

My Memories of John

Miles Rucklidge, Lancaster, UK

I write this as John's oldest friend; I and my wife Margaret would have wished to have been with you today but sadly age and illness prevent us travelling so far.

John was born on 15th October, 1930 in Derby, the only child of Archie and Edith Hollin. John's father was an electrical engineer at the power station and in 1943 moved to a similar job in Halifax, Yorkshire. It was here that I first met John as we were both at the same school. At school he was known as 'Cherub' on account of his angelic face! We had a shared interest in the Scouts and this led to us spending much time together in outdoor activities, camping, climbing, caving etc. Hitchhiking across France in 1947 to climb in the Alps was one such adventure. This started what was to become a lifelong friendship.

On leaving school John spent two years in National Service in the army in Austria, where he learnt to type, ski and learn German. Following the army he went to St Edmund Hall, Oxford to read geography. I followed him to Oxford in 1951 and we resumed our friendship, being active members of the Mountaineering Club and the Exploration Club. The Oxford University Exploration Club had a long history of interest in North East Land, the first of the expeditions there being in 1923, then 1924 and 1935. Subsequent aerial photos showed a major movement of the icecap into the sea on the south coast and further expeditions took place in 1949, 1951 and 1955 to investigate this. John was the organiser of the 1951 expedition and the leader in 1955 and so was his interest in glaciology and ice surges born. In 1955 I was expedition cook, boatman and handyman. I know John has been writing up the results from this expedition for many years, I don't know if he ever finished.

Following graduation John had no career planned – a characteristic that was to stay with him for the rest of his life. So he took a job as an instructor at the Outward Bound Mountain School at Eskdale in the English Lake District. The warden there was John Lagoe and John formed a lifelong friendship with him and his wife Joan. It is highly appropriate that their son Jonathan is with you today and can represent all of John's UK friends.

John's interest in glaciology must have spread, for out of the blue he got a phone call from Washington asking him to join the US International Geophysical Year Programme in 1957 as a glaciologist at Wilkes Station. So he left the Lake District for Antarctica. He subsequently lead a peripatetic life travelling the world looking at sea level changes as evidence of ice surges, eventually finishing up taking his PhD at Princeton in 1972. He came to Boulder in 1976 so many of you will have known him since then.

Coming to Boulder coincided with him being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. As a doctor, I imagined the worst for him but fortunately it turned out to progress very slowly and he managed his increasing disability with amazing courage and cheerfulness.

Since our time in Oxford, 65 years ago, we have never lost contact. For a long time he visited us, bringing stories of his adventures from all over the world. Then when he was no longer able to travel we kept in touch, first by letters then by e mail. Fortunately we were able to visit

Boulder in 2007 and see him for what was to be the last time, when he was living in his trailer. He took us on a tour of the Rocky Mountain National Park and took great pleasure in pointing out the geological features of the area. We also visited his office at INSTAAR and looking at the mountains of papers and books, wondered if he would ever finish his research!

John was a great friend and we shared many adventures together. Margaret and I are going to miss him very much.

Miles Rucklidge.

Lancaster, November 21 2016

Memories from Miles Rucklidge
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