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## NEWS

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### HALF CENTURY OF POLAR RESEARCH

Virginia Burdon, LPS Science Staff

London (LPS): The Scott Polar Research Institute, based in Cambridge (Britain) has just celebrated its 50th Anniversary (16 November 1984).

It was founded indirectly in response to Captain Robert Falcon Scott's last words as he lay dying only 18 kilometres from safety on the ill-fated Polar Expedition of 1910-13. "But surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for," he wrote in his diary, and it was out of the resulting fund set up for the team's dependents that the idea came for the Polar Research Centre.

The scheme was met with scepticism at first, but eventually Professor Frank Debenham, one of Scott's team members, persuaded the authorities to transfer the idea into a reality, and in 1934 the Institute was formally opened.

As well as the massive amount of scientific research and observations left by Scott's expedition, the Institute houses the records and relics of many other famous polar expeditions and the library holds the largest single collection of unpublished and published material available, including the Franklin papers.

There is also a fine collection of pictures, including

hundreds of watercolours and drawings by Edward Wilson of Scott's *Discovery* and *Terra Nova* expeditions, and the museum exhibits include Scott's last letter, painfully written in pencil, as well as a section devoted to old and contemporary travelling equipment.

Today, however, the bulk of the Institute's work is to do with science and research, particularly into the physical properties of ice and snow, and it is now regarded as the world's most important centre for polar research.

One subject that is causing increasing concern is the stability of the polar ice sheets since it is thought that climatic changes caused by man could result in melting of the ice. If this happened it would raise sea levels on a global scale, so to monitor developments the Institute is currently helping to develop a satellite which will be used to give measurements of the height and surface of the ice sheets up to the nearest 10 centimeters. (LPS).

(Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge, England CB2 1ER. (BIS, Science and Technology News, British High Commission, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021.)

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### JAPANESE TEST OF WHO PAIN-KILLING LADDER IS SUCCESSFUL

As part of a new initiative, WHO is attempting to raise consciousness to a largely neglected problem in cancer care, the management of pain. The guidelines have been developed essentially to teach non-pain specialists how to control most cancer pain by the use of a few potent drugs well.

The ages of the patients treated at the Saitama Cancer Centre, North Tokyo ranged from 8 to 83. Most of them suffered from gastrointestinal cancer, but lung, head and neck, and breast cancer were also among prevalent forms. In 80 per cent of patients cancer has spread.

Before cancer therapy commenced, pain was severe for about two-thirds of patients. Most patients suffered from their pains throughout the day, and had anxiety and fear, and some were deeply depressed.

Aspirin or paracetamol was given by mouth every four to six hours to patients with mild or moderate—and at times even severe—pain. Where these non-narcotics were ineffective, codeine, a mild narcotic, was added, administered, again, at regular intervals. (World Health Organization, Media Service, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland Press Release WHO 20, 11 December 1984).

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