

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ZEALAND ANTARCTIC SOCIETY

# ANTARCTIC

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Inhospitable Coasts:  
The Balleny Islands

Photo Essay: Five Decades  
in the Polar Regions





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## ANTARCTIC

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Professor Peter Barrett PM, NZAM, 2008

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#### IS THIS YOUR LAST ISSUE OF ANTARCTIC MAGAZINE?

With the staged implementation of the Society's new website [antarcticsociety.org.nz](http://antarcticsociety.org.nz) since August 2017, the membership and subscriber database is now fully web-based. Commencing 30 June, many members will be receiving renewal reminders for annual membership. In order to continue receiving issues of *Antarctic*, your membership will need to be fully paid. See page 31 for how to renew your membership on-line at [antarcticsociety.org.nz/my-account/](http://antarcticsociety.org.nz/my-account/).



**Cover photo:** Tourists play on ice floe beneath arched iceberg, Petermann Island.  
*Photo by Colin Monteath / Hedgehoghouse.com.*

**Photo above:** Adélie penguin rests on iceberg, Bransfield Strait, Antarctic Peninsula, 2010.  
*Photo by Colin Monteath / Hedgehoghouse.com.*

## From the Editor

South from New Zealand are several island groups within the territory of New Zealand. In our lead article this issue, David Harrowfield takes us to *Inhospitable Coasts: The Balleny Islands*; recounting some of their history and geography, and introducing us to the science that has been undertaken there. He estimates that barely more than 500 people have visited, making this one of New Zealand's lesser known locations. This is part I of the article, which will be continued in our December issue with part II, which will look at landings for science, education, and adventure.

Many Antarcticans are familiar with the photographs and books of Colin Monteath, and *Antarctic* is pleased to bring you a photo essay of *Five Decades in the Polar Regions*. This roll-out feature shows some of Colin's stunning photographs, from the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

The government wishes to re-write New Zealand's Statement of Strategic Interest in Antarctic. An article from MFAT invites you to *Have your Say about how we express New Zealand's interests in Antarctica*.

The March 2018 issue of *Antarctic* included a back-cover look at some book dedications. One of these was "To the boy scouts of the world who enshrine the best spirit of adventure." An article by John Thomson introduces us to Chief Scout James Marr, and Eagle Scout Paul Siple, in *Boy Scouts in Antarctica: James Marr and Paul Siple*.

An article by Margaret Bradshaw and the Editor outlines the *Society Oral History Project: The Mt Erebus Disaster*, in which 14 people who led the way in the recovery of passengers and crew from the Air New Zealand DC10, which crashed into the lower slopes of Mount Erebus in 1979, will be interviewed. **Your donation is invited to assist with expenses for this project.**

In Society news, there is a brief look at *Renewing your Membership* on-line at <https://antarcticsociety.org.nz/my-account/>. There will be no printed invoice renewals this year.

You are invited to branch *Midwinter Dinners* at Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury branches. Regular branch programme updates are also found on the Society's website at <https://antarcticsociety.org.nz/events/>.

*Behind the Story* expands on a comment within Colin Monteath's photo essay, and explores what happened to Priestley House, a green fibreglass building on Deception Island. Our final, back-cover piece is a poem from Bob Norman. *A Toast to "Past Parties": Antarctic Mid-Winter Celebration* remembers earlier times in Antarctica, and raises a glass to past parties.

Lester Chaplow

## From the President

Firstly, I want to offer a huge thank you from the National Council, and on behalf of the Society, to our patron Peter Barrett, who led the website subcommittee team as the new Society website was created from scratch with Meta Digital, two NZAS councillors and other specialists last year. He continued in that role to iron out the settling-in challenges over these early months of use, changing habits, processes and realisations. This has been a massive task, undertaken by Peter with care, courage, and professionalism. The original website subcommittee has now been formally disestablished by Council. The various communications platforms (website, Facebook, and *Antarctic* magazine) will now be working in collaboration in a new Communications Group: Christoph Kraus (website content), Gabriella Roldan (Facebook), and Lester Chaplow (*Antarctic* Editor). In addition, and in case you are unaware, Rebecca Pyne is now our Membership manager.

I am very pleased to advise that the National Council has agreed that our National Speaker for 2018 will be Frank Graveson, who is an Auckland Branch Member, NZAS Life Member, Polar Medallist and Antarctic dog handler from back in the day. Frank will make presentations in each of the Branches later this year. He is a wonderful storyteller, with great Antarctic stories to tell. Our Antarctic Oral Histories also continue apace, thanks to Margaret Bradshaw and her tireless coordination efforts and enthusiasm. We lose Lester Chaplow as our longstanding Treasurer soon, after a decade or so of reconciling the Society accounts and ensuring that the Society's financial affairs were, and are, legal and constitutional. Thank you, Lester.

The next Council Meeting in June will include the second focus workshop – this time it will involve reviewing and refreshing the Society's Strategic Plan. All three Branch midwinter dinners will be held during June – have fun, enjoy the speakers and the networking opportunities with others, whether Antarcticans or those who just like to be involved in all things Antarctic.

Linda Kestle

# Inhospitable Coasts: The Balleny Islands

By David L. Harrowfield

There is something special about the Balleny Islands, and they have long captured the imagination of mariners, scientists, and visitors. These peri-Antarctic islands have a mystique and remoteness not evident in many places around the continent.

But what has actually been the attraction for expeditions of various forms to such a remote locality for almost 180 years?

From an analysis of 70 expeditions this article hopes to answer the question. A brief update includes the first landing (in which the location is questioned), an estimate for the total number landed, and comments concerning the activity of various expeditions.

Until the late A. G. E. Jones analysed the only surviving logbook for the first expedition, that by John Balleny in February 1839, it had been generally accepted the historic first landing was made on Borradaile Island. The new interpretation by Jones was not available to historians, such as New Zealand's L. B. Quartermain, and records such as in the *Antarctic Pilot* have continued to accept the earlier account, first published in November 1839.

The numbers of total landings and of people who have landed can be only estimates. Little data was found for 14 seasons (1998–2003, 2006–13) and some visits may not have been recorded or reported. IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators), to which details are supplied by members each season, in 1991 had some landings recorded. However, not all visits to the islands may have been notified. IAATO records for 1998 to 2003 are presently unavailable electronically.

For many years it has been generally accepted that there have been few landings on any of the islands, and it is suggested here that the number of persons who have landed is higher than previously thought.

*The Antarctic Chronology* by Headland<sup>1</sup> has been particularly useful, as has been the excellent report by Quartermain<sup>2</sup>, compiled for the New Zealand Reconnaissance Party 1963–4. Other sources include the National Institute for Water and Atmospheric

Research (NIWA), IAATO, the New Zealand Antarctic Society periodical *Antarctic*, and “Antarcticans” familiar with the islands.

## The Balleny Islands

The Ballenys, located in the Southern Ocean between latitudes 66° 15' and 67° 10' S, at longitudes 162° 15' to 164° 45' E, straddle the Antarctic Circle (66° 33.638' S) and form a 160 km chain trending north-west to south-east. In area they cover 400 km<sup>2</sup> and are 2,300 km due south of Bluff, New Zealand and about 300 km from the Antarctic continent.

The islands lie along a transform fault in the Antarctic plate south of a triple junction that involves the New Zealand, Australian, and Antarctic plates.<sup>3</sup> They are volcanic, and include olivine basalt lava flows, tuffs, and scoria, and are probably Cenozoic in age.<sup>4</sup> Earthquakes have been recorded on occasion, including on 31 December 1964 and on 25 March 1998 (a magnitude 8.1 tremor).

From north to south three large islands – Young, Buckle, and Sturge – are all similar in size. Several smaller islands include Row (name assigned by the *Discovery 2* expedition), and Borradaile near the south end of Young Island. South-east of Cape McNab on Buckle Island are Sabrina Islet and Sabrina Island (also known as Chinstrap Island), each of which was previously referred to as an “islet” and, because of their near proximity to one another, have now been shown on charts as one.

Elsewhere, dramatic “pinnacles” and “stacks” of basalt include Seal Rocks, at the north end of Young Island; the 60 m Beale Pinnacle near Cape Beale on the south-east of Borradaile Island; Eliza Cone near the south-west end of Buckle Island; and Scott Cone near the south-east end of Buckle Island. South-east of Sabrina Island is “The Monolith”, an impressive 79 m pillar of lava, linked by fallen rock to the end of a large block. Others are at the south-east corner of Sturge Island and in other localities.

Young Island has a relatively flat, plateau-like surface and Freeman Peak rises to an elevation of 991 m.



Passing the east coast of Buckle Island, January 2018. *Photo: Justin Gilligan.*

Buckle Island rises to 945 m, and Sturge Island, with Brown Peak, has the highest point of the islands, at 1524 m. Previously, heights have been inaccurate and these have been corrected through surveying and availability of modern technology.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the coastline for all the islands is characterised by sheer cliffs and bluffs of rock capped by ice, magnificent ice falls, high ice cliffs and crevassed piedmont glaciers. Very few areas have ready access and many areas offshore are un-surveyed and dangerous for navigation.

### Landing places

With exception of the narrow shingle spit on Borradaile Island, beaches are small, have little space, are difficult to access and generally have a veneer in a size range of cobbles to extremely large boulders. Other landing places that have been used are on the north-east corner of Young Island; the north side of Row Island, south-east of Young Island; south of Eliza Cone by Buckle Island; on a spit extending from the end of a barrier beach with two levels, by the cove on Sabrina Island; below “The Monolith” pinnacle; on a cobble and boulder beach at the north edge of Sabrina Island;

and if calm, ice-free waters are present, possibly on the north edge of the adjacent Sabrina Islet, although the shore here has huge basalt boulders; and on a shingle tombolo off Cape Smyth at the south-east extremity of Sturge Island.

The islands are administered by New Zealand, because they lie between the 160th degree of east longitude and the 150th degree of west longitude.<sup>6</sup> When New Zealand commenced administration, Norwegian whaling was already established in Antarctica and licenses for whaling around the Balleny Islands were issued by New Zealand and an Administrator was appointed.

Considering the remoteness, in 1934 Charles Craw, an officer in the Department of External Affairs, suggested New Zealand’s position may be “seriously prejudiced” and that the islands could have a permanent site that should be occupied, perhaps in the summer.<sup>7</sup> This never eventuated, as there was, in fact, no ground suitable for long-term occupation.

### The first landing

The islands were first seen from the north on 9 February 1839, during Charles Enderby’s sealing

expedition under Captain John Balleny, with two “pleasure yachts”: *Eliza Scott*, a 154 ton schooner; and *Sabrina*, an 84 ton cutter, with Captain Thomas Freeman. John McNab, second mate on the *Eliza Scott*, recorded: “At 4 p.m. saw land distinctly bearing about SW. Two large islands and several smaller ones. At 6 saw a third one to westward . . . ”.<sup>8</sup>

The islands were named after merchants, and Eliza Cone and Scott Cone, two volcanic “stacks”, perhaps named by the Admiralty, for Balleny’s vessel.

Balleny’s log for the *Eliza Scott* records the land was ice-bound and that on 12 February he landed with Freeman from the *Sabrina*’s cutter, where there was, “**three or four feet of beach**” [author’s emphasis].<sup>9</sup> Balleny recorded that Freeman “was just able to pick up a few stones, **from the bare rocks where the icebergs had broken off** [author’s emphasis], and was thoroughly soaked in doing that” (ibid). The comments for the landing site are significant and this appears to be the first landing south of the Antarctic Circle.

Peter I Øy (Peter I Island) discovered by Admiral Thaddeus Bellingshausen on 20 January 1821, was the first land discovered south of the Antarctic Circle, but was not landed on until on 2 February 1939, by Norwegians: a century after Balleny and Freeman in the Ballenys.

Meticulous research by the late A. G. E. Jones, which has not been questioned by historians, included a detailed study of Balleny’s navigation data for the *Eliza Scott* (ibid). At the time they skirted around heavy ice, and they had been about half a mile (0.8 km) south-south-east of Buckle Island.

It is often reported that only Freeman only landed on Borradaile Island (66° 32.6' S, 162° 41' E by GPS). However, the outline sketch of the island in Balleny’s log records shows that Freeman and Balleny landed at 6 p.m. on the 12th, on a small beach most likely behind a north-east point on Buckle Island. With the southerly wind and tacking they had time to accomplish their objective, making this landing site likely (ibid). Balleny’s log indicates that on 12 February his latitude and longitude “by account” (dead-reckoning) were 66° 22' S and 167° 49' E. As Jones states, “Balleny would hardly have spent two hours from 4.00 to 6.00 p.m. beyond the ice off Borradaile Island, but could have reached Buckle Island in that time.”<sup>10</sup>

Only Balleny’s record is available, as Freeman, his crew of perhaps 7–8, and the 18 year-old *Sabrina*, were later lost during a gale on the night of 24–25 March, at latitude 50° 09' S, longitude 93° E.

According to Jones, the vessel, known to be unstable, was “seen in distress, burning blue lights and then was seen no more”.<sup>11</sup>

Of interest is volcanic activity (smoke) reported at the time on the northern end of Young Island and again during C. E. Borchgrevink’s British (*Southern Cross*) Antarctic Expedition, on 12 January 1899<sup>12</sup> on Buckle Island, when it was sketched by Australian physicist, Louis Bernacchi. No activity at that place has been observed since then, although it has since been reported on Sturge Island.

There were further sightings of the islands in 1840 (Wilkes), 1841 (Ross), 1850 (Tapsell), 1894 (Bull), 1904 (Scott), and near the end of the “Heroic Era” (1895–1917) when *Aurora*, under Captain Joseph. R. Stenhouse, passed east of the Ballenys. On 22 September 1915 Stenhouse entered in his log:

*Sturge Island (Balleny group):— brg North (True) 90 miles distant. Light N.W. airs with clear, fine weather. Sighted Sturge Island in the morning, bearing due North of us and appearing like a faint low shadow [author’s emphasis] on the horizon. It is good to get a good landmark for fixing positions again and it is good to see that we are making northerly progress, however small. Since breaking away from C[ape] Evans we have drifted (roughly) 705 [nautical] miles [1306 km].*<sup>13</sup>

This observation is interesting, as a similar appearance for the islands has been remarked on by others, such as Bernacchi on 12 January 1899, who reported, “at noon today a faint grey light was seen on the port bow. At one time it looked like cloud . . . ”<sup>14</sup>

### An emerging interest – surveys for science and other activity

There have been numerous surveys undertaken, along with general observations at sea and during rare landings, when samples were collected.

In December 1930 the islands were inspected by scientists on SY *Discovery*, during Sir Douglas Mawson’s, BANZARE (British, Australian, New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition 1929–31), and again on two occasions during the British RRS *Discovery 2* Expeditions (1935–7, 1937–8) when, in 1936 and 1938, in largely ice-free conditions, oceanography and a “running survey” were accomplished.

Surveys without landings, to secure information on the islands and surrounding ocean, then began to be undertaken by several countries.

In late 1947, United States “Operation High Jump”

ships rendezvoused at the Ballenys, and photographs were taken from a sea plane; and in 1952–60 several surveys, including oceanography with soundings, were undertaken by the USSR *Slava* whaling fleet vessel *Komsomolets-23* and the USSR Antarctic Expedition cargo and research vessel *Ob*.

In late March 1956, the *Ob* called at the Ballenys and west of the islands. Three stations were established, with hydrological, geological, and biological data collected. Soundings recorded great depths near Young Island, and to the north-east, rock walls falling almost vertically to the seabed to form a submarine ridge to the north, with depths from 2,000 to 3,000 m.<sup>15</sup>

Further surveys were done in 1958: by *Komsomolets-23* equipped with a helicopter, when large numbers of whales was reported; in 1959; and while the *Ob* in 1960, using “Neptune” equipment, sounded at three stations west of the islands on 9, 22, and 23 February. During her fifth voyage from Mirny Station to the Ballenys, officers recorded depths of 4,000 m.

In October 1959 a party of six, led by Lieutenant R. D. Adams on HMNZS *Endeavour*, mapped ridges on the sea floor, undertook biological and other oceanographic observations, and, during two late-summer cruises, used a proton magnetometer to study the seabed. Further surveys were done on subsequent voyages, during the annual resupply for Scott Base.

Over the next three years, trawling was undertaken by the USSR research vessel *Ivan Nosenke 37*, when fish and other benthic organisms were collected.

In 1966–7 the oceanographic research vessel USNS *Eltanin* conducted magnetic profiles of the seabed around the islands, and sea-bird and other surveys. However, bad weather prevented a planned landing.<sup>16</sup> An investigation of fisheries was undertaken by the United States Antarctic Research Programme (USARP), from the icebreaker USCGC *Burton Island* in 1975–6.

A collaborative expedition of Japan and the USSR in 1980–1, as part of the International Whaling Commission whale assessment voyage with three ships, *Toshi-maru 11*, *Kyo-maru 27*, and *Vdumchivvy 34*, completed a third annual estimate of minke whale stocks. The following season, Russian scientists focused on oceanography, and, in 1986–7, scientists using two ships, *Zubarevo* and *Zukharevo*, carried out a seal survey near the islands: on 9 December 1986 to 7 January 1987, 1,970 crabeater and 172 leopard seals were recorded.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere there was for the Southern Ocean at this time considerable taking of minke whales, fish, and krill.

### NIWA science

New Zealand’s RV *Tangaroa*, built in Norway in 1981, is 70 m long and has a beam of 13.8 m. It is owned by NIWA Vessel Management Ltd, is New Zealand’s only ice-strengthened and dynamically positioned deep-water research vessel, and is well equipped for a range of science.

NIWA in 2001 fully surveyed 6,512 km<sup>2</sup> of seabed surrounding the islands, 70 km of shoreline was fixed, a hydrographic chart was compiled, and, as part of a biodiversity study, which included seven video transects and six dredge samples, 124 species were collected and identified.

In 2003–4 during the 41-day BIORoss cruise, an assessment was made of marine biodiversity and habitat, with five transects from shallow to deep water by trawling, at 49 deepwater sites of 200–750 m and 100–500 m. From 27 macro algal fauna taxa collected, 14 species were new to science. Four seamounts were also studied, and hydrographic surveys were made of shipping lanes.

In 2005–6 when Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) contracted NIWA, hydrographic baseline points, and geological and geophysical data, were collected, in support of New Zealand’s Extended Continental Shelf claim in the Ross Dependency. This involved 13 survey lines.

In February 2015, during a joint Australia–New Zealand Ecosystems 42-day expedition, a survey was undertaken to determine factors influencing the abundance and distribution of humpback whales around the islands. Most of these, with between one and five whales recorded, were east of Young and Buckle Islands. Acoustic monitoring that provided an insight into blue whale behaviour, and visual sightings, also determined the distribution of blue whales. Ten biopsy samples were obtained, along with water samples, and a demersal trawl survey with 18 trawls focused on the Antarctic toothfish (*Dissostichus mawsoni*), when 90 species of fish and invertebrates were also collected. Project Leaders Mike Double (Australia) and Richard O’Driscoll (New Zealand) led the science party. The expedition also included the Ross Sea, as part of the Australian government’s International Whaling Commission’s Southern Ocean partnership.

### Marine resources

After Balleny’s expedition, when only 178 seal skins were unloaded, the United States sealing and whaling

expedition in 1851, on the *Levant* (Captain Mercator Cooper), recorded their visit. However, little sealing appears to have been undertaken. In later years, there was greater emphasis on whaling.

Norwegian whaling expeditions may have visited the Ballenys during several seasons in 1923–30. On one visit, a DH.60 Gipsy Moth aircraft was launched from the Norwegian factory ship *Kosmos* in fine weather on 26 December 1929. No trace of the aircraft with pilot and the medical officer was seen again. The Norwegian government subsequently requested all shipping to keep watch for the aircraft.

Beginning in January 1947, the USSR *Slava* whaling flotilla was the first of four Russian whaling fleets in Antarctica. The first, with the ship *Komsomolets-23*, arrived at the Ballenys in March 1958, and followed with other visits in 1959, in 1960, and in 1965 when a large fleet included a factory ship and 13 catchers.

Japan, with the *Unitaka-maru*, had in 1964–5 fished around the Ballenys, and in 1980–1, in a joint venture with the USSR, three ships were involved in an assessment of minke whales. No records have been found for Russian expeditions to the Ballenys following cessation of the Soviet Union on 25 December 1991.

With increasing interest in the Southern Ocean fishery, monitoring has been undertaken by Royal New Zealand Air Force P-3K2 Orion aircraft, with the first recorded flight taking place in 1997.

Japan, with two ships in 1994–5, focused on krill, with the most recent recorded visits concerning exploitation of marine mammals and fish.

### Further landings

Following the landing by Balleny and Freeman on Buckle Island, 109 years passed before three members of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE), Group Captain Stuart Campbell, naval rating W. Wallace, and Philip Law, achieved on 29 February 1948 a brief first landing on Borradaile Island. Campbell later wrote: “I had time to grab a rock from the beach . . . this I think is the only rock specimen ever collected from the Ballenys, but should assist in determining their general nature and age”.<sup>18</sup> Mawson later examined a collection, suggesting Law had also collected samples.

On 7 March 1949 during the Expéditions Polaires Françaises led by André Frank Liotard and when south of Young Island in fine weather, with seas entirely free of ice, officers on the *Commandant Charcot* (Capitaine Max Douquet) observed: “the relief is only indicated by light shadows [and] is lost in the white sky, drenched in

sunshine” and that “everywhere below ice cliffs, blocks of ice [are] heaped up and tossed about surround the island with an impassable girdle”.<sup>19</sup> Four men landed from a whaler on “the little Sabrina Islet”, where the Adélie penguin colony was found to have 1,500 birds, two emperor penguins were seen on an ice floe, geological and botanical samples were collected, and a detailed survey, including prominent features on the islands, was recorded.

The *Komsomolets-23* on her first visit, on 23 March 1958, circumnavigated Young Island. Sea depths were measured, including in the confined strait between Young and Borradaile islands. A landing was achieved at the north end of Young Island, by ten officers and crew members, including a photographer, on a boulder-strewn beach along the east shore of Cape Ellsworth.

When returning from Mirny Station on the Soviet cargo and research vessel *RV Ob*, useful observations of sea ice and icebergs, referred to as the “Balleny ice mass”, were made by V. I. Shilnikov of the Soviet Antarctic Expedition, who reported “the worst ice conditions occur in the western part of the Balleny ice mass, formed chiefly of nearly stationary old ice fields of local origin”.<sup>20</sup>

A second landing, presumably on the same beach, was made from a *Komsomolets-23* whale catcher on Young Island in 1959, when geological and botanical specimens were collected. A third landing was also made, by whale catcher in 1960.

The French survey was undertaken in good weather. However, at the time of the Soviet expedition the position of Sturge Island was placed by the officers further south and also reduced in recorded size. Changes were again made to Sturge Island and also to Buckle Island, during a survey by the *Ob* in February 1960, when officers, as a result of a radar survey and using a plane table, further amended the position and configuration of Sturge Island and the east coast of Buckle Island, which was, in the main, correctly shown on the charts.<sup>21</sup>

It is important to note that valuable aerial photographs had been taken by sea plane during the United States Navy Antarctic Developments Project “Operation High Jump” (1946–7), although these were unlikely to have been available in 1960. In 2017 detailed aerial photographs were taken during the Antarctic Circumnavigation Expedition (2016–7). ¶

*This is Part I of the article. Part II will be in our December 2018 issue, together with all references. References for the above are available from the Editor on request.*

# Photo Essay: Five Decades in the Polar Regions

New Zealand Antarctic Society Life Member Colin Monteath has worked for 31 summer seasons in Antarctica since 1973, and four in the Arctic. Over ten summers (1973–83) Colin worked for the New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme – from 1975 as NZARP’s Field Operations Officer, co-ordinating the logistics for the field science programme.

Part of Colin’s role during these years was to maintain the Kiwi dogs at Scott Base and to help train the winter-over dog handlers by undertaking spring journeys with them. He took part in three US–NZ–French expeditions to the summit of Mt Erebus (1975, ’76 and ’78), making a descent into the inner crater in 1978.

Colin was awarded a QSM and the New Zealand Special Service Medal (Erebus) for his role in helping to co-ordinate the recovery operation following the 1979 Air New Zealand crash on Ross Island. He acted as a guide for HRH Prince Edward during his Antarctic tour in 1982. Colin has been involved in a number of new mountaineering routes and first ascents on Antarctic peaks in the Transantarctic Mountains. In 1988, he became the first New Zealander to reach the highest summit in Antarctica, Vinson Massif in the Ellsworth Mountains.

In 1983–84, Colin went freelance as a writer and photographer specialising in the polar and mountain regions. Ever since, he has also worked as an expedition leader, lecturer, and guide for a number of polar adventure tourism companies, such as Adventure Network, Lindblad Travel, Society Expeditions, Quark Expeditions, and Aurora Expeditions. This has also involved guiding on numerous peaks on the Antarctic Peninsula, and he has completed two successful crossings of South Georgia on Shackleton’s route. A private-ship-based expedition in 1990 into the Ross Sea enabled Colin to climb in the Dry Valleys and to make an ascent of Mt Erebus on Shackleton’s party’s first ascent route from Cape Royds.

In 1991, on his first of four seasons in the Arctic, Colin was aboard the Soviet nuclear-powered icebreaker *Sovetsky Soyuz* that completed the fourth surface vessel transit to the Geographic North Pole then went on



Colin Monteath.

across the Arctic Ocean to complete the first surface traverse, ending up in far-eastern Siberia. A transit of the North-East Passage followed.

In 1993, with three dog teams, Colin skied across the Greenland icecap on an East–West traverse. In 2002, he was a member of a Kiwi team that made a 29-day ski traverse of the Alaskan peak, Denali, North America’s highest summit. In the spring of 2008, as a member of a four-person international team, Colin skied across the Norwegian Arctic island of Svalbard. He has taken part in mountain journeys and climbing expeditions all over the world, including 21 expeditions in the Himalayas. Colin’s most recent expeditions have been some journeys in remote parts of Mongolia: climbing the country’s highest peak, a bitterly cold traverse riding reindeer through taiga forest and mountains close to the Siberian border, and a camel journey across the Gobi Desert.

Based in his Christchurch Hedgehog House polar and mountain reference book and image library, Colin produces writing and images that have been used in magazines and books internationally for decades.

Colin has published 12 books. Those involving the polar regions are the highly acclaimed history book *Antarctica – Great Stories from the Frozen Continent* (1985) (principal photographer), *Wild Ice – Antarctic Journeys* (1990) (co-author), *Antarctica – Beyond the Southern Ocean* (1996), *Hall & Ball – Kiwi Mountaineers – from Mount Cook to Everest* (1997), *Under a Sheltering Sky – Journeys to Mountain Heartlands* (2003), *Vanishing Wilderness of Antarctica* (2010), and *Antarctica – Land of Silence* (2010).

Colin is an Honorary Member of the New Zealand Institute of Professional Photographers and a Life Member of the New Zealand Alpine Club.

*In the following pages, Colin gives the background to 10 of his photos from his five decades in the polar regions, adding rich explanations to each.* ❧

1970s





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## 2000s

### G. Elephant seal weaners sparring in front of whaling era hulk, Grytviken, South Georgia, 2000.

I first went to South Georgia in 1983, the year after the Argentine invasion, so I witnessed the aftermath of an ugly conflict: the resultant oil pollution, warships in Cumberland Bay, British soldiers in barbed-wire bunkers on King Edward Point, a crashed helicopter on Crean Glacier, fresh graves and memorials... then, for the next 20 years, patrolling Gurkha troops. Thankfully, you still can't fly to South Georgia. However, the island has seen much change since the war, most of it highly positive: the re-starting of quality science, the active monitoring of fisheries, the minimising of albatross by-catch, the dismantling and export of much of Grytviken whaling station, the burying of asbestos, the draining of oil tanks, and the creation of a museum – by far the best in Antarctica. The recent eradication of rats and reindeer has been a crucial step in ongoing environmental management. An increase in seaborne tourism, both by cruise ship and by yacht, has fostered an appreciation for the island's uniqueness while producing a rich catalogue of art, writing, and photography. There has also been an explosion of exciting private adventures, with new climbs and ski traverses. There have also been regular crossings of the island on Shackleton's route, helping to keep polar history alive. I've guided this traverse three times, twice successfully. The failed attempt turned back near The Trident after a frightening windstorm, a scary crevasse encounter, and a wet night huddled with hundreds of belching elephant seals in Possession Bay. As we limped back to the ship next morning with our tails between our legs our weary little party was left in no doubt who is in charge here on this jewel in the polar crown.

### H. Chinstrap penguins come ashore, Baily Head, Deception Island, South Shetland Islands, 2006.

I've landed on Deception Island most summers since 1983, sometimes up to five times per season on the way to or from the Antarctic Peninsula. With its reputation for foul weather and its bleak volcanic landscape I often dreaded entering Neptune's Bellows to anchor in Whalers Bay. But, almost without exception, something unusual, dangerous (volcanic eruptions), or very beautiful happened during my time on this famous sunken caldera – even if it meant simply honouring Sir Hubert Wilkins (Australia's most famous polar explorer) and his pioneering 1935 fixed-wing flight from the black-sand beach. One summer I was stunned by the apparent theft of a large green fibreglass building near Biscoe House that had been ripped from its foundations. Whalers Bay is the only place I've flipped an empty Zodiac. I was caught in a ferocious williwaw, forcing me to dive down from under the pontoon then climb up on the upturned engine to lie on the hull while being blown out into the bay. (I was rescued by Russian crew who, thankfully, saw me flip while visiting the New Zealand square rigger *Tradewind*.) Landing on Baily Head on the outer rim of Deception with its notorious pounding surf and undertow was often "sporting" in the extreme, though always worth it, as the beach is a gateway to an amphitheatre of 200,000 breeding pairs of chinstraps.

## 2010s

### I. Adélie penguin rests on iceberg, Bransfield Strait, Antarctic Peninsula, 2010.

When photographing penguins on ice it is surprisingly difficult to find a clean backdrop. When they are in a group on an iceberg the surface is often covered with yellow guano streaks. It is even harder to find a lone bird on the ice.

This image, originally in colour, has been used on the cover of several books. I have guided two seasons on the Motor Yacht *Itasca* (crew of ten), an ice-strengthened luxury vessel (a converted Dutch tug) currently owned by an Italian family. But I could not persuade the Italians to cross the Drake with us, so we waited for them to fly in to the South Shetlands, a concept I dislike intensely, especially given the foul weather patterns that prevail there. (One Chilean passenger aircraft crashed in bad weather on nearby Nelson Island, killing all ten aboard). With time on our hands for a few days, we explored around the coastline, and there, in the most unlikely of places, we came around a fog-shrouded corner to find this beautifully carved berg with its lone stowaway.

### J. Mt Erebus from an ice-choked Ross Sea, 2015.

Early March is a beautiful time to be in the Ross Sea. But by then the Southern Ocean is rapidly shutting down for winter, the sea is freezing up fast with vast areas of pancake ice, the air temperature is brisk to say the least – certainly, this is no latitude for error if one is still operating there on a ship. I've worked on a number of different ships in the Ross Sea, such as the *Lindblad Explorer*, but three of them in particular stand out: *Frontier Spirit*, *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, and *Marina Svetava*, in part because they each had helicopters aboard. The helicopters enabled us to take passengers high into the Transantarctic Mountains in places such as Cape Hallett and Coulman Island, and even briefly into the Dry Valleys. They have also enabled us to reach McMurdo Station and Scott Base when the channel is blocked by ice. Importantly, we have been able to use the helos to fly out in front of the ship to radio back to the bridge the best course through heavy pack ice. In 1990, the first time a cruise vessel was scheduled to enter the Ross Sea twice in one season, Mike McDowell and I decided to get off the ship on the first southerly leg and rejoin it at the end of the second voyage. We took 12 months' food and fuel in case the ship didn't come back. And we took our own helicopter and a two-man Japanese natural history film crew (including Mitsuaki Iwago – the Japanese equivalent of David Attenborough). The helicopter enabled us to climb in the Asgard and Olympus ranges. Standing on top of Brunhilde we realised that we were the only two individuals in the entire Transantarctic Mountains. Later, we climbed Erebus by the route taken by the first to climb the mountain, the party from Shackleton's 1907–9 expedition, from Cape Royds. Antarctica's greatest gift is silence, and it is surely a sacred land to be cherished at all costs.

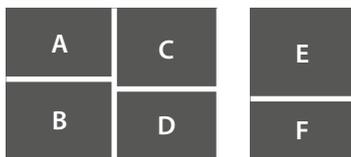


1980s



2000s





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## 1970s

### A. Kiwi dogs rest in front of Captain Scott's *Terra Nova* hut, Cape Evans, Ross Island, 1976.

Part of my job as Field Operations Officer for the New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme (1975–83) was to manage the Kiwi dogs at Scott Base. In early October I'd go to Scott Base with the new "doggo" to undertake a training period with the out-going winter-over dog handler. It is the coldest time of year in McMurdo Sound, but a very beautiful one, with a low-swinging sun creating a colourful mosaic of light and shadows. Some journeys stand out, such as the one to White Island when the temperature dropped to -54°C, making it almost impossible for the dogs to turn into the slightest breeze. On another we charged up the Blue Glacier under the Royal Society Range; then, in another year, there was a memorable adventure up from Cape Evans onto the slopes of Erebus and an attempt to take a husky to the summit. On the way down we were caught by a southerly, resulting in an epic feat to get the polar tent pitched, desperately belaying the apex of the tent from the sledge. Inside at last and with the Primus chugging away it still took hours to warm our fingers. Next morning in a whiteout we were lucky not to hurtle over the lip of Barne Glacier on the run down to Cape Royds. These journeys taught skills and fostered confidence in a way that no field manual ever could.

### B. Kiwi geochemist Werner Giggenbach abseils into the inner crater of Mt Erebus, 1978.

Living under Erebus for ten summers at Scott Base (1973–83) I had instilled in me by the volcano an aura of sacredness in the same way that other powerful mountains have in the Himalaya and Patagonia. So it was a privilege to help out on three multinational expeditions near the summit, which were led by Kiwi–USARP scientist Phil Kyle and which included scientists from New Zealand, USA, Japan, and France (famed volcanologist Haroun Tazieff). It was on the last trip, in 1978, that I abseiled into the inner crater to test our rope system. After I was hauled out, Werner made the descent, as he was determined to get gas samples from fumaroles close to the lava lake. That Erebus erupted while he was in there is a much longer story...

## 1980s

### C. The deckchair man – asleep on the Amundsen Sea, 1985.

My first exposure to Antarctic tourism was in the 1970s when we took a dog team up to Cape Royds to meet *MS Lindblad Explorer*. Baden Norris was aboard, the first Kiwi government "rep". In 1983, while still working for DSIR Antarctic Division, Lindblad flew me to Punta Arenas, Chile, to join a ship heading for the Ross Sea so that they could make sure they had the Ross Island historic hut keys aboard in case the ship couldn't reach Scott Base. It was during this "semi-circumnavigation" voyage that I met Alan Gurney, Mike McDowell, Dennis Puleston, and Keith Shackleton, who were destined to play pivotal roles in creating the standards for lecturing, guiding, and Zodiac work with seaborne tourism in both polar regions. This was an era when the only other tour vessel working in Antarctica was the *World Discoverer*, a great rival for the *Explorer*. Planning to go freelance in 1984, I was offered a job by Lindblad, so it was on subsequent voyages that I got to know characters such as Alan Graham-Collier, (a World War II RAF Lancaster bomber pilot). Alan had genuinely fallen asleep on the deckchair when I tiptoed out to take the image, one that was later used in a *National Geographic* magazine feature on Antarctica. Later, upon dining in a New York restaurant

Alan was approached by the waiter who asked, "Excuse me, sir, but you're not that fellow in *National Geographic*, are you?" After five very different voyages to Antarctica as passengers Alan and his wife Patricia wrote a lovely book, *Antarctic Odyssey*.

### D. Summit ridge, second-highest peak in Antarctica: Mt Shinn, Ellsworth Mountains, 1988.

While working for NZARP I'd spent ages planning the Kiwi component for the USARP expedition to the Ellsworth Mountains. So, at the last minute, it was a huge disappointment not to be able to join this exciting science venture. In 1988, however, I worked for Adventure Network International as a guide. Early in the season, one group of clients cancelled, so, with the DC6 and Twin Otter flights paid for, Mike McDowell, Greg Mortimer, and I took off and climbed Vinson Massif, the first Kiwi and Australians to summit Antarctica's highest peak. Soon after, Greg and I climbed a new route on Mt Shinn. It was one of the coldest climbing days I've ever experienced in Antarctica. Greg, originally a geologist with NZARP, didn't need much convincing to crampon along this ridge just to pick up a rock. Later that season I guided an ANI group down the spine of the Antarctic Peninsula as far as Rothera, leapfrogging from island to island in a Twin Otter aircraft.

## 1990s

### E. Zodiac pushes through pack ice into Curtiss Bay, Antarctic Peninsula, 1995.

The 1980s and '90s were exciting decades to work with seaborne Antarctic tourism, in part because there were few ships operating. My own involvement with the industry spanned 1983–2015, but the early years were the best, for there were so many bays and small islands to explore that were unnamed in the *Antarctic Pilot*, and must have been rarely visited by government expeditions, if at all. The vastness of East Antarctica in particular was wide open for exploratory voyages. I worked with Australian Mike McDowell as he set up Quark Expeditions using Soviet hydrographic vessels (50 pax + 20 crew + 5 staff), and later pioneered the use of Soviet icebreakers such as *Kapitan Khlebnikov* with its helicopters. After Mike sold Quark I worked with Greg Mortimer and his newly formed Aurora Expeditions, and together we pioneered the concepts of camping ashore with passengers, climbing peaks, crossing South Georgia, and sea-kayaking and diving trips. Ninety-five per cent of the time Zodiac work in Antarctica is relatively easy and safe (there has never been a death with Zodiac operations in Antarctica), but when the Southern Ocean cuts loose I have found it as scary and dangerous as anything I have ever faced among high mountains.

### F. Tabular iceberg rolls over in wind storm, Gerlache Strait, Antarctic Peninsula, 1998.

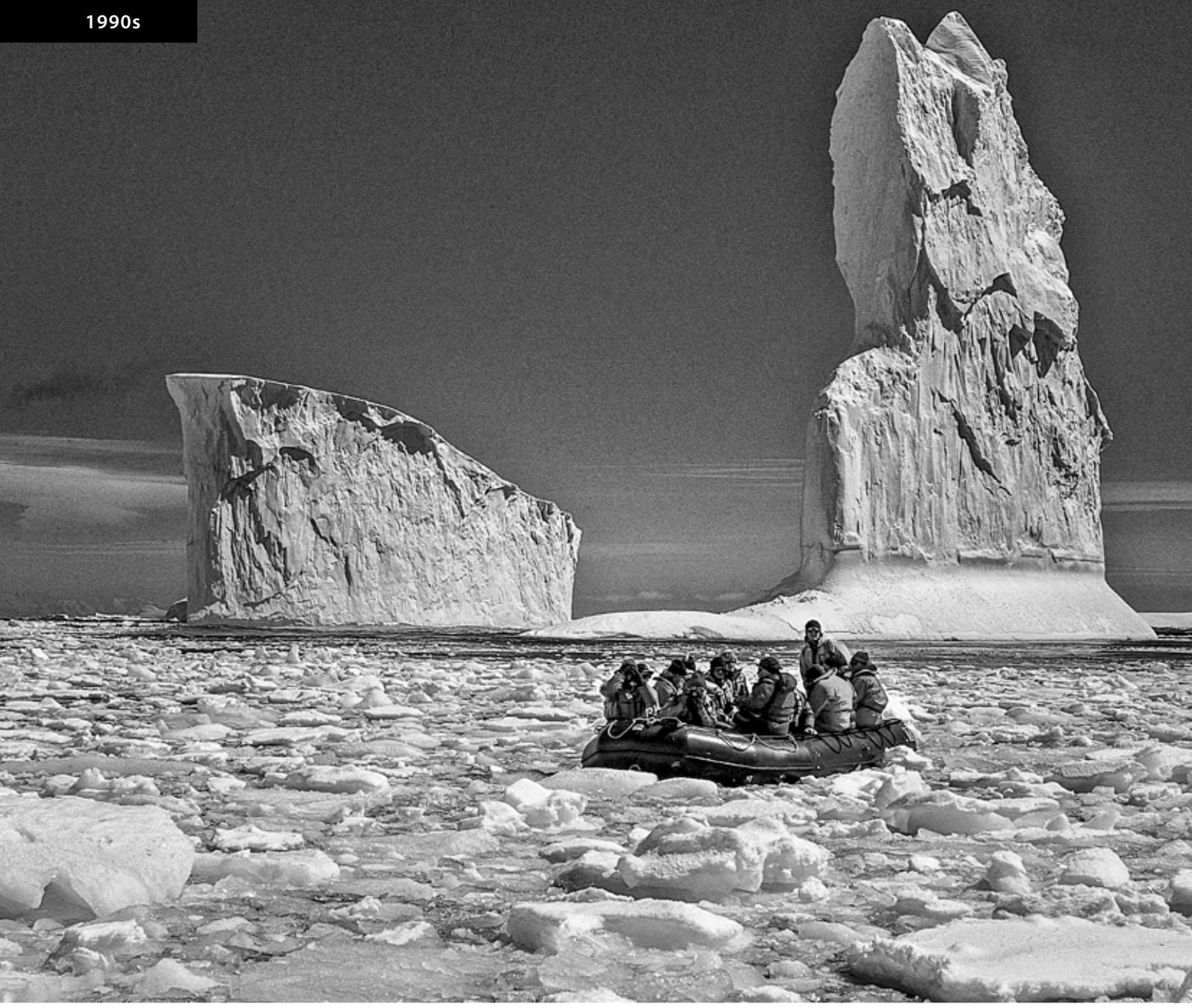
The Antarctic Peninsula is often called the "banana belt" of Antarctica – certainly in recent years, as the climate warms, it is not uncommon to get rain. But, assuredly, it still knows how to blow there, particularly in the open relatively ice-free bodies of water such as the Gerlache – no place to be caught unawares in a yacht or even on a bigger vessel. I have particularly enjoyed photographing ice in its many forms in Antarctica, from frost crystals to icebergs...and I love it when the weather cuts loose...a time to take the camera out, not put it away. But, on this occasion, I tied myself onto a deck windbreak panel with my climbing harness – even then the wind made it hard to keep the camera from vibrating.



2010s



1990s



# Have your say about how we express New Zealand's interests in Antarctica

By Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

New Zealand has significant and enduring strategic interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. These include peace, security, and effective governance in Antarctica, together with environmental, scientific, conservation, reputational, and economic interests. In 2002 the government published a Statement of Strategic Interests in Antarctica articulating these interests.

We think it is timely to refresh understanding of New Zealand's enduring interests in Antarctica and to express them in "plain English", including how New Zealand will support and promote those interests.

A draft "plain English" Statement of New Zealand's Interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has been prepared (and a copy is printed here). You are invited to comment on this draft.

Relevant documents are available at: [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/environment/antarctica/newzealandinterests](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/environment/antarctica/newzealandinterests), including:

- the 2002 Statement of Strategic Interest in Antarctica,
- the proposed "plain English" version.

Comments may be sent until 30 July 2018. Please email comments to [antarctica@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:antarctica@mfat.govt.nz), or post to: Environment Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Private Bag 18-901, Wellington.

There will also be opportunities to discuss the proposed statement at meetings of the Antarctic Society, in Wellington and Christchurch in July. Dates and locations will be published on the Antarctic Society website. 

## Proposed "plain English" statement of New Zealand's interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean

New Zealand is committed to the responsible stewardship of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean for the benefit of present and future generations.

### Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are important to New Zealand because:

- We value a safe and secure region to the south of New Zealand.
- New Zealand has maintained a claim to the Ross Dependency since 1923 and is one of the twelve original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959.
- We want to protect Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science.
- Understanding the role of Antarctica in global systems will help us improve New Zealand's resilience to climate change and other environmental challenges.
- New Zealand values a healthy and productive Southern Ocean and is committed to protecting its biodiversity.
- New Zealand is the Gateway to the Ross Sea region and our ecosystems are connected to Antarctic and the Southern Ocean.

### To support these interests, New Zealand will:

- Prioritise the environmental protection of Antarctica and follow best practice in our engagement in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.
- Support science that contributes to understanding the role of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in global systems and the impact of global environmental changes on Antarctica.
- Ensure Scott Base is fit for future generations and air and maritime assets are capable of operating in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.
- Strengthen the Antarctic Treaty System to ensure the impacts of human activity are limited, Antarctica's value as a place for science is prioritised, and international rules governing all actors and activities in Antarctica are implemented.
- Apply precautionary and ecosystem approaches to the conservation and sustainable management of living marine resources in the Southern Ocean.
- Continue to be an international leader in efforts to eliminate whaling and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in the Southern Ocean.
- Be a leader in the implementation of the Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area, and the establishment, protection and management of representative special areas in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.
- Tell the story of New Zealand's connection to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, through science, environmental protection, conservation, heritage and logistical support.
- Strengthen Christchurch's position as the international gateway to the Ross Sea region, ensuring we provide high-quality services to and collaboration with other nations.

# Boy Scouts in Antarctica: James Marr and Paul Siple

By John Thomson

**A**ntarctica has certainly been the making of many men. One trip, and lives have been changed for ever – and careers made.

Take these two interesting and influential men: James Marr and Paul Siple. You may not have heard of them. Marr was a Scot, and Siple an American. They never met, yet their lives were amazingly similar, thanks to a shared background in the Boy Scout movement and invitations to travel to Antarctica.

This is how it happened. After his failed Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition between 1914 and 1917, the restless Sir Ernest Shackleton determined to go back; this he did in 1921 – on the *Quest* Expedition, which among other things aimed to have the first aircraft flying over the continent – by a Kiwi, Roderick Carr.

Shackleton advertised in the London newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, for a Boy Scout to be part of the expedition, and, after a nationwide search, two young men were chosen. One was the 18-year old Scot, James Marr. The second young man, Norman Mooney, was badly affected by sea-sickness – the *Quest* was an unruly vessel – and he could not continue, leaving the expedition at Madeira, one month into the voyage.

Shackleton died suddenly just as the *Quest* arrived at South Georgia, and, while the expedition continued its work under the command of Frank Wild, the aerial ambitions were not realised.

That expedition shaped Marr's future career. A few years later, he joined Captain Frank Worsley in an expedition into the Arctic, serving as biologist and naturalist. It was a private journey, with everyone – crew and scientists – pitching in. Nobody was paid. Apart from Worsley's own account of what he called "the last exploration adventure under sail", there is little record of the journey.

Marr's only reward was publication of a zoological report as part of Worsley's book *Under Sail in the Frozen North*, but the young man was proud of this, as it was his first published scientific paper since competing his MA and BSc degrees at the University of Aberdeen.

Marr had met Worsley – the man who captained Shackleton's ill-fated *Endurance* – on the *Quest* journey, and they became firm friends.

Marr then went south again, four times in fact, between 1927 and 1937, researching the ecology of the southern oceans. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, he was a whaling inspector in the Antarctic. His unrivalled knowledge of the area put him into a key position for the British Royal Navy to influence events in that distant and lonely zone of Cape Horn.

In the early years of the war, one of the greatest dangers to Britain was the operation of German U-boat submarines roaming the oceans. This war on and under the sea had the potential to cut supplies to Britain of vital food and minerals, among other things.

So, an operation was set up to occupy some Antarctic territories: the aim was to deny the German navy access to whaling stations already established; bases from which the Germans hoped to send out packs of U-boats to attack and sink Allied shipping.

The position was highly strategic, giving access to the southern areas of the world's greatest oceans over which often-vulnerable convoys of largely unarmed ships sailed, including troop ships from New Zealand and Australia.

The operation was called Tabarin, and Marr was its Field Commander.

The British problem was to mask the true purpose of their presence in the islands around the Antarctic Peninsula. Marr did this in the guise of scientific study of flora and fauna – genuine-enough research that also concealed the covert operation to occupy the ground and keep the German raiders out.

The scientific cover was also aimed at hiding the wartime purpose from neutral Chile and Argentina, both of which countries disputed British claims to Antarctic territories.

The scientific aspect of Marr's operation, incidentally, after the war, became a civilian operation called the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. In 1962 this became the British Antarctic Survey and is today still the primary British institution involved in scientific research in Antarctica.

Several sites were used in Operation Tabarin, at Deception Island, Port Lockroy, and Hope Bay. Port Lockroy remains today as the hub of the Antarctic tourist trade.

Marr continued a most distinguished career. He had Shackleton to thank for his introduction to Antarctica. Paul Siple had Commander Richard Byrd of the United States Navy.

Byrd – probably inspired by Shackleton’s publicity coup in staging a national contest among Boy Scouts for a position on the *Quest* expedition in 1921 – duplicated the scheme for his 1928 expedition in another part of the continent, where he established the base he called Little America, near the Bay of Whales.

Siple was the chosen one, and he developed to become every bit as influential for American study into Antarctica as Marr was around the Antarctic Peninsula for Britain.

Siple remained at Little America for more than a year – one of 42 men crowded into three prefabricated houses. Byrd, who then believed that he was the first man to fly over the North Pole – a claim that was later disputed over course recalculations – was determined to be first over the South Pole as well.

Later that year in another of his aircraft, the *Floyd Bennett*, named after his late pilot on the North Pole run, Byrd – again the navigator – took off from Little America and headed for the South Pole, 800 miles away.

Siple witnessed the departure and the triumphant return of the determined aviator.

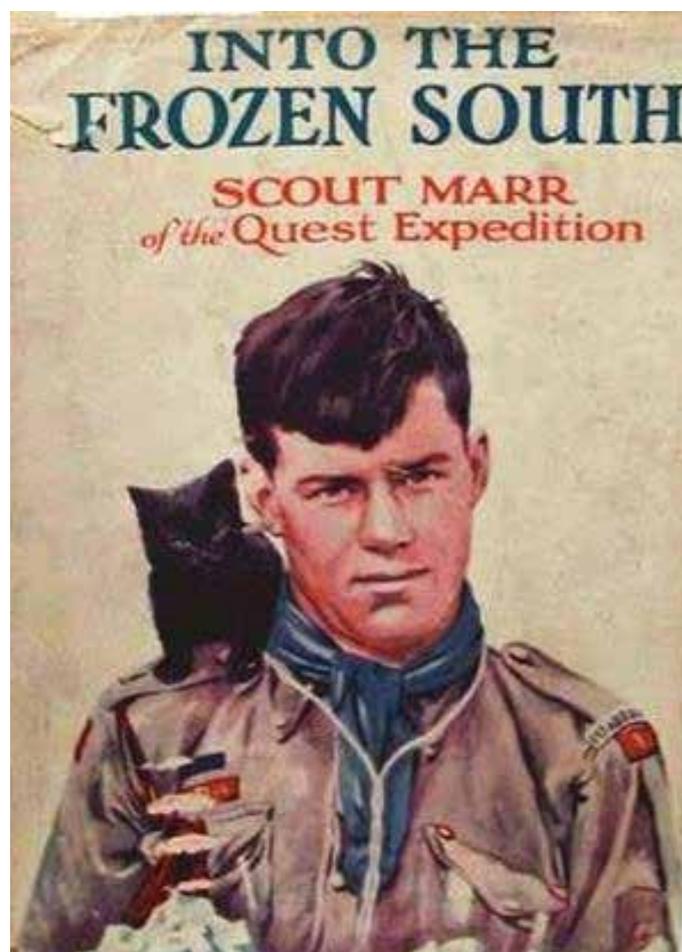
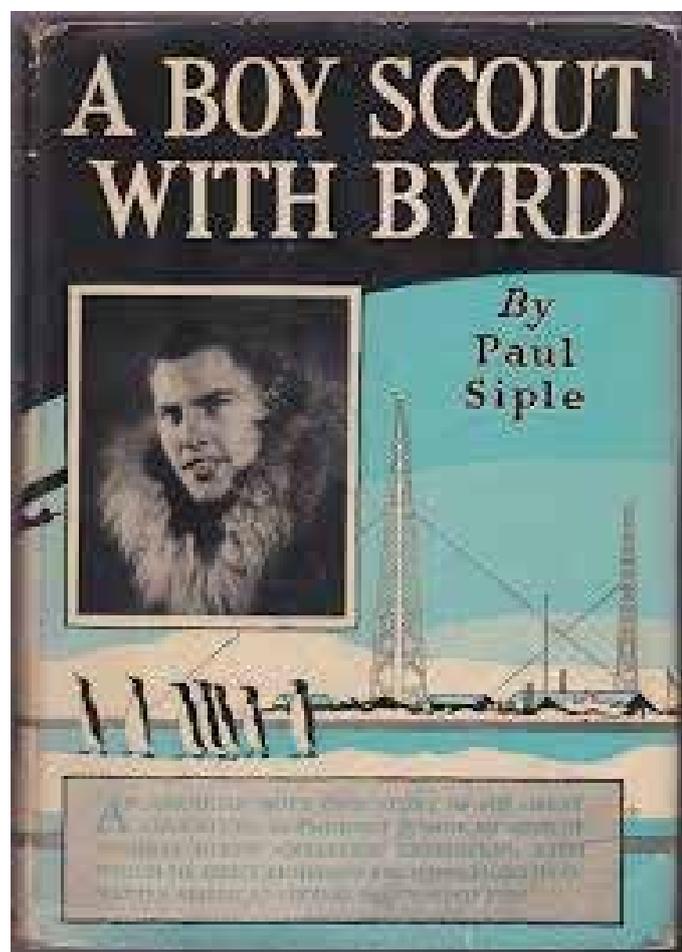
The young man continued his studies and he became one of the United States’ most experienced men on the continent. He is credited with undertaking the first research that led to the development of the wind chill index, among other things, and in 1957 he took his own expedition to the South Pole. That party was the first to winter-over at the South Pole.

Siple has both an island and a mountain named after him. They are on the coast of Marie Byrd Land, which was named by Commander Byrd, later Admiral Byrd, for his wife.

Both Marr and Siple wrote on their experiences from those first expeditions. Marr’s book on Shackleton and the *Quest* from 1921 to 1922 is called *Into the Frozen South*, and Siple’s account of his experiences with Byrd at Little America in 1928–29 is called *A Boy Scout with Byrd*.

If you can find copies of either of these books hold on to them – as with most Antarctic volumes of daring and discovery, they have become increasingly rare.

*John Thomson advises: As far as I am aware, the two men never met . . . (Ed.)* †



# Society Oral History Project: The Mt Erebus Disaster

By Margaret Bradshaw and Lester Chaplow

On 28 November 1979, Air New Zealand Flight TE901, with 257 people on board, crashed into the side of Mt Erebus in Antarctica. There were no survivors. At first no one knew what had happened, although everyone feared the worst when no contact had been made with the plane by the time fuel reserves had run out. A US Hercules leaving McMurdo at 10 p.m. was asked to look out for the plane, and the crew later reported a “dark smear” on the lower slopes of Mt Erebus. Three hours later another Hercules began systematically searching the Erebus area and discovered wreckage on the lower northern slopes of Erebus. The koru emblem on the intact tail section identified the missing flight. A US helicopter, with New Zealanders on board, immediately visited the site, but was unable to land because of poor surface definition and blowing snow. They reported no apparent survivors. Later that morning, when conditions improved a little, three New Zealand climbers were landed to check for signs of life and to assess the site for recovery. They confirmed the lack of survivors and reported that the site was too steep to land helicopters and that a helicopter landing pad would need to be built. A larger team of experienced climbers and surveyors followed and built the helo pad in very difficult terrain. They also marked crevasses, established a surveyed grid for retrieval, flagged and protected remains, and created a large camp for the Police Recovery Team. They remained on the mountain to ensure the safety of the Recovery Team, some of whom had never been on a mountain before. The climbers also helped maintain the huge camp and assisted with the cooking for the two shifts of police teams.

Although the efforts of the Police Recovery Team are well documented and all New Zealanders were interviewed, assessed, and counselled by psychologists, there is no record of the experiences of the initial team on the mountain, or of the effect on the inhabitants at Scott Base and their co-ordination with Antarctic Division staff in Christchurch.

In 2017, the Society applied to the Lottery Grants Board (Lottery Environment and Heritage) for financial assistance to record oral histories of some of the men who worked on the recovery, were at Scott Base at the time, or contributed from New Zealand. It is an ambitious project for the Society, and one that we hope to complete in two years. We are limited in the number of oral histories we can record by the funding available. The Lottery Grants Board has awarded us \$20,000 toward the project, on the condition that the Society raises \$12,000 as “Partnership Funding” for the interviews.

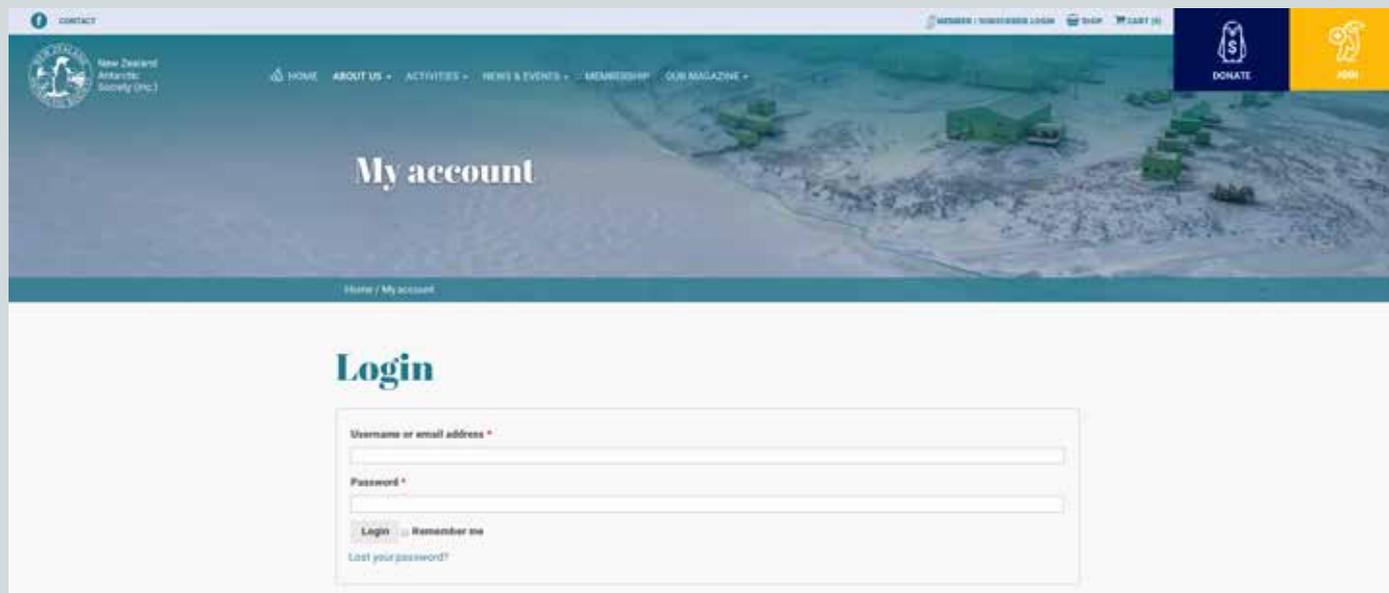
Between March 2018 and the end of March 2020 the Society will contract two well qualified oral historians to interview 14 individuals who were involved in the Erebus operation in various ways.

To date the Society has recorded 51 oral histories of significant Antarcticans, and these are lodged with either the Canterbury Museum (Christchurch) or the Alexander Turnbull Library (Wellington). Subject to certain restrictions, these oral history interviews are available to *bona fide* researchers, and collectively form a unique and valuable New Zealand Antarctic resource. It is our intention to place the Erebus interviews with the same repositories.

A full list of the 51 oral histories recorded to date can be found on our website at [antarcticsociety.org.nz/activities/oral-histories/](http://antarcticsociety.org.nz/activities/oral-histories/). 

We invite you to support this project by making a donation towards the cost. As the Society is a Registered Charity (CC27118), your donation is tax-deductible in New Zealand. In the event that we receive more funds than our current programme requires, we intend to continue with related interviews. Donations may be made on our website from the Donations Tab (please add a note in the “Other Information” box at checkout), or by cheque directly to the Treasurer, New Zealand Antarctic Society, PO Box 404, Christchurch 8140.

# Renewing your Membership



For most members of the Society, 30 June is the annual renewal date for their subscription. Members with a membership expiry date other than 30 June will receive reminders on the anniversary of their joining.

With the Society's new website, the subscription renewal process is a little different, and can now be completed on-line. Also, a fundamental change to previous billing is that unpaid memberships will cease to receive copies of *Antarctic* magazine, and may also miss out on notification of Society events.

Two weeks before your subscription is due to expire, you will receive an e-mailed reminder that your renewal is coming due. If the Society holds an e-mail address for you, **no printed renewal reminder will be sent.**

Members who have previously paid on-line, and who have agreed to allow recurring payments, will have this done on the due date and will receive an email to record the transaction.

Those of you who have paid manually will receive on the due date a "customer renewal invoice" with a link to complete your renewal order by credit or debit card at our secure payments page. Here you can also to check/update your membership details – name, address, phone number, e-mail, Antarctic interests. You can also choose the recurring payment option for the future. If you haven't responded within a week, a reminder is sent.

For any queries please contact the membership team at [membership@antarcticsociety.org.nz](mailto:membership@antarcticsociety.org.nz).

From the homepage, or indeed from anywhere on the website, you can also visit the Society's on-line shop, where recent back copies of *Antarctic* magazine, and other Society publications, postcards, badges, clothing, etc. are available with a members' discount of 10% on all purchases. Membership also entitles you to full access to the Society's on-line archive of the *Antarctic News Bulletins* and *Antarctic* magazines back to 1950.

When renewing your membership, or making a purchase from the shop, please also consider a donation to the Society. The Society is registered as a Charity in New Zealand (CC27118), and any donations you make are tax-deductible in New Zealand.

Payments may be made by credit card, or by direct payment to the Society's bank account. The payment option is offered at checkout, on completion of your order. If choosing the direct payment option, please include your order number with your payment. 



# Behind the Story ...

*“One summer I was stunned by the apparent theft of a large green fibreglass building near Biscoe House that had been ripped from its foundations” (Colin Monteath, Photo 2000s –H).*

That sentence in Colin Monteath’s photo essay caught my eye, and I thought it needed explaining. When asked, Colin said that it had just disappeared, with no sign of storm debris lying around. The foundations and steps remained, and he assumed that the rest of the hut had been removed (dismantled).

The BAS website, in a history of Deception Island, states, “A plastic accommodation building known as Priestley House after Sir Raymond

Priestley ... was erected in Jan 1966 and found to be missing [sic] on 22 Mar 1985 when RRS *John Biscoe* visited.”

And from BASClub newsletter 97, May 2007, Shaun Norman writes:

*Whilst strolling close to the Old Magistrates Hut wreckage I noticed a piece of bright green fibreglass showing through the debris. Without shifting anything I could see that it was part of the front door of “Plastic Deception” in which I lived from December 1966 till Eruption Day in December 1967. So those who “borrowed” plastic Base B left not only the front steps but also the kitchen stove and our front door.*

Colin writes:

*You can see the size of the building, hence my comment that I don’t think it could have been blown away without leaving a trace elsewhere in Whaler’s Bay. But why steal an eroded/brittle fibreglass shell?*

Recent social media comment while preparing this note alleges, “it was removed by Argentina and dumped at sea, in retaliation for the UK’s removal of their base on South Thule”. The Southern Thule Islands are part of the South Sandwich Island group, and the base was at 59° 27’ S – and technically outside Antarctic Treaty protection. It is believed that the debris from the base has now been removed. *Ed. ⚡*



Old whaling station and British Antarctic Survey base, Whalers Bay, Deception Island. Photo © Colin Monteath / Hedgehoghouse.com

# Midwinter Dinners

This is the time of year that the Society's branches celebrate midwinter – the longest night of the Antarctic year and a special moment in the Antarctic calendar. We again invite our members, Antarctic Treaty representatives, and Antarctic friends to join us. Our branch midwinter functions remember past and present parties wintering-over on the continent. We also celebrate the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty to keep the continent for peaceful purposes. We hope to see you at one of our branch events. Please contact the respective branch for more information.

## Midwinter Dinner, Auckland

Thursday, 21 June, 6.30 p.m.

**Venue:** Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, Westhaven

**Guest Speaker:** Jenny Hillman, University of Auckland, on her Antarctic work, including spectacular images from under the ice in McMurdo Sound.

## Midwinter Reception, Wellington

Wednesday, 20 June, 6–8 p.m.

**Venue:** Hunter Common Room, VUW

## Midwinter Dinner, Canterbury

Thursday, 21 June, 6 p.m.

**Venue:** Visions Restaurant, Ara Institute

**Guest Speaker:** John Evans and Richie Hunter share their experiences of a journey across the Ross Ice Shelf in support of a party of glaciologists.

We wish you all the best for your midwinter celebrations.



# New Zealand Antarctic Society Membership

[www.antarcticsociety.org.nz](http://www.antarcticsociety.org.nz)

**You are invited to join; please complete the membership application form at [www.antarcticsociety.org.nz/membership](http://www.antarcticsociety.org.nz/membership).**

The New Zealand Antarctic Society Inc was formed in 1933. It comprises New Zealanders and overseas friends, many of whom have been to the Antarctic and all of whom are interested in some aspect of Antarctic exploration, history, science, wildlife, or adventure.

A membership to the New Zealand Antarctic Society entitles members to:

- *Antarctic*, the quarterly publication of the Society. *Antarctic* is unique in Antarctic literature as it is the only periodical which provides regular and up to date news of the activities of all nations at work in the Antarctic, Southern Ocean, and Subantarctic Islands. It has worldwide circulation.
- Attend meetings, and educational and fun events that are held by the Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury branches of the Society.

The Editor of *Antarctic* welcomes articles from any person on any subject related to the Antarctic, the Southern Ocean, or Subantarctic regions. In particular, articles recounting personal experiences of your time in the Antarctic are welcomed. Articles may be submitted at any time to the Editor at [editor@antarcticsociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@antarcticsociety.org.nz). The Editor reserves the right to decline to

publish an article for any reason whatsoever. Note that all articles will be subject to editorial review before publishing. Please see our advice to contributors and guidelines for authors at [www.antarcticsociety.org.nz/our-magazine](http://www.antarcticsociety.org.nz/our-magazine), or contact the Editor.

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New Zealand

*Antarctic* magazine correspondence, advertising enquiries, and article submissions should be sent to [editor@antarcticsociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@antarcticsociety.org.nz), or to:

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Enquiries regarding back issues of *Antarctic* should be sent to [backissues@antarcticsociety.org.nz](mailto:backissues@antarcticsociety.org.nz), or to the National Treasurer at the above address.

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## COMING IN AUGUST:

The first sunrise after winter at New Zealand's Scott Base is set for 12.19 pm on Sunday, 19 August, with Winfly to follow shortly after.

## CORRECTION:

In our December 2017 issue, vol. 35, no. 4, the photo caption on page 54 referred to W.I. (Bill) Ingham, and Mark Langevad. The people were in fact C.E. (Bill) Ingham, and Mike Langevad. The image credit should have also been C.E. Ingham.

# A Toast to “Past Parties”: Antarctic Mid-Winter Celebration

By Bob Norman

Good gentles all – it hath been put to me  
That on this specially mark’d mid-winter day  
A toast be offered to intrepid men  
Who first did tread Antarctic’s frozen land.

So prithee, list ye to my little song.  
Far south, all doth remain unchanged in peace.  
In timeless, hasteless passage o’er the years  
Wheel by the seasons – nature’s lights and shades.  
So far, and yet so near, the stage is set.  
How long have we stood witness to this scene?  
Why, but a century ago did man  
First etch his footprints on the southern ice,  
So all our understanding of this place,  
Of human lives, quests and discoveries  
Resideth in one small capsule of time.  
But in that instant, so much has been done.  
Heights have been scal’d, fastnesses survey’d,  
Depths have been plumb’d, and knowledge thus enrich’d  
By science, in its manifold endeavours.

Turn back the clock – one hundred years ago  
The first mid-winter party did take place.  
There on “Discovery”, anchored at Hut Point  
Did Robert Falcon Scott and all his men  
Enjoy a banquet fit for Royalty –  
At 6pm the turtle soup came round  
And then the mutton, generously serv’d;  
Plum puddings, pies and cakes made up the fare,  
Washed down by bottles of good dry champagne.  
The Ross Sea winter night did then resound  
With sounds of revelry and much good cheer.  
And in his record, Captain Scott did write :  
“If happiness to-day can surely end  
This first small part of our captivity,  
What room for doubt can there remain that we  
Shall see with triumph all our planned sojourn  
With such contentment and indeed great joy.”

So pass’d the first mid-winter way down south.  
And from that time, did bands of famous men  
Look south, sail’d there and sought the stars,  
And all the other myst’ries of our earth;  
And by example they have taught the world,  
And all who followed them, so many things.  
Not just the sciences we practise now,  
But fortitude, endurance and plain pluck,  
And commonsense – a faculty that’s rare  
To find these days in halls of government!

Oh gentles all, the time is passing by  
And may I thus conclude my humble tale  
In just four stanzas in my tribute so.

In London’s own St Paul’s, ’tis said of Wren:  
“If ye would seek his monuments, look round!”  
We too can speak in similar refrain,  
Our artifacts do ev’rywhere abound.

And past explorers, with their open hearts,  
Have brought to others much of learning’s fount.  
The whole is just the sum of many parts,  
And finally, ’tis little things that count.

So there it is. Speak well where’er ye go  
Of this society of famous men.  
Take note: howe’er the sands of time may blow,  
We’ll never look upon their likes again.

So raise your glasses high and drink a toast  
To good times gone, and others yet to be –  
And to those folk who serv’d us more than most –  
Past Parties – may they shine eternally!

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From *94 not out: Tales of an Engineer* (2017).  
Paraparaumu: Slide Rule Press, pp.45–47.