

Obituaries

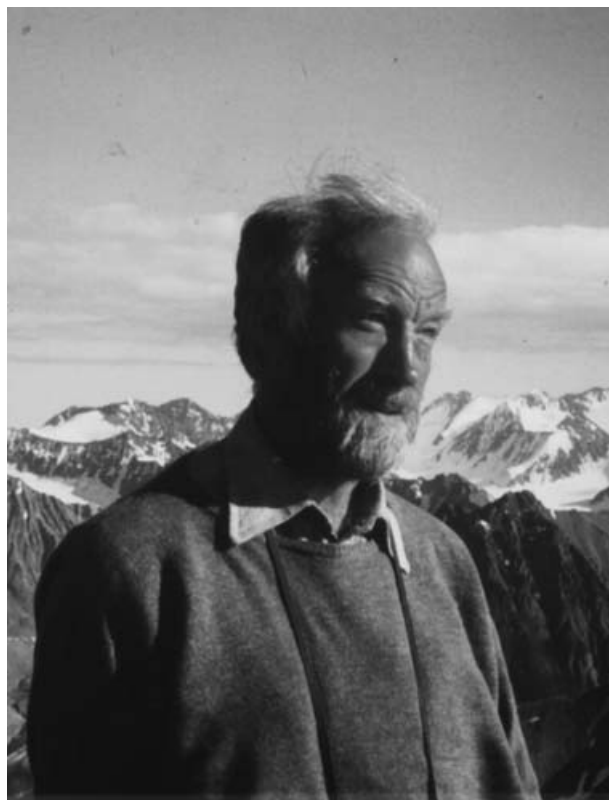


Fig. 1. Angus Erskine.

Angus Erskine died in Edinburgh on 15 April 2006, aged 77 (Fig. 1). He was one of fewer than a dozen people to hold the Polar Medal with Arctic and Antarctic clasps.

Angus Bruce Erskine was born in 1928, a son of Colonel Sir Arthur Erskine GCV O DSO, a former Crown Equerry to King George V and King George VI, and, later, an Extra Equerry to Queen Elizabeth II. He was educated at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and went to sea as a Midshipman a few weeks before the end of the war.

His introduction to the polar regions came in 1950, when he was serving as a Sub-Lieutenant in HMS *Bigbury Castle*, which was the guardship in British Antarctic Territory waters in that season.

In 1952, because of his enthusiasm for ski-mountaineering and previous polar experience, he was chosen out of many volunteers to take part as assistant surveyor in charge of dog teams on the British North Greenland expedition to the little known Dronning Louise Land of north east Greenland under the leadership of Commander Jim Simpson CBE, DSC, RN. During three summers

and two winters Erskine played a full supportive role for geological, geophysical and meteorological work. With other members of the expedition, he received the Polar Medal with Arctic clasp on their return. He contributed a useful appendix on dog management and sledging to Simpson's book on the expedition (Simpson 1957).

On his return from Greenland in 1954, Erskine went back to general service in the navy until 1956, when he was seconded to the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (now British Antarctic Survey). In January 1957, he was appointed temporary harbour master at Deception Island to cover the visit of HRH Prince Philip, who was touring Antarctic stations in HMY *Britannia*. Erskine then took command of the station at Detaille Island, off the west coast of Graham Land, where for the next year, travelling by dog team, he filled an important gap in the survey work. Following his return to England in 1958, Erskine Glacier, Loubet Coast, was named after him in 1959, and he was awarded a second clasp (Antarctic) to his Polar Medal in 1963.

In his later career, Erskine qualified at the Royal Air Force Staff College and, in 1963–1964, he served as UK Liaison Officer with the United States operation 'Deep Freeze' in the Antarctic in the rank of Lieutenant Commander. He then had his own command at sea and was promoted Commander in 1965. His final appointment in the navy was to Rosyth Naval Base on the staff of the Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland. He retired in 1972, having been allowed to stay on for an extra few months in order to organise and lead the RN and RM Mountain Club Expedition to northern Ellesmere Island.

Erskine saw it as his mission to revitalise the club with regard to foreign trips, particularly after a disastrous expedition to Greenland in 1966, on which two RN personnel had been killed. The new seven man expedition was based at Tanquary Fiord, from where they made a number of first ascents of peaks up to 2000m and made a useful collection of rocks, flora and fauna.

On retirement from the navy, Erskine spent four years running the sail training ship *Captain Scott*, before setting up his own tourist company, Erskine Travel, based in Edinburgh and specialising in adventurous trips to places such as Arctic Canada, Greenland, Svalbard, the Falkland Islands and the Himalayan foothills. He sold the company as a thriving concern in 1991, but for a number of years continued as cruise director or guest lecturer in tourist ships in the Arctic and Antarctic.

Chief Petty Officer Steve Williams BEM RN (retd) of the 1972 Ellesmere Island party, in Erskine's footsteps, a fine leader in the field, remembers Erskine as 'a fine

leader, a lovely man, and sorely missed' – sentiments that will be echoed by Erskine's many friends.

Erskine's South African born first wife Alison died early in 2000; later that year he married a long time family friend, Maureen, who survives him together with two sons by his first marriage.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

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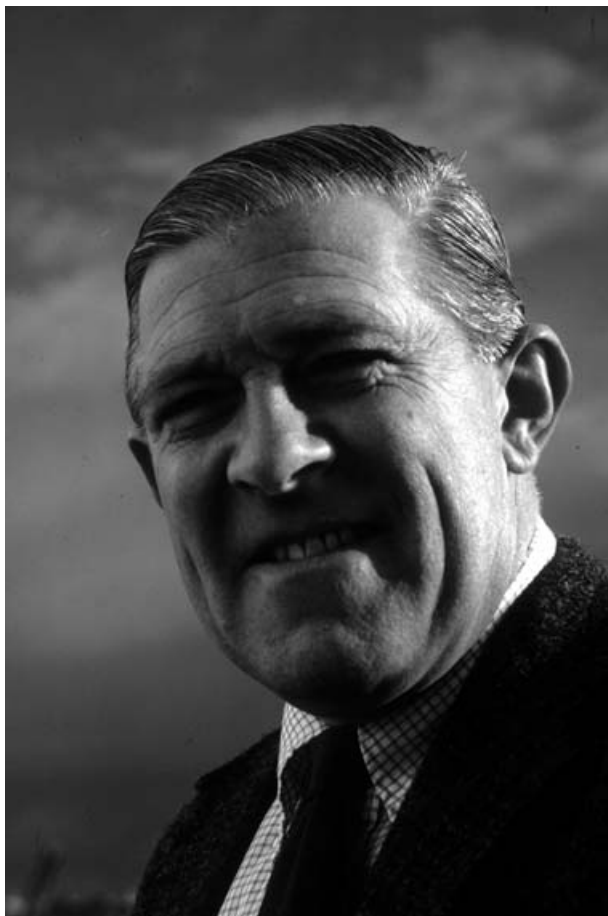


Fig. 2. Ray Adie in 1972.

Raymond John Adie, OBE, died on 14 May 2006 at the age of 81 (Fig. 2). Born on 26 February 1925, he was stirred as a lad by the book *Edward Wilson of the Antarctic* and was to become the first South African-born scientist to set foot in Antarctica. He went to Maritzburg College before graduating from the University of Natal with a double first in Chemistry and Geology. In 1946, he came to Britain to join the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS). He sailed south later that year aboard *MV Fitzroy* for the FIDS base at Hope Bay where he spent the 1947 austral winter. During the following summer he began his geological work, sledging with others south along the Larsen Ice Shelf and across the Graham Land plateau to the FIDS base on Stonington Island, a journey

of some 470 miles, where he spent the 1948 winter. Vivian Fuchs, a fellow geologist, was the Base Leader and also Commander of FIDS.

In the 1948–49 summer season, Fuchs and Adie sledged from Stonington to Keystone Cliffs on Alexander Island, collecting rocks and fossils and making geological observations. On their return to Stonington they learned that the relief ship *RRS John Biscoe* had met impenetrable pack ice and was unable to progress farther south than the Argentine Islands, some 200 miles to the north. Sir Miles Clifford, Governor of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies, was aboard and reluctantly advised the men that they would have to spend another winter in the Antarctic. For some, including Adie, this unplanned winter at Stonington would be their third consecutive winter in the Antarctic and they became known as the 'Lost Eleven'. Meanwhile, plans were laid for the following field season when Fuchs and Adie proposed to continue the geological reconnaissance work of the previous season. They sledged from Stonington across Marguerite Bay and along George VI Sound to Eklund Islands at its southern end before returning north, a round trip of some 600 miles. Adie thus became the first and only man to sledge with dogs the length of the Antarctic Peninsula, from Hope Bay to Eklund Islands. It was during the return trip that Fuchs began sketching plans for an expedition to cross Antarctica with tractors, to achieve what Sir Ernest Shackleton had so gloriously failed to do 35 years earlier. In February 1950, Stonington was relieved and closed, the saddest aspect being the necessity to put down all but thirty-seven of the huskies.

Back in Britain, Adie settled in St John's College, Cambridge, to undertake the laboratory work on his geological collections, to write research papers and to submit a thesis on 'The Rocks of Graham Land' for a PhD degree, awarded in 1953. He married Aileen Hancock in 1953 and secured a position working as a geologist for Albright and Wilson Ltd. Meanwhile, Fuchs was preparing to lead the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition and had been granted leave of absence from his position as Director of FIDS for the duration of the expedition. Sir Raymond Priestley, a veteran geologist of both Captain Scott's and Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions, stood in as Acting Director. Priestley was also Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University and he negotiated space in the Geology Department for returning FIDS geologists to write up their work. Adie accepted the post of Chief Geologist to direct and supervise the FIDS geological research and was also made Honorary Reader in Antarctic Geology. He took great pride in the achievements of his geologists, many of whom completed PhD theses and went on to successful careers in industry, government service and academia.

Adie made 22 more visits to Antarctica in an administrative capacity but did no further field work. However, his observations along the length of the Antarctic Peninsula gave him an unrivalled view of the geology of the region. His early papers established the basic framework for

the geology of the Antarctic Peninsula that was only superseded by the advent of extensive radiometric age determinations in later years. He published on the geology of the Antarctic, mostly synthesizing and reviewing the growing volume of geological data and knowledge. As a student in South Africa he had been influenced by the work of Alexander du Toit, who was a staunch advocate of 'continental drift' at a time when many leading geologists still regarded such ideas as heresy. Ironically, what was arguably Adie's most significant paper was probably the least known. In 1952, in a paper entitled 'The position of the Falkland Islands in a reconstruction of Gondwanaland', he proposed, on lithological and structural evidence alone, that the Falkland Islands had originally been located off the south-east coast of South Africa, prior to the break-up of the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana, and had been rotated through 180° during their passage to their current position. This was confirmed by palaeomagnetic research almost 34 years later, once the theory of plate tectonics had been firmly established.

As the Chief Editor of FIDS and BAS scientific publications he set a very high standard for clarity of expression, rigorous argument and style. He was also an editor of the *Journal of Glaciology* for many years and edited the proceedings volumes of the first two international symposia on Antarctic geology held in 1963 and 1970. In 1963, with Sir Raymond Priestley and Dr Gordon Robin, he edited and contributed to a major review of British research in Antarctica entitled *Antarctic Research*. He also served as the UK representative on the Working Group on Geology of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and was its Secretary/Chairman for several years. He contributed to many international meetings on the organisation of Antarctic research.

Following the retirement of Sir Vivian Fuchs as Director of BAS in 1973 and the appointment of Dr Richard Laws as his successor, Adie was formally appointed Deputy Director, confirming an appointment he had held informally for many years. He was summoned to Downing Street during the Falklands conflict to brief the Prime Minister on the consequences should the Argentines extend the war to Antarctica. He was Chairman of the BAS Club for more than 20 years and was twice President of the Antarctic Club. He was also a founder member of the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute and served as their Chairman from 1986 to 1995.

He retired in 1985 and spent much of the rest of his life in South Africa where he renewed his many contacts and continued to lecture widely on geology and the Antarctic. He made numerous trips to visit his children and grandchildren in Australia. Ray was a much-loved husband (his wife Aileen died in 1984), father and grandfather. He is survived by two of his daughters, Daphne and Virginia (his eldest daughter Diana died in 2002), 9 grandchildren and his partner of 15 years, Nora Grice.

He was honoured with the Polar Medal in 1954, the Mrs Patrick Ness Award of the Royal Geographical

Society in 1960, the Bellingshausen Medal of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1970, a moiety of the Wollaston Fund of the Geological Society of London in 1971, the Fuchs Medal in 1986, and an honorary DSc by the University of Natal in 1987. Adie Inlet on the east coast of Graham Land was named for him. He was made an OBE in 1970 in recognition of his contribution to British research in the Antarctic.

Charles Swithinbank and Peter Clarkson

Ella Lury Embree Wiswell died in Hawaii on 16 August 2005. Ella Meierovna Lury was born on 20 February 1909 in the Russian far eastern town of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. Her father, Meier Moiseevich was owner of an extensive fishery business not only in Russia, but also in China and Japan. In 1920, the family moved to Yokohama, Japan. In March of that year a renegade band of Bolsheviks held the residents of Nikolaevsk hostage and proceeded to kill a large percentage of the population, including many of Wiswell's relatives. After attending the University of California at Berkeley, she graduated from the Sorbonne in 1931. The following year she married John Embree. Tragedy struck on 22 December 1950 when her husband and daughter were killed in a road accident. In 1952, she was appointed by the University of Hawaii to teach French, but in 1954 she transferred to teaching Russian becoming Associate Professor in that language. After she retired in 1968, Wiswell continued with academic work and published several articles and books, often as translator or editor. Among these, she translated a paper on Dimitri Girev, one of the two Russian participants in R.F. Scott's last expedition, that was published in this journal (Yuzefov 1998). Her translation of V.M. Golovnin's *Around the world on the Kamchatka, 1817–1819* was very well received (Golovnin 1979). She also translated two important Russian books concerning the town in which she was born: *The destruction of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, 1920* by A. Ya. Gutman, and *Liudi v adu [People in hell]* by Konstantin Emelianov (Gutman 1993; Emelianov 2004).
Patricia Polansky

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Fig. 3. David Nicholls.

David Nicholls died on 4 July 2006 at the age of 57 (Fig. 3). He had a distinguished career in the Royal Marines and as a mountaineer. His final appointment in the Royal Marines was as Commander of the British Forces in the Falkland Islands. Upon retirement, he devoted much time to Project Atlantis, based in Dundee, a research and consultancy group directed towards environmental

matters. An early achievement of this project was to complete a comprehensive web site, which brings the beauty of the island of South Georgia and its natural heritage to worldwide access via the internet. Now on the National Grid for Learning, it is the official website for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

Active in the British Schools Exploring Society, he led an expedition to southern Chile, the Falklands and South Georgia in 2003 comprising 8 other leaders and 21 young explorers. He also led a second expedition to South Georgia in 2005. Ties with BSES became closer in 2006 when he took over as Chairman of the Society's Expeditions Committee, charged with overseeing the future programme of expeditions and their leadership, and was co-opted onto Council. He took on both jobs with his characteristic enthusiasm and thoroughness but, sadly, barely had the chance to make his mark at the time of his death. He was liked and admired with all those with whom he worked in BSES.

Keenly interested in South Georgia, he was active in the foundation of the South Georgia Heritage Trust and was involved in the renovation of the Manager's house at Husvik. The Trust recently took responsibility for the South Georgia Museum in Grytviken. He was also enthusiastic concerning measures for the protection of the bird species that nest in the islands, and notably with regard to a project for the elimination of rats.

Nicholls will be severely missed in all these areas of endeavour and it is encouraging that all his many friends are determined that his work will be continued as he would have wished.

Ian R. Stone