

# South Georgia Association Newsletter

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The Annual General Meeting will be on May 21, 2010.



## The Eighth Annual General Meeting, 29 May 2009 held at the Royal Over-Seas League, St James, London.

43 members, including the Committee, attended.

David Tatham welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning especially Professor Nick Owens, Director of British Antarctic Survey, Jane Rumble and Debbie Ward (Polar Regions Section of FCO) Howard Pearce and Alison Neil (South Georgia Heritage Trust), Elsa Davidson (Curator, South Georgia Museum), Sally Poncet (Falkland Islands), Mr and Mrs Kjell Tokstad (Øyas Venner, Norway). 49 members sent their apologies: John Alexander, Jon Barker, Bill Block, Dave Burkitt, Cindy Buxton, Robert Dott Jnr, Wendy Driver, Tony Ellerbeck, Peter Evans, Sir Anthony Evans, Dick Filby, Alison Firth, John Gallsworthy, Martin Hampar, Lizzy Hawker, Julia Hazel, Elaine Hicks, Steve Hunter, John Killingbeck, Denise Landau-Filby, Peter Landon, Ron Lewis-Smith, Fiona Lovatt, Alan MacArthur, David Macdonald, Sir Iain Mackay-Dick, Kevin & Jenny Marchant, Revd. Peter Millam, Andrew Moffat, Lord Naseby, Stephen Palmer, Mike Pienkowski, Roderick Rhys Jones, Jason Roberts, Ian Scantlebury, Guy Sheridan, John Smith, John Spletsoesser, Phil Stone, Peter Sutton, Lynne Taylor, Peter Thomson, Alec Trendall, Anthony Trevis, Lesley Tregaskes, Alan Wearden, Helen Witts, Henry Worsley and Jim Yelland.

David Tatham reported on the year's activities. In September there had been a successful visit to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich attended by 31 members of SGA and the James Caird Society, with a tour of the museum and special viewing of Shackleton artefacts in the library. The visit was followed by lunch in the Painted Hall of the former Royal Naval College.

Also in September the Letters Patent Exhibition, celebrating 100 years of British administration in South Georgia, moved from SPRI in Cambridge to Hull and Dundee. Bob Burton who designed the exhibition had the honour of explaining it to the Princess Royal.

In February the SGA enjoyed a joint lecture with the Friends of SPRI given by Paul Cooper, GIS manager at BAS on 'Visualising South Georgia' a talk and live demonstration of the new Geographic Information System (GIS) designed for South Georgia. (See Newsletter 15.)

The SGA website has been updated by Andy Rankin, and now contains past issues of the newsletter and other items.

a word on the Island and on the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands - that handful of overworked men and women who administer this bleak but beautiful territory. We are grateful to the Commissioner, Alan Huckle, who has kindly sent us a message for this AGM. This has been a year of especial achievement for South Georgia. Princess Anne paid the first royal visit since the Duke of Edinburgh called in 1957 and she formally switched on the reconstructed hydro-electric plant. We pay particular tribute to Ms Harriet Hall who has been chief executive of the South Georgia Government for several years. Harriet is one of those special people who evoke universal admiration and gratitude. She is now leaving Stanley. We shall miss her but we look forward to co-operating with her successor Martin Collins. In the meantime we congratulate Harriet who married Simon Johnson on the deck of the FPV *Pharos SG* in Grytviken on 27 March. We hope to see her at our meetings when she returns to this country and wish her a congenial next posting.'

Keith Holmes explained that there were currently 325 members. Forty had not renewed their 5-year subscription in 2008. Seventeen new members joined in 2008, and seven so far in 2009.

Once again John Bawden had kindly audited the accounts of the Association, which had been enclosed with the current Newsletter. Our total income this year was £6,048.78. We received £4,300 from subscriptions, which included a nominal sum of £3,265 for 2009 in respect of the 302 fully paid-up Members on 25 March. Interest on our deposit account was £363 and we received £200 from the sale of albatross brooches.

The net cost of communicating with Members through the website, the Newsletter and at various meetings and events, including the AGM, was about £2,200. Administrative costs were about £320, and we spent £500 on the Initiative Fund and £950 on the Letters Patent Exhibition. We spent about £1,434 on projects to preserve historic material relating to South Georgia. A copy of the document which Sir Ernest Shackleton's crew left on South Georgia after his burial was relaminated and given to the Museum, and money was spent on digitising photographic images taken by David Ferguson, Leo Harrison Matthews and Edward Hay. Expenditure exceeded income this year by about £580.

The overall financial position of the Association on 25 March was very healthy, with a cash balance of about £22,000 some £580 lower than last year. Of this, £5,570

assigned to the Duncan Carse Bust Appeal. This left an unallocated reserve of more than £14,000.

Membership and subscription income are at levels very similar to those of the previous two years, and seem to have reached a plateau. Interest payments were now very meagre but despite this, the Association clearly had sufficient reserves to maintain standards and the same, or even an increased, level of activity.

#### **Initiative Fund**

The Association contributed £500 this year from the Initiative Fund to Sally Poncet of South Georgia Surveys towards the cost of upgrading the South Georgia Historic Sites Database. In 2006 the Initiative Fund made a £250 donation to Thomas Binnie for help in preparing Ian Hart's book 'Antarctic Magistrate' about his grandfather Edward, published in April 2009. £1,500 has been spent on digitising and making various historic photographic records more widely available.

Some of the surplus from the Duncan Carse Bust Appeal is to be used to help enhance the quantity and quality of images in the forthcoming publication 'From Cook to Carse: putting South Georgia on the map' which will be published shortly by David Walton, through Bluntisham Books and the Erskine Press. The SGA is very grateful to Alec Trendall who has spent a lot of time reworking the text and to George Spenceley for selecting the photographs.

#### **Newsletter**

Bob Burton was pleased to report that the April Newsletter was able to scoop two exciting stories: HRH the Princess Royal's visit to South Georgia, and the marriage of Harriet Hall and Simon Johnson on board FPV *Pharos SG*. The committee was considering including an extra sheet (4 pages) to the newsletter which will allow larger pictures, and the possibility of colour printing.

#### **Øyas Venner**

Kjell Tokstad, Chairman of Øyas Venner (Friends of the Island), gave the meeting an update on the activities of Øyas Venner. This year the society celebrated the centenary of whaling from Leith Harbour. Work has continued on Glasgow House in Sandefjord, which presents whaling history. £600 has been spent on preserving the graveyards in Husvik and Stromness. The collection of names of all the whalers who lost their lives in the Antarctic is continuing.

#### **South Georgia Heritage Trust**

The SGA was pleased to welcome Howard Pearce and Alison Neil from the SGHT and Elsa Davidson, Curator of the South Georgia Museum. The Trustees had visited South Georgia on the *Grigoriy Mikheev*. Howard thanked BAS for allowing a landing on Bird Island. HRH the Princess Royal had opened the hydro-project at Grytviken, toured the museum and opened the Carr Maritime Gallery.

The Habitat Restoration Project is a long-term plan to eradicate rats on South Georgia. The preliminary 2-year phase is to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments and Health and Safety Assessments. The first experimental phase planned for 2011 is for eradication on Greene Peninsula. This may take 3 - 4 more years to complete. Funding is from the US and the UK. On 10 November 2009 Nigel Marven will talk about filming penguins and pipits at the Royal Geographical Society. This is a fund-raising event. SGHT will kindly offer ticket to SGA members at a 20% discount.

Alison Neil talked about joint SGHT and SGA projects: South Georgia Surveys and BAS were producing data for the historic database; Bob Burton from SGA attended the Discovery Point event with the Letters Patent exhibition; SGHT will support the BAS marine hotspot project with

will be produced with Kew Gardens. SGHT have plans for a Conference in 2011 on whaling stations and industrial heritage sites and would like to collaborate with SGA. Further plans include a survey of wrecks and restoration of the whalecatcher Petrel to make it available for public access.

Elsa Davidson reported on activities at the South Georgia Museum: Last year they had received 8,500 visitors; Steve Massam, the taxidermist, had completed a wandering albatross for the new Carr gallery, and now planned a bull elephant seal skeleton to be re-articulated outside the museum.

The Carr Maritime Gallery was opened by HRH the Princess Royal, the James Caird replica (no. 3) was in place; bow sections from the Alert (a Discovery Investigations vessel used at South Georgia in 1930) rescued by Sally Poncet in 1995 was now rebuilt by Chris Moore and on display; The Salvesen's ex-whaler oral history project was underway; Bob Burton had visited last season and was helping with a booklet on the SGHT's work at Grytviken; the database package was to go on the SG museum website.

Sally Poncet reported that the wandering albatross census on Prion Island had been carried out as usual. It was planned again for 2010 and the survey would include a penguin census and invasive species monitoring.

Sarah Lurcock reported from KEP: There are now eight BAS personnel and two Government Officers at KEP, and four BAS at Bird Island. There are currently 12 Toothfish vessels operating, each with their own observer. Next season there will only be two BAS scientists at KEP. The Government officers will be increased to three. There are three SGA benches for Grytviken being built by Thies Matzen.

#### **Committee**

All members of the committee were willing to stand for re-election, except Richard Ralph who had retired as Chairman and from the committee during the year. The committee proposed Professor David Drewry as Chairman from January and he was elected by a show of hands. Andy Rankin was proposed by Patrick Fagan, seconded by Ros Marsden and was elected to the committee. The meeting voted in favour of re-electing all other members of the committee.

The committee now comprises

President: Charles Swithinbank

Chairman: David Drewry (from January 2010)

Acting Chairman: David Tatham

Secretary: Fran Prince

Treasurer: Keith Holmes

Membership Secretary: Elizabeth Hawker

Newsletter editor: Bob Burton

Members: Bob Headland, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Ron Lewis-Smith, Dave Fletcher, Andy Rankin  
Corresponding Members remain as: Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP), Trevor Potts, Dan Weinstein (USA)

There was no other business. The meeting ended at 8:15 and was followed by a lecture by Professor Nick Owens on *Current Developments in BAS*.



## Message from the Commissioner read at the AGM

2008 has been another busy year for the South Georgia Government, culminating in the first royal visit to the territory in over 50 years, when HRH the Princess Royal visited in her role as Patron of the South Georgia Heritage Trust. We were delighted to welcome Her Royal Highness to KEP on the final day of that visit and are grateful to her for formally opening the hydro-electric scheme, as well as for the time she spent looking round and meeting residents of King Edward Point.

A major achievement this year is the coming into operation of the new hydro-electric power plant which provides electricity for the residents of KEP. This is a scheme which has successfully combined the past and present of South Georgia, using the historical dam from the whaling era as a basis for a modern power generation plant. We will continue to monitor the output of the power with a view to increasing the usage if circumstances permit - one of the untried aspects so far is whether the flow of water will be sufficient throughout the winter to maintain the capacity year-round. Some minor snagging works are still in progress but the majority of the Morrisons workforce have now left the Island and their camp, which has been a feature of Grytviken for six years now has been removed, as has the road which permitted access to the dam works. I should take this opportunity to record our appreciation to Morrison Construction for their hard work on this project.

Also on the public works front, there is a new addition to the buildings at King Edward Point in the form of a biosecurity store. SGA Members will be aware of the increasing threat to previously remote areas posed by the introduction of alien species. The biosecurity store offers a facility where goods being imported - or even field equipment being moved from one part of the island to another - can be cleaned and examined for seeds and insects in a secure environment.

Financially, 2008 turned out better than we might originally have expected, thanks among other things to a particularly strong krill fishing season. This is unlikely to be repeated this year, which is already showing signs of being exceptionally poor. Sea-surface temperatures around the north of the island for January show up as significantly warmer than in recent years. This has had a strong impact on the arrival of krill from its spawning grounds around the Antarctic. An immediate and visible result has been the poor breeding and survival success of the gentoo penguins along the north coast. We continue to monitor the situation carefully. Similar poor years occurred in the 1990s, most recently in 1998. We hope that this will also be a one-off rather than an indication of permanent change.

Our other fisheries, for toothfish and icefish, continue to be successful. We had hoped that by now our toothfish fishery would have been re-certified to Marine Stewardship Council standards but unfortunately delays in the process have postponed any announcement we might be able to make on this score. I can however reassure you that the delay does not denote problems with the fishery and that the existing certifi-

cation has been extended to cover the gap. So you can still buy MSC-certified South Georgia toothfish.

Tourism has been a strong sector for South Georgia this season, with around 8,500 passengers on over 70 ships visiting the island. There have also been 25 yacht visits and five expeditions. Passenger numbers next season are expected to fall, following the departure from the region of two of the larger cruise ships. Following discussions with IAATO members, we have introduced a new tourism policy document which gives a firm endorsement of IAATO's approach to tourism, whilst retaining our own freedom of action to permit and regulate visits. As usual, the document is publicly available on our website. In tandem with this new policy framework, we have supported a pilot study assessing behaviour and potential impact of tourists. This has involved completion of questionnaires and monitoring visitor movements. The data are currently being analysed and will form the basis of further discussions with IAATO on visitor management.

One of the major achievements this year has been the inauguration of the South Georgia Geographic Information System which is available on the web. Designed by the MAGIC team at BAS this will become an invaluable resource to store and make public all data gathered on South Georgia. I commend it to those who have not already logged on to the system ([www.sggis.gov.gs](http://www.sggis.gov.gs)).

Our collaboration with the EU and RSPB on work to counter invasive species in the South Atlantic draws to a close this year. Thanks to EU funding, we have not only been able to construct the biosecurity building to which I referred earlier but have also had a comprehensive survey of flora and invertebrates carried out. This was done by a team from Kew Gardens and Buglife International and gives us an up to the minute record of some of the smaller and lesser-known forms of life on the island. It will enable us to build on historical data and analyse more accurately the spread of invasive species. It will not surprise any of you to learn that an enormous number of specimens was collected and that analysis is ongoing.

On a final positive note, we have recently received the final results from blood tests of the chinstrap penguin colony at Cooper Bay, following the outbreak of avian cholera there in 2004. All the tests were negative, which means that the site can once again be opened to visitors in the 2009/10 season. We are grateful to all cruise operators for their understanding and support for the closure over the past four years.

As always, we very much welcome the support of the South Georgia Association and have kept in contact with your Committee during the year. I should like to thank both Richard Ralph and David Tatham for their engagement with Government whilst in the Chair. I look forward to working with your new Chair over the coming months.

**Alan Huckle**

## Our New Chairman

The South Georgia Association has announced the name of its new chairman. He is Professor David J. Drewry, a former director of the Scott Polar Research Institute and of the British Antarctic Survey and Director General of the British Council, who has recently retired as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull. Professor Drewry, who was elected at the annual general meeting of the SGA, will take over from the acting

Speaking of his appointment, Professor Drewry said: 'I am delighted to have been elected to this position and to take over from the very capable hands of David Tatham. South Georgia holds a special place in the hearts of those who work in and travel to Antarctica, even if they have not visited themselves. Its breathtaking scenery, prolific and colourful wildlife combined with a rich history of exploration and economic activity have made it a place of considerable significance. I hope that I can assist in promoting further the aims of the Association, of

## South Georgia Toothfish Recertified With Flying Colours

Based on a GSGSSI press release



*A toothfish more than 2 m long and 100 kg in weight brought into KEP from a fishing vessel. This is near the maximum size of the species.*  
*Photo by Jon Ashburner.*

Since the Commissioner's statement at the AGM, it has been announced that the South Georgia toothfish fishery has been re-certified as a sustainable and well-managed fishery. Originally certified in 2004, the fishery received an average score of 93% in its reassessment, making it the third highest scoring of the 52 current Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fisheries.

Despite this success, the South Georgia Government has pledged a continued commitment to further improving the fishery. This will include an extensive programme of scientific work in order to support management of the fishery over the next 5 years.

Dr Martin Collins, Director of Fisheries, says: 'We are delighted that the toothfish fishery has been recertified and the excellent scores attained reflect the efforts made by the GSGSSI, its scientific consultants and fishing industry to ensure the fishery is managed sustainably. South Georgia is a unique environment and the GSGSSI will continue in its efforts to improve all aspects of the fishery.'

Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the MSC adds: 'The South Georgia toothfish fishery has excelled in its re-certification scoring significantly higher than the first assessment. It is deeply gratifying to see the GSGSSI commit to further improvements in the fishery which has already made such great strides forward. By leading the way in toothfish certification, the SG toothfish fishery has created a market for certified sustainable toothfish that is now – deservedly – thriving'

The MSC has been operating for 10 years as an international non-profit organisation set up to promote solutions to the problem of overfishing. A total of over 150 fisheries are engaged in the MSC programme. Fifty two are certified and over 100 under full assessment. Another 40 to 50 fisheries are in confidential pre-assessment. Together, the MSC certified fisheries record annual catches of close to 4 million tonnes of seafood, representing approximately four percent of the FAO's total recorded global capture. The fisheries currently undergoing full assessment catch a further 2.85 million tonnes - approximately three percent of the total global capture. Worldwide, more than 2,500 seafood products, which can be traced back to the certified sustainable

The South Georgia fishery catches around 3,500 tonnes of toothfish (worth around \$15/kg). In the 2009 season it involved 11 vessels from seven flag states (UK, Spain, Korea, NZ, Chile, Uruguay and South Africa). There is a small by-catch of grenadiers (around 100 tonnes) and skates, but most of the latter are released alive.

## Seabed extension claim

Based on press releases

The UK has submitted its claim for an extended continental shelf surrounding South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the Falkland Islands. The claims were made to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLCS), who will determine the final fixing of maritime boundaries worldwide, setting limits to national rights to oil, gas and minerals, and marine living resources. UNCLCS has a big job. Around 60 countries can claim shares in the ocean seabed.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea permits states to extend their control of the seabed up to 350 nautical miles offshore (from the previous 200 nautical mile limit), or 100 miles from where the sea reaches a depth of 2,500 metres. Once the limits have been set the boundaries will be final and binding, and it is now up to the UN to decide on the validity of every nation's claims. The 21-strong team of part-time scientists must settle disputes, relying on geology and the 'sometimes arcane' Law of the Sea. For instance, hydrographers will have to pore over technical details like the slopes of seabed sediment. 'Are we up to the task? Not really, to be honest,' said the Commissioner of UNCLCS.

Claims had to be made by 13 May 2009. Argentina deposited hers on 21 April and the UK followed on 11 May. If the claims had not been submitted, the UN could have allocated the seabed of this area of South Atlantic and Southern Ocean to any country in the world. Readers will not be surprised to learn that Argentina immediately protested at the U.K.'s claim over Argentine 'sovereign territory'. This will effectively put the allocation on hold because the Commission's policy is not to address disputed claims but to shelve them until a diplomatic agreement is reached.

Watch this space (for a long time).

## Frank Worsley and the *Kathleen Annie*

Everyone with an interest in South Georgia history is familiar with the crucial role of Frank Worsley as captain of



*Endurance* and *Quest*. Over the next 20 years, Worsley led a varied and adventurous life which is detailed in John Thomson's fascinating biography "Shackleton's Captain. A biography of Frank Worsley". However, early in his post-World War I career, Worsley was involved in an incident which has never been fully recounted. The following account is distilled from the researches of Allan Taylor, a retired Orcadian coastguard. The facts were confirmed in a letter from the executor of Worsley's widow's estate.

In 1924 Worsley was skippering the four-masted auxiliary schooner *Kathleen Annie* and had brought her to Orkney en route to the United States. On board were 54,000 gallons of rectified spirit – concentrated ethanol – in 17,000 cases. At the time, spirits cost 12/6d a bottle, an average weekly wage. Prohibition in the US was at its height, giving rise to a hugely profitable transatlantic trade in illicit spirit-running.

This was not Worsley's first bootlegging venture. He used to call in at Orkney quite regularly, but, despite his expertise as a skipper and navigator, he became rather over-confident about the skerries and tidal races between the islands. *Kathleen Annie* came to grief on the Muckle Green Holm, a tiny island off Eday, on 29 September 1924.

According to Allan Taylor, and confirmed by my Orcadian mother-in-law who was 11 at the time, the story of the wrecking of the *Kathleen Annie* and the loss of its cargo was officially played down because the spirit came ashore all over the place. There were even some fatalities from over-indulging and drinking it neat. The schooner was officially heading from Bremerhaven to Newfoundland, supposedly carrying salt, but Orcadians knew full well what had been going on, since the ship was one of many doing the same thing. Many a quiet little deal was done around the coasts and harbours of Orkney and Shetland at that time.

Following the wreck, customs officers took charge of the schooner and transferred the drums of spirit to a steam drifter, *Busy Bee*. Many of the drums were leaking strong alcohol fumes and it was a great source of amusement to watch the men staggering home at the end of a day's work! Taylor recalls '...near the end of the second day.... There must have been a couple of thousand cases in the hold of the *Busy Bee*, the bilge pumps were playing up and water had leaked on to the engine room floor from other parts of the



*Busy bee lies burned-out to the left and badly-damaged Kathleen Annie is supported by another vessel to the right. Off Hatston slip, Kirkwall.*

hull – and of course it was full of the leaked spirit.

When Jackie Leslie, the engineer, went to stoke up the boiler, his guardian angel must have been looking out for him because as soon as he opened the furnace door the place just went up. They got him out and he was burned, but

diving off the boat like rats! The sight of all the spirit cases exploding was like a massive fireworks display.'

Worsley never seems to have been officially apprehended, but in Orkney the incident surrounding the *Kathleen Annie* became a much-recounted fireside tale. Loose drums of spirit washed out to sea from the Muckle Green Holm came ashore around Orkney and as far north as Shetland. Their contents were decanted and stored away in various guises, and the drums destroyed. The local grapevine, alerted by some initial fatalities, very promptly spread from island to island the dangers of drinking the spirit neat.

Diluted with an assortment of substances, it became the stuff of legend at local dances. Indeed, around 1960, some 35 years after the incident, my brother-in-law attended a dance on Eday where he was repeatedly offered a drink from a bottle of what began as whisky but never seemed to shrink in volume and became stronger as the night wore on! He discovered the topping-up source to be a drum of 'Annie's Elixir' secreted in a loft. It is rumoured that several drums wrapped in sailcloth are still buried under Bignold Park in Kirkwall. Perhaps they will come to light during a Guy Fawkes Night bonfire! Allan Taylor recalls that 'We used to mix it with Ministry of Food orange juice the bairns were issued with in the 1950s. It was pretty horrible but it hit the spot. ... In its neat state we used it for fuelling the Primus stoves and Tilly lamps and for burning the stubble off plucked chickens'.

The story of *Kathleen Annie* bears a remarkable similarity to that of the ss *Politician* which was wrecked in a gale on Eriskay, in the Outer Hebrides, 17 years later in February 1941, and on which Compton Mackenzie based his tale *Whisky Galore*.

*This account is compiled from an article entitled 'Bootleg Bounty' by Kath Gourlay, published in Living Orkney, Issue 12, November 2006. My thanks to the editor, Howard Hazell, for permission to reproduce this material. Some additional information was taken from John Thomson's biography of Frank Worsley.*

**Ron Lewis-Smith**

### Industrial archaeology survey completed

In March and April a group of four scientists visited Prince Olav Harbour and Ocean Harbour to undertake a systematic survey of the two former shore whaling stations. We were Dr. Dag Avango, project leader (The Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, and Arctic Center, University of Groningen, the Netherlands), PhD-student Ulf Gustafsson (Arctic Center, University of Groningen), Mr. Gustav Rossnes (The Norwegian Agency for the Cultural Heritage, Oslo) and Professor Bjørn L. Basberg (Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Bergen). The Arctic Center and the Royal Institute of Technology were in charge of the work, which was sponsored by the Dutch and Swedish research councils. The Prince Olav and Ocean Harbour surveys were part of the larger research project LASHIPA (Large Scale



International Polar Year 2007-2009.

The party arrived at Grytviken on 13 March from Ushuaia on the cruise ship *Minerva* and transferred to the 56-foot aluminum sailing yacht *Seal*. It took us to Prince Olav Harbour and became our floating base camp for the next weeks. Run by Kate and Hamish Laird, this proved to be a very efficient and comfortable solution. A base camp ashore was not an option. There are no really suitable houses left in Prince Olav and the fur seals were also a problem.



*Prince Olav Harbour.*

Fortunately, by our late season arrival both numbers and aggressiveness were manageable, and the seals did not create significant problems. Finally, the asbestos issue not only ruled out a shore-based camp but required that the party had to adhere to a strict safety plan. Prince Olav Harbour was in fact for several years believed to contain no asbestos. This was not the case, and it is found in various locations throughout the plant, especially as insulation around pipes and boilers.

The survey consisted of detailed photographing and mapping of the entire station. All buildings, main structures and artefacts were photographed. The buildings were measured, drawn up and described. To the extent that it was possible, the interiors were also surveyed. A majority of the buildings are, however, completely collapsed, making this part of the work very difficult or even impossible. The decline is more severe in Prince Olav than in the other stations in Stromness Bay and Grytviken, which of course is due to the fact that the station had already been abandoned in 1931. Furthermore, throughout the 1930s, parts of the plant were partially dismantled and moved to Leith Harbour.

A very important and time-consuming part of the survey was mapping with an electronic Total Station which will generate data to make a revised map of the station and surroundings. The topography in Prince Olav is of special interest. No other station has such an unfavourable location.

The terrain is steep almost from the beach, and when the station was constructed, several terraces had to be levelled out to give space for buildings. The large guano shed was to some extent built on poles extending into the sea.

On 29 March we sailed to Ocean Harbour. There we had three hectic days of photographing, mapping, describing and surveying with the Total Station. The contrast to Prince Olav Harbour is striking. The harbour is more protected,



*Ocean Harbour.*

the station. Ocean was closed in 1920 when the Larvik-based company merged with Sandefjord Hvalfangerselskab – the company that owned Stromness. With the exception of the small brick bath house, everything was removed, mainly to Stromness. This included the Villa which later caused some confusion because it was wrongly associated with Shackleton's 1916 arrival in Stromness (see Newsletter no. 9).

Many foundations of buildings are still visible in Ocean. By comparing with historic photos it is now possible to generate a revised map of the station which is much more accurate than what has been available to date.

On 2 April we were picked up outside Ocean by *Grigoriy Mikehev*, on a cruise for the South Georgia Heritage Trust, and taken up to Stanley.

The surveys of Prince Olav Harbour and Ocean Harbour conclude a work that was started in 1989/90 and has resulted in surveys of Husvik, Stromness, Grytviken and Leith Harbour. Those surveys were part of the Norwegian Antarctic Research Program with grants from the Norwegian Research Council. It is interesting to note that it was not possible to obtain Norwegian support this time although both Prince Olav and Ocean have very strong historic links with Norway. Most important, however, is that the surveys have now been undertaken and knowledge of this unique heritage has been preserved.

The data will be analyzed and used in Ulf Gustafsson's dissertation in which he will compare the studies at South Georgia with similar studies of three other former shore whaling stations, including Finneset on Svalbard. He will discuss the development of these sites in wider historical and political contexts. The results will also be published in reports and articles.

**Bjørn L. Basberg**

### **The Bergen connection**

In a year or so's time, the city of Bergen, already famous for the Bryggen waterfront of World Heritage Site status, will have a new attraction. One line of the tramway system that closed in 1965 will re-open and its 'star' will be a tram that was built in 1897, the year that the tramway opened.

What is the connection with South Georgia?

generators (perhaps surprising in a country that has abundant hydro-power!). In 1910, these were superseded by power direct from the Bergen Electricity Works. The generators were sold to Sandefjord Hvalfangerselskab and shipped to their new whaling station in Stromness Bay. And there they remain, having provided power to the station until it closed in 1961.



*The Bergen generators at Stromness.. The control panel is at left.  
Dag Naevestad, Industrial Archaeology at South Georgia (NARE 89/90)*

Bob Headland records that in 1977 the generators were still in good enough condition for him to turn them slightly with an ‘inching lever’. Twenty years later, however, he found that the building housing the generators had largely collapsed and the generators and their associated control panel had deteriorated badly.

Engineer Ralph Wilson of the Bergen Electric Tramway discovered this link between Bergen and South Georgia when researching the tramway restoration project. He would dearly like to bring the generators home!



## Leith Harbour, a brief centenary history

On 13 September 1909, 100 years ago, s.s. *Starlight* arrived at South Georgia with men and materials to erect a shore whaling station. Her destination was a cove in Stromness Bay which became known appropriately as Leith Harbour because the company building the station was Christian Salvesen of Leith, on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

The site of Leith Harbour had been reconnoitred the previous year by Henrik Henriksen, who became the first manager. The station was built at the head of the cove, at a site known as Jericho, but after two avalanches and a rockfall, which killed three men, much of the station was relocated to its present position, 1 km southward. A second ship *Coronda* arrived on 30 November, incidentally bringing South Georgia’s first magistrate James Innes Wilson, and the first whale was caught on 10 December by the whale-catcher *Semla*.



*Leith Harbour, 1912. Salvesen Archive, Edinburgh University.*

Henriksen was succeeded by Leganger Hansen in 1916. He remained until 1937, earning the unofficial title of ‘King of South Georgia’. As well as making Leith Harbour pre-eminent among the island’s shore stations, he planned the operations of Salvesen’s pelagic factory ships.

Salvesen of Leith, as the name suggests, had its origins in Norway. In 1851 Christian Salvesen settled in Scotland and established a successful company with shipping and other interests, including Arctic whaling. His son Theodore took the company to the South Atlantic, whaling first at New Island in the Falklands and then at Leith Harbour. Salvesen’s later dominant place in the whaling industry was driven by Theodore’s son Harold. He became a leader in the negotiations to restrict catches and preserve whale stocks and drove the technical developments that increased the efficiency of the whaling process. He also confronted a Norwegian union’s attempts to reserve whaling jobs for its own nationals and, by the 1950s, half Salvesen’s employees were British.

From the outset, Salvesen was required by the terms of their lease with the government of the Falkland Islands Dependencies to utilise the whole whale, rather than wastefully strip the blubber and jettison the rest of the carcass as



*Leith Harbour, 1920s. Discovery Investigations.*

Leith Harbour survived the overproduction crisis of 1931, which forced some other land stations to close. This was due to the financial strength of Salvesen. Operation was able to continue because of the station's technical efficiency and its use as a forward base for Salvesen factory ships. Stromness whaling station was leased in 1931 and used for maintaining the company's whalecatchers.

By the end of the 1950s, Leith Harbour was utilising every part of the whale, including the baleen which was used in the manufacture of brushes. Nevertheless whaling was going into a steep decline through overhunting. Salvesen ceased operations at Leith Harbour in the 1961/2 season but the station was sub-leased to a Japanese company which operated until 15 December 1965.

This was the end of whaling at South Georgia but there is a postscript. Salvesen bought the leases of all the whaling stations on the island in the mid-1970s, on the off-chance that whaling or some other industry might become viable in the future. In 1979, Constantino Davidoff of Buenos Aires contracted with Salvesen to salvage machinery and other items from the abandoned whaling stations. The involvement of the Argentine navy in Davidoff's venture was a prelude to the invasion of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands in 1982.

Christian Salvesen has been taken over by the French company Norbert Dentressangle, whose trucks may be seen



*Leith Harbour, derelict.*

on our roads. Not even the old company logo based on the Norwegian flag remains on Salvesen trucks, but the memory of whaling days lives on in Salvesen ex-whalers' clubs in Edinburgh, Shetland and Tønsberg. Last June, the Tønsberg club celebrated the 25th anniversary of its founding by its energetic chairman, ex-patriate James Meiklejohn. Next year the Shetland club will be hosting a reunion with ex-whalers from around the world.

The Norwegian Post Office has produced four stamps to commemorate the centenary of Leith Harbour. The stamps show: a panorama of Leith in the 1950s, a 'street' scene from the 1950s, the bone loft in the 1920s, and the whale-catcher *Sonja I* which operated from 1910 to 1924. Each stamp costs 20 NOK (approx. £2) and can be obtained from: Sandefjord Filatelistklubb, Postboks 272, 3201 Sandefjord, Norway.

**Bob Burton**

### A fascinating reprint

A  
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GIPSY; HIS TRAVELS DURING EIGHTEEN VOYAGES  
TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD, DURING  
WHICH HE WAS FIVE TIMES SHIPWRECKED;  
THRICE ON A DESOLATE ISLAND NEAR  
THE SOUTH POLE, ONCE ON THE  
COAST OF ENGLAND AND ONCE  
ON THE COAST OF AFRICA

HE TOOK PART IN SEVERAL BATTLES ON THE COAST OF SPAIN AND PERU  
AND WITNESSED SEVERAL OTHERS; WAS ONCE TAKEN BY PIRATES,  
FROM WHOM HE WAS PROVIDENTIALLY DELIVERED, PLACED IN  
A SMALL BOAT AND SET ADRIFT AT A GREAT DISTANCE  
FROM LAND, WITHOUT THE MEANS FOR CONDUCTING  
HER TO THE SHORE. HE AFTERWARDS TOOK PART  
IN FOUR MINOR ENGAGEMENTS WITH  
SAVAGES NEAR NEW GUINEA.  
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

First published in 1844, this snappily-titled book has been edited and republished with a commentary by Damien Sanders. We must be very grateful to him because the 'desolate island near the South Pole' is none other than South Georgia.

Tom Smith was one of the very few literate 'below decks' men from the sealing period. He was sealing at the height of South Georgia sealing (1815-20) and the discovery of the South Shetland Islands (1821-22). He admits to not keeping a diary and was writing from memory, but he rings true. His accounts of South Georgia and the sealing industry are fascinating.

Order the book from Damien Sanders, 1 rue du 8 Mai 1945, Dinan, 22100 France. E-mail: [damien.sanders@neuf.fr](mailto:damien.sanders@neuf.fr). It costs £19 or \$30 plus postage. Surface European post is £4.50. Please inquire for other locations and airmail prices.