

Obituaries

Walter George Richards, who died in Stanley, Falkland Islands, in October 2002 aged 73, served as a ‘handyman’ with the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey from 1948 to 1950. He was long known by his nickname ‘Bill.’

Early in 1948, Richards found himself at Port Lockroy, Wiencke Island, in a four-man party under the leadership of George Barry, his other two companions being the Falkland Islander John Blyth and Ken Pawson, an adventurous young man responsible for a minor incident during their stay. Pawson had already taken Blyth — no mountaineer — on an ascent of the local snow-covered Jabet Peak (545 m), and now planned to row in the base dinghy with Blyth and Richards the few miles to Doumer Island for a one-night visit. They reached Doumer Island safely, but were then held there for several days by drifting ice. Meanwhile, Barry at the base was extremely worried, as the party carried no radio. He passed on his concern to Dr (later Sir) Vivian Fuchs, the overall field commander based at Marguerite Bay, many miles to the south and powerless to assist. The three travellers eventually returned to the base after an absence of six days, following a change in sea-ice conditions.

Richards spent his second year in the Antarctic, 1949–50, at Deception Island under the able leadership of Gordon Stock, a veteran of the 1947–48 winter at the Argentine Islands.

Richards was born in Stanley in 1929, the eldest child of a Falkland Island mother and an English father who had settled there after World War I. In the mid-1930s, his parents moved back to England with their five other children, leaving him in the Falklands with his grandparents. As a teenager, he worked as a Morse-code operator in the Post and Telecommunications Department, and took an active part in the Boys’ Brigade and in the Defence Force, and in sport. He was a crack rifle shot, who represented the Falkland Islands at Bisley, narrowly missing the Queen’s Hundred.

In 1951 Richards married Thora Biggs, a Falklands girl, and in the same year they took up a two-year posting to the government station at Grytviken, South Georgia. In 1956 the couple followed the rest of his family to England. Richards then joined the Metropolitan Police, in which he rose steadily through the ranks to become Chief Superintendent of Greenwich Borough, controlling ‘R’ Division, before retiring in 1985.

During the Falklands War in 1982, Richards advised the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on possible landing sites for British forces, and he later made several journeys down to the Falklands to advise on reforming the local constabulary. In England he was especially solicitous

of wounded Falkland veterans by visiting them in hospital. In 1983, for the last two years of his police service, he was seconded as Chief of Police in the Falklands.

Following the death of his wife in 1995, Richards remarried in 1997 and moved back to Stanley. He is survived by his second wife, Shirley, and by a son and a daughter of his first marriage.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

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André Roch, the great Swiss mountaineer, Alpine guide, and ski instructor, died in Geneva on 19 November 2002, aged 96.

Roch’s father, a professor of medicine, and himself a keen mountaineer, steered his son away from a formal career after he had qualified as a civil engineer in Zurich. When not away on expeditions, Roch did, in fact, spend his working life as an engineer at the Avalanche Research Station, Weissfluhjoch, Davos. This is not the place to record Roch’s great first ascents in the Alps, the Himalayas, and the Karakoram, well described in his own books and in tributes to him. However, it needs to be emphasised that he played a major role on the Swiss Everest Expedition, 1952, in pioneering the route up the Khumbu Icefall leading to the South Col, successfully followed by the British expedition the following year.

Roch had a close friendship with the late Dr Max Perutz (*Polar Record* 38 (207): 371; 2002), with whom he worked in the field. Roch was a much valued member of the Jungfrauoch research party in 1938, organized and led by Gerald Seligman, during which Perutz as crystallographer did pioneer work on the transition of fallen snow through firn to glacier ice. Towards the end of that summer, Perutz and Roch left early one morning to climb the Jungfrau by the Mittelegrat, a difficult route but one far within the ability of so fine a pair of mountaineers. Following their descent, they were severely reprimanded by Seligman for risking their lives on an important scientific expedition! Their private derision at the time gave way to amusement when, years later, they recalled the incident.

In 1948 and 1950, Roch again accompanied Perutz to the Jungfrauoch to assist in the experiment of sinking a pipe into the Aletschgletscher, and later to measure its inclination. As many had expected, the experiment proved that the glacier moved fastest at the surface, with gradually decreasing velocity lower down, thus demolishing the extrusion-flow theory. Roch was co-author of the report on the experiment in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*.

Roch also made important ascents of Mount Forel (3460 m) in East Greenland and of Mount Logan (6050 m) in the Yukon Territory. In 1939 the Zurich Academic Alpine Club organized a full-scale assault on Mount Forel, then believed to be the highest peak in Greenland, but now recognized as the second highest. In 1931, during the British Arctic Air Route Expedition, Lawrence Wager and Alfred Stephenson had failed in their attempt on the summit. The Swiss now engaged Inuit dog-drivers and their teams from Sioralik Fjord to transport the climbing party, with equipment and stores, up the steep glacier passage to the ice cap near the foot of the mountain. Under Roch's leadership, Mount Forel was finally conquered by the south ridge (*Polar Record* 3 (17): 28–30, 1939).

Roch's ascent of Mount Logan in 1950 was a very different affair. The American mountaineer Norman Reade had been on the first ascent of the mountain in 1925 under the leadership of Captain A.H. McCarthy. Reade now wished to make his second ascent 25 years later, and engaged Roch as his guide. As Roch later recalled, their relationship was to be entirely master–servant. They arrived near the foot of the mountain by air, whereas previously Reade had arrived with a pack-horse train. Roch duly led his client to Mount Logan's summit, where it may be imagined that Reade would have paused for a few moments and then said 'Down,' in the style of the more austere, early gentlemen-mountaineers, typified by Valentine Ryan. Roch had no recriminations about the expedition, for he had been well paid. However, he must sorely have missed the 'companionship of the rope' that he had long known.

On a personal note, I recall André Roch's great charm and kindness in taking my wife, young daughter, and me around Grindelwald and in walking with us up to Scheidegg in the 1960s. He loved young people, and my daughter remembers 'Mr Roch' with affection, as will all those who knew him. Only a year or two previously, in 1962, tragedy had struck his family, when his elder daughter, Suzanne, and a female friend had been killed while rock-climbing with him near Davos. He was twice married and is survived by a son and a daughter.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

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James Edward Butler Futtit Farrington, known to friends and expedition colleagues by his nickname 'Fram' (Fig. 1), died at Lisburn, Co. Antrim, on 4 October 2002, aged 94. He was one of a handful of surviving holders of the Polar Medal in Bronze, abolished after 1941. He should also have received the Polar Medal in Silver, but the medal was denied him during his lifetime through a technicality; it has, however, since been awarded to him after his death.

Farrington, known in his family as Butler, was born in Dunmurry, Co. Antrim, on 6 April 1908, the son of the Rev. Gerald Farrington, a parish priest, and of his wife Philippa (née Adamson). He received his early education



Fig. 1. Fram Farrington.

at Killinchy village school, and later at the Royal Belfast Academical Institute. Shortly after World War I, his father accepted a living in Leeds, where the young Farrington finished his schooling in Leeds Grammar School.

He had hoped for an Army career, but failed acceptance by the Army through colour-blindness. In 1929 he qualified as a marine radio operator and was accepted by the Marconi Company. He then served for three years in passenger ships in Far Eastern, Australian, and New Zealand waters, and for a further three years in cargo ships, colliers, and coasters in British and European waters.

In the autumn of 1935, Farrington was engaged by the Discovery Committee to serve as radio operator in RRS *William Scoresby* in the Southern Ocean on the Discovery Investigations, involving marine biological, hydrographic, and whale-marking work. On the 1935–36 commission, Farrington voyaged south to the coasts of Enderby Land, Kemp Land, and Mac.Robertson Land, eastward to longitude 75°E in Australian Antarctic Territory. He and the hydrographer scaled the spectacular Scullin Monolith, fronting the coast of Mac.Robertson Land. It was a bad season for ice during the next commission to the same Antarctic sector, and the Antarctic coastline was never sighted.

The third commission in 1937–38 was devoted almost entirely to the waters of the British Antarctic Territory, and provided a much more interesting voyage, with a visit to South Georgia, and marine surveys in the waters of the South Orkney Islands and South Shetland Islands, and thence around the Antarctic Peninsula to as far west as Peter I Øy in the Bellingshausen Sea. Aboard *William Scoresby*, in addition to his radio duties, Farrington took charge of producing the ship's journal *Pelagic News*. For his service he was one of the last to receive the Polar Medal

in Bronze (with Antarctic clasp, 1935–38), gazetted in 1941.

In 1940 Farrington (who had married in 1938) obtained war work as an Air Ministry inspector based at Metropolitan Vickers in Manchester until, through his previous association with Lt Cdr James Marr, RNVR, in the Antarctic, he was summoned to London for secondment to the highly secret Operation Tabarin. Authorized at the highest level, this was launched in 1943 to safeguard British interests in the Antarctic sector south of the Falkland Islands, where the Argentine and Chilean governments had rival claims. After 1946 the operation became known as the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and, from 1962, as the British Antarctic Survey.

The original group, of which Farrington was almost the last surviving member, was under Marr's command and code-named Naval Party 475. They left England in mid-December 1943 in the troopship HMS *Highland Monarch*, with most of the men not knowing their destination until after sailing. On reaching Stanley, Falkland Islands, in late January 1944, they transferred with all stores and equipment to *William Scoresby* and to the Falkland Islands Company ship SS *Fitzroy* for the Antarctic part of their voyage.

In early February, five members of the party were landed at Deception Island to occupy the derelict British whaling station, where Farrington set up the radio equipment. The remaining nine members of the party were finally landed in mid-February at Port Lockroy, Wiencke Island, off the west coast of Graham Land, where work started on the construction of a living hut, to be completed a month later after the ships had sailed. Here Farrington established his communications centre, with responsibility for all radio traffic between the two Antarctic bases and London, all conducted in cipher.

In February 1945, at the end of the first Antarctic winter, Marr was invalided home. His second-in-command, the Canadian Captain Andrew Taylor, RCE, was ordered to establish a new base at Hope Bay, near the northern tip of Graham Land. With the relief of Port Lockroy and the arrival of a new base party, Taylor and his party were landed at Hope Bay, where they immediately set about building a living hut, and where Farrington set up radio communications. He had expected to winter at Hope Bay, but his sense of duty made him exchange places with the much less experienced radio operator at Deception Island, which had become the communications centre for the whole operation. He thus never wintered on the Antarctic mainland, a requirement then for the award of the Polar Medal in Silver. While all of Farrington's companions at Port Lockroy and Hope Bay received that medal, he was not recognized. He did not know if his exclusion from the award was due to perceived misconduct until, many years later, a friend told him of the over-wintering requirement. Thus, his crucial and sterling work went unrecognized.

On his return from the Antarctic in 1946, Farrington left Metropolitan Vickers and moved to Malvern as a

scientific officer with the Telecommunications Research Establishment and, in 1948, to a similar post in the new Electronics Division at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, where he remained until his retirement in 1975.

In 1989, after 40 years in Wantage, Farrington and his wife Eileen moved back to Northern Ireland to be near their son Gerald in Co. Antrim. His wife died in 1999, and 'Fram' is survived by his son, to whom we are most grateful for details of his father's life.

It was announced in the *London Gazette*, 4 April 2003, that The Queen has approved the award of the Polar Medal in Silver (Antarctic clasp, 1944–45) to Farrington. The award happily set aright the earlier unfairness of denying him the medal because he had not wintered on the Antarctic continent. Farrington thus became the eighteenth and last person to receive both the Polar Medal in Bronze and the Polar Medal in Silver.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

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Frederick William Sherrell, geologist and engineer, who participated in both Arctic fieldwork and the Falkland Islands and Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition, died of complications from emphysema at Tavistock on 5 August 2001.

Sherrell was born in Bere Alston, Devon, on 2 February 1932. He was educated at Tavistock Grammar School and at Bristol University, graduating in 1952 with a BSc in geology. At the end of his first year, he was invited to take part in a summer's geological fieldwork in East Greenland. The base camp was on Ella Ø, but after initial preparations, Sherrell accompanied the senior geologist to Traill Ø, where they worked in Mountnorris Fjord. In the following summer he travelled with a fellow geologist to Kap Brewster, south of Scoresby Sund, where they spent three weeks preparing a topographical map and then measuring, collecting, and describing the recently discovered new fossiliferous Tertiary deposits overlying the basalt of the region.

The next year, 1952, Sherrell again joined a party of Bristol geologists going north, the intention being for him to return to Kap Brewster. Ice conditions prevented them travelling south from Ella Ø, and Sherrell went with a research party to the west side of the island. Regrettably, on the first night out, he suffered an appendicitis and had to be evacuated by launch after the base was alerted to his condition by one of the field party hiking across the mountainous terrain.

After his National Service with the Royal Engineers in Iraq, Sherrell became a member of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition, 1955–56. He arrived at Deception Island in the beginning of December 1955, his official job being surveyor and geologist. However, his first task was skipping the landing pontoon, ferrying stores from ship to shore. For most of the season, the weather was atrocious, with winds up to 70 knots and low clouds obscuring the tops of

the hills preventing good survey sights. One noteworthy event during the two-week stay on Astrolabe Island was the discovery of a small colony of fur seals. Late in the season, they went farther south to view possible aircraft landing sites. Bad weather prevented a landing on Brabant Island, where Sherrell had hoped to carry out some geological investigations, but on a brief visit to Livingstone Island, he found some copper-bearing rocks.

The following year Sherrell joined a civil engineering contractor, and was sent to Malta, where he developed a lifelong interest in groundwater, both as a water supply and as a potential hazard to building and civil engineering projects. In 1958 he returned to Tavistock and started a well-boring business, locating and developing rural groundwater supplies.

Drilling and site investigation contracts for civil and structural engineers led to increasing consultancy work

in engineering geology, and in the mid-1960s he sold his well-boring company to concentrate on engineering. During the next 20 years he advised on many of the region's civil engineering projects. At the same time, his work on groundwater supplies was developed into a thesis on the Triassic aquifer of east Devon and west Somerset, and he received a PhD in 1972 from Bristol University. Plymouth University awarded him an honorary DSc in 2000 in recognition of his contributions to engineering geology.

Sherrell retired in 1993 but remained an enthusiastic member of the Arctic Club and of the Greenland Club, of which he had been a founder member. He leaves his wife Cynthia, two daughters and a son, and five grandchildren.

Paul Miller

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