

# South Georgia Association Newsletter

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The next Annual General Meeting will be on May 23, 2008.



## The Sixth Annual General Meeting, 18 May 2007

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, St James, London

35 members including members of the Committee attended. Another 17 members, including the President, Stephen Venables, Newsletter Editor, Bob Burton, and Membership Secretary, Lizzy Hawker, sent their apologies.

The Chairman, Richard Ralph, welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Sally Poncet from the Falkland Islands, Gerry Adamson, (FCO representative), Charles Swithinbank, Howard Pearce (South Georgia Heritage Trust) and Jon Edgar (sculptor). He noted the sad news of the death of Duncan Carse's widow, Venetia Kempe, during the preceding year. In reporting the Association's programme of activities over the past year, Richard Ralph highlighted the interesting guided tour of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (which it was hoped to repeat), and the lectures and reception to mark the 25th Anniversary of the retaking of South Georgia. The Duncan Carse bust was now in place at the Museum at Grytviken, the SGA having been pleased to support this project. We were proud to have supported the South Georgia Survey's historic site survey through donations from the Initiative Fund. Howard Pearce had retired as Commissioner, to be succeeded by Alan Huckle. The SGA welcomed the appointment of Harriet Hall as first Chief Executive of GSGSSI, and the earlier publication of the South Georgia budget on the official website, a notable advance in terms of transparency. The SGA also welcomed the reduction in the killing of albatrosses on fishing lines around South Georgia, but regretted to note a distressing reduction in the numbers of breeding pairs in various sites around the Island. The Association still hoped to have the opportunity to present the Carrs with the inscribed picture to mark their retirement from South Georgia. The Newsletter had maintained its admirably high standard, for which Bob Burton was congratulated. The SGA now had a new logo, and plans were afoot to produce postcards of the design. Fran Prince would represent the SGA at the 90th anniversary celebrations of the Sandefjord Whaling Museum. The Chairman thanked the committee and officers for their efforts over the year, and the GSGSSI for its positive interaction.

Richard Ralph reported that he had conveyed to the GSGSSI the SGA's concerns about the Prion Island boardwalk following the resolution passed at the previous AGM, and had received a courteous response. The South Georgia Government had taken note of the representations made by the SGA and others, had created a period for consultation, but eventually had decided to proceed with construction of

the boardwalk. However, they would review the situation in the light of experience, and did not exclude adjusting, or even dismantling, the boardwalk. It was confirmed that an environmental impact assessment had indeed been undertaken. The Chairman said that the SGA executive committee would keep a watchful eye on the situation, and liaise with the Commissioner when the boardwalk was reviewed.

In Lizzy Hawker's absence, Fran Prince reported that the SGA currently had 346 paid-up members from 20 countries and three corporate members. It was proving difficult to encourage members who had taken out a 5-year subscription (when the Association was set up) to renew their membership, though two thirds had done so far.

Unaudited accounts had been distributed with the AGM notice. The accounts had now been independently examined and signed by Mr John Bawden. John Bawden was thanked for auditing the SGA accounts. Total assets within the current and deposit account amounted to £22,000. This year £4,500 had been received from subscriptions, £260 in interest, and £4,650 for the Duncan Carse bust appeal.

Bob Burton had sent a message that he was pleased with the two publications of the newsletter produced over the last year, particularly the article by Ken Passfield on the historic sites survey, and the anecdotal articles by Steve Chellingsworth and Michael Gilkes. He appealed for more material for future editions, plus any photos, notes or artefacts for incorporation into the historic sites database.

Given the relatively comfortable state of the Association's finances, and in order to encourage more applications, the Committee had decided to increase the amount available for awards under the Initiative Fund to £500 per quarter. This year funding had been received by South Georgia Surveys for the South Georgia historic survey programme (article in April 2007 Newsletter by Ken Passfield) and by Mr Thomas Binnie, who was compiling a book of historic South Georgia photographs taken by his grandfather, E.B. Binnie, who had been a magistrate at South Georgia for many years.

The Chairman thanked Stephen Venables on the completion of his term of office as President and reported that Charles Swithinbank had accepted an invitation to become the new president. This was approved by acclamation. With the exception of Stephanie Martin all members of the committee were willing to stand for re-election. Charles Swithinbank suggested that the Executive Committee be elected en bloc. This was proposed by Patrick Fagan, seconded by Ros Marsden, and passed unanimously by the members present.

The Committee comprises

President: Charles Swithinbank

Chairman: Richard Ralph

Secretary: Fran Prince

Treasurer: Keith Holmes

Membership Secretary: Elizabeth Hawker

Newsletter editor: Bob Burton

Members: Bob Headland, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Jane Tanton, Ron Lewis-Smith, David Tatham. Corresponding Members remain as: Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP), Trevor Potts, Dan Weinstein (USA)

Gerry Adamson read the Commissioner's report to the meeting (see below), which was received with interest.

We were pleased to have Jon Edgar at the meeting. He spoke of his friendship with the Carse family, and how he had created the bust of Duncan Carse, which had eventually been unveiled at Grytviken by Alec Trendall. The Chairman thanked him, saying that the SGA were proud to have supported this work of art.

Howard Pearce was congratulated on his appointment as Director of The South Georgia Heritage Trust, and was invited to report on its activities. He said that SGHT was established in 2005, as a means to channel funds from non-government sources to be spent on South Georgia. It was felt that many visitors who came to South Georgia wished to contribute funds. David Nicholls had been the driving force behind the SGHT creation and Howard Pearce thanked Richard Ralph for his tribute on David Nicholls' untimely death. The SGHT was based in Dundee with branches in Norway and the USA. It had charitable status in UK and was tax-deductible in the US. Its objective was to raise money for South Georgia and then spend it. The SGHT gives grants to (1) promote and protect indigenous flora and fauna (2) preserve South Georgia's historical sites and promote human interest. There is an international board of trustees from UK, USA, Norway and Sweden. Alison Neill is the Director, based in Dundee. The President is Alistair Fothergill and the Patron HRH The Princess Royal. The SGHT had completed two projects: (1) signs at Grytviken; (2) the restoration of the exterior of the manager's villa at Husvik - tribute to be paid to the Norwegian branch. Three further projects were in train: (1) Second element of Husvik restoration, to renovate the interior so it could be used by expeditions and scientists; (2) to acquire a replica of James Caird currently in the USA for the South Georgia museum; (3) habitat restoration, primarily to eradicate the rats on South Georgia (very important). Funds were available for this, and it might take 6-7 years to complete. Other ideas were (1) further development of Discovery House (2) restoration of the Manager's Villa at Stromness. Fundraising had only got started this year. There was a grant from US Islands Foundation for \$¾ million over three years for the habitat restoration project, plus £20,000 from a UK foundation for the same project. The SGHT were encouraged by this start.

Howard Pearce was keen that the SGHT and SGA should work closely together. They were complementary. But it was important to avoid duplication. They could perhaps join forces on certain projects, including their funding.

John Gallsworthy asked about the re-roofing of the Grytviken church. If there was no use for a building, would it be knocked down? Mr Pearce replied that he would need to ask the SG Government. The recent clean-up operation did involve the demolition of some buildings, but the Government's intention was to keep the buildings as intact as possible. The Government had taken responsibility for the Museum and surrounding buildings. The SGHT would

consider proposals to help restoration. The Chairman thanked Howard Pearce and congratulated him on the success of SGHT. He echoed the complementary natures of the two organisations.

The Programme for 2007 – 2008 is planned to include a visit to HMS *Endurance* at Portsmouth on 7 July. An exhibition on the Letters Patent of 2008 would start off at the Scott Polar Research Institute and then travel elsewhere. It would show two examples of legislation: the unsuccessful attempt to control the whaling industry compared with the modern situation of successful fishing control. Proposals were put forward for a visit to *SS Great Britain* in Bristol, and an evening of historic film footage in Cambridge.

Richard Ralph drew members' attention to a proposal for a special cruise to the Falklands, South Georgia, South Orkneys and the Antarctic Peninsula in 2008 aboard *Professor Multanowsky*. (Contact details are given on page 8 of this newsletter.)

#### **Any other business**

Sally Poncet offered thanks for the financial assistance provided from the Initiative Fund for South Georgia Surveys to conduct the historic survey in 2006/2007. This information would be going straight into the GIS database at British Antarctic Survey, along with information from the Petrel Survey that had now completed its second year. Results from this showed that Giant Petrels were doing well, but White-chinned Petrels less so. Wandering Albatross showed a 13% drop on Bird Island, similarly on Prion Island. Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatross continued to show a 3-5% drop in numbers. It appeared that these species were being killed off South America in the tuna and swordfish fisheries. South Georgia Surveys planned to continue with survey work but lacked funding at present. Sally personally thought the boardwalk at Prion Island would be a waste of time and money, and was not the optimal solution. The public would have access to the GIS database which would also hold information on glacial retreat and tourism.

Jamie Watts observed that the South Georgia Government was leading the way with the reduction of seabird bycatch within the fishery industry. The problem now was plastic being ingested by birds.

Ros Marsden offered tea and coffee to members visiting Duncan Carse's grave at Kings Lynn.

The meeting ended at 8:20 and was followed by an illustrated lecture by Ben Sullivan, RSPB, on *Albatrosses in the Southern Ocean, threats, challenges and solutions*.

#### **Maiviken revisited**



In the last issue, Steve Chellingsworth told how he lodged in a cave at Maiviken (The South Georgia Sheraton), while acting as 'gash hand' for a botanist, and improved the furniture with an all-purpose plank. Here is the botanist, Ron Lewis-Smith, with both wooden and lithic furniture, also with some of the original whalers' iron frying pans, now removed. Does anyone know where they are now?

## Message from the Commissioner of SG and SSI

I am delighted to have this opportunity, so soon after my first visit to South Georgia as Commissioner, to send a message to the South Georgia Association. Whilst I was able to spend only three days on the Island, it gave me an appreciation of the stark beauty of the place and the importance of preserving its pristine environment.

It has been a busy year for the South Georgia Government. We published 'Plan for Progress', the Government's review of the Environmental Management Plan and programme for the next five years (see our website).

Tourist visits increased again (51 cruise ships and some 5330 passenger landings but only 13 yacht visits and three expeditions). This level of visitor pressure requires close monitoring. Last season, we issued a stricter Code of Conduct for Cape Rosa and will draw up site-specific guidelines for the most sensitive and heavily visited landing sites.

Sally Poncet and her team have completed the fieldwork on the Government-sponsored survey of petrels, which will help us to meet one of our major commitments under the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrel (ACAP).

Our Habitat Restoration Officer, Darren Christie, has completed a successful field study on the population and distribution of the common rat and will now produce a feasibility report on rat eradication. He will also examine the problem of the hairy bittercress, which continues to flourish. We hope to have heightened biosecurity measures for all visitors in place before next summer. Richard McKee will present the plan to IAATO in June.

A major achievement was the accreditation of the South Georgia fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council. US demand for our toothfish is encouraging. We also saw improvements in reducing bird mortality in the longline fishery, with only four birds reported as being killed so far.

I know that there is concern about the decision to construct a boardwalk on Prion Island. We delayed installation to allow time for modifications following your comments on the Initial Environmental Evaluation. We have decided to go ahead with construction but will closely monitor the effect on the albatross. If there is, we shall consider closing the island to tourist visitors.

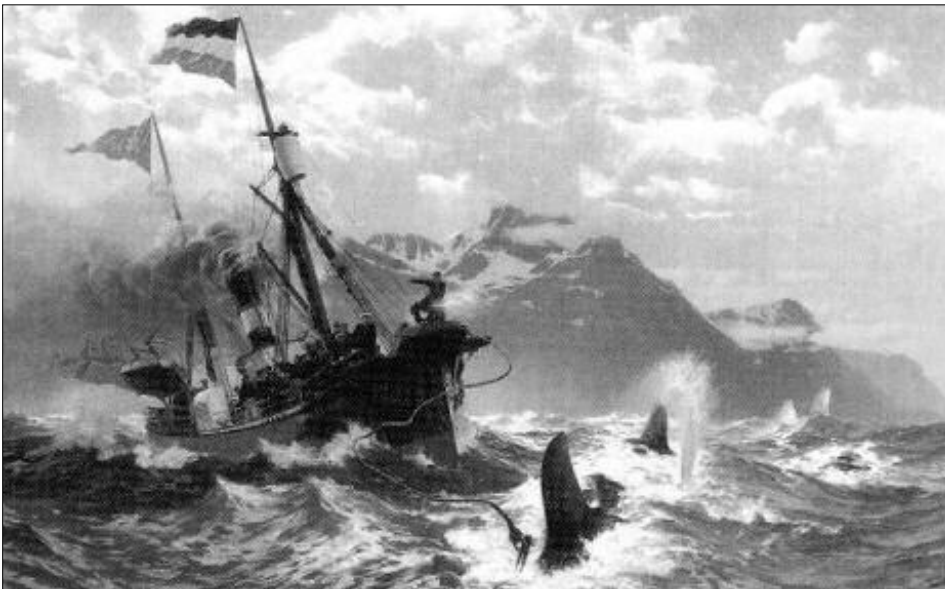
On capital projects, Morrison (Falklands) Ltd have carried out a detailed study of the dam above Grytviken. Initial indications are encouraging and we hope to reintroduce hydroelectric power in early 2009, reducing our dependence on fossil fuel.

I must recognise the contribution made to South Georgia by David Nicholls, who sadly passed away last year. He will be sorely missed. So too, will Gordon Liddle, although his new work at Dundee University will allow him to remain closely engaged with South Georgia. His departure has led to a reorganisation in the South Georgia Government. We have created a new role of Chief Executive Officer. Harriet Hall will take up the post in mid-July.

I look forward to working closely with the South Georgia Association and wish you a successful AGM.

**Alan Huckle**

## *Lille Carl*: a famous sealer and whaler



*Lille Carl with Kaiser Wilhelm on board. Carl Saltzmann's painting is one of the most dramatic illustrations ever made of a whale hunt.*

*Lille Carl* was a vessel with an illustrious history, which included carrying Kaiser Wilhelm II. She whaled and sealed at South Georgia for over half a century and, when she arrived in 1907, she had already served 21 seasons in the Arctic. She was built in 1884 as *Duncan Grey*, said to be named for one of the British shareholder's sons. There is, however, an 18th-century folk ballad *Duncan Gray* (usually spelled with an 'a'), which is a fairly explicit bawdy ballad.

*Duncan Grey* started whaling near Tromsø in 1885 and she was joined by another whaler re-named *Nancy Grey*,

allegedly after the British shareholder's daughter.

The development of cruise-ship tourism in northern Norway after the 1870s coincided with the expansion of modern shore whaling off the same coast. Several whaling stations became leviathanic tourist attractions in spite of their stench and gore. On 15 July 1892, the German emperor Wilhelm II, made a 13-hour pleasure whaling trip on *Duncan Grey*, and a sei whale was harpooned. The maritime court painter Carl Saltzmann commemorated the monarch's hunt in a very dramatic painting. Versions were quickly published in illustrated magazines worldwide.

Shore whaling operations along the Norwegian coast were banned after the 1904 season. *Duncan Grey* and *Nancy Grey* were transferred to Spitzbergen

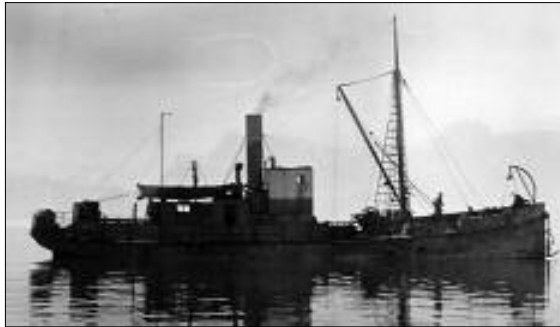
waters in 1905 and were renamed *Carl* and *Mathilde*, after Carl Suchard, of the Swiss chocolate firm which was a major investor in the whaling company, and his wife. They then went to South Georgia in 1907 with the floating factory *Bucentaur* to work from Husvik Harbour.

*Mathilde* sank in 1907 and *Carl* was bought by CA Larsen's Pesca in 1910 to work at Grytviken. Since the new owners already operated a somewhat larger whaler by the name of *Carl*, the new purchase was renamed *Lille Carl* (Little Carl). *Lille Carl* took right, humpback and fin whales, before being assigned to tow flensed whales to the floating carcass rendering factory (skrottkokeri) *Nor* and then deployed for elephant sealing and as a buoy boat. Harpoon

cannon, whale winch and accumulator system were removed in early 1911. As a buoy boat, *Lille Carl* is said to have towed into Grytviken, in 1912, the largest whale ever recorded: a female blue whale of 33.58 m.

The complement of Pesca's sealing vessels gradually changed their national composition from predominantly Norwegian to Slavic and Argentinian. In the vernacular of the Spanish-speaking, Argentinian crew, the Norwegian name of *Lille Carl* became *Carlito*. In the early years, Konrad E. Johannessen was *Lille Carl's* master. He was nicknamed 'poker'n' for his notorious fondness of the card game and concomitant consumption of alcohol. In the early 1930s Karl O. Jansen captained *Lille Carl* for a few seasons and achieved international fame through the gossip of scientists who had travelled on *Lille Carl*. It was South Georgia lore that Jansen sought success in hunting by the ritual of not washing during the season.

*Lille Carl in the 1950s showing the 'Parson's Box' on the stern.*



*Lille Carl* was also used as a taxi for carrying people and running errands. She was equipped with the 'Parson's Box', a small cabin built on deck originally for the convenience of the Grytviken priest when visiting his flock at other stations. She also carried penguin egg-collecting parties and light-house maintenance crews. Shackleton made good use of her while waiting to take *Endurance* into the Weddell Sea and his scientists were taken on collecting expeditions. On a visit to Drygalski Fjord, Frank Hurley recorded that her boiler broke down and that her hull plates were so thin that "Captain Johansen, pointing to a tiny block of ice, with that twinkling merriment in his eyes, intimated in Norse-English: - "Little Karl - not hid dat - Little Karl zink - go to bod-dom." Between 1951 and 1957 *Lille Carl* was deployed for Duncan Carse's survey and Carlito Bay is named in her honour.

After the 1957 sealing season, *Lille Carl* was laid up, moored to the hulk *Louise*, another of South Georgia's legendary vessels, for three years. In 1960, she was sold for 1.6 million Argentine pesos (£8,000). She left her old blubber-hunting haunts in tow of the tanker *El Conquistador* for Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Rumour has it that she served as a river boat on the Río Paraná in Paraguay after that, but this needs corroboration. After all, who would pay £8,000 and let a vessel just rot? Wishful thinking among ship lovers has it she may still be afloat or wreckage of her may still be seen on the muddy banks of the Paraná. Anyone out there who knows the fate of this legend?

### Klaus Barthelmess

*El Conquistador tows Lille Carl out of King Edward Cove in 1960. (From a cine film.)*



### Sandefjord Whaling Museum's birthday party

In May this year I accepted the invitation from Sandefjord Whaling Museum to attend their 90th birthday party. I was met by Kjell Tokstad, chairman of Øyas Venner, the Norwegian 'Friends of the Island' who have strong links with the SGA. Kjell kindly showed me around Sandefjord which has a strong sea-faring and whaling history and many affinities with South Georgia.



The reception at the museum was a well-attended friendly event, complete with birthday cake, speeches and singing, followed by the opening of two new exhibits. I was impressed by the regard and respect shown by everyone for their controversial whaling past. The museum is really well presented and leads you comprehensively through the history of whaling (and has labels in English!). And it was good to meet some of our Øyas Venner friends who have often been over for SGA events.



*The museum's birthday cake.*

Part of my mission was as a money-runner. I was able to deliver the latest SGA Initiative Fund donation in kroner to the museum for Thomas Binnie who is writing a biography of his grandfather, Edward Binnie magistrate on South Georgia from 1914 to 1927 and a keen photographer. The book will incorporate many of his photographs from his time on South Georgia.

After the reception I joined a couple of ex-whalers for a late dinner at the Atlantic Hotel, which is almost a museum itself as the corridors are decorated with many whaling artefacts and photographs. I was treated to some pretty rugged stories about life on the factory-ships!

I recommend a visit to Sandefjord. There is lots to see and it is an easy and cheap journey on Ryanair from Stansted.

**Fran Prince**

## Glaciers and climate change at South Georgia

Recent visitors to South Georgia, and particularly those on return visits, will have noticed that many of the island's glaciers are visibly retreating. This is especially evident at places like St Andrews Bay and Gold Harbour. At the latter, the lower section of Bertrab Glacier has disappeared entirely, forming a lagoon and exposing a 40m high rock step which 30 years ago was covered by a spectacular icefall. Some small corrie glaciers have shrunk drastically and are now close to disappearing (e.g. Hodges Glacier, behind Grytviken). These changes are related to climate warming, particularly since about 1950. Interestingly, however, they have not affected all of South Georgia's glaciers equally; some of the largest tidewater glaciers have changed comparatively little over the past few decades and one of the largest, Novosilski Glacier on the south coast, has actually advanced. The behaviour of these calving glaciers is more complicated because they are partly floating, but if the climate warming continues, then they too may retreat dramatically.

As part of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's Scotia Centenary Expedition to South Georgia in 2003, we conducted a study of glacier changes over the last 100 years or so, using a variety of documentary and geomorphological records, including historical photographs. We have looked at a sample of 36 glaciers in different parts of the island. Of these glaciers, two are currently advancing, 28 are retreating and six are stable or show a complex response. Most glaciers on the north-east coast of the island attained more advanced positions during the late-19th century. Since then, smaller mountain and valley glaciers have progressively receded. Larger glaciers that have higher accumulation areas in the Salvesen and Allardyce Ranges generally remained in relatively advanced positions until the 1980s.



*The Bertrab Glacier at Gold Harbour was photographed by Frank Hurley in 1914 when it terminated in an ice cliff resting on a beach at high water mark. The upper photo, taken in 1964/5 by Bill Vaughan sealing inspector at Grytviken, shows little appreciable change in the intervening period. Since the 1980s, however, most of the lower section of the glacier has disappeared entirely, exposing the large rock cliff in the lower photo taken in 2006/7 by Bob Burton. The glacier has retreated over 0.8km and is now separated from the sea by an open bay behind the moraines.*

However, a threshold appears to have been crossed on the north-east side of the island, to the extent that most of these larger glaciers are now receding, their delayed responses possibly reflecting the locations of their accumulation basins in areas of higher orographic precipitation. As noted above, some of these retreats have been dramatic. The response of the glaciers can be related to the direct effects on glacier mass balance of sustained climate warming that began in the 1950s. Our observations indicate that glacier recession on the windward south-west coast, where precipitation is significantly higher, is less widespread. Glaciers here, experiencing a harsher, cooler and wetter climate, display a more complex response, with smaller, lower elevation glaciers retreating, but the higher elevation glaciers stabilised or even advancing slightly.

As well as being an indicator of recent climate trends, glacier changes are of wider environmental concern. Significant glacier recession, especially where former calving glaciers become land-based, may allow range expansion of introduced species, notably reindeer and brown rats, with consequent increased degradation of vegetation and predation of important breeding populations of ground- and burrow-nesting birds.

We are continuing to build up a wider picture of historical glacier changes on the island and are modelling future glacier responses under different climate scenarios. To help with this study, we would like to appeal for information about any historical photographs of the island's glaciers that readers may have or know of in private collections, particularly from the early 1900s to the 1970s, perhaps taken by themselves, or by parents or grandparents involved in the whaling industry or by other expeditions to the island.

**John Gordon, Valerie Haynes, Alun Hubbard**  
(contact [john.gordon@snh.gov.uk](mailto:john.gordon@snh.gov.uk))

## 25th anniversary of the Events of 1982

An astoundingly quick quarter century has passed since the invasion of Argentine forces on South Georgia. During this period vast changes have taken place, many of which have origins in the small war. The 25th anniversary was time for recollection, perhaps a more appropriate sentiment than commemoration or celebration. Forty seven members attended the meeting at Miller's Academy, a very hospitable and amazing private club near central London.

Two presentations were given of the Events of 1982 by participants. The civilian side of the story was given by Bob Headland who had been with BAS at King Edward Point, and the military view by Tony Ellerbeck who had been serving on HMS *Endurance*. Bob outlined the responsibility Steve Martin, the Base Commander, had to Rex Hunt, the Governor, and the problems of communication. An instance was when Bob was watching Argentine activities at Leith Harbour from a position on a high ridge on the Busen Peninsula, while monitoring their VHF communications on a hand-held set. He had to move behind a peak to transmit his intelligence on low-power to the base launch *Albatross* waiting in line of sight in Cumberland Bay. From there they were relayed to Steve Martin, then to Stanley, and onward to London. Almost a day later this news was heard on the BBC World Service as Mrs Thatcher spoke in the House of Commons - and a large amount of the information was correct (some suffered from Chinese whispers). The circumstances of Keith Mills' surrender of the British forces after the 'Battle of King Edward Point' and the civilian surrender by Bob to Captain Alfredo Astiz were described with the

remark that, all things considered, it was good that nobody present knew anything of the history of torture and murder that Astiz had accumulated.



*The wreck of an Argentine helicopter is one of the few relics of the conflict.*

Some of the events on base were described: parading of the BAS men, dealing with dangerous and radioactive chemicals (the Argentines had no idea of such things), the use of a 'Danish Art Magazine' as a weapon of war (a guard found this much more interesting than what was being packed in luggage). This was followed by an account of time in prison aboard *Bahía Paraíso* during which a group of scientists and engineers, with a lot of time to think, were able to roughly calculate the course. Helicopter landings on the deck above us were interesting. The ship with prisoners aboard, was in active service to reinforce Argentine invaders of the Falkland Islands. (We were fortunate that HMS *Conqueror* did not become interested in preventing this.)

Tony Killingbeck was in command of the two Wasp helicopters aboard HMS *Endurance* with Nick Barker as Captain. Tony's account began with signals from South Georgia arriving during a party in Government House. The *Endurance* complement boarded quickly and she returned to South Georgia where her signals capacity was very useful. Tony, with Nick Barker, made flights to the BAS observation post and was able to observe Argentine movements. When the full intentions of the Argentines became apparent, *Endurance* covertly headed for the Falklands leaving a platoon of Royal Marines on South Georgia. Things moved too fast for her and the islands were invaded before she could assist in their defence.

*Endurance* returned quickly and covertly to South Georgia knowing that she was a primary target, that no support was yet available in those waters, that her observation and signals abilities were critical, and that the Argentines were about to



*Santa Fé on her way to a temporary resting place off Hesteshletten.. The submarine leans against Salvageman, which is towed by Yorkshirer. Endurance is behind them.*

attack the Royal Marines. Coming around the southern end of the island Tony, with Captain Barker, flew to the Barff Peninsula. By then prisoners were already aboard *Bahía Paraíso* and it was too late to deploy weapons. Tony had some fascinating photographs to show of events in Cumberland Bay. Then it was a bit of 'cat and mouse' because *Endurance* was a most desirable target for the Armada Argentina. Tony concluded with an account of the surrender of the Argentines on 25 (King Edward Point) and 26 April (Leith Harbour), and subsequent activities until *Endurance* returned to Chatham.

Both speakers had a range of slides to illustrate events. Many questions followed, both in the theatre and the parlour above. A large selection of items were on display including: newspapers, documents from the Argentine prison camp, others found at KEP, a war diary, maps, photographs and books (including Guy Sheridan's *Taxi to the snowline* - reviewed in Newsletter No 11). Two other books were the revealing Argentine history by Rear Admiral Horacio Mayorga which answered many questions, and the disappointing and allegedly 'official history' by Sir Lawrence Freedman which is replete with misconceptions and various errors regarding South Georgia events (one hopes it was more accurate for the Falkland Islands). Most of the dust has had time to settle but a variety of mysteries remain. How the Argentine flag reached Southern Thule in late 1982 is but one.

In summary it was a fascinating evening commemorating South Georgia's only war.

## New place names

Four new placenames have recently been accepted.

*Mount MacArthur* was proposed by Stuart Macdonald. He was deputy climbing leader of the Southern Challenge Expedition 2001 that made the first known ascent of this mountain on 25 January 2001, at the time that Ellen MacArthur was nearing the end of the Vendee Globe Round the World Yacht Race. The naming is in honour of Ellen's exceptional achievements in sailing. Furthermore, she spent six weeks with Sally Poncet on the albatross survey which resulted in some excellent commentary on her website and an exceptional television programme.

*Mount Pelagic* was proposed by Skip (James) Novak, skipper and co-creator of the yacht *Pelagic*. Skip, with a small group of hardy explorers and sailors has used the yacht, and more recently its sister yacht, *Pelagic Australis*, to offer the logistical back-up for explorers and film-crews in the polar regions, especially South Georgia, since 1988. Skip accompanied the British South Georgia Expedition 2005 who made the first known ascent of the mountain on 23 January 2005.

*Poncet Island* is the most easterly of the Kupriyanov Islands at the entrance to Diaz Cove. It is named after Jérôme and Sally Poncet who, with their yachts *Damien*, *Damien II* and *Golden Fleece*, have made outstanding contributions to science, support and knowledge on South Georgia for over 30 years. Sally is especially well-known for leading the current series of seabird surveys.

*Nicholls Peak* is one of the Wilkens Peaks, north of the Kohl Plateau. It is named after Brigadier David Nicholls, Commanding Officer, British Forces, Falkland Islands, 1999-2000, first Chairman of the South Georgia Heritage Trust and leader of the British Schools Expedition Society's Footsteps of Shackleton Expedition 2003-2004.

## South Georgia Heritage Trust update

Visitors to Grytviken in the coming season will find a new display in the maritime building next to the South Georgia Museum. The display hopes to capture elements of South Georgia's varied maritime history. The maritime building will house a replica of *James Caird*, which SGHT has been able to purchase thanks to tremendous support for getting the boat to Grytviken. *James Caird* will travel to South Georgia on the deck of a Quark Expeditions cruise ship in February, with her maker, Bob Wallace.



*The replica of James Caird that will be on display at Grytviken.*

Other displays in the maritime building will include the bow of *Alert*, a launch used by the Discovery Investigations for inshore survey around South Georgia in the 1920s. The bow was rescued from the Falkland Islands in 1995 by Sally Poncet, after the rest of the boat had been destroyed by fire.

For this season only, the ship's bell and scale model of the *Dias*, or *Viola* as she was previously known, will also be part of the display. (*Dias* can be seen in front of the museum beside *Albatros*.) *Viola* was originally a trawler, built in 1906 at Beverley in East Yorkshire for the Hellyer Steam Fishing Company of Hull. After being requisitioned for use in the First World War, she was renamed *Dias* and came to South Georgia as a sealer, also taking part in expeditions including the Kohl-Larsen Expedition of 1928/9 which took the first cine film of the Island. *Dias*' bell has recently been on display in Hull's fish market but Dr Robb Robinson who arranged for the bell to be brought to Hull, Arthur Credland, Keeper of Hull Maritime Museum, the Maritime Historical Studies Centre, Blaydes House at the University of Hull and Alan Hopper, the director of Fishgate, have kindly agreed to lend the bell and the model to SGHT for a season at the museum. If you would like to find out more about *Viola*, Dr Robinson's website is at [www.viola-dias.org](http://www.viola-dias.org). Elsa Davidson, SGHT's new curator, will be in charge of putting together the maritime display, which will give visitors some background on the vessels they will see on their travels round South Georgia.

The information will also be available on the new South

Georgia museum website at [www.sgmuseum.gs](http://www.sgmuseum.gs).

Other great news for South Georgia is the support SGHT has received for the Habitat Restoration programme from the Island Foundation in the USA, and the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation in the UK. Thanks to the generosity of these foundations as well as donations from cruise passengers, SGHT has raised £400,000 to begin the work to clear the island's invasive species and restore the habitat for many of its birds.

Finally, this season SGHT intends to secure the exterior of the Stromness Villa, subject to government approval. We know that SGA members have a keen interest in Stromness Villa and we hope to work with you in the future to preserve this historic building.

**Alison Neil, SGHT Director**

## An honest man

It was in December 1946, that I had the opportunity to accompany the manager of Leith Harbour, Captain Anton Torgersen, on a trip westwards on board the Leith Harbour buoy boat (ex-catcher *Stina*) along the north coast to visit the old Unilever station at Prince Olaf Harbour. The



declared purpose was to inspect the buildings and assess the possibility of bringing some of them back to Leith, particularly as a replacement for the existing (but in my view, by no means inadequate) hospital.

On arrival at Prince Olaf, I fell under the wing of 'bos'n' Hans Kristofferson, also *Stina*'s master, who showed me around the station. We looked at the buildings, unused since 1932, and decided that several would make useful additions to the Leith facilities.

Hans and I then went to the small bluff overlooking the stranded hull of *Brutus*, originally brought down to act as a coal hulk. While admiring her and the ruins of the station piggery alongside, Hans bent down and lifted a large, rectangular object from the tussock clumps covering the bluff. As we deciphered the lettering, I felt, and still feel, that it was one of the most moving and touching objects, that I ever seen.

It consisted of a copper sheet, about 2ft 6in x 18in, folded over a stout plank of wood, and it was obviously an original grave marker.

The inscription had apparently been made with a largish nail and hammer so that the letters are indented in the plate. The beautifully-executed inscription read "John Anderson Mate of Sch Mary Jane of N York Capt John S. Parsons. Died Nov 23 AD 1838 in this port on board of the brig Medina of New York Captain Elijah Hallett Age 36 years An honest man". Above the name there is an engraved, but difficult to distinguish device, which might be a whale, a krill or most likely in the context a fur seal.

As Prince Olaf had been closed since 1932, it was not surprising that the existence of this grave marker was not widely

known even among the whalers. But over the succeeding years, prompted by my photograph of it, I would occasionally inquire if it was still in place. Nigel Bonner, the doyen of the island, confirmed that it was, but expressed an anxiety that it might succumb to the depredations of yachting tourists.

The population explosion of fur seals (there were none in my years of 1946 – 48) has significantly limited access to the site, and it was reported to have disappeared. In 1993, during a visit on the cruise ship *Explorer*, a misinterpretation of my directions led a shore party to report that the marker could not be found. They had mistakenly gone to the upper graveyard above the station, and rather naturally drew a blank. It is of note that the absence of the oil tank visible in my photograph occasioned considerable uncertainty as to the location.

When I visited Prince Olaf in 1994, I anxiously led a party through the gambolling and vicious young fur seals. After rummaging in the tussock the marker was found and a fine record photograph taken by a fellow passenger. This being the time of the founding of the South Georgia Whaling Museum, to my great relief, eventually steps were taken to move the marker down to Grytviken, where it can be honoured by the increasing droves of visitors and admired for the moving object that it is. I later learned that the marker had been removed by Bob Burton, then director of the museum, for safekeeping. He had found that the marker was deteriorating and the copper sheet was being pulled away from the underlying, rotting, timber. Tim Carr subsequently made an accurate replica in copper and timber and this has been installed in the correct place.

Both fur seals and the draconian station-access rules will ensure that the grave is rarely visited. This is a shame, for it is in a lovely site overlooking the Bay of Isles.

**Michael Gilkes**

### The Initiative Fund

At the AGM we agreed to double the sums of money available for projects, i.e. from £250 to £500 per tranche, with a maximum of £1000 per project. This is in recognition of our healthy balance sheet and the slightly disappointing take-up so far.

The Committee has also decided, in principle, to broaden the scheme by making gifts through the Fund to fraternal organisations as a way of expressing our support for their leadership in appropriate projects which are too large for the Association to handle. With the support of the Fund, the publication of E.B. Binnie's photographs is scheduled for later this year or early next year.

**Keith Holmes, Hon. Treasurer**

### Crafty prizes

The Falkland Island Craft Fair attracted some impressive entrants from King Edward Point. Seven prizes were shared between the eight entries.



First Prize in the 'woodwork section' was awarded to Martony Vaughan for his sundial. Sarah Lurcock was awarded Second and Third Prizes in the same section for her wooden penguin sculpture and whale-shaped cribbage board, as well as the Morrison FI Ltd cash prize for overall winner of the 'woodwork and metalwork section'.

The 1/8th scale whaling harpoon in brass won Gareth Wale First Prize in the 'metalwork section' and Anjali Pande was awarded a Highly Commended in the 'jewellery section' for her ¼ size 'friend', a piece of climbing equipment to be worn as a pendant. First Prize in the 'handicraft section' went to Emma Jones for the wood, glass and metalwork tea-light candle holder.

It's nice to see all that spare time put to good use!

*(Information from [www.sgisland.org](http://www.sgisland.org).)*

### Cruise of South Georgia and Antarctica

Members should have received a prospectus some weeks ago for the cruise which Far Frontiers Expeditions are arranging for the southern summer season of 2008/9 in association with the SGA, The James Caird Society, The Royal Geographical Society and The Society of Old Framlinghamians.

To remind you, the voyage will take place from 17 November to 8 December 2008 aboard *Professor Multanovskij*, starting and finishing at Ushuaia. It will include the Falkland Islands, four days at South Georgia, the South Orkneys, Paulet Island and Brown Bluff, Deception Island, Paradise Bay and Melchior Islands and the Drake Passage.

The cruise has elicited a good deal of interest, and Far Frontiers have taken a number of firm bookings already. The auguries therefore are promising.

If you or anyone of your acquaintance would like details of the cruise, please email [jan@farfrontiers.org](mailto:jan@farfrontiers.org), or call 0844 800 9029, for a detailed brochure.

### Diary dates

**May 23, 2008.** Annual General Meeting with a talk on 'South Georgia and the International Polar Years' by Bob Headland.

**February 23, 2008.** At the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, in conjunction with the Friends of SPRI. 'The cinephotographic history of South Georgia', a presentation of films dating from Frank Hurley's film made in 1917, and including the Kohl-Larsen expedition of 1928-29, the Discovery Investigations and shore and pelagic whaling.

The South Georgia Association newsletter is produced twice a year, in April and November. Contributions should be submitted, at least one month before publication, to the editor: Robert Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW. e-mail: [robert@burton41.co.uk](mailto:robert@burton41.co.uk)