

Obituaries

Welland Wilfred (Weldy) Phipps, OC, died in Ottawa in October 1996, aged 74. He was the renowned pilot who first made the Canadian high Arctic accessible to light aircraft in the summer months, thus greatly facilitating the servicing of isolated stations and the deployment of field parties in places remote from existing airstrips. Under winter snow cover, such places are accessible to ski-wheel light aircraft. Phipps had the idea of giving the light aircraft a summer landing capability by fitting it with oversized wheels and low-pressure tyres for landing on unprepared, more-or-less level bare ground. Courage, persistence, and ingenuity were the hallmarks of the successful outcome of his experiment.

In the summer of 1956, Phipps flew his Piper Super-Cub aircraft solo north from Pelly Lake, NWT, to Eureka in northern Ellesmere Island. The aircraft was fitted with oversized wheels on a standard tandem under-carriage. At Eureka he picked up a cameraman of the National Film Board of Canada, and from there made a series of local flights, with landings on a regular runway at Alert and on unprepared strips at Fort Conger and at Cape Columbia, the northernmost point of Canada. Apart from some difficulty in landing on soft ground at Fort Conger, the big wheels proved highly reliable. On the round-trip Phipps flew a total of 4500 miles in 50 flying hours over 11 days. He patented his device, and it was not long before other aircraft operators in the Arctic followed his lead.

Weldy Phipps was born on 23 July 1922 in Ottawa, where he went to school. During the war he served as a flight engineer in bombers of 405 and 409 Squadrons, RCAF. He was eventually shot down over Essen, and later captured in Holland. Shortly before the end of the war, he escaped while on a forced march between prison camps — he bore the bayonet scars from that march. While hiding in a wood, he and a fellow Canadian prisoner became aware of advancing American tanks in the distance. They needed something white to wave on a stick. Ever resourceful, Phipps removed his underpants as the nearest thing to white in his possession. Duly recognized by the Americans, they then had to ride with the advancing tanks, back into Germany, until it was possible for them to be passed to the rear area for repatriation.

Phipps gained his pilot's license in 1946. Initially he was in partnership with Russell Bradley of Bradley Air Services, Carp, Ottawa, but soon formed his own company, Atlas Aviation, based at Resolute, NWT. After his pioneer flight in 1956, he gradually built up a fleet that included de Havilland Beaver, Single Otter, and finally Twin Otter aircraft, which could all be equipped with big wheels for summer landings. With his equable temperament, mechanical expertise, and consummate airmanship, Phipps was the best-known and one of the most highly

respected Canadian Arctic pilots, from the early 1950s until the early 1970s. At field camps of Canadian government operations and of private expeditions, he was always a welcome sight, in his battered and oil-stained red parka, easing his stocky frame out of the cockpit.

In the later years one of his Twin Otters bore the markings 'WWP,' for his initials, and Phipps thus acquired the nickname 'Whisky Papa' from the radio code for these letters. Early in 1966, with some misgiving, he allowed holes to be drilled in the wings of this aircraft for the mounting of an aerial, forming part of the radio echosounding apparatus of the Scott Polar Research Institute, to be used from the air for the first time to measure the depth of glaciers. The aircraft, flown by one of Phipps' pilots, made highly successful test flights over northern Ellesmere Island.

Phipps was well known for his impish sense of humour. When someone joked, 'Weldy, I believe you could fly without benefit of wings,' he responded, 'But I couldn't carry a payload!' There was the occasion when he had to take off over a cliff from a very restricted landing area. Asked what his passengers thought of this manoeuvre, he replied, 'The trouble with passengers is that they are always laughing when they should be praying.' One day two of his pilots concocted a sort of lampoon of him, which started: 'They call me a bush pilot, but there aren't any bushes around here....' They showed it to Phipps, who said it was 'fine,' but made sure that he pocketed the fee when it was published in *Reader's Digest*.

After he had sold his company and retired from flying, but not before he had flown the first tourists to the North Pole, Phipps settled in Tignish at the northern end of Prince Edward Island, while maintaining a yacht (named *Whisky Papa*) in the Bahamas for cruising in the winter months. He was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1976. Phipps is survived by his charming wife Fran, who bore him nine children.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

Leslie Hamilton Neatby, Arctic historian, died in Saskatoon on 4 May 1997, aged 94. Born in London on 16 May 1902, the son of a medical practitioner, Neatby was the sixth in a family of eight. In 1906 the family emigrated to Canada on board *Victorian* and his father set up practice in the small town of Earl Grey, Saskatchewan, some 50 km north of Regina. Dr Neatby was naively lenient in allowing his patients credit, and the practice was far from flourishing. Hence, at his wife's urging, Dr Neatby decided to homestead in the spring of 1908; as Leslie Neatby was wont to relate, in his delightfully droll manner, his mother 'was unable to relinquish the English notion that land-owning was associated with gentility!' The irony of

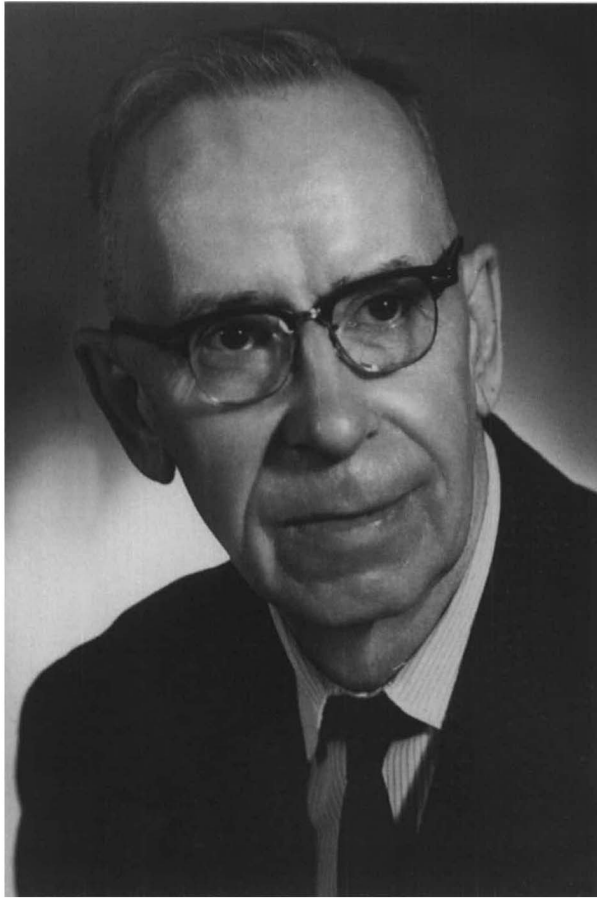


Fig. 1. Leslie Neatby. Photo: University Archives, University of Saskatchewan,

this misconception can only be properly appreciated in the context of the brutal hardships of the first few years of homesteading on the bald Saskatchewan prairie, where temperatures routinely fluctuate between -40°C in winter and $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$ in summer.

The Neatby homestead lay near Renown, Saskatchewan; the family travelled by oxcart from the nearest railway station at Nokomis, taking three days to cover the intervening 36 miles. In the two-story frame farmhouse (the gaunt skeleton of which still stands), Dr Neatby and his wife provided their children with a rich and imaginative education; there was no school within reach in the early years, and Leslie Neatby first attended school at the age of 10, and even thereafter the demands of the farm took priority, and hence his formal schooling was somewhat sporadic.

The family moved to Saskatoon in 1919, and Neatby obtained his BA from the University of Saskatchewan in 1925 and his MA in 1939. During the intervening period, he taught in schools throughout Saskatchewan, ending with a decade as principal of the school at Shellbrook, west of Prince Albert. Then followed four years in the army, and then, after several more years in the classroom, he embarked on his PhD in classics from the University of Toronto, attaining that degree in 1950 at the age of 48. Thereafter, he was head of the Department of Classics at

Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, until 1967, when he came home to the University of Saskatchewan, where he was on the faculty of the Department of Classics until his retirement in 1970. On his retirement he assumed the position of Historical Associate at the Institute for Northern Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, a position that he retained until the demise of that institution in 1982.

Neatby had always had a keen interest in the history of exploration of the Arctic, and in 1958 this blossomed into the first of seven books on different aspects of that history. Four of these books together represent one of the clearest and best overviews of the history of exploration of the Canadian Arctic (Neatby 1958, 1960, 1966, 1970). He also put to good use his command of German by publishing translations of two important Arctic journals (Neatby 1967; Hantzsch 1977), that of Johann Miertsching, the Moravian missionary who was on board McClure's *Investigator* in the role of Inuktitut interpreter, and that of Bernard Hantzsch, the German ornithologist whose sojourn among the Inuit of Baffin Island in 1909–1911 ended with his death on the shores of Foxe Basin. Neatby also published a large number of articles and book reviews, the latter particularly in the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Although he worked mainly from published works rather than archival sources, Neatby possessed an impressive gift for reading between the lines and of perceptively and shrewdly assessing the characters and motives of the various players in the history of the Arctic. This talent, combined with an enviable command of the English language and an easy and fluent style, made all his books a pleasure to read. The honorary LLD awarded by his alma mater for his contribution to the history of the Arctic in 1974 was well deserved.

William Barr

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Jean Macklin, the widow of Dr Alexander H. Macklin and the 'last close link in her generation with the expeditions of Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton,' died in June at the age of 79. Born Jean Hanton on 22 May 1918, she married Dr Macklin in 1947, when she was 29 and he was 57.

Jean Macklin had not yet been born when her husband-

to-be served as chief surgeon on Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914–1916), on which Shackleton's ship *Endurance* was held fast in the ice of the Weddell Sea for 10 months, before finally being crushed. Shackleton then kept his party together on the ice, ultimately leading them in boats to Elephant Island, where Dr Macklin was one of 22 men who waited for more than four months while 'the Boss' made his famous open-boat journey to South Georgia to bring back help.

Dr Macklin was back with Shackleton on the explorer's next, and last, expedition. It was Macklin who was at Shackleton's side when he died on *Quest*, anchored at

Grytviken, on 5 January 1922, who performed the post mortem, and who signed the death certificate of his friend.

By the time the Macklins married, he was a prominent physician, and he later worked at both the Dundee Royal Infirmary and the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, as well as serving as a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen. Throughout this time, Jean Macklin was a great support to her husband, and to the two sons that they had.

In January 1997, Jean Macklin visited South Georgia for the first time, where she was able to visit Shackleton's grave at Grytviken and to see Mount Macklin.

Beau Riffenburgh

In Brief

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN. Sir John Franklin died on 11 June 1847, during an expedition in search of the Northwest Passage, dispatched by the British Admiralty. Ceremonies commemorating 150 years since his death took place in Spilsby (his birthplace in Lincolnshire); in Hobart, Tasmania (where he was Lieutenant Governor, 1837–1843); and in London.

The London commemoration was largely organised by Mr Ralph Lloyd-Jones of Hammersmith Library (see his article on page 327). Some 60 descendants, writers, curators, naval officers, and private individuals gathered at noon, on a wet day, beside the national Franklin monument in Waterloo Place. They were kindly allowed to inspect the reverse of the plinth — an iron plaque with a map of the Northwest Passage — from the garden of the nearby Athenaeum Club. Here, after an introductory address by Mr Lloyd-Jones, Ann Savours said a few words in tribute to Franklin and the ships' companies of HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*. The party then walked to Westminster Abbey, where they were joined by the Dean, the Very Reverend A. Wesley Carr, in the Nightingale Chapel, beside the Franklin bust. Prayers were said by the Dean and by Lieutenant Ernie Coleman, who has followed in the expedition's footsteps on King William Island. Three wreaths were laid: the first by Major P.A.M. Gell, a direct descendant; the second by Captain D.V. Jacobson, RCN, representing the Canadian High Commission; and the third by N.C. McClintock, CBE, to the memory of Admiral Sir Francis Leopold McClintock, discoverer of the fate of Franklin.

The rain clouds rolled away for a cruise down the Thames from Westminster Pier to Greenwich. By courtesy of the Commander and Chaplain of the Royal Naval College, access was gained to the small chapel behind the main altar. Here can be found the elaborate carved memorial to the lost expedition of 1845–1848. Mr Lloyd-Jones spoke briefly about the memorial, after which he was thanked for organising the commemoration in London.

Ann Savours

BICENTENNIAL OF IOANN VENIAMINOV. As mentioned in the previous issue of *Polar Record*, 1997 marks the bicentennial of the birth of Ioann Veniaminov, the distinguished Russian Orthodox missionary, teacher, ethnographer, and linguist, who was canonized as St Innocent, Apostle to North America and Siberia. From 1825 to 1852, St Innocent was the first priest at Unalaska and the first Orthodox bishop in Alaska.

As part of the international celebration surrounding this anniversary, the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Alaska State Museums have prepared an exhibit illustrating Veniaminov's life, work, and legacy. The exhibit — entitled 'A good and faithful servant' — will open on 19 September 1997 in Unalaska in the Aleutian Islands, where St Innocent began his work among the native peoples of Alaska and the Russian east. It will then travel to a number of Alaskan communities.

An international symposium entitled 'Ioann Veniaminov in Alaska and Siberia and his contribution to Arctic social science' is scheduled to be held at University of Alaska Fairbanks 5–7 December 1997. Scholars from the United States, Russia, and Europe are expected to come together to discuss topics relating to Veniaminov and his extraordinary life of scholarship and teaching. For current information and updates about the symposium, the symposium web page can be found at: <http://www.oca.org/celebrations/Year-of-St-Innocent/AK-Proclamation.html>

SIR JOHN BARROW. In William Barr's article 'Searching for Franklin from Australia: William Parker Snow's initiative of 1853' (*Polar Record* 33 (185): 145–150; April 1997), the author referred to letters from Snow to Sir John Barrow. John Barrow had, in fact, died in 1848, five years before Snow's expedition. Snow's correspondent was, rather, John Barrow Jr, head of the Records Office at the Admiralty and, like his father, keenly interested in the Arctic and the Franklin search. All references in the article are to John Barrow Jr, not to Sir John Barrow.