

INTRODUCTION

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I WELCOME you to the Fiftieth Anniversary Day of the International Glaciological Society. The Society was founded at a meeting held in London on 11 December 1936 by a small group of people brought together by Gerald Seligman and James Wordie. "Society" and "Association" were both used for the organization, but in July 1937 it became officially named "The Association for the Study of Snow and Ice". The name was later to be changed to "The British Glaciological Society", "The Glaciological Society", and finally "International Glaciological Society". In the first set of rules of 1937, the objectives of "The Association for the Study of Snow and Ice" were stated to be "to stimulate interest in and encourage research on the scientific and practical problems of snow and ice". We further read that "Membership shall be open to geographers, meteorologists, geologists, physicists, mountaineers, ski-runners and others who can give evidence that the study of snow and ice is, or has been, of scientific or practical interest to them".

Seligman, who was born 100 years ago this year (on 26 March 1886), became Chairman of the Association, with Wordie as Vice-Chairman. The original activity of the group was to meet several times each year for lectures, which were later distributed; but it was not until 1947 that the *Journal of Glaciology* came into existence. The main reason for an originally slow development of the Society was, of course, World War II. More about the history of the Society can be found in a book by Peter Wood entitled *The International Glaciological Society: fifty years of*

progress. Published by the International Glaciological Society, it comes straight from the press and is partly financed by a legacy from the late P.D. (Pat) Baird.

The important fact to recognize today is that Seligman brought together in Britain an active group of scientists from divergent fields for a common cause, and in due course glaciologists from around the world were attracted to join this group. A major asset in the development of the Society has been that a firm base for operations was found in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, for which we are immensely thankful.

After some difficult years, mainly at the beginning, the Society today is thriving. Compared to the small group of people holding their meetings in the 1930s and 1940s, there will be full house at King's College with 160 people attending the 1986 Banquet. However, I should hate to judge the performance of the Society by the attendance at a banquet, so I think it would be more rewarding to count heads in this room. A programme of special lectures has been drawn up by the joint efforts of the Immediate Past President, Secretary General, President, and Council. A number of distinguished speakers will, during the day, give an overview of the development of their specific fields of glaciology over the last 50 years. The order of the lectures has been chosen roughly in the way the lines of interest developed within the Society since the early days. The lectures will be published in 1987 as a special issue of the *Journal*.