be on board the M/V *Ortelius* and starts on 27 August 2022 and finishes on 13 September 2022. Our Executive Secretary, Celene Pickard, tells me there are still a few places available. Please contact her if you would like to join us on this amazing voyage.

With the lifting of the COVID-19 national restrictions, I'm pleased to tell you that activities at SPRI are gradually re-starting. The Library and Archives are now open and able to offer bookable desks to external researchers and students for the first time in over 16 months. While the Polar Museum is now open on Thursday, Fridays and Saturdays between 10.00 – 12.30 hrs and 13.30 – 16.00 hrs for visitors with a pre-booked ticket. The latest news is that the Museum can also now welcome the return of school visits.

The re-opening of SPRI means that we can now start planning to hold Friends events again in Cambridge, and we are hoping to start off with the Friends AGM at the Institute on 6 November 2021. If we get the go ahead, the event will be a special day as we will be celebrating not just our 75th birthday, but also marking the retirement of Professor Julian Dowdeswell as the Director of SPRI after almost 20 years leading the Institute. We will, I hope, be able to drink a toast to Julian and wish him farewell, and for him to cut our birthday cake! I look forward to seeing you there!

My best wishes,

John Shears

Chairman of the Friends of SPRI

Navy's Unique Relationship

with the Friends

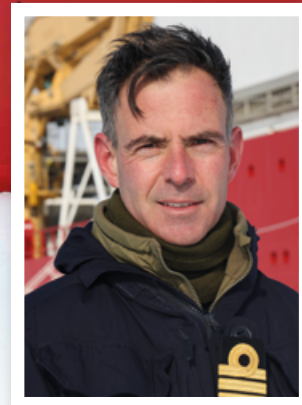
Written by Captain Michael Wood MBE

As the Captain of HMS Protector, I want to extend my greetings to the Friends of SPRI, and with it many congratulations on this, the 100th edition of 'Polar Bytes'.

The Ship's Company and I have recently returned from the Arctic, having laid claim to one of the northern-most latitudes reached by a Royal Navy surface vessel, a record still held by the Nares expedition of 1875. Whilst normally at home in the planet's southern-most continent, the ship used the opportunity of this nearer northern ice to conduct ice-ramming trials with a team of embarked scientists, engineers and naval architects, testing the limits of her icebreaking capabilities. The ship also made hydrographic surveys and collected data on ice, marine life and water conditions. The journey provided cold-weather acclimatization to prepare the crew for the 21/22 Antarctic season. The Ship's Company were able to rehearse routines for operating in, and working on, the ice, all whilst enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime visit to the High North – a journey enlivened by sightings of polar bears, seals, walrus and whales, and a short stay alongside in stunning Iceland.

Fuelled, victualled, stored and finally heading South, having left the delights of Gibraltar, Protector will soon stop at two more of Britain's Overseas Territories, Ascension Island and St Helena. There we will conduct coastal survey work around these extraordinary and remote volcanic islands and engage with the local communities there. And as the Northern summer ends and the Southern Hemisphere begins to warm once again, our journey will continue towards Antarctica, albeit with the addition of a special guest joining us in the Falklands.

Since 2009 the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute have nominated an 'Artist in Residence' to sail to the Antarctic to document both the amazing landscape and wildlife, as well as life on board. This has resulted in some fabulous works of art, some of which we have the privilege to display on board. The Antarctic environment provides the most exciting range of subjects, from textured and surprisingly colourful icebergs, of all shapes and sizes, to a vast population of wildlife including seals, penguins and a wide variety of albatross and other majestic seabirds. Previous



HMS Protector leaving Devonport August 2021

Our mission in the British Antarctic Territory is varied; primarily to assert the longstanding UK claim, but also to uphold the Antarctic Treaty,

artists have used a range of techniques including sketches with pencil or pen, oils, watercolour, illustrative drawing blended with digital technology.

Each artist that has sailed with Protector has chosen their own style to interpret Antarctica, creating lasting memories of each journey. Close ups of wildlife, ice and even small patches of lichen (there is a very small range of plant life on the continent!), vast brooding landscape vistas and technically accurate plumage of birds have all been committed through the eyes of wonderfully creative talents.

We are delighted to be able to host the 10th Artist in Residence, Claudia Myatt, in the 2021/22 Antarctic Season.

And so we are delighted to be able to host the 10th Artist in Residence, Claudia Myatt, in the 2021/22 Antarctic Season. Claudia is of course a well-known maritime artist, specialising in illustrating and sketching sailing boats and the sea, and is also a published author, with her book "Sketchbook Sailor". We are especially excited that her period onboard will allow her to range widely, and see her visit South Georgia, the South Sandwich and South Orkney Islands, before we head down to the Antarctic Peninsula itself to visit Rothera station around New Year.

Our mission in the British Antarctic Territory is varied; primarily to assert the longstanding UK claim, but also to uphold the Antarctic Treaty, ensuring that the continent remains peaceful, pristine and open for scientific research by all. To this end the ship will conduct a range of base inspections of other nation's Antarctic stations and facilities. Alongside this Protector will undertake a comprehensive programme of hydrographic surveys, contributing to our understanding of the continent's underwater geography and providing data for new charts to aid safe maritime navigation in the region. And through our long relationship with the British Antarctic Survey and UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, we have a healthy shopping list of tasks, large and small, to help support and sustain their work in the field and at the various stations, foremost being to supply aviation fuel to Rothera. Finally, whilst in the South Atlantic, Protector will conduct fishery patrols on behalf of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), working alongside other signatory partners and the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands to help conserve this ocean resource for future generations.

It remains our great pleasure to be able to offer passage to the Artist in Residence and I look forward to welcoming Claudia onboard. I am grateful for the support and



encouragement we receive from the Friends, and the fantastic lead in sustaining this partnership which Celene Pickard provides so willingly.

Images left to right: Photographs taken in the Arctic (Fram Strait) conducting ice trials (Jun 21); HMS Protector and personnel going out on expeditions to mark the trial range; Captain Michael Wood MBE; Personnel drilling for ice core sampling, to test the thickness; ice along the range; personnel dragging sleds. © Crown Copyright: LPhot Belinda Alker RN.



FRIENDS *Gallery*

A look back at some major Friends events, from voyages to exhibitions, artists to Ships, famous faces and special tributes. Enjoy!



Do you have any Friends events photos old or new you would like to share or donate? GET IN TOUCH!



Images: Friends events including voyages; Bonhams exhibitions; artists; events onboard HMS Victory, HMS Protector and HQS Wellington visit to Historic Dockyard in Chatham; Michael Palin events and Ranulph Fiennes's tribute to Charles Swithinbank. © Photos: Bonnie & James Pickard



From the Institute

A few words from Interim Director Neil Arnold email: nsa12@cam.ac.uk

Welcome to a special issue of Polar Bytes. As I'm sure you're all aware, this is the 100th edition, and this summer also marks 75 years since the formation of the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute. Since I last wrote, the Institute is feeling much more normal. Whilst there are still some restrictions within the Institute to help safeguard staff and visitors, the library and archives are now open to pre-booked visits by researchers from outside as well as inside the university; the museum is open three times a week; and many more staff are working in the Institute for a greater part of their time. We have even re-instated morning coffee three times a week, with staff alerted by the bell of the Terra Nova as we have done for many years.

We are gearing up to the arrival of the new cohort of Ph.D. and M.Phil. students for the start of the new academic year, with offers made to 7 Ph.D. and 15 M.Phil. students, two of whom receive support in the form of the Debenham and Scott Polar Scholarships, the latter funded in large part by the generous

efforts of the Friends over the years. The University is planning for the resumption of face to face teaching in the autumn, so it will be great to welcome the new students 'properly' into the Institute.

We are also looking forward to three new internationally-funded post-doctoral fellows arriving in the Institute. Two are Marie Curie fellows (one is already in post, in fact, but we will be able to finally welcome her into the Institute) working in the humanities and social sciences, and in a first for SPRI, a European Space Agency fellow (and recent Institute Ph.D. graduate) who will be working with me and Dr Ian Willis examining the distribution of meltwater lakes on Antarctic ice shelves. Planning for fieldwork is also resuming, with several staff likely to visit Antarctica for research over the coming austral winter. It's an exciting time, and as I said in my last introduction, I'm also looking forwards to being able to get to know the Friends better over the coming months.



A note from the Executive Secretary

Friends Secretary

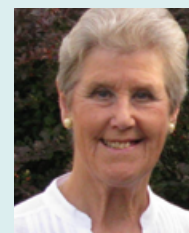
Celene Pickard email: friends@spri.cam.ac.uk

Dear Friends

HAPPY 75TH BIRTHDAY to the Friends and HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TO POLAR BYTES!

A double milestone for us all to celebrate in the near future. How incredible to read John's article on how the Friends have evolved over these many years. I am immensely proud to have experienced and been integral to so many of the wonderful events, commemorations and important centenaries that we have shared. Memories that I will cherish forever and all so beautifully recorded in Polar Bytes - our newsletter which has come on its own journey from an A4 sheet of text to this full-colour professionally designed publication. Huge thanks to all of our dedicated Friends who have given their own time to producing PB over the years, editing and contributing articles and images. Thank you to Leona Gaine who in 2004 created the whole 'new-look' for PB and to Kristy Jones of Arliam Design our ever-brilliant designer and editor of nearly 10 years. Our thanks also to our printers, Cambridge Print Solutions for many long years and more recently Kingfisher Press. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the extremely generous support of our many sponsors. Historically various polar travel companies funded individual editions interspersed with polar-related businesses but since 2017 we have been enormously grateful to receive ongoing funding from Argos Froyanes through Peter Thomson - we thank them all.

The Friends would never have succeeded without the wonderful support of each and every one of you now, and those that we have sadly lost along the way. As the Membership secretary for 8 years, it has been an absolute joy to get to meet so many of you and to share so many memories together. It is always wonderful to welcome new Friends but sadly we also have to say farewell to our dear Friends, and on this note I am really sorry to announce the passing of John and Pat Hollingsworth in the Spring of this year, within 6 weeks of each other. They were such loyal Friends for 15 years attending nearly every single event and all the Saturday night lectures, which involved an overnight stay in a hotel as they travelled so far to attend. We shall really miss them and send our sincere condolences to their family.



We value each and every Friend as you support us in raising funds for such an incredibly vital and immense cause. At a time when our World is changing in ways that we could never have imagined we realise that more than 100 years after Scott perished, travellers are no less vulnerable to the forces of nature.

Celene

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