

Obituary

Derek John Hatherill Searle, died in hospital in Norwich on 12 September 2003, aged 75. He was born and grew up in the village of Hinxton, near Cambridge, where his father was the village postmaster and where Derek sometimes acted as the telegram boy, now an extinct species. Searle was educated at Cambridge County High School. After leaving school in 1946, he served in the Army for two and a half years, initially in the Royal Artillery before transferring to the Education Corps in Germany.

In 1949 he went to the University of Sheffield, where he graduated in geography and then took a diploma in teaching. Happily for him, he did not take up teaching but joined the Directorate of Colonial Surveys (later Directorate of Overseas Surveys). Here he met surveyors returning from the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (now British Antarctic Survey), which led him, 15 months later, to join FIDS as a surveyor.

In 1955 he found himself a member of the small team setting up a new base on Horseshoe Island in northern Marguerite Bay, off the Fallières Coast of Graham Land. Arriving there on 16 March, the ship was only able to stay a few days in support. Although not the base leader during his first year, Searle was a tower of strength in establishing the new base. They were a party of eight men, at first living in tents, cooking on Primus stoves, and eating in a 'shanty' built from ration boxes. After eight weeks hard slogging in the face of snow and constant wind, they moved into their hut, now at least protected from the weather but in primitive conditions. Searle wrote in his journal: 'I am the first man on base to have a bath in twenty-eight degrees of frost. They revived me with whisky and lime.' As the late Sir Vivian Fuchs (former Director of the British Antarctic Survey) recalled in his book *Of ice and men* (1982), Searle with his wry sense of humour was foremost in maintaining morale during the winter with locally devised entertainment purporting to come from an outside radio station!

Early in 1956 the relief ship RRS *Shackleton* arrived with the Governor of the Falkland Islands aboard, and Searle was told that he would be base leader for his second year, a popular choice because of his tolerance of personal foibles during a difficult winter. During his two years on Horseshoe Island, his party's survey journeys were mainly confined to the fjords and glaciers to the north of the base. One of his main achievements was to produce a detailed map of Horseshoe Island at the scale of 1:25,000. For his service in the Antarctic, he was awarded the Polar Medal (with clasp Antarctic 1955) in 1958.

On his return from the Antarctic in 1957, Searle married Petra Leay, whom he had met in 1953 and who was still working as map curator at the Directorate of



Fig. 1. Derek Searle with two young friends.

Overseas Surveys. She later became senior map officer with the British Antarctic Survey. Searle made one further trip to the Antarctic in 1958–59, with the late Professor D.L. Linton on a geomorphological reconnaissance of the northern Antarctic Peninsula and islands. This led to a period of research in the Department of Geography, University of Birmingham, where he produced a map of Alexander Island, then hitherto very poorly mapped, from trimetrogon air photographs. His map was a landmark production of its time, and Searle described the compilation and evolution of it in important papers in *Empire Survey Review* (volume 16, no 119, 1961) and *Geographical Journal* (volume 129, 1963).

In 1961 Searle joined the planning office of Norfolk County Council, continuing there until he retired in 1993. His work lay with development control, and involved dealings with councillors, committees, and the public. He was a stickler for good English.

In retirement he deployed his DIY skills in restoring the family home near Norwich, a former gamekeeper's cottage. He skills were said to include bricklaying to a

Churchillian standard! He enjoyed his boat *Duet*, often sailing single-handed into the North Sea. Perhaps most, he enjoyed meeting up with old friends and field companions as at Antarctic Club dinners and British Antarctic Survey Club reunions, or with those who lived nearby, such as Ken Blaiklock and Jim Exley.

In Antarctic circles, Searle will be remembered for his prowess as a field surveyor and map compiler, and as a superb base leader, whose 'skill and diplomacy

produced a happy and united party' (in the words of Jim Exley). He is commemorated by Mount Searle on Horseshoe Island. In a place-names publication, the height of Mount Searle was given incorrectly as 1760 metres instead of feet, but he was happy with his increased elevation!

He is survived by his wife, three children, and four grandchildren.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

In Brief

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ANTARCTIC CIRCLE CROSSED BY LARGE CRUISE VESSEL. The first crossing of the Antarctic Circle by a large cruise vessel, Holland America's MS *Amsterdam*, was made in the 2003/04 austral summer on the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula. *Amsterdam* is the largest cruise vessel to cross the Antarctic Circle, and the second largest ship to do so, the first being the US aircraft carrier *Philippine Sea* during Operation Highjump, 1946–47. Sea-ice conditions in the area cruised by *Amsterdam* were unusually light, with minor scattered icebergs. *Amsterdam* is not ice-strengthened and, by agreement with the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators and the company's permit from the US Environmental Protection Agency, conducts only cruises in the Antarctic Peninsula area, without making landings. During the 2003/04 season, its second in the Antarctic, *Amsterdam* twice crossed the Antarctic Circle (28 December 2003 and 20 January 2004). Captain Jonathan Peter Harris was the Master, and Pat Toomey the Ice Pilot. (Source : John Splettstoesser)

ANTARCTIC LANDINGS MADE FROM MEDIUM-SIZED CRUISE VESSEL. The first Antarctic landings from a medium-sized cruise vessel officially affiliated with the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators — Saga Shipping Company's MV *Saga Rose* — were made in the 2003/04 season. Although landings have

been made in previous years from the similarly sized *Marco Polo*, Orient Lines has not been a full member of IAATO. As part of the world cruise of *Saga Rose*, landings were made at Half Moon Island on 28 January 2004, at Waterboat Point on 29 January, and at Deception Island on 30 January. *Saga Rose* is currently scheduled to have a similar Antarctic programme in 2005. Captain Alistair McLundie was the Master and Captain Stewart Lawrence the Ice Pilot.

SOUTH WITH SHACKLETON. An exhibition of artefacts from Ernest Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition of 1907–09 opened in April 2004 at Sudeley Castle, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. The exhibition, entitled 'South with Shackleton,' includes a specially produced video about the expedition, which sailed in *Nimrod* and saw 15 men winter at a hut at Cape Royds, Ross Island. Shackleton and three comrades discovered the Beardmore Glacier, reached the Antarctic Plateau, and attained a farthest south of only 97 miles from the South Pole, while three other members of the expedition were the first to reach the area of the South Magnetic Pole. Many of the artefacts displayed in the exhibition belonged to Sir Philip Brocklehurst, a member of the expedition and a nephew of Sudeley Castle's former owner, Emma Dent. The items have been donated to the exhibition — which is scheduled to run for two years — by Mr Johnny Van Haften, Brocklehurst's great nephew and heir.