

Notes

The place and date of James Weddell's birth

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ABSTRACT. It has long been suspected that James Weddell was born in Ostend, Belgium. However, no record of his birth was found during earlier searches in the Belgian archives. New searches in the parish registers of Ostend reveal that he was born in that town on 24 August 1787. The Weddell family is recorded in these archives under the name of Waddle, and it was as such that father Waddle signed documents. The parish registers of Ostend are in Latin and James's name was Latinised to Jacobus. The first record of James Weddell thus refers to Jacobus Waddle. In the parish registers are two other documents relating to the Weddell family: the birth of a brother Charles in 1782 and the death of another brother who was also called Jacobus in 1787. Therefore, the family lived in Ostend at least from 1782 to 1787.

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Introduction

James Weddell (1787–1834) was a British explorer and sealer who sailed on three expeditions to the Antarctic. During his expedition of 1822–1824 he discovered the sea that would later bear his name and in that sea he set a record for the farthest south that would stand for many years: he reached 74°15'S on 20 February 1823. During this expedition he also discovered the seal that was named after him. James Weddell was one of the few sealing captains who published a book about his Antarctic voyages. His classic *A voyage towards the South Pole performed in the years 1822–24*. . . was published in London in 1825 (Weddell 1825).

Little is known about the early years of the Weddell family. His father Archibald was a Presbyterian upholsterer from Dalsersf, near Lanark, in Scotland. He settled in London and married Sarah Pease, a member of a famous English Quaker family (Jones 1992: 375). Ill-health compelled Archibald Weddell to move to the seaside, and the family moved to Ostend in Belgium. There is no evidence concerning why Ostend was chosen for this purpose.

The birth of Weddell

It has long been supposed that James Weddell was born in Ostend. Several historians have tried to find proof of this in the parish registers of the town, but to no avail. When James Weddell entered the Royal Navy in 1810, he gave his place of birth as Massachusetts, thus casting doubt on Ostend as his birthplace. A new thorough search of the death registers and the baptism registers of Ostend was completed recently. These registers are kept in the State Archives of Bruges. The study revealed that the Weddell family lived for some years in Ostend and that James was born there on 24 August 1787.

The reasons why earlier searchers did not find a trace of him in the parish registers of Ostend are twofold. First, the original name of the family was not Weddell, but Waddle. James's father clearly signed two documents as Archibald Waddle. Thus, when searching in the alphabetical indices, no Weddell can be found. A second reason is that the registers are in Latin, and the priests of the time only accepted as children's names the Latin names of saints. Thus, the English name James was translated to Jacobus and James Weddell is inscribed in the register as Jacobus Waddle. It is not known when, and under what circumstances, the change of surname came about.

In the parish registers of Ostend an alphabetical index for baptisms and deaths is given for the period 1626–1797. In this period three entries were found for the name Waddle. The corresponding registers revealed that all were for the family of James Weddell.

The first entry was in the baptism register for 1782. On 3 February 1782 it was mentioned that a son Carolus (Charles) was born and baptised in Ostend. The Latin text can be translated as follows (keeping names of people exactly as they are mentioned):

Carolus Antonius, legal son of Archibald Waddle, born in the city of Lanark, aged 29 years, and of Sara Pease, aged 32 years, born in the parish of York, was born yesterday evening around 12. Witness is Isabella Germanpré, living here.

The document was clearly signed by 'Archibald Waddle', the priest and the witness. This was clearly James Weddell's eldest brother and this document proves that the family had lived in Ostend from 1782, or earlier (Ostend Parish Registers 1782).

A second document was found in the death register for 1787. On 5 March the death of Jacobus (James or Jacob) was recorded:

Jacobus Waddli, 2 years old, son of Archibald Waddli and Sara Pisi, both from England, was buried yesterday at 11 o'clock at noon in the eastern churchyard.

23 | *jacobus filius legitimus ardebald waddle nate in*
Schotia aetat 33 Ann et Sara pese nate in Anglia
atati 37. Anno natus 24 Aug. hora duodecima nocturna,
Subcep. Robertus saults et anna penderglass incolae
hujus.
Archibald Waddle P.J. Stuer Vicepast
Robert Saults signat Matrino

Fig. 1. Record of James Weddell's birth (Ostend Parish Registers 1787b).

Since the birth or baptism of this child was not recorded in the parish registers of Ostend, it may be that the family for some time lived somewhere else. This was clearly Weddell's elder brother who had the same first name (Ostend Parish Registers 1787a).

A third document was found in the baptism register for 1787. In the entry for the date of baptism 23 September, it is mentioned that James Weddell was born a month earlier.

Jacobus, legal son of Ardebald Waddle, born in Scotland, aged 33 years, and of Sara Pese, born in England, aged 37 years, was born on 24 August at 12 o'clock midnight. Witnesses Robert Saults and Anna Penderglass, living here.

The document was signed by Archibald Waddle, Robert Saults and the priest G.J. Stuer. The godmother, 'Matrina' in Latin, signed with a cross (Ostend Parish Registers 1787b) (Fig. 1).

No further documents were found in the baptism and death registers. It is assumed that Archibald Weddell died not long after the birth of James. If this be true, then he did not die in Ostend, for his name is not found in the death registers of Ostend, which were checked until 1804.

It is very probable that the family left Belgium not long after the birth of James. Already at the very young

age of nine, James Weddell joined his brother Charles in the Royal Navy as boy, first class, on the ship *Swan* (Jones 1992: 375).

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Una Peaks: a long overdue Antarctic geographical naming

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ABSTRACT. A new name for a geographical feature in the Antarctic Peninsula known for many years by its colloquial name of Una's Tits, was formally approved by the Antarctic place names committee of the United Kingdom. It is now known as Una Peaks, named for a former secretary in the governor's office, Stanley, Falkland Islands.

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Introduction

On 20 May 2008 the Antarctic place names committee of the United Kingdom (UKAPC) approved the name Una Peaks for '[t]win ice and snow-capped peaks on Renard Island, south of Cape Renard, at the entrance to Lemaire Channel. Named after Una Spivey, a member of staff in the Governor's Office in Stanley, Falkland Islands in