

# South Georgia Association Newsletter

Number 5 November 2003



## A Conference on "The Future of South Georgia: A Programme for the Next 10 years"



*An Inuksuk welcomes delegates to the Scott Polar Research Institute reception..*

The Conference was a great success, with more people applying to attend than could be accommodated. We are very grateful to Professor Chris Rapley, Director of the British Antarctic Survey, for providing the facilities for holding the Conference and to friends at BAS who helped with the planning and operation, notably David Walton, John Croxall and Linda Capper.

The Conference was made possible by generous donations from the Government of South Georgia, The Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Oceanwide Expeditions, Quark Expeditions, Argos Georgia and the Falkland Islands Company.

We would also like to thank especially those who chaired the sessions and workshops, and David Tatham and Mike Pienkowski for their summaries. A number of people helped with the organisation: Jackie Burton, Sarah Lurcock, Jean Sinclair, Stephanie Martin, Simon Morley and Bob Headland.

We now hope to capitalise on the enthusiasm and energy generated by the Conference. As a start, a summary of the presentations and discussions will be published as a supplement to this newsletter early in the New Year and a CD of the Powerpoint presentations, reports and other information will be presented to delegates.

**David Rootes, Robert Burton, Frances Prince**

"South Georgia-The Next Ten Years", the ambitious title of the recent Conference, was printed on the generous Conference pack given to each of the 85 delegates. The Conference had been sold out for a month before the event so those trying to book late were disappointed.

It will not be easy to summarise a very busy, interesting three days, but here goes. Lots of people chose to come to the pre-registration reception at the Scott Polar Research Institute to maximise time for catching-up with old friends, colleagues and other Southgeorgiaphiles. If one had a moment when conversations lapsed, then the Institute had laid out a special display of SG interest, and large quantities of cheese and wine. There was an impressive Norwegian contingent keen to address heritage issues; tourism representatives and past tourists from North America, artist Molly Sheridan, who travelled from France, showing her work from a recent visit to SG, even some who had planned their leave from working on South Georgia so they could attend. The headquarters of the British Antarctic Survey at Cambridge proved to be a super venue for the Conference, we just need to persuade them to extend the buildings so we can fit more in next time.

The welcome address was made by SGA President Stephen Venables who welcomed Howard Pearce, the Commissioner for South Georgia. The Commissioner was there for the first day only and took the opportunity to address the packed conference. Whilst welcoming input from the SGA on Island matters, he cautioned us that with the current Grytviken Clean-Up there is no money in the coffers to pay for any expensive new schemes we might

propose. Gordon Liddle, the SG Operations Manager, stayed throughout to represent the Government, as did others from the FCO.

Delegates were impressed by the overall high standard of presentations. Topics included Island Management; Fisheries; Tourism; Conservation; and Heritage. Presenters usually summed up with a list of suggested ways forward. These often made a lot of sense, be it a proposal for the formation of an Environmental Committee; for the official adoption of IAATO tourism management guidelines in future legislation; or the introduction of better Vessel Monitoring Systems for fishing vessels. Sessions were chaired by able and brave individuals who kept keen presenters to the tight schedule and marshalled, sometimes lively, question and discussion sessions. Further subjects were presented in the form of posters displayed in the conference hall and lunch room. At coffee breaks, and in the minutes while some presenters struggled with the technicalities of Powerpoint presentations, the hubbub in the hall illustrated the interest stimulated by the presentations.

At the end of the second day of sessions, SGA Chairman David Tatham summed up the presentations. He suggested that next time SGA had a conference we should perhaps invite administrators of other sub-antarctic islands to share their experience with us. He highlighted the need for a SG Heritage Trust, and picked up on the issue of human rights on the fishing vessels, saying the Commissioner had taken note of the conference concerns in this area and that he, as an ex-Commissioner, felt guilty he had not addressed fully. David also noted that



*David Tatbam sums up.*

fur seals had reared their ugly heads throughout the conference, not literally thank goodness. It was interesting how this and other obviously 'thorny subjects', such as eradication of reindeer, although mentioned, were mostly only given a passing comment. It was as though all delegates realised that the Conference was not the place to get into such detail, when there were larger issues, such as which scheme might be adopted to assess future Island Management, to be discussed.

The last day was dedicated to workshops and a final discussion that had the aim of distilling the proceedings into recommendations for the future management of the Island, then putting these forward to the SG Government and publishing them for a wider audience. Delegates chose to attend one of three workshops on offer: Tourism, Cultural Heritage or Conservation and Fishing. Many would have liked to go to all three!

Once again it was impressive to note the quality of contributions made in the workshops, often by people highly qualified by experience or profession. The hour and a half was over far too quickly. In the plenary session the chair of each workshop summed up their group's ideas. The Fisheries and Conservation workshop identified the need for appropriate legislation and for a mechanism to oversee the Island's conservation. The Tourism workshop wanted to see a change of approach, highlighting what you can do, instead of what you can't do, and to bring in an Environmental Education Strategy. The Cultural Heritage group recommended a separate Heritage Management Plan. A group will outline a plan to present to GSGSSI.

Now looking back at the Conference, I conclude it was a success on many levels. It was stimulating, interesting, social, enjoyable and a useful exercise which will result in valuable and practical, and not necessarily expensive, recommendations being put forward to GSGSSI.

Down sides? I did not get time to talk to everyone for as long as I would have liked.

Lessons learnt? Find a venue with room for more people.

**Sarah Lurcock**

## RSGS *Scotia* Centenary Expedition

The Scottish National Antarctic Expedition (1902-04), led by William Speirs Bruce, made a significant contribution to Antarctic science and discovery during the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration. The expedition sailed on board the Steam Yacht *Scotia* and conducted the first detailed scientific studies in the Scotia Sea, including hydrographic survey and marine biology. They established the longest running Antarctic meteorological station in the South Orkney Islands and discovered 150 miles of the coastline of continental Antarctica, which they named 'Coats Land'. Scientifically, the expedition was an overwhelming success and achieved without fuss or drama, but because the focus was on science, and there were no disasters or epic struggles for survival, public awareness of the expedition, its achievements and the importance of Bruce as a polar explorer have remained low. The centenary of the expedition provided a timely opportunity to celebrate this immensely important part of Scotland's polar heritage.

As part of the centenary celebrations, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society mounted a scientific expedition to South Georgia to investigate past climate and environmental change and to promote wider awareness of Bruce and the achievements of the original *Scotia* expedition. The 10 members of the team, supported by the ocean-going ketch *Ocean Tramp* visited a number of locations on the north coast of the island between Possession Bay and St Andrews Bay in January-February 2003.

Although William Bruce did not visit South Georgia, his ashes were scattered off the island, following his death in 1921. Earlier in 1893, he had proposed an expedition to the island to carry out geographical and geological survey, meteorological observations and studies of the flora and fauna. He also had plans to establish a shore-based station for whaling and sealing. However, he was unsuccessful in funding these ventures and it was left to others to explore South Georgia and develop its resources.



*The RSGS expedition with Ocean Tramp at King Edward Point.*

The aims of the centenary expedition were to investigate environmental changes at South Georgia since the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) (around 20,000 years ago), and to

place these changes in the wider global context of climate change in Antarctica and the Southern Hemisphere. Our focus was on South Georgia for scientific reasons. First, it lies close to two key global climatic boundaries: the Polar Frontal Zone, which forms the ocean boundary between relatively warm temperate water and colder Antarctic water, and the northern extent of winter sea ice. Changes in the positions of these boundaries affect profoundly the environment of the island. Second, South Georgia is a climatic 'bridge' between Antarctica and southernmost South America. Its location between the Antarctic continent and temperate latitudes makes it a key site to determine a high-resolution chronology of glacier fluctuations over different timescales and thus contribute towards a fuller understanding of inter-hemispheric climate change. Third, there are existing studies from South Georgia that we were able to build on.

We are using a combination of approaches to gain a better understanding of past environmental change at South Georgia. One team mapped former glacier limits and marine limits in 6 major fjords and will date these using a variety of techniques to reconstruct past glacier and sea-level changes. Initial results suggest that the LGM advance was restricted to the inner fjords. This is consistent with evidence of restricted isostatic recovery. Prominent raised shore platforms in the outer fjords and open coast suggest higher relative sea levels associated with earlier, more extensive ice cover. Another team recovered sediment cores from lakes on the Tonsberg Peninsula, Thatcher Peninsula (Maiviken) and Barff Peninsula, and is applying a range of laboratory techniques and high resolution dating to reconstruct in detail the environmental history of the last 20,000 years.



*Lateral moraines at Moraine Fjord. Harker Glacier is in the background.*

A third team is investigating the controls on glacier behaviour, using historical records of glacier change, meteorological records and computer modelling of glacier responses to climate change. Most glaciers on South Georgia advanced during the late 19th century. Since then, smaller, land-based glaciers have thinned and receded, particularly in the last few decades. Larger tidewater glaciers, however, have generally remained in relatively advanced positions and show more

variable behaviour; e.g. the front of Lyell Glacier is largely in the same position as recorded in 1975; Harker Glacier is further advanced than when photographed by Frank Hurley in 1914 and appears not to have changed significantly since the 1970s, but the adjacent Hamberg Glacier has receded several hundred metres since then. A high-resolution 3-dimensional glacier flow model will be used to elucidate the links between climate and past glacier fluctuations. Ice thickness and glacier bed characteristics are critical boundary conditions for such modelling and were determined for Nordenskjöld Glacier using ice-penetrating radar.

Together, these approaches should allow us to build up a detailed picture of the patterns and timing of environmental change at South Georgia, to make comparisons with the records from Antarctica and southern South America and to clarify the wider regional scale processes of climate change.

The expedition obtained national TV and radio coverage and newspaper articles. A series of five radio programmes, 'A Diary of Climate Change', recorded on location, was broadcast in May 2003 on BBC Radio 4 and is archived at [www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science). Further information is at [www.geog.gla.ac.uk/Expeditions/Scotia/scotia.htm](http://www.geog.gla.ac.uk/Expeditions/Scotia/scotia.htm)

### **John Gordon, Jim Hansom and expedition members**

#### **Getting Gambo'd**

Following the Scotia Expedition, one of its members, Edinburgh University-based numerical glaciologist and climber Alun Hubbard, returned to South Georgia on his yacht *Gamba*. His main objective was to climb mountains but the visit also allowed him to complete an accumulation survey across the upper Nordenskjöld Glacier as well as glacier-front and bathymetric surveys. He will enter the survey results into a computer model to predict its response to climate warming. But before Hubbard left the Island his initial findings led him to say 'The glacier appears to be dynamically unstable and well over-extended at the moment. I believe that the Nordenskjöld Glacier is likely to undergo a catastrophic retreat in the next few years.'

Alun's team attempted the east ridge of Mt Paget and also Paulsen Peak, Quad Five, and Marakoppa. These targets were chosen for being unclimbed but accessible from Grytviken, where the yacht was confined with engine problems. All attempts were thwarted by bad weather and difficult ice and climbing conditions - a result that came to be known as being 'Gambo'd'.

The Paget group, Leader Alun Hubbard, Tim Hall and Hamish Millar, headed for the obvious col at 1800m between Mt Roots and Mt Paget, where they enjoyed stunning views down the south coast and along the Allardyce range. After being weathered in for four days, Alun and Hamish set off on the remaining 4km to the top. They enjoyed the beautiful route but at 2450m, just 45 minutes from the top, they were hit by phenomenal winds and cloud and became concerned about losing their track in the white-out. They were Gambo'd! So they decided to retreat. Indeed it was a difficult four hours back to Camp 3 where, reunited with Tim, they packed up and headed on down to Camp 2 with little

remaining food and fuel, and got back to the coast next day.

At their highest point the two mountaineers had said a few words in tribute to a previous Mt Paget summiter, Mark Stratford. Mark, a Royal Marine Mountain Leader, died in one of the helicopter crashes early in the Iraq war. He had summited in 1995 by joining a German expedition climbing South Georgia's highest mountain while on his four-month tour of duty on the island.

While Alun vowed to return again next year, another of the Gambo team, Davie Robinson, nicely summed up their frustrated ambitions saying 'It was a pleasure not summiting in such a beautiful place'.

**Sarah Lurcock**

### **The Whale: fishermen's enemy or friend?**

The toothfish fishery around South Georgia is blighted by whales visiting the longliners for an easy feed. The usual culprits are orcas and sperm whales, and they say you can tell which is stripping the line as the orcas leave the heads, but if all you get coming over the side is the lips, then you have sperm whales. The fishery observers describe the latter as looking like logs rolling in the wake of the ship. Whales have been an especially severe problem this year and it is likely whale predation has been a significant factor in some usually successful vessels not reaching their fish quota.

One ship reported a pod of 40 orcas behind it. Were it not for the presence of Government Fisheries Observers on each of the longliners, you can be sure the fishermen would find, possibly fatal, ways of deterring the whales. We know captains used to shoot at orcas with rifles. As it is, the ships have to go to some lengths to try and loose the parasitic whales. They may lay a line then move many miles away to lay another, hoping to draw the whales away so they can return to the first and lift it without the whales there to snack on the valuable catch. On bad whale days the daily data sent by the ships to the Fisheries Officer at KEP might read: Time spent fishing: 24 hours; Number of hooks set: 21000; Number of fish caught; 5!

No wonder the longliners sometimes resort to underhand means to get rid of their whales. On one memorable night the residents of KEP heard some exasperated calls on the radio as a longliner watched another ship furtively sail around its stern, refusing to answer calls on the VHF to identify itself. It was rubbing its whales off onto the other ship. The last frustrated call we heard was a futile 'I know what you are doing!'

Ships with a particularly bad record for attracting whales are no longer sent to fish. The assumption is that the noise of the ship is well known to the whales who home in on it. Maybe that is why some of the newer ships are incredibly quiet. It was eerie watching an almost silent autoliner slipping out of King Edward Cove at night. The autoliners that fished this year were very successful. Auto lining is where the tens of kilometre long lines have the thousands of hooks baited by machine. The crews on autoliners are almost half those of the hand baited fishing vessels.

One of the autoliners new to the fishery this year developed an unusual relationship with one whale though. Nicknamed Tutti Frutti, the fishermen claimed the sperm whale was helping them. They would follow it and it would show them where to fish for a good catch. Now wouldn't it be nice if in the future more ships could develop such a symbiotic relationship with their accompanying whales.

**Sarah Lurcock**

### **South Georgia's postcode**

South Georgia, along with the Falklands and British Antarctic Territories, have been issued with a Postcode. Letters to South Georgia should now be addressed to **S1QQ 1ZZ, South Georgia, via Falkland Islands**. It didn't take one bright spark very long to realise we had now been officially labelled 'Sickies'. Perhaps that is not as bad as the Falklands FIQQ 1ZZ - 'Thickies', and most agreed that BAT has come off best with the cute BIQQ 1ZZ as 'Bickies'.

The Postcodes were introduced in an attempt to prevent mail for the three territories going to places like New Guinea, Georgia in the USA, Faroe Islands, Falkirk and many other far-flung spots.

Early attempts to use the new postcode did not all go well. One package was returned to the sender in the UK from Canada, and another that did eventually get through had "Missent to Guyana" stamped on it. Once post offices become familiar with the new post codes such indirect routes will be much rarer.

**From a Sickie**

### **Anthony Gerald Bomford**

Surveyor and map-maker 1927-2003

Tony Bomford died in Canberra on May 10, aged 76. In 1955 he was seconded from the army to Duncan Carse's South Georgia Survey to be its chief surveyor. For this work, he won the Ness Award of the Royal Geographical Society, the citation stating that his work had established a new standard in Antarctic mapping. The map based on his survey is only now being replaced (see next page).

Born in British India, he served in the Royal Engineers and was director of National Mapping in Australia when he retired. His passion for surveying took him to remote places. He once said 'there was nothing I would rather be doing. If I had been born in Captain Cook's day, I'd have wanted to be one of his lieutenants.' His wider interests ranged from travel in wild and remote places and kayaking to stamp collecting, poetry, music and making woollen rugs. After cancer was diagnosed, he made one last adventure to visit Heard Island and other remote islands of the South Indian Ocean.

## A new topographic map of South Georgia

The Government of South Georgia has commissioned a new topographic map of South Georgia from the Mapping and Geographic Information Centre at the British Antarctic Survey which will be published in early 2004. It will supersede the familiar map compiled by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys (DOS) in 1958.

The DOS map was based on the best available information at that date, mainly from the South Georgia Survey Expeditions, 1951-57. Recent satellite imagery and modern geodetic survey methods have revealed a number of inaccuracies that include positional errors of up to 1 km and the positions of glacier fronts which have changed by up to 1.5 km.

The image backdrop for the new map is a mosaic of two Landsat 7 satellite images with a resolution of 15 metres. The new map will be at 1:200,000 scale and will have a positional accuracy of about 60 m (0.3 mm at map scale).

Available from Stanfords,  
12-14 Long Acre,  
Covent Garden  
London WC2E 9LP

## CSE Crossing Reunion

In 1964/65 Malcolm Burley led a Combined Services Expedition of 10 men to South Georgia. They were the first party to land at King Haakon Bay and retrace Shackleton's route over to Stromness (using the explorer's account in South). They also explored alternative routes across the island that Shackleton might have taken and, with one minor exception, decided that he had in fact chosen the very best option.



From the left  
Tony Back, George Hutt, Peter Langdon, John Peacock, Tom Lynch,  
Patrick Fagan, Malcolm Burley, John Chester. Wheel chair - Simon Down.

The expedition spent four months on the island, going on to make the first ascents of Mounts Paget and Sugartop, and attempting others. These climbs were from the south-west

side, so that a full expeditionary crossing of the Allardyce Range had to be made to get back to Grytviken and to go on to Royal Bay for a large scale survey of that area. The expedition was filmed, and appeared later as a 30-minute programme on ITV in the Survival series.

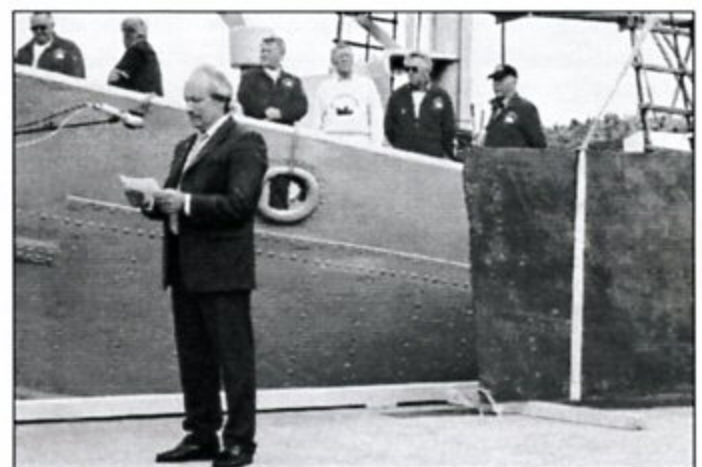
One of the 10, Terry Thompson, sadly lost his life on Everest in the 1970s, but over the years many have met up again from time to time. A 100% turnout has been inevitably rare, but in May (2003), 38 years after their return from South Georgia, all nine survivors (three of them already members of the SGA) met up for a two-day reunion at the army camp at Hermitage, where they had undergone pre-expeditionary training in the black arts of surveying all those years earlier. Despite life having not been kind to two or three of the team, the friendships born through South Georgia experiences remain very active indeed, even after so many years, and the years rolled away in the happiest of ways. I am pretty sure we will all be celebrating a full reunion again at the 40th anniversary of our return, but members meet quite regularly in smaller groups all the time.

Patrick Fagan

## Steel memorial for whalers

Several years after the idea was proposed by Hans Kjell Larsen, CA Larsen's grandson, Øyas Venner has brought a 3.75 x 1.75 metres steel plate from South Georgia to Sandefjord in Norway. The plate will be engraved with the names of over 130 Norwegian whalers who are buried on South Georgia and housed in a floating chapel in Sandefjord harbour. Relatives have expressed delight in having a memorial they can visit in Norway.

The plate was collected from South Georgia and carried to Portsmouth on HMS *Endurance*. The last part of its journey to Sandefjord was aboard the restored whalcatcher *Southern Actor*. Its arrival was witnessed by the Commissioner, Mr Howard Pearce, and the Norwegian Minister for Culture.



Kjell Tokstad, of Øyas Venner, with the steel plate in front of the restored whalcatcher *Southern Actor*.

## Fishing vessels wrecked at South Georgia

Wednesday 30 April was about two days into the toothfish licensing period at South Georgia, always a busy time, and disaster struck twice. Strong winds (Force 10 to 12) caused the Spanish longline vessel *Viking Bay* to run onto the beach next to the KEP jetty but she managed to get off the beach with the aid of lines from the fishery patrol vessel *Sigma*. However, later that evening, the Korean longliner *Moresko 1* went aground and started taking in water. It then transpired that another ship, the Falkland Islands registered *Lyn*, had also run aground. The two stranded ships were on rocks on opposite sides of the entrance to Moraine Fjord, roughly 2 miles from King Edward Point.



Rescue operations start at the *Moresko 1*.

At first light, small boats from KEP and *Sigma* started ferrying the 41 fishermen from *Moresko 1* ashore. Meanwhile BAS personnel had set up a reception area in the boatshed for the rescued mariners, with warm drinks, soup, noodles, bread rolls, biscuits and fruit. During the day a number of longliners attempted to tow the *Lyn*, and at one time three vessels at once tried to pull her off. An hour before darkness, the crew, bar six senior officers, were evacuated.

The *Moresko 1* sailors were billeted at KEP and *Sigma* took the *Lyn* crew. It was difficult to communicate with the *Moresko 1* crew who were a mixture of Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese and Indonesians and spoke no English, so the BAS personnel resorted to drawing pictures of toilets and 'No Smoking' signs and sticking them on doors.

A diver from the *Lyn* discovered that rocks were pinning the ship on both sides of her stern, so a tow dead astern would be the only way to get her off. At high tide and with all *Sigma's* power, the *Lyn* moved astern a few metres but remained stubbornly aground. The longliner *Jacqueline*, another powerful ship, attempted a tow the following morning but she also couldn't make the *Lyn* budge.

The six senior officers remained on the *Lyn* to operate the pumps and machinery with the hope that the tug *Typhoon* would be able to remove the fuel, and with the extra buoyancy, tow the ship free. But eventually the poor old ship gave up, the incoming water overwhelmed the pumps, and the six officers were evacuated.

The *Typhoon* arrived from Stanley on Tuesday 6 May but she was unable to carry out any salvage as she lacked sufficient pumps. So the *Moresko 1* and *Lyn* were abandoned.

The wrecked vessels were a potential environmental time bomb, and as it was the start of the fishing season they contained many tons of fuel, rotting bait, plastic bags, fishing line, rope, net bags, and other hazards to wildlife and shipping. Removing as much of this as possible before the main wildlife breeding season in the spring was obviously a priority. The salvage operation took up most of the winter months, with a survey vessel *Kalatsori*, and salvage tugs *Calafate* (with barge *Breckenock*) and *Luma* all staying at King Edward Point for extended periods to remove the hazardous items and undertake a beach clean-up.

Both wrecks have suffered badly from the effects of wind, waves and ice – *Moresko 1* has now broken up and *Lyn* will probably soon follow. Thankfully the salvage operations will have lessened the impact on the important and fragile ecosystems present in Cumberland Bay.

**Based on a report by Sue Dowling**  
BAS Medical Officer at KEP

The following letter has been sent to South Georgia:

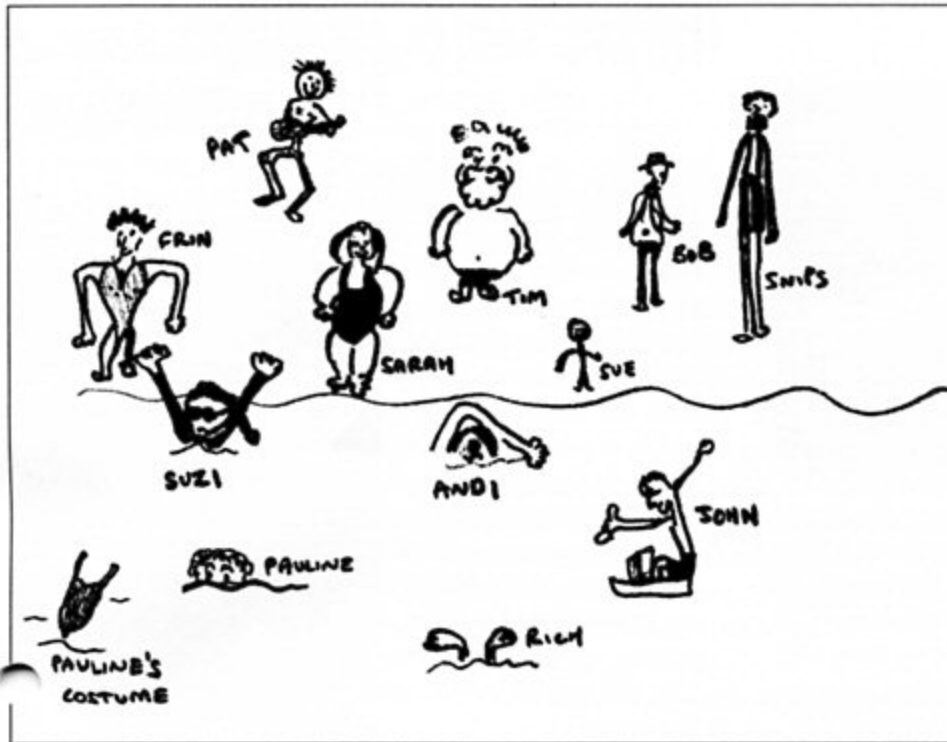
*To the Marine Officer, King Edward Point*

*The South Georgia Association, at their annual general meeting in London on 22 May, unanimously agreed to send a message of congratulations to the entire community at KEP/Crytviiken, to the Fishery Officers of the Falkland Islands Government and to the crew of the FPV *Sigma*. Members of the Association who have lived and worked in South Georgia know better than most how difficult conditions can be there and how dependant you are on your own resources. We are full of admiration for the courage, endurance and unremitting hard work in arduous conditions which you displayed in assisting, rescuing and receiving the crews of the fishing boats in distress during the last days of April and early May. Grateful if you could circulate this to everyone at KEP and Crytviiken.*

*With our warm best wishes for a successful and happy winter,*  
David Tatham, Chairman, SGA



There have been suggestions that ships visiting South Georgia would benefit from lighthouses. This is one erected by the whalers at Cape Saunders. Perhaps it could be refurbished!



The midwinter swim at KEP could not take place because of everyone was still busy dealing with the aftermath of the wrecks. So it was replaced by the 'just after midwinter swim'. The event was held on a cold and windy day.

This 'artist's impression' is said to have been made with a wide-angled pencil and shows all the local inhabitants except Howie the boatman. He had whipped up everyone else's enthusiasm for the chilly dip, and then disappeared into hiding.

It is believed that the maximum number of swimming strokes was five or six, before the participants were forced to re-emerge and retire to the sauna.

### SOUTH GEORGIA Gateway to Antarctica

Ludwig Kohl-Larsen. Translated by W. Barr 2003  
Bluntisham Books/ Erskine Press

First published as *An den Toren der Antarktis* in 1930, William Barr's translation into English is a very welcome addition to the South Georgia literature because it brings the account of this important episode in the island's exploration to a wider audience.

Ludwig Kohl's first expedition to Antarctica ended hardly before it had begun. He had joined Wilhelm Filchner's Deutschland expedition in 1911 but, on the voyage south, he developed acute appendicitis. The operation left him in a weakened state and he had to be left ashore at Grytviken. There he met Margit, one of C.A.Larsen's daughters. They married and he changed his name to Kohl-Larsen. In 1926, the couple returned, with a photographer, Albert Benitz, to South Georgia.

Kohl-Larsen made use of his family connections with the whaling industry to set up a small but ambitious expedition to the island. The main objectives were the study of the natural history of birds and seals and the collection of geological and limnological specimens, while Benitz would make the first film of South Georgia, but the plan also included exploration of the interior of the island. To that date, the only excursion to penetrate the mountains and glaciers had been Shackleton's crossing from King Haakon Bay to Stromness in 1916. Despite their better equipment, Kohl-Larsen's trio did not have such good luck with the weather as Shackleton's exhausted trio, and their travels were rather limited.

This is one of the first accounts of an island that was then terra incognita. Kohl-Larsen was not only insatiably curious but a meticulous observer. For him, the 'greatest joy is the

actual act of finding out and the possibility of observing lifestyles and their connection with the environment.'

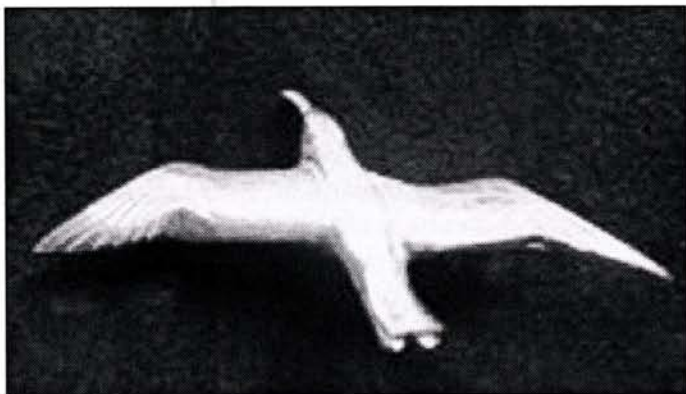
The expedition's first destination was Coal Harbour where they camped for several weeks to observe and film the breeding habits of the elephant seal, for which 'one had to be prepared to occupy a tented camp on one of the stormiest coasts in the entire world for a long period, unflinchingly and cheerfully.' The book is filled with descriptions of days lost while the damp, cold and frustrated trio sheltered from rain, snow and wind. Their tent is flooded, buried under snow drifts and, one night, its pole snaps. On another occasion a gale lifts the tent's groundsheet, and its three occupants, off the ground.

This book will be enjoyed by anyone who has visited South Georgia. They will be given a vivid reminder of the island that once captured their imagination, and they will envy the Kohl-Larsen expedition's freedom to explore so much of the island. The book should be required reading for anyone proposing to visit South Georgia for the first time. The island is revealed in its true colours. Captain Frederiksen, a sealing skipper, and Ludwig Kohl-Larsen agree 'there is probably no place on earth where the weather and the gales are such a pain in the neck to us humans.' Yet, as everyone who has been to South Georgia knows, there are compensations. 'This is indeed a paradise in which we are living. Say what you like, friends! Forget the tough hours and days and remember this magnificent day.'

**Bob Burton**

(Amended from a review written for the Polar Record)

## SGA jewellery



Award-winning jeweller Geraldine Martick has produced this handsome 4-centimetre silver albatross pin for the SGA. It is being worn with great effect by both men and women.

The first batch sold out very quickly at the Conference. A second batch is now available. Orders should be sent, with a cheque for £21 [this includes £1 for postage] to

The Hon Alexandra Shackleton  
33 Banim Street,  
Hammersmith,  
LONDON W6 0DN

## 2nd Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held at the Royal Overseas League on 22 May: The meeting was attended by 50 members and 31 sent apologies for absence. David Tatham welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially guests from Norway and Scotland, Sally Poncet from the Falkland Islands and Harriet Hall, who would soon be the new Assistant Commissioner.

In Stephen Palmer's absence, Keith Holmes reported on membership. There are currently 232 members with many



*The Officers at the AGM: (L. to R) Keith Holmes (treasurer), Stephen Venables (president), David Tatham (chair), Bob Burton (newsletter editor), Fran Prince (secretary).*

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](mailto:newsletter@southgeorgiaassociation.org)

having paid £50 for the 5-year subscription. Nearly 200 members are from UK, 20 from USA, others from the South Atlantic, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. 70% of the membership communicate with the Association by email. On 25th March 2003 there was currently £7032.04 in the account. Keith Holmes explained the money was not kept in a deposit account in order to keep things flexible and simple. David Tatham explained the problems convincing the Charities Commission that SGA would be eligible for charitable status.

Kate Batty-Smith, the new FCO desk officer, read a letter from the Commissioner, Mr Howard Pearce. He sent best wishes to the SGA and described his visit on HMS *Endurance* to South Georgia in March, which included a visit to Bird Island. The main issues for Government were: environmental, including heritage conservation; fisheries - which is the main source of income (of which 80% is ploughed back into the industry) and tourism. The priority is the clean up of asbestos in Grytviken by the end of the next austral summer. This will cost £6 million which is equal to the entire South Georgia reserves. The GSGSSI warmly welcome the SGA and the forthcoming conference and the Commissioner looks forward to meeting the Association there.

After the AGM, Bob Headland presented a video of the film made on the Kohl-Larsen expedition of 1926.



*Stephen Venables receives a photograph of the Kohl Larsen plateau on behalf of the SGA from John Heaney, a surveyor involved with the making of the 1952 map of South Georgia.*

## Forthcoming events to be noted in your diary

Annual General Meeting. 7 May at 1830, the Royal Overseas League, London.

Lunchtime Reception on 19 June in Edinburgh, coinciding with the BAS Club's reunion and the southern midwinter.

Further details will be published in the next newsletter and on our website: [www.southgeorgiaassociation.org](http://www.southgeorgiaassociation.org)