

# South Georgia Association Newsletter

Number 25 November 2013

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**Spring Meeting & AGM will be on May 16, 2014**



*The ruins of Leith whaling station painted by Bruce Pearson.*

## **The Twelfth Annual General Meeting, 17 May 2013**

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London

The meeting was attended by 53 members including the following members of the Committee: David Drewry (Chair), Sarah Greenwood (Membership), John Owen (Treasurer), Mel D'Souza (Events), Andy Rankin (Website), Dave Fletcher, Bob Headland, Alexandra Shackleton, David Tatham, Fran Prince (Secretary).

David Drewry welcomed everyone, especially Howard Pearce, Alison Neil and Peter Taylor of the SGHT, and Oscar Castillo, South Georgia desk officer, FCO.

Apologies were received from: Bob Burton, Jackie Burton, Doug Bone, Tom Clarke, Wendy Driver, Gustav Ellingsen (Øyas Venner), Robert and Brenda Faulconbridge, Alison Firth, Nigel Haywood (Commissioner), Keith Holmes, Andy Jamieson, Pat and David Langridge, Pat Lurcock, Sarah Lurcock, Allan MacArthur, Deborah O'Connor, Celene Pickard (Friends of SPRI), Richard Ralph, Jane Rumble (FCO), Ron Lewis-Smith, David Rootes, Ian Scantlebury, John A Smith, Phil Stone, Kjell Tokstad (Øyas Venner), Lesley Tregaskes.

The minutes of the Eleventh AGM held on 4 May 2012 were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising that were not covered in other Agenda items.

The Chair reported on the previous year's activities.

A joint event with the James Caird Society was held on 9 November 2012 with a lecture by Bob Burton 'What if Shackleton had landed: would he have crossed Antarctica?'

We held an SGA evening on 29 November during Bruce Pearson's art exhibition, with a reception and talk by him on his project 'Troubled Waters' in collaboration with Bird Life International.

A stakeholder meeting was held in the autumn organised by FCO, and two SGA committee members attended. South Georgia topics included the reindeer cull

and work at Husvik. SGA appreciates the opportunity to participate at these meetings.

Ron Lewis-Smith attended a workshop on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Assessment of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge in December 2012.

The Chairman welcomed David Tatham as our new SGA President. David has been chairman and committee member, and was instrumental in the formation of SGA.

Events are being planned for the Shackleton centenary 2014/15.



*Bernard Stonehouse tells stories of the old days.*

## **Membership**

Sarah Greenwood reported that there were currently 250 individual members, 20% from overseas. She noted that there had been a decline in membership. SGA has recently launched a FaceBook page which we hope will provide an additional means of attracting new members.

## **Treasurer**

John Owen had provided a summary of accounts in the last newsletter, which had been audited by Keith Holmes. At 31 December 2012 the Association had a bank balance of £18,000. £6,000 of this was membership subscriptions received in advance for 2013 and beyond. Most of the funds remain from previous grants. The current income

covers the cost of producing the two newsletters and the spring meeting.

A question was asked about paying subscriptions by direct debit. John Owen replied that he had investigated this with our bank, but the SGA's turnover is too small.

#### **Newsletter**

Bob Burton was absent from the meeting as he was recuperating from an operation. The meeting sent good wishes to Bob, and thanked him heartily for his work and commitment in producing an excellent quality newsletter. Members were encouraged to write to Bob with any ideas, news or views of South Georgia as material for the newsletter. Keith Holmes was thanked for contributing the funds to allow the newsletter to be printed in colour.

#### **Initiative Fund**

Members were encouraged to send in proposals to the committee for consideration for the initiative fund.

#### **Website**

Andy Rankin encouraged members to look at the SGA website and also the new Facebook page, which will provide a good way to interact. It is easier now to become a new member or renew on-line using PayPal. Any contributions for the website are welcome.

#### **Message from the Commissioner**

The Commissioner, HE Nigel Haywood, had provided a report to the meeting. This was read out to the meeting by Oscar Castillo, FCO. (See below).

#### **Reports from other organisations**

Alison Neil, CEO of SGHT, reported on Phase 2 of the Habitat Restoration Project currently underway on South Georgia and likely to continue until 2 June. 53,000ha west of Stromness have been treated, which is all the targeted area for this phase apart from 8 hours of helicopter-supported activity left to complete at Elsehul. SGHT are delighted the operation has been a great achievement. In 2015 there will be 30,000ha left to complete.

SGHT thanked SGA for its support, and Andy Rankin for including information on the SGA website.

The Chairman thanked Alison on behalf of SGA, and re-emphasised the importance of the work SGHT is undertaking.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Friends of the Island, sent news of Øyas Venner's activities which was read to the meeting by Bob Headland.

#### **Election of committee members and officers**

The Committee stood aside and David Tatham, President, temporarily took the Chair. All members of the Committee were willing to stand for re-election. In addition Bill Block had been proposed by Ron Lewis-Smith, seconded by Bob Burton.

The re-election of the committee was proposed by Dave Brook and seconded by Patrick Fagan. The meeting voted in favour of all to be re-elected by a show of hands.

Chairman:	David Drewry
Secretary:	Fran Prince
Treasurer:	John Owen
Membership Secretary	Sarah Greenwood

Newsletter editor:	Bob Burton
Members:	Bob Headland, Dave Fletcher, Andy Rankin, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Ron Lewis-Smith, Melanie d'Souza, Bill Block

Corresponding Members:	Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP)
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#### **Any other business**

David Tatham proposed that Alexandra Shackleton should be asked to thank the Royal Over-Seas League for providing the facility for the AGM.

Bob Headland mentioned the memorial for Sir Rex Hunt would take place on 11 June. The Falkland Island Association would be issuing tickets for this on application.

Congratulations were given to our previous President, Charles Swithinbank who was at the meeting, for the award of the MBE in the New Year's Honours.

The meeting ended at 7:45 and was followed by a lecture by Bernard Stonehouse 'Whalers, sealers and king penguins: South Georgia in the 1950s'.

**Fran Prince, Secretary**



*Catching up with old friends. A vital part of the meeting.*

#### **Message from HE the Commissioner**

The last year has been a busy and eventful one for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The last 12 months has seen the start of the reindeer eradication project, the first year of Phase II of the SGHT's rodent eradication project, the renovation of Discovery House, the announcement of new measures to enhance our Marine Protected Area and the inquest into the death of a cruise ship passenger.

Fisheries continue to provide the main source of income for the Territory, with the Patagonian toothfish fishery providing most of it. The reductions in toothfish quota that were initiated in 2010 appear to have had the desired effect and we now anticipate greater long-term stability in quotas in this valuable fishery. This year we were able to increase the quota by 300 tonnes compared to 2012 and the indications from the first month of the season are very positive, with all six vessels achieving excellent catches. We will continue to be cautious in our approach to managing this fishery to ensure that it remains sustainable in the long-term.

For the second consecutive year the Director of Fisheries' toothfish licensing decisions were challenged in the courts. This Judicial Review process is both time-consuming and costly, but on both occasions the decisions taken by the Director of Fisheries were upheld.



*The longliner Argos Helena in Cumberland Bay.*

Following poor krill years in 2009 and 2010, the last two years have been excellent for the krill fishery, with good catches achieved, most notably by Norwegian vessels. The 2013 fishery is yet to start, but the indications are that there is plenty of krill around South Georgia. The icefish fishery has also bounced back after a couple of relatively fallow years, which were linked to the low krill abundance in 2009 and 2010. In early 2013 one of the vessels achieved some of the highest catch rates of recent years.

In January this year, following a stakeholder consultation, GSGSSI announced a suite of new measures to enhance the existing Marine Protected Area. The new measures include a seasonal closure of the krill fishery and the formal establishment of a series of benthic closed areas. This is an integral part of our continued responsible management of the marine environment in the waters around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

The 2012/13 tourism season progressed well and without any significant incidents. The number of cruise ship's visiting was the same as the previous season with 51 visits and only a slight decline in passenger numbers to 5,792. Yacht visits more than doubled, with 16 visits and 100 passengers. In addition there were seven expeditions, including a re-enactment of Shackleton's open boat journey and crossing of the island as well as three other commercially led overland traverses.

The IAATO meeting was attended by both Martin Collins and Richard McKee. A range of issues were discussed with IAATO members, including ongoing major works and heritage projects, the mandatory requirements for GSGSSI observer coverage on large private vessels, Grytviken access for IAATO larger vessels (in conjunction with major incident planning) and the findings of the South Georgia Inquest held in January 2013.

In January the inquest reconvened into the tragic death of Mrs Eileen Larrimore in 2012. Mrs Larrimore died as a result of the injuries sustained following a fall from a cliff whilst undertaking the 'Shackleton Walk' between Fortuna Bay and Stromness. The inquest lasted for two weeks, after which the Coroner delivered a narrative verdict. The Coroner's key findings included the fact that the official route (as detailed in the Government's visitor management plan) was not followed by the staff guiding the passengers (though the leader had received a copy), there was no warning given by the staff to passengers about the cliff and the Coroner also raised concerns about the standard of medical attention.

The Coroner subsequently wrote to all the Interested Parties, making a number of recommendations. GSGSSI is now working closely with IAATO to address a number of actions including a review of all documentation to heighten awareness of the key visitor management issues and concerns, the establishment of a panel of experts to review all current visitor activities and report back to GSGSSI and a separate review by appropriate medical experts into the current standards and medical care capabilities on visiting cruise ships, with a view to making recommendations.

The last 12 months have seen some major developments in habitat restoration on South Georgia. The first stage of the reindeer eradication was completed by an Anglo-Norwegian team in January and February 2013, with over 1900 animals removed from the Stromness area by a combination of herding and corralling, and ground shooting. The number of animals was greater than anticipated, but over 900 were gathered in the Tønsberg Point area and were killed under veterinarian supervision and processed for their meat. The other animals were shot and the carcasses dragged to the intertidal area, where they were quickly consumed by scavengers, to avoid the possibility of rats eating them. In addition to the work on the Busen area a further 1500 reindeer were shot on the Barff area. The remaining Barff animals will be eradicated in early 2014.

Early 2013 also saw the beginning of the first part of Phase II of the SGHT's rodent eradication project. Operating bases were established in February and baiting began in early March. The South Georgia weather has, at times, limited operations but it looks like the SGHT will achieve most of their objectives for 2013. All the signs suggest that the first phase of the eradication on the Thatcher, Greene and Mercer peninsulas was successful and the SGHT plan to complete the project in 2015.

The combination of reindeer and rat eradications will help return South Georgia to a more natural state and I would like to thank all concerned for their efforts on these challenging projects.

The final piece in the habitat restoration jigsaw is the project to control and eradicate some of the non-native plants from South Georgia. The primary focus continues

to be the bittercress around King Edward Point, but additional work has been undertaken at Grytviken and around the old whaling stations.



*Blue dye marks where bittercress has been sprayed.*

In addition to the habitat restoration work, considerable progress has been made with cultural heritage projects. As part of an agreement to mark the centenary of Amundsen's and Scott's teams reaching the South Pole funds have been made available by the UK and Norwegian governments for heritage work on South Georgia. During the austral spring of 2012, using funds provided by the Norwegian Government, GSGSSI organised a laser survey of the whaling station at Husvik. This provides an excellent record of the current state of the disused station and a similar survey of Leith is planned for next season. Another project used UK Government funds to remove the last of the asbestos from the old manager's villa at Husvik, so that this can be used for accommodating field staff during the habitat restoration projects. Utilising funds provided by the FCO, GSGSSI has renovated Discovery House to provide extra facilities at King Edward Point. Discovery House will primarily provide extra accommodation for visiting scientists.

Next season will see Discovery House commissioned and we also plan to undertake some major work on the Nybrakke, replacing the roof and windows and sorting out the drainage as the first step to utilising the building for emergency stores and accommodation.

Scientific activities on South Georgia remain a high priority as these underpin our management of both the terrestrial and marine environments. Last year we instigated a small grants scheme to encourage science on South Georgia and during the austral summer KEP hosted two groups of scientists to undertake the funded projects. One project focussed on meteorology and extreme weather events on South Georgia whilst the other looked at microbial activity in soils and freshwater.

As always, we very much welcome the support of the South Georgia Association and remain committed to working with the Association to better manage South Georgia's unique environmental and cultural heritage. We will continue to engage the SGA and other

stakeholders in developing key policies and legislation for the Territory.

### A name with a history



Tony Walker (who wintered at Signy Island in 1991 and Bird Island in 1994 and 1995) and his wife, Mary Kate Archibald (who visited the Antarctic Peninsula on a cruise ship with Tony and Bernard Stonehouse in 2010), recently had twins: Signy Grace Archibald Walker and William John Archibald Walker. The twins were born on April 16, 2013 and in the photograph Tony is holding his daughter Signy.

The name Signy was inspired by the time Tony spent on Signy Island and the fact that both parents loved the name.

The island was given its name by Captain Petter Sørle, of the Norwegian whaler *Paal* who named the island after his wife, Signy Sørle. The name William, by the way, was not chosen because of the Arctic explorer, William Scoresby or his namesake, RRS *William Scoresby*.

Petter Sørle had a profound effect on the history of South Georgia. He patented the stern slip that allowed factory ships to operate on the high seas and so ended the whalers' dependence on shore stations, where the Falkland Islands government could tax and control them.

Tony and his family live in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and can be contacted at [tonyrobertwalker@gmail.com](mailto:tonyrobertwalker@gmail.com).



*A new South Georgia £2 coin from the Pobjoy Mint depicts the pup of a Weddell seal.*



*A set of stamps shows 'star trails' photographed by Sam Crimmin, a former M.O. at KEP.*

## The Kuli South Georgia Expedition (KSGE)

The Climate Change Institute (CCI) has a long tradition of research in remote regions of the world, many of which have experienced dramatic warming in the last few decades. This warming (and associated feedbacks such as reduced sea ice yielding enhanced ocean heat loss) has resulted in massive losses of: land-based glaciers, floating ice shelves and sea ice. With warming, ice core records that provide unique, highly robust reconstructions of past climate are fast disappearing. South Georgia's glaciers may no longer preserve easily-interpreted environmental records derived from ice cores but, if they do, the records offer a critical view of climate change for much of the South Atlantic and Southern Ocean. Notably these records would offer information on past temperature, precipitation, atmospheric circulation, air chemistry, sea ice extent, volcanic and human activity, as well as much more at storm event resolution, ranging from decades to thousands of years. These data would yield a framework for assessing future climate and environmental change. Losing these records through melting is tantamount to losing the 'Rosetta Stone' for these regions.

New ice core records from sensitive regions like South Georgia are needed to address major scientific questions:

(1) How will the behaviour of major climate features, such as the westerlies that transport heat and moisture throughout much of the southern hemisphere, change in the future and how fast might a change occur? As an example CCI has demonstrated that recent changes in the westerlies, associated with greenhouse gas warming and the Antarctic ozone hole are unlike anything in the previous 5000 years.

(2) How much has the chemistry of the atmosphere changed in response to human activities in both hemispheres?

To investigate the potential for recovering ice core climate reconstructions from South Georgia glaciers, eight members of the KSGE team set sail aboard *Pelagic Australis* on 6 October 2012 from the Falkland Islands for South Georgia and returned on 28 October.

We reached South Georgia after almost six days sailing and, as weather reports predicted rough weather, we decided to postpone our planned Possession Bay landing and travelled to King Edward Point. At daybreak headed to the Barff Peninsula to check a site that had relatively easy access from the shore - Szielasko Ice Cap. The team split into two groups - one searched for a base camp location and the other for a route to the ice cap. By the end of the day the weather had deteriorated significantly. To take advantage of any sudden improvements we decided that three members would stay at the emergency hut on Barff Peninsula and the rest would return to the yacht to be ready for work at other sites.

Second attempt to collect basal ice from Nordenskjöld Glacier ... unfortunately, conditions too rough to launch the zodiac ... returned the next day with success.

Meanwhile, the Barff team collected snow samples and conducted radar surveys on the Szielasko Ice Cap. A 2.7m snow pit was dug at the top of the Ice Cap (686 m asl) and sampled at 1 cm intervals to allow detailing of individual storm events. The winter snow at this elevation was starting to melt and the sampling stopped at 2.7m when ice was hit, indicating either significant melting of the pre-2012 winter snow or a hiatus between last winter's snow and possibly many years down to glacier ice.



*Approaching Szielasko Ice Cap, Barff Peninsula.*

In general, the southern half of South Georgia is about 1°C colder on average than the northern half, so sampling at Szielasko is equivalent to sampling at about 100-150m higher on the northern half of the island. Our original plans were to sample at about 800-900 m asl on the northern end of the island so sampling at close to 700 m asl on the southern half is not significantly lower with respect to temperature than our original plan. It demonstrated that recovery of a continuous, well preserved ice core would have to be conducted at elevations well above 1000 m asl.

To our knowledge, the Szielasko snow pit may be the first sampling of the chemistry of the atmosphere over South Georgia. It provides a basis for comparing changes in the chemistry of the atmosphere between winter 2012 and significantly older ice discussed below.

*Science:* Two short ice cores were recovered from the snout regions of Nordenskjöld and Fortuna Glaciers. Although extremely short, these may be the first ice cores recovered from South Georgia. By comparing the snow pit chemistry from Szielasko Ice Cap with the 'old' ice chemistry from Nordenskjöld and Fortuna Glaciers ice cores, we will provide the first estimate of difference in atmospheric chemistry between the industrial and the pre-industrial eras. Our previous research in coastal Greenland suggests that debris-insulated glacier ice can contain well-preserved records of past climate despite their low elevation (and thus relatively high air temperature). By examining the chemistry of these ice cores we may be able to estimate whether this ice is several hundreds to many thousands of years old and so allow the first estimate of the age of some of the oldest

ice on South Georgia. If the cores hold well-preserved records we also expect to be able to investigate them at sub-annual resolution, using our newly developed laser sampling technology to gain insight into what deep ice near the centre of South Georgia might hold for a climate record, in anticipation of proposed future ice core drilling.



*Preparing ice drill and solar panels for drilling on the edge of the Nordenskjöld Glacier.*

### **Toward a record of past climate from South Georgia**

Warming is severely impacting South Georgia's glaciers and to recover a well-preserved ice core from South Georgia it will be necessary to go considerably higher than the 1000 m asl assumed from pre-expedition calculations using existing climate records. Our investigations in Cumberland Bay suggest that sufficiently high (>2000m) and sufficiently thick (>150m) ice can be accessed and will likely offer a well-preserved record of past climate change extending back several hundreds to thousands of years. We plan to develop a Cumberland Bay region deep ice core drilling programme plus a South Georgia wide ice and snow sampling component in the near future. There is much more to be done to understand South Georgia's past climate and through this to make better predictions for future climate in the South Atlantic.

A 12-minute movie documenting the expedition can be seen at [http://climatechange.umaine.edu/cci\\_videos](http://climatechange.umaine.edu/cci_videos).

**Paul Mayewski**

### **Nail-biting triumph by Team Rat**



In NL 24 we reported that Phase 2 of the rat eradication had not been completed. The weather had been awful and progress slow. As winter approached, temperatures dropped and snow fell. It looked as if the team might fail to complete the phase. Eventually, we heard that the last of the poison bait had been spread at the 59th minute of the 11th hour. A big sigh of relief and congratulations to Team Rat. You can find Tony Martin's vivid account at [www.sght.org/newsletters-and-publications](http://www.sght.org/newsletters-and-publications).

### **How the bells of Grytviken rang out in Norway**

Many readers will know the sound of the Grytviken church bells. Many will also know that it takes quite a lot of skill to sound them musically rather than make a lot of clanging. This year will be the centenary of the first ringing of the bells and of the consecration of the church.

The inscriptions on the two bells read:

Salig er de død	(Blessed are the dead)
Som dø i herren	(Who die in the Lord)

Vaag og bed bered snart (Awake and pray Make ready)  
Jeg ringer dig ind til fred (I ring you unto peace)

On the 75th anniversary I was at Grytviken with Hans-Kjell Larsen, grandson of Carl Anton Larsen who founded the whaling station and was responsible for establishing the church. We had travelled aboard HMS *Arrow* accompanied by a bronze bust of C.A. Larsen to display in the church at Christmas.

There were various ideas for the commemoration and we were aware of great interest in Norway, particularly in Sandefjord and Vestfold province generally. Thus a bit of modern technology came in useful and a plan was made with connivance of the Royal Navy. I used a hand-held VHF radio to transmit the sound of the bells to HMS *Arrow* from where it was transmitted to Northolt by a satellite link. The communications section in Northolt were very obliging (it was Christmas) and dialled a phone number in Sandefjord. From there it was transmitted to the church and local radio station. As we rang the bells, presumably a few seconds later, they were heard where they were made in Norway. Perhaps the VHF connection was really not necessary, the radio officer could have put a microphone outside, but it was a not particularly clement night, and radio rooms are deep within most ships.

On the 100th anniversary, this Christmas, the broadcast to Norway will be repeated - but with a direct Iridium phone connection and some bell-ringing practice first!

**Bob Headland**

*A pencil inscription in the belfry records the date the bells were first rung by M. Abrahamsen.*



## **The mystery of the South Georgia polar library**

There are always new mysteries turning up regarding South Georgia, of which a substantial proportion have been solved by members of the South Georgia Association. An intriguing question is whatever happened to the polar library of the base at KEP? It was a very good collection of about 118 books from many sources, probably the best of those on any BAS base. Books included those left by the Magistrates and other government officials, some provided by BAS, 'borrowings' from the libraries of the whaling stations, and many given to base by their authors. There were also a general library and a biological library when the base closed, rather abruptly, as a result of a large number of badly behaved visitors arriving suddenly in the early afternoon of 3 April 1982.

After the Argentines had been defeated and deported, a BAS party of three returned in August 1982 to inspect, salvage and clear up the base, or more properly the garrison, for so it was until 2001. The main library was left intact, the biological and the polar libraries prepared for transfer to Signy and BAS HQ.

Until then the books of the polar library were held in a glass-fronted bookcase in the Base Commander's room. During the previous two winters, they had been catalogued in detail and numbered. A purple rubber stamp (made from the 'John Bull' printing kit) was applied, with the note: 'South Georgia Polar Library No. ' , to all of them. Much attention was also given to their binding where necessary and most were covered with a transparent protective film. The film and stamp made them easily identifiable.

On the day when the BAS men suddenly became 'guests' of the Argentine navy, a few had a polar book, which they were reading, in their luggage. These, with other books, were returned as we were discharged from the temporary prison in Puerto Belgrano and they made their way back to Cambridge. Only half a dozen polar books were, however, involved, including two single volumes from two-volume sets.

The packing of the rest of the polar library was completed in the clear-up/salvage of August and arrangements were made for it to go to BAS HQ at Cambridge. At this time many other items, including a lot of personal things, were also dispatched. The books arrived which, with all other returned things, were held in the BAS stores. The books which returned independently were put back with them which, in the instances of separate volumes, got everything back together. The understanding was that the library was to be held safely until it could be returned to KEP.

The return was delayed far longer than expected. Enquiries about the South Georgia polar library, a couple of years later, were answered that it was 'in storage'. When the base was to be re-established Alan Wearden, who did not know of the original extensive collection, suggested a

collection of books be sent. Nobody knew the whereabouts of the original polar library and this is the mystery; where has it gone?

The books all bore distinctive markings: some had the old Magistrate's stamps, all had the John Bull stamp, most had transparent plastic covers, all had the catalogue numbers. None has been seen after 1982. None has appeared in any of the many sales and catalogues and there is no other evidence that they have reached the second-hand book trade. The cases in which they were packed were carefully marked, heavy and known to have reached BAS HQ stores. Enquiries by the BAS Club have not had any success, the BAS library has no record of them and the BAS archives merely have copies of the old inventories. The stores have been re-organised several times since those far-off days. Where has the South Georgia Polar Library gone? Any detective work would be appreciated with the object of getting the best polar library back to the island.

**Bob Headland**

## **Seabird rescue - Bird Island style**

As part of the long term monitoring programme on Bird Island, the wandering albatross chicks are visited once a month to monitor breeding success. The monthly check in July proved more eventful than normal. One chick seemed to be missing. The bird had left its nest and fallen down a hole that was around 3 feet deep. It had become completely wedged in and soil had fallen on top of it so that all that was visible was its head. After digging it free, an exhausted, mud-covered chick was eventually pulled out and returned to its nest.

At first one leg seemed injured but a few visits later the chick was sitting up again as normal, with little obvious permanent damage. Without the rescue the chick would surely have died because its parents would not have been likely to find it to feed it. Hopefully it will fledge in November or December with the rest of the 2013 cohort.

Every chick is vitally important as the wandering albatross is now classified as vulnerable. The Bird Island population has been monitored since 1958, and has shown a continual decrease in numbers. In 1972 there were 1582 pairs of breeding adults on the island, this year there were only 748 pairs, a reduction of 47% in 41 years.

This massive decrease in population is thought to be due primarily to long-line fishing, which increased in popularity in the mid-1990s. Birds are hooked whilst trying to feed on fishing bait and drown. There are measures that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of hooking albatrosses which the South Georgia Government have implemented on fishing boats in the South Georgia maritime Zone. These include fishing at night, weighting the hooks so they are quickly out of reach of the birds, and using scarers on the lines. Since implementing these control measures, the number of birds killed has been massively reduced. The problem for

the albatrosses of Bird Island is that these measures are not used elsewhere and, as the birds are so wide-ranging, many are still being killed. Ringed birds have been recovered from fisheries operations as far away as South Africa, South America and Australia/New Zealand.

Hopefully chick 4007001 will not fall victim to a fishing hook and will return in a few years to breed.

**Stephanie Winnard**



*The chick a few days after rescue and a month later.*

## The Death of Shackleton

The cause of death of Sir Ernest Shackleton on 5 January 1922 is not disputed. He died of a heart attack early in the morning in his cabin on the *Quest* in King Edward Cove. However I had noted some inconsistencies in the accounts and some speculation on his health prior to the final illness which, as a pathologist, I thought needed further clarification. Of interest to me was the assertion that there was a post mortem and perhaps even an inquest.

The ship's surgeon, Dr Alexander Macklin, was called to his cabin early in the morning and was with Shackleton when he died. His detailed diaries for 1921-22 in the Scott Polar Research Institute were my first port of call.

*"Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 4.10am This morning at 2.50am the Boss died. I was taking the 2.30am anchor watch when I was attracted by a whistle from the Boss's cabin. He told me that he was suffering from pains in the back and bad facial neuralgia. He wished some drug that would produce immediate relief. He said he had taken three tablets of Aspirin and it had done no good. I noticed that he was only covered by one blanket and as the night was cold I said 'you should be more warmly covered. I will get you my blanket' which I did and*

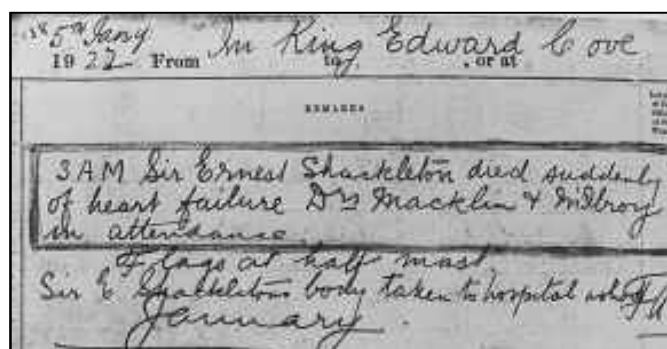
*tucked it all around him. He was impatient for some drug to immediately relieve him of pain and to give him sleep. I left him and went to the medical cupboard and got 10minims of Chorodyne which I gave him in water. He did not take it all at once but said 'put it down there'."*

The 'facial neuralgia' is referred pain\* to the angle of the jaw which may be experienced during an acute heart attack. Macklin then records the famous conversation about asking Shackleton to give up alcohol for the sake of his health, but Shackleton's condition rapidly deteriorates.

*"He then said I feel the pain coming again, give me the medicine quickly. He swallowed it but immediately had a severe paroxysm during which he died. I stayed by him until I saw that all was hopeless and then went to tell McIlroy, for it flooded through my mind that his death would come as a sensation and that there might be an enquiry. I said 'Mick, come at once, the Boss is dying'. Mick came but on entering the room said as soon as he saw him 'yes, he's gone'."*

They then fetched Hussey and a hypodermic of ether but did not give an injection as they all knew it would do no good. Macklin then writes:

*"Death is a terrible thing to witness and I can never get used to it, but this was much more so, as can easily be understood. The cause of death is, I feel perfectly sure, Angina Pectoris."*



*The log of Quest, recording Shackleton's death.*

This is incorrect terminology and we would say Myocardial infarction now. Angina implies a shortage of blood to the heart associated with narrowing of an artery or arteries that causes pain but not tissue death. Myocardial infarction is caused by a complete obstruction of an artery or a critical shortage of blood flow because of multiple vessel disease causing permanent tissue death – cardiac cells cannot regenerate. Macklin corrects this in his letters to Fisher and McIlroy also refers to him not having angina in his interview with the Fishers. In 1920 I suspect the terminology of the events of acute heart disease was not so well defined as now.

\* Referred pain is pain felt in another site distant from that of the affected organ such as the heart. The pain of an acute heart attack is most commonly felt as crushing pain in the centre of the chest but occasionally may be felt referred or radiating out to the jaw or left arm or shoulder.

*"I laid him out and tidied things up, turned out the light which was flickering, and shut the door. We all returned to think things*



over and nothing further could be done until 6.00am, when I will inform the magistrate who is also Coroner. I will notify of what exactly happened and then give a certificate of death from angina pectoris, heart failure. Mick agrees about this. I have written this one hour later so that an account of it while fresh in my mind to refer to at a later date in case of enquiries which people are bound to make.

".....After breakfast Wild, McIlroy and myself went to the see the magistrate and informed of the fact and arranged about the medical certificate. After that we went to see Jacobsen the Whaling station manager about disposal of the body.

".....I returned to the Quest and cleaned up the body and dressed it in a pair of his silk pyjamas and then sewed it in a sheet. Wild got a piece of canvas and we sewed him up in this also. We took him ashore in the station motorboat and Worsley, Hussey and the Norwegian Doctor and I carried him up to a room in the little hospital, the identical room in which we lived seven years ago. We covered him with clean white sheets and the white ensign and there he will be till we are ready to place him in the coffin."

The medical certificate of Cause of Death, signed by Macklin (in the South Georgia papers) states the cause as 1a Angina Pectoris due to 1b Heart Failure and this also appears in the South Georgia Death Registration book witnessed by Wild, Macklin and McIlroy and countersigned by Edward Binnie, the magistrate and coroner. There is no mention of an inquest in the narrative adjacent to this entry unlike other entries in the book, which can be seen on the South Georgia Cemeteries website run by Pat Lurcock. A coroner can hold an inquest without a post mortem but there would be no reason to do so if the cause of death is accepted.

Macklin goes on to describe in his diary the embalming of the body in his entry for 7 January. Interestingly he writes initially that he has performed a post mortem and then crosses it out. What he actually describes is an opportunistic examination of the coronary arteries which would have easily been accessed during the embalming process which was done, not via the arteries of the neck as is most usual, but by opening up the chest to expose the aorta perhaps because the doctors wanted to make absolutely sure of the cause of death.

*"Dr McIlroy and myself performed a post mortem examination. I opened up the body to expose the great aorta, which was injected with formalin under pressure. We had a chance of seeing the heart and we found fatty extensive atheroma of the coronary arteries. The station doctor, Dr Simonsen and his assistant put themselves at our disposal and lent all the necessary instruments etc.*

*"Finally we placed him in a coffin with a lining of galvanised Zinc and the station tinsmith soldered it down and sealed it hermetically."*

McIlroy's interview with the Fishers also mentions doing a post mortem but again only talks about the disease in the heart. He also mentions that Shackleton had a probable cardiac episode in Spitsbergen some years previously but would not allow McIlroy to examine him.

*"So when we reached Grytviken in S Georgia and I was called by Macklin to come and see him I found him dying and wasn't*

*surprised. .... He had thrombosis of a coronary artery. I did a post mortem on him and I think he must have had some trouble.*

*"We put poor old Shackleton in the mortuary, the body freezes very quickly in those temperatures ..... and Macklin and myself did a post mortem on Shackleton. We had to find out what was wrong with him. We rather guessed it was his heart, because it was so quick. And I don't think he suffered any pain."*

The South Georgia papers folder that contains the medical certificate of Cause of Death also contains a certificate of Freedom from Infection signed by Macklin on 10<sup>th</sup> January giving the cause of death as Atheroma of the Coronary Arteries and Heart Failure, the terminology differing from the death certificate presumably after his examination of the heart during the embalming.

The outer cover of the South Georgia folder indicates, in a handwritten note dated 1968, that the inquest report is missing but there is no evidence either in Macklin's diaries or in any of the other first hand accounts of the witnesses that such a report ever existed or that an inquest occurred. It would not have been required under law and the acceptance of a cause of death and the issuing of a death certificate by Macklin rather than the Coroner are also evidence that no inquest was held. No inquest is mentioned either in Hussey's account, nor in the Fisher biography or their interviews and correspondence with Macklin and McIlroy in the 1950s.



*Shackleton's coffin in the Whalers Church. Christmas decorations are still in place.*

Macklin's Diary for late 1921 does not record any problems with Shackleton's health in Rio de Janeiro where most of his diary is blank pages, but he clearly states in interviews and letters to the Fishers (as does Scout Marr) that Shackleton was taken ill on 17 or 18 December while at a club on land and Macklin was sent

for. Macklin attributes this gap in his diary to his shipboard duties and the need to keep records in the ship's log, and also the cramped quarters in his cabin which he shared with Hussey and the banjo. Macklin told the Fishers that he was more concerned about Shackleton's health after the incident in Rio and both McIlroy and Macklin inform the Fishers about Shackleton's reluctance to have a physical examination.

Shackleton mentions in his letters to his wife sent in October (27<sup>th</sup>) 1921 that he was not very well but expected to be soon back to his old self. He also wrote to Emily on 17 December

*"I only just wish to say that you must not worry about me and my health is really all right only I am feeling the stain of the delays especially with the eyes of the world upon us" and in the PS Darling I am a little tired but all right, you seem always young."*

It is always more difficult to prove the absence of an event than its occurrence but all the evidence points to Shackleton's death being certified by Macklin, as a doctor who had attended him in life and at the time of death, which was then registered by Binnie to allow the removal of the body without a post mortem or inquest being undertaken.

The note on the South Georgia folder made in 1968 seems to have caused a great deal of the confusion about the inquest but is probably a genuine mistake made by someone unfamiliar with the law and documentation surrounding sudden death. Macklin and McIlroy took the opportunity to examine the heart to confirm the cause of death during the embalming process but did not perform a full post mortem.

Thanks are due to several people who willingly assisted me in my investigations, in particular, Naomi Boneham of the Scott Polar Research Institute Archives.

**Cathy Corbishley Michel**



*A screen shot captured from the KEP webcam last winter.*

## **Bird Island 'Come Dine With Me'**

Saturday evenings on Bird Island are occasions for smart dress and good food because the cook of the day is obliged to provide a three-course feast. During the winter, when the base drops from nine residents to four, the rules get relaxed a bit and this tradition sometimes gets overlooked. Yet the weekend should be a time of relaxing and doing something a bit different. So Craig came up with a plan for a 'Come Dine With Me' style cooking competition.

The evening started with the three 'guests' arriving with gifts, usually something purloined from the stores or moved from somewhere else on base. Typed or handwritten menus were perused over a glass of wine or new cocktail while sitting at the fabulously decorated table before the main event of the evening, the food, was served. There was time for chatter between courses but unlike the Channel 4 show we resisted the urge to go through each others' rooms and judging their possessions. Dessert was followed by a game, something invented or perhaps a modified version of a classic (the Game of Life seems rather alien to us).

The whole evening was judged in front of a private video camera and, at time of writing, we are still unaware of the results. Tempting as it was to be fully appreciative about the amazing effort everyone put in, it was more fun to go for the style of the show and complain about petty little things ('Well, Steph loses points because she dropped my slice of flan upside down on the plate.').

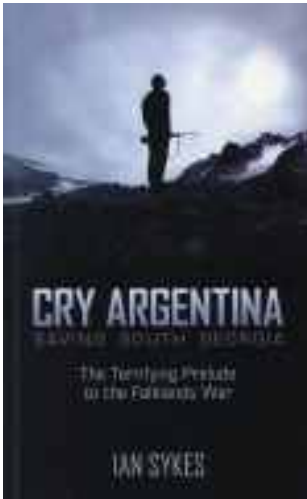
It was a good chance for people to let their creativity out. Steph chose possibly the hardest dessert: lemon meringue pie with old eggs. Jerry went for an Indian theme with curries, naans and poppadums and Hannah brought along Bird Island Cluedo - the thought that had gone into the weapons was a little worrying. Craig finished off with a FIDs evening. He had everything from serving 'manfood' (sledging rations) on the floor and old sheets rigged up to look like a tent interior, to ensuring we all arrived dressed in old shirts and big beards.



*Pretend Fids.*

The dinners lent a sense of occasion to the weekends when not much else was happening and, although stressful when trying to make a new recipe perfectly, it was a great laugh.

**Jerry Gillham**



**Cry Argentina; Saving South Georgia  
The Terrifying Prelude to the Falklands War**

Ian Sykes. 2013. Brighton: Book Guild Publishing.  
ISBN 978 1 84624 871 9  
314 pp, 4 maps, bibliography,  
£ 8.99

This book, in the opinion of a reviewer who was on South Georgia during the critical period in 1982 (and who is mentioned in it) is highly enigmatic. Those with only vague understanding of the course of events will probably enjoy it and believe it informative. Those who were there, or otherwise knew what actually happened, will often find themselves annoyed, displeased and vexed. The combination of fact and fiction is the essence of this polarity. The author includes much authentic information and has apparently used some highly placed sources, but this is diminished by the intrusion of so much fiction. Geographical error, careless editing and a degree of internal inconsistency are also apparent. Personal names illustrate this; many are of actual persons who were involved and did some of what is described. Numerous others, including an intrusive love story, are entirely fictitious. In such a concoction it is impossible to distinguish where reality ends and fiction begins without personal knowledge.

The introduction notes that the author has tried to write an unbiased *account of events from both sides*. While there are nine bibliographical references, all are British. The many Argentine works on the subject are not mentioned, although the book invents much description of occurrences from their aspect. Some of the unsubstantiated speculations of the politics involved are potentially good and come close to reality. The best published account of the war on South Georgia is by Roger Perkins; *Operation Paraquat*, in 1986. This is principally a military account and contrasts with this work which, despite its imperfections, has the advantage of concentrating more on the British Antarctic Survey staff involved (indeed the author spent two winters working with the Survey, but not at South Georgia, and came to know it well).

There remains a distinct lack of an account of the events on South Georgia from the point of view of the scientists and other staff involved. Much archival material and disparate publications include information and the majority of those directly involved are around. There are

now many Argentine sources available. A good factual book on the subject would be very welcome – even more than 30 years later. I entirely disagree with the note at the end of the introduction: 'I have tried to portray events accurately as they occurred'. The blurb on the back cover ends stating 'it is a complex and compelling feat of dramatic storytelling' with which I have no problem as it makes no claim to being history. On the basis of 'never let the facts ruin a good story', after all, there is no doubt that the book is a 'ripping yarn'.

**Bob Headland**

**South Georgia's first love story**

On 18 October 1911, the German South Polar Expedition under the command of Dr Wilhelm Filchner arrived at Grytviken on the *Deutschland*. A few days after they left Buenos Aires, Dr Kohl, one of the two doctors, had realised that he was suffering from acute appendicitis. He made his will and insisted that the operation had to be performed immediately on the high seas by the second doctor, Dr von Goeldels, and his assistant. The assistant needed a few whiskies for his new role as he could not stand the sight of blood. Years later, Kohl heard that the assistant's glasses fell straight into the open wound.

The Norwegian doctor at the whaling station considered Kohl to be too weak to continue with the expedition and he was taken ashore to stay in the Villa. On the 8th Captain Larsen gave a farewell dinner for the crew of *Deutschland*, which left for Antarctica three days later. Present was Margit Larsen, one of the daughters of the manager Carl Anton Larsen.



*Farewell dinner for the expedition. Ludwig Kohl sits 2nd from left. Margit is the righthand woman. CA Larsen is 3rd from right.*

For Kohl it was love at first sight. On 16 December he wrote a postcard with just one sentence (freely translated): 'One last heartfelt greeting, Dr L. Kohl'. It was addressed to Margit. So the postcard was surprise for her. It was genuine South Georgia inland mail sent from King Edward Point to the Villa (1.4 kilometres or a 17-minute walk). Maybe Binnie handed the card to Margit on the day Ludwig Kohl left?



*The fateful postcard sent to Margit Larsen on 16 Dec 1911.*

Kohl left South Georgia four days later on 20 December. After he was back in Hamburg he waited every day for mail from Margit. In March 1912 there is an entry in his diary (translated): 'Hourly longing for news from South Georgia from Margit. All my future plans depend on the receipt and contents of her letters.' On 29 April he wrote: 'Where is Margit? All this waiting! A real punishment for a human being!'

In the following months he got no news from Margit but in September 1912 he was sightseeing in Oslo. While walking through the streets on a sunny autumn day he pup at him: Margit! He could not explain this completely unexpected meeting, but then he realised that Norway was Margit Larsen's home country. From then on, things developed rapidly. On 27 November, 1912 they got engaged before he joined the Max von Oppenheim excavations of the Tell Halaf in Mesopotamia (now Iraq).

After returning to Europe, on 18 September 1913, Ludwig Kohl married Margit Larsen, added her surname to his and they became the Kohl-Larsens. He went to work as a doctor on Yap in the Caroline Islands, then a German colony, and wrote an interesting book about his time there (with beautiful illustrations of the local culture and the famous 'stone money' of Yap). In September 1923 he returned to Antarctica on board the factory ship *Sir James Clark Ross* with his father-in-law Captain Larsen.

1928/29 saw Kohl-Larsen's own South Georgia expedition (of course with Margit), where he and cameraman Albert Benitz produced the film 'Roah Roah' (apparently the call of a penguin!). As well as depicting wildlife, their film and photos are valuable for climate research because they captured scenes showing the status of South Georgian glaciers in that era.

After participating in the Polar Expedition on board the airship Graf Zeppelin in July 1931, Kohl-Larsen concentrated his research in Africa with Margit's assistance. In Laetoli, Tanzania, he made his most important find. The biography of Kohl-Larsen is titled:

*Ludwig Kohl-Larsen: Der Mann, der Lucy's Ahnen fand* (Ludwig Kohl-Larsen, *The man who found Lucy's ancestors*). Leakey wrote: 'The skull fragments represent a species of Palaeoanthropos, NOT Homo Sapiens. I think it is a new species - very important.' As a result of WW2 he never got the scientific recognition he deserved.

Kohl-Larsen died at his home near Lake Constance in 1969 at the age of 85. Margit followed him in 1990 at the age of 99. The great romance that started with a postcard in South Georgia came to an end.

**Albert-Friedrich Gruene**

### Prestigious award

At the 40th Conference of the Association for Industrial Archaeology in Dundee, 10 August, Professor Bjørn L. Basberg, an SGA member, was awarded *The Peter Neaverson Award for Outstanding Scholarship* for his book *The Shore Whaling Stations at South Georgia. A Study in Antarctic Industrial Archaeology*. The award recognises publications which have made the greatest contribution to the scholarship, knowledge and/or understanding of industrial archaeology.

### Our own Facebook page

The SGA now has its own webpage. You do not have to be a Facebook user for access to it. Simply type [www.facebook.com/southgeorgiaassociation](http://www.facebook.com/southgeorgiaassociation) into Internet Explorer or other browser.

You will find current press stories, information about radio and TV programmes, news of members, notices of new books, cartoons, snippets of South Georgian interest.



'Click' around the page and find things of interest. 'Click' in [Photos](#) and see photos the Spring Meeting. It looks like fun. Join us next year!

We now have 350 people receiving updates of our page. Join them by clicking on the 'Like' button under the main picture and then 'Get notifications'.

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:

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