



Once lost, they are lost forever. These historic buildings stand as the last vestiges of this period, and bear testament not only to the endurance and courage of the explorers and the hardships they experienced, but to the minutiae of their everyday existence.

Herbert Ponting's photograph of Scott in his den 1911

# Britain's Antarctic Heritage





## Foreword By Patron HRH The Princess Royal



**"The Antarctic Heritage Trust aims to ensure that the huts in the Ross Sea and the historic huts on the Antarctic Peninsula, especially Port Lockroy, survive in the best possible condition for future generations. They form a unique legacy both from the heroic age of Antarctic exploration and Britain's continued scientific endeavour on the continent.**

**To be able to visit the historic huts is an extraordinary experience. The presence of those people who spent so much time together, in such an extraordinary environment, is still part of the fabric of the huts; and I believe will remain that way. What they went to do is an extraordinary story in itself, and how much they achieved is remarkable. They opened doors for the rest of us to understand so much about the Antarctic continent, and for this we should be eternally grateful.**

**I urge all who can, and especially the growing numbers of people who have taken the new opportunities to visit Antarctica, to support the Trusts in these exciting moments establishing the conservation of these huts and their contents to inspire future generations."**

Anne

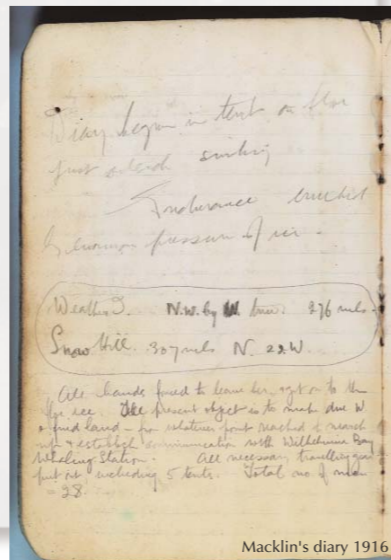
**“I am just going outside and may be some time”. Oates’ dramatic exit from Scott’s tent is probably the most poignant and well known episode in the long history of British Antarctic exploration. From Cook’s circumnavigation in 1772-75 until today, the United Kingdom has contributed significantly to Antarctic exploration and scientific knowledge. Inspired by the need to recognise and conserve this long and distinguished past, the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust was set up as a charity in 1993.**

We aim to:

- help conserve selected early British scientific bases on the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia for the enjoyment and education of visitors. We look after Port Lockroy, which is designated as Historic Site and Monument (No. 61) under the Antarctic Treaty;
- support the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust in conserving the historic huts in the Ross Sea area built by the explorers Scott, Shackleton and Borchgrevink;
- promote an educational programme to stimulate young people’s interest in science, the global environment and Antarctic research through the inspiration of earlier British Antarctic endeavours;
- help with the acquisition and preservation of British historical Antarctic artefacts

In short, we exist to conserve evidence of Antarctica’s history now and in the future.

This booklet is to inform you about Britain’s Antarctic history, and how you can contribute to conserving it for the future.



Macklin's diary 1916

## The Past

### The early years

During his great voyage of 1772-75 Captain James Cook crossed the Antarctic Circle for the first time and continued to 71°10'S, a farthest south record. Although he did not actually sight the continent, he predicted “a country doomed by Nature to lie buried under everlasting ice and snow”. The Russian Fabian Bellingshausen was the first to sight the continent on 27 January 1820. Close followers were the Briton, Lieutenant Edward Bransfield and the United States sealer, Nathaniel Palmer.

Two other distinguished British explorers were Captain James Weddell who in 1822 reached 74°15'S, and Captain James Clark Ross who in a voyage from 1839 to 1843 discovered the coast of Victoria Land, sighted Mount Erebus and found the continent’s largest ice shelf; the Weddell and Ross Seas are named after them. Edward Bransfield (1820-21), Henry Foster (1828-31), John Biscoe (1830-32), and C. Wyville Thompson (1872-76) made further geographical discoveries. During the 1800s, numerous sealers and whalers, principally from Britain and United States, knew the Southern Ocean well, and in particular the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula.



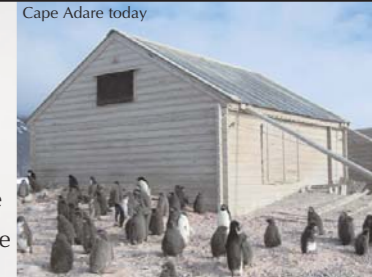


RRS *Discovery* - Dundee today

### The Heroic Age



The early part of the 20th century saw major advances in man's knowledge of the continent. Carsten Borchgrevink, leader of the British Antarctic Expedition (1898-1900) aboard *Southern Cross*, although not nearly as well known today as Scott or Shackleton, remains a key figure in Antarctic history. Born in Norway, Borchgrevink first visited the continent on the whaler *Antarctic* in 1895. From this first inspiration, he eventually persuaded a wealthy British magazine publisher to back his expedition. Despite the expedition's name, there were only two British members. Based at Cape Adare, the expedition spent the first winter on Antarctica and set a record for the most southern point reached on the continent.



Cape Adare today



Captain Robert Falcon Scott led two major expeditions to the Ross Sea. The first of these, the National Antarctic Expedition (1901-04) was a major undertaking with a specially designed ship, *Discovery*. The expedition achieved a great deal of scientific and geographical work including a journey to Cape Crozier on the east side of Ross Island, the first ascent to the Polar Plateau and a record traverse south by Scott, Ernest Shackleton and Dr Edward Wilson. Perhaps more importantly it fired the imaginations and ambitions of two leaders who were both to return to Antarctica; Scott and his Sub-Lieutenant, Shackleton. It is this expedition which leaves the greatest physical legacy with the hut still standing on Ross Island and the ship *Discovery* docked in Dundee.





The Scottish National Antarctic Expedition (1902-04), under William Speirs Bruce aboard *Scotia*, did invaluable work in the South Orkney Islands and discovered Coats Land. His hut still stands on Laurie Island.



Laurie Island Meteorological Station, Omond House



A major objective of the British expeditions that followed was to reach the South Pole. Ernest Shackleton reached within 180 km of the Pole, during his British Antarctic Expedition (1907-09) aboard *Nimrod*. The expedition also made the first ascent of Mt. Erebus (3794 m), and a party of three reached the South Magnetic Pole.



In 1910 Captain Scott returned aboard *Terra Nova* leading the British Antarctic Expedition (1910-13). The polar party advanced

beyond Shackleton's farthest south across the Polar Plateau reaching the South Pole on 17 January 1912. There they found that Roald Amundsen's Norwegian expedition had reached the Pole 35 days earlier.



Scott's hut at Cape Evans today

The return to base was a desperate run of exceptional cold, declining health, and shortage of food and fuel. A concussed and delirious Edgar Evans died on 17 February 1912. A month later Lawrence Oates walked out of the tent during a blizzard uttering his famous words. From 21 March, a blizzard pinned the three survivors, Scott, Wilson and Birdie Bowers, in their tent. The men perished only 17 km from One Ton Depot. Scott's last message to the public in late March 1912 as written in his diary read **"Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale..."**



Scott and party at the South Pole, Jan 1912

Further to the west, the British born Douglas Mawson led the Australasian Antarctic Expedition with *Aurora* (1911-14). He discovered and claimed land for the British Crown, and three wintering parties undertook extensive exploration and scientific research. Mawson himself was the sole survivor of a three man sledging journey during which Belgrave Ninnis died in a crevasse taking most of the supplies with him, while later Dr Xavier Mertz died as the two survivors desperately tried to return to base on virtually non-existent supplies. Mawson's hut still stands at Cape Denison in Commonwealth Bay.





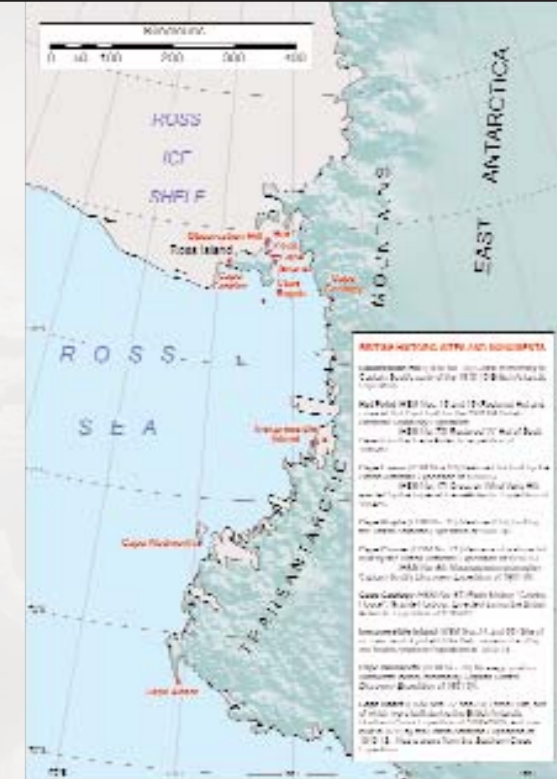
Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-16) could not reach land when his ship, *Endurance*, became trapped in the ice of the Weddell Sea and, nine months later, was crushed. With great difficulty he and his crew reached Elephant Island. Shackleton, with five companions, then sailed for help in an eight metre open boat *James Caird* across 1500 km of tempestuous ocean to South Georgia. They landed on the uninhabited south side of the island so Shackleton, with two of the men, crossed

the unmapped central mountains to reach the whaling station at Stromness. Shackleton then set about rescuing the other 22 men on Elephant island, and after four attempts, succeeded. The expedition had failed but in Shackleton's words, "**we had pierced the veneer of outside things and reached the naked soul of man**".

It was Apsley Cherry-Garrard who later wrote "**For a joint scientific and geographical piece of organization, give me Scott; ....for a dash to the pole and nothing else, Amundsen: and if I am in the devil of a hole and want to get out of it, give me Shackleton every time**".

Meanwhile the Ross Sea party, responsible for laying depots for Shackleton's overland traverse from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea, did not manage to pull themselves out of difficulty without loss of three lives. Despite unimaginable hardship over two winters, with some men at Hut Point and others at Cape Evans, they managed to lay depots towards the Beardmore Glacier – in vain as it turned out.

Hurley and Shackleton at Ocean Camp 1915

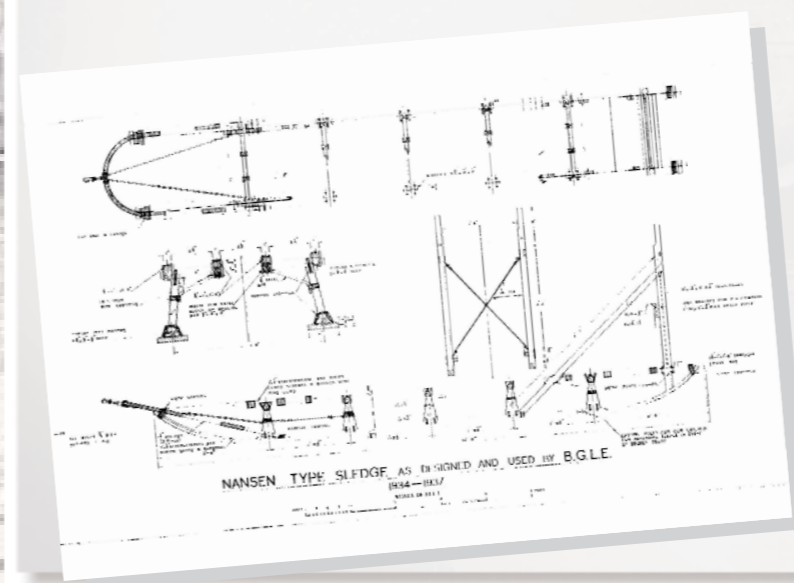
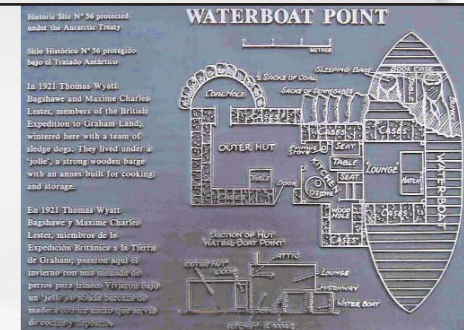




Penola at Port Lockroy 1935

### The Transition

After World War I, British interests again turned to the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia. On the British Expedition to Graham Land (1920-22) Thomas Bagshawe and Maxime Lester wintered with a team of sledge dogs in some discomfort in a converted wooden barge, or 'waterboat', in Paradise Harbour. A full year of meteorological, tidal, ice conditions, and other data were recorded and zoological observations made before they were relieved in January 1922. In 1929-31, Douglas Mawson led the British Australian New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition and, with the aid of ship and aircraft, filled a major gap in the knowledge of the coast of the Antarctic continent.



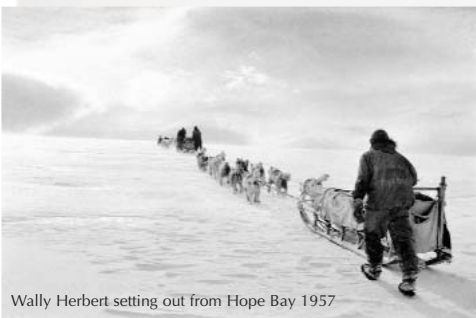
The British Graham Land Expedition (1934-37), led by another Australian, John Rymill, explored the Peninsula. With few members, a small ship, *Penola*, and an aircraft, it set new standards in meticulous planning, the scope of its scientific programmes, and the harmony and care with which its object was achieved. Offshore the 'Discovery Investigations' undertook 13 voyages between 1925 and 1939 which collected marine (principally whale) and hydrographic survey data and significantly advanced knowledge of the Southern Ocean.



Bingham and Rymill 1937

## The Modern Era

The modern era of British Antarctic exploration started in 1943 when the British Government organised Operation Tabarin. The aim of this wartime operation was to report any activities of enemy naval assets, but it also served to enhance British sovereignty by the establishment of bases at Deception Island, Port Lockroy and Hope Bay. At the end of the war, responsibility was transferred from the Admiralty to the Colonial Office to be managed as a scientific and survey organisation. Its objectives were to maintain a permanent presence in the region for political reasons and to expand the exploration, survey and research for scientific reasons. The number of bases rapidly increased. Cape Geddes in the South Orkney Islands and Stonington Island on the Peninsula were set up in 1946; Argentine Islands and Signy Island in 1947; and Admiralty Bay in 1948. Extensive survey journeys were made from Hope Bay and Stonington Island using dog sledges. In the 1947-48 summer, their surveys were linked by the meeting of parties from both bases – a dramatic moment.



Wally Herbert setting out from Hope Bay 1957

During the mid and late 1950s another 10 bases were built, some for the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58. The IGY was a remarkable example of international cooperation. 12 countries worked in the Antarctic where they had a total of 52 stations operating. Scientists from 67 countries were involved in the project. Its purpose was to be "... all embracing, to fit the Earth into the pattern of the universe, to relate its parts together, to discover hidden order, and to interpret the whole in relation to space and especially to...the Sun" (Professor J Wilson).



British scientists played a significant role in planning this event and ensuring its great scientific success.

Not formally connected, but overlapping with the IGY, Sir Vivian Fuchs, supported by the New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary, continued the pioneering work of British explorers with the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1955-58). The expedition made the first land crossing of the continent, from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea via the South Pole, making valuable scientific observations along the way. Surgeon Lieutenant Commander David Dalgliesh led the Royal Society Expedition to Halley Bay (1955-59). The true importance of this period was the establishment of a tradition of international scientific cooperation and it led to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 which still flourishes today.

In 1962 the British scientific and survey activities in Antarctica were renamed the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). Five years

later it became, and still remains, one of the research institutes of the Natural Environment Research Council. Sir Vivian Fuchs was Director through the transition from 1950-73. He was succeeded by Dr Richard Laws 1973-87, during whose directorship the most recent major research station, Rothera, was built in 1975.



Port Lockroy 1959



Rothera Research Station

## Now and the Future

The history of British involvement in Antarctica spans well over 200 years. Whilst exploration and commercial exploitation of seals and whales were dominant early activities, scientific research, starting in the 18th century, has continued ever since. William Bruce of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition established a meteorological station on the South Orkney Islands in 1903 which was later transferred to Argentina. This station still operates: the oldest continuous observatory in the Antarctic. Since 1944 Britain has maintained a continuous presence carrying out scientific research. This solid scientific tradition and the quality of British Antarctic research are second to none. It has generated considerable international respect and has given Britain a strong, influential position in the affairs of a continent of increasing global importance.

The affairs of the Antarctic, the region south of 60°S, are conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty. Following the success of the IGY, as well as to help resolve the actual and potential frictions of rival claims to Antarctic territory, the 12 countries who participated in the Antarctic IGY conferred in Washington DC in 1959\*. In December of that year the Antarctic Treaty was concluded, with the UK the first to ratify it. In essence, it established Antarctica as a region for peaceful cooperation and the world's first international scientific laboratory, accessible to all who wanted to use it for genuine research purposes. The Treaty states that the Antarctic is to be used for peaceful purposes only and bans disposal of radioactive waste, weapons testing and all military activity. It places all territorial claims in abeyance. The Treaty came into force on 23 June 1961 after ratification by all 12 countries. It stands as a remarkable and durable example of what can be achieved by cooperation between peoples despite wide political and cultural differences.



\*The original signatories, in order of ratification were: Britain, South Africa, Belgium, Japan, USA, Norway, France, New Zealand, USSR, Argentina, Australia, and Chile.



the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust. The ship also transports inspection teams under the Antarctic Treaty. The political and international aspects of British operations are administered by the Polar Regions Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Scientific research in Antarctica continues apace. The British Antarctic Survey lies at the forefront of all aspects of Antarctic research. It now operates two permanent research stations on the Antarctic continent, Halley at 75°S on the Weddell Sea coast, and Rothera at 67°S on Adelaide Island. Signy on the South Orkney Islands is a summer station. There are also two research stations on South Georgia: Bird Island and King Edward Point. Their work is supported by the Royal Research Ships, *James Clark Ross* and *Ernest Shackleton*, by a Dash 7 and four Twin Otter aircraft.

The Royal Navy assists the Survey with the Antarctic patrol ship HMS *Endurance* equipped with two Lynx helicopters. *Endurance* conducts hydrographic survey, and generally supports British interests, including those of



# The Peninsula

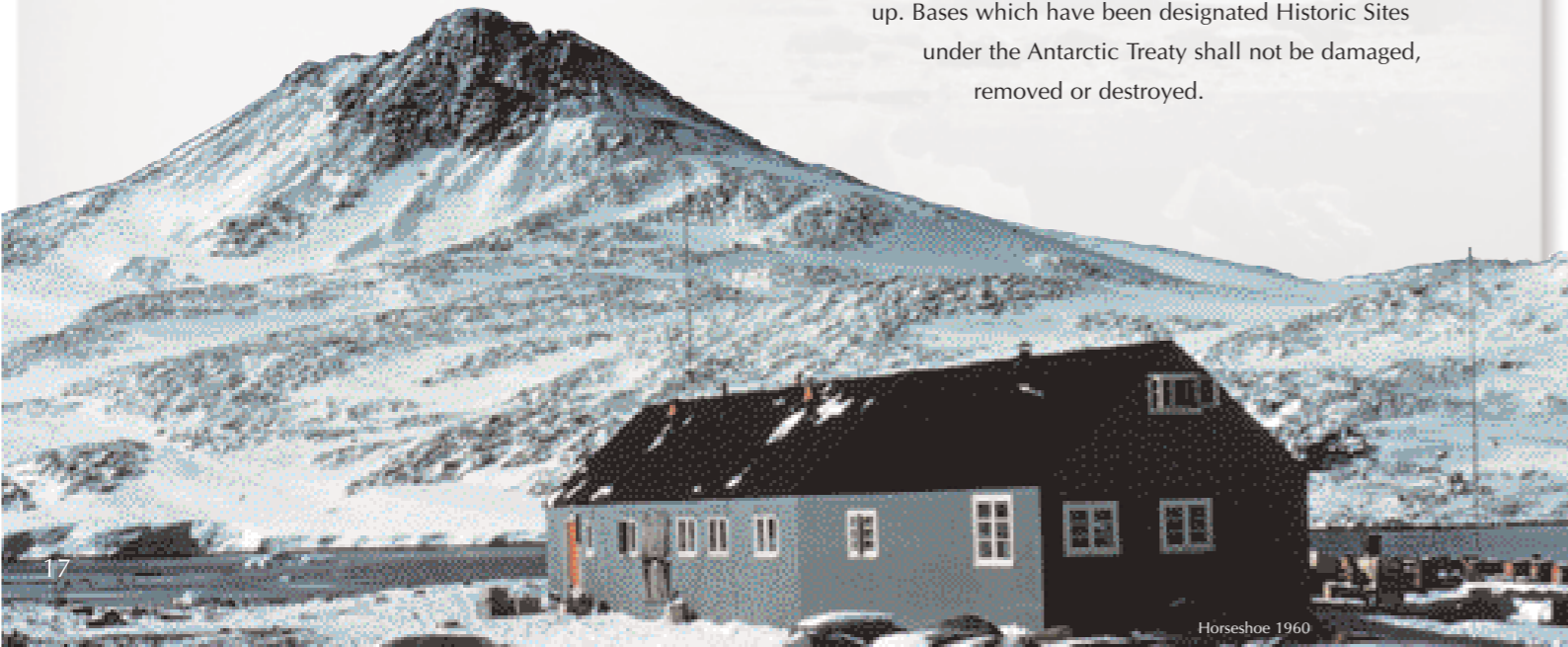
The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust works with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Antarctic Survey to conserve historic British sites on the Peninsula. In 1994 the Trust commissioned a conservation survey of several abandoned British bases that formed the basis for future action. As a result, four bases – Port Lockroy, Argentine Islands (Wordie House), Horseshoe Island and Stonington Island – were designated as Historic Sites and Monuments under the Antarctic Treaty (respectively Nos. 61, 62, 63, 64). In 2003, the old British base and aircraft hangar at Deception Island was also declared a Historic Site, with the remains of the Norwegian Hector whaling station (HSM no. 71). The Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty (1998) requires abandoned stations and waste dumps in Antarctica to be cleaned up. Bases which have been designated Historic Sites under the Antarctic Treaty shall not be damaged, removed or destroyed.



Stonington 1948



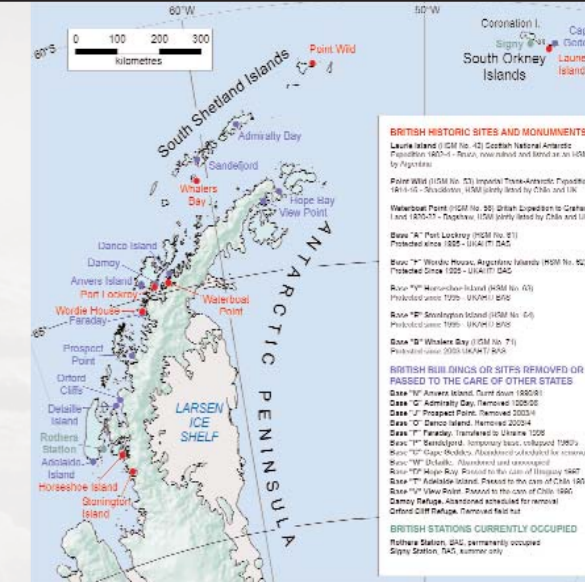
Port Lockroy today



Horseshoe 1960

The British bases on Argentine Islands, Horseshoe Island, Stonington Island and Deception Island are managed by the British Antarctic Survey. Portal Point hut, although not designated as a historic building, was dismantled by BAS in 1996 and has since been re-erected at the museum in Stanley, Falkland Islands. With funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in 1996 BAS restored Historic Site and Monument No. 61 Port Lockroy to its 1962 condition (when it closed). Since then it has been operated annually by the Survey during the summer months as a living museum and post office and is one of the most visited sites on the Peninsula. It came under the management of the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust in 2006. Proceeds from the small gift shop and a proportion of the revenue from the post office pay for the operation of the site and the conservation of other British historic sites in Antarctica.

Other historic sites of British origin in the Peninsula region include the stone hut built on Laurie Island in 1903 by William Speirs Bruce (HSM 42), and the remains of the waterboat at 'Waterboat Point' in Paradise Harbour occupied by Bagshawe and Lester in 1921 (HSM 56).



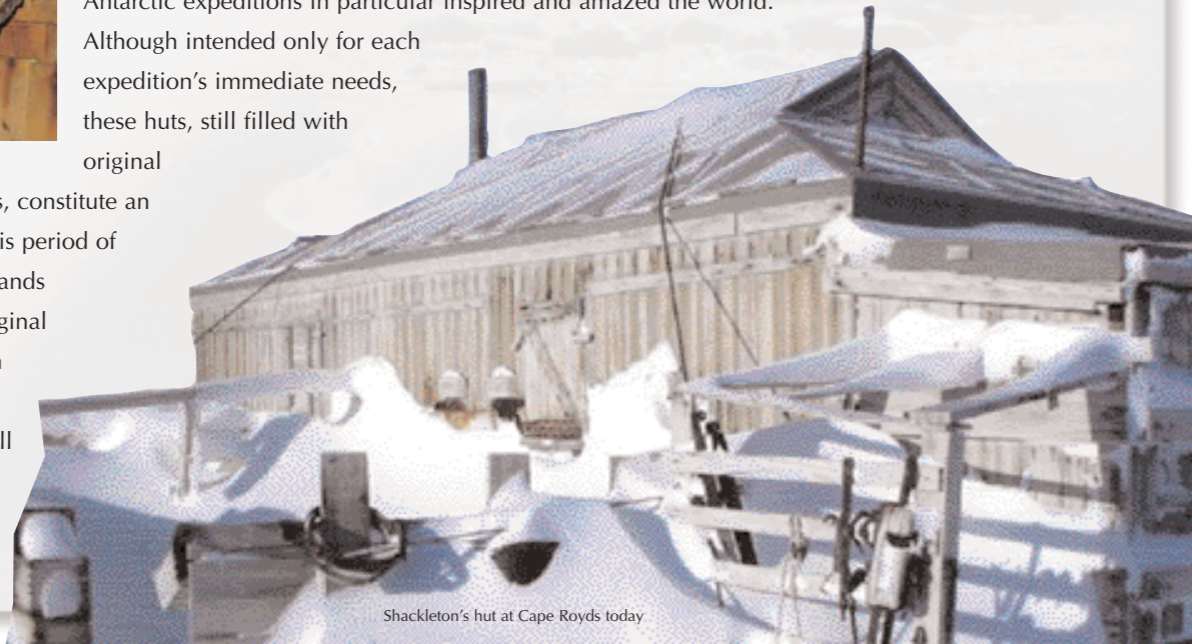
Port Lockroy before restoration

## The Ross Sea

The Ross Sea region contains 14 listed Historic Sites and Monuments relating to the four British expeditions of the heroic age. In particular, the four huts (Borchgrevink's at Cape Adare, Shackleton's at Cape Royds, and Scott's at Hut Point and Cape Evans) are protected and designated as Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPA) within the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty System. The sites are under the care of the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust. These sites are of exceptional interest and value. They constitute the only remaining physical legacy from man's first attempts to establish a toehold, even temporarily, on the brutally inhospitable Antarctic continent. The five expeditions which first used them aimed to explore the unknown, and extend scientific knowledge. Scott's and Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions in particular inspired and amazed the world.

Although intended only for each expedition's immediate needs, these huts, still filled with original

equipment and provisions, constitute an exceptional heritage of this period of human endeavour. Thousands of provisions from the original expeditions still remain in the huts today, including many from brands that still exist such as Fry's Chocolate, Heinz and Shell Oil. Legs of ham



Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds today



Stove at Cape Royds

still hang on the wall, reindeer skin sleeping bags lie on the bunks, provisions such as Colman's Flour and Mustard, Bird's Dried Egg powder, jars and tins from Fortnum & Mason and Harrods line the walls of the kitchen areas, skis line the wall, and the dog kennels sit eerily empty. But a century on, they are threatened with destruction by the very elements that have helped preserve them. In recognition that the buildings, and the thousands of artefacts associated with them, require major conservation efforts, the Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project was launched in Antarctica by HRH The Princess Royal in 2002. While in its entirety it is a multi-million pound exercise, based over many years, the NZ Antarctic Heritage Trust is undertaking the project in stages as funds permit. Comprehensive heritage conservation plans have been developed for each of the four sites providing the basis for

work needed. To date funds from many sources, including some following the World Monuments Fund's inclusion of Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds in its 2004 and 2006 lists of the World's 100 Most Endangered Sites, have begun saving that hut and its associated artefacts – from bottles of Moir's red currants to a fur sleeping bag.



Scott's Discovery Hut

## How You Can Help

The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust is a charity registered in the UK (no. 1024911).

**You can become a 'Friend of Antarctica' by contacting [info@ukaht.org](mailto:info@ukaht.org) or visiting our website [www.heritage-antarctica.org](http://www.heritage-antarctica.org)**

In doing so you will support Antarctic heritage in Antarctica and artefacts in museums. You will also help us to support the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust in conserving the Ross Sea huts. Donations from UK, NZ and US tax payers are tax-deductible; please enquire.

As a 'Friend of Antarctica' you will receive a twice yearly newsletter with priority updates. The Trust arranges events around the UK.

Port Lockroy (left) is the Trust's flagship project. Please help the Trust conserve and share Port Lockroy and the other Antarctic huts for the future.



## [www.heritage-antarctica.org](http://www.heritage-antarctica.org)



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