

BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY

NEWSLETTER No. 66

SEPTEMBER 1972

ADFLAIDE ISLAND

Weather: Changeable, mild conditions during first two weeks, overcast with high winds later. There were 87.7 hours of sunshine.

Mean Temperature: 5.9°C.

This month continues with more work on the jetty with Ron, Allan, Harry and Mike managing to clear a considerable amount of ice from around the hole by attacking said ice with crevasse probes and pick axes. The pump is coping quite well although freezing up of the pipes is a big problem, which means that the whole lot has to be taken indoors to thaw out. There may be some jobs with Wimpey's when we get back home!

The met. men took advantage of the exceptionally fine weather to let off masses of halloons, these being visually tracked to approximately 35,000 feet by Colin, but the price he had to pay was frozen fingers. Mex let the side down by not starting his stopwatch when timing his balloon twice in one day!

Steve celebrated his birthday party one Saturday night with a fancy dress happening, the theme being "Explorers", and quite a few well known names in the Fids world had the Michael extracted! Winner of the evening for sheer charm, beauty and composure (no, not Harry) was Cyn, dressed in chic floppy hat, red ribbon and sign proclaiming her to be "Faithful Explorers Dog" (the handwriting wasn't Cyn's). The next morning Mike staggered out of his pit, did the 9.am Stanley sked and staggered back to bed through a fast asleep base.

Allan has been digging valiantly in some snow drifts for some meat he buried earlier on and at last struck lucky. Ron, on Sunday cook, gave us his special rice-lark-a-la-James which has graced our tables oft in the past. Colin has been busy for some time now preparing field equipment in readiness for the Alexander Island geologists arrival later in the season.

Mex generously provided our entertainment one day by very unceremoniously, and with a great shriek, falling flat on his back down a slight slope from the met. screen. He still insists he was full of the joys of spring and thought he'd attempt a double somersault, but we know better.

Indent fever seems to be getting a grip on most people; Mike sorted out his spares which came in last relief, and is thinking of doing the indent proper soon; Ron is wading through his building indents, and it won't be long before everyone else joins in. Princess had an attack of suspected food poisoning which was quickly cured by Steve and the almighty syringe. Cyn gets lazier every day but now her plaster is off and the leg, though wasted through lack of use, looks good and she is able to get around a bit more. Allan dug out our Bar-B-Q for a barbeque the coming

Saturday but foul weather put paid to that. Harry had a go at our long dormant "Utilurker" Muskeg, but not having any batteries for it he decided he'd like to hear engine sounds some time that day, so the Skidtrack engine was run for half an hour. Mike repaired the record player amplifier after smoke was seen coming out of it in great plumes, and wonders how long it will last this time.

Casino atmosphere was savoured by all at a stud-poker session one Saturday night, as a consequence of which priority mail next year is a book on gambling rules. Weapons were handed in to Sheriff H. Lines before the game started.

Roger has been grip-happy because of our forthcoming photo competition next month. Prizes are being handed to Mex and Allan for distribution to the winners and runners up. The month draws to its climax with Allan celebrating his birthday with five gallons of home brew beer which had been made to the extra strong recipe, beats any beer back home for power. Towards the end of the evening-cum-morning after a good game of three card brag, Steve, Roger, Ron and Mike had a bit of a right groove-up. We only hope the new air mechanic fits into our dancing circles as good as the last one, Rob "Twinkle Toes" Campbell-Lent. See you all next month.

Written this month by Mike Jozefiak.

ARGENTINE ISLANDS

Weather: Greatly fluctuating temperatures, some rain and much snowfall. There were 37 hours of sunshine.

Mean Temperature: -3.7°C .

August left as it came, sunny and everybody on base seems to feel better for it. The last birthday in the month belonged to Pete B. and the party called for a 'smooth' appearance (and there are plenty of them I can tell you!).

'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' - well not exactly - but that's how early September greeted us, with a definite touch of spring in the air. The furniture and construction group, Binsley (sauna), Rasp (furniture), Bob and Pete B. (record cabinet) and finally Buttercup (painting one side of the physics room door), were still hard at work at the beginning of the month. Ken, what with thermographs and boat repairs, seems to be busy too. Igloo building is also the 'thing' at the moment, will the Eskimos take on Rasp and Buttercup as GAs next year?

Not only spring, but the holiday season too. Bob and Pete B. (you remember that dynamic duo) set off to Wordie, only to return the same night to play darts against Halley Bay (via radio). They reported that the brochure didn't mention anything about two inches of snow on the floor and dripping roofs. They intend writing to the travel agent. The darts match? Well let's just say that they were suitably humiliated, with Mac's help of course; what a darts player!

Our first seal birth was recorded on September 4th and they have been reported ever since, especially around Wordie. Keith and Stu were entertained for tea at Wordie and afterwards went looking for seal and pups. Perseverance pays, and Keith has proved that in his ski-ing, even in blowing snow and 30-knot winds - damn those Welsh! 'Tam-O-Shanter' Stu has also graced the slopes, watch out Aviemore next year.

Rasputin's birthday passed quietly, like Father Time? And Sunday blasted into energy with Pete F., Mac, Buttercup and Ken off to Wordie. Everybody settled in on Sunday night, except Pete F. Was it a ghost or a dressing gown on skis that appeared to be walking down to Wordie at 8 o'clock on Monday morning? (Later confirmed as Pete F. equipped for a week of rest). The holiday camp was thrown open to the public on Wednesday for Buttercup's birthday, with Pete F. providing eats. The party returned last Sunday in a blizzard.

For those who stayed it was a question of spring-cleaning the kitchen and loft, with Binsley, Hobbit and Dave O. the main instigators. Cooking was really taken in hand by Stu, Hobbit, Dave O. and Pete B. Hobbit seemed glad to see Buttercup, he's been having trouble with the tide gauge, and all the base were glad to see Mac, that's not to say the cooking was bad however!

We now know our relief is on December 9th - so get writing folks, everybody is looking forward to letters etc. now. Towards the end of the month we return to good old British snow, temperatures just below zero, and plenty of brash (bits of ice, small), and the sea ice season, apart from Skua and Stella Creeks, seems at an end.

Well that's about it for September. We go out manky, drizzly, rainy and snowy, hoping for better weather and summer. So it's cheers from the 'Banana Belt' for another month. From all here to you at home, best wishes, keep well.

Written by Pete Barton.

FOSSIL BLUFF

A manky and windy August is followed by a September almost as bad, however, on the occasional bright days things get done. The travelling season eventually began on the 2nd, after a three day Crossword Festival - a query from a corner started it all. Soon all the Bluff reference books were out and about and it went on from there.

With Ian and Andy safely in the Cwm, Jim and Martin took Rasmus across the Sound to Horse Point for some glaciological work. Although it got quite cold, all three seemed to enjoy themselves. Whilst out in the Sound news reached the caboose from the Cwm that Andy had dislocated his ankle; another chance for Ian to practise his plastering. All is now well there.

Meanwhile back at the Bluff work started on the Kegs. Even though little room is left in our tarpaulin/scaffolding garage for people when there is a Keg in there, a top overhaul has been completed on one Keg and is about to start on the second.

By way of light relief the Fids might be seen leaping from vehicle to vehicle at dead of night, taking flash photographs of each other. Either that or lying on the floor inside the

house with pinpoint sources of light swinging about their cameras.

The latest pastime is brewing. The beer ran out about 6 or 7 weeks ago and thirst has now driven us to home brew bins that have been here for years! As if no beer wasn't torment enough, Rasmus, a few days ago, took a liking to the last of the fresh meat. So now we've none of that.

However, despite all the hardships we're all still happy - and hope you are.

Written by Martin Pearson.

HALLEY BAY

Weather: Precipitation occurred on 18 days; high winds caused much drift. There were 115.6 hours of sunshine.

Mean Temperature: -28.1

September sees the field season start. Paul J. Toby and Tony ushered in the month by levelling at Nocker. Later Dave F. Bruce and Ian B. set off towards the South Pole, not quite getting there, but stopping 900 miles or so short to recce the Bob-Pi area.

One of the frequent day "jollies" (Gord D., Gord R., Tony and Paul J.) finally stumbled over that photographer's paradise the penguin rookery, located near Mobster Creek this year. Bruce dug out the Fairy plane, almost buried during the winter, and along with Norman took it down to the sea ice at Third Chip. The descent down the slope proved a lot easier than the journey back up, but with the aid of a few jolly passers-by it was pulled over the top.

There is always work to do around base. Paul B. has been seen occasionally, but only when not chipping ice from the garage roof in an attempt to save the building for relief. Iain C. and Jack have brought the dogs out of their winter home in the tunnel, and they are now spanned on the surface. They are also tearing around base in a specially made little sledge, training dogs for the first field trips.

Winter projects are still holding out, Trev T. is building the best radio in the world and, by coincidence, Gord R. has built the biggest, quietest speaker in the whole universe. They may be getting together sometime.

Met. man Ron has been acting as nurse to Audrey, one of the several bitches who have had unplanned pups this year. Two other members of the same department, Rog and Trev B. started an ambitious programme involving the survey of Third Chip, the usual location of relief. Keith and John have been confined to base more than most. Keith has been manning the kitchen alone while Ian B. is off base, and John is tied to his radio.

This, however, doesn't prevent John wallowing in rumours he has picked up over the air about relief. We hope they are not all true.

Excuses for celebrations and parties have not been hard to find. Both Trev B. and Jack had birthdays while Brian and Dave H. toasted sisters who have recently married.

The strangely named Kim Philby Evening produced plenty of surprises for the unsuspecting people who volunteered, or were coerced into appearing on the panels. Brian brought his team to victory by showing he was better able to whistle with his mouth full of oats than his rival Andy.

Kevin arranged the photo competition which has not yet reached the voting or prize giving stage. Some very fine photos are on exhibition. Also in a photo frame of mind Norman did a second base photo, the first attempt sinking without trace in the winter jollities.

Authors Dave H. and Norman apologise for any inaccuracies. All characters are extremely real and have no resemblance to people either fictitious or dead.

SIGNY ISLAND

Weather: Often overcast; high winds sometimes gusting to 69 knots, There were 62.2 hours of sunshine.

Mean Temperature: -6.1°C .

News from sunny, manky, wet and windy Signy Island. Yes Readers, we have had the lot this month, even as I sit here I can hear the 60-knot winds howling around me.

September started off with high winds, funnily enough, forming a sort of sastrugi surface on the sea ice which is a little unusual for Signy. Eager for new experiences the team from Signy Island School for Stuntmen got out there with the yellow 'Doo and a sledge, showing the rest of base just what they could do. Paul Skilling gets the award of stuntman of the month after rolling off the sledge, completing several complicated somersaults and then coming to rest in a handy snow drift. He was heard to scream "Great, I even managed to keep the cine running!" The film should be interesting.

The Weddell seals have arrived and are giving birth to pups left right and centre. Needless to say many footprints have been seen in the snow heading away from base, and for a while the dark room was chokka with Fids processing roll after roll of film showing nothing but Weddell seal in various positions. Whilst on one of these jollys Plaffs perfected his disappearing act by falling through a hole in the sea ice, which had been hidden by drift snow. Fortunately he only fell waist deep and after being hauled out by partner in crime Dave W., the only thing he could think to say was "It's alright, me camera did'nt get wet!"

Talking of cameras, both Plaffs and Chris have had troubles with big black blobs on their negatives. This, it was found, was due to holes in their shutter blinds, caused by pointing cameras at the sun. Fortunately with the help of neoprene glue they have managed to make the required repairs, and both parties could be seen soon after blating off roll after roll of film, claiming that they were testing their cameras.

Meanwhile the terrestrial team (Ian 'Hamish' Collinge, Don 'Quackers' Goddard, Paul 'Broadycles' Broady and Pete Jennings) are belting off to Gourlay with their newly built 6-foot Nansen sledge, (GT model) believed to be the only one in use in the Antarctic.

The re-decoration of the lounge was completed mid-September by Mike and Dave W. We found great difficulty in choosing names for the new colours but finally decided on homicidal yellow and indescribable blue.

At the same time Jan 'Captain Pasty' Hoogesteger and Plaffs transformed the kitchen into a replica of Santa Claus' grotto with the aid of several pints of Fiesta red gloss paint.

Mike has also been doing his best to "wreck-a-Doo-a-day"! I can't possibly give a complete list of his success but he managed to destroy the steering twice. Once by driving into a rock, blaming Hamish for mis-parking the red 'Doo', and once by pulling the handlebars off whilst driving - "It came off in my hands"! As these 'ere accidents frequently happen on John's gash day, it has been suggested that perhaps it's all a big effort to keep John amused.

The Signy discussion/debate/rebellion group have been kept busy lately with the advent of a new notice being posted informing us of a coming grip (photo) competition. As is traditional on Signy, it would seem that not everybody agrees with the rules. As there are only three rules one would assume that no normal group of human beings could keep such an argument (whoops, sorry my mistake, I mean discussion of course) going for more than half an-hour or so. But then as our Readers have probably realised over the past few months, if there's one thing Fids ain't, it's normal humans.

Jan kept himself busy in the earlier part of the month trying to devise a system of getting sea water in and out of the wet lab. Seems his success has been somewhat spasmodic, but that's science for you.

Our WOP (radio operator) Jay, has been oscilating his amplifiers (or something like that) by letting every radio "ham" in the world know he's alive and kicking. He has contacted several "hams" in the Falkland Islands, and has consequently been the source of many rumours about the times and dates of people and ships due to arrive soon.

The sea ice on the west coast has been rapidly deteriorating with warm winds and was finally declared to be unsafe for travelling on the 6th September. Paul Skilling managed to get two dives on the ship wreck (TIOGA) however, along with Jan, Terry, Mike, Ian, Brian and Dave W.

Broadcycles went off for one of his solitary weekends at Gourlay Field Hut, but the main jolly of the month was to Coronation Island. Participants were Don, Terry, Jay and Dave T. their aim was to scale Wave Peak but, as with the previous Coronation party, they found the weather to be against them and had to be content with sticking to Nobs Ridge and the lower coastal regions. However, they seemed to have a good time, and the Squadcal radio behaved itself this time.

Radio operators for that week were Dave W. and Brian da Mollusc. They seemed to manage well enough until the last day when they tried to blow up the main transmitter (I knew something was wrong when it went bang).

Don, our part time medical officer, was kept busy tending Kris, who has had to rest his leg for a week. However, Kris recovered quickly and further administrations to the sick weren't necessary although Don was seen polishing and tenderly caressing hammer, chisel and hacksaw.

The only person I don't seem to have mentioned is Tim. Well, apart from his botanising, playing the worst of Signy's collection of records and generally acting like a proper Charlie, he has been planning various whistle stop tours of South America, producing more weird photos with the aid of grease proof paper and various types of tissues, and was the night watchman for the latter part of the month.

The only other thing that seems worth mentioning is the recent influx of messages from London telling us of the three or is it four hundred tons of cargo, along with 20 new faces or so, that we can expect this summer. It's also rumoured that we will be getting a few of the Ugandan refugees, just to complete the scene, but I don't know how much truth to attach to that one.

Cheers for now.

Written by the plastic replica cockney cook, Plaffs.

SOUTH GEORGIA

Weather: Above average temperatures and considerable rainfall, interspersed with calm, dry, cloudy conditions. There were 98.9 hours of sunshine.

Mean Temperature: 0.5°C.

This month, as the newsletter goes to press on Sparky's 'Magic Piano', it is in the hands of the radio operator himself. Revenge on those long-newsletter-writers whose handiwork needs decoding.

Time is slipping by very rapidly now and the onset of the summer relief frenzy imminent. Elephant seal bulls are appearing on the beaches, followed by the cows. After their long winter at sea they are coming back for mating and pupping. A few early Skua gulls have also been seen, returning from their winter migration to warmer waters. Our resident population of

Dominican gulls, somewhat thinned by the rigours of winter, are being swelled by new arrivals. The sighting of a killer whale in Moraine Fjord eclipsed the more commonly seen Leopard seals, though we are not quite blasé about them yet.

The latter part of last month saw some heavy snow falls, with many of the less used bungalows drifting up to roof level, ski-ing, however, remained unpopular until just lately, snow-shoes being more appropriate due to soft surfaces. Eric, Fergy, Scobie and Andy J. were dropped at Dartmouth Point for their assault on Sutton Crag. This was an abysmal failure, according to base pundits (commenting from the comfort of Shackleton House), but South Georgia weather played it's usual part and they had low level cloud for much of the time (naturally this restraint of my scathing pen will catch each of them a case of beer).

Geoff fell out of bed during the course of a vivid dream about a novel method of descending staircases, but this did not hinder his recovery and he is now happily tugging about on his crutches. Dave in fact has had more dentistry to do than anything else, fillings having suffered during the course of the winter, and has done a few radio-doctor skeds with Signy Island. Jerry shot a two ton elephant seal for doggie meat, Abdul commenting that the weight being mostly due to the 'amount of lead in it'. Nothing daunted, Jerry commenced painting the Botany lab. and despite initial difficulties, getting gloss to stick on the ceiling, has made a good job of it, perhaps inspired by Scobie, whose orange radiators have flowered all around Shackleton House. The latter has been busy these days down in the chippy shop making some big double doors. He had to knock the wall down to put them up. Abdul, having finished wiring up the street lights, built a new heat exchanger for LILLI KARL and Dick Rumble too has been busy, and has done an excellent job on the overhaul of LILLI KARL'S engine, together with Dick 2. the pistons, rings, liners and sundry bearings being renewed, new fuel pump installed as well as the whole works being painted, resulting in what looks like a new engine. Brian has been painting the engine compartment so that it will not disgrace the engine, helped by Roge.

The biggest job of all this month was lifting the heavy engine out of LILLI KARL. Ably managed by Dick, assisted by all and sundry, it required removing the coach roof, erecting a scaffolding like an oil-rig's, on the deck of the boat, to take the two hoists. The critical moment came when the engine was swung, hanging from the cross-beam over to the 'bucket' of the International which was parked on the very edge of the jetty - having been coaxed and cursed through the deep snow from the garage - LILLI KARL objected to the lack of ballast, but with many Fids grimly counter-balancing the weight of the engine, it was all accomplished without Fids, engine, boat and tractor all disappearing into the depths, from whence there is no rescue except by suitable offerings of beer to Garrey. On the subject of depths - an echo sounder recently fitted to KUMBAYA promises to be very useful.

Ian, Andy J. and Bob have been digging out various pieces of equipment from beneath depths of snow up at Hodges Glacier and the latter has also been putting the finishing touches on the hut extension. How he gets the time for gonking..... Mike and Pete have both been doing Trojan work in the darkroom

before their return to the Barff. I am not sure though if the developing is keeping pace with exposing. Andy C. has also been active in this field and has shown some excellent photos. John K. bemoaning the return of the sun and resumption of ozone obs., ~~exercised~~ his culinary talents last week and produced a fine Saturday night meal. Garrey, quiet for some reason since his return from Leith Harbour, has just made a 'scientific discovery' and indications are that he may go on permanent sleep reversal to conform to the habits of his little critters down in the 'wet' lab. Keith, apart from relieving me of the occasional teleprinter schedule, has been 'modding' his wind speed recorder so that it will register in excess of 90-knots. Welllll..... it might happen.

The most startling event of the month, however, was the debut of Merv on the piste. Despite the gloomy predictions of the vast crowd on Shackleton House grandstands, who over-looked the event, Merv failed to come to grief. We believe that he is practising for the Lyell Glacier trip, but I will leave the details to next month's chronicler.

Caution:- Any person taking this as a precedent for long newsletters will be appropriately dealt with.

Written by John Burke.

STONINGTON

Sledges Echo (Miles and Bob), Alpha (Malc and Drummy) and Charlie (Pauls G. and F. plus Brian Jones) were the first to leave base for the summer trip on 3rd September. The last three sledges, Juliet (Dave and Neil), Tango (Graham and John Hudson) and Lima (Mick, John Yates and Denis) departed on the following day.

Alpha writes:-

Sledge McAlpha, after leaving base, endured ten consecutive hard days travel. Drummy and Malc covered 150 miles through glen and glacier to reach the south edge of the Wordie Ice Shelf at the foot of the Relay Hills, and were dying for a lie-up. Well, it never rains but it pours, and the subsequent 13 miles took as many days, in one of the worst spells of weather that we can remember. The sound of wind and snow was frequently pierced by hideous Celtic, Greek and Germanic oaths as the Spartans and the Huns ploughed shoulder deep through soft snow towards Mount Edgell. It's a good job we left our kilts at home.

Miles and Bob of Sledge Echo made steady progress to their work area, in the Cape Berteaux Peninsula, with no lie-ups, but their enjoyment of the trip was marred by particularly low temperatures. They parted company with Sledge Charlie at Ptolemy, and with Sledge Alpha just before heading for their work depot in the Clarke Glacier, east of Cape Berteaux. After sledging to the bottom of the Clarke they began geologising and plane-table mapping. After two days work the weather turned and they have not managed any work in the fortnight since.

Dave and Neil of Sledge Juliet, with John Hudson and Graham of Sledge Tango, say they claim the distinction of being the

first major East Coast Earth Sciences Expedition to Higher Latitudes. The initial stages of their journey took them via Ptolemy, the Mercator Ice Piedmont and the Weyerhaeuser Glacier onto the Palmer Land Plateau. From then on it was very much travel by compass as they were greeted by the usual September plateau muck. Their first major stop was Charity Depot, 170 miles from base, in the Eternity Range, to check the escape depot there. Here, apart from checking the depot, the much rumoured case of ale was consumed in an effort to reduce old stocks. Nog Lady pupped the following day, providing four very sore heads with an excuse for a day's delay. The next stage of their journey should take them to their work depot and Boomerang Ridge, and then on to their proposed work area between the Clifford Glacier and Mount Andrew Jackson.

The two survey Sledges, Paul Gurling, Paul Finigan and Brian Jones of Charlie and, Mick John Yates and Denis of Lima, travelled with Juliet and Tango as far south as the Eternities. After that they parted company and headed west for the King George VI Sound. They are now 200 miles south of Stonington and propose to start work, weather permitting, within the next week.

After waving goodbye to the departing field parties, Brian, Ali and Nick dashed back to base to revel in the space afforded them by an empty Stonington. Room at last to sit down for a meal, room at the bar to sit and drink, room even to lean a tippler's drowsy elbow. The sledgers look forward to getting back into the field, whilst we on base anticipate the peace and quiet of an almost Crusoe existence. We have plenty to occupy our time; Ali has the new building to complete, Brian has much wiring and re wiring to do, Nick has a new radio shack to install. Unfortunately our peace will soon be shattered in a few months, by the arrival of planes and ships.

Written by Stonington sledgers and thrown together in some sort of order by Nick Meades.

Note from London Office

10th October, 1972

On 1st October, John Hudson was suddenly taken seriously ill with abdominal trouble, some 200 miles from base. Graham Wright immediately made radio contact with Stephen Vallance, the doctor at Adelaide who has been supervising his treatment by radio ever since. He is being supported by Doctor Ashmore, the Senior Medical Officer in Stanley with whom he can talk by radio, and by specialists in this country who are being kept in touch by teleprinter.

Sledge Juliet was despatched to the sick camp to help nurse the patient; meanwhile Bert Conchie and Dave Brown who were in Toronto preparing to fly our Twin Otter south at the end of the month, at once took off for Punta Arenas, arriving there on 8th October. They are now waiting for suitable weather to cross the Drake Passage.

Last Wednesday, when there was increasing anxiety about John, Sir Vivian Fuchs contacted the Argentine Antarctic Institute asking whether an Argentine aircraft might be able to bring John back to base quicker than we could. The Argentine government ordered a plane south, which has already reached Marambio. Today she took off for Adelaide, but after two hours the weather clamped and the pilot has been forced back to Marambio. When conditions permit, Bert Conchie will make the flight to Adelaide in one hop, so both aircraft could arrive there almost simultaneously.

John is still holding his own, and we hope it will not be long now before he is in hospital in Argentina. I am sure you would all like to be associated with us in extending our sympathy to Mr. & Mrs. Hudson in this anxious time.