

1st SCAR Workshop on the History of Antarctic Research

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The Action Group on the “History of the institutionalisation of Antarctic Research within the Scientific Committee of Antarctic Research (SCAR)” was established in October 2004 under the chairmanship of Cornelia Lüdecke. It is the first international and interdisciplinary group devoted to the history of polar research. In the course of annual workshops the group wants to investigate the engagement, realisation, and co-operation in Antarctic research, as well as the leading figures in the context of different national settings and perspectives.

To answer some of these questions the 1st SCAR Workshop on the History of Antarctic Research took place at the Bavarian Academy of Science and Humanities in Munich on 2 - 3 June, 2005, under aegis of the SCAR Action Group and the Commission for Glaciology of the Academy.

18 participants came from Australia, Chile, England, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and USA to give nine papers and to present three posters. The posters were on display throughout the workshop. Abstracts describing the Australian and Russian activities were received also.

Adrian Howkins (USA) and Aant Elsinga (S) explained the early involvement in Antarctic research of Argentina and of Sweden respectively, while Johan van Bennekom (NL) talked about the Dutch interest in Antarctica. International cooperation long before the Antarctic Treaty was highlighted by Jorge Berguño (RCH) and by Cornelia Lüdecke (D). John Behrendt (USA) took us along on dangerous early traverses to measure ice thickness during the IGY (1957/58) while Reinhardt Krause (D) gave a biography of Georg von Neumayer (1826-1909), after whom the German Antarctic station was named. Peter Abbink (NL) discussed the changes in the Antarctic Treaty in the 1980's, when the number of consulting parties nearly doubled. Lüdecke explained why the privately organized German expedition of the physician and mountaineer Karl Maria Herrligkoffer (1916-1991), failed due to opposition from scientific bodies in the 1950's. The workshop ended with Balthasar Indermuehl's (AUS) lecture on the history of Astrophysics in Antarctica from the first meteorite find in 1960 till the use of the ice as gigantic particle detector.

During the poster presentation, Jason Davis (USA) explained the changes to Antarctic identity rhetoric as demonstrated by papers published in the National Geographic Magazine. David Michael Dodd (AUS) addressed the Australian context of the history of Antarctic research. Helmut Honik's (D) and Lüdecke's poster focussed on the Bavarian officer Wilhelm Filchner (1877-1957), leader of the second German Antarctic expedition (1911-12) to the south eastern part of the Weddell Sea and his estate, which is placed in the Filchner-Archive of the Bavarian Academy of Science and Humanities in Munich.

Summing up the workshop it can be said that the mixture of PhD and graduate students, historians, Antarctic veterans, and historians of science, as well as profound experts of the Antarctic Treaty System led to very lively and interesting discussions. Between single sessions nice coffee breaks right next to the conference room facilitated the continuation of the discussions. During lunch breaks typical Bavarian dishes were served at the same place. A nice summer evening made the visit of a beer garden in Munich very pleasant.

It is planned to publish the proceedings of the first SCAR workshop in the Reports of Polar and Marine Research of the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven (Germany) in 2006.

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