

Discovery Expedition



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **British National Antarctic Expedition, 1901–04**, generally known as the **Discovery Expedition**, was the first official British exploration of the Antarctic regions since James Clark Ross's voyage sixty years earlier. Organised on a large scale under a joint committee of the Royal Society and the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), the new expedition aimed to carry out scientific research and geographical exploration in what was then largely an untouched continent. It launched the Antarctic careers of many who would become leading figures in the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration^[1] including Robert Falcon Scott who led the expedition, Ernest Shackleton, Edward Wilson, Frank Wild, Tom Crean and William Lashly.

Its scientific results covered extensive ground in biology, zoology, geology, meteorology and magnetism. There were important geological and zoological discoveries, including those of the snow-free McMurdo Dry Valleys and the Cape Crozier Emperor Penguin colony. In the field of geographical exploration, achievements included the discoveries of King Edward VII Land, and the Polar Plateau via the western mountains route. The expedition did not, however, make a serious attempt on the South Pole, its principal southern journey reaching Farthest South at 82°17'S.^[2]

As a trailbreaker for later ventures, the Discovery Expedition was a landmark in British Antarctic exploration history. After its return home it was celebrated as a success, despite having needed an expensive relief mission to free *Discovery* and its crew from the ice, and later disputes about the quality of some of its scientific records. It has been asserted that the expedition's main failure was its inability to master the techniques of efficient polar travel using skis and dogs,^[3] a legacy that persisted in British Antarctic expeditions throughout the Heroic Age.



The *Discovery* in the Antarctic ice

Contents

- 1 Background to the expedition
 - 1.1 Forerunners
 - 1.2 Royal Navy, Markham and Scott
 - 1.3 Science versus adventure
- 2 Personnel
- 3 Organisation and objectives
 - 3.1 Finance
 - 3.2 Ship
 - 3.3 Objectives
- 4 Expedition
 - 4.1 First year
 - 4.2 Arrival of the relief ship
 - 4.3 Second year on the ice
 - 4.4 Second relief expedition
- 5 Aftermath: summary of achievements
- 6 Some consequences
- 7 See also
- 8 Notes and references
- 9 Sources
- 10 Further reading
- 11 External links



Map showing the Discovery Expedition's general field of work, 1902–04. Main journeys: RED line; *Southern journey to Farthest South, November 1902 to February 1903*. BLACK line; *Western journey through Western Mountains to Polar Plateau, October–December 1903*. BLUE line; *Journeys to message point and Emperor Penguin colony at Cape Crozier, October 1902, September and October 1903*.

Background to the expedition

Forerunners

Between 1839 and 1843 Royal Naval Captain James Clark Ross, commanding his two ships HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, completed three voyages to the Antarctic continent. During this time he discovered and explored a new sector of the Antarctic that would provide the field of work for many later British expeditions, including that of the *Discovery*. Ross established the general geography of this region, and named many of its features, including the Ross Sea, the Great Ice Barrier (later renamed the Ross Ice Shelf), Ross Island, Cape Adare, Victoria Land, McMurdo Sound, Cape Crozier and the twin volcanoes Mount Erebus (still active) and Mount Terror (now extinct).^[4]



Sir James Clark Ross, discoverer of the Ross Sea, the Ross Ice Shelf and McMurdo Sound

He returned to the Barrier several times, hoping to penetrate it, but was unable to do so, achieving his Furthest South in a small Barrier inlet at 78°10', in February 1842.^[5] Ross suspected that land lay to the east of the Barrier, but was unable to confirm this.^[6]

After Ross there were no recorded voyages into this sector of the Antarctic for fifty years. Then, in January 1895, a Norwegian whaling trip made a brief landing at Cape Adare, the northernmost tip of Victoria Land.^[7] Four years later Carsten Borchgrevink, who had participated in that landing, took his own expedition to the region, in the *Southern Cross*.^[8] He landed at Cape Adare in February 1899, erected a small hut, and spent the 1899 winter there. The following summer, Borchgrevink sailed south, landing at Ross's inlet on the Barrier. A party of three then sledged southward on the Barrier surface, and reached a new Furthest South at 78°50'.^[9]

The Discovery Expedition was planned during a surge of international interest in the Antarctic regions at the end of the nineteenth century. Four other expeditions were in other sectors of Antarctica at the same time as the *Discovery*, one from Germany led by Erich von Drygalski, one from Sweden led by Otto Nordenskiöld, an expedition from France led by Jean-Baptiste Charcot, and the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition led by William Speirs Bruce.

Royal Navy, Markham and Scott

Polar exploration had once been a traditional activity of the Royal Navy in peacetime.^[10] This interest diminished after the total loss of the Franklin expedition, which had left England in 1845 in Ross's ships *Erebus* and *Terror* in search of the Northwest Passage, and was never seen again.^[11] After the near-disastrous 1874–76 North Pole expedition led by George Nares, the Admiralty had decided that further polar quests would be dangerous and futile.^[12]

However, the Royal Geographical Society's Secretary (and later President) Sir Clements Markham was a former naval man who had served on one of the Franklin relief expeditions in 1851,^[13] and remained a firm advocate for the navy's resuming its historic role. An opportunity to further this ambition arose in 1893, when the prominent biologist Sir John Murray, who had visited Antarctic waters in the 1870s with the Challenger Expedition,^[14] called for a full-scale Antarctic expedition for the benefit of British science.^[15] This was strongly supported, both by Markham (by then RGS President) and by the country's premier scientific body, the Royal Society. A joint committee of the two Societies was established to decide the form which the expedition should take. Markham's vision of a full-blown naval affair after the style of Ross or Franklin was opposed by sections of the joint committee (see Science versus adventure, below), but his tenacity was such that the expedition was eventually moulded largely to his wishes. His brother and biographer later wrote that the expedition was "the creation of his brain, the product of his persistent energy".^[16]

It had long been Markham's practice to take note of promising young naval officers who might later be suitable for polar responsibilities, should the opportunity arise. He had first observed Midshipman Robert Falcon Scott in 1887, while the latter was serving with HMS *Rover* in St Kitts, and had remembered him. Thirteen years later, Scott, by now a Torpedo Lieutenant on HMS *Majestic*, was looking for a path to career advancement, and a chance meeting with Sir Clements in London led him to apply for the leadership of the expedition. Scott had long been in Markham's mind, though by no means always his first choice, but other favoured candidates had either become in his view too old, or were no longer available.^[17] With Markham's determined backing, Scott's appointment was secured by 25 May 1900, followed swiftly by his promotion to Commander.^[18]

Science versus adventure

The nature of Scott's precise responsibilities had still to be settled. The Royal Society joint committee members thought that he should be merely the captain of the ship that would transport the expedition to Antarctica. They secured the appointment of John Walter Gregory, Professor of Geology at the University of Melbourne and former assistant geologist at the British Museum, as the expedition's scientific director, and leader once it had landed.^[19] This was not how Markham and the RGS caucus saw it. They argued that Scott's command of the whole expedition must be total and unambiguous, and Scott himself was insistent on this to the point of resignation.^[19] Markham's and Scott's view prevailed, and Gregory resigned, saying that the scientific work should not be "subordinated to naval adventure".^[20]

This controversy soured relations between the Societies and lingered after the conclusion of the expedition and the publication of its scientific results, although Gregory himself praised the scientific accomplishments of Scott and his colleagues. Markham's insistence on a naval command was primarily a matter of tradition and style though, rather than indicating disrespect for science. He had made clear his belief that, on its own, the mere attainment of higher latitude than someone else was "unworthy of support".^[20]

Personnel

Although it was not a formal Navy project, Scott proposed to run the expedition on naval lines, and secured the crew's voluntary agreement to work under the Naval Discipline Act.^[21] The Admiralty agreed to provide him with a partial complement of three Royal Navy officers and 23 seamen, the rest to be recruited from the Merchant Marine or from civilians.^[22] Two merchant officers signed up: Albert Armitage, the second-in-command, who had experience with the Jackson–Harmsworth Arctic expedition, 1894–97, and Ernest Shackleton, destined himself to lead later expeditions and to rank with Scott as an iconic figure of Antarctic exploration.^[23]

The scientific team was inexperienced. Dr George Murray, Gregory's successor as chief scientist, was due to travel only as far as Australia (in fact he left the ship at Cape Town),^[24] using the voyage to train the scientists, but with no part to play in the detailed work of the expedition. The only scientist with previous Antarctic experience was Louis Bernacchi, who had been with Borchgrevink as magnetic observer and meteorologist. The geologist, Hartley Ferrar, was a 22-year-old recent Cambridge graduate.^[25] Marine biologist Thomas Hodgson, from Plymouth Museum, was a more mature figure, as was the senior of the two doctors, Reginald Koettlitz, who, at 40, was the oldest member of the expedition. He, like Armitage, had been with the Jackson–Harmsworth expedition. The junior doctor and zoologist was Edward Wilson, in whom Scott acquired a devoted follower,^[26] one who provided the qualities of calmness, patience and detachment that Scott reportedly lacked.^[27]

Scott was fortunate that among the lower deck complement were staunch figures such as Frank Wild and William Lashly, and later Thomas Crean, who joined the expedition following the desertion of seaman Harry Baker at Lyttleton Harbour.^[28] Petty Officer Edgar Evans and Able Seaman Thomas Williamson, together with Lashly and Crean, would subsequently travel with Scott on the Terra Nova Expedition. Another Antarctic debutant who would later make his name, chiefly in association with Ernest Shackleton, was Ernest Joyce.^[29]

Organisation and objectives

Finance

The total cost of the expedition was estimated at £90,000 (2008 equivalent approx. £4.5 million),^[30] of which £45,000 (£2.25 million) was offered by the British Government provided that the two Societies could raise a matching sum. They achieved this, thanks largely to a donation of £25,000 (£1.25m) from wealthy RGS member Sir Llewellyn Longstaff. The RGS itself contributed £8,000 (£400,000), its largest single contribution to any expedition to that date, and £5,000 (£250,000) came from Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe.^[31] The rest was raised from smaller donations. The expedition also benefited from significant commercial sponsorship: Colman's provided mustard and flour, Cadbury's gave 3,500 lb (1,600 kg) of chocolate, Jaeger gave a 40% discount on special clothing, and Bird's (baking powders), Bovril (beef extract) and others all made significant contributions.^[32]

Ship

The expedition's ship was built by the Dundee Shipbuilders Company as a specialist research vessel designed for work in Antarctic waters, and was one of the last three-masted wooden sailing ships built in Britain.^[33] The construction cost was £34,050 (£1.7m), plus £10,322 (£515,000) for the engines,^[33] and the final cost after all modifications was £51,000 (£2.55m).^[33] The name had historic naval associations, most recently as one of the ships used in the Nares expedition, and certain features of this older vessel were incorporated into the design of the new ship. She was launched by Lady Markham on 21 March 1901 as SS *Discovery* (the Royal Research Ship designation was acquired in the 1920s).

As she was not a Royal Naval vessel the Admiralty would not allow *Discovery* to fly the White Ensign. She eventually sailed under the Merchant Shipping Act, flying the RGS house flag and the Blue Ensign and burgee of the Royal Harwich Yacht Club.^[34]

Objectives

The Discovery Expedition, like those of Ross and Borchgrevink before it, was to work in the Ross Sea sector of Antarctica. Other areas of the continent had been considered, but the principle followed was that "in going for the unknown they should start from the known".^[35] The main objectives of the expedition were summarised in the joint committee's "Instructions to the Commander" in the following terms: "to determine, as far as possible, the nature, condition and extent of that portion of the south polar lands which is included in the scope of your expedition", and "to make a magnetic survey in the southern regions to the south of the fortieth parallel and to carry out meteorological, oceanographic, geological, biological and physical investigations and researches". The instructions also stipulated that "neither of these objectives was to be sacrificed to the other".^[33]

The instructions concerning the geographical objective became more specific: "The chief points of geographical interest are [...] to explore the ice barrier of Sir James Ross to its eastern extremity; to discover the land which was believed by Ross to flank the barrier to the eastward, or to ascertain that it does not exist [...] If you should decide to winter in the ice...your efforts as regards geographical exploration should be directed to [...] an advance to the western mountains, an advance to the south, and an exploration of the volcanic region".^[33]

Expedition

First year



Captain Robert Falcon Scott, leader of the Discovery Expedition



Ernest Shackleton, Third Officer on the *Discovery*



The *Discovery* ship's bell

Discovery left British waters on 6 August 1901, and arrived in New Zealand via Cape Town on 29 November after a detour below 40°S for a magnetic survey.^[36] After three weeks of final preparation she was ready for the journey south. On 21 December, as the ship was leaving Lyttelton Harbour to the cheers of large crowds, a distressing accident occurred which cast a pall over the start of the voyage. A young Able Seaman, Charles Bonner, fell to his death from the top of the mainmast, which he had climbed so as to return the crowd's applause.^[37] He was buried at Port Chalmers, two days later.

The *Discovery* then sailed south, arriving at Cape Adare on 9 January 1902. After a brief landing she continued southwards along the Victoria Land coast to McMurdo Bay^[38] and turned eastward, to land again at Cape Crozier to establish a pre-arranged message point there.^[39] She then followed the Barrier to its eastern extremity where, on 30 January, the land predicted by Ross was confirmed, and named King Edward VII Land.^[40]

On 4 February, Scott landed on the Barrier and unpacked an observation balloon which he had acquired for aerial surveys. Scott climbed aboard and rapidly ascended to above 600 feet (180 m) in the firmly tethered balloon. Shackleton followed with a second flight. All either could see was unending Barrier surface.^[41] Edward Wilson privately thought the flights "perfect madness";^[42] the experiment was not repeated.

Discovery then proceeded westward in search of winter quarters. On 8 February she entered McMurdo Bay and later that day anchored in a spot near its southern limit, which was afterwards christened Winter Quarters Bay. Work began ashore with the erection of the expedition's huts on a rocky peninsula designated Hut Point. Scott had decided that the expedition should continue to live and work aboard ship, and he allowed *Discovery* to be frozen into the sea ice, leaving the main hut to be used as a storeroom and shelter.^[43]

For the *Discovery* party the process of familiarisation with their new environment was sobering. None of the men were skilled skiers, and only Bernacchi and Armitage had any experience with dog-sledges. The results of the men's early efforts to master these techniques were not encouraging, and tended to reinforce Scott's prejudices in favour of man-hauling.^[44] The dangers for inexperienced travellers in unpredictable and unfamiliar conditions were confirmed when, on 11 March, a party returning from an aborted journey to Cape Crozier became stranded on an icy slope during a blizzard, and in their attempt to find safer ground one of the group, AB George Vince, slid over the edge of a cliff and was killed. His body was never recovered; a cross with a simple inscription, erected in his memory, still stands at the summit of the Hut Point promontory.^[45]

During the winter months of May–August the scientists were busy in their laboratories, whilst elsewhere equipment and stores were prepared for the next season's work. For relaxation there were amateur theatricals, and educational activities in the form of lectures. A newspaper, the *South Polar Times*, was edited by Shackleton. Outside pursuits did not cease altogether; there was football on the ice, and the schedule of magnetic and meteorological observations was maintained.^[46]

As winter ended, trial sledge runs resumed, to test equipment and rations in advance of the planned southern journey which Scott, Wilson and Shackleton were to undertake. Meanwhile, a party under Lt. Royds travelled to Cape Crozier to leave a message at the post there, and discovered an Emperor Penguin colony,^[47] while another, under Armitage, reconnoitred in the mountains to the west. This party returned in October with symptoms of scurvy.^[48] The expedition's diet was quickly revised, tinned meat being replaced by fresh meat and penguin, and the trouble was contained.^[49] It is not clear how far this dietary revision was applied to the rations taken on sledging journeys, but it was evidently not enough to prevent the incidence of scurvy on the southern journey.^[50]



A modern photograph of the interior of the *Discovery* hut

Scott, Wilson and Shackleton left on 2 November 1902 with dogs and supporting parties. Their goal was "to get as far south in a straight line on the Barrier ice as we can, reach the Pole if possible, or find some new land".^[51] However, their lack of skill as dog drivers was soon evident, and progress was slow. After the support parties had returned, the group resorted to relaying their loads, thus travelling three miles for every mile of southward progress. Mistakes had been made with the dogs' food,^[52] and a combination of poor diet and incompetent handling weakened them further, until Wilson was forced to kill the weakest as food for the others. The men, too, were struggling, afflicted by snow blindness, frostbite and possible early scurvy, but they continued southwards in line with the mountains to their west, until on 30 December

1902, without having left the Barrier, they reached their Furthest South at 82°17'S.^[53] Troubles multiplied on the home journey, as the remaining dogs died and Shackleton collapsed with scurvy.^[54] Scott and Wilson struggled on, with Shackleton, who was unable to pull, walking alongside and occasionally carried on the sledge.^[55] The party eventually reached the ship on 3 February 1903 after covering 960 miles (1,540 km) including relays, in 93 days' travel at a disappointingly slow daily average of just over 10 miles (16 km). However, in spite of the hardships endured, they had continued to chart the mountain chain to their west, and had identified and named many features and landmarks.

Arrival of the relief ship

During the southern party's absence the relief ship *Morning* had arrived, bringing fresh supplies. The expedition's organisers had assumed that the *Discovery* would be free from the ice in early 1903. Scott would then be able to carry out further seaborne exploration and survey work, moving north of the pack before winter set in and returning to New Zealand in March or April. It was intended that *Discovery* would return home to England via the Pacific, continuing its magnetic survey en route.^[56] *Morning* would provide any assistance that Scott might require during this period.^[57]

This plan was confounded as *Discovery* remained firmly icebound. Markham had privately anticipated this, and *Morning*'s captain, William Colbeck,^[58] was carrying a secret letter to Scott authorising another year in the ice.^[56] With *Discovery* immobile, this became inevitable. *Morning* provided the opportunity for some of the party to return home, and among these, against his will, was the convalescent Shackleton, who Scott decided "ought not to risk further hardships in his present state of health".^[59] Some polar chroniclers date the later Scott–Shackleton antipathy from this point, others from a supposed earlier falling-out during the southern journey.^[60] There is, however, plenty of evidence that relations remained cordial for some years yet.^[61] *Morning* departed for New Zealand on 2 March 1903,^[59] and the main party prepared for another winter.

Second year on the ice

After the 1903 winter had passed, Scott prepared for the second main journey of the expedition: an ascent of the western mountains and exploration of the interior of Victoria Land. Armitage's reconnaissance party of the previous year had pioneered a route up to altitude 8,900 feet (2,700 m) before returning,



A modern photograph of the *Discovery*'s old anchorage in Winter Quarters Bay, McMurdo Sound, alongside the Hut Point hut in the right background



The Vince memorial cross, erected on the Hut Point promontory

but Scott wished to march west from this point, if possible to the location of the South Magnetic Pole. After a false start due to faulty sledges, a party including Scott, Lashly and Edgar Evans set out from *Discovery* on 26 October 1903.



Emperor Penguins. The colony at Cape Crozier had been discovered by a party led by Charles Royds, in October 1902.

Ascending a large glacier, which they named after the party's geologist Ferrar, they reached a height of 7,000 feet (2,100 m) before being held in camp for a week by blizzards, and did not reach the glacier summit until 13 November. They marched on beyond Armitage's furthest point, discovered the Polar Plateau and became the first party to travel on it. After the return of geological and supporting parties, Scott, Evans and Lashly continued westward across the featureless plain for another eight days, reaching their most westerly point on 30 November, just west of 148°E, and about 70 miles (110 km) SW of the calculated location of the Magnetic Pole.^[62] Having lost their navigational tables in a gale during the glacier ascent, they did not know exactly where they were, and had no landmarks to help them fix a position. The return journey of 150 miles (240 km) to the Ferrar Glacier was perilous in the extreme, but they found the summit, and on the descent took a short detour to discover the rare phenomenon of an Antarctic snow-free area or dry valley.^[63] Scott and Evans survived a potentially fatal fall into a crevasse before the party reached *Discovery* on 24 December. Their average daily mileage on this exclusively man-hauling journey was significantly better than that achieved with dogs on the previous season's southern journey, a fact which further strengthened Scott's prejudices against dogs.^[64]

Several other journeys were completed during Scott's absence. Royds and Bernacchi travelled for 31 days on the Barrier in a SE direction, observing its uniformly flat character and making further magnetic readings. Another party had explored the Koettlitz Glacier to the south-west, and Wilson had travelled to Cape Crozier to observe the Emperor Penguin colony at close quarters.^[65]

Second relief expedition

Scott had hoped on his return to find *Discovery* free from the ice, but she remained held fast. Work had begun with ice saws, but after 12 days' labour only two short parallel cuts of 450 feet (140 m) had been carved, with the ship still 20 miles (32 km) from open water.^[66] The work was halted.

On 5 January 1904 *Morning* returned with a second ship, the *Terra Nova*, and firm instructions from the Admiralty that, if *Discovery* could not be freed she was to be abandoned and her complement brought home on the two relief ships. This ultimatum resulted from Markham's dependence on the Treasury for meeting the costs of this second relief expedition, which they would do only on their own terms.^[67] The deadline agreed between the three captains was 25 February, and it became a race against time for the relief vessels to reach *Discovery*, still held fast at Hut Point. As a precaution Scott began the transfer of his scientific specimens to the other ships. Explosives were used to break up the ice, and the sawing parties resumed work, but although the relief ships were able to edge closer, by the end of January *Discovery* remained icebound, two miles (approx. 3 km) from the rescuers. On 10 February Scott accepted that he would have to abandon her, but on 14 February the ice suddenly broke up, and *Morning* and *Terra Nova* were able to sail alongside.^[68] A final explosive charge removed the remaining ice on 16 February, and the following day, after a last scare when she became temporarily grounded on a shoal, *Discovery* began the return journey to New Zealand.^[69]

Aftermath: summary of achievements

On its return to Britain the expedition was well received. Scott was promoted Captain RN and invited to Balmoral Castle to meet the King, who invested him with the Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO).^[70] He also received a cluster of medals and awards from overseas, including the French Légion d'honneur.^[71] Naval promotions were also given to other officers and crew members. Scott's published account, *The Voyage of the Discovery*, sold well,^[72] and he became something of a celebrity before resuming his naval career, first as an assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence and then, in August 1906, as Flag-captain to Rear-Admiral George Egerton on HMS *Victorious*.^[73]

The main geographical results of the expedition were the discovery of King Edward VII Land, the ascent of the western mountains and the discovery of the Polar Plateau, the first sledge journey on the plateau and a Furthest West beyond 148°E, and the Barrier journey to a Furthest South at 82°17'S. The island nature of Ross Island was established,^[74] the Transantarctic Mountains were charted to 83°S,^[75] and the positions and heights of more than 200 individual mountains were calculated.^[76] Many other features and landmarks were also identified and named, and there was extensive coastal survey work.

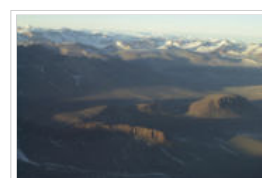
In addition to the mass of data from meteorological and magnetic observations, which would take years to assess, there were several discoveries of major scientific importance. These included the snow-free Dry Valleys in the western mountains, the Emperor Penguin colony at Cape Crozier, scientific evidence that the Ice Barrier was a floating ice shelf,^[77] and a leaf fossil discovered by Ferrar which helped to establish Antarctica's relation to the Gondwana super-continent.^[77] Thousands of geological and biological specimens had been collected and new marine species identified.

The location of the South Magnetic Pole had been calculated with reasonable accuracy. A general endorsement of the scientific results from the navy's Chief Hydrographer (and former Scott opponent) Sir William Wharton was encouraging.^[78] However, when the meteorological data were published their accuracy was disputed within the scientific establishment, including by the President of the Physical Society of London, Dr Charles Chree.^[79] Scott defended his team's work, while privately acknowledging that Royds's paperwork in this field had been "dreadfully slipshod".^[80]

Some consequences

The expedition created considerable enthusiasm for future Antarctic exploration among some of its members. Scott himself harboured further ambitions,^[81] and three of his officers—Armitage, Barne and Shackleton—nurtured their own plans.^[82] Of the crew members, Frank Wild and Ernest Joyce made repeated returns to the Antarctic in subsequent expeditions, Wild's total of five exceeding that of anybody else during the Heroic Age.

To the public at large the expedition was presented as a national success, due in part to some enthusiastic cheer-leading from Markham.^[83] Scott in particular became a great hero. This euphoria, however, was not conducive to objective analysis, or to thoughtful appraisal of the expedition's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, characteristics such as the reliance on pluck and resourceful improvisation, rather than professionalism, tended to be adopted as the norm by later British expeditions.^{[84][85]} In particular, the glorification by Scott of man-hauling as something intrinsically more noble than other ice travel techniques^[86] led to a general distrust of methods involving ski and dogs, to the mystification of seasoned ice travellers such as Fridtjof Nansen,



The Dry Valleys in the western mountains of Victoria Land were an important geological find during the expedition's western journey.

whose advice on such matters was usually sought, but often set aside.^[87]

Scott did apply some lessons from the Discovery Expedition to his next venture, with the *Terra Nova*. He took a larger and more experienced scientific team, he avoided his ship being trapped in the ice, and he employed a ski expert to improve his team's skiing abilities. In other ways, however, he simply replicated the general character of the earlier expedition, for example as to size, multiple aims and naval formality. Although Scott gave the principal aim of the *Terra Nova* expedition as a polar conquest^[88] he seemingly did not consider whether a different form of organisation would be appropriate for this object. Above all, he retained his ambivalence regarding the use of dogs, at least until it was too late to affect the expedition's outcome. Shackleton's 1907–1909 *Nimrod* expedition, smaller, less formal and with a more concentrated purpose, easily outdid Scott's *Discovery* efforts in polar exploration terms, almost reaching the Pole. However, Shackleton's southern journey had used Siberian ponies, not dogs, so Scott's anti-dog prejudices were unaffected, perhaps even reinforced, by Shackleton's impressive results.^[89]

The failure to avoid incidences of scurvy, repeated in subsequent expeditions, was the result of medical ignorance of the causes of the disease rather than the fault of the expedition. At that time it was known that a fresh meat diet could provide a cure, but not that lack of it was a cause.^[90] For example, fresh seal meat was taken on the southern journey "in case we find ourselves attacked by scurvy",^[91] a wording which suggests that the meat was to deal with the problem after, rather than before, its occurrence—a cure, rather than a prevention. It is not recorded how much seal meat was taken, but scurvy certainly occurred on that journey. On his 1907–09 *Nimrod* expedition Shackleton avoided the disease through careful dietary provision, including extra penguin and seal meat.^[92] However, Lieutenant Edward Evans almost died of it during the *Terra Nova* expedition, and scurvy was particularly devastating to the Ross Sea party during 1915–16. It remained a danger until its causes were finally established, some 25 years after the *Discovery* expedition.^[93]

See also

- List of Antarctic expeditions
- Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration

Notes and references

- ↑ The so-called "Heroic Age" of Antarctic exploration is generally considered as covering the period from Adrian de Gerlache's Belgian expedition, 1897, to the end of Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1917.
- ↑ The term Furthest (or Farthest) South, often though not invariably capitalised, is used in polar histories to fix the most southerly latitude reached by man before the conquest of the pole itself, in 1911. The term Farthest North has an equivalent function in Arctic exploration history.
- ↑ Huntford, p. 188
- ↑ Coleman, pp.329–335
- ↑ Preston, pp. 12–14
- ↑ Captain Scott's instructions, as leader of the 1901 Discovery Expedition, required him to "discover the land which as believed by Ross to flank the barrier to the eastward". Savours, pp. 16–17
- ↑ This landing was claimed as the first on continental Antarctica. However, the American John Davis claimed to have landed on the Antarctic Peninsula in 1821. Riffenburgh, p. 36
- ↑ This expedition was financed by a donation of £35,000 from British publishing magnate Sir George Newnes – Preston, p. 14. A condition of this donation was that the venture be called the "British Antarctic Expedition", although it had no official recognition and only two of the ten-men shore party were British. Nevertheless it is listed as British by the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI).
- ↑ Some histories give a slightly different latitude.
- ↑ Crane, p. 67
- ↑ Crane, p. 2
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 50
- ↑ Preston, p. 15
- ↑ Murray had been assistant to the *Challenger* voyage's chief scientist, Charles Wyville Thomson, and assumed responsibility for the production of the scientific reports after the death of Thomson in 1882.
- ↑ Max Jones, pp. 56–57
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 58
- ↑ Crane, pp. 82–83
- ↑ Preston. p. 28–29
- ↑ ^{*a b*} Crane, pp. 91–101
- ↑ ^{*a b*} Max Jones, pp. 62–63
- ↑ Fiennes p. 35
- ↑ The list of the Expedition's members shown by Ann Savours, p. 19, indicates that, excluding officers and scientists, there were 27 RN men, two Royal Marines, five Merchant Navy sailors, and three civilians. This list, however, includes replacements.
- ↑ Whereas in the late 20th century Scott's reputation declined, Shackleton's star rose. When in 2002 the BBC asked viewers to nominate the greatest Britons ever, Shackleton came 11th, Scott 54th. Max Jones, p. 289
- ↑ Fiennes, pp. 43–44
- ↑ Markham described Ferrar as "very unfledged and rather lazy", but "he might be made into a man". Preston, p. 36
- ↑ Preston, p. 222
- ↑ Huntford, p. 160
- ↑ Michael Smith, p. 31
- ↑ Joyce was a prominent member of Shackleton's *Nimrod* Expedition, 1907–09, and was also in the Ross Sea party which supported Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1914–17.
- ↑ Modern equivalents of 1901 costs are difficult to provide accurately. The figures used are Fiennes's for 2003, with a slight top-up. See Fiennes, pp. 33–34
- ↑ Harmsworth had previously financed the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition to the Arctic, 1894–97.
- ↑ Preston, p. 39
- ↑ ^{*a b c d e*} Savours, pp. 11–18
- ↑ Crane, p. 113
- ↑ Fiennes, p. 31. It appears that Fiennes is quoting Markham's words but this is not made clear.
- ↑ Savours, p. 24
- ↑ Michael Smith, p. 37
- ↑ The character of McMurdo as a Sound rather than a bay was not established until later in the expedition.
- ↑ Message points or post offices were set up at predetermined locations, so that relief ships would be able to find the expedition.
- ↑ The name "King Edward VII Land" is nowadays applied only to a small peninsula adjoining the Ross Ice Shelf, not to the large land mass to its south and east.
- ↑ Preston, pp. 45–46.
- ↑ Wilson diary entry, 4 February 1902, p. 111
- ↑ Because of its location close to the Barrier edge this hut was used as a depot and shelter on all subsequent expeditions based in the McMurdo area.
- ↑ See Scott's *Voyage of the Discovery* Vol I p. 467 for Scott's oft-quoted statement about the superiority of man-hauling.
- ↑ Michael Smith, p. 51
- ↑ Crane, pp. 175–185
- ↑ Fiennes, p. 87
- ↑ Preston, p. 59
- ↑ See Crane, pp. 194–96 for an account of the scurvy episode.
- ↑ Wilson diary, 14 and 18 January 1903, pp. 238–39
- ↑ Wilson, diary entry 12 June 1902
- ↑ Crane. p. 205
- ↑ Although most sources, including Scott, Wilson and Shackleton, give 82°17′ as the party's furthest south, modern calculations of the position, based on photographs, suggest a latitude of 82°11′. See Crane, pp. 214–15 and Fiennes, p. 98.
- ↑ Crane, pp. 226–27. Wilson's diary tends to skirt around the question of scurvy, beyond stating (entry 14 January 1903) that "we all have slight, though definite symptoms of scurvy".
- ↑ The extent to which Shackleton was carried was disputed between Scott's account and Shackleton's, with Edward Wilson tending to support Shackleton.
- ↑ ^{*a b*} Crane, p. 233
- ↑ Crane, p. 273
- ↑ Colbeck had been with Borchgrevink on the *Southern Cross*, and had participated in the short Barrier journey that had established Borchgrevink's Furthest South in 1900. Cape Colbeck, on the King Edward VII Peninsula, was named after him.
- ↑ ^{*a b*} Preston, p. 68
- ↑ See Fiennes, p. 100
- ↑ The recorded words and actions of Scott and Shackleton do not support

the view that there was bad blood between them, until Shackleton became a rival to Scott in the hunt for the Pole. Albert Armitage, who had fallen out with Scott, was the chief source of stories of a Scott-Shackleton rift. The nature of Shackleton's letter to Scott, to welcome him home in September 1904, (see Crane p. 310) is evidence of continuing mutual respect at that time.

62. ^ See map, Fiennes p. 89
63. ^ Lashly's recorded comment on the dry valley was "a good place for growing spuds". Crane, p. 270
64. ^ Crane, p. 270, calls the western journey "one of the great journeys of polar history".
65. ^ Preston, pp. 76–77
66. ^ Crane, p. 275
67. ^ Fiennes, pp. 129–30
68. ^ Michael Smith, p. 66
69. ^ Crane, pp. 277–87
70. ^ Scott had been created a Member of the Royal Victorian Order (MVO) when *Discovery* left Cowes in 1901. The King now promoted him within the Order, to the higher rank of Commander.
71. ^ Crane, p. 309
72. ^ Crane, p. 322
73. ^ Crane, p. 325
74. ^ Preston, p. 47
75. ^ Wilson diary, 30 December 1902, p. 230
76. ^ Preston, p. 77
77. ^ ^a ^b Crane, p. 272–73
78. ^ Crane, p. 302
79. ^ Huntford, pp. 229–30
80. ^ Crane, p. 392
81. ^ Max Jones, p. 72
82. ^ Only Shackleton's plans came to fruition.
83. ^ Crane, p. 303
84. ^ For example, Shackleton's 1907–09 *Nimrod* venture had strong individual characters, but scarcely any more Antarctic or Arctic experience than had the *Discovery*.
85. ^ This preference for bravery and noble values over basic competence did not come about as a result of the Scott expedition (it being such a mark of Victorian Britishness that it was lampooned by Gilbert and Sullivan: "my military knowledge, though I'm plucky and adventury / Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century"), but it did receive a large boost from Scott.
86. ^ Quoted in Max Jones, p. 71
87. ^ See Huntford, pp.138–39, and Max Jones, p. 83
88. ^ Crane, p. 397
89. ^ Shackleton's performance convinced Scott that he should take ponies on the Terra Nova Expedition. Noting Shackleton's observation that the dark-coloured ponies had died before the white ones, Scott ordered that only white ones should be purchased. Preston, p. 113
90. ^ Preston, p. 219
91. ^ Wilson diary entry, 15 October 1902
92. ^ Riffenburgh pp. 190–91
93. ^ Huntford, p. 163

Sources

- Coleman, E. C.: *The Royal Navy in Polar Exploration, from Frobisher to Ross* Tempus Publishing 2006 ISBN 0 7524 3660 0
- Crane, David: *Scott of the Antarctic* Harper Collins 2005 ISBN 0 00 715068 7
- Fiennes, Ranulph: *Captain Scott* Hodder & Stoughton, 2003 ISBN 0 340 82697 5
- Huntford, Roland: *The Last Place On Earth* Pan edition 1985 ISBN 0 330 28816 4
- Jones, Max: *The Last Great Quest* OUP 2003 ISBN 0 19 280483 9
- Preston, Diana: *A First-Rate Tragedy* Constable paperback 1999 ISBN 0 09 479530 4
- Riffenburgh, Beau: *Nimrod* Bloomsbury Paperback 2005 ISBN 0 7475 7253 4
- Savours, Ann: *The Voyages of the Discovery: Illustrated History* Chatham Publishing 2001 ISBN 1 86176 149X
- Scott, Robert Falcon: *The Voyage of the Discovery* Vol 1 Smith, Elder & Co 1905
- Smith, Michael: *An Unsung Hero: Tom Crean, Antarctic Survivor* Headline Book Publishing 2000 ISBN 1 903464 09 9
- Wilson, Edward: *Diary of the Discovery Expedition* ed. Ann Savours, Blandford Press edition, 1966 ISBN 0 7137 0431 4

Further reading

- Huntford, Roland: *Shackleton* Hodder & Stoughton 1985 ISBN 0 340 250007 0
- Landis, M: *Antarctica: Exploring the Extreme: 400 Years of Adventure*. Chicago Review Press 2003 ISBN 1-55652-480-3
- Seaver, George: *Edward Wilson of the Antarctic* John Murray 1933
- Skelton, J V & Wilson, D W: *Discovery Illustrated: Pictures from Captain Scott's First Antarctic Expedition* Reardon Publishing 2001 ISBN 1-873877-48-X
- Skelton, Judy (ed) *The Antarctic Journals of Reginald Skelton: 'Another Little Job for the Tinker'*. Reardon Publishing 2004 ISBN 1-873877-68-4

External links

- Expedition information at CoolAntarctica.com (<http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Robert%20Falcon%20Scott.htm>) Additional images and brief account of expedition
- Scott Polar Research Institute (<http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/>) Provides extensive Antarctic information, with comprehensive list of expeditions.

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discovery_Expedition"

Categories: Featured articles | Exploration of Antarctica | Scientific expeditions | 1901 in the United Kingdom

- This page was last modified on 9 January 2009, at 10:14.
- All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.) Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.