



# The James Caird Society Newsletter

Issue 17 · July 2011

## Museum at the end of the world

Tucked away on tiny Goudier Island on the Antarctic Peninsula is one of the world's southernmost museums. JCS member Nick Smith joined MV *Plancius* on a visit to Port Lockroy.



December 2010: as the early morning southern sky turns from salmon pink to a clear pale blue, several groups of adventure travellers disembark the Polar cruise ship *Plancius* in zodiacs to visit Goudier Island. Our purpose is to visit

Port Lockroy, a one-time British science research base. Today it's one of the continent's most frequently visited tourism attractions, as well as being a post office and museum.

'Base A' at Port Lockroy was built in February 1944, its first wintering team led by Lt Commander James Marr who, as a Boy Scout, first went South under the leadership of Ernest Shackleton. Its main building, Bransfield House, was the first permanent British government structure on the Peninsula, intended for research into geology, meteorology, botany and ionospherics. When the British Antarctic Survey relocated its science to other sites on the Peninsula, the base closed in January 1962 and fell into disrepair. Designated as Historic Site No 61 under the Antarctic Treaty on 19 May 1995, the base was restored between 14 January and 18 March 1996 and since November 1996 the station has been run as a Historic Site. Today it plays an important role in understanding the



environmental pressures of humans on penguins. Although there is a shop at Port Lockroy where you can buy all manner of souvenirs, send postcards and even get your passport stamped, of far greater interest is the hut itself. It is a wonderful experience to wander around the restored sleeping quarters, the radio room and laboratory. There are countless fascinating original artefacts, from a portrait of a very young Queen Elizabeth, to photographic materials, contemporary newspapers and boxes of pipe tobacco. The great explorer Apsley Cherry-Garrard was said to have enjoyed it that Penguin published his book *The Worst Journey in the World*. And it was with similar pride that my guide showed me a small collection of antique Penguin paperbacks – including Aldous Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza* – in the museum. These books (along with some, for the day, quite risqué pin-ups) once belonged to the field scientists stationed at Port Lockroy and are adorned with early versions of the publisher's now familiar and distinctly Antarctic logo, but in a number of unfamiliar poses.

Nick Smith visited Antarctica with [www.worldexpeditions.co.uk](http://www.worldexpeditions.co.uk)



Photographs: Nick Smith

# James Caird Society news and forthcoming exhibitions

The Annual General Meeting 2011  
will be held at Dulwich College on  
**Friday 4 November 2011, starting at 5.30pm**  
Following the meeting Dr Jan Piggott will talk on  
**Shackleton and Scott**  
*Dinner will be served in the Great Hall after the lecture*

Meetings in 2012:  
Friday 11 May and Friday 9 November (AGM)  
Details of speakers at these two evenings have yet to be confirmed

Would you like to serve on the Committee of the James Caird Society?  
If so, please contact Pippa Hare, details on the back cover

## On Thin Ice: Pioneers of Polar Exploration An Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Falmouth, Cornwall

Developed in partnership with the Scott Polar Museum in Cambridge, the Maritime Museum's current six-month exhibition takes visitors sub-zero as they journey around three dedicated galleries called North, South and Base Camp, giving a chilling insight into Britain's Polar heritage.

This new exhibition features a historic collection of artefacts from the tragic Terra Nova expedition of 1910–13 including Scott's snow goggles, a compass, pony snow shoes, man-hauling harness, journal wallet and letters.

Shackleton's vest sits alongside Leonard Hussey's banjo with fragments from the *James Caird* in a powerful union, honouring the pioneering voyage, aboard *Endurance*, of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic expedition of 1914–17, that became an epic of survival. Binoculars, snow boots and goggles from the expedition are also on display.

The other side of the world is also defined by the cold: a region of frozen seas, permafrost, midnight sun and unending polar nights. Wally Herbert, the first man without doubt to have reached the North Pole on foot and the last of the great Polar pioneers, has his fox fur parka, seal skin mittens and polar bear fur boots and stockings on display. This is truly a breathtaking look at animal fur from the Poles being used to warm man.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes refers to Herbert as 'the greatest Polar explorer of our time' and yet Ran himself is referred to as 'the world's greatest living explorer' by the Guinness Book of Records. Comparing Ran's clothing and expedition kit worn on his epic Transglobe expedition 1979–82, where he became the first man to reach both Poles by surface travel, and that of Herbert's, Scott's and Shackleton's, it is clear to see how modern technology is changing the face of Polar exploration.

Pen Hadow, the first Briton to walk without re-supply to the North and South Poles, says: 'It's enormously difficult to communicate to anyone who hasn't been to the Poles what life is like at these extremes. This exhibition is like a *Who's Who* of Polar explorers. It's an honour to



*Kari Herbert with her father's fur parka*



*Alexandra Shackleton at the opening of the Exhibition, flanked by Robert Smith and Heather Lane, both of SPRI*

The exhibition is open every day (10–5) until 9 October 2011 · Adults £9.50 · Seniors £7.75

## Elsewhere in this issue

Pages 2–3  
James Caird Society news and forthcoming exhibitions  
The Endurance Quilt Project

Pages 4–5  
Come dine with us!  
James Caird Society Dinners  
Reports on the lectures

Page 6  
Art and poetry  
The Boss in bronze  
A poem by Leonard Hussey

Page 7  
The President's year

Pages 8–9  
For armchair explorers everywhere  
Book reviews

Pages 10  
Shackleton in Italy

Page 11  
Shackleton and Ireland

Page 12  
Shackleton's Whisky

Page 13  
News of individual expeditions

Pages 14–15  
Shipping News  
Closer to Shackleton's South Atlantic  
A new *Protector* to sail south

Page 16  
How to join the Society  
The JCS Forum

## The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton & Antarctic Photography

21 October 2011 – 15 April 2012  
The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

This exhibition of remarkable Antarctic photography by George Herbert Ponting and Frank Hurley marks the 100th anniversary of Captain Scott's ill-fated journey to the South Pole.

Ponting's dramatic and vivid images record Scott's Terra Nova expedition of 1910–12, which led to the tragic death of five of the team on their return from the South Pole. Hurley's extraordinary icescapes were taken during Ernest Shackleton's Polar expedition on *Endurance* in 1914–17, which ended with the heroic sea journey aboard the James Caird from Elephant Island to South Georgia.

Both collections of photographs were presented to King George V and are today part of the Royal Photograph Collection.

Preview a selection of highlights online:  
[www.royalcollection.org.uk/microsites/HOTGA/](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/microsites/HOTGA/)

## South Georgia Association – 10th Anniversary An Evening of Celebration

Dinner, drinks, live music, a photography competition and a painting exhibition at the Royal Overseas League St James's Street, London SW1A 1LR.

Saturday 24 September 2011  
Tickets £75

More information from Melanie D'Souza at

### From June 2011, Scott's Last Expedition

Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.  
(Also coming to London in January 2012, and to Canterbury, November 2012.) [www.anmm.gov.au](http://www.anmm.gov.au)

### The Scott Centenary

Numerous events are being planned, both nationwide and worldwide, to celebrate 100 years since the Terra Nova expedition.

To find out more, go to the website:

## The Endurance Quilt Project and the Festival of Quilts – August 2011

I became interested in the *Endurance* expedition after seeing the famous artificially lit picture of the ship stuck in the ice taken by Frank Hurley in 1915.

The high quality of his black and white and early colour pictures, and the character of the ship and crew in the icy landscape lend themselves to Cyanotype (blueprint) monochrome printing. This is a mid-19th-century photographic process using light-sensitive chemically impregnated paper or fabric and long exposure times up to 20 minutes in bright sunlight or using a UV sunbed. I obtained permission to use the images from the Royal Geographical Society (who hold Hurley's glass plate negatives) and the Scott Polar Research Institute (who hold the 'Green Album' assembled by Hurley while on board *Endurance*), and made digital acetate negatives from prints of the photographs.

I initially intended only to print pictures of the ships and icy

landscapes, but as I read more about this extraordinary and moving survival story, I began to appreciate their skills and characters, so I also included a number of the Hurley crew portraits and Hussey's autographed banjo. The process of watching the ship, the ice and the life-size faces of the men emerging from the photographic developing process was highly evocative.

The pictures were assembled into two large quilts with a positive and negative print of *Endurance* as 'Spectre ship' as centre pieces. Both quilts were hung as part of an exhibition at the Royal College of Pathologists over the summer of 2010 and will be exhibited at the Festival of Quilts at the NEC in Birmingham in mid August 2011.

I am currently working on further pieces using the Hurley images with themes including Imprisonment in the Ice, the *James Caird* boat journey, the Ordeal on Elephant Island, and South Georgia.



Endurance 1:  
The Endurance and the James Caird



Endurance 2:  
Shackleton and his men

Dr Cathy Corbishley Michel  
[cathy@michelg.plus.com](mailto:cathy@michelg.plus.com)

## Come dine with us!

I would like to encourage any member who has not yet experienced a James Caird Dinner to do so. Come and hear an interesting lecture on an Antarctic-related subject, followed by a delicious three-course meal complete with wine. The seating at dinner is organised with great care by Alexandra Shackleton (Zaz). Many people come on their own but soon find like-minded companions. No one feels alone.

Last November the James Caird Evening took on a slightly different 'flavour' as we decided that, due to the large number of guests (137), dinner would be served in the Great Hall. This proved extremely popular and we felt that members really enjoyed dining together in one room. With the addition of new round tables, the Great Hall looked especially festive and was definitely a warmer option for the winter dinner.



Admiral Sir James Perowne  
Chairman

This left the South Cloister free for Frank Swinton's talk and once again the large screen, generously presented by Charles Swithinbank, came into its own by showing off Frank's photos perfectly.

As it happened our relationship with Frank had been a little tenuous. He had been to visit

Calista Lucy at the College and bravely offered to lecture to the Society about his time spent with the British Antarctic Survey's research base Halley, as their in-house doctor. It is fair to say that we normally know a little more about our speakers beforehand! However we were very pleased to take up his offer and it turned out to be a most illuminating lecture which was also delightfully illustrated. Frank (seen on the invitation with a large black beard) arrived looking much more like the consultant anaesthetist he has now become!



The Hon Alexandra Shackleton  
President

More recently, on a perfect May day, we had a very different evening. The sunshine poured into the North Cloister and the outside doors were left open, quite the opposite to the freezing cold evening in November! This time 115 guests enjoyed dinner in the North Cloister and Lower Hall whilst the talk, a joint offering from Dr Kevin Fewster, Matthew Clark and Nick Drake, took place in the Great Hall.

It is always very special to eat at one of the tables around the *James Caird*. If anyone has not enjoyed this privilege, please indicate as much on your reply slip to the next dinner (Friday 4 November) and I will try to put it right.

Pippa Hare

### Life at 75° South

Frank Swinton spoke of his time with the British Antarctic Survey. In 2003 he left the UK to spend five months as the ship's doctor on the Royal Research Ship *Ernest Shackleton* and then a year at Halley research station.

Frank discussed his journey to Antarctica including a visit to Grytviken on South Georgia to visit Sir Ernest's grave. Tales of angry seals and friendly albatross led into some of the science which is ongoing in the South.

There was then a description of life at a modern Antarctic



station including the living quarters, medical facilities and working conditions. Chores included digging snow for fresh water, fire watch, baking the daily bread and jacking up the building in order to keep the pool table level. Entertainment involved delights such as murder mystery nights, the building of igloos, midwinter

barbecues and shovelling snow. There were several pictures illustrating the flat landscape both on base and whilst camping, as well as the beauty of the auroras and the polar sun.

Frank drew his talk to a close with slides showing the Emperor penguins which live near the base and which he was lucky enough to visit several times during his stay.

At the May Dinner, held on Friday 6 May 2011, the guest speakers were Dr Kevin Fewster, Matthew Clark and Nick Drake. Dr Fewster explained the ambitious new exhibition area at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and Matthew Clark described how the first exhibition there, 'High Arctic', would look, and told us of the team's trip to the Arctic to gain inspiration. Nick Drake entertained the guests with poetry and prose written on the trip, an extract of which appears below.

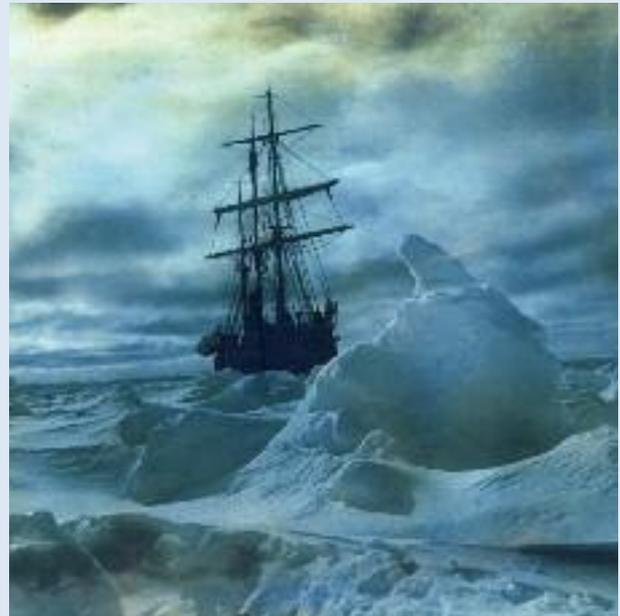
### The Romance of Catastrophe

After lunch, everything seemed normal. Perhaps this is always how disaster looks, before it nearly happens. Anyway, I'm getting ahead of the drama. We set off into what looked like open seas, with some pack ice far away, a tense white line on the horizon. The idea of iceberg-watching holds a certain romantic allure but as we sailed further, anticipating a northwesterly course out of the Widjefjordan passage, the ice suddenly surrounded and then crowded in on us. At first this was thrilling – we got to observe these big beasts from the theatrical circle of the deck. To our delight, and even amusement, one or two even held the clear footprints of polar bears.

But then, very suddenly, like the calculated teeth and jaws of a bank vault, the white shards and fragments simply closed ahead and behind us, and we were trapped fast in the grip of the ice. The captain revved the engine, and we made some semi-heroic but disastrously slow progress; nevertheless the floes were now large, and densely packed; there was little sea left open to push them aside, and we all suddenly felt the first odd trill of something going wrong. The ship drilled and drilled against the heavy floes, and perhaps we advanced – but only by inches.

Then everything became very still. The ship stopped moving at all. The ice was white, dense, broken and ruined and beautiful, sending peaks and shears into the air; I'll never forget the sound of the big parts of the puzzle, knocking and jostling together, white and blue, on the black water. Then the sky darkened and the wind began its own advance on our frail bark, driving us now inexorably towards the land. Shards of ice the size of cars and trucks, and sharp as window glass, were capsized and shoved under the floes by the wind alone.

I went outside and there it was, ambling casually over the ice floes at a distance of maybe 500 yards: a polar bear, not seeming to take much notice of us, but heading exactly in our direction. It moved with a panther's slow grace – no hurry, total confidence, pacing from floe to floe. Its legs were taller than I'd imagined, and its eyes sensitive dark spots with wide black brows set in yellow-white fur. Like something walking out of a myth, it gazed at us, and passed within 50 feet of the prow. We were all warned it could leap on to the ship and, if we were ordered to move, we should not hesitate. But the bear seemed merely tired;



with an indiscreet yawn it settled down on a nearby floe, resting its beautiful powerful head on its paws, like a dog before a fire. It turned out to be distracting us magnificently from an even more present danger which had now become apparent; the strong wind was driving us onto rocks only 300 yards or so away.

Time seemed to be moving faster than usual. As if to add to the freakishness of the moments, another female polar bear with cub was spotted further away; were they converging? Did they scent a smorgasbord of climate change artists and scientists? We scanned the skies and prepared to be airlifted, like so many Peter Pans and Tinkerbells in a West End production, up into the belly of the rescue helicopter we were told was on its way ...

But then! As if in response to the impending disaster of the situation, the ship suddenly surged ahead; the ice seemed looser, less certain; as if it had changed its mind, and decided to let us go. The engine, freed from opposition, quickly built up momentum; we swatted the next floes aside with mere crunches and shudders, and then, within ten minutes, we were in the glory of wide-open water. We had escaped.

But as we floated once more on open waters, I knew I would always remember the way the ice closed against us. It looked like a destructive urge. It looked deliberate.

*Nick Drake*

## Art and poetry

### The Boss in bronze

Ian Milner, the well-known sculptor, found that his lifelong admiration of Sir Ernest Shackleton was brought into sharper focus by a visit to Antarctica in 2005. It was high time, he felt, to make a bust of his Polar hero.

'The introduction of a fresh image of someone so well loved such a long time after his death is obviously an ambitious task,' he said. 'I had always felt that the existing portraits of Shackleton somehow failed to reflect the indomitable courage and supreme optimism for which he has been universally admired, and I resolved to do all in my power to put this right.'

The life-sized bust was displayed at The Royal Society of Marine Artists' 65th exhibition at the Mall Gallery and a bronze resin has been generously donated to the Scott Polar Research Institute in recognition of their help and encouragement during the project. The presentation was made on 11 March 2011 and Bryan Lintott (Exhibitions Officer, SPRI) was thrilled to receive it on behalf of the Institute.



The sculptor pictured holding the bronze resin bust, with Hugh Milner (left) and Stephen Scott-Fawcett (right).

### When

When faces turn pale beneath the soot and the grime,  
When eyes start in tarrier as if caught in some crime,  
When we beg on our knees to be let off this time,  
When you know that Kerr's threatened to sing,  
When such silence reigns you could hear a pin fall.  
When we lie round in pain unable to crawl,  
When a sense of depression hangs over us all,  
Then you know that Clarke's just made a joke.  
When a man climbs the hill with curious antics,  
Shades his eyes with his hands and appears to be frantic,  
And then looks through his leg at the blooming Atlantic,  
That's Maraton admiring the view.  
When the Colonel eats all his nut food in one day,  
When Jock can't eat his hooch, but gives some away,  
When Buddha talks nothing but sense all the day,  
Then it must be a beautiful dream.  
When Stephenson offers to take your turn firing,  
And after your health is always inquiring,  
And continually remarks that 'this job's very trying',  
Then he's trying to 'bum' a fag end.  
When you hear talk of shipping and all that kind of thing,  
And 'When I was out East' and all that sort of thing,  
And Cathedrals and Bishops and all that sort of thing,  
That's Buddha talking his usual blithering rot.



When the Doctors dance around with joy on their faces,  
And sharpen up knives and take saws from their cases,  
When Mack spits on his hands and Mick hoists his braces,  
Then you know that the Colonel's gone sick.  
When you see a man standing with Trembling Knees,  
And tears of sheer joy through his closed eyelids squeeze,  
When a faint voice gasps out, fill it up again please,  
That's Wild with his first pint of beer.  
When Alf says he's hoarse he can't even squeal,  
And finally sings us 'Teddy O'Neal'  
He's been asked to sing 'Grandfather's Chair'.  
When people turn round in their bags with a sigh,  
And cover their heads up and wish they die,  
When Hurl's so happy, he feels he could cry,  
Then I'm just going to start on my 'Jo'.  
When first started spouting even sweet Jimmy smiled.  
And Rickinson's face was like that of a child,  
But now Robert looks 'randy' and Wordie looks wild,  
So I think that I'd better shut up.

Leonard D A Hussey  
Elephant Island 23 June 1916

## The President's year

### 8 October 2010

To Hull with the South Georgia Association for an interesting tour of the city once famous for its fishing and whaling industries. The SGA visited Blaydes House and the Maritime Museum; exhibits included a fine collection of scrimshaw. The President was especially taken with the fish drawings on the pavement, marking the heritage trail through the city.

### 22 October 2010

To Athy, Co. Kildare, for the 10th Ernest Shackleton Autumn School. The President unveiled a plaque for the occasion.

### 11 November 2010

To Liverpool with the Falkland Islands Association plus members of the James Caird Society and the SGA. We here visited Hurley's iconic photographs and the Merseyside Maritime Museum to view 'Endurance, Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure'. We also saw the magnificent 18th-century 'Old Dock', now hidden deep below modern developments.

### 3 April 2011

The Travel Book Fair at the Royal Geographical Society.

### 5 April 2011

We visited the 17th-century College of Arms in Queen Victoria Street with members of the Friends of St George's and descendants of the Knights of the Garter. We were given a fascinating tour by Garter Principal King of Arms. Some of the early coats of arms are incredibly beautiful.

### 7 April 2011

Visited the National Maritime Museum Falmouth in Cornwall to do a joint opening of the fine exhibition *On Thin Ice* (see page 2). In unison with her fellow 'opener' (Kari Herbert, representing the Arctic) the President had to sink a fake ice axe into a fake iceberg. Certainly different ...

### 4-5 May 2011

To Fetter Cairn, the Highland home of Whyte & Mackay, to film the story of Shackleton's whisky with Talkback THAMES (see page 12). The countryside was beautiful, as was the weather which was fortunate since on Day 1 the

President was being filmed 'up the airy mountain' (covered in cloud the previous week) and 'down the rushy glen' (which would have been far too *rushy* in the rain).

On Day 2 we were filming in the distillery which was hot and steamy in places and redolent of barley and whisky. We were dwarfed by huge objects: mash tuns, pot stills, butts and hogsheads. The President's favourite object was an 1874 spirit still of mahogany and brass, glass-fronted, through which one could see colourless fluid pouring from container to container until the desired proof was reached; too high and it becomes vodka! Two formidable padlocks secure the spirit still. One key is held by the distillery and one by Customs and Excise. The whisky is being held under bond and must not be touched.

The President felt privileged to have been shown round by the charismatic Master Blender, Richard Paterson. Putting on white gloves, he showed a bottle of the original whisky discovered under the Cape Royds hut. It is so precious that he had only been allowed to take samples with a hypodermic syringe. By dint of much research, Richard has replicated the whisky - which the President was allowed to taste. It is wonderful! Whyte & Mackay have produced a limited edition of 5,000 bottles (47.3% proof) and it is flying out of the distillery. £5 from each bottle sold will go to the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust. All in all it was a memorable visit although repeating the same thing for three or four hours at a time (yes, really!) is not something the President would wish to do too often ...

### 12 May 2011

To the Millennium Seedbank, part of Kew, at Haywards Heath. The President went with members of the Falkland Islands Association to see this vital resource for our future. The President was pleased to hear that seeds which refuse to dry, and so cannot be preserved, are known as 'recalcitrants'. It sounds like a Cromwellian term of abuse ...

A good year.

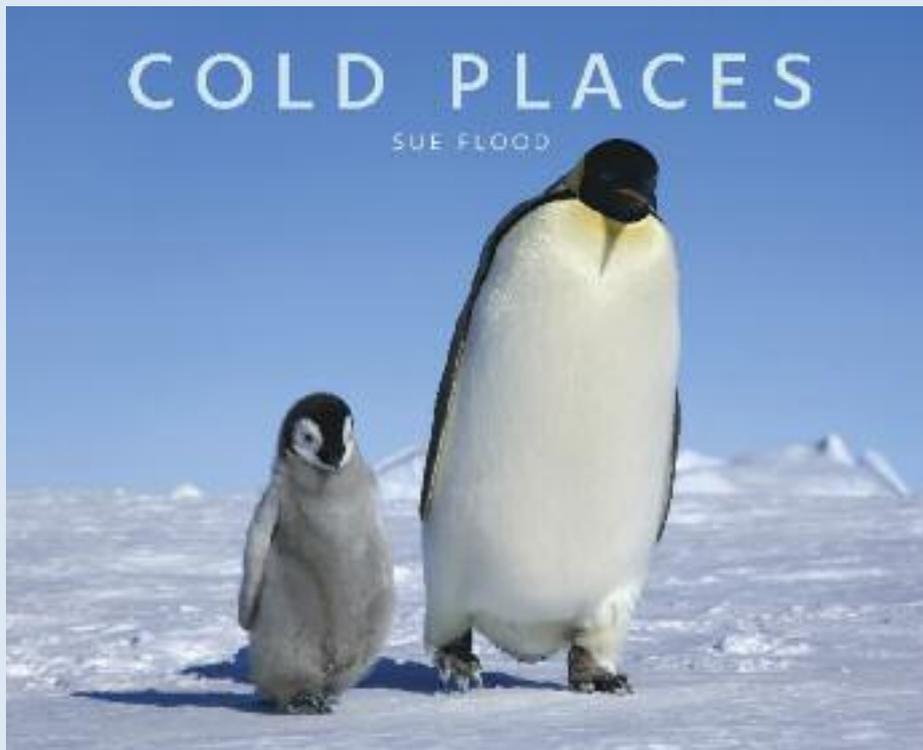
*The Hon Alexandra Shackleton,  
President*

## The *Endurance* Obituaries

During the course of her researches, Calista Lucy, Keeper of the Archive at Dulwich College, discovered a fascinating new website which will be of interest to Society members: [www.enduranceobituaries.co.uk](http://www.enduranceobituaries.co.uk)

The website has been created by John Mann, an expert on the *Endurance* expedition, and is dedicated to the members of that expedition. John Mann's reasons for compiling these Obituaries are quite simple. After reading a number of books and articles about the expedition, he noticed numerous inconsistencies: names often differed, as did ages, nationalities and many other significant details. His aim with this site is to set the record straight in order to provide a complete and accurate source of reference for future researchers and *Endurance* aficionados. The research is ongoing so the pages, first put together almost three years ago, will shortly be updated with his latest findings.



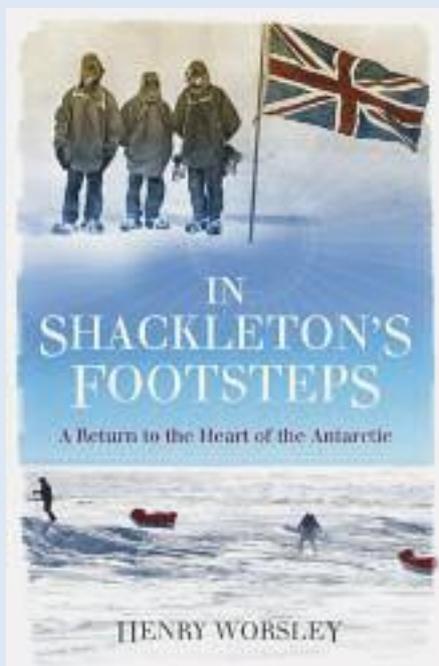


*Cold Places*  
Sue Flood

This is a book that needs no introduction to James Caird Society members who enjoyed some of Sue's magnificent Polar photography at their meeting in May 2010. This book provides a chance to see the pictures again at our leisure.

*Cold Places* reproduces many of Sue's favourite images and is also a record of some of the most spectacular places and memorable animals of the Polar regions.

*Tangent Books 160pp £25*



*In Shackleton's Footsteps*  
*A Return to the Heart of the Antarctic*  
Henry Worsley

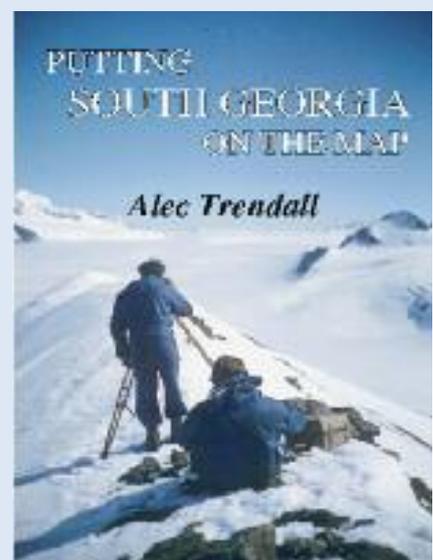
Another name familiar to James Caird Society members is that of Henry Worsley. Henry's fascinating talk in November 2009 was enjoyed by many of us. In his best-selling book Henry describes again his team's momentous recreation of Shackleton's 1908 expedition; he explores the history of that original journey and recounts the experiences of the subsequent one.

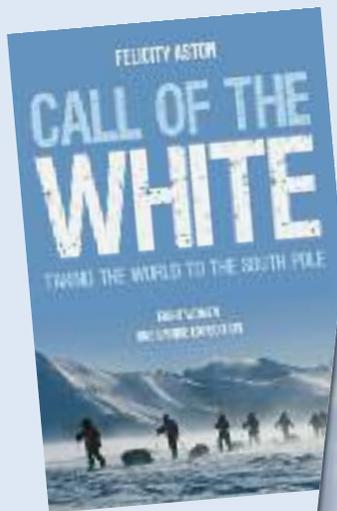
*Virgin Books 260pp £18.88*

*Putting South Georgia on the map, an essay on Duncan Carse*  
Alec Trendall

This publication can be ordered via [www.alectrendall.com.au](http://www.alectrendall.com.au) where you can look at the book's main features and download the first 15 pages. Detailing Carse's life and achievements, this book will be of particular interest to James Caird Society members, because it contains a new analysis of Shackleton's epic land crossing of the island in 1916.

*216pp, price varies, see website*





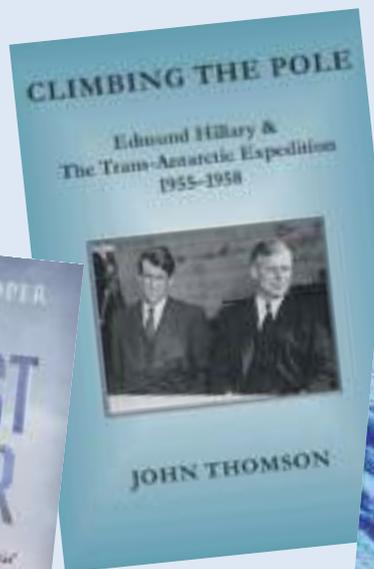
*Call of the White*  
Felicity Aston

British Adventurer Felicity Aston led an all-female expedition to the South Pole – not experienced explorers but ‘ordinary’ women who wanted to inspire others to follow their dreams or make a change in their lives. At the close of 2009, the women from all over the Commonwealth – some of whom had never seen snow or spent the night in a tent – set off on a 900 km skiing trek across the Antarctic. Eighty-mile-an-hour winds ripped through base camp; frostbite and injuries were an everyday occurrence; deadly crevasses emerged from the cracking ice beneath their feet. They also shared ideas, philosophies and laughter, and broke no fewer than six world records.

*Summersdale 320pp £8.99*

*The Longest Winter: Scott's other heroes*  
Meredith Hooper

Scott's ‘Northern Party’ played an important role in his last expedition, but how did they survive? Their tents were torn, their food was nearly finished and the ship had failed to pick them up. Stranded and desperate, the six men dug out an ice cave with no room to stand upright. Circumstances forced them closer together and somehow they made it through the longest winter. Working from diaries, journals and letters written by expedition members, Meredith Hooper tells the intensely human story of Scott's other expedition.



*Climbing the Pole*  
John Thomson

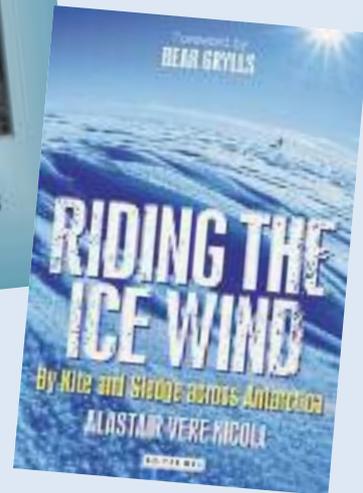
In 1957 on the Antarctic Plateau Sir Edmund Hillary, the great New Zealand mountaineer, raced his expedition leader, Vivian Fuchs, to the South Pole – for reasons that were never fully explained. Hillary's actions threw Fuchs' Trans-Antarctic expedition into confusion. While scrutinising records that could explain why Hillary acted as he did, John Thomson discovered aspects of that expedition which had somehow escaped close examination for over 50 years.

*Erskine Press 168pp £15*

*Riding the Ice Wind*  
Alastair Vere Nicoll

Leaving the security of friends, work and his wife, Alastair joined a team of young men to harness the katabatic winds and haul and kite-surf right across Antarctica. This is the story, not only of the first West to East traverse of the continent of Antarctica, but of the crossing of two phases in the author's life – of youth into manhood, frivolity into responsibility, fantasy into reality. It is also the story of a race against time, as he fought to get home for the birth of his first child.

*IB Tauris 272pp £18.99*



## Shackleton in Italy

### *Shackleton – The Antarctic Hero*

In the last Newsletter news was given that a film crew from RAI (the Italian equivalent of the BBC) came to Dulwich College to film the *James Caird* for a programme dedicated to Sir Ernest Shackleton. This was broadcast on 30 December 2010 under the simple but significant title: *Shackleton – The Antarctic Hero*.

The documentary, almost two hours long and aired in prime time, was prepared by Piero Angela, a veteran of science documentaries, some of which are dedicated to famous explorers, including Livingstone. It told about Shackleton's life and deeds, in particular the Endurance expedition. JCS readers already know the epic story so there is no need to retell it here; more relevant perhaps is to address the documentary itself and to assess its effectiveness.

The source materials included: the Channel 4 film starring Kenneth Branagh, winner of six awards and 13 international nominations; the original film *South* (1919); Frank Hurley's famous photographs. Other elements of the documentary consisted of interviews in studio and visits to Dundee, London, Cambridge, and Athy in Ireland.

Among those interviewed was Valter Maggi, the Italian glaciologist from Milan University, who participated in ten missions, each three months long, in the Italian Antarctic station. He described the living conditions at those latitudes. Reinhold Messner, climber, who in 1989–90 carried out Shackleton's idea of crossing the Antarctic ice sheet from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea, passing over the South Pole and travelling 2800 kms in 92 days, was also interviewed. Messner made a point of highlighting the great determination, courage, mental



Giovanni Blasich, long-time member and supporter of the James Caird Society

and physical strength required for the achievement of such feats. Simonetta Contini, professor of geography at Naples University, spoke with insight about exploration in Antarctica; Paco Lanciani, eminent physicist, explained how to find a ship's position at sea, underlining the difficulties encountered by the *James Caird* along the 870 mile route from Elephant Island to South Georgia. (We must not forget that the attempt of *James Caird II* failed in 2000).

Among the locations the documentary takes us on while visiting 'Shackleton places', Dundee, home of *Discovery*, must be mentioned. Aboard this ship, Shackleton, aged 26, made his first expedition to Antarctica as third officer, under the command of Captain Scott. During the visit to Shackleton's cabin one feels the wet cold of the planks, and the fetid air, a mixture of the smell of dirty socks and unwashed men that they breathed under the deck. Then the film travels to Athy where a 15-foot model of *Endurance* may be seen; to London, Dulwich College, where the original *James Caird* is of course preserved, and, last but not least, to SPRI where the Hon Alexandra Shackleton, President of the James Caird Society, spoke about her grandfather's great skills in leadership and showed some fascinating memorabilia, including the commemorative medal of his three expeditions.

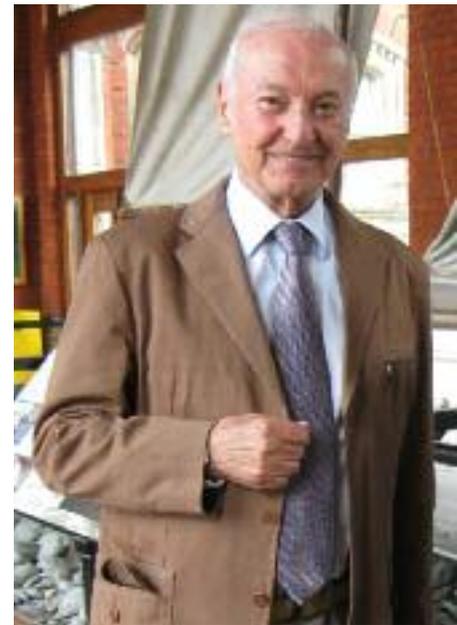
The itinerary was illustrated by maps, models and a diorama reconstruction, enriched by a few special effects with a lucid narration by Piero Angela and a clear presentation of the events.

The documentary began with those well-known words from an advertisement for the expedition: 'Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.' Then Shackleton's voice: 'A live donkey is better than a dead lion' explaining the decision taken during the Nimrod expedition at the furthest point south in 1909, a mere 97 miles from the Pole.

Finally, evoking the personalities of the greatest explorers of the time, the documentary remembers these words: 'Scott for scientific method, Amundsen for speed and efficiency but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.' So said Raymond Priestley, civilian geologist and meteorologist of the Nimrod and Terra Nova expeditions.

The only flaw of the documentary is the fact that, while scrolling through the images of Shackleton's simple grave no mention is made of the words of Robert Browning, carved on the back of the funeral stele: 'I hold that a man should strive to the uttermost for his life's set prize.'

This Shackleton certainly did.



Piero Angela, Italian film director

Giovanni Blasich

# Shackleton and Ireland

## Shackleton Show packs in the crowds

On 21 February 1911 Sir Ernest Shackleton came home to Dublin to deliver a lecture in the Rotunda building on his Nimrod expedition. According to newspaper reports of the time, the evening attracted a 'large attendance'.

On 21 February 2011 the Shackleton show *Nearest The South Pole* was staged in the same Rotunda building and also attracted a large audience – in fact over 350 people in a room with seating for only 220. At the scheduled start time there was such a large crowd outside that the last 130 people had to be let in for free on a 'standing room only' basis. Ernest Shackleton, a great Irish showman himself, would no doubt have felt at home and laughed.

The show itself consisted of music, lectures and poetry together with readings from contemporary newspaper accounts performed by actors in period dress. The show had previously been performed in the National Concert Hall in Dublin, the Community Centre in Athy and the Arts Centre in Drogheda. Further performances are scheduled for other locations in Ireland later in the year. The Antarctic writer and historian, Meredith Hooper, saw the show as part of the Shackleton Autumn School weekend in October 2010 in Athy. She particularly enjoyed the acting: 'The actors in their two-man show *Nearest The South Pole* achieved the energy of the moment with deft deploying of contemporary newspaper accounts, humour and the spare but fast acting that utilises the space available, and an audience's delighted responses'.



The February show in the Rotunda building was attended by several dignitaries, including the Norwegian Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Öyvind Nordsletten. He gave a short address linking Norway and Ireland by reference to the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and the Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton: 'On 14 December 1911 Roald Amundsen and his teammates and their dogs reached the South Pole. Roald Amundsen held Ernest Shackleton in the highest esteem. He said of him 'The name of Ernest Shackleton will forever be written with letters of fire in the history of Antarctic exploration'. I believe what Amundsen admired most in Shackleton was his meticulous planning, perseverance, leadership and the courage it takes to turn back when victory beckons and you are within reach of your dreams as Shackleton was when he reached 88.23 degrees in 1909, two years before Amundsen made it all the way'.



Reading from contemporary newspaper accounts



From left to right:  
Jonathan Shackleton (lecturer), Edith Byrne (Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin),  
Öyvind Nordsletten (Norwegian Ambassador to Ireland),  
Michael Holohan (musician and composer)

## Shackleton Autumn School

28 October 2011 – 31 October 2011

The annual Shackleton Autumn School Festival is a 4-day event commemorating Sir Ernest in the county of his birth.

The Autumn School provides the only forum for the discussion of Polar exploration/research in Ireland.

[www.shackletonmuseum.com](http://www.shackletonmuseum.com)

Ernest Shackleton lived in Dublin with his family as a boy between 1880 and 1885. Full details and photographs can be found on the James Caird Society Website. From the home page follow the link to Shackleton's Irish Background and Ancestry.

# Shackleton's whisky

## An enduring spirit...

Cheers! Following on from our story in the last issue of the Newsletter, distillers Whyte & Mackay have now succeeded in replicating the whisky Shackleton took with him on *Nimrod* in 1908. And by all accounts the taste is 'sheer heaven'.



According to Richard Paterson, Master Blender at Whyte & Mackay, people expected a harsh or peaty whisky, imagining it to be a rough dram that would need diluting. In fact it is quite the opposite with a colour – light honey and straw gold – which shimmers as you hold it up to the light. The nose is soft, elegant and refined with delicate aromas of crushed apple, pear and fresh pineapple. It has a whisper of marmalade, cinnamon and a tease of smoke, ginger and muscovado sugar.

The generous strength of the 47.3% whisky (it had to

be high to prevent the alcohol freezing) gives plenty of impact, but in a mild and warming way – fittingly enough.

It has, apparently, 'whispers of gentle bonfire smoke slowly giving way to spicy rich toffee, treacle and pecan nuts'. The poet in Sir Ernest would surely have appreciated such a magnificent description!

In addition to the whisky professionals at Whyte & Mackay, a whole team of people have contributed to the rebirth of this historic whisky, including the Antarctic Heritage Trust and James Caird Society member, Martin Williams.

Thanks to all of them Shackleton's spirit truly does live on!



## ... coming to TV screens near you

The efforts to recreate the spirit of Sir Ernest were supported by the production team at Talkback THAMES, who have been working for over a year to bring this story to the small screen.

The story begins with a consignment of whisky found under the hut of one of the world's greatest explorers of the 'Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration'. Having survived for over 100 years in the extreme climate of Antarctica the whisky is brought back to life by one of the world's most acclaimed whisky blenders... the spirit of Shackleton lives once more.

This is a story that did not have to be made up to give it such worldwide appeal. This was a unique occurrence which provided a perfect opportunity to retell the account of Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, one which did not grab the limelight in quite the way his later expedition did. *Nimrod* arguably put Shackleton on the map and the discovery of his whisky created a wonderful opportunity to remind the world of the 1908 expedition.

Following a story across three continents, however, is not easy; but working closely with the Antarctic Heritage Trust and Whyte & Mackay, all the way from the snowy mountains of the New Zealand Alps to the highlands of Scotland (with a few lowlands inbetween) Talkback

THAMES have pieced together the fascinating history of Shackleton's Antarctic legacy.

This tale of the reincarnation of a century old whisky is in the process of being retold. It will feature the Hon Alexandra Shackleton, JCS President.

Watch this space ...



*Richard Paterson and Alexandra Shackleton prepare to taste Shackleton's whisky for the camera*

## News of individual expeditions

In March 2011 Charles Fellows-Smith made a special trip to Chile to recapture some of the atmosphere in Punta Arenas during the months in which Shackleton made attempts to rescue the party on Elephant Island. Using newspaper articles from the time, Charles Fellows-Smith made a personal pilgrimage of the city, guided by extracts from *The Magellan Times* (reproduced below).



Captain Milward's house as it is today

6 July 1916

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous South Pole explorer, arrived here on Tuesday by the *Orita*. He has been in Port Stanley for some time arranging for the rescue of the men stranded on Elephant Island, South Shetlands. We extend him our heartiest welcome and hope that he will return shortly with the other members of the expedition from Elephant Island. He is staying at Captain Milward's house & hopes to get away south in a few days time. Sir Ernest is accompanied by Captain Worsley and Mr Tom Crean.

13 July 1916

Lecture by Sir Ernest Shackleton (*Greeted with enthusiastic ovation*) 'Since I arrived in this city I have not only received practical help. Within 24 hours of my arrival, steps were taken spontaneously to equip a vessel for the rescue of my men and only yesterday a further proof of this practical sympathy was given to me by a message from the President of Chile through the Governor of this Territory offering to put their tow boat *Yelcho* at my disposal.'

16 July 1916

On Thursday evening last the Governor of the Territory gave a banquet at the Gobernación in honour of Shackleton. After the toast Sir Ernest responded: 'Your Excellency, I am very pleased that I came to Chile and I wish to thank you for the hospitality I have received at your house, and more especially for the kind words you have used in hoping for the ultimate rescue of my comrades in Elephant Island. I feel that although they are far away, the kindness that you have shown to me is an earnest of the kindness that they will receive on their arrival in Punta Arenas.'

The British Association of Magallanes has decided to pay for the organisation and equipment of a relief expedition to rescue the members of Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition who were left on Elephant Island. ... as we go to press the Fund has reached about £1,500, a figure which is probably sufficient to cover the cost of the expedition.

20 July 1916

As we announced last week, the *Emma* with Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Worsley and Tom Crean on board left at midnight on Wednesday 11 July for Elephant Island. The Government patrol boat *Yelcho* had orders to tow the *Emma* as far as two hundred miles south of Cape Horn.

27 July 1916

The Government patrol-boat *Yelcho* arrived back on Tuesday. She brought the following from Sir Ernest Shackleton: 'Please inform the members of the British Association of Magallanes that owing to bad weather, damage to the *Yelcho*, and broken tow-rope, I [am] only leaving this place today.'

3 August 1916

We read in the *Buenos Aires Herald* that amongst the members of the Shackleton expedition left on Elephant Island was a boy who stowed away on board the *Endurance*, when she was in Buenos Aires.

10 August 1916

We regret to announce that Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition for the rescue of the men at Elephant Island has been unsuccessful.

17 August 1916

Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Worsley and Mr Crean arrived in the *Emma* early on Monday, and we were all pleased to welcome them back.

31 August 1916

On Thursday evening [24th] Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Worsley and Mr Crean were in the British Association to say farewell to the members on their departure to Elephant Island again.

7 September 1916

On Friday evening [1st] and Saturday morning [2nd] rumours were rife in the town that the *Yelcho's* expedition to Elephant Island had been successful and that all the marooned men had been rescued. On Sunday news came through from Rio Seco that the *Yelcho* was on her way to Punta Arenas with Sir Ernest Shackleton and his rescued comrades on board. The news spread like wild-fire; the firebells rang out to advise the populace; flags were hoisted, and the townspeople of all nationalities, hurried to give a Punta Arenas welcome to the intrepid men who have suffered so much in the cause of science and knowledge ... they marched in procession, with cheers for Sir Ernest Shackleton, the Chilean Navy and Comandante Pardo, and headed for the Hotel Royal, amidst a huge and enthusiastic crowd shouting their welcome. In the evening, a reception was held in the British Association of Magallanes. Mr Hussey obliged with a solo on the banjo which he has kept with him from the start of the expedition. Other songs, chiefly topical ones on the life in Elephant Island composed by the singers, were sung by Messrs GE Marston, F Wild, JT James, LD Hussey, and A Cheetham. A public Service of Thanksgiving for the rescue of Sir Ernest Shackleton's comrades in Elephant Island will be held in St James's Church on Sunday next [10th] at the hour of 5pm.

14 September 1916

On Thursday evening [7th] a magnificent banquet took place in the Club Magallanes to honour Shackleton and other Members of the South Polar expedition. The goodwill of the community towards the voyagers reached its height on Sunday afternoon [10th] in the demonstration on the race-course. Except on the memorable day of the *Yelcho's* return, we have never witnessed anything in Punta Arenas to match the immense crowd.

19 October 1916

The following telegram has been received by the British Association from Sir Ernest: 'Santiago 5 October 1916. We are now leaving Chile and on behalf of my comrades and myself wish to thank you for the way in which you took us to your hearts and made a second home for us. The British Association will be ever a vivid memory for the unstinting kindness, generosity and sportsmanship of a crowd of good fellows.'



St James's Church, Punta Arenas

### A Polar first for an African-American woman

New Yorker Barbara Hillary, a lung cancer survivor and former nurse who retired over 17 years ago, has become the first African-American woman on record to reach both the North and South Poles. She is 79.

On 31 January 2011, after being delayed for days in Punta Arenas by a local protest, she was guided on a visit to the South Pole and the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station. En route, she

reported to her followers by satellite telephone, 'I thought Antarctica was one sheet of ice and snow. But we're sitting here surrounded by a mountain range exquisite in its beauty. The air is so clear you can drink it!'

She reached the North Pole in 2007 after signing on with a private expedition guide service based at Camp Barneo, the floating Russian ice camp about 60 miles from the Pole. From there she travelled by helicopter to within a day's cross-country ski journey to the North Pole.

### *Pelagic Australis*

#### Closer to Shackleton's South Atlantic

We know that if we want to experience what Shackleton and his men felt in the *James Caird* in 1916, we can't! As they turned from the fading shape of Elephant Island to the endless empty sea they had mixed emotions. Many days of fatigue, cold, seasickness and lonely watches we can replicate if we try. What we can never feel is having the survival of a party of men on our shoulders and the realisation that we had started a voyage which, by the ordinary laws of nature, should not succeed. To starve, freeze or drown amongst the waves of the South Atlantic, to miss land or to be wrecked on a lonely reef at night was their most likely fate. Such a journey had never been tried.

With its uninterrupted winds, mountainous seas and plunging temperatures, the South Atlantic is like no other. I wanted, at least once in my life, to experience those seas by taking a commercial trip from the Antarctic peninsula to South Georgia. From a cruise ship promenade deck I felt a genuine gale force wind, a gust of which nearly plucked me off the upper deck at night, also the hull resonate end-to-end three times when the ship slammed into a heavy sea, and watched 40-foot sheets of spray from the bows – but I was several decks above the sea, had unlimited food and warmth to retreat to.

For a closer experience I took an alternative trip in *Pelagic Australis*, an ocean-going yacht of 22 metres (72 ft), purpose-built for these waters. Starting from the Falkland Islands we sailed to and explored South Georgia

over 28 days taking four days in the crossing. The 14 of us on board maintained watches, two hours on, four hours off, day and night. Crewing, cooking and washing up were shared. Mostly there was no engine noise – just the whistle of the wind, the straining of the rigging and noise of the sea. From the cockpit and afterdeck we watched the giant rollers coming up behind and lifting the heavy yacht into a corkscrewing slide forward. We marvelled at the wheeling, wave-skimming albatrosses and petrels, and the flashing flights of the pintados.

At night we often took a turn doing iceberg watch alone on the exposed foredeck. Clothed in heavy weather gear, twice as protective as anything in 1916, we sheltered behind the mast as we strained into the darkness to see small icebergs ahead. When I gingerly removed an outer



Photographs: David McLean

glove it was whipped out of my hand by a fierce gust, to be found later wedged into the mast's rigging. After 40 minutes communing with the spirits of those intrepid small boat sailors I was losing sensation in my hands and glad to see a lone figure edging forward to take my place.

Shackleton's men were exposed at the helm or on watch for four or five hours at a time, and sometimes all night, fighting their instincts to shelter in the cramped and smelly darkness below.



Tabular iceberg off South Georgia

That gigantic wave whose crest Shackleton mistook for a break in the weather and which nearly overwhelmed the *James Caird* is still out there. As I worked my way back in the half light I watched an enormous crest for a whole minute before it overtook us and heaved the boat forward washing over the decks. Nothing compares with the raw power of nature in the untamed and remote South Atlantic – and a small boat is the place to see it and know a little of what Shackleton and his men knew.

David McLean



Pelagic Australis between South Georgian storms

## A new *Protector* to sail south

The future of HMS *Endurance* is still being decided by the Ministry of Defence following the catastrophic flood in the machinery spaces in 2008 which nearly sank her.

As reported in the last issue of the Newsletter, the MOD has now confirmed its decision to lease a Norwegian vessel, MV *Polarbjorn*, initially for three years. The ship has undergone some conversion already, mainly to the positioning of the flight deck by moving it aft; work also included stripping down the engine and gearbox, and the fitting of a state-of-the-art multi-beam echo sounder survey system to the hull – requiring the cutting of steel plates 4 inches thick. All of this was carried out in a Danish yard in an astonishing ten days. She arrived in Portsmouth on 23 May 2011 where conversion work continued, including the fitting of gun mountings, naval communications and other RN 'stuff'.

The Naming Ceremony for the new HMS *Protector* took place on 1 June with the Commissioning Ceremony taking place three weeks after, on 23 June which also marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the International Antarctic Treaty. She will be the eighth ship to carry the name *Protector*; the sixth ship of that name was the Ice Patrol Ship from 1955 until 1968. Our Chairman, then Midshipman James Perowne, served in her for the 66/67

patrol, our editor enjoyed Christmas parties as a child on board her in Stanley harbour, and many members will remember her as the 'Grey Ghost'.

After commissioning, her CO Captain Peter Sparkes and her ship's company (which includes one Norwegian civilian Chief Engineer throughout her RN service) will spend the summer and early autumn familiarising themselves with the ten-year-old ship and bringing her up to Naval operational standards ready for her inaugural deployment to the Southern Ocean sometime in late November.

When she sails South for the first time under the White Ensign, she will not carry helicopters; she has a flight deck but no hangar, so will sail with a flotilla of seven boats, including a new survey motor boat (*James Caird IV*), two Pacific RIBS and a fast rescue craft. She will also take three BV206 all-terrain vehicles and three quad bikes, complete with trailers which can be placed directly onto the ice by using one of her cranes. Next year she is expected to take landing craft with her to help with the supply of the British Antarctic Survey Stations.

We wish HMS *Protector* and her company all the best and we very much hope we will have as good and productive a relationship with the new ship as we have had with the two HMS *Endurances*.



The James Caird Society was founded by Harding McGregor Dunnett in 1994. It is a registered charity dedicated 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 KCVO. These qualities proved invaluable during the ill-fated but glorious *Endurance* expedition when Shackleton maintained his men's morale while they were stranded for months on the ice without hope of rescue. This achievement, combined with the feat of bringing the team home safely, is unique in the history of exploration.

The James Caird Society website Forum is a fascinating place to visit: we receive a gratifying number of detailed entries from all over the world – some share information

about members of Shackleton's crew and other aspects of his expeditions; some are enquiries and requests for advice or information; many have uncovered intriguing and unfamiliar detail.

Reproduced below are a few examples of the topics we have received. The subjects show the breadth of interest of those accessing the Forum which, together with the website, is managed by Roddy Dunnett, son of the Society's founder. The discussion on the pages is fertile and lively, and continues to throw up fascinating new angles. There are plenty more topics on the site and it would be helpful if JCS members and Shackleton aficionados could visit the site from time to time.

The more offering advice, the merrier!



### Pictures and topics submitted and discussed on the JCS Forum include:

the Arrol-Johnson car taken on the *Nimrod* expedition; the *Aurora*, Shackleton's 'other' ship; the fate of the *Stancomb Wills* and *Dudley Docker* on Elephant Island; the *James Caird's* masts; Leslie's barge-building works in Poplar where the *James Caird* was built to Frank Worsley's specifications; the repatriation of the *James Caird* to England from South Georgia; Mrs Chippy, the carpenter's cat; 'Chips' McNish himself (he is a very popular subject, with many informative entries); the refusal of Polar Medals to four men; communications from relatives of Tom Crean and of carpenter McNish; Perce Blackborow, the stowaway; Scout Marr of the *Quest*. Shackleton's mother (Henrietta Letitia Sophia Gavan); his sisters; Shackleton relations from Harden, West Yorkshire; Shackleton at 'The Firs' preparatory school; the indispensable RRS *Endurance* Tracking Project and an online assembly about Shackleton for Primary Schools; the *James Caird* at the London Boat Show; the *Deep South* exhibition at Dulwich College; viewing the *James Caird* at Dulwich; Trevor Potts and his 1994 'In the Wake of Shackleton' expedition; RRS *Shackleton*; plans for a *James Caird* replica in Punta Arenas, Chile. Publications and TV programmes are often discussed, pictures of memorabilia submitted.



### Membership application form

I wish to become a member of the James Caird Society paying a subscription of (*indicate as applicable*):

\_\_\_ £55 / US\$110 for three years, or

\_\_\_ £100 / US\$200 for six years, or

\_\_\_ £20 annually (For UK residents only,  
payable by bankers' order)

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Please photocopy this form or download it from our website. Single year applications (for UK residents only) must also include a completed Bankers' Order Form which can also be downloaded from our website. Cheques should be made payable to The James Caird Society and should be sent, with the relevant form, to: Mrs Pippa Hare, The Hon Secretary, The James Caird Society, Fig Tree Cottage, High Street, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 3EN, UK Tel: 01580714944 Email: jamescairdsoc@aol.com

UK taxpayers are urged to take advantage of Gift Aid which allows the Society tax relief on subscription. A Gift Aid Declaration Form is available on the website.

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