MEREDITH HOOPER: FROM ADELAIDE TO ANTARCTICA



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A historian and author with a profound affinity for Antarctica, Meredith visited the continent on several occasions and was a member of the Board of Trustees of IPF UK for 12 years.

Born in Adelaide South Australia in 1939, Meredith developed her love of Antarctica at a young age. During long walks on the beach, she could sense the presence of the Antarctic continent across the waters of the Southern Ocean.

She completed her undergraduate degree in history at the University of Adelaide and was awarded a First Class Honours. A postgraduate scholarship then took her to the University of Oxford in 1961. There, she studied imperial history at Lady Margaret Hall and Nuffield College, where she was the first female graduate student. She met her husband Richard Hooper at Oxford. They were married in 1964 and settled in London

where they had three children: Rachel (who reports on Parliament for the BBC), Tom (who directed the Oscar-winning film The King's Speech) and Ben, (first a barrister and now a management consultant specialising in tech).

Meredith wrote her first Antarctic book, *"A" for Antarctica*, in 1991. Drawn by this Southern neighbour, she subsequently applied to work for the Australian Antarctic Division, spending three months in Antarctica in 1994. In addition to books for adults, she was a prolific writer of children's books, many of them also focusing on Antarctic stories. Her 58 titles have been published around the world and translated into dozens of languages, including Catalonian and Korean.

Among her most influential Antarctic works were *The Longest Winter*, which told the story of Captain Scott's Northern Party during his *Terra Nova* expedition of 1910-1913.

The Ferocious Summer, which described the impact of climate change on the Adélie penguin, was written while she researched as Writer in Residence at the United States' Palmer Station on the Antarctic Peninsula. On the release of *The Ferocious Summer*, Eric Woehler wrote in *The Australian*, "Hooper has written a book that is unique among the wide-ranging literature of recent times. A delight to read providing the human and scientific contexts of the research efforts and contribution to climate change science, in a remarkably intimate manner."

In 2015, she curated *Enduring Eye*, a major exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society in London. The exhibition explored the legacy of Frank Hurley, the photographer of Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, and offered Meredith the opportunity to honour Hurley, one of her great Antarctic heroes and a fellow Australian.

Meredith was awarded the US Congress Antarctica Service Medal in 2000 for her Antarctic work. Additional accolades include the Nettie Palmer Prize for Non-Fiction, Runner-Up for the Australian Children's Book of the Year, and Winner of the English 4-11 Awards for the Best Children's Illustrated Books.
She was voted Australian of the Year in the UK in 2014 and was a Visiting Scholar at both Wolfson College and the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge. She was also a Trustee of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, where she brought enormous dedication to the work of protecting the legacy of Scott and Shackleton and the huts that they built at the turn of the 20th Century.

"At the International Polar Foundation, we have always appreciated the dedication Meredith had to all matters Antarctic, and were so pleased to be able to count her amongst our Board Members for over a decade," remarked Nighat Amin, Head of Environmental and International Affairs at the International Polar Foundation, and fellow Trustee of IPF UK. "Her help and advice was invaluable, and many will miss her insight and guidance at this historically difficult time. There are too few women of exceptional ability who are elevated in the Polar context, and we choose on this sad occasion to celebrate the life of Meredith Hooper, an accomplished young woman from Adelaide who travelled the globe, and left her mark."