

Obituaries

Verner Duncan Carse, the last surviving member of the British Graham Land Expedition, died on 2 May 2004, aged 90. In the polar community, Carse will be best remembered for his six expeditions to South Georgia, four as leader of the South Georgia Survey, but to the wider public, he was known as the radio voice of Dick Barton, Special Agent.

Born on 28 July 1913, Carse was educated at Sherborne and in Lausanne before joining the Merchant Navy as an apprentice on square-rigged ships. In 1933 he was appointed to *Discovery II*, then involved in oceanographic research in the Southern Ocean as part of the Discovery Investigations.

In November 1934 *Discovery II* was in Port Stanley at the same time as *Penola*, then heading south with the members of the British Graham Land Expedition. Hearing that the expedition ship might be short-handed after landing the shore party, Carse volunteered to join *Penola*, and was allowed to transfer to the expedition, becoming its youngest member. The first winter of the expedition, *Penola* remained locked in the ice near the expedition base at the Argentine Islands. Carse proved invaluable, not only serving as the wireless operator, but assisting in the depot-laying journeys in preparation for later long-distance sledging. In March 1936 the expedition ship returned to Port Stanley and then sailed to South Georgia before returning to the Antarctic Peninsula. The shore party was picked up from its second winter base at Marguerite Bay in March 1937.

Upon his return to England, Carse landed a job with the BBC as a radio presenter and announcer. In 1942, however, he left to join the Royal Navy as an ordinary seaman, a rank he did not hold for long, as he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant in 1943. He spent most of the rest of the war serving aboard a trawler in the Western Approaches, leading him to believe that his talents and experience had not been properly used by the naval authorities.

Following the war Carse returned to the BBC, where, in 1949, he succeeded Noel Johnson as the voice of Dick Barton, Special Agent in the BBC's hit daily radio series that was followed by as many as 15 million listeners. Carse earned the position over more than 1000 other applicants, but left the job two years later, before the series was replaced by *The Archers*.

Carse immediately threw himself into the preparations for the South Georgia Survey, leading a team that between 1951 and 1957 made four expeditions to explore and survey the island. Those efforts led to the production of the first detailed map of South Georgia, one that remains the standard map of the island and that proved to be an invaluable source of data for land, sea, and air operations during the 1982 conflict.

In 1961 Carse was back in South Georgia, where he lived alone on the desolate west coast from February to September 'as a personal psychological experiment.' In May his hut was destroyed and many of his supplies lost by a massive rogue wave. However, he managed to continue on his own until he was rescued by a whale catcher.

A dozen years later he returned, being landed at King Haakon Bay in order to retrace the march of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his companions in 1916. However, a lengthy blizzard caught him high on the glaciated terrain, and he was ultimately forced to retreat to his starting point.

Carse continued to work at the BBC until the mid-1980s, serving not only as a presenter, but working on the production of films as well. In 1992 he received a second clasp to his Polar Medal (which had originally been gazetted in 1939 for his role on the British Graham Land Expedition). This recognition of his efforts on South Georgia came after a long delay caused, in part, by the fact that until 1985 service on South Georgia did not qualify for the award.

Carse's contributions to the exploration and understanding of the Antarctic were recognized by the naming of Carse Point, on the east coast of George VI Sound, Antarctic Peninsula, and of Mount Carse, a 2300-m peak in the southern part of South Georgia.

He is survived by his third wife, Venetia, by two daughters from his first marriage, and by a son from his second.

Beau Riffenburgh

Gordon de Quetteville Robin, former base leader for the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, member of the Norwegian–British–Swedish Expedition to Dronning Maud Land, director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, and president of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, died on 21 September 2004, aged 83. A full obituary will appear in the next issue of *Polar Record*.