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POLAR BYTES

ISSUE 099 – MARCH/APRIL/MAY 2021

Loyal readers since 1996



Captain Scott's Hut at Cape Evans 2020 © Professor Julian Dowdeswell

Dowdeswell Bay



The UK Antarctic Place-names Committee are delighted to announce the approved name Dowdeswell Bay in recognition of Professor

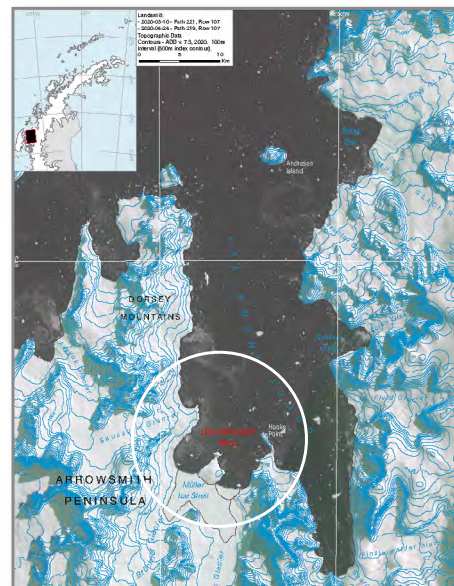
Julian Dowdeswell a glaciologist and Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute and Professor of Physical Geography in Cambridge University 2002 to 2021.

Julian is a glaciologist studying the form and flow of glaciers and ice caps and their response to climate change, and the links between former ice sheets and the marine geological record. He represented the UK on the councils of both the Scientific Committee

on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and was Chair of the UK National Committee on Antarctic Research. Awarded the Polar Medal (1994) for 'outstanding contributions to glacier geophysics'; Founder's Gold Medal from the Royal Geographical Society (2008); Louis Agassiz Medal from European geosciences Union (2011) and Lyell Medal from the Geological Society of London (2018).



M/V Ortelius anchored off Cape Evans 2020 © JD



Dowdeswell Bay location: 67°12'S 66°49'W.
Bay about 8.5 km wide and 8 km deep (2021)
at the southern end of Lallemand Fjord, Loubet Coast. To the west of Hooke Point and north of, and formed by the retreat of, Müller Ice Shelf.

Thank you to Argos Froyanes for their generous sponsorship



Welcome to our Spring Newsletter



I hope you and your families are safe and well, and enjoying the freedom to get out from our homes as the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK is

gradually lifted. There is still some way still to go, but with the continued successful rollout of the vaccine programme, we can be optimistic that lockdown will finally end in a few weeks and life can begin to get back to normal.

In line with the lifting of national restrictions, I'm pleased to tell you that activities at SPRI are gradually re-starting. The Institute is making plans to welcome students back from the 17 May, but visitors are not yet allowed. This means we still cannot hold any Friends events or meetings at SPRI until later in the year when the building fully re-opens. We hope, therefore, that several of the SPRI Centenary events that we had to postpone from last year might now be able to take place in the autumn.

The Polar Museum will re-open from 20th May, with online booking now available. On the 4 March, the Museum launched a new virtual exhibition, "The Big Freeze", a polar art festival featuring work by artists who specialise in the polar regions. A total of 13 of the 25 artists contributing to the exhibition have benefitted from the Friends of SPRI Artist in Residence scheme. I was fascinated to see the impressive and wide range of art they have produced, to listen to their stories and discover the major impact the residency has had on their careers and work. A virtual visit to the exhibition is highly recommended click on: www.bit.ly/BigFreezeArtFest

I would like to say a huge congratulations to Professor Julian Dowdeswell who has been recognised by the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee with a bay in his name. As many of you will be aware Julian retired as the Director of SPRI on 31 March, after almost 20 years leading the Institute. SPRI organised a special celebration Zoom coffee morning for Julian the day before his retirement, with over 60 people participating from all over the world, including many Friends. During the coffee morning Julian gave an excellent presentation showing highlights of his career, and his favourite places in the polar regions. He was then presented with a card and present, a superb painting of the southern Baffin Island mountains by Nick Jones who was the Friends of SPRI Arctic Artist in Residence in 2018. Julian will continue to work at the Institute

until the end of 2022, when he retires from his Professorship of Physical Geography at the University of Cambridge. Many thanks to Julian for his wonderful support for the Friends over so many years. Assuming that the Institute can re-open its doors to the Friends later in the year, I hope that Julian, and his wife Evelyn, can be our special guests at the next Friends AGM in November so that we can properly mark his outstanding achievements as Director of SPRI and say farewell in person.

Professor Neil Arnold has now taken over as the Interim Director of SPRI up until the recruitment of a new Director at the end of 2022. We warmly welcome Neil to his new role, and look forward to working with him in the coming months. Neil has provided his first update from the Institute in this edition of Polar Bytes.

During lockdown the Friends have also continued with our remote activities. Since my last message to you all in January, we have recruited a new member to the Friends Committee. He is Robert Culshaw. Robert read Classics at Kings College, Cambridge, and then had a long and distinguished career in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, before becoming Deputy Director of the British Antarctic Survey in 2006. Since retiring in 2012, he has focused on charitable work, including construction of the new Cambridge Ice Arena. Robert replaces Lucy Carty. Lucy was an outstanding and enthusiastic member of the Committee, and did a fantastic job for us as the Editor of Polar Bytes for several years. We wish Lucy the best of luck and thank her for all the work she has done for the Friends.

Fund raising for the SPRI Centenary campaign also continues. The latest financial report, dated 21 April, shows that we have now raised the grand total of £175,785.28! We now only have to raise a further £74,214.72 to reach our target of £250,000 to fund a research studentship at SPRI. Many thanks to Peter Thomson, and Argos Froyanes, for their incredibly generous donation of £12,500 to the campaign! Also, thank you to Michael Tarver, a Friend of many years standing, for his donation of £250. Any donation you might be able to give to the Campaign, big or small, will be gratefully accepted.

The planned Friends voyage to Spitsbergen and Northeast Greenland planned for late summer 2021 has now been rescheduled to 2022. Norway, who set the rules for tourism in Spitsbergen, are being extremely cautious

about opening their borders to overseas travellers following the COVID-19 pandemic. On 5 May we received an update from the Norwegian authorities confirming that only vessels carrying less than a total of 30 passengers on board would be permitted to enter the region's waters in 2021. Sadly, this means the Friends voyage, which had been scheduled to take place between 31 August to 13 September 2021, has had to be postponed because our expedition ship M/V Ortelius carries 108 passengers. However, Oceanwide Expeditions have arranged for an identical voyage to be operated on the ship between 27 August to 9 September 2022. I very much hope that all the Friends who had booked on this amazing Arctic voyage will still be able to join the ship next year. Our Executive Secretary, Celene Pickard, has been working hard on the Friends behalf to liaise with our travel partners Steppes Travel and Oceanwide Expeditions to reorganise the voyage. Please contact her if you need further information.

In England all the remaining lockdown restrictions are due to be lifted on 21 June. I'm sure many of us will be cheering and celebrating that long awaited and anticipated day! It is also Midwinters Day in Antarctica. Midwinter is the main holiday of the year on most national bases in Antarctica, and marks the winter solstice and the shortest day of the year.

The celebration of Midwinter was a tradition started in Antarctica by Captain Scott on the Discovery expedition in 1902. Scott recorded in his diary that: "At six we had our dinner in the wardroom, with the table decorated and the display of all our plate. Starting with turtle soup, we passed on to a generous helping of mutton, and from that to plum pudding, mince pies, and jellies, all washed down with an excellent dry champagne. With a largely assorted dessert of crystallized fruits, almonds and raisins and nuts came the port and liqueurs, which brought us into good form. With such a dinner we agreed that life in the Antarctic Regions was worth living."

So, I will be going out to see family and enjoy time outdoors on 21 June, but will also raise a glass and pay tribute to all the winterers in Antarctica living so far from home, in darkness and in lockdown on their bases for several more months to come until the sun returns.

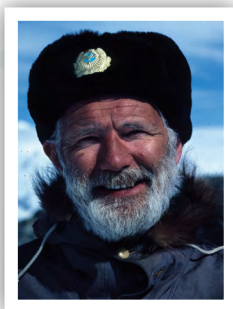
My best wishes,

John Shears

Chairman of the Friends of SPRI

Cataloging history

Written by Lucy Martin, Picture Library Manager



The Picture Library is pleased to report that a large group of photographs bequeathed to the Institute by Dr Charles Swithinbank, has been catalogued.

Dr Charles Swithinbank, glaciologist was involved in polar research for 60 years. His connection with the Scott Polar Research Institute goes back to 1949, when he became a member of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition 1949-52. Swithinbank was employed by the expedition until 1955 and then at the SPRI until 1959. From 1959 to 1963 Swithinbank was a Research Associate and Lecturer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. From 1963 to 1974 he was at the SPRI and from 1974 to 1986 he was with the British Antarctic Survey, first as Chief Glaciologist and then as Head of the Earth Sciences Division. He spent three winters and more than 20 field seasons in the Polar Regions. On retirement, Swithinbank was involved in the interpretation of satellite images of Antarctica, mapping, and the development of ice runways for transport aircraft. He was an Emeritus Associate of the SPRI.

The Scott Polar Research Institute holds all the photographs taken by Charles Swithinbank during his working career in the Polar Regions. The collection includes 8268 transparencies (35mm slides) which relate to all aspects of Swithinbank's career as a glaciologist in the Arctic and the Antarctic. During this time, he photographed all aspects of the life and work carried out on the various British and International scientific expeditions in which he took part, including scenery, wildlife, research stations, aircraft, ships, and people.

In 2018 the Picture Library started a project to catalogue and digitise the entire collection of 35mm slides. Most of the slides have all been captioned, in varying degrees by Charles Swithinbank. A group of volunteers were recruited and, following a set procedure, began the task of creating an inventory by entering the relevant cataloguing information onto an excel spread sheet. The information was then imported into the main internal collections database (Modes). This will ensure that both the image and the associated information recorded on the slide are preserved.

The gradual process of digitising the collection was also arranged and was running concurrently until interrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020. The images have been linked to the main database and will be made available on the SPRI Picture Library website at the end of the project.

Once the pandemic took hold operational procedures transferred to home working for the Picture Library Manager. This enabled a concentrated period of time to process the many records previously catalogued by the team of volunteers. The remainder of the slides have also been catalogued. These records are now on the main Picture Library database and the project is reaching completion. The digitisation of the remaining images will take place once the working world is functioning as normal again.



Left to right clockwise: Dr Charles Swithinbank; Lemaire Channel, 12 January 1975; Mount Ptolemy, 12 January 1967. Petrie, R.P. Vere, Swithinbank: King penguins, Volunteer Point, 7 February 1990; Twin Otter VP-FBC approaching Fossil Bluff, Alexander Island, Antarctica, 6 January 1984 © SPRI

RESCHEDULED

Spitsbergen & Northeast Greenland Cruise 27th August - 9th September 2022



Due to the pandemic, the Spitsbergen and Northeast Greenland expedition cruise in conjunction with The Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute has been rescheduled to 2022. Now giving you another opportunity to book your place!

The Expedition will be onboard the M/V Ortelius and will take place in August 2022. Joining you on the voyage will be our very own John Shears, Professor Julian Dowdeswell, Evelyn Dowdeswell and Celene Pickard.

Don't miss out on this compelling trip of a lifetime fund-raising voyage for the Friends. For more information please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/3ne4chsy>

BOOK TODAY!

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OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS



From the Institute

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

This is my first piece as Interim Director of the Institute. Julian is a hard act to follow, as he has been so central to the workings of SPRI over the best part of the last two decades, but I am looking forward to getting to know the Friends better in the coming months.

My time since I stepped into the role has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. I have been working with staff at the Institute to begin the process of gradual reopening. As a first step, we have been able to re-open pre-booked study spaces in the library for current students and staff from 26 April.

We hope to further open the Institute to allow current students and staff to work part-time within the Institute from 17 May, when under the Government road map, face-to-face teaching resumes in Universities. Social distancing and building capacity constraints mean that there are still tight controls on the numbers of people who can be in the building at any given time, so access will be restricted to current staff and students.

However, May 17 is also the date when museums can re-open, and we are planning to re-open the Polar Museum for pre-booked visits on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 20 May.

Although the Institute has been a strangely quiet place since January, work has continued behind the scenes. Academic research has continued, with 2021-dated publications by members of the Institute appearing in numerous journals; work on the museum collections has been ongoing, as has work in the library and archives. Administrative work, supporting students and staff across the Institute, has also been keeping many people busy. I thank all the Institute staff, and more broadly the Friends and associates, for their work, support and dedication over this time, and I look forward to seeing the Institute gradually fill with people again over the coming months.

COME VISIT US! The Polar Museum will be reopening for pre-booked visitors from 20 May, and tickets can be booked at <https://tickets.museums.cam.ac.uk/>



From the archives

Naomi Boneham SPRI Archives
contact archives@spri.cam.ac.uk

Laura is currently cataloguing the archive papers of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955-58. They detail the organisation, logistics and science of one of the major endeavours of the mid-20th century, namely the first crossing of Antarctica from Shackleton Base in the Weddell Sea to Scott Base in the Ross Sea via the South Pole. Sir Vivian Fuchs and his team made the crossing in 99 days using sno-cats and modified tractors. They were supported from the Ross Sea side by a team lead by Edmund Hillary of Everest fame. He was drafted in to route find and lay depots for Fuch's team, who planned to pick up his trail once they'd crossed the pole. Hillary, however, caused controversy when he decided to strike for the pole himself and made it there before Fuchs. The expedition also saw the first trans-polar flight, which was completed in December 1957.

Our collection details the "business" side of the expedition and is comprised mainly of records which were originally created and stored in the TAE offices in London. These include planning papers, fundraising initiatives and expedition logistics as well as correspondence with the expedition, fan mail and relations with the press. They also include a smaller amount of science and survey work.

The project will help open up the archive so researchers can gain a better understanding of how Antarctic expeditions were planned and executed in the mid-20th century. It will also add context to the collection of TAE equipment and clothing held by the museum.

A BIG success

In March, the Polar Museum held its first ever online festival of polar art over ten days. The Big Freeze Art festival was a new endeavour for us, and we learnt a lot along the way. We were delighted to have people register for the festival from 32 different countries, and we estimate that some 250 hours of video were watched by viewers throughout the festival. Considering that many of the videos were under ten minutes long, that's quite remarkable.

The Big Freeze Festival exhibition and many of the videos and events are still available to view at www.bit.ly/BigFreezeArtFest

Image above: Polar Museum curator Charlotte Connelly in discussion with Inuit film makers Asinnajaq, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril and Nyla Innuksuk.



IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY! Next issue will be our celebratory 100th edition issue and 75th birthday. *Don't miss it!*



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

A note from the Executive Secretary

Dear Friends,
A very happy 75th birthday to the friends, which we will be celebrating in the next edition of Polar Bytes, our 100th issue.

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

PASSING FRIENDS - We are saddened to report the passing of Ros Marsden (friend for 30 years) and John Thorne. Our sincere condolences are extended to their families.

HOW TO CONTACT US:

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