

## The first publication of *The South Polar Times*, Volume IV

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Polar bibliophiles, librarians and readers will be familiar with the three handsome facsimile volumes of the first Antarctic newspaper, published in 1907 and 1914 and edited in turn by E. Shackleton, L.C. Bernacchi and A. Cherry-Garrard during the National Antarctic Expedition, 1901–1904 and the British Antarctic Expedition 1910–1913. These expeditions were led by Captain R.F. Scott R.N. in *Discovery* and *Terra Nova* respectively. From S.Y. *Discovery*, beset for two winters in the ice of McMurdo Sound were made the first extensive sledge journeys into the interior of the Antarctic continent, including the great ice sheet or plateau. These were further prolonged, following Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, while the pursuit of science during both Scott expeditions led to the publication in London of two monumental sets of scientific and geographical results, plus new charts and maps.

During the lightless Antarctic winters, boredom and melancholy (if there were any!) were kept at bay by contributions from officers, scientists and men to what became known as *The South Polar Times*. A precedent for these efforts, both serious and full of fun, had been set in the Arctic during the 19th century by the Royal Naval exploring expeditions, from the 1820's to the 1870's. On the return of ships and men to the British Isles, a number of these amateur literary productions were published in London, at the wish mainly of families and friends.

Four winters were passed on Ross Island by the Scott expeditions, yet only three facsimiles were published after their return. Regarding these three published volumes it is interesting that members of the lower deck of *Discovery*, such as Frank Wild, Thomas Kennar and Arthur Quartley contributed a number of lively articles. None appear to have done so in *Terra Nova*. Dr Edward Wilson became well acquainted with Quartley and remarks about him in his *Discovery* diary, as being the son of an artist in the United States, which turns out to be so.

However, a fourth volume was in fact put together and edited by Cherry-Garrard, with Frank Debenham's help, during the winter of 1912. The contributors to this fourth volume were members of the small party of thirteen living in the hut at Cape Evans, in the charge of Surgeon E.L. Atkinson, R.N. They knew that somewhere to the south of them, on the route to or from the South Pole must lie members of the pole party, with their diaries and records. (Others then still remaining in the Antarctic were members of the Northern Party, under the leadership of Victor Campbell, on the opposite shore of McMurdo Sound).

The fourth volume of *The South Polar Times* was issued with great *éclat* on Midwinter Day 1912. The keeping of diaries, the recording of meteorological observations, exercising the Himalayan mules landed from *Terra Nova* plus other duties

and pastimes occupied the winter days, during which, according to Debenham, it was agreed not to discuss the fate of the pole party. As is well known, Atkinson took the decision to try and discover this and not to relieve the Northern Party.

With the sighting of the tent on the Great Ice Barrier and the retrieval of records, diaries, letters and geological specimens, the fate of the pole party became known. Members of the Northern Party returned safely to Cape Evans and all boarded *Terra Nova* for the long voyage home.

The pages of *The South Polar Times* of winter 1912 travelled with them and must have been handed over to Reggie Smith of Smith, Elder who had already published Scott's narrative and the two *Discovery* volumes of *The South Polar Times*. Smith and his wife Isobel had become personal friends of Scott, and of Wilson, whose watercolours so much enhanced the publications. Although the firm published a third volume (winter 1911) which appeared in 1914, it was decided that there should be no Volume IV (winter 1912), since it lacked illustrations by Wilson, articles by Scott and photographs by the distinguished "camera artist" Herbert Ponting. The three published volumes were re-issued in 1982 by J. and S.L. Bonham of London.

The 1912 document came into the hands of Mrs Smith, after her husband's suicide in 1916. She bequeathed it many years later to Cherry-Garrard, from whose widow, Mrs Angela Mathias, it came in 1959 to the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge. At the request of the late William Mills, then the Institute's Librarian, the author undertook to edit *The South Polar Times* IV for publication over a decade ago. Supported with enthusiasm for several years by the Antarctic bibliophile and traveller, Mr Joe Bugayer, and designed with great care by Vera Brice, a very special fourth volume emerged in 2010–2011, in an edition of 500 copies, to stand on the bookshelf beside the earlier three. This was published in Cambridge by the Scott Polar Research Institute with J and S.L. Bonham, and it is dedicated to members of the wintering party, 1912, and to the late William Mills. The volume is in dark blue buckram, gold blocked on the spine, with a paper inset printed in full colour. It matches the earlier three volumes (as published in 1907 and 1914). The scene portrayed on the front board of *The South Polar Times* IV is of the hut at Cape Evans beneath Mount Erebus, replicating that of *The South Polar Times* III (winter 1911).

Two interesting articles on sledge flags, a peculiarly British feature of polar travel, are published as Appendices. The first article is by H.G. Carr, and the second is by Barbara Tomlinson, charmingly entitled 'Chivalry at the poles.

It is fitting that publication should have taken place during the centenary of Scott's last expedition, which was commemorated in St Paul's Cathedral on 29 March 2012 in the presence of H.R.H. the Princess Royal, Patron of the Antarctic Heritage Trust. That same year the Folio Society modified and re-issued Ann Savours' *Commentary* in a slip case, accompanied by a special box containing separate facsimiles of all twelve issues of *The South Polar Times*. That edition of one thousand copies is now sold out, while a few copies of *The South Polar Times* IV, at £250 remain. These and copies of Bonham's 1982 publication of all three volumes, at £600, may be ordered from Mr John Bonham, at 84 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6QE, email: info@bonhambooks.co.uk. Proceeds go towards the work of the Scott Polar Research Institute.