



The James Caird Society Newsletter

Issue 14 · July 2008

Antarctic ice shelf continues to break up



Site of the former Larsen-B Ice Shelf and the Antarctic Peninsula.

A giant Antarctic ice shelf that began to break up in February is shedding ice despite the approach of winter, according to the European Space Agency.

The break-up is the latest sign that warmer temperatures are affecting the Antarctic Peninsula. The peninsula has warmed about 2.5 degrees Celsius in the past 50 years, and seven ice shelves have retreated or disintegrated in the past two decades, ESA said.

About 160km² broke off the shelf in late May, the first documented calving of ice in winter. The shelf's link between Charcot and Latady islands more than halved to 2.7km and now risks breaking completely, said ESA, which monitors the region by satellite.

'The remaining plate has an arched fracture at its narrowest position, making it very likely that the connection will break completely in the coming days,' said Matthias Braun at Bonn University, and Angelika Humbert at Muenster University, both in Germany. They have been monitoring the Wilkins Ice Shelf for months.

In 2002, the Larsen-B Ice Shelf collapsed, with 453 billion tonnes of ice breaking up into icebergs in less than a month.

Other shelves that have collapsed in the past 30 years include Prince Gustav Channel, Larsen Inlet, Larsen A, Wordie, Muller and Jones.

While the Antarctic Peninsula is losing ice, the Antarctic Ice Sheet as a whole will remain 'too cold for surface melting and is expected to gain in mass due to increased snowfall,' the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said last year. Even so, scientists have said global warming may cause further melting in Antarctica.

The Wilkins shelf lost 570km² in February and March, the British Antarctic Survey said in March earlier this year. That followed a loss of 1,000km² in 1998.

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Some presidential outings

by Alexandra Shackleton

June 2007 To Portsmouth at the invitation of Captain Bob Tarrant RN to see his ship *HMS Endurance* receive the Freedom of the City, a rarely bestowed honour. At the historic ceremony the Lord Mayor was resplendent in glorious robes, foaming with lace and adorned with the magnificent chain of office. Afterwards, the ship's company exercised their new privilege of marching through the city.

November 2007

To Barcelona to speak at the exhibition 'Atrapats al gel' ('Trapped in the Ice'). The American Museum of Natural History created this exhibition (based on the *Endurance* story) in 1999. Since then it has toured America, visited Ireland and reached Spain last year, where it will tour for three years under the auspices of the Fundació Caixa Catalunya, a cultural foundation. Much additional material, which considers Antarctica from a scientific point of view, has been added. The Barcelona opening took place in the Maritime Museum, a fine building, once a shipyard. The President, who was given an interpreter, planned to apologise for not speaking Spanish, but was told that the *really* tactful thing was to apologise for not speaking Catalan. Everything was conducted in both languages, so being interviewed took ages, and the exhibition had two catalogues. 'Trapped in the Ice', which is very impressive, will be in Liverpool in 2010.



December 2007 To speak at the Whyte & Mackay Earls Court Boat Show to which Dulwich College had lent the *James Caird*. A great show and a nice link with the past, since the boat's successful 1999 visit to the Olympia Boat Show inspired Harding Dunnett, Old Alleynian, to found the James Caird Society and become our first Chairman.

February 2008 To the University of Brighton to open their conference 'The Polar Environments, Past, Present and Future' which was held in support of the International Polar Year, designed to focus world attention on the Polar Regions. The President – undeniably representing the past, as she pointed out – spoke on the *Nimrod* expedition. The present and the future were mainly represented by scientists. There was very positive feedback from those attending.

April 2008 To St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, for the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Sir Edmund Hillary KG ONZ MBE. The Queen, the Princess Royal and the Duke of Gloucester attended, as did Lady Hillary and the Prime Minister of New Zealand, who gave an address. The impressive service ended with the laying up of Sir

Edmund's Garter banner. The Chapel is the spiritual home of the Order of the Garter, instituted in 1348 by Edward III, and the banners of living knights (and ladies now) hang in the Quire.



The Military Knights of Windsor, uniformed in scarlet with silver breastplates trooped the banner up to the Dean who laid it on the altar. Sir Edmund's crest and banner, designed by the College of Heralds, splendidly evoked his life. The crest is a kiwi holding an ice-axe in its beak and the banner depicts a pair of emperor penguins supporting a shield showing the peaks of the Himalayas, surmounted by three Buddhist prayer wheels for the Nepalese people for whom Sir Edmund did so much after conquering Everest with Sherpa Tenzing. The motto is 'nothing venture, nothing win'.

Afterwards, the President was interviewed by New Zealand TV on the connection between Shackleton and Hillary. She said there were two connections: not only had Hillary led the Ross Sea Party of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (led by Vivien Fuchs) which achieved in 1955–58 what Ernest Shackleton had hoped to achieve in 1914–16; but Shackleton's son, Edward, the first President of the James Caird Society and father of the current President was himself a Knight of the Garter.

An interesting year.

An evening to remember

Our very well-attended Members' Evening on Friday 9th May must rate as one of the James Caird Society's most lively and entertaining evenings. It was also one of the warmest evenings of the year.



Our speaker, Paul Rose, has made an outstanding contribution both in work in the Polar Regions and in his media career. He was a charismatic former Vice-President of the Royal Geographical Society and also the Base Commander of Rothera Research Station.

His talk covered his action-packed life as explorer, yacht skipper, mountain safety consultant as well as leader of many scientific expeditions to Antarctica, Greenland and the Indian Ocean. His theme highlighted people who had influenced him during his life, and who had managed to kindle a flame in peoples' lives by their own inspiration and guidance. These people surviving against impossible odds of extreme cold, heat and pain. The talk was well illustrated by his slides.

Proceeds and donations to the dinner will go to the 'Shackleton Epic Expedition' in 2009, led by Tim Jarvis.

Pippa Hare, Hon Secretary

News in brief

Biography of a College

A new book about Dulwich College has been published. Called *Dulwich College: a History, 1616–2008* it is by former college archivist Jan Piggott. Jan is well known to the Society, having been a Committee member as well as the curator of the exhibition *Shackleton, the Antarctic and Endurance* (2000). His lavish biography of the home of the Society is available from the Dulwich College Commissariat and is extraordinarily good value at £24.

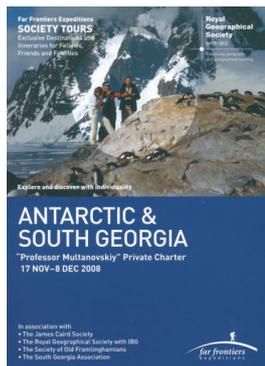
Email: the.commissariat@dulwich.org.uk
Tel: 020 8299 9222

Ernest Shackleton Autumn School Friday 24th – Monday 27th October 2008

The Athy Heritage Centre has established the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School to celebrate the life and work of the great Antarctic explorer in the area of his birth. The Athy Heritage Centre holds the only permanent exhibition on Sir Ernest Shackleton in Ireland, which includes artefacts relating to his expeditions and a scale model of the ship *Endurance*. A variety of artistic, educational and musical events will take place over the duration of the Autumn School.

Contact: Athy Heritage Centre, County Kildare, Republic of Ireland
Tel: +353 (0)59 8633075

Travel to the South Atlantic



There is still a chance to join a trip to the South Atlantic with Far Frontiers Expeditions (in association with organisations including the James Caird Society). An exclusive private charter of the *Professor Mullanovskiy* has been organised to take a classic journey from Ushuaia to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Dates: 17th November – 8th December 2008
Email: rgs@farfrontiers.org · Tel: 0844 800 9029

New biography of J R Stenhouse

Explorer, treasure-hunter, professional mariner and submarine destroyer, Joseph R Stenhouse was the walking embodiment of daring and courage. In this new biography – *Ice Captain: the Life of J. R. Stenhouse* – author Stephen Haddelsey describes the fascinating life of this Polar Medal winner. Published by the History Press.

For more details visit: thehistorypress.co.uk

November 2007 Society Auction

An auction of memorabilia donated by Society members raised a total of £1,295, with nearly all of the items exceeding their guide price and with one item in particular – an original postcard of the *Nimrod* expedition – going over by five times the guide. All items were donated by members of the Society, and the Auction took place on 2nd November 2007.

- ‘Framed embroidery of Walter How’s sketch of *Endurance*’ by Grace Turzig (Walter How’s niece). Donated by Grace Turzig. Hammer price: £100
- ‘Two framed antique prints’ (Shackleton 1916 & Scott 1912). Donated by Stephen Scott-Fawcett. Hammer price: £170
- ‘Original postcard of the *Nimrod* expedition.’ Donated by Henry Worsley. Hammer price: £130
- ‘Set of nine British Antarctic Territory stamps mounted in a walnut frame.’ Donated by Henry Worsley. Hammer price: £150
- ‘Copy of *The Great White South* by Herbert Ponting (3rd Edition, 1923):’ Donated by Henry Worsley. Hammer price: £130
- ‘Unframed original antique steel engraving of the Polar Regions.’ Donated by Stephen Scott-Fawcett. Hammer price: £350
- ‘Unframed modern canvas print of Sir Ernest and Lady Emily Shackleton on board *Quest*, 1922.’ Donated by Stephen Scott-Fawcett. Hammer price: £80
- ‘Three prints from glass slides.’ Hammer price: £185

New editor for 2008

This year sees the appointment of a new editor for the James Caird Society Newsletter. After 11 years of superb work on the Newsletter, Margaret Slythe has stepped down from the chair, but remains on the committee.



Nick Smith, Contributing Editor on the *Explorers Journal*, the magazine of the Explorers Club, replaces her. He is also a former editor of *Geographical*, the magazine of the

Royal Geographical Society, of which he is a Fellow. Nick has won seven journalism awards and was PPA Magazine Editor of the Year in 2004.

The new look for the newsletter has been supervised by Society committee member David McLean, who has recently also finished work on the production of *Dulwich College: a History, 1616–2008*, as well as contributing a chapter to Thames & Hudson’s *The Seventy Great Journeys in History*, edited by Robin Hanbury-Tenison.

Next James Caird Society meeting

Next meeting of the James Caird Society and Annual General Meeting will be held on

7th November at Dulwich College.

Eminent glaciologist and President of the South Georgia Association, Charles Swinbank, will give the evening’s lecture. More details will be posted to members in due course.



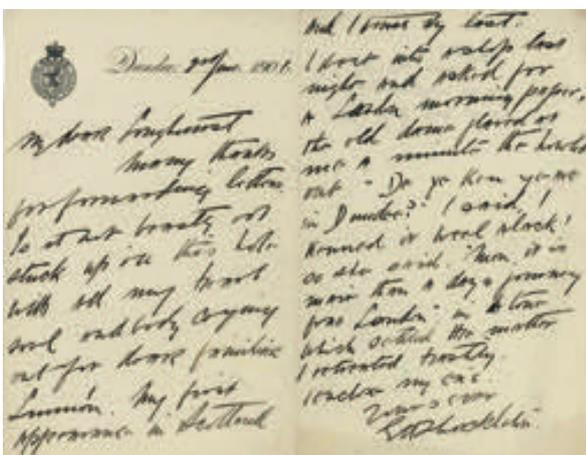
Christies of London: Exploration & Travel with Polar Sale

Last year's Sale took place on 26–27th September 2007 (Sale total £2,560,750) and was especially strong in mountaineering with much to please enthusiasts for art, manuscripts, memorabilia and ephemera from both the Alps and the Himalayas. From the world of polar exploration there was much from Captain Scott's expeditions, but of specific interest to the James Caird Society there were four lots of fascinating letters by Sir Ernest Shackleton.

The first was an autograph letter to Cyril Longhurst, secretary to the British National Antarctic Expedition, complaining at being stuck in Dundee.

Is it not beastly rot stuck up in this hole with all my heart soul and body crying out for dear familiar Lunnon [London]. My first appearance in Scotland and I trust my last. I went into a shop last night and asked for a London morning paper, the old dame glared at me a minute the[n] howled out 'De ye ken ye are in Dundee?' I said, I kenned it weel alack! so she said: 'Mon it is mair than a day's journey frae London', in a tone which settled the matter.

Shackleton was presumably in Dundee for the impending departure of the *Discovery*, which set off for London shortly afterwards. His antipathy for Scotland was not to last: on his return from the *Discovery* expedition he took a post first as secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and later at the Parkhead engineering works in Glasgow. In between he had even stood as Liberal Unionist Candidate for parliament in Dundee itself in 1906. The connection with Dundee continued when one of its foremost citizens, Sir James Caird, was the main sponsor of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. (Hammer price £4,375)



Next up was a series of four autograph letters again to Cyril Longhurst. Three concern the last-minute preparations for the departure of the *Discovery*, the earliest concerning stores (for which Shackleton was responsible).

Of course I do not want anything out of the Balloon box, or the Explosives, mostly provisions and general stores: if you send the various boxes down I will have them locked up and returned directly.

A second brief note to Longhurst commiserates on a cancelled cricket tour. From New Zealand Shackleton writes on the verge of departure for the south: 'We... will soon be shut off from all we know excepting our little crowd on the ship'. (Hammer price £5,000)

The third lot consisted of an autograph letter in which he thanks Cyril Longhurst for agreeing to be his best man:

It is awfully good of you coming along on the 12th as Best Man, there will be no trouble, I will arrange everything before, mind you don't laugh you rotter!! and for Heaven's sake don't lose the place in the book for prompting there is no letter box to hide in if you start laughing there.

Shackleton's wedding to Emily Dorman, with Longhurst as best man, in fact seems to have taken place on 9th April rather than the 12th as anticipated here. (Hammer price £4,000)

The last lot consisted of a typed letter from Shackleton to Longhurst, as well as letters from Sir Clements Markham signed as President of the Royal Geographical Society. Shackleton writes to announce the confirmation of his planned British Antarctic Expedition:

Sufficient funds have been guaranteed to make the Southern Expedition... I had given up all hope of getting an Expedition since two years ago, but within the last month I again made a strenuous effort, because of the other nations making renewed plans for a South Polar attack.

Writing on the same day, Sir Clements Markham reacts sceptically to the same news:

That Shackleton announcement is startling. The scheme is very much what he propounded to me long ago. I doubt whether he has the stamina for it. I shall be very anxious to learn whether he has been in frank communication with Scott and Barne, and that he has not been playing a low down or double game. I do not think he would, but I have not heard from Scott.

The following month, he writes with further news:

I had a letter... from Capn Scott very much annoyed at Shackleton's disloyalty and reticence, and saying that he had written to Shackleton. Later I got a second letter from Shackleton telling me that, on hearing from Scott, he had given up the McMurdo Sound route to him, and that he had had no idea that Scott thought of going again.

In an autograph document, Sir Clements gives a formal reference for Longhurst's work as secretary of the National Antarctic Expedition. (Hammer price £6,875)

Champagne Mumm launches the Cordon Rouge Club

The launch of the Champagne G H Mumm Cordon Rouge Club has taken place in the Royal Geographical Society in London. The ceremony, which was accompanied by a display of exploration memorabilia from the Society's archives, was presided over by 2008 Club Chairman, Bear Grylls. Grylls presented each of the inaugural members with a commemorative champagne sabrage sword, before leading an expedition across London in a double-deck bus to the Travellers Club in Pall Mall, where a celebratory dinner was held.

Cordon Rouge Club organiser Charlotte Bell, said that the awards had been founded, 'to recognise exceptional people for their extraordinary achievements in the realms of adventure and discovery'. She went on to say that the Club will bring together like-minded and inspiring people on an annual basis: 'Each year a new Chairman will be appointed and together with existing members, they will approve and induct new members.'

Inaugural members include (pictured, l-r): David Hempleman-Adams (polar balloonist and adventurer),



Oliver Steeds (tribal expert and adventurer), Ben Saunders (polar adventurer), Patrick Woodhead (Antarctic adventurer), Olly and Suzi (expedition artists), Bear Grylls (Club Chairman for 2008), Ben Fogle (trans-Atlantic oarsman), Neil Laughton (Everest mountaineer), Robin Knox-Johnston (round-the-world yachtsman), Tom Avery (polar adventurer), Brian Thompson (round-the-world yachtsman), Dee Caffari (round-the-world yachtswoman) and Mike Golding (round-the world yachtsman).

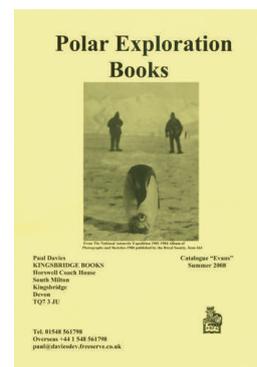
Polar books at the Hotel Russell



Antiquarian bookseller, Paul Davies was spotted at the PBFA Fair in Bloomsbury's Hotel Russell earlier this summer. Paul, who is a specialist in polar exploration titles and a member of the James Caird Society, was exhibiting a number of interesting items including a very good copy of Ernest Shackleton's *Heart of the Antarctic: Being the Story of the British Antarctic Expedition 1907-09* (£475). This classic account of the *Nimrod*

expedition was accompanied by a very attractive early edition of *South* (£545), along with an early French edition entitled *Mon Expedition au Sud Polaire 1914-17* (£130). A three-volume centenary facsimile edition of *The South Polar Times* was up for £590.

To get hold of a copy of Paul's latest catalogue email: paul@daviesdev.freemove.co.uk



Chilean sea captain memorial on Elephant Island



Former Alleynian Michael Hall has sent the JCS newsletter this picture from a trip he made to the southern latitudes. Here, shrouded in low cloud, we see Elephant Island cast adrift at the very end of the Antarctic peninsula in the Southern Ocean. Clearly visible is the memorial to the Chilean sea captain Luis Pardo Villalon, Commander of the ship *Yelcho*, who on 30th August 1916 rescued from Elephant Island the sailors of the *Endurance* vessel of the British expedition of Sir Ernest Shackleton, which was crushed by the ice and sunk on 21st November 1915. Although Mr Hall does not tell us when he took this photograph, it must have been before late 2007, as the cruise ship in the background – the *M/s Explorer* – sank when she struck an unidentified submerged object on 23rd November of that year.

Shackleton Epic Expedition

Expedition update by Tim Jarvis



On 21st November 1915, the *Endurance* sank beneath the ice of the Weddell Sea, forcing Shackleton and his men into a march westward to save themselves, a march to the remote outpost of Elephant Island.

Shackleton and five men left Elephant Island in April 1916 to summon help, leaving the remaining men behind. They set out on an 800-mile voyage through a stretch of the southern ocean, notorious for its extreme weather and raging seas. Seventeen days later, against the odds and having endured almost unceasing gales and even a hurricane, the men arrived at the remote island of South Georgia.

That they survived such a long voyage despite stormy weather and ferocious seas in a small boat is remarkable enough. That they successfully navigated to tiny South Georgia Island is a testament to the unparalleled navigating skills of Frank Worsley, who was able to take only four sightings during the voyage, and to those on a boat pitching wildly on enormous seas. That Shackleton and two others then climbed over the mountains of South Georgia to reach the whaling station at Grytviken to raise the alarm and ultimately save all of his men is astonishing. No wonder, then, that Shackleton's saving of all his men and the 'double' of the boat journey and climb that it involved have become the stuff of legend.

The modern expedition, 2009

To this day no one has been able to complete 'the double', sailing in a replica boat from Elephant Island to South Georgia and then climbing through the mountains to Grytviken. In December 2009, however, a team will attempt it, in an expedition that has been dubbed 'The Shackleton Epic' expedition.



The expedition will set sail from Elephant Island in December 2009 in a replica *James Caird* and, in honour of Shackleton's original journey, will use only technology, food and equipment that Shackleton would have had available to him in 1916.

Doing things the old way is nothing new to Tim Jarvis who heads up the expedition team, having returned from Antarctica in 2007 from a gruelling expedition to retrace the incredible survival journey of Australian polar explorer Sir Douglas Mawson (Mawson was a member of Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, reaching the South Magnetic Pole as Shackleton's battled towards the South Pole itself). Tim's Mawson journey *When Hell Freezes* was filmed and aired on Channel 4 in the UK and ABC in Australia in 2007/08.

Tim's retracing of Mawson's original expedition used the same clothing, equipment and starvation rations as Mawson had available to him in 1912 in order to test the theory as to what had enabled him alone to make it on a journey during which both of his colleagues perished. Both Tim and patron of the Mawson expedition, The Hon Alexandra Shackleton, felt that any attempt to retrace the Shackleton double should be done the same way.

The Shackleton Epic team will therefore set off on their attempt to re-enact 'the double' in a replica of the *James Caird* and using only the kind of clothing available in Shackleton's day. The team at this stage has not been finalised but includes Tim, John Stoukalo, (his Russian climbing compatriot from the Mawson journey), Paul Rose, Steve Bull, and hopes to also include an Old Alleynian from Dulwich College and a New Zealander to honour Worsley.

Above left: Tim Jarvis showing the strain after 35 days on the ice. They travelled in wooden boats those men of old, but were they iron men?

Below left: Last day of the gruelling Mawson expedition. Lessons learnt here using old clothes and equipment will be put to good use in the Shackleton Epic.

Above right: Pulling across the vastness solo, the old way.

For more information about the Shackleton Epic Expedition contact Tim Jarvis on: 07884 122013, via email at tim_jarvis@urscorp.com or visit Tim's website: spiritofadventure.com.au

Matrix Shackleton Centenary

Expedition update by Henry Worsley

Plans for the Shackleton Centenary Expedition are moving into their final preparatory stages. The team – Henry Worsley, William Gow and Henry Adams – have just completed their final training exercise on Milne Land, an island off the east coast of Greenland. It was a very successful dress rehearsal for the main expedition enabling them to travel on the Korridoren glacier and negotiate its crevasse field, traverse a small ice cap and get in excess of 100 miles under their sledges.



Will Gow, Henry Worsley, Henry Adams on Milne Land.

A cameraman also accompanied them to take footage for a BBC 2 *Timewatch* programme, which intends to look at the original expedition through the eyes of the 2008 journey. The programme will go out on BBC 2 in summer 2009 and will rely on footage that we take on the main journey.

Significant sponsorship deals have been struck with Timberland who are making a range of bespoke clothing for the expedition and Matrix, a financial securities company. So funding is on track and a healthy balance is building in the Shackleton Foundation account as well. The charity will be announcing the award of its first £10,000 grant on 25th June.



Heading up the Korridoren Glacier on Milne Land.

The Shackleton Foundation

Sir Ernest Shackleton is widely known as one of the most inspirational leaders of the twentieth century. Whilst he never achieved his personal dream of being the first to reach the South Pole, his reputation as a leader of men is based on a still greater success: the survival and safe return of all of his team members, whilst overcoming almost unimaginable odds. Shackleton's name lives on as a synonym for courage, bravery and, most of all, leadership.

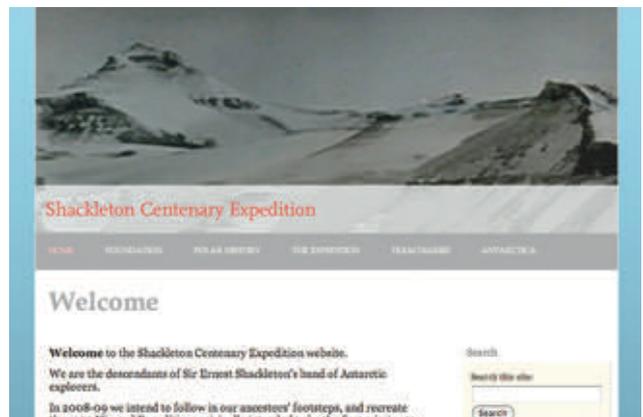
Shackleton's era of heroic exploration is now long gone. However, The Shackleton Foundation believes innumerable and significant challenges still exist where the rallying power and indomitable spirit of Shackleton is needed, in order to make a tangible contribution to the greater good.

Thomas Pynchon wrote: 'Everyone has an Antarctic'. The Foundation exists to support and encourage people who may not otherwise have the opportunity to identify and cross their own Antarctic, particularly where the applicant's chosen project can be shown to directly benefit the less advantaged. Whilst we support projects within and outside the physical arena, it is evidence of Shackleton's spirit that we seek.

We believe that singular people making singular contributions to the public good can act as beacons of inspiration, and we wish to support them in their endeavours.

The Foundation hopes that beneficiaries will develop or possess the personal qualities that define leadership: a fierce personal commitment to succeed, a willingness to take intelligent risks, and the ability to inspire and energise those around them to do their utmost towards worthwhile causes.

But, as Sir Ernest Shackleton knew only too well, the main effort still remains to raise funds. A number of lectures and other fundraising events are scheduled to take place over the late summer in parallel with final kit-packing, fitness training and gaining body weight. The team will be departing UK around 10th October still with the intention to step out from the Nimrod Hut at 10.00am on 29th October – weather dependant. Eighty days rations will be carried and the team is scheduled to arrive at the South Pole around 22nd January 2009.



Screen grab of the expedition homepage. Visit www.shackletoncentenary.org

Members of the Society will be able to keep daily track of the expedition's progress on a redesigned website at www.shackletoncentenary.org and of course a lecture to the society will be arranged on return of the team to UK.

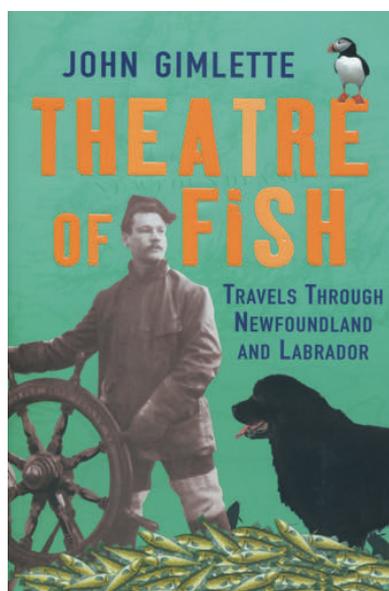
The Other End of the Atlantic

What, you might ask, have Newfoundland and Labrador got to do with the world of Shackleton? Author of the much-acclaimed *Theatre of Fish*, JOHN GIMLETTE, entertained the society on 11th May 2007 with his thoughts from the North Atlantic.

In many ways, Antarctica and these Canadian provinces could hardly be further apart. Geographically, they are almost the opposite ends of the world; the tip of Labrador is roughly the same distance from the North Pole as Elephant Island is from the South.

Nor, in terms of history, have the two regions ever had much in common. One of the few links is Robert Scott's ship, *Terra Nova*. Built in Dundee in 1884, it was used as a seal-hunting vessel in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1885 to 1903 (bringing in 850,000 pelts in 51 seasons) before serving on Scott's 1910 expedition (to which the Newfoundlanders contributed £500). That, however, was the end of its Antarctic connection. After that, it returned to Newfoundland, where it continued seal hunting until 1943 when she sprang a leak off Greenland and sank without loss of life.

But despite these superficial disparities, there are some gruelling similarities between the eastern extremes of Canada and the world of the South Atlantic. For a start, they have a mutual appreciation of delinquent weather. In Newfoundland, which extends as far south as Paris, it's tempting to imagine a climate fit for grapes (as the Vikings did), and yet – when we get there – we find that the weather is a source of outrage. Some places get smashed up every winter. The Newfoundlanders even have an anxious language of ice; slob, sish, quarr, growlers, blocky, and blue drop. And then there's the fog. The first Britons thought these vapours were the aftermath of Noah's flood, created by a vast rotting forest in the middle of the island. There was even a plan to set fire to the place and thus rid the Atlantic forever of its lethal mists.



Then, of course, there's that shared understanding of space and distance. Like the inhabitants of the South Atlantic, the Newfoundlanders have a true respect for emptiness. Newfoundland itself is half the size of Britain and yet

its entire population would struggle to fill Wandsworth. Even then, Newfoundland is only settled around the edges; along its 6,000-mile coastline, there are some 1,500 tiny communities.



Labrador, meanwhile, is as spartan as anywhere down south. It's twice as big as Newfoundland, and yet only 33,000 people live there. The coast has no roads at all, nor railways, bridges, canals, or reservoirs. It looks like the Scottish Highlands in draft. In fact it's all so empty that, when a German U-boat established a weather station there in 1943, it wasn't discovered for another 37 years.

Just like their southern cousins, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians hardly recognise agriculture (although it's offensive to describe their land as 'barren'). The only vegetables are grown in tiny plots, or in disused boats and satellite dishes. During the early nineteenth century, all the big litigation was about theft of topsoil.

All this has produced a curious diet – of deep fried things eaten in newspaper, or seal flipper pie. It's even worse in Labrador, where food is a matter of textures: slob, Klik, stringy and slab. In remoter parts, people are eating much the same food as that enjoyed by the Royal Navy in about 1820; hardtack, salt beef, rum, molasses and figgy duff. On special occasions there might be a few treats like sheep's head broth or chislin (cod's sperm).

Such lonely, weather-beaten lives often leave me wondering how the South Atlantic might have developed if only it had been – well, nearer to home. For all their isolation, the Newfoundlanders have remained doggedly British (Newfoundland joined the empire in 1583 and Labrador in 1763). They celebrate Guy Fawkes' night, maintain a vociferous Monarchist league and – until recently – sent their exam papers back to Britain for marking. In parts of the island, Newfoundlanders still speak with West Country accents, and use an ancient Shakespearean argot ('Hearken!' they might say, or 'Douse the lights!'). Some communities still have stronger links to towns in Dorset, than to those up the coast. St John's is only a centre to those who live there.

As in the South Atlantic, fishing has traditionally offered the only real prospect of economic survival. In Newfoundland, the first taxes and school fees were paid in fish, and fish remained the currency until 1946 (when a

law was passed obliging employers to pay their workers in cash). King Cod ruled until – like everywhere else – he was over-fished. In 1968, enough cod were caught in Newfoundland waters to stretch nose-to-tail three times round the world. The ocean was literally scraped clean of life.

Naturally, if you put people in such isolated places, the only thing that really thrives is eccentricity. Generally speaking, Newfoundlanders are salty, witty, generous, ebullient and suspicious. All the older families are descended from outlaws (if for no other reason than that all settlement was banned from 1670 to 1811, to protect the English fish merchants). Even the place-names have a slightly piratical feel; there's Ship Cove, Heart's Desire, Turk's Cove, Blow Me Down, Dildo, Famine and Despair.

But, whether North or South Atlantic, the priority is to keep out of the gale. Most Newfoundlanders were born 14 to a saltbox (the local house that's built like a boat). These are curious homes, with rifles and Princess Plates on the walls, and curtains round the bath. Often the furniture is still in its wrapping as if that's just part of the beauty of mail order.

One day, maybe, all these people will be gone, and – like the south – the rocks will once more revert to the

birds. Without fish, the Newfoundlanders are pulling out (50,000 have left the province in the last fifteen years, and, in the last thirty, 250 communities have closed). But no one is talking of dereliction just yet. In fact, the locals are fiercely loyal to their unruly outcrop. Let's face it, where else in the world would you have a national anthem with the refrain, '*We love thee frozen land*'?

Perhaps the next time you head out into the Atlantic you'll be tempted to head north instead of south? As you sail into Labradorian waters, the voyage will seem chillingly familiar. In winter, the sea cracks and squeaks with ice, and every spring 3,000 icebergs come bowling down from Greenland. Some weigh over 200,000 tons and boom like artillery as they fall apart. Ships, of course, are easy prey for the Labradorian ice. Its most famous victim was the *Titanic* but there have been plenty of others; of the province's 51 great seal-hunting ships, all but ten were crushed in the freeze. The most recent wreck was a government ferry, seized in the ice and squeezed until it popped. For students of the *Endurance*, such a fate has a distinctly familiar ring.

John Gimlette's latest book *Panther Soup* is out now in hardback

Polar Poetry

No one could ever accuse Ernest Shackleton of being a great poet, but he had a voice of his own and he wrote with gusto. The following is a contribution he wrote under the name of 'Veritas' for *Aurora Australis*, the magazine of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1907–09. It is reproduced here as it appeared in the original, complete with Shackleton's highly idiosyncratic punctuation. The illustration is by George Marston, the expedition artist.

Midwinter Night

The acetylene splutters and flickers,
The night comes into its own.
Outside Ambrose and Terror
Are snarling over a bone.

And this is the tale of the watchman,
Awake in the dead of night,
Tells of the fourteen sleepers
Whose snoring gives him the blight.

The revels of Eros and Bacchus
Are mingled in some of their dreams,
For the songs they gustily gurgle
Are allied to bibulous themes.

And subjects re barmaids and bottles,
Whisky and barrels of beer,
Are mixed with amorous pleadings
That sound decidedly queer.

Darling you really love me?
Stutters one dreaming swain ;
The watchman whispers "Never",
And the dreamer writhes in pain.

From a corner cabin a mutter,
The listener knows not what ;
It sounds like "yon pale moon",
Or some other poetic rot.

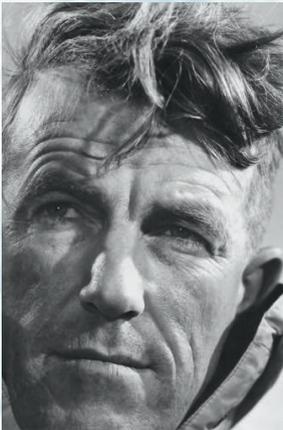
Murder is done in another's dream
And falls from the shuddering heights ;
Erebus rises to dance on the sea
And the dreamer flees south in tights.

Another sails north on the broken ice
Just dressed in Nature's clothes,
Whilst seals and penguins grin in delight
And the frost plays hell with his toes.

And some see tailors they knew of yore,
Stalk in with their mile-long bills ;
And everyone when morning broke
Made a rush for calomel pills.



Obituary: Sir Edmund Hillary (20th July 1919 – 11th January 2008)



Edmund Hillary will always be best remembered for being the first person to set foot on the summit of Mount Everest, the world's tallest peak. But for Hillary, Everest was not the end of his mission: rather, it was the start of a lifelong career dedicated to improving the living conditions of the people of the Himalayas.

In 1953 the success of Col. John Hunt's Royal Geographical Society-Alpine Club expedition became one of the biggest news stories of the 20th century. At its centre was Hillary, a 33-year-old climber from New Zealand. Along with the Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, he became an overnight celebrity. Unprepared for the fame and adulation that was to follow, Hillary 'felt that the mountaineering world would be mildly interested in the fact that we'd got to the top, but the public and media attention took us completely by surprise.'

Hillary wasn't by any stretch a 'hot shot rock climber', but he was formidably strong, and he often attributed his success on Everest to this strength rather than technical ability. While the first assault pair of Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans turned back at the South Summit, Hillary and Tenzing were able to press on, wondering 'rather dully, whether we would have enough strength left to get through.'

By the time Col. John Hunt's account of the ascent appeared in the *Geographical Journal* in December 1953 (Vol CXIX Part 4) both he and Hillary had been knighted. In the biographical notes the journal described Hillary as 'a bee-keeper from New Zealand'. This simple description

would almost certainly have amused the modest Hillary who remained listed in the Auckland phone directory throughout his life. His assumption that others would respect his privacy came unstuck when Ollie Bradshaw, a 14-year-old schoolboy, phoned the explorer to ask for help with his homework. Hillary naturally obliged.

As part of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition he reached the South Pole overland in 1958. He would later also travel to the North Pole, but it is likely that Hillary would most want to be remembered for his work with the people of Nepal. Hillary founded and worked tirelessly for the Himalayan Trust, a medical and educational charity dedicated to improving the lot of the Sherpa people. The Trust continues to provide much-needed schools, hospitals, medical centres, airstrips and bridges for the region. He clearly took enormous pride in its success and often said that while he owed much to his success in the field of exploration, 'there's no doubt at all that the activities on behalf of the mountain people were the most worthwhile.'

Tributes to Edmund Hillary have arrived from every quarter. Buckingham Palace issued a statement saying the Queen was 'deeply saddened' by the death of the mountaineer. Fellow Everest summiter Chris Bonington said: 'His greatest work and contribution has undoubtedly been with the Sherpas.' Jangling Tenzing Norgay, son of Hillary's partner on the summit of Everest said: 'He was a humble man. One of his achievements was to help the people of Nepal.' New Zealand's Prime Minister, Helen Clark, simply said he was 'the best-known New Zealander ever to have lived.'

Above: Edmund Hillary around the time of his successful ascent of Everest in 1953.

Below: Press cutting of Sir Edmund's obituary in the Independent on Sunday, showing the mountaineer in Shackleton's hut on a trip to Antarctica in 2007.

SIR EDMUND HILLARY

Stuck on Everest, waiting for a hero

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Twenty-five years ago I found myself in the Himalayas on the 30th anniversary of the ascent of the world's highest peak. Sir Edmund Hillary was there too, building schools for Sherpas around Everest. So I came up with the wheeze of interviewing him on what, I insisted, should be the lower slopes of the mountain.

Arrangements were made, and I flew into Lukla, 10,000ft up. Hikers have made it the busiest international airport in Nepal, but back then it was just a grassy strip, sloping steeply to an alarming 2,000ft drop to the valley below. I made it, but the great man didn't, for reasons I never discovered. That was the first problem.

The second was that it started to rain heavily, and the plane due to take me back did not turn up. Worse, this was the start of the rainy season, when there could be no planes for months.

The only alternative was to walk, but I was warned that I should set off fast as parts of the footpaths could soon be washed away, leaving me stranded. I decided to stay, since in those days before satellite phones, there was no way of telling my family what I was doing - and they would be worried if the flights resumed and I did not appear. Fortunately the skies cleared and a plane came.

Three years later I did catch up with the conqueror of Everest - but without much more success. We were climbing the hilly streets of Aasia, during the World Wildlife Fund's 25th anniversary celebrations in St Francis's town. I found it distinctly exercising - but was delighted to see that the then 66-year-old legend was almost equally puffed. Searching for an opening gambit, I said how reassuring I found his shortness of breath. Wrong move. The conversation ended before it began.

Eventually I was third time lucky. Six years ago, he described to me how he had first seen snow at the age of 16, on a school trip to Tongariro, New Zealand's first national park. 'It absolutely transformed my life. I loved the mountains and their beauty and revelled in the sense of challenge. From then on I spent every day I could among the great peaks.'

He told of his delight in mountain sunsets and sunrises ('strag in my sleeping bag I would peer out of the tent door until the sun sank in a crimson light over the Himalayan ridges'), recounted how he and Tenzing had 'emerged on the summit of the world' and even described how he had built that scary Lukla airstrip ('we hacked the slope into shape with spades and mammoths and pounded the surface into reasonable firmness') to bring in materials to build a hospital for the Sherpas to whom he devoted much of his life after its unprecedented peak.

Geoffrey Lean

Sir Edmund Hillary inside Shackleton's hut on a trip to Antarctica last year. His first sight of snow, in New Zealand at the age of 16, 'absolutely transformed my life' RELATIONS

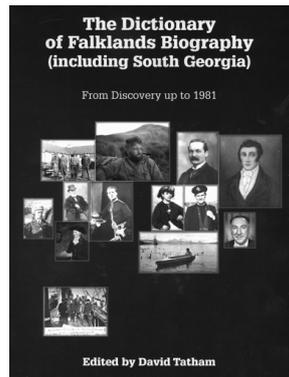
Scenes from South Atlantic life

As the James Caird Society Newsletter goes to press, the Editor has received an early copy of *The Dictionary of Falklands Biography* by former Governor of the Islands, David Tatham.

The Falklands Islands have been the scene of some remarkable feats of exploration and navigation, of scientific research and international political unease. They have been the setting for some of the most wonderful legends of endurance and survival, as well as the centre of a once-proud whaling industry. They are also intermittently the focus of attention of 'the distinctly dubious historical claims of a predatory neighbour,' writes David Tatham in the Introduction to his thoroughly entertaining and much-awaited *Dictionary of Falklands Biography*.

Although thousands of miles away from the UK 'the Islands' cast a long shadow and are deeply entrenched in the British psyche. In recent years this far-flung archipelago has gained worldwide attention for the Conflict of 1982, when the Islands were briefly occupied by Argentina before being surrendered to British forces on 14th June. We remember the notorious 'Gotcha' headline on the front page of the *Sun* newspaper after the sinking of the *General Belgrano*, the battle of Goose Green and the famous images of Argentine prisoners of war in Port Stanley. However, none of this iconic recent history makes it onto the pages of *The Dictionary of Falklands Biography*, because Tatham has chosen to include no material after the start of the Conflict. As a cut-off point this makes sense for two reasons: 'not only did this war introduce literally thousands of new "players" into the Falklands scene... but it would have transformed a study devoted to the history of the Falklands and South Georgia into one dominated by conflict and international relations.' It also allows scope for a separate similar post-1982 study at a later date. It is probably still too soon to do this, as many of the players in Falkland affairs since the war are 'still alive, making impartial assessment difficult.'

Tatham, who was Governor of the Falkland Islands from 1992-95, has spent six years editing the *Dictionary*, and the result is an immense reference work that will be of great value to both professional historians and researchers. Assisted largely by volunteers he has made



great efforts to follow the style and conventions of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. But because of the nature of the Falklands version Tatham has relaxed the rules a little, allowing a limited number of entries about living people (some of which are actually autobiography, as in the case of former Governor Sir Rex Hunt).

The body of the book, however, is made up of biographical sketches of the (long-deceased) great and the good. There are essays on British circumnavigator Captain

James Cook, 18th-century French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, and the wonderfully named early-19th-century Russian explorer Thaddeus Gottlieb Thaddeovich von Bellinghausen, who became the second circumnavigator of the Antarctic (after Cook). Ernest Shackleton has one of the longest entries in the *Dictionary*, including detailed descriptions of his *Nimrod* Expedition and his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition in *Endurance* that included his epic journey to South Georgia in the *James Caird*. This entry also has a wonderful picture of Governor Sir Arnold Hodson unveiling the headstone on Shackleton's grave, which unlike traditional Christian graves – that face east – faces south, in honour of the great explorer's devotion to Antarctica.



Books such as the *Dictionary of Falklands Biography* are designed for dipping into. But in appreciating the delicious trivia of this sparsely populated remote Overseas Territory it would be unwise to forget the range and depth of experiences that history has inflicted upon the islanders themselves. At the moment the Islands are enjoying greater prosperity than they have ever known and the people of the region have real confidence about their future. So it demonstrates sensitive timing that David Tatham should choose now to publish this extraordinary testament to their past.



Above right: Governor Hodson unveils Shackleton's gravestone in Grytviken, 1928.

Left: Governor Sir Rex Hunt supplied this picture of his arrival at Government House with his wife Mavis.

The Dictionary of Falklands Biography

is for sale from the Falklands Government Office at

14 Broadway, SW1H 0BH, price £33.

Alternatively, within the UK you can order it by post from the Editor (£33 plus £9 postage). Send a cheque made out to 'D E Tatham (DFB)' to the Editor DFB, South Parade, Ledbury, Hereford HR8 2HA.

For overseas postal rates email the Editor at editordfb@onetel.com

Sir Wally Herbert: Portrait of an Explorer

When Sir Wally Herbert died in 2007, tributes poured in for the greatest polar explorer since the golden age of Scott and Shackleton. He was also an accomplished artist, whose paintings have been published in a new book called *The Polar World*.

By Nick Smith



The explorer's daughter, Kari Herbert, with a copy of her father's last book *The Polar World*. (pic: Nick Smith)

'You have to understand' says Kari Herbert, the explorer's daughter 'that while Dad was fiercely proud of his achievements, records didn't mean much to him unless they were underpinned by geographical research. The point of the British Trans-Arctic Expedition back in the late 1960s wasn't to be the first to reach the North Pole.' But as she explains, the opportunity to do so was too tempting to pass up.

Inevitably Sir Wally Herbert's fame will rest with the fact that he was the first to make a surface crossing of the Arctic Ocean along its longest axis. This feat has never been repeated, leading some historians to call it 'the last great journey on earth'. During this expedition in the late 1960s he also became – along with his three companions, Fritz Koerner, Allan Gill and Ken Hedges – the first man to walk to the North Pole. Unlike Ernest Shackleton's relief of his crew on Elephant Island, Sir Wally's achievement has taken some time to pass into the folklore of exploration.

Maybe it was because events at the top of the world were overshadowed by the lunar landings, or by the contested claims of Cdr Robert E Peary or Dr Frederick A Cook, but recognition for the success of Sir Wally and his men has been a slow burner. Indeed, in the 1980s he took matters into his own hands when he published the meticulously researched *Noose of Laurels*, an analysis of Peary's claims that concluded the commander had not reached the pole. The polar community now accepts that 6th April 1969 is the date that counts – a date Sir Wally hammered home in his painting 'North Pole Group No1, 6th April 1969'.

The facts of Sir Wally's career as a polar explorer are simply extraordinary. Over the span of half a century he traveled with dog teams and open boats more than 25,000 miles – over half of that distance through virgin territory. A formidable cartographer and surveyor, he mapped some 46,000 miles of new country in Antarctica

and retraced the routes of some of the greatest explorers in history. Few have contributed more to our understanding of the native Inuit of Northwest Greenland. He published ten books, received many medals and awards and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II on the last day of the second millennium 'for services to polar exploration'. Ranulph Fiennes called him 'a genuine explorer and great man of the modern age'.

What is not so well known was that he was a professional artist, a fact made clear with the publication of his last book *The Polar World*, where 'nearly all' of Sir Wally's paintings have been brought together for the first time. Nearly all, because according to Kari there are 'four or five known paintings that are either lost or are too hard to track down. I'd like to hear from anyone who has one of Dad's paintings that is not reproduced in *The Polar World*'.

Sir Wally was a commercial artist in the sense that he painted for a living – this means much of his work has disappeared into private collections (Reinhold Messner commissioned both *The Landfall of the 'James Caird' on South Georgia* and *Everest*). Kari remembers that as a child she would watch the paintings grow over time only to see them packed up and shipped off to the client 'almost before the paint had dried'. Sir Wally was in the habit of commissioning high-quality large-format plate photography of his finished work and it is from these transparencies that much of the book has been assembled.

And yet Sir Wally might so easily have never become an artist, despite showing a talent for drawing at school. Kari takes up the story: 'when Dad retired from expeditions in the early 1980s he officially became a full-time writer – that's how he earned his living. But the book deals dried up a bit. Mum thought it would be a good idea for him to take up painting again to relieve the stress.' Reluctant to do this at first, in case failure as a painter 'added to the stress', he soon found that his childhood aptitude for art had coalesced with his professional expertise in draftsmanship and cartography to produce paintings that not only attracted a commercial market, but gained the attention of the likes of HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales who in Kari's words 'became Dad's biggest fan'.

His 'biggest fan' has described Sir Wally variously as a 'genius' and 'a national treasure', but to Kari, who is an accomplished writer and photographer in her own right, 'my Dad was the embodiment of the polar world and so it follows he should paint it'. *The Polar World* is an extraordinary epitaph to a man of many gifts – a writer, a painter, but above all, a towering figure in the world of polar exploration.

Copies of *The Polar World* are available from Polarworld Books in standard hardback edition (£35) or in two special limited editions: leather hand-bound, £499 and cloth, £240. Contact: kari@kariherbert.com



Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds

In this extract from *The Polar World* Sir Wally describes finding Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds

Unlike Nansen, who had an aristocratic bearing and a daunting intellect, and who found close friendship with men uncomfortable – much preferring the companionship of women – Shackleton was of shorter stature, far more relaxed in the company of men, a man's man if ever there was one. His men referred to him as 'The Boss'. Nansen was known (out of earshot, of course) as 'Himself' – the inference quite obviously implying that he was far too overbearing and opinionated to be regarded as a normal human being. This to be fair was perfectly true. Of all of the 13 men on the *Fram* it was Nansen who found it the hardest to settle, for, in spite of having a well-stocked library of 600 books on board and an electric organ, he lacked intellectual stimulation and there was no one on board to challenge him. Although the living quarters of the *Fram* were small and moderately comfortable there was always a tension in the air when the leader was around. Not so in Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds. It was one of the friendliest huts I have ever seen in the Antarctic.

I visited for the first time shortly after the return of the sun in 1961 with Peter Otway. Peter and I had spent the previous summer in the field, and the Winter at New Zealand's Scott Base working on our maps and taking care of our dogs, and were now preparing for a season in the field mapping the historic territory of the Beardmore and the Axel Heiberg glaciers – the routes taken by Shackleton, Scott and Amundsen...

We approached the hut from the south in pitch darkness, and on reaching a snow bank had stopped and set up camp, not knowing where we were. I was up at the first light of dawn the next day, and discovered, looming not 20 yards from the lead dog of my team, Derrick Point, where Shackleton's party had hauled their stores up the ice cliffs from the sea ice on 10 February 1908. Excitedly I set off to find the hut...

It was a small pocket of kindly feeling – a shell of timber with a few relics left to taint it with the odour of age, and yet I entered that hut as Herbert Ponting had done: 'with a feeling akin to awe'. It was from that little hut that Shackleton and his three companions of the Southern Party had set off for the South Pole on 29 October 1908.



Above left: Endurance Being Crushed in the Ice
Herbert said: 'In the original photograph Hurley had cumulus clouds, which just didn't fit; it was supposed to be a very serious and heroic shot where the ship was being crushed in the ice, but the sky was all wrong!'

Below left: Endurance in Winter
Herbert said: 'To bring in the historical aspect accurately in my paintings, I referred to the old black and white images taken by photographers such as Hurley and Ponting.'

Book Reviews

The James Caird Society Newsletter presents a round up of recent books with a polar connection, plus a look at one of the classic Shackleton biographies...

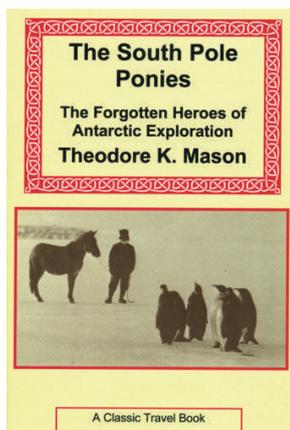
The South Pole Ponies

By Theodore K Mason
Classic Travel Books,
pp 228, pb, £11.99

One hundred years ago Ernest Shackleton became the first polar explorer to attempt to use ponies as a means of expedition transport across the ice and snow of Antarctica. After seeing ponies in action in Shanghai, Shackleton decided to employ them on his British Antarctic Expedition 1907–1909 (the so-called *Nimrod* expedition). A few years later Captain Robert Falcon Scott would repeat the experiment in the *Terra Nova* expedition of 1910–1912. How the two leaders fared is the subject of *The South Pole Ponies*, a long-forgotten and valuable item of the polar canon by the field scientist Theodore K Mason.

The men called the headstrong, untrained ponies that had been bought in to solve logistical problems of expedition supply the 'Devils' – and with some justification: these animals – described by one team member as 'a cross between a pig and a mule' – often drove the men to distraction. And yet they endeared themselves to such an extent that even during their polar privations the men would share their rations with the Manchurian ponies. It was a fruitless endeavour, as the animals later came to be sacrificed for the greater good. *The South Pole Ponies* tells of the men's grief at the loss of their animals to which they had become emotionally attached.

Now available in the print-on-demand format from Classic Travel Books, *The South Pole Ponies* can lay claim to being more than equestrian ephemera. The current edition has been produced partly to raise awareness of the plight of the famous Antarctic huts and of the British polar explorers of the Golden Age of exploration. According to the publisher: 'Having endured nearly a century of harsh weather and official government neglect, the scientific headquarters still symbolise the nobler aspects of human nature... the tiny buildings are now listed as some of the most endangered sites in the world.'



Aurora Australis

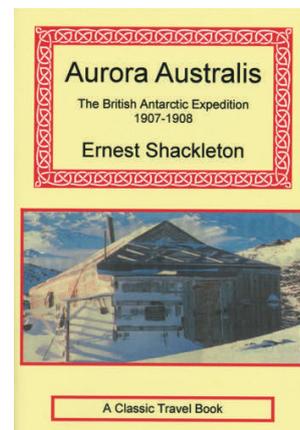
Edited by Ernest Shackleton
Classic Travel Books,
pp108, pb, £10.00

On 30th July 1907 Ernest Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition left London in an old sealer called *Nimrod*. Shackleton's aim was to spend winter at the white continent conducting scientific experiments – they were to stay there until late February 1908. While based at Cape Royds the 15-strong shore party divided their time between research, a haphazard ascent of Mount Erebus and producing the first book to be written and published in Antarctica.

Called *Aurora Australis*, it is a slight anthology of essays, poems and engravings dealing with life in frozen isolation. Scottish biologist James Murray notes in his piece on aquatic multi-cellular organisms that in the absence of penguins and skuas *Nimrod's* shore party are 'the only land animals at present living in this region.'

While providing a fascinating insight into the lengths to which Edwardian explorers would go in order to stave off boredom, *Aurora Australis* is just as notable for how it came to be printed in the first place. In his 'Additional Preface' Shackleton describes some of the difficulties encountered trying to produce a book in sub-zero temperatures in a confined wooden hut. Because of the extreme cold 'the only way to keep the printing ink in a fit state to use was to have a candle burning under the inking plate.'

Only 25–30 bound copies of *Aurora* were produced. Many of these are in the hands of private collectors, and when a copy does come to market it will fetch £50,000 at auction. So it will be a relief for collectors of polar literature that *Aurora* is finally in print again at an affordable price. It is also impressive that the publishers are donating their royalties to the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust, which could ultimately safeguard the future of the hut in which *Aurora* was produced.



No More Beyond: the Life of Hubert Wilkins

By Simon Nasht
Birlinn, pp346, hb, £25

Early on in Simon Nasht's brilliant biography of Sir Hubert Wilkins, he says that Wilkins is not like other great explorers. Firstly, most of us have never heard of him... Secondly, and more importantly, he had no lust for fame and no desire to see his name in the record books. What motivated him, says his biographer, was his thirst for scientific knowledge, a thirst that would lead him to

To obtain copies of the Classic Travel Books editions of either *The South Pole Ponies* or *Aurora Australis*, as well as other titles of polar interest visit

www.classictravelbooks.com

unexplored environments that needed exploring, rather than the popular challenges so much coveted by newspaper editors at that time.

Despite the fact that Wilkins went on many polar expeditions he was much more than a polar explorer. Indeed, in his long and varied career he explored many environments across the globe, photographing them as he went along, while achieving such impressive feats of discovery that his biographer can scarcely believe it possible that 'a man could achieve so much and yet be so little remembered.'

His first love though was not so much exploration, but the benefit advances in technology bought to it. In a moment that biographers dream of, Wilkins enlisted with the Australian Flying Corps in 1917, only to find himself under the command of veteran polar explorer and celebrity photographer Frank Hurley. Their mutual interests were vital to the development of aerial photography as an integral part of modern geography.

When *No More Beyond* was first published in Australia in 2005 it was under the different title of *The Last Explorer*. The original is perhaps a more fitting description for Hubert, who was one of the 'last of the first', historic explorers who still had, as Nasht says, 'the unknown ahead of them.' *No More Beyond* has put Wilkins up there with Scott and Amundsen – a superb biography of one of the unsung heroes of 20th-century exploration.

Captain Vancouver, North-West Navigator

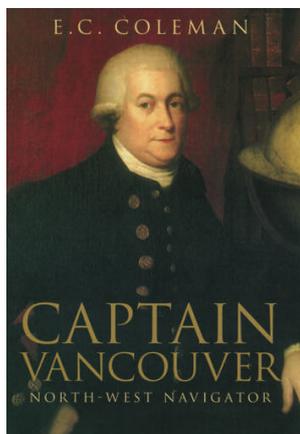
By E C Coleman

Tempus, pp160, pb, £16.99

If not for the fact that Canada's third largest city bears his name, one of Britain's greatest navigators, George Vancouver, would hardly be remembered at all today. A gentleman's son from the Norfolk town of King's Lynn, there was nothing in his childhood to suggest a great career at sea ahead of him. Yet his exploration of North America, the south-west coast of Australia and his discovery of new lands mean that he is rightly regarded by his biographer E C Coleman as one of the immortals of British exploration.

At the end of the 18th century, when Captain Vancouver returned home from his epic five year around-the-world voyage, his dreams must have been set on more than obscurity. Having graduated from the post of midshipman with Captain James Cook, who had been charged with discovering the western entrance to the North West Passage, he subsequently undertook the burden of the survey himself. He concluded that the Passage, if it existed, could only be at higher latitudes than originally supposed.

The counter balance to this failure was that Vancouver had unexpectedly negotiated the sovereignty of the



commercially significant Hawaii on the same voyage. And so fame surely beckoned. But fate intervened when politically influential members of his crew staged a post-landing mutiny. Thomas Pitt, 2nd Baron Camelford, who had been disgraced when discharged from the voyage now challenged Vancouver to a duel. The press had a field day, and Vancouver's brilliant career ended there and then.

Although short in length, in scope *Captain Vancouver* is surprisingly wide. Coleman's sparse, concentrated style barely hints at the depth of knowledge his work contains, and we can only guess at what further treasures a full-scale biography might have revealed. *Captain Vancouver* is a must-read for students of the history of the North West Passage.

Shackleton

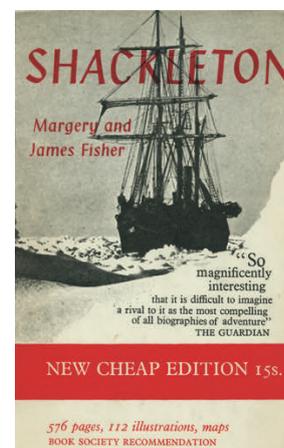
By Margery and James Fisher
First published 1957, currently out of print, but widely available on www.Abebooks.co.uk

In 1907 while Ernest Shackleton was planning his British Imperial Antarctic Expedition *Nimrod* he made a famous statement to the Royal Geographical Society: 'I do not intend to sacrifice the scientific utility of the expedition to a mere record-breaking journey, but say frankly, all the same, that one of my great efforts will be to reach the Southern Geographical Pole.'

Fifty years later one of the best books on the Antarctic explorer appeared by the hands of the prolific authors Margery and James Fisher (the latter was a famous ornithologist who died tragically in a car crash in 1970). Entitled simply *Shackleton*, this 500-page tome examines every aspect of the man, from his leadership skills, to his decision-making ability, from his style as a businessman to his relationship with Scott and the rest of the exploration establishment.

The story of Shackleton's heroism is the stuff of legend, and there is nothing that can be added here that is not already known. But what is interesting is the timing of this biography. Originally published in 1957 it reflects more of the warmer opinions of his contemporaries than the cooler judgements of objective history, and as such will have Shackleton aficionados nodding vehemently in agreement while shaking their fists with rage. One criticism of the book is that there are times it is comprehensive to the point of triviality. Appendix B contains an example of the Boss's poetry which, although hardly W B Yeats, reminds us that we should be grateful he followed his true star in the field of exploration rather than literature.

Heralded by Gavin Maxwell as a 'great rather than a merely competent biography', *Shackleton* is, and will probably remain, one of the indispensable books on 20th-century exploration.





The James Caird Society

The James Caird Society was established in 1994 and is a registered charity. It is the only institution dedicated to preserving the memory, to honouring the remarkable feats of discovery in the Antarctic and to commending the qualities of leadership associated with the name of Sir Ernest Shackleton, KCV0 (especially during the ill-fated but glorious *Endurance* expedition).

How Shackleton maintained his men's morale while stranded for months on the ice and when there seemed no hope of rescue, eventually bringing all of them home safe and sound, is now seen as an achievement unique in the history of exploration.



The *James Caird* is the 22 foot (8m) whaler in which Shackleton and five companions made the epic voyage of 800m (1,300km) from Elephant Island, 500 miles (800km) south of Cape Horn, to South Georgia during the Antarctic winter of 1916. She is now preserved at Dulwich College, Shackleton's old school in south London, as a memorial to an illustrious son.

Membership application form

I wish to become a member of the James Caird Society and prefer to pay a subscription of:

- £55 / US\$110 for three years, or
- £100 / US\$200 for six years, or
- only for UK residents and paid by Bankers Order: £20 annually (subscription year begins on 1st July)

(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Name

Address

.....

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Profession

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Fax

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Shackleton connection (if any)

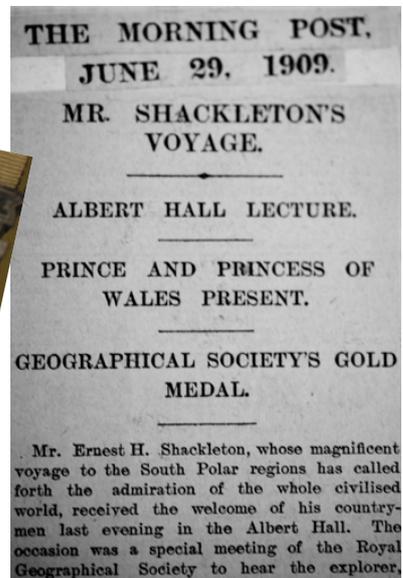
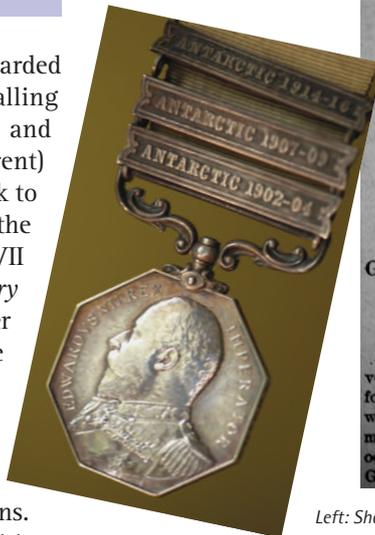
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Please photocopy or print* and complete this form and send it with your cheque, made payable to the James Caird Society, to:
The Hon Secretary, Mrs Pippa Hare, The James Caird Society, Fig Tree Cottage, High Street, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 3EN, UK
(Tel/fax : +44 (0)1580 714944 email: jamescairdsoc@aol.com)

Single-year applications must also include a completed Bankers Order form, which will need to be downloaded from www.jamescairdsociety.com. *A version of this Membership Application form will also be found there, and a form for UK Gift Aid Declaration. All UK Taxpayers are urged to take advantage of Gift Aid, which allows the Society tax relief on subscriptions.

From the Archives

The Polar Medal was established in 1857 and is awarded for 'extreme human endeavour against the appalling weather and conditions that exist in the Arctic and Antarctic'. Shackleton's is the third (and current) version of the medal, the design of which dates back to 1904. As the Polar medal always has the head of the reigning monarch of the time we can see Edward VII in this case (obverse). On the reverse is RSS *Discovery* with a sledging party in the foreground. The silver octagonal medal has a white ribbon symbolising the Polar Regions, while the three bars on Shackleton's represent the *Discovery*, *Nimrod* and *Endurance* expeditions. Originally the medal came in both silver and bronze; the bronze medals were awarded to personnel of relief ships for Antarctic expeditions. No bronze medals were awarded for Arctic expeditions and today the medal comes in silver only.



Left: Shackleton's Polar Medal. (Photo: Nick Smith)

Above: A contemporary press cutting following the success of the British Antarctic Expedition 1907-09 (Nimrod).

The James Caird Society 2008

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