

OBITUARIES



SIR RAYMOND PRIESTLEY—1886—1974

SIR RAYMOND PRIESTLEY, scientist and university administrator, an Honorary Member of the International Glaciological Society, who died on 24 June 1974 aged 87, was one of the few remaining survivors of those who accompanied Scott and Shackleton to the Antarctic. He joined Shackleton's British Antarctic (*Nimrod*) Expedition 1907–09 as geologist at the age of 21. After writing up the results of his work at the University of Sydney, he went south again with Scott's British Antarctic (*Terra Nova*) Expedition 1910–13. With the Northern Party he spent a year working at Cape Adare and then, when moved by ship to Terra Nova Bay, became marooned for another winter when ice prevented the vessel from picking them up at the end of the season. There they were forced to spend one of the hardest winters ever endured by polar men, for they lived in a snow cave, suffering great privation, until they were able to undertake the long and gruelling overland journey back to base in the following summer. Priestley's story of their ordeal is told in his book *Antarctic adventure*.

Of his scientific work perhaps his monograph on the Archaeocyathinae and the large volume *Glaciology* (joint author Charles Wright) are the most important. The latter was an early classic work to which the discipline owes a remarkable debt.

Not long after his return from the expedition the first World War broke out, during which Priestley served as Adjutant of the Wireless Training Centre and with the 46th Division Signal Company in France, where he was awarded the Military Cross. Later he wrote the official history of the Signal Service in France and the story of the 46th Division in his book *Breaking the Hindenburg Line*.

When at last, in 1920, he was able to continue his studies he went to Cambridge. There he joined with Frank Debenham (also of the *Terra Nova* expedition) to promote the foundation of the Scott Polar Research Institute as a memorial to Scott and his ill-fated companions. For the next eleven years he remained in Cambridge where he became a Fellow of Clare College and, for much of the time, Secretary of the University Board of Research Studies. In 1934 he became the first Secretary-General of the Faculties.

This was followed by three years as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, and fourteen years as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham where he is remembered as an outstanding Vice-Chancellor. There he remained, by request, beyond the age of retirement, until 1952.

The following year saw him appointed Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service until 1955, when he became Director of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (now the British Antarctic Survey) until 1958. Thus he came back to polar work during the great period of expansion in the International Geophysical Year. In 1956 when President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, he chose "Twentieth century man in Antarctica" as the subject of his presidential address. In the following year, at the age of 70, he joined H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh for part of his Commonwealth tour in the Royal Yacht and, transferring with him to the R.R.S. *John Biscoe*, was able to see the work in progress at a number of British Antarctic stations. Two years later he went back to the Antarctic once more as British Observer with the United States expedition, and was able to revisit Ross Island and Victoria Land which he had known so well fifty years earlier.

During 1959-60 he remained active as the first Chairman of the Royal Society's British National Committee on Antarctic Research, and from 1961 to 1963 was President of the Royal Geographical Society.

His death has saddened an immense circle of friends and collaborators, young and old, in particular those of the university and polar communities. Even in his latter years, when finally incapacitated by old war injuries, he delighted in keeping in touch with the young men who go each year to the Antarctic; they will remember him as a lively, amusing and interesting contact with the past, a man with whom they could feel in sympathy despite the great disparity in age.

Priestley was awarded the Polar Medal and Bar, the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Medal, and was knighted in 1949. His wife Phyllis Boyd, a New Zealander whom he married in 1915, died in 1961. He leaves two daughters. A memorial service was held in Tewkesbury Abbey, in his home town, on 3 July 1974.

VIVIAN E. FUCHS