Obituaries

Count Eigil Knuth, who achieved fame as the archaeologist to find evidence of the earliest known culture of Greenland from its most northern shores, died on 12 March 1996, aged 92. He was also a talented sculptor.

As a child, Knuth played a tiny part in a famous Arctic controversy that is still unresolved. In September 1909, at the age of six while at a reception given by his grandmother, a patron of Arctic explorers, he presented a bouquet of flowers to the American explorer Dr Frederick A. Cook, newly arrived in Copenhagen from Greenland and claiming to have reached the North Pole in the previous year. But a dénouement came a few days later when the Danes began to have doubts about Cook's claim, following the news of Robert E. Peary's counter-claim and accusations againt Cook. Such early exposure to Arctic affairs may have helped to shape the young Knuth's future career, which he devoted in the main to fieldwork in Greenland. Later, he was able to extend this work to Ellesmere Island, where, in a few weeks' excavation, he put back the known pre-history of the Inuit in that region by about 3000 years.

Knuth was born in Klampenborg on 8 August 1903, the son of Captain Count Eigil Knuth and his wife Marie (née Gamèl). He studied at the Academy of Art, Copenhagen, and later worked as a sculptor in Italy. His association with Greenland began in 1932 and lasted for the rest of his life. In that year, and again in 1934, he worked for the National Museum of Denmark on excavations of Norse ruins in West Greenland, and during this period he was also art critic for the Danish newspaper *Dagens Nyheder*. In the summer of 1935, he served as archaeologist on the British East Greenland Expedition (1935–1936), jointly led by August Courtauld and Lawrence Wager, and in 1936 he became a member of Paul-Emile Victor's French Trans-Greenland Expedition, which crossed the Inlandseis by dog sledge from Jakobshaven on the west coast to Angmagssalik on the east coast, where Knuth wintered in 1936–1937. In 1938–1939, Knuth led the Danish North-east Greenland Expedition, which wintered at Mørkefjord and carried out scientific surveys as far north as 82°N, in southern Peary Land.

After the interruption by the war, Knuth returned to Greenland in 1947 as leader of the Danish Peary Land Expedition, which spent three summers and two winters operating from a station established by Catalina flying-boat, of the Royal Danish Navy, on Jørgen Brønlands Fjord off Independence Fjord. During the course of the expedition, scientific surveys were extended to the northern end of Greenland, and Knuth made his own great discovery of the stone tent rings of very early Inuit hunters. In these ruins he recognized two distinct cultures, which represented two waves of immigration from northernmost Canada and that he named Independence I and Independence II. By radiocarbon dating of charcoal from the central hearths of the tent ring, the cultures were dated at 4000–5000 a BP and approximately 3000 a BP, respectively. Of almost equal importance was his finding of the wooden frame of a 10.5-m umiak that he concluded had been sailed north around Greenland, presumably when slightly less severe ice conditions than the present would have allowed limited inshore boat work. The radiocarbon age of the umiak, about 470 a BP, and an oak member with nails in its construction, indicated that its Inuit owners had had contact with Norse settlers on the west coast of Greenland. The umiak was dismantled in the field, and brought back to Copenhagen for reconstruction and display in the National Museum.

After this long expedition, and until his ninety-second year, Knuth spent most summers in Peary Land, pursuing his obsession with the early Inuit hunters; indeed, that most northern land became his spiritual home. He had long held the theory that these hunters had reached Peary Land by following muskox trails from Arctic Canada. In both 1958 and 1965, he spent a few weeks with Canadian field parties in northern Ellesmere Island. In 1962, on a well-trodden muskox route near the head of Tanquary Fiord, we found tent rings unusually high above sea level and resembling the Peary Land features. Within hours of landing by plane in 1965, Knuth confirmed the Independence age of these ruins. He was so delighted by his three weeks' excavation in the area that he was moved to remark that 'Tanquary Fiord is more beautiful than Peary Land.' Twenty-two years later, he made perhaps his most important discovery, on the Ile de France off the east coast of Greenland at 77°N. In three seasons' fieldwork, his parties excavated more than 500 ruins of early Dorset age, dating to approximately 2500 a BP. He was quoted as saying: 'The Ile de France is unique; the site is simply bulging with artefacts.' The economy of these early Inuit was based on seal and whale hunting, and it is significant that a polynya exists off the island today.

Knuth published his research in a long series of papers and, most notably, in his monograph *The archaeology of the muskox way* (1967). However, much of his work remains unpublished but preserved in his beautifully illustrated field notebooks. He also published a number of popular books, and used his talent as a sculptor to produce a series of fine portrait heads of East Greenlanders. For his research, he was made a Knight of the Dannebrog, and also received the medal of that order, and the Danish Medal of Merit in silver. His other awards included the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, the Mungo Park Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, and the rarely awarded Rink Medal of the Danish Greenland

Society.

Knuth was proud of his ancient lineage but, to his friends, his kinship seemed to lie rather with the Inuit hunters whose ruins he studied. Much of his private means went into those studies, while he enjoyed the simplest lifestyle, preferring, as he said, his tent in Peary Land to, say, the comfort of an exclusive club. He was a fastidious camper, keeping his tent in neat order and serving two-course meals from a Primus stove with exquisite care. His astonishing physique — tall, lean, and loose-limbed — enabled him to carry on active fieldwork for decades after his contemporaries had taken permanently to their desks. On long walks in summer he would carry a pair of green wellies that were donned for crossing glacier streams half-naked.

Knuth was seen at his best in the close-knit community of a field camp or among a few friends with similar interests. He liked people but was never at ease in a large group, partly from shyness and partly from deafness, although he claimed that he could hear perfectly in an aircraft cruising at 20,000 feet. ('Don't shout — I'm up in the air,' he would say.) He will be remembered especially for his whimsical sense of humour expressed, for example, in a Christmas card of his design portraying his car on an open road in Denmark. The gap of sky between the trees formed a map of Greenland beckoning towards the next field season. It is hardly surprising that he never married.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

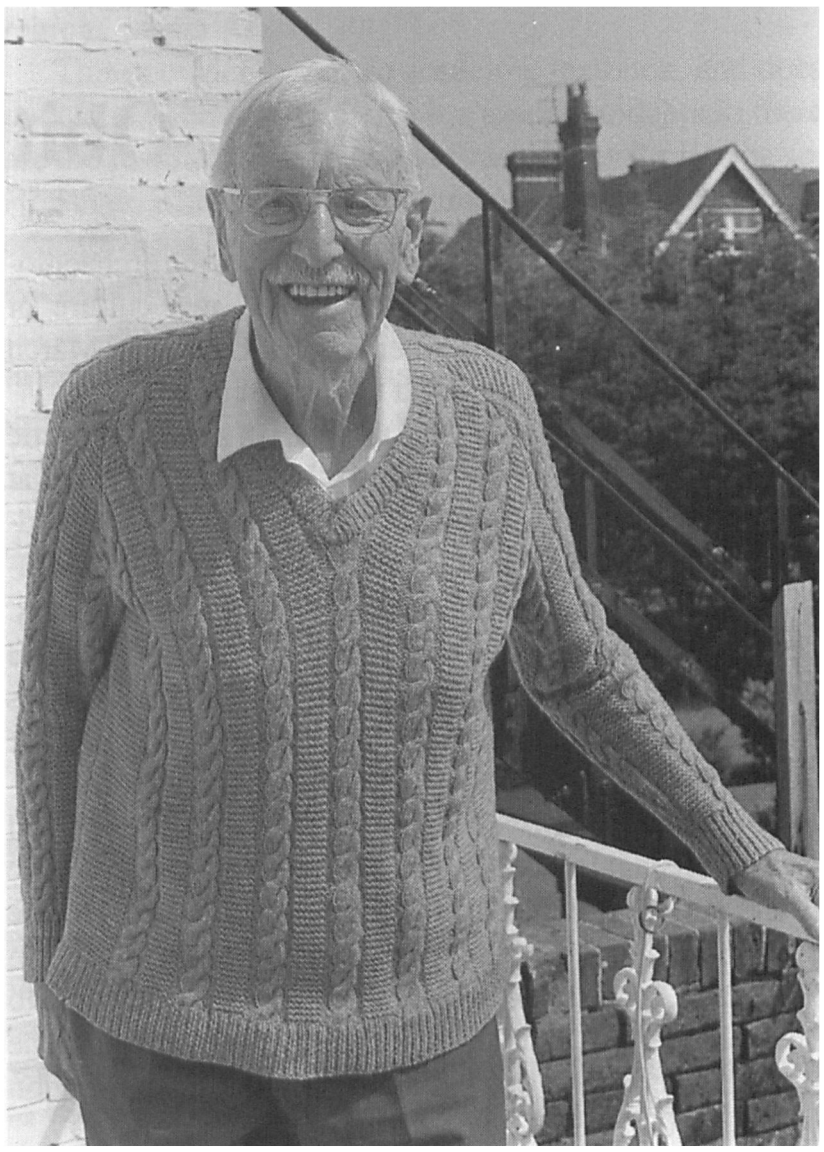

Fig. 1. The Reverend Harold Duncan in 1990.

The Rev Harold Duncan, former missionary at Pond Inlet, died on 30 November 1995, aged 92. Born in London on 17 November 1903, he won a scholarship to the King Edward VI School in Sheffield. After school he taught at Monkton Combe for five years.

In 1928, at the age of 25, Duncan left his teaching post to train at the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society College in Bristol. After having been ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Ontario in 1929, he accompanied Jack Turner (later Canon Turner) to Pond Inlet, where they became the first resident missionaries. In 1934 Duncan returned to England on furlough, and, due to to ill health, did not return to the Arctic. He returned instead to his teaching career, and was headmaster of Cloverly Hall School in Shropshire for 18 years, following which he returned to the Church and undertook a variety of clerical posts.

During the time Duncan spent at Pond Inlet, he translated the Scripture Union Bible Reading Cards into Inuktitut and the Book of Isaiah from the dialect of the Labrador Inuit to the dialect of the Baffin Island Inuit. This was later printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and at present is on display at the Scott Polar Research Institute, along with many artifacts he kindly donated to the museum in 1990.

To this day, Duncan is still spoken of among the community at Pond Inlet with great respect and affection. His musical talent, in composing hymn tunes and accompanying the Church services on his accordion, is well-remembered, as is his dedication to pastoral care, which on one occasion involved carrying out an eight-hour operation on a young child who had been mauled by a husky. In 1992 Bishop Christopher Williams presented Duncan's private communion set to St Timothy's Church in Pond Inlet, a gift still treasured.

Shirley Sawtell

John Blyth, a member of Operation 'Tabarin,' died in Stanley, Falkland Islands, on 1 May 1995, aged 71. Blyth was born in Stanley, where he spent most of his childhood. In January 1944, as a member of the Falkland Islands Defence Force, he heard that a team of British scientists needed a cook for an Antarctic expedition. He immediately volunteered his services, as a relief from the sentry duty in which he was mainly engaged. On being accepted, he found himself a member of the then secret Royal Navy Operation 'Tabarin,' launched to safeguard British sovereignty in the Falkland Island Dependencies (now British Antarctic Territory) and commanded by Lieut Cdr J.W.S. Marr, RNVR.

Sailing from Stanley in HMS *William Scoresby* in March, Blyth joined Marr's nine-man party at Port Lockroy (Wiencke Island, Danco Coast), where they established a base known as Bransfield House. Although he had been engaged as cook, in fact he acted only as cook's assistant, for much of the cooking was taken over by the stores

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