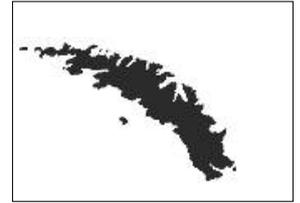


South Georgia Association Newsletter

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Website: www.southgeorgiaassociation.org



The Third Annual General Meeting

Once again we held our AGM in the hospitable premises of the Royal Over-Seas League, off St James's. There was a good turn out of 53 members and we were particularly pleased to welcome our President, Stephen Venables, and the Commissioner for South Georgia, Howard Pearce.

The Association's officers were able to tell a story of successful achievement over the preceding year. Keith Holmes (Treasurer and speaking for the Membership Secretary) reported that membership had risen to 314, an increase of 82. Threequarters had paid the five-year subscription. We have four corporate members. Our financial position is healthy – we have over £2,000 in the bank and £10,000 in a deposit account, opened in response to a suggestion at last year's AGM.

David Rootes reported on the success of the Cambridge Conference in September 2003 and said that following on from the Conference a Cultural and Heritage Workshop would be held at the Scott Polar Research Institute. The topics to be covered would include: industrial heritage, archaeological recording of artefacts and Shackletoniana.

During the meeting events planned for the year ahead were highlighted: The Edinburgh meeting in June was previewed by David Tatham. David Nicholls reported on the exhibition to be held at Sandefjord in Norway on 'South Georgia and its people'. Bob Headland will speak on 'A Century of South Georgia' at SPRI on 30 October.

Charles Swithinbank kindly chaired the meeting while the Committee was re-elected for a further year.

The Commissioner, Mr. Howard Pearce, then gave an illustrated talk on activities at South Georgia during the preceding season. The full text is given below.

A brief discussion followed the Commissioner's talk on the full-sized metal sculpture of a blue whale which Helen Denerley has proposed for Grytviken. Some members felt it was too 'Disneyland'. Others liked it.

The evening concluded with a fascinating talk by Tony Ellerbeck and Robb Robinson on the sealer/trawler *Dias/Viola* and the possibility of recovering it to Hull.

We are delighted that once again the Commissioner has given us a 'State of the Territory' address and that he was able to deliver it in person at the AGM.

'Thank you for inviting me to address you during your AGM. I am delighted to be present at this occasion for the first time. I will talk first about what we have been doing in South Georgia this year. Then I will look ahead to some of the

The next Annual General Meeting will be on May 20, 2005.

things likely to be on GSGSSI's mind over the next year or so.

Our principal preoccupation during the last summer season has been the clean-up at Grytviken. The objective: to remove all hazardous substances and potential pollutants from the abandoned whaling station, so that Grytviken is safe for those who live, work and visit there, and the threat of future environmental damage minimised. The work this summer was on the whaling station itself and the three abandoned whaling or sealing vessels. I am delighted to record that the work has been an outstanding success. Completed on time, and just under budget. We have:

1. *either removed all asbestos and buried it on site, or where its removal has been impossible it has been sealed and made safe. The work has been overseen by experts from Thames Laboratories in the UK and completed to UK standards;*

2. *removed all the remaining oil from the tanks (a particularly unpleasant job which involved scraping it up by hand from the bottom of the tanks and removing it by wheelbarrow); it has been taken away from SG by barge and disposed of safely;*

3. *checked for the presence of PCBs, but so far found none;*

4. *refloated the two sealers, Albatros and Dias, removed the remaining oil from their tanks, removed asbestos where we could, and sealed it where we couldn't;*

5. *demolished a number of buildings where essential in order to remove asbestos or where the buildings themselves were unsafe and potentially dangerous.*

The project has so far cost GSGSSI nearly £5 million – a very substantial proportion of the money we have in the bank. We have had no help from elsewhere. But for health and safety reasons we had no choice but to go ahead.

We plan to complete the project next summer season. We have yet to take final decisions on next season's work plan. It will depend on whether we are able to secure material assistance with the costs from Norway, which has a strong historical and cultural interest in the SG whaling stations. I am grateful for the collaboration we have had so far from Norwegian colleagues.

I hope that as next season's work progresses it will be possible to allow visiting cruise ship passengers back into the whaling station, or at least some parts of it, including the former flensing plan. Our plans include improving pathways and providing signage to explain what went on there. We are also considering the restoration of a useable landing stage at Grytviken, although this will depend on progress of work and budget. We anticipate spending a further £1 million on the project next year.

We would like to be able to clean up the other whaling

The South Georgia Association congratulates the Commissioner, Mr Howard Pearce CVO, on his marriage to Miss Caroline Thomée on October 21 at Christ Church Cathedral, Stanley.

stations at Leith, Stromness and Husvik. But we have no prospect of finding the resources to do this. They will therefore have to remain closed to visitors.

Some of you will be aware of the proposal for a sculpture to be erected at Grytviken as monument to the whale. A very talented Scottish sculptress, Helen Denerley, who makes the most remarkable sculptures out of scrap material, has been identified. Helen has visited Grytviken and is very excited by the project. Our decision to continue remedial work at Grytviken next year makes the project a practicable proposition. The project will, however, have to be paid for from private or commercial sources. GSGSSI can afford to offer no more than moral support. But I think it's an exciting and imaginative project. I am fairly optimistic that donors have already been found to meet the majority of the costs, although any further expressions of interest would be very welcome.

I should mention one other important development. This is the award to GSGSSI of certification by the Marine Stewardship Council for its management of the toothfish fishery. This follows some two years' or more work to secure MSC certification. We are very proud of this award, which is a tribute to GSGSSI's responsible attitude to environmental management. I should like to express my gratitude for the persistence, hard work and determination of the former Director of Fisheries for South Georgia, Russ Jarvis, whose efforts are largely responsible for this achievement.

That is the good news on fish. The bad news is a very substantial reduction by CCAMLR in the Total Allowable Catch for toothfish during the current season, which will result in a very significant decrease in GSGSSI's income at a time when our expenditure, principally on the Grytviken clean-up, has been exceptionally heavy. This has also resulted in a particularly difficult licensing round this year.

I now want to look ahead to some of the issues which GSGSSI will be addressing over the next year or so. Much of this is work in progress. Decisions have not yet been taken. I should welcome the views of SGA members.

We shall be taking many – perhaps most – of these decisions in the context of our forthcoming review of the Environmental Management Plan for South Georgia. Many of you will be familiar with the first version of this document, published some four years ago. We hope to be able to complete work on the update by the end of this year. As well as bringing the document up to date, reviewing existing policies and addressing a number of new policy issues, we aim to produce a document which is much more attractive and accessible to the lay reader. The British Antarctic Survey, who did much of the work on the first version, will be carrying out the work on our behalf, but in very close consultation with GSGSSI, who will be responsible for the final decisions about what goes into the revised plan. We plan to carry out an extensive consultation process as we did with the first version, including of course the SGA.

Some of you will be familiar with the work on tourism management in SG which Sally Poncet has been carrying out for us. Sally has produced a comprehensive set of recommendations, most of which we shall be addressing in the

context of our work on the new Environmental Management Plan. On some of her recommendations we may need to make some more urgent decisions. I want to share some of our thinking with you now. Much of Sally's recent work has focussed on Albatross and Prion Islands. Sally has recommended that we close Albatross Island to visitors; and close Prion Island to visitors during the height of the fur seal breeding season (late November to early January); construct a path (in preference to boardwalks) for visitors to Prion Island, to which visitors should be strictly confined.

In the longer term we shall also be considering whether the scale of the tourist industry in South Georgia requires closer regulation. We shall be considering such issues as:

- 1. restrictions on the size of ships;*
- 2. limits on the annual number of cruise vessel visits;*
- 3. limiting visits to Grytviken as well as other locations to LAATO member vessels only;*
- 4. the preparation of individual site management plans; some further seasonal restrictions at certain sites (mainly the principal fur seal breeding sites);*
- 5. further tightening of the quarantine regulations.*

Responsible environmental management is GSGSSI's first priority. But for the reasons I have already explained money will continue to be a constraint on what we can do. We have however been looking at ways of encouraging more support from private and commercial sources for the protection and conservation of the SG environment. Many of you will already be aware of our decision to establish a South Georgia Heritage Trust, with charitable status, as a channel for funds from non-official sources. The trust will be independent of the South Georgia Government, although a representative of the Government will be included on the Board of Trustees, and we envisage that it will be active in the USA and Norway as well as in the UK.

One of the projects which I hope the Trust will be able to support is the eradication of rats from South Georgia. As far as I know this would be the largest rat eradication project ever to be undertaken, and we need to do more preparatory work on feasibility and costs before we decide to pursue it. I recently met Andy Cox, whom some of you will know as one of the world's leading experts on the subject, in Christchurch, New Zealand. By any standards it will be extremely expensive, and beyond the means of GSGSSI alone.

We also plan to look again at the issue of reindeer eradication. My own instinct is to remove one herd and retain the other. We shall be giving this more thought as part of our review of the Environmental Management Plan.

Governing South Georgia continues to be a challenging and exciting task, and we can be sure of an interesting and active year ahead. Let me say how grateful I am for the dedication and hard work of my GSGSSI colleagues, Harriet Hall, Gordon Liddle and Richard McKee, not forgetting of course Pat and Sarah Lurcock at King Edward Point, and for the support we receive from David Nicholls and his colleagues in Project Atlantis. We all of us welcome the existence and continued interest in our work of the South Georgia Association.'

Howard Pearce, Commissioner

Edinburgh Meeting, June 19

A lunch-time meeting was held at the Royal Over-Seas League, Princes Street, Edinburgh to coincide with the Reunion of the British Antarctic Survey Club that evening at Heriot-Watt University. It was attended by 45 people and we were very pleased to welcome eight members of the Salvesen Ex-Whalers Club Edinburgh. As well as the food and drink, we were entertained, and instructed, with a series of short talks.



Helen Denerley (pictured above) told us about her plan to erect a life-size model of a blue whale, made of local scrap metal, at Grytviken. Mike Fedak and Martin Biuw of the Sea Mammals Research Unit described how they attach highly accurate temperature and salinity sensors to elephant seals. Readings are transmitted to a satellite during the seals' feeding trips around the Southern Ocean. This is a lot cheaper way of collecting oceanographic than deploying a research vessel! John Gordon gave a graphic account of the RSGS *Scotia* Centenary Expedition (see Newsletter No. 5). David Nicholls showed us some fine views of the rarely seen interior as he described the recent BSES Expedition and Keith Holmes told us about his visit to the whaling exhibition at Sandefjord (see this newsletter).



Member Ian Terris with two of the ex-whalers.

Government Officer

For the last 14 years a Marine Officer (MO) has been employed on short-term contract to work on South Georgia. Now the job will change to a longer term contract, and will be renamed Government Officer. A new house is being built to accommodate the Government Officer and an Assistant Government Officer will be recruited.

The first MOs mainly dealt with vessels transshipping fish, issuing licences and charging port and customs fees. Before this the Commanding Officer of the garrison stationed at King Edward Point had undertaken these duties, but so many vessels were transshipping that it was decided a dedicated Marine Officer was needed.

Early MOs were not the busiest of folk, especially after the collapse of the Russian economy which kept the large Russian fishing fleets away, but the duties of the MO have expanded over the years. After the South Georgia Maritime Zone was declared in 1993, all fishing vessels wanting to fish in the zone had to apply for a licence, and undergo inspections to ensure they were set up to comply with the requirements of the fishery. The tourism industry has also grown, from two or three ships visiting in a summer, to more than 40, and the MO's work has moved into other areas, such as maintaining the Government database and dealing with other Government interests on the Island.

For the last two winters an extra person has been working for a few months during the busy winter fishery. Now, the Government want to have two people working on longer contracts, both building up experience.

The first Government Officer will be Patrick Lurcock, who has worked as MO for more than 12 years. He and his wife Sarah will move into the new house in April. Carse House, named in honour of Duncan Carse who died earlier this year, will be built this summer by Morrison Falklands Ltd. It is a single storey building with three bedrooms, all en suite, and will be sited between the new Base building and Discovery House.

An Assistant Government Officer will be recruited and will live in Shackleton Villa, the two bedroomed apartment attached to the base where the MO currently lives. The two Officers will cover for each other's annual leave, and will both work on the Island in the busy winter fishery period.

South Georgia Exhibition at Sandefjord

Sandefjord Whaling Museum is celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the first whaling station at Grytviken by staging an exhibition entitled 'South Georgia, the Island and the People'.

At the opening ceremony on June 11, the Museum's Director, Sidsel Hansen, speaking graciously in English for the benefit of the two British attendees, as well as Norwegian, said that she felt it was timely for the Museum to focus upon the people of the whaling industry, rather than the technology and the business itself, which have hitherto been predominant themes. The museum now, therefore, has three sections.

The oldest is the charming original building, donated in 1917 by Lars Christensen, in which the emphasis is upon polar wildlife. A full-sized model of a blue whale, suspended from the roof, dominates these simply displayed traditional exhibits. Next door is a modern display of the history, artefacts and technology of whaling, from earliest times to the modern era in which Sandefjord prospered. Upstairs is the excellent new exhibition, which consists mainly of maps, photographs and written material. The displays are clear, interesting, comprehensive, and bi-lingual. It is well-worth seeing.

The Exhibition tells the story of how perhaps 40,000 or so Norwegians played an important role in the 20th century history of South Georgia. The Vestfold region of Norway, which encompasses the ports of Larvik, Tønsberg, and Sandefjord, was the leading source of capital, ideas and manpower for modern whaling.

Commercial whaling on the Island itself ended in 1968, and many of us are indeed glad that it is all over. 1.3 million whales are said to have been killed there between 1904 and 1965, but of course, at that time, whaling was not seen to be such an unworthy enterprise as it now is. It did, unquestionably, produce products that sold well in the market place and generated modest prosperity for hundreds, if not thousands of people, most of whom were proud of their achievements. Some are still alive, and I earnestly hope that their historical accounts, both oral and written, will be further archived before it is too late.

The Exhibition gives the impression that some of the seven abandoned whaling stations are still in the hands of Christian Salvesen Limited, whereas they are now in fact the property of the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Nevertheless, it draws justified attention to the huge improvement arising from that Government's recent and expensive clean-up programme at Grytviken. It also shows the letter which the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment wrote to the High Commissioner on May 14 this year, declining to help with the clean up, or with the preservation of the old factories. Instead it offered help, if required, in providing cultural knowledge of the Island - which is indeed what this exhibition is all about. In the spirit of this letter, I hope that a suitable venue can be found in Grytviken to display this exhibition after it has served its purpose in Sandefjord.

Some of the local pride in whaling can be seen today in the public areas of Sandefjord, in its Museum, the street names, a blue whale jawbone arch, and the splendid fountain near the waterfront. Alongside one of the jetties is the beautifully preserved whalecatcher Southern Actor, built in 1950 by Smiths Dock Company Ltd in Middlesborough. There one can also see the whaling chapel which the Friends of the Island have built to commemorate the 137 Norwegians who lost their lives in the southern whaling business. Their names are being engraved on steel plates salvaged last year from Grytviken.

The duty-free car ferry to Sweden, together with cheap airfares from Stansted to the convenient airport at Torp, bring Sandefjord and this whaling memorabilia within easy

reach of the tourist. Several themed waterfront restaurants provide a pleasant venue at which to while away a long mid-summer evening, marvelling, if one chooses, at the Arctic terns that still make the annual journey which so many whalers once did. Now that the Norwegian government again supports commercial whaling, and meat exports, one can even enjoy the Kokereit's (Cookery's) speciality - Minke Whale Steak. Whalemeat and whaling still have value in the modern market place.

Keith Holmes



Keith Holmes sits beside the memorial unveiled in the Norwegian port of Sandefjord, on July 30, to mark the place where Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship Endurance was built. Originally named Polaris, the 350 ton barquentine was built in 1912 at the Framnes shipyard. She was completed in 1913 but had never sailed when Shackleton bought her early the following year. The memorial, a large boulder with a descriptive plaque, can be seen from the road on the south-eastern side of the town, on the site of the old slipway.

Alien species in South Georgia: Identifying problems and prioritising action

Invasive alien species have been recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as the second biggest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. With ever increasing global trade and travel the numbers of species becoming established in new areas are rapidly multiplying. The UK Overseas Territories (OTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs) are a geographically and culturally diverse group including a number of very remote islands, likely to be very sensitive to ecological damage by new introductions. Until recently very little was known about non-native species in the OTs and what, if any, problems they were causing. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) has recently carried out a review of introduced species in the UKOTs and CDs in an attempt to learn more about the scale of the problem and identify priorities for action.

First a word about terminology: 'introduced', 'alien' or 'non-native' species are simply those originating from elsewhere. They will not necessarily cause ecological problems. As a rule of thumb it is estimated that only about 10% of

introduced species will establish self-sustaining populations and that only about 10% of these will go on to cause ecological problems. So, in general, only around 1% of the species will become what is termed 'invasive', although the percentage may be higher for species arriving on islands.

The JNCC database of non-native species in the UKOTs and CDs has collected a range of information including species present, whereabouts in each territory, whether increasing and, most importantly, what ecological problems they were causing or suspected of causing. It also allows identification of species which are not yet causing problems but are causing problems in other territories, so they can be monitored closely if present or quarantine action taken if not. It is hoped that the database will eventually be available online.

South Georgia has become home to 51 non-natives some of which are known to cause ecological problems here and in other parts of the world; rats for instance. Around two-thirds of these are plants (65%), about one-third invertebrates (29%), with only a very few vertebrate species (6%). The Island has so far been largely protected from the risks of non-native species introductions by its remoteness and inhospitable climate. The glaciers are impassable to the three introduced mammal species (mice, brown rats and reindeer), so restricting their distribution. However, climate warming will benefit introduced species, as the glaciers recede and more suitable habitat is uncovered. Warmer temperatures may also allow a wider range of invaders to become established. The combination of likely climate change and the ever-increasing pressure of tourism has led to South Georgia being identified as the most threatened Antarctic or subantarctic area by a recent review of invasive species in the region.

With no quarantine legislation and no quarantine measures as yet in place at the main point of entry in Grytviken, there is a real risk of new introductions from incoming vessels. This has reportedly already happened when a fishing vessel carrying rats and cockroaches was wrecked in Cumberland Bay in April 2003. With increased visitor numbers there is a pressing need for effective and enforced quarantine measures to prevent the introduction of new non-natives and to prevent the existing ones from being moved to new parts of the territory. It is not just increased tourism that increases the risk of non-native introductions - people visiting the islands for work purposes can also introduce new species. A recent study by the Australian Antarctic Program looking at entry routes of alien species to subantarctic islands found that the clothing and equipment of expedition members often carried viable seeds, with Velcro fasteners being a particularly rich source of seeds.

Overall, South Georgia does not appear to be as damaged by invasive alien species as many other OTs. With climate change and increased visitor numbers it seems likely that the risks of new invaders arriving will increase in years to come, but with effective quarantine and education of visitors this risk can be greatly reduced. Preventing new species becoming established is the best ecological solution

and almost always the most financially cost-effective, underlining the importance of good quarantine measures. The second best (and usually next cheapest) solution is to respond rapidly to new species arrivals and eradicate them before they have a chance to become established. The database project certainly seems to have tapped into an increasing awareness of invasive species issues and there is a growing body of information and expertise within the OTs that could benefit them all. I hope the database will be able to assist in this by providing a central resource of records and examples of practical action.

Karen Varnham is a freelance biologist specialising in invasive species. If you have any more information about non-native species present on South Georgia, perhaps corrections or comments on this article, please contact her at kjvarnham@btopenworld.com and she will pass the information to the JNCC database.

Test case: eradicating an introduced plant

Many plants have become established in South Georgia, most arriving during the whaling era. A relatively recent arrival is a plant known locally as 'landcress'. First noticed about three years ago on the grass verge beside the track that goes up through the middle of King Edward Point, it has now spread and new plants are establishing in the area around where it was first seen.

The plant produces seed pods that open explosively and fling the seeds away. The seeds are also thought to have a burr-type ability to assist dispersal by clinging to passing animals (human or phocine).

Recently two landcress plants have been found at some distance from the main area: one on the path leading up to Hope Point and the other nearer the KEP jetty. These outlying plants raised concerns about the ability of the plant to spread rapidly, and prompted discussion about attempting to eradicate it before it spread outside the KEP.

In the Environmental Management Plan for South Georgia, the Government say they seek to prevent further introduction of alien biota and, as a long-term policy, seek to remove non-native flora from the Island. After taking advice, they have decided to use a selective herbicide spray to attempt the eradication of the landcress. This is probably the first time a chemical spray of this kind has been used on the island, but the possible prevention of the spread of an aggressively establishing plant is deemed worth it. The spray should arrive in early November and spraying will commence as soon as possible in the hope of catching the plant before it seeds this season and spreads further.

The main affected area has been roped off to help prevent unwitting spreading of seeds by human activity. Visitors to the Point will be asked to use footwear cleaning stations in case seed-bearing mud has been picked up. With the movement of people and equipment from KEP to Bird Island for building a new base this summer, there will be extra precautions taken to prevent introducing this and other alien plants or fauna to the SSSI. Equipment will be pressure-washed, footwear and clothing cleaned, and special rat quarantine areas are being set up to ensure rats are also

not unwittingly carried to Bird Island. Cruise ships have long had rigorous disinfection procedures for footwear to prevent the transport of seeds and other organisms between countries and landing sites on their itineraries.

Eradication will be a long-term project. Vigilance will be needed to spot any new plants outside the main area, and respraying of the main infected area is likely for the next few years as new plants establish from seeds dormant in the soil.

The photograph below was sent to various botanists with South Georgia experience. Two responded that it is probably hairy bittercress *Cardamine hirsuta* but until the plant flowers this spring a final identification cannot be made.



Duncan Carse



Duncan Carse, who died on May 2 aged 90, was one of the most influential figures in the history of South Georgia. Over four summers between 1951 and 1957, he led the South Georgia Survey that produced the first map to show the interior of South Georgia. It is only now about to be replaced.

It is not generally known that the Survey only came

about after Carse's plan to cross the Antarctic continent had been turned down in favour of Vivian Fuchs' successful Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

Duncan Carse joined the Merchant Navy as an apprentice on square-rigged ships. He joined RRS *Discovery II* in 1933 on one of her voyages in the Southern Ocean, as part of the Discovery Investigations, and made his first visit to South Georgia. In November 1934, *Discovery II* was in Port Stanley when the yacht *Penola* of the British Graham Land Expedition arrived. Carse transferred to *Penola* and became the youngest member of what was to be a very successful expedition, and one that laid the foundations for subsequent British expeditions to the Antarctic. *Penola* spent the winter in the ice near the expedition base at the Argentine Islands, off the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, so Carse could take part in sledging journeys as well as carry out his duties as wireless operator.

On return to England, Carse worked for the BBC as an announcer, and in 1942 he joined the Royal Navy as a seaman, being commissioned later as a sublieutenant. In 1943, he was posted to a trawler in the Western Approaches, where he spent the rest of the war. After the war Carse returned to the BBC as a radio presenter and actor and in 1949 he succeeded to the role for which he is best known to the older generation. He became "Dick Barton, Special Agent", but he left before the end of the series to prepare the South Georgia Survey, which he described as 'a small inexpensive and useful expedition'.

The expedition of 1951/52 involved a team of six men and surveyed the area between the Allardyce and Salvesen ranges. The second expedition of four men was on the Island from October 1953 to January 1954. They started in the Bay of Isles, then surveyed much of the southern part of the island and Annenkov Island.

The third expedition of 1955/56 included eight men who surveyed the Shackleton crossing and other parts of the western end of the island, before going to the southern end and finally the area south of the Kohl Plateau. The South Georgia Survey was completed by Duncan Carse working alone during the summer of 1956/7 and using the sealers *Albatros* and *Dias* to cover much of the coastline.

In 1961 'as a personal psychological experiment' into the effects of isolation, Carse went to live alone near Undine South Harbour. He had planned a major expedition to traverse the Allardyce and Salvesen Ranges but could not get funding. Instead, he leased about 4 hectares of the Island from the Governor for ten years at one shilling a year (prepaid) and was landed with 12 tons of equipment on February 23. One night in May, while he was asleep, a surge



Arnov House: before and after the wave.

wave hit his hut and destroyed it. Carse survived with what he could salvage from the wreckage until September when he contacted the sealer *Petrel*. He later made a television documentary about the experience.

In December 1973, Carse landed at King Haakon Bay for his eighth expedition to South Georgia, with the aim of retracing Shackleton's crossing in 1916. He was halted by very severe weather and forced back to King Haakon Bay. Shackleton was a hero to Carse and it was a great disappointment to him that his proposal to produce and act the part of Shackleton in a television film on the *Endurance* expedition was turned down.

Duncan Carse received the Polar Medal 1939 for his service on the British Graham Land Expedition and was awarded a clasp for mapping South Georgia in 1992. Mount Carse 2,300m in the Salvesen Range of South Georgia and Carse Point, on the coast of George VI Sound, Antarctic Peninsula, were named after him. He is survived by his third wife, Venetia, and by two daughters from his first marriage and by a son from his second.

Bob Burton

John Heaney writes:

I joined Duncan's party of six to spend the southern summer 'season' of 1951-52 starting to explore South Georgia. We had first to decide how we were going to get around the island. Was it to be mountaineering or skiing? We went equipped with sledges and skis. It turned out that the glaciers formed excellent highways, criss-crossing the island with a number of very useful passes to get from one side to the other.

Duncan had a vision of what he wanted to achieve. He understood the need for consensus from a team of six of us, each with different skills and background experiences. He was very determined and in the first season we probably mapped over 30 per cent of the island, and developed techniques for covering the rest. The map was finished in Duncan's fourth season and was published by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys in 1958. As the only terrestrial map showing the interior of South Georgia, I am sure it was very handy to show where you were, and what connected with what, during the Falklands War.

Duncan will also be remembered on South Georgia by Carse House, the name that will be given to the new Government Officer's house being built this summer on King Edward Point.

In respectful and admiring memory, John Heaney.

New map of South Georgia

At the time of writing, it appears that the new 1:200,000 map of south Georgia prepared by the British Antarctic Survey (see Newsletter No. 5) will be published at the end of November. It is expected to be for sale at about £10 from Stanfords, 12-14 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9LP.

New coins for South Georgia



Pobjoy Mint has recently issued two new coins. One coin commemorates the centenary of the founding of Grytviken whaling station. The coin depicts the *Louise* which transported the factory buildings from Sandefjord in the foreground with a general view of Grytviken behind. A cameo of Captain Carl Anton Larsen is pictured below the wording "Centenary of Grytviken 1904 - 2004" in the surround. The second coin commemorates the 90th Anniversary of the Imperial Trans-

Antarctic Expedition. The coin carries a portrait of Shackleton with an image of *Endurance* beset. In the foreground is an impression of the crew dragging the *James Caird*.

The coins are available in cupro nickel at £9.95 or silver at £39.95. If you mention that you have read about the coins in SGA newsletter, Pobjoy Mint will make a donation to the SGA. Write to: **Pobjoy Mint, Millenia House, Kingswood Park, Bonsor Drive, Kingswood, Surrey KT20 6AY**. Website: www.pobjoy.com.

Albatrosses – the good and very bad news

On April 6, 2004, Environment Minister Elliot Morley announced that the UK Government had ratified the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels. ACAP has since been extended to South Georgia. It is aimed at setting up co-ordinated international action for stemming the devastating losses of albatrosses and petrels, which have been caused mainly by the worldwide longlining for toothfish and other species of fish.

ACAP had already come into force on February 1, through its ratification by five countries - Australia, New Zealand, Ecuador, Spain and the Republic of South Africa. Another five - Argentina, Brazil, Chile, France and Peru – have signed and hopefully will soon ratify.

Two significant clauses are: 3.2.1 The Parties shall take appropriate operational, management and other measures to reduce or eliminate the mortality of albatrosses and petrels resulting incidentally from fishing activities. Where possible, the measures applied should follow best current practice. 3.2.4 The Parties shall endeavour, within the context of this Agreement, to adopt additional measures to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (= 'pirate'. Ed.) fishing activities that may have an adverse effect on albatrosses and petrels.

The importance of this action is amply demonstrated by the latest survey of albatrosses at South Georgia. It reveals an alarming state of affairs. Counts of albatrosses on nests during the 2003/4 breeding season were made mainly from a yacht sailing around the coastline by Sally Poncet and her associates and on land at Bird Island by the British Antarctic

Survey. Compared with a similar yacht-based survey in the mid 1980s, black-browed and grey-headed albatrosses have decreased by at least 26% and 14% respectively. However, more accurate ground counts at Bird Island indicate that the decline was even greater. The decline of the wandering albatross is much worse: 30% since 1984. Even more worrying is the acceleration since the late 1990s. Wanderers are now disappearing at around 4.5% per year. This is despite the sterling effort of the South Georgia Government in implementing the regulations to protect seabirds which were developed by CCAMLR and thereby have almost eliminated by-catches of seabirds in the South Georgia Maritime Zone.

The albatrosses will be saved only through curbing by-catches by fishing vessels throughout the birds' huge feeding ranges. Without a halt to the declines, the long-term survival of albatrosses at South Georgia must be in doubt. For all of us who have visited the packed nesting colonies and watched albatrosses following our ship, this is too awful to contemplate.

Managing the Island's Environment

Sally Poncet has delivered a 143-page Land and Visitor Management Report to the South Georgia Government. It is the result of her three-year's fieldwork on the Environmental Baseline Survey in which her team made vegetation and wildlife inventories of 13 sites on the Island. The Report will be great value to the five-year review of the Environmental Management Plan scheduled for 2005.

The report considers that the Island's wilderness qualities and wildlife will be best preserved by developing a precautionary approach to environmental protection. This has already been implemented by the closure of Albatross Island, while allowing limited access to nesting wandering albatrosses on nearby Prion Island (see the Commissioner's letter on page 2). Prion Island is a better venue because there are smaller areas of fragile vegetation, fewer fur seals and easier access to the albatrosses. It would also be easier to manage if there was an accidental introduction of alien species. The report argues for legislation to prevent the introductions (see other items on these pages).

Sally has made 60 recommendations to the Government. These, and the Government's response to each, have been posted on the Government website www.sgisland.org. They make interesting reading but it is frustrating not to have full report to see the reasoning for Sally's recommendations and the Government's responses. Requests have been made for the full report to be posted on the website. As yet, it has not appeared.

Many of the recommendations have been accepted by the Government, while others will be subjects for debate during the impending review of the management plan.

Central to Sally's recommendations is the formation of an advisory body – the “South Georgia Environment Committee”. This is also one of the recommendations that emerged from the SGA Conference last year. Unfortunately, the Government considers Sally's proposal ‘would be overly bureaucratic and would make the system unwieldy, slow and in practice unworkable’. Their intention is ‘to establish a panel of advisers with a broad range of skills’ who could be consulted as necessary.

News from South Georgia

It has been a bit of a non-winter. Each snow fall was followed by big thaws. This made us most disgruntled, as winter is for skiing and snowboarding. The wildlife will have benefited from the easy winter. It should be a record year for the reindeer with easy access to food all winter, and huge flocks of up to 150 ducks have fed on the exposed grassy areas on King Edward Point.

The massive iceberg grounded off the north-east coast has continued to calve smaller bergs that have covered the normal krill grounds. So the krill vessels had to find a new area to fish. Cumberland Bay has had masses of icebergs all winter, making life difficult for shipping and even our small boats sometimes found it hard to operate.

The toothfish fishery kept us all busy from May to late August. The 13 licensed vessels fished successfully. Catches by CCAMLR registered ships outside the South Georgia Maritime Zone, but within the rectangle of sea for which the toothfish Total Allowable Catch is set, led to the season closing early on August 21st. Only one of the SG licensed ships was still fishing by then. New regulations making all our licensed vessels tranship their catches in either South Georgia or Falkland Islands made for a busy mid-season. The new transshipping rules aid tracking of the Marine Stewardship Council certificated SG catches. It also means ships have to be far more accurate in assessing their catches and staying within their Total Allowable Catch. The Marine Officer and Assistant Marine Officer were assisted by the BAS scientists in overseeing the 24hr operation of transshipping.

Sarah Lurcock

Annual General Meeting, 2005

The fourth Annual General Meeting will be held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London, on May 20. It will be followed by a talk by Stephen Palmer on 'Far from Moderate: Some aspects of the environmental history of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia', based on his recently completed doctoral thesis.

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