
Mountaineers and Skiers in British Antarctic Territory Place-names

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In the 'heroic' age of Antarctic exploration, spanning the first two decades of this century, it is strange that mountaineering and cross-country ski expertise were conspicuously deficient on British expeditions. It appears that for some reason there was no rapport in Britain between polar explorers on the one hand, and mountaineers and pioneer ski-runners on the other. So Scott, Shackleton and their men learnt an indifferent snow and ice craft the hard way – by trial and error when they reached the field.

Yet, as early as 1883, Baron A E Nordenskiöld had demonstrated the tremendous advantage of skis in polar work on his expedition to West Greenland. His example was followed by Nansen, who ski'd across Greenland in 1889, and by Conway, who ski'd across Vestspitsbergen in 1896. In the Antarctic, Scandinavians were foremost in making use of skis: first, Amundsen on the de Gerlache (Belgian) expedition to Graham Land (now part of the British Antarctic Territory (BAT)) in 1897–99, followed by Borchgrevink on his expedition to Victoria Land (now part of Ross Dependency) in 1898–1900 and O Nordenskiöld on his expedition to northern Graham Land in 1901–04. In 1912 skis were crucial to Amundsen's great triumph at the South Pole. However, the first Antarctic explorer to emphasize the importance of traditional mountaineering skills, as opposed to ski technique, was Charcot from France, who employed an Alpine guide on his expedition to the west coast of Graham Land in 1903–05. He thus ensured sound mountaineering technique among members of this expedition, a number of whom formed the nucleus of his second expedition to the same area in 1908–10. By way of example and contrast, on the British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (BITAE), Shackleton's famous crossing of South Georgia in 1916 was due entirely to the magnificent courage and endurance of his three-man party, and owed nothing to mountaineering skill which the party simply did not possess.

In the 1920s, polar exploration began to move out of the 'heroic' age, as travel by dog-sledge completely replaced man hauling and as aircraft soon became available for reconnaissance and depot laying. With improved food, clothing and equipment, expeditions were able to concentrate with enjoyment on mapping and science in new country and ceased to be survival tests of the most rigorous and extreme kind. In Britain during this transition period, important roles were played by two men, Wordie and Watkins, both experienced mountaineers who brought other mountaineers into the polar field. (Fuchs, of later Antarctic fame, was a member of Wordie's British East Greenland Expedition, 1929, and Chapman and Wager, both of later

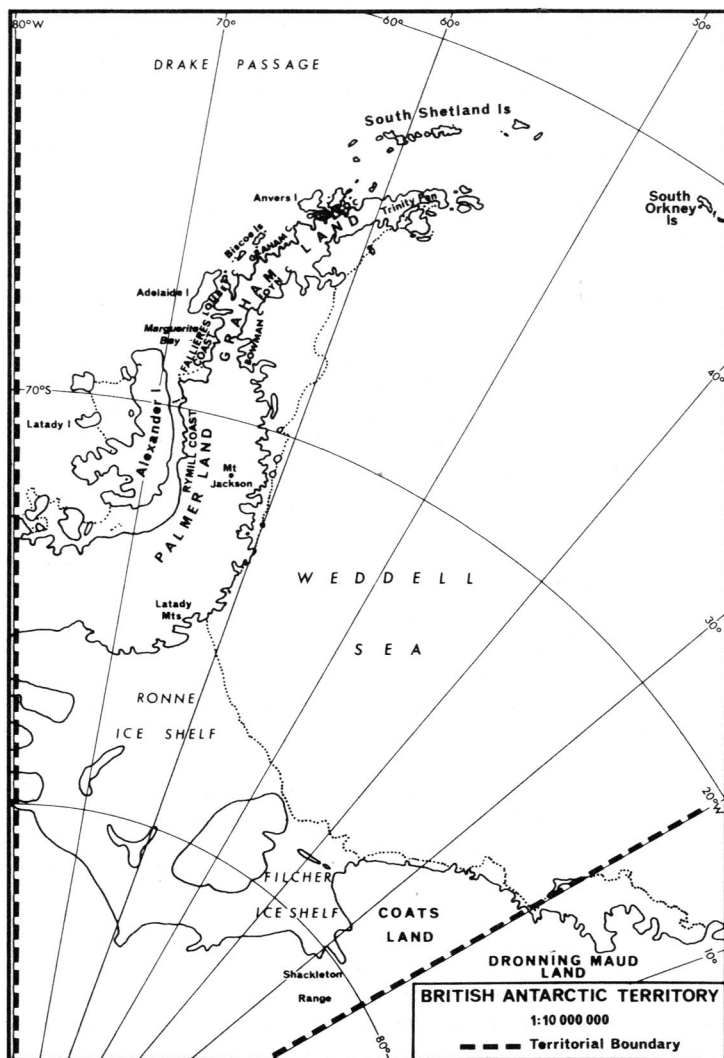
Himalayan fame, were members of Watkins's British Arctic Air Route Expedition, 1930–31 (BAARE). In the Antarctic, the trend of the immediate pre-Second World War period culminated in the British Graham Land Expedition, 1934–37 (BGLE), originally planned by Watkins prior to his death in a kayak accident in 1932. This expedition, one of the most cost-effective ever mounted, carried out important mapping and scientific work on the west coast of Graham Land.

British work in Graham Land, halted by the Second World War, was resumed in 1944 under the Royal Navy's Operation 'Tabarin', which in 1945 became known as the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) and, from 1962, as the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The hastily assembled members of Operation 'Tabarin' had a nucleus of men with ship-borne Antarctic experience, but none who could be called a mountaineer. But a number of mountaineers were soon attracted to the FIDS in its early days, so that there was usually at least one experienced man at each station. In the BAS today mountaineering experience is an essential requirement for a proportion of the recruits to man the present four stations in the BAT, namely, Signy (South Orkney Islands), Faraday (Graham Coast), Rothera (Adelaide Island) and Halley (Coats Land).

The wide-ranging work of the Survey over most of the BAT, on journeys for which in late years the snow tractor has replaced the dog team, has led to a steady demand for new place-names. In Coats Land new names were also needed following the work of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955–58 (TAE), and an intense demand for names arose from the first systematic air photography of Graham Land and off-lying islands by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition, 1955–57 (FIDASE). To resolve the problem of the need for new names outstripping the traditional sources (e.g. names of expedition members and descriptive names), the late Dr Brian Roberts, for many years Secretary of the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee, thought of naming groups of geographically related features after corresponding groups of persons or ideas. Among the groups he chose were 'Pioneers of ski-mountaineering' and 'Pioneers of polar life and travel' for the indirect contribution of such men to Antarctic exploration by reason of their expertise as skiers and/or mountaineers, and as designers of equipment. Some of those commemorated (including a few foreigners) were members of the Alpine Club; all are more or less well-known in mountain literature. Mountaineers also appear in a group of names after 'Glaciologists', and in widely scattered areas outside these main groupings. Under these categories and with reference to the map, a selection is given of those names most likely to be of interest to readers of this journal.

Place-names after pioneers of ski-mountaineering (Graham Coast)

Pride of place must go to *Rossa Point* and *Tuorda Peak*, named after A P Rossa (1844–1917) and P L N Tuorda (1847–1911), the two Jokkmokk Lapps on Nordenskiöld's expedition to west Greenland in 1883, who were credited with



covering a total distance of 460km (*sic*) on skis in 57 hours. The first Englishman to make a full day's journey on skis was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), in Switzerland in March 1893, so we have *Doyle Glacier*. This journey was made only three years before the first crossing of Vestspitsbergen by Sir Martin Conway, 1st Baron Conway of Allington (1856–1937), President of the Alpine Club, 1902–04, and first President of the Alpine Ski Club, 1908–11 (*Conway Island*). Pioneer British ski-runners are further represented by E C Richardson (1872–1954), first Secretary, 1903–05, and then President of the

Ski Club of Great Britain (*Richardson Nunatak*) and by V Caulfield (1874–1958), author of *How to Ski* (London, 1910) (*Caulfield Glacier*). And German pioneer ski-runners are represented by: O Vorweg, author of *Das Schneeschuh Laufen* (Warmbrunn, 1893) (*Vorweg Point*); W Paulcke (1873–1949), who with three companions traversed the Bernese Oberland on skis in January 1897 (*Mount Paulcke*); W R Rickmers (AC) (1873–1965), explorer of the Caucasus and Pamir, and co-author with E C Richardson (see above) and C Somerville (see below) of *Ski-running* (London, 1904) (*Rickmers Glacier*); and W Hoek (1875–1951), author of *Schi und seine sportliche Benutzung* (München, 1906) (*Hoek Glacier*).

Also commemorated in the place-names are men especially noted for designing new or improved mountaineering and ski equipment, although not all were experts of technique. Their names comprise: F Huitfeldt (1851–1938), Norwegian designer of the Huitfeldt ski-binding and author of *Lehrbuch des Skilaufens* (Berlin, 1890) (*Huitfeldt Point*); M Zdarsky (d1940), Austrian inventor of the first dependable ski-binding and author of *Lilienfeld Skilauf-Technik* (Hamburg, 1896) (*Mount Zdarsky*); G Bilgeri (1873–1934), Austrian inventor of the first spring ski-binding and author of *Der Alpine Skilauf* (München, 1911, (*Bilgeri Glacier*); F Genecand (1879–1957), Swiss inventor of the Tricouni nail for climbing boots (*Mount Genecand*); V Sohm, Austrian inventor of special types of skins and waxes for skis (*Sohm Glacier*); and R Lawrie (AC) (1903–82), the well-known bootmaker and alpine equipment specialist of London, who supplied equipment for the BGLE and later Antarctic expeditions, thus helping to bridge the gap between alpinists and polar explorers (*Lawrie Glacier*).

Finally, the list includes the names of two much earlier pioneers of alpine travel: J Simler (1530–76), Italian author of *De alpihus commentarius* (Tiguri, 1574), giving the first reasonable advice on precautions for travel on glaciers (*Simler Snowfield*), and F J Hugi (1796–1855), Swiss school-teacher, called ‘the father of winter mountaineering’, and author of *Naturhistorische Alpenreise* (Leipzig, 1830) (*Hugi Glacier*).

Place-names after pioneers of polar life and travel

(Shackleton Range)

The two most famous British mountaineers of the 19th century, E Whymper (AC) (1840–1911) and A F Mummery (AC) (1855–95), the latter lost on Nanga Parbat, were not the best of friends in life but now rest together (as it were) in the adjacent features *Whymper Spur* and *Mummery Cliff*; both men were designers of tents that bear their names. A third tent designer, C F Meade (AC) (1881–1975), is commemorated in the nearby *Meade Nunatak*. A little further away lies *Freshfield Nunatak*, named after D W Freshfield (1845–1934), explorer of the Caucasus and Himalaya, who initiated widespread recognition of the place of mountaineering in exploration; he was Editor of this journal, 1872–80, and President of the Alpine Club, 1893–95, and of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), 1914–17.

Place-names after glaciologists

(Adelaide Island, Loubet Coast, Fallières Coast, Foyn Coast, Bowman Coast)

Most of those commemorated in this group can be counted as mountaineers of varied expertise. A selection has been made in which pride of place must go to H B de Saussure (1740–99), Swiss physicist and geologist, who made the third ascent of Mont Blanc in 1787 (*Saussure Glacier*). Two other early alpine scientists are commemorated: J D Forbes (1809–68), Scottish physicist, who made pioneer studies of glacier flow (*Forbes Glacier*), and J Tyndall (1820–93), Irish mountaineer and author of papers on glaciers and the physical properties of ice (*Tyndall Mountains*).

British mountaineers and skiers of more modern times are represented by: G Seligman (AC) (1886–1973), Founder and first President, 1946–63, of the International Glaciological Society, and author of *Snow Structure and Ski Fields* (London, 1936) (*Seligman Inlet*); M F Perutz (b1914), crystallographer of Austrian birth, OM and Nobel Laureate, an accomplished ski-mountaineer (*Perutz Glacier*); W H Ward (AC) (b1917), a member of expeditions to Jan Mayen, 1938, and Baffin Island, 1951 and 1953, and Secretary, International Commission of Snow and Ice, 1959–71 (*Ward Glacier*); and W R B Battle (1919–53), a member of expeditions to Norway and Greenland, and to Baffin Island, where he lost his life in a glacier melt stream (*Battle Point*).

Among Americans we have: W B O Field (AC) (b1904), sometime Research Fellow of the American Geographical Society, noted for his surveys of glaciers in North America (*Field Glacier*); M H Demorest (1910–42), theoretician in the field of glacier flow, who lost his life on active service with the United States Army in a crevasse accident on the Greenland ice cap (*Demorest Glacier*); J G McCall (1923–54), an expert on cirque glaciers in Norway and Alaska, who died during a mountain rescue operation on Mount McKinley (*McCall Point*); and M F Meier (b1925), specialist on the regime and flow of North American glaciers, who was President of the International Commission of Snow and Ice, 1967–71 (*Meier Valley*). Other countries are represented by: S Finsterwalder (1862–1951) and R Finsterwalder (1899–1963), German pioneers of photogrammetric survey of glaciers, father and son (*Finsterwalder Glacier*), and F Müller (1926–80), Swiss glaciologist who carried out research in the Canadian Arctic and Greenland, and in the Himalaya as a member of the Swiss Everest Expedition, 1957 (*Müller Ice Shelf*).

Other place-names after mountaineers

(ungrouped)

The earliest first-class mountaineer to visit the BAT was P Dayné, the Italian alpine guide from Valsavaranche in the Aosta Valley, who was a member of Charcot's 1903–05 expedition (*Dayné Peak*, Wiencke Island, Danco Coast); he named the highest peak that he climbed (1415m) after Prince Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, Duke of the Abruzzi (AC) (1873–1933), Italian alpinist and Arctic, East African and Himalayan explorer (*Luigi Peak*, Anvers Island). Charcot's expeditions were well-found in ski-mountaineering equipment, thanks to

C Somerville, the ski-mountaineer and equipment specialist of Oslo (*Somerville Island*, Graham Coast).

Subsequent expeditions left widely scattered place-names after members or supporters who were mountaineers. All the 16 members of the BGLE are commemorated in place-names, but on the mountaineering side the expedition is perhaps best remembered in names after two men who did not take part – *Watkins Island* (Biscoe Islands) and *Chapman Glacier* (Rymill Coast). H G Watkins (AC) (1907–32), the originator of this expedition and the leader of expeditions to Edge Island (Svalbard), Labrador and Greenland (twice), was also a fine alpinist. F S Chapman (AC) (1907–71) brought the sledge-dogs from West Greenland to England for this expedition, having previously served on Watkins's Greenland expeditions; in 1937 he made the first ascent of Chomolhari in the Himalaya.

Following the early work of the FIDS, it was appropriate that a major feature should be named after Sir James Wordie (1889–1962), Scottish geologist and polar explorer, who was Chief of Scientific Staff, BITAE, and leader of six expeditions to Greenland and Arctic Canada between the wars; he was also Chairman of the FID Scientific Committee, 1948–56, Vice-President of the Alpine Club, 1949–51, and President of the RGS, 1951–54 (*Wordie Ice Shelf*, Fallières Coast). Others commemorated in place-names at about the same time were: L R Wager (AC) (1904–65), British geologist, who was a member of the BAARE and of the Mount Everest Expedition, 1933, and leader of later expeditions to Greenland (*Wager Glacier*, Alexander Island); F K Elliott (b1910), British rock-climber, Alpine and Himalayan mountaineer, who was FIDS Base Leader at Hope Bay, Trinity Peninsula, 1946–48, and who led a 700km sledge journey down the length of Graham Land to Stonington Island, Marguerite Bay (*Mount Elliott*, Trinity Peninsula); W R Latady (1918–79), American optical engineer and mountaineer, who was a member of the (US) Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition, 1946–48, based at Stonington Island (*Latady Island* and *Latady Mountains*, Palmer Land); and the British mountaineers E W K Walton (b1918) and A R C Butson (b1922), respectively FIDS engineer and medical officer at Stonington Island, 1946–48, both of whom were awarded the Albert Medal (later translated to George Cross) for bravery in crevasse rescues on different occasions near the FIDS base (*Walton Peak* and *Butson Ridge*). (Only one other George Cross has been awarded for Antarctic service. Some years later Walton performed another, probably more difficult, crevasse rescue in South Georgia, for which he received the Queen's Commendation.) It is worth recording that, early in 1948, with two or three Climbers' Club members by chance gathered together at Stonington Island, a meet was held during which the difficult Neny Matterhorn and other peaks were climbed.

The year 1955 saw the launching of two important expeditions (mentioned above), from which the names of four members or supporters may be selected to recall the mountaineering skills that were so much needed in the field. V E (later Sir Vivian) Fuchs (b1908), the leader of the TAE, had previously served with Wordie in Greenland and as Commander of the FIDS, 1948–50; he was Director of the FIDS/BAS, 1950–73 (*Fuchs Ice Piedmont*, Adelaide Island,

and *Fuchs Dome*, Shackleton Range). Sir Edwin Herbert (later Baron Tangle of Blackheath) (1899–1973), who had been President of the Alpine Club, 1953–55, was a member of the Committee of Management and Chairman of the Finance Committee of the TAE (*Herbert Mountains*, Shackleton Range). W G Lowe (b1924), the New Zealand mountaineer and photographer with the successful Mount Everest expedition in 1953, was a member of the trans-polar party of the TAE, 1956–58 (*Mount Lowe*, Shackleton Range). Finally, P G Mott (b1913), of Hunting Aerosurveys Ltd, was the leader of the FIDASE; as a surveyor he had led Oxford University expeditions to Greenland in 1935, 1936 and 1938, and had been a member of the British Shaksam Expedition, 1939 (*Mott Snowfield*, Trinity Peninsula).

Of the many young mountaineers that have served at the BAS stations over the years, space allows mention of only two. J C Cunningham (1927–80) served as Station Commander at Stonington Island, 1962–63, and Adelaide Island, 1964–65, having been a member of the privately organized South Georgia Survey, 1955–56; on 23 November 1964 he led the first ascent of Mount Jackson, Palmer Land (3180m), the highest peak in the BAT, but he is commemorated in *Mount Cunningham*, South Georgia (outside the BAT); he lost his life as the result of a climbing accident on sea-cliffs off Holyhead. J F Bishop (1950–80) worked as a glaciologist on Alexander Island, having previously been a member of expeditions to Greenland and leader of an expedition to north-eastern Afghanistan; he later took part in further expeditions to Greenland and Iceland, and in the RGS International Karakoram Project, during which he lost his life in a climbing accident near the summit of Kirkun Peak (*Bishop Glacier*, Alexander Island).

Although the Antarctic outside the BAT is not within the brief of this article, it is fitting to close by drawing attention to place-names after four most illustrious members of the Alpine Club in *Hillary Coast*, *Odell Glacier*, *Shipton Ridge* and *Tilman Ridge*, all in New Zealand's Ross Dependency.