

News from the British Antarctic Survey

The British Antarctic Survey (BAS), is the winner of the international "Green Apple" Gold environmental award for the successful removal of an old waste dump from Antarctica. The dump was a legacy of logistics activity in the 1960's and 1970's, before the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty was signed. The £500,000 clean up took place near the remote BAS summer field station at Fossil Bluff, Alexander Island on the Antarctic Peninsula. Over 50 tonnes of wastes were first flown to Rothera and then shipped to the Falklands Islands or UK for recycling or safe disposal. Fossil Bluff is one of the most remote bases in Antarctica and is used as a summer meteorological outpost and aircraft re-fuelling station by BAS and is accessible only by Twin Otter from Rothera.

BAS hopes to complete its £2 million clean-up programme in 2004 with the demolition and removal of the abandoned British stations at Detaille Island (Base W), Danco Island (Base O) and Prospect Point (Base J) (see BB17). Half the clean up costs were provided by BAS' parent body – the Natural Environment Research Council. BAS matched these funds by providing support logistics such as Twin Otter aircraft and ship time on the *Ernest Shackleton*. As Bergy Bits went to press the clean-up team were camping ashore at Danco Island and had almost completed demolishing the hut.

News from South Georgia

The two longliners *Lyn* and *Moresko* which were grounded off the mouth of Moraine Fjord (as previously reported) have now been cleared of fuel oil and fishing gear but the positions of both vessels meant that it has not been possible to refloat them. The shores of Moraine Fjord and the Barff Peninsula have also been cleared of any environmentally hazardous material. There are no plans to do anything more. *Moresko* has now broken up into at least three bits and small bits of debris – mainly insulating foam from her freezer hold – are turning up on the beaches from time to time. Sadly there is not anything that can be done about this now.

The Grytviken Whaling Station Remediation Project to make the site safe from hazardous substances continued this season with massive amounts of asbestos removed and buried. Several buildings that were on the point of collapse, or close to it, have been dismantled and there is now a clear indication of what the whaling station area will look like in the future. Previously the visitor could have only seen the rusty corrugated iron walls of the buildings, but now it is possible to see the items that were hidden inside. It should make a more interesting exhibition when the whaling station area is re-opened, hopefully at the end of the 2004/5 summer season.

The wrecks of the three whaling/sealing vessels *Albatros*, *Dias* and *Petrel* have all been refloated, cleaned of the tar-like furnace fuel oil and dragged partly out of the water, bows inland, so that they now sit flat and level on the bottom. They are now to be welded shut as it has not been possible to remove all of the asbestos from inside them this season. The hulls are not strong enough for them to be patched and maintained afloat. By completion, the work being undertaken by the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands will cost nearly three quarters of a million pounds.

More Centenary Celebrations

On 22 February Argentina celebrated a century of Antarctic research. To mark the occasion the navy icebreaker *Almirante Irizar* took a party of dignitaries and journalists to Orcadas Station on Laurie Island. The meteorological station on Laurie Island was established by the Scottish National Antarctic (*Scotia*) Expedition

under the leadership of William Speirs Bruce. When the expedition left the island in 1903 it was handed over to Argentina. Robert Mossman, the expedition's meteorologist, and a cook, Bill Smith, transferred to the Argentine Meteorological Service and remained at Orcadas with the Argentine meteorologists over that first winter. Argentina has operated the base at Orcadas ever since - it is now the oldest continuously inhabited site in Antarctica. For more accounts see websites of the principle newspapers, *La Nacion* and *Clarín*.

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Bergy Bits

The Newsletter of the Friends of Antarctica

Port Lockroy Anniversary Year

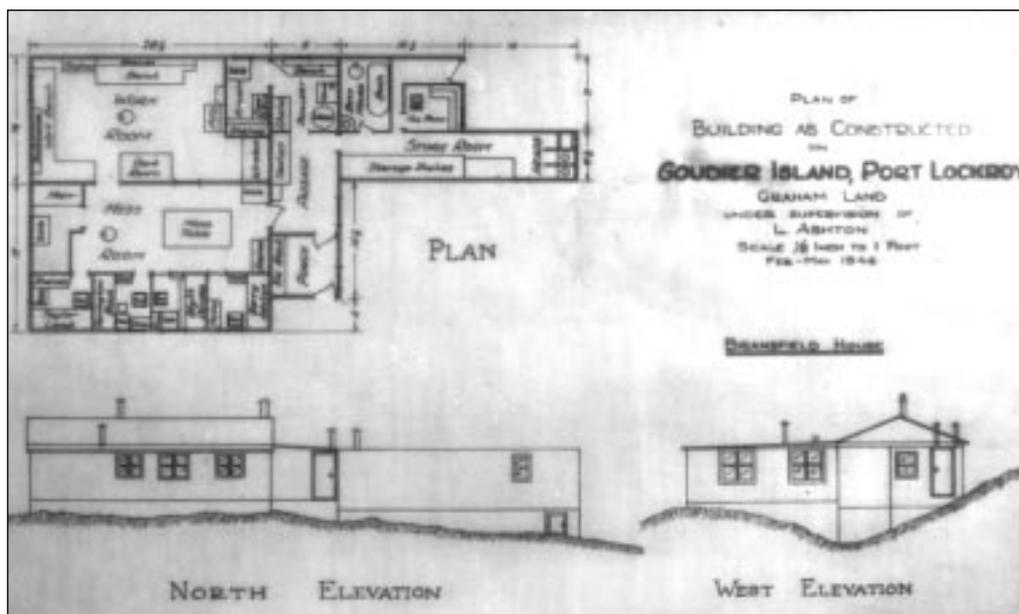
One hundred years ago, Charcot's first Antarctic expedition ship *Français* sailed into a harbour off Wiencke Island to effect engine repairs. Shortly afterwards, when seeking a potential over-wintering site, the expedition returned to the harbour and charted it. They named it Port Lockroy on 19 February 1904 after Etienne-Auguste-Edouard Lockroy, a French politician who had helped finance the expedition.

Forty years later, in 1944, the arrival in Port Lockroy of HMS *William Scoresby* and the SS *Fitzroy* came about because dangerous ice conditions caused the 'Most Secret Operation Tabarin' to abandon its plan to set up a base at Hope Bay. The nine men actually slept on board ship until the 17th, when they moved ashore. Two days later the roof of their prefabricated Boulton and Paul 'Spitsbergen' hut was in place.

This year's wardens, Peter Milner, David Wattam and Rick Atkinson were able to take enough time off to celebrate both events with an anniversary dinner.



1944 - with Bransfield House nearing completion, the next task was to erect the ex-Army Nissen hut. Photo: Gwion Davies. © British Antarctic Survey.



Plan drawn by Capt. Taylor, photo of plan by I. M. Lamb, 1944, courtesy of British Antarctic Survey Archives.

Ross Sea Huts Appeal

Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds has been included in the World Monuments Fund (WMF) 2004 Watch List of the 100 Most Endangered Sites. This is a significant listing for the hut which not only confirms the international significance of the site but brings it to international attention. The New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust is now preparing Conservation Plans for Scott's Discovery hut at Hut Point, his Terra Nova hut at Cape Evans, and for the huts at Cape Adare of Scott's northern party and Borchgrevink's 1899-1900 expedition.

The New Zealand work party this year which included a historian, carpenter (ex BAS) and two conservators spent time at the huts at Cape Royds, Cape Evans and Hut Point. They undertook basic maintenance, removal of snow and ice from inside the huts (particularly at Cape Evans) and continued the task of assessing, documenting and photographing the artefact collection.

Parallel with implementing the plans for the huts go the fundraising efforts. Substantial contributions have been made by some donors, including the James Caird Society which made the project its sponsored charity for both last year and this. The UKAHT has set up a fundraising Sub-Committee to support the project.

Great Scott!

My mother was 13 when the news of the Scott tragedy hit the streets of a small town in Lancashire. She might have been amongst those one and a half million children who, four days later, were told the story at school. Her contribution to the Scott phenomenon is that I am writing this, and the only thing I recall her reading to me was the Scott story!

In the earlier days Scott was pre-eminent. Shackleton was there but did not carry the same clout. Then came Huntford's lop-sided book about Scott and Amundsen that so distorted the public view of Scott, but did nothing to change the view of those who had done their homework, either at first hand with Scott's diary or at the knee of Cherry Garrard's *"Worst Journey..."*. While it remained the case that "Scott and Shackleton" were almost always bracketed together when explaining the phenomenon of continuing British interest and activity in the Antarctic, the duo began to look a bit frayed at the edges in the 1970s and '80s. Scott had been "done over" and Shackleton's day had not yet come. When it did, it was from an unexpected quarter – from America, which had hardly been noted for its interest in British polar history hitherto. An American, Caroline Alexander, brilliantly discovered Shackleton (and Mrs Chippy the cat), the *New York Times* wrote of "Shackleton mania", a sensitive IMAX film of the *Endurance* expedition was made, and the *James Caird* gained iconic status for a while in New York. In America – and here – Shackleton had climbed the greasy pole. Scott remained in the doldrums.

The clouds over Scott, however, soon began to lift, revealing a remarkable trans-Atlantic reassessment.

It began with two authors, one American and the other English. Both Tim Baughman's *Pilgrims on the ice: Robert Falcon Scott's first Antarctic Expedition* and David Yelverton's *Antarctica unveiled. Scott's first expedition and the quest for the unknown continent*, took a long hard look at Scott's first expedition, the first to penetrate far from the coast and the first to have a terrestrial science programme, one that still influences Antarctic science today. Baughman is a disinterested historian; the same cannot be said of Yelverton: the purpose of his meticulously detailed research is to refute, hook line and sinker, the misrepresentations of earlier accounts. His decision to join battle on the basis of the *Discovery* expedition when Scott, pushing the frontiers on so many counts, could have made so many mistakes and, in the event, made so few, was well judged.

A year after Yelverton's book, the battlefield moved to Scott's last expedition. The first, and mighty, salvo was fired by Susan Solomon in *The coldest march; Scott's fatal Antarctic expedition*. Solomon, a distinguished Antarctic scientist in her own right, had sceptically heard someone at the American Antarctic McMurdo station, with Hut Point in their daily view, remark disparagingly about "Scott, the loser". She convincingly demonstrated that Scott had not been whingeing about the temperatures he had encountered while marching in March 1912 on "the Barrier" – they were abnormally cold – and by so doing she was the first to add a substantial and crucial body of new fact to the Scott legend.

The immediate impact of the Scott story, and its continuing vitality through a century of such great change as might have been expected entirely to have extinguished it, has been a remarkable phenomenon. Max Jones's *The last great quest; Captain Scott's Antarctic sacrifice* provides an historian's detailed survey of how the story of the

Two more books for your collection...

...a couple of books I have recently come across stand out from the crowd not just for their excellence but for being good value.

The complete story - Antarctica edited by David McGonigal and Dr Lynn Woodworth. Published originally in Australia and now in the UK by Frances Lincoln. £39.99 isbn 0711222851. 608 pages. A beautifully presented and weighty volume, it covers everything you may want to know about Antarctica. It is clearly set out, full of fantastic photographs, diagrams and maps and well indexed. With much comparison to the Arctic it places Antarctica in the polar context to provide a truly complete book for both beginner and expert.

The Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife by Hadoram Shirihai, published in the USA by Princeton University Press, and in the EU but Alula Press Oy, Finland 10160. About £45. isbn 06911 14145. 510 pages packed with comprehensive and detailed information, photographs, illustrations and maps covering birds and marine mammals of the Southern Ocean (including the sub-Antarctic islands). Yet it is still small enough to pack in your suitcase.

Dates for your diary...

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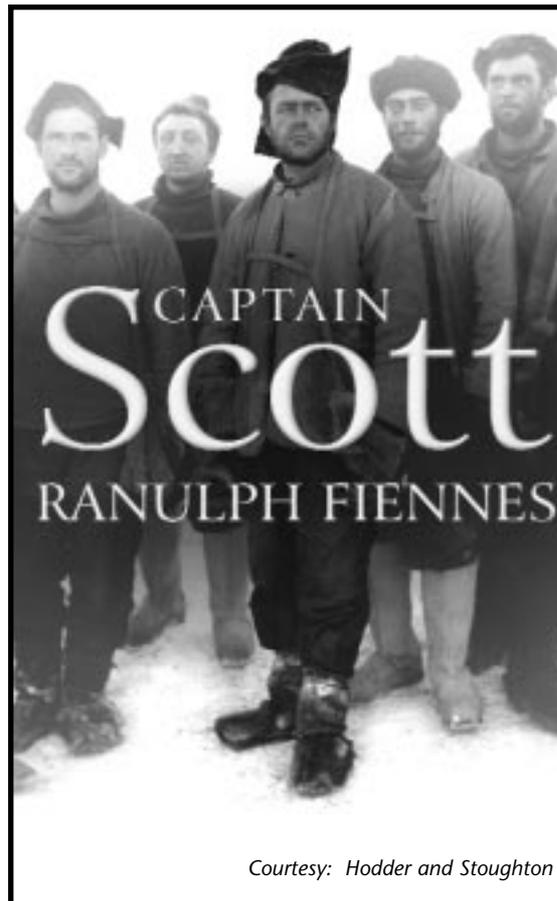
tragedy was received in both Britain and abroad in that short but seminal period between the sinking of the *Titanic* and the First World War. His conclusion that the story was not in any sense "spin doctored" in today's jargon, and that its vitality so many years later remains an exceptional phenomenon, leads on in a way to Ranulph Fiennes's simply titled *Captain Scott*.

Fiennes brings a unique "been there, done that" realism to his telling of the story. Fiennes and Stroud followed in Scott's returning footsteps after themselves having reached the Pole on the day that Scott had reached it so many years before; they had a clearer insight into the awfulness of Scott's descent of the Beardmore Glacier and of the unending march across the featureless Ross Ice Shelf than can be vouchsafed to anyone who has not "been there and done that". Before his Antarctic crossing, Fiennes took Huntford's book at its own estimation; after it, he was vexed, to say the least, that those who had not had that experience could be so critical of Scott – justice needed to be seen to be done.

Has justice been done? There will be many views on that but, for me, these five books about Scott, all published between 1999 and 2003, and in their different ways, have added a great deal to what we know about Scott. Readers of Caroline Alexander's *The Endurance. Shackleton's legendary Antarctic expedition*, or viewers of the film will have felt the powerful aura of Shackleton's leadership. By similar token, readers of these books about Scott will find it very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Scott's place amongst the greats is rightfully his. It is right that Shackleton has joined Scott in equal

partnership; it is right, too, that Scott's reputation has been revived at the hands of scrupulous history and science and relevant experience. In these days of instant celebrities, one may wonder whether a century on the Scott legend will still have the fascination it does today – Max Jones makes me think there is a good chance it will. But, for my part, I am content that my mother would have been able to claim that she was in step with history!

John Heap - March 2004



Courtesy: Hodder and Stoughton

1 August 2004

and the Antarctic at the Natural History Museum, Admission free. Artist John Kelly went of the 'Artists' and Writers' Programme'. The work is the vast scale of the Antarctic the sense of loneliness it represents. Further 7942 5000 or www.nhm.ac.uk

(his birthday) 2pm Rededication of the Scott Monument in **Plymouth**. To celebrate the centenary of the Memorial and the Park by English Heritage. For more information from Colin Walker - Plymouth 01752 307025, colin.walker@plymouth.gov.uk

2004
 centenary of the return of the 'Discovery' to the UK in 1904: Regatta/boat races on the Tay, organised by the Scottish Royal Philharmonic Society, a Ladies' Dinner and a half marathon.

AND

- Saturday 18 September 2004
 A major centenary dinner in **London** to celebrate the return of the 'Discovery' expedition will be held as a fundraiser for RRS 'Discovery'. To be held in the prestigious surroundings of The Great Room at Christie's, King Street, St. James's which they are kindly providing free of charge. Further details on www.rrsdiscovery.com.
- 28-30 June 2004
 'Discovery' centenary conference in Southampton: "A Century of 'Discovery': Antarctic Exploration and the Southern Ocean. An International Symposium" at the Southampton Oceanography Centre. Details at www.soc.soton.ac.uk/Discovery/
- 23 - 24 July 2004
 Community events at Millport on the Isle of Cumbrae will mark the centenary of the return of the SY Scotia to **Scotland** in July 1904. Scotia Centenary celebrations continue with a schools programme and competition organised by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Further details on www.rsgs.org