

# South Georgia Association

## Newsletter

Number 21 November 2011



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The Annual General Meeting will be on May 4, 2012.

*The BAS research station, King Edward Point .*

### **The Tenth Annual General Meeting, 20 May 2011**

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London

The meeting was attended by 41 members including the President, Charles Swithinbank, and the following members of the Committee: David Drewry (Chair), Bob Burton (Newsletter Editor), Sarah Greenwood (Membership), Keith Holmes (Treasurer), David Fletcher, Bob Headland, Sarah Lurcock, Andy Rankin, Alexandra Shackleton, David Rootes, Fran Prince (Secretary).

David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, including members from across the country and abroad, and thanked Heather Christie from the FCO attending on behalf of the Commissioner; Howard Pearce, Alison Neil, Peter Taylor, Melanie Stoutzker from the South Georgia Heritage Trust; Tony Martin, Director of the Habitat Restoration Project; and Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Norway.

Apologies were received from: Jackie Burton, Dave Burkitt, Martin Collins, Melanie d'Souza, Robert Faulconbridge, John Gallsworthy, Julia Hazel, Ron Lewis-Smith, Deborah and Gawain O'Connor, Iain Mackay-Dick, Chris Elliot, Bruce Mair, Kevin and Jenny Marchant, John Marshall, Tony Soper, Guy and Molly Sheridan, Phil Stone, Peter Sutton, David Tatham, Lesley Tregaskes, Anthony Trevis, Alan Tritton, Hedwig and Harald Voss, Dan Weinstein.

The minutes of the Ninth AGM held on 21 May 2010 were approved as a true record of the meeting, proposed by David Brook, seconded by Bob Headland and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising that were not covered in other Agenda items.

The Chair reported on the previous year's activities. During the year there had been considerable consultation with GSGSSI on primary legislation. The Association had been involved in the new Wildlife Ordinance, Use of Heavy Fuels and Management of Reindeer. Fiona Lovatt had represented SGA at the reindeer consultation meeting in September 2010. The consultations had been demanding on the committee, and there had been encouragement to members to give individual views. The committee was thanked for drafting contributions.

The Stakeholders meeting at the FCO in September 2010 gave the opportunity to discuss strategic plans in the South Atlantic: security, British presence, environmental stewardship; with dialogue between the FCO and other organisa-

tions. David Rootes, Bob Burton, Bob Headland and Sally Poncet represented the SGA at the meeting.

The visit to Hull in October 2010 had been splendidly organised by Melanie d'Souza and attended by 25 members. The theme of the weekend was to view connections between the city of Hull and the South Atlantic. There were visits to the Maritime Centre, Blaydes House and museums. The trip was enjoyed by all, and sincere thanks were given to Mel and the lecturers.

Later this year we will be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of SGA. A dinner is arranged at the Royal Over-Seas League on 24 September 2011. There will be an art display, photographic competition and entertainment from a polar folk singer. The Norwegian Ambassador and Jane Rumble from the FCO will be attending as our official guests. Members are encouraged to come to the event and to bring guests.

The SGA is delighted to see the publication of Alec

*Nic Warren and Sarah Robinson met among the fur seals on Bird Island. Esther came later.*



Trendall's book *Putting South Georgia on the Map*. This has been supported by Keith Holmes who has given Alec substantial encouragement to complete the project.

The SGHT will be holding a Conference 'Managing Industrial Heritage: South Georgia in Context' in Dundee in September. We recognise this is an important event and an opportune time to discuss future heritage conservation at South Georgia.

Anniversaries: 2011 is recognised as the centenary of the outstanding achievement by Norway of reaching the South Pole.

#### **Membership**

Sarah Greenwood reported that there were currently 310 individual members, representing a loss of 20. There were 62 members from overseas. There is one corporate member, Zegrahm Expeditions.

#### **Treasurer**

Keith Holmes reported that John Bawden had kindly audited SGA's accounts this year and was now retiring. John had always audited the accounts quickly and on time and Keith wished to record the AGM's warm thanks for his help over the years. The accounts for the year to 25 March 2011 were presented showing a total income of £3700, including £2600 from subscriptions. There had been no Bank interest. Keith had personally made up the difference between the cost of colour and black-and-white printing of the Newsletter. This will appear as a donation. Expenditure for the year was about £2350 covering costs of producing and circulating the Newsletter, meetings, and travel expenses.

Keith is retiring from the post of Treasurer today. He has suggested changing the SGA financial year to end on 31 December as this would be more convenient. John Owen will be taking over as Treasurer, subject to election, and will carry this out.

#### **Newsletter**

Bob Burton thanked Keith Holmes for his contribution towards the cost of colour printing the newsletter. Bob now has the opportunity to expand the range of photographs that can be used, and this will help his job hugely. The newsletter now has four more pages, so members are encouraged to submit more material. The chairman thanked Bob on behalf of the Association for production of the newsletter, and thanked Keith for his contribution to allow the printing to be in colour.

#### **Initiative Fund**

There had been two awards to the Initiative Fund during the year.

1) Copies of David Tatham's Dictionary of Falklands Biography had been sent to libraries overseas.

2) £440 for recording John Croxall for the Oral History Project (a collaboration by BAS, BAS Club, SPRI and UKAHT that interviews notable Antarctic individuals).

Surplus money from the Duncan Carse fund was used to purchase a significant number of Alec Trendall's book.

Keith outlined a review of the Initiative Fund awards since its inception; £4000 had been spent on, among other things: Purchase of picture displayed in the South Georgia Museum.

Preserving, laminating old photographs and glass negatives  
Binding copies of historical extracts.

Three benches installed outside the South Georgia Museum  
Digitising old South Georgia films.

Support of the South Georgia Environmental Survey.

Support for SGA Conference, Cambridge 2003.

Keith announced that the committee had agreed to donate £500 towards the Habitat Restoration Project (rat eradication) as a token of support for the project.

#### **Website**

Andy Rankin reported on progress. There is a resources section with information on books and other websites. Andy encouraged members to join the forum and express their views.

The chairman reiterated thanks to John Bawden for auditing SGA accounts, and would write to thank him. He also thanked the committee for their energetic work.

#### **Message from the Commissioner**

The Commissioner's message to the AGM was delivered via a video recording. Following the speech, David Drewry thanked GSGSSI for their efforts with the recording. It was useful to hear what had been achieved in the current year and proposed for the future. There was concern in the reduction in income from fishing and tourism.



*Andy Rankin sets up the Commissioner's video.*

#### **International reports and reports from other organisations**

Howard Pearce, Chair of SGHT, introduced Alison Neil (Chief Executive), Tony Martin (Director of the Habitat Restoration Project) and Peter Taylor (fund-raiser). The Habitat Restoration Project was currently the major concern for SGHT. SGHT continue to manage the Museum at South Georgia and thanks go to Elsa Davidson for her work as curator. The new South Georgia Wildlife Guide was nearing completion and thanks were given to Bob Burton as editor. The Heritage Conference is organised for 7-9 September at Dundee and will be addressing what to do with South Georgia's industrial heritage. It is hoped the conference will produce recommendations for management. SGA members are welcomed to the event.

Major fund-raising is underway for the Habitat Restoration Project, and Howard thanked SGA for their donation, and recognised this as an important gesture of support. He also thanked individuals of SGA for their support.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Norwegian Friends of the Island, kindly relayed news of Øyas Venner's activities. 'Glasgow House' in Sandefjord is now restored and is used for meetings and presentations. The house can accommodate 6 – 10 people. SGA members were invited to stay at very beneficial rates. The memorial church for whalers in

Sandefjord will have four new names added this year. There will be a ceremony on 31 July when the name plates are added. There is £25,000 in the Society, and Øyas Venner wish to spend some on the continuing the upkeep of the South Georgia cemeteries and church. There is a cruise planned for 2013/14 to celebrate the centenary of the Norwegian church at Grytviken.

Sarah Lurcock described the last eight months she had spent on South Georgia. There had been a big crash in numbers of some wildlife species last year but a fantastic success this year, for instance with gentoo pairs raising two chicks. GSGSSI had taken on two more staff: a one-year contract observer on ships and a one-year contract for a bird survey. There is now a team of three Government Officers so that there are always two present on South Georgia. They also manage and oversee biosecurity and spraying alien plants. A visiting scientist from British Geological Society was installing a geomagnetic station and a Norwegian team will take core samples from the bottom of lakes. Live ordnance had been dealt with (including a museum exhibit!).

**Election of committee members and officers**

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 Keith Holmes who had retired as Treasurer. John Owen had volunteered to replace Keith.

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, Doug Bone seconded and the meeting voted in favour by a show of hands.

President: Charles Swithinbank

Chairman: David Drewry

Secretary: Fran Prince

Treasurer: John Owen

Membership Secretary: Sarah Greenwood

Newsletter Editor: Bob Burton

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

Corresponding Members: Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP)

**Any other business**

David Drewry thanked Keith Holmes who was retiring as SGA Treasurer having served for eight years. Keith was presented with a framed picture of Duncan Carse in South Georgia as well as a bottle of malt whisky. The Chairman



*David Drewry presents Keith Holmes with picture and bottle.*

also thanked the Secretary, Fran Prince, for her exceptional dedication and work for the Association through the year.

The meeting ended at 8:30 and was followed by a lecture by Professor Tony Martin, Director of the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project “Of Helicopters, Rats and Men: Phase 1 of the South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project”.



*Tony Martin addresses the subject of rat eradication.*

**Message from HE the Commissioner**

The last year has been a particularly busy and challenging one for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The year has seen declines in revenue from both fisheries and tourism, but also the start of the first phase of the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project, which aims to eradicate rodents from the whole of South Georgia. The year also saw a change of Commissioner. In September 2010 Alan Huckle left the post of Governor of the Falkland Islands and Commissioner for South Georgia and I took over in October. I'm sure you will join me in thanking Alan for his excellent work during his four-year tenure. Unfortunately I have not yet had the opportunity to visit South Georgia or indeed the South Sandwich Islands, but I'm well aware of the environment and heritage significance of the Territory and will be making every effort to visit in the next 12 months.

Fisheries continue to provide the main source of income for the Territory, but the last couple of years have seen significant reductions in the Patagonian toothfish quota. The reduction in quota, which is based on the latest scientific advice, is a consequence of concerns about recruitment of toothfish, which shows considerable inter-annual variability that was not incorporated into earlier assessments. The new toothfish season started on 2 April, with six vessels fishing in the South Georgia Maritime Zone and the early signs indicate that vessels are fishing well. We will continue to be cautious in our approach to managing this fishery to ensure that it remains sustainable in the long-term.

In addition to the reduction in toothfish quota, the krill and icefish fisheries have been poor for the last two seasons. Although krill was abundant at South Georgia in 2010, catch rates and sea-ice conditions were exceptionally good in the South Orkney and South Shetland Islands allowing vessels to fish throughout winter and hence only two vessels briefly fished at South Georgia. Krill-eating predators, such as fur seals and gentoo penguins, have had a successful recent summer season, which indicates that krill is abundant in

South Georgia waters and we hope this remains the case and that we see an increase in licensed fishing for krill this winter. An industry-led, 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.

Tourist numbers were substantially reduced in the 2010/11 season, with only 5400 visitors compared to 7400 the previous year. This reduction is due, in part, to the global economic situation, which has caused some companies to cease trading and others to reduce the size of their operations. A further five vessel visits were cancelled during the course of the season. It is hoped that we will see a gradual increase in tourist numbers over the next few years. The Cooper Bay chinstrap colony has, once again, been closed following an outbreak of avian cholera.

A number of compliance issues were identified this season involving the behaviour of visitors ashore. Each case was investigated and appropriate steps taken to prevent any reoccurrence, including mandatory government observer coverage for those vessels. GSGSSI remains committed to working closely with the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators and the vessel operators to ensure that high standards are maintained and that visitors to the island are well managed and well briefed, enabling them to enjoy a remarkable experience and leave the island well informed about the challenges facing South Georgia in the coming years.

Whilst visitor numbers have declined this season, there has been a general increase in visits over the last decade. Mindful of this fact GSGSSI continues to review and exercise our major incident plans, whilst also increasing and improving our response capabilities through increased additional stores and refurbished storage facilities at KEP.

The combination of reduction in fisheries and tourism revenue has put considerable pressure on the GSGSSI budget for 2011. On a more positive note GSGSSI has received a substantial contribution from the FCO to bolster our reserves, but this cannot be spent on the day-to-day management of the Territory.

In September 2010, in partnership with the FCO, we organised the first of what we anticipate will be a regular series of SGSSI stakeholder meetings. At the meeting the GSGSSI and FCO presented their strategy documents for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The meeting was extremely well attended, with the SGA well represented. Following the meeting, the strategies were revised and published on the FCO and GSGSSI websites in November. During the last 12 months we have also consulted relevant stakeholders on a range of South Georgia issues, including the Wildlife & Protected Areas Ordinance, reindeer management and the carriage of heavy fuels. We will continue to engage the SGA and other stakeholders in developing key policies and legislation for the Territory.

A key event this year has been the initiation of the South Georgia Heritage Trust's Habitat Restoration Project on South Georgia. In March of this year the first, trial, phase succeeded in spreading bait over the Greene, Thatcher and Mercer Peninsulas and on Saddle Island. The outcome of this first phase will not be known for some time, but our hope and expectation is that rats will have been completely eradicated from these areas. You will hear more about the project from Tony Martin later this evening, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the project, particularly Tony and his team who worked tirelessly on South Georgia. GSGSSI provided considerable logistical and practical support for the first phase and will continue to support the development of the project

In September 2010 GSGSSI convened a meeting in London to consider the outcome of the consultation on the future of reindeer on South Georgia. Following this meeting, GSGSSI announced their intention to eradicate both herds of reindeer from South Georgia. The timing and methodology of the eradications have yet to be decided, but GSGSSI is seeking expert advice on how to responsibly and humanely undertake the eradications, with decisions expected later this year. However funding remains a significant hurdle to implementing these plans.

As part of a broader habitat restoration strategy, GSGSSI is investing considerable time and resources in the management of invasive introduced plants, and hope to eventually eradicate a number of these problem species. This was greatly helped by the visit of an expert from New Zealand, who spent several months on the island earlier in the season. Subsequently our Government Officers on the island have worked tirelessly to keep on top of the problem. Given the enormous amount of time and money invested in the tackling of rodents, reindeer and plants, biosecurity remains high on our agenda, to ensure no new introductions occur.

In November 2010 GSGSSI commissioned a survey of the old whaling stations by experts in asbestos and cultural heritage. The survey will help GSGSSI consider the best approach to the long-term management of the whaling stations and the outcomes will be presented at the Industrial Heritage conference in Dundee in September. The findings of the asbestos survey confirmed that the current measures in place to manage this issue and protect visitors are appropriate and must be maintained.

Science remains a high priority for both South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and two major projects have undertaken research on or around South Georgia in 2010/11. In November, as part of a Darwin Initiative project, a team of divers undertook a survey of the shallow marine fauna of South Georgia. As part of an OTEP funded project, the Fisheries Protection Vessel *Pharos SG* undertook monthly surveys of seabird and larval fish distribution in areas traditionally fished for krill. Both projects are due to complete in April 2012 and will be key precursors to the development of Marine Protected Areas in the South Georgia Maritime Zone. In January 2011 GSGSSI undertook a survey of seabirds on and around the South Sandwich Islands, particularly focussing on some of the large penguin colonies. This was the first significant survey of the South Sandwich Islands since 1997.

As always, we very much welcome the support of the South Georgia Association and remain committed to working with the Association to better manage South Georgia's unique environmental and cultural heritage.

**Nigel Haywood**



*This year's stamps have a wide range of themes.*

## 10 years old and still going strong!

The South Georgia Association celebrated the first ten years of its existence with a dinner at the Royal Over-Seas League in London on September 24th.

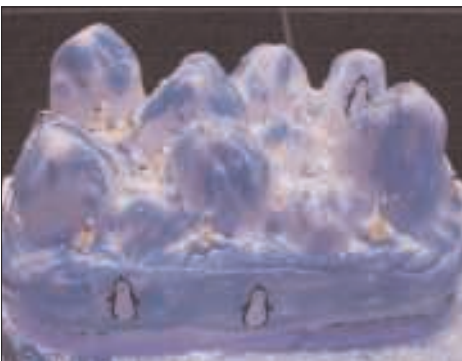
Around 50 members and their guests attended the dinner, including all three SGA Chairmen who have held the position since the Association's inception: David Tatham, Richard Ralph and David Drewry. The official guest was Jane Rumble, Head of the Polar Regions Unit at the FCO.

Current Chairman David Drewry acted as Master of Ceremonies for a full and varied evening's programme, which included an exhibition of art and maps and a photograph competition (won by John Alexander with a view of Larsen Harbour).

During a dinner that featured imaginatively named dishes such as 'Penguin Patties' and 'Cutlets of Elephant Seal', whose ingredients were not quite as advertised (chicken and lamb, actually), there was a performance by the renowned folk musician Cliff Wedgbury who included a debut performance of his specially composed 'Ballad of South Georgia'.



*President Charles Swithinbank and the celebratory cake.  
(Who better than a glaciologist to cut the icing?)*



*The cake was an imaginative representation of Mt. Paget.*

Founding Chairman (and ex South Georgia Commissioner) David Tatham gave an after-dinner speech in which he described how, in September 2001, a meeting was held in the offices of the Falkland Islands Association to set up the SGA to encourage interest in, and the conservation and study of, the natural and cultural heritage of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and to promote contacts and encourage fellowship among those who have lived or worked in or around South Georgia.

David Tatham said: 'The event when I would say we came of age was the conference which we held at BAS in Cambridge in September 2003 on the 'Future of South Georgia - the next ten years'. We displayed the range of talents possessed by our members in giving an overview which only we could provide. The conference also attracted enough financial support to enable us to finance our initiative fund, making small grants available for projects to do with South Georgia.'

David Tatham said the South Georgia Association applauded the work of the people who live and work in South Georgia today: 'the scientists and administrators at King Edward Point, Grytviken and Bird Island; just as we are grateful to those in Stanley and London who support them.... We applaud but we are not simply a fan club. We also hope to act as a conscience for the Island, and it is in this role that we attended the gatherings of 'stakeholders' which was held in the FCO during September of last and this year to bring together all the British bodies with an interest in South Georgia in order to up-date them on the plans of the FCO and the GSGSSI for the years 2010 to 2015.'

In conclusion David said: 'After ten years I believe we are achieving the objectives we set for ourselves in our first meetings. We have become a forum for everyone interested in the Island; we have disseminated information on the rapid pace of change at KEP and Grytviken; we have achieved the status of authorities on a wide variety of South Georgian topics; we have donated a bust of Duncan Carse to the Museum and while we have attained these worthy objectives which we set for ourselves ten years ago, I believe we are also achieving our third objective: we have met in an atmosphere of good fellowship even good cheer. Something worthy of celebration - may the next ten years be as fruitful - and as cheerful!'

The Norwegian representative of Øyas Venner, Gustav Ellingsen, followed with a speech that drew attention to the common interests of the UK and Norway with South Georgia and the forthcoming centenary of the Whalers' Church in 2013.

Summing up the evening the current SGA Chairman David Drewry described the 10th Anniversary dinner as: 'a really enjoyable and celebratory evening.'



*Cliff Wedgbury with the 'Ballad of South Georgia'.*

**Niall Rankin's photographs**  
Bob Burton



One of the best books on South Georgia is 'Antarctic Isle' by Niall Rankin, published by Collins in 1951 and now an item that should be on the bookshelf of everyone who has visited the island (although there won't be enough copies!).

Rankin, a product of Eton and Oxford, organised expeditions to many parts of the world and took some wonderful photographs. Unfortunately, he was usually so busy organising the next expedition that he did not have time to print the photographs taken on the previous one! Luckily for us, he not only printed the photographs of his expedition to South Georgia but wrote a book about it.

In 1946, Salvesens transported Rankin and his boat *Albatross*, a 42 ft former RNLI lifeboat, and its crew of two Shetlanders to South Georgia aboard the factory ship *Southern Venturer*. From Leith Harbour, *Albatross* explored much of the north coast, from Bird Island to Larsen Harbour. Rankin counted the birds, studied their behaviour and photographed them. He concentrated on the wandering albatrosses on Albatross Island and king penguins on Salisbury Plain. His pictures of the courtship displays of the wanderers have never been bettered.

After his death, about 500 glass plate negatives were deposited with the wildlife photographer Eric Hosking and they are now kept by his son David who runs the Frank Lane Picture Agency [www.flpa-images.co.uk](http://www.flpa-images.co.uk).

I visited David Hosking in deepest Suffolk and had an afternoon examining the glass plate negatives. It would have been easier if there had been prints but many of the plates have now been digitised. Rankin's photos may not catch the movement that present-day visitors to South Georgia capture so effortlessly with their digital cameras but, when you see his camera, you appreciate the excellence of his work.



**Managing Industrial & Cultural Heritage:  
South Georgia in Context**

South Georgia is best known for its superlative scenery and amazing concentrations of wildlife but it also has a significant and fascinating history. One of the principal aims of the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) is to preserve, protect and promote an understanding of the historical heritage of South Georgia in relation to the island's whaling, sealing and maritime history. To this end, the SGHT was host to a conference on Industrial Heritage in Dundee, 7-9 September, 2011, organised by David Munro and Alison Neil. The South Georgia Association participated as a co-sponsor and provided one Chair (Ron Lewis-Smith) and two speakers (Bob Burton and David Fletcher), as well as a number of delegates.

The conference could not have had a more spectacular venue - at the Discovery Centre in Dundee, beside RRS *Discovery* and overlooking the River Tay. Over 60 delegates



*David Munro addresses the delegates.*

from around the world attended two days of presentations, discussions and workshops which were focused primarily on the whaling stations that are becoming increasingly ruinous and dangerous.

The keynote presentation was 'Polar Heritage - neglected child becomes international talking point' by Susan Barr. The importance of polar heritage is now being recognised and international guidelines recommend careful modification and natural decay of historic sites rather than radical intervention. This accords with the 18th and 19th century idea of the 'sublime ruin' which maintains the relevance of a site for both historians and visitors.

The conference was treated to a number of presentations on the value of heritage sites in the polar regions and examples of conservation and research at sites ranging from Svalbard and the Isle of Harris to Iles Kerguelen and the Antarctic Peninsula. The South Georgia whaling stations have been thoroughly surveyed by Norwegian researchers but the deteriorating condition of the stations is a major concern. Michael Morrison discussed the possibilities of public access and salvaging items of machinery etc. The presence of asbestos is a severe drawback in any plan of action.

While much can be learned from the physical remains of the whaling industry at South Georgia, understanding of the working of the industry is greatly enhanced by the study of archival documents, including photographs, and by oral history. Elsa Davidson described the SGHT oral history proj-



*One of Bridget Steed's artworks of Grytviken projected onto the hull of RRS Discovery.*

ect in which members of the Salvesen Ex-Whalers Club are interviewed about their working and social lives on South Georgia in the 1950s and early 1960s.

It is to be hoped that the conference will stimulate action into preserving and recording South Georgia's industrial and cultural heritage before rust, rot and the weather destroys the relics on the island and time erases the memories of those who worked there.

The overwhelming problem for saving South Georgia's heritage is its remoteness that makes it financially and practically very difficult to implement anything but the simplest conservation and research programmes. The whaling stations are massive structures and the problem is compounded by the quantities of asbestos present. The small sites, such as sealers' camps, do not present a hazard problem but they are remote and difficult to access. It was of particular interest, therefore, to hear Martin Collins, senior executive of the South Georgia Government, present the government's strategy on cultural and industrial heritage. The primary goals are

*to develop, within the constraints of available funding, long-term objectives for the whaling stations and explore the use of artefacts,*

*to gain a better scientific understanding of the level of risk posed by asbestos and put in place adequate protective measures to limit GSGSSI's contingent liability,*

*to develop legislation for the protection of SGSSI's heritage.*



*Not many of these revellers are thinking about industrial heritage.*

In conclusion, Frederik Paulsen proposed a number of projects that would preserve South Georgia's cultural heritage, make the island more accessible to visitors and allow for more intensive scientific study.

Finally, there is always a social side to conferences where delegates meet familiar colleagues and old friends. This conference had the benefit of a champagne reception aboard RRS *Discovery*, which featured projections of Bridget Steed's artwork, and dinner and ceilidh aboard HMS *Unicorn*, considered the best preserved of all the world's historic ships from the age of sail.

A full report of the conference will be published.

## Viola (in miniature) sails again



Alan Richardson of the Hull Boat Builders has made a 4 ft model of the trawler *Viola*, better known at South Georgia as the sealer *Dias*. Mr Richardson visited the vessel in her *Dias* incarnation at Grytviken when he was a seaman with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.



The model is radio-controlled and 90% is made of recycled materials. The white screen around the bridge is sewing machine tape, the funnel is 40mm drainpipe and the fish in the hold were made in jelly moulds.

## George pipes for ovarian cancer research



George Brown is well-known as the radio operator at KEP who features in Nan's *Antarctic Housewife*. When he lost his younger daughter, Catriona, to ovarian cancer in 2009 he decided to become a busker and raise funds for Ovarian Cancer Research.

An experienced piper, George started his new career in October 2009 and now performs regularly on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. He

### One-man tourist attraction.

divides his year between Australia and Edinburgh – quite a long commute – spending December to April with daughter, Fiona, grandchildren and great-grandson in Australia.

For 2011 George set himself a target of £5,000. Currently his haul is £4,870. He is confident he will reach his goal before starting back to Australia on 20 November.

## Anniversaries for South Georgia

J. Michael Buchanan

With centenaries of the Heroic Age of Polar Exploration all around (for example, 1909 - Shackleton (Farthest South) and 1911/12 – Amundsen and Scott (South Pole)), Antarctica may eclipse South Georgia as a focus of interest, at least until 2016, the centenary of Shackleton's unexpected arrival on South Georgia on the *James Caird*. There are, however, some anniversaries in 2011 are of special relevance to South Georgia.

In the 1911-12 season, the South Georgia Co. Ltd., Christian Salvesen's whaling company, despatched its first two floating factory ships, *Neko* and *Horatio*, to the South Shetland Islands. *Horatio*, however, caught fire on leaving Norway and missed a season. 2,550 whales (66,510 barrels of whale oil) were added to the company's catch that season. From 1911 until their withdrawal from whaling in 1965, the South Georgia Co.Ltd. was the biggest Antarctic whaler, although it only accounted for some 10 per cent of the total harvest in most years.

For readers antipathetic to whaling and its history, the 50th anniversary of South Georgia's gradual disengagement from whaling can also be celebrated in 2011. The 30th anniversary of the visit of Davidoff's scrap-metal team to Leith Harbour falls next year, 2012.

Back in Scotland, 100 years ago, on 15 January 1911, Salve Christian Fredrik Salvesen died. His obituary appeared the next day in *The Scotsman*, two days later in *The Times* and in *The Leith Observer* on 21 January 1911. Christian was born in Mandal, Norway, in 1827 and settled in Leith in 1851. He had worked with his elder brother, Johan Theodor, who was based in Grangemouth from 1843. Christian's early commercial involvement was with agency work and merchant shipping, dealing mostly with cargoes of coal, timber and whale oil, trading between the Forth ports and southern Norway. 1891 marked his first involvement with whaling and this led to operating whaling stations in Iceland, Faeroes and Shetland. In 1907 his company went south, 8000 miles from home, to New Island, Falklands. Leith Harbour was established in South Georgia in 1909. By that time, Christian was an elderly gentleman but he still played a key role in the decision to go south, entering whaling 'big time', as three of his four sons took command.

Christian's passing, 100 years ago, was marked by a special toast at a Salvesen clan gathering in Scotland in April 2011. There were guests from USA, Norway, England and Scotland. The youngest guest (b.1998) was a gt.gt.gt. grand-son of Christian Salvesen.

On South Georgia the group of peaks called 'The Three Brothers' commemorates Christian's sons, Tom, Fred and Ted. The family name is given to The Salvesen Range which, along with the Allardyce Range, forms the backbone of the island.

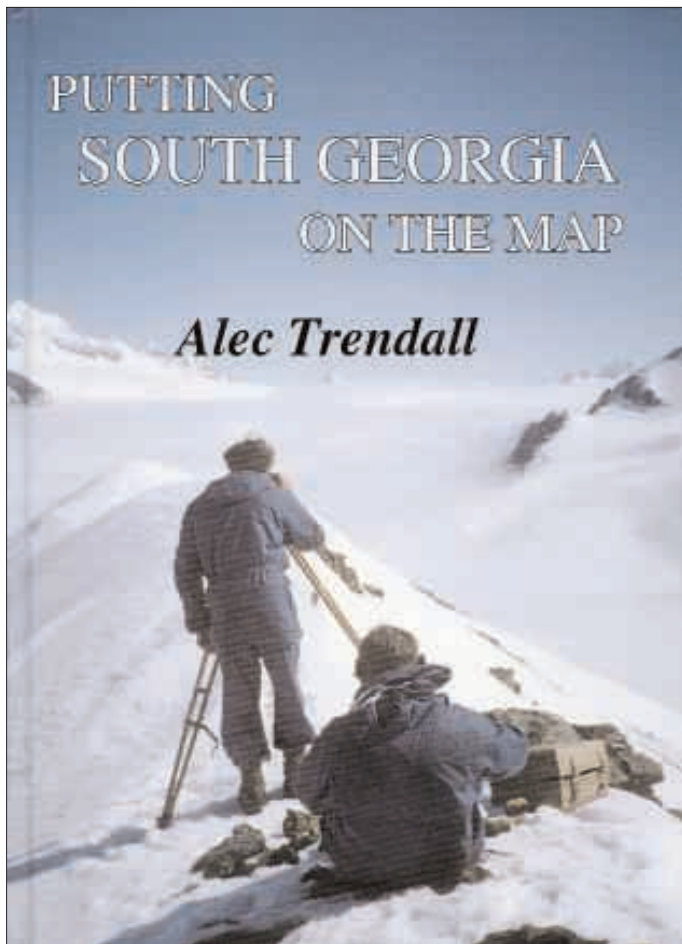
## Putting South Georgia on the map: Duncan Carse's South Georgia Surveys of 1951-56.

Alec Trendall. 2011. Albany, West Australia: Alec Trendall. ISBN 978-0-9870614-0-9 (Hard cover), 978-0-9870614-1-6 (Soft cover). No prices given.

Bernard Stonehouse

The South Georgia Survey (SGS) was a private expedition devised and organised by Duncan Carse, a radio actor who had served as a seaman on the pre-World War II British Graham Land Expedition and *Discovery* Investigations. Carse's stated objective was to produce the first compre-





hensive map of South Georgia. Sparsely funded, SGS was planned originally to occupy a small sledging team for the single summer season of 1951-52. However, the expedition expanded into a second season in 1953-54, then to a third in 1955-56.

Alec Trendall, a geologist recently graduated from Imperial College, London, joined the first season's team, to find himself one of six hardy folk man-hauling and surveying in the island's heavily glaciated interior, hampered at every turn by foul subantarctic weather. In a near-fatal crevasse accident he severely damaged a knee – an injury that required him to leave the expedition in early January.

It soon became clear that South Georgia could not be mapped in a single season. There was no fieldwork in the following summer, but by late 1953 Carse had scraped together sufficient funds to return for a second season's work, this time with a team of four that again included Trendall. Marred by disputes within the group and the illness of the doctor, it was neither a successful nor a happy season: Trendall judges it even less effective than the first.

By now lacking credulity, depressed and in debt, Carse had to scratch around for funds for a further season's work. He succeeded, returning in 1955-56 with a doctor, two surveyors and four mountaineers, who virtually completed the survey. From their results the Directorate of Overseas Surveys in 1958 produced the single-sheet map of South Georgia at a scale of 1:200,000 (DOS 610), thereby fulfilling the expedition's stated objective.

There was, however, another objective that adds substantially to the interest of this book. Carse, whose role-model throughout life was Sir Ernest Shackleton, had hoped that by leading a successful expedition to South Georgia, he would prove his capability to lead the then-impending, nationally-supported expedition across Antarctica. The first two seasons of SGS did nothing for his reputation, and the

success of the third season came too late. It is doubtful whether those in power ever took his bid for leadership seriously, and as history records, the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1955-58 was led by the far more experienced Vivian Fuchs.

Carse died in 2004 without writing up the South Georgia Survey, and it has fallen to Alec Trendall – now long resident in Australia – to tell the full story. Walter Roots contributes a chapter on the first season's work. Trendall himself writes of the second and third seasons, the last (in which he was not personally involved) mainly from diaries of colleagues. SGS may well prove to be one of the last private expeditions of its kind.

Readers interested in camping, man-hauling, mountaineering, survey and sheer adventure, often in very gruelling conditions, will find plenty of interesting technical detail. The book ends with biographies of the twelve expedition members and a useful bibliography and notes. But woven throughout is Trendall's account of Duncan Carse, the complex and sadly-flawed leader, to whose reputation he is scrupulously fair. This is a well-produced, well-documented book, clearly illustrated with photographs and maps, and a pleasure to read. It is not easy to buy in Britain: Contact can be made with the author through his website <http://www.alectrendall.com.au/>.

#### **Far horizons: from Hull to the ends of the earth.**

Robinson, R. 2010. Hull, Maritime Historical Studies Centre, University of Hull. 242 pp., photographs, maps. ISBN 978-0-9545027-6-6. £20.00. Bernard Stonehouse

Dr Robb Robinson, Education and Outreach Officer at the Maritime Historical Studies Centre of the University of Hull, is an inspiring teacher and researcher with broad interests in the history of his city and its people. As the Director of the Centre (Dr David J. Starkey) points out in his preface to this book, Hull's remoteness and isolation from the rest of Britain resulted in its citizens relying to a great extent on water travel, to the midlands via the Humber and its tributaries, and to the wider world of coastal and oceanic voyages. This fostered among Hull folk a particularly adventurous and entrepreneurial spirit, which Robinson has captured as the main theme of his book.

*Far horizons* is made up of 39 short chapters, most of which tell the story of one or more citizens who left Hull to find or foster adventure in the wide world. A few chapters tell not of people, but of Hull-built ships that similarly made history far from their home port. The chronology covered is from earliest times to the 1930s, and the chapters are grouped in five geographical destinations that together encompass much of the world.

In the 'North America' section we read of Henry Wolsey Bayfield, a young naval officer from Hull who in 1816-25 surveyed lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron and Superior. Then there was William Harman, a Hull ironworker who in 1829 assembled the first steam locomotive in the United States, later built iron ships in Chicago, and later still built steamboats for trading on the Columbia River. The same section features the Reverend John Bacchus Dyke, son of a Hull shipbuilder, who lived and died in England but whose hymn tunes (including 'Eternal Father' and 'Nearer my God to Thee') are still standard for all the major hymnals in the United States. In the 'South' section we find the story of HMS *Bethia*, later renamed HMS *Bounty*, and the barque *Alexander*, a convict transport that sailed with the First Fleet to Botany Bay, Australia. Both were built in Hull, with-

in sight of Blaydes House, the present headquarters of the Maritime Historical Research Centre.

Robinson tells too the remarkable story of the *Sarah and Elizabeth*, an American-built ship that sailed from Hull first in 1784 as an Arctic whaler, then for many years became a South Seas whaler based in Nepean Bay, South Australia. From 1843 she again worked the Arctic from Hull, finally foundering in 1857 among the ice floes of Davis Strait. Read on and you find Hull men and women governing Sierra Leone, founding the tiny colony of Tristan da Cunha, managing forests in Sind, undertaking missionary work among Maoris, and one who became Prime Minister of New Zealand. Notable among the women was aviator Amy Johnson, who in 1930 made the first solo flight from England to Australia in a second-hand Gipsy Moth biplane. Readers with polar inclinations are likely to find special interest in Section 2 ('The Arctic and northern seas') and Section 5 ('Far south'), which together make up about one third of the book. An early Arctic explorer from Hull was James Hall, who in 1605 helped the Danes to explore the Greenland coast, and seven years later took his own expedition of two ships from Hull to West Greenland in search of silver ore. Soon afterwards Thomas Marmaduke led several sealing and walrus-hunting expeditions from Hull to the Arctic, challenging the Muscovy Company's monopoly and pioneering whaling along the Spitsbergen coast. In 1631 Captain Luke's *Fox* left Hull to explore Hudson's Bay in an early search for the North-west Passage. From 1772 Hull began to take Arctic whaling seriously, for several decades running second only to London in the number of ships sent annually to the Arctic. The industry peaked during and after the Napoleonic wars, employing thousands of seamen afloat and ships' outfitters ashore, and establishing Hull firmly as a deep-sea port. Robinson highlights some of the entrepreneurs, masters, ships and voyages involved.

The bomb-vessel HMS *Hecla*, built in neighbouring Hessle and fitted-out in Hull, achieved fame in a series of voyages in search of the Northwest Passage between 1819 and 1827 under Capt. William Parry RN. *Hecla* later returned to the Arctic as whaling ship working from Scottish ports, finally being crushed among the ice of Melville Bay in 1840.

Robinson's final section, 'Far South', includes five chapters dealing with Hull men and ships in Antarctic waters. The first concerns Llewellyn Longstaff, chairman of a prominent Hull oil and paint company. He did not visit Antarctica, but his timely donation of £25,000 in 1899 brought the British National Antarctic Expedition into being, and a personal recommendation ensured that his son's shipmate Ernest Shackleton took part. Later Longstaff offered £5000 toward the costs of the *Morning* relief expedition, which in 1902 reprovisioned *Discovery* in McMurdo Sound.

In the second 'Far South' chapter Robinson writes of William Colbeck, the Hull merchant service officer who commanded *Morning* in both 1902 and the subsequent relief voyage of 1903. Colbeck had first visited Antarctica with Carsten Borchgrevink in the *Southern Cross* expedition of 1898-1900. For his *Morning* expeditions he recruited crews largely from his home town: of the 27 men serving on one or other expedition, no fewer than 18 were from Hull. Similarly Robinson traces Hull men in Shackleton's own *Nimrod*, *Endurance* and *Quest* expeditions, notably Alf Cheetham, John Vincent, William Stephenson and Charles Green.

Robinson's final chapter concerns the remarkable Hull steamship *Viola*, built in 1906 as a 'boxing' trawler – one of a fleet that worked the Dogger Bank, sending its catch home

daily in boxes carried by fast steam cutters. *Viola* served as an armed trawler through World War I, in 1918 helping to sink a U-boat off Whitby. In 1919 she was sold to a Norwegian fishing firm, then in 1927 passed to the Argentine whaling firm *Compania Argentina de Pesca*, which renamed her *Dias* and employed her in Grytviken as a sealer and whaling buoy-boat. Now over a century old, *Dias* is currently beached close to the museum at Grytviken. Robb Robinson is campaigning to see her return to Hull, to be cherished as the last surviving representative of the North Sea boxing fleet.

This is a fascinating book, well researched with full references, written by an enthusiast, and published by a city that is proud of its maritime heritage. Maps and colour photographs enhance the lively text; one could have wished only for more thorough editing, to avoid literals (e.g. 'flows' for 'floe' throughout), some of which may well have been introduced by an over-zealous spelling-check. Read more about it and order it through:

[www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc/FarHorizons/farhorizons.htm](http://www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc/FarHorizons/farhorizons.htm).

### The Antarctic Film Festival - KEP a winner!

Based on accounts by Sam Crimmin and Sarah Lurcock

At the end of August, actors, actresses, directors, camera people and fans gathered expectantly, awaiting the announcement of the winners of the 'Golden Penguins'. These coveted awards go to the very best of the 2011 Antarctic short features.

Every year an international mix of wannabe filmmakers abruptly stop all meaningful work and toil for 48 hours to create five minute cinematic masterpieces. To ensure no one spends weeks making their film, every film has to incorporate five elements. The films have to be conceived, shot, edited and uploaded in 48 hours.

This year the five elements were: the character Popeye, the sound of a dripping tap, a saw, the line of dialogue 'which I imbibed rapaciously' and a chocolate bar attached to a shirt.



*Popeye about to imbibe rapaciously.*

It is an international event with competitors ranging from the French on subantarctic Crozet Island to the Americans at the South Pole and there were submissions from the Japanese, Koreans, Russians, Australians and British. Organiser, Michael Christiansen from the US McMurdo Station, said: 'Just looking at the list of participating stations proves that this is truly an international experience. And, I believe, the only unifying Antarctic experience. Well, except for, umm, science.'

After the films have been submitted, there is a fortnight to allow straining internet connections all over the Antarctic to download the submissions and for base members to watch them and vote for the winners.



The categories are: Best Cinematography, Best Screenplay, Best Use of the Five Elements, Best Actor and, most sought-after, Best Film.

First category to be announced was Best Use of Elements. The Russians at Bellinghousen were the clear winners with their igloo-building masterpiece, the clever and beautifully filmed, 'Once In Antarctica'. Next was Best Screenplay which was closely contested but French Crozet Station pipped KEP with 'What if Popeye Was a Woman -



*Bluto's beard appears to be an upside-down seal pup.*

You should see her Muscles'. Best actor went to Halley's Andy Dixon for his stirring portrayal, in 'The Antarctic Hair Stylist', of one man's struggle for acceptance, love and decent haircuts on the Brunt Ice Shelf.

The award for Best Cinematography came after a dramatic pause and some discussion as to what cinematography actually means. King Edward Point were winners with 'Popeye the Whaler Man'. And, more importantly, they were also awarded Best Film. Alastair Wilson, making his directorial debut, commented that, as a multi-awardwinning film maker, his first action was to update his CV.

Bird Island's submission was 'Saving Private Pingu'. It failed to win any award but it was obviously fun to make. The credits included the reassuring note that 'No penguins were harmed during the making of this film'.

KEP's award-winning film can be seen at: <http://youtube/OXhZD3KxP1A>



*Olive Oyl takes it easy after her abduction and rescue.*

## Thatcher Peninsula map



The BAS map of Thatcher Peninsula was recently awarded 'Highly Commended' in the British Cartographic Society's international competition for Best Printed Map 2010-11.

The 1:25,000 scale map was prepared on behalf of the Government of South Georgia and is aimed at tourist visitors to the area. Side A is a traditional cartographic map, while side B has a satellite image (part shown top).

There was no existing map at a more detailed scale than 1:200,000. So this is a completely new map, based on BAS GPS survey work in 2008, existing aerial photography by HMS *Endurance* from 1998 and a Quickbird high-resolution satellite image from January 2008.



## Watch out for waifs and strays

The South Georgia Heritage Trust will soon be publishing *South Georgia Wildlife – A Field Guide* (details in the next newsletter). One of the problems facing the editors (Bob Burton and John Croxall) was deciding which species to include. You might think that the birds would be well-known but unexpected species can turn up and there are problems with definitive identification, especially when seen distantly from a heaving ship.

Unusual birds on the list include a number of land birds, ranging from barn owl to swallow. A century ago the cattle egret was limited to Africa and Asia. Then it crossed to South America and spread into North America, while an eastward spread has reached Australia and New Zealand. It is now seen in South Georgia most years.



*Cattle egrets get their name from their habit of following or perching on cattle and other large mammals to catch the insects they disturb. A sleeping elephant seal is unlikely to yield much to eat.*

As the wildlife guide was nearing completion, Ron Lewis-Smith mentioned that he had photographed a 'little brown job' that had come aboard his cruise ship off the Shag Rocks. Whether it had been swept in the wind all the way from South America or had hitched a lift on another ship is not known. Ron was able to take some good photos and the bird looked distinctive enough to make identification easy. Unfortunately, it turned out that there are a couple of 'look-alike' species. The consensus is that it was a grey-flanked cinclodes, a relative of the Falkland Islands tussac bird, known to birdwatchers as the blackish cinclodes.

It is not so surprising that oceanic birds from distant places are seen in South Georgia waters. For several years now, a white-capped albatross has mated with a black-browed albatross on Bird Island and they have even reared



*The grey-flanked cinclodes looking lost.*

a chick. Bird Island has also seen an antipodean albatross from (you've guessed it!) Antipodes Island, to the south of New Zealand. Its identity and provenance were confirmed by the leg ring fitted when it was a chick.

So keep your eyes skinned and your wits about you when visiting South Georgia. If something looks a bit unusual, it may well be something unusual, and not just a trick of the light or your eyesight. Have your cameras ready - there may even be a prize for new species if they can be confirmed.

There are a number of species on the 'likely list' expected to be seen at South Georgia, and confirmation is needed for sightings of the northern royal albatross. Yet, as Andy Clarke has noted: 'Experience elsewhere suggests that the safest prediction would be that one of the next species to be added to the South Georgia list will not have been predicted.'

## The DFB for Christmas

A few copies remain of the *Dictionary of Falklands Biography, including South Georgia*. With 470 biographies over 570 pages and 360 illustrations, the DFB has enjoyed excellent reviews, not least in the SGA Newsletter. It makes an ideal Christmas present for anyone interested in the South Atlantic. E-mail the DFB editor on: [d\\_tatham@hotmail.com](mailto:d_tatham@hotmail.com) to arrange delivery and sending a cheque at the special rate (for SGA members) of £30 including postage. For deliveries to Europe £35 and to the rest of the world £40 (surface).

## Colour copy

We thank Keith Holmes for paying the extra cost of printing this newsletter in colour.

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