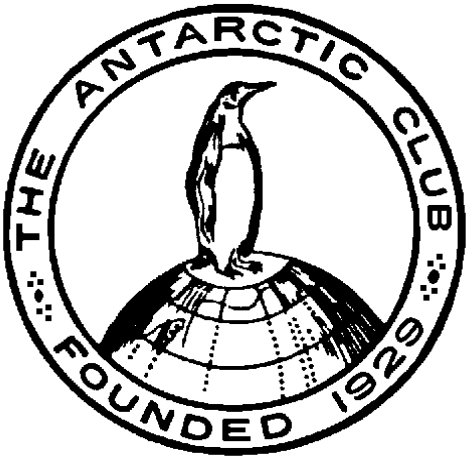
A Brief History of the
ANTARCTIC CLUB

Revised November 2025



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ANTARCTIC DINNER CLUB.

20th December, 1928.

Dear Sir,

It has been decided to form a Dining Club, the membership of which is to be confined to those who have taken part in Antarctic Exploration, for the purpose of reviving old associations and of keeping green the memory of the five who reached their objective on January 17th, 1912, and of others who have lost their lives in Antarctic Seas.

It is proposed that there should be an Annual Dinner on the 17th January, and arrangements have been made to hold the first of these on January 17th, 1929, at the Café Royal, 68, Regent Street, W.1, at 7.30 for 8 p.m. Engr. Vice-Admiral R. W. Skelton, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., [redacted]., Engineer-in-Chief of the Navy (Discovery 1901-1904), has consented to act as Chairman on this occasion.

A temporary Organising Committee has been formed, and consists of Cdr. L. C. Bernacchi, O.B.E., R.N.V.R., of S.Y. Discovery 1901-1904, Eng.-Cdr. L. Rickinson, R.N. (rtd.) of S.Y. Endurance 1914-1916, and the Honorary Secretary, Lieut.-Cdr. J. H. Mather, D.S.O., V.D., R.N.V.R., of S.Y. Terra Nova 1910-1913, but it is proposed to elect the Committee for the following year at the first dinner.

Copies of this circular are being sent to those whose addresses are known to the Committee, but all recipients are asked kindly to notify the Secretary as soon as possible of any addresses that may be known to them, so that all may have the opportunity of joining the Club.

The cost of the Dinner Tickets will be 12/6 each, exclusive of wine, but inclusive of coffee and port, and in addition there will be an annual subscription of 5/- to cover the costs of printing and postages.

Yours faithfully,

Prof Redmore Brown
Geography Dept
The University
Sheffield

J. H. Mather

Hon. Sec.

Illustration 1: *The invitation to the formation of the* Antarctic Dinner Club
[1928 money was pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d); 12/6 was 12s and 6d or £0·625, 5/- was 5s or £0·25.]

A Brief History of the Antarctic Club

First Edition by Jack Reid, 2009
Second Edition by Robert Headland, 2016 (revised XI 2025)

Preface

The first edition of the club's history was written by Jack Reid (1926-2025) and published in 2009 for the 80th anniversary of its foundation. Two hundred and fifty copies were printed which were distributed to members and others until supplies were exhausted. Additional details and information were subsequently found, including some associated with the commemoration of the attainment of the South Pole in 1911 and 1912 with related events during the historical period a century ago. These, with correspondence from members and archival research, have allowed more information to be incorporated in this revised edition.

This brief history is largely based upon the documents kept by the Honorary Secretaries. The first held the post from the foundation of the Club in 1929 until 1956, and the second until 1996, which covers by far the greater part of its existence. Fortunately they were both keen to keep a good record of events and it is easy to follow most items from initial discussions to implementation, or rejection.

The rules for eligibility for membership evolved during the course of time. This was no doubt because the composition of the Club's Committee, who had to approve membership nominations, changed as well. The founding members came from expeditions of the 'Heroic Age'. The first sign of changes to come arose with the Discovery Investigations, a scientific organization operating from 1925 to 1951, which conducted marine research and surveying in the Southern Ocean. Today most of the members come from government organizations maintaining static scientific bases.

Committee Members have not been mentioned by name, except for the President (elected annually). A list of incumbents is given at the end of each section of this history. Like any organization's committee, there were, no doubt, helpful and unhelpful members. This is possibly indicated by some outlandish proposals the Committee received and considered.

This history is essentially extracts from the records. Any observations or comments are entirely my own[1] (be they right or wrong). The current Honorary Secretary[2] has left me unprompted and free to do what I can.

As well as a published document it appears, with annual revisions, as part of the Club's section hosted by the web site of the Scott Polar Research Institute.

[1] Jack Reid, 2009
[2] Peter Clarkson at that time

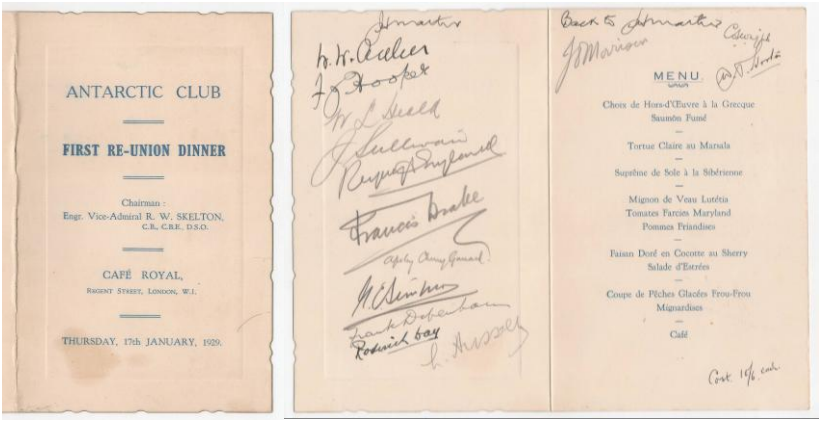
PART I: YEARS BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Clubs are no doubt formed when a group of like-minded people decide to continue their association. This will allow them through their professions, callings, or interests to gather periodically, usually to chew over old times, to set the world right and to despair for the future as they see it developing. British Antarctic explorers of the 'Heroic Age', and shortly thereafter, decided in 1927 to do just that.

Following discussion among expedition members, Lt Cdr John Mather RNR was asked to contact all the prospective members whom he could find, to arrange a meeting to discuss the formation of an Antarctic Club. On 20 December 1928, as Honorary Secretary of a 'temporary Organizing Committee', he sent a letter, headed 'Antarctic Dinner Club' (illustration 1), to 'those known to the committee' proposing to meet at a reunion dinner. This initial meeting was in London, at the Café Royal, Regent Street, on 17 January 1929. This day was that on which Captain Scott's party arrived at the South Pole in 1912. (They found, as most readers will know, that they had been forestalled by Roald Amundsen's expedition on 14 December 1911.) It was the date of the annual dinner for many years.

At this initial meeting, the first Annual Dinner and Reunion, prospective members attending represented ten expeditions, from Carsten Borchgrevink's *Southern Cross* (1898–1900), to that of *Quest* (1921–22). Thirty-nine subscriptions were received, all dated 17 January 1929 and recorded in the first ledger. Vice-Admiral Reginald Skelton presided; it was proposed that an 'Antarctic Club' be formed and a committee appointed.

Illustration 2: *The first Reunion Dinner, 17 January 1929, at the Café Royal.*



ANTARCTIC CLUB

FIRST RE-UNION DINNER

Chairman:
Engr. Vice-Admiral R. W. SKELTON, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

CAFÉ ROYAL,
REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.1.

THURSDAY, 17th JANUARY, 1929.

MENU
DÎNER

Choix de Hors-d'Œuvre à la Grecque
Saumon Fumé

Tortue Claire au Marsala

Suprême de Sole à la Sibérienne

Mignon de Veau Lutétia
Tomates Farcies Maryland
Pommes Friandises

Faisan Doré en Cocotte au Sherry
Salade d'Estrées

Coupe de Pêches Glacées Frou-Frou
Mignardises

Café

Illustration 3: *John Mather's signed menu from the first Reunion Dinner, 1929.*

The first official meeting of the Club Committee was called for 18 March 1929 in London. Louis Bernacchi was in the chair; James Wordie and Frank Debenham were members, with one other who could not attend at that date. John Mather accepted the post of Honorary Secretary. The Chairman proposed that the first business of the Committee be to produce a set of rules for future conduct of the Club, as follows:

1. The Club shall be called the 'Antarctic Club'.
2. Membership shall be restricted to those who have visited the Antarctic continent whilst engaged in expedition work.
3. A reunion dinner shall be held annually.
4. A general meeting of all Club members shall be held before the dinner.
5. There shall be a Committee of four members, in addition to the President, Secretary and Honorary Treasurer as ex-officio members. The membership fee shall be five shillings [25 p] per year.
6. No guests shall be permitted at the annual dinner, other than those nominated by the President, up to a maximum of three.

It was agreed that these proposed rules should be circulated to the members for consideration. News of the formation of the club began to spread, within a few years 112 members of expeditions from 1898 to 1928 had joined.

On 8 May 1929 a Valedictory Dinner, chaired by the President, was arranged for Sir Douglas Mawson who was about to set out aboard *Discovery* on the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Expeditions of 1929–30 and 1930–31. The dinner complement was 38 members with 16 guests. One of the latter, Edward Beveridge Binnie, had been Falkland Islands Dependencies government representative and the Stipendiary Magistrate on South Georgia from 1917 to 1927 where he had spent several winters. Similar special dinners were subsequently arranged for comparable events.

The Committee next met on 11 December 1929 to discuss the result of the plebiscite on the proposed rules. The majority agreed, with a suggestion that the membership be limited to British expeditions. This was debated, but the area of qualification was altered to 'Antarctic Regions', with the Committee having the final word on membership. The next meeting was on 17 December 1929 to approve the design of the Club badge and Certificate of Membership. A blazon based on that of Captain Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition was adopted. Since there had been dissent from various members, it was decided that the Certificate of

Membership would include details of the expedition concerned, and that only Commonwealth expeditions would be acceptable. A small blue embossed cloth-bound document with the name, date, certificate number and rules of the club was issued to each member.

The second annual dinner and reunion was on 17 January 1930 with 25 members present. A midwinter dinner where members' guests could attend, was held on 4 July. Attendance was 38 members with 40 guests, many of the latter being members' wives.

The third reunion, on 17 January 1931, at the Café Royal, again raised the question of membership qualifications. One proposal was that only holders of the Polar Medal with an Antarctic Clasp should be admitted. Another proposal was that the membership subscription should be raised to £1:1s:0d (one guinea [£1·05]). The equivalent in 2021 would be about £60, a lot of money for many of the rating members, and possibly for some of the officer members and scientists too. The proposal was rejected and the secretary pointed out, as no doubt many secretaries have done in the past, that if only the subscriptions were paid on time there would be no problem. The Secretary reported that, following negotiations with the Scott Polar Research Institute about bulk purchase of the *Polar Record*[3], the Club could afford to purchase that publication, and post it to overseas members within the sum brought in by annual subscriptions.

During the Committee meeting on 15 May 1931, the question of membership qualifications was again raised and discussed at length. It was resolved finally that the rule should be: 'Membership of the Club shall be restricted to members of British expeditions undertaking exploration work within the Antarctic Circle'. Any cases of doubt should rest with the Committee. Following the free issue of the *Polar Record* to overseas members, it was decided that all fully paid-up members should also receive a free copy.

At a committee meeting on 12 May 1932, it was decided that two non-subscription-paying members should be approached with reminders, since it would seem that they could afford to pay. Members known to be in financial difficulties should not be pressed.

The following committee meeting saw Dr Hugh Robert Mill (a polar historian, who had been a guest at the Mawson Valedictory dinner) elected as the first Honorary Member of the Club. The Committee stressed that was a very special event, and should not be seen as the first step in establishing a second grade of membership. In contrast to this election, one famous member had his name removed from the list of members, for non-payment of membership fees.

On 22 October 1932 the Arctic Club was inaugurated with a dinner at St John's College, Cambridge. Four Antarctic Club members attended, including two of its founders. The clubs have, at various times, invited members of each other to reunion dinners and other events. Indeed both have members in common. Each club has maintained the tradition of inviting the President of the other to reunion dinners.

During the annual dinner of 1933, Dr Jean Charcot was the guest. He had wintered twice in the Antarctic, aboard *Français* (1903–05) and *Pourquoi Pas*? (1908–10). In reply to the President, he pointed out that the Antarctic Club could muster some 90 members whereas any French equivalent could only find eight. In 1933, the Club issued Christmas cards for the first time.

During the committee meeting of 29 April 1936, a proposal was discussed concerning membership of the Club for officers and scientists aboard *Discovery, Discovery II* and *William Scoresby* of the Discovery Investigations. This was rejected on the grounds that these ships were branches of a research station and not an exploring expedition. If accepted,

[3] *Polar Record,* published by the Scott Polar Research Institute from 1931, included news of current Antarctic expeditions.

their total membership might exceed that of the full members of the Club – and what would happen then?

On the return of the British Graham Land Expedition (1934–37) a special '*Penola* Dinner' was held in October 1937. Frank Worsley who presided became the 1938 Club President.

The 12th reunion and dinner, on 19 January 1940, was combined with that of the Arctic Club since many members of both Clubs were away on active service. Nine of those present belonged to both Clubs; there were twenty other members of the Antarctic Club, and nineteen others of the Arctic Club.

The reunion dinners of the Antarctic Club went into abeyance for the duration of World War II although reports and accounts continued to be sent to members. Thus a gap of five developed between the number of annual reunion dinners and the anniversaries of the foundation of the Club.

Table I: The years before World War II (reunion dinners 1–12)

Year	*President*	*Attendance*
1929	Eng Vice-Admiral Reginald Skelton	39
1930	Eng Vice-Admiral Reginald Skelton [II]	25
1931	Capt Albert Armitage	30
1932	Mr Louis Bernacchi	40, 2 CG
1933	Prof Robert Rudmose Brown	36, 1 HM, 1 CG
1934	Capt Rupert England	36, 1 HM, 1 CG
1935	Capt Sir Jameson Adams	29, 1 HM, 8 CG
1936	Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Evans	28, 1 HM, 2 CG
1937	Cdr John Hamilton Blair	21, 1 CG
1938	Cdr Frank Worsley	29
1939	Mr Thomas Bagshawe	33, 9 CG
1940	Col Alexander Macklin (for the duration of the War)	20, 19 AC, 9 JM, 1 CG

(HM = Honorary Member, CG = Club Guest, AC = Arctic Club, JM = Joint Member)

Honorary Secretary: Cdr John Mather

Venue: 1929–38 Café Royal, Regent Street, 1939–40 Connaught Rooms, Covent Garden

Illustration 4: *Antarctic Club Dinner 1934 at the Café Royal*

PART II: THE POST-WORLD WAR II YEARS TO 1960

The officers of the Club remained in post during the war, although no activities took place. The Honorary Secretary tried to keep the spirit of the Club alive with annual newsletters. That of 1943 contained what information there was on members, including the sad news of three deaths as a result of enemy action. It also carried the President's presumed 'good wishes' to all members, although the Honorary Secretary had to admit that he was not at all sure in which theatre of war the President was operating. There was also the usual Secretary's plea: 'if you receive this newsletter, please send your annual subscription – soonest'. Another newsletter was sent to members in March 1944.

With the cessation of hostilities and the possible return home of some members, the first reunion dinner was organized for 18 January 1946 (the 13th). Neither the pre-war President nor the 1946 President (Sir Charles Wright) was able to preside at the dinner and the place was taken by Eng Rear Admiral Sir Reginald Skelton, the first President of the Club. The Honorary Secretary read the names of the three members who had died as a result of enemy action and of eight others who had passed on during the war years. An Australian Section of the club was formed in this year with an annual appointment of a President and reciprocal rights with the original club.

On 27 April 1946 a 'Reunion Lunch' was organized in the Dorothy Café, Cambridge with members of: the Arctic Club, the Antarctic Club, 'Discovery' staff, the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, and friends. Total attendance was 63 with 30 being Antarctic Club members. Many who were attending belonged to more than one of these organizations. This was the second of such combined events. It was followed in the afternoon by an informal committee meeting at the Scott Polar Research Institute where a member again raised the question of the eligibility of Discovery Investigations personnel. This was discussed and it was decided to put the matter before the next General Meeting.

At a further committee meeting, on 13 December 1946, the question of the eligibility of Discovery Investigations personnel was raised again. After much discussion it was proposed that Rule 2 be deemed to include members of the Discovery Investigations expeditions to whom His Majesty had been pleased to award the Polar Medal[4]. (This was a diplomatic solution. This award is recommended by the Polar Medal Committee, essentially an independent body. It is scarcely possible to refuse membership to a holder of the Polar Medal, particularly since this very qualification was suggested and discussed at length earlier in the Club's history.)

The annual dinner and meeting on 17 January 1947 included three members of Operation Tabarin among the 28 members attending. Following the toast to HM the King, the President announced that some bottles of liquor had been found by an Operation Tabarin sledge party from 'Base A', Hope Bay, in a depot, left on Snow Hill Island some 40 years earlier, for Otto Nordenskjöld's Swedish Antarctic expedition (1901-03). The drink, *Hesperidina* from Buenos Aires, was then passed around the table, and pronounced to be excellent. The proposal regarding acceptance of Discovery Investigations personnel as members was put to all members and, after discussion, was carried unanimously.

At the committee meeting later in the year the Honorary Secretary reported that the free issue of the *Polar Record* to members would have to cease. The arrangements were proving embarrassing to both the Scott Polar Research Institute and the Club, and had been terminated by mutual agreement. It was noted that members of the Arctic Club had always had to pay full price for *Polar Record.*

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4 This was instituted in 1904, a successor to the Arctic Medal instituted in 1857

The 1948 annual dinner was on 16 January; 50 members attended, including 15 from Operation Tabarin and the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS).

At a meeting of the Committee on 30 November 1948 it was stated that 'the meeting was primarily to discuss what means, if any, could be introduced to ensure that there should not be an influx of new members from FIDS', who were it was said 'not fully qualified in accordance with the objects of the Club'. Three possibilities were considered: that only holders of the Polar Medal should be admitted, that qualification should entail not less than two year's residence at an Antarctic base, and that an entrance fee for membership should be introduced. The Committee decided that the first was not possible since no Polar Medals had yet been awarded to Fids, and that the second, one year's residence, should be enough for eligibility since many eminently suitable candidates would be barred if two year's residence was demanded. The third, an entrance fee for membership, was considered very undesirable.

The next committee meeting was on 21 January 1949, and again the question of Fids membership received prolonged attention. After much discussion, the following qualifications for membership were adopted, for the guidance, and protection, of the Honorary Secretary: 'candidates must be proposed and seconded by two members of the Club, the candidate should hold the Polar Medal with an Antarctic Clasp or have spent one continuous year on exploratory work with a British expedition in Antarctic Territory, which is to be understood as including Graham Land and outlying islands, islands off-lying Coats Land, Queen Mary Land and Queen Maud Land, etc, outside as well as within the Antarctic Circle'. (Presumably FIDS was looked upon at that time as a Government organization, liable to be staffed by a type of individual completely different from those 'old hands' who had been on privately funded (but possibly Government-sponsored) expeditions. In the 1940s, the intrusion of Fids must have looked awkward, if not ominous. It could scarcely have been anticipated that by the end of the century the majority of members would be former Fids.)

The 16th annual dinner was on 21 January 1949. Correspondence later in that year could have come as some relief to the Committee, and perhaps the membership in general, when 'it was observed that FIDS is changing markedly next year. Routine meteorology will be the main work, and exploratory survey and other scientific work will be run down.'

The 21st anniversary of the foundation of the Club was celebrated on 20 January 1950. There were 66 members present, with 2 President's Guests and 8 Club Guests, additionally 10 members of the Arctic Club and 6 representatives of the press attended. Sir Raymond Priestley proposed the toast 'to our Guests', to which HE the Norwegian Ambassador replied. After the Loyal Toast an additional one to The King of Norway was made before the customary toasts ending at 9 p.m. when Admiral Lord Mountevans proposed the Silent Toast.

In January 1951 the Honorary Secretary compiled, printed, and distributed a *List of Members*. This included 196 names throughout the world, with an additional 'Australian Section' of 34 names. The committee meeting of October 1953 was the first at which decisions had to be taken on individual proposals for membership of the Club. Three ex-Fids were proposed, and accepted as members. A summer outing to Cambridge, including a visit to the Scott Polar Research Institute, was made on 11 July.

The 25th anniversary of the Club was celebrated by a dinner on 15 January 1954. There were 47 members present, 4 guests from the Arctic Club, and 8 other guests. After grace Sir Reginald Skelton, first President of the Club, rose and, on behalf of the members, presented Cdr John Mather with a silver model of an Emperor Penguin as a tribute to his involvement in the foundation of the club and 25 years as Honorary Secretary. During dinner a toast 'to the Antarctic Club' was proposed by Sir Thomas White, High Commissioner for Australia, to which the President responded.

In 1955 the Club Tie was introduced, not all members approved, but 12 dozen were ordered. At the dinner in January that year, Dr Vivian Fuchs was asked to speak on the projected Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition that he was organizing.

At a committee meeting, on 12 May 1955, nomination for membership was made on behalf of participants in the South Georgia Surveys led by Duncan Carse (1951–57). This was rejected on the grounds that South Georgia was not within the bounds defined earlier for eligibility for the Club. At the same meeting it was decided to invite Sir Miles Clifford, a former Governor of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies and member of the committee of FIDS, to become an Honorary Member.

After almost 30 years of service as the Club's Honorary Secretary, Cdr Mather informed the Committee on 10 August 1956, that owing to failing health he was, with regret, forced to resign. He had sounded out a successor, and Alfred Stephenson had agreed to take on the work from 1 September 1956, subject to approval at the next General Meeting. At this, on 18 January 1957, the club formally accepted Cdr Mather's resignation and approved the appointment of Alfred Stephenson as his successor. The meeting also decided that in view of the large number of FIDS personnel who might apply for membership, it would proceed as follows: 'that a few prospective members, who were indisputably eligible, and keen to join, should be enrolled. They would then sound out prospective members, and make formal proposals, to be accompanied by a statement from the candidate of a claim to membership.'

At the meeting of the Committee in May 1957, it was reported, with great sadness, that Cdr Mather, a founder of the Club, and its Honorary Secretary for 27 years, had died on 10 April 1957. It was also announced that HRH Prince Philip was pleased to accept Honorary Membership of the Club. This had been offered in view of his interest in Antarctica, and of his recent cruises to Graham Land, South Shetland Islands, and South Georgia aboard the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and RRS *John Biscoe*, during which he was accompanied by Sir Raymond Priestley. The Committee also made known that they had accepted the first nominations for membership from Australians, all being holders of the Polar Medal. Following discussion of the future membership of the Club, the qualifications were again revised to take account of recent changes in opinion. Effectively the Committee would accept as members anyone who had wintered in the Antarctic with a British expedition, even though the candidate might have done no travelling away from the base. This was proposed and seconded by two members.

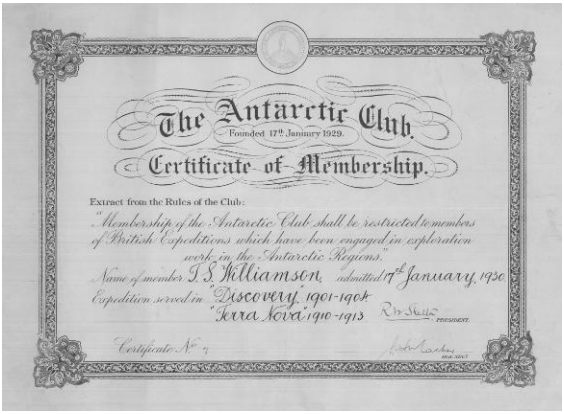
The Antarctic Club.
Founded 17th January 1929.
Certificate of Membership.
Extract from the Rules of the Club:
"Membership of the Antarctic Club shall be restricted to members of British Expeditions which have been engaged in exploration work in the Antarctic Regions."
Name of member T. S. Williamson, admitted 17th January 1930
Expedition served in "Discovery" 1901-1904
"Terra Nova" 1910-1913
PRESIDENT.
Certificate No.

Illustration 5: *Antarctic Club Membership Certificate 1930*

The club entertained 35 members and friends of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition aboard HMS *President* on 2 November 1957; the *Magga Dan* farewell party. The expedition's events went according to schedule and, on 10 June 1958, the Club held a reception at the Royal Geographical Society to welcome the members home. This was attended by about 150 members and friends, and 50 guests, mostly members of the expedition with their friends. The records include the note that 'one elderly member put it "The only thing to do now is to make them cross it the other way, so we can have another party"!'

For a number of reasons the annual dinner for 1959 was in February. It was particularly well attended, with a large number of guests, and one Honorary Member, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. As usual the President (Lt Col William Colbeck) took wine with members of all the expeditions present from the *Discovery* expedition of 1901–04 to the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1955–58) and Royal Society International Geophysical Year Expedition (1956–58), and finally, to the delight of all members, he took wine with the *Britannia* expedition of 1 to 12 January 1957. This brought forth much clapping and shouts of delight from the assembled diners. Before drinking the toast to Absent Friends, the Honorary Secretary read out a telegram from Bunny Fuchs, who gave the position of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition party, and hoped that they would arrive at Scott Base in McMurdo Sound at the beginning of March. Behind the high table three Royal Standards were draped which had been brought by Prince Philip from Sandringham. In his speech he explained that these had been presented by Queen Alexandra to Shackleton in 1907, Scott in 1910, and Shackleton again in 1914.

At a committee meeting in June 1959 the hope was expressed that those Club members who knew of possible candidates for membership who had just returned from FIDS would do their best to see that they were proposed.

In 1960 there were two proposals for the future. It was noted that both Australia and New Zealand now had their own Antarctic clubs[5]. The 50th anniversary of the arrival of Captain Scott's party at the South Pole would fall in 1962, and the Honorary Secretary was asked to look into the possibility of holding a function at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich.

Table II: 1946 to 1960 (reunion dinners 13-27)

Year	*President*	*Attendance*
1946	Sir Reginald Skelton [III]	27, 1 CG
1947	Sir Charles Wright	28, 3 CG
1948	Lt Col Sir Philip Brocklehurst	50, 2 CG
1949	Major Eric Webb	48, 4 CG
1950	Sir Reginald Skelton [IV]	66, 2 PG, 8 CG, 10 AC, 6 Press
1951	Prof James Wordie	61, 4 PG, 3 CG
1952	Dr Neil Mackintosh	53, 8 CG
1953	Rev Launcelot Fleming	47, 3 CG
1954	Cdr John Mather	47, 4 AC, 8 PG and CG
1955	Sir Raymond Priestley	49, 5 CG
1956	Mr William Hampton	38, 1 HM, 5 CG
1957	Prof Frank Debenham	32, 1 HM,, 5 CG

[5] The New Zealand Antarctic Society formed in 1933 and the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) Club in 1952 after the Australian branch of the Antarctic Club of 1946. The South African Antarctic Association formed in 1961.

1958	Dr Leonard Hussey	74, 1 HM,, 3 PG, 17 CG
1959	Surgeon Capt Edward Bingham	58, 1 HM,, 4 CG
1960	Lt Cdr William Colbeck	54, 7 CG

(HM = Honorary Member, PG = President's Guest, CG = Club Guest, AC = Arctic Club)

Honorary Secretaries: Cdr John Mather to August 1956 and Alfred Stephenson from September 1956

Venue: 1944-54 Holborn Restaurant, Kingsway,1955-60 Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly

PART III: 1960 TO 1980

As well as the January reunion dinner an additional Scott Jubilee Dinner to commemorate Midwinter Day, (austral) 1911 was held in the presence of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh at the Grocers' Hall in London on 21 June 1961. Sir Raymond Priestley, of *Nimrod* (1907-09), *Terra Nova* (1910-13), and *Britannia* (1957) presided. The celebration of the Midwinter Day had been chosen rather than the 50th anniversary of Scott's arrival at the South Pole in the expectation of far better weather for the diners to travel, and in the hope of attracting as large an attendance as possible. As usual the President took wine with members of all the expeditions represented - 18 in total, ranging from *Discovery* of 1901-04 to Operation Deep Freeze of 1960-61. Those attending included delegates from the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions, guests from the Soviet Antarctic Expeditions, learned societies, the armed services, and others; in total 202 persons were present (this needed a booklet to elucidate seating arrangements). Prince Philip's speech, with those of several others, was recorded and transmitted on the BBC's World Service later in the week.

On 1 January 1962 the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) was renamed the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) but otherwise remained unchanged. In 1959 the Fids Club had been established. In 1976 this was reorganized as the BAS Club[6] which included many Antarctic Club members.

At a committee meeting in 1962 it was suggested that the opinion of members should be sought regarding the establishment of a category of 'Associate Members', to include past and present Governors of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies, High Commissioners of the British Antarctic Territory, and captains of FIDS or BAS ships, etc. However it proved to be impossible to get agreement on a draft proposal to put to a General Meeting, thus it was decided to hold further discussions.

These took place at a meeting early in January 1963, and resulted in the following 'Guidelines for Membership': The Committee has devoted considerable time during the past few years to a re-assessment of eligibility for membership of the Club. Basically it is sufficient that a candidate should have taken part in a *bona fide* British expedition, have been awarded a Polar Medal with an Antarctic Clasp, or have wintered in the Antarctic. In addition to this, it has been considered very important that a candidate should have shown a continued interest in Antarctic affairs. With the considerable increase in activity in the Antarctic there has arisen a small band of enthusiasts who have done excellent work, both scientific and administrative, the value of which is in many cases greater than the contribution which many existing members were able to make. The type of work, which has been done by these enthusiasts, has in itself often precluded wintering in the Antarctic, work such as oceanographic studies, sea-ice studies, and the command of polar vessels. There are a few,

[6] The BAS Club is a less formal organization of employees of the survey and associated individuals. It has many members in common with the Antarctic Club.

who for many years have been the mainstay of the administration, recruiting personnel and equipping stations, and who have visited the stations summer after summer, but whose work requires them to be at Headquarters in the austral winter. Some of these seasoned travellers merit, in the opinion of the Committee, membership of the Club, and rather than increase the number of Honorary Members, or introduce a new class of membership, it is recommended that the terms of eligibility for ordinary membership should be broadened to include those who have visited Antarctica during the open season on a sufficient number of occasions to have rendered outstanding service to British Antarctic exploration. Candidates for membership on such grounds would have to be proposed and seconded in the usual way, and be endorsed unanimously by the Committee.'

At a General Meeting on 18 January 1963 these recommendations were accepted without dissent. In effect, this constituted a quiet revolution from the policies of the 1950s. No longer were applicants to the Club expected to have spent time south of the Antarctic Circle, and, to enhance their credentials, to have sledged vast distances. The Committee put together the new rules for eligibility because membership of the Club had become a mix of pre-war and post-war members, including people who had much experience of land travel and exploration, and others who had engaged in extensive marine research. This seems to have been a good combination, with open minds preferring to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

This Committee, at a meeting in September 1963, had to consider what was perhaps the ultimate question concerning membership; should women be elected to the Club? At that time there were no obvious candidates, so the Committee decided that the question need not be faced immediately, but should be discussed only when a nomination was forthcoming. At this meeting, Dr John Harvey Pirie, a member of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition (*Scotia,* 1902-04), was proposed for membership. He was elected, and written to immediately with an offer of membership (Dr Pirie, born in 1877, died on 27 September 1965.)

During the committee meeting held before the General Meeting in January 1964, the Committee acted on the resolution of January 1963, offering membership to a number of British and overseas candidates. The 19 June 1964 was the date chosen to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition (1914-16). The Honorary Secretary was asked to contact as many as possible of the surviving members. Six of them, including William Bakewell, from the United States, were guests of the Club at a reception in the House of Lords. This was followed by a cruise on the Thames to Greenwich.

The 1965 dinner was on 22 January. The President's final, and unusual, duty was to take wine with three Honorary Members, Sir Miles Clifford, Sir Raynor Arthur and Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, all former Governors of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies (the last also a High Commissioner of the British Antarctic Territory). At this time the Honorary Secretary distributed a *List of Members Past and Present* which included 'the names of all who have joined the Club since its inception.' This included 430 names with a note that the addresses of the Australian members could be had from the ANARE Club (Australian National Antarctic Expeditions).

At a committee meeting in 1965, it was reported that a suggestion had been received that a memorial plaque should be set up in one of the churches of the City of London to commemorate members of the Club who had died in Antarctica. There was some sympathy for the suggestion, but it was decided that since the Club had been founded solely as a dining club, this extension of its activities was not appropriate[7]. In 1966 a related suggestion was received, that expedition members who had died 'down south' should be elected as 'Posthumous Honorary Members'. Again the Committee decided that this was not the

[7] The British Antarctic Monument Trust, established in 2001, subsequently dealt with this subject.

business of a dining club. Sir Raymond Priestley's 80th birthday was celebrated by a cocktail party in July 1966 at the Royal Geographical Society.

In 1967 the Committee looked again at the question of membership. It was pointed out that, with the inevitable loss of members from earlier expeditions, the membership of the club would come, before long, almost entirely from the British Antarctic Survey (and its predecessor, FIDS). In view of this it would not be a good idea to broaden the source of entry by enrolling members who, although they had never been to Antarctica, were acknowledged experts in their field of Antarctic science. There was general agreement that something needed to be done but, as often happens in committees, it was decided that further discussions should be held first.

A committee meeting in May 1967 was notable for examining the results of a questionnaire which had been circulated to all members (the Club rarely used this procedure). There were two questions - on what day of the week should the annual dinner be held? - and should there be a second base colour available for the Club tie? On the first point, there were 57 votes for Friday, 33 for Saturday, with 18 members indifferent; there were 61 votes against a second tie, 38 in favour, and 9 members were indifferent.

The 40th anniversary reunion and dinner was on 24 January 1969 with 85 members and 4 Club Guests. As usual a message of goodwill was received from Hugh Evans in the United States. He was a member of the *Southern Cross* expedition of 1898–1900. The Club members accepted this gratefully, and asked the Honorary Secretary to reply with a special message of good wishes.

Illustration 6: *Antarctic Club Dinner 1963 at the Criterion in Piccadilly*

The 41st anniversary reunion was at Imperial College, London, in the presence of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. The event commemorated the 60th anniversary of the return of Sir

Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition (1907–09), and the sailing of Captain Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition in 1910. There were 112 members present, the largest number to date in its history, with 5 Club Guests and 1 Honorary Member. In a witty speech in reply to the Loyal Toast, The Duke of Edinburgh paid a special tribute to Sir Raymond Priestley, who was a member of both the *Nimrod* and the *Terra Nova* expeditions, and who later greatly encouraged polar exploration. He had accompanied HRH when the Royal Yacht visited Antarctica in January 1957.

A committee meeting in May 1970 saw the election to membership of two ship's officers; Capt John Cole, master for many years of the FIDS and BAS vessel RRS *John Biscoe*, and Capt Freddy White, a master serving for some 20 years with the Falkland Islands Company, who had made several voyages to Antarctica whilst his ship was on charter to FIDS.

Further to the proposal to broaden the terms of membership, it was suggested at a committee meeting in 1971 that the Honorary Secretary should sound the opinions of previous Presidents and some selected members. He reported at a later meeting, at the end of 1971, that those approached had found the proposal generally unacceptable, since it was considered that the category of 'Honorary Member' was sufficient to cope with the numbers likely to be concerned.

Despite this, the General Meeting of 1972 was asked to vote on a proposal that the category of 'Honorary Member' should be increased from 4 to 10; which was carried unanimously. The Honorary Secretary was asked to approach the Directors of the British Antarctic Survey and the Scott Polar Research Institute for nominations for Honorary Membership.

The Committee was informed, at a meeting in October 1973, that twelve Polar Medals had recently been awarded for Antarctic service, and that only four of the recipients were members. The Honorary Secretary was asked to contact contemporaries of the non-members, with a view to nominations being submitted. It was noted that it should, of course, be remembered that, in addition to holding a Polar Medal (how things had changed), anyone nominated was expected to have a continuing interest in the Antarctic.

At a committee meeting in December 1974 it was decided that the annual subscription should be raised, from the original 5 shillings (25 pence) to 50 pence. It is interesting that the rate had remained unchanged for 45 years, despite the 1931 proposal to raise the subscription to one guinea.

The 46th anniversary dinner was on 10 January 1975. In the President's Chair was Alfred Stephenson, who had temporarily relinquished his post as Honorary Secretary. This was to mark the 40th anniversary of the sailing of the British Graham Land Expedition's vessel, *Penola*, from Port Stanley. The Acting Honorary Secretary called upon Right Reverend Launcelot Fleming (a contemporary on the British Graham Land Expedition) to deliver a brief biography of the President (prepared in secret), and to thank him for his services to the Club as Honorary Secretary since 1956. This was followed by the presentation of various gifts to Steve, as he was familiarly known.

This reunion also received a letter of good wishes from Hugh Evans. It was the year of his 100th birthday, and unfortunately the last year in which the club would receive a message from him – he died in early February 1975. In January 1976 it was announced that, although since deceased, he had been awarded the Polar Medal.

The Club held a Mid-Winter (austral) party on 20 June 1975, on a glorious evening at Trinity House. Members and guests present totalled 130. An additional interest was to watch the Ceremony of the Keys in the Tower of London.

‘Any other business’ at the Committee Meeting in November 1976 brought forth a suggestion to hold two Polar Club dinners yearly, jointly with the Arctic Club, since the Clubs had a significant number of members in common. Whilst this did not meet with immediate approval, one member of the Committee suggested that one such combined event could be held ‘to test the waters’. It was agreed to bear the suggestion in mind. However, the next committee meeting decided that this proposal should be kept for the more distant future.

The annual dinner in 1977 led for the first time to a father and son dining together as members of the Club (Kevin and Jonathan Walton)[8]. The Honorary Secretary pointed out that there had previously been father and son who were members at the same time, but they had never dined on the same occasion. The President announced that Rear Admiral Sir Edmund Irving, the Hydrographer of the Royal Navy, had been elected as an Honorary Member, restoring the number of such members to four. The announcement was greeted with warm applause.

The annual reunion dinner for the 50th anniversary of the Club was on 22 January 1979 in the presence of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Despite appalling weather, rail strikes, strikes by lorry drivers and the possibility of a strike by catering staff, 141 members attended, with 12 Club Guests – the largest number for a reunion dinner to date. It was a great success, and was the fourth that The Duke of Edinburgh had attended. In a short speech, replying to the toast ‘HRH and members of the Royal Family’, he pointed out that his interest in Antarctica would be broadened now that he was Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, since he seemed to think that both BAS and SPRI would be ‘under his wing’.

Members were also informed that the Committee had decided to make a contribution to the *Discovery* Preservation Fund. A collection was made in the course of the evening during which a considerable amount was raised. Donations were also received from members who were unable to attend the dinner. The money was used to purchase a compass binnacle for installation aboard *Discovery* later in the year.

Table III: 1960 to 1980 (reunion dinners 28–48)

Year	*President*	*Attendance*
1961	Mr James Marr	77, 1 PG, 7 CG
1962	Sir Raymond Priestley [II]	57, 8 CG
1963	Dr George Deacon	70, 6 CG
1964	Dr Brian Roberts	84, 5 CG
1965	Sir Vivian Fuchs	86, 3 HM, 6 CG
1966	Dr Henry Herdman	89, 5 CG
1967	Dr Colin Bertram	74, 5 CG
1968	Lt Cdr Leonard Hill	75, 3 CG
1969	Mr William Flett	85, 4 CG
1970	Mr David Stratton	112, 1 HM, 5 CG
1971	Mr Quintin Riley	62, 3 CG
1972	Dr Raymond Adie	90, 3 CG
1973	Dr Gordon Robin	85, 10 CG
1974	Dr Francis Fraser	63, 5 CG
1975	Prof Alfred Stephenson	82, 1 PG, 5 CG
1976	Capt Henry Kirkwood	91, 2 CG
1977	Sir Alistair Hardy	83, 1 PG, 3 CG

[8] In 2022 Jonathan Walton and his son Finn Walton dined together, the second and a consecutive occasion, which also involved a third generation, of such an event.

1978	Mr Kenneth Blaiklock	89, 1 PG, 2 CG
1979	Rt Rev Launcelot Fleming [II]	141, 12 CG
1980	Surgeon Capt David Dalgleish	94, 2 CG

(HM = Honorary Member, PG = President's Guest, CG = Club Guest)

Honorary Secretary: Alfred Stephenson

Venue: 1955–70 Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly, 1971–80 Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington

PART IV: 1981 TO THE PESTILENCE (2019)

So far the original author of this history has found something of interest in most years which he considers worthy of record. In the early 1980s there seems to be nothing of note until 1985. At a committee meeting in March of that year, a proposal was received to admit to membership the four participants in the Trans-Globe Expedition (1980–81). One was the leader's wife, who had wintered in Antarctica. After much discussion, and consultation with members, the Committee decided without dissent that membership should be offered to all four members of the expedition. There were nominations of other women to be considered and thus women became accepted as members of the club.

In 1985 a Summer Outing was held. A total of 118 members and guests assembled aboard RRS *Discovery* on the Thames, and were conducted round the ship, to inspect the renovation and to see the compass binnacle which the Club had presented. The party then made their way to Trinity House, where they enjoyed a guided tour and a buffet supper.

At a committee meeting in October 1986 the qualifications required for membership were again discussed. With the continuing change in the nature of Antarctic work, it was felt that these qualifications should be amended to suit the times. Membership should not be made open to all on application. Prospective members still needed to be proposed and seconded by members of the Club and such nominations would still be considered for approval by the Committee. However, it was agreed that eligibility would have to be assessed individually and, although a few guidelines could be established, the final decision must rest with the Committee (the reader may well feel that he has been here before).

The annual reunion of the 58th year took place on 23 January 1987. Sadly the President, Mr Douglas Mason, had died and was succeeded by Capt Thomas Woodfield. For the first time in the Club's history lady members were present: Virginia, Lady Fiennes, and Mrs Janet Thomson.

Further to the views on eligibility for the Club noted by the Committee in October 1986, and following the circulation of a questionnaire to all members, the following special restriction on membership was suggested: 'that no more than ten new members should be elected in any one year, although allowance could be made in exceptional years, and if there had been unusual wastage'. It was also suggested that the Club should take care not to become exclusively professional, and that a broad cross-section of achievement be encouraged. These observations should be made available to the membership selection committee. Mr Eric Salmon, the President for 1988, suffered a heart attack shortly after retiring from almost 40 years service with BAS; Dr Ray Adie represented him at the dinner.

In 1989 Sir Rex Hunt, a former Governor of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies, and High Commissioner of the British Antarctic Territory, was offered, and accepted, Honorary Membership.

The dinner of the Diamond Jubilee of the Club, in 1989, at Imperial College was attended by 167 members, the most recorded. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh was the principal guest. He had been an Honorary Member for 30 years, and had attended Club functions on five occasions.

Following some persistent lobbying by two committee members on behalf of a United States naval pilot, the Committee agreed the following: 'that a new form of Honorary Membership be instituted to include foreigners who have particularly assisted, or taken part, in British expeditions', and this was agreed at a meeting in March 1990. The pilot in question readily agreed to accept Honorary Membership.

At a meeting in July 1990 it was agreed the post of President should be offered in future in alternating years to a member from the 'older' and 'younger' generations.

The Honorary Secretary was applauded by the Committee at its next meeting for his ingenuity in getting 17 of the 53 outstanding defaulters on their subscriptions to settle their accounts (unfortunately for his successors the details of his ingenuity are not disclosed). Committee membership came under discussion, presumably because of events within this particular committee. It was agreed that in future there would be four members of the committee, each serving for 3 years, one member being replaced each year. A member could be re-elected to serve for a second term of three years, but this should be the limit.

At the reunion in May 1992, it was proposed that the date of the dinner should revert to January, as close as possible to the date on which Scott reached the Pole in 1912. On a show of hands the proposal was rejected, it being widely felt that a date later in the year would give better weather for travelling, and encourage more members to attend. In addition January was a month when some members were in the Antarctic. A revised copy of the members list was prepared in 1992 which listed 320 names, 49 of whom lived abroad in 13 countries.

Immediately prior to a committee meeting in March 1993 the Honorary Secretary broke a collar bone, and was unable to travel. There was, luckily, no business of great importance, and the meeting proceeded, with minutes produced by a member of the committee. Sadly again a President died before a reunion; Dr Eric Back was succeeded by Dr James Andrew.

At a committee meeting at the beginning of 1995 it was proposed that Honorary Membership be offered to the Hydrographer of the Navy, Rear Admiral John Myres, and to John Smith, long-term curator of the Falkland Islands museum. This was agreed and they were duly elected. Also at that meeting the Committee were asked if they would promote an exhibition of paintings at a future reunion. This was declined, on grounds familiar to the reader; that the Club is solely a dining club.

The Honorary Secretary, Alfred Stephenson, announced at the Committee Meeting in mid-1995, that after 40 years of service to the Club, and having problems with his legs, that it was time to bow out. The Committee with much regret accepted his resignation, and asked that their appreciation of all that Steve had done for the Club should be recorded (the Honorary Secretary's record of this instruction is a master-piece of tact). Munro Sievwright accepted the nomination to succeed Steve, and 'hoped that he could do justice to the post'.

The 1996 annual dinner and reunion was on 19 April. It saw the announcement to members of Steve's resignation, and it was noted how fortunate the Club had been in its Secretaries, two had sufficed for the 67 years of the Club's history. As recognition of his services the Silver Penguin which had been presented to Steve in 1976, was further engraved to mark 20 more years of office to 1996. It was also decided to found a 'Stephenson Medal' and fund, the medal to be awarded to a member of the Young Explorers Trust, for outstanding service to that trust which was content to take over the administrative duties involving the medal.

Discussion of location and costs of the annual reunion dinner had been a perennial matter thus a questionnaire was circulated in December 1996 asking members opinions about: location, venue, price, menu and any other views. A third of the members replied, some in considerable detail. The result favoured a central location in London despite costs involved. In summary the opinions expressed amounted to: 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'.

During the 1998 summer a combined excursion, with the British Antarctic Survey Club, was arranged to visit RRS *Discovery* and the associated museum now removed to Dundee. This coincided with the Annual General Meeting and Reunion Dinner of the latter club which included many members of both clubs with their guests. It was the second Antarctic Club visit to this venerable vessel.

Unfortunately Munro Sievwright became unwell a few years after accepting the post of Honorary Secretary. Peter Clarkson acted as Honorary Secretary during Munro's illness with the expectation that he would recover; sadly this did not happen and he remained in a care home. Peter Clarkson continued to organize the annual dinner until Joe Farman accepted the post in 2003

In 2001 it was resolved that, as well as from the Arctic Club[9], a representative from the several associated clubs be invited in turn as a Club Guest to the annual dinner. Thus either the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute (founded in 1949), Antarctic Heritage Trust (U.K.) (1993), James Caird Society (1994), and South Georgia Association (2001) was represented annually (many guests belonged to more than one of these organizations).

The reunion dinner on the 75th anniversary of the Club, in 2004, was attended by HRH The Princess Royal as a guest of the club. Princess Anne had recently become Patron of the Antarctic Heritage Trust (United Kingdom). In this capacity she subsequently made several visits to Antarctic regions.

Jack Reid, as narrated in the introduction, began preparing the club history which led to an interim distribution of photocopies in 2008. The first published edition appeared in 2009 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Club's foundation.

Illustration 7: *The 2013 Annual Reunion Dinner, Royal Geographical Society (PDC)*

[9] Twelve men have been President of the Arctic Club and of the Antarctic Club – although none simultaneously.

During Joe Farman's period as Honorary Secretary some administrative changes occurred. The somewhat onerous collection of subscriptions was relieved by inclusion of the small cost of club administration in the price of the annual reunion dinner. Expenditure became less as electronic mail developed quickly in the 1990s at the same time as the cost of postage began to increase rapidly. It was, however, a prolonged process before nearly all members came to adopt e-mail. The main business of Committee Meetings was consideration of membership nominations which were dealt with by the Honorary Secretary with the current and former Presidents. In conformity with changing fashions and degrees of formality, as well as for economy, the dress code was relaxed – gentlemen members may attend dinners attired in dark lounge suits.

The venue for dinners remained a dilemma as these changed from Imperial College, to the Royal Over-Seas League and, in 2012, the Royal Geographical Society. Joe Farman resigned as Honorary Secretary in 2010. After an interim period with Peter Clarkson and the current writer, Richard Crabtree took over until 2013 when increasing debility caused him to reluctantly relinquish the task. The committee was pleased that, in autumn 2014, Rod Downie was willing and able to undertake the task of Honorary Secretary.

Unfortunately Rod was unable to attend the 81st reunion dinner in 2014 owing to a change of date of an Antarctic Treaty meeting in Brasil (moved, at short notice, to avoid a clash with the football World Cup). Club guests included two grand-daughters: Judy Skelton whose grandfather was the first President and on three later occasions, and The Hon Alexandra Shackleton. A note in the menu drew attention to the years of foundation of the club and number of reunions had gone awry following the Club's Diamond Jubilee in 1989. The reason was the World War II during which several annual reunion dinners were impracticable. In autumn 2014, after dining at the Graduate Union in Cambridge, a reception and lecture was held in conjunction with the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute. With the Institute's museum open to members, and the lecture describing the polar organizations and other links with Cambridge, this event was open to members and guests.

The 2015 President was Professor Jane Francis, Director of the British Antarctic Survey, the first lady to occupy both these offices. Following the success of the previous autumn event another excursion was arranged; a visit to the Oates Museum in Selborne.

In 2016, as one of the events associated with the centenary of the 'heroic age of Antarctic exploration' the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute hosted another combined reception with a lecture on the centenary with the history of the Club. This provided an occasion to publish a revised edition of the club's concise history and announce the new age with the club having an electronic presence on the internet.

In 2017 the Arctic Club invited members of the Antarctic Club to participate in their annual reunion on 9 December aboard HQS *Wellington*. Some seven members attended in an unusual livery hall with about a dozen persons who were members of both clubs making a complement of about 70. The Antarctic club reciprocated the joint invitation at the 2018 dinner in the Royal Geographical Society where, again, the many who were members of both and 5 purely Arctic Club members dined. In October of that year a visit by members and guests was made, courtesy of Cammel-Laird, to see the new British Antarctic Survey vessel, RRS *Sir David Attenborough*, under construction in Birkenhead.

After five years as Honorary Secretary Rod Downie indicated that time to fulfil the functions was becoming difficult with increasing family and work commitments. Consultation and expression of interest in a replacement took place which resulted in Mark Brandon accepting the post from the 2019 reunion dinner. This was also the 90th anniversary of the club. Rod became a co-opted a member of the committee.

Table IV: 1981 to the Pestilence Period (reunion dinners 48–86)

Year	*President*	*Attendance*
1981	Dr Stewart Slessor	91, 4 PG, 2 CG
1982	General Robin Smart	87, 3 CG
1983	Group Capt John Lewis	106, 3 CG
1984	Dr Richard Laws	91, 2 PG, 3 CG
1985	Dr George Marsh	86, 5 CG
1986	Dr Leo Harrison Matthews	118, 3 CG
1987	Mr Douglas Mason succeeded by Capt Thomas Woodfield	110, 1 HM, 1 PG, 2 CG
1988	Dr Raymond Adie [II] (for Mr Eric Salmon)	107, 3 CG
1989	Mr Alfred Stephenson [II]	167, 1 HM, 9 CG
1990	Dr Bernard Stonehouse	95, 1 CG, 1 PG
1991	Dr Victor Russell	95, 1 PG, 2 CG
1992	Dr Stanley Evans	83, 4 CG
1993	Dr Eric Back succeeded by Dr James Andrew	93, 1 CG
1994	Dr Colin Bertram [II]	93, 5 CG
1995	Capt Stuart Lawrence	88, 1 CG
1996	Dr Peter Clarkson	97, 1 PG, 4 CG
1997	Capt David Turnbull	81, 1 PG, 3 CG
1998	Dr Charles Swithinbank [II]	70, 2 CG
1999	Mr David Jones	73, 1 PG, 4 CG
2000	Dr David Drewry	62, 2 CG
2001	Mr Kevin Walton	62, 2 CG
2002	Capt Malcolm Phelps	70
2003	Cdr Angus Erskine	62, 1 PG, 1 CG
2004	Dr David Pratt	58, 1 HM, 3 CG
2005	Mr Denis Wilkins	63, 1 PG, 3 CG
2006	Mr Robert Burton	64, 1 CG
2007	Mr George Hemmen	60, 1 PG, 1 CG
2008	Mr Alan Etchells	68, 1 PG, 1 CG
2009	Dr Geoffrey Hattersley–Smith	70, 2 V
2010	Prof David Walton	62, 1 PG, 1 CG
2011	Mr John Smith	34, 1PG
2012	Mr Alan Tritton	63
2013	Mr Gordon Stock	55, 2 CG
2014	Mr John Killingbeck	57, 2 CG
2015	Prof Jane Francis	59, 1 PG, 3 CG
2016	Mr Robert Headland	55, 1 PG
2017	Gp Capt Robert Bond	53, 1 CG
2018	Capt Chris Elliott	58, 1 PG, 1 CG, 4 AC
2019	Mr James Fellows, (for the duration of the pestilence) succeeded by Robert Headland [II]	62, 1 PG, 1 CG

(HM = Honorary Member, PG = President's Guest, CG = Club Guest, AC = Arctic Club guest)

Honorary Secretaries*:* Alfred Stephenson to 1996, Munro Sievwright to 2000, Peter Clarkson to 2003, Joe Farman to 2010, Richard Crabtree to 2013, Rod Downie to 2019, Mark Brandon to 2022.

Venue: 1981–97 Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington, 1998–2011 Royal Overseas League, St James's, 2012–19 Royal Geographical Society, South Kensington

PART V THE PESTILENCE AND BEYOND

In spring 2020 arrangements were made for the accustomed annual reunion dinner on 24 April in the Royal Geographical Society. A rapidly spreading pandemic of a corona virus reached Britain early in that year necessitating its cancellation of the event, at short notice, when the country went into a period of isolation, termed 'lockdown', with equivalent actions throughout the world. Similarly the 2021 reunion dinner could not be held owing to the persistence of the pestilence and quarantine. During this period the death of the senior Honorary Member, the Duke of Edinburgh, occurred in April barely two months before his 100th birthday for which the President dispatched an appropriate message of condolence.

On the occasion of the austral mid-winter Solstice of 21 June 2021 an electronic gathering was arranged for members, another inevitable sign of the times. This allowed exchange of greetings, some news, with the accustomed toasts, to occur during this strange period. One advantage was that members from remote locations were able to appear (although style of dress was noticeably relaxed and only 24 members made electronic contact). In January 2022 the President James Fellows, sadly died and was succeeded by Robert Headland until David Burkitt took the chair. In that year, the 93rd year of the club, the 87th reunion dinner became practicable, this was again in the Royal Geographical Society. Unfortunately during the period of pestilence the attrition of members was substantial thus the Committee resolved that a recruiting effort became increasingly important. The reduced numbers attending the enjoyable reunion dinner were such that a group photograph was practicable (illustration 8, from one of several members' photographs).

Illustration 8: *Members at the 2022 Reunion Dinner, Royal Geographical Society (Anon)*

Circumstances following the pestilence with a period of stagnation caused the President, with the concurrence of the entire committee, to request the Honorary Secretary's resignation. This was forthcoming, although his offer of resignation from membership was declined. Thence the President, with some members of the committee, made much effort to restore the club's organization. Fortunately the President was able to organize the 2023 annual reunion dinner in the Union Jack Club in Waterloo. This had the advantage of being able to provide accommodation and to be noticeably less expensive as the fees for the Royal Geographical Society had increased beyond the Club's practicability. Peter Clarkson again assumed the post of acting Honorary Secretary. A new, competent, Honorary Secretary, Rachel Duncan, was appointed, membership procedures reinstated, and recruitment enhanced, as the club entered its 95th year. The Club might be said to have reached the electronic age as dining notices, and other correspondence with members, came to be by electronic mail. The last few users of postal communications had not been heard from for several years (and postal costs were rising swiftly). Scott Polar Research Institute, however, continued to provide the Club's

postal address, although no longer housing of the records which are now held by a committee member.

The 2024 and 2025 annual reunion dinners were again in the Union Jack Club which was regarded very favourably by the members. An excursion, organized by the President with cooperation of the British Antarctic Survey, took place in October 2025 to visit the new RRS *Sir David Attenborough,* docked in Harwich.

Table V: from the Pestilence Period (reunion dinners 87–90)

2022	Mr David Burkitt	40, 1 PG
2023	Mr Jonathan Walton	57, 1 PG, 1 CG
2024	Capt David Rowley	65, 1 PG
2025	Mr Allan Wearden	61, 2 PG, 2 CG

(PG = President's Guest, CG = Club Guest)

Honorary Secretaries*:* Mark Brandon 2022. Peter Clarkson for 2023, Rachel Duncan from 2024

Venue: 2022 Royal Geographical Society, South Kensington, 2023–25 Union Jack Club, Waterloo

EPILOGUE[10]

The future of the Club would appear to be secure, as long as dining clubs are in fashion, and 'those of similar interests' can be found to organize and run the Club. It is clear that the Club has been through occasional stages of unrest, in particular in the World War II and the 2020–22 pestilence, but that is scarcely surprising. The nature of polar exploration was changing rapidly with privately funded expeditions taking a lesser part, while quasi-permanent occupation of Antarctica by government-funded institutions is now the norm.

Obviously the old hands from the early expeditions were getting on in age when the Club was formed. After 1960 there was a relatively small number of survivors from these expeditions, and the Club membership quickly became (numerically) dominated by those who had served in the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, later to become the British Antarctic Survey. There are, perhaps fortunately, a number of people who want to do their own thing, and break away from the norm, but this is largely confined to tourism and adventure, rather than to those engaged in serious scientific work.

Let us hope that the Antarctic Club continues, and that members enjoy the comradeship engendered by polar work develops in the far south, if not quite so elsewhere on Earth.

THE SILENT TOAST

To those who have voyaged to explore the Antarctic Regions and have not returned.

[10] Adapted from Jack Reid, 2009

Presidents of the Antarctic Club

Adams, Capt Sir Jameson	1935
Adie, Dr Raymond	1972
Adie, Dr Raymond (for Mr Eric Salmon)	1988
Andrew, Dr James (succeeding Dr Eric Back)	1993
Armitage, Capt Albert	1931
Back, Dr Eric	1993
Bagshawe, Mr Thomas	1939
Bernacchi, Mr Louis	1932
Bertram, Dr Colin	1967
Bertram, Dr Colin	1994
Bingham, Surg Capt Edward	1959
Blaiklock, Mr Kenneth	1978
Blair, Cdr John Hamilton	1937
Bond, Gp Capt Robert	2017
Brocklehurst, Lt Col Sir Philip	1948
Brown, Prof Robert Rudmose	1933
Burton, Mr Robert	2006
Clarkson, Dr Peter	1996
Colbeck, Lt Cdr William	1960
Dalgleish, Surg Capt David	1980
Deacon, Dr George	1963
Debenham, Prof Frank	1957
Drewry, Dr David	2000
Elliot, Capt Chris	2018
England, Capt Rupert	1934
Erskine, Cdr Angus	2003
Etchells, Mr Alan	2008
Evans, Dr Stanley	1992
Evans, Vice-Admiral Sir Edward	1936
Fellows, Mr James (for the duration of the Pestilence)	2019
Fleming, Rev Launcelot	1953
Fleming, Rt Rev Launcelot	1979
Flett, Mr William	1969
Francis, Prof Jane	2015
Fraser, Dr Francis	1974
Fuchs, Sir Vivian	1965
Hampton, Mr William	1956
Hardy, Sir Alistair	1977
Hattersley-Smith, Dr Geoffrey	2009
Headland, Mr Robert	2016
Headland, Mr Robert (succeeding Mr James Fellows)	2021
Hemmen, Mr George	2007
Herdman, Dr Henry	1966
Hill, Lt Cdr Leonard	1968
Hussey, Dr Leonard	1958
Jones, Mr David	1999
Killingbeck, Mr John	2014
Kirkwood, Capt Henry	1976
Lawrence, Capt Stuart	1995
Laws, Dr Richard	1983
Lewis, Group Capt John	1982
Mackintosh, Dr Neil	1952
Macklin, Col Alexander (for the duration of the World War II)	1940
Marr, Mr James	1961
Marsh, Dr George	1984
Mason, Mr Douglas	1986
Mather, Cdr John	1954
Matthews, Dr Leo Harrison	1985
Phelps, Capt Malcolm	2002
Pratt, Dr David	2004
Priestley, Sir Raymond	1955
Priestley, Sir Raymond	1962
Riley, Mr Quintin	1971
Roberts, Dr Brian	1964
Robin, Dr Gordon	1973
Rowley, Capt. D.	2024
Russell, Dr Victor	1991
Salmon, Mr Eric	1988
Skelton, Eng Vice-Admiral Reginald	1929
Skelton, Eng Vice-Admiral Reginald	1930
Skelton, Eng Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald	1946
Skelton, Eng Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald	1950
Smart, General Robin	1981
Smith, Mr John	2011
Stephenson, Prof Alfred	1975
Stephenson, Mr Alfred	1989
Stock, Mr Gordon	2013
Stonehouse, Dr Bernard	1990
Stratton, Mr David	1970
Swithinbank, Dr Charles	1987
Swithinbank, Dr Charles	1998
Tritton, Mr Alan	2012
Turnbull, Capt David	1997
Walton, Mr Jonathan	2023
Walton, Mr Kevin	2001
Walton, Prof David	2010
Wearden, Mr Allan	2025
Webb, Major Eric	1949
Wilkins, Mr Denis	2005
Woodfield, Capt Thomas (succeeding Mr Douglas Mason)	1986
Wordie, Prof James	1951
Worsley, Cdr Frank	1938
Wright, Sir Charles	1947

Honorary Secretaries of the Antarctic Club

Brandon, Prof Mark	2019–22
Clarkson, Dr Peter (Acting)	2000–02
Clarkson, Dr Peter (Acting)	2022–23
Crabtree, Mr Richard	2011–14
Downie, Mr Rod	2014–19
Duncan, Ms Rachel	2024–
Farman, Mr Joe	2003–10
Mather, Cdr John	1929–55
Sievwright, Mr Munro	1996–99
Stephenson, Prof Alfred	1955–95

Postal correspondence for the **Antarctic Club** may be addressed:

The Honorary Secretary,
The Antarctic Club,
c/o Scott Polar Research Institute,
Lensfield Road,
Cambridge,
United Kingdom,
CB2 1ER

A section for the Club is hosted by the website of the Scott Polar Research Institute.

http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/about/external/antarcticclub/

Electronic mail address: AntarcticClub@gmail.com

Membership is by nomination and invitation.

Administrative expenses are included in costs of the annual reunion dinners.

The Club's Committee consists of the President, the Honorary Secretary,

past Presidents, and co-opted members.

The Club maintains reciprocal dining privileges with similar organizations

in Commonwealth countries involved in the Antarctic.

The original edition of the club history was written by Jack Reid and edited by committee members: Peter Clarkson, Joe Farman, Robert Headland, George Hemmen, and Charles Swithinbank with advice and assistance from several other members who reviewed an interim 2008 version which was published in 2009. The second edition, printed in 2016, was revised by Robert Headland with advice from several colleagues. The history is revised annually and the latest version appears on the Club's web-site after annual reunion dinners. Illustrations are from the Club's collection lodged in the Scott Polar Research Institute and from Peter Clarkson (no. 7) and a member present in 2022 (no. 8).