

## Obituaries

**William James Mills**, librarian and keeper of collections at the Scott Polar Research Institute, died after a long illness on 8 May 2004, aged 52.

Mills was born on 14 August 1951 and was educated at St Edward's School in Oxford. He then went up to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to read geography, receiving a senior scholarship. Following his graduation, he worked as a teacher, and trained as a professional librarian at the College of Librarianship in Aberystwyth, achieving a distinction. He worked in several universities as librarian and information officer — the last being Aston University — prior to his appointment as librarian of the Scott Polar Research Institute in 1989, when he succeeded acting librarian Janice Meadows. Remarkably, given his subsequent career, he returned to Cambridge with well-proven library skills, but little knowledge of the polar regions, which were to dominate the rest of his life. However, his interest may already have been stimulated some years earlier, not only by contacts as an undergraduate with David J. Drewry, later director at SPRI, but by his publication of a paper about Darwin and the iceberg theory. Certainly he now threw himself into running one of the world's outstanding polar libraries and acquiring a detailed knowledge of the polar regions.

Polar scholars from all over the world who have used the Library and Archives of the Scott Polar Research Institute will testify to the unfailingly helpful welcome given to them by Mills and to his generosity with his scholarly knowledge. He took great pleasure in showing visiting scholars the breadth and depth of the Institute's collections of historical documents, artefacts, and artwork that focus on British exploration of the Arctic and Antarctic from the early nineteenth century onwards. He recognized the Library's importance as a unique resource for polar studies, and developed its bibliographic work into an information service for scholars from around the world. In 1990, the Library's abstracting journal *Recent Polar and Glaciological Literature* became *Polar and Glaciological Abstracts* and a subject/geographic index was added, and longer abstracts included. Cambridge University Press took on the publishing, marketing, and distribution, and circulation increased by 50%, as Mills, its editor, developed many new exchanges with publishers and polar libraries, enhancing the journal's coverage and content in the process. A mark of his international standing was his secretaryship for many years of the Polar Libraries Colloquy.

Meanwhile, together with Dr John Heap, the Institute's director in the early 1990s, Mills worked on the fundraising and design for the Shackleton Memorial Library,



Fig. 1. William Mills explaining about the polar world to a young audience.

a significant addition to the earlier building and winner of a prestigious architectural award. The University of Cambridge recognized his achievements by promoting him to the post of librarian and keeper of collections in 1998.

Outside of work for the Institute, music was one of Mills' particular interests; he began by playing the classical guitar and went on to learn the lute, continuing to play regularly, including participating in musical events and holding regular practices in the SPRI Museum.

In 1999 he fulfilled a long-standing ambition by going to the Antarctic as a speaker on a cruise ship. He returned with abiding memories of places about which he had read for many years, and also having met his future wife Dionne. For the next several years he continued to lecture on cruise ships in the polar regions.

Eventually, early-morning lute practice gave way to the writing of what became a two-volume historical encyclopedia, *Exploring polar frontiers*, which was published in the spring of 2004. Mills was rightly pleased with it, and was able to show it to colleagues and friends during his final illness.

On 31 March 2004, as a mark of his achievements in the polar world, the Antarctic Place-Names Committee

named a glacier draining part of upland West Antarctica the 'Mills Glacier.' This glacier is an inlet in the Evans Ice Stream, which provides a route down on to the ice stream from the Fowler Peninsula. News of this reached him just three weeks before his death, and in a typically understated way he was clearly delighted. He also received posthumous recognition from the National Science Foundation for his contribution to the United States Antarctic Program through the Antarctic and Cold Regions Bibliography Projects.

Mills is survived by his wife, Dionne, and three young children.

*Compiled by Shirley Sawtell and the SPRI Library staff*

**Graham Westbrook Rowley**, archaeologist and one of the last true explorers of Arctic Canada, died 31 December 2003 at the age of 91. Highly successful as an explorer, a researcher, a scholar, an administrator, and a friend to the north and those who live there, the significance of Rowley's contributions is shown by his name having been bestowed upon a river and a large island in northeast Hudson Bay, making him the last living person other than royalty to have been so commemorated in the Canadian Arctic.

Born on 31 October 1912 in Manchester, Rowley was educated at Giggleswick School and Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied both natural sciences and archaeology. Through his contacts at the University's Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Rowley was introduced to Tom Manning, leader of the British Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1936–39. Rowley quickly joined the expedition as archaeologist.

The five members of the expedition travelled to Churchill on the west coast of Hudson Bay, from where in May 1936 they made for the southwest coast of Southampton Island. While his colleagues surveyed the area and conducted scientific investigations, Rowley made an early study of Sedlermiut Inuit ruins. The expedition then moved on to Repulse Bay, near the base of Melville Peninsula, from where Rowley and ornithologist Reynold Bray made a 250-mile, mid-winter journey by dog team to Igloodik.

Rowley had by now realized that his research could be carried on much more productively by working separately than by remaining tied to the other members of the expedition. Therefore, after carrying out archaeological investigations near Igloodik, in the spring of 1937 he and an Inuit companion sledged some 300 miles to the northern parts of Baffin Island, where he conducted further fieldwork at Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet. Rowley's journeys not only included travels to areas where white men had virtually never been before — and which had certainly never been mapped or charted in detail — but were conducted by traditional, native methods. His experiences of turning from a novice to an expert in the arts of travelling and living in the north were recounted in his book *Cold comfort: my love affair with the Arctic* (1996).

After a period in England, Rowley returned to Repulse Bay in September 1938. In December he and two Inuit companions again made a winter trip to Igloodik, in February and March of 1939 the three of them exploring northernmost Baffin Island. In the summer of 1939, west of Igloodik, Rowley excavated what proved to be the first-discovered site of pure Dorset culture.

With the start of the Second World War, Rowley enlisted in the Canadian army, serving in the European theatre for six years, during which time he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. When he returned to Canada in 1946, he joined the Canadian Defence Scientific Service in Ottawa, where, as head of the Arctic Section, he was responsible for the Arctic military research that was a result of the Cold War and concerns about Soviet aggression in the Arctic. During the next seven years he initiated a number of scientific expeditions to the Canadian Arctic and sub-Arctic, including a first landing on newly discovered Prince Charles Island.

Rowley later served as scientific advisor to the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. He also was chairman of the Arctic Institute of North America, Professor of Canadian Studies at Carleton University, visiting fellow at Clare College, Cambridge, and, in 1978, co-author of the classic book *The circumpolar north*, which he wrote with Terence Armstrong and George Rogers. Like his close friend Armstrong, Rowley was that incredibly rare and special combination: a great intellect, talent, and success matched in one person by a kind, gentle, and giving nature.

For his distinguished career and many services, Rowley received numerous honours. These included the MBE, being appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada, and being awarded the Massey Medal of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, the Coronation Medal, the Jubilee Medal, the US Arctic and Antarctic Service Award, and the Northern Science Award.

Rowley is survived by his wife Diana, whom he originally met at the Royal Geographical Society during the Second World War, and by their three daughters, one of whom, Susan Rowley, is a respected archaeologist.

*Beau Riffenburgh*

**Lady Virginia Fiennes**, wife of Sir Ranulph Fiennes, a main organiser of his expeditions, and the first woman to be awarded the Polar Medal, died in Exeter on 20 February 2004 at the age of 56.

Born in Godalming on 9 July 1947 as Virginia Frances Pepper, 'Ginny,' as she was usually known, was a childhood friend of Fiennes, whom she met when he was 12 and she was nine. She was educated in boarding school at Eastbourne, during which time she maintained contact with Fiennes (who was at Eton), despite the disapproval of her father, who thought him rather wild. The couple would eventually marry in 1970.

After school, she qualified as a deep-sea diver and then took a position with the Scottish National Trust in Wester Ross. However, she also became the primary

researcher for Fiennes' early travel books, and in the late 1960s she took a further step and began organising expeditions, including, in 1968, the first ascent of the Nile by hovercraft. Three years later it was the first trans-navigation of British Columbia entirely by river.

In 1972 she was commissioned by *Woman's Own* magazine to live with an Omani family for two months. The love of the country and the people that she developed during this time led to her later organising four expeditions to the region to locate the lost city of Ubar in Dhofar, famed for its frankincense. After more than two decades this search was finally successful.

The same year that Lady Fiennes moved to Oman, she suggested an expedition that would become perhaps the couple's most famous: the Transglobe Expedition. Its object was to become the first to circumnavigate the Earth in a north–south direction, in this case keeping as close to the Greenwich meridian as possible, while passing over both poles. In preparation for her role in the expedition, Ginny Fiennes was trained as a radio operator at the Royal Aircraft Establishment Farnborough and then took marine radio officer courses.

The party travelled south from Greenwich in September 1979, crossing parts of Europe and Africa before landing in Dronning Maud Land, not far from South Africa's Sanae base. While Fiennes, Charlie Burton, and Oliver Shepard made their way across Antarctica, Lady Fiennes ran the base camp 170 miles inland, which she had designed, and from where she conducted very-low-frequency radio research for Sheffield University. She set up and maintained 80-foot radio masts and at one point helped save the lives of a group of South African scientists who had become lost north of the advance base. When her husband neared the South Pole, she closed down the advance base and flew on to the Pole and then to New Zealand's Scott Base, from where she coordinated supply and communication.

In the later stages of the expedition, as her husband and Burton passed through the Arctic, she set up and ran a series of radio bases to maintain contact with them, before joining them at Alert, where they wintered in 1981/82. Her work on the expedition, and particularly the research into VLF radio propagation, resulted in 1985 in her being the first woman ever to be invited to join the Antarctic Club.

Two years later, she was the first woman to receive the Polar Medal from the Queen.

In the 1980s, the couple moved to Exmoor, where Lady Fiennes began to raise pedigree Aberdeen Angus cattle, which went on to win awards at major cattle shows. Meanwhile, she wrote a best-selling book about her terrier, *Bothie the polar dog* (1984), and continued virtually until her death to help organise her husband's much-publicised expeditions.

Lady Fiennes was a strong individual — tough, feisty, and single-minded when she needed to be, traits that helped her to be successful in such a broad range of activities. But to those who knew her, it was even more her humour, her enthusiasm, her generosity, and her integrity for which she will be remembered.

*Beau Riffenburgh*

**Morton Joseph Rubin**, former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) meteorologist who specialised in the weather of the Antarctic and Southern Hemisphere, died 10 April 2004 at the age of 86 due to complications from hip-replacement surgery.

Born in Philadelphia, Rubin earned his first degree from Pennsylvania State University and a Master's degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He began working for the US Weather Bureau in 1938 and spent much of the next decade as a meteorologist for Pan American–Grace Airways in Peru and Chile.

Rubin joined NOAA in the late 1940s, and, due to his Southern Hemisphere expertise, became more and more involved in the study of Antarctic weather. He visited Antarctica several times in the 1950s, and during the International Geophysical Year was a US Exchange Scientist to the Soviet Mirny Station, where he was based for 16 months. He later served as a member of the US Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names.

In the early 1970s Rubin left NOAA after having attained the position of senior scientist. He received NOAA's Meritorious Service Award. He then joined the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva, before retiring to the Washington, DC, area. Even after his retirement, Rubin continued to publish scholarly articles about Antarctic meteorology, weather, and history. Mount Rubin in the Prince Charles Mountains was named in his honour.

*Beau Riffenburgh*