

Obituary

Geoffrey Francis Hattersley-Smith ('Geoff'), who died on 21 July 2012, served for many years as a polar field scientist, contributing substantially to glaciological and geological surveys in both north and south polar regions. In later life he undertook research in another discipline altogether – the sorting and cataloguing of polar place names – an achievement in scholarship for which all other polar researchers may be thankful.

Geoff was born on 22 April 1923. After schooling at Winchester, he was accepted by New College, Oxford, to read geology. This was the middle of World War II: having established his place at Oxford, Geoff enlisted as a seaman in the Royal Navy, serving in Atlantic convoys. Later commissioned in the RNVR, he saw further service in the North Atlantic, in the English Channel for the D-day landings, and later in the Indian and Pacific Ocean theatres. After an eventful war he returned to Oxford to complete his degree.

In 1948 he joined the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey as a glaciologist, serving for a year as leader at Base G (Admiralty Bay, South Shetland Islands). Though one of the smaller bases, with only six men, this had dog teams and a remit to explore and survey King George Island. With a little help by radio from other bases, Geoff taught himself the techniques of dog-driving and sledging, developing a vigorous campaign of topographic and glaciological survey covering much of the island.

After his 18-month Antarctic stint Geoff returned to Oxford, spending two summers in Switzerland to study glacier ice formation. He found time also to marry Maria Keffalinou. In 1951, by then an experienced polar traveller, surveyor and glaciologist, he joined the Canadian Defence Board, which offered scientists ample opportunities for glaciological research in the northern territories. Working in the Yukon, the Beaufort Sea, on Banks and Cornwallis islands, and especially on Ellesmere Island, he undertook surveys and long-term studies of the ice caps, glaciers and bergs. In 1956 he was awarded an Oxford D.Phil. for his glaciological studies. In 1966 he received the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, and became chairman of the committee on Canadian glaciers.

Retiring from the Defence Board in 1973, Geoff, with Maria and their daughters, Fiona and Kara, returned to England. Among Geoff's duties in the Canadian Arctic had been responsibility for naming newly identified features, and cataloguing and sorting a muddle of established names, according to their prior-

ity of usage. In Britain he found a niche in the British Antarctic Survey (BAS, successor to the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey) tackling a similar project in the sector of Antarctica that had hitherto been called the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Extending south to the South Pole, this had in 1962 been split into two – an area north of latitude 60°S that retained the old name, and a southern area extending to the pole (now within the boundary of the Antarctic Treaty), renamed British Antarctic Territory.

Appointed secretary of the Antarctic Place-names Committee in 1975, with a desk in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, Geoff compiled gazetteers for both newly defined areas, a work requiring meticulous scholarship that extended over 16 years. *The history of place-names in the Falkland Islands Dependencies* appeared as BAS Scientific Report 101 in 1980, followed by *The history of place names in the British Antarctic Territory* (Report 113) in 1991. The abstract of the second, two-volume work indicates some of the complexity to be found in both publications:

There are 4350 officially accepted place names in the British Antarctic Territory, and 1414 unofficial or redundant names in various languages . . . together with about 14 000 synonyms A review is . . . given of the evolutions of the place-names as a result of voyages of discovery, sealing and whaling operations, and scientific and other expeditions, from the time of William Smith's voyage, in 1819, to the present About 1700 published and unpublished sources in eight main languages are listed in the references.

Appropriately, on page 280 of this second work is a modest entry for 'Cape Hattersley-Smith' on the Black Coast of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith also compiled a gazetteer of place names of the Ellesmere Island National Park Reserve, edited the polar diary of Tryggve Gran, the Norwegian army officer who served as a skiing instructor on Scott's British Antarctic Expedition 1910–1913, and produced many papers on both northern and southern polar issues. In 2006 his distinguished work in both polar regions was recognised in the award of the Polar Medal with Arctic and Antarctic clasps.

Bernard Stonehouse