

# POLAR BYTES

ISSUE 101 - SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2021

Loyal readers since 1996



HRH Duke of Edinburgh, Julian Dowdeswell & Robert Brooks

## A good friend

Written by  
Julian Dowdeswell



**Both staff at SPRI and Friends were very sorry to learn of the passing of Robert Brooks, former Chairman of Bonhams and a long-time supporter of the SPRI.**

Robert was a great enthusiast for things polar and had a particular interest in polar art and photography. Through Robert, the Institute was able to hold a number of splendid exhibitions at Bonhams in New Bond Street, both before and after the major refurbishment of the premises that he oversaw. The opportunity for SPRI to use such a superb London venue cannot be overstated in its significance. In addition, through Robert, Bonhams also offered sustained sponsorship of the Friends' Artist in Residence programme, allowing a number of artists to experience the Arctic and Antarctic and to show

their works at several summer exhibitions in New Bond Street.

Robert's support of the Institute and the Friends was strong and sustained. Many will remember the 2007 exhibition of the Antarctic paintings of Edward Seago, kindly loaned by the Late HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Both the Duke and HM The Queen came to Bonhams to view the paintings, which Robert and his staff had displayed to great effect. Following this initial exhibition, Robert enabled several further polar exhibitions in the now refurbished London premises, where works from the SPRI art and photographic collections were displayed together with those of our Artists in Residence. A highlight was the exhibition that brought together Herbert Ponting's photographs and Edward Wilson's paintings from Scott's last expedition for the first time. Added to this, Robert also underwrote the costs of printing

high-quality catalogues and often provided support for launch parties too. He was a generous host, always speaking highly of the Institute on public occasions and, together with his wife Evelyn (who also provided huge assistance through her position at Bonhams), also gave unstinting behind-the-scenes support.

The last time I met Robert and Evelyn was at the launch of the SPRI Centenary Campaign at The Ritz in late 2019. Robert was his usual engaging and enthusiastic self. He much admired the new book of platinum prints from Captain Scott's own photographs that was produced in collaboration with Salto-Ulbeek. As Director of SPRI for many years, I can say unequivocally that Robert Brooks has been one of our most important supporters over more than a decade. I am most grateful for Robert's sustained support and for his friendship – he will be much missed.

Thank you to Argos Froyanes for their generous sponsorship

# Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter



I hope you and your families and friends are all well, healthy and staying safe, and you enjoyed the lovely summer weather.

Back in August, I wrote saying that I hoped that with the easing of the national COVID-19 restrictions, and the re-opening of SPRI, that we might get the go ahead to hold the Friends AGM at the Institute on 6 November 2021. Unfortunately, there are still very strict and tough rules in place on events at SPRI, and after much thought and discussion with Lucy Matthews, the Acting Administrator at SPRI, we have decided not to have the AGM in person at SPRI this year. Instead, we are running the AGM remotely by post, as we did last year. You will find enclosed with this issue of Polar Bytes all the AGM papers, including the Chairman's Report, the Treasurer's Report, News from the Director, and a Nomination Form for new Committee members. Please do fill and return the Nomination Form if you would like to be considered as a member of the Committee. If you have any questions about any of the papers then please contact the Friends by e-mail ([friends@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:friends@spri.cam.ac.uk)).



Transantarctic Mountains and Iceberg painting by Dafila Scott

staff. Dafila invited us to view her beautiful Antarctic paintings inspired by her experiences in the Ross Sea. Then we had a great, big garden party, with much laughter and enjoyed our time together under the sun and big blue skies of the fens. We also took the opportunity to raise funds for the Friends Centenary Campaign with over £260 donated. Thank you so much to Dafila and Tim, and also to our Executive Secretary - Celene Pickard, for organising the reunion. And if you want to see Dafila's paintings of the Ross Sea then visit her website (<https://www.dafilascott.co.uk/antarctic>).

I'm pleased to report that we are getting ever closer to reaching our fundraising target of £250,000 for the Friends Centenary Campaign and to fund a research studentship at SPRI. The latest financial report, dated 1 October, shows that we have now raised the grand total of £193,417.33! That is over £10,000 more than the last financial report from 16 July. At this rate, we will have reached £200,000 by Christmas and will be well on track to reaching our target during 2022. Many thanks to John Mitchell for his recent generous donation of £500 to the campaign!

Please do take care and stay safe this autumn.

My best wishes,

**John Shears**

Chairman of the Friends of SPRI



Ross Sea Reunion Group © J.Pickard

Many of you will know that the Friends organised a very successful SPRI 100 expedition voyage to the Ross Sea, Antarctica in early 2020. All of us who went on that epic adventure became great friends, and agreed that we should try and get together when we all got back safely to the UK. Little did we realise that it would be 18 months later before we could meet again because of all the COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions! The Ross Sea Voyagers reunion finally took place on 11 and 12 September in the beautiful gardens at the historic home of Dafila Scott and Tim Clutton-Brock in Reach, Cambridgeshire. A total of 40 people attended, mostly Friends but also fellow passengers and expedition





## From the Research Collections

Naomi Boneham SPRI Archives contact [archives@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:archives@spri.cam.ac.uk)

# A little piece of history returns home

It seems fitting in this SPRI's centenary year that a little piece of our history has come back to us. Covid restrictions on travel prevented it being delivered until this week. The latest accession into the archive is a three-page typescript of the address given by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin at the Senate House of Cambridge University on 16 November 1934 regarding the official opening of our SPRI building on Lensfield Road. Sent from New Zealand by long time researcher David Harrowfield the text has now returned to the very building Baldwin was opening.



Prime Minister Baldwin's 1934 address

# POLAR BYTES



## SPRI library discovers Breitfuss pamphlets!

The SPRI library is sorting through the pamphlet collection, with the help of Ian Chambers. Over the past few months Ian has found around 20 pamphlets from the Breitfuss Collection, which somehow had escaped the catalogue! We are delighted that these unique resources have been found. Among them are an article from the Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung on the ice age, from the early twentieth century; an illustrated



Breitfuss pamphlet

guide to sea fish from 1910, and a guide to the definition of clouds published by the Soviet Union's Central Geophysical Observatory in 1930.

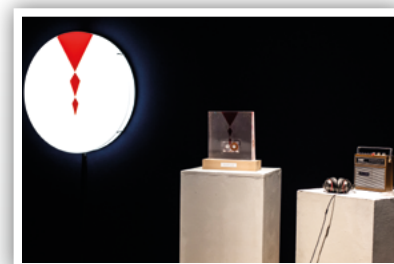
The Russian-German marine biologist and polar explorer Professor Leonid Breitfuss (1864 – 1950) amassed a huge collection of material on the polar regions throughout his life. The SPRI library was able to buy his collection off his brother Wilhelm after his death. The Breitfuss collection is a crucial resource for polar historians and scientists across the world.

Read more on the Breitfuss collection, visit <https://bit.ly/3Aj2LS3>

## Arctic Artist in Residence UPDATE

Congratulations to our 2017 Arctic Artist in Residence, Kat Austen, whose work *The Matter of the Soul* | symphony video has been acquired by a Polish public collection, the Zachęta collection in Wrocław.

The video will be exhibited as part of an exhibition on art and ecology from 1.10.21-27.12.21 in the Contemporary Museum, Wrocław. The full installation is also on show currently at the IZIS Festival in Slovenia. You can find out more on Kat's website, [www.katausten.com](http://www.katausten.com)



Kat Austen's *The Matter of the Soul* audio installation at Bonhams in 2018



Icebergs and Moon, Ilulissat, 2019

## Nicholas Jones: 30 Years at Crane Kalman Gallery

In 2018, painter Nicholas Jones travelled to Greenland and Baffin Island as the Friends of SPRI's Arctic Artist-in-residence. The journey inspired a large new body of work celebrating the beauty and mystery of the Arctic. Some of these paintings are included in Nick's solo exhibition, *30 Years at Crane Kalman Gallery*, open until 30 October in London.

Find out more at [www.nicholasjones.info](http://www.nicholasjones.info)



## From the Institute

A few words from Interim Director  
Neil Arnold email: [nsa12@cam.ac.uk](mailto:nsa12@cam.ac.uk)

Following on from my last piece for Polar Bytes, by the time you are reading this the Michaelmas Term will be well underway. The Institute, and of course the wider university, are hoping that our plans to resume most teaching as face-to-face lectures and seminars will go smoothly, and the new cohort of PhD and MPhil students should be settling in to their work in the Institute. We will also be welcoming back current students and other staff to work much more in the Institute.

The Polar Library is open for booking by members of the public (including the Friends, of course) and students, as are the Archives. We are also resuming school visits to the Polar Museum, and developing more online content to allow school engagement to happen more widely for those who find it difficult to visit in person. Staffing constraints mean that we can't yet extend opening the Polar Museum beyond Thursdays to Saturdays, but we will be trialling non-ticketed admissions in the near future to increase flexibility for visitors, especially families.

Getting to this stage has taken a great deal of work by colleagues throughout the Institute, and I thank them all for the flexibility and adaptability they have showed, especially as restrictions have eased which has meant a lot of rapid changes in our ways of working over the last couple of months especially.

Departing 27th August - 9th September 2022

## Spitsbergen & Northeast Greenland Cruise

Don't miss out! There are still remaining places for our trip of a lifetime fund-raising voyage for the Friends. **BOOK TODAY!**

[friendsofspri@steppestravel.com](mailto:friendsofspri@steppestravel.com)

01285 880980 | [STEPPESTRAVEL.COM](http://STEPPESTRAVEL.COM)

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**100** Scott Polar Research Institute

**OCEANWIDE** EXPEDITIONS

## Worth a visit!

John Kelly's exhibition, 'Two Islands', is taking place at the Lapworth Museum of Geology, Edgbaston, Birmingham until 24th November.

Two Islands resulted from field studies on two very contrasting islands, beginning in Surtsey, Iceland, and ending among the time worn rocks of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland. **Find out more:** [www.lapworth.bham.ac.uk](http://www.lapworth.bham.ac.uk)



Why not buy membership as Christmas gifts for your friends and family.

Email Celene at [friends@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:friends@spri.cam.ac.uk) for more information.



## A note from the Executive Secretary

Friends Secretary

Celene Pickard email: [friends@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:friends@spri.cam.ac.uk)

Dear Friends

Sadly we are unable to reunite for our AGM, but let us look forward to brighter and safer times in 2022 when we plan to enjoy a programme of exciting events.

**NEW FRIENDS** - A very warm welcome is extended to all new members.

**PASSING FRIENDS** - We are deeply shocked and saddened to hear of the passing of Robert Brooks (ex CEO Bonhams).

A warm and kind gentleman, Robert was fiercely supportive of the Institute and the Friends. The foundation of the Artists in Residence programme over 12 years ago, was entirely due to the generous sponsorship of Robert. We share many

happy memories of the exhibitions at Bonhams as well as sailing on HMS Protector in the Summer of 2015, when our 2013 artist Emma Stibbon, presented Captain Rory Bryan with her gift of a painting in the company of Robert.

We sadly also report the passing of John Bussey a LIFE member of the Friends. Our sincere condolences are extended to their families.

*Celene*



## HOW TO CONTACT US:

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