

South Georgia Association

Newsletter

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The Annual General Meeting will be on May 20, 2011.

The Ninth Annual General Meeting, 21 May 2010 Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, St James, London

58 members, including the Committee, attended. David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning particularly that members will be sorry to hear that Fran Prince, our Secretary, was unwell, despite which she was able to continue with arrangements for the Committee meeting and AGM. David Rootes had offered to take the minutes in her stead. He also welcomed members from across the country and abroad, and thanked James Jansen and Heather Christie from the FCO attending on behalf of the Commissioner; Howard Pearce, Alison Neil and Elsa Davidson from the South Georgia Heritage Trust; Tony Martin, Director of the Habitat Restoration Project; Sally Poncet from the Falkland Islands; and Mr Kjell Tokstad, Øyas Venner, Norway.

32 members sent their apologies: Roger Barker, Dave Burkitt, J. Michael Buchanan, Lyle Craigie Halkett, John Croxall, Wendy Driver, Bob Faulconbridge, Dick Filby, Amanda Gray, Harriet Hall, John Hatchman, Elizabeth Hawker, Denise Landau, Ron Lewis-Smith, Kevin and Jenny Marchant, John Marshall, Allan Macarthur, Andrew Moffat, Skip Novak, Stephen Palmer, Alan Precious, Frances Prince, Guy Sheridan, Peter Sutton, Lesley Tregaskes, Phil Stone, Alan Tritton, Wilf Vevers, Hedwig and Harald Voss, Nicholas Warren and Allan Wearden.

The Chairman reported on the previous year's activities. The Association funded three benches for Grytviken, constructed by Thies Matzen from whaling station timber. In June Bob Headland represented the SGA at the celebration by the City of Cardiff for the centenary of the departure of the British Antarctic Expedition aboard *Terra Nova*.

The SGA committee welcomed the opportunity during the year to meet Martin Collins, Senior Executive Officer, GSGSSI. A wide range of topics was discussed, including fisheries, tourism and archaeology. It was agreed to hold annual meetings when practicable.

GSGSSI has been active during the year and had brought forward various proposals and a new Wildlife Ordinance. The SGA committee has submitted responses on these proposals on behalf of the members. The SGA is also pleased to congratulate GSGSSI on the new biosecurity measures that are important for the long-term protection of the islands. New visitor and expedition guidelines, and a revised charging regime, have been instigated. The toothfish fishery has been re-accredited.

The Chairman highlighted further activities. The SGA will hold a meeting in Hull in October, to which all members are invited. The FCO are holding a South Georgia Stakeholders' meeting in London in September. SGA and SGHT will hold a joint cultural heritage workshop in September 2011. The Chairman invited members to bring forward ideas to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Association in 2011.

The significant activity on the horizon, however, is the start of the Habitat Restoration Project, organised through SGHT and due to commence in February 2011.

Membership

Elizabeth Hawker apologised that she could not attend the AGM. It was announced that she will be standing down and the meeting thanked her for her time as the Membership Secretary. She reported that at 30th March there were 314 individual and 2 corporate members. There are 68 overseas members. Renewals for 18 individual members were outstanding but 16 new individuals joined during the past year.

Treasurer

Keith Holmes wished to record the AGM's thanks to John Bawden, who had kindly audited SGA's accounts again. The accounts for the year to 25th March 2010 were presented showing a total income of £3122.38, including £2344.00 from subscriptions. Bank interest only accounted for £10.38; however albatross brooches brought £180.00. Expenditure for the year was about £3532.59 plus a further £1000 has been allocated to the Grytviken benches. Of the main expenditure, just over £1000 was on production and circulation of the newsletter. The Association still has a healthy cash balance, although it is down about £1500 on the 2009 figure. SGA has reserves of £13,500, excluding allowances for 5 year subscriptions already paid. Keith Holmes noted that he wished to stand down as Treasurer at the 2011 AGM and he proposed that another officer is sought during the year for a timely handover.

Newsletter

Bob Burton reported that two newsletters were produced during the year as usual; however, an extra four pages have been added. He is investigating using colour in the publication, at least for the cover pages. Bob Burton encouraged the membership to submit material to keep the greater number of pages filled.

Initiative Fund

There were no formal applications to the Initiative Fund during the year and no awards were made. Funds that had been allocated for potential applications were therefore

used for other projects. £300 was donated to an Oral History Project (a collaboration by BAS, BAS Club, SPRI and UKAHT) and would be used for recording notable South Georgia individuals. Several copies of Bob Headland's Chronology were distributed and copies of David Tatham's Dictionary of Falklands Biography will be distributed over the next year. The Chairman encouraged members to bring forward proposals to the Initiative Fund.

Website

Andy Rankin has taken over management of the website and reported on progress. Much new material, including a South Georgia Chronology by kind permission of Bob Headland, has been added. There is capacity for much more if members provide material. A trial Forum has been initiated at <http://www.southgeorgiaassociation.org/forum/> to allow the membership a means to voice its opinion. Andy Rankin encouraged members to log on and to express their views.

Message from the Commissioner

James Jansen and Heather Christie from the FCO introduced a novel presentation of the Commissioner's report to the meeting (full text available on page 3 and the SGA website). For the first time, members were shown a video recording of the Commissioner, who addressed his speech to the AGM. The presentation was received with interest. The Commissioner introduced the next incumbent, Nigel Haywood, who will take up the post in October. Following the speech, David Drewry welcomed the innovation and requested the FCO to convey the members' appreciation to the Commissioner.

Committee

The Committee stood aside and the President, Charles Swithinbank, temporarily took the Chair. All members of the committee were willing to stand for re-election, except Elizabeth Hawker who had retired as Membership Secretary. Charles Swithinbank, on behalf of the members, thanked the Committee for their work during the year and called for nominations. Patrick Fagan proposed those willing to stand be elected and meeting voted in favour by a show of hands.

President: Charles Swithinbank

Chairman: David Drewry

Secretary: Fran Prince

Treasurer: Keith Holmes

Membership Secretary: Sara Greenwood

Newsletter Editor: Bob Burton

Events Secretary: Melanie d'Souza

Members: Bob Headland, Dave Fletcher, Andy Rankin, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Ron Lewis-Smith, David Tatham

Corresponding Members: Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP), Trevor Potts, Dan Weinstein (USA)

Any Other Business

Bob Burton announced that Skip Novak, Pelagic Expeditions, was offering a cruise to South Georgia in October 2010 that was open to members. He had accompanied a similar cruise during the 2009-10 season and could thoroughly recommend it.

Bruce Mair, who also went on the *Pelagic australis* cruise last season, suggested that a simple map of South Georgia is needed for visitors, to include place names and other helpful information. It could go on the SGA website and be available to all. Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF) noted that the Forum is producing maps for other Overseas Territories and welcomed suggestions of what should be included. It was noted that funds are needed to prepare a South Georgia Gazetteer.

Bob Burton also recommended to members a new CD of

whaling photographs offered, for sale at £10, by John Alexander, who worked at Leith Harbour. Half of all sales income will go to the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project.

It was noted that oil exploration had recommenced off the Falkland Islands. Bruce Mair recognised the possibility of a major spill reaching South Georgia and proposed the SGA should investigate the environmental procedures for the drilling programmes.

David Tatham wanted to record thanks to Fran Prince for her sterling work during the year and felt he spoke for everybody present when he wished her a speedy recovery.

The meeting took reports from international visitors and other organisations.

Howard Pearce, Chair of SGHT, introduced Alison Neil (Chief Executive) and Elsa Davidson (Museum Curator) and highlighted the growing range of projects initiated or managed by SGHT. These included funding for work on Marine Protected Areas through BAS; a book on the flora of South Georgia; a joint conference with the Association on Cultural Heritage in September 2011; the return of Quest's cabin to South Georgia for display, with the support of Øyas Venner; and, largest of all, the Habitat Restoration Project. Tony Martin, Project Director, gave a presentation on the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project: state of progress; plans for the coming season; and likely outcomes. He took questions from the floor on the potential effects of the rat bait on the bird populations and the issues faced by the reindeer herds.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Norwegian Friends of the Island, kindly relayed news of Øyas Venner's activities. This year, 2010, the Friends helped restore "Glasgow" house, a small property at Sandefjord. SGA members were invited to stay for some very reasonable hospitality. Øyas Venner has been raising funds for the restoration and maintenance of the church and cemeteries on South Georgia and has been compiling a list of whalers who died in Antarctic waters. The Friends normally hold two meetings a year and on 16 November 2010 will be celebrating the anniversary of the start of whaling - all are welcome! They are keen to recruit more young members and are planning a cruise to South Georgia in 2013-14, to re-dedicate the church that was first consecrated on 25 December 1913.

The meeting ended at 8:30 and was followed by a lecture by Dr Crag Jones, onetime Fisheries Officer at KEP, on "*Mikhail Gorbachev-my part in his downfall. One man's efforts to control the might of the Soviet fishing fleet.*"

The new Commissioner

We welcome Mr Huckle's successor, Mr Nigel Haywood. Previously 'Our Man in Basra', Mr Haywood recently completed an MSc course on biodiversity conservation. He is a very keen runner so may become the first commissioner to compete in the KEP Half Marathon.

Message from HE the Commissioner read at the AGM

The last year has, yet again, been a busy one for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI). Highlights this year included the recertification of the toothfish fishery and the full operation of the hydro-electric system.

In January I was fortunate to visit the island in the company of Jane Rumble, head of the FCO's Polar Regions Unit, and Martin



Mr & Mrs Huckle dressed for boating.

Collins, Senior Executive Officer for GSGSSI. The visit was an opportunity to review the facilities at King Edward Point and Grytviken and consider ways of reducing Government expenditure and increasing revenue. The visit also gave us chance to plan the long-term strategy for the Territory, which we hope will go out to public consultation in due course. At the museum, on behalf of the South Georgia Association, I officially handed over Theis Matzen's beautifully carved wooden benches to the South Georgia Museum. At Prion Island we saw the boardwalk, which, whilst initially controversial, I believe is serving a useful purpose in allowing access to the island whilst minimising the impact on the environment and the wildlife.

The journey back to Stanley on the Fisheries Patrol Vessel *Pharos SG* provided a great opportunity to discuss a range of issues relating to South Georgia, and an important outcome of this was our decision to hold an annual South Georgia Stakeholders meeting. The first meeting will be hosted by the FCO in London in September and will provide an opportunity for stakeholders, such as the SGA, to be consulted on the long-term plans for the Territory.

Fisheries continue to provide the main source of income for the Territory, and 2009 saw the recertification of the Patagonian toothfish fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council. The fishery was initially certified in 2005 and this time passed with flying colours, scoring the third highest of all 51 approved fisheries. The new toothfish season started at the end of April and the early signs indicate good catch rates and a healthy stock. We will continue to be cautious in our approach to managing this fishery to ensure that it remains sustainable in the long-term.

2009 was an extremely poor krill year at South Georgia, which was reflected in poor breeding success of many krill dependent predators in the 2008/09 season and a reduced



A longliner unloads its catch onto a reefer in Cumberland Bay.

number of breeders in 2009/10 season. Only 50 kg of krill were caught in South Georgia waters in 2009, compared with an average annual catch of around 30,000 tonnes. The icefish fishery was also affected, with catches greatly reduced. Already 2010 shows signs of being a better year for both the krill-eating animals and the fishery. An industry lead, but government-supported, initiative has also seen the icefish fishery conditionally certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, which reflects the continued excellent management of our fisheries.

Tourism remains buoyant with over 7000 visitors to the island in the 2009/10 season. Cooper Bay was re-opened to visitors following closure after the outbreak of avian cholera in 2004. It is hoped that the current economic downturn will not greatly impact next season's tourist numbers. In light of the amendment to MARPOL on the carriage of heavy fuel south of 60 degrees South, the government will be conducting a consultation and policy review on the carriage of heavy fuel in the Territory's Maritime Zone.

Biosecurity remains crucially important and it was pleasing to see the government's Biosecurity Measures now adopted by IAATO for their Antarctic operations. The biosecurity facility at King Edward Point is now fully operational and a high priority will be to prevent the earwigs that have taken over Stanley from invading South Georgia.

After some teething problems, the hydro-electric facility has now been working constantly since October 2009 and will reduce fuel consumption by around 153 tonnes per year. No major capital works are planned for next season, but we do plan to renovate the Drukken Villa at Grytviken to be used as accommodation by the museum staff.

The government has recently been successful in obtaining two research grants for marine science at South Georgia. A Darwin Initiative grant lead by the British Antarctic Survey will look at benthic biodiversity from the shallows to deep-water around South Georgia, whilst an OTEP award, also with BAS, will investigate potential impacts of the krill fishery on foraging birds and mammals and on fish larvae. Both projects will be key precursors to the development of Marine Protected Areas in the South Georgia Maritime Zone.

The review of South Georgia legislation continues, and we will shortly make the Wildlife and Protected Areas Bill available on our website for public comment. Other legislation will be enacted over the next few years.

Next season is likely to be another busy one on South Georgia. In October the Drukken Villa renovation will begin. In November we will be organising an inspection of the whaling stations to assess both the current threat from asbestos and the heritage value of the buildings and contents. In February 2011, the SGHT are planning the first phase of the Habitat Restoration project, which aims to remove rats from the Greene, Thatcher and Mercer peninsulas. GSGSSI have been heavily engaged in the evaluation and planning of the project. In parallel with this, we will be conducting a public consultation on management options for the reindeer. A review document will be available on the website shortly.

As always, we very much welcome the support of the South Georgia Association and have kept in regular contact with your Committee throughout the year. This will be my final address to the Association as Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. My successor, Nigel Haywood, takes up post in October and I'm sure you'll join me in wishing him an enjoyable and successful term in office.

Alan Huckle



The start: Camping at the head of King Haakon Bay.

Tracing Shackleton's crossing

Patrick Fagan

The wind blew hard and snow flurries swirled about as the bedraggled band of ten men struggled into Stromness. This was in November 1964. We were servicemen under the leadership of Malcolm Burley and had just completed the first crossing of what has become known as Shackleton's Route. We were the first to seriously try to trace his route across South Georgia. Inspired by Shackleton's story, Burley planned to repeat the crossing as part of a four-month Combined Services Expedition which would include climbing the highest mountain, Mount Paget.

The expedition was carried from Stanley aboard HMS Protector and, after laying depots of stores at Grytviken, Leith Harbour, Royal Bay and Newark Bay, we sailed to King Haakon Bay.

The weather was closing in and the wind rising as Protector approached King Haakon Bay. This was not a place for a ship this size to enter under these conditions and two Whirlwind helicopters ferried the ten of us and our stores in hurried relays up to the head of the bay.

Now we really were on South Georgia. The tents were up, flapping loudly in the wind, but there was no time to reflect on Shackleton's situation here; time now only to get everything sorted, food, fuel and other essentials unpacked and distributed to the five two-man tents. Piles of snow also had to be placed by each tent for water. By now the wind was very strong, and we were very happy to seek the shelter of our new homes. We were still dry and well shod, not like

On the Murray Snowfield.

left: Possession Bay below. right: Looking towards Shackleton's four cols.



those heroes of 1916, but it still looked like being a pretty uncomfortable night.

And so it proved. I remember thinking that I can cope with most forms of discomfort but I don't want a wet sleeping bag. Well, in a few hours that was just what I had, as the snow piled up deeply outside the tent, filtered through due to the warmth within, and trickled along the runnels of my li-lo. My bag was bag sodden in no time. Welcome to South Georgia!

The storm continued through the next day and we stayed in our tents listening to the gale outside. At times we were unable to hear our tentmate through the rasp of spindrift and the crack of the tent walls flapping. I remember thinking 'what have I let myself in for? Why did I leave the warmth of Aden'.

But all storms pass. Later we were to become much more experienced in looking after ourselves. We quickly learnt, for example, that our tents were best pitched blunt end into wind so that they ballooned out and the snow took far longer to build up.

Before leaving King Haakon Bay, a party of four went to Peggotty Camp to see if there was anything still there that could be traced back to the camp of 1916 – but there was nothing.

We were a heavy expedition at the start of a four-month trip and we had to relay our stores along the route. We divided into two teams of five, each with a Nansen sledge, and relayed our stores by carrying forward around 300-500lb per trip and returning to collect the next load. We were fortunate we did not have to carry radios with batteries, chargers etc. (The MOD accepted that no one could have come to our help even if we had.) As we progressed,





Digging out the camp after a heavy fall of snow.

John Chester on right with cloth cap. Tom Lynch in centre, kneeling.

of course, our loads became lighter through consumption of food and fuel, but progress was still quite slow. We were also filming and the results later appeared on the ITV Survival series.

The plan was to identify the route that Shackleton took and evaluate it in the light of contemporary mountaineering experience. Our bible was Shackleton's South and it proved surprisingly easy to follow his description of his route. We also wanted to explore possible alternatives that he might have taken. Shackleton did the crossing, non-stop, in around 36 hours. We were to take two weeks, five days of which were spent tent-bound under storms. Sometimes we had 3 or 4 feet of snow fall on our tents, and it took several hours to dig ourselves out and get going again.

The snow was very soft and after a few days we decided to fit our skis with skins for the climbs. Although this made progress easier in some respects, getting five men with skis around one sledge required some dainty footwork. There were plenty of crevasses but being harnessed onto a sledge provided security for all but the largest.

It will be remembered that Shackleton and his companions hurtled down the steep slope by the four cols. A particular hardship due to our relaying was having to go up this slope again to bring down the next load. It was below these four cols that we hurried to camp before another storm hit us. The next morning, I discovered that one of my skis had been blown away. I had parked the pair together upright in the snow in the classic fashion and found that one had snapped in two just behind the heel plate. Fortunately the missing part was found eventually and the binding transferred to a replacement ski at the next depot.

Somewhere around here the clouds lifted, the sun came out and we felt quite warm, even hot, as we toiled over the

Descending the slope above Fortuna Bay.



snow. The mountains rose 3-4,000 ft above us, their summits covered in huge 'mushrooms' of rime ice, deposited by the cold and damp winds. They looked almost like top-heavy ice creams, and were very beautiful in an awe-inspiring way. Could Shackleton have enjoyed even a moment to gaze about him in such scenery? I like to think that even after all his tribulations he could have done so.

But this break in the weather did not last, and dark clouds returned for the last stages of the crossing. While filming the steep descent to Fortuna Bay, an avalanche, fortunately small, was set off and one of the team was hurt. We had to carry him for a while on a sledge, so adding to our loads. But he paid for his carriage by reading to us, revealing a natural and amusing style to entertain us through the day.

And so we came to the final stage of the crossing to Stromness: up over the low pass in thigh-deep snow to where Shackleton saw the whaling station below. The cloud was well down at this stage and the waterfall the three men slid down was partly covered with new snow. We were a pretty tired and bedraggled bunch of fit young men, well pleased to be heading for shelter. We could appreciate all the more just what those three must have felt crossing the same last stretch.

We were the first to retrace their steps over the last part of that epic journey from Elephant Island.

Millions have come to admire the story of this expedition, especially in recent years as it became more widely known. Since our trip, another 46 years have passed and other people have repeated our journey, in part or in whole. Others again have done the boat journey. Indeed, the last easy section from Fortuna Bay is regularly walked by parties off cruise ships. But no one, of course, can ever replicate the full experiences of Shackleton's expedition, and under conditions that could so easily have led to despair on very many occasions. There have been many wonderful and heroic stories through history, but for me this one is perhaps the most wonderful and heroic of all.

By the end of the crossing, my respect for Shackleton had grown even further for the accuracy of his descriptions, especially when one considers the circumstances of this journey. He was constantly accurate in his assessment of distance but less so in height, although even here it was by a constant factor. The three men were after all sailors not mountaineers, and had spent almost two years within a few feet of sea level. I found it all hugely impressive – perhaps the more so because of my training as a surveyor. When, I wondered, did he write it down? And how was he to know that anyone would ever retrace this route? It could have been so easy to exaggerate. But the fact that they did not makes me admire them all the more, and leads me to believe Shackleton's description of events elsewhere in his story, rather than others when they differ.



Descent to Fortuna Bay, with avalanche.

Whaling inspector at Husvik, 1960-61

Douglas Bremner

The account by Theoni Photopoulos about her stay at the Husvik Villa, in Newsletter no 18, prompted me to write an account of my time as whaling inspector there. I set off from South Shields aboard the whale factory ship Southern Harvester. I made the mistake of once sitting in the



Husvik abandoned

Captain's deckchair! We stopped to refuel in the West Indian oil port of Aruba, before sailing on to South Georgia. As whaling inspector, I was responsible for recording all whales brought into Husvik. For each whale I had to identify species, its length, whether it was female in calf, the time since death and the name of the whaler. Out of the 268 whales I dealt with, only six were illegal and the captain and crew of the whalers that killed them did not receive a bonus for them. A short postmortem time was important because the whale could be frozen for human consumption.

I was also responsible for sending a report to the National Institute of Oceanography. Being a recent zoology graduate of Aberdeen University, I was just about qualified to take samples from the dead whales and record a variety of observations.

I had been advised that it would be necessary to take 36 half-bottles of whisky and two crates of beer to persuade the whalers to help me gather the biological samples I needed.

However, during my time at Husvik I never had to use the alcohol as bait to obtain co-operation.

The Norwegian whalers were without exception friendly and helpful and I had no trouble, even though some did not speak English.

My time at Husvik was spent on the whale plan with the baleen fin or sei whales or the toothed sperm whale. They had permitted catch sizes of 57, 40 and 35 feet respectively, although many were well above these



lengths. The observations I made included sex, extent of diatom scarring on the skin, the state of the mammary glands, the weight of ovaries or testes, the length of any foe-

tus and the state and contents of the stomach. My samples included pieces of skin, ovaries or testes and wax earplugs which were used for ageing the whale. I also made my own collection sperm whale teeth, 2-foot baleen plates from a fin whale mouth and two very small plates from the front of the only blue whale I saw.

Otherwise, when I was not on the plan I explored the spectacular hill country behind Husvik, walking twice to Stromness and once to Leith Harbour. I also was fortunate to visit Grytviken and had expeditions to Royal Bay and Bird Island.

While I was at Husvik, Ackseth the manager of Leith Harbour was killed on Christmas Eve while crossing between whalecatchers moored to each other in a gale. He was buried on Boxing Day in the little graveyard some distance from the station, attended by most of the whalers on the island.

The occasion did not prevent my Station Manager Jansen from celebrating Christmas Day in the Manager's Villa, Molbo, in fine style. We were joined by the station foremen Johansen and Gyrpen, Vespy the technician, and Rogne with whom I played cribbage a few times. We had whale



It was a joyous meal!

meat which tasted like steak, and ice cream made on the premises by our cook Rolf.

One of my strongest recollections of the island was the bleached whale bones on certain beaches, including some large specimens probably of the now scarce blue whale.

We looked forward to the visiting ships which brought mail from Scotland. I wrote home, giving an account of my activities on South Georgia, and I still have these letters as well as the detailed diaries and records which I carefully kept. My uncle, Alasdair Munro, when he heard I was going, insisted I took his 35 mm camera, so I took a lot of colour slides, the quality of which I did not know until I returned and had them processed. My set of slides was complemented by black and white photographs taken with my father's Voigtländer folding camera on 120 film. So I have a very good record and happy memories of my experiences of that intriguing island.

Sadly, we learned of the death of Douglas not long after he had submitted this article.

Homage to Hull: Sailors, Scrimshaw and Science SGA meets at Hull



Sitting in the angle of the Hull and the Humber, the city's full name is Kingston upon Hull as a result of King Edward I taking a liking to the place. There were good reasons for the SGA to meet here. Our chairman, David Drewry, was vice-chancellor of the university so had all the contacts and, as Robb Robinson of the Maritime Historical Studies Centre was to tell us, there are a number of links between the city and South Georgia, ranging chronologically from Captain Cook to five requisitioned trawlers that visited Grytviken in the aftermath of the events of 1982. And it must not be forgotten that *Dias* started her distinguished life as the North Sea trawler *Viola*.

Two dozen members, family and friends gathered on Friday evening, 8 October, at the Premier Inn overlooking the river Hull and the trawler *Arctic Corsair*. Ahead of us there would be a most enjoyable and instructive weekend meticulously planned by Events Secretary Melanie d'Souza (instructions so clear we could not get lost, a fleet of taxis booked and paid for, etc.).

Next morning, David Drewry donned his tour guide hat (see above) and led us through the streets of Hull, recounting its history and pointing out features of interest. Despite considerable redevelopment, much of the heritage has been preserved in the city centre. Among the modern buildings and wide-open spaces, there are still some narrow streets and historic buildings, including Trinity House, where there are almshouses for 'decayed seamen and their widows'.

After lunch, we gathered at the Maritime Museum where Arthur Credland, former Keeper of Maritime History, introduced us to the right whale skeleton, the whaling paraphernalia and the amazing collection of scrimshaw. There was even a mermaid (half monkey, half fish and no lure for mariners).



Hull is very well provided with museums and there was time for browsing in Streetlife, Wilberforce House (local MP of anti-slavery fame), the Ferens art gallery, The Deep aquarium and others.

The evening's entertainment began with a very fine reception at Blayde's House, the home of the Maritime Historical Studies Centre, followed by a short talk and guided tour by Robb Robinson. Then it was off by taxi to Mr Chu's China Palace, the largest Chinese restaurant in the U.K., which we found being patronised by Hull's former MP and his wife, a couple famous for their use of two Jaguars.



The Hull mermaid.

The Captain Cook connection between Hull and South Georgia is rather tenuous. He acquired the Whitby-built but Hull-owned collier *Drake* for the Admiralty. She was renamed *Resolution* to avoid offending the Spanish.

Three of the Hull trawlers temporarily converted to minesweeping and manned by R.N. personnel are shown here with the *QE2* in Cumberland Bay, which was discovered and named by Captain Cook.....aboard *Resolution*.



The GSGSSI has been very active over the last year and in the last few months has published a number of proposals, a new Wildlife Ordinance and consultations on the use of Heavy Fuel Oil by vessels operating within SGSSI waters and the management of reindeer. (The documents can be read on the SGA website forum.) The SGA was invited to respond to them. In some cases the committee has submitted responses on behalf of the members; for others we have invited individuals to respond. It is very time-consuming to consult members and produce a unified SGA response, which may lead to some respondents feeling that their view has not been given sufficient weight. So it is often better for individuals to make their own responses. If members still wish to comment, please make use of the forum on our website (click on the forum tab on the top right of the homepage). Representatives of the SGA also took part in two discussion meetings: a general Stakeholders' Meeting and a Reindeer Meeting. These meetings will assist Government officials in their decision-making on the future management of the island. These will be published on the government website (www.sgisland.gs).

The Government of SGSSI is also seeking to expand the range of scientific research at King Edward Point and make the facilities available for science projects run by other organisations. To this end, a meeting was held at BAS to demonstrate the range of science that has been done at KEP. See www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_bas/events/south_georgia/summary.php.

The Stakeholders' Meeting

David Rootes, Bob Burton and Bob Headland

The FCO and GSGSSI called a joint meeting on 24 September, in London, of parties interested in South Georgia and its government to bring them up-to-date with the plans of GSGSSI. As well as the SGA, SGHT, British Antarctic Survey and International Association of Antarctica Travel Operators, there were representatives of fishing companies, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, RSPB, WWF and Birdlife International among others. The SGA was represented officially by Bob Headland and Bob Burton but Sally Poncet and David Rootes also represented the SGA's viewpoint.

The main part of the meeting was presentations of the UK's and the South Georgia Government's Strategies for the territory for the period 2010 to 2015. The former has strategic objectives which include ensuring the security of SGSSI through a continual British presence, promoting British Sovereignty over SGSSI, working with GSGSSI to ensure sound economic policies which contribute to the long-term financial self-sufficiency of the Territory, and supporting GSGSSI's environmental stewardship of the Territory.

Thus the UK Strategy is mostly focussed on military strategic issues and responsibilities to international agreements. It will be reviewed annually. The GSGSSI's strategy is more focussed on management of South Georgia's affairs and activities in the Territory. The new 5-Year Strategy has the following Objectives:

To manage the affairs of SGSSI and the surrounding 200 nautical mile Maritime Zone, through good, efficient and effective government

To conserve the Territory's environment, preserving and, where practicable, restoring biodiversity and habitats

To provide safe and sustainable management of SGSSI fisheries to ensure minimal impact on non-target species and habitats, including engaging in CCAMLR

To manage tourism in a way that has minimum impact on the SGSSI environment but optimises the income to the Territory and contributes to the overall regional management of commercial tourism

To preserve where practicable, the unique industrial heritage of South Georgia either in situ or through transfer to museums

To encourage high quality scientific research to underpin GSGSSI management of the Territories

To manage government finances prudently and, where possible, to diversify the Territory's revenue streams, which are heavily dependent on income from fishing licences

To maintain the facilities at KEP and Grytviken to a reasonable and environmentally-friendly standard

To improve public awareness of South Georgia issues by effective and economic dissemination of information

The GSGSSI strategy will lead to a revised Environmental Management Plan. We did note that Cultural Heritage was not given the attention that we believe it should have received in the Strategies. Not surprisingly, it is overshadowed by the emphasis on the Natural Heritage and the plan to restore the island's habitat by eradicating rats. But the Territory's Fishery is the main focus for the Government. Its greatest income is from the South Georgia fishery. In 2009, fishing was responsible for 78% of income (of which toothfish made up 85%). However, at 56% of total expenditure, the industry also has greatest expense to manage and monitor. This dependence on fishery is a key concern.



Toothfish: the 'white gold' that funds South Georgia.

Catches of toothfish have had to be reduced as a precaution against overfishing. If income from licences fall too much, the patrol ship, *Pharos SG*, may become underfunded, which could herald the end of a very well-managed fishery. Ways of increasing income and reducing expenditure are being pursued. These include sub-chartering the *Pharos SG*, seeking external funding for science and, in the future, some land-based tourism.

GSGSSI did not set any timetable for review of their strategy, however, the FCO voiced willingness to hold an annual meeting if stakeholders desired this. Those present agreed that the meeting was well worthwhile and encouraged the FCO to repeat the exercise. The SGHT noted a joint SGHT/SGA conference in October 2011 on Heritage and Cultural issues, and the SGA offered to consider proposals from FCO or GSGSSI for future conferences to assist the process of engaging stakeholders.

The future of the reindeer

Fiona Lovatt

The future of the reindeer in South Georgia has often been discussed. This has ranged from 'doing nothing' to complete eradication. They are alien animals, which some argue have no right to be on the island, and they cause considerable damage to the vegetation, with consequent impacts on the environment and native species. On the other hand, they are a tourist attraction and their long isolation from their Norwegian ancestors makes their genetics interesting and means they were not polluted by the Chernobyl accident.

Earlier this year, the Government put out a public consultation document about the future of South Georgia's reindeer. (The consultation document is at: [www.sgisland.gs/download/South Georgia Reindeer Management.pdf](http://www.sgisland.gs/download/South%20Georgia%20Reindeer%20Management.pdf)).



download/South Georgia Reindeer Management.pdf).

There were 58 responses of which over threequarters agreed that non-native animals should be eradicated. Should management go ahead, then shooting was seen as the preferred method of control (and preferably from the ground rather than the air) and a majority would want to see recovery of products such as meat and antlers.

On 23 September, a meeting of interested parties was held at Kew Gardens and I was invited to attend as representative of the SGA. After summarising the results of the consultation document, Darren Christie (the SG Environment Officer) emphasised the three reasons why reindeer management had to be urgently addressed:

Reindeer have a serious impact on native species over a large proportion of the vegetated parts of the island.

Glacial retreat will soon allow the reindeer to spread.

Reindeer must not be present during the proposed rat eradication in 2013 as they would eat the bait. This would jeopardise rat eradication and deer would be poisoned with unacceptable consequences to their welfare.

For these reasons, it is urgent that reindeer be managed in some way, and ideally this would occur before 2013.

The meeting discussed the heritage, cultural and potential scientific value of the reindeer as well as issues such as how public relations should be managed.

Should a cull go ahead, the decision on the method will depend primarily on welfare issues, though there must be due consideration of practicality. In reality it would probably be a combination of aerial and ground shooting.

Recovery of commercial products might be possible and this may have either a positive or negative influence on public reaction. It was agreed that removal of carcasses would be important, even if there was an associated cost, for environmental reasons and because carcasses could cause an

increase in the number of rats.

The SGHT has been discussing monitoring the restoration of vegetation after rat-eradication. The point was made that programmes would need to be in place before any reindeer were removed so that baseline data would be available.



Contrasting vegetation inside and outside an enclosure.

I indicated that any cull would be an opportunity to collect a comprehensive selection of samples for a project that would consider genomic-environmental interactions.

Whereas the rat eradication is being funded and undertaken by the SGHT, the SG Government expects to pay for any reindeer cull assuming the 'cost is not prohibitive'. The cost could be up to half a million pounds.

It was recommended that a subcommittee should be formed specifically to discuss further practical details associated with the management of the reindeer. SG Government officials requested that appropriate names for this committee should be forwarded.

The discussion was regarded as very fruitful and will help GSGSSI prepare a decision on the future of the reindeer, which will be published probably early in the new year.

Ruin at Bird Island

Stacey Adlard

This winter, while walking along the shore of Main Bay at Bird Island, I stumbled upon the remains of what appeared to be an old stone wall. Further investigations revealed the remnants of a fairly substantial stone structure and some metal and wooden objects.

Having never noticed this before, I contacted BAS Archives to find out what the structure could

be. I was surprised to find that they had not heard of it. I then contacted people who have been familiar with Bird Island for many years, but no-one was aware of its existence.

From photographs, and after a bit of discussion, the consensus is that the site may have been an old sealing camp, which would have been used around 150 - 200 years ago. I guess without proper excavation, no one will ever be quite sure of its function, or how it fits into the larger scale sealing industry of which there is plenty of evidence not far away at Elsehul.

The ruin may have been unearthed only recently through erosion by fur seals. Bird Island always has a timeless feel about it, as if it has remained the same forever. But I wonder how much the place has really changed since the sealers lived and worked here. I must have walked past the site so many times since my arrival, yet it still took me nearly two years to spot it. It just goes to show how often we don't see the things that are right under our feet!





Chilling out with the gentoos

Sarah Lurcock

Winter is a good time to see the spectacle of gentoo penguins bursting out of the sea on their way home to roost. Unlike other species of penguin, gentoos do not disappear out to sea after nesting. They remain in inshore waters and return each night to roost on land. Our closest colony is at Maiviken, an hour or so's walk or ski away. To get there we ski over Deadman's Pass and down the other side to the hut. We dump most of our gear before skiing down the last slopes to find the penguins' roost where 10 to 15 penguins are standing on the hillside. Between the roost and the beach, half a kilometre or so, there is a penguin-trodden snow road with the odd penguin traipsing along. We leave the skis at the tussac line and dodge the fur seals to get onto the pebble beach where we unpack the Thermos and down jackets to keep warm.



At first, just the odd penguin or two porpoise in. We may pick them out a long way off, so there is time to set up the camera and tripod in what we hope is the right spot. Often we lose track of them. Where are they?....Then Bam! There they are, bursting out of the water in an undignified hustle and skittering over the pebbles up the beach.

As the sun sets, the penguins start arriving in greater numbers. They group together at sea, for safety perhaps, and waves of 30 or 40 penguins reach shore at once. Now the show really starts. We crouch on the waterline, camera ready for the penguins to burst onto the beach at our feet, white bellies shimmering with the clinging water. Press the button, hoping to capture all that bustle and panic. They quickly settle for a preen and shake-out before waddling away after the others, wings outstretched like tightrope walkers, black backs merging in the crowd.



The sky darkens, fingers and toes are past the bloody-cold stage heading to the no-feeling stage. It's time to go. Dodge those fur seals again as we follow the birds trudging up through the tussac, slam frozen leather ski boots into metal ski bindings, clip in, grab sticks and then ski as fast as we can to stir the blood and work off the cold.

We hardly give a second glance to the penguins gathered at the roost as we steam along, trying not to cry out at the pain as circulation returns to our hands. Grateful now that it is too dark to see the drop off below the skis as we 'skin' sideways up the trickiest bit of the steep hillside. Arrive at the hut just a bit late to radio to KEP and say All is well. It is -12°C , so get the Primus going: hot rum - yum, and boiling water to pour into bags of instant shepherds pie - thank goodness for Tabasco sauce. Open a carton of Chilean red wine and snuggle into down jacket, fleece trousers and down bags. We check the photos... Blast it! None are any good but the video footage is better. Have to try again soon.

From Sussex to South Georgia - The story of a brick

Bob Burton



The brickworks, Sussex.

Back in May, Elsa Davidson of the South Georgia Museum had an enquiry from Patsy Laker of the Southwater Local History Group in Sussex. They had discovered that in 1972 a consignment of bricks had been sent down from their local brickworks to South Georgia. They were 'Southwater engineering class B bricks' and were used in the construction of a greenhouse which would be used for various botanical projects. Patsy asked for information on the greenhouse.

A few emails to likely sources have revealed something about the greenhouse. It was built initially for a project on tussock grass followed by other botanical studies. John 'Golly' Gallsworthy was in charge of the building and he reported that there was a bit of a problem with the foundations which were not rising levelly. Recrimination was cut short when it was found that the team were working with two piles of bricks: one metric and one imperial. This was duly rectified.

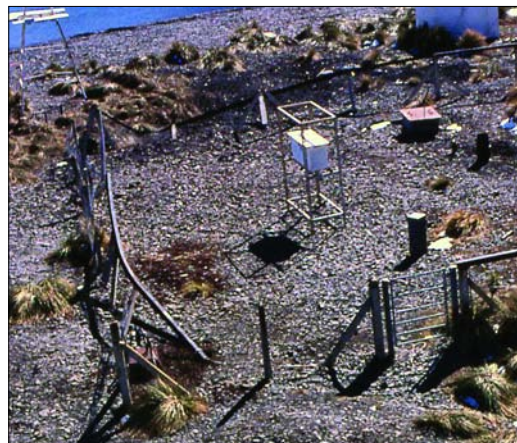
The greenhouse was equipped with an oil-fired hot water heating system and sodium lighting to enable year round growth. It also had an automatic watering system with electroconductive probes in the pots which linked to misting sprays. The botanists resisted many pleas to allow this wonderful controlled environment to be used for growing salad.

One necessary feature was an elephant seal-proof fence. It was 4'6" high and made from 4" x 2" metal posts linked by a top rail, with tough mesh netting strung between them. It worked for the most part, but the photo shows that it was not a great deterrent against a full-grown bull.

The greenhouse was demolished about 1975. It had proved difficult to maintain because, in a very strong wind, glass panes were sucked out of the lee side. Most of the rest of the contemporary buildings have been demolished since then and the layout of KEP restructured. However, Ruth Fraser has had a search and managed to find some Southwater bricks on the site of the greenhouse. I have not heard whether an export permit has been requested to repatriate them for display in Sussex.



The greenhouse, South Georgia.



After the greenhouse had been demolished, the compound was used for meteorological instruments. The state of the fence shows the impact of elephant seals.

Website forum

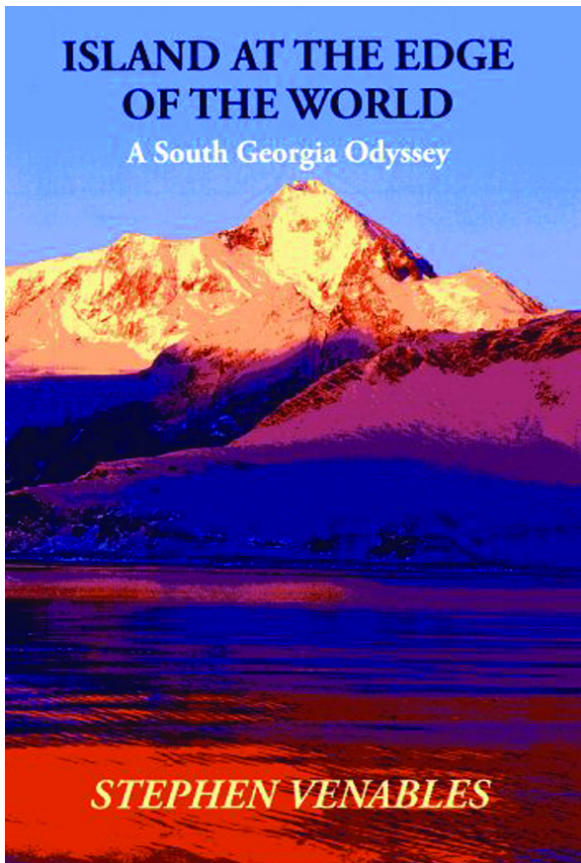
Andy Rankin has set up a forum on the SGA website. Go to the homepage and click on the 'forum' tab in the top right corner. You will be able to read about new items of news from and about South Georgia and the SGA, and the resulting discussions on these topics. If you want to contribute, you will need to register for a 'login' and 'password'. Do this in the top left corner.

Please feel free to join in the discussions and contribute positively to the topics that are under review. The more who take part, the better. If nothing else, it is a good way to while away a few idle minutes!

Dictionary of Falkland (and South Georgia) Biography

David Tatham has produced an up-date sheet with some corrections and fresh information on some subjects. They can be obtained, free of charge, from David at Wisteria Cottage, South Parade, Ledbury, Hereford HR8 2HA or editordfb@onetel.com.

About 100 copies of the Dictionary remain unsold out of the 1,000 printed. It is obviously a much-appreciated work. If you haven't got a copy, you clearly need one!



This is more than a book of climbs, Stephen Venables, a past president of the SGA, has worked the history of South Georgia into the tale of his adventures. Cook, Shackleton, Larsen, Carse, Nigel Bonner, Cindy Buxton – they are all there. The main story is Stephen Venables and his four companions trying to climb untrodden summits, sometimes successfully. The greatest challenge was, of course, the weather. They spent 23 days trapped in an ice cave.

This is a new edition of the book first published in 1991, with the addition of 10 pages and some excellent photographs about two more recent expeditions: doing the Shackleton Crossing with Conrad Anker and Reinhold Meissner in 2000 and fee-paying clients in 2008.

If it is not already in your South Georgia library, you need to get it. Copies can be bought direct from www.stephen-venables.com/bookshop.asp

Photographs courtesy of: Stacey Adlard, Douglas Bremner, Bob Burton, Darren Christie, Inigo Everson, Patrick Fagan, Ruth Fraser, Maritime Historical Studies Centre.(University of Hull), George Cummings, Tony Kelville, Ron Lewis-Smith, Fran Prince, Pat & Sarah Lurcock, Robb Robinson.

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

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: robert@burton41.co.uk

New Oral History display for the South Georgia Museum Elsa Davidson

A new display telling the stories of people who worked in the whaling industry on and around South Georgia will be installed at the Museum this year. The display has been developed as part of the South Georgia Museum Ex-Whalers' Oral History Project which began in January 2010.

It will give visitors the opportunity to listen to 'sound bites' from a range of interviews which have been conducted with members of the Salvesen Ex Whalers' Club across Scotland and the Falkland Islands. A related online resource is currently being developed and will form part of the SGHT website. The oral history recordings will add an interesting new dimension to the Museum displays and will also form an excellent historical archive resource. A copy of all the recorded material will also be held by the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive at Edinburgh University. Were you involved in the whaling industry? Would you like to donate your South Georgia stories to the project? We would also be interested to hear from people not directly involved in the industry but who may have stories to tell about it. The interview involves a pre-interview questionnaire which is completed by post, followed by a recorded interview.

For details please contact the Curator, Elsa Davidson: elsa.davidson@sght.org or write to Elsa Davidson, SGHT, First Floor Offices, Verdant Works, West Henderson's Wynd, Dundee DD1 5BT.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Reminiscing is a convivial occupation.

L-R: George Cummings, Norman Jamieson, Danny Morrison, Jim Yorkston, Don Lennie, Elsa Davidson.



Colour copy

The B&W printing of the first 18 issues of this newsletter have left much to be desired. Colour printing, however, is much more expensive. We are very fortunate that an anonymous member has volunteered to pay the difference.