

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH (SCAR) – NATIONAL REPORTS 2009 – 2010
MEMBER COUNTRY: UNITED KINGDOM

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Reference Antarctic Data for Environmental Research (READER) Antarctic Digital Database (ADD) Antarctic Bedrock Mapping (BEDMAP) Tide Gauge Data (Permanent Service for Mean Sea Level)				Mr Steven Colwell (BAS); Dr. Mike Meredith (BAS); Dr. John Turner (BAS) Dr Paul Cooper (BAS) SC-AGI; Dr. Adrian Fox (BAS) Prof. David Vaughan (BAS) Prof. Philip L. Woodworth (Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory)		

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF SCIENTIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

XXXI SCAR Delegates Meeting and Open Science Conference, Buenos Aires, July-August, 2010

This meeting is a significant highlight in the SCAR calendar, providing the opportunity for Antarctic research across a broad range of science themes to be presented. A number of UK scientists were able to attend and present their last two years' research at this conference. In addition, AAA held its inaugural meeting as an SRP and EBA was able to put forward ideas for potential future Life Sciences SRPs. In the build up to the meeting, there was considerable discussion of the SCAR Strategic Plan. Martin Siegert, the UK Alternate Delegate, was in communication with UKNCAR members to ensure a strong UK response to the Strategic Plan. At the Delegates' Meeting it was noted that there is great pressure, and unanimous support, in favour of a rise in subscription fees. The UK recognised the need for this increase and will consider and pass to funders (if necessary) the case made by the SCAR president in a forthcoming letter.

ISAES XI

The University of Edinburgh, British Geological Survey and British Antarctic Survey are working to host the next ISAES conference, which is to be held in Edinburgh, from 10-16th July, 2011, encompassing geological, climate and biological fields. The organising committee are already working hard to ensure that everything will be in place to achieve a productive meeting. Key note speakers such as Ian Dalziel and Richard Alley are currently being approached to participate. Eleven science themes will be represented and a call has been made for session proposals (deadline 31st August). Previous meetings have drawn hundreds of delegates, covering 6 continents. It is expected that the meeting will significantly raise awareness of Antarctic science, promote greater collaboration and identify potential future areas of key scientific research in Antarctica.

UK National Committee on Antarctic Research Town Meeting, April, 2010

The UKNCAR held its first 'Town Meeting' in London this April. The event was designed to gather the UK Antarctic Research community in order to consider and develop the UK's strategic priorities in Antarctic research, promote engagement with the UKNCAR, and encourage the next generation of Antarctic scientists to engage with SCAR and learn more about SCAR's activities. The meeting highlighted to the UKNCAR Committee where they need to relate to UK scientists more so that they can maximise their contribution to, and use of, SCAR. The UK community benefited from becoming more self aware of their role in Antarctic research, and of the role of the UKNCAR and SCAR.

IPY Open Science Conference Oslo, June ,2010

There was a strong UK presence at this successful conference, which highlighted the high quality of Antarctic research carried out by UK scientists during the IPY. In particular, several sessions were organised by EBA to highlight the outcomes from numerous EBA-linked IPY programmes. Similarly, projects, such as Antarctica's Gamburtsev Province (AGAP), received significant media attention as the latest results were unveiled.

Subglacial Antarctic Lake Environments

SALE has now met its original Terms of Reference and will be discontinued. A final version of the 'Code of conduct for the exploration and research of subglacial aquatic environments' will be presented at the SCAR Delegates Meeting and to the CONMAP executive. It is hoped that this document will be approved and sent on to the Antarctic Treaty. An Expert group may be established in the place of SALE to oversee or advise any relevant future programmes and to ensure that the proper environmental protection of subglacial lakes will continue.

ICESTAR

The ICESTAR Scientific Research Programme comes to an end this year, but will take on the role of an Expert Group. ICESTAR succeeded in publishing more than 200 papers (including Nature publications), as well as hosting and convening numerous scientific sessions at international conferences. It has delivered a variety of outputs to the scientific community, providing a better understanding of the polar atmosphere through new datasets and grid technology, constraining models of atmospheric dynamics and establishing a relevant data portal.

AAA

The latest SRP to progress from the work of ICESTAR is Astronomy and Astrophysics from Antarctica (AAA). Previously an Expert Group, AAA was established as an SRP this year and will be holding its inaugural meeting at the XXXI SCAR meeting. The programme aims to coordinate astronomical activities in Antarctica to ensure the best international scientific outcome in this field. It is projected to run for four years. The PASTA Action Group will continue to support the work of AAA.

Life Sciences and EBA

EBA has been functioning well and has completed a number of successful international workshops between 2009 and 2010. EBA has been assessing its role and achievements and two new biology SRPs may be proposed in the coming months, reflecting new scientific research directions and interest. In this way, EBA may be replaced with a series of smaller work packages. A detailed proposal will be put forward in 2012 to the Programme Planning Group.

AFI

The Antarctic Funding Initiative has completed its final 11th grant round, with funding decisions announced in April, 2010. As a result of changes in the operation of NERC funding and delivery, AFI will no longer be operating. However, the annual AFI workshop for 2010 will continue as normal and will be held in September at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. A Responsive Mode standard grant scheme is now in place to handle those proposals which require Antarctic logistic support. The first grant round to adopt this new scheme was held in June, 2010 for proposals beginning 2012/13.

AGCS

AGCS has produced a report on Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment. This has proved a very successful publication and is available on the SCAR website.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF SCIENTIFIC HIGHLIGHTS cont/d

Census of Antarctic Marine Life (CAML)

CAML, part of the Life Sciences SRP, EBA, has had a hugely successful year. The database of marine life has increased from a few 100 species to many thousands. This work has received a huge amount of scientific and media interest globally. The CoML (CAML and Arctic Ocean Biodiversity projects) highlighted 235 species co-occurring in both polar regions - a key discovery. Scientific cruises are collecting specimens and identifying new species using morphological and genetic techniques. These Antarctic biodiversity projects, such as those led by Dr. Katrin Linse and Dr. Huw Griffiths (BAS), are essential to the success of CAML.

History of SCAR

Professors David Walton and David Clarkson are currently working on a book outlining the history of SCAR. As SCAR continues to grow and develop this will provide an invaluable point of reference as to the history of the organisation, its structure, development and science through time.

25th Anniversary of the Discovery of the Ozone Hole

BAS recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of one of its most dramatic scientific discoveries – the Ozone Hole. Jonathan Shanklin (BAS), Joe Farman, and Brian Gardiner reported their observations of large losses of ozone over Antarctica in Nature in May, 1985. The accumulation of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in refrigeration and air conditioning systems, and industrial solvents were found to deplete the protective layer of ozone that surrounds the Earth. Action by governments around the world led to the 1987 Montreal Protocol and its amendments, which ensured that production and consumption of CFCs, halons and carbon tetrachloride were phased out by 2000, and methyl chloroform by 2005. Today, scientists predict that Antarctic ozone levels will return to their 1950s levels by about 2080.

Fellowship of the Royal Society

In May, it was announced that Dr. Eric Wolff had been elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society. Eric Wolff is a world-renowned scientist most notable for his contributions in the study of ice core palaeoclimate. He leads the British Antarctic Survey science programme “Chemistry and Past Climate”, has chaired the science committee of the European Project for Ice Coring in Antarctica (EPICA), and co-chairs the international initiative to coordinate future ice core research. Selected for his scientific achievements in the advancement of knowledge of the Earth’s past climate, Dr Wolff joins a community of over 1300 of the most eminent and distinguished scientists, engineers and technologists from the UK and the Commonwealth.

SCAR Medal

During the SCAR Open Science Conference in Buenos Aires, the SCAR Medal for Excellence in Antarctic Research was awarded to Dr. John Turner, Climatologist at British Antarctic Survey, for his extensive contributions to Antarctic Science and to SCAR.

Polar Medal

Dr. Fausto Ferraccioli, Aerogeophysicist at BAS, has been presented with a Polar Medal by HRH Prince Philip for his continued dedication to science in the Polar Regions. Fausto has clocked up a total of 12 months on the ice during 16 visits to Antarctica with British and Italian teams of scientists. His most recent research in Antarctica was with the AGAP (Antarctica’s Gamburtsev Province) project, a flagship programme of the IPY. Fausto has been using his expertise in Antarctic science and aerogeophysical surveys to research the enigmatic mountains that are buried by up to 4 km of ice and tell a story about past, present and future climate change. Dr. Rob Larter, a marine geophysicist at BAS, was also awarded the Polar Medal in the New Year’s Honours list.

Operational Meteorology

The Operational Meteorology group, led by Steve Colwell (BAS), is working to ensure that good observations continue to be made in Antarctica. A weather forecasters’ handbook was developed in response to this work. It has had great success and can be access for free via the internet.

SCADM

The SCAR Executive has endorsed the SCAR Data and Information Strategy. The UK is happy to support the development of, and contributions to, an Antarctic Data Management System. The Polar Data Centre (PDC) coordinates the management of data collected by UK funded scientists in the polar regions, and from 1st April 2009 replaced the Antarctic Environmental Data Centre (AEDC).

Antarctic Digital Database (Paul Cooper)

The ADD has been updated to include ‘OpenLayers’ which allow the user to view maps of Antarctica. It now also provides a seamless link to LIMA (Landsat Image Mosaic of Antarctica). These additions have been made possible by users’ suggestions and the incorporation of new data sources and both act to greatly improve the users’ experience of the ADD. The UK has the second highest number of registrations to download data from the ADD since 2008. The ADD will continue to incorporate new data (such as BAS data from the South Sandwich Islands), revise old areas and in the longer term provide new layers (such as coastline and rock outcrops) derived from LIMA.