

South Georgia Association Newsletter

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Brown skua chick.

Spring Meeting & AGM will be on May 17, 2013

The Eleventh Spring Meeting & AGM, 4 May 2012

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London

The meeting was attended by 34 members including the following members of the Committee: David Drewry (Chair), Bob Burton (Newsletter Editor), Sarah Greenwood (Membership), John Owen (Treasurer), Bob Headland, Sarah Lurcock, Andy Rankin, Alexandra Shackleton, David Tatham, Fran Prince (Secretary).

David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the Commissioner HE Nigel Haywood, Alison Neil on behalf of the South Georgia Heritage Trust, Mr Kjell Tokstad and Gustav Ellingsen from Øyas Venner, Norway.

Apologies were received from: Jon Barker, Dave Burkitt, Jan Cheek, Tom Clarke, Melanie d'Souza, Wendy Driver, Tony and Janie Ellerbeck, Chris Elliot, Paul Engeham, Patrick Fagan, Dave Fletcher, Didy Graham, Philippa Hayes, Andrew Jamieson, John Killingbeck, Denise Landau, Ron Lewis-Smith, Allan MacArthur, Robin Macdonald, Kevin and Jenny Marchant, Ros Marsden, Michael Norman, Stephen Palmer, Howard Pearce, Bruce Pearson, Mike Pienkowski, Richard Ralph, David Rootes, Roderick Rhys Jones, Ian Scantlebury, Mike Skidmore, Dudley Smith, Phil Stone, Robert Sugden, Peter Sutton, Charles Swithinbank, Lesley Tregaskes, Alan Tritton, Wilf Vevers, Rita Walker, Helen Witts.

The minutes of the Tenth AGM held on 20 May 2011 were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising that were not covered in other Agenda items.

The Chairman reported on the previous year's activities.

The 10th anniversary of SGA was celebrated at a reception and dinner at the Royal Over-Seas League in

September 2011 and attended by 50 members and guests. Events included an art exhibition, photo competition, a super Mount Paget birthday cake sliced by our President Charles Swithinbank, and entertainment from Antarctic folk singer Cliff Wedgebury. Thanks were given to all who helped organise this successful event.

The SGHT conference *Industrial Heritage: South Georgia in Context* took place in Dundee in September. SGA helped co-fund this event and provided a chairman and two speakers. Thanks were given to Bob Burton who liaised with SGHT in planning the conference.

The Initiative Fund provided funding for Bob Burton to be interviewed for the British Antarctic Oral History Project. The Initiative Fund is open to proposals, members were encouraged to submit ideas.

SGA donated £500 to the SGHT Habitat Restoration fund.

There had been a recent meeting between some committee members and Martin Collins and Richard McKee of the GSGSSI on South Georgia topics. The Chairman recorded appreciation of the transparency and willingness of GSGSSI to discuss plans and activities with SGA.

The Chairman welcomed John Owen who had served as Treasurer for one year, and welcomed back Keith Holmes to the meeting and for taking on the role of Auditor of the SGA accounts.

Charles Swithinbank has completed his 5-year term as President, and the committee is searching for a successor. The Chairman publicly thanked Charles for his support and assistance to the Association. He had been an assiduous member of the Committee and had provided

wise and helpful advice. His Antarctic experience had been greatly valued.

Sarah Lurcock was congratulated on her new role as SGHT Director of South Georgia.

Future events: 1) Art exhibition 29 November with an SGA evening, reception and talk by Bruce Project on his project 'Troubled Waters' in collaboration with Bird Life International.

2) Joint event with James Caird Society 9 November with lecture by Bob Burton.

The committee were thanked for their work over the past year.

Membership

Sarah Greenwood reported that there were currently 258 individual members, representing a loss of 52. There were 46 members from overseas. There are two corporate members, Zegrahm Expeditions and - new to SGA - Pelagic Expeditions.

Treasurer

John Owen had provided a summary in the last newsletter.

It had become necessary to increase the 5-years subscription from £50 to £60. This represents the first increase since the inception of SGA, and is necessary to maintain the costs of the newsletter and the AGM.

A question was asked whether SGA would consider a cheaper venue for the AGM. This had, in fact, been discussed at the Committee Meeting and suitable alternatives were being investigated.

Newsletter

Bob Burton recorded pleasure with the colour production of the newsletter. Members were encouraged to submit more material, even snippets and photographs, that can be turned into a story.

There was discussion of an electronic version of the newsletter. At a vote, 12 members at the meeting would be happy to receive the newsletter electronically. Some would be prepared to pay extra to receive a paper copy.

Keith Holmes suggested producing an index for the newsletter. Bob will investigate.

Initiative Fund

There had been one award to the Initiative Fund during the year (covered in Chairman's report).

Website

Andy Rankin reported there are no major changes to the website. SGA is very appreciative of any news or material to put up on the website. He suggested members look at the forum. There will be an exploratory trial on Face Book. Seven members at the meeting already use Face Book.

Reports from other organisations

Alison Neil, CEO of SGHT, reported on the success of Phase 1 of the Habitat Restoration Project. The monitoring teams (from GSGSSI and OTEP – Overseas Territories Environment Programme) and the permanent residents (BAS, Pat and Sarah Lurcock) have seen no sign of rat presence since the clearance of 2011. This was over an area of 12,500ha which is already the largest area of any rat eradication programme. Phase 2 is planned for February 2013 and will be supported by *Ernest Shackleton* with 3 helicopters, and a team of 25 people. The plan is to clear 60% of the island, the cost will be £3m. SGHT already have £1-2m. Thanks go to Peter Taylor, SGHT fundraiser. Alison expressed thanks to SGA for the donation and moral support, and also thanks for help with the Heritage Conference.

SGHT are thinking next about the cultural heritage at South Georgia and are forming a heritage steering committee. There is expectation of collaboration on this. SGA is much appreciated by SGHT.

Questions from the floor:

Judy Skelton: How will SGHT combat reintroduction of rats?

AN: SGHT is confident that risk assessment of vessels and mitigation measures are under control.

The Chairman thanked Alison on behalf of SGA, and re-emphasised the importance of the work SGHT is undertaking.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Norwegian Friends of the Island, kindly relayed news of Øyas Venner's activities. Work was completed in August 2011 at the memorial church in Sandefjord, naming all 137 whalers who were buried at South Georgia. The Norwegian Government has been asked to take care of the graveyards on South Georgia, and Øyas Venner will be responsible for this work. There is a new lectern being made for the Church at Grytviken and this will be taken down on *MV Fram* in 2013.

The Anniversary Tour 2013/14 is in advance planning stages with Hurtigruten on board *MV Fram* to celebrate the church's consecration on 25 December 1913. Mr Tokstad outlined the details of the cruise; this is also in the brochure brought to the AGM and available from Øyas Venner. The cost of the cruise will be between £5650 – 11,000. There will be 6 places for Falkland Islanders to join the cruise at Stanley.

Election of Committee Members and Officers

The Committee stood aside and Keith Holmes temporarily took the Chair. All members of the Committee were willing to stand for re-election.

Keith Holmes, on behalf of the members, thanked the Committee for their work during the year and the Chairman for his role in the Association. The meeting

voted in favour of all to be re-elected by a show of hands.
 Chair:man: 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

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8:15 and was followed by an informative, well-illustrated lecture by Jamie Watts **“South Georgia – the richest wilderness remaining”**.

Message from HE the Commissioner

The meeting was privileged to be addressed by HE Nigel Haywood in person. He reported on activities at GSGSSI. SGA was considered an important stakeholder and good to call upon for advice and expertise given with enthusiasm and transparency.

Staff changes – Darren Christie, Environmental Officer has moved to Public Diplomacy in the Falklands Government, and has been replaced by Jennifer Lee who has a Doctorate in invasive species.

Fisheries remain the most important source of income. This has been a good season but there has been a cut-back on quotas to six fishing vessels, which has been the subject of judicial review. The fisheries were visited by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall as a subject for "Hugh's Fish Fight". Mr Fearnley-Whittingstall went to visit the best fishery in the world but criticised GSGSSI for not having a total exclusion area. However this remains a sustainable fishery.

There will be an increase in the size of acceptable cruise ships, up to 800 passengers.

There are plans for the restoration of Discovery House next season and there will be a need to attract more science to use the facilities.

The legislation for Wildlife and Protected Species came through. SG is category 6 Marine Protected Area: 'Protected Area with sustainable use of natural resources'. GSGSSI wish to demonstrate to the World how it is possible to run a sustainable resource.

The Habitat Restoration Project had received £250,000 from Defra. Phase 2 is planned next year. Norwegian experts will be visiting to continue discussions of the reindeer cull, also planned for next year. As the reindeer were introduced by the Norwegians, they will also be removed by them.

Built Heritage: next year sees the centenary of the Grytviken church.

Nigel Haywood agreed to take questions from the floor:



HE Nigel Haywood addresses the Spring Meeting.

Gustav Ellingsen: Any effect on South Georgia from Argentina yet?

NH: No, but need to be aware of any likely SG 'stunt'. Nothing politically aimed at SG.

Bruce Mair: Are there measures in place for the possibility of oil spills causing degradation to habitat?

NH: FI/SG have the highest possible environmental impact assessment open to the world to view. Compare with Argentina who did not publish their EIA.

BM: Even so, if BP managed to spill oil in Gulf of Mexico, how will all the minor companies in the FI manage such an event?

NH: At this exploratory stage it is not possible to cause oil spills.

Marathon Government

A fit and competitive team!

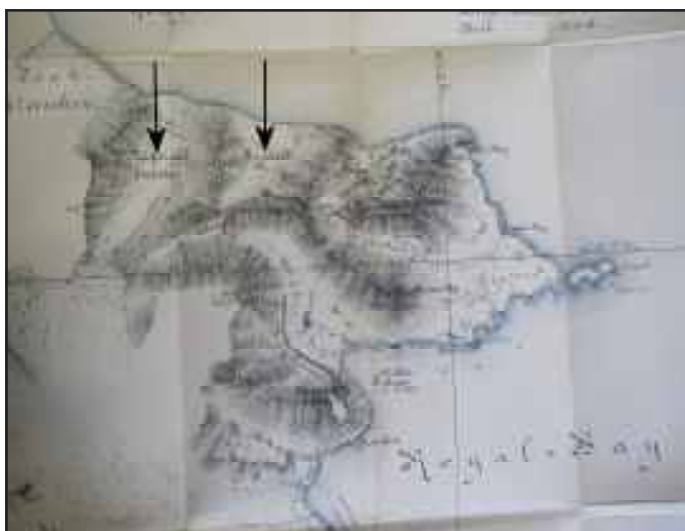


Mixing business with pleasure (?), the Commissioner, Nigel Haywood, and Chief Executive, Martin Collins, competed in the Oslo Marathon. They came 301st and 99th respectively. They also discussed reindeer eradication and the krill fishery in more relaxing circumstances.

The First Christmas Tree on South Georgia



The picture shows the members of the International Polar Year (IPY) 1882/83 expedition to South Georgia celebrating Christmas with a Christmas tree. The IPY expedition was stationed in Moltke Harbour, Royal Bay, and was the first high-calibre scientific research expedition to South Georgia. Results of their scientific studies (e.g. geomagnetics, astronomy, meteorology, oceanography) were published in a 550 page report and this report is still an interesting source for all kinds of information related to South Georgia. For example they mapped the glaciers in the Royal Bay area. When I checked whether some of the names they gave to glaciers are still in use on modern maps, I could see immediately that the Forster Glacier has disappeared and the Dr Nachtigal Glacier has declined significantly.



Dr Nachtigal and Forster Glaciers arrowed. The station is on the south side of the peninsula.

The excellent expedition equipment also included state of the art photographic apparatus. One album, with the earliest photos taken on South Georgia, was located a couple of years ago in an archive and its content was

published in 2007. The bottle that can be just made out on the left side on the table could be an earthenware Schnapps bottle. Pieces of similar earthenware bottles found at Moltke Harbour are now in the South Georgia Museum's collection.



Remains of an earthenware bottle from Moltke Harbour. Now in the South Georgia Museum.

When I was a child I saw my grandfather filling glasses with Schnapps for visitors from this type of bottle. I think 130 years ago the IPY members had a chance to warm up a bit by having a few glasses from this earthenware bottle.

If you take a closer look at the Christmas tree on their table you can see a photo in the middle. I have enlarged the photo in the tree and can identify the person portrayed: Dr Georg von Neumayer the most important proponent of the IPY expedition. Two years ago I came just a bit in contact with him when I was visiting one of my brothers living in Neustadt an der Weinstrasse. He is a medical superintendent in the local hospital. While I was waiting for him I walked to the cemetery behind the hospital (they obviously pursue an integrated concept) and discovered an impressive memorial (see picture) which turned out to be the memorial for Dr Georg von Neumayer who, I learned, was born in Neustadt. It is interesting to see on the Christmas picture that the expedition members thought of him on Christmas Eve on a remote island in the South Atlantic.



Memorial to Dr Georg von Neumayer, who conceived the idea of international co-operation in scientific observation and was co-founder of the First International Polar Year.

Albert-Friedrich Gruene

Who shot Roland and Bambi?

With the rat and reindeer eradication programmes in full swing, the editor's request for articles reminded me of earlier attempts at reducing the numbers of these 'invasive species' that were doomed to failure. It might prove useful for me to relive where we went wrong.

First, there was the Great Grytviken Rat Hunt. Major Tec Gurung of the 7th Gurkha Rifles was a resourceful person. As commanding officer of the garrison, he decided something had to be done about the invasion of rats.

Orders were duly posted. The incentive was one can of beer per dead rat. The British troops attached were slightly thirstier than the Ghurkha infantry platoon and greatly incentivised.

When darkness fell the operation commenced. The 'Molly' tractor was used to uproot nests and provide the illumination. Smoke grenades were employed to flush out the little bleeders. The enemy was engaged in various skirmishes, but our casualties were mounting. Twisted ankles, smoke inhalation, several 'missing in action', but no one had been run over by the tractor . . . yet. Still no dead rats and no free beer, not that it could be called that any more. We were beginning to pay a heavy price. Increasingly desperate measures were employed, all to no avail. It had now become a face-saving exercise. We had to get at least one. Eventually a rat was cornered. There were a great many spectators, all offering advice. An NCO not so much commanded the action as choreographed the amusement.

'Right, you get ready with the ice axe. You shine the torch. When I jump he'll go that way, so thwack the sod as he comes past.' The executioner took his role very seriously as evidenced by the massive two-handed back-swing that felled the hapless onlooker standing behind him. In the ensuing riot the rat made good his escape.

But this sorry tale does not hold a candle to the earlier story of the Governor's Christmas dinner. I think it was 1990, so the main players will know who you are. A top-secret military telex was received. Decoded it was from CBFFI (Commander British Forces Falkland Islands) to Major Peter Krazinsky, commanding the Grenadier Guards then manning the garrison at King Edward Point.

'I'm having the Governor to Christmas Dinner and I thought it appropriate to have some South Georgian Venison. See what you can do, Old Boy.'

Now Peter was the coolest of the cool, but even he was jumping at this one. He had done a tremendous job of this posting and this really would be the icing on the cake, possibly the ticket to permanent promotion. A careful operation was planned with a meticulous timetable. The best sniper from the recce platoon was briefed and a section despatched to the Barff Peninsula. The deer was duly shot and one of the troops, an ex-butcher by trade, jointed it all professionally and packaged it hygienically for the freezer.

A week later we received a frantic message: 'Venison thrown overboard. Thought it was beef that had gone off. Can you get another?'



The major plans his campaign.

A Royal Fleet Auxilliary vessel was due to leave at dawn next day, arriving back at the Falkland Islands a few days before Christmas. It was the last possible chance. A night party was scrambled to the Barff once more. We saw flares going up, and listened to the radio traffic as they hunted all night. At dawn the bedraggled party returned just before the transport sailed. There was no time for jointing. Guttled, with the head and legs removed, it just fitted into a large freezer.

I shared in Peter's joy that despite challenges:

the Grenadiers had prevailed.

However, had he known that mysterious forces were afoot he might not have rested quite so easily. The police in the Falkland Islands at the time were certainly on their toes. First was the Great Port Stanley Heroin Bust where half the Fisheries Department was locked up on the nod of a demented cook off of a Danish freighter who thought Stanley was the nexus of a global drugs conspiracy. Next came the Great Port Stanley Pornography Bust. This also ended in tears but not from the accused. The implausibly-named Jimmy Hendix ran the Stanley photographic club. A spoof video without even any nudity fell foul of the law (enforcers). Locals and ex-pats lay awake at night waiting for the knock on the door. Who and what would be next? All of the primary school banged up for an international banking conspiracy, or senior legislature staff for apple-scrumping?

The police deserved a break when a call from the 'feds' (their military police counterparts at Mount Pleasant) presented the chance of a good collaring.

'Yes. We spotted a carcass being washed down up here.'

'Looks like a patrol might have shot a cow for some light entertainment.'

'Not good for military-civil relations and we don't want to be accused of a cover up, so we thought we'd hand over the case to you.'

The boys in blue galloped off to MPA arrested everyone, confiscated the 'cow' and burnt it.

'Right you lot. What's been going on here then . . .?'

Crag Jones

Shackleton's autograph



The South Georgia Association has presented an original signature by Ernest Shackleton to the South Georgia Museum. The Commissioner Nigel Haywood handed the small frame containing the signature to Sarah Lurcock (SGHT Director SG) who accepted it for the South Georgia Museum collection.



The signature was in the collection of Ricky Chinn, who died recently. He was the first BAS Base Commander at King Edward Point. The Grytviken caretaker sold a number of items from the whaling station to the men at KEP and Ricky also collected a flensing knife, ship's clock and navigation lights which will also soon be making their way to the Museum.

It is not known where the signature came from but it is likely that it was in an autograph book.

Gearing-up for Phase 2 of Habitat Restoration

Readers of this Newsletter, and attendees of the Association's AGM, will know that Phase 1 of the South Georgia Heritage Trust's Habitat Restoration project was carried out in early 2011. I am relieved and delighted to be able to report that no signs of rats or mice have been seen in the areas treated (some 50 sq. miles centred on Grytviken) since baiting took place, and that consequently Phase 2 will commence as scheduled in early 2013. It is still too early to claim total success for Phase 1, but I think we can reasonably assume that the general methodology was indeed successful, and that any rodents remaining are likely to have survived by virtue of some strange, atypical circumstances. We remain vigilant, and will continue to search for rodent evidence in the Phase 1 area, but there are no good reasons to delay treatment of the rest of the island.

The good news about the (lack of) bad guys is matched by equally good news about the good guys. Most birds proved unsusceptible to the cereal bait pellets, and the few species which did suffer losses (mostly skuas, pintails and sheathbills) bounced back in the first breeding season after the work was completed. Again, we must remain vigilant, but the panel of experts that advised SGHT on the sustainability of non-target mortality following Phase 1 has recommended that Phase 2 should go ahead essentially unaltered.



Stromness from the air. Bait will be spread by hand in the whaling stations to ensure every nook and cranny is covered.

With just 100 days to go before fieldwork starts, all preparations are on track. The 25-strong team has been selected, the 200 tonnes of bait is on its way from the United States and two containers of equipment and supplies are also wending their way towards South Georgia. The two original helicopters have been refurbished, and a third similar one has been purchased to provide the necessary capacity. This operation is, after all, ten times larger than any previous eradication attempt, and the only one spanning more than one season of work.

The plan is that BAS RRS *Ernest Shackleton* will be chartered for three weeks to carry the helos, gear and

supplies to the island, and for its helideck to be used to fly 800 loads ashore. We will be using some 14 Forward Operating Bases, each capable of taking a tented village as far away from marauding fur seals as we can manage. Having a fur seal or, worse, an ellie flattening your tent in the middle of the night is unlikely to make for a restful sleep.



Truckloads of stores are assembled for shipping South.

Once the supply ship has departed, we start baiting as rapidly as weather permits, and we just keep going until the target areas (everything to the west of the Phase 1 area in 2013, everything to the east in 2015) have been treated. This may take as little as six weeks. It may take 10 weeks. Quite how and when we are taken off the island at the conclusion of the work has yet to be worked out....

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Tony Martin, Project Director

Marine Protection for South Georgia

In February 2012, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands declared a large Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the waters surrounding the islands, designed to ensure the protection and conservation of the region's rich and diverse marine life, whilst allowing sustainable and carefully regulated fisheries. The MPA covers over a million square kilometres, making it one of the largest areas of protected ocean in the world. It includes several no-fishing zones, including all of the area within 12 nm of South Georgia, Clerke Rocks, Shag and Black Rocks, as well as the area within 3 nm of the South Sandwich Islands. Bottom trawling is prohibited within the entire MPA to protect its highly diverse seafloor communities, and long-line fishing is restricted to depths greater than 700m, to protect juvenile toothfish.

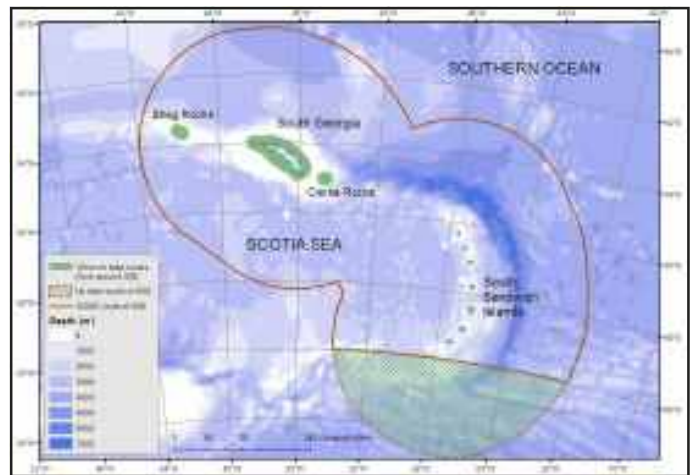
Following the British Antarctic Survey's April 2012 workshop, we will now consider what types of additional spatial and temporal protection might be required within the MPA to give further protection to unique and rare species, areas of high biodiversity, and reference sites for scientific research.

Potential measures of the proposal by the workshop include closure to krill fishing of the southern South Georgia shelf and Shag Rocks shelf, and all areas within 12 nm of the

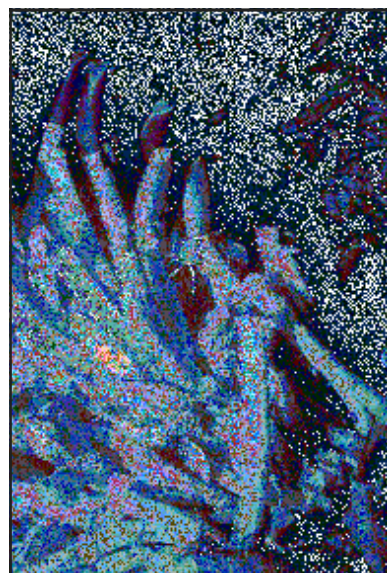
South Sandwich Islands. Potential measures to protect the seafloor include closing a number of seamounts and other sensitive areas to bottom fishing.

These proposals were presented at the annual SGSSI stakeholder meeting held in London in September 2012, and a formal consultation process is being undertaken to obtain feedback from scientists, the fishing industry and any other interested parties, on the full range of options under consideration. The consultation closed on 2 November, and the Government is expected to make an announcement in early 2013 on the establishment of further measures for protection within the MPA.

Susie Grant (British Antarctic Survey)



Strange creatures, like these pogonophores, will benefit from the Marine Protected Area. The Pogonophora or beard worms live in tubes, often around hydrothermal vents (see NL 22).



Large numbers were brought up in dredges by the *Discovery* Investigations scientists in the 1920s. The tangled masses of worms were laughingly assigned to the family Gubbinidae ('gubbins' being a contemporary colloquialism for 'objects of little or no value; rubbish') and shovelled back into the sea. It is said that only in the 1950s did the Russian marine zoologist A.V. Ivanov realise that they were an entirely new section of the animal kingdom and name them Pogonophora.

The second blue-winged teal on South Georgia

The second blue-winged teal on South Georgia

It was the 22nd of July, I had been for a ski around Grytviken for the afternoon and slowly made my way back to base along the track. There the usual Antarctic terns, kelp gulls, giant petrels and South Georgia pintail were feeding in the fading light. Among the pintails, dabbling in the shallows, one duck appeared to be slightly different. It did not really catch my attention, but I registered that it had a pale patch behind its bill. I carried on making my way back to base, not being able to get a good view in the dull conditions.

Two weeks passed before I spotted it again. This time the light was good. I could distinctly see that it was not a species of duck I had seen here before, or in the Falkland Islands either. I skied as close as I could, and with my compact camera took a few snapshots in the hope of being able to identify it later.



The blue-winged teal (extreme right) among South Georgia pintails.

Eventually, I was able to turn my attention to the odd duck. With the help of some photo adjustments I managed to get my snapshot reasonably clear, and by googling South American ducks I found the most likely identification was a male blue-winged teal. I sent my photo to the GSGSSI office in Stanley and they passed it to Andy Black at Falklands Conservation. He confirmed my identification.

There has been only one previous sighting of a blue-winged teal in South Georgia. One was spotted near King Edward Point and the official requirement was that it had to be shot to confirm its identity. The ease of taking high-resolution photos with digital cameras has thankfully consigned this terminal approach to history.

The blue-winged teal breeds in mid to south North America and migrates south during the winter to the Gulf of Mexico, and as far as the West Indies and the Neotropics, reaching Peru and Brazil. Obviously this plucky duck got a bit carried away and headed further south than usual. Luckily, it discovered South Georgia, but whether it will ever get back to North America is another matter.

Alistair Wilson

President of Ireland presented with SG coin



The President of Ireland (right), Michael D Higgins being presented with a silver Shackleton coin by Jim McAdam on behalf of the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and Pobjoy Mint Limited. The President had just officially opened the 12th Ernest Shackleton Autumn School in Athy, Co Kildare, Ireland (Shackleton's birthplace). He expressed his delight and pleasure at receiving the coin and he had spoken widely of the endeavour and spirit of Sir Ernest Shackleton in his opening address.

From the archives



Probably never published before, this photograph by Frank Hurley shows dead and decaying whales in King Edward Cove. It was taken part-way between the whaling station and the cemetery. As well as the decaying flesh on the shore, several carcasses are floating in the cove.

In 1914, the rotting whale carcasses, collected for oil, was cast adrift. The meat and bone of the skrotts were then processed into oil and 'guano' (meatmeal and bonemeal) aboard a 'skrott factory'. This was the three-masted sailing ship *Ems* which anchored in King Edward Cove. In 1914, when *Endurance* was at South Georgia, *Ems* was late arriving. The situation was made worse by the machinery

at Grytviken breaking down, while fresh carcasses continued to be brought in.

Shackleton's men compared Grytviken unfavourably with the Salvesen's factory at Leith Harbour where the entire carcass was processed and the atmosphere was tolerably fresh.

Can I have a gun, please

It is not every day you walk into an army officer's office or the local police station and ask if they have a gun you can have. But nor would I have predicted that, through my work for the South Georgia Museum, I would help dig the grave of a long dead polar explorer (Frank Wild) or clean 13 loos in a day!

So why did I need a gun? Well, as part of the revamp of our display on the military, I had arranged for one of the Royal Marines who defended King Edward Point during the Argentine invasion to donate his uniform. Here I hit a problem, we needed a mannequin to display the uniform. Our Royal Marine Bob is 5ft 10in. Well, you try finding a mannequin under 6ft 4in! To complete the effect I was on the look-out for the sort of gun Bob would have used. In his foxhole at KEP he had been using a light machine gun, or more specifically a L4A2 LMG Bren. But I am not fussy: an L1A1 SLRs (the standard British Self Loading Rifle) which most of the other men had would also do, but where to get one?

We made enquires at a couple of military museums in the UK, and I asked various military contacts if they knew anyone that could help, but drew a blank. Then, when travelling south back to South Georgia via the Falkland Islands, it occurred to me that there may well be a suitable gun available there. One of the higher ranking officers in the Falkland Island Defence Force had grown up on South Georgia. So I steeled myself and walked into Major Peter Biggs' office to pose the question. 'Peter, do you have a gun you could let me have?' He did not think so, but suggested I go and ask at the Police Station; maybe they would have one spare. So have I found one? Well, no luck so far, but I am still hoping someone will be able to help. So....have you got a gun I can have?

Sarah Lurcock



Three caught in avalanche

The short piece of track between King Edward Point and Grytviken is prone to both rockfall and snow avalanche. Indeed, the magistrate William Barlas and a Mr O'Sullivan were caught there by a snow avalanche in September 1941. Barlas died after the cascading snow from a big fall the night before pushed them into the water. O'Sullivan survived.

These days, the people living and working at KEP through the winter undertake training in how to move safely in the snowy conditions. And once the winter snow comes, they wear avalanche transceivers when skiing and walking in the mountains. This is a device that allows them to be tracked by radio if they get buried in snow. This winter, Base Commander James Wake, who is fieldcraft-trained, conducted the winter training, taking people out for practical lessons in winter travel. This included learning to assess avalanche risk using snow pits, and how to locate and recover people who have been caught in an avalanche. The training can be fun, for instance practising ice axe arrests on the steep hillsides.

After a big new snowfall everyone can be confined to base for days until the slopes above the track are no longer an avalanche risk. The risk is monitored daily by using 'avalanche pits' to assess the stability of the snow pack. Deep trenches are dug around a metre square section of snow. Then a skier stands and jumps on the exposed block to see if the snow shears in one of the lower layers.



Checking snow layers

On July 31 this year, the first assessment pit showed no cause for concern. So a party of three set out to check further along the hillside. They were caught by a slab avalanche and carried them 20m down the hill. One of the skiers ended up very close to the water's edge but quickly freed himself. Another was partly buried but with assistance from the other two was soon rescued. None were hurt, but three skis and other equipment were lost.

Later that day snow probes were used to locate some of the missing equipment and a metal detector was sent from the Falklands to assist finding the rest.

Someone else who experienced avalanche on this hillside was weather forecaster Danny Borland in the 1960s. He was caught one morning when making his regular walk from KEP to the whaling station to brief the whaling captains on the day's weather. It was dark and an avalanche swept him off the track into the icy waters of the bay. Apparently, he struggled out and carried on to do his briefing before returning to KEP to change out of his still wet clothes!

Sarah Lurcock



The large tabular iceberg off Cumberland Bay seen from Maiviken.

Recording Louise—photos needed

Although devastated by fire, enough of the hulk of Louise is left to make it worthwhile to record details the remaining structure. I am in contact with marine historians in Maine, where the ship was built as the Jennie S. Barker in 1869.

A start has been made by taking photographs of the hull structure and measuring timbers at the waterline, but I am also looking for photographs taken of Louise before she was burnt. There are plenty taken of the bow from the shore., so I need photos taken from offshore, on the deck, up the mast and below decks.

All photos appreciated. Send to my address on p.12.

Bob Burton



Katie Murray , Curatorial Assistant at the Museum, measuring timbers at low tide.

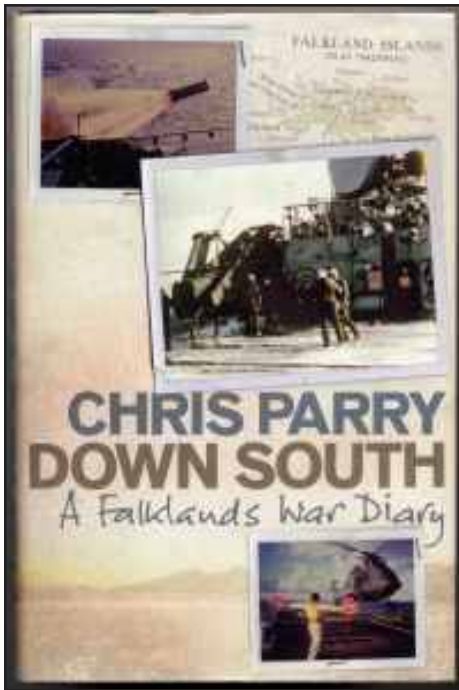
Image taken from the MODIS satellite in September over unusually clear skies . The large iceberg to the north broke off the Ross Iceshelf in 2003.



Down South – A Falkland War Dairy

By Chris Parry

Published by Viking. 327 pages, 59 photographs.
Hardback. ISBN: 978-0-670-92145-4 . £20.



Chris Parry was the Flight Observer of the Wessex III helicopter, known as 'Humphrey', on the destroyer HMS *Antrim*. Just as the vessel was completing an exercise off Gibraltar, in late March 1982, she was called southwards as part of the task force sent to recover the Falkland Islands and South

Georgia following the Argentine invasion at the beginning of April. The vessel and 'Humphrey' were involved in some of the essential major events of the campaign, both in South Georgia and the Falklands.

A history graduate, Parry appreciated the importance of first-hand accounts of historic events, and of recording them as soon as possible before too many distortions in recollection set in. His discipline in keeping a diary, and the decision to publish it in an almost unaltered format, makes for a compelling narrative that draws the reader along day by day as the events unfold. Interestingly, he believes that the daily recording of the events was a cathartic exercise that helped him avoid the psychological trauma that can affect those involved in long and intense situations. As well as the expected major events, we gain an insight into the lesser events that made up the day-to-day life on board, which flesh out the story and bring it to life.

On the journey south we join in the preparations for battle; the complex logistics that are constantly changing as plans develop. The routine exercises in fire fighting and damage control gain urgency when the protagonists know that the routines may soon be needed for real. On arrival at South Georgia, the SAS insertion onto the Fortuna Glacier in appalling conditions, and their rescue the next day in worse blizzard conditions that caused the two accompanying helicopters to crash, make compelling reading. Landing an overloaded helicopter (eight passengers on top of the normal crew of four) on a moving ship and then going back for a further 12 men was an amazing feat. All credit goes to Parry then for the

amount of detail in his write-up at the end of what must have been a very long and exhausting day. He does not go overboard with flowery prose, which makes the narrative all the more impressive.

Parry came up with the idea to search for the Argentine submarine *ARA Santa Fé* by thinking through what it would most likely be doing. He persuaded his superiors this was feasible and sure enough 'Humphrey' locates and depth-charges the submarine, disabling it for the duration of the war. This success allowed ships to operate closer to South Georgia and retake the Island in relative safety.

Later, when the ship was operating around the Falklands, 'Humphrey' played a major part again, landing the first of the SBS prior to the main landing at San Carlos.

In late May, after Argentine air raids over San Carlos damaged *Antrim*, the ship withdrew to South Georgia to make repairs. 'Humphrey' too was damaged. The descriptions of the immediate reactions of those on the scene during an air raid when a crewman was badly injured make us realise how big a deal an event is that might only warrant half a sentence on the evening news. There is a lot more behind '... and one man injured' than one normally considers.

Back in South Georgia HMS *Antrim* acted as a guard for troopships and repair-ship operations in the shelter of Cumberland Bay.

Running through the book are a number of threads in addition to the main action: his relationship with family at home, and the problems caused by the lack of easy communication; the life on board ship with the various supply issues such as the lack of fresh food. We witness the excitement at the arrival of fresh onions, juxtaposed by the excitement of depth-charging an enemy submarine. There is humour too: a pipe 'Nine-o'clockers: Tonight's delight salmon and caviar' announcing the evening snack, followed shortly after by 'correction to my last – pilchards'; and a wry observation that on the day that they were nearly destroyed by a bomb made in England, they were fed corned beef made in Argentina.

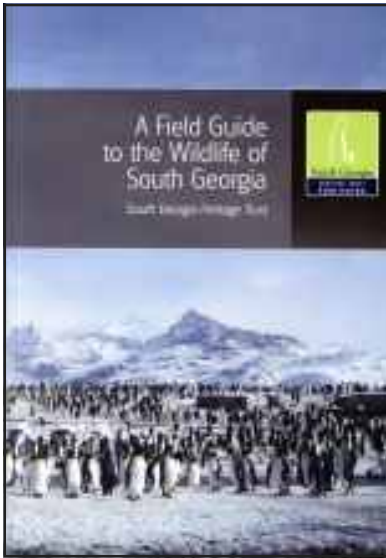
At the end of June, once it is over, at least for HMS *Antrim*, the journey back and a return to the north, home, and normality is documented with an interesting sprinkling of analysis as the author has time to mull over lessons learnt from the campaign.

There is plenty here for every reader: military aspects of the battles; details of life on board a navy vessel at war; the excitement of battle and the incredulity at how badly the Argentines treated their own people. It all adds up to bring a depth of understanding to the maritime events of 1982 and nicely complements other books that describe the more shore-based aspects of the campaign. It has a useful glossary of military jargon and a brief chronology of the Falklands War.

Pat Lurcock

A Field Guide to the Wildlife of South Georgia,

Edited by Robert Burton and John Croxall. Published by South Georgia Heritage Trust. 200 pages, 307 colour photographs, 3 maps. Softback. ISBN 978-0-9564546-1-4



This is an excellent field guide; small enough to fit into a decent-sized pocket or day-pack, comprehensive enough to provide the information that a visitor to South Georgia might need to identify and learn about its wildlife.

The book starts with a concise account of South Georgia's principal features and history with respect to its wildlife. This is

followed by species accounts of the birds, mammals, invertebrates and plants found on the island and in the surrounding seas. The bird accounts begin with the penguins, and for each species note its distribution, identification and behaviour, plus brief notes on its status and where it can be seen on South Georgia. Albatrosses, petrels and related species are dealt with next. This group can be difficult to identify in the field, especially from the deck of a moving ship. An excellent feature of the guide is the use of multiple photographic images of a species, and others with which it might be confused, in different plumages and from above and below, but made to appear as if in a single photograph. This should greatly facilitate the identification of several similar species of prions and petrels.

The accounts illustrate several species which occur as vagrants, having been seen at South Georgia between 2 and 20 times. Among these are several land birds which make what can only be a one-way journey to the island with the prevailing winds. I recall being in my study hide at Dartmouth Point in 1977 while making observations of elephant seals. A barn swallow appeared flying over the seals while trawling the air for flying insects. It seemed so natural, yet bizarre at the same time, as was the observation of a cattle egret perched on an elephant seal at King Edward Point in the same year. The bird accounts end with a list of accidental species, which have been recorded at South Georgia once only, and unconfirmed sightings.

The section on the seals of South Georgia is straightforward and is followed by accounts of the cetaceans of the surrounding seas. Here also use has been made of composite photographic images of different species to aid identification. There are also some painted illustrations, which will definitely help with the often difficult task for non-experts of identifying whales and dolphins in the water.

The accounts of birds and mammals will satisfy the wildlife identification needs of most visitors to South Georgia, but the guide is comprehensive and also covers invertebrates, particularly insects, and plants and fungi. The section on plants is particularly welcome. The plant communities are readily visible and accessible to visitors, contain some beauties in miniature which reward close inspection, yet tend not to feature in the available popular literature on the island.

Overall the quality of illustrations and the text are of a high standard. The guide should be a 'must have' for any visitor to South Georgia.

Seamus McCann

Obtainable from the SGHT for £17.95 plus p&p.. Online shop at www.southgeorgia.absolutewebhosting2.co.uk/, or from John Wiley & Sons Ltd, New Era Estate, Oldlands Way, Bognor Regis PO22 9NQ.

You can still help to save South Georgia's birds (and insects) from Rodent Invaders.

Go to www.sght.org/sponsor-a-hectare

£90/USD 140 frees 1 hectare of rats for birds to return to breed without their nestlings facing a grisly death .



The South Georgia Association newsletter is produced twice a year, in April and November. Contributions should be submitted, at least once month before publication, to the editor: Robert Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW. Email: rwburton@ntlworld.com