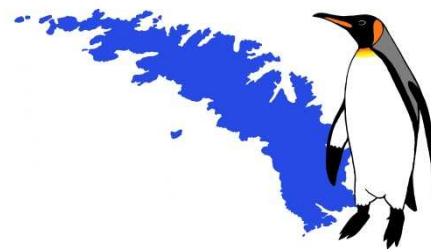


# South Georgia Association Newsletter

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**The Spring Meeting & AGM will be on April 29, 2016**



*Salvesen whalers at Leith Harbour. RW Vaughan*

## **The 14th Annual General Meeting, 22 May, 2015**

Held at the Royal Over-Seas League, London.

The SGA Annual General Meeting was attended by 58 members and guests, including the following members of the Committee: David Tatham (President), David Drewry (Chair), John Owen (Treasurer), Alexandra Shackleton, Robert Burton (Newsletter Editor), Sarah Greenwood (Social Media), Bill Block, Bob Headland, David Rootes and John Mills (Membership Secretary).

David Drewry welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Jane Rumble who heads the Polar Regions Desk at the FCO; the new Chief Executive of the GSGSSI, James Jansen; recent recipients of the Polar Medal, Sally Poncet and Pat Lurcock; Alison Neil and Tony Martin on behalf of the South Georgia Heritage Trust; Gustav Ellingsen and other friends from Øyas Venner.

Apologies for absence were received from nine members, including committee members Fran Prince, Ron Lewis-Smith, Andy Rankin and Paul Rodhouse. Dave Fletcher apologised that his train had been cancelled. Apologies were also received from the Commissioner, Colin Roberts, due to scheduling difficulties and Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner (Norwegian Friends of the Island), due to ill-health.

The minutes of the Thirteenth AGM held on 16th May 2014 were approved as a true record of the meeting (proposed by Bob Headland and seconded by Bill Block) and were signed by the Chair. 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 Shackleton Legacy meeting, which was well-attended and involved a fascinating programme.

The Chair thanked IceTracks for their financial support and Bob Burton for putting the programme together.

Having been asked to nominate candidates for the Polar Medal, the Association put forward the names of Sally Poncet and Pat Lurcock, both of whom were duly recognised and received their medals from HRH The Duke of Cambridge at Buckingham Palace on 21st May.



*Pat Lurcock and Sally Poncet at Buckingham Palace. Sarah Lurcock*

Earlier in the year the Plymouth 100 event was held, which was an engaging and entertaining event organised by the Devon and Cornwall Polar Society.

The annual South Georgia Stakeholder meeting took place in September with Jane Rumble at the FCO, which enabled us to keep in touch with the latest events and

news regarding South Georgia but also discuss the ways in which the Association can contribute.

A weekend event is planned in Edinburgh for the last weekend of October 2015, covering a number of issues and activities related to the Antarctic and South Georgia. Bruce Mair, who is organising this event, will provide more details (see below).

### **Membership**

John Mills reported on membership, stating that there are currently 263 members, one more than where we were this time last year. The association has 51 overseas members from 20 different countries.

2015 has seen 14 new memberships to date, with 27 names whose membership lapsed this year who have not yet renewed. An email will go to these in the coming weeks to encourage renewal. Initiatives will be pursued this year to encourage new members from the cruise and travel companies that feature South Georgia in their itineraries, plus companies that have an historical association with the island.

### **Treasurer**

John Owen reported that the Association retained a current account surplus of around £20,000, which he commented was rather large for a small association. He said that the committee would welcome further applications for Initiative Funding.

A question was raised from the floor on whether the aim had been for the Shackleton Legacy event to break even. John replied that there had in fact been a small surplus and that the Committee had discussed donating this (£700) to an albatross charity.

### **Newsletter**

Bob Burton gave an apology for the lateness of the latest newsletter distribution, due to a number of logistical reasons. He again reported that he was pleased to have received plenty of material for the newsletters and had persuaded the committee to allow him to add four additional pages (one sheet) to future newsletters so that more of the material could be accommodated for the benefit of members.

An index of past newsletters has been prepared, which will shortly be uploaded to the website.

There is a plan to pilot digital newsletters distributed by email; beginning with the next issue in November. Members will be given the opportunity to choose to retain a paper copy should they wish.

### **Website/Social Media**

Sarah Greenwood reported that new website page had been created where the Shackleton Legacy talks had been uploaded.

The Facebook page has recently been receiving four or five 'likes' a week and now has a total of 684 followers. Ways are being considered to persuade more of those 'likes' to join the Association.

Members were asked to contribute old photographs, details of events or videos about South Georgia that could be uploaded to the website. A question was asked on

whether slides could be used. They would need to be copied into an electronic format first.

A second question asked whether it was possible for members to post their own photographs. Members were advised that it would be better to send them to Sarah Greenwood so that she could upload images in groups.

The Association is in the process of setting up a Twitter account.

### **Message from GSGSSI**

Jane Rumble offered to say a few words about the South Georgia agenda in place of the Commissioner, who sent his apologies that he was unable to attend, together with his best wishes. Jane Rumble explained that she is Head of Polar Regions at the FCO, which covers the Antarctic and also represents the UK on the Arctic Council.

The rat eradication project appears to have been a major success and that it was believed that all remaining reindeer had now been culled.

The Island would soon be saying goodbye to the Chief Executive, Martin Collins, who would be succeeded by James Jansen, an appointment from DEFRA with previous experience working within the FCO on fisheries issues.

The Patagonian toothfish fishery has been recognised as the most sustainably-managed fishery in the world.

The GSGSSI has recently launched a consultation on its strategy document which will set the agenda for the next five years. The input of Association members and others was requested. Last time, the strategy was all about rats and reindeer. The current one seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that the biosecurity of the islands is enhanced. Members were asked to give their view on all the issues set out in the document and any others not yet included.

A question was asked about co-operation between the UK and Norway on South Georgia issues. An MOU was signed between the two countries in 2011. Since then the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has helped fund surveys of the whaling stations and special co-operation is due to continue for at least another three years. The Norwegians hold a similar annual South Georgia stakeholder meeting to that held in the UK FCO every September.

The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) exhibition of Hurley's photos of the Shackleton expedition will eventually go to Grytviken and Stanley. The RGS's Young Geographer of the Year theme for 2015 is 'Why does Antarctica matter?'

A question was asked as to whether the FCO would be holding a celebration of the Shackleton expedition. Plans are being formulated in conjunction with the RGS, details to follow.

### **Penguin City Event 30th/31st October, Edinburgh**

Bruce Mair said a few words about the forthcoming SGA event in Edinburgh, which will feature a number of South Georgia and Antarctic themes.

A whisky tasting event will take place on Friday evening to start the weekend. On Saturday, Edinburgh Zoo will host a series of half hour talks on a range of subjects, followed by a tour of the penguin area.

Dinner will be at Channings Hotel, where Shackleton used to live, which can cater for up to 70 diners.

The cost of the weekend is £65, which covers the whisky tasting, the Saturday programme and the dinner on Saturday evening. A flyer is available on the website.

#### Reports from other organisations

Kjell Tokstad, Chair of Øyas Venner, was sadly unable to be present due to illness, but Gustav Ellingsen, editor of the Øyas Venner magazine, gave an update on activity in Norway. Their annual meeting took place on 25th May. The association currently has around 300 members. The Grytviken church centenary cruise in 2013 went very well both financially and in terms of attendance, helping make many new connections. The stakeholder meeting that has taken place with the UK had been welcomed. Graveyard maintenance on the island has been a key recent project, as has scanning and digitally recording of old whaling photographs. A new website has been launched, but as yet is only in Norwegian. Øyas Venner is aiming to work towards catching up with the SGA in terms of its social media activity.

Alison Neil, CEO of SGHT, reported on progress with the Habitat Restoration Project, which had been a model of collaborative working. Although early signs of success were very positive, monitoring would still be required until 2017 to be sure that the island had been cleared of rodents. A habitat restoration conference is being planned for 2017 to enable lessons learnt to be disseminated.

Tony Martin of the SGHT showed some slides of the 2015 Phase III rat eradication work. Phase I and II had run in the north and the west from 2011 onwards. The overall operation was at least 10 times larger than any comparable project. Tony reported that pipits were successfully recovering already in the North-west. Images and video were shown of baiting activity and evidence of recovering birdlife in areas that had been baited earlier.

A question was asked whether the film crew were German. They were and the SGHT has yet to be notified of when and where the main footage will be shown.

A second questioner asked about collateral damage. Some collateral damage was inevitable with a project of this size, although the evidence strongly suggests that the birds most at risk are at least as abundant if not more abundant than they were before the baiting took place. Most SG birds are seabirds that rarely feed on land.

#### Election of committee members and officers

The Committee stood aside for the President, David Tatham, to take the Chair. David thanked members for attending and the Chairman and committee for their work on behalf of the SGA over the past year. The re-election of the committee was proposed by Keith Holmes and seconded by Bob Headland. The meeting voted in favour of all to be re-elected.

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

#### Any other business

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm and was followed by a lecture by Prof. John Smellie of the Department of Geology, University of Leicester, "*The South Sandwich Islands – the world's most remote active volcanic island arc, hostile to mankind but paradise for wildlife.*"

**John Mills, Membership Secretary**

#### Adventure Tourism

An oxymoron if ever there was one? On the other hand Amundsen wrote that 'adventure is just bad planning'. Today he might have returned to all his pioneering routes as an 'Adventure Company' superno guiding hordes of clients across the wilderness. Who knows? The world is a rapidly changing place. We struggle to even find a wilderness nowadays or know how to interact with it. Governments try to seek a rational way to manage this shrinking 'resource'. A key area of potential conflict is commerce and adventure.



*Peeling potatoes on a yacht. Adventure tourism? Skip Novak*

It is essential to realise and understand the distinction between these two principal types of expeditions:

1) A commercial expedition is one with clients who have paid a company to be guided on a route. The



companies research, choose and advertise the venue. They recruit the members and provide experienced guides to lead them. The company does nearly all the preparation and nearly all the decision making. It will decide what equipment is required and possibly provide much of it. Inevitably things have to be carried out to a framework, timescale and budget that benefit the company. They err towards the larger scale of economy. Safety margins should be high, objectives are constrained, the scope for spontaneity is limited and the outcomes more predictable.

2) The alternative, an adventure expedition, is a group of like-minded individuals coming together. They do their own planning, contribute funds, research and decide on an objective. They also do all the preparation and decision making themselves. Activities do not have to be so pre-determined. They can be flexible, responding to conditions, motivation and mood as necessary. Objectives are more ambitious, outcomes more uncertain and the risks higher. More is demanded of the participants and there is a greater freedom of response.



*Adventure tourists start on Shackleton's Crossing. Deirdre Galbraith*

Each type of expedition is a very different 'beast' that requires different and flexible management guidelines. It also has to be acknowledged that there are many grey areas. Examples are the long established client-guide relationships that allow a far more nuanced approach and the purist 'amateur' expedition that charters a professional yachting operation as the support vessel rather than sailing their own boat.

There might be a natural tendency for governments to favour the commercial venture because fewer risks are involved, things are easier to manage and they bring in more income. However their larger scale, frequency of return visits and visits to favoured wildlife concentrations all hold the danger of causing more disturbance and environmental disruption.

There is with the adventure expedition a more valid engagement overall that deserves greater freedom in its expression. The participants have invested greater effort getting there in the first place. Providing they conduct

themselves in a responsible manner they will, by sheer dint of their small size, one-off visit, to a possibly less visited location, cause less environmental disruption. Compared to returning commercial groups, the 'private' expeditions have less experience of the venue and potential ignorance of environmental and wildlife safeguards.

This is something to be guarded against. Good assessment at the application stage, briefing prior to the visit and compliance during it are all important factors, as should be appropriate sanctions for any infringements.



*Not your average tourism. Climbing on Mt Kling. Julian Attwood*

Commercial operations can help ensure compliance because of their presence and ability to report infringements by others. However great care has to be taken that this role is carried out in a responsible and constructive fashion. There is the temptation for overzealous misinterpretation of regulations in this respect to exclude 'independent' teams and enhance the commercial companies' monopoly over the 'resource'. Commercial companies and their clients have to accept that they will have less freedom and flexibility compared to the small self-organised independent teams. Equally, the latter must respect restrictions that apply to them and avoid elitist disregard for environmental safeguards that professional companies scrupulously adhere to.

Finally, there is the paperwork for which read 'the interesting nexus where lawyers, insurance companies and governments meet in a furious bout of 'défense du derrière' (bureaucratic morris dance?)'. The trick is of course to make sure you avoid a situation where all the boxes are ticked but this has little bearing on what happens on the ground. We have to win over hearts and minds to ensure real progress. First is the awareness and acknowledgement of the two competing strains of visitor, their aspirations and their real not supposed impacts. Large commercial companies may have the resources to satisfy any potential demands for formal Environmental Impact Assessments and Risk Assessments and might welcome the opportunity to profit from that advantage. Meanwhile the self-organised independent team is left with a very high bureaucratic hurdle that may not modify

real behaviour. It is hoped governments' temptation to use these blunt instruments can be avoided.



*Adventure tourism is becoming more varied. Skip Novak*

For South Georgia, the assessment of each expedition application has to bear in mind the spectrum of 'commerciality'. Is the strong independent adventure team really going to conduct itself in an environmentally responsible manner? Has the travel adventure company got guides who know their clients well? Are the clients experienced and currently active enough for proposed challenges? How resilient would either setup be to a crisis. Scenario upon scenario is interpreted according to these criteria along with all other pedestrian considerations: kit and caboodle, communications etc . . . There are many boxes that are only ticked after careful thought.

Something will go wrong sometime, whether by poor judgement, a mistake or sheer bad luck. If human beings want to do silly things in scary places, then they have to accept the responsibility that goes along with it. Hopefully the government will continue to allow people to exercise that freedom of choice.

**Crag Jones, Chairman, Expedition Advisory Panel**

### **Grytviken in East Yorkshire!**

Those of us who enjoyed the SGA weekend in Kingston-upon-Hull in 2011 may recall visiting The Deep, one of the UK's most successful Millennium attractions. Its vast tanks are home to a wide variety of sea life from drifting plankton to darting sharks and giant manta rays. Jellyfish add interest and colourful corals with their associated life give a tropical flavour. In 2013 it was decided to expand the range of experiences at the The Deep by introducing penguins. In March 2014 Hull received its first complement of Gentoos from Texas where they had been reared. The penguins are provided with 'ice floes', a diving pool, rocky beach and a nesting area. The visitor can view the birds at three levels including underwater.



The wildlife team at the Deep was keen to provide an interesting and original backdrop for the penguins. 'It would', said Colin Brown, The Deep's Chief Executive, 'have been simple but predictable to construct an icy, white background simulating the frozen South'. But that is not how The Deep operates; they wanted to create something novel and stimulating. Colin told me how they came up with the idea of having the Gentoos set against an abandoned whaling station on South Georgia - Grytviken. It was to be a theme of re-occupying the habitat over the ruins of the station. The post-industrial setting demonstrates how wildlife quickly and effectively re-colonises the terrain, once human activity ceases. Furthermore Grytviken with its Shackleton resonances creates a link to Hull. Many of the crew of both *Nimrod* and *Endurance* hailed from the City and its environs and Cedric Longstaff, the son of a wealthy Hull businessman, was instrumental in Shackleton's appointment to Scott's *Discovery* Expedition in 1901.



The Exhibit, which cost about £600,000, is masterfully executed and has created a vivid backdrop of Grytviken - the decaying buildings and the spectacular mountain scenery. It is a blend of artwork, 3D structures and artefacts. The air temperature is controlled to 10°C, the water at 8°C and there is a snow machine for periodic added effects! The staff looking after the exhibit, 'The



Penguins of Grytviken', has received training from Moody Gardens, Texas as well as Edinburgh Zoo.

The visitor learns about penguin biology, their role in the food chain of the Southern Ocean as well as contemporary problems, information about whaling, South Georgia, Shackleton and Grytviken in particular.

For more information go to: [www.thedeep.co.uk](http://www.thedeep.co.uk).

**David Drewry**

### Historical treasures from the Slop Chest



The Slop Chest is one of the oldest buildings in the Grytviken whaling station and during recent works it yielded fascinating historical treasures.

The government building team spent much of last summer working on the building which is behind the manager's villa (now the Museum). They were converting it from a workshop and store into a post office and a new exhibition area.

Originally, the Slop Chest had a counter at the front, with lots of storage shelves behind, and the whalers would go there to purchase everyday necessities like toothpaste, clothing and tobacco. One of the items, discovered tucked down the side of the eaves, was the hand-written ledger recording all the purchases between 1917 and 1921. Maybe it had slipped off a pile of old ledgers which were later cleared away and lost forever. I love how these 'lost' items become the very things that record our history. Visiting curator Dag Ingemar Børresen from the Sandefjord Whaling Museum, Norway, was able to translate some the entries and was particularly excited to see that some of the subjects of his studies, African whalers, were customers of the Slop Chest. In the ledger the whaler's name and the date were written over the list of what he had bought. Socks, dungarees, soap and much more were listed and the totals later tallied and taken off the men's wages.



*Jerome and Deirdre cleaning the Slop Chest ledger. SG Museum*

Other exciting finds included a couple of items that would have been sold in the Slop Chest: a navy blue work shirt and filmy-blue tobacco papers, items that had possibly slipped off a shelf or got lost under the counter. Time and the elements have had a deleterious effect on the items. The exposed outside of the shirt is filthy, but open it up and you can see it is brand-new, complete with a paper label showing it was made in Argentina.

The long job of cleaning these items started straight away. Curator Deirdre and volunteer Jerome spent hours gently brushing and hoovering dust and debris from the first few pages of the ledger. Despite making a good start, many more hours are needed to complete the process. The plan then is to put it on show in a small exhibition in the refurbished Slop Chest to show the building's original function. It will be joined by other items from the museum collection, like a seal skin hat that was bought at the Slop Chest and perhaps a toothpowder pot.

Viewed from the outside, the building now looks new. Inside, retaining old features, like the wood-clad interior and old electrical switch panel, and using lamp shades taken from a store shelf at Leith Harbour, have helped the building retain some of its historical feel. The remaining section of the old Slop Chest counter was also saved and now forms part of the new post office counter.

The first exhibition in the new exhibition area will feature a small selection from the forthcoming Royal Geographical Society exhibition 'Enduring Eye' which is based on the photographs of Frank Hurley, Shackleton's photographer on the *Endurance* Expedition.

**Sarah Lurcock, SGHT Director SG**



*Cattle egrets fly over King Edward Cove. Probably from South America, they are recorded on South Georgia most years. Tony Martin*

### Roger Huxley

Roger Huxley, who was the first honorary Treasurer of the South Georgia Association died unexpectedly on 5 September while on holiday in Russia with his wife Enid.

As First Secretary in the Falkland Islands 1990-1994, Roger was also Assistant Commissioner for South Georgia. He only visited South Georgia once but he

maintained a lively interest in events and when a fishery zone was established he became Director of Fisheries.

Born in 1939, Roger joined the Foreign Office as a communicator but he transferred to the mainstream and served in Athens and a number of third world posts – Jakarta, Abu Dhabi and then Mogadishu, where he was Head of Chancery. After his posting to Stanley, he and Enid (Niddy) returned to London before a final posting in 1995 as Administrator on Ascension Island – a job that enabled him to keep in touch with his many friends on the Falklands as they passed through.

When the SGA was established, Roger volunteered to serve as Treasurer until the pressure of his work in local government increased and Keith Holmes took over.

Roger was a popular member of the community in Stanley, a keen golfer with a strong sense of humour. After retirement, his annual Christmas letters had a wide, appreciative and amused readership. His life was commemorated in his home town of Stratford upon Avon in the Church of the Holy Trinity (Shakespeare's Church) on 25 September: a rousing service before a full congregation.

### Penguin City Weekend, Edinburgh (30 – 31 October)

This event was a huge success and was attended by over 85 members of the South Georgia Association, Øyas Venner, Friends of SPRI, the Devon and Cornwall Polar Society and interested individuals. Descendants of Sir Ernest Shackleton, C. A. Larsen and James Wordie were among the participants.



*A spirited presentation on whisky by 'The Nose'. John Alexander*



The weekend began on the Friday night in the Holiday Inn, which is situated beside Edinburgh Zoo, with a fascinating presentation by Richard Paterson, Master Blender of Whyte and Mackay Ltd (current owners of the Mackinlay brand). After enthusiastically telling us the

alternative history of whisky Richard (The Nose) recounted the story of Shackleton's order for 25 cases of Mackinlay's Whisky 10 Years Old ML Brand at 28/- a case in May 1907, and how in January 2006 the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust found several cases frozen in the ice under the *Nimrod* hut at Cape Royds.

Eventually one opened and two closed cases were recovered in 2007. In 2010 the open case was returned to Canterbury, New Zealand, to be carefully thawed under controlled conditions and, in 2011, three bottles were flown to Scotland for analysis in the private jet of Whyte and Mackay's owner.

Samples were extracted from the bottles by syringe for analysis and tasting by Richard to re-create the whisky as a limited release of 50,000 bottles of 'Mackinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt – The Discovery' followed by a second bottling of 100,000 bottles of 'Mackinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt – The Journey'. This modern whisky was produced at 47.3% - the same strength as the original - and it was this high alcohol content that had prevented the liquid freezing and breaking the bottles. The three original bottles were subsequently returned to their resting place under Shackleton's hut.

Our whisky tasting started with a generous dram of 15 year old Dalmore Highland Single Malt whisky for the 70 attendees in tasting glasses specially engraved with the SGA logo and date, for us to keep. This was followed by a slightly smaller dram of the re-created 'Journey' whisky which is described as having 'plenty of impact on the palate!' A traditional Scottish supper of haggis, neeps and tatties was served and everyone retired for the night (eventually), warm and glowing from our whisky tasting, and fully inspired by Richard's enthusiasm and passion.



*One of our neighbours.* also endured a few computer gremlins and a lecture theatre temperature designed for tropical primates rather than penguins! Luckily neither detracted from the 10 presentations about South Georgia, both past and present. They included archive collections, fieldwork (botany, geology and glaciology), whaling, present day fisheries and the Habitat Restoration Project to rid the island of the introduced rats and mice.



*Life on South Georgia is being recorded for posterity. Stewart Dodd*



The excellent images and fascinating facts about South Georgia invited many questions from the eager audience of 85 – with all of us happily transported back there albeit just for the day! The final talk about the penguins of Edinburgh Zoo (initially brought back from South Georgia by Salvesen's whaling factory ships since 1914) was followed by a walk across to Penguin Rock and pool where the gentoos gave a brilliant swimming display in the gathering twilight.

There were 74 for the 'Abandonment Dinner' at Channings Hotel, 12 – 16 Learmonth Gardens which incorporated Shackleton's home (No. 14) when he was Secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Photographs and artwork on the walls took us straight back south again! After drinks in the Shackleton Bar a delicious dinner was served in the Conservatory and Restaurant, with much reminiscing about South Georgia and catching up with old friends. Sir Gerald Elliot, former manager of the Salvesen whaling fleet, and Roger Crofts, Chairman of the RSGS, were invited guests. After dinner the raffle was drawn. Aberdeen University geomorphologists Richard Birnie, Jim Hansom, John Gordon and Gordon Thom (ably supported by their spouses and Britta Sugden) were tasked to sell tickets and raised £715 in total which ensured the weekend was self-funding (with any surplus going to the South Georgia Association).

Bruce Mair, a BAS geologist who worked on South Georgia in the 1970s, meticulously organised the whole weekend over the last year and deserves much praise for such a successful event (along with his Swedish spouse Carina). Many thanks also to the 10 speakers, the donors of raffle prizes, those who travelled to Edinburgh from as far as Devon, Norway and Sweden, plus the staff of the Holiday Inn, Edinburgh Zoo and Channings Hotel.



*On their best behaviour. Stewart Dodd*

In conclusion let's not forget Sir Ernest Shackleton who at 5pm on 27 October 1915, almost exactly 100 years earlier, gave orders to abandon the ice-crushed and sinking ship, *Endurance*, in the Weddell Sea and who eventually led his men back to safety.

**Sue Edwards and Bruce Mair**

## A new look GSGSSI website

*From a Press Release*

The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands has launched its new fresh website at [www.gov.gs](http://www.gov.gs).

GSGSSI has been online since 2001 and what a lot has changed since then. When the site [www.sgisland.org](http://www.sgisland.org) was launched there was no Internet available in South Georgia and most GSGSSI administration was done without it. It was not until 2007 that satellite internet arrived on South Georgia and from then on the amount of content on the website increased rapidly. In a drive for better communication and greater transparency, GSGSSI has published more and more documents online including financial statements, annual reports, laws and environmental publications.

Two webcams were also installed on the island that transmit a new image every three minutes. Users around the world tune in to the cameras to enjoy views of penguins, fur seals and stunning mountains. The webcams are a popular feature of the website with more than 3 million views in total so far.

In 2014 GSGSSI entered the world of social media and launched its Twitter feed @GovSGSSI so that the Government could share information about the Territory with an even wider audience. The twitter feed generated more than 2.8 million views in the first 11 months of operation. For those who are not Twitter users, the Twitter feed is embedded in the website so they can enjoy the regular updates and pictures of the Islands.

Now in 2015 it is time for a complete new look and a new web address [www.gov.gs](http://www.gov.gs). The new website has an updated design and branding, and is easier to navigate and search, providing a more accessible portal for those interested in finding out more about this UK Overseas Territory. It also has more photographs capturing stunning wildlife and landscapes. For those on the move, the site is optimized for viewing and using on mobile phones. The content has also been updated, providing the latest information in key areas of interest including visiting, the environment, fisheries and science. Over 250 documents are available to download in the document library and a live search function makes it easy to find what you are looking for.





## Rat Eradication not finished yet!



The triumphant conclusion to Team Rat's baiting of the entire island of South Georgia was reported in the last newsletter. There are already welcome signs of pipits and ducks returning to breed where they have been absent for many years. However, the island cannot be declared free of rats, and mice, until an intensive monitoring programme in late 2017 fails to find any evidence of their survival. The project can then be held up worldwide as a shining example of the possibilities of eliminating invasive species from islands, where they are particularly damaging to the local native species. If it can be done on the scale of South Georgia, despite its rugged environment and harsh climate, it should be possible anywhere!



The SGHT needs to raise another £800,000 to carry out the monitoring programme and so claim success.

Donate now! UK residents go to [www.sght.org/Sponsor-a-hectare](http://www.sght.org/Sponsor-a-hectare) and use Paypal to gift aid your donation. USA residents can go to [www.fosgi.org/donations](http://www.fosgi.org/donations) to make a tax-deductible donation. Everyone else go to [www.sght.org/Sponsor-a-hectare](http://www.sght.org/Sponsor-a-hectare) or [www.sght.org/make-donation](http://www.sght.org/make-donation) and donate via Paypal or credit card.



*There are now pipit tracks where three years ago there would have been rat tracks. Hopefully, this will soon be seen all over the island.*  
Tony Martin

## A whaling inspector's lot: bridging a cultural divide

'Meesta Dai!'

The voice is strange, small and very far away. It seems to come faintly to me through miles of carpeted, heavily-curtained corridors.

I am nobody, I am nowhere.

I am asleep.

Slowly, because I don't want to, I gain a rough realisation: I am not at home, not in an aircraft, not on a ship; I am still somewhere unusual. I open my eyes a little and shut them.

I am John Dye, Government Whaling Inspector, South Georgia, and I am no longer asleep, damn it, I am awake. What's the time? The luminous thing on the chair, clanking like a beam engine, says two thirty. It looks glad to see me.

There wasn't a voice. I dreamt it.

The next lot aren't due until five, I've only been asleep two hours.....

'Meesta Dai!'

Two hours out of twenty-four, isn't much, it isn't enough....

'Good morning, Ueno.'

He gesticulates southwards, towards the plan. He doesn't speak English very well, even at noon.

'Whale .... Four .... soon.'

'Oh.'

'On Plan, one whale .... I go.' He pelts out and down the stairs. I can hear him running nearly all the way. I have to move, 'soon' to Ueno is 'right now' to the rest of us.

My feet are on the threadbare mat and I drag on clothes that haven't cooled since I undressed. I glance out of the window: patches of the Tota's ugly twelve thousand tons are picked out round scattered, feeble lights on the quay. Men in brown uniforms are running down the gangplank. A seal grunts under the jetty, they ignore him.

Now I'm running too, the teeth of my steel heel spikes digging into the stiff ground, wet mud just a few hours before.

Over Sugartop, the Southern Cross blinks unheeded. I can't see either of them for the lights, the smoke and the iron factory roofs.

On the coal heap an unattended steam pipe works quietly all night, keeping the frost out for the men with shovels.

Now there are shouts from the Plan and, with the clanking of machinery, the factory comes to life.

I get there to find it's already up: Andy and Ueno are out scrutinising the tape. The first segment of blubber is already peeling back with a crackle of snapping ligaments. Yoshida looks intently at the meat.

'Good meat?'

'Ah, Good Morning Mister Dai, yes, very good meat.'

'Plenty money?'

'Ha! Plenty money! Ha!, but not for me!'



*Flensing starts as the whale comes up the Plan. Note harpoon.*

By now the flensers have taken off the second piece of blubber and the tail. I watch it speed by, bumping on the old, uneven boards. Carved on one fluke is the catching number, XK/2. I look up over the slipway and I can just see the lights of *Kyo Maru No. 10* as she rounds the Point and heads out into the South Atlantic.

Andy comes up.

‘Sixty-one feet three inches, female, immature.’

‘And the scars?’

‘Slight, post-ventral.’

‘Diatoms?’

‘Damn, you watch the stomach.’

I move round to the best point to see the stomach while Andy deftly skips over a couple of cables and runs round to the head.

Ueno is balancing on the moving flesh as he slices the stomach open and water rushes out over our boots. We bend and scrutinise, like schoolboys hunting tiddlers.

‘Ufauziah, small, one leetle r.’

He picks up a fragmentary crustacean. ‘Two eff.’

I scribble it all into my book and push the pencil back into the spiral. Andy is already in the office, the Anglepoise illuminates his face, his beard has a piratical look.

‘Well?’

‘Euphausia, small, one small ‘r’, medium freshness.’

‘Did you get the catcher number?’

‘10K/2, what’s the flensing time?’

‘0235, they’re getting a real move on.’

And they are. Already the backbone is being turned and pulled away. The Toff and Sammy Davies and their merry band are already hitching the big cable onto the next tail.

Up it comes, creaking and dragging, inch by inch up the wet boards of the Plan.

The Flensing Crew are standing about, wiping their faces and sharpening the knives. Ueno runs up to the window, he indicates ‘male’, somewhat coarsely I think, Andy laughs.

‘Well, Mr Smith, will you join me in a whale?’

We quickly warm our hands by the glowing electric fire kindly provided by Yosh, and out we go again.

They were working hard indeed: the Plan is now clear and the sky showing pale across the Cove. The glistening skyline of the Barff Peninsula is just discernable from the jetty where there are fewer lights. Around the slip the foul water is a moving mass of capies, with a few belligerent stinkers and gulls cruising up and down about twenty yards out, fighting over bits of floating meat and being generally unpleasant.

‘Meesta Dai, Coughie Time!’ Ueno’s welcome voice calls from the middle of the Plan. I wave in reply and he waves back, small on the wide expanse of shining wood. A few chaps with hoses and scrapers are cleaning off the worst of the muck. A gust of wind makes the harsh lights dance crazily on their wires.

I carefully cross the greasy Plan to the Foreman’s Hut, shrouded in steam from an old winch by the door. I always liked that winch: it is decrepit and bleeds steam through all the joints but it has a pleasing rattling action. I see it as intricate and functional but I fear the Japanese would have thrown it in the Cove if they could replace it; they tolerate its eccentricities with no sympathy and little humour, they have livings to make. To be fair, if the Norwegians before them had felt the same, it would never have got into that state ..., but I can smell coffee.

The Foreman’s Hut is hot, steamy, bare, crudely furnished and decorated with some of the lewdest photographs it has ever been my privilege to express disgust at. At four o’clock on a November morning at Grytviken, I wouldn’t swap it for five stars on the Adriatic. The floor, like all ‘working’ floors in the station, is covered with rough planking to protect it from our spikes. There is a plain table, with a mattress-covered seat by the wall and a form on the other side, a few nondescript chairs are scattered about. Kimura and Ueno are sitting at the table and they motion me to the best seat, on the mattress with the hot steam pipe gurgling underneath. Plan Foreman Yoshida gets the coffee pot from the hotplate and pours a cup of black coffee, which tastes vile but refreshes remarkably.

On one wall is a large blackboard with columns marked in Japanese characters we understand but cannot read.

We’re waiting for *Toshi Maru No. 12*, now out on the open sea, trailing four more whales along her steel flanks, pushing through black waves towards the millpond surface of the Cove.

‘Yoshida-San?’

‘Yes, Mr Dye.’

‘Next catcher, Toshimaru number 12, four fin whales.’

‘Ah, yes.’

‘What time, arriving?’

He picks up the phone and dials rapidly.

‘Moshi, Moshi .....’ he chatters fast, interspersing phrases with a thoughtful ‘Ah’ or ‘Oh’. He puts the phone down and concentrates on translating:

‘Number twelve Toshimaru, four fin whale, arrive five o’clock and Ah, and Ah, and .....’

‘Five fifteen? Five thirty? Five twenty?’



'Yes.' He scrutinises his pocket dictionary for many pages, finally smiling triumphantly: 'A quarter past five!'

We all look at the clock together, four-fifty. The door is open and the dawn is pale in the sky across the Cove, fitfully veiled by steam from the old winch.

Andy had his language lesson going well before I arrived, and he was burrowing eagerly into a dictionary for a long time. Occasionally he would look up and pronounce a word:

'Hachee.'

Ueno and Kimura: 'Hai, er Yes.'

Andy (miming) 'chopsticks.'

Ueno and Kimura: 'No, No!' (laughing loudly).

Ueno: 'Cho'stick is Hachi.' 'Hachee mean, er.' He fumbles in his dictionary, gives up and goes to the blackboard, where he draws a stone bridge.

Andy: 'Bridge, bridge!'

Ueno: 'Bleej.' He writes furiously in a small book.

Andy: 'No, bridge, berrrij.'

Ueno (slowly): 'Berleej.'

Andy corrects him slowly and Ueno makes a great many alterations, dots and dashes, to the characters in his book. Eventually he is satisfied and diverts his attention to Kimura, who has been intently watching all the time. Ueno's pronunciation got slowly better, Kimura's lagged a good way behind: the Kimura dialect of Ueno English was practically pidgin Japanese.

I walk to the door, the dark outline of the Barff Peninsula is more obviously a range of snow-covered mountains. The lights of King Edward Point still glint below Mount Duse. The empty Plan, the quietly-steaming winches, the Kamasaki boats tied up below the round, unglamorous rear of the *Tota*, are all strangely still. Even the machinery in the factory around us seems muffled and distant, there isn't a man to be seen anywhere. The hoses lie coiling slowly on the clean boards, streaming glimmering rivers towards the slip. An elephant seal belches loudly on Hestesletten, a mile up the coast.



*The products of whaling.*

Some were sensitive, the men who built the church, who made the flower boxes blossom and left tins of plants in the barracks to be found, shrivelled, years later. Some

Hundreds of men have come south to gaze a few times on this sight and then sail north again, some to return, some to settle down and become half normal; none to forget. Some were hard: men to profit from the slaughter, living thousands of miles from their native mountains and fjords; men who drank rough spirits and could lift a two hundredweight harpoon on each arm (or so they say).

were lonely, some were running from the world, most were untidy. For 50 years men have come south by sail, then steam and now diesel.

Suddenly, there is a tiny moving light creeping over the black rooftops of the Point, and *Tosbi Maru No. 12* comes into the cove after steaming seventeen hours from the catching ground. Three and a half thousand horsepower pushing her bow wave out across the cove to rattle on both shingle shores.



*Blood, blubber and guts on the Plan. RW Vaughan*

Yoshida is smiling, he is proud of his company.

The engines of the Kamasaki boats roar and smoke as shoot out from the jetty scattering the birds.

The Wire Men run down to the slip, their black plastic sleeves shining, to drag down the hook from the big winch, ready for the first whale.

I hear a splash and a clanking as the catcher crew let go the chain holding the first whale, and the huge tail drops into the water; then another, and another. The first boat, its ninety horsepower screaming in pain, hauls a great dim shape towards the Plan, the second is only yards behind.

Men are spilling from doorways everywhere, chattering and laughing. Andy goes past me to watch from the edge of the Slip. Kimura, Yoshida and Ueno follow. The catcher is following the boats in, coming to the jetty for fuel, water and food and a few short hours of solid ground for the crew; they will be bucking over the crests again before I finish breakfast.

The first whale is coming, its great tail rears up over the edge. A sling goes round the base of the tail, the hawser is dragged into position and the big shackle fixed. Then the great electric winch starts and the lights dim as another huge, shining beast inches onto the Plan.

**John Dye, former whaling inspector**



*A feast for capies. RW Burton*

## Alien Plants on South Georgia summer 2014/15

This season the 'weed' team was led by Jennifer Lee and Kelvin Floyd, and the field team consisted of Kelvin Floyd, Bradley Myer, Sally Poncet, Ken Passfield and Sarah Browning. The season was a productive one for alien plant control on South Georgia, thanks to the Defra Darwin Plus funding. Many gaps in our knowledge of species abundance and location have been filled and this information will contribute to the island's alien plants strategy. Some new low-incidence species sites were found during the surveys but overall the control efforts on all the low-incidence species are showing good results and populations are declining.

There are 40 alien plant species considered to have been present on South Georgia in the last ten years.

- All known locations of 29 species were checked, and all plants were treated.
- Information was gathered and some control undertaken for eight other species to determine their management in the future.
- three species are widespread and not generally feasible to control. These are *Cerastium fontanum* (common mouse-ear), *Poa annua* (annual meadow grass) and *Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion).

The total area of *Cardamine flexuosa* (bittercress) controlled this season was 17.68 m<sup>2</sup> sprayed compared with 20.84 m<sup>2</sup> in 2013/14, and 617 m<sup>2</sup> in 2010/11. Control operations seem to be effective and older sites are showing vastly reduced amounts of seedlings appearing.



War is being waged against bittercress. RW Burton

The removal of reindeer has increased the urgency of alien plant control with many species now noticeably more visible, especially during flowering. While the reindeer – the main vector of their spread – has been eradicated, it will be important to locate and control

where possible the plants that have been spread. Some grass species will prove to be a challenge because of their abundance at some sites and their wide distribution over the areas previously inhabited by the reindeer.

The Darwin Plus funding continues for one more season in 2015/16 and last year's team will return to continue control and surveying.



Dandelion leaves are eaten as green salad at King Edward Point!  
Ron Lewis-Smith

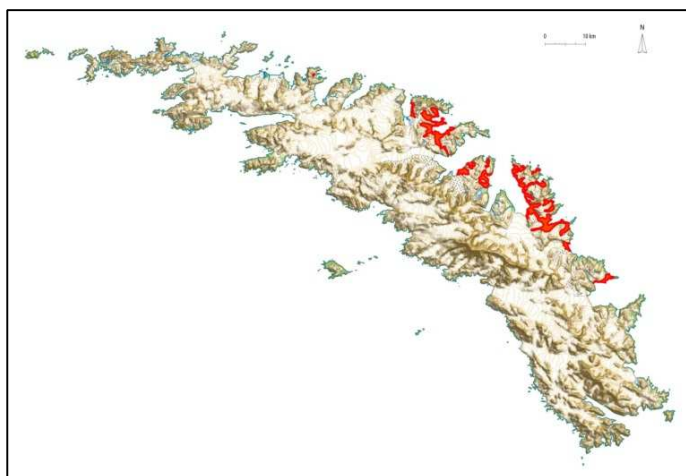
Further information can be found in the report at <http://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Environment/Invasive%20Species/SG%20Weed%20Report%202013.pdf>

### Current list of weed species

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow	Asteraceae
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>	sneezewort	Asteraceae
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	common bent	Poaceae
<i>Agrostis vinealis</i>	brown bent	Poaceae
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	chives	Amaryllidaceae
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	sweet vernal grass	Poaceae
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	cow parsley	Apiaceae
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	shepherd's purse	Brassicaceae
<i>Cardamine glacialis</i>	bittercress	Brassicaceae
<i>Carex aquatilis</i>	water sedge	Cyperaceae
<i>Carex nigra</i>	common sedge	Cyperaceae
<i>Carex sp.</i>		Cyperaceae
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	common mouse-ear	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cocksfoot	Poaceae
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	tufted hair-grass	Poaceae
<i>Deschampsia cf parvula</i>		Poaceae
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	wavy hair-grass	Poaceae
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	couch grass	Poaceae
<i>Empetrum rubrum</i>	diddle dee	Ericaceae



<i>Festuca rubra</i>	red fescue	Poaceae
<i>Juncus filiformis</i>	thread rush	Juncaceae
<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	autumn hawkbit	Asteraceae
<i>Leptinella scariosa</i>	feathery buttonweed	Asteraceae
<i>Luzula multiflora</i> <i>var congesta</i>	heath wood-rush	Juncaceae
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	mat grass	Poaceae
<i>Poa annua</i>	annual meadow grass	Poaceae
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	smooth meadow grass	Poaceae
<i>Pratia repens</i>	berry lobelia	Campanulaceae
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	meadow buttercup	Ranunculaceae
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup	Ranunculaceae
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheeps sorrel	Polygonaceae
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	curled dock	Polygonaceae
<i>Sagina procumbens</i>	pearlwort (procumbent)	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Stellaria media</i>	common chickweed	Caryophyllaceae
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	dandelion	Asteraceae
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover	Leguminaceae
<i>Tripleurospermum</i> <i>indorum</i>	scentless mayweed	Asteraceae
<i>Trisetum spicatum</i>	spike trisetum	Poaceae
<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>	cowberry	Ericaceae
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	thyme leaved speedwell	Scrophulariaceae

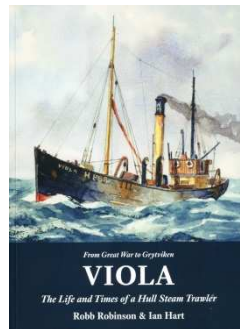


6000ha of reindeer and human disturbed areas (red) were surveyed.

Kelvin Floyd

### Viola. The Life and Times of a Hull Steam Trawler

Robinson, Robb & Hart, Ian. 2014, 223 pages + 37 photographs. Lodestar Books, London. ISBN 978-1-907206-27-6. Paperback, £12.



This is the latest book on an aspect of South Georgia's maritime history by Ian Hart, and co-authored by fellow historian Robb Robinson. All visitors to Grytviken, whether there for a few hours or as a temporary resident, over the past 50 years will have noticed three small rusting ships (*Dias*, *Albatros* and *Petrel*) tied up at

the pier at Grytviken. However, other than probably taking a photograph for posterity, few will have considered their historical background. This book deals specifically with *Dias* although, confusingly, her name in the title is *Viola*. The authors go to great length to explain the reason for this name change and provide in intricate detail the life of this remarkable and historically important little ship from her birth in Hull to long after her death at Grytviken. *Dias* is the last of the British steam trawlers and will celebrate her centenary in 2016.

*Viola* was built in Beverley, East Yorkshire, and launched in January 1906; her keel was laid in the previous year. She was built for the North Sea boxing fleet operated by the Hellyer Steam Fishing Company of Hull, almost all of which were named after Shakespearian characters. Boxing fleets were an early form of industrial fishing, working for weeks on end in the North Sea. On an almost daily basis they transferred their boxed catches to fast steam cutters which took them to London to be marketed at Billingsgate. At the onset of the Great War *Viola* was requisitioned and armed by the Admiralty, but still largely crewed by fishermen. For four years she patrolled the North Sea from Shetland to the southern east coast of England. She was often at the forefront of the maritime conflict, encountering minefields and submarines, and steaming thousands of miles - far more than any of the dreadnoughts (super-battleships). She was involved in the sinking of two U-boats, one of which had been spotted by the airship R-29 and which directed *Viola's* flotilla to UB-115's position where they contributed to her sinking by dropping depth charges. Of more than 3000 fishing vessels that served in the Great War, *Viola* is the sole survivor.

After the war *Viola* was laid up in Milford Haven, then sold to a Norwegian company A/S Sandefjord Trawlfiskeselskap and renamed *Kapduen*. During the years 1920-23 she operated as a tug in Sandefjord Harbour, but working as a transport vessel in the offshore winter herring fishery in the 1922-23 winter. In 1922 the company was acquired by Nils Thorvald Nielsen-Alonso who transformed it into a whaling company of three catchers and a factory ship, *Bas II*. The bridge of *Kapduen*

was rebuilt forward of the funnel. In June 1923 the small fleet sailed from Sandefjord for the West African coast, intent on hunting humpback whales off Angola. The following year the fleet was sold to A/S South Atlantic of Tønsberg and *Kapduen* renamed *Dias*. The enlarged fleet returned to Angola, with *Dias* probably seconded to a shore station there. However, catches were disappointing and, in 1924, the fleet operated farther north off the West African coast. The expedition returned to the Angola coast in 1925 but, after further low catches, the company was dissolved in 1926. Then, after 20 years of diverse service, *Dias* was about to enter a new and exciting phase of life.

In 1927 Lars Klaveness, the Norwegian agent for Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima, a Buenos Aires-owned but largely Norwegian-operated whaling company, better known simply as Pesca, purchased *Dias* for the company for the purpose of seal hunting activities from its station (Grytviken) on South Georgia. By coincidence, *Dias*' sister ship *Hamlet* had been bought by a South African whaling and sealing company operating at Iles Kerguelen in the mid Indian Ocean. *Dias* left Sandefjord for South Georgia, arriving at Grytviken on 6 September 1927 to begin a long association with the sub-Antarctic island.

Besides whaling, Pesca was also permitted to undertake sealing at South Georgia. *Dias*' worth in this role was quickly apparent as, in her first season, she contributed 13% of the company's total production of whale and seal oil. The success of the elephant seal industry over the next 20 years allowed the annual quota of 6000 bull seals per year to be increased to 7500 in 1948, then 9000 in the following year. However, this resulted in a rapid decline in the population and, as a result of research and analysis by R.M. Laws, a government appointed seal inspector (and later Director of the British Antarctic Survey), the annual quota was gradually reduced to 6000 by 1952 and a management regime instituted whereby the island's coastline was separated into four divisions, with one remaining fallow each year. Sealing continued until 1964, coinciding with the end of the whaling era at South Georgia. However, during her sealing years, *Dias* served other roles. Between 1928 and 1942 she carried personnel and stores to the Argentine station Orcadas on Laurie Island in the South Orkneys, voyaging from South Georgia, Buenos Aires or Ushuaia. In 1928-29 *Dias* supported the Norwegian Kohl-Larsen Expedition around South Georgia. From 1927-29 the Argentine ornithologist Alberto Carcelles made several collecting trips around the island on *Dias*. Duncan Carse's South Georgia topographical survey expedition (1951-57) and George Sutton's unsuccessful British South Georgia Expedition (1954-55) were assisted by *Dias*. In 1953-54 Nigel Bonner (later sealing inspector at Pesca, and also Deputy Director of B.A.S.) and Bernard Stonehouse (later Director of S.P.R.I.) undertook biological studies at the Bay of Isles, supported by *Dias*, as was their follow-up

Bird Island Expedition in 1958, and the Royal Navy Hydrographic Survey Expedition in 1960-61. Her final transformation occurred in 1956 when her coal-fired engines were converted to burn oil.

*Dias*, *Albatros* and *Petrel* saw their last active service during the sealing season of 1963, Grytviken having now been sub-leased to the Japanese International Fishery Company of Tokyo. With the cessation of whaling and abandonment of all shore stations in 1965, *Dias* and her two companions were mothballed and tied up against the quayside at Grytviken to await their fate. Over the next 40 years several complex negotiations attempted to preserve *Dias* and, to a lesser extent, *Albatros* and *Petrel*. Initially, they were maintained by Ragnar Thorsen who, without payment from the company that then employed him (Albion Star (South Georgia) Ltd.) remained alone as caretaker at Grytviken until 1971, running the ships' engines weekly and carrying out maintenance and repairs to the ships and station in the belief that the industry would soon be reborn. It wasn't and, sadly, his loyalty was never rewarded, his food and passage home being paid for by B.A.S. All three ships survived unscathed the brief Argentine invasion of South Georgia and the subsequent wanton target practice by the British military occupation force. Various attempts to restore them, especially *Dias*, met with little success due to financial constraints and a certain apathy by the government. Suffice to say that in 2004 *Dias*, together with *Petrel*, was refloated, partially restored and hauled to their present quayside mud berth at Grytviken for visitors to admire once again/ But her future preservation remains in doubt due to limited resources being made available.

Few visitors are aware of the remarkable history of *Viola/Dias*, the last intact survivor of over 3,000 fishing vessels which played such a crucial role in the Great War. Anyone with an interest in British maritime history or in South Georgia will find this a fascinating and meticulously researched tale of a veritable centenarian.

**Ron Lewis-Smith**

### Dias stamps



At midwinter 2015 a set of five postage stamps for South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands was issued to commemorate the centenary of *Viola/Dias*. These depict the ship in her main roles: 70p as the boxing trawler *Viola*,

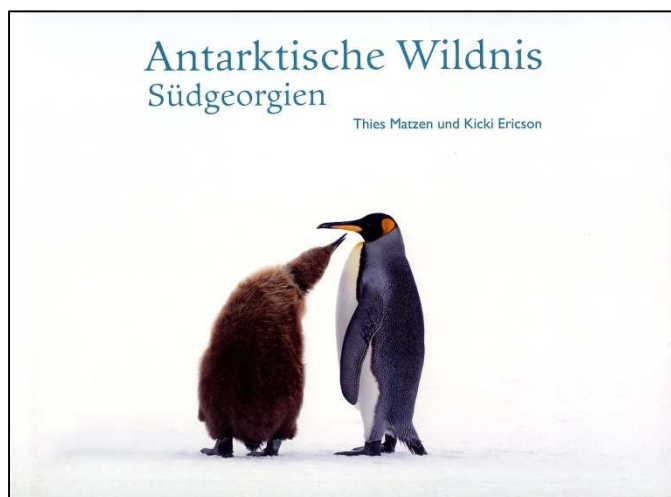


another 70p as *Viola* on patrol off the Farne Islands during World War I; 80p as *Dias* whaling off the African coast; £1.25 as *Dias* elephant sealing at South Georgia; and £2.50 as *Viola* in a miniature sheet depicting her association with the airship R29 and the sinking of the German submarine UB-215 on 29 September 1918 off Newton-by-the-Sea, Northumberland.



### Antarktische Wildnis

Thies Matzen and Kicki Ericson. 2014 & 2015. Mare, Hamburg. 168 pages. 96 colour photos. £31.05



Thies and Kicki spent over two years at South Georgia aboard their 30 ft, 60 year-old, no modern equipment, wooden yacht *Wanderer III*. Thies' skill as a wooden boat-builder was put to good use in making the benches at Grytviken that were commissioned by the SGA (NL 18). During their time at South Georgia, the couple explored much of the coastline and have translated their experiences into a most beautiful book. If you collect books on South Georgia, this is a necessary addition. Ask for it for Christmas, if your budget is limited. 'Stunning photographs' is a cliché but some of these will poleaxe you. The book is packed with photos the like of which you have not seen before.

Although the text is in German, the photos aren't! And, anyway, there is an accompanying booklet with the text in English (or Chinese if you prefer). It has been well-

reviewed in the German press, was nominated for the 2015 German photo book prize and is short-listed for Germany's Most Beautiful Book of the Year.

It is now in its second edition (2015) and is available at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk).

### Shackleton's Headstone

When I visit Grytviken as a lecturer on history aboard a cruise ship, one of my duties is to propose a 'Toast to 'The Boss' at his grave. With 200 passengers taking part, this requires me to make several toasts, in Irish whisky, and there are always bad jokes about the stretcher party standing-by to take me back to the ship.

There are three little puzzles that I put to the passengers as we wait for a suitable number to gather.

The headstone was made in Edinburgh and was carved from granite by Stewart McGlashen. I point out that, on the back of the stone, there is a quotation from Robert Browning: '*I hold that a man should strive to the uttermost for his life's set prize*'. According to Shackleton biographers, Margery and James Fisher, Shackleton would quote this as a reason for leaving his family on yet another expedition. In 1907, Emily gave him a photograph of herself and their children in a silver case engraved with these words. If you 'Google' them, you will find the quote in every on-line account of a visit to South Georgia.

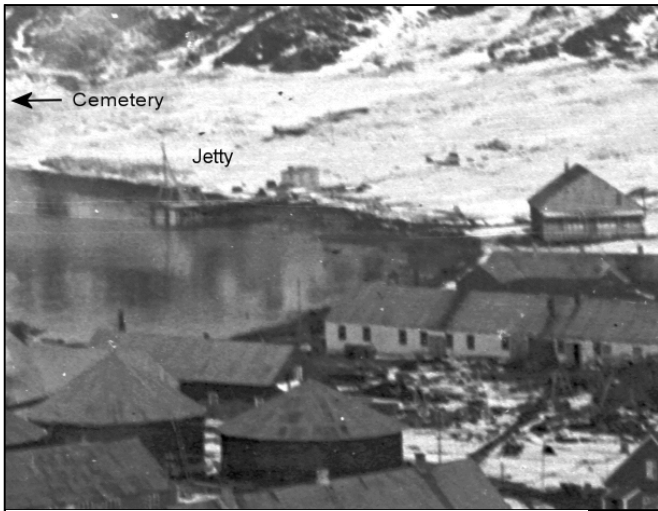
Except that this is not what Browning wrote. In a lengthy poem entitled 'The Statue and the Bust', his words are:

*Let a man contend to the uttermost  
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!*

My question is why did Shackleton rewrite Browning? I can only think he wanted to turn the injunction into a personal statement.

My next question is how was the 2-3 ton granite headstone brought to the cemetery? There was no difficulty about getting it to South Georgia. It was taken to Barry Docks by rail and shipped on *Harpon*, the cargo ship that sailed regularly to Grytviken. But it then had to be conveyed to the cemetery.

I got part of the answer from a photograph by Theodor Andersson, a Swede who worked as a carpenter at Grytviken in the 1920s. Some of Andersson's photographs are published in the book *Grytviken seen through a camera lens* edited by Stig-Tore Lunde. Several photographs show a jetty equipped with a derrick near the present resting place of *Louise* and there is a railway track heading up the hill. The headstone was brought down in late 1927, just before the jetty and railway were installed for the rebuilding of the dam on Gull Lake. That solves how they got the headstone from *Harpon* to the shore and I wonder whether some rails were relaid to the cemetery.



*Jetty and derrick along the beach from the Teatersalen.*

There is no proof of this and the photograph of Governor Hodson unveiling the headstone on 24 February 1928 shows little sign of disturbed ground around the grave. A deep hole must have been dug to lay the considerable foundations for holding the stone firm in soft ground. Perhaps the whalers were very thorough in making-good the site after they finished the installation.



*Governor Hodson unveiling Shackleton's headstone.*

My final question is that Leonard Hussey reported on the funeral in *The Times* for 29 May 1922, and added that "he thinks that the sender of a sprig of rosemary inscribed 'Rosemary for remembrance. From a Suffolk garden' will like to know that he laid this this tribute on the grave". I wonder who was the sender.

**Bob Burton**

## Newsletters go electronic

It was announced at this year's AGM that from this November newsletter, newsletters will be distributed to members in an electronic format. As you now realise, the e-newsletter is being sent out by email. We see this system as being particularly useful for those living in far-flung places where deliveries are slow. Please let us know if there are any problems.

Some members have indicated that they would definitely prefer e-newsletters and others have asked for a paper copy through the post. Note that a hard copy can be printed from the pdf, which may be the best of both worlds.

The e-newsletter has the obvious benefits of savings on printing and postage, as well as saving the time and effort of stuffing copies into envelopes, sticking on address labels and stamps and taking them to the post office.

The index of past issues is now on the SGA website.

Remember that up-to-date news of South Georgia can be seen on the **SGA Facebook** page. You do not have to sign up to Facebook. It can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/southgeorgiaassociation>

The SGA has submitted a response to the GSGSSI's consultation on **strategy for the next five years**. It took into account all comments received from members and can be seen in the News section of the SGA website.



*A photograph of the 1½ mile wide Neumayer Glacier taken from a helicopter by Tony Martin in 2011. The two arrows show the position of the snout in 2015. The mighty glacier is retreating so fast it will soon no longer be a barrier to rats. Their extinction has come just in time!*

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

Contributions should be submitted, at least one month before publication, to the editor:

Robert Burton, 63 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW. Email: [rwburton@ntlworld.com](mailto:rwburton@ntlworld.com)