

Obituaries

David Eric Yelverton, polar historian, expert on the Polar Medal, and enthusiast for all things related to Antarctic heritage, died on 20 November 2004, aged 82. He had suffered from a variety of health problems for some time, although he had steadfastly continued working on several projects, including his just-published book *Quest for a phantom strait*.

Born 15 August 1922, Yelverton was an only child, whose father served as chief chaplain to the Royal Army, and was based in Camberley and Sandhurst. At the age of 14 he entered St Edward's School in Oxford, where he became a prefect for Segar's House in 1939 before passing out of school at Easter 1940. In 1941 he joined the Royal Armoured Corps, with which he served in the Middle East. A quiet, private man, Yelverton disclosed little about this period or much else of his personal life, but served throughout World War II, before resigning in 1945 due to ill health.

Following the War, Yelverton worked with the Iraq Petroleum Company for several years, during which, on 20 January 1947, he married Leontine (Leonie) Koopman at the Collegiate Church of St George in Jerusalem. They later moved back to the London area, and, in December 1947, Yelverton began a long career with an international company, in which he ultimately moved from chemical engineering management to logistics, with an early expertise in computing and order-processing systems. His final 10 years with the company were spent in Brussels, before he took early retirement in 1979 and moved to Hampshire.

Yelverton had long been interested in classic racing cars, photography, vintage wines, and landscape flowers and shrubs. He now developed a fascination with medals, and his research led him to publish articles on the Polar Medal, which in turn became part of his growing expertise about the history of Antarctic exploration. He became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a Friend of the Scott Polar Research Institute, spending time at both for his research.

In 1992 Yelverton's wife Leonie died; the couple had had no children. Shortly thereafter he moved to Hitchin, the proximity of which to Cambridge allowed him to become a regular visitor to SPRI, where he made many friends socially and professionally and became well known as a host of dinner parties at which he would proudly unveil special bottles of wine from his collection laid down through many years.

Yelverton published a number of articles about Antarctic history in a variety of fora, but his major contribution was his first book, *Antarctica unveiled: Scott's first expedition and the quest for the unknown*

continent (2000), a meticulously researched account of the British National Antarctic Expedition (1901–04). He also was an enthusiastic supporter of the Antarctic Heritage Trust, and was involved in the Trust's conservation plans for Cape Evans and for the Discovery Hut. His latest book, *Quest for a phantom strait*, is an account of three early expeditions to the area of the Antarctic Peninsula. In addition to his own works, his support and encouragement of others will remain an important part of his legacy.

Beau Riffenburgh

Malcolm Kirton, Antarctic geophysicist and former president of the ANARE Club, died on 20 November 2004, aged 72.

Kirton was born on 11 October 1932, and raised in Northamptonshire, where, according to him, he had a good but unremarkable childhood until it was disrupted by the Second World War. His formative years were spent at Rugby where he learnt to play, and love, Rugby Union football and cricket. He also acquired a strong desire to travel, so after graduating from university, he obtained a three-year contract in 1955 with the Bureau of Mineral Resources (BMR) in Australia. He then took part in a series of aeromagnetic and aerogeophysical surveys ranging from Bass Strait to Tennant Creek and then the Kalgoorlie region. The results contributed significantly to the Australian minerals boom in later years.

In 1958, the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) appointed him as geophysicist at Mawson station for 1959. It turned out to be a year of high drama and disasters. The main power house caught fire and was destroyed in April, as did an auroral observatory at Taylor Glacier in July, and then in December, two Beaver aircraft were destroyed in a major blizzard. Kirton did not confine his responsibilities solely to geophysics; he became a dedicated dog-man as well. He participated in two epic dog-sledging journeys across sea ice, first to Auster Rookery to count emperor penguins in winter and then to Foldøya, almost 200 km west of Mawson, to complete similar biological work in October.

He subsequently returned to Antarctica in 1963 as a traverse geophysicist at Wilkes station, where he completed two very difficult and prolonged seismic surveys. The first was an east–west line across Law Dome in autumn, the second into new territory away from the line of the 1962 Vostok traverse. He was awarded the Polar Medal for his outstanding scientific work, and Kirton Island was named after him in recognition of his service to ANARE.

After his time 'down south,' Kirton married Margaret, and as they were both keen to sample new experiences

and places, he took up a contract in Ghana in West Africa, where he used magnetometry and other techniques to detect mineral deposits in the region. It was to be the start of 20 years' involvement in the mining industry. While there, they had two children, Suzanne and Paul, and when they were old enough it was not unusual for the family to accompany Kirton on field trips in his old but much-loved Chevrolet car.

In the early 1970s, the family returned to Melbourne from where Kirton continued with field work in central and Western Australia, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea. However, after six years it was time for a new challenge, so they moved to Algeria, where he had to learn 'instant' French. Although he had an office in Algiers, he would often have to travel deep into the Sahara to carry out his work, driving and walking long distances through the desert to complete magnetic and seismic surveys.

When the family again returned to Melbourne in the mid-1980s, Kirton became a school teacher and was able to spend more time opening young people's minds to the wonders of mathematics and science. Although he did not approve of his students wearing their sports caps backwards, he enjoyed coaching the school soccer team. He also became a very active member of the ANARE Club. Apart from being president in 1997 and 1998, he was editor of the Club journal *Aurora* for 14 years, building it into a respected publication both in Australia and overseas. He was awarded life membership for his exceptional contribution to the ANARE Club.

In retirement (Fig. 1), Kirton maintained a keen interest in rugby, test cricket, and Grand Prix motor racing and was always busy either painting houses, cooking Sunday roasts, or enjoying ballet, opera, theatre, and art exhibitions with Margaret. He was the quintessential family man with a very special place in his heart for his three young grandchildren, Rowena, Stephanie, and Alissa. He also loved to share meals and good wine with friends and was a prominent member of the 'Chelsea

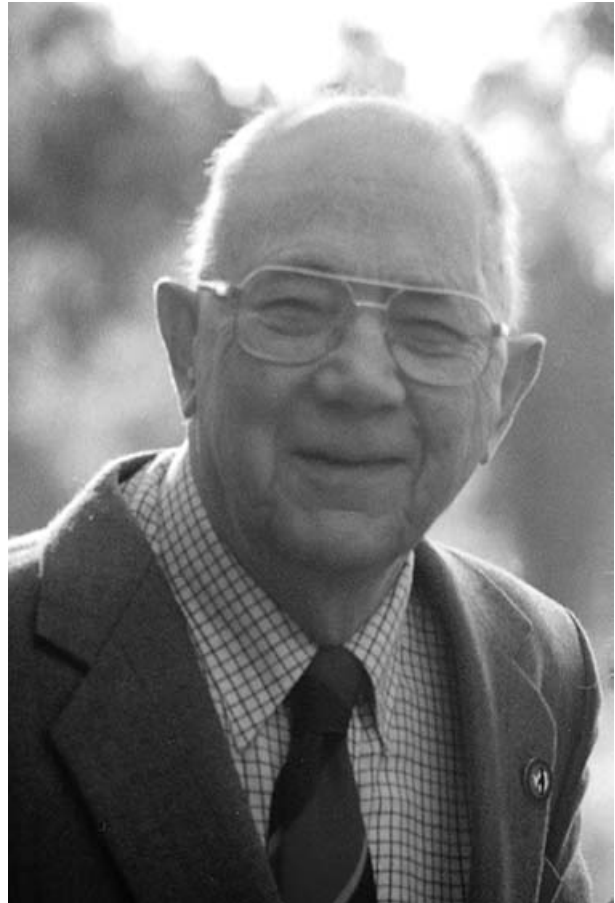


Fig. 1. Malcolm Kirton.

Pensioners,' a group of ageing Antarctic veterans who meet regularly to enjoy reminiscing and a meal in the name of good fellowship and the ANARE spirit. His attitude to his illness was typical of his attitude to life: 'You get on with it and do what *you* want to do.'

D.A. Brown