

## Obituaries

**Colin Bertram**, British polar explorer, biologist, and former director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, died at his home in Graffham, Sussex, on 11 January 2001, aged 89.

Born on 27 April 1911, George Colin Lawder Bertram showed early interest in natural history. In 1932, while reading zoology at St John's College, Cambridge, he and fellow undergraduate David Lack organised the Cambridge expedition to Bjørnøya, undertaking ornithological studies and collections. The next year, as a member of the three-man Cambridge expedition to Scoresby Sound, he was transported to East Greenland by the celebrated French explorer J.-B. Charcot, in his equally celebrated expedition ship *Pourquoi-Pas?*, a remarkable experience for an aspiring polar biologist.

After a brief spell studying coral reefs in the Red Sea, in 1934 Bertram joined the British Graham Land Expedition, initially as a marine biologist with the ship's party, later replacing Brian Roberts in the shore party. One of a series of non-governmental, low-budget, but strikingly efficient expeditions that characterised post-'Heroic Age' British polar exploration, the BGLE gave Bertram many opportunities to learn polar craft, including sailing, dog-sledging, and surveying, from friendly experts only a little older than himself. There were also opportunities for a young biologist to make his mark. The 16 men and 80–100 sledge dogs relied heavily on seals for food: Bertram studied the seals as they were killed, writing his conclusions in a scientific report and a thesis that earned him a Cambridge PhD. He was awarded also the Polar Medal and the Bruce Memorial Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Bertram later told his experiences in 'Antarctica sixty years ago: a re-appraisal of the British Graham Land Expedition 1934–1937,' which was published as a complete edition of *Polar Record* (32 (181): 98–183 (April 1996)).

In 1939 Bertram married Kate Ricardo, a fellow graduate in zoology. In the same year he wrote *Arctic & Antarctic: the technique of polar travel*. During the early months of World War II, he was involved in War Office research on Arctic clothing, which included designing and testing early versions of the string vest. From 1940 he joined the Colonial Office, becoming chief fisheries adviser in Palestine, later fisheries adviser to the Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo.

After the war Bertram returned to Cambridge, taking up a fellowship and tutorship at St John's and immersing himself in college administration and raising four sons. From 1949 he held the part-time appointment of director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, a prestigious but chronically under-funded institution that made little use of his polar knowledge and skills. Before retiring on 31 December 1956, he was instrumental in ensuring that his succes-



Fig. 1. Colin Bertram when he was director of the Scott Polar Research Institute.

or would hold a full-time directorship.

In the following year Bertram was awarded the Murchison Grant of the Royal Geographical Society and held a visiting professorship at the University of Otago, New Zealand. In 1965 he became senior tutor at St John's, an appointment he held until 1972. College life, research on a diversity of practical ecological issues from tropical fisheries and manatee conservation to fur seals of the Pribilof Islands, coupled with long-term involvement in the affairs of the Royal Geographical Society and the Eugenics Society, kept his life busy well beyond formal retirement.

Apart from research papers, Bertram wrote *Adam's brood: hopes and fears of a biologist* (1959), *In search of mermaids: the manatees of Guyana* (1963), *Antarctica, Cambridge, conservation and population: a biologist's story* (1987), and *Memories and musings of an octogenarian biologist* (1992). Kate Bertram, who from 1970 to 1979 was president of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, died in 1999.

Bernard Stonehouse

**Helge Ingstad**, Norwegian scholar, sailor, adventurer, and writer, died at his home in Oslo on 29 March 2001, aged 101, ending a life spanning three centuries. He discovered the only authenticated Norse ruins in North America. His study of the Icelandic sagas and of other medieval documents, and his knowledge of weather, sea-ice conditions, and early navigation techniques had guided him in his long quest in the wake of Eric the Red and the Norse explorers of a thousand years ago.

In 1953 Ingstad and his wife Anne-Stine (Moe), an archaeologist, had examined ruins of Norse settlements in West Greenland. As a result, they recognized the need to search for further Norse remains along the Labrador and Newfoundland coasts. In the summer of 1960, after sailing from Norway in his own ship *Halten* with a crew of six, Ingstad made a preliminary survey of these coasts from ship and light aircraft. In the following spring, sailing out of Montreal and accompanied by his wife, he followed the north shore of the St Lawrence River, and then the coastline northeastwards, examining likely locations for Norse settlements. Finally, near the northern tip of Newfoundland and on its eastern side at L'Anse aux Meadows, his attention was drawn by a local man, George Decker, to some grassy mounds that Ingstad recognized as possible remnants of Scandinavian sod houses. His hunch was proved correct from excavations directed by his wife in the 1961 summer and in seven subsequent summers. Her archaeological finds included the foundations of eight buildings, including a large house almost identical to Leif Ericsson's 'great hall' in Greenland; an area used for smelting bog iron; and artifacts such as a soapstone spindle-whorl and a bronze tunic pin of Norse design. The radiocarbon method gave the date of the site as about 1000 AD, according with that indicated in the sagas for the main winterings in Vinland. The Ingstads thought it more than probable that L'Anse aux Meadows was the place referred to in the sagas as 'Leifsbudir.'

After 1968 the Ingstads left further excavations to Parks Canada, but kept a close eye on L'Anse aux Meadows, which, in 1980 to their delight, was named by UNESCO as an official World Heritage Site. Historical tourism at the site has helped to offset the severe damage to the economy of the region caused by the ban on cod-fishing in Newfoundland's coastal waters, imposed by the Canadian government in 1992.

Helge Marcus Ingstad was born on 30 December 1899 at Meråker, near Trondheim, where he enjoyed a hardy upbringing among the mountains. After taking a law degree in 1922, he worked for four years as a lawyer, before embarking on a life of adventure and research. In 1926–30, he worked as a fur-trapper in northern Canada, and there acquired a lifelong interest in the Arctic, which he was able to indulge in a series of privately organized expeditions, with the emphasis on ethnography and archaeology. He wrote up his travels and research in a long series of popular books and scholarly papers. His Canadian experience is recorded in *Land of feast and famine* (1933),

dealing with the region of Great Slave Lake and the upper Thelon River. His expedition to East Greenland, 1932–34, is described in *East of the great glacier* (1937). From 1936 to 1938, he served as a district judge in Svalbard, and became an authority on the history and development of those Arctic islands.

After the war, Ingstad resumed his travels with an expedition to northern Alaska, 1949–50, to study the Nunamuit Inuit of the Brooks Range, of whom he published an account in *Nunamuit* (1952). His visits to Norse sites in West Greenland in the 1950s were described in *Land under the pole star* (1966), and a popular account of his great discovery in Newfoundland is contained in *Westward to Vinland* (1969). Finally, Ingstad and his wife set the seal on their work in Newfoundland with the publication by the Oslo University Press of *The Norse discovery of North America* (1986, two volumes), containing a full report on the excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows.

Ingstad was recognized in his own country as a Knight of St Olav, Honorary Doctor of Oslo University, and Fridtjof Nansen Medalist. Other honours came to him, including the Andrée Medal of the Royal Swedish Geographical Society, and honorary doctorates from the University of Calgary, McGill University, and Memorial University in Canada. Finally, in 1991, jointly with his wife, he received the Founder's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, a belated award but one that he greatly prized. He must have been the oldest recipient of a Royal medal from that Society; in his quiet and modest way, he took a wry pleasure in receiving it in the year before the quincennial celebrations of the official discovery of North America by Christopher Columbus.

Anne-Stine, for 56 years his devoted wife and co-worker in the field, died in 1997, aged 79 (*Polar Record* 34 (190): 273 (1998)), and Ingstad is survived by their daughter and grandchildren.

*Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith*

**Pyotr 'Peter' Tpykhhkak**, chairman of the Association of Traditional Marine Mammal Hunters of Chukotka (formerly known as the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters), died of complications associated with stomach cancer on 9 December 2000 in the village of Sireniki, Provideniya Region, Chukotka Autonomous District, Russia. Tpykhhkak was born in 1933 in Imtuk, a settlement near Sireniki. His Eskimo name was Tpykhhkak.

Tpykhhkak spent most of his life in Sireniki. When he was 15 years old he was already an assistant marine mammal hunter on the schooner *Oktober*. He spent his entire career at sea, and, in addition to being a leading traditional marine mammal hunter, he also worked in the Soviet state system, working his way up from shooter, to motor-man, and then to brigadier (whaling crew captain). Although partially blind in one eye, he was a good shot. He was widely considered one of the most respected elders, and he spent much time teaching young hunters in Chukotka. Tpykhhkak was active in civic life and served as a deputy

(legislator) in village, regional, and district government. He was a member of the Magadan Regional Party Committee.

Typykhkak particularly showed his wisdom and talent as a leader after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the old restrictions melted away, he became extremely active in bringing his people and his organization in close contact with the people of St Lawrence Island, and of northwest and northern Alaska. He forged very close alliances with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, the North Slope Borough, the Alaska Nanuuq (polar bear) Commission, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, and other native hunting organizations.

He was committed to renew the traditional bowhead whale hunt for the Chukotka native people. Typykhkak had been on the last bowhead whale hunt allowed by the Soviet government in 1972. He related that on his wife's deathbed she asked to taste, one last time, some bowhead whale *muktuk*, which he was not able to give her. In 1996, standing on the beach in front of his village, he pressed a delegation from the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and the North Slope Borough about what he could do to renew the traditional bowhead whale hunt. His persistence led to a long process that involved securing the cooperation of the Russian and US governments and ended with an aboriginal quota for bowhead whales for the Russian Federation from the International Whaling Commission. Typykhkak assisted his younger son's crew to harvest a bowhead whale in 1998, after a more than a 25-year hiatus of the tradition.

In 1997, Typykhkak helped form and was elected the president of the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters, and

was able to employ his skills and knowledge protecting traditional subsistence. Under his leadership, the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters became well-known in Russia and internationally as a native organization interested in protecting the traditional lifestyle of the native people while being actively involved in the management of marine resources. Typykhkak represented the organization at the 2000 meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Australia.

He is greatly mourned by his Russian colleagues. In his obituary in the Russian press it was written that 'Peter was one of the most reliable protectors of the traditional marine mammal hunt and the spirit of the Eskimo people, and he prepared an entire generation of talented hunters, sailors, and Arctic naturalists. He was especially known for his wisdom, his love of people, his drive, his integrity, and his honesty.'

Typykhkak was also well liked by Alaskans. He often visited Alaska representing the native people of Chukotka. Early in 2000, the US National Park Service and employees of the North Slope Borough arranged for a Fairbanks ophthalmologist, Dr Zamber, to volunteer his time to operate on Typykhkak's cataracts, which had made him almost blind. People from all over Alaska contributed money to the operation, which was a success. Sponsored by Roman Abramovich, Typykhkak returned for medical attention to Anchorage in October 2000. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer and returned to his native village in November. He is survived by three sons and two daughters.

*Vladimir Etylin*  
*John Tichotsky*