

South Georgia Association Newsletter

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The Annual General Meeting will be on May 23, 2009.



The Princess Royal visits South Georgia

As an extension to her visit to the Falkland Islands in late March, Princess Anne and her husband, Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence, were invited by the trustees of the South Georgia Heritage Trust to join them on a cruise to the island aboard the small cruise ship *Grigoriy Mikbeev*.

Apart from a failure to land at Salisbury Plain and Prion Island because of the swell, HRH had a marvellous introduction to the island. The first call was at Bird Island on 28 March where she toured the BAS station and made the acquaintance of the wildlife, including a wandering albatross.



Stromness had to be substituted for Salisbury Plain and the main landing was made on 30 March at Grytviken, where the *Mikbeev* anchored in the middle of the cove. HRH was welcomed ashore by Chief Executive Officer Harriet Hall and Government Officer Emma Jones. She was given a comprehensive tour, starting with a historical walk past Discovery House and the Gaol to Shackleton's Cross

on Hope Point, in the company of 'Old Fids' Andy Clarke and Dave Fletcher. This was followed by a tour of the BAS science laboratory guided by the Base Commander Tom Marshall, before joining the base personnel for 'smoko'.



The Royal Standard flies over KEP.

The party then walked around the cove to Grytviken where Museum Curator Elsa Davidson led a tour of the museum, church and whaling station. The new Carr Maritime Gallery was opened and, to save time, a short car ride took them to Gull Lake and the new hydro dam where Clerk of Works David Peck and John Hammerton and Charlie Keating (Morrisons Ltd) were on hand to describe the engineering works. Back at sea level, a plaque was unveiled on the turbine house.



The final visit was to Shackleton's Grave in the cemetery, and was followed by a walk back to KEP and boarding *Pharos SG* for the Falkland Islands. The visit had lasted longer than planned because of HRH's interest and already extensive knowledge in all she saw. No doubt, like many other visitors, she would gladly have extended her stay beyond the bounds of a practical timetable! She is not the first member of the Royal Family to visit South Georgia. In 1957, Prince Philip called in aboard *Britannia* and visited Leith Harbour and Grytviken. But Grytviken now is a far cry from the whaling station at 'full cook' that he witnessed.

Secret wedding at KEP

Harriet Hall, Chief Executive Officer for the South Georgia Government, arrived at South Georgia on FPV *Pharos SG* in readiness for the Royal Visit a few days later. She was accompanied by Simon Johnson, Office Manager for Byron Mckay Port Services in Stanley, and the couple surprised the local population by arranging to get married on the ship's helicopter deck on 27 March.



The open-air ceremony was conducted by Emma Jones, who took on the role of Registrar for the purpose, and was witnessed by Clerk of Works David Peck and Fisheries Protection Officer Roy Summers. Certificates were signed in the ship's lounge after which the couple were toasted in champagne and wedding cake was eaten.

Harriet has been associated with South Georgia for nearly 10 years and has guided great changes in the island's administration, so a wedding on a fine day at KEP was very special and most appropriate. Harriet and Simon will be returning the UK in May and we send them our best wishes for the future.

New Senior Executive Officer appointed



Dr Martin Collins has been recruited as Senior Executive Officer and Director of Fisheries for GSGSSI, in succession to Harriet Hall, and will take up his appointment in May.

With a PhD on squid ecology, Martin worked as a Fisheries Observer for the Falkland Islands Government before joining the British Antarctic Survey in 2002 to

work on Scotia Sea ecosystems.

Martin has often visited South Georgia and has even taken part in a half-marathon on the island. He has been involved in South Georgia fisheries as a member of the UK delegation to the Scientific Committee of the Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Postal routes on South Georgia

The postal service to and from South Georgia is well documented, but little has been written on the distribution of mail within the island. Although postage stamps were usually available for purchase at the stations, at least in post-Second World War years, mail had to be taken from the whaling stations to the island's only post office at KEP for despatch to the outside world. Incoming mail came to KEP for sorting and delivery to the stations. Each station had its collecting letter box near the front door of the station manager's villa. Some of these boxes still exist. There was frequent interstation communication by catchers and supply ships (and by smaller motor launches between the Stromness Bay stations), and by mail and supply ships directly between South Georgia and Stanley, Great Britain and Norway. Between 1924 and 1933 the mail ship *Fleurus* made, on average, three return runs per year between KEP and Stanley. It was contracted by the Falkland Islands Government and operated by Tønsbergs Hvalfangeri (Tønsberg Whaling Co.) which owned Husvik whaling station. There was thus a relatively regular despatch and delivery of mail.

There was also a continual interchange of station personnel between the three stations in Stromness Bay, by way of a well-worn footpath around the coast and over two undulating headlands from where there are magnificent panoramic views towards the distant permanently ice-covered mountains. The walk takes about 1 - 1½ hours from Leith to Stromness and the same from Stromness to Husvik. If a ship carrying mail called at one of these stations from Grytviken, but did not continue to visit the other stations, mail would usually be taken to them by small motor launch although, especially in the earlier years, delivery was sometimes by a pedestrian 'postman'.



The Post Hut overlooking Cumberland East Bay. It was used as a field station by scientists from Endurance in 1914, when it was known as the 'Veslegard Hut'.



The Post Hut today, with reindeer.

Contact with New Fortuna whaling station was much less easy and very infrequent. Here, the main mail service involved despatch over land and sea between the station and King Edward Point. A small refuge hut was erected on the tussock grass-covered raised beach about 25m behind the shore, close to the stream flowing down a broad unnamed valley to the north of the Sörling Valley. This was the Post Hut which served as a collecting and depositing point for outgoing and incoming mail from New Fortuna whaling station 5 km away on the east side of the Barff Peninsula.

The station was reached by following the valley to a broad pass to the south of Szielasko Ice Cap and descending a narrower and steeper valley to the station. From the door of the hut there is a spectacular view across the head of Cumberland East Bay to the 2 km long ice cliffs of Nordenskjöld Glacier with its backdrop of the Allardyce Range rising, in Mount Paget, to almost 3000m.

The hut is constructed of timber with corrugated iron cladding. It was just large enough to accommodate three or four persons if they had to spend the night there. There are many names, initials and dates carved into or written on the inside walls, the earliest being dated 1912. The hut remains intact, after extensive rebuilding in 1964 but, unfortunately, like so many artefacts of the whaling era, it has been vandalised by some of the less sensitive visitors.

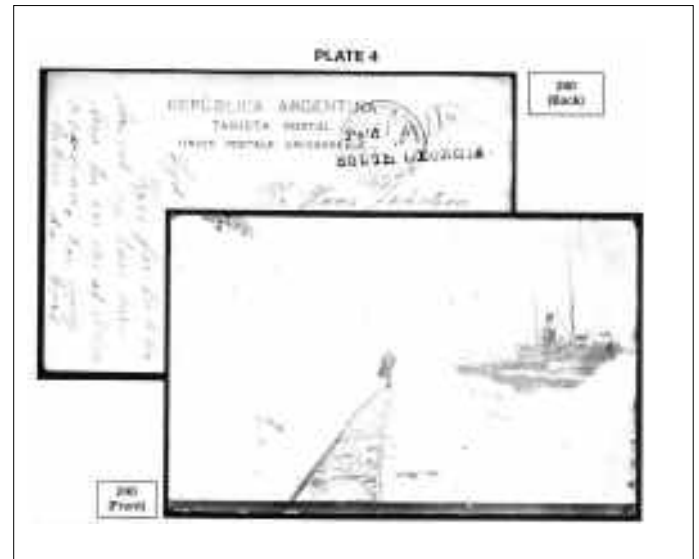
The path between New Fortuna whaling station and the Post Hut was probably created mainly by the reindeer herds which developed from the original introduction at New Fortuna Bay. However, it was also the route used by whalers for recreational outings, but its primary use was in connection with postal communication. At one time the station manager kept one or two horses which were used to carry the mail to and from the Post Hut, thereby providing the world's most southerly 'pony express'. It is possible that horses were used in a similar way between the Stromness Bay Stations. Does anyone have any information on this?

Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, none of the mail leaving New Fortuna whaling station bore a cachet or other dis-



The 'post horse' at New Fortuna whaling station.

tinguishing mark to indicate its station of origin, but certainly some of the extant covers dated between 1909 and 1920, particularly those addressed to Sandefjord, Norway, were probably sent from New Fortuna.



A postcard showing the railway line leading to the jetty at New Fortuna (Ocean Harbour). It was probably posted from the whaling station.

In trying to trace the early postal communications of South Georgia I have also been unable to discover the identity of mail despatched from Prince Olav whaling station. Indeed, it is impossible to identify most covers from any of the stations. There was little contact between Prince Olav and the other stations, and supply ships tended to arrive from England via Rio de Janeiro and occasionally South Africa.

When I discussed the mail service of this station with Mr. Edward Hay, who had worked at Prince Olav Harbour between 1925 and 1930, he had no recollection of mail going to King Edward Point for cancelling and despatch. Although much of it probably did go to KEP, some may have been sent directly to Stanley or even to England for posting, in which case mail would not have borne stamps or cancellations of the Dependency. However, it is more likely to have been collected and delivered by catchers or other vessels, including *Fleurus*, sailing between Grytviken and Prince Olav Harbour.

If any members of the SGA can provide additional information about this topic, I would be pleased to hear from them. Of particular interest will be the identification of covers from individual stations. I have seen cachets indicating the station of origin only from Leith and Husvik on covers dated in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Ron Lewis-Smith

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A return to the scene of action

It is very difficult to put into words the emotions that you experience on South Georgia or what it means to you. It is all so very personal. My husband Robert and I recently spent 10 days at KEP as guests of the Government.

Robert has had a long, and exciting association with South Georgia. He first visited the South Atlantic in 1978 when he was stationed in the Falkland Islands and, in 1982, he was one of the small party of Royal Marines aboard HMS *Endurance* that was deployed first to monitor the activities of the Argentine scrap metal merchants in Stromness Bay and then landed at KEP. Robert, a machine gunner, dug a trench in the grassy area behind Quigleys house. The next day Argentine troops were landed at Grytviken and Robert opened fire on the Puma helicopter which crash-landed below Brown Mountain. However, the Marines were forced to surrender and eventually they were repatriated to the UK. Just a month later, Robert was back in South Georgia to rejoin *Endurance*. He was later one of the small party that landed on Southern Thule in the South Sandwich Islands to take over the Argentine base.

Our trip 'down South' started life in November 2007 when Robert visited the Falklands on the SAMA (82) Pilgrimage and attended a reception for South Georgia veterans on board the *Pharos SG*. During a most convivial evening, Harriet Hall made the offer of a passage to the island on board *Pharos SG* and accommodation at KEP, providing he could get himself to the Falklands for a minimum period of three weeks. This invitation kindly included me, which was very generous and was the chance, at last, for Robert to show me his trench, if it was still there!

We managed to arrange the dates for January to February 2009, which would coincide with Robert's 50 birthday and make the trip a lovely present. I must just say at this point our best endeavours would have been thwarted if it were not for the huge assistance of Harriet Hall and Richard McKee. Extra special thanks must also go to James Marsh at FIGO for sorting out our flights.

We flew to the Falklands courtesy of the RAF on 18 January. We were collected at Mount Pleasant at about 1530 and handed an invitation to celebrate Possession Day at Government House at 1800 that very evening. It was a good job I had taken Sarah Lurcock's advice to include at least one 'posh frock'!



The Ashtons refurbished the memorials to military personnel on Hope Point and also repainted Shackleton's Cross.

After an uneventful passage, we arrived at KEP in a grey mist and settled into Pat and Sarah's home very quickly, as they are excellent hosts. The house itself is new and very modern with, I was glad to see, all mod cons. I did not, for example, expect an on-site sauna.

In the main we behaved like typical tourists, visiting Shackleton's Grave, the old whaling station and museum at Grytviken but, unlike day-trippers, we had 10 whole days to explore. We were therefore able to go further afield and spent one day walking to Maiviken. We stopped in the little hut on the way, a sort of shelter-come-weekend retreat, well-stocked and comfortable. There was even a bottle of wine. The hut is available for weekends, overnight stays and day trips, no booking required. We were very amused to read the treatment advice in the 'Seal Bite Kit'. The scrubbing-out of the wound with a toothbrush caused us both to grimace!



Robert located the trench where he took cover in 1982, even though it is now little more than a dent in the ground.

He was able to pose in it for this photograph, but felt that he should have sought permission from the new 'tenants' - the fur seals - which were watching from the surrounding tussock grass.

The social side of life at KEP is great. We had a film evening in the BAS lounge and were invited to dinner on the Saturday night. They are an extremely friendly bunch, from all races and creeds, and, I understand, with varying cooking capabilities. The bar-tending skills however, left nothing to be desired!

When the day of departure arrived it felt very strange. Whilst it had taken a while for us to settle in, the remoteness and isolation from modern life does grow on you and, when you leave, there is a feeling that you will somehow lose something - something of the simpler things in life.

Nina Ashton



Nina in the Maiviken Hut.

The Carr Maritime Gallery, South Georgia Museum

The doors are now open to the new Carr Maritime Gallery which is situated in a former workshop adjacent to the Museum. Tim and Pauline Carr worked at the Museum first as caretakers and later as curators. They developed the predominately whaling and sealing Museum to include exploration, modern expeditions, natural history, military and administrative history. With their dedication to the Museum and love of the sea, it was fitting that the new gallery should be named in their honour. Displays include information on a variety of vessels around the island, a replica of the *James Caird* and a fabulous new wandering albatross specimen created by taxidermist Steve Massam.

James Caird III arrived in Grytviken in November. The boat was accompanied by Bob Wallace who had built it in Massachusetts, USA, in 2000. It replaced the replica used in the Shackleton IMAX movie, *Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure*, which Bob sailed as Sir Ernest Shackleton. This boat sank during filming and the new model is built to represent how the *James Caird* would have looked on the journey to South Georgia. The hull is mahogany planked over steam-bent oak. The deck is mahogany and the masts and spars are made from fir. The boat was purchased by SGHT thanks to a huge level of support from individual donors and Quark Expeditions Inc. after Tim and Pauline Carr undertook a US lecture tour on behalf of SGHT, telling people about South Georgia and life at the Museum. Stan Livingston, a long-time supporter of the Museum, had the idea of purchasing a *James Caird* replica for the Museum to help visitors grasp the achievement of sailing this tiny lifeboat 800 miles from Elephant Island to Cape Rosa. With the help of Bob Wallace, Quark Expeditions and many supporters in New England, Stan helped SGHT to raise the funds to bring the *James Caird III* to South Georgia.



James Caird III is brought ashore on two Zodiac inflatable boats.

It was a glorious day with brilliant sunshine as the cruise ship *Akademik Shokalskiy* brought the boat in atop two zodiacs. Ainslie Wilson, the General Manager, and I went out in a zodiac to meet Bob Wallace and the *James Caird III* where we got some fantastic photos and film footage. Once on land, the boat was picked up by Morrison Construction who guided it carefully to the Maritime Gallery. The *James Caird* was then part rigged by Bob and there was an opportunity for all the cruise ship passengers to take part in a team photograph. On the following day, Morrisons and the Museum team guided the vessel into the gallery where it is now on show.

The new Gallery also looks at some of the vessels around the island including *Dias*, formerly *Viola*, which was built in

Beverley in 1906 as a fishing trawler and later sailed to South Georgia to work as a sealing vessel. We have on display the original bell from *Viola* and a model of the vessel, both on loan from Hull.

Another exciting aspect of our new display is the inclusion of a section of the bow from *Alert*. *Alert* was used during the Discovery Investigations to survey inshore waters around the island. The boat later travelled to the Falkland Islands where it was used for many years before finally being burnt on a beach. Part of the bow was saved by Sally Poncet and transported to South Georgia in 1995. When Pat Lurcock brought my attention to the *Alert* section in 2007 it was in several pieces in the central store. Our museum assistant, Chris Moore, is now undertaking the painstaking process of putting the pieces back together and preparing the section for display. The completed artefact will be an excellent addition to our collection here at the Museum.

I would like to thank everyone who has been helping us with this remarkable new gallery and I hope that it will continue to inform and inspire our visitors for years to come.

Elsa Davidson, Curator

The Midwinter Cake, 1970

The major feast in the Antarctic calendar is not Christmas, when everyone is frantically making the most of an all-too-brief summer, but Midwinter when all are safely back on base and outdoor activity is severely curtailed. Preparations begin in early May, when a culture of secrecy descends and people disappear to work on 'projects'. Doors are kept uncharacteristically locked, and workpieces kept strictly under wraps. But then, Midwinter would not be Christmas without the surprises!

Some responsibilities are necessarily established well in advance: Entertainments Officer, Winter Sports Manager, Official Photographer, Catering Officers (one for each course of the Midwinter Dinner) and so on.

Thus it was that one of our number became the Midwinter Cake Manager – a somewhat open-ended position which allowed draconian rights over the stores without imposing any specific expectations. His initial requests should have warned us: a 2 x 1 metre piece of 2 cm. Blockboard, several lengths of *Dexion* angle-iron, half a year's supply of pipecleaners and the base's entire medical stock of tongue depressors. The merely *culinary* ingredients were much as one would expect for a traditional English Christmas cake - except that a traditional English housewife would have blanched at the quantities requested. Our store-keeper merely grumbled: 'But that's a whole year's supply'.



Rationally (no pun intended), if a whole year's supply was still available at mid-year, there had clearly been little demand (and hence, presumably, little enthusiasm) for traditional English fruit cake. But, explorers at play....

The cake was baked in sections, secretly, at night, during the Cake Manager's normal two-day cooking duties. On leaving the oven, the sections disappeared 'for icing into the complete structure'. According to the ingredients list, there was enough icing on that structure to sink a fair-sized ship!

When Midwinter's Day arrived, the dinner tables were arranged in a quasi-democratic horseshoe, with The Cake in pride of place at its focus. It was an iced landscape, contoured like the local terrain, and decorated with a realistically clad pipe-cleaner figure of each base member in characteristic skiing posture. There was 'Wild Jock' slaloming down Mount Hodges; 'Dad' resolutely *walking* with skis over his shoulder; 'Brains' with knees together and everything else akimbo; 'Sparks' ignominiously seated; and your author, 'The Probe', points-first down a hole in the football pitch.



The rebuilt dam showing the spillway.

Apart from causing local pollution, diesel fuel has had to be imported thousands of miles from overseas. And as fuel prices rise, the cost of £1.8 million for the installation becomes increasingly attractive. At current prices, the cost will be recouped in 18 years. A further benefit is that the all-pervading thudding of diesel engines has been silenced.

The first hydroelectric power plant was built in 1914 to light the whaling station and later to power winches. The new turbine house, built on the site of the old asdic/radar workshop, now makes KEP and Grytviken independent of fossil fuels for power generation.



Strengthening and raising the dam was a major part of the operation and not surprisingly there have been a few hitches. I found myself part of a relay team delivering a packet of small but vital parts that had been left in the UK. The new boiler in the KEP boatshed did not

communicate well with the hydroplant and caused it to repeatedly shut down, which annoyingly triggered the fire alarms. But that will be sorted out.

Bob Burton

Stop press! Morrisons clear up

While I was compiling this newsletter, I was keeping watch on one of the KEP webcams. Normally, they show seals, penguins or nothing in particular but I was able to watch Morrisons shifting the soil back over the road they had made to access Gull Lake. Previously they had dismantled their accommodation block at Grytviken. This was the final phase of six years' involvement with cleaning-up the whaling station, rebuilding the museum and finally installing hydro-power.



I got this photo from the webcam. Keep abreast of the local weather, penguins, seals and visiting ships, and even catch a glimpse of friends, by looking at: www.sgisland.gs!



Democratic dining arrangements.

The Midwinter Dinner was so filling and The Cake such a work of art, that for a long time we were reluctant to cut it. Then it emerged that nobody was really that keen on iced fruit cake, especially not when 'well done' ('caramelised' was not yet a term in 1970). A few stout hearts (and teeth) tried but failed to make any inroads into it, and even the dog, who was almost blind and stupid enough for most things, could not be persuaded to come to the rescue. So, The Cake languished, shifted ignominiously from site to site, until spring when we finally took an axe to it and used the rubble as back-fill for rebuilding the jetty.

The 'guess-the-weight' competition had produced a wide range of wild entries, but no winner emerged because the engineers could not find a method of actually measuring the cake. The rubble weighed in at 102 kg. But we each got to keep our own pipecleaner caricature.

Steve Chellingsworth

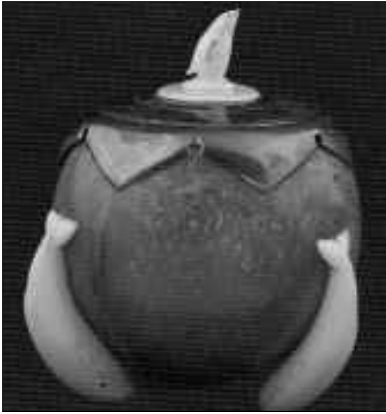
Green Grytviken

I was lucky to be staying at King Edward Point in December and so witnessed the historic change-over to hydro-electric power. An interim report on progress was made by Ainslie Wilson last year in Newsletter No. 14. The project is a feather in the cap of GSGSSI for their commitment to reducing their carbon footprint and to Morrisons, the contractors, who carried out a complex operation in a remote place.

The Arts of Modern Whaling

Klaus Barthelmess. Sandefjord (Norway). Commander Chr. Christensen's Whaling Museum, Publication no. 32. 58 pages, 66 colour illustrations. A4, soft cover. 100 NOK.

Written by the well-known whaling historian and collector Klaus Barthelmess, this book was published in connection with the exhibition of the same name which was held in Sandefjord to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Whaling Museum. Although I did not have a chance to see the exhibition I have greatly enjoyed reading this guide to whaling art which could easily be used as a stand alone reference point for this diverse subject.



Tobacco box made from a blue whale's eyeball with whale-shaped feet and penguin-shaped lid handle carved from sperm whale teeth.

The book has been well laid out, clearly describing a variety of related art forms, including scrimshaw and forerunner ropework. There is also an interesting section on engineering 'art' and the development of the harpoon. Many of the items featured are from the Whaling Museum, Sandefjord, but there are also a number of artefacts from private collections which you would not usually have the opportunity to see. A selection of work from whalers, professional artists, craftsmen and engineers has been included which gives you an interesting cross-section of the subject.

I have found this to be an excellent addition to our library at the South Georgia Museum. The book also benefits from having a great selection of colour photographs and a detailed bibliography. *The Arts of Modern Whaling* has certainly opened my eyes to the diversity of whaling related art and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in the subject.

Elsa Davidson

Available from the Whaling Museum. Orders can be placed through www.hvalfangstmuseet.no.



English, Danish and Dutch whaling ships working in Arctic ice. 1777.

The Shackleton Epic Expedition

The Shackleton Epic Expedition will be launched with a **lecture and reception at Dulwich College on Friday 24 April at 7pm**. The lecturer will be the expedition's leader, Tim Jarvis, environmental scientist and veteran of 14 previous expeditions. Tim intends to 'do the double': sail the 800 miles from Elephant Island to South Georgia and then cross South Georgia, emulating the extraordinary voyage and trek of Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1916. Several expeditions have attempted to recreate both parts of Shackleton's journey, but so far none has succeeded.

The date of the launch has been chosen because it was on that day that Shackleton sailed from Elephant Island. A replica of Shackleton's boat, the tiny 23 ft. *James Caird*, will be used for the sea-crossing. She is being built by The International Boatbuilding Training College Lowestoft.

Tickets for the lecture by Tim Jarvis, the reception and a mini-auction are available from Anna Thomson, 54 Bendermeer Road, SW15 1JU or anna@va-pr.com; or www.thomson-events.com. They cost £25. Cheques to 'Shackleton Epic Expeditions'.

New SGA website

Andy Rankin has given www.southgeorgiaassociation.org a much-needed facelift. Take a look: it is much clearer and simpler to use. One advantage is that it will be easier to update it and give information on forthcoming events and items of news.

Andy is keen to get input from members on what sort of items, including features, could be placed on the website. Past issues of the Newsletter can already be found under the News tab.

If you have any ideas, contact Andy (andy@midsummerenergy.co.uk)

A chronology of Antarctic exploration.

Robert Keith Headland. 2009. Bernard Quaritch. Hardbound, 722 pages. 40 plates, 27 maps, 21 histograms.



Bob Headland has at last produced his magnum opus. It is the result of 25 years' (intermittent) work and supersedes the interim version published in 1989. At 2.4 kilos, it is a monumental work in more than academic terms. It contains 4865 entries in chronological sequence from 700 BC to 2008 and covers sealing and whaling as well as expeditions engaged in exploration and research. Geographical coverage includes South Georgia and other 'periantarctic islands'. There

are also entries on related historical events that affected Antarctic exploration, such as the American Civil War and the invention of the primus stove. Many entries are accompanied by references which facilitate further research. The introductory 62 pages form a 'potted' introduction to Antarctic geography, history, politics, exploitation etc. An index of 50,000 entries aids navigation.

At £110, it is a book for the serious student of Antarctic history but, if you are one, a purchase will be money well spent.

Hunting for aliens

My wife Rosy and I were lucky enough to spend six weeks on South Georgia last summer on a joint BugLife/Kew Gardens survey expedition to lay down a baseline for future studies on non-indigenous, especially invasive, species. Islands like South Georgia are particularly vulnerable to the effects of alien species which can, and often do, wreak havoc with the ecology and threaten indigenous species. South Georgia's history of sealing, whaling, scientific research, armed invasion and, most recently, tourism has resulted in lots of opportunities for plants and animals from other parts of the world to get there. They may be introduced deliberately, like the reindeer, but their arrival is mainly accidentally with provisions, building materials or equipment, or simply from being on board visiting vessels.

Being so far south and so cold, South Georgia has relatively few indigenous species of animals: a couple of hundred invertebrates, some of them found nowhere else in the world. Contrast this with about 30,000 invertebrate species in the UK, at roughly the same latitude north.

Our objective was to collect samples of everything that creeps, crawls or flies on six, eight or more legs, or no legs, from as wide a geographical range on the island, with as a broad a variety of techniques, to make as comprehensive a survey of possible in the time available. However, trying to persuade a somnolent fur seal to get off your pitfall traps is one of the more unusual aspects of entomological work on South Georgia. So is having your trap marker flags eaten by reindeer, light traps smashed by nosy sheathbills and tent pegs pinched by skuas.

Working with the botanists, from *Seal*, a 17.5m aluminium yacht, we stopped at 14 places along the coast, taking a total of 655 samples from 177 locations.

Our methods for catching insects included Hoovering up all the invertebrates from a series of 1m x 1m squares of vegetation, shingle or strandline litter. At the same time we dug in pitfall traps and laid out pan traps - bright yellow bowls of preservative that resemble irresistible huge flowers. We swished sweep nets through the tussac, dip nets through the streams and lakes, and flushed the inhabitants from a vast amount of plant litter with naphthalene mothballs.

Roger operates a petrol-engined leaf blower converted to suck up insects.



Rosy uses a Malaise trap that relies on the familiar tendency of insects to end up at the highest point of a tent, nearest the light.

While not very diverse, the abundance of invertebrate life within South Georgia's vegetation is impressive. Vacuum sampling of just one square metre of grass regularly turned up 1,000-2,000 specimens of small fry - tiny mites and springtails, as well as a couple of dozen of the much larger tussac beetles, nearly 1 cm long.

In all we collected an estimated 150,000 specimens, whose DNA will be examined to investigate the origin of alien species, the evolutionary origins of the indigenous ones, and the relatedness of different populations on South Georgia which are currently separated by glaciers.

We are now sorting, identifying and working out who are the most recent incomers. Some aliens are already known: two predatory ground beetles from South America are having adverse effects on the native tussac beetles; a European bluebottle is feasting on the abundant carrion; and there are from the northern hemisphere a winter-gnat, a peat fly, a moth fly and a lesser dung fly.



A new hoverfly for South Georgia.

We have already identified a number of these, along with at least two new ones: a hoverfly from South America or the Falklands, which was abundant on dandelions at Grytviken, and a little metallic green/bronze pill beetle in moss by the church. We are still not sure of the identity or origin of the latter but it is in a group found in South America, South Africa and the Falklands. It is just possible that it might be a native.

A preliminary report should be on BugLife's website www.buglife.org.uk/ by the time you read this. Our photographic record of the fauna and flora of South Georgia is at www.flickr.com/photos/roger_key/collections/72157614490563547.

Roger Key