

South Georgia Association Newsletter

Number 14 April 2008

Website: www.southgeorgiaassociation.org

ISSN 1747-4302



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



Mystery painting donated to South Georgia Museum

In 1983 Ken Richard, who worked with BAS in the late 1970s and visited South Georgia, saw an unidentified but very attractive miniature water-colour in a Wiltshire antique shop. It was with a box of old frames and other material, and the owner had no idea of what it represented. Ken had; and purchased it having recognised it was an early view of Grytviken. The questions of when it was painted and by whom started some detective work. The whalers are decked in signal flags as bunting, it was winter, the overhead railway could be seen in the whaling station and there were several other things which allowed a good guess of the date and occasion.

This and subsequent evidence supported the idea that the scene was painted in August 1927. This was the occasion of the first visit of a Governor of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies to the island (indeed to any of the Dependencies). Arnold Hodson arrived aboard *Fleurus* which made a voyage from 6 to 13 August. *Fleurus* carried the post between South Georgia and the Falklands, with occasional visits to the South Shetland and South Orkney Islands, between 1924 and 1934. Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify the artist but the possibility that it was the Governor himself remains.

Ken, having owned the painting for many years, decided that it would be a good addition to the South Georgia Museum, especially considering its historical significance.

The committee discussed this and a favourable price was negotiated.

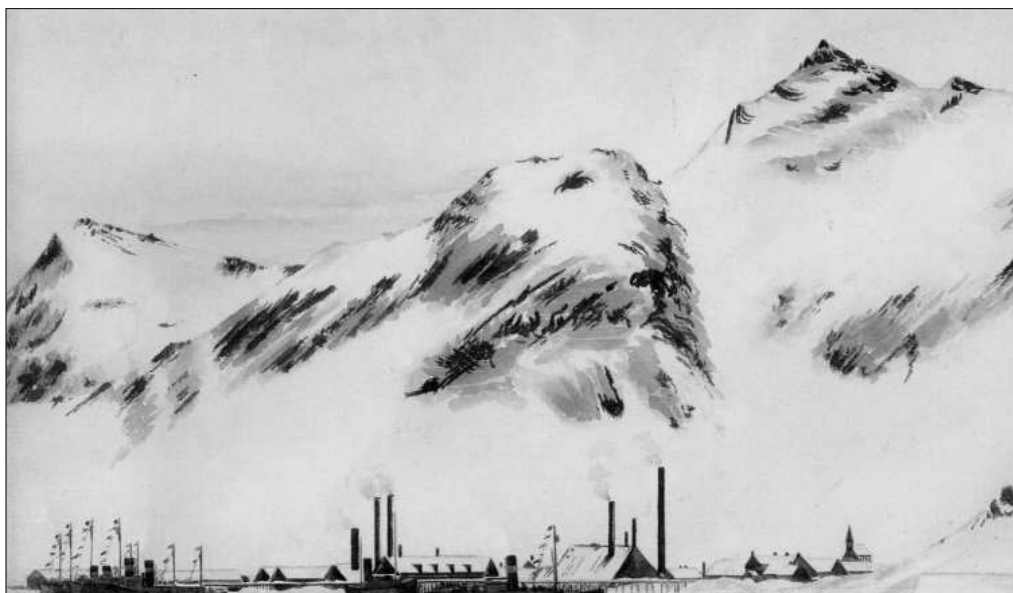
By fortunate coincidence, I was due to visit South Georgia later in the year and was able to carry the painting mounted under glass in a small oak frame safely there.

After calling at the Falkland Islands I arrived at South Georgia early in December aboard *Kapitan Khlebnikov*. At the museum, in a moderately formal presentation, I handed the painting over to the curator Elsa Davidson. Ken Richard is very pleased that the painting has been found a good home at Grytviken about 80 years after it was painted there.



The committee has proposed that the painting be made into a card suitable for Christmas or other greetings. A framed copy will be shown at the Annual General Meeting.

Bob Headland



SGA Visit to HMS Endurance

After two visits postponed for operational requirements, the visit to HMS *Endurance* in Portsmouth Dockyard was finally made on 24 November. Sadly after all her hard work arranging the visit, Jane Tanton was unable to attend.

I travelled by train with SGA secretary Fran Prince to Portsmouth Harbour station on what was the start of a glorious sunny day. The last section of the journey brought into view the Spinnaker Tower which has a unique sail design. It was going to be named the Millennium Tower but was finished five years late.

The group was supposed to meet at Trafalgar Gate but according to the security staff that gate was closed on a Saturday. More of the SGA group were arriving and we could see *Endurance* 300 metres away, but we were not allowed to walk to it. Eventually a coach arrived from picking up other members who had driven to Unicorn Gate and now all 30 of us were taken to the gangway of the *Endurance*, where we were greeted by Lt Commander Adam Northover, the Operations Officer. Also there to greet us was Captain Stuart Lawrence, who had been captain of the British Antarctic Survey ships RRS *Bransfield* and *Shackleton* before he retired.

HMS *Endurance* was due to set sail for its Antarctic season (Nov 07 to May 08) in a few days, so the upper deck was full of activity with sailors and contractors busy installing windlasses, a hot water system, hydraulics, high pressure air systems and air conditioning. The group was taken to a mess hall where we had tea and coffee before Lt Commander Northover began his lecture, short film and Powerpoint presentation.

We were told that *Endurance* is the Royal Navy's ice patrol ship and she patrols Antarctic waters carrying out operational duties for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK Hydrographic Office, as well as providing science logistics support to BAS. She is a class 1, A1 icebreaker, her captain being Captain Bob Tarrent and the ship's complement is 126. Her motto is *Fortitudine Vincimus*, which is that of Sir Ernest Shackleton. The ship is equipped with two Lynx helicopters and three work boats named *James Caird*, *Nimrod* and *Dudley Docker*. *Endurance* was built in Norway as *Polar Circle* and was chartered by the Navy under that name before being bought outright and renamed HMS *Endurance* in October 1992. Her range is 65,000 nautical miles (120,000 km) at 12 knots (22 km/h) and a main speed of 15 knots.

The film was a spectacular excerpt of a new BBC documentary series, provisionally named *Frozen Planet*. The amazing footage was created using gyro-assisted cameras slung under the ship's Lynx helicopters. Adam stated that the amount of footage shot would mean that editing may take until 2010 before it reaches the television.

The Powerpoint presentation took in other aspects of the season's work, like moving BAS scientific parties and logistics support around the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia. On the way home last season they had chased ship pirates for some West African countries. One group of pirates found off Gabon were removing fuel from a ship and then set it on fire to sink it. Adam noted that *Endurance* used all the most sophisticated satellite surveillance equipment available on board to name the ship, and they then 'Googled' it, which raised a lot of laughs.

At the end of the lecture and before the tour of the ship I talked to Stuart Lawrence who in his retirement has been doing Antarctic chart work for *Endurance* and the UK Hydrographic Office. He was also doing a Christmas cruise, as an ice pilot on an Antarctic cruise ship. He jokingly was very disappointed not to get an ice pilot's job on board ms

Explorer which had sunk the day before in the Bransfield Strait, luckily near the many bases on King George Island.

We were split into two groups for the ship tour, with one group starting at the bridge and working down to the engine room and the other starting in the engine room and working up. I was in the first engine room group and we passed crew cabins and galley on the way. There were a lot of maps, photos and presentations for people to see around the bulkheads of the passageways.

The engine room was impressive behind its watertight doors with two Bergen BRM 8 Diesels at 8,160 hp (6 MW). But for those of us at the back it was too noisy to hear everything the guide was saying.

The final part of the tour was visiting the bridge where a lot of work was being done with the installation of new equipment. There were good views around the ship, with many radars, ice satellite radars, and sophisticated steering consoles. More tea was available and a chance to take in some original paintings, including one by Keith Shackleton, before we met back under the helicopter.

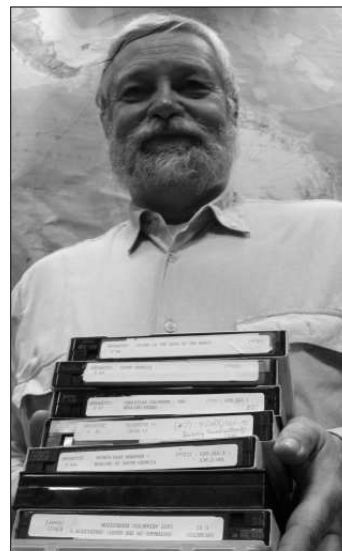
After we had thanked everybody for an excellent tour we were told that we could follow the ship's progress by logging onto www.visitandlearn.co.uk/default.asp. Portsmouth University is doing some Antarctic research with HMS *Endurance* and its website shows photos of *Endurance* at work. www.port.ac.uk/thebigfreeze.

The next part of the day was lunch at the new development of Gun Wharf Quays overlooking Portsmouth Harbour, where 28 members enjoyed a meal and drinks at the Loch Fyne Seafood Restaurant. It was also a good opportunity to mix and match and sit with SGA members I didn't know. Dave Brook and I were chatting to Steve and Gill Fruin from the Isle of Wight. Gill had been on a cruise ship to South Georgia and became captivated and the island has been a passion every since; Steve has an interesting job as a shepherd on the IOW.

After lunch, we could take part in a tour of the historic dockyard and look around *Mary Rose*, HMS *Victory* and HMS *Warrior*.

Steve Norris

Festival of historic films



Bob with an armful of videos.

This meeting on 7 March was one in the series of public lectures organised every year by the Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute. It was a special occasion because it was held jointly with the SGA and everyone attending was invited a drink or two beforehand. So, with the addition of about 50 members of the SGA and their guests to the usual audience, the lecture theatre at SPRI was unusually packed and lively. Some had come from far afield. George Spenceley, veteran of Duncan Carse's 1950s South Georgia Survey, came from Banbury, while



Norwegians examine one of their nation's inventions: the Svend Foyen harpoon cannon mounted outside the Scott Polar Research Institute.

Michael Gilkes, who had been medical officer at Leith Harbour whaling station in the same period, arrived all the way from Brighton.

The journeys were worthwhile because Bob Headland had compiled a programme of films that are rarely seen, and he presented them in his inimitable, entertaining and knowledgeable style. Selected excerpts of eight films ranging over eight decades were shown.

The earliest cine film of South Georgia was taken by Frank Hurley of the Endurance expedition who returned to the island in 1917 to get some replacement material after the loss of the ship. We then saw the film that had been made during the Quest expedition, which included shots of Shackleton's grave at Grytviken. Perhaps the most interesting item was a film of the Kohl-Larsen Expedition which was the first to explore the interior of the island. The party consisted of Ludwig and Birgit Kohl-Larsen accompanied by the cinematographer Albert Benitz who prepared the first commercial film of the island.

Some of the remaining films were about whaling, ancient and modern. The smoke and bustle of whaling stations in operation impressed those who know them only as 'ghost towns'. The research and survey from Discovery II in her 1933-35 commission was featured. Whaling films were followed by the Argentine invasion of 1982 and Bob Klusniak working for Nigel Bonner at the newly established museum at Grytviken. The programme finished with an extract from one of Duncan Carse's films in which he reminisced about events a quarter of a century ago.

Hydroelectric update

A wet, windy summer prevented the completion of the hydroelectric project, which was reported in Newsletter no. 12. It will now be completed next year.

The Morrison FI Ltd team raced against time to get as much done as possible to complete the civil works. They completed the strengthening of the dam and laid the pipeline from the dam to the turbine house.

At KEP they have dug a trench for the high voltage cable and laid a short run of it. Ultimately this cable will follow the track around to Grytviken and onwards to the turbine house. The transformer is in place in the generator shed at KEP.

Laying the pipeline to the turbine house was a challenge



Laying the pipeline from Gull Lake.

because of the steepness of the slope. The turbine house has been built and the generator is in place and ready for installation next year.

Up at the dam the two containers for maintenance equipment have been given the additional and rather surprising role as tsunami shelters. Geologists have found instability in the structure of the South Sandwich Islands and predict a collapse that will cause a massive tsunami, in the near future (on a geological timescale). It could be soon so, because KEP and Grytviken are very low-lying, it has been deemed prudent to stock these containers with emergency supplies.

Eventually the ground around the dam will be landscaped and soil that was scraped away to make the road to the dam will be returned and vegetation will grow over the scar.

Ainslie Wilson

Tom Price and the South Georgia Survey

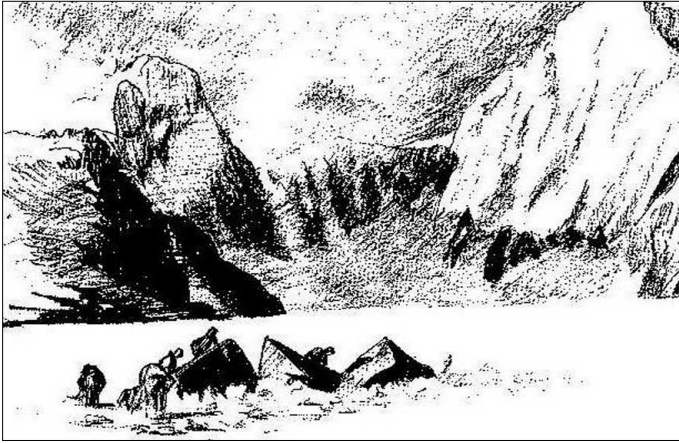
The expedition led by Duncan Carse to South Georgia in 1955-56 consisted of a team of seven and included Tom Price an English master at Workington Grammar School in Cumbria. I was 15 at the time and Tom was a popular teacher at the school and a keen climbing partner of Dr Keith Warburton. Duncan Carse had met Keith when they were employed by the Salvesen whaling company.

It was Keith who suggested to Carse that the expedition should include climbers, as previously Antarctic expeditions had been led by seamen, i.e. Scott and Shackleton. Tom was given leave of absence by the Headmaster and joined the expedition as assistant surveyor, with Keith as the medical officer.

During my visit to Antarctica in November 2007 I was delighted to see in the museum at Grytviken a map and photo of the 55-56 expedition with Tom Price and the team. I knew Tom lived on Threlkeld near Keswick and had written a book of his lifetime exploits so I sent him a postcard. His book *Travail So Gladly Spent* has a chapter about the expedition and several of his accomplished pen-and-ink sketches. Published by Ernest Press, the second edition was published in 2002.

One evening on board *Explorer II* I discussed Tom and his book with Bob Burton and contacted Tom on my return to UK. I then resolved to visit as I had not seen him for over 50 years.

Tom is now 89, fit, well and active. I had a pleasant few hours with him. He is one of four survivors: Stan Patterson a mathematician and climber, who was the second surveyor, lives on Vancouver Island in Canada. George Spenceley from Yorkshire, teacher, photographer and climber, lives in Banbury and is a member of the SGA. Tony Bomford was a captain in the Royal Engineers and expedition cartographer. He eventually became head of the Australian Cartographic Department. Tom carried the equipment for



surveying but also sketched the panorama which proved to be very useful when back at base.

Their first journey lasted eight weeks and they lived in 2-man tents, with Tom and John Cunningham sharing, John was an expert camper/climber and had been a member of the infamous Craig Dhu Climbing Club. They also tested pemmican and meat bar for the army, each tent pair living solely on one or the other.

The survey was a huge success and they gave peaks and glaciers names like Cake, Sandwich etc. Later they were asked by the Directorate of Overseas Survey to name a peak or glacier. Tom chose the Price Glacier as he knew there was already a Mount Price in Australia.

On his return from South Georgia Tom rejoined the grammar school, eventually leaving to become head of Eskdale Outward Bound School.

Tom was at university when World War II commenced and broke off his studies to join the RN as an able seaman on corvettes and minesweepers, rising to captain of a rocket-firing assault ship. He saw action during the invasion of France when his ship softened up the beaches before the landing craft went in.

Michael Boyd

Genetics of South Georgia reindeer

Following six years of research at Durham University, I have finally finished my PhD thesis entitled 'A study of the impact of population bottlenecks on the genetics and mor-

phology of reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*) on the island of South Georgia'. This completes the work inspired and begun by the BSES Millennium Expedition, which visited South Georgia for a couple of days from 31 December 1999. A number of individuals and expeditions have since kindly collected samples, and many members of the South Georgia Association are included in the acknowledgements.

Completing my research was very much a labour of love, fitted around my job as a farm vet and the birth of my daughter Jessica. The research was largely self-funded and was only possible with small grants from the Shackleton Scholarship Fund, the Trans-Antarctic Association and the British Ecological Society.



For those members of the SGA who want to know the main findings without all the jargon, here is a summary.

There are currently two separate populations of reindeer on South Georgia: the Barff herd and the Busen or Husvik herd. The founder group of the Barff herd comprised three males and seven females introduced to Ocean Harbour in 1911. The Husvik herd was founded by the introduction of three males and four females into Husvik Harbour in 1925. Records suggest that both founder groups of reindeer came from Filefjell Reinlag, a reindeer herd based at Hemsedal, Buskerud, southern Norway. A single newspaper report from 1928 suggested that a further four females were sent from Norway to the Husvik herd in that year, though there are no further references to these extra reindeer and no confirmation that they actually arrived on South Georgia.

Each of the introductions of reindeer caused a genetic 'population bottleneck' (because the small number of animals means that they are inbred and have very little genetic diversity) and the inaccessibility and geography of the island has ensured that the two herds have been isolated from immigrants and separated from each other. Although it is relatively easy to research genetic bottlenecks in populations of fruit flies in a laboratory, it is much less common for it to be possible to study unmanaged wild populations of large mammals in such detail.

The opportunity offered by the reindeer on South Georgia is particularly special as there are well-documented historical details, such as the size and date of the bottlenecks and census data from each herd over the past century. There is also access to suitable samples from each of the South Georgia herds as well as the source herd in Norway.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of the two separate population bottlenecks on both the genetics and physical appearance of the reindeer by comparing the three herds. Skeletal measurements were used to compare how symmetrical the reindeer are and how much variation there is in size and shape between individuals within the different

herds. Asymmetry within an individual or wide variation between individuals may be the first indicators that a population is under some sort of developmental stress, such as one might expect from intense inbreeding.

Samples were collected from carcasses collected on South Georgia and from culled reindeer from Norway. Where possible, DNA was extracted from skin samples, although some South Georgia samples were taken by drilling into teeth. DNA was obtained from 63 Barff samples, 59 Husvik samples and 97 Norwegian samples. Separate tiny sections of the DNA were amplified (by polymerase chain reaction) so that comparisons could be made. Physical measurements were made on 41 skulls from the Barff herd, 23 from Husvik and 46 from Norway. Using precision callipers, 44 separate measurements were each repeated three times on each skull.

The South Georgia herds showed significant genetic differentiation from each other and from the Norwegian herd, which indicates that they are each now genetically unique populations. The Husvik herd showed decreased levels of genetic diversity compared with the Barff herd while both South Georgia herds showed significantly lower levels compared with the Norwegian herd.

Both South Georgia populations of reindeer are more likely to have asymmetric bodies and a wider variation in size compared with the Norwegian population, and with increased variation in the Husvik herd compared with the Barff herd. This suggests that South Georgia reindeer show the early stages of being less developmentally stable than the source Norwegian reindeer. Both South Georgia populations had smaller skulls than the Norwegian population although this may be due to the different environment as much as a consequence of the genetic bottleneck.

The physical and genetic consequences of the bottleneck were found to be more pronounced in the Husvik population. This may be due to the fact that the Husvik population remained smaller for much longer than the Barff population, which apparently increased rapidly after its introduction. Although the numbers of reindeer in each introduction were comparable, the Husvik herd experienced more intense inbreeding because of this prolonged small population size. The study illustrated the effect of chance on the outcome of a population bottleneck.

In the conservation of endangered species, scientists are often interested to know whether a population has previously experienced a genetic bottleneck as it can have significant consequences on the subsequent ability of that population to survive. One method of determining whether this is the case involves comparing the genetics of an actual population with computer models, looking for particular 'bottleneck signatures'. I was able to use the data from South Georgia reindeer to validate a number of commonly used 'bottleneck signatures' and establish which are more reliable.

The reindeer on South Georgia have provided a good opportunity for some useful and original research and there would be a number of further interesting investigations if there is someone with suitable inclination, time and funding!

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this study in any way. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the project, I can be contacted on pfmlovatt@metronet.co.uk.

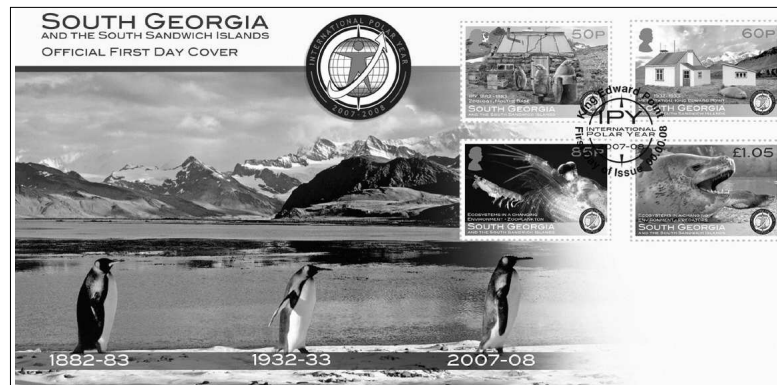
Fiona Lovatt (née Hatchell)

Stamps for the International Polar Year (IPY)

A set of stamps has been issued to commemorate the Fourth International Polar Year.

The 50p stamp commemorates the First International Polar Year of 1 August 1882 - 31 August 1883, the earliest example of international coordination in polar science. The German station at Moltke Harbour in Royal Bay observed the Transit of Venus on 6 December 1882. As well as astronomical observations, there were programmes on meteorology, geophysical sciences and biology. The stamp illustrates the zoological hut at Moltke Harbour and three young king penguins, nicknamed Kaspar, Melchior and Balthasar after the Three Kings from the Orient, which were used for studies of metabolism.

The 60p stamp illustrates the former meteorological station at King Edward Point. The Second IPY, 1 August 1932 - 31 August 1933, was adversely affected by the financial depression of 1931 and none of the stations planned for Antarctic regions was built. However, data were contributed by the meteorological station at South Georgia.



The 85p and £1.05 stamps capture the importance of the marine ecosystem. From the tiny zooplankton such as krill up to the large predators such as leopard seals, the delicate balance of the polar oceans is liable to disturbances from climate change. The fourth IPY was launched in March 2007 and has been extended to March 2009 to allow for two field seasons at both poles. Many of the IPY projects are focused on understanding how the animals inhabiting the polar regions may be affected by changes in sea temperature and sea ice coverage. ICED (Integrating Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics) is one of the projects studying these interactions around South Georgia.

Based on a Press Release from the Pobjoy Mint

Some thoughts on fur seals

In February 1947, in Leith Harbour Villa, I was talking to Neil Rankin. As you will know, he was author of *Antarctic Isle*, the account of his visit to South Georgia to study the birdlife. (Incidentally, the photos illustrating the book were developed in the x-ray film tanks of my hospital.) He had just returned from a trip in his converted RNLI lifeboat *Albatross* to the western end of the island. 'Doc' he said, 'Can you keep a secret?' I naturally replied that I thought I could, and he explained that he had sighted five fur seals at Bird Island.

The reason for discretion was very apparent. The fur seals of South Georgia were believed to have been almost extinct following their slaughter by sealers. Nonetheless it is interesting to note that in the narratives of later expeditions, fur seals are conspicuous in the absence of reported sightings

and encounters. Shackleton had no problem with them at Elephant Island or South Georgia. Indeed, while at South Georgia, his men had found it a pleasant activity to visit the elephant seal colonies, while enjoying an entirely risk-free perambulation of the local shore.

When I returned to South Georgia 40 years after my meeting with Rankin, the memory of his observation evoked an almost incredulous reaction. The pugnacious nature of the animals, even more than their numbers, combined with their speed led to a feeling that a paradise had been lost. Their numbers represented an almost unbelievable population explosion when compared with Rankin's five pairs. There may have been half a million on South Georgia, without taking into account the numbers at other subantarctic islands. And this from an animal which for nearly a century had been declared almost extinct!

At each visit I have made in the succeeding 20 years since my first return, further dramatic increase has been evident. The global population is variously assessed at between two and three million so questions have been raised as to whether such numbers are having a deleterious impact on bird and cetacean numbers. As so often, such alarms are largely conjectural.

Yet one is tempted to wonder if, in fact, the present apparent population explosion is a reversion to numbers little different from the incredible numbers observed by Captain Cook and the sealers.

I have to admit that I resent the loss of liberty imposed by the fur seal domination of the beaches. But this is well compensated by the sheer spectacle of nature in the raw. I have enjoyed watching the young seals gambolling in the waters around *Brutus* at Prince Olaf Harbour, and the same time photographing their picturesque poses while contemplating their next assault on the intruding humans.



One can also learn from them. During a little rest and relaxation while visiting the whalers' graves at Leith Harbour, I contemplated the football pitch over which one once could roam with total impunity. The breeding season of the fur seal community down by the oil tanks was in full swing.

Harem bulls attempted to maintain their status, crushing the odd pup in the process. Apparently abandoned pups lay around under rusty machinery and cows ranged up and down the beach, just back from foraging and calling plaintively. Suddenly the nearest pup mewed and a reunion feed was quickly affected.

A truth came to me. The large bulls seem to dominate the scene. No! As always, it was the women who were running the show.

Michael Gilkes

New boardwalk on Prion Island

About 60 passengers from *Corinthian II* visited Prion Island on 8 March. We had with us Ainslie Wilson from KEP as an official observer because this was *Corinthian II*'s first visit to South Georgia. We were met on the beach by Scobie Pye who is in charge of the construction. He was happy for us to use the partly completed boardwalk. It was complete for about threequarters of its length and the main framework was in place for the remainder. The whole structure was

very tidily constructed and very solid in appearance and use - nothing wobbled.

One concern for us was that the chicken-wire netting for giving a firm grip on slippery wood was too thin. Scobie was aware of this and said that the wrong gauge had been delivered and it would eventually be replaced. From seaward the boardwalk is barely seen except for some of the handrails. It was not clear to us if only certain sections were going to have a handrail or if it would run the whole length of the boardwalk. If the latter were the case it would be slightly more visible.



Some staff commented that, at about 1 metre wide, the boardwalk is a bit narrow for passing, but there are wider sections designed as passing-places, which will be adequate for the small groups that are allowed.

For our group of mainly elderly and relatively unfit passengers this boardwalk was a major factor in their visit to the nesting wandering albatrosses. The nesting area would have been inaccessible to many of them without the boardwalk, and very difficult for others. The boardwalk also freed staff from acting as helpers over bog and slippery rock, so they could be deployed more effectively at the nesting area and on the beach.

It remains to be seen if the fur seals are going to use the boardwalk as a highway to their ever-increasing breeding areas in the tussac beyond the beach.

I am not a great believer in footpaths and boardwalks in remote areas but I do accept that increasing visitor pressure makes this inevitable at Prion Island to prevent further damage and erosion. I think Scobie and his team are making an excellent job and was amazed at how much heavy manual labour has been required to get all the materials from the beach to the top of the island.

Trevor Potts

Can HMS Plymouth be saved?

HMS *Plymouth* was part of the Task Force despatched to retake the Falkland Islands and South Georgia in 1982 and she took part in Operation Paraquat.

There is a campaign to preserve her as a tourist attraction and memorial in Plymouth. The organisation Warship Management was set up to purchase and move HMS *Plymouth*, the last remaining Type 12 frigate, from Birkenhead to Millbay Docks in Plymouth following the collapse of her previous owners The Warship Preservation Trust. The collapse of the trust led by default to her becoming the property of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in whose dock she now resides, awaiting her fate.

Warship Management had agreed to purchase her and had

verbal agreements with Associated British Ports Plymouth to berth her on Trinity Pier, Millbay, for a trial period of one year commencing Easter 2007. After the appointment of a new port manager in January 2007 and within days of the signing of contracts for the purchase, our agreements with Associated British Ports were denied and once again *Plymouth* is left seeking a new berth.

Efforts to secure a berth in Plymouth, Falmouth or Portland have continued. Plymouth remains our preferred port as HMS *Plymouth* not only bears the name of the city but she is also the last remaining warship to have been built in Devonport. Plymouth is the obvious place for her to continue her new career as a visitor attraction, museum and memorial to the Falklands War.

For latest news see www.warshipmanagement.co.uk

Whaling in the Falkland Islands Dependencies 1904-1931

Ian B. Hart

2006. Pequena. 363 pages, illustrated, £25.00

The Falkland Islands Dependencies were for many years the very crucible of world whaling, where hundreds of thousands of whales met their end in the first half of the 20th century.

At that time whaling was perceived very differently to the discredited wholesale slaughter of endangered mammals that it represents to many people today. It was a pioneering, honourable and daring enterprise at the bottom of the world, which drew men back year after year. Ian Hart's book leaves little doubt as to the harshness of the work. Life and ships were cheap; the text is littered with stories of sinkings and fatal accidents that would not be tolerated today.

This is a scholarly book, which I found absorbing and thorough. Although a cetologist by profession, with a long interest in South Georgia and its whaling history, I found plenty of new and fascinating material. The detail is impressive and bears witness to the extraordinary amount of research that must have preceded its writing. This could easily be the accomplishment of a lifetime, except that it was preceded only a few years earlier by another, and even larger, work. (*Pesca: a history of the pioneer modern whaling company in the Antarctic*, reviewed in Newsletter No. 4). To produce two such comprehensive tomes in half a decade without a team of researchers, is a very considerable achievement indeed.

This book charts whaling in the Falkland Dependencies from its very beginnings in the early years of the 20th cen-



The flensing plan at Whalers Bay, Deception Island.

tury until 1931 - a notorious period of boom and bust. During this short time land-based whaling developed at breath-taking pace, peaked and diminished as near-shore stocks were exhausted. Their demise coincided with the introduction and rapid development of mobile factory ships that soon took over as the main source of profits. Whaling did continue subsequently, but the lack of an effective international agreement to limit the industry in the Antarctic eventually brought about the demise of both the whale populations and the industry that had been based on them.

From my perspective, the only slightly disappointing element of this book is the quality of reproduction of some of the photographs. But costs are no doubt an important factor when publishing in such a specialised market, so this is understandable, and the lack of finish is compensated by the sheer number of photographs included - there are hundreds - which collectively enrich the story enormously.

The history of the Falkland Islands Dependencies is essentially one of sealing and whaling. So why has it taken so long for a book to appear that is dedicated to the history of whaling in this region? Whatever the reason, Ian Hart's book fills an important gap, is a good read, and I can't see it being superseded for decades to come.

Tony Martin

Letters to the Editor

Mainiken revisited

Further to the ongoing story of the SG Sheraton at Maiviken (NL Nos 12 & 13), when I first visited the cave in 1969 there were numerous pieces of slate-like rock at the entrance. These had names and dates of previous visitors scratched in them. Some were quite old. I cannot remember just how old but it seemed to me to be a historic reminder of the past. On my last visit in 1999, I saw that the floor had been built up and levelled and the cave entrance had been closed off. I would guess the 'name plaques' would have been buried at this time. This is a shame as a little piece of history has been lost. I wonder if anyone remembers them?

John 'Golly' Gallsworthy

Local alcohol

I read with interest Michael Gilkes' article 'An Episode of Legal History'.

On one of my visits to Leith in 1954, I was invited to have a drink with the then Medical Officer at the whaling station. I duly arrived and all I remember is that when I got up to leave fairly unsteadily, I fell headlong down some very steep stairs. The next thing I remember was that we were clearing Clerke Rocks en route to the South Sandwich Islands.

On a subsequent visit I learnt that this 'drink' was made by boiling up black shoe polish. The consequent, presumably, pure alcohol was strained through bread and coloured with prune juice to make it look like whisky.

This letter will confirm to all and sundry that in my case this concoction did not have the sadly fatal consequence referred to by Michael Gilkes in his article.

Alan Tritton

**Exhibition on the Centenary of the Letters Patent:
“The Government of South Georgia - A century of resource management”**



The seal on the Letters Patent.

On 21 July 1908, Letters Patent under the Seal of King Edward VII were promulgated to formalise the earlier claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, which included South Georgia. This was a response to the start of Antarctic whaling and in the following year James Innes Wilson became the first stipendiary magistrate. With the exception of three weeks in 1983, there has been a British administration on South Georgia ever since.

To mark the centenary of the Letters Patent and government of South Georgia, the SGA is staging an exhibition, with generous financial assistance from the Government of South Georgia.



The far-sighted William Allardyce.

The objectives of the exhibition are to show that South Georgia has had a century of administration that has been mainly concerned with controlling the exploitation of natural resources. Initially, this was whaling and, to a minor extent, elephant sealing. It is now fishing. The attempt to regulate whaling failed but elephant sealing and fishing are good examples of controlled exploitation producing sustainable industries.

William Allardyce, Governor of the Falkland Islands Dependencies in 1908, was determined to allow the development of whaling but without the overexploitation that had devastated whale populations in other parts of the world. He initially restricted the numbers of licences granted to whaling companies and each licensee was allowed to operate only two whalecatchers. These and other restrictions could have saved both the whales and whaling industry but for the development of pelagic factory ships. These vessels enabled whalers to operate in open seas beyond the reach of the law.

If the Falkland Islands Dependencies Government had been able to retain control of whaling at South Georgia and elsewhere, the whale populations and a sustainable industry would most likely have been maintained. By contrast, elephant sealing was carried out

on a sustainable basis until it ended, with closure of Grytviken, in 1965.

The South Georgia fishing industry developed in the 1960s and the most important target species is the valuable Patagonian toothfish. By rigorous control, with quotas set yearly on the basis of scientific research and monitoring, the Government has successfully managed a sustainable fishery and so avoided the depletion



The Government administration at KEP: Mairi Macleod (Magistrate & Base Commander), Pat Lurcock & Emma Jones (Government Officers), Sarah Lurcock (Deputy Postmistress).



Patrol ship Pharos is vital for fisheries management.

of stocks that occurred in whaling.

Venues, dates and websites for further information.

The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, 19 July to 29 September.. www.spri.ac.uk

The Discovery Point, Dundee, from 4 October to 16 November. www.rrsdiscovery.com

Blaydes House, Hull, 21 November to 24 December. www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc

Thereafter, it is hoped that the exhibition will travel to Stanley and Grytviken.

Important questions: Have you changed your email address? Have we got your new one?

Do we have your current email address? Email is a very easy way of contacting the majority of members. We assume that the addresses on the membership list are correct but I have received significant numbers of notifications of undeliverable emails from the last mass-emailing. Apart from the extra work this involves, you may be missing out on important information.

Please check we have your current address by sending a (friendly) message to secretary@southgeorgiaassociation.org.

Frances Prince, Secretary

Diary dates

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

A visit to the **National Maritime Museum, Greenwich**, is planned for this autumn.

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