

OBITUARY

ANTARCTIC GEOLOGIST - A MODERN DAY MAWSON

ROBERT JOHN (BOB) TINGEY 4 March 1940 - 17 November 2017



There aren't many Australian geologists with geographic features named after them in Antarctica. Sir Douglas Mawson is one. Robert John Tingey, who has died aged 77, is another of these rare individuals, with a splendid glacier and a set of rugged rocks in the Prince Charles Mountains named after him in recognition of his work for Geoscience Australia during pioneering geological mapping in the 1960s and 1970s.

Like Sir Douglas, Bob Tingey epitomised the strength and resilience inherent in the character of many geologists. They need stamina to undertake their chosen profession, often in rugged environments, persistence to go that one step further for one last sample, and determination to see their work through to maps and published documents. Bob had all three attributes in spades. He needed them not only for his work in the seriously bitter and unforgiving environs of the mountains of Antarctica where he spent five summers, but also to weather one of life's cruellest blows. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at the relatively young age of 46 and spent the last thirty years of his life fighting the debilitating effects of this slowly worsening condition. For a vibrant, energetic man in the prime of his life, the diagnosis must have been shocking and might have crushed a less determined person.

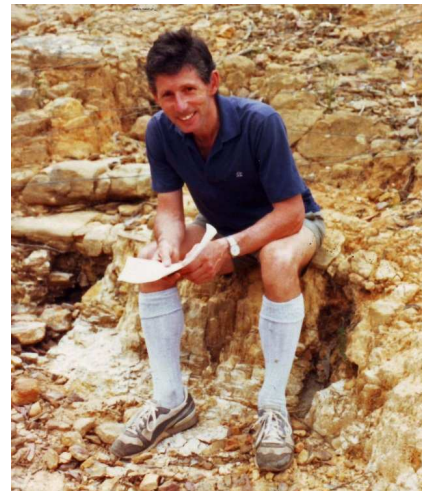
Bob Tingey was born in the city of Bedford in England on 4 March 1940. His parents were Harry Tingey, a policeman, and Margaret Coe, a teacher, who married in 1937. Bob was the eldest of their three children. Younger brothers Hugh and Paul were born in 1941 and 1946 respectively. His childhood was shaped by the effects of World War 2 and its aftermath, but images and anecdotes from this period of his life show a generally happy family life with school, sports and the great outdoors fully embraced. After primary school, Bob boarded at Dunstable Grammar School in the market town of Dunstable before attending university in Newcastle in the far north of England. He was a competent sportsman, playing in both the school's hockey eleven and the first cricket eleven. He was good at his studies and developed his own study skills that were to stand him in good stead for the rest of his life.

In 1958, Bob achieved three A levels in physics, chemistry and mathematics and gained a place in the second year in King's College, Newcastle, part of the University of Durham. With money for the family tight, Bob found that he could only get a grant from his local council if he went into the first year at university. The university said he could not be accepted into first year because he had earned a place to go straight into second year. As a result, Bob stayed away and attended his local technical college instead to get the grant, with the advantage of adding to his savings by living at home.

In the summer of 1959, aged nineteen, Bob moved to Newcastle and began his honours geology degree, a course he completed in 1963. During his time at the university he met his future wife Nancy Howarth, though they did not marry

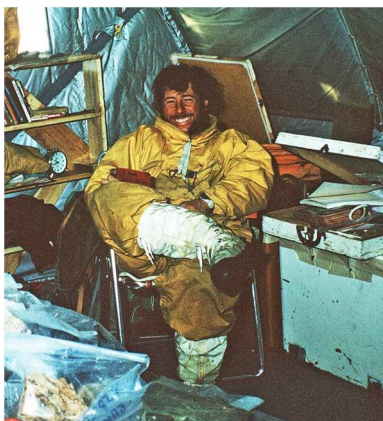
until several years later in 1971. Bob was too engrossed in combining his newly honed geological skills with his young man's thirst for adventure by taking field trips with fellow students to remote places and eventually leaving England altogether to begin a career in geology with Australia's Bureau of Mineral Resources in December 1966. As Bob writes in his autobiography, "my first contact with the BMR was in 1960, when the London-based (British) Commonwealth Geological Liaison Officer, Lyn Noakes, later BMR's director, described the organisation and its work in a lecture at the geology department of King's College. At the time, the Slim Dusty song 'A pub with no beer' was very popular in Britain, and Lyn looked as if he had just come from that unfortunate place".

Thus inspired by Slim Dusty and Lyn Noakes and after working in Africa for two years, Bob applied in 1966 to be one of the geologists that BMR was to send to Antarctica but by the time he joined the organisation, the positions for that year had been filled and Bob was sent to Papua New Guinea instead. There, with the newly accepted theory of plate tectonics as background, Bob worked with other BMR geologists on foot and by helicopter mapping the underlying geology of the jungles and attempting to piece together from their hard won geological samples the intersection of several tectonic plates that collide and rise up to form the rugged PNG terrain.



It was hard, back-breaking and dangerous work with days of intense geological traverses often interspersed with weeks back in the office or down at the sailing club, a popular watering hole.

In 1969, Bob was selected to join the BMR's Antarctic geological mapping program. At this stage of the program, under head geologist Ian McLeod, the Bureau was mapping the rugged but beautiful Prince Charles Mountains to the south of Australia's Mawson Station and also along the coast line to the west. The work was conducted in association with geographical mapping being undertaken by National Mapping and with logistical support provided by the Antarctic Division. Expeditioners who had over-wintered the previous year provided experienced assistance for the geologists and surveyors of the summer program.



Up to six geologists were deployed each summer season and Bob subsequently made five trips to the Antarctic continent, often picking up where he had left off the previous season. Tons of rock samples were brought back to Australia, analysed, sectioned and examined and gradually the geology of the region was revealed and documented. Bob became so engrossed in the work that in 1982 at an international geological conference at Penrose in the US he initiated the idea of a combined international *opus magnus* documenting the geology of Antarctica. The book,

of nineteen chapters, would be accompanied by a geological map of Antarctica at about 1:10,000,000 scale. Almost all the potential contributors were at the

Penrose conference and, therefore, vulnerable to some arm twisting. Bob records that “had any of us had any inkling that this would take ten years to publish we would have immediately abandoned the project.” Persuasive and articulate, Bob was able to recruit the people that he thought were best qualified to contribute the chapters he wanted for the book. The 27 contributors were spread over Great Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Australia; Australian BMR scientists contributed four complete chapters and part of a fifth. The book was published by Oxford University Press in 1993. It remains the most authoritative work on Antarctic geology to date and is a lasting legacy to Bob’s professional career.

Bob became an Australian Citizen on 11 April 1984.

In 1987, aware that “something was seriously wrong” with his health, Bob consulted doctors and specialists and was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Despite this devastating news, Bob continued to work at BMR, now renamed AGSO, the Australian Geological Survey Organisation, to edit the book, and participate in family and community life. Bob, Nancy and their three boys lived in the historic village of Hall, just outside Canberra where in addition to his life as father and husband Bob was secretary of the Hall Progress Association for many years. But his career as a field geologist was at an end and new challenges were emerging. He was awarded the prestigious Australian Antarctic Medal in 1990 for services to Antarctic geology and retired from AGSO in December 1996.



Between 1993 and 2005 as his Parkinson’s progressed, Bob had six hip replacement operations and suffered five dislocations. He was treated in seven hospitals and spent time in five nursing homes, settling with high level care in Villaggio Sant’ Antonio in Canberra at the end of 2001. Although by this time confined to a wheelchair he remained focussed and interested in life. He was President of Parkinson’s ACT and a board member of Parkinson’s Australia from 1993 to 1998. He was also a founder member of *Painting with Parkinsons* which his wife Nancy created in November 1994 to combine her role as a community artist and art curator with caring for Bob. Bob’s painting *Antarctic Waters* was used to advertise the Creativity and Parkinson’s component of the First World Parkinson Congress in Washington in 2006.

While Bob did not suffer the privations that Douglas Mawson suffered in Antarctica a generation earlier, the hostile Antarctic environment had not eased when Bob was making geological traverses on foot or by motorised toboggan and his personal autobiography contains many anecdotes relating heroic episodes and near misses. Most of these challenges pale to insignificance when laid alongside his fight with the debilitating of Parkinson’s disease which slowly stripped him of his athletic body and its stamina leaving only his fertile mind to dwell on what might have been.

Bob Tingey is survived by his wife Nancy and their three sons Alex, Sam, and John and their families, and his brothers Hugh and Paul.

Malcolm Robertson
December 2017

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The Tingey Painting with Parkinsons Program



Nancy Tingey founded *Painting with Parkinsons* in 1994 to combine her role as a community artist and art curator with caring for her husband Bob who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1987 at the age of 46. The philosophy underpinning *Painting with Parkinsons* is based on research. The methodology used in each workshop is evidence-based and emphasises the process and materials of art to lessen the symptoms

of Parkinson's through immersion in the creative process. *Painting with Parkinsons* meets weekly in the Joseph Banks building at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra. Workshops are conducted by experienced *Painting with Parkinsons* facilitators who are supported by valued volunteers. Many workshops include poetry or literary readings and singing or instrumental musical performances. Warm up exercises and meditation often form part of the introduction to the session. Rather than being taught or directed, artists are encouraged to become absorbed in their own work which results in unique, individual artworks. High quality art materials are used to create vibrant clarity of colour and line.

Workshops vary and may include painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics or writing. All workshops conclude with respectful group discussion and sharing about the work created during the session.

Bio (if needed)

Malcolm Robertson (musgrovemedi@netspeed.com.au) is a freelance Canberra writer specialising in obituaries.

Photographs

File Name	Suggested Caption	Acknowledgement
Bob 1	Bob Tingey in the ice mask, Antarctic 1970. During field work in Antarctica, condensation in breath often ices up	Unknown
Bob 2	Bob Tingey in Enderby Land, Antarctica, 1976	Unknown
Bob 3	Bob Tingey relaxes in luxurious portable accommodation - Mt Cresswell Antarctica 1972	Unknown
Bob 4	Bob Tingey at Bundanoon in 1988	Nancy Tingey
Bob 5	Bob Tingey with his Antarctic Medal - Government House September 1990	Peter West (official photographer)
Light	Bob's painting "Light"	John Pratt
Antarctic Waters	Bob's painting "Antarctic Waters"	Rosemary Williams