Over the last twenty years, more than 200,000 people have passed through the doors at Port Lockroy and gained first hand experience of life as one of Antarctica’s earliest scientists.

Visitors tell us...
“...what an inspiring historical record - a wonderful snapshot of a very tough existence. It is a privilege to be here and to receive such a warm welcome.”

Our supporters tell us...
“Our passengers love to visit Port Lockroy - they like the professionalism of your staff, the friendly and helpful atmosphere and the lovely detailed design of the historical base. And the expedition team loves the perfect communication.”

“We are very impressed with how the operation has evolved over the past few years. The level of conscientiousness embedded within the staff was very clear. They are extraordinary: good fun, hard-working and good-natured throughout. Your selection and training process is clearly very effective: the results speak for themselves. Well done.”
2013 marks the twentieth anniversary of the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust’s work. We are delighted to be marking this milestone and we are rightfully proud of our achievements.

Most of Antarctica’s historic heritage is British. This is indicative of Britain’s long and distinguished involvement on the Antarctic continent. Over the last twenty years we have worked in the UK and on the Antarctic Peninsula to safeguard the last remaining physical legacies of that involvement.

From small beginnings in 1993 the Trust has grown to become a leading voice on all matters of Britain’s Antarctic heritage. The Trust has grown in influence and is well respected both in the UK and on the international stage.

Rachel Morgan, Director.
Who we are

Since its foundation, the Trust has received exceptional support from its Patron, HRH The Princess Royal. Over the years we have benefitted from the vice patronage of Sir Edmund Hillary KG, Lady Philippa Scott, Sir Vivian Fuchs, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Dr Dafila Scott and Dr Charles Swithinbank.

The UKAHT was born in 1993 out of the vision and energy of founding Chairman John Hamilton, who was inspired by the need to recognise and conserve Britain’s long and distinguished history of exploration and scientific research.

Philippa Foster Back OBE took over as Chairman in 2006. She has steered the Trust through its rapid expansion on the Peninsula, the £6m Ross Sea Huts campaign, a comprehensive media engagement programme and a landmark commemorative service at St Paul’s Cathedral to mark the Centenary of Captain Scott’s expedition.

In 1993, John Heap took the helm and with Peter Hetherington and Pat McLaren paved the way for the Trust to take a more active role in Antarctic affairs.

What we do

Our Mission: The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust works to conserve Antarctic buildings and artefacts and to promote and encourage the public’s interest in its Antarctic heritage.

The work of the Trust is funded largely through our successful trading operation at Port Lockroy. During the first 12 years of its existence the Trust’s average annual turnover was £56,000. In the subsequent six years its average annual turnover rose tenfold to over half a million pounds, largely as a result of trading. But this significant rise in turnover also reflects c. £230,000 in grant aid which has been brought in for the conservation of the Peninsula huts, £14,000 in grant aid for the Oral History Project as well as £3.5 million designated for the Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project.

Our work is made possible through the support of our loyal membership, visitors to Port Lockroy, and key stakeholders: members of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Polar Regions Department, and the British Antarctic Survey.

Our membership base has grown from 50 to over 700 in the last 20 years with an active following on Facebook and Twitter. We run an active programme for our ‘Friends of Antarctica’ members with biannual events around the UK.

Our conservation work on the Peninsula has been recognised by the international Antarctic community. The Trust was recently awarded the Royal Geographical Society’s Geographic Award for our “outstanding work to further learning through historical Antarctic expeditions”.

We coordinate Antarctica 100, a group of over 50 institutions with an interest in Antarctic heritage. This is a mutually-supportive group which works to share knowledge and resources to further the public’s awareness of Britain’s long and distinguished story of Antarctic endeavour.

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Where we work

The UKAHT operates with a small permanent team in the UK and sends staff to the Antarctic Peninsula annually to manage our flagship project at Port Lockroy and undertake conservation works at other bases.

So far - on the Antarctic Peninsula - spending £270,000, the Trust has:

- Preserved four British Historic Sites and Monuments (Port Lockroy, Wordie, Damoy, Detaille) ensuring they are structurally secure and weathertight (and planning to on two more - Horseshoe and Stonington).
- Reconstructed the Nissen hut at Port Lockroy to provide modern fit-for-purpose accommodation for our staff.
- Maintained and continually improved the museum at Port Lockroy which is now the most visited site in Antarctica.
- Run a highly successful gift shop at Port Lockroy with an annual turnover of approximately £100,000 (a figure which has quintupled since 2006) which generates vital revenue for conservation of the historic huts.
- Operated the most successful British Antarctic Territory Post Office on behalf of the Government of the British Antarctic Territory, generating additional income for the Trust from the sale of philatelic items.
- Provided financial support for other polar institutions in the UK helping to grow public support.

Port Lockroy is the site for the post office we operate on behalf of the Government of the British Antarctic Territory.

Director, Rachel Morgan, has been with the Trust for 13 years. Prior to that she wintered at Rothera Research Station on the Antarctic Peninsula and worked at the Royal Geographical Society.

Management and care of all the historic sites involves routine maintenance to protect the buildings from the weather.

Detaille HSM no 83

66°52’S  66°48’W

Detaille Island ‘Base W’ was used for the purposes of survey, geological and meteorological research along the Loubet Coast. It was occupied for only three winters, being evacuated in March 1959 when sea ice and bad weather made relief by ship impossible. Extensive repair and maintenance work to the hut and emergency store was undertaken in 2011 and 2013 by small teams from the Trust. In February 2013, for the first time in 53 years, the postage facility was re-instated.

In February 2013, for the first time in 53 years, the post office was re-opened temporarily.

Tudor Morgan, Anna Malaoa, and Michael Powell have been the Trust’s mainstay of Peninsula conservation for the last few years.

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Our flagship project is the management of British 'Base A' at Port Lockroy on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Port Lockroy on Goudier Island was recognised in 1994 for its historical importance as the first base built during the secret WW2 Operation Tabarin. The base was built in 1944 and was home to scientific investigation after the war, but was abandoned in 1962 as science programmes moved to more modern research stations elsewhere. For thirty years the buildings at Port Lockroy lay abandoned until 1996 when they were restored to their original 1962 condition and opened to visitors during the Antarctic summer.

In 2011 we completed the reconstruction of the wartime Nissen hut to provide fit for purpose accommodation for the staff. Its innovative adaptation won an award from the Institute of Structural Engineers.

Each year we recruit a team of three or four talented and enthusiastic staff to work at Port Lockroy for the season promoting the legacy of British scientists’ early work to visitors. The application process for the position of Port Lockroy Assistant is rigorous: selection is based on the individual’s practical skills and personal attributes as well as their ability to live in a harsh and remote environment with basic facilities. The reward, of course, is the opportunity of a lifetime.

Deception HSM no 71
62°59’S 60°34’W

British ‘Base B’, was established as part of the wartime Operation Tabarin, occupying the abandoned Hektor whaling station. A centre for aerial survey, it was abandoned after the eruption at Deception Island in 1967 and is now an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) managed by several nations. We are supportive of heritage conservation plans.
Horseshoe HSM no 63
67°48’S  67°18’W
Horseshoe ‘Base Y’ on Horseshoe Island in Marguerite Bay, with its outpost Blaiklock Hut, was established in March 1955 to cover the work on the Southern Peninsula, previously carried out from Stonington which had proved difficult to access by ship. However, Horseshoe had its own access problems (survey teams getting onto the mainland) and closed in August 1960. The excellent condition and completeness of both the buildings and artefacts are of considerable historical significance; together they provide a very special time-capsule of British life and science in the Antarctic during the late 1950s. There are an estimated 10,000 artefacts on site.

Stonington HSM no 64
68°11’S  67°00’W
Stonington ‘Base E’ on Stonington Island in Marguerite Bay was established in February 1946 and had two periods of operation from 1946–50 and 1960–75. The famous polar explorer Sir Vivian Fuchs was the Base Commander in 1948 and 1949. The station closed in 1950 due to continuing difficulties in relief by ship, caused by bad sea ice conditions but reopened again in 1960 when a new hut was erected. The scientific research carried out at the station included topographic survey, geology and meteorology. ‘Base E’ is adjacent to the US Antarctic Service Expedition ‘East Base’ built in 1939, later occupied by the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition - also a historic site.

In October 1947, four sledgers from ‘Base D’ at Hope Bay (on the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula) set out to do the first traverse of the Peninsula along the east coast to Stonington Island; some 600 miles further south. Just over half way into their challenging journey, they met a group who had sledged out from Stonington to meet them and together the teams completed the final leg of the crossing. The trip had taken 71 days and 200 miles of new coastline had been surveyed. It was also the first journey between two bases. The image shows members from both ‘Base D’ and ‘Base E’ just after their arrival at Stonington.

Wordie HSM no 62
65°15’S  64°16’W
Wordie House, ‘Base F’, on Winter Island is of historic importance as an example of an early British scientific research station. It was built in January 1947 by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) on the site of the northern base of the 1930s British Graham Land Expedition (BGLE). FIDS had intended to use the BGLE hut which they had checked out the previous year but arrived to find that the hut had been washed away by a tidal wave. The men had to return to Port Lockroy and dismantle half the hut built just three years earlier. The base closed in May 1954 when a new base was established on nearby Galindez Island. In 2010 the Trust sent a team of two skilled carpenters to Wordie to replace the roof and the next phase will be to bolster the rotting floor.

Damoy HSM no 84
64°49’S  63°31’W
Damoy Refuge lies in Dorian Bay on Wiencke Island. It was originally built as a summer air facility with a skiway close by. It was intermittently occupied from 1973 to 1993 when it provided a transit station for those personnel and stores which had arrived by ship to be flown on to Rothera Research Station in early summer when sea ice prevented direct access to the station by sea. This hut represents the pre-modern era of Antarctic science and logistics. For the past three years the Port Lockroy season staff have visited Damoy to carry out general upkeep and maintenance tasks.

Reclus Hut
Carefully dismantled in 1996 and re-erected with its artefacts in the Falkland Islands Museum
Reclus Hut, also known as Portal Point, was built in 1956 on an exposed area of rock close to the sea on the tip of Cape Reclus. In 1957, three men from Danco Island (‘Base O’) wintered in the small hut in order to carry out local survey work. During the same winter, a team of four men from Hope Bay (‘Base D’), including the famous polar explorer Sir Wally Herbert, set out on an epic sledge journey with two teams of dogs to make the first East-West crossing of the Antarctic Peninsula; the team from Reclus Hut laid depots for this team and looked for a suitable route for them. The Hope Bay team made the epic journey to Reclus Hut in 54 days.
British Antarctic Oral History Project

Oral history differs from personal diaries; time lends distance and a degree of reflection and recordings can often elicit the idiosyncrasies of events not otherwise recorded in writing. Official records of more recent Antarctic activity are often silent about the personal stories and experiences which are the elements that really bring history to life. To preserve those memories we have established the project as the principal funder in collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), BAS Club and the Scott Polar Research Institute. Additional funding has come from the FCO and Capital International. Now over 200 audio and video recordings lie with the BAS Archives Service. The recollections offer us a unique, often entertaining insight into personal, social, political and scientific interactions and varied perspectives on the challenges and eccentricities of living in one of the world’s most remote environments.

Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project

We support our sister trust, the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust (NZAHT), in protecting four historic buildings in the Ross Sea Region of Antarctica on the opposite side of the continent to the Peninsula sites.

Forde, Debenham, Taylor and Gran on their return from the Western sledging journey, British Antarctic Expedition 1911

Shackleton’s hut at Cape Royds has been saved for future generations

Alan Wright also had the presence of mind to record the howling huskies for posterity and they form a particularly evocative part of the oral history project

Alan Wright Surveyor 1961-62 recalls: “I had one experience on Mount Bransfield – I lost the tent. It is bad weather up there – you’re in the cloud very often and you can’t see any detail. I went out to feed the dogs and then went to the toilet, and I lost the tent – completely! Luckily by then I knew how you could make the dogs howl. So I worked my way upwind and howled, which I hoped would set the dogs off. Then I went downwind and I picked up the sound of the dogs, so I could go back upwind to the dogs, and then I found the tent.”

Falcon Scott assisted with conservation works on his grandfather’s hut in 2012

There are four historic huts from the heroic era in this region most notably those at Cape Royds and Cape Evans, built by Ernest Shackleton in 1907 and Robert Falcon Scott in 1911 respectively which have been included on the World Monuments Fund Watch List of 100 most endangered sites. These and two other huts at Discovery Point built by Scott in 1907, and Cape Adare built by Carsten Borchgrevink in 1898 and the thousands of artefacts they contain constitute the only remaining physical legacy from man’s first attempt to establish a toehold, even temporarily, on the brutally inhospitable Antarctic continent.

The UKAH T has helped to generate £3.5 million in funds which went directly towards the NZAHT’s long-term cold climate conservation programme which is ensuring these buildings are protected for future generations.

“Once lost, they are lost forever. Historic buildings in Antarctica stand as monuments to the dedicated work of their inhabitants and as witnesses to the details of their everyday existence.”
We jointly facilitated the biggest polar gathering in modern times - a service at St Paul’s Cathedral on 29 March 2012 to commemorate the death of Captain Scott and the Pole party. Readers included HRH The Princess Royal and Sir David Attenborough. This was the culmination of a series of events and exhibitions during the three-year Scott Centenary celebrations in 2010-13, many of which were supported by us.

Outreach and Education

We produce a biannual newsletter - The Antarctic Times - to update our members on our work and latest news. In addition the Trust has published five Antarctic publications (Fit for a Fid, Southern Horizons, Britain’s Antarctic Heritage, A History of Port Lockroy, Tip of the Iceberg) and has commissioned a forthcoming Port Lockroy museum guide. We have also produced three Antarctic maps (which now sell over 1500 copies per year), an annual calendar (selling 1000 copies per year) and a briefing DVD for cruise ship passengers landing at Port Lockroy.

Support

Our staff and supporters are instrumental in making the Trust work so successfully. We now have more than 700 ‘Friends of Antarctica’ members and numerous corporate sponsors. We would especially like to thank the Bill Butlin Charitable Trust; The Sherman Foundation; the Garfield Weston Foundation; Hapag Lloyd; the Sir Edward Lewis Foundation, Capital International; the Government of the British Antarctic Territory, and F.E. Mars Jr. for their generous financial support. And for support in kind from IAATO operators in particular Hurtigruten and Lindblad Expeditions; SkyEye Communications; Tog24; and Jeldwen. We thank the British Antarctic Survey and HM Navy for their continuing support. We are enormously grateful to Jonathan Selby and Alan Carroll who untiringly give their time and expertise in support of our work.

The future

The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust is now looking forward to another twenty years continuing to safeguard these unique and vulnerable buildings for the benefit of the international community so that those who visit may return home with a new understanding of the past endeavours of the men who pioneered life in the Antarctic. It will continue to spearhead heritage outreach projects in the UK, and promote British’s importance in the history of Antarctica.

www.ukaht.org