

# South Georgia Association Newsletter

Number 3 November 2002



## Message From The Commissioner to the AGM

I am sorry that no one from the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is able to attend your AGM, but you may find it helpful to have an account of some recent events and developments.

There is much public comment in the media on the events surrounding the 20th Anniversary of the liberation of both the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. This occasion did not pass un-noticed by the GSGSSI or those resident on South Georgia. A short church service, led by the BAS Base Commander Steve Brown, was held in the whalers' church at Grytviken. Some of the crew from the tug *Condor* and members of the OSRL team joined the congregation of BAS and Government employees. After the service everyone walked to the cemetery. On a still but snowy morning a wreath was laid on the central cross and a minute's silence observed in memory of all who had died in 1982. A second wreath was laid on the grave of Argentine Felix Artuso, the only casualty of the liberation of South Georgia.



*After a short service led by the BAS Base Commander Steve Brown in the whalers church, the congregation of BAS and Government employees, crew of the tug Condor and members of the OSRL (Oil Spill Response Ltd) team walked to the cemetery where wreaths were laid on the central cross and the grave of the Argentine sailor Felix Artuso.*

*Two men on the Condor had been involved in 1982. John Morris came to South Georgia only days after the Liberation on the tug RMLAS Typhoon and Barry Bellows, had been on Elk, a roro vessel, in the Falklands.*

## Research programme

A great deal has happened since the beginning of 2001. The military garrison on South Georgia has been withdrawn and our research station has been successfully established. BAS, on the GSGSSI's behalf, now undertake a first class science programme in support of the commercial fisheries. I recently chaired, in Stanley, the first meeting of a liaison committee of those involved with the research station. The aims of the committee are broadly to:

oversee the BAS operation at King Edward Point,

including the science programme;

develop ideas to make best use of the King Edward Point facility and capability in the light of experience.

It is worth recording that the relationship on the ground between the BAS contingent and others is excellent.

Interest in our four commercial fisheries, toothfish, ice-fish, crab and krill, continuing the promulgation of a new fisheries policy has done much to ensure the transparency of our policies and enabled us to work closer with the industry. This is of course important as the sale of licences generates the bulk of our revenue and much of our expenditure is directed to fishery related matters - protection and research in particular.

## Environmental policy

We continue to pursue a prudent environmental policy. Sally Poncet has just completed the final year of a three-year environmental baseline project. I now wait for her report. Another piece of good news, involving Sally again, was the work she and experts from the New Zealand Department of Conservation undertook on a rat eradication trial. This work focussed on Grass Island in Stromness Bay. It came to a close in April of this year when Grass Island was officially declared 'rat free'. A small step, but one in the right direction. We now need to consider what we do next, how we do it and how we pay for it.

We have a number of environmental related projects in the pipeline:

- A census of the black-browed, grey-headed and wandering albatross populations of South Georgia
- The creation of a database of seabird and marine mammal dispersion in South Georgia and surrounding waters
- A review of SGSSI Laws

We are rapidly approaching the time when a review of our Environmental Management Plan is required and we are already in discussion with BAS on a review programme.

The Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) team has just left Grytviken. They were commissioned to remove oil from some of the beached whalers/sealers before any major oil pollution occurred. I believe it was only partially successful but I await their report.

## Visitation

The museum continues to thrive. It maintains its high standards and is valued by those who visit it. It is now a successful enterprise in its own right with an annual turnover of more than £100,000.

Shipping is on the increase. In 2001 there were 195 harbour visits, yachts, fishing vessels, cruise ships etc - 42% higher than 2000. The number of tourists in 2001 also increased; 2377 in 2001, up 13% on the 2000 figure.

The sale of stamps and more recently commemorative coins play an increasing part in the revenue of the Territory. Stamp collectors have a high regard for the quality and the variety of the issues the Government releases.

### King Edward Point

A considerable amount of work has taken place at King Edward Point. The demolition work is now complete and the Point is looking immaculate. Larsen House has been brought up to the standard of the research station and its accommodation block. Discovery House has been renovated and all the asbestos removed and disposed of to UK specifications. We are now working towards a plan for the most appropriate use of this important building. Our initial ideas are that it should be used as a venue to celebrate the Discovery Expeditions in a high standard interpretative fashion, allow BAS an area for them to show the work of the fisheries laboratory and the broader BAS sphere of expertise. Our aim will be to demonstrate the success of the combined efforts of the FCO/GSGSSI/BAS in managing the South Georgia environment in a sustainable fashion. We are also considering an eventual move of the Post Office to Discovery House.



Discovery House refurbished

### Stromness Villa

Another subject that I know is dear to the South Georgia Association - Stromness Villa. A number of things have happened. An asbestos survey has taken place and the Royal Engineers have undertaken an assessment of the building to determine its suitability for refurbishment. Briefly, the asbestos survey indicates that asbestos-based products appear to have been used in a variety of applications and locations throughout what remains of the site. The degree of risk these materials present varies considerably, although the extent of the problem does not match that at Grytviken.

The assessment of the building suggests that with no further maintenance the villa is likely to survive in its current form for no more than 10 years. The refurbishment of the Manager's Villa will involve extensive works to both the interior and exterior of the building. In order to reduce costs and the extent of the project this work could be phased. The most important aspect is to improve the overall appearance and the weather proofing of the building; this could be done as one phase. A second phase would include refurbishing the interior including many cosmetic improvements. I will keep the Association informed on progress on this issue. Perhaps I could invite the Association's views on funding and fund-raising possibilities?

### Asbestos problem

But the issue that concerns me the most is the problem of

asbestos at Grytviken and I suspect this will be our main priority for the next two years and more. The former whaling station at Grytviken is deteriorating very rapidly. It contains a number of hazardous substances. These include asbestos in several forms, PCBs and old bunker oil residues. The asbestos is the most immediate problem as it could affect the safety of staff and visitors. We are presently conducting regular air sampling to ensure that the areas visited and lived in are safe for those purposes.



The whaling stations are collapsing

As background information you should be aware that there was also asbestos at King Edward Point. This had to be dealt with during the 2001/2002 austral summer season as part of a demolition project; refurbishment and general clean up of the Point following construction of our new research station in 2000/2001. This work has been completed successfully and the waste materials disposed of to UK/EU standards. As part of these works we had to employ a certified asbestos removal company and an independent inspecting consultant, as required under UK law.

We took advantage of their presence and tasked them to undertake a full survey of the problems at Grytviken. This work is now complete and their report is to be delivered when they have completed the analysis of the many samples taken at that time. We have commissioned the report from Morrison Construction who were the managing contractor for the new works and demolition we have carried out over the last two years on the island. They will be using their construction and demolition experience to advise on removal of the hazardous buildings as well as making the site safe for any asbestos removal specialists who will be required to operate there in the future.

The next stage as far as we are concerned is to assess the report when we receive it and look at what the costs of remediation may be. The amounts required are going to be more the GSGSSI can possibly find alone and we will be looking to other sources of funds. You may wish to contribute to our thinking on this issue.

In closing, may I take this opportunity to wish the Association every success. I look forward to maintaining and building on our close relationship as the Association develops.

Donald A Lamont, Commissioner

## Serious asbestos problem at the whaling stations

In the previous article the Commissioner discusses the problem of asbestos, which has become a dark cloud hanging over our island. In 1991 there was a partial clean-up of the whaling stations funded by the FCO and Christian Salvesen plc, the then holder of leases to the whaling stations. Large amounts of oil and other hazardous materials were destroyed and quantities of asbestos buried, sealed in steel tanks or left in closed buildings. The situation seemed stable for a while but the last few years have seen buildings disintegrating at an alarming rate as timbers rot and corrugated iron sheets are ripped off by the wind. The asbestos is now being exposed and blown about. This presents the GSGSSI with a very serious problem, which could become a crisis as it affects every aspect of life on South Georgia. Russ Jarvis, the Assistant Commissioner, has supplied the following details of how the problem emerged and the GSGSSI's investigations into how to deal with it.

### Background to the problem

In 1998, The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) was made aware that amounts of asbestos and other hazardous materials remained in Grytviken and other whaling stations on South Georgia. The GSGSSI commissioned a survey of all the stations by Poles Apart, independent environmental consultants specialising in polar matters. The task of making the whaling stations safe by removing them had been considered and an assessment of the scrap value of the metals in the stations was conducted by an accepted expert in the field, Dan Weinstein.

In March 1999 Mr Weinstein's report was received and the total scrap value was found to be very much less than the probable costs of removal. In May, the Poles Apart final report was delivered. As a result the GSGSSI prohibited visitors to the island from approaching within 200 metres of the whaling stations at Leith Harbour, Stromness, Husvik and Prince Olaf Harbour. This was in part due to the dangers of sheet corrugated iron flying off buildings in the high winds that are so common on the island.

But it was considered possible to allow visitors limited access to Grytviken in calm weather. Some buildings were boarded up and put off limits and the Marine Officer was tasked with stopping people entering the area of the station in windy conditions. Oil residues in the part sunken whalecatchers were also considered at this time and plans began to take shape for their removal. Some further remedial works were undertaken at Grytviken in accordance with the recommendations from Poles Apart.

### New regime at KEP

This year also saw the beginnings of plans to withdraw ground forces from King Edward Point and construction of a new fisheries laboratory for the GSGSSI to be manned and managed on their behalf by the British Antarctic Survey. The GSGSSI was insistent that the funding package put together by the U.K. Government must include sums to remove hazardous old buildings and materials from King Edward Point in order to provide a safe working environment for their own Marine Officer and the BAS staff. The

MOD commissioned a report from their consultants Mott MacDonald, that gave some idea of the scale of the problems at KEP and an approximate cost for remedial works.

October 2000 – March 2001

Morrison Construction constructed the new research facility on the site. At this time some asbestos was removed and stored safely. A price was given by Morrison Construction to carry out the demolition and safe removal of the remaining asbestos at King Edward Point using specialist sub-contractors and working to U.K. Health and Safety standards. The GSGSSI funded this.

### Action taken

October 2001 – March 2002

Morrison Construction, along with specialist asbestos removal sub-contractors, carried out the safe demolition and removal of asbestos from the old buildings at King Edward Point. This and refurbishment of two buildings, one historic, cost approximately £800,000. Whilst this sum covered the demolition of several buildings, the total asbestos removal did not come to more than 150 cubic metres. The asbestos was disposed of to U.K. standards in a special landfill site. During this period the GSGSSI asked the U.K. asbestos inspector, John Richards of Thames Laboratories, an asbestos removal company, to assess the present risk at Grytviken. His initial report alerted us to developing risks due to deterioration of the buildings and increasing exposure of asbestos to the air. The GSGSSI then commissioned Morrison Construction to work with Thames Laboratories and produce for us a detailed report on the risks presented by the environmental hazards at Grytviken, methods of controlling or removing the risk and the associated costs.

Because of concerns expressed by John Richards, we instigated an air sampling programme to ensure that, if airborne asbestos from Grytviken became a problem to either the South Georgia Museum staff living beside the station or the personnel on King Edward Point which is downwind of the whaling station in the prevailing westerlies, we would know and be able to remove them to safety. At time of writing the air sampling has not revealed asbestos levels that approach the U.K. acceptable limits.

### Ongoing plans

August 2002.

The GSGSSI received the detailed report from Morrison Construction and Gordon Liddle, Operations Manager for GSGSSI, met with Thames Laboratories, Morrison Construction, Mike Doig, the FCO desk officer for South Georgia, and Dr Mike Richardson, Head of Polar Regions Section of the FCO, to discuss the report and its implications. The report indicates that airborne asbestos is becoming an increasing risk to life both at Grytviken and at King Edward Point. It says that we can remove the risk either by removing only the asbestos and some of the buildings (as they are inextricably linked) or by removing all the buildings to ground level. Partial removal is probably not a realistic possibility as there is always the chance of some asbestos or other hazard remaining behind.

The best solution is suggested to be the removal of all the

asbestos-bearing and unwanted buildings to ground level. The report indicates the total volume of asbestos to be of the order of 1,500 cubic metres and the volume of asbestos-contaminated materials to be of similar volume. The report also shows that the rest of the non-hazardous waste is of the order of 50,000 cubic metres. The report describes the methodology by which this disposal can be conducted to make the environment safe for the long term future. The report did not consider the costs or technical details of removal of the remaining oil residues from bulk storage tanks or other hazardous chemicals like PCB's found in electrical machinery and supply systems.

#### Enormous cost

The bare cost suggested by Morrison construction for dealing with the asbestos and non-hazardous waste was estimated to be c.£6.2M. This did not include the further works required on oil residues etc., neither did it include profit for the company carrying out the works. There were one or two matters that the group at the meeting felt had perhaps been estimated at lower prices than was probable. The best figure presently available for the cost of this work in total is now of the order of £10M.

The report emphasises that we have very little time to deal with this problem. Otherwise, we will have to abandon Grytviken, the new research facility at KEP - the administrative capital of the island, and prevent access to the entire area by tourists from, presently, 44 cruise ships per annum, which carry around 4000 passengers.

#### Dropping a clanger?

The Cathedral clock was working in June 1966 when we arrived in the Falkland Islands but the chimes had been silent for at least 20 years. The hammer mechanism was badly rusted from lack of maintenance. Being of a mechanical bent, I determined to restore the chimes if at all possible. John Quigley, the South Georgia contract engineer/mechanic, volunteered to help if we could get the rusted, indeed crumbling, parts conveyed to him at King Edward Point.

I enlisted the help of H.M.S. *Protector's* stokers to unbolt all the hammers, bar one which was relatively free of rust, and place them in a large wooden box for conveyance to S.G. by the first available ship, the *Shackleton*. This would be about October, 1966. When *Shackleton* docked, some of the cargo was left on the jetty while an all-night party took place. After all, this was the first physical contact with the outside world for nearly four months, since the midwinter relief in June. Unfortunately there was a very conscientious caretaker/handyman at K.E.P. whose task was to empty the trash bins, row out into the bay and dump the contents. Being so conscientious, he was up at his usual time while others slept late and collected the trash into his boat. He was just about to pull away from the jetty when he noticed a box full of rusting iron which he took to be trash for disposal and loaded it into the boat. He rowed out and, oblivious to the screams and shouts of those on the jetty, unceremoni-

ously tipped our precious bell hammers and levers overboard, where they remain to this day!

As you can imagine, I was devastated on learning the news, for these were precious 'pattern pieces', each one being of a slightly different weight, and more importantly, each arm was of a critical length from the fulcrum. Fortunately we still had the lightest of the hammers in situ and I managed to send this down to K.E.P. on board *Protector*. John Quigley did a marvellous job in fabricating seven more hammers and arms which he thought 'might do'.

The following summer, *Protector's* stokers fitted them in the church. THEN WE HAD FUN! Everything John had fabricated was only 'approximate', i.e. inspired guesswork from the sole surviving (lightest) hammer. This meant a little bit more than 'fine tuning', for unless you get everything in balance the chimes will not work or, if they work, will not stop. It took about a week to get things right, with me going up into the tower sometimes in the dead of night to stop the wretched thing just when we thought we had everything 'tickety-boo'. That is why the hammer arms are drilled like meccano - to get the balance just right. In the end we succeeded. I took great pride in broadcasting the Cathedral chimes over the F.I.B.S. after a lapse of 20+ years and had many a congratulatory message from both Camp and Stanley. If memory serves me right, we did not stop the chimes during the night and had but few complaints. In fact, most welcomed the friendly night sound.

Peter Millam

#### £1,000 for a fish tag (by courtesy of Penguin News)

A Vietnamese fisherman was awarded a cheque for £1000 this week after it was announced he had won a South Georgia toothfish tagging prize draw. This came as part of the package of rewards offered for the return of fish tags. The winner, Trun Van Thuy, collected his prize from Mr Lamont.

The tagging programme, part of the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands' fisheries research, is operated by MRAG Ltd, a fisheries consultancy based in London. Posters advertising the scheme have been displayed in ports in South America, the Falkland Islands, and on vessels operating in the South Georgia toothfish longline fishery. The scheme offers an immediate £5 reward for the return of the tag and the details of its location of capture, fish length and the return of the otolith (the earbone used for ageing the fish). Additionally, each tagfinder is entered into the prize draw.

A spokesperson for GSGSSI commented, 'The tagging programme began in 2000. Since then over 2,200 Patagonian toothfish have been tagged and released. The fish are tagged by observers on longline and pot vessels licensed to fish around South Georgia and by scientists on groundfish surveys. So far 50 fish have been recaptured. The results contributed to the understanding and management of toothfish stock structure, migrations and growth.'

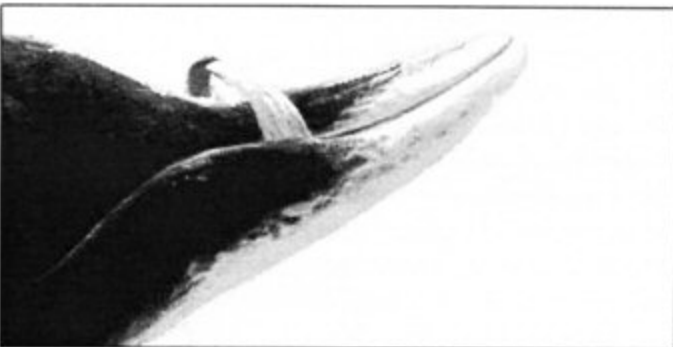
## Weird whale

Tim and Pauline Carr report that the museum has acquired the skull and four ribs of a rare strap-toothed whale. The complete skeleton was found on Laws Beach, Larsen Harbour in September 2001 by Mark and Fraser Carpenter on the yacht *Joshua* and the skull and ribs were eventually brought round to Grytviken on Philippe Poupon's yacht *Fleur Australe*.



This is believed to be the first record of the strap-toothed whale for South Georgia. The species is not well-known and the Carrs know of only one other sighting south of the Antarctic Convergence. The usual range is sub-Antarctic waters and strandings have been recorded on New Zealand, Australia and the Falkland Islands.

One of the features of the beaked whale family is the asymmetric beak or rostrum, which is more pronounced in the strap-toothed whale than other species. This specimen is female. If it had been male, the tusk-like tooth seen in the photo would have been much longer and curving over the upper jaw, as shown in the painting by Bruce Pearson. These teeth, which give the whale its name, prevent males opening their mouths fully, which would seem to make feeding difficult!



## Shackleton not the greatest!

The BBC's recent poll to discover the Top 100 Britons resulted in recognition for two eminent South Georgians. Sir Ernest Shackleton came 11th and Captain James Cook 12th. They were beaten out of the Top 10 and consequently having a special TV programme devoted to them by, among others, Princess Diana and John Lennon.

## South Georgia Environmental Baseline Survey

For the past three years the Government of South Georgia has been funding environmental research at South Georgia in the form of the South Georgia Environmental Baseline Survey (SGEBS). The principal aim of this project has been to compile an environmental inventory of South Georgia's principal visitor sites and certain Protected Areas and to conduct a survey of best-practice visitor management at each visitor site.

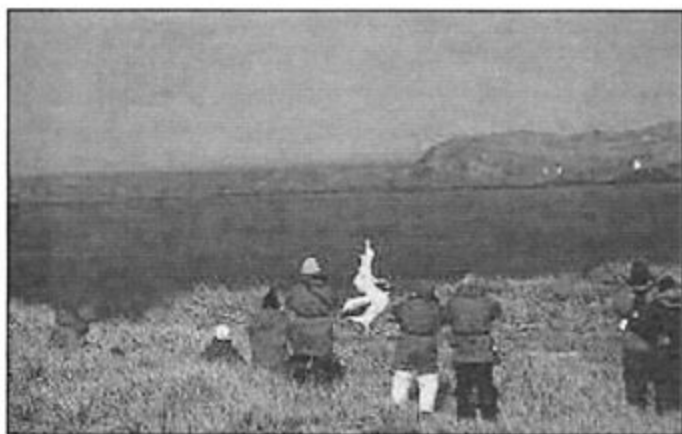
There are approximately 20 sites at South Georgia that are regularly visited by cruise ships, and another 20 that receive occasional visits. In the season 2001/02, 2500 cruise ship passengers visited the island on 33 cruises, with the 'Top Ten' sites receiving 87% of these visitors. The SGEBS compiled detailed inventories for these sites and four others, and surveys are in progress for another 16.

As principal researcher for the project, I organised the summer fieldwork logistics and concurrently coordinated the recent rat eradication feasibility trials (see Newsletters 1 and 2). Fieldwork was conducted by myself and Jenny Scott, an Australian botanist. Jenny's knowledge of sub-Antarctic ecosystems comes from many years' research at Heard and Macquarie Islands; and her experience as lecturer/naturalist on Antarctic cruise ships provided invaluable insights into visitor management during the course of the project. My own involvement with South Georgia started in 1977 when I first visited the island on the yacht *Damien II* with my husband Jerome. We returned many times over the next 15 years to carry out seabird and seal surveys for the BAS and independent seabird and wildlife habitat research.

Logistics for the SGEBS project included camping, accommodation at the King Edward Point research station and at the Museum at Grytviken, with transport between the Falklands and South Georgia and between field camps on the island offered by cruise ships, Fisheries Protection Vessels and private yachts. A dedicated charter vessel, *Golden Fleece*, was employed for the rat eradication project during the course of which a photocensus of black-browed and grey-headed albatrosses was carried out by myself and professional photographer Grant Dixon as part of a Protected Area survey. During the 3-year project, yacht crews, cruise companies and their Expedition Leaders were always willing to help with transport and discuss all aspects of visitor and site management. Their support and that of the parent organisation International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is much appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

The final report to Government is due out later this year and will include site inventories and options for site-specific codes of conduct. Following on from this, there are plans for a South Georgia Site Guide as a companion volume to Ron Naveen's 'The Oceanites Site Guide to the Antarctic Peninsula' and Debbie Summers' 'A Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands'.

One aspect of the project that I found especially interesting was the annual wandering albatross census on Albatross and Prion Islands. I started the census during a private visit



to the islands in 1998/99, prior to the SGEBS. The four consecutive years' of data not only complement the annual wanderer census conducted by BAS on Bird Island but also provide the baseline information necessary for ensuring adequate visitor management at the two islands which are popular visitor sites (over 2000 people landing here last season). This is especially important at a time when not only is the albatross population steadily decreasing due to at-sea mortality associated with the long-lining fishery, but also the numbers of visitors and fur seals at South Georgia are increasing. The impact of seals on the vegetation at Albatross and Prion Islands are also being monitored as part of the census programme, as is albatross chick survival, nest distribution and the areas visited by people, in order to determine whether seals and visitors are applying additional pressure to a species whose survival is already under threat.

Support for further albatross research has recently come from the South Georgia Government and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who have agreed to fund an island-wide survey of albatrosses, scheduled for 2003/04. And as part of this project, I will be returning to South Georgia this November to do the Albatross and Prion Islands annual wandering albatross chick count, and again in January 2003 for the wanderer breeding pair census and related environmental monitoring.

Sally Poncet, Principal Researcher

### **Macklin medical centre**

At the suggestion of the serving medical officer, Dr. Gareth Hughes, the new medical centre at King Edward Point has been named after Dr. Alexander Macklin. Bob Headland commented 'This is a very fitting tribute to Dr Macklin. Shackleton thought very highly of him'. As well as serving on *Endurance*, Macklin joined the *Quest* expedition and was with Shackleton when he died at Grytviken. Many of his Antarctic memorabilia were auctioned at Christie's last year. His *Endurance* diary fetched £92,000 and the sweater that Shackleton gave him shortly before his death £3,200. The diary is now held at the Scott Polar Research Institute.

The Centre is located in Larsen House and provides a medical service for the fishing fleet as well as BAS and other local personnel.

### **News from Romania**

An informal and unpublicised 'South Georgia Reunion and Slide-show Supper' has taken place in Bucharest, Romania, for two SGA members and their wives. It was hosted by Anthony Trevis, who was the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment Garrison Commander at KEP during the austral winter of 1987. He is currently serving as a UK Military Training Adviser to the Romanian Regional Training Centre based in Bucharest. His special guest was fellow SGA member, Richard Ralph, who is the current British Ambassador to Romania. As you may know, Richard was Commissioner of SGSSI during 1996-99, and he departs shortly for his next appointment as HMA to Peru.

### **Review:**

#### **Shetland's whalers Remember**

compiled by Gibbie Fraser

Fort William: Gilbert A. Fraser.

ISBN 0 9541564, 238 pages, illustrated, £14.00.

This is a fascinating book, in an unusual style, which makes an important contribution to understanding of a major period in Antarctic history. The chapters consist of a series of personal accounts from 51 individuals from the (North) Shetland Islands who served with Christian Salvesen and Co. Accounts include work at Leith Harbour and Stromness whaling stations, aboard floating factories and whale catchers, and occasionally of employment during the Antarctic winter on South Georgia. While most of the accounts are from the period after World War II there are many earlier ones. An interesting peculiarity of the nature of the book is that the same incident, always a memorable one, may crop up in more than one account. This is an advantage; as well as drawing the reader's attention to the instance one learns more of it from different observers.

The author is to be congratulated in bringing such an amount of information together. In the Foreword it is noted that Antarctic whaling ceased in 1963 thus the work has been completed well in time for the events to be within living memory - another asset. The last paragraph of the Foreword is good advice and well worth quoting: *If any reader meets an old whaler, shake his hand, buy him a drink, and let him tell you about his experiences in the South Ice. You might hear some of the stories that could never be printed!*

I thoroughly recommend the work as an essential for the history of South Georgia in particular and Antarctic whaling in general. It is an excellent supplement to the several more formal histories of the industry and companies involved.

R.K. Headland

## Shackleton Fund artist heads South

Landscape and wildlife artist Molly Sheridan will be heading for South Georgia in December for a two month stay thanks to the Shackleton Fund. Molly has a special interest in the Island as her husband Guy Sheridan, an SGA member, was the leader of the land forces that retook the island after the Argentine invasion in 1982. The South Georgia Government has also helped considerably to enable the visit. Molly, who paints in all mediums and exhibits extensively, will be able to study the breeding elephant seals, fur seals, light-mantled sooty albatrosses and other species all in the magnificent setting the island provides. With so little original art of South Georgia it is an exciting prospect that a successful artist can be assisted to visit in this way.

## Leopard seals at KEP



A very welcome distraction from the affairs of fishing arrived this winter in the form of an increase in leopard seal activity at KEP. On at least seven occasions young leps hauled out at the Point itself or close to the site of what was once the tennis court. They were no doubt somewhat bemused by the degree of attention they received, while the neighbouring fur seals reconciled themselves to the fact that they were no longer the centre of attraction. One leopard seal was even caught in the act of removing a cormorant from the ecosystem.

It was not long before the BAS team at Bird Island, who are veterans of tagging leps, were contacted for advice. A tagging tool and tags duly arrived from BI, complete with a home video illustrating the finer points of how to tag your lep. It was clear from the outset that, in order to keep the peace among base personnel, the privilege of tagging and naming a seal should be conferred on the individual who discovered it. One seal eventually received the tag numbered W6581 and was named 'Breeze'. At one stage 'Donald' was considered, but we did not know whether the Commissioner for SGSSI would be flattered, so the name of a trusty springer spaniel in Scotland was deemed more appropriate. Unperturbed by the incident, the seal stayed on the beach for a further hour before returning to sea.

Bird Island were kept informed and we understand that this is the only record they have (certainly in recent times) of a lep being tagged at KEP or anywhere on the main island itself. Unfortunately two subsequent attempts to tag other seals were less successful, but fingers and thumbs are still in one piece!

Richard McKee

## Christmas 2002, Cards and Prints



### COLOUR PRINT

Shackleton's Cross A3

### CHRISTMAS CARDS

Message: Season's Greeting  
A6, envelopes included.



- 1 Shackleton's Cross
- 2 Wings over Leith Harbour
- 3 Two Kings and Mount Sugartop (no message)

Cards 45p each. Supplied in sets of nine. Or, specify your mix.

Prices include 1st class postage and packing

Greetings Cards:- 9 - £4.77, 18 - £9.03, 27 - £13.81,  
36 - £18.20, 45 - £22.81 Print: £18.50

From Mike Skidmore, Rivendell, Castle Hill Road, ALTON,  
Staffs, ST10 4AJ. 01538 703017

mikeskidmore@themail.co.uk

See these, and more, on: [www.antarctic-paintings.com](http://www.antarctic-paintings.com)

Painting commission enquiries welcome.

## Shackleton Prints

A series of prints from watercolours of the Endurance expedition:



Available in two sizes:

- 13" x 17 1/4" plus 2" border  
\$135US each
- 8" x 10 1/2" plus 2" border  
\$45US each

1. The Adventure Begins - Endurance underway from Grytviken
2. What Lies Ahead - Endurance encounters ice in the Weddell Sea
3. Locked In - Endurance beset by ice
4. Released from the Ice - The crew take to small boats
5. Dry Land at Last - Approaching Cape Valentine
6. "It's Clearing, Boys!" - James Caird and the rogue wave
7. "Who the Hell Are You?" - The three men arrive at Stromness

A series of note cards of the first 6 images: Set of six: \$15US,  
or double set of 12: \$25US. Plus shipping

MC, VISA and AMEX credit cards accepted.

20 percent of the gross sales will be donated to the SGA.  
Mention your membership when ordering.

From Adam Koltz, 1125 Oceanic Drive, Encinitas CA 92024 USA  
Or order through [www.shipportraits.com](http://www.shipportraits.com).

## U.S. dollar account for SGA

For the convenience of American and Canadian members, we have opened a US\$ account with the First National Bank of Pittsburgh. Subscription rates are:

One year: US\$ 25 Canadian\$ 37  
Five years: US\$ 75 Canadian\$ 112

Cheques should be sent to Mr Dan Weinstein, 13 Ridgeley Terrace, Jamestown, NY 14071. He will register members and ensure newsletters etc will be sent to them.

Dan has indicated that he is willing to talk to anyone about the SGA and South Georgia, exchanging news and information. His phone number is 716 665 6045.

## SGA News

Now nearly one year old, the SGA has 225 members and has held four meetings. We have an official address, by kind permission of the Director, Professor Julian Dowdeswell: **The South Georgia Association, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB1 2ER**

### Annual General Meeting

The first AGM was held at the Royal Overseas League, London, on 24 May. The President, Stephen Venables, was unable to attend and the acting Chairman, David Tatham, took the chair. 35 members attended and 31 sent their apologies. The SGA constitution was formally adopted and David Tatham explained that he is still in correspondence with the Charities Commission over registration. Charles Swithinbank then took the chair for the election of the Committee. Mike Doig of the FCO read the letter from the Commissioner of SGSSI that is printed on pages 1 and 2 of this newsletter.

After the AGM, Dr Inigo Everson and Dr Mark Belchier of the British Antarctic Survey gave presentations on fishery policy at South Georgia and on current fishery research. There followed refreshments until it was time to go home.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Liberation

A reception to mark the liberation of South Georgia from Argentine occupation was held at the Athenaeum Club in London on 26 April. 48 attended a very pleasant social occasion. Our special guests were Sir Rex Hunt and Alan Huckle, Head of the Overseas Territory Department at the FCO. Øystein Froiland and Kjell Tokstad came over from Norway. Several of those present had played a part in the events of 1982 and our Chairman invited Sir Rex, Steve Martin and Bob Headland to recount some of their experiences. Øystein Froiland then reminded us of the part played by the Norwegian army at South Georgia during World War II.

### Cambridge meeting, 19 October

*The Argentine Invasion of South Georgia -20 Years on. Subtitled: Galtieri - my part in his downfall.* This was Bob Headland's

masterly erudite, and witty, account of the events before, during and after the invasion. Some 20 members gathered for refreshments before the lecture, which was part of the Scott Polar Research Institute's regular autumn lecture series.

### Website and email

David Rootes has arranged for the design of our website which can be seen at [www.southgeorgiaassociation.org](http://www.southgeorgiaassociation.org) The site is still being developed.

We also have email forwarding addresses:

Email letters sent to:

[Secretary/newsletter/membership@southgeorgiaassociation.org](mailto:Secretary/newsletter/membership@southgeorgiaassociation.org) will be redirected to the relevant officer.

[conference@southgeorgiaassociation.org](mailto:conference@southgeorgiaassociation.org) will be redirected to Bob Burton, David Rootes and Fran Prince.

### Honorary treasurer

We regret that Roger Huxley has resigned as treasurer due to pressure of other commitments and we thank him for his hard work in setting up the SGA's accounting system. His place has been taken by Keith Holmes. He can be contacted through the SGA official address or by email [kdbox@hotmail.com](mailto:kdbox@hotmail.com).

## Diary Dates

### 2nd Annual General Meeting

22nd May, 2003. Royal Overseas League, London.

### Cambridge Conference, 2003

The Director of the British Antarctic Survey, Professor Chris Rapley, has given permission for our conference to be held at the British Antarctic Survey headquarters in Cambridge. There will be a limit of 85 participants. Further information is given in the flyer circulated with this newsletter.

We invite anyone who is likely to attend and who wishes to be kept informed of plans to register their interest by writing to the Secretary SGA, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB1 2ER or email [conference@southgeorgiaassociation.org](mailto:conference@southgeorgiaassociation.org).

### SGA Committee

<i>Chair</i>	David Tatham
<i>Secretary</i>	Fran Prince
<i>Treasurer</i>	Keith Holmes
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Stephen Palmer
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Bob Burton
<i>Events Secretary</i>	Peter Emeleus
<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 Check (Falkland Islands)

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: Bob Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW. e-mail: [newsletter@southgeorgiaassociation.com](mailto:newsletter@southgeorgiaassociation.com)