

## BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Footsteps in the snow*, by John Dudeney (2022). Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-184995-539-3.

As its cover aptly states, *Footsteps in the snow* is the “autobiography of an individual with a remarkable breadth of experience of living and working in Antarctica.” After completing university studies, John Dudeney joined the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) in 1966; Antarctica has been central in his life ever since. He started with a two-year engagement as an ionospheric physicist at an isolated station on the Argentine Islands, lying just off the Antarctic Peninsula. During the next four decades he progressed to leader of the geospace group and finally to deputy director. Nine-tenths of the book cover this period.

Dudeney describes an institution undergoing large changes. Having known BAS as a first-class polar research and logistic organization—the British counterpart of the Norwegian institute that I led through major transformations—I was surprised to read so much about personnel conflicts. Presumably this reflects the author’s aim to write a frank autobiography, warts and all. During his four decades at BAS, Dudeney did not always advance as rapidly as he felt he deserved, a complaint that turns up several times. He was constantly travelling to Antarctica, and comes across as BAS’ chief troubleshooter. This is not a trivial position!

An autobiography should rightly focus on the author, so Dudeney may be forgiven for occasionally giving an exaggerated impression of his personal impact to readers who come to the book with little prior knowledge of the larger context. There are relatively few references to his superiors regarding issues that I imagine must have been decided at the top of the organization. Instead, the narrative often suggests that Dudeney was the main planner and decision-maker. Examples include personnel problems at Halley Station and many challenges related to rebuilding the station, and, at Rothera Station, handling the fire and, later, the fatal diving accident. During his final six years at BAS, he was involved with Antarctic politics (with perhaps a less prominent role than the narrative suggests), working on the Liability Annex to the Environmental Protocol and on the report of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Edinburgh in 2005.

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# FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW

JOHN DUDENEY

Judging by the profusion of details, Dudeney must have a prodigious memory and been an assiduous diary-keeper. *Footsteps in the snow* should be of interest to readers who want to know more about Dudeney, those who worked at BAS during his years there, and everyone concerned with upper-atmospheric research in Antarctica. The book neither provides general information about Antarctica nor discusses issues such as climate change and sea-level rise, which are now of public interest. I wouldn’t recommend the book for readers looking for general information about Antarctica or for stunning images.

Since retiring, Dudeney has spent many seasons lecturing aboard Antarctic tourist cruise vessels. With his breadth of experience, he must be a welcome addition to the expedition teams on these ships. He and John Sheail have also undertaken very interesting historical research through extensive archive-digging. This has produced peer-reviewed articles on early British Antarctic policy

and about Ernest Shackleton declining help to rescue his party on Elephant Island—ample demonstration of his continued engagement in Antarctic issues and his lively mind. Near the end of his autobiography, he states that

he is collaborating with colleagues on a new book examining Britain's role in the Southern Ocean whaling industry. I am sure this will also bring to light new fascinating information.