

OBITUARY

PETER SMITH—1938–1961

PETER SMITH, a postgraduate civil engineering student at Imperial College, lost his life off the west coast of Jan Mayen, with four of his companions whilst taking part in a combined University of London Expedition in the summer of 1961.

He came to Imperial College in 1956 from Heywood Grammar School in Lancashire and was soon prominent amongst his more adventurous colleagues. He was a mountaineer and keen to travel, but always wanted to do something in addition to enjoying his climbing. In 1958 he was largely responsible for organizing an expedition to the Reydarfjordur district of Iceland, where his party made some accurate measurements of heights of raised beaches. In the following year he was in charge of the Imperial College section of the University of London Jan Mayen Expedition led by Dr. Dollar. In this year Smith began his detailed work on the glaciological measurements of South Glacier which he had proposed to continue (and in fact did) in the summer of 1961.

Plans were made for a second visit in 1960, but owing to transport difficulties at the last minute the Jan Mayen venture was cancelled. However, Smith was determined that his preparations should not be wasted and at very short notice he skilfully changed his plans and took his party of four to West Spitsbergen where they made some useful triangulation observations in the Dickson Peninsula. Two members of this expedition, John Fraser and Martin Smith (who that summer had returned from the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey), were to lose their lives with their leader in the following summer.

In 1961 a second combined expedition with Birkbeck College was organized, with Peter Smith leading the Imperial College section which was to concentrate once more on the glaciology of South Glacier and in addition other glaciers further north. In the first week stations were marked and measurements taken on South Glacier and the glaciological party then set off to join the geologists in Cross Bay. It was during this journey, which was being made in the calm of a mid-summer's night, that a sudden and violent squall swamped and overturned their boat and five of the six occupants lost their lives.

Peter Smith combined unbounding enthusiasm and physical energy with a clear-cut scientifically trained mind. He was just beginning to **make himself known** amongst glaciologists and his death is a great loss to the younger generation of explorers.

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