

OBITUARY

SIDNEY FREDERICK HARMER, who was born in 1862 and died on 22 October 1950, had a distinguished career as a zoologist, and will be especially remembered for his studies of the Cetacea, his interest in the conservation of the stock of whales, and his efforts to initiate the work of the Discovery Committee, which later was to owe much to his judgement and foresight. He was trained at University College, London, and at Cambridge, where he became a lecturer in zoology and in 1891 superintendent of the Museum of Zoology. He was a joint editor of the *Cambridge Natural History* to which he contributed a volume on the Polyzoa, and as a zoologist he is perhaps best known for his important work on this group. He joined the British Museum (Natural History) as keeper of zoology in 1907 and was appointed director in 1919, a post from which he retired in 1927. By now he was taking a special interest in the Cetacea, and besides organizing a valuable system for the reporting of whales stranded on the British coasts he accumulated in the museum's files a unique body of information on whales and whaling. He was a member of the Interdepartmental Committee on Research and Development in the Dependencies of the Falkland Islands, whose report, published in 1920, contained a memorandum by him on the southern whaling industry. This article dealt largely with the natural history of whales and recommended various lines of research calculated to assist the proper regulation of whaling. The report as a whole was the starting point of the Discovery Investigations and many of Harmer's recommendations were subsequently accepted. When the Discovery Committee was constituted in 1924, Harmer was appointed vice-chairman. He held this position, together with the chairmanship of the scientific sub-committee, until he resigned in 1942. He became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1898, and was knighted in 1920; he was governor and later a vice-president of the Marine Biological Association, and at one time president of the Linnean Society of London. N.A.M.

T. HARVEY JOHNSTON was born on 9 December 1881 and died on 30 August 1951. He studied at Sydney University and afterwards lectured on zoology and physiology at Sydney Technical College. From 1909 to 1911 he served the Government of New South Wales as a microbiologist, and then became lecturer in charge of the department of biology at Brisbane University. He was later appointed chairman of the travelling commission formed by the Queensland Government to inquire into the control of prickly pear, and was responsible for the introduction of wild cochineal to control the pest. From 1919 to 1922 he was professor of biology at Brisbane. In 1922 he became honorary director of the South Australian Museum and in 1928 honorary professor of botany at Adelaide University.

In 1929, at the age of forty-eight, he joined Sir Douglas Mawson's British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition as chief biologist, and accompanied the *Discovery* during her antarctic voyages of 1929–30 and 1930–31. The biological programme consisted largely of marine investigations in the South Atlantic Ocean, but landings were made on Îles Crozet, Îles de Kerguelen, Heard Island, and Macquarie Island, and at various points on the antarctic continent between Enderby Land and King George V Land. On his return to Australia, Johnston was given the task of editing the expedition's zoological and botanical reports.

MICHAEL AMBROSE MAHONEY, better known as "Klondike Mike", died on 8 April 1951 at Santa Monica, California, at the age of seventy-five. He was born and reared near Buckingham in the backwoods of Quebec and worked for a time at lumber



SIR SIDNEY FREDERICK HARMER

Royal Society photograph

camps in Quebec, Michigan, Missouri, and British Columbia. In August 1897, soon after the start of the gold rush, he went north to Skagway and reached Dawson later that year. He worked for some time freighting in the goldfields, and in December 1897 sledged 600 miles to Skagway carrying gold and mail. In April 1898 he contracted to transport a vaudeville company, the Sunny Samson Sisters Sextette, from Skagway to Dawson. It was on this occasion that Mahoney made his name a byword by back-packing a piano to the summit of the Chilkoot Pass. The North-West Mounted Police refused to allow the company to enter Canadian territory, and Mahoney went on alone to Dawson. In December 1898 he brought out another load of gold and mail in the record time of under fourteen days. In March 1899 he broke his own record by sledging with Judge Morphet as passenger from Dawson to Skagway in less than nine days. Mahoney lost heavily in trying to exploit an unproductive claim at the head of Forty Mile River, and in February 1900 moved to Nome in Alaska. For the next four years he carried United States mail between Nome and Cape Prince of Wales. In October 1904 he went to Fairbanks and soon became a national figure by sledging alone in mid-winter from Fairbanks across the unknown coastal range to Valdez, carrying the coffin of Judge Thomas Huncs. The 450-mile journey which he covered in twenty-eight days in December 1904, opened a much more direct route from the sea coast to Fairbanks, and became known as the Mahoney Trail. The Richardson Highway now follows approximately the same route. In 1905 Mahoney struck a rich claim at Goldstream near Fairbanks, and in 1910, when this claim was exhausted, moved to another on the Iditarod River. He finally went south in 1912, with one of the largest shipments of gold ever brought to Seattle by a single individual. Soon after his return to Canada he founded a very successful road haulage business at Ottawa.

Mahoney did not learn to read until he reached the age of fifty-nine and it was only then that he first read the works of Jack London, Robert Service, and Rex Beach. His own extraordinary feats of strength and endurance had provided much of the factual material upon which these three writers based their tales, and he gradually became associated in the public mind with Dan McGrew, the legendary figure invented by Robert Service. In time Mahoney came to be accepted as an actual "witness" of the incident at Dawson, said to have occurred in 1904, when Dangerous Dan, the Lady that was known as Lou, and the Man from the Creeks shot it out in the Malamute Saloon. Finally, in 1937, when Mahoney was presiding over the annual meeting of the International Sourdoughs' Association, a newspaper reporter sought to expose him by reading a letter from Robert Service stating that the characters, the incident, and even the Malamute Saloon at Dawson were the creations of Service's own imagination. One by one, old sourdoughs, whose integrity and honesty were beyond reproach, stood up to repudiate the evidence and to affirm, as unimpeachable eyewitnesses, the events of the fateful night in 1904. The full story of Mahoney's life is told in *Klondike Mike. An Alaskan odyssey*, by Merrill Denison (New York, 1943).

JOSEPH H. ROMIG died on 23 November 1951 in Colorado Springs at the age of seventy-nine. He first went to Alaska in 1896 as doctor and missionary at the Moravian post in Bethel on the Kuskokwim River, where he worked for nearly thirty years. His adventures as the only doctor in hundreds of square miles of trackless wilderness are told in *Dog-team doctor: the story of Dr Romig*, by Eva G. Anderson (Caldwell, Idaho, 1940). In 1909 Romig, was appointed superintendent of schools in south-western Alaska. In the early 'twenties he joined the medical staff of the Alaska Northern Railroad, and supervised the hospital at Anchorage until his retirement in 1942. Romig originated the annual all-Alaska dinner at Anchorage, at which only Alaska-produced foods are served.