

Commentary

Beau Riffenburgh

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The first article in the last issue of this journal was a Commentary entitled 'To those who have made *Polar Record*'. It was written by Beau Riffenburgh and marked his retirement after holding the appointment of Editor of this journal since 1992. During his long tenure of the office, he presided over no fewer than 54 issues, more than in the case of any previous Editor. In his note, he presented not only an outline history of the progress of the journal since its establishment in 1930 but also illuminating comment on who had done what to make *Polar Record* the successful academic publication that it is today (Riffenburgh 2006).

Riffenburgh's account was generous in its praise of a large number of individuals who had, in one way or another, contributed to the journal over the more than 75 years since the first issue appeared. But there was one prominent omission in the list of those to whom recognition was due. This, of course, was himself, and it is the pleasant duty of the incoming Editor to rectify this.

He commented that his appointment, from October 1992, had a main aim. This was to continue the progress that had already been made under the stewardship of Bernard Stonehouse towards developing *Polar Record* as a 'primary research journal' and 'to continue to upgrade its scholarly reputation.' In this he has been spectacularly successful. He noted the methods adopted towards these ends, including, for example, strengthening and making more rigorous the peer refereeing process and the adoption of the concept of having special dedicated issues, and these initiatives he has carried through with vigour. For the magnitude of the task should not be underestimated. The most obvious point is that *Polar Record*, is, in Bernard Stonehouse's words, 'an anomaly' in that it is 'a cross-disciplinary journal providing for multi-disciplinary problems in the polar world' (Stonehouse 2001). This means that Riffenburgh had, perforce, to strengthen the resources available to him with regard to securing editorial advice on all the multifarious topics upon which papers might be submitted for publication. It is pleasant to record that this aim was achieved and that the present Editorial Advisors cover, between them, everything that an Editor might reasonably wish to know about any aspect of polar studies.

But a very significant aspect of Beau Riffenburgh's success arises from the nature of the man himself. Over the years, I have submitted to him many pieces for consideration for publication in *Polar Record* and have had long discussions with him about many of them. The courtesy of these conversations, during which his tact and his profound knowledge of our subject, and of the editorial process, were so frequently demonstrated, will long remain with me and I know that many other authors have valued his informed and helpful advice as much as I have. Indeed, when the question of my becoming Editor arose, this courtesy and consideration for others continued in the form of an offer to remain as Editor Emeritus with particular responsibility for book reviews, that extremely important aspect of the functions of the journal. This, of course, I was delighted to accept and, since taking over responsibility, his advice has been sought very frequently and often, at what I have been painfully aware, were inconvenient times. It has always been given in the same spirit of helpful cooperation that he has manifested towards his many friends in the polar world generally. All readers of *Polar Record* will join with me in expressing our thanks for the work he has done on behalf of the journal and our gratitude to him for remaining associated with it so that we may continue to have the benefit of his wise council in the future. It is also encouraging to note that his retirement from the office of Editor will afford him more time to devote to his *fortes*, polar history and the history of exploration. If his book on the *Nimrod* expedition (Riffenburgh 2004) is any guideline, we may expect many important works from him in the future.

It is also important to note the great part played by Dr Elizabeth Cruwys, for many years Assistant Editor of the journal, in the development of *Polar Record*. Her contribution will also be sorely missed.

References

- Riffenburgh, B. 2004. *Nimrod: Ernest Shackleton and the extraordinary story of the 1907–09 British Antarctic Expedition*. London: Bloomsbury.
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- Stonehouse, B. 2001. *Polar Record* 200: a retrospective. *Polar Record* 37 (200): 3–4.