

AV 16: Harry King oral history summary

Recorded at Harry King's home in Cambridge. Interviewed by John Heap, 12.10.2000.

Track 1 [00.54.58]. [00.00.00] John Heap (JH) introducing Harry King (HK), former Librarian at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI), 1955-1984. Description of HK's career immediately prior to SPRI in the Manchester Guardian Library, 1953-54. Mention of his wife Barbara. [00.03.00] Description of his career prior to joining the Guardian including wartime work at a wireless radio mechanic and training instructor; studying for a History degree at University College London (UCL); training to be a librarian at University London library for 18 months; working for Institute Historical Research for 18 months. [00.06.55] Memories of his interview at SPRI including mention of Brian (Birley) Roberts (BBR). [00.09.10] Description of SPRI in the 1950s including comments on it being a polar travellers club; mention of naval work there during the war; staff at SPRI including BBR, James Wordie, Colin Bertram, Terrance Armstrong (TA), Henry Gethin, Anne Savours. [00.13.50] Description of BBR's interest in the polar regions and influence at SPRI including anecdote about him breaking in to SPRI prior to getting a job there; comments on BBR turning SPRI into an outward looking centre for research; HK was Librarian and Information Officer; comments on BBR's personality and management style. [00.18.25] Description of HK's working relationship with BBR; comments on the material the library collected and the cataloguing process; mention of BBR's temper if work was not done properly; anecdotes about BBR's hatred of cello tape, paperclips and spores. [00.25.30] Description of the library Universal Decimal Classification system (UDC) including mention of the work of Debs girls; BBR decided to use UDC and devised the glaciological numbering; mention of constant amendments and updates to UDC; memories of printing cards on a Banda copying machine which was done by Shirley Webb (later Morley). [00.31.25] Description of the University review of SPRI, c. late 1950s, leading to it becoming a sub department of Geography including mention of Gordon Robin becoming SPRI's first full time director; mention of funding arrangements prior to the review; mention of Bertram and J.E. Stead[?]; comments on having to re-apply for their jobs. [00.35.40] Description of Gordon Robin's (GR) appointment including influence of Wordie and Priestley in the selection process; mention of GR's career prior to SPRI; JH's memories of Priestley; comments on GR turning SPRI into a centre of academic excellence; HK's job became permanent in 1959. [00.39.50] Description of SPRI building in the 1950's including basement boiler room becoming focus for GR and Stan Evans Radio Echo Sounding research; comments on need for expansion; JH's memories of the gallery seminar room. [00.42.34] Description of work at SPRI during the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58, including research by the US Navy who were setting up McMurdo Station; mention of delegation sitting round the library table including Debenham, Terrance Armstrong and Dufek; comments on Trans Antarctic Expedition (TAE) putting SPRI in the headlines; mention that HK's work became more meaningful. [00.46.10] Description of relationship between Russia and SPRI including reciprocal visit in the late 1950s; mention of BBR and TA visiting Arctic Institute in Leningrad and Maksimov and Treshnikov making a return visit to SPRI; comments on the Russian collections and exchange of information. [00.48.55] Description of BBR's involvement with the Antarctic Treaty. [00.51.40] Memories of coffee and tea in the library in the late 1950s-60s; comments on the portrait of Debenham. [00.54.58] END.

Track 2 [00.56.21]. [00.00.25] Description of extension to SPRI in the late 1960s including comments on funding from the Ford foundation who had connections to GR; mention of Larry Gould. [00.02.55] Description of the need for an extension; mention of Lancelot Fleming ensuring SPRI's garden was not built on by the Chemistry Department; mention of the appointment of Hughs and Biknell, architects, and Ratty and Co builders; comments on requirements; comments on using the museum as a lecture theatre

before a dedicated room was built in the extension; memories of Fuchs TAE lecture; memories of planning the building. [00.08.05] Description of the opening ceremony for the new extension including the large ice sheet that was shattered to open the building; mention of Larry Gould's speech; memories of a fire that started in the basement interrupting the speech; tea getting stuck in the lift; showing dignitaries round the archive room with a bicycle lamp due to lack of electricity. [00.12.30] Memories of BBR and Fuchs regularly setting off the fire alarm with pipe smoke; irritation at having to work on Saturday's whilst BBR and Fuchs met. [00.14.15] Description of collaboration with other polar libraries including providing a bibliography to the Library Congress in 1960s [00.15.55] Description of the establishment of a conference for Polar Librarians including mention of Anita Cook, Walter Kupsch, Nora Corley; memories of hosting the 3rd meeting in Cambridge; mention that he enjoyed meeting other librarians and the travel; [00.19.20] Anecdote about Clements Markham telling his librarian Hugh Robert Mill that the "proper place for a librarian is in the library". [00.20.20] Comments on his library travels being beneficial to the institute; memories of a trip to visit a library in Inuvik organised by Graham Rowley. [00.22.45] Memories of a trip to New Zealand (NZ) in 1976 to help Canterbury Museum establish a polar library; comments on the production of a published version of the library catalogue; visiting other libraries and archives whilst in NZ and Australia; disappointment at having a trip to Scott Base, Antarctica, cancelled. [00.28.20] Description of writing his book 'The Antarctic', published in 1969. [00.31.35] Description of publishing Wilson's Discovery diary, edited by Anne Savours. [00.32.25] Description of the publishing of BBR's book on birds illustrated with Wilson's watercolours. [00.33.35] Description of publishing Wilson's Terra Nova diary including purchasing the missing part from Sotheby's. [00.35.00] Mention of the published version of the library catalogue. [00.35.30] Description of publications post-retirement in 1983 including a catalogue of Bower's manuscripts; Victor Campbell's diary; A bibliography of the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic; A bibliography of Antarctica with William Mills. [00.39.00] Comments on BBR being the ideas man; HK sales man [00.39.30] Memories of personalities at SPRI including mention of Debenham, Steffanson, Raymond Priestley; Jim Wilson; Angela Mathias, first wife of Cherry-Garrard. [00.43.21] Memories of Ethel John Lindgren (EJL) and Mikel Utsi including EJL's personal library and formidable personality; mention of their interest in Reindeer including EJL bringing a baby reindeer into the lecture theatre half way through a lecture. [00.47.50] Memories of authors who visited SPRI including Elspeth Huxley and Roland Huntford, who was a controversial figure. [00.52.25] Description of how SPRI changed over his career including summary of HK's career highlights culminating in praise for the SPRI library in a report from the General Board of the faculties. [00.56.21] END.