

## Obituaries

**Sir Edmund Hillary** died on 11 January 2008. An obituary will appear in a future issue of this journal.

**David C. Nutt** (Fig. 1) who died on 10 January 2008, aged 88, was an Arctic oceanographer, and leader of the team that first analysed ancient atmosphere in Greenland ice.

Nutt was born on 21 June 1919, in Cleveland, Ohio, a son of Joseph Randolph Nutt and Elizabeth Hasbrouck Nutt. He graduated from Dartmouth College,



Fig. 1. David C. Nutt standing on the furling mechanism of the schooner *Blue Dolphin* in Labrador, aged 33.

New Hampshire, with a degree in botany in 1941. Two years later, he was married to Mary Louise (Babs) Wright. They moved Etna, New Hampshire, in 1946.

Nutt led the team in the 1950s that made the first measurements of the composition of ancient air in Greenland ice, thus triggering the modern study of climate change in the polar regions. His team also measured the age of the Greenland ice, moved their sampling base from icebergs to ice tunnels at Thule, Greenland, and began the ice drilling methods that eventually led to the complete ice cores to bedrock in Greenland and Antarctica. At present these cores have reached back 110,000 years in Greenland and 740,000 years in Antarctica.

Analysis of trapped air in ice began with the Norwegian physiologist Per F. Scholander in 1954, working with Greenland icebergs off the Labrador coast on board the oceanographic research schooner *Blue Dolphin*, of which Nutt was master, expedition leader and chief scientist. One day while looking over the rail, Scholander asked why the glacial ice was fizzing. From his wide Arctic experience, Nutt told him that it was air locked in under high pressure during the transition from glacial snow to ice, now being released. 'Put it in your Scotch, and you'll have instant iced Scotch and soda,' he said.

Scholander was galvanised by the possibility that the air was old air, of the same age as the ice, and reckoned that he could measure its CO<sub>2</sub> content, which would tell him about old atmospheres. The first paper reporting this success, by Scholander, Kanwisher, and Nutt, was published in *Science* in 1956. Further analyses of Greenland ice with Scholander and L. K. Coachman involved oxygen isotope measurements by W. Dansgaard in Denmark and eventually, the first carbon-14 dating of ancient ice at the laboratory of Hessel De Vries in The Netherlands. Thus began the modern era of climate change that led to the Nobel Peace Prizes of 2007. In further studies, Nutt used *Blue Dolphin* to discover the annual cycle of thermal and compositional change in Labrador fjords. This work also involved measurements through the winter ice in which dog teams were used for transport. Nutt was also instrumental in helping to establish the US Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (USA-CRREL) in Hanover, New Hampshire.

As a student from 1935 to 1940, Nutt had accompanied Captain Robert A. Bartlett to the Arctic on the schooner *Morrissey*. His resulting experience in navigation and seamanship qualified him for a direct commission in the US Navy, and he was called to active duty in 1941 during the last semester of his senior year at Dartmouth. His duty involved attending Local Defense School at the Boston Navy Yard, where he was allowed to sit his Dartmouth comprehensive examination in Botany and later released

for graduation exercises. He served in 1942–1943 on the survey schooner USS *Bowdoin* in Greenland under Lt. Stuart Hotchkiss, charting the west Greenland waters for the construction of air bases to be used in ferrying fighter planes to Europe. These bases, however, were never used for that purpose.

In 1944 after a tour studying mapping problems in the Pacific in the Navy Hydrographic Office in Washington, Nutt joined the survey ship USS *Sumner* (AGS-5) in which he served as executive officer and then captain. On this ship he conducted surveys and cleared waters for navigation in the western Pacific at Ulithi Atoll (where 400 ships of destroyer classes and above were accommodated in the harbour), Guam, Iwo Jima, Leyte Gulf, Korea, China, and Bikini Atoll, where the ship prepared the harbor for the 1946 atomic bomb test. The *Sumner* saw action and won three battle stars. At Iwo Jima, Nutt climbed Mount Suribachi during the battle to set a survey signal there and by chance also visited his old college roommate, now the Marine Captain Robert White, in his command post foxhole ‘while Hell’s kitchen was flying overhead.’

In 1946 Nutt was released to the Naval Reserve with the rank of Commander and became attached to the Geography Department at Dartmouth College. In 1948, he acquired the schooner *Blue Dolphin*, refitted it for Arctic oceanographic research and from 1949 to 1952 and again in 1954 surveyed the fjords and estuaries of Labrador. Dartmouth professor Elmer Harp, Jr., joined the 1949 expedition as archaeologist, and discovered at Phillip’s Garden in Port au Choix, Newfoundland, evidence of the 5,000-year old Maritime Archaic culture. With colleagues Nutt and Trevor Lloyd, Harp helped attract the Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, with his library of Arctic writings, to Dartmouth.

Nutt became a governor (and Chairman in 1961–1962) of the Arctic Institute of North America, and served on the boards of the American Polar Society, the New England Grenfell Association and the Aviation Association of New Hampshire. He was president of Early Sites Foundation and was awarded the Elisha Kent Kane Medal of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia for Arctic Service. He was a selectman in Hanover, New Hampshire, and served several terms in the New Hampshire Legislature.

He and his wife owned and operated Post Mills Airport in Vermont. In Etna, they gardened, raised sheep, maintained a maple sugar orchard and were tree farmers, winning the New Hampshire Tree Farmer of the Year Award in 1995. His wife Babs, an accomplished sailplane and aerobatics pilot instructor, predeceased David in 2006. She held the women’s dual-seat glider altitude record of 35,463 ft (10,809 m) in a wave over Colorado.

His survivors include four daughters and two sons, 12 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

*S.A. Morse*

**Charles Gaston Rouillon**, who died on 6 March 2007, was prominent in French Antarctic and Arctic circles. He

was born in Souvigny in France on 11 October 1915. He was a boarder at Stanislas School in Paris from 1926 until 1934, and entered St Cyr (the French Military Academy), in 1934 and continued there until 1936. At the academy he practised competitive sports notably rugby, athletics, and canoeing and was commissioned as an officer in the Mountain Infantry in Dauphiné. In 1938, he obtained the alpine certificate in the 71th Alpine Battalion for numerous ascents beyond 3,000 m.

In 1939, he was admitted into the French cross-country skiing team with the aim of participating in the Olympic Games planned for 1940. However, war intervened and towards the end of the first winter of the hostilities, he was lieutenant-instructor in training officer cadets. During the German offensive of May 1940 and until 24 June, he held an appointment in the 140th Regiment of Alpine Infantry and saw much action. From October 1940 until June 1944, he was engaged in the management of the Jeunesse et Montagne groups in Grenoble as adviser, and then in charge of sports activities. After the Normandy landings of June 1944, he entered the resistance of the department of Isère as military assistant to the leader of the sector Belledonne-Grésivaudan and participated directly in operations in that sector until the end of the occupation.

His next appointment was as chief military instructor to the military academy of Uriage, with the rank of captain, and he joined the First French Army for the hard 1944–1945 campaigns in Franche-Comté, Vosges, Alsace and South Germany. After the armistice in May 1945, he joined the Military School for Mountaineers in Chamonix, as the officer in charge of education. This appointment lasted until December 1948. For personal reasons he resigned from the army on 31 December 1948 and received later an appointment as honorary major.

From January 1949 until October 1980, he lived his second, polar, life. He was appointed to the management of the French polar expeditions (Missions Paul-Émile Victor) as deputy director, at first as leader of mission, then took responsibility for publications, and following this the performance of the scientific programmes. He undertook expeditions to Greenland, in 1949 and 1950, as second in command, and then in 1951 as expedition leader. He visited Adelie Land in the summer of 1956–1957, as part of the IGY, as observer, and became expedition leader at the Dumont d’Urville station for the 3rd expedition (1957–1959).

There, he developed his scientific speciality of gravimetry: the measurement, calculation and interpretation of the abnormalities of the field of gravity notably on the glaciers and the icecaps, with the aim determining the thicknesses of the ice and the cartography of the underlying bedrock. He also visited the French southern territories of Kerguelen, Crozet and Amsterdam.

He became a historian of the French polar expeditions on which subject he lectured widely. After a very active life, he died in March 2007.

*Serge Kahn*

**Ann Katharine Parry**, the author of *Parry of the Arctic* (1963), died peacefully at home, at White Barns, Furneaux Pelham, Hertfordshire, on 3 February 2008 at the age of 84.

She was the twin of the late Peter Parry and the daughter of W.E. Parry, captain of HMS *Achilles* during the battle of the River Plate in 1939, early in World War II. He was later captain of the battle cruiser HMS *Renown* which carried W.S. Churchill to meet F.D. Roosevelt in mid-Atlantic in 1943 (Lavery 2007).

Ann Parry was educated at Girton College, Cambridge at a time when there were few women members of the University. She later lived in London and held posts in the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Geographical Society. She worked on the papers of her ancestor Sir William Edward Parry who commanded three naval voyages in search of the northwest passage, and one towards the North Pole all in the 1820s. The family's splendid collection of Parry ms. had been donated to the Scott Polar Research Institute by her father. Her excellent biography (Parry 1963) also covered Parry's time with the Australian Agricultural Company in New South Wales, and other periods of his life, including his relations with the Stanleys of Alderley, Cheshire, of which his wife Isabella Louisa was a member. Her diaries are also in the Scott Polar Research Institute.

In 1971, she published *The Admirals Fremantle*, after whom the port of Fremantle, Western Australia, was named, and from whom she was also descended (Parry 1971). In 1983 she moved to Hertfordshire, where she did voluntary work for the WRVS and eventually acquired fifteen great nephews and nieces. She was tall, modest, almost diffident, a straightforward person and an accomplished polar, Australian and naval historian. Her *Parry of the Arctic* should be reprinted.

*Ann Savours*

### References

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**Philip Steven Corbet**, who has died at his home in Saint Bunion, Cornwall, on 13 February 2008, aged 78, was an entomologist and biologist who had done field work on four continents, ranging from the Canadian High Arctic to New Zealand. He was a world authority on mosquitoes and dragonflies. His was a vary varied and extensive output of published research, comprising more than 250 papers, reporting findings on fish, crocodiles, bats, mosquitoes, dragonflies and other aquatic insects,

pest management, demography, resource management, and the Arctic climate.

Corbet was born on 29 May 1929 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where his father was a microbiologist with the rubber research institute. He went to school in New Zealand and later to Dauntsey's School, Devizes, Wiltshire, where he had his first instruction in biology. He attended the University of Reading and graduated with first class honours, and then received a PhD from Cambridge for research on dragonflies.

From 1951 to 1962, Corbet was employed as zoologist and entomologist by the East African High Commission in Uganda. As a result of his mosquito research Corbet was headhunted by the Canadian Department of Agriculture in Ottawa, where in 1962 he was employed in the Entomology Research Institute. In that summer and during the following summer he was a member of a team of specialist entomologists working from a field camp on Lake Hazen, northern Ellesmere Island, at about 82° N. The lake is the largest in the world at such a high latitude. The annual temperatures range from –57°C (–70°F) to 21°C (+70°F). In this extreme environment Corbet discovered and described 'facultative autogeny' hitherto unknown in mosquitoes, as an alternative strategy for reproduction. Later others detected the same phenomenon in harsh conditions elsewhere.

He then deployed his expertise in leading a team that diagnosed and later suppressed the insect nuisance in the St. Lawrence River that threatened the viability of Expo 67 in Montreal.

In 1967 he was appointed Director of the Agriculture Research Institute in Belleville, Ontario. Developing his interest as an ecologist, he saw clearly the driving role of human population pressure in destabilising ecosystems and in precipitating pest outbreaks. In his view, there was need for national policies to balance the size of human population in line with available resources. These principles guided Corbet in his subsequent appointments as Professor at various universities in Commonwealth countries and, after his retirement in 1996 to Cornwall, where he continued his research writing.

His scholarly distinctions included honorary doctorates from Cambridge, Edinburgh and Reading, and he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1987. He received that society's Neill Medal for Natural History in 2002.

Corbet was a tall and amply built figure, with luxuriant growth of white hair and beard and appeared larger than life. With his fund of well-told anecdotes he stood out in any company. Sadly, his in domestic life he had gone through three divorces, but in his closing years he derived great happiness from his partnership with Sarah Joule, who survives him together with a daughter of his third marriage.

*Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith*