

### STERNER LAW FOR DRUNKEN DRIVERS IN ALASKA

In June 1983 State Governor Bill Sheffield signed new legislation increasing penalties for drunken drivers. A 72 hour mandatory jail sentence, minimum fine of \$250 and loss of driving privileges face first offenders; for a third offence the minimum sentence increases to 30 days, the fine to \$1 000, and privileges are lost for 10 years. Vehicles may be confiscated after a second conviction. The bill is seen as a further step toward curbing the growing menace of drunken drivers in the state (*Polar Record*, 21 (135): 601–03, 1983), though doubts have been expressed as to the effectiveness of increasing penalties without further attempts at rehabilitation. (Source: *Anchorage Daily News*, 20 July 1983; correspondence.)

### RECORD ANTARCTIC WIND STRENGTH

Soviet scientists at Russkaya, on Burks Cape, Marie Byrd Land, report a world record wind velocity of 77 m per second (215 km or 173 miles per hour), experienced in early February this year. Established four years ago in 1980, Russkaya lies in the track of deep depressions; gales are recorded on more than 300 days per year. Hitherto Commonwealth Bay, Terre Adélie, has generally been considered Antarctica's windiest locality, plagued by downslope winds from the polar plateau; there the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911–14 frequently recorded gusts of over 65 m per second (Source: *BBC summary of world broadcasts*; 1: *USSR weekly economic report*, 10 February 1984.)

### CANADIAN AND ALASKAN AWARDS FOR NORTHERN SCIENCE

The Canadian Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs has announced the establishment of an annual award to commemorate the 1983 centenary of the First International Polar Year. The award, consisting of a medal and prize of \$5 000, will be given in recognition of individual contributions to the Canadian north through scientific activity. The award was announced during the Third Inuit International Conference in Frobisher Bay. The North Slope Borough Council of Alaska has also inaugurated an award, the Arctic Science Prize, to be given biennially to distinguished scientists who have made significant contributions to man's understanding of natural processes in the Arctic. The prize consists of an engraved plaque and \$10 000. (Sources: *Canada Weekly*, 11(32): 3, 1983; *North Slope Borough information leaflet*.)

## Obituary

**Major ERIC N. WEBB**, DSO, MC, the sole surviving member of Sir Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) 1911–14, died on 23 January 1984 at Caterham, Surrey. New Zealand born, he was aged 22 when he joined AAE as a recent graduate in Civil Engineering from Canterbury University College, Christchurch; before leaving he trained for four months under experts from the Carnegie Institution and Melbourne Observatory, Australia. His prime tasks on AAE were to establish a magnetic observatory and make an accurate field survey of terrestrial magnetism near the South Magnetic Pole: this latter project was done with colleagues Bage and Hurley on a major sledge journey over 62 days, when severe conditions cut short the intended journey by some 17 minutes of arc. Many years later Webb was to contribute notes to *Polar Record* on his magnetograph hut (September 1975) and the location of the South Magnetic Pole (September 1977).

Returning from AAE he began preparing his results for publication, but World War I took him to Europe. In Webb's absence, Professor Farr at Canterbury, New Zealand, arranged for 12 women students (known as the Mawson Club) to complete the task over the next two years. It was not until late 1977 that Webb met five of the club on a trip to the antipodes. During the years between he had followed an illustrious career as a hydro-electrical engineer in Australia, India and England, and in the Hamilton Falls scheme in Newfoundland from which he retired in 1959. During this same visit to Australia Webb took a tourist flight over his old Antarctic base, later captivating audiences at the Australian Antarctic Division and on TV with his talks about AAE, that showed how strong were his memories of the expedition even in his 90th year.

I took Eric to the National Gallery of Victoria where he had a preview of an exhibition of photographs by Herbert Ponting, of the *Terra Nova* expedition, and Frank Hurley, his close friend on AAE. His recounting of how and where Hurley took the photographs and the techniques used left a lasting impression on those organising the exhibition. Webb was an excellent correspondent. Always courteous, the letters conveyed the author's viewpoint to journals, newspapers, Governments and Antarctic agencies, and corrected minute errors as well as making suggestions on what should be done. The possible return of Mawson's hut to Australia was one such project he felt strongly about. The influence of AAE on Webb's life can be summed up in a recent statement; 'For myself, the AAE was much the greatest character builder of my life and a most agreeable one'. In his last letter he wrote 'I manage to keep occupied to avoid boredom. Antarctica continues my principal interest and I read much'. His enthusiasm for Antarctica was infectious and stimulated many young scientists and engineers and was an important link between the 'heroic era' and contemporary expeditions. His letters and reports will remain a valuable contribution and enduring testimony to his work. The greatest tribute to Webb's contribution to Antarctic science came in 1976 at a Royal Society discussion meeting on Antarctic Research; a group of eminent scientists, still using Antarctic magnetic data, sent a note to Eric expressing 'their admiration and respect for the quality of the magnetic records which you obtained during Mawson's AAE'.

Desmond Lugg

**SAMUEL JOHN FRANCIS** (FIDS 1945 to 1948). John Francis died on 11 September 1983 after a long illness borne with characteristic courage. Educated at Falmouth Grammar School, he trained as a land surveyor with both the Ordnance Survey (OS) and the Royal Engineers Survey Battalion. His early OS duties included employment in the One-inch Department, which demanded specifically an extremely high standard of draughtsmanship: he was also involved in both the primary and secondary triangulation of Great Britain and Jamaica. With the Royal Engineers he played a leading role in the training of personnel in wartime field survey; in 1944 he was commissioned in the Royal Engineers.

Joining the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in 1945, John was posted as a surveyor to Hope Bay (Base D). His main contribution to Antarctic exploration was the mapping of the east coast of Graham Land from Hope Bay in the north to Three Slice Nunatak in the south, approximately due east of Base E (Stonington Island). With colleagues Frank Elliott, Ray Adie and 'Mac' Choyce this involved a remarkable and hazardous sledging journey of 600 miles in 71 days. John resurveyed some 250 miles of coastline (mostly Nordenskjöld's work) and another 220 miles of new mapping, despite many occasions of poor visibility and bad weather. Limited provisions precluded waiting

for the weather to clear and they had no air support. It was a hazardous journey because they did not know the problems that might confront them. As they would be passing a point of no return and did not enjoy support from the air, it was imperative that they made a pre-arranged rendezvous with a guide party from Stonington Island to bring them up and over the 5 500 ft plateau and on down to base. They kept the rendezvous, only 2 days late and with only one day's dog food remaining, a result due in no small measure to John's ability as a surveyor, backed by his clear thinking, quiet dry humour and equable temperament; he was no doubt an ideal companion for such a mission.

Following his return to the UK in 1948, John was employed as Chief Surveyor to the Worcestershire County Architect, another post in which his technical excellence and meticulous, painstaking approach added considerable strength to the department. A popular figure with a compassionate view of life, a sincere and reliable friend, John retired in 1977 owing to ill health.

Reg Freeman

Ray Adie writes:

I had the good fortune to spend 1947 at Hope Bay with John. During this time, while assisting him with local survey tasks and sledging on depot-laying journeys, I came to know him extremely well and quickly appreciated his dedication to both survey and its role in exploration. His accurate and swift reduction of survey observations and the subsequent draughting of the final maps were quite admirable and became the pride of all base members. Never before had I seen such superb hand-lettering on maps; no doubt this was due to his early training in the Ordnance Survey. In the field John's determination came into its own. Survey always came first but, even so, he was the main spring of our field work. His intuition as a navigator inspired us. We always knew where we were, although he casually prefaced all answers to enquiries by 'I think we are here'. We were there!

On the 1947–48 sledge journey from Hope Bay down the east coast of Graham Land we encountered many unusual problems that might have spelt disaster had off-the-cuff decisions been taken. It was probably John's wartime dictum of 'Let's camp and brew up' that brought sound thought and common sense to bear on these problems, and their sensible solution brought ultimate success to the journey.

**PATRICK D. BAIRD** died in Ottawa in January 1984. Coming from a Caithness family he was very much the Highlander in personality, with a quiet reserve that made him not the easiest man to know, but yet one with many friends. He had an abiding love for the Arctic landscape, its distance from civilization, its ice and its mountains.

Educated at Edinburgh Academy and Cambridge University, Pat Baird first saw Canada on a Cambridge University expedition to West Greenland and Baffin Island, led by J. M. Wordie. Another Cambridge expedition took him again to Baffin Island in 1936–37; on that occasion he may have become the first European to see the Barnes Ice Cap, which he was later to visit. He was on Baffin Island a third time in 1938–39 during the British Canadian Arctic Expedition to Southampton Island, Melville Peninsula and Bylot Island. After crossing Bylot Island he shipped to Montreal in the Hudson's Bay Company vessel *Nascopie*. In the same year, 1939, he joined the Royal Canadian Artillery as a gunner, leaving for Britain with the First Canadian Division. By 1942 he was training paratroopers in Scotland; later he moved to Canada to take part in Arctic Warfare Training. In 1945 he was in charge of Exercise Lemming, and field commander of the moving force in Exercise Musk-ox in 1946. Appointed Chief of the Arctic Section,

Defence Research Board of Canada, he retired from the army in 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

After taking part in the foundation of the Arctic Institute of North America, he became director of the head office of the institute in Montreal in 1947, a post which he held until 1954. During his time with the institute he organized and led two important expeditions to Baffin Island, one in 1950 to the Barnes Icecap, the other in 1953 to the Penny Highlands and Penny Icecap. From 1954 onward he was Senior Research Fellow in Geography in the University of Aberdeen, returning to Canada in 1959. In 1959 he was appointed director of the Gault Estate of McGill University, a 2 600 acre property east of Montreal, and supervisor of northern field studies in the Department of Geography, retiring in 1969. He held the Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, the Bruce Memorial Medal (Royal Society of Edinburgh) and the Coronation Medal.

Pat Baird's chief interests were glaciology, the North, and mountaineering; he was at his best and happiest in the field and as a field leader. He was excellent with students and made many friends at McGill, where he will be remembered for many years. Memories of him include his demonstration, on the main staircase of the Rideau Club in Ottawa, of the way seals slide off ice floes (this in his kilt), his love of amateur theatre, his making and maintenance of cross-country ski trails on the Gault Estate, and his pride in the fact that his grandfather was born in the 18th century. Altogether a remarkable man.

M. J. Dunbar