

# Note

## Freeze Frame: historic polar images

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**ABSTRACT.** Since the development of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, exploration has created iconic images of the polar regions. A new two-year research project, entitled Freeze Frame, using the world-class collections at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, will bring this remarkable visual culture forward for new audiences.

### Introduction

The collections held by the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, are among the richest in the world for the study of polar environments. Supported by funding from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Capital Programme, work begins in April 2007 on the Freeze Frame project to capture and preserve the Institute's archive of historical images in digital form. The Freeze Frame historic polar images project is the largest and most ambitious of its kind (Fig. 1).

The photographic negatives are a unique resource but are also an extremely fragile one. Over 20,000 photographic negatives from the period from 1845 to 1960 will be conserved and recorded in digital form. These represent some of the most important visual resources for research into British and international polar exploration. This archive includes daguerreotypes, magic lantern slides, glass plate negatives and modern cellulose nitrate and acetate formats. Many of these images are unpublished, having been rediscovered within private albums and personal collections. Most have never been before the public eye.

The digitisation of related documents, information from personal journals and official reports from expeditions on which these photographs were taken, will provide the historical and cultural contexts for the images. It is also intended to add context to the images by displaying them alongside selected items from the Institute's pre-eminent collection of polar fine art, prints, drawings, and manuscript materials.

The International Polar Year (IPY), 2007–2008 is the first of its kind for fifty years. The timing of the IPY, coupled with growing interest in climate change, provides a unique opportunity for the online resources at the Scott Polar Research Institute to reach a wider learning community than has ever been possible. The forthcoming centenaries of the 'Heroic Age' expeditions

to the polar regions, and in particular those of Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton, demand of us that this visual archive be made accessible to a global audience.

The Freeze Frame project aims to develop an online database of freely available visual and textual resources to support learning, teaching and research into topics relating to the history of Arctic and Antarctic exploration and science. Through a series of interpretative web pages and e-learning resources, the project will provide access to hidden collections for all educational levels. We will encourage users to discover polar environments through the eyes of those explorers and scientists who dared to go into the last great wildernesses on earth.

### Outline project timetable

The outline timetable for the project is as follows:

#### 2007

- 1 January. Project planning and research strategy
- 15 April. Collection research begins
- 1 May. Initial image selection begins, Project website launch
- 17 July. Project team deliver strategic plans to steering group
- 1 August. Phase 1 recruitment and training completed
- 15 August. Metadata completed for initial batch of 1000 images
- 1 September. Aggregation of resources in DSpace begins
- 15 November. Trial implementation of presentation layer released for usability testing
- 1 December. Collection development forum launched

#### 2008

- 1 March. Education Officer appointed; focus group convened
- 15 June. First learning resources available for evaluation
- 1 September. Final usability testing begins

#### 2009

- 1 February. Resource integration completed; work begins on final report
- 1 March. Project launch
- Steering group meetings will be held in March, July and November each year.

### Project staff

The following are the staff of the project:  
 Project Director: Professor Julian Dowdeswell  
 Deputy Director: Heather Lane  
 Research Curator: Dr Huw Lewis-Jones  
 Project Manager: Naomi Boneham  
 Digitisation Assistant: To be appointed  
 Documentation Assistant: To be appointed

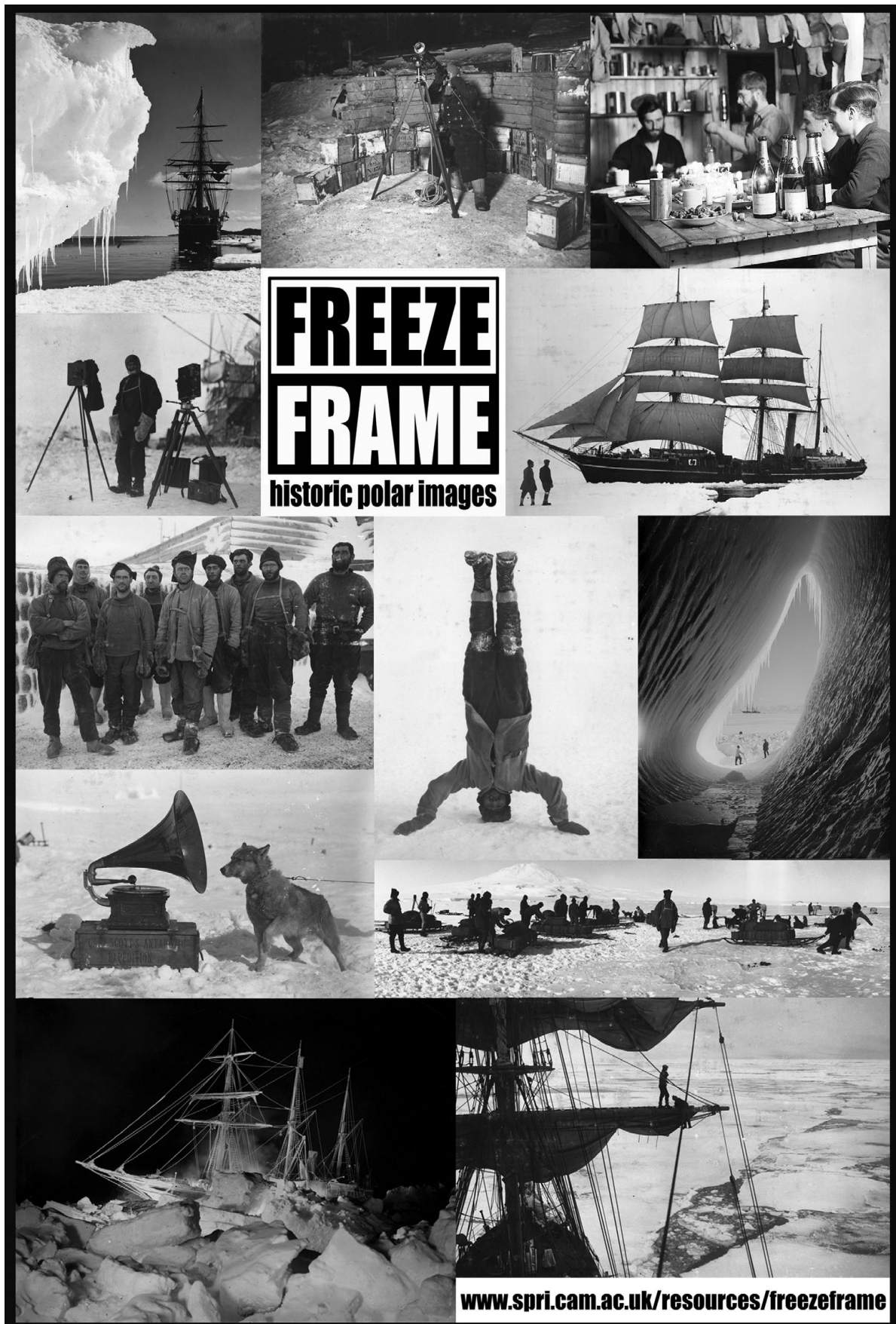


Fig. 1. Freeze Frame: a montage selection of these remarkable historic polar images.

Education Outreach Officer: To be appointed  
Picture Library Manager: Lucy Martin

**Contact information**

For enquiries about the project or to be added to the project's mailing list please email [museum@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:museum@spri.cam.ac.uk) or contact Heather Lane ([librarian@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:librarian@spri.cam.ac.uk)). A

call for participants in an online collection development forum will be placed in November. Please register your interest with either of the addresses mentioned above. For press enquiries, please email [enquiries@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@spri.cam.ac.uk) or telephone +1223 336540. More information may be found at the project's holding pages: <http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/resources/freezeiframe>