

South Georgia Association Newsletter

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Prince Olav Harbour (Photo: P. Lurcock) – see place names feature on p. 11.

In this issue: SG Association Summer event, 4–5 July 2025; Updates on SG Association Bob Burton Awards; SG fieldwork clothing and equipment, then and now; Upcoming Science on South Georgia; Place names at Prince Olav Harbour; 70 years of RRS *Biscoe* and HMS *Endurance* – appeal for information; South Georgia organisations’ news roundup; SG wildlife surveys workshop; New publications – book and maps.



SG Association Summer Event (p. 2-4)



*Viewing the Hope Point Cross at
Dundee - Bob Burton Awards (p.
5-6)*



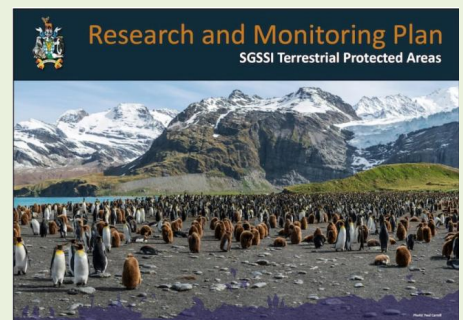
*SG fieldwork clothing and equipment,
then and now..... (p. 7-8)*



*70 Years since launch of RRS *Biscoe* and HMS
Endurance – appeal for information (p. 13)*



*New Commissioner Colin Martin-
Reynolds CMG visits SG (p. 13)*



*SGSSI Research and Monitoring Plan
published (p.14)*

South Georgia Association summer event: *The Association is holding an in-person, two-day event **10-11 July 2026**, with the theme of **History and Art of South Georgia**. It will be hosted in Cambridge, and includes the Annual Members Meeting and Presidential Dinner. This is early notice to save the date - More details to follow.*

Report on the SGA summer event, with the theme of Marine Biodiversity and including AGM, Morag Husband Campbell Medal presentation, and South Georgia 250th Anniversary Dinner. Friday 4 - Saturday 5 July 2025.

In the Aurora Collaboration Space, British Antarctic Survey, and Gonville Hotel, Cambridge.

Friday 4 July

Registration with tea and coffee opened at 13.30; 61 people had registered for some, or all, of the event. After a welcome to the attendees by Dr Phil Trathan, the event began with the first two presentations in the programme.

Unfortunately technical issues prevented recording of some of the talks, but most are available on the SG Association website at: <https://southgeorgiaassociation.org/sga-video-recordings/>

Advances in mapping the island of South Georgia. Bob Headland and Dr Adrian Fox.

Robert Headland (Emeritus Affiliate, and formerly Archivist and Museum Curator at SPRI) described the advances in mapping of South Georgia from the initial charting by Cook in January 1775 until the publication of the South Georgia Survey's (Duncan Carse expeditions) map in 1951. Adrian Fox, formerly Head of the Mapping and Geographic Information Centre at BAS, reported progress from then to date, covering advances in the map of the whole island and the production of detailed maps of key areas. (*Talk available*).

Overview of BAS Archives. Ieuan Hopkins, BAS

Ieuan is the Archives, Records and Information Compliance Manager at BAS, where he has worked since 2013. He provided an overview of the range of material held in BAS archives, with a focus on South Georgia, and explained how they are currently used to support the work of BAS. (*Talk available*).

The talks were followed by:

The South Georgia Association's Annual General Meeting (at 15.15)

The meeting was attended by approximately 45 SGA members, including Committee members: Philippa Foster Back (Chair), Paul Rodhouse (Events), Sarah Greenwood (Communications), Adrian Fox (Newsletter Editor), Martin Collins, Phil Trathan, Bob Headland, and Fran Prince (Secretary).

The Minutes from the 2024 AGM were approved, proposed by Phil Trathan, seconded by Bob Headland.

The Chair (Philippa Foster Back) thanked David Drewry as past Chairman (who stepped down in October 2024) for his massive contribution to the SGA.

Chairman's Report

Philippa Foster Back introduced herself as the new SGA Chairman. She has previously chaired Friends of SPRI, UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, South Georgia Heritage Trust, is still Chair of the UK Antarctic Place Names Committee, and now the SGA.

Phil Trathan was thanked for organising the speakers for this current event, and Bruce Mair for producing the booklet, a good memento of the event; and to Sarah Greenwood for running Eventbrite and liaising with the Gonville Hotel.

Highlights of the past year included the 2024 Summer Event held at SPRI in July 2024, and in January 2025 Bruce Mair had presented an on-line talk celebrating the 250th anniversary of Cook's landing at Possession Bay, and also on BAS geology fieldwork undertaken in the 1970s. (*available online from the SGA website*).

Newsletter: The SGA Newsletter had been published in November 2024 and May 2025 with excellent articles, with thanks to Adrian Fox. The newsletter is published twice per year and Adrian is keen to receive material and pictures please.

Membership update: John Mills reported that numbers are currently 185 up from 160 last year. There are 19 new members enrolled this year; 38 are still to renew and reminders will be sent. The Chair suggested setting a target increase for membership at 250 for next year.

Initiative Funding: A report from Sarah Lurcock explained the rebranding of SGA Initiative Funding to 'Bob Burton Awards' following a generous bequest from Robert Burton.

This year there are 4 awards underway: (1) to James Burke for his project "Beyond South Georgia" (2) In October the Hope Cross was unveiled in Dundee with initiative funding to aid transportation from KEP (3) The Virtual Viola project (4) Sound Recording equipment for the SG Pipit project. (*See updates on 2,3, and 4 on p. 5*).

Applications for Initiative Funding can be made through the SGA Website. Members are encouraged to spread the word.

Treasurer's report: In David Rootes' absence, Paul Rodhouse read out a summary of the Finance report. Copies of the Report were available at the meeting. In summary, the accounts are in good health with £1363 surplus in 2024 of Association's membership, events and other income over expenses. There is also a healthy reserve fund, and funds remaining from the Morag Campbell and Bob Burton legacies. Events are a key part of the Association's activities. They are usually the largest expense but can generate income from those attending and lead to new members.

Reports from Partner Organisations: Reports from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), GSGSSI and SGHT were printed in the event booklet. We were pleased to see Laura Sinclair Willis (GSGSSI) and Alison Neil (SGHT) present at the meeting and invited any comment:

Laura said she was delighted to be here at the AGM and to meet people in person. She was impressed by the wealth and depth of knowledge given at the talks and amongst SGA members. Alison observed that every time attending a SGA event gives the opportunity to learn something new. The SGA is an important partner to SGHT and they are looking forward to working together in the future.

Election of the Committee: The committee was re-elected *en bloc*, proposed by David Drewry, seconded by John Shears. At the time of the AGM the roles of Secretary and Treasurer were vacant. Since the AGM the role of Secretary has been filled by Matthew Bellhouse Moran (*see p. 17*) but the SGA continues to seek a Treasurer. This role is not onerous without the regulatory burden of the Society being a Charity. Anyone interested in taking this on should contact the Secretary in the first instance, please.

Date of next Annual Meeting: The next Annual Meeting will be part of the Association's 2026 Summer Event, planned for 10-11 July 2026.

Any Other Business:

Philippa Foster Back explained to the meeting that Fran Prince is retiring as SGA secretary after 24 years (since the beginning of the SGA). Very kind words were expressed and Fran was presented with a splendid artwork specially commissioned from wildlife artist Bruce Pearson. *Photo right top (S. Greenwood)*



Presentation of the Morag Husband Campbell Medal for 2023

The AGM was followed by the presentation of the Morag Husband Campbell Medal (2023) to **Dr Frederik Paulsen**.

The award was made possible by a generous bequest of a long-standing supporter of the South Georgia Association, Morag Husband Campbell. The medal can be awarded annually to individuals who have contributed significantly to the understanding, appreciation and promotion of South Georgia.

The 2023 medal presentation was delayed until this year. It was awarded to Dr Paulsen in recognition of his "*outstanding and sustained support for the ecological restoration, preservation of heritage and enhancement of scientific knowledge of South Georgia*". Frederik's interest in the island is long and enduring, and his support of diverse initiatives to benefit South Georgia has been key to some of the most important positive changes on the island in recent times. The detailed citation is on the SGA website under the Morag Husband Campbell tab.

Photo above: The Chair presented Dr Frederik Paulsen with the Morag Husband Campbell medal.

South Georgia 250th Anniversary Dinner

The Dinner was held at the Gonville Hotel, with a drinks reception on the hotel terrace beforehand.

At the dinner the three courses were dedicated to: *Sighting the Willis Islands, Cook's Landing and Departing Clerke Rocks*.

The dinner concluded with a Toast to "Captain James Cook, the Crew and the Scientists of HMS Resolution".

Photo Right – pre-dinner reception



Saturday 5 July *comprised a series of talks by leading experts with the theme of marine diversity in the South Georgia region.*

Seals and Sealing. Dr Connor Bamford.

Connor is marine ecologist at BAS specialising in the use of high-resolution satellite imagery, integrated with AI, to study Southern Ocean seal populations. The talk explored the historical context of sealing at South Georgia, the remarkable recovery of seal populations and current research on their population dynamics under new and evolving stresses.

South Georgia whales: Past, present and future. Dr Jen Jackson

Jen is a marine biologist who studies the recovery of whales from whaling in the Antarctic, how whale populations are connected around the Southern hemisphere and their preferred habitats. She has been leading a whale research programme at South Georgia ('Wild Water Whales') since 2017, investigating the populations of Southern Right, Humpback, Blue and Fin whales that are returning to these waters since whaling ceased.

South Georgia is an important summer feeding ground for multiple species of whales. In the early 20th century over 174,000 whales were killed in under two whale generations in the South Georgia region. The talk covered the impact on whale populations and the variety of approaches for studying whale recovery and how they use this important feeding ground, including drones, acoustics and genetics.

New Predator Science: Highlights, questions, and challenges. Dr Ashley Bennison *(Talk available).*

Ashley is the Bird Island Science Manager, and works on applying new technologies and developing new methods for long-term-monitoring and understanding the behavioural ecology of marine predators. The challenge of monitoring predators is how to keep up with developing technology whilst also staying relevant to long-term studies. The talk covered some of the developing predator research that looks to answer new questions, or old questions in new ways. Examples spanned 'up-close' work with new species, through the fast-developing area of drone imaging, to the use of satellites. These cutting-edge technologies have advantages and disadvantages, but are revealing new insights into ecology on South Georgia.

Ocean Ecosystem Science: New insights from an unusual year.

Dr Sally Thorpe (BAS). Sally is an ecological modeller and Head of the Pelagic Ecosystems Group at BAS. Her research is focussed on the role of the physical environment in the distribution of key species within the Southern Ocean ecosystem. The talk gave an update on the marine ecosystem science carried out around South Georgia in the last year, including a research cruise on RRS *Sir David Attenborough* in February/March. The 2024-25 year was unusual for South Georgia in several ways with low sea-surface temperatures, more sea ice than the recent trend and proximity of the A23a iceberg. The talk covered these in the context of ecological modelling time series and wider observations of climate change. *(Talk available).*

Marine Management and Protection. Dr Martin Collins, OBE

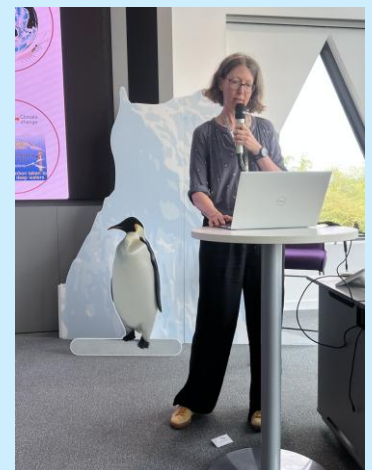
Martin is a marine ecologist at BAS and is the UK's Scientific Representative to CCAMLR. He was previously Chief Executive and Director of Fisheries for GSGSSI (2009-2015), a period that included the creation of the South Georgia and SSI MPA, and eradication of reindeer rats and mice.

Marine management in SG waters is a combination of the CCAMLR system and domestic management implemented by GSGSSI. Martin described the recent history of exploitation and subsequent marine management at SG, including the establishment of CCAMLR, the proclamation of the Maritime Zone and domestic fishery management, and the creation and later developments of the SGSSI Marine Protected Area. The MPA has very high compliance and is enforced through MV *Pharos*, C130 overflights from the Falkland Islands, and Royal Navy ships. *(Talk available).*

New Threats, Including Climate Change. Dr Ryan Reisinger, (University of Southampton) *(Talk available).*

Ryan is an Associate Professor at the University of Southampton, specialising in the ecology of top predators in the Southern Ocean. The talk considered potential futures for the unique marine ecosystem and environment of SG, against the background of a century of monitoring and management. It described how, over the past century, the South Atlantic has undergone significant environmental transformation, with rapid physical changes, and changes in the distribution and abundance of marine life, alongside the historical exploitation of krill, Patagonian toothfish and marine mammals.

Drawing on published and forthcoming research, the talk discussed projections of distribution changes in species across the food-chain and how these might relate to CCAMLR's ecosystem-based management framework. Scientific monitoring



*Dr Sally Thorpe presenting
(Photo: P. Trathan)*

programmes are key to understanding emerging threats and identifying governance challenges that may undermine conservation efforts in this extraordinarily diverse region as environmental pressures intensify.

Updates on recent Bob Burton Awards:

1) South Georgia pipit study Katie Wells, Marine Biologist, British Antarctic Survey

Prior to the Habitat Restoration Project to eradicate invasive rodents from South Georgia, ground-nesting pipits were restricted to only a handful of rat-free sites, predominantly on Bird Island, with an estimated 3000-4000 breeding pairs. Their re-colonisation of mainland South Georgia following the removal of rats was by all accounts almost immediate, with singing pipits rapidly occupying their preferred coastal tussock habitat, no longer at risk of predation. With their short-generation length, pipits were anecdotally seen at numerous sites around the island within just a few years.

A £1000 award was used to help purchase specialist sound recording equipment for use by BAS personnel in surveys of South Georgia Pipit and other bird populations on South Georgia. The equipment is currently being used by Katie Wells, a marine biologist already working at KEP, for on-going studies of South Georgia Pipits. As well as the objective of providing tangible information on population density post-eradication of rats, defining a replicable methodology will enable long-term monitoring that could inform future conservation action should rodent or invasive invertebrate incursion occur.

Fieldwork for the project in austral summer 2024-25 comprised two aspects, an observer walking established transects recording pipits, and the placement of audio recorders at these sites. In September 2025 Katie reported that:

“I’m currently processing the acoustic files collected from Discovery Point and Maiviken using the SongMeter minis during the 2024-25 summer season.

To get to this stage, it was first necessary to train the BTO Pipeline software to recognise pipit calls, which involved many hours of listening to ambient Maiviken sounds and picking out the pipits manually. In the coming weeks I’m going to get my teeth into the analysis of this and the transect data – I’m really excited to pull everything together.

I’ve also been granted the privilege of staying at KEP a little longer – until the end of January 2026, so I hope that I’ll be able to gather data for the best part of another summer season. It’ll be very interesting to compare, as many people were reporting an anecdotally low number of pipits last summer.”



*A SongMeter mini at Discovery Point (Photo: K. Wells)
There is more detail about the project in Newsletter 48.*

2) Virtual Viola (based on an update from Norman Court, project manager to the Viola Trust)

The Viola Trust is working to virtually repatriate the old Hull steam trawler *Viola* (later known as *Dias*) to her home port of Hull. Bob Burton Award Funding is being used to complete a virtual reality realisation of *Viola* and her long and varied history. *(See the detailed article at p.9 in Newsletter 47, November 2024).*

The Virtual Viola Project is now complete but has not yet been officially launched by the Viola Trust. The virtual visualisation film has been shared with the SGA committee, who generally were very complimentary about its content and quality. Our main contact for this project, SGA member Norman Court, is the Project Manager to The Viola Trust. He is due to give an online presentation to SGA members on 20 November 2025, hosted by Martin Collins, which will include the *Virtual Viola* film and possibly another short film explaining the genesis of the project. *(See Events section on p.17).* This project received a Bob Burton Award of £1,000.

3) Hope Cross Memorial Appeal - Dundee Heritage Trust

This project was completed some while ago, but the South Georgia Heritage Trust’s recent ‘Whale of a Weekend’ event enabled several South Georgia Association members to view the resulting display of the Shackleton Memorial Cross at Discovery Point, Dundee. *(See the report of this event from SGHT, on p. 16).*

This project was awarded a £1000 Bob Burton award towards the display of the cross.

South Georgia fieldwork clothing and equipment, then and now.....

Bruce Mair and Katie Wells

On 17 January 2025 Bruce Mair gave a fascinating online talk for the SG Association about his experiences of geological fieldwork on South Georgia in the mid-1970s. The Editor was struck by how much has changed over that 50-year period, but also how some things have stayed the same! The article below by Bruce Mair and Katie Wells, a scientist currently working on South Georgia, looks at clothing, equipment, food and communications, then and now. Bruce's online talk can be viewed via the 'Events' tab on the SGA website. As well as her work as a marine biologist, Katie is a recipient of a Bob Burton Award supporting work on South Georgia penguins.

Bruce Mair

The Geological Section of the British Antarctic Survey was based at the University of Birmingham when I joined as a "Temporary Geologist" on a two-year contract on 1 July 1974. Just three months later, on 3 October I was aboard the RRS *John Biscoe* in Southampton with other scientists, base personnel and ship's crew to sail to Antarctica via Uruguay and the Falkland Islands – and for the first of my two seasons on South Georgia, my allotted field area.

Field Seasons

In my first season I arrived at King Edward Point (KEP) 46 days later, 18 November 1974, aboard HMS *Endurance* having trans-shipped in Stanley. Two of our party were experienced FIDS, namely geologist Dr Mike Bell and, General Assistant (GA) Dave Orchard, while geologists Bryan Storey and I were just "FIDLETS". We collected our field equipment (tents, food and fuel) that morning and later that same day we were helicoptered into our first campsite in Cooper Bay. During the next 151 days we surveyed the southern end of the island and were moved (helicopter, Gemini, ship's launch and "flubber") by HMS *Endurance*, RRS *John Biscoe* and RRS *Bransfield* to 6 main campsites from where we could reach another 4 depot campsites to extend our area of mapping. We left South Georgia on 27 April 1975 and arrived in Southampton on 30 May 1975. My second season in 1976–77 followed a similar pattern with 140 days in the field (8 main and 3 depot campsites) along the southwestern coast with transfers by RRS *John Biscoe* and RRS *Bransfield*. I was accompanied for most of the field season by GA Dave Burkitt, and later by Tim Fogg when working around Cumberland Bay.

Clothing

Our BAS clothing was supplied to us when the ship reached Stanley on the journey south (see list and photograph). The full equipment list was modified for South Georgia, given that the temperatures were not as extreme as on the Antarctic Peninsula where the other BAS stations were located. The climate of South Georgia brought its own problems – the variability in weather as weather fronts arrived from the southwest giving temperature fluctuations, variable winds and especially the dampness and humidity – rain one minute and snow the next even in the austral summer.



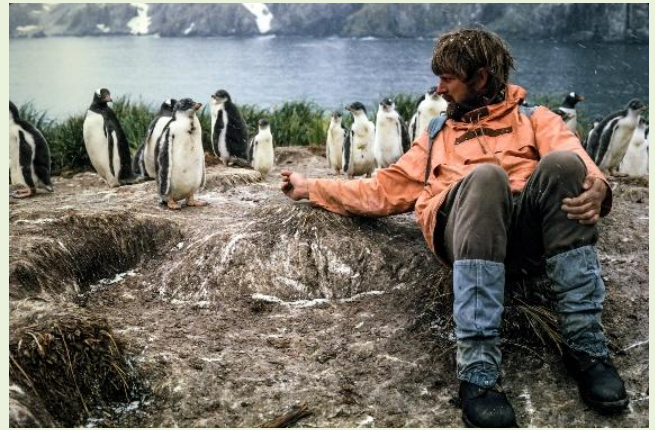
STANDARD CLOTHING LIST FOR SUMMER FIELD PARTIES – NORTHERN AREA BASES.					
PER PERSON.					
Item No.	Description	Qty.			
1.	Anorak, base	1	27.	Kitbag	1
6.	Boots, Greenland	1 pr	28.	Knife, hunting	1
9.	Boots, rubber, knee	1 pr	29.	Laces	2 pr
10	Boots, indoor	1 pr	31.	Necksquare	1
11.	Braces	1 pr	33.	Pyjama, trousers	1
12.	Caps, balaclava	1	34.	Pyjama, jacket	1
13.	Drawers, long	1 pr	36.	Shirts	2
14.	Drawers, short	2 pr	38.	Snow spectacles	1 pr
15.	Gloves, woollen, finger	3 pr	39.	Socks, heavy woollen	4 pr
16.	Gloves, working, finger	2 pr	40.	Stockings, seaboot	2 pr
20.	Gloves, heavy-duty, mitt	1 pr	42.	Towels, hand	1
21.	Gloves, duffel	1 pr	43.	Towels, bath	1
22.	Handkerchiefs	4	44.	Trousers, working	1 pr
23.	Headband	1	45.	Trousers, windproof	1 pr
24.	Housewife	1	46.	Vests, string	2
25.	Insoles, plastic	1 pr	47.	Vests, long arm	1
26.	Jersey, Icelandic	1	48.	Waterproof cagoule	1
			49.	Waterproof overtrousers	1 pr

Kit issue, 1974 (B. Mair)

The 1970s were a watershed in clothing and equipment for mountaineering and walking. The expeditions of Sir Chris Bonington and his contemporaries (often associated with former FIDS) reported in a deluge of books (with multiple colour photos) revealed that modern materials, in combination with natural fabrics, and sleeker design could streamline and

facilitate exploration activity. The transformation from the old to the new was underway in the private world, with BAS and other government science organisations trying to catch up.

The windproof clothing made of Ventile (the same material as our tents) included a Base Anorak (not the more robust Sledging Anorak) and over-trousers was worn over the wonderful Norwegian sweaters, the ubiquitous tartan shirts (generally soft to wear but later materials were itchy), sturdy moleskin trousers and a thermal base layer. String vests were issued, but not popular. The anoraks were perfect for geologists, having a zipped pocket large enough for the tools required - a notebook, marker pens, pencils, hand lens, compass, and inclinometer. In damper conditions Ventile swells and although not fully waterproof provides more protection and invariably would become too warm.



Mike Bell (1942-2019) (above) and Bruce Mair (below) in standard field gear: Ventile anorak, checked shirt, moleskin trousers, canvas gaiters. Standard pyramid tent behind.

In heavy rain or snow, we sometimes resorted to thick, very robust but unwieldy cagoules and overtrousers supplied by BAS, but thanks to our project leader, Geoff Tanner, we were given alternative waterproof jackets to test.

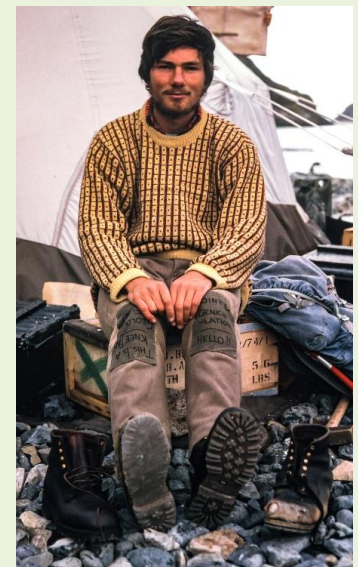
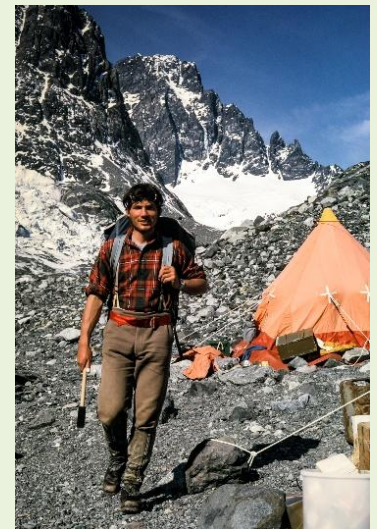
Multi-layer Brollibond jackets proved impractical for our field work with poppers and zips, and the over-jackets from Nevisport (a company formed in 1970 by FID Ian Sykes) were certainly waterproof but lacked ventilation (other than the front zip). Gore-Tex was not readily available until about 1976. As the saying goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad (inadequate?) clothing!

In 1974 field geologists on South Georgia were issued with two pairs of Greenland leather walking boots which were well made, of high quality and very comfortable so easy to break in. Alas, the daily soaking and drying cycle when used in the field, in combination with the abrasive igneous and volcanic rocks we worked on, wore them out in under six weeks! Drying our boots by hanging them in the apex of our pyramid tents directly over the Tilley lamp didn't prolong their life. And in addition, they were too pliable for using properly with either crampons or skis. In 1974 we were issued with standard alpine skis modified to take a toe-fixed cable binding to facilitate travelling on the Saloman Glacier with varying success.

There is a pair of Greenland Boots in the Scottish Mountain Heritage Collection - see <https://smhc.co.uk/collection/greenlander-boots/>

By 1976 we were issued with plastic boots (either Koflach or Scarpa?) as these were now becoming available for mountaineering. They were much stronger, had a stiffened sole suitable for crampons or cross-country ski heel bindings, and gave high ankle protection. They took longer to break in but served us well, with the laces giving up before the boots themselves. As it happened, we had plastic snowshoes for glacier travel in my second season which were considered more practical, but perhaps not safer when crossing crevasses.

We augmented our clothing issue with items brought from the UK to avoid wearing the supplied string vests or Y-fronts (commonly referred to as shreddies), and to save those Norwegian sweaters! Striped flannel pyjamas served as both nightwear, and as alternative thermal layers under our windproof anoraks and trousers.



Right: South Georgia is very hard on boots! Note Norwegian sweater, and Karrimor framed canvas rucksack with two compartments - rucksack design was evolving in the 1970s.

The concept of layered clothing to provide both ease of movement, warmth and comfort isn't something that arrived with the Merino icebreaker thermal wear that is available today! We were supplied with a variety of fingered gloves, which were

constantly being pulled off or put back on when taking geological measurements and notes, and we carried Dachstein thick wool mittens in our rucksacks in reserve for the really cold days.

Camping Equipment

Our tents, camping equipment, food and fuel for our austral summer field season was prepared by the overwintering personnel at King Edward Point. Everything was itemised, listed and checked in advance and packed according to the camping procedures established over many years since Operation Tabarin, by FIDS and BAS.

Camping and tent life operated as a two-person unit, with a standardised internal tent layout for sleeping, cooking and storage with most scientists (but not all apparently!) sharing routine chores equally with their companion (GA). We soon acquired the skills necessary to light a Primus stove or a Tilley lamp without a fuss, and to cook when designated as “inside man”, and to secure the tent, locate stores, fuel and water when in the role of “outside man”.



B. Mair in full Nevisport waterproofs with Pup tent.

Three or four nights in such spartan surroundings were more than enough!

The standard BAS Pyramid Tent is about 8 ft square at its base, tepee-style, double walled and with a tunnel entrance and provided comfortable and adequate protection in all weathers. It is still routinely used today by BAS. Thankfully we seldom had to transport them far from our landing beaches as they were heavy and unwieldy when collapsed in their carrying bag.

To enable us to travel away from our main camps and extend our range and spend more time on surveying or geological investigation we were supplied with a BAS Mountain Tent (or pup tent). There were intended as a safety “reserve” tent, and to be used for back packing. They were rectangular, low height A-frame, double-walled and with a tunnel entrance – and heavy! We would ferry loads when establishing a remote depot site with a Mountain Tent as carrying it, camping equipment and food plus geological equipment was impossible.

Food

BAS sledging rations – “man food” - was supplied in 56 lb boxes, and provided two thirds of our nourishment, with the remainder being made up of “base food” supplies. These sledging rations were intended for 2 people for 10 days and based on the calorific needs of men undertaking extreme physical work in low temperatures such as on the Antarctic mainland. We found the 6 lbs of tinned butter a bit of challenge to get through, despite using it in porridge, soups, thickly layered on biscuits or added to our daily meat bar concoctions.



Contents of 10- day food box for two people (B. Mair)

As we were dropped by ship on landing beaches we benefitted from having extra “Base food” to vary our diet. The boxes were made up at King Edward Point by the overwintering personnel from the stores at Shackleton House, and each varied in content, so opening them was exciting. There was a range of tinned goods including meats, dried fruit, jam, cakes and puddings in varying quantities which led to some inventive combinations!

Communications and entertainment

There could be five scientific field parties, remote from KEP, active on South Georgia in the 1970s, and there were three ships providing our logistical support. A daily (usually evening) radio schedule was maintained with KEP (unless by prior agreement say when using a depot camp). Each field party in turn would call in using a military style Racal Squadcall radio to confirm their status, make any requests and to confirm ship movements. Each could listen in to the other conversations. BAS personnel could receive 200 words per month from designated next-of-kin and could send 100 words per month in return. These messages were transmitted by telex to/from the UK and KEP and would be read out over the open radio schedule on request; although most of us opted to receive a printed copy later from the KEP, or one of the ship's, radio operators. Standard mail was received but this was totally dependent on whether a ship was passing through or returning

from Stanley. Outgoing mail was given to the ship's radio operator during our camp moves for subsequent posting from KEP where our postal bill would be paid at the end of the season.

We used a transistor radio in the field to listen to BBC World Service, Lourenço Marques Radio or perhaps Radio Nederland occasionally in the evenings. It all depended on "atmospherics" as to how good the signal was, if we remembered and what time zone we kept. In the 1974-75 our GA Dave Orchard purchased a mini-cassette recorder in Stanley on the voyage south to provide some musical relaxation. The upside was that we could run it off the Squadcall batteries! The downside was there were few cassette tapes available in the Falkland Islands Company Store but the three I remember vividly were The Carpenters, Hair, and Melanie. We knew all the words by the end of that field season I assure you!

The evenings and "lie-up" days were occupied with writing up notes, drawing up maps, labelling rock samples, reading, listening to the radio on occasion, playing crib, or just talking. It all seems terribly civilised and gung-ho just like it was for the heroes of the golden age of polar exploration. My diaries add a touch of reality – I commented often about the weather, the complexity of the geology and the constantly changing ship schedules commensurate with the dynamic programme of polar research that BAS conducted during the 1970s, of which I was just a part.

Katie Wells

I arrived at King Edward Point in November 2023, recruited as one of two marine biologists, and am due to leave in January 2026. I travelled South on commercial flights to Chile and then to the Falkland Islands to join MV *Pharos SG*. The whole journey from the UK to South Georgia can be done in about a week.

Clothing

Having previously worked on other islands in the South Atlantic, I had some experience of preparing for remote postings, but there was something very exciting about visiting the clothing department at BAS to try on the contents of my kit bag. As well as a range of hats, buffs, gloves, and boots, I was supplied with several sets of merino base tops/trousers, lightweight mid-layers, hiking trousers, waterproof salopettes, a synthetic down jacket and heavy duty paramo coat.

The weather on South Georgia is renowned for being changeable. This, coupled with the sometimes-inflexible timings of wildlife monitoring, means it's not always possible to be a fair-weather fieldworker! The clothing we're issued in 2025 is designed to equip us for the wide-ranging conditions of the sub-Antarctic summer and winter, with several layering options to adjust as necessary.

I had not long stepped off MV *Pharos SG* onto the island before walking to Maiviken to monitor the Antarctic fur seal population became my regular commute.

The marine biologist role at King Edward Point often involves hiking, whether it be to count southern elephant seals, monitor gentoo penguin colonies or mark out the locations of giant petrel nests. Most of this work takes place locally on the Thatcher Peninsula, but sometimes we're lucky enough to have boating assistance to reach sites further afield.

It quickly became apparent that I was going to need additional boots, as the first of my Meindl pairs began to suffer from the unforgiving scree.



*Three pairs of Meindl boots.
South Georgia is still very hard on boots! (Photo: K. Wells)*

Without a doubt my most frequently used piece of kit is the Paramo coat. It's a love-hate item amongst the biologists on South Georgia. The cons being its weight, and the fact it apparently doesn't face up very well to the Bird Island rain. However, I think there's a lot to be said for a coat with such a multitude of useful pockets. A down jacket with a Paramo over the top being the ultimate winter combination. In 2024, we had a particularly harsh winter at King Edward Point, with frequent heavy snowfall. To stay warm, I found myself relying a lot on a pair of thick Paramo, ski-pant style salopettes and thermal base layers.

Our most frequently visited field site – Maiviken – is dense with tussock grass. Following rain, the tussock holds onto the water droplets, ready to soak any unsuspecting biologist not in their waterproof trousers! I've learned this the hard way, and now often complete the fur seal monitoring route wearing a pair of waterproof salopettes. They're ideal for a rainy summer day, as they're not too thick, so overheating doesn't become an issue. Coupled with a Gore-Tex jacket, it's *almost* possible to stay completely dry.



Left: K. Wells with Paramo jacket and Gore-Tex salopettes (Photo: N. Frontier), Centre: K. Wells in full winter kit (Photo: C. Fox-Clarke) Right: Marine Biologist Rhi Nichol in full waterproofs on Prion Island (Photo: K. Wells).

Field huts and food

Still a standard feature of life on South Georgia are the use of Primus stoves and Tilley lamps, which can be found in every field hut. There is nothing cosier than the warm glow of the Tilley, coupled with the faint aroma of damp Meindl boots hung from the ceiling to dry. In our bags we carry an MSR (multi-fuel, pressurised liquid) stove and fuel for use in emergencies, or when bivvying/camping.

Food-wise, most opt to take 'Rat-packs' (dehydrated ration packs) to the huts, for a quick and filling meal. They are lightweight, which pays dividends, especially in winter when your pack is already weighty enough with snow shovel, ice axe, and avalanche safety gear. The most sought-after Rat-packs are chilli con carne and chicken korma, though there are also a surprisingly varied range of vegetarian and vegan options to cater for all. For the more experimental, it can be fun to cook up decadent hut feasts using a range of ingredients brought from base, or mystery items found at the back of the shelves. Cheeses and meats travel well, with the height of luxury being a camembert melted using the heat of the Tilley lamp.

Communications

Life on base has been revolutionised by the introduction of Starlink, (satellite communications system) which makes keeping up with the outside world very easy - sometimes too easy. However, when staying in the huts, scheduled radio calls are still necessary to check field party status. For groups further afield, at St Andrews Bay on the opposite side of the Barff Peninsula for example, a satellite phone is used to check in and garner plans for the following day, organise boating operations or request updated weather forecasts.



Boating Officer 2023-24 'AJ' with Primus and Tilley in action in the St. Andrews Bay hut (Photo: K. Wells)



Dehydrated ration packs 'Rat-packs' (Photo: K. Wells)

Upcoming science activity at King Edward Point and on South Georgia, 2025-26

The upcoming field season (2025/2026) is shaping up to be a busy one at KEP. The Marine Biologists on the ground, Katie Wells and Rhi Nichol, have already started regular long-term monitoring, studying the population and breeding success of fur seals, elephant seals, gentoos penguins and seabirds, with bi-monthly surveys on the South Georgia shelf for krill (and consumers) from the patrol vessel *Pharos SG*.

The team will lead the project '*Synchronised Swimming: Tracking Penguins and Krill Swarms on the South Georgia shelf*', deploying 40 GPS tags and depth recorders on 20 pairs of breeding gentoo penguins at Maiviken, allowing their foraging locations to be mapped in 3D. Simultaneous mapping of krill swarms on the South Georgia shelf, where the penguins are expected to forage, will be carried out from MV *Pharos SG*.

KEP Scientist, Kate Owen, will lead extended drone surveys to study populations of fur seals at Maiviken, Husvik and Stromness, utilising a new Mavic 3 drone, and avian influenza monitoring will also continue. The main focus of this work has evolved to connect the impacts of the virus with population structure and demography in the long-term monitoring species.

Late season a NERC funded team will be stationed at KEP, assessing nutrient input from glacial melt at sites across Cumberland Bay led by Alanna Grant from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and finally, for the Wild Water Whales team led by Jen Jackson and Stephanie Martin at BAS an acoustic array will be deployed off Cumberland Bay.

Thanks to Kate Owen.

Place names at Prince Olav Harbour, South Georgia

Adrian Fox, and Elena Field (UK Antarctic Place-names Committee)

Place names on South Georgia are a fascinating short-hand for the history of exploration, sealing and whaling, and science on the island. This article is the sixth in a series highlighting the place names of landmarks at the more frequently visited areas of South Georgia.

Prince Olav Harbour is the SW part of Cook Bay and is the site of the last of the main whaling stations to commence operations on South Georgia, and the first to be closed, operating for only 20 years from 1912-1932.

Initially, from 1908, Prince Olav Harbour was a floating factory operation, until the site of the shore whaling station was leased by the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company from the Falkland Islands Government in 1911 as *Port Gladstone*. The main station opened in 1912. The South Georgia Company eventually purchased the station from the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company and moved some of the infrastructure to Leith.

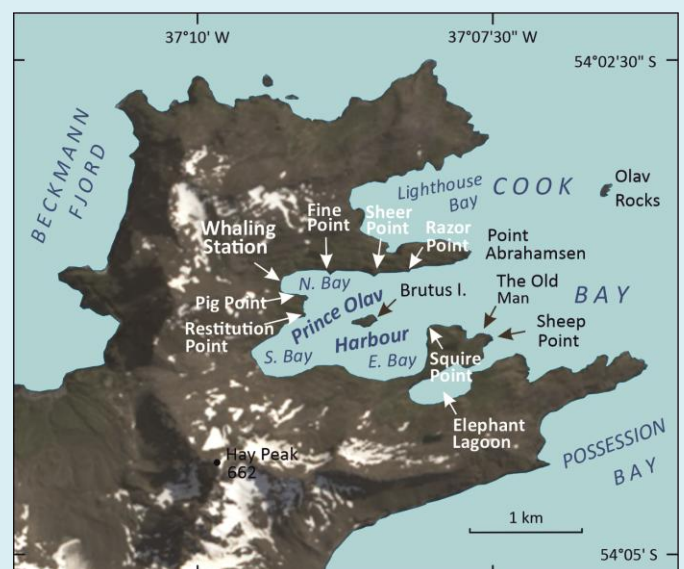
The bay was first called *Ratten Hafen* [= rat harbour] by sealers and whalers, probably because the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is believed to be introduced to South Georgia at this harbour in 1800.

The bay was re-named *Prince Olav's Harbour* by Norwegian whalers after Prince Olav of Norway (b. 1903), (later King Olav V, from 1957), and through common use this name also became attached to the whaling station.

Olav Rocks lie about 2 km from the entrance and are so named because they serve as a guide for ships entering Prince Olav Harbour.

The harbour is bounded by the west entrance point **Point Abrahamsen**, named by the Discovery Investigations (DI) after Captain Abrahamsen, Manager of Prince Olav Harbour whaling station, following charting in 1926-30.

It contains the three smaller, and geographically named, **North**, **East** and **South** bays.



Map based on a Landsat 8 image and data from the APC gazetteer

Restitution Point and **Brutus Island** are named after ships associated with whaling here: Restitution Point was originally named *Factory Point* by DI, as the site of the whaling station, but re-named Restitution Point by the Antarctic Place-names Committee (APC) in 1954 after SS *Restitution*, a factory ship which worked for many years at Prince Olav Harbour before the shore station was built.

Brutus was a hulk, towed from South Africa with a cargo of coal by two small whale catchers, and was for many years moored alongside the old whaling station.

Pig Point, to the west of Restitution Point was named for the site of the whaling station piggery.

On the west side of the Harbour, **Fine**, **Sheer** and **Razor points** were named descriptively by DI after new charting in 1929-30.



Looking west into North Bay at Prince Olav Harbour (Photo: Pat Lurcock).

The whaling station is in the centre, the descriptively named Razor Point is to the right. The wreck of Brutus lies to the left of the photo, just south of Pig Point.

On the east side **Dinghy Point** was originally named *Pram Point* by DI, as the Norwegian for dinghy, but was renamed Dinghy Point in 1991 to resolve a clash with Pram Point at Stromness. Further east the DI also named **Squire Point** and descriptively **The Old Man**. The eastern boundary is **Sheep Point**, site of a now disused lighthouse built to guide shipping into the Harbour. This was originally named *Cape Christophersen*, probably after Pedro Christophersen, one of the first Directors of the Compañía Argentina de Pesca, which operated the whaling station at Grytviken, 1904-65 but was renamed Sheep Point by the DI in 1929, possibly reflecting a name in earlier usage.

Elephant Lagoon lies to the south, round Sheep Point, on the SE side of Cook Bay, to which it is connected by **Carl Passage** (a 60 m wide channel named after the sealer *Lille Karl*). The lagoon was named *Elephant Harbour* by the Shackleton-Rowett Antarctic Expedition, 1921-22 after the elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*), probably following the usage of sealers and renamed as a lagoon by the DI in 1929.

Hay Peak (662 m) is the high point of the ridge enclosing Prince Olav Harbour. It was surveyed and named *The Snow Pap* by DI, 1929-30 but was renamed after Arthur Edward Hay (b. 1902), Technical Engineer with the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company at Prince Olav Harbour, 1924-35, by the APC in 1991.

The toponymy of this area is an interesting example of how different actors in different eras have applied names independently, without consideration of duplication elsewhere (Pram/Dinghy), overlaid new names (Ratten Hafen/Port Gladstone/Prince Olav Harbour; The Snow Pap/Hay Peak) and used generics without agreed definitions (Harbour/Lagoon). This shows the importance of the role of the APC in ensuring stability and consistency in the toponymy, with most names here reviewed and accepted into the APC gazetteer in 1953-1955.

The Antarctic Place-names Committee advises the Commissioner of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands on matters relating to place-naming on South Georgia, and if appropriate, endorsement of place names rests with the Commissioner. More information about South Georgia place names and an online gazetteer and web-map can be found at: <https://apc.antarctica.ac.uk/>

Ships that Pass in the Night, 2026 Bruce F. Mair

There are many events associated with South Georgia to be commemorated in 2026. It will be 25 Years since the King Edward Point Research Station was opened, 50 Years since the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) established their headquarters in Cambridge, and 70 Years since the launch of two ships that played significant roles in the history of the island, namely RRS *John Biscoe* and HMS *Endurance*.

The South Georgia Association is planning to commemorate the impact both ships had on the recent history of the island via a series of events in 2026. **Members are asked to share images and recollections of their experiences – either as crew members, field scientists or as base personnel – to ensure these ships that often passed in the night are not forgotten.** Please contact: events@southgeorgiaassociation.org

RRS *John Biscoe* was the “ship of choice” for field parties working around the coastline of South Georgia because of her low foredeck which was ideal for landings by Gemini. She was launched on 11 June 1956 from the shipyard of Fleming & Ferguson, Paisley at Yard No. 8 (Phoenix). She was ice strengthened, diesel electric powered with a gross tonnage of 1534 grt, and was 220 ft in length. The RRS *John Biscoe* finished her service with the BAS in 1992, and after various new owners she was scrapped on 2 February 2004 after a life of 48 years.



RRS *John Biscoe* at Grytviken, 1976 (Photo: B. Mair)

HMS *Endurance* (A171) started life as the *Anita Dan*, a cargo vessel of 2641 grt and 302 ft long, launched on 26 May 1956 from the Kröger Werft Shipyard in Rendsburg, Germany.

Initially built for the Danish firm of Lauritzen Lines, *Anita Dan* was purchased by the UK in 1967 and modified at Harland and Wolff, Belfast to become the Royal Navy’s ice patrol ship until 1991. HMS *Endurance* completed aerial vertical and oblique photographic surveys of South Georgia in 1973 to add detail to the 1:200,00 DOS 1958 map, and occasionally provided support for field parties. She was decommissioned in 1991 and broken up two years later.



HMS *Endurance* at King Edward Point, 1974 (Photo: B. Mair)



Fieldwork support by Whirlwind helicopter from HMS *Endurance*, Cooper Bay, 1974 (Photo: B. Mair)

South Georgia Government news *Compiled by the Editor, mainly based on the GSGSSI website*

New Commissioner

The Commissioner for SGSSI, Colin Martin-Reynolds CMG, has made his first visit to South Georgia. He was only a couple of months into the role having been sworn in as His Majesty’s Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in July, taking over from Ms Alison Blake CMG. During his career so far, he has held many former positions at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office including recently as British Ambassador to Colombia.

The cruise ship season in South Georgia has started earlier and earlier in recent years. To reach the island, the Commissioner was able to join and travel with the first expedition cruise ship to visit this season, MV *Silver Explorer*. He arrived on the island in early October, in time to see winter snow still lying at sea level.

On arrival the Commissioner observed the immigration and arrival process, before going through the regular biosecurity checks for all those arriving on the island.

Right: Visiting KEP laboratories, and at the Museum, with Dierdre Mitchell.



During his visit, the Commissioner was delighted to meet the personnel of the various agencies working at KEP and Grytviken including Government, British Antarctic Survey and South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) staff.

Amongst other places, he visited the science labs at KEP, Government Post Office at Grytviken, the South Georgia Museum and Shackleton's grave in the Grytviken cemetery. *Thanks to Sarah Lurcock.*

Research and Monitoring Plan for Terrestrial Protected Areas

On June 20, 2025, GSGSSI published a new Terrestrial Protected Areas Research and Monitoring Plan to guide scientific activities that will contribute to the sustainable management and regulation of South Georgia.

Previously, in July 2022, the Government of SGSSI designated the entire landmass of South Georgia and its outlying islands, and the South Sandwich Islands as Specially Protected Areas. These **Terrestrial Protected Areas** (TPAs) cover over 3,800 km² and complement the Marine Protected Area, which covers the whole 1.24m km² Maritime Zone, thus ensuring that the whole of SGSSI lies within a protected area system. This is a success story in a world where it has become common-place for unsustainable human activity to result in environmental deterioration and a decline in biodiversity.

The Terrestrial Protected Areas have two overarching Conservation Objectives: (i) the conservation, protection and preservation of the ecosystem and restoration of biodiversity, and (ii) that activities carried out in the TPA are managed sustainably with minimal impacts on the ecosystem.

Following the designation of the Terrestrial Protected Areas, GSGSSI published the TPA Management Plan (2023-2029). A key commitment within this was to develop a **Research and Monitoring Plan** (RMP) which would review existing monitoring and data gathering activities within the Territory and map these against TPA management aims.

As part of the wider GSGSSI [Pathway to Protection](#) strategy, the Government intends to review the RMP within a maximum of six years of publication to assess progress against the research and monitoring needs. Based on this assessment, identified gaps can be listed as priorities for further research, and management actions or further monitoring can be initiated to ensure the ongoing protection of the islands.

GSGSSI is very grateful to all those who contributed to development of the RMP, and to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for funding the project.



The Research and Monitoring Plan, along with the Terrestrial Protected Areas Management Plan and 'Pathway to Protection' document is available on the GSGSSI website.

Invitation to Tender for successor to MV *Pharos SG*.

In October 2025 GSGSSI invited tenders for the Charter of a UK-flagged Patrol, Security and Fisheries Protection Vessel (the successor to the current contract with MV *Pharos SG*).

The charter is for a multi-purpose role in the Scotia Sea region, with primary functions including patrol and fisheries protection, alongside additional transportation, security, and scientific support responsibilities.

The charter period is either for ten years plus five one-year extension options, or alternatively for 15 years. The target start date is end of May 2028. The Tender Closing Date is 5 December 2025.

Entry Permit Scheme for 2025-26 Tourism Season

In August GSGSSI opened the new Entry Permit Scheme for all visitors to South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. All people entering South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands for work or visitor purposes will now require an Entry Permit, (apart from a few exemptions). There are separate permits for work and visitor purposes.

Permits can be accessed through a portal on the GSGSSI website and it also has information for Operators, Expedition Leaders and Masters.

It is a requirement that all Expedition Leaders and Masters must be familiar with the documentation and Expedition Leaders must pass an Expedition Leader briefing. All applicants must have evidence of adequate Health Insurance. There is no charge for a 12-month work permit, a 30-day visitor permit costs £200.

Recent stamps

Falkland Post Services Ltd are producing stamps to mark the 250th anniversary of Cook's landing on South Georgia. In this anniversary year the stamps celebrate South Georgia and its change from a little-known island to a thriving UK Overseas Territory which is globally renowned for championing science, conservation and sustainable management.

Each set of stamps issued this year will focus on a different element of South Georgia and shine a light on both its history and its future.

The first (Cook and 250th anniversary of Possession) and second (Weather) issues were featured in Newsletter 48 in May. The third issue was released on 5 July 2025 and focuses on Wildlife – a feature of South Georgia which is cherished above all others and now attracts tourists and scientists from across the globe, but which once was seen purely through a lens of exploitation. *More information is available at: <https://www.falklandstamps.com/>*



SGS137 South Georgia Wildlife Sheetlet



SGS137 South Georgia Wildlife – a set of six stamps

South Georgia Heritage Trust update Jodie Price, SGHT

A new season is underway on South Georgia, and our dedicated South Georgia Museum team is back on island, ready for what promises to be a busy six months. Alongside welcoming visitors, we're launching two significant projects that mark important milestones in our conservation work.

Preserving Shackleton's legacy has reached a critical juncture. Without immediate action, the Stromness Manager's Villa — a key site in the Endurance story — risks being lost forever. With permission from GSGSSI, we are sending a team of skilled Norwegian carpenters this season to stabilise the Villa.

This vital work is being funded through the generous support of major donors – RSK Group and RSK Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Barry and Marie Lipman, and Frederick Paulsen – and the fund established by the late Bob Burton, a cherished member of the SGA community. The stabilisation project is being delivered in conjunction with 60 South Ltd whose vessel *Meredian* will be supporting us for the full season and Ocean Expeditions whose vessel *Sola* will transport the team and most of the cargo. Once stabilised, we plan to create a digital twin of the Villa, ensuring Shackleton's story can be explored and shared far beyond South Georgia's shores.

At Grytviken, home to the South Georgia Museum, preparations are underway to install a poignant new Whale Memorial. This powerful tribute will honour the thousands of whales killed during the peak of the Antarctic whaling industry in the early 20th century — a stark reminder of the past and a call to protect marine life for future generations.

The Key Table, which featured at Whale of a Weekend in Dundee, is currently en route to South Georgia and will be installed this season on the flensing plan at Grytviken.

Through the Whale Memorial, SGHT and Friends Of South Georgia Island (FOSGI) are raising funds to support vital research into the ongoing recovery of whale populations in the Southern Ocean.

Fundraising continues for both the Stromness Villa and the Whale Memorial. If you would like to support these efforts, please visit:

<https://sght.org/donate-now/>

There is an excellent 4-minute film about the Whale Memorial project at:

<https://vimeo.com/1096022506>

We had a whale of a time at Whale of a Weekend, held in Dundee this June. Many of you joined us to celebrate this remarkable island. If you missed it, you can still catch up on some of the talks online and explore the Whalers' Memory Bank – a resounding success since its launch. (see *SGHT website, News & Resources tab*). Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it has resonated deeply with communities both connected to whaling and those previously unaware of the industry's scale. The Memory Bank continues to grow, with new memories, artefacts, and photographs being donated regularly.

Linked to the Whale of a Weekend, the BBC Radio 4 *Rare Earth* series featured an hour-long episode about whales and whaling, featuring South Georgia Museum Curator Jayne Pierce as a studio guest and recorded pieces with Helen Balfour (South Georgia Museum Assistant Curator) and former whaler Gibbie Fraser. The programme was on Friday 27 June and is available on BBC Sounds.

August marked SGHT's 20th anniversary, and we celebrated in style with a special meal for current and former staff and trustees. We have many exciting plans still in development and remain profoundly grateful for the enthusiasm and support you bring as SGA members. Your continued commitment is helping to protect South Georgia's heritage and wildlife for generations to come.

South Georgia Museum: The 2024-25 season was our busiest season yet and saw us welcome 15,520 visitors to the museum from 109 ship visits and involving 144 whaling station tours! In between sharing the history of South Georgia, we cared for our museum collection, including the 250th Anniversary display celebrating the discovery of South Georgia. Our new exhibition in the Jarvis Room - *We Are All Whalers*, is dedicated to South Georgia's Whales: Past, Present, and Future. It includes an interactive sound station with various marine sounds that might be heard around the island. (Photo Right, UKAHT).

If you would like to follow the team this coming season, be sure to check out our museum blog:

<https://sgmuseum.gs/latest-news/>

Thanks to Lynn Barrowman for museum news.



L-R: Dan Snow (Historian), Gibbie Fraser (ex-whaler), Michael Visocchi (creator) and John Shears (Endurance 22) with the Key Table. (Photo: B. Anderson)



Some of the outputs from the whale-themed art workshop (SGHT)



South Georgia Association News

Membership update: The Association welcomes 25 new members since September (total 201, target 250). However, 36 had not renewed since January. If you are one of the 36, and renewing has slipped your mind, please do renew!

Committee changes: *There are several changes to the Committee personnel:*

Secretary: Fran Prince has stepped down after being the Secretary since the beginning of the SG Association (*see the report of the Summer meeting on p. 3*). The SGA is very grateful to Fran for this outstanding service.

Mathew Bellhouse Moran is the new Secretary. Matthew worked a season on South Georgia in 2015/2016 as a curatorial intern at the museum in Grytviken. He went on to work in museums across Scotland and is currently Executive Director of the Scottish Maritime Museum, where he is always happy to underline the shared heritage of South Georgia and Scotland through the common threads of whaling and Antarctic exploration.



Mathew Bellhouse Moran

Joshua Holder has joined the Committee to provide IT support. He is an IT Engineer at BAS and has provided IT support for the past two AGMs. He is currently preparing for his fifth deployment on the RRS *Sir David Attenborough* (SDA) since joining BAS as an apprentice four years ago, and this will include visiting Bird Island and King Edward Point. "On my last cruise I truly fell in love with South Georgia; the SDA took shelter from a storm at Husvik Bay, and seeing the island in person is truly magnificent. I hope to contribute to the Association in any way I can". *Photo right: Joshua Holder, (HMS Protector behind).*



David Fletcher is stepping down after many years as an active Committee member.

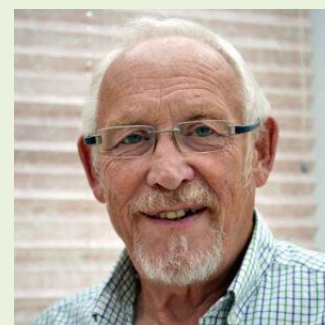
He had a career with BAS in Antarctica with BAS at Halley, Signy and Rothera, first as a field assistant (mountaineer) and later as a Base Commander. After BAS he had substantial experience of the cruise ship industry and brought for the SGA an understanding of how they handled their visits to South Georgia. He also represented the SGA at FCO Stakeholder meetings and at IAATO meetings.

Treasurer: **The Committee continues to seek a new Treasurer.** If interested please contact the Secretary in the first instance. The role involves: 1) Financial control for the Association by: Operation of the Associations' bank account, book-keeping, budgeting and preparation of financial reports to the Committee, and 2) The preparation of annual accounts and liaison with the Society's auditor.

Events:

20 November 2025. Online Talk – Virtual Viola. 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm.

Norman Court (*Right*), Project Manager for the Virtual Viola project, which was partly supported by the SGA, will give an online talk, including showing the Virtual Viola film.



Provisional dates for SGA events in 2026. PLEASE SAVE THE DATES

Online talks: *Live on the dates below and recorded for the website.*

- Friday 20 March 2026, 25th Anniversary of King Edward Point Research Station
- Friday 25 September 2026, 70th Anniversary of the Launch of RRS *John Biscoe* and HMS *Endurance* (*Anita Dan*)

Summer event: Friday 10 – Saturday 11 July 2026. The Association is holding an in-person, two-day event, with the theme of 'History and Art of South Georgia'. It is being hosted in Cambridge, and includes the Annual Members Meeting and Presidential Dinner.

Morag Husband Campbell Medal 2026: Nominations (self-nominations are not permitted) should be made on an official Nomination Form, available on the SG Association website and from the Secretary, to whom they should be sent no later than 28th February 2026. Full details about the medal and awarding criteria are available on the SGA website. The award would be made at the Association's Annual Members Meeting, part of the Summer Event in July 2026.

South Georgia Wildlife Surveys workshop meeting report. Dr Claire Waluda, BAS

On 17 September 2025, the South Georgia Heritage Trust, Friends of South Georgia Island, and the British Antarctic Survey convened a one-day workshop in Cambridge on the topic of South Georgia Wildlife Surveys. The aim of the workshop was to devise a plan for long-term monitoring and island-wide population counts of the mammals and birds of South Georgia. Many population estimates are over 40 years old, necessitating the need for updated information to quantify change and establish new baseline counts for as many species as possible.

The hybrid event brought together almost 60 experts from a range of organisations with some joining online from as far afield as the Falkland Islands, as well as from research stations on South Georgia itself. It was Chaired by Dr Simon Brockington, erstwhile BAS scientist and now Bursar at Downing College, Cambridge.

The meeting was opened by Dr Tim Stowe (SGHT), who set out the vision of the South Georgia Heritage Trust and Friends of South Georgia Island, followed by Dr Mark Belchier (GSGSSI) who discussed the objectives and priorities of the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Dr Claire Waluda (BAS) then gave an overview of the workshop objectives and outline of the day.

The meeting discussed recent changes in bird and seal populations on South Georgia following the success of projects to eradicate invasive species including rodents and reindeer, the impacts of climate change, the recent outbreak of avian influenza and the recovery of whale populations following the cessation of commercial whaling in the region.

Participants considered key priorities for wildlife surveys and monitoring, including what is currently feasible, what might be possible in future, potential timescales, capacity and funding requirements. Participants then considered priorities and methodologies for surveying key species groups including seals, penguins, flying birds, and cetaceans, including potential synergies in data collection and analysis. Technologies such as drones, satellite remote sensing and static cameras were considered as key techniques for wide ranging survey work. A co-ordinated whole island aerial survey was considered to be the gold standard for assessing seal and ground nesting bird populations, but participants recognised the significant financial and logistical challenges associated with undertaking such an endeavour.



Left to Right: Dr Jen Jackson, whale ecologist, Dr Tim Stowe (SGHT), Dr Simon Brockington (Chair) and Dr Claire Waluda, marine ecologist and meeting organiser. (Photo Alison Neil)



The meeting had nearly 60 attendees, in-person and online, from a range of organisations. (Photo Alison Neil)

The importance of year-round long-term monitoring studies of key species undertaken at Bird Island and King Edward Point were acknowledged as essential for understanding population change, alongside decadal surveys which have provided excellent updates on albatross and giant petrel population sizes and are important to continue to understand changes in these iconic species. There were various lively discussions on novel techniques for population survey and monitoring including using bioacoustics to record the presence of South Georgia pipits post-rat eradication, and citizen science approaches to increase the scope of wildlife data collection.

Updating estimates of white-chinned petrel and Antarctic prion populations were highlighted as of key importance due to their large numbers and impact on the ecosystem, acknowledging the difficulty in monitoring such species due to their burrow nesting habitat. The use of novel techniques such as detector dogs and spectral colour analysis to identify burrows were discussed, as well as the use of genomics using current and historical samples to assess effective population sizes, particularly for species which were heavily impacted by rodents such as common and South Georgia diving petrels.

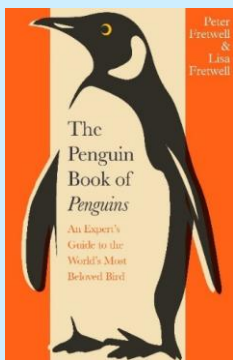
Previous survey work around the island has shown that whales have undergone significant recovery post whaling, with humpback and southern right whales in particular showing regional recoveries. It was recommended that future cetacean surveys should prioritise the understanding of the Antarctic blue whale populations, with continued passive acoustic monitoring useful for establishing cetacean biodiversity baseline data at South Georgia.

Future priorities also include the development of standard methodologies and protocols for repeatable aerial surveys, and streamlining data collection, storage and processing. By bringing together a diverse range of participants, a key aim of the workshop was to foster collaboration and reduce duplication of effort, for example by facilitating the use of data and imagery for multiple outcomes, such as population counts for various species as well as vegetation surveys.

A meeting report will be published which will set out the key priorities and strategies for future work and highlight priority topics for fundraising efforts. This workshop was the first step in creating and building on collaborations between participants, and there will be ongoing engagement to keep everyone connected and further our collective understanding of wildlife populations at South Georgia.

New publications relevant to South Georgia

A new book about penguins, including the species found on South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.....



The Penguin Book of Penguins

An Expert's Guide to the World's Most Beloved Bird

by Peter Fretwell and Lisa Fretwell

A charming and beautifully illustrated book about the world's most beloved birds, written by a leading scientist at the British Antarctic Survey and illustrated by his wife.

Publishing in the same year as PENGUIN'S 90th anniversary



The Penguin Book of *Penguins* is a new book, published in September 2025 by Penguin/Viking and celebrating all things Penguin. It was written and illustrated by husband and wife team Peter and Lisa Fretwell, and draws on Peter's extensive career and experience of working on and viewing penguins at British Antarctic Survey. Peter has discovered over half of the World's emperor penguin colonies and his pioneering work has tracked their battle against climate change in a warming world.

The book itself is a joyful, informative book that introduces us to the main species of penguin and the fascinating lives they lead: their history, evolution, behaviours and habitats. It recites the history of human interactions with the various species and conveys an urgent message about the importance of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean to the world's climate, with a strong ecological narrative.

The illustrations are all hand drawn by Lisa, using either pencils or pen and ink to support the text and add context and flair to the book's design. *The book can be found in all good bookshops and various online retailers.* ISBN-10: 0241732069, 288 pages

New British Antarctic Survey map catalogue online – free downloads of useful maps

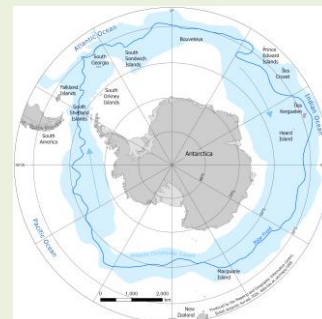
The Mapping and Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC) at BAS has published a new online map catalogue. It contains open-access topographic, thematic and geological maps, as well as information on where to purchase BAS's award-winning, professionally-printed published maps. Full details at bas.ac.uk/maps

The catalogue contains several high-quality maps that can be freely downloaded as PDF or PNG files and will be very useful for people interested in South Georgia, and are intended as base maps for publications and talks. These include:

- A4 Overview map of South Georgia
- Scotia Sea Overview Map
- Sub-Antarctic Islands and Circumpolar Current

The following full, published maps are also available for download:

- Geological map of South Georgia
- Bathymetry and Geological Setting of the South Sandwich Islands Volcanic Arc



A4 Overview of SG and Sub-Antarctic Islands, and Circumpolar Current maps



Outside the main building at King Edward Point: 31 July 2024 and 31 July 2025. Photos: B. Fyffe (L) and K. Wells (R).

The South Georgia area experienced unusually cold weather in winter 2024, with temperatures dropping to -10°C at King Edward Point in August. There were frequent heavy snowfalls and sea ice formed in King Edward Cove.

For comparison, mean daily maximum and minimum temperatures for August (winter) at KEP are $+2.4$ and -3.7°C with a record low of -13°C (2006-20) (Source: Meteomanz.com). See Newsletter 47, November 2024, for more photos from 2024.

South Georgia cruise: South Georgia Heritage Trust is organising a special voyage, *In the Footsteps of Shackleton*, in November 2026 which will include a circumnavigation of the island. See their website or contact luke.smith@sght.org

Editor's note: Thank you to all the contributors, and proof readers at the SGA. The SG Association newsletter is produced twice a year, in May and November. Contributions are welcomed by the Editor: Adrian Fox (aifo@exchange.nerc.ac.uk)