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Ian Rodney Stone

Beau Riffenburgh

Commentary

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Author for correspondence:
Beau Riffenburgh, Email: Bar10@cam.ac.uk



Ian Stone during a visit to William Hulme's Grammar School, which he attended as a youth.

Ian Rodney Stone, University administrator, educator, polar historian, and former Editor of *Polar Record*, died peacefully at Noble's Hospital, Douglas, Isle of Man, on Friday, 10 July 2020, at the age of 77, after suffering for some time from heart disease.

Born 12 February 1943 in Manchester, Stone was the only child of Charles Stone, an officer in the Royal Artillery, and his wife Ethel (née Farmer). He attended William Hulme's Grammar School in Whalley Range, Manchester, and then studied geology and mathematics at University College London (UCL).

Following his graduation from UCL, Stone entered Sandhurst, and after completing his course he followed his father into the Royal Artillery. He was stationed in Germany before seeing action in the Federation of South Arabia and the Protectorate of South Arabia (both formerly parts of the Aden Protectorate), where he reached the rank of captain. He resigned his commission shortly after he was wounded in military action during the intensive terrorist campaign that eventually led to the British withdrawing from Aden and its hinterlands in November 1967. The territories thereafter became the People's Republic of Southern Yemen.

Stone had a life-long interest in education, and particularly its growth in developing countries. After leaving the Royal Artillery in 1967, he joined the British Educational Services Overseas, and spent the next two years working in Nigeria. He returned to the UK in 1969 to complete a Post-graduate Certificate of Education at the University of Manchester, for which he specialized in geology and geography. He then spent nearly five years in the Seychelles and another two in Zambia helping establish educational programmes and contributing to a wide variety of innovative teaching efforts.

In 1977, Stone again returned to the UK, this time to earn a Diploma in Polar Studies (the course later changed to an MPhil in Polar Studies) at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI), University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he was a junior member of Trinity Hall. Although he never lived in Cambridge again, this period launched Stone into a research career and an affiliation with SPRI that would continue for the rest of his life.

In May 1978, at the end of his post-graduate work, Stone was immediately appointed as an Administrative Assistant in the Academic Division of the Registry at the University of Kent. His natural aptitude for educational administration led him rapidly to move up the career ladder, as he became Assistant Registrar in 1982, and in 1985 he was promoted to Senior Assistant Registrar and Faculty Administrator for the Natural Sciences Faculty. In 1990, he became head of the new Research Grants and Contracts Office at Kent, continuing in that position until he took early retirement in 1996.

While at Kent, Stone was not only incredibly efficient, as shown by his rise through the ranks, but also was very supportive as a manager, greatly esteemed and highly popular as a colleague, and a demon on the squash court.

Dr Jeremy Ovenden, the former Director of Planning and Student Information at the University of Kent, later wrote: "Ian was one of those real characters that you are privileged to come across in your working life. Always entertaining, he delighted his colleagues with his little eccentricities and headed up a happy and motivated office. Yet beneath that exterior

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was an intelligent, knowledgeable, and caring individual, and I was grateful for his guidance on many occasions."

Throughout his time at Kent, Stone carried out research in his spare time. He produced an impressive number of scholarly publications, most of which were about the Arctic. In 1978, his first publication in *Polar Record* appeared: a short profile entitled "William Parker Snow, 1817–1895" (*Polar Record* 19 (119): 163–165). Five years later, his first full article was entitled "The Crimean War in the Arctic" (*Polar Record* 21 (135): 577–581); this was a topic that linked two of his long-term interests, and he would eventually write more papers about the Crimean War than any subject other than the Arctic. During the 1980s, he wrote for *Polar Record* about topics as diverse as Arctic poetry, shipwrecks, Charles Dickens, the Franklin search, the science of Edward Sabine, and Victorian gentlemen travellers.

When I succeeded Bernard Stonehouse as Editor of *Polar Record* in 1992, I very quickly learned what an invaluable resource Ian Stone was. Need an article refereed? He'd have it back within days. Need a book reviewed? He would remark on elements of it that showed remarkable background knowledge, no matter what the subject. Plus he wrote notes on any number of unusual, but fascinating, topics – for example, Anthony Trollope's visit to Iceland, a law-suit over the presumption of death on the Franklin expedition, Bellingshausen's house in Estonia, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's polar writings. Equally important, in a different way, were his dedication to SPRI, his love of all things Arctic, his very English sense of humour, and an enthusiasm that permeated his being. When I formed my initial Editorial Board for the journal, he was the first person I asked to be a member of it.

Upon leaving the University of Kent in 1996, Stone immediately moved to Andreas, a village on the Isle of Man, and then equally as quickly left his new house to spend a year as a consultant at the University of Tartu, the largest and most prestigious University in Estonia. Here, Stone assisted the University in developing a programme for international research grants, an area that he had previously overseen at Kent.

While at Tartu, Stone befriended and mentored a young Estonian scholar named Erki Tammiksaar, and he encouraged me to work with Tammiksaar on a number of articles that were appropriate for *Polar Record*. The two of them co-authored four publications, and Tammiksaar has gone on to be the world's leading authority on the Baltic Germans who were the leaders of much of the Russian Empire's polar exploration.

During his tenure at Kent and afterwards, Stone served for more than a decade as the Secretary of the European Mathematical Trust (EMT). This was an international company, the members of which are the National Mathematical Societies of each European country. Its chief purpose is the management of the Euromath Project for the mathematical community of Europe. One of Stone's roles was to help more than 50 Eastern European Universities develop resources that would serve to connect them to Western European Universities.

In June 1998, Stone visited Budapest on behalf of the EMT. He was scheduled to meet a mathematics professor from Bratislava at the train station, but the professor never arrived, and Stone was heading to the exit of the station when he overheard a pretty young woman at the information center asking in English for directions to a specific hotel, which just happened to be the one at which he was staying. He volunteered to show the woman – who was named Olga Eggert and had just arrived for a short break from Kiev – the way to the hotel. The meeting was the most fortunate one of Stone's life, as the two hit it off so completely that a little more than a month later they were married in the Crimea. Olga would be the great love of Stone's life.

When Stone settled back down on the Isle of Man with Olga, he maintained an extremely busy lifestyle. He continued to produce quality articles for *Polar Record*, *Arctic*, and other scholarly journals, as well as writing five entries for the multivolume *Encyclopedia of the Antarctic*, proving he was equally versatile in both polar regions. He lectured aboard ships around the world, with a special emphasis on the polar regions and the Baltic, Black, and Aegean seas. Frequently Olga, a professional pianist, was able to accompany him. He and Olga attended the opening of the refurbished Crimean War Memorial in Balaklava, where he thrilled those in attendance with his electric reading of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. When at home, Stone showered attention on his stepson Eugene, of whom he was extremely proud. He loved the Isle of Man, and his passion for vintage cars and motorcycles made him a great fan of the Isle of Man TT. In addition, he was a great supporter of the Island's Crogga Valley Railway. Stone also continued to actively participate in squash and fives, as well as being an avid stamp collector.

Stone's retirement hit a bit of a snag when I stepped down as Editor of *Polar Record* in 2006. Late the previous year, I attended a meeting at Cambridge University Press, at which the managers of the journal wanted to determine how to advertise for the position. I told them that there was no need, because I had the perfect candidate for the job. When they said that it should be advertised internationally, I told them that there was no one who could equal Stone in combining a knowledge of the history of the polar regions and of many of the scholars working in them, with a dedication to SPRI, an inside understanding of how the journal functioned and was run, the work ethic to conduct all of the parts of the operation required, and the enthusiasm to stimulate potential authors to contribute. They were convinced, and it was my pleasure to be able to offer Stone the position, which he immediately accepted.

For the next 11 years, Stone was a brilliant representative of SPRI and the University, and his personality and charm were major reasons for an impressive increase in the number and breadth of contributions to *Polar Record*. He also oversaw the transition of the journal to being online only, which contributed enormously to its growth in size. When he retired at the end of 2016, there was a seamless transition to the new Editor, Nikolas Sellheim, who had worked for two years as Deputy Editor and had benefited greatly, he wrote, from "Ian's supervision and role as a teacher."

A second retirement didn't slow Stone down, although it gave him more time to spend with his beloved Olga, the young grandchildren he adored, and his rabbit Thumper, who used to sit at his feet while he edited *Polar Record*, and about whom he once wrote: "One gets a lot of common sense from a rabbit!" Throughout his final years, Stone maintained his charm, wit, and zest for knowledge, as well as his reputation as a polar scholar and his talents as a lecturer, entertainer, and raconteur. Above all, he retained all the classic qualities of a British officer and a true English gentleman.

Stone's farewell ceremony was held at Andreas Church, Isle of Man, on Thursday, 23 July 2020, his twenty-second wedding anniversary.

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