

BAS Club Reunion, Cambridge, July 2018

Just a few notes and pictures for a one or two of you who weren't able to make it to this year's reunion! It was in Cambridge, and in July rather than June (close to Midwinter), I think because that was when they could arrange a visit to the BAS Headquarters.

I drove down from North Yorkshire, picking up Alan Precious on the way. (In his nineties, he's no longer keen to drive that far.) He was one of the two who brought dog-driving techniques to Halley Bay in 1961, and Precious Bay (an unofficial place name near the Bob-Pi Crossing) was named after him. He led the group who discovered the Crossing, and made the first trip across it!

Not many people turned up from my two years. For 1964 there were Alan Etchells, James Westwood, Ian Buckler and Phil Cotton. Even less from 1965 – only Phil Cotton (and me, I suppose). This must be the first for many years that Rod Rhys Jones has missed, and nor was Jeremy Bailey's brother Brian Dorsett-Bailey there.



On Saturday morning there was a visit to the Scott Polar Research Institute, a mile or two from the BAS HQ. Outside is the northern end of the Antarctic Monument organised by Rod Rhys Jones. (Apparently the southern component, in Port Stanley on the quayside, is suffering from saltwater corrosion and they're trying to find a grade of resistant steel for a replacement. This wooden component is also suffering, in this case from the British weather.) I think the statue right of centre was by Captain Scott's wife, to commemorate his and his companions. The husky statue, moved from the original site by the BAS HQ, is now on the other side of the SPRI building.

With sharp eyes you might pick out James Westwood here, second to the right of the wooden artwork, and Phil Cotton to the right of him.



Plenty of souvenirs available in their shop – but I don't think the sledge overhead is for sale. Not cheap, either – a rug in the Antarctic tartan (there's one for the Arctic, too) was £45.



I couldn't resist a chuckle at this display, a sonde unit from the Maudheim expedition of 1949-52. It's mounted on its side! Someone saw the windmill part and assumed that to be an anemometer for wind speed. Of course, an ascending balloon moves together with the wind and so the apparent horizontal wind speed is always zero! That component should have the axis horizontal, so that it's turned by the air rushing past vertically as the whole thing ascends. This then turns a gear (a worm drive in ours, as I remember), and that turns a three-way switch to transmit the three readings (temperature, pressure and humidity) in succession for a few seconds each. I eagerly pointed it out to one of their guides.



At BAS HQ that afternoon, and some volunteers had set out items from their shop. Brisk trade, but much more popular were the tables in the far corner. There, they'd dumped several huge piles of obsolete maps! Not easy sorting through a pile a couple of inches thick, especially when someone else is doing the same to the opposite corner of the pile. I got a couple of Dronning Maud Land maps, and one of Admiralty Bay for Alan Precious. (It showed Precious Peak – he was Base Leader there, in 1959.)

Director of BAS, Professor Dame Jane Francis, had been expected to give us a welcome talk but that day was the launch of the hull of the RRS Sir David McBoatface, so she was in Liverpool for the occasion. We got a video of her talk instead.



In their cold room at -25°C , with everyone very lightly dressed (heat wave, outside). We were all chilling down, and then when someone tried to get out they found the door stuck!

Lewis Jukes, 9/8/18

We didn't need the red panic button on the wall – turned out that the door just needed a good solid shove. Anyway, Phil Cotton doesn't look worried.



As our party went from department to department, we reached Botany. They've got quite a lot of that, around the other bases. Extreme right, Phil Cotton, and next is James Westwood.



Quite an ornament for the stairwell – surprised that it hasn't been removed, as being politically incorrect.

Lewis Jukes, 9/8/18



Dinner about to start: from the left, Ian Buckler and Wendy Morgan; James Westwood and Shelagh.



Saturday evening, and the dinner. Right, my son Russell (he's joined the club and taken to attending Reunions). Next, Phil Cotton, and then Keith Gainey (editor of the BAS Club Magazine).

Lewis Jukes