South Georgia Association Newsletter

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Spring Meeting & AGM will be on May 22, 2015

South Georgia pintail. The ducks are benefiting from the removal of rats and are breeding successfully at King Edward Point.

The Commissioner, Colin Roberts, addresses the AGM.

The 12th Annual General Meeting, 16 May, 2014
Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London.

The SGA Annual General Meeting was attended by a record 81 members and guests who included three ex-Commissioners: Richard Ralph, Alan Huckle and William Fullerton. The new Commissioner, Colin Roberts, joked that the collective name for a group of Commissioners is a 'plume' - from the plume of feathers on the uniform hat.

The following members of the Committee attended: David Drewry (Chair), John Owen (Treasurer), Robert Burton (Newsletter Editor), Andy Rankin (Website), Fran Prince (Secretary), Bill Block, Dave Fletcher, Bob Headland, David Rootes and Alexandra Shackleton.

David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the Commissioner Colin Roberts; ex-commissioners William Fullerton, Richard Ralph and Alan Huckle; Jane Francis, Director of BAS; Alison Neil on behalf of the South Georgia Heritage Trust; Scott Davidson, South Georgia desk officer, FCO; and Kjell Tokstad from Øyas Venner.

Apologies were received from: Bjørn Basberg, John Chester, Tom Clarke, John Croxall, Inigo Everson, Patrick Fagan, Robert and Brenda Faulconbridge, Sarah Greewood, Martin Hampar, Elaine Hicks, John Killingbeck, Ron Lewis-Smith, Michael Norman, Deborah and Gawain O'Connor, Stephen Palmer, James Perowne, Paul Rodhouse, John A Smith, Phil Stone, Charles Swithinbank, David Tatham, Debra Taylor, Wilf Vevers, Harald and Hedel Voss.

Colin Roberts (centre) with Richard Ralph (left) and William Fullerton (right).

The minutes of the Twelfth AGM held on 17 May 2013 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 Chair reported on the previous year's activities.

Events included the 2013 AGM with the talk given by Bernard Stonehouse, and a joint lecture with Friends of SPRI given by Bob Headland on invasive species in subantarctic islands: 'The Good the Bad and the Ugly'.

SGA Initiative Funding had been provided to assist with the Oral History Project to record Nigel Leader-Williams (BAS scientist working on reindeer 1970s).

Sarah Greenwood has set up a SGA Facebook page, and PayPal has been introduced for payment on-line.

The committee had been discussing the objectives and engagement of the Association under the Quo Vadis? paper written by David Drewry.

Bob Burton and Bob Headland attended the annual FCO Stakeholders meeting, keeping SGA linked with fellow organisations; Alexandra Shackleton and Bob Headland had attended the Antarctic 100 meeting. Bob Burton had attended the SGHT Cultural Heritage meeting on behalf of SGA.

SGA is sponsoring a reception at the Plymouth 100 event run by the Devon and Cornwall Polar Society.

A one-day conference 'Shackleton's Legacy' is planned in November 2014 jointly with Friends of SPRI to examine the achievements of Shackleton and his men, and demonstrate the subsequent development in leadership skills, Antarctic science and expedition techniques.

Membership

Bob Headland reported on behalf of Sarah Greenwood. There are 262 members from 18 countries.

Treasurer

John Owen had provided a summary of accounts in the last newsletter, which had been audited by Keith Holmes. The association currently has a balance of £20,000, some of this represents subscriptions received in advance. The current income is £3000-£4,000 and covers the cost of producing the two newsletters and the spring meeting.

JO asked the meeting for ideas on using £10,000. Bruce Mair commented that the money should be used and invested in the membership.

Initiative Funding

The funding is open to all members and to the wider South Georgia community, and is an opportunity to fund or assist South Georgia projects.

Newsletter

Keith Holmes was thanked for contributing funds to allow the newsletter to be printed in colour. Bob Burton was pleased to have received plenty of material for the newsletters. There is a plan to pilot digital newsletters distributed by email; this will be advertised in the November issue. A volunteer is needed to compile an index of the newsletters.

Website

Andy Rankin thanked Sarah Greenwood for producing the Facebook page. Both the website and Facebook need new information. AR requested photographs to update existing pictures.

Message from HE The Commissioner

The meeting welcomed the Commissioner, HE Colin Roberts, who reported on South Georgia issues despite being in office for only two weeks.

Reports from other organisations

Alison Neil, CEO of SGHT, reported on the Habitat Restoration Project. There was good news following the recent monitoring on the north-west of the island, where baited detection devices had been set up. There had been no sign of rats or mice from the Phase 2 baited areas. A control check had been made at an un-baited area at the Barff Peninsula. SGHT is now sufficiently confident to go ahead with Phase 3 baiting in 2015. Support is still needed to fund the operation.

More South Georgia pipits are being seen at previously baited areas, though no sign yet of nesting. There are a good number of pintail and a return to usual numbers by skuas. South Georgia is now an example for this type of habitat restoration and other organisations are asking for advice. SGHT thanked SGA for supporting the project. SGHT has plans for heritage work in the future at South Georgia. They are pleased to have appointed Sarah Lurcock as Director at South Georgia.

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, Norwegian Friends of the Island, reported on the anniversary tour of 142 members to Stanley, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. 82 were from Great Britain, Germany, US, Denmark, Sweden, China. They were pleased to welcome Martin Collins and Richard Harris on the ship at a reception at Stanley. King Harrold V sent a message to the expedition on Christmas Day. Members mostly had whaling connections, and were of high average age! He expressed his pleasure at attending the SGA AGM and hearing directly on developments on South Georgia.

Election of committee members and officers

The Committee stood aside and Keith Holmes, former SGA Treasurer and current Auditor, kindly agreed to take the Chair. Keith thanked the Chairman and committee for work with SGA over the past year. The re-election of the committee was proposed by Dave Brook and seconded by Allan Wearden. The meeting voted in favour of all to be re-elected and approval of co-optees by a show of hands.

Chairman:	David Drewry
Secretary:	Fran Prince
Treasurer:	John Owen
Membership Sec.:	Sarah Greenwood
Newsletter Editor:	Bob Burton
Members:	Bob Headland, Dave Fletcher, Andy Rankin, David Rootes, Alexandra Shackleton, Ron Lewis-Smith, Bill Block, Paul Rodhouse, John Stafford Mills
Corresponding Members:	Jan Cheek (Stanley), Sarah Lurcock (KEP)

Any other business

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm and was followed by a lecture by Bruce Pearson 'Trailing the Albatross'.

Fran Prince, Secretary

Inspecting Bruce Pearson's paintings.

Message from The Commissoner

The meeting was addressed by Mr. Roberts, who had only been in post for just over two weeks. He said being Commissioner for SGSSI was the 'best job in the world' which he does along with the 'other best job: being Governor of the Falkland Islands'. Early in his address he praised the 'fantastic' GSGSSI team in the Falklands and welcomed the appointment of a new Attorney General to reinforce the team on the legal side. He said the mission he has been given in his new role is to uphold sovereignty; to have a high quality of governance; and to preserve the natural and other heritage of SGSSI whilst allowing access. He said SGSSI is a 'fragile territory in many ways and very fragile economically' and that the real challenge for the Commissioner is to make sure governance is transparent, open to challenge and accountable.

The issues on his mind as he starts are to make sure GSGSSI stayed in touch with what was going on in the rest of the world, as things are changing incredibly fast. He cited that, contrary to his preconceptions, the way science is conducted in Antarctica is changing, with scientists making shorter field trips to 'grab some data' and that these shorter-term scientists had the potential to damage the environment, whereas tourism was generally well-managed with lower negative impact on the environment.

Giving an account of the activities of GSGSSI during the past year, Mr. Roberts stressed that he wishes to make sure SGSSI is the best managed natural environment and fishery in the world. Among the main achievements of SGSSI, he listed the second phase of the Reindeer Eradication Project. The remaining few animals will be removed in the months ahead. He also highlighted the good news from the recent monitoring of the baited area from Rat Eradication Phase 2 which showed no sign so far of any surviving rodents. He said GSGSSI were "enormously appreciative to SGHT for undertaking the rodent eradication as GSGSSI would never have been able to fund such a project." He said recent changes to fishing licensing, such as giving licences for two years, gave greater certainty to operators. He also highlighted the success of the GSGSSI partnership with Norway to access new money and new partners to undertake some heritage projects like the whaling station laser surveys and work on heritage buildings.

As to the future, Mr Roberts said he did not have a lot to say on this yet. However, a Legal Advisor will be appointed to 'strengthen the legal side of things'; there are political challenges that need to be dealt with and also the exciting Shackleton centenaries ahead. He finished by saying GSGSSI will be discussing the future with stakeholders such as the SGA and he wants more people to get involved and take care of South Georgia. To this end he asked the audience to 'please feel GSGSSI is an open organisation and to engage with it'.

Twitter

GSGSSI have a new twitter feed "@GovSGSSI". News snippets are posted several times a week.

Monitoring changing glaciers

Much has changed in the world since Ernest Shackleton and his group of forlorn explorers crossed the rugged mountains of South Georgia Island nearly 100 years ago in search of rescue. One only needs to look to Gold Harbour on South Georgia Island's north-eastern coast to see an example of how the world's landscape is being modified by climate change. Frank Hurley, the official photographer of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, captured the majestic Bertrab Glacier in 1914, its vertical calving face peering into the clear waters of the southern Atlantic Ocean. Today, from this same vantage point, it is hard to imagine this scene, as the glacier has retreated about 1 km, revealing a large rock cliff over which the Bertrab used to flow.

What started as an isolated project for James Balog in 2005 to capture photographs of glaciers in Iceland for a story in *The New Yorker* magazine has grown into a much larger project coordinated by the Earth Vision Trust (www.earthvisiontrust.org). Our organization is dedicated to inspiring a balanced relationship between humans and nature through innovative visual exploration of our changing environment. Central to this work remains the Extreme Ice Survey, which has installed more than 30 time-lapse cameras at glaciers in Greenland, Alaska, Iceland, the Alps, the Himalaya and, most recently, on both South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. These camera systems (each consisting of a Nikon digital camera and timer powered by a solar panel and battery) capture one photograph every hour of every day, regardless of rain or shine. Month after month, year after year, these

cameras create a visual repository of the glaciers' extent and flow.

Cameras monitor glaciers in Drygalski Fjord.

During March 2014, our team visited South Georgia aboard Lindblad Expedition's *National Geographic Explorer*. Prior to our arrival, we spent nearly two weeks exploring the Antarctic Peninsula, cruising among majestic icebergs and landing on beautiful beaches filled with more penguins and seals than we had ever seen before. During this time, we successfully installed seven time-lapse cameras at four different locations, all under sunny skies, with warm temperatures and calm winds. Having worked on the Peninsula before, I knew such wonderful weather is both rare and elusive (I spent seven days tent-bound waiting for a plane to arrive on the Larsen C Ice Shelf in 2009). This had me particularly apprehensive about our forthcoming work on South Georgia, whose reputation for harsh conditions possibly exceeds that of even the Antarctic Peninsula.

During our first day of work, what started as overcast skies with occasional rays of sunshine, quickly progressed into fast moving squalls that obscured the peaks along the 6-mile long Drygalski Fjord. Before long, a wind-whipped deluge of mixed precipitation engulfed us, such that by the end, our Gore-Tex outerwear looked as if we'd gone for a protracted swim in the fjord. We managed to install two camera systems at the head of Drygalski Fjord, overlooking the dramatic calving front of Risting Glacier.

This coming November, we will be returning to South Georgia to revisit and maintain the previously installed cameras and also to install additional cameras at the Bertrab Glacier in Gold Harbour and at Nordenskjöld Glacier, both on the north-east coast. These cameras, along with the seven cameras we installed on the Antarctic Peninsula in March 2014, are part of a concerted effort to document the dramatic and ongoing change in the Southern Hemisphere.

We encourage you to learn more about our project and to follow along during our trip this November at www.earthvisiontrust.org or on the Facebook pages for both the Extreme Ice Survey and Earth Vision Trust.

Dan McGrath

Tourism supports conservation and research

Whatever your views on tourists visiting Antarctica and the unique islands surrounding it, tourism is a prominent and legitimate activity in the Southern Ocean. Many readers will be familiar with the sight of a cruise ship or yacht in the bays at South Georgia, or have enjoyed being tourists themselves. This article introduces you to a side of tourism that you may be less familiar with: its contribution to science, conservation and, ultimately, the continued protection of those places we cherish in the Southern Ocean.

The vast majority of commercial tour operators working in and around Antarctica are members of The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO). Many of IAATO's members visit South Georgia. They must apply to the Government (GSGSSI) for a permit to visit and visitors are charged a landing fee that contributes to government income. During the 2013-2014 season, GSGSSI reported that around 7000 tourists visited the islands, to wonder at their splendour, wildlife and history, and perhaps do a bit of shopping as well. IAATO enjoys working closely with GSGSSI and also the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT), exchanging knowledge and information that facilitate safe and sustainable management of the islands.

With the South Georgia rat eradication project entering its third and final phase this season, the risk of introducing pest, or non-native, species is of huge concern, not least to IAATO members and their passengers, who have contributed over $650,000 to the South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project since 2010. The success and spread of introduced species at South Georgia are a warning that this can be (and has been) repeated in other areas.

IAATO and GSGSSI work together to implement strict biosecurity protocols to prevent the introduction of non-native species by visitors, which start long before the traveller lands at South Georgia, or further south, through pre- departure information in several languages such as IAATO's 'Don't Pack a Pest' leaflet. Briefings are also given onboard ship. IAATO has commissioned research to identify which methods and biocides (for washing boots and equipment) are most effective at preventing transmission of alien species, which sets a precedent among the wider Antarctic community.

Expedition leaders on cruise ships also act as 'rangers', informing GSGSSI of any unusual events at landing sites. This worked well in late 2004 when a crew from an IAATO yacht reported a suspected outbreak of avian cholera amongst the chinstrap penguins at Cooper Bay. Within hours the site was closed to prevent any potential spread of the disease, and procedures for dealing with the discovery of a high mortality event were incorporated into the IAATO Field Operations Manual.

IAATO members and their guests have regularly made donations of cash or science equipment for national and non-government science programmes and conservation efforts such as Save the Albatross, the South Georgia Heritage Trust, the Antarctic Heritage Trust, the World Wildlife Fund and Oceanites. In 2014, this amounted to over $600,000 alone.

A further role taken on by IAATO is transport of staff and equipment to research stations or field sites for both government and non-government programmes. On average since 2010, twenty trips are made each season in support of this. Several of these projects have been reported in past issues of this newsletter.

Long-term monitoring and assessment is the key to environmental conservation, so IAATO has been supporting projects with this mission. One such project is Penguin Lifelines, a collaborative project involving Oceanites, Oxford University, Stony Brook University, Zoological Society London and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. IAATO operators help Penguin Lifelines by carrying researchers to sites along the Peninsula and South Georgia to set up time-lapse cameras that monitor penguin and fur seal populations over several years. The results will provide a picture of how populations might be changing, particularly in response to climate change. Currently there is one camera at South Georgia, which has been successfully monitoring the gentoo penguin colony at Maiviken for several seasons. GSGSSI has granted licences to install cameras at 14 further sites with nesting gentoo, chinstrap, macaroni and king penguins. Dealing with the amount of data generated by the cameras presents a real challenge to the researchers, so Penguin Lifelines uses a clever web-based citizen science project called Zooniverse that allows the public to help extract data by clicking on individual penguins. To take part, go to www.penguinwatch.org

Another project is the Antarctic Site Inventory (ASI), coordinated by the non-profit organisation Oceanites, Inc, which also collabor ates with Stony Brook University and Penguin Lifelines, particularly at South Georgia. For 20 years, IAATO members have assisted Oceanites with sending out an annual troop of experienced 'penguin counters' to around 150 sites across the Antarctic Peninsula, collecting data that may detect possible changes in flora and fauna and help determine how best to minimize or avoid environmental impact caused by human activity. The ASI is enormously useful to both IAATO and policy makers. This season, IAATO members will carry researchers to South Georgia to carry out king penguin and fur seal censuses for Oceanites, which hopes to establish a greater scientific presence on the island.

As IAATO's sea-based members carry their visitors to wonderful places, their ships and yachts also function as 'vessels of opportunity'. For example, expedition staff and passengers routinely record marine mammal sightings and behaviour for forwarding to academic institutions; they check names and locations of fishing vessels for illegal activity and, for over a decade, tourist vessels have been accumulating large amounts of depth soundings on their travels, often in areas that remain poorly charted.

Killer whales make themselves available for counting.

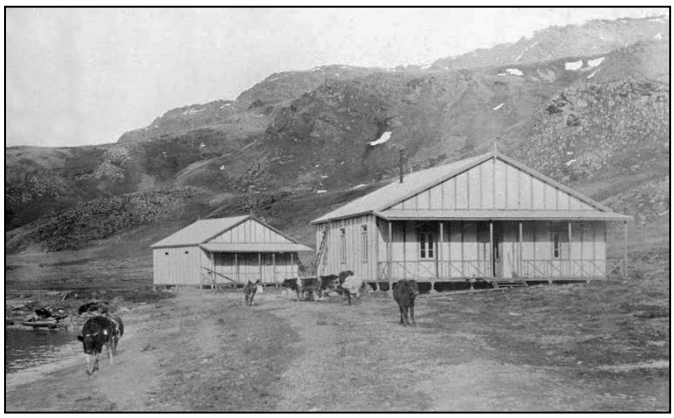
Determined to make these historical data available to all, IAATO, with their northerly sister the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), have found a crowd-sourcing system that allows the sharing of files and provides a valuable add-on to official, but sometimes sparse, navigational charts. In addition, an IAATO yacht has recently proved that it is possible for a small, non-government vessel to conduct official hydrographic surveys and produce cost-effective charts. This is of huge benefit at a time when government-sponsored survey activity is declining in Antarctica due to financial pressures.

Protecting the rich natural and heritage resources of sub-Antarctic islands, the Southern Ocean and the Antarctic continent itself, requires collaboration on a grand scale by the whole community. This includes all visitors, from the tourist marvelling at their first view of an albatross, to the seasoned scientist. They, plus governments, tour companies and academic institutions, all agree that these natural resources should be conserved. This remarkable consensus is unique to the polar world and is the key to ensuring that these regions are sustainably managed for generations to come.

Amanda Lynnes
IAATO Operations and Communications Assistant

The last matinée at Grytviken

Not much has been recorded about the Grytviken Teatersalen, built by Capt. C.A. Larsen in 1905, the year after the land station commenced operations.



The Teatersalen before 1910, with cattle. The hospital, where Shackleton's dog handlers stayed in 1914, is behind it.

According to Ian Hart in his book *Pesca.,* Larsen was very aware that his men occasionally needed some respite from the daily toil of killing and processing whales. He instigated readings and theatrical performances in the station mess room as a form of basic entertainment. A special house – the *forsamlingssalen* or workers' assembly room - which doubled as a bunkhouse, and was locally known as the Teatersalen, was built for this purpose; there was also a small library in the building. Theatrical costumes were purchased to enable plays to be performed, and other entertainment was encouraged.

Hart adds that "Reports that 'dancing girls' had been brought down for further entertainment are probably exaggerated but, in June 1909, Larsen wrote to his wife that a 'theatre-company had arrived at Grytviken to give some relief from the monotony of winter on South Georgia' ".

Hart also mentions that 'In the mid-1920s, the Teatersalen, or labourers' meeting house, was used as a bunk house to accommodate the workers and plant construction crew on the extension to the hydro-electric dam but continued to serve for general social activities. After the second world war, when additional accommodation had been erected, it was used for airgun shooting competitions and to house salvageable parts of equipment and storage for the station motor boats.' He makes similar comments accompanying photographs which show the Teatersalen in his book of Edward Binnie's wonderful photographs in *Antarctic Magistrate: a life through the lens of a camera*".

In the early 1960s the building was used to store bales of glass fibre insulation for the proposed huge whale meat freezer plant, the foundations of which were laid nearby, but progressed no further.

The Teatersalen was located on the south side of King Edward Cove, between the piggery and the island's first hospital (later moved inside the station). More recently its location was between the 1960s foundations of the proposed whale meat freezer (just east of the former piggery and hen houses) to the west, and the hydro-electric plant to the east. Until its demise, it was an historically important relic of the beginnings of the whaling station.

In the early days of BAS occupation at King Edward Point no one paid much attention to the structure. However, during a brief visit to the island in 1967, and on several subsequent visits, I inspected the building and was fascinated to notice numerous pictures of scenic views and of young ladies pinned on the timber walls. One room contained the remnants of books and magazines, tables, chairs, etc., but other rooms were empty, as far as I can recall.

Sometime later, on Saturday 31 January 1981, at 14.30 hours to be precise, while en route from KEP to one of my research sites close to the Gun Hut near Horse Head, the heavens suddenly opened, accompanied by strong gusts of wind, just as I was emerging from the south side of the station.

I took shelter in the former, now rather leaky, theatre. I was rather wary of the creaking roof and walls when the sheets of corrugated iron lifted with each gust. After about an hour, as the rain and wind intensified and showed no sign of easing, I headed back home to Shackleton House.

That evening the gale reached 70 knots (80 mph), according to the Met. Department's anemometer.

The following day the weather was fine, sunny and calm, so I set off to resume my ecological foray. On passing around the south side of the cove, my keen eye detected a change in the industrial environment. The Teatersalen was no longer in the vertical position it had held for the past 76 years. Only a few hours after I had taken shelter in it, it had completely collapsed in a pile of shattered timber and twisted corrugated iron.

The collapsed Teatersalen on 1 February 1981, following the storm.

Moral: Don't be overenthusiastic about going to your workplace. Sometimes it's better to work at home.

Ron Lewis-Smith

From the archives:
Disappointed whalers – an unfortunate swap

Southern Whaling & Sealing Company, Ltd.

South Georgia 26th July 1919
S/S Woodville. Stromness Harb'r

Captain Anderson
Leith Harbour
South Georgia

Dear Sir
I am informed that, on your opening the cask presumed to contain Brandy consigned to you & landed on your Station from my ship, it was found to contain vinegar.

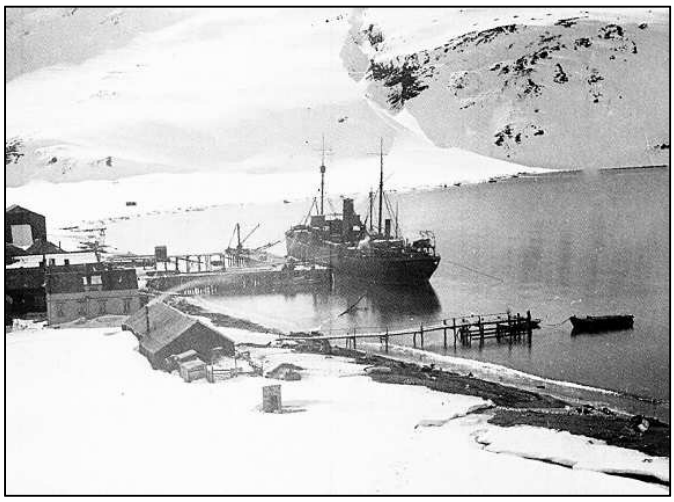
On my making enquiries into the matter it would appear to me that your cask of Brandy has been landed in Gough Island, on my way to South Georgia, in error for a cask of vinegar consigned there.

I much regret this mistake & the only way I can suggest to remedy it is for me to reship the cask of brandy on my calling at Gough Island on my return to Cape Town and to send it down from Cape Town by one of our whalers coming down to South Georgia for the season.

Probably you will be coming over to Stromness in the course of a few days to go into the matter of your loss of provisions &c owing to the fire in my cargo.

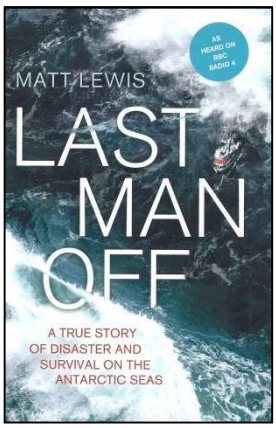
I am Sir
Yours faithfully
H P Goodwin (signed)
Master
S/S. Woodville

(It would be amazing if the cask of brandy was still waiting, untouched, at Gough Island. Ed.)



Woodville *at Stromness.*

Last man off: a true story of disaster and survival on the Antarctic seas
Matt Lewis. 2014. penguin-viking. Hardback ISBN 978-0-241-00278-0 £13.59. Paperback ISBN 978-0-241-00279-7



Matt Lewis recounts his experiences of disaster and survival as a government fisheries observer aboard the South African long-liner *Sudur Havid*, which sank off South Georgia in winter 1998 in atrocious conditions.

It is a remarkable book and all the more powerful for being told in simple clear language. The honesty and integrity of this harrowing account should be a lesson to all of us who go to sea and are responsible for those at sea.

The author recounts in candid detail the lot of the fisheries observer. Typically young and inexperienced (at least for a first trip), graduates are suddenly transported from the irresponsible joys of academia and first loves into the harsh world of a working fishing vessel. With the prospect of being alone, often for months at a stretch, they have to harden up quickly to a rigorous schedule and fit into an established crew, whilst also maintaining a professional detachment in the execution of their duties. It is a tough job on the best of vessels. But here the suspense builds as Matt's tale lists all the ingredients that could combine into tragedy. Uneasy but uncertain on how to proceed against established lines of authority and experience, all of this is stripped bare in the lethal realisation that the ship is going down and someone has to try to do something to avert certain death for everyone.

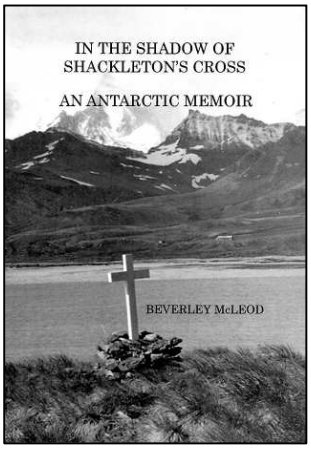
Lazy, selfish, incompetent lack of action among the senior officers led to the foundering. Despite the protestations of those trying to act, the arrogance of those responsible, and their wilful ignorance led to the vessel disappearing beneath their very feet. By the time their unbelieving eyes finally saw what was happening, it was too late. This and the then inevitable grim reality of the sinking, abandoning ship and desperate fight for survival is heart-wrenching and frightening. Scared and panicked, Matt summons the courage, dignity and resolve to do his best not only for himself but for the others as well.

Finally they struggle free of the vessel and drift in flooded liferafts. The will or any ability to live is being stolen into the mountainous freezing benighted seas. Those left alive do not even know if their final cry for help has been heard and even if there is a ridiculous hope of ever being found at night in such a storm. Those who survived serve as a testament to the decency, skill, determination and bravery of Captain Sandoval and the crew of the *Isla Camila* who somehow managed to find and recover them.

It is some consolation that as a result of this and other tragedies the Government has taken a lead in establishing the regulations, procedures and expertise to try and prevent them happening again. In the past, authorities simply had to accept de facto working practices in their struggle, with limited resources to get abreast of the industry. Vessels are now inspected at their home ports before sailing and are licensed to check seaworthiness and minimum standards of crew accommodation, health and safety.

Crag Jones

In the shadow of Shackleton's Cross
An Antarctic Memoir
Beverley McLeod 2014 OTCEditions ISBN 978-1-84986-031-4
396 pp. monochrome illustrations
Available from the website www.shackletonscross.co.uk



Beverley McLeod is one of a privileged handful of individuals fortunate to spend some years on South Georgia. In her childhood memoir *In the Shadow of Shackleton's Cross* she captures some of the wonder of the beautiful sub-Antarctic Island and describes it as seen through the eyes of a child. Having arrived at an early age in the late 1950s she was also able to describe some of the on-shore activities of the whalers. Whaling and sealing had been the reason the Island had been inhabited since the early the 20th Century but both industries were reaching their last gasp at the point at which Beverley moved there with her family. Like a number of Falkland Islanders, the family moved from the Falkland Islands to join the small community on King Edward Point where an administrator and a number of staff oversaw the licensing of the whaling industry.

The book includes descriptions of the majestic scenery, the stunning wildlife and the extremes of weather that will be familiar even to those with just the shortest experience of the Island. Seen through young impressionable eyes every detail seems to demonstrate the heightened consciousness that I too have felt when standing alone on Hope Point below the cairn and cross erected by Shackleton's men. The author's vivid recall of scenes and events has clearly been backed up by research and records a rare opportunity to experience life in isolated conditions.

The whaling stations and catchers were manned among others by Norwegians and Scots, including many Shetlanders. Many memorable characters feature in Beverley's account; they include the delightful Einar Strand, a tiny grandfatherly figure who was a skilled blacksmith, Eskedal the fierce-looking but kindly motor boatman, and the irrepressible 'Bonski'.

Sadly a cruel family drama was being enacted when the doors closed. Her father who was employed as a radio operator at King Edward Point was a controlling man with a serious alcohol problem which frequently led to violence. His gentle, long suffering wife, like so many battered women, forgave him repeatedly, and no doubt tried to believe he was truly remorseful and willing keep his promises. The young Beverley, bright and caring, was not so easily won over and found it difficult to understand why her mother stayed on and tried to hide her injuries. Only her father's fellow radio operator seems to have been aware of what went on and tried to help. The children quickly learned to recognise the signals and at least escape physical if not emotional damage. She also portrays starkly the way sensitive children try to conform to what they believe is expected of them and how mortified they feel when they believe they have failed. This element of the book is searingly honest and not a comfortable read but the reader has to respect the fact that it is part of the memoir.

Happily Beverley and her brother and mother, along with two younger siblings, escaped to better lives.

Jan Cheek

More on the South Georgia Polar Library

The question of what happened to the former comprehensive South Georgia polar library after it was taken to BAS HQ in 1982, with the announced intention of eventual return to the island, and its subsequent disappearance has been noted in earlier issues of this newsletter. A result has been several inquiries and indications of the whereabouts of a few of the volumes. The bulk of the books remain unaccounted for - and any information as to their fate (better still, the possibility of recovery) is still requested.

A copy of one book has appeared commercially: Roald Amundsen's *The South Pole, an Account of the Norwegian Antarctic Expedition in the 'Fram'*. This was listed in the latest catalogue from Glacier Books in Pitlochry. It is a two volume edition and the title pages have an ink stamp, 'Discovery Library', a second ink stamp on the dedication page reading 'British Antarctic Survey, King Edward Point, South Georgia, Lat 54 16 S, Long 36 30 W. An ink stamp on the front pastedown reads 'South Georgia' and is overstamped 'Withdrawn'. A final ink stamp on the rear pastedown reads 'South Georgia Polar Library'.

The book was apparently one of those purchased for the library in Discovery House around 1925 and it remained on South Georgia until 1982.

Details of any other sightings would be appreciated, fewer than 10% of the books are so far known - where might the remainder be?

Bob Headland

Ice-dammed lakes of Hindle and Twitcher Glaciers

The article by Bruce Mair in SGA Newsletter No. 26, in which he described the history of Gulbrandsen Lake, revived my memories of visits to two other ice-dammed lakes elsewhere in South Georgia. During the early 1970s, whilst working on a geological survey of the north-east coast of the island and its hinterland, I came across lakes marginal to the east side of the Hindle Glacier (a southern tributary of the Ross Glacier, flowing with it into Royal Bay) and the south side of the Twitcher Glacier. At the time, during the 1973-74 field season, I was accompanied by 'Dog' Holden, who provides a relative scale in the figures. Details of the lakes were included in articles published in BAS Bulletins numbers 40 (1975) and 44 (1976), both now available online via the BAS website.

Bruce's account sent me off to Google Earth to see how 'my' lakes were faring. I couldn't see any sign of the one beside the Hindle Glacier and it is not marked on the 2004 South Georgia map published by BAS (Sheets BAS (Misc) 12A and 12B, 1:200k), although on that map the side valley that the lake occupies is shown. But the lake was a fairly small feature so may not show up too well on satellite imagery, particularly if frozen over and snow-covered. The lake had not been noted during Duncan Carse's South Georgia Survey Expeditions in the 1950s, with the 1958 map arising from the expeditions' work (Directorate of Overseas Surveys, D.O.S. 610, 1:200k) showing its vicinity as being 'Inadequately Surveyed'. Nevertheless, the array of relict shorelines up to 35 m above the lake surface (Figure 1) suggested that it has had a long history of fluctuating water level. When visited, in December 1973, there were large blocks of ice perched on some of the lower shorelines (Figure 2) so a draining event must have taken place not long before.

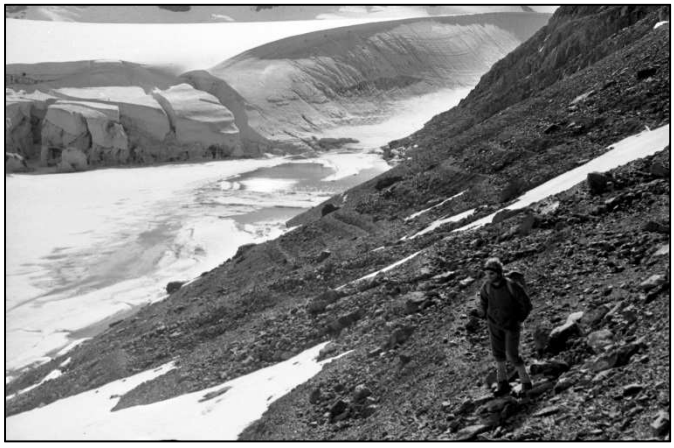


Figure 1. The higher series of old shorelines abandoned above the Hindle Glacier lake. Photograph courtesy of BAS/NERC: Archive reference ES3/GY95/rev/3.7.

Figure 2. Blocks of ice marooned on the lower shorelines of the Hindle Glacier lake.

The Twitcher Glacier lake survives but is no longer ice-dammed. Both the Google Earth imagery and the BAS (2004) map show the lake separated from the glacier by a terrestrial barrier that is probably a combination of rock and moraine. The lake was discovered and mapped as ice-dammed by the 1953-54 South Georgia Survey Expedition, and shown as such on the 1958 map, and was 'rediscovered' early in 1955 by members of the British South Georgia Expedition. Writing about the latter expedition in his book *Glacier Island,* George Sutton described '[a] huge hidden lake, dammed at its seaward end by a narrow tongue of ice and land, and previously unseen and unsuspected'. My visit was in late January 1974, at which time the north-west side of the lake was only partially ice-dammed, with two sections of ice barrier separated by a 'nunatak' of rock and moraine that formed the central part of the lake's margin (Figure 3).

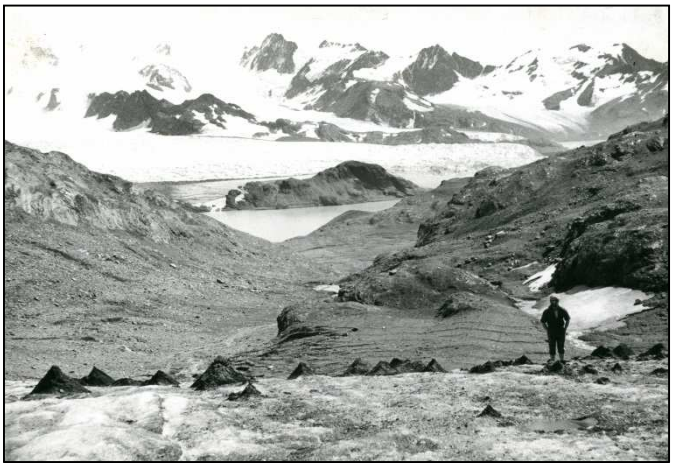


Figure 3. Looking down from the south-east onto the Twitcher Glacier lake with its far shoreline partly ice-dammed and partly formed by a rock 'nunatak'. The wasting ice field in the foreground is peppered with dirt cones and has retreated from a series of small moraine ridges. Photograph courtesy of BAS/NERC: Archive reference ES3/GY95/rev/6.4a.

The glacier's ice-front was level with the north-east margin of the lake and drainage was no longer sub-glacial

but was instead via a channel cut in bedrock and over a waterfall directly into the sea. Relict shorelines were preserved up to 60 m above the surface of the lake, with the lowest, at about 4.5 m above lake level, so extensive and well-preserved that it could only have been abandoned for a short time (Figure 4).

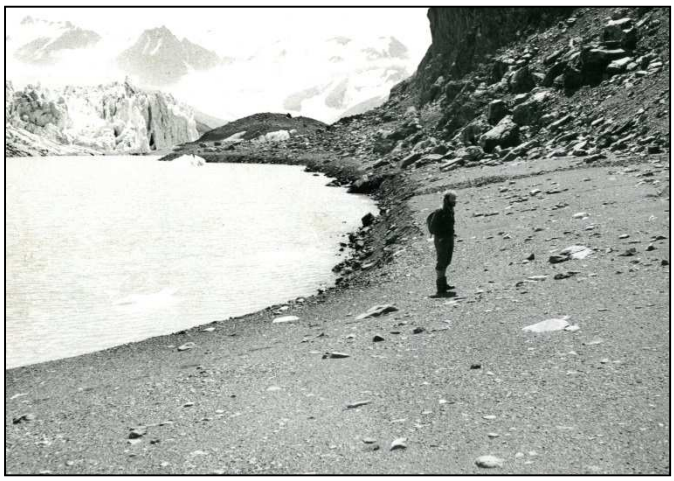


Figure 4. An extensive shoreline terrace abandoned about 4.5 m above the surface of the Twitcher Glacier lake. Photograph courtesy of BAS/NERC: Archive reference ES3/GY95/rev/6.4b.

Comparisons of the position of the lakes with the extent of their associated glaciers from the 1958 map, my 1973-74 observations, and the 2004 map and Google Earth imagery illustrate the scale of glacial retreat on South Georgia's north-east coast. The Hindle/Ross Glacier front in Royal Bay appeared to have changed little from the 1950s to the 1970s, but since then has retreated, on the south side at least, by almost 1 km. The southern side of the Twitcher Glacier snout may have retreated by as much as 1 km between the 1950s and the 1970s, with the abandonment of the lake's well-defined 4.5 m shoreline as one of the consequences. Since the 1970s the southern side of the Twitcher Glacier has clearly retreated away from the lake, which is no longer ice-dammed at any point, and the position of the glacier's snout appears to have retreated by about 200 metres.

Phil Stone

Reindeer update

Just after the finish of last year's programme to eliminate the Barff reindeer herd, a few animals were spotted, having avoided the attentions of the marksmen. Earlier this austral summer a RN ship made a helicopter reconnaissance and spotted 15 reindeer. Marksmen will now return to the island in December and January to shoot the remaining animals.

New Shackleton biography:

Ernest Shackleton By endurance we conquer
Michael Smith.

A new biography of Shackleton was published recently and it will be reviewed in the next newsletter.

The publishers describe the book thus:
'Shackleton is one of history's great explorers, a tenacious and charismatic personality who became a dominant figure in Antarctic discovery. His incredible adventures on four expeditions to the Antarctic have captivated generations. He was a restless adventurer from an Irish background with acclaimed leadership skills. But he was also a flawed character whose chaotic private life, marked by romantic affairs, unfulfilled ambitions and failed business ventures, contrasted with celebrity status as the leading explorer. Persistent money problems left his men unpaid and his family with debts. This first comprehensive biography in a generation draws on extensive research of original diaries, letters and many other publications. It brings a fresh perspective to the heroic age of Polar exploration which was dominated by Shackleton's complex, compelling and enduringly fascinating story.'

Obituaries
We regret to report the deaths of three significant South Georgia stalwarts.

Charles Swithinbank MBE

Charles Swithinbank died on 27th May 2014 after a short illness at the age of 87. He was President of The South Georgia Association until 2012 and the Association benefitted greatly from his interest, experience and enthusiasm; he always contributed significantly to Committee deliberations as well as general meetings. South Georgia was a special part of the world for him. He had perhaps not visited it many times but he felt it a magical place imbued with the spirit of Shackleton, and he did much to promote an interest in the islands. He was born in Burma in 1926 and saw service as a junior officer in the Royal Navy in the latter years of World War II.

Charles' interest in the Antarctic region consumed the whole of his career, indeed his life; the very title of his semi-autobiographical book *Forty years on Ice* attests to this passion! He was a pioneer in polar glaciology. He broke new ground in several ways - the study of ice shelves, radio echo-sounding and satellite interpretations. His meticulous early work on the ice shelves adjacent to Maudheim base on the Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition (1949-52) provided an exacting template for others to follow, and his PhD from Oxford! He continued that interest in ice shelves for much of his professional life, investigating the Ross Ice Shelf when he was at Michigan University.

Charles Swithinbank (right) with David Petrie and Bob Vere: first radio echo-sounding for measuring ice thickness, 1967. Photo courtesy of SPRI. BAS Archive G95/1/1/CWMS BAS 40.

When he returned to the UK Charles joined the British Antarctic Survey as head of the Glaciology section (later Ice and Climate) based initially in the Scott Polar Research Institute. He promoted the use of radio echo-sounding to study the thickness of glaciers and he flew many missions as pilot and scientist in the Antarctic Peninsula. Whilst the Peninsula attracted much of his attention, South Georgia was not neglected. He encouraged glacial geomorphology studies by the Universities of Aberdeen and Durham and as part of the International Hydrological Decade (1965-74) he instituted in 1970-71 an important project on South Georgia to study the Hodges Glacier, and he visited the island on several occasions.

It was in the mid-1970s that Charles' interest also developed in the emerging field of satellite remote sensing. Over several decades his work on the glaciological interpretation of these images set new standards. Many who had become involved had a background in the satellite systems themselves; Charles' strength was that he could combine a wealth of practical experience of working on glaciers and ice sheets with the new technologies and he became something of a guru, so much so that Richie Williams of the US Geological Survey sought out Charles to produce excellent interpretive volumes for the USGS on Antarctica.

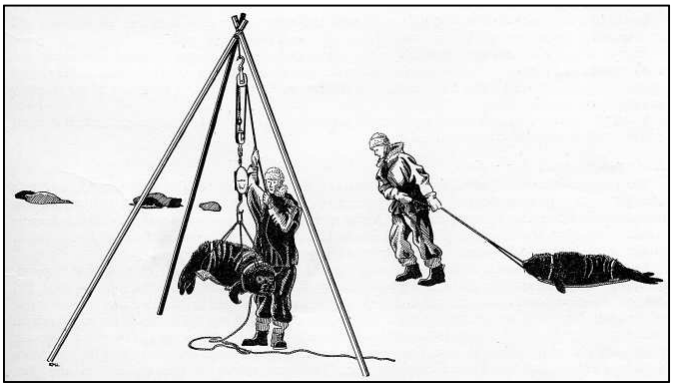
It is not possible in a concise obituary to set out his other many substantial roles in the polar world - the submarine profiling of Arctic sea ice, his trip on the *Manhattan* through the North-West Passage, and assisting with identifying blue ice runways which eventually became the springboards for commercial exploration in the Antarctic. Needless to say his contributions to these fields have been of great importance; his legacy is considerable.
Charles combined an easy-going personality, was quick to make friends, comfortable in many different and culturally diverse environments, the possessor of a keen, enquiring mind combined with a truly adventurous spirit.

David Drewry

Richard Laws CBE FRS

Richard (Dick) Laws died after a long illness on October 6th 2014; he was 88. He was born in Whitley Bay, Northumberland in 1926, went up to St. Catherine's College, Cambridge where he read Zoology and graduated with a First Class degree in 1947. Immediately thereafter he joined the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) and headed south to Signy in the South Orkney Islands, to become the new base leader, taking over from Gordon Robin. At Signy, Dick worked on the biology of elephant seals, developing an unsurpassed knowledge of these then commercially important large mammals.

Dick's association with South Georgia followed on from these early years at Signy. In 1951 he returned to sub-Antarctic waters and took over as Base Commander at Grytviken. He proved a most effective leader and placed the FIDS activities there on a new and much more effective scientific footing. He continued his work on elephant seals, which at South Georgia was more closely related to the then sealing industry.



Weighing elephant seal pups.

His research set the standards for much of the work that followed and his techniques for ageing the seals was innovative and masterful. He was able to demonstrate that the age of a seal could be determined by an analysis of the growth rings displayed in its teeth. This became a method adopted for many other mammals and was a significant contribution to later studies of population dynamics. His work at South Georgia was fundamental in assisting the formulation of new regulations and catch quotas for the sealing industry. It was an early and undeniably important lesson in conservation. The significant body of research that he published from South Georgia is an enduring testament to his insight and fieldwork expertise.

After South Georgia, Dick first joined the National Institute for Oceanography turning his attention briefly to whales and sailing to Antarctic waters once more on the factory ship *Balaena.* He then shifted his focus to large terrestrial mammals, working on elephants in East Africa.

In 1969 Dick Laws rejoined what was now the British Antarctic Survey as Head of Life Sciences. In this role his efforts led to the steady build-up of biological activity in

BAS especially on South Georgia and the station on Bird Island was reopened in 1972. It has proved to be one of the most important biological research sites in the whole southern hemisphere. As Director, taking over in 1973, Dick continued to take an active interest in South Georgia albeit at slightly greater arm's length.

The invasion of South Georgia in April 1982 was a critical time for BAS and for Dick who was in Antarctica at the time. The safety of staff was his primary concern, particularly when they were taken prisoner. However, as non-combatants they were transferred to Buenos Aires and shortly afterwards repatriated to Britain, much to his (and their!) relief. Following the conflict Dick put in train plans to re-establish a significant presence on South Georgia given renewed resolve, and money, by the British government to maintain an active presence in the South Atlantic and Antarctica.

When he retired as Director in 1987 he focused on his new role as Master of St. Edmunds College in Cambridge and worked tirelessly for its scholarly development.

There is no doubt that today's activity on South Georgia owes an immense debt to Dick's outstanding scientific research, his foresight in establishing new, long-term programmes there and his determination that the island should remain an important element in the BAS portfolio.

David Drewry

Lancelot (Lance) Tickell

Lance Tickell died on 10 June. Over several years, between 1958 and 1964 he led a series of expeditions to Bird Island to study the breeding biology of albatrosses. These ground-breaking studies laid the foundation for the remarkable research programme that was developed by BAS and which still continues.

Lance worked as a metman at Signy where he made a study of the Antarctic prion. He then set up a private expedition to Bird Island funded by the United States Antarctic Research Program (USARP). Two further summering expeditions visited Bird Island and in 1962 Tickell's albatross research at Bird Island was concluded with an 18-month, overwintering expedition, again funded by USARP and supported by British Antarctic Survey. The three-man team built three huts and wintered in the largest, Lönnberg House.

Lance made also two films *The Private Life of the Wandering Albatross* and *Home for the Wanderer* which were shown on BBC television. His main legacy is his monograph *Albatrosses,* published in 2000, the first modern comparative account of the albatross family.

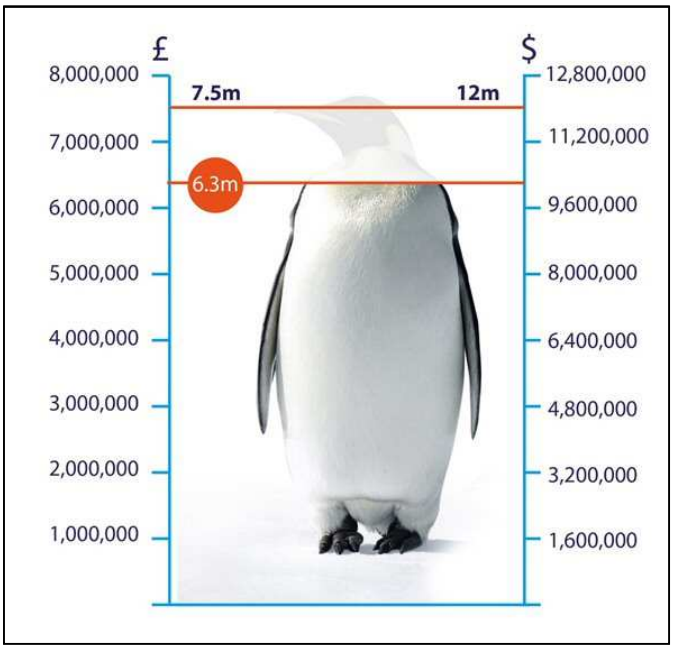
Bob Burton

Rat update

Very soon, on the 24th of January 2015, Team Rat will once again set sail from the Falkland Islands on the RRS *Ernest Shackleton* (ES) with 3 helicopters, 90+ tonnes of bait, 300+ drums of fuel and mounds of food and equipment. The ES will depot bait and fuel at eight locations from the Barff Peninsula to Drygalski Fjord. Once all of these Forward Operating Bases are set up, the team will wave goodbye to the ship and begin the task of baiting the final third of the island still infested by rats.

Following monitoring work in the Phase 2 areas earlier in the year, all the signs indicate that the baiting work in 2011 and 2013 did its job. Pipits have been seen in numbers in the areas treated, and in years to come they will be joined by the many petrel and prion species whose numbers have been decimated by rodents since the late 19th century. We are within shooting distance of raising all of the funds to pay for the project, as Percy Penguin below indicates.

SGA supporters have been incredibly generous to the Habitat Restoration project. Please help us to cross the finish-line and help us to achieve what would have been unthinkable a few years ago – a rodent-free South Georgia. Thank you for donating by sponsoring a hectare through the SGHT (www.sght.org) or FOSGI (www.fosgi.org) websites.



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Robert Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW. Email: rwburton@ntlworld.com