

South Georgia Association

Newsletter

Number 2 April 2002



Twenty years ago

Twenty Years ago, it all started with a contract to remove scrap metal from four of the abandoned whaling stations on South Georgia made between Constantino Davidoff of Buenos Aires and Christian Salvesen plc of Edinburgh. On the surface, it was a normal commercial transaction but it was the prelude to 'The Falklands Conflict' of which the taking and retaking of South Georgia played a minor but significant role.

The Argentines had planned to take both the Falkland Islands and South Georgia on the same day. They had to wait an extra day before attacking South Georgia because, not for the first time in the annals of the island, foul weather upset the best laid plans. The events, when war came to South Georgia, have been described in Roger Perkins' *Operation Paraquat* and in Chapter 9 of *The Island of South Georgia* by Bob Headland. Here are five previously untold tales by those who were there.

Counterfuges baffle guards

After the Royal Marines surrendered, the BAS men, who had taken refuge in the church, were marched to King Edward Point. The Argentines allowed each man about 20 minutes to gather personal possessions under individual guard. A guard first allowed me to pack some things in my cabin and then we went to the laboratory. I was able to grasp an unexpected opportunity on the way and drew the guard's attention to a publication which interested him far more than what I was doing, with the result that I had films of the previous few days' events packed deep within a pair of thick socks, and he had an 'art' magazine in a plain brown envelope.

As we were assembled at the jetty with our bags, I took the precaution of informing the commanding officer of the invaders of the danger posed by stores of hazardous chemicals, explosives and radioisotopes. A lieutenant was delegated for me to show where these things were. On the way I collected a scintilometer and proceeded to the basement of the Customs House where there were many bottles of dilute radio-carbon solutions, a very weak source of radiation. Here I confess to hamming it up with the instrument on full sensitivity and a charade of very carefully handling chemicals with gloves and gown regalia. The lieutenant followed instructions carefully and, with much loud clicking coming from the scintilometer, I believe I gave him fears of either an atomic explosion or sterility, or both.

This done we went back to the jetty where I went into the Base Office and 'scrubbed up' after dealing with the chemicals. I instructed the lieutenant to do likewise and he took at least 10 minutes to finish. These 10 minutes alone in the Base Office were sufficient to get rid of a few things, put all cash, cheques, postage stamps and some other items in a box, and lose the key of the safe under a floorboard. I proceeded to the jetty carrying my box and, as one does not carry boxes when approaching a C.O., the lieutenant ordered a private to carry it for me. I then went aboard *Bahia Paraiso*, with the private and my box following as ordered.

Luggage carried by British captives was searched on arrival, but not a box being carried by an Argentine private. So my box containing £10,000 came aboard safely. Subsequently I declared it in front of several officers, so there was no chance of anything going astray. All was counted and correctly accounted for. I remained in charge of the box throughout our captivity in Argentina and our deportation to Uruguay. It enabled me to buy drinks all round at H.M.'s expense at Montevideo Airport.

Bob Headland

Suspense at Bird Island

It is strange to blow the dust of old diaries and look back to 1982 when I was based at South Georgia. It was my second summer as a biological field assistant on Bird Island. BAS were planning big changes to its operations at South Georgia. Grytviken was to become smaller (closing 'Shack House') while at Bird Island we were to build a new accommodation block – upgrading the base from a 'summer only' to a 'wintering' station.

At Bird Island, it was a case of 'work hard – play hard'. Builders helping biologists and biologists helping builders – we had some great parties and serious hangovers. As the summer drew to a close we were chuffed with ourselves: a good field season and building work scheduled to take 14 months was nearly finished after six!

So our electrician and mechanic caught an early ship to spend the last month of the summer at Grytviken where they were rewarded with a jolly of a walk to Leith Harbour. There they stumbled across some Argentine scrap metal workers with a military escort.

Events changed rapidly. How was it from our viewpoint? The first thing we noticed was that the casual evening radio schedule was now tense, it was not what was said but what was left unsaid. Skeds were suddenly increased to every two

hours, day and night; something was up; why were other people turning up at the field huts at Lyell and St Andrews? We started tuning in to the BBC World Service with a sense of urgency.

At Bird Island, we were stunned when the Argentines landed at Stanley. Then, without warning, Grytviken went off the air. Anxiety is a strange beast and feeds on uncertainty. From the World Service we heard that the Argentines were at Grytviken. We all expected a visit, and especially those at Lyell only half a day's walk away. None of us slept well.

Fortunately the remaining parties on South Georgia were still in touch and at Bird Island we were able to transmit to the BAS base at Signy. These skeds became very important for our morale. It was raised by the news that RRS *Bransfield* may pick us up, lowered when she was ordered north. Good news when we heard that our Grytviken mates had arrived in Uruguay.

Hour followed hour, day followed day; we listened with incredulity as the world previously ignorant of the South Atlantic now made it the centre of their news. Occasionally we heard comments about ourselves, apparently at one stage we had taken to the hills. Some concerns were real. At Bird Island we were well off, not so the field bases especially at Lyell Glacier, whose meagre supplies were fast dwindling. How long would the uneasy calm last? The news of the Task Force being assembled and dispatched allowed us to calculate when they might be in the area.

In the end events moved fast, forewarned by Lyell (who heard bangs), our radio sked was interrupted by Red Plum. It was not until Lyell replied as Yellow Banana, St Andrews as Green Apple and Schlieper as Big Orange that Red Plum owned up to being HMS *Endurance*. 24 hours later we were all at Grytviken and on our way to Britain.

I daresay that had any of us had suggested the previous winter that Grytviken would, the following year, host *Canberra* and the *QE2*, everyone would have thought them mad. The truth was, due to government financial cuts, South Georgia and BAS faced an uncertain future, but the events the following winter certainly changed the fortunes for both.

Paul Copestake

South Georgia – My part in its liberation

'Sir! Sir! You are wanted in the Admiral's Day Cabin, there is a meeting of officers in half an hour.'

'What time is it?'

'0300 sir.'

Thank you, I will be there.'

I was the Navigating Officer of HMS *Antrim*, a County Class Guided Missile Destroyer, wearing the flag of the then Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward. That made me the Flotilla Navigating Officer, responsible for the safe navigation of about 15 ships, which were exercising in the Gibraltar exercise areas some 200 miles west of the Rock. We were in Week Two of Exercise Springtrain and had left UK about

two weeks previously, with no inkling of any likely trouble in the Falklands but confident that we would return to UK for Easter leave in about 10 days' time.

During the previous week, the row over the scrap metal workers had been simmering which, unknown to us at the time, had now culminated in the invasion of South Georgia and the Falklands.

The signal from Admiralty was laconic:

'1. Take charge of HM Ships *** *** and proceed to the Falklands.

2. Aim. Recover the Falklands.'

Some firms would do well to copy this style for their mission statements!

'Well,' said the Admiral, 'Course to steer please, Pilot [the nickname for navigators]?'

This was a defining moment for me, and all eyes turned in my direction. Clearly, hesitation was not an option, but the chart outfit we carried onboard was for Home Waters and covered only as far south as Morocco.

But the Navigating branch in the Royal Navy goes to great pains to cultivate an aura of omniscience, any lapse of which might open us to the charge of being mere mortals, perhaps rated at the same level – heaven forefend – as Gunnery Officers.

I knew that the Islands were south of us, but a course of 180° would be too obvious an answer. An answer was required which would suggest clairvoyance, coupled with deep and meticulous prior planning and forethought. I suspected that the Islands were west of south. So,

'Course is 197 at 18 knots, please Sir.'

'Thank you Pilot. Make it so, Chief Yeoman!'

Thus, the Flotilla came round to the new heading and the Navy was on its way. In the Wardroom, a collective release of pent-up breath was heard. The first challenge had been overcome. We were equal to the task. It was going to be OK.

Later, and clear of the public gaze of brother officers, the next signal was made.

'To HMS *Berwick*. Detach. Proceed to Gibraltar with despatch and collect charts of the South Atlantic. Rejoin along the track'

Bluff isn't always directed solely at the enemy.

Christopher Morrison

Three days in South Georgia.....

With our last landfall being the arid slopes of Ascension Island, we would normally have been as eager as Shackleton (well, almost!) to sight South Georgia – had it not been for the damaged but potentially lethal Argentinian submarine *Santa Fé* ahead of my Lynx helicopter in the early morning of 25 April 1982. Details of the ensuing action are well documented in Roger Perkins' book 'Operation Paraquat' with no room to repeat them here, but from my point of view it was a mixture of absolute exhilaration at one's first

firefight, tempered, after years of high-tech Cold War training, by a nagging feeling of what the hell was I doing firing a machine gun mounted on an upturned typist's chair at an old American submarine on the fringes of Antarctica! All the while one was conscious of the looming cliffs around Cumberland Bay to the south, but it was not until later in the day that we were able to make closer acquaintance. After *Santa Fé* limped back into Grytviken we set off around Bird Island and the south coast, navigating on our single A4 size Xeroxed chart, to check for any hostile surface vessels; nothing was found, but our careers were nearly terminated by several thousand large skuas and albatrosses which were clearly unimpressed by the ultra-noisy Lynx.

With the Grytviken garrison suitably softened up with several rounds of naval gunfire from offshore, and much to the chagrin of my Commando helicopter colleagues, it then fell to three anti-submarine aircraft to carry out the first major helo-borne amphibious assault in many years. In what seemed a very short time, the occupying forces saw sense and ran up the white flag. One remembers the personal touches: as we made our first landing at KEP itself, the Captain of the *Santa Fé* marshalled us away from a minefield – extremely kind of him after we had been so unpleasant to his boat!

The next 48 hours saw massive consolidation in and out of the island – I recall ferrying the erstwhile and very scruffy 'scrap metal workers' out to RFA *Tidespring*, keeping them in order by flying with the doors open and me being strapped in – they weren't! Perhaps our hardest task was winching a detachment of Special Forces off a very small beach under a very large cliff near Leith Harbour, at night and in a blizzard with the aircraft at the very limit of its performance. The troops had been existing on combat rations for days, doubtless very sustaining but leading to extreme flatulence, and flying an overloaded aircraft out of the bay was definitely beyond the call of duty!

Given the diversions and the weather we were really unable to appreciate the magnificence of the island except for a few breaks in the cloud and, despite a brief visit in HMS *Andromeda* in 1985, it was not until I returned as Captain of HMS *Endurance* in 1995 that I really came to see South Georgia's true colours. However, my experiences during those few days in 1982 certainly fired my subsequent determination over the 95/96 and 96/97 seasons to 'donate' as much of the Queen's helicopter time and working party expeditions as possible to help with conservation and heritage work, helping to banish the scars of 1982 and ensure that future generations will remember the island for its natural glory rather than the site of a relatively minor – but very exciting – skirmish.

Barry Bryant

The wine store in Leith Harbour

17 May 1982. My spell on watch was from 2330 to 0100. It was rather spooky walking about the whaling station with

the wind clattering old pieces of corrugated iron and whistling through electricity lines and wires drooped around the buildings. With the night vision telescope it was entertaining to watch the rats darting here and there and at one's feet too. Dawn was clear and cold and after an early breakfast we walked towards Cape Saunders, following reindeer tracks carved out of the steep scree slopes and rocks. We climbed to gain the ridge near Coronada Peak about 700m up and as we gained height we entered light snow on the ground. The views were wonderful all the way over to Paget but we did not linger in the biting wind and returned to Leith by lunchtime.

In the afternoon I completed a closer review of the station and the immediate area surrounding it. The main dining hall was where the scrapmen undoubtedly spent most of their time when not dismantling machinery. Down one side of the hall were lined up what I thought were about 1500 empty wine bottles. I made a rapid calculation: the scrapmen had been there for about three weeks when we evicted them and they were due to stay three months – without resupply from Argentina. If they had consumed 1500 bottles in three weeks, I deduced that somewhere within Leith there must be a massive store of wine. I called for Sergeant Napier and tasked him to find it and not return until he had! Meanwhile I walked the ground behind the station and over to Gun Point, continuing my reconnaissance.

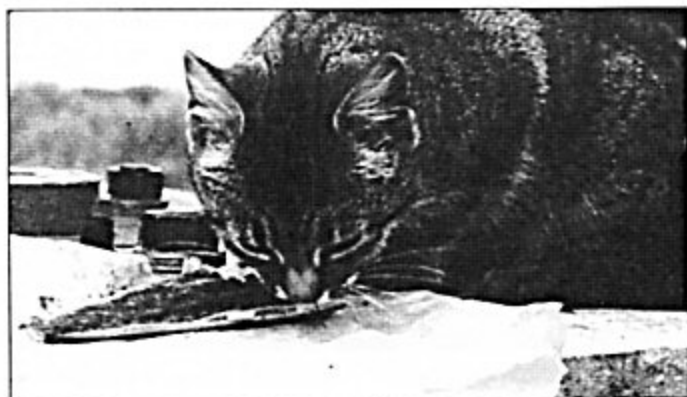
Shortly after 1600, Sergeant Napier caught up with me and, with a delightful smile and in his Northern Irish brogue, said: 'Come and look at what I have found, Sir!' Together we walked up to a long low brick building, towards the rear of the whaling station, that resembled an indoor 25 metre shooting range. He opened the door to reveal the length and breadth of the interior stacked to the ceiling with cases of wine. We had found *Alladin's Cave* and helped ourselves to a couple of bottles for supper that evening. It was not bad wine either!

The above account was written after I had completed a report for Captain Nick Barker, Captain of HMS *Endurance* in 1982, with recommendations of how best to defend Leith, Stromness and Husvik. I passed news of the discovery of this cache of wine to Nick and *Endurance* was thus assured a couple of years' free wine for the Messes on board. She sailed into Leith shortly afterwards to fill her holds. The Mess in Shackleton House received their share while M Company, 42 Commando, Royal Marines remained in KEP. I managed to take 12 bottles of mixed reds and whites with me when I left South Georgia to rejoin 42 Commando for the battles in East Falklands, leaving them in the protective hands of a friend in HMS *Fearless*, for consumption after the fall of Stanley. HMS *Endurance*, M Company and I owe much to the unrecorded generosity of Mr Davidoff. If there is a moral to the story, it is this: It is impossible to squeeze more than 12 bottles of wine into a 90 litre rucksack on top of all the other military stuff. Believe me, I tried.

Guy Sheridan

Shackleton's legacy?

In 1970, while working at the BAS station on King Edward Point, I was 'adopted' by a tabby cat, who used to visit me regularly through the east door of Shackleton House. Like all the South G. cats, she was small and emaciated, and grateful for any supplement to a bare subsistence diet. She would quite happily eat anything - even corned beef sandwiches - but her particular favourite was tinned pilchards (in tomato sauce), which were unpopular with us and were always left over in the end-of-month food store.



The sealers and whalers had brought cats to South Georgia long ago, as well as cattle, reindeer, dogs and monkeys. After the whalers departed in 1964, a small colony of cats continued to survive at Grytviken.

In the Antarctic summer of 1914, Shackleton's *Endurance* lay at Grytviken for a month, sometimes alongside the jetty. The ship's complement included the carpenter's cat, Mrs Chippy (who was actually a Mr), a tiger-striped tabby 'with dramatic markings'. It is difficult to believe that, in the course of the month, he did not take the opportunity of some shore leave, and once ashore, it is even more difficult to believe that 'Mrs' Chippy did not indulge in a little nautical fraternisation with some of the local cats.

It is a fair bet that there were at least a few cats around King Edward Cove with the late Mrs. Chippy's genes. Among cat markings the tabby gene is the dominant one.

With alarming regularity, 'my' tabby (named Judith after the Base Sweetheart of 1970 - Judith Durham of the then-fashionable 'Seekers' pop group) would suddenly start to put on weight and withdraw from circulation for a couple of weeks. She would later reappear, thin and hungry, and very thirsty. It did not take long to work out why, and such was her confidence that if I produced, but would not serve, an opened tin of pilchards she would lead me to the secret hiding place of her litter. On the last occasion this was in the darkest recesses under the stairs of the luxurious, but safely-abandoned Magistrate's Residence, half way down the track between Shackleton House and the jetty.

Then one day, Judith and her litter mysteriously disappeared. Rumour had it (and it's surprising how fast rumour can spread in a 10-man community) that the kittens had been drowned in the Cove by an unsympathetic base member who felt that the Magistrate's House had somehow been demeaned by their presence. On Judith's fate, Rumour

was silent and, despite many doorstep inducements, the east entrance of Shackleton House remained unvisited. Weeks went by, then months.

But, just as RRS *Bransfield* arrived on her maiden voyage, to relieve the base and return me to 'civilisation', Judith suddenly reappeared. She was small and emaciated, as before, but now untrusting; she would not enter Shackleton House, nor accept any food - not even pilchards. But she did reappear. It was almost as if, against her better judgement, she had come to say 'Goodbye'. Was Judith really Mrs Chippy's great, great granddaughter? We will never know. But I am inclined to believe the photographs.....

Steve Chellingsworth

Fresh Midwinter Salad

The pioneers who established the BAS presence at King Edward Point in 1969/70 laboured under a burden. Regular Fids* were inclined to dismiss South Georgia as 'The Banana Belt', and those who toiled there as 'not quite real' explorers. We seemed to have things just a little too easy.

In many ways perhaps we did, but like true Fids everywhere, when deprived of *real* difficulties we contrived our own. Like the Midwinter's Day Salad.

The 10 First-Winter pioneers included two botanists and, given South Georgia's luxuriant coastal vegetation, the rest of us could never understand why they needed so much electronics just to grow weeds. But they were scientists... Their success with the worldwide turnip programme bred a reckless enthusiasm which led them to increasingly extravagant claims. In early March they announced with a flourish that we were going to outdo all our colleagues further south: that the first BAS South Georgia Midwinter Dinner was going to include ... fresh salad!

The abandoned Magistrate's House, halfway down the track from our Base to the jetty, boasted a fully-glazed, north-facing, first-floor conservatory which would admit enough light (we were assured) to stimulate the projected crop. The rest of us were sworn to respect the KEEP OUT signs, and the project got under way.

In early April the diesel mechanic was asked to provide supplementary lighting for the conservatory; arc lights were duly set up. Then more lights were requested, and more power, and we began to suspect that the crop was not progressing quite according to plan.

The demands for light and power increased, necessitating additional heavy power cables from the generator shed down near the jetty. By the end of May, when South Georgia (never gripped in total darkness) would normally have enjoyed a pervasive twilight and comprehensive evening darkness, the track round the beach from the whaling station was illuminated by a beacon. The Magistrate's conservatory emitted a brilliant greenish-white glow which would have been actionable anywhere in the civilised world as *Name for members of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, later British Antarctic Survey.

unacceptable light pollution. Ribald comments throughout early June were rebutted with assurances that our Midwinter salad was still 'on'.

Then the great day dawned: June 21 1970 (there had been some debate, possibly initiated by the Botany Department, as to whether June 22 would actually be closer to the true solstice) and the Midwinter celebrations got under way. They began with a cocktail party in one Shackleton House inmate's room, progressed through a *Lucky Dip* exchange of hand-crafted presents in the Bar, and on to the Midwinter Olympics, which had to be curtailed due to lack of snow (well, it *was* the Banana Belt). Then Midwinter Dinner. We sat with bated breath through the speeches and toasts; then telex messages and more toasts; then aperitifs and 'barracking' whilst cooks and 'gash hands' panicked; then toasts to panicking cooks and gash hands. And then finally, in pride of place ahead of the *bors d'oeuvres*, the Midwinter fresh salad arrived.

Only those who have lived for six months on tinned and constituted vegetables can know what the deprivation is like: that craving for something fresh and natural, clean-flavoured and spontaneous; cucumber and celery and tomato reclining luxuriantly on a bed of crisp lettuce with spring onions, olives and gherkins in attendance. Mayonnaise or French Dressing would be an intrusion. And what did we each receive? A saucer bearing a solitary, disconsolate radish!

Steve Chellingsworth

Rats revisited

Following Government's trial eradication of rats from Grass Island in Stromness Bay and Jason Island at the western entrance to Cumberland Bay in November 2000 (see Newsletter 1), a visit was made to both islands this summer to check the oil-soaked pine wood gnaw sticks that had been put in to monitor the post-baiting presence of rats.

With Fraser Carpenter, I landed on Grass Island on 27 February and found no recent signs of any rat activity in either the tussock or at the gnaw sticks. Fraser and Mark Carpenter, who carried out fieldwork for the project last summer, will be doing a systematic search for rats in late March, setting traps and gnaw sticks over the entire island for a period of two weeks, in accordance with instructions from the project's consultants Andy Cox and Ian McFadden from the New Zealand Department of Conservation. Successful eradication will be declared if no rats are caught, and no other signs of rats are found.

I also landed on Jason Island on 3 March and, although there were no recent signs of rat activity in the tussock, two gnaw sticks showed possible sign of gnawings. Expert opinion is being sought and the Carpenters will be visiting the island later this month to investigate further. Andy and Ian anticipate that, despite the cold seawater at South Georgia, rats will, in time, recolonise Jason Island, given that it lies only 35 metres from the mainland shore. The trial eradication was designed to provide evidence of this.



Hope for the endemic South Georgia pipit? It is now almost wholly confined to rat-free offshore islands.

One piece of very good news was the sighting of a South Georgia pintail with young and a pipit on Jason Island during my short time ashore. The nearest pipit population is on Right Whale Rocks 9 km away, at the eastern entrance to Cumberland Bay. Judging from the number of pipit-size droppings in the disused lighthouse on the island, the bird appears to have been a frequent visitor. Jason Island's lush tussock cover is ideal habitat for both pintails and pipits and hopefully we may see pipits breeding there next year – providing of course there are no rats.

Sally Poncet

Tenth Anniversary of the South Georgia Museum

The South Georgia Museum celebrated its 10th anniversary on 22nd January this year with a party for everyone from King Edward Point and a cake-cutting ceremony.

The museum was originally envisaged as a fairly modest Whaling Museum to interpret the whaling station and preserve whaling artefacts. The original concept came from David Wynn-Williams of BAS (who was tragically killed this March), then the late Nigel Bonner (former Deputy Director of BAS and sealing inspector at South Georgia during the 50s and 60s) became Project Director whilst William Fullerton (who was then the Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands) facilitated the formation of a Museum Trust to oversee the running of the museum. The derelict Manager's Villa became the site of the museum and, after partial restoration, it opened its doors to the public for the first time in 1992.

Since then there have been considerable developments, those most obvious to visitors are the broader range of displays to encompass many of the more positive aspects of South Georgia's history, including discovery, Shackleton, expeditions, surveys, climbing and natural history. Further exhibits are planned to show details of the administration, the events of 1982 and the subsequent military presence until BAS returned in 1991.

In 1992 there was no water, no heat and a very dodgy 3k generator producing minimal lighting. The museum team

came down for only two months of the summer and there were just six cruise ship visits. Now there is 24-hour power provided by underground cable from the King Edward Point generators and even a fibre-optic cable will soon to be connected to provide vastly improved communications. There is heat and hot water and currently re-wiring of the entire complex to British Standards is being completed. The full-time curators live in 'The Little Villa', a renovated house next to the museum. Other staff come down each summer. There were 32 cruise ship visits this year and the numbers are generally on the increase. The church has been restored and several services are held every Christmas, as well as two weddings in recent times. Some of the buildings around the museum have also been partially restored and are being maintained; the cemetery has a new fence.



The Bonner Room, entrance hall to the museum.

Funding for these developments has come from the South Georgia government, the museum's gift shop profits and from generous donations.

Sadly the whaling station has had to be closed to visitors as it has become progressively less safe. However zodiacs carry passengers in front of the station, giving them views of the 'plan' and factory whilst visitors may still walk from the museum to the church and, by way of the football pitch, to the cemetery and Shackleton's grave.

Tim and Pauline Carr

Grytviken named 100 years ago

On May 2 1902, a Swedish geologist, Gunnar Andersen, walked to the top of a pass and saw beneath him a small bay almost cut off from the much larger Cumberland Bay by a low spit of land. On descending to explore, he found seven sealers' tryptops on the spit, one of which was inscribed *Johnson & Co. W—ping Dock, London*. 'In consequence of this find', he wrote, 'I gave the place the name of Boiler Bay'. Or in Swedish: Grytviken.

Andersen had landed the day before with three companions in a bay which they named in honour of the day - Maiviken or May Cove. Their ship, *Antarctic*, under Captain C.A.Larsen, was exploring South Georgia before

heading south to relieve the wintering party of Otto Nordenskjöld's Swedish Expedition on Snow Hill Island.

Other signs of human occupation found by Andersen at Grytviken included several sealers' grave markers in what is now the whalers' cemetery (See Newsletter 1.). Also on the spit (now King Edward Point), there was an old green-painted centreboard boat, 30 feet long and 11 feet wide. This was a shallop, dating to the sealing period in the first half of the 19th century. Shallops were used as tenders of larger vessels for working inshore. This boat survived until it incorporated into the jetty as part of a tidying-up operation at King Edward Point. Thus are historical treasures lost!

After picking up Andersen and his party, the *Antarctic* spent a month in Grytviken. It gave Captain Larsen time to investigate this sheltered 'bay within a bay' which became the site of the whaling station he established in 1904.

Bob Burton

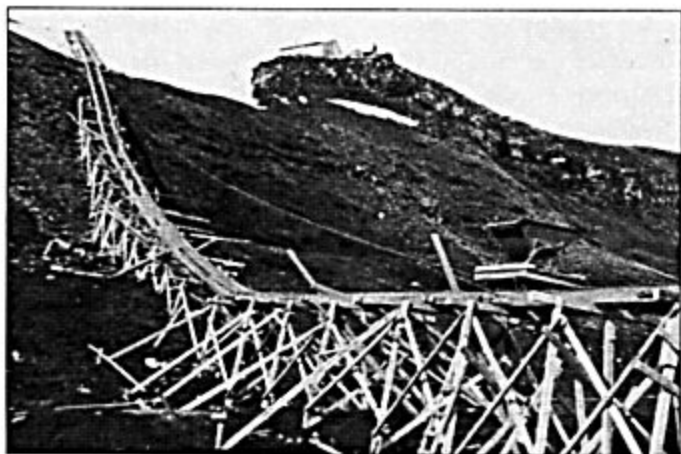
Hydro-electric Power - An option for the future?

Securing an adequate and continuous supply of power at King Edward Point has been a necessity for a good many years, from the time that the first magistrate's house was erected in 1912. In the early years, coal was the sole source of heat for both warmth and cooking, but it was an expensive commodity and the civilian population often ran short. Thousands of tons were needed every year for the boilers at the Grytviken whaling station to provide energy for processing the whale catch, fuelling the catchers and fulfilling the basic needs of a 'self-sufficient' sub-Antarctic whaling community. Indeed, by 1908, because of the increase in the size of the establishment, it had become apparent that the existing system of steam-powered dynamos for providing electricity would have to be supplemented by a system with greater capacity.

Hydroelectric power technology had been developed in Norway, so it was not surprising that the Norwegians at Grytviken sought such a scheme as it would be both cost effective and efficient. The decision was made to construct a dam above the waterfall by the cemetery. This scheme became fully operational in February 1914 and supplied the whole station with electricity for lighting, provided there was an adequate flow of water. The lake created behind the dam was named Gull Lake.

The generating station was built at the foot of the slope below the dam. A 20cm pipe, which provided water for the factory and domestic needs from a smaller dam, also supplied a 25 HP turbogenerator, basically also for lighting. In 1923 electricity was extended to King Edward Point from Grytviken by a buried cable, but it was not a complete success.

In 1928 modernisation and increased capacity of the station made it necessary to enlarge the hydroelectric power unit. The capacity of the reservoir was increased by raising the wall of the dam and a new power plant was constructed in a new building with associated turbine pipes. This work was effected by the construction of a Decauville railway to



The railway running up the steep slope to the dam

transport materials and equipment from the beach to the dam. The hydroelectric generating station was equipped with three turbogenerators that supplied both AC and DC current light and power, including the large 45 ton electric winch at the head of the plan for hauling the whales out of the sea. In 1950/51, two 100kw diesel generators were installed to supplement the output from the hydro-power station in the event of overloading or a shortage of water.

It was claimed by many of the station managers that hydro-electric power was one of the primary reasons that Grytviken was able to continue operating in the very competitive climate of the 1930s and 1950s when pelagic whaling brought the closure of many land-based concerns.

In 1924/25 a dynamo was established at King Edward Point to supplement lighting power and generate electricity for the radio station and scientific work at Discovery House. With the demise of the whaling industry on the horizon in 1962, a new generator was installed at the Point to make it wholly independent of Grytviken.

When whaling station closed in 1965, it was guarded by caretakers until 1971. What became of the hydroplant after that makes only for disappointing reading. Before the Falklands war, the plant building was broken into and, after the war, it was used for exercises by the garrison. The result is that the building is now in a sorry state, both internally and externally, and the pipework above it has been ruptured, so plumes of water are thrown high into the air.

The Norwegian Oyas Venner (Friends of the Island) has formed a team intent on restoring the hydroplant and reinstating the supply of energy it once produced so cleanly and efficiently. The Government of SGSSI has expressed interest. Modern 'green' technology in power transmission could ensure an adequate supply to King Edward Point from a 'renewable' source. The possible long term gains could be very advantageous, helping to ensure an eco-friendly environment for wildlife and future generations of people. And it would be a fitting recognition of the good relations that both the Norwegian and British communities have enjoyed over the long period when South Georgia was an active and industrious island.

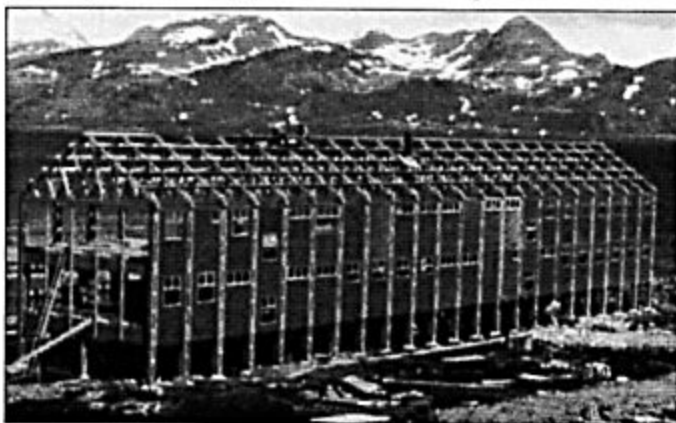
Ian Hart

Discovery House and the old gaol

It is not easy to recognise King Edward Point after the completion of the new Base and removal of Shackleton House and other buildings. Only three old buildings remain. Two of these, Discovery House and its coal store, were refurbished externally this summer.

The historic value of Discovery House, put up in 1925 as a laboratory and accommodation for Discovery Investigations' scientists, was realised early in the plans for the new look KEP. Now it may become another attraction for tourists.

A specialist asbestos removal team spent much of the summer here, and part of their work was to strip the asbestos wall and ceiling panels from Discovery House. Builders working on the outside used some materials from the original Radio Room to replace windows and some of the exterior cladding. Now, Discovery House is smartly painted on the outside, with an eye-catching display of an old harpoon gun and anchors to the front. Inside it is a different story: it is just a shell. The studwork from the walls remains, but otherwise it is empty. On some of the beams the original stencils have been exposed and read 'Discovery Building. OHMS Grytviken. South Georgia.'



'New Discovery House', later Shackleton House, under construction, November 1962.



Shackleton House has been demolished and the site is being landscaped, February 2002.

The Government has been canvassing opinion as to what to do with Discovery House. Many have suggested that the original laboratory could be reconstructed, with other parts of the building used to show current research.

The other building to survive, the oldest on KEP, is the Customs Warehouse, a corrugated iron clad shed put up in

1913. A year later a four-cell gaol was built at one end. Famously, the first prisoner escaped while it was still being constructed but gave himself up the next day, after a cold night out on the slopes of Mt Duse. Over the years the building has served more as a temporary home for various expeditions than as a gaol, and is now used as a store. With all the other buildings looking so smart, the Gaol's peeling paint and bullet hole pocked tin could do with a makeover. Maybe next summer it will get it.

Sarah Lurcock

SGA News

As of April 1, the SGA boasts 169 members and has over £5000 in the bank. This healthy financial position is a result of most members signing up for five years, which is itself a sign of confidence in the Association.

Inaugural meeting

This was held at the Linnean Society in Burlington House, Piccadilly, on Friday, 14 December. The Linnean Society is one of the premier scientific societies and its historic rooms are both venerable and welcoming. It was an open meeting and 60 people (not all members yet) attended. Chairman David Tatham welcomed everyone, particularly Gordon Liddle from Government House in the Falkland Islands, Øystein Froiland from Øyas Venner (the Friends of the Island) in Norway, and Dan Weinstein from New York. He briefly described the aims of the organisation, which are to encourage interest in South Georgia and promote the conservation of its natural and cultural heritage, as well as promoting contacts and encouraging fellowship among those who have visited South Georgia or are interested in the island. The SGA has the support of the Government of South Georgia. David Tatham also introduced the President, Stephen Venables, the mountaineer and author whose book 'Island at the Edge of the World' is about one of his expeditions to South Georgia.

It is hoped to develop close links with North America and Norway. Dan Weinstein suggested setting up a US (Dollar) bank account for the Association. Øystein Froiland talked about the very strong links Norway has with South Georgia and described the activities of Øyas Venner which has 450 members. Gordon Liddle (South Georgia Operations Manager) said that the South Georgia Government was delighted with the formation of the SGA. It was not easy from Government House to obtain all the views of the many people involved with South Georgia. The SGA could be valuable in reaching decisions. He congratulated SGA on its work so far.

After the business meeting, Nick Lewis, of the logistics company Poles Apart, gave a fascinating slide presentation

on the making of the IMAX film 'Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure' at South Georgia. Afterwards the meeting adjourned to the Library of the Linnean Society for refreshments until 9.30.

Annual General Meeting

The first AGM will be held at 6.00 pm on May 24 at the Royal Overseas League, off St James St., London. (See separate sheet.) Afterwards, there will be a reception (price £12) and a talk by Dr. Inigo Everson of BAS on Fishery Research at South Georgia.

Autumn meeting

Bob Headland will talk on 'The Argentine Invasion of South Georgia - 20 years on', as part of the Scott Polar Research Institute's autumn lecture series, at 8.00pm on 19 October at the Scott Polar Research Institute.

Website

www.southgeorgiaassociation.org has been registered as the SGA website. It is blank at the moment but we hope soon to display basic information.

South Georgia Conference, 2003

The SGA proposes to hold a major conference on **The Future of South Georgia** to study the longer-term prospects for South Georgia. The conference will run for three days, Thursday-Saturday, 18-20 September, 2003. The venue will be Cambridge, at either the British Antarctic Survey or the Scott Polar Research Institute. The programme will consist of invited papers and discussions on the first two days and workshops on the third. Topics are likely to include Heritage, Natural environment and its management, Resource management, Tourism and Governance.

It will be useful to have an indication at this early stage of those who are interested in attending. Please contact Bob Burton at rburton@ntlworld.com or Dave Rootes at David.Rootes@polesapart.org

The SGA's Acting Committee is:

<i>Chair</i>	David Tatham
<i>Secretary</i>	Fran Prince
<i>Treasurer</i>	Roger Huxley
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Stephen Palmer
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Bob Burton
<i>Members</i>	Angus Erskine, Bob Headland, John Heap, Skip Novak, Trevor Potts, Dave Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton
<i>Corresponding Members</i>	Sarah Lurcock (South Georgia) Jan Cheek (Falkland Islands)

The South Georgia Association newsletter will be produced twice a year, in November and April.

Contributions should be submitted, at least one month before publication, to the editor:

Bob Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW.

e-mail: rburton@ntlworld.com