

OBITUARY

OTTO GEIST, the pioneer Alaskan palaeontologist, archaeologist and naturalist, died in München on 3 August 1963. He was born in Bavaria in 1880 and emigrated to the United States in 1910. There he pursued a number of occupations, none for very long or with much financial gain, until, in 1925, he attended the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines—later to become the University of Alaska—on the encouragement of a naturalist friend, and began to collect Eskimo artifacts.

With University support he led annual collecting expeditions for many years, contributing greatly to knowledge of ancient Eskimo culture and amassing the University's unique collections. In 1957 the University conferred on him an honorary degree.

CARL ALEXANDER GIBSON-HILL died suddenly on 18 August 1963 in Singapore, where he had been successively curator and director of the Raffles Museum. Born in 1911, he was educated at Malvern and Cambridge University. His main life-interest was in Malayan ornithology, local culture and antiquities, but his other studies included North and South Atlantic sea birds. In 1946 he took advantage of the transport facilities afforded by the whaling industry to make a short visit to South Georgia. He subsequently published a number of papers on Antarctic birds.

PAUL-LOUIS MERCANTON, the pioneer Swiss glaciologist and meteorologist who was born in Lausanne on 11 May 1876, died there on 25 February 1963. He was educated at the University of Lausanne, gaining a diploma in electrical engineering in 1899, and a doctorate in physical science in 1901.

After two years working under Professor Röntgen in München, he returned to join the staff of his old university, teaching first engineering, and later geophysics, meteorology and exploration topography there until 1938. Between 1934 and 1941 he was in charge of the Meteorologischer Zentralstatt in Zürich.

His main scientific interest, however, was in glaciology, to which he was introduced early in his career by F. A. Forel. After Forel's death, in 1912, Mercanton succeeded him in charge of studies of Swiss glaciers—a position he held until 1955. His field work and technical innovations established for him a firm reputation as both an alpine and, later, an Arctic glaciologist, working under the auspices of the International Glacier Commission and of the Commission for Snow and Ice of the International Association of Scientific Hydrology. He was successively secretary and vice-president of the Committee of the latter.

His Arctic work began in 1910 with visits to glaciers in northern Norway and Vestspitsbergen. In 1912 he accompanied A. de Quervain's Swiss expedition to Greenland, making glaciological investigations on the western margin of the ice sheet while de Quervain was making his crossing. He twice visited Jan Mayen: in 1921 with J. M. Wordie, when he was one of the party to make the first ascent of Beerenberg, and in 1929, with J.-B. Charcot, when he made a more accurate determination of the height of the mountain. He was also a member of the Danish-Swiss Polar Year Expedition to Iceland in 1932-33.

Mercanton was a prolific writer on a wide range of scientific subjects—geophysics, glaciology, meteorology and archaeology—and published some 400 papers during an unusually active career.

Captain GEORGE FRANCIS ARTHUR MULOCK, RN (ret'd), died in Gibraltar on 26 December 1963, at the age of 81. He was born in February 1882 and educated at Stanmore Park and Dartmouth; he qualified in marine surveying while serving in HMS *Triton*.

As a sub-lieutenant he was appointed to the relief ship *Morning*, attached to Scott's National Antarctic Expedition, 1901–04, transferring to the shore party in March 1903 in exchange for E. H. Shackleton, whose health had broken down. In November 1903 he accompanied Barne on what was to be a ten-week southern journey; weather and surface conditions drove them back soon after they had reached Barne Glacier. Scott had a very high opinion of Mulock's abilities and initiative, frequently recording praise of him in his diaries. On the return of the expedition, he was lent by the Admiralty to the Royal Geographical Society to complete the compilation of the survey. His results were published by the Society in 1908 as *The charts of the Discovery expedition*.

During the First World War, 1914–18, he served with distinction in the Gallipoli campaign, as Beach Master at Cape Helles and Sulva Bay. In 1920 he retired from the navy and joined the Asiatic Petroleum Co. as Marine Superintendent at Shanghai. He later saw service during the Second World War, for part of which he was a prisoner in Japanese hands.

Professor GREGORIUS JOHANNES VAN OORDT, the Dutch zoologist and physiologist, died suddenly during an ornithological excursion in Friesland on 22 April 1963. He was born at Arnhem in 1892. After an active period of teaching and research, he became Professor of Endocrinology at the University of Utrecht from 1945 until his retirement in 1962. He was a man of very wide interests, but concentrated his research mainly on reproduction in the vertebrates. Extensive travels included a visit to Spitsbergen in 1921 to study the breeding birds. In 1951–52 he undertook a voyage to the Antarctic whaling grounds on board the Dutch tanker *Barendrecht*, when he made important additions to knowledge of the pelagic distribution of the Procellariiformes in the South Atlantic and Southern Oceans. His numerous publications may best be traced from *G. J. van Oordt. His contributions to science* (Arnhem, 1962), edited by his co-workers in the Zoölogisch Laboratorium at Utrecht.

Professor THOMAS GRIFFITH TAYLOR, the Australian geographer and geologist, was born on 1 December 1880 in Essex and died at Sydney on 5 November 1963, in his 82nd year. His father went to New South Wales in 1893 as government metallurgist and Taylor was educated at King's School, Parramatta, and the University of Sydney, where he read geology and physics. After a year or two of teaching he spent three years as an Exhibition Science Research Scholar in geology at Cambridge, where he was engaged by Scott as senior geologist of the *Terra Nova* expedition, 1910–13.

Frank Debenham writes of him:

Though a distinguished geographer in his own right, he will be best remembered by readers of the *Polar Record* as the senior geologist of Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition, 1910–13.

He was a great favourite with the large company at Cape Evans during the winter, when he joined heartily in every type of work and all the fun that was a regular feature of our life there.

He was not a robust man, but he was a prodigious walker. During his life he certainly "tramped", to use his own expression, a far greater distance over many countries than any geographer I have known, and continued to do so till within a month or so of his death.

He was also a prodigious writer, whether of books—some forty of them—articles, or newspaper correspondence. He was fond of illustrating his work with his own maps and sketches, somewhat roughly executed perhaps but always enlightening. In his general philosophy he was a free thinker and would take an independent line, sometimes perhaps for the joy of debate. A typical instance comes to my mind. At our Sunday services we had to recite the Psalms in turn with Scott. I was next to Griff and a little too close to Scott to quite hide the muttered comments on the verses. When Scott came to the phrase "and the little hills skipped like rams" it was too much for Griff's realistic soul and everyone could hear his "Damn nonsense! the

psalmist was no geologist"; Scott gave him a very stern look. As a sledge mate and leader of the party he was quite splendid, always reasonably cautious but taking any accidents as they came.

His later life was as full of interest and colour as his time in the South, and though he was proud of his successes he followed Scott in his feeling that "it was the work that counted, not the applause that followed".

Soon after his return to Australia he became lecturer in geography at Melbourne University, the first step in a distinguished academic career which included in sequence the chairs of geography at Sydney University, 1917–18, the University of Chicago, 1929–35 and the University of Toronto 1936–51. He was a Foundation Member of the Australian National Research Council, President of the American, Australian and Canadian Institutes of Geographers and an active member of many other learned societies. Throughout his long career he contributed to many scientific journals, and published several books including *With Scott, the silver lining* (London, 1916), *Antarctic adventure and research* (London, 1930) and an autobiography, *Journeyman Taylor* (London, 1958).

Father ARTHUR THIBERT, OMI, Roman Catholic missionary and noted Eskimo linguist, died in Ottawa on 17 October 1963. He was born in Sherrington, Quebec, 7 November 1898. In 1920 he joined the Oblate order and in 1926 he entered the Hudson Bay vicariate as missionary, first at Eskimo Point, later at Baker Lake and Chesterfield. Because of failing health, he retired from the mission field in 1945. In 1952 he became Professor of Missiology in the University of Ottawa. Among his several books, the most important are his dictionaries, in French and English, of the Eskimo language. Since 1955 he edited the Eskimo language journal, *Inungnut Tamenuk*.

Professor WERNER WERENSKIOLD, the Norwegian geologist, geographer and glaciologist, died on 2 August 1961, in his seventy-eighth year. He worked for some years in the Norges Geologiske Undersøkelse, making important contributions to knowledge of Pre-Cambrian, Eocambrian and early Palaeozoic rocks in southern Norway, finally producing a new geological map of this part of the country. In 1915 he took up teaching geography at the University of Oslo and, two years later, began his long association with scientific work in Spitsbergen, taking part in annual government-sponsored expeditions to southern Vestspitsbergen until 1924, and making a very considerable contribution to the geological and cartographical knowledge of the area. He also collaborated with O. Sverdrup, in 1922–23, in a geological survey of Bjørnøya. Werenskiold was also interested in glaciology, and, in later years, in glacial geology. He published a very large number of books and scientific articles of which a complete bibliography appeared in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift*, Vol 18, No 1–2, 1961–62, p 8–28.