	<h1>SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB</h1> <p><i>To Encourage Adventurous Endeavour and Interest in the Science, Culture and Protection of the Arctic</i></p> <h2>Newsletter - April 2019</h2> <p>www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk</p>
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Spring Newsletter

From our President, Douglas Anderson

On 20th March Andrea and I landed in Kulusuk with a Pitera* still blowing at 70mph over in Tasiilaq. The temperature was around -20°C. We had 2 further piteraqs over the next 3 weeks. In the past 15 years we have never experienced a pitera* at that time of year. It was very cold and our water pipes froze despite the heating being on.



Bitter day waiting to fly to Tasiilaq. It was -20°C and a wind of 40 mph in this photo. Face mask required to walk about.

Then the temperature shot up to around zero or above even at night!

Sea ice in all previous years enabled us to cross the fjord on ice as seen from our front steps. Compare pics from 2018 and 2019 taken on exactly the same dates (28th March). Normally you can cross the fjord opposite our house until the end of April at least. In 2018 it was possible until the end of May.



28 March 2018



28 March 2019

We were scheduled to fly home on the 12th of April for a charity commitment on the 15th but decided because of bad weather forecast projecting 7 days of heavy “RAIN” and strong winds we couldn’t risk staying. The forecasts are notoriously wrong but still I was anxious. In fact it rained every day for 2 weeks: 10inches. After we left, there were no flights out for 4 days.

Regrettably Craig Matheson’s Polar Academy expedition had to be curtailed early and even so they crossed back to Tasiilaq in ankle deep water on the 10th of April. They were due to stay out for many more days but it would have been truly horrible.



Craig’s kids at our house for chips before they set out.

After April 7th the temperatures in Tasiilaq were higher than here in Scotland.

All ice was gone from the fjord and it was not possible to cross even high up from the 14th of April onwards.



Looking up the fjord from the harbour Breakup of sea ice 27th March 2019. the snowmobile tracks on the ice include ours from the previous day. This breakup took about 1/2 an hour and caught out a local guy fishing . He was OK.

One piece of good (ish) news was that the polar bears that were around were in good condition. Until they were shot anyway. Not all suffered that fate you will be glad to know.

Douglas

*A piteraq is a cold katabatic wind which originates on the Greenlandic icecap and sweeps down the east coast. The word "piteraq" means "that which attacks you" in the local language. Piteraq is most common in the autumn and winter. Wind speeds typically reach 50 to 80m/s (180–288km/h; 111–178 mph). On February 6, 1970 the community of Tasiilaq was hit by the worst documented piteraq ever in Greenland (estimated at 90 m/s) causing severe damage. Since the beginning of 1970 special piteraq warnings are issued by the Danish Meteorological Institute [from Wikipedia!]

Following Douglas's account of early spring in Tasiilaq, Andrea sent the link, below, to a short film which gives a glimpse into the challenges the youth in such communities are facing:

The despair of Greenland's Inuit youth

<https://www.france24.com/en/20190104-video-reporters-greenland-despair-inuit-youth-young-people-theatre-arctic-suicides>

or click on this link <https://www.france24.com/en/>

49th Annual Gathering and Supper

Saturday 16th November 2019

The Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William

Phone number 01397 702331

salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com

We return to Fort William for this year's Annual Gathering and Supper. It's never too early to book your accommodation. Please mention that you are with the SAC when booking to receive our very good rates. And you may wish to consider booking for the Friday night as well as we usually have about 50 Club members staying for both nights.

New Logo

The observant will have noticed that our 'polar bear on a saltire' logo has had a makeover. Noel Williams, Vice-president, recently redesigned the outline of the bear and changed the blue colour to correspond with the Scottish Government's designated colour of the Saltire Cross – sky blue (Pantone 300). The committee recently voted to change to the new design.

Arctic Day in Inverness

The European Engagement section of International Relations of the Scottish Government promoted a day of talks and discussion in the Eden Court Theatre in Inverness on Monday 25th March. The Government is committed to developing an Arctic Policy Framework and the meeting brought together interested parties from throughout Scotland and also further afield, for example, Finland, Northern Norway, Iceland and Maine, USA. The Club was invited to have a stall and Vice-president Noel Williams provided an eye-catching display, including the first use of our new logo. The meeting was opened by Fiona Hyslop, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs and she brought the meeting to a close with a wide-ranging summary including mention of the Club heading towards its 50th anniversary. The initial plenary session was entitled 'Doing business in/with the Arctic' and after lunch there were two sets of parallel sessions, firstly between 'Young and rural – a young people's perspective of living in the North' and 'Scottish-Arctic research, science and training' in which Finlo Cottier, guest speaker at our Gathering in 2014, gave a very comprehensive and balanced view of current research in Scotland focussed on the Arctic. This session also included Jordan Grigor, who received one of our grants in 2011. The second pair of workshops were 'Climate change and clean energy - Scottish contributions and opportunities for action' and 'Scottish-Arctic Cultural encounters – charting the past, mapping the future.' The climate change workshop was chaired by Sarah Knight who received one of our grants this year.



Vice-president Noel Williams, right, talks to Club member, Donald Balfour, in front of our stall.

The Club had 10 members attending and four of us staffed our stall.

David Broadhead provided some notes of the day:

- I was amazed by the number of organisations from various countries involved with the Arctic.
- the various speakers were very polished and articulate and seemed to have a genuine interest in the Arctic.
- Fiona Hyslop stayed the whole day which suggests she takes the Scottish Governments aspirations to develop links with the Arctic seriously.
- it was very pleasing to see so many young people involved.
- some of these young people had visited the Arctic with some financial support from SAC and were very appreciative.

The meeting closed with a small reception during which Fiona Hyslop rounded off the day with an excellent summary and left us listening to the Lea Larsen Trio playing a mix of Scottish and Scandinavian tunes.

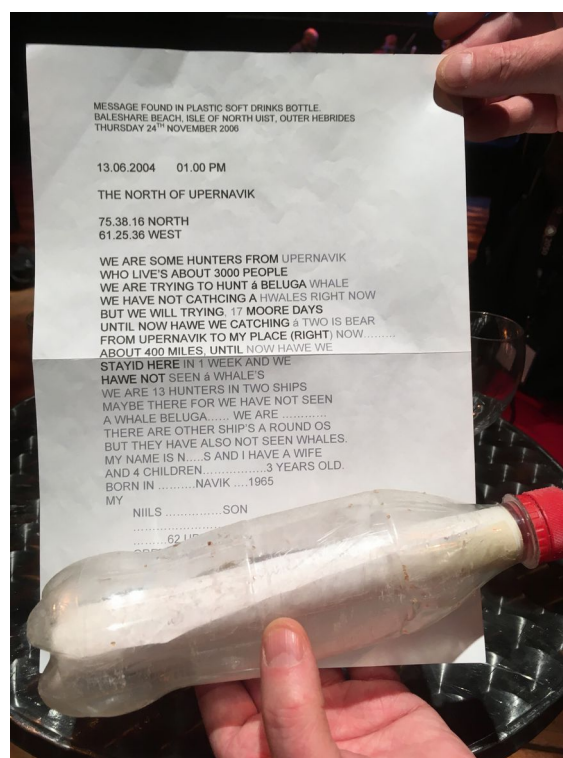
Further news items from the Arctic Day

North West Sutherland Schools

Alison Macpherson, a Club member from Kinlochbervie and recipient of a grant in 2016 attended the Arctic Day and visited our stall. She is a graphic designer and was mentioned in the 8th March issue of the Northern Times for having worked up the winning design, by Mia Walker of Durness Primary School, for a logo for the group of NW Sutherland schools.

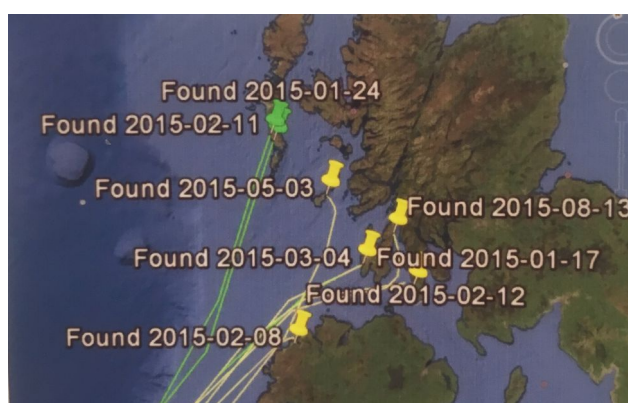


Message in a bottle and the Drift Bottle Project



Towards the end of the event, we met Andy Mackinnon of North Uist, shown here with Expedition Fund trustee, Bryan Alexander, who had picked up a bottle in 2009 on Baleshare beach with a message inside (shown right) from an Inuit man from Upernavik. In 2018, after trying for many years, Andy was able to contact the sender and he hopes to raise funds to travel to Greenland in 2020 to make a short film about the plight of the Inuit hunters and this unusual request for help.

The **Drift Bottle Project** started on Students on Ice Arctic Youth Expeditions in 2004. In 2014 142 bottles were dropped into the David Strait between Canada and Greenland, some close to Canada and the others close to Greenland. Two bottles have been picked up on Islay and their probable tracks as shown below.



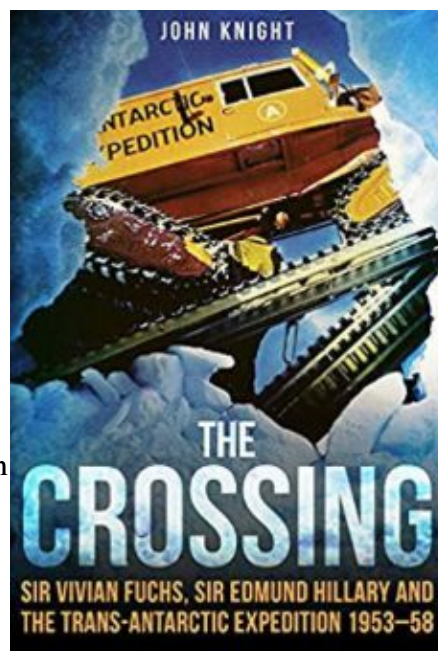
<https://studentsonice.com>

Book reviews

The Crossing by John Knight (Amberley 2018)
288pp hardback and ebook, £20 ISBN-13:978-1445686295

This takes me back to 1957 when I collected press cuttings about the Crossing of Antarctica by Vivian Fuchs and Edmund Hillary as material for a school geography project. It was my first exposure to the polar world. John Knight's book has a 60-year perspective on this major expedition. One thing I learnt from the book was that the Transantarctic Expedition (TAE) was not officially part of the 1957-8 International Geophysical Year, though of course there was overlap.

The book begins with an historical survey of the first Polar Year 1882, its successor in 1932 and the WWII origins of Operation Tabarin and later the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS). At Cambridge in 1929 Vivian Fuchs was invited by his geology lecturer, ex-Shackleton expeditioner James Wordie, on a field trip to East Greenland. Post war, Fuchs was gripped by the idea of putting into practice Shackleton's crossing of the continent, the last great land journey.



There follow the accounts familiar to all expedition books: raising money, obtaining sponsorship and equipment, and planning the logistics against a departure deadline. In this case the problems were doubled as the UK (Weddell Sea) party and the New Zealand (Ross Sea) support had to be in place and to coordinate their movements over a 4-year period. The personalities of the two leaders Vivian Fuchs (UK) and Edmund Hillary (NZ) come through, particularly in examining Hillary's push to reach to South Pole after having established the supply depots for the northward leg of the crossing. The United States provided help in the form of icebreakers assisting the supply ships and air transport from NZ to Antarctica and on to the South Pole. The author picks a way through this complex story and gives us a feel of the scale of the enterprise, along with a chapter reviewing Shackleton's 1914 Ross Sea *Aurora* expedition in comparison with the Transantarctic Crossing.

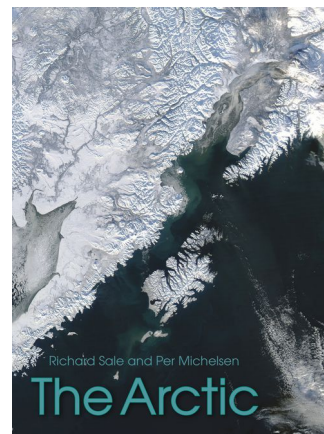
The illustrations are contemporary Kodachromes from both halves of the expedition, an overall map that could have benefited from better reproduction, and floor plans of the base huts. Curiously, the chapters are not numbered. Through contact with the widow of George Lowe, the author has included as an appendix a fund-raising appeal for the Himalayan Trust UK, part of the project set up by Lowe and Hillary to support Nepalese sherpas and their families.

Jim Barton

The Arctic: Richard Sale and Per Michelsen. Whittles Publishing, 2018, softback, 368 pages, 280×210mm, ISBN 978-184995-342-9, £25.00.

This ambitious book attempts to cover both a very large area and a very big topic. It appears to be largely a repackaged version of a hardback book entitled *The Arctic: The Complete Story* by the same authors which was published by Francis Lincoln in 2008. That book consisted of 632 pages and cost £45, whereas this new version has 368 pages and costs £25.

The cheaper price means that the book may appeal to a wider market, but there are no acknowledgements, no bibliography and no index. The book is lavishly illustrated but no credit is given to the sources of the illustrations, apart from the satellite image used on the cover. A somewhat spidery font is used for the captions and when overlain on the photographs they don't stand out very well on many of the backgrounds. It is assumed that most of the photographs were taken by Per Michelsen though exactly which ones are not indicated. They are generally of a very high standard.



The book starts by defining the boundary of the Arctic region. An argument is made to look beyond the Arctic Circle and include Iceland, Hudson Bay, the Aleutian Islands and south-west Alaska. Unfortunately the purple colour line of the boundary does not stand out well on the figure used.

Subsequent chapters describe geology, snow and ice, climate, atmospheric phenomena and human history. These topics are all covered quite well though as a geologist myself I would like to have seen more photographs of rock features – such as glacial striations, chatter marks and glacial polish. The katabatic winds which descend from the icecap on the east coast of Greenland perhaps deserve more of a mention too. Although they are usually fairly short-lived, *piteraq*s can be destructive of property and a serious problem for those travelling in the open.

A significant part of the book is devoted to Arctic wildlife. (The same authors have also published a field guide with various publishers entitled *Wildlife of the Arctic*.) It is here that it becomes apparent that the authors have a particular preference for birds. Mammals are covered well too but plants get rather perfunctory treatment. The authors acknowledge that there are around 1000 species of vascular plants in the Arctic. However there are only 25 pictures of plants – in two separate chapters – while there are 133 pictures of birds.

The later chapters include a traveller's guide and discuss exploitation of the Arctic and its fragile environment. The last part has clearly been updated from the 2008 book, because it discusses the Paris Agreement (2016) and describes the depressing stance adopted by Donald Trump on global warming.

All in all this is a very worthy book which manages to cover a mammoth topic moderately well. It is a good starting point for learning more about this fascinating region, though it would have been greatly improved by a suggested reading list.

Noel Williams

Attadale 2019 – fully booked

The spring week at Attadale is 11-18 May and is organised by Kathleen Cartwright who reports that it is fully booked once again.

Summer Solstice Meet, 22-23 June

Myrtle Simpson has very kindly offered to host our solstice meet once again, at her house near Loch Insh, 22/23 June. As ever there will be a BBQ Saturday evening, and plenty of room for camping. Last year some people paddled on the Spey, paddling down to Myrtle's on the Saturday (flat water), and on down to Aviemore on the Sunday (up to grade 2). Some boats were hired from Loch Insh water sports centre.

Please let me know if you'd like to join us, and if you'd like to paddle on either day. And if you need to hire a boat.

Stella Spratley, Vice-president, who may be contacted on spratley42@hotmail.com or via the secretary.

Gathering & Supper 2019

At the AGM the majority of members requested that we return to the Ben Nevis Hotel for 2019. It was not possible to book a different weekend, as we had hoped, so the Gathering & Supper will be on Saturday 16th November. The rate for dinner, bed and breakfast will be £44, with a £14 single supplement (£16 for Friday night), and for those who are not staying in the hotel but wish to attend the Supper the cost is £20. If you are in full time education the Club will subsidise your hotel room by 50% so you will pay just £22.

50th Anniversary Expedition: Greenland Summer 2020

Stella Spratley provides an update on developments towards next summer's expedition:

1. 20 people have responded and expressed an interest in next year's trip, giving a total of approx. 30 people. And the age range is looking to be from 4 to 90!
2. There will be a families' expedition. They will have their own boat to travel between remote camps.
3. There may be a kayaking expedition.
4. Some people will stay in Tasiilaq, with day trips out.
5. Some of the Tasiilaq based people may spend a few days in a remote camp, transported by boat.
6. Costs. This year's prices. Transport Glasgow to Tasiilaq approx. £1400 return. Camping in Tasiilaq £9pppn. Indoor accommodation from £40 to £114pppn. Food cost approx. double UK.
7. Possible time line: Sat/Sun 25/26 July people arrive in Tasiilaq

Mon 27 July BBQ and celebration

Tue/Wed 28/29 July expeditions depart and Tasiilaq based people transported to remote camp.

Sat/Sun 1/2 August Tasiilaq people returned to Tasiilaq

Mon/Fri 3/7 August some day trips arranged from Tasiilaq

Return home whenever you like!

- People will need to book their own transport and accommodation, and sort their own food. There is a supermarket in Tasiilaq. I will book camping for anyone who wishes to camp in Tasiilaq. I will arrange the BBQ. I will attempt to arrange some day trips from Tasiilaq, and possibly transport to a remote camp for a few days. Expeditions will organise themselves.
- Last year Iain booked flights 8 months in advance of travelling to Greenland and all cheaper seats had gone, so flights will need to be booked well in advance. Accommodation will also need to be booked well in advance.

Please respond with any comments, suggestions, improvements, things I've completely forgotten . . .

Comments on time line appreciated.

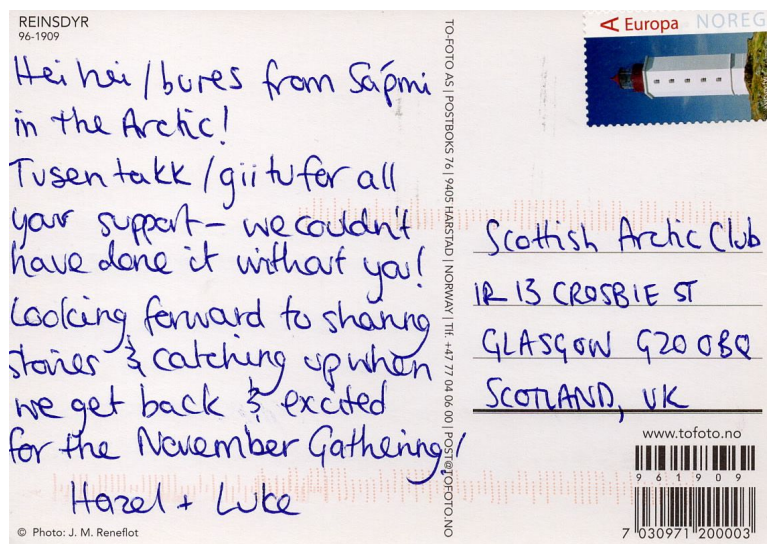
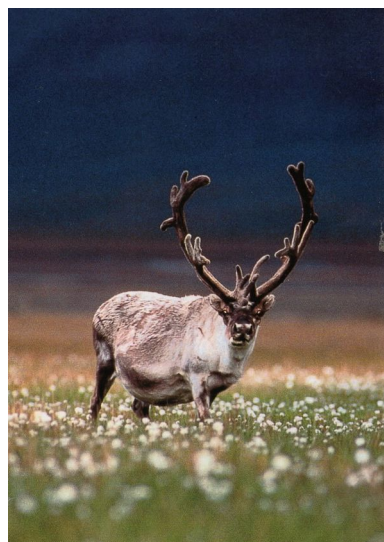
Also let me know if you are interested in joining us and haven't already let Iain or I know.

Stella spratley24@hotmail.com

Welcome to the following new members

Dave King, Slussfors, Sweden
Felix Butschek (re-joining), Innsbruck, Austria
Rhona Fraser, Inverness
Hazel and Luke Robertson, Edinburgh

Hazel and Luke, above, received a grant from the Expedition Fund this year and sent a postcard from northern Norway, which the secretary received this week:



Read more here: <http://everyday-exploring.com/arctic-connections>

New members are welcome: the Club is for people of all ages and nationalities who have an interest in the Arctic, particularly if they have already been, or are planning to travel there. See the web site for an application form.

The committee comprises: President: Douglas Anderson, Vice Presidents: Stella Spratley and Noel Williams, Secretary: Iain Allison, Treasurer: Chris Calver, and Committee members: Hans-Peter Grossmann, Elspeth Hamilton, Susie Ranford and Aythya Young

Secretary: Iain Allison
Club email address - sacsecretaryia@gmail.com
Web site: www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk
Club's official postal address: c/o Royal Scottish Geographical Society,
Lord John Murray House, 15-19 North Port, Perth PH1 5LU
Secretary's address: 1/R 13 Crosbie Street, Glasgow G20 0BQ
Mobile phone: 0781 244 7808