Yakusha, and 'Selected index of reports on Himalaya, Tibet and Central Asia to the Geographical Journal (1893–1959),' compiled by Yoshimi Yakusha.

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The Northern Universities Geographical Conference, one of the less publicized events in the geographical calendar, has instituted a new Journal (Vol. 1, February 1960, pp. 92) to provide a permanent record of its annual gatherings. The purpose of the journal is to provide students with a medium in which they can publish succinct accounts of their research. The nine contributors, all from different universities, offer two field investigations (on Land's End valley development and the local climate of a hill mass), four economic studies (Nottingham's lace industry, government-assisted industry in Northern Ireland, the china clay trade and building development in Leeds), two historical essays (canals in north-east England, and regional variations in the agriculture of medieval England) and one overseas topic (Middle West air masses).

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Since 1951, the Scottish Field Studies Association (c/o Dept. of Botany, University of Glasgow) has operated a Field Centre at Garth Memorial Youth Hostel near Glen Lyon, Perthshire. It is the policy of the Association to include an article on some aspect of Garth in its Annual Report. That for 1959 deals with the geography of the Garth area—"the central highlands in miniature," as Joy Tivy describes it. The article is based on work done in the field by study groups and is testimony to Dr. Tivy's enthusiasm for the area.

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OBITUARY

H. ST. JOHN B. PHILBY, 1885–1960

When St. John Philby died suddenly at the age of seventy-five in Beirut on Friday, 1 October 1960, on his way back from London to Arabia, the Royal Geographical Society lost one of its most distinguished explorers and a man of very remarkable character.

Philby was born on 3 April 1885 in Ceylon where his father, Henry Montague Philby, was a tea planter. After a distinguished scholastic career at Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge, he entered the Indian Civil Service in 1907 and served in the Punjab, attaining a high standard in several oriental languages. In 1915 he went to Mesopotamia as a Political Officer, and served as Financial Assistant to the chief Political Officer, officiating Revenue Commissioner for occupied territories, Political Officer in charge of 'Amara district and on special duty in Baghdad. He was made C.I.E. in 1917. During 1917–18 he was in charge of the British Political Mission to Central Arabia, and crossed Arabia from 'Uqayr to Jeddah, exploring a large area in south-central Arabia and being the first European to visit the southern province of the Nejd. For this journey, which alone would have ranked him among the great travellers in Arabia, but which for Philby was only a beginning, he was awarded the Founder's Medal of the R.G.S. in 1920. He described this journey in 'The heart of Arabia' (1922). He returned to Mesopotamia in 1920 and served as adviser to the Ministry of the Interior until he went to Trans-Jordan in 1921 as chief British representative, a post he held until 1924. His journeys in central Arabia had, however, convinced him that the future of Arabia lay with Ibn Saud and not with King Hussein. Already in Mesopotamia he had quarrelled with Government policy and here in Trans-Jordan the friction continued. Philby was seldom tolerant of views which disagreed with his own. In 1925 he retired from the I.C.S. after visiting Jeddah, which was then being besieged by Ibn Saud's forces, as a self-appointed intermediary between Ibn Saud and King Ali—to the embarrassment of H.M. Government. In 1926 he set up in business in Jeddah as resident director of Sharqieh Ltd. In 1930 he declared himself a Muslim
and from then on lived mostly in Arabia where he became a close friend of King Ibn Saud. In 1931 he crossed the Rub' al Khali, or "Empty Quarter," from north to south, a few months after Bertram Thomas had crossed it from south to north. He described his epic feat of desert exploration in 'The Empty Quarter' (1933). From 1932–7 he surveyed Ḥaṣir and the northern borders of the Yemen and described this further exploration in 'Arabian Highlands' (1952). In 1937 he made another outstanding journey between the Empty Quarter and the foothills of the Yemen, from Saudi Arabia to the Hadramaut and back again, a journey which he described in 'Sheba's daughters' (1939).

These and his first Arabian journey in 1917–18 were Philby's major geographical explorations, the achievements by which he will best be remembered, especially by members of this Society. Although he made these journeys before the last War he never, in fact, stopped exploring. I lunched with him a few days before he died and he told me of his latest plans. Philby had known in full the satisfaction which an explorer feels from crossing an uncharted desert or from looking behind another range of mountains; he had experienced in full the disappointment which an explorer must feel when someone else beats him to his chosen goal: but Philby was more than an explorer, he was also a scholar fascinated by his adopted land. In consequence, Arabia did not lose its interest for him as it became better known. He who had solved so many of its major geographical problems was content in his later years to spend a week or more mapping some minor water-course or searching for ruins and inscriptions. Earlier he had been an enthusiastic collector of birds, mammals, plants, insects and rocks, of anything indeed which would add to the world's knowledge of Arabia, and his collections in the British Museum bear witness to the endless trouble he took over his specimens and the care with which he made his notes. Later in his life it was increasingly the past history of the land, recorded in inscriptions scattered about the desert and the empty hill sides, which absorbed his interest.

Philby wrote a number of books. His travel books are crammed with meticulously recorded observations which makes them invaluable as reference books but rather heavy reading. Other of his books, however, contain statements and charges which, to say the least, are unsound, for over politics he was curiously intertemperate. Since his Mesopotamian days he had been strongly biased against the British Government and was always ready to attribute a sinister motive to their policy in the Middle East. To prove his point or to vindicate his judgement he was sometimes prepared to distort facts to suit his case. Such demonstrable inaccuracies will inevitably cause historians to question the soundness of his work, which is a pity for his life covered forty vital years of Arabian history. Geographers will, however, always be impressed by the accuracy of his maps, some of them made under conditions of the greatest possible hardship.

Philby's finest feat of exploration was undoubtedly his crossing of the Empty Quarter. Inevitably, one contrasts this achievement with that of Thomas, a comparison made the more interesting by the complete dissimilarity of the two men. I have sometimes wondered whether, if Philby had already crossed the Empty Quarter, Bertram Thomas would have undertaken the journey. Philby had certain advantages denied to Thomas. Once he had obtained Ibn Saud's permission to undertake the journey—and it was the King's delay in granting this permission which lost him the race—he had behind him the King's far-reaching authority. As a Muslim, with the backing of the widely feared Bin Jalawi, Governor of Al Hasa, he could pass safely through the territory of the powerful Ahl Murrah, whereas Thomas ran his greatest risk from this tribe, many of whom were extremely fanatical. Thomas had to make all his preparations himself—the Sultan of Muscat and his Wali in Dhufar were friendly, but their effective authority only extended a few miles inland. He discovered from experience which tribesmen could be of use to him, but as a Christian he was at first suspected and disliked. The measure of his achievement was that he won the confidence of these tribesmen and with no authority behind him persuaded them by patience and fair dealing to take him across the Sands. His object was to cross the Empty Quarter, a
feit which was generally assumed by Europeans to be impossible, and naturally he chose the easiest route where in fact the dunes were small, and the wells known to his Rashid guides were comparatively frequent. Philby's route was far more difficult and the last part of their great journey was an amazing achievement, starting as he did with tired camels and men on the verge of mutiny, to cross a further 400 miles of waterless and unknown country through mountainous sands. There can be no doubt that his journey was the greater of the two, that it was indeed the greatest in the story of Arabian exploration.

I first met Philby in the summer of 1947 in Jedda, after I had travelled there through the Hejaz mountains from the Yemen border, through country much of which had previously only been seen by him. On my way there I had encountered several Arabs who had been with him. From their talk I got the impression of a man of tireless energy, quick-tempered and impatient of fools. It seemed that he had climbed every peak and spur along my route, most of them at midday when his companions wished to sleep. Although clearly they had frequently been exasperated, they spoke of him with considerable respect and often with affection, saying that he was very generous and never nursed a grievance. Philby showed an immediate interest in my journey and insisted on lending me various unpublished papers and maps of his to help me to prepare my own for the Geographical Journal. I saw him occasionally during the next few years whenever we were both in London. At the time I was travelling in the Empty Quarter and Philby, of course, was living in Saudi Arabia. I shall never forget the help and encouragement which he gave me during those years, nor the generosity with which he insisted on entertaining me. But best I remember a night we spent together in Layla. A few days earlier he had by his intervention with Ibn Saud secured my release from prison, and he had then come down to Layla from Riyadh to see that I was all right. We talked from sunset till nearly dawn. I had been distressed and shaken by the fanatical hostility I had encountered in the town. Philby that night was wise and very human. I realized then how great he was. As an Arabian traveller I shall always be proud to have followed in his footsteps.

Wilfred Thesiger

H. St. J. B. Philby was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1919, his application being sponsored by D. G. Hogarth and by Arthur Hinks, then Secretary of the Society. When he received the Founder's Medal in 1920, the President, Sir Francis Younghusband, referred to the care with which he had trained himself in geographical work and survey, and this set the tone for a long and fruitful association between Philby and the Society. He worked out and plotted his observations in collaboration with Mr. Harry F. Milne, senior draughtsman (now retired), and they prepared a series of maps which were published in the Journal and elsewhere. The first to appear showed the routes between Riyadh and Wadai Dawaasir, surveyed on Philby's 1918 journey in the southern Nejd (Geogr. J. 55 (1920) p. 240), and an earlier journey, from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea in 1917, was mapped and published in Vol. 56 (1920) p. 510; these were the expeditions which earned him the Gold Medal. Mr. Milne, in a recent letter to the Society, recalls his association with Philby thus: "I much admired the mental energy he was able to concentrate on the plotting of his prismatic compass traverses for he worked all the day through at the R.G.S. without a break for lunch, until 4 o'clock when he had tea supplied by the housekeeper. I shall always regard it as a great privilege that I was associated with Mr. Philby in the construction of these maps, for they represent a remarkable contribution to the sum of human knowledge."

Material supplied by Philby was included in the Society's 'Map of Southern Arabia' (1958) and the Drawing Office has been working on his surveys, particularly of Najran, up to the present time. Philby seldom visited the Society without bringing in some new observations, and the Society, in addition to eighteen folders of his work, holds the typescript copies of his diaries covering his journeys between 1946 and 1955. These documents, which he managed to smuggle out of Arabia by air just before his banishment, are characteristic of his wide range of human and intellectual interest and in them survey observations and transcriptions of Himyaritic inscriptions mingle with
records of the latest Test Match scores heard over his portable radio. During these long, and often solitary, desert journeys, Philby was able to free himself from the political and moral controversies into which he so hotly plunged in more civilized surroundings. All attention was concentrated, without thought of personal comfort or advantage, on the scrupulously careful collection of scientific observations of all kinds. These formed the foundations of our knowledge of Arabia.

L.P.K.

JAMES BRABAZON GRIMSTON, FIFTH EARL OF VERULAM

The death of Lord Verulam on October 13 has deprived the country of a man who, having decided that something needed to be done, drove himself to the utmost until convinced that progress was being made. For his service to a cause he sought no recognition; satisfied that there should be a harvest irrespective of who did the reaping. He was fifty when he died.

At heart a Planner, he regarded geography as a science to be applied only as an equal partner in the triangle man: place: work. Few students of Le Play can have been faced, so early in their career, with the opportunity which came to him to put theory into practice. Arriving in South Wales from Christ Church in the mid-30’s he found a community in which the normal processes of distribution had collapsed and which lacked the means to acquire even the bare necessities for life. Where many had looked and passed on Verulam stayed to help. His unorthodox but successful devices for dealing with the emergency are on record in the film ‘Eastern Valley’ which should surely be preserved as a page in the history of the Principality. The end of the depression was not the end of his work for Wales. In the magnificent factory which he built at Brynmawr men and women today work under conditions as nearly ideal as it is possible to make them.

Verulam was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1951 and in the same year presented “The geography of power,” a Paper which he dramatically illustrated by conversing from the rostrum with an engineer on duty at a hydro-electric power station in Swedish Lapland. The Paper was carefully drafted to draw attention to what he felt was an unnecessary time lag between technical advance and the application of that advance in the service of mankind. He suggested that those responsible for planning transfers of electric power were often unaware of the tools which research had made available and that schemes involving more than one country were regarded as too complicated to be worthy of consideration. Much that he advocated, and in particular the cross-Channel power link, was accepted as practical in his lifetime.

Verulam travelled a great deal in the interest of his Companies and was an unselfish competitor in that his experience was readily at the disposal of British industry as a whole. It was appropriate that his final journey, to Australia as Chairman of the British Institute of Management, should have been undertaken on behalf of all. There must be very few countries in the world into which the knowledge that he will not pass that way again has not brought a sadness which is shared by his many friends at home and in the Society. In particular, he will be missed by the President and Council on which he served as a valued member from 1957 to 1960.


Dr. Stratton, formerly director of the Solar Physics Observatory, Cambridge, and Professor of Astrophysics in the University of Cambridge from 1928 to 1947, died in Cambridge on 2 September 1960, at the age of 79. He was a leading authority on the spectra of new stars and had travelled widely in connection with his astronomical studies. Apart from this he commanded a signal unit in the 1914–18 war, and saw much service in France where he was awarded the d.s.o. and Legion of Honour. During the 1939–45 war, he was again in uniform as a lieutenant-colonel and went on many missions to Canada, the U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and India.

Stratton took a leading part in the organization of science both in this country and internationally. He was general secretary of the British Association from 1930–35;