

Robert Falcon Scott



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Robert Falcon Scott CVO (6 June 1868 – 29 March 1912) was a British Royal Naval officer and explorer who led two expeditions to the Antarctic regions: the Discovery Expedition, 1901–04, and the ill-fated Terra Nova Expedition, 1910–13. During this second venture Scott led a party of five which reached the South Pole on 17 January 1912, to find that they had been preceded by Roald Amundsen's Norwegian party in an unsought "race for the Pole". On their return journey Scott and his four comrades all perished because of a combination of exhaustion, hunger and extreme cold.

Before his appointment to lead the Discovery Expedition,^[1] Scott had followed the conventional career of a naval officer in peacetime Victorian Britain, where opportunities for career advancement were both limited and keenly sought after by ambitious officers. It was the chance for personal distinction that led Scott to apply for the *Discovery* command, rather than any predilection for polar exploration.^[2] However, having taken this step, his name became ever after associated with the Antarctic, the field of work to which he remained committed during the final twelve years of his life.

Following the news of his death, Scott became an iconic British hero, a status maintained for more than 50 years. In the closing decades of the twentieth century, however, in a more sceptical age, the legend was reassessed. From a previously unassailable position, Scott became a figure of controversy, with questions raised about his competence and character.

Scott was undoubtedly capable of commanding great personal loyalty. Some were prepared to follow him anywhere, and did so.^[3] "He wouldn't ask you to do anything he wasn't prepared to do himself", said *Terra Nova* stoker William Burton. Tom Crean, the Irishman who accompanied Scott on both the Discovery and Terra Nova Expeditions, was more effusive: "I loved every hair of his head".^[4] But his relations with others, including Ernest Shackleton, Lawrence Oates, and his expedition second-in-commands, were less easy.^[5] Despite his considerable exploration experience, something of the resourceful amateur remained with him until the end. For example his reluctance to rely on dogs, despite the advice of expert ice travellers such as Nansen, has been cited as a critical factor that lost him the race to the pole and, ultimately, the lives of all his party.^[6]

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Early life

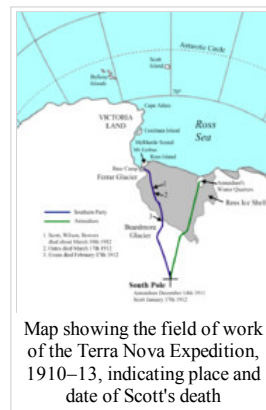
Family background

Scott was born on 6 June 1868, the third child of five and elder son of John Edward and Hannah (née Cuming) Scott of Stoke Damerel, near Devonport, Devon. Although his father was a brewer and magistrate, there were naval and military traditions in the family, Scott's grandfather and four uncles all having served in the army or navy.^[7] John Scott's prosperity came from the ownership of a small brewery in Plymouth, inherited from his father, Robert, and which he subsequently sold.^[8] In later years, when Scott was establishing his naval career, the family would suffer serious financial misfortune, but his early childhood years were spent in comfort. In accordance with the family's tradition the two boys, Robert and Archibald, were predestined for careers in the armed services. Robert was educated first in the nursery at home, then for four years at a local day school before being sent to Stubbington House School, Hampshire, a cramming establishment preparing candidates for the entrance examinations to the naval training ship HMS *Britannia* at Dartmouth. Having passed these exams Scott, aged 13, began his naval career in 1881, as a cadet.^[9]

Robert Falcon Scott



Born	6 June 1868 Plymouth, England
Died	29 March 1912 (aged 43) Ross Ice Shelf, Antarctica
Education	Naval cadet programme, HMS <i>Britannia</i>
Occupation	Royal Navy officer and Antarctic explorer
Spouse(s)	Kathleen Bruce
Children	Peter Markham Scott, later Sir Peter Scott
Parents	John Edward and Hannah Scott



Map showing the field of work of the Terra Nova Expedition, 1910–13, indicating place and date of Scott's death

Early naval career

In July 1883 Scott passed out of *Britannia* as a midshipman, seventh overall in a class of 26.^[10] By October he was en route to South Africa to join HMS *Boadicea*, the flagship of the Cape squadron, the first of several ships on which he served during his midshipman years. While stationed in St Kitts, West Indies, on HMS *Rover*, he had his first encounter with Sir Clements Markham, then Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), who would loom large in Scott's later career. On this occasion, 1 March 1887, Markham observed Midshipman Scott's cutter winning that morning's race across the bay. Markham's habit was to "collect" likely young naval officers with a view to their undertaking polar exploration work in the future. He was impressed by Scott's intelligence, enthusiasm and charm, and the 18-year-old midshipman was duly noted.^[11]

Later that year, Scott attended the Royal Naval College at Greenwich and in March 1888 passed his examinations for Sub-Lieutenant, with four First Class certificates out of five.^[12] His career progressed smoothly, with service on various ships and promotion to Lieutenant in 1889. In 1891, after a long spell in foreign waters, he applied for the two-year torpedo training course on HMS *Vernon*, an important career step. He graduated with First Class certificates in both the theory and practical examinations. A small blot occurred in the summer of 1893 when, while commanding a torpedo boat, Scott managed to run it aground, which earned him a mild rebuke.^[13]

During the research for his dual biography of Scott and Roald Amundsen,^[14] Roland Huntford got wind of a possible scandal in Scott's early naval career, but was unable to pin it down. He focuses on the period 1889–90 when Scott was a lieutenant on HMS *Amphion*. According to him Scott "disappears from naval records" for eight months, from mid-August 1889 until 24 March 1890. Huntford hints at involvement with a married American woman, of cover-up, and protection from senior officers. David Crane reduces the missing period to eleven weeks, but is unable to throw much more light other than scorning the notion of protection by senior officers, on the grounds that Scott was not important or well-connected enough to warrant this. Documents that may have offered explanations are missing from Admiralty records.^[15]

In 1894, while serving as Torpedo Officer on the depot ship HMS *Vulcan*, Scott learned of the financial calamity that had overtaken his family. John Scott, having sold the brewery and invested the proceeds unwisely, had lost all his capital and was now virtually bankrupt.^[16] At the age of 63, and in poor health, he was forced to take a job as a brewery manager and move his family to Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Just 3 years later, while his elder son was serving as torpedo lieutenant aboard the Channel squadron flagship HMS *Majestic*, John Scott died of heart disease, creating a fresh family crisis.^[16] The family – mother and two unmarried daughters – now relied entirely on the service pay of Scott and the salary of younger brother Archie, who had left the army for a post in the colonial service in order to increase his income. Archie's own death in the autumn of 1898, after contracting typhoid fever, thrust the whole financial responsibility for the family on to Scott.^[16]

An ambitious officer, Scott now had an additional weight of domestic responsibility. The main thing that concerned him now was promotion, and the extra income this would bring.^[17] Early in June 1899, while home on leave, he had a chance encounter in a London street with Sir Clements Markham (now the RGS President), and learned for the first time of a pending Antarctic expedition. It was an opportunity for early command and a chance to distinguish himself. Markham remembered him from St Kitts, and presumably said something encouraging, because a few days later, on 11 June, Scott appeared at the Markham residence and volunteered to lead the expedition.^[11]

Discovery Expedition 1901-1904

The British National Antarctic Expedition, as it was officially known until its association with the ship, was a joint enterprise of the RGS and the Royal Society. It represented a long-cherished dream of Markham's, and it required the deployment of all of his considerable skills and cunning to bring it to fruition under naval command and largely staffed by naval personnel. Scott may not have been Markham's first choice as leader but,^[18] having decided on him, his support remained constant. There were committee battles over the scope of Scott's responsibilities, with the Royal Society pressing to put a scientist in charge of the expedition's programme while Scott merely commanded the ship. Eventually, however, Markham's view prevailed.^[19] Scott was promoted to the naval rank of Commander^[20] before *Discovery* sailed for the Antarctic on 31 July 1901.

Despite an almost total lack of Antarctic or Arctic experience within the 50-strong party, there was very little special training in equipment or techniques before the ship set sail.^[21] Dogs were taken, as were skis, but hardly anyone knew how to use them. Professionalism was considered less praiseworthy, in Markham's view, than "unforced aptitude",^[22] and possibly Scott was influenced by Markham's belief. In the first of the two full years which *Discovery* spent in the ice this insouciance was severely tested, as the expedition struggled to meet the challenges of the unfamiliar terrain.^[23] The expedition was not a quest for the Pole, but a long march south was a major objective. This march, undertaken by Scott, Shackleton and Edward Wilson, was a physical ordeal which took them to a latitude of 82°17'S, about 530 miles (850 km) from the Pole, followed by a harrowing journey home which brought about Shackleton's physical collapse.^[24]

The second year showed improvements in technique and achievement, culminating in Scott's western journey which led to the discovery of the Polar Plateau, and which has been described by one writer as "one of the great polar journeys".^[25] The scientific results of the expedition included important biological, zoological and geological findings.^[26] Some of the meteorological and magnetic readings, however, were later criticised as amateurish and inaccurate.^[27]

At the end of the expedition it took the combined efforts of two relief ships and liberal use of explosives to free *Discovery* from the ice.^[28] Nevertheless Scott could feel satisfied that he was returning in good order, with much to show for his efforts. In contrast to his naivety at the expedition's commencement he was now a seasoned Antarctic traveller, although with many of his prejudices intact. He remained unconvinced that dogs and ski were the keys to efficient ice travel, and continued to laud the British preference for man-hauling (the practice of propelling sledges by manpower, unassisted by animals),^[29] a view he maintained until very late in his Antarctic career. His insistence on Royal Navy formalities made for uneasy relations with the Merchant Navy members of the expedition, most of whom departed with the first relief ship in March 1903.^[30] However, the question of Scott's relationship with Ernest Shackleton, Third Officer on *Discovery* and



The first of the two HMS *Britannias* which served as naval training ships between 1859 and 1909. Scott trained on the second, which came into service in 1869.



Discovery in 2005 at its home port of Dundee



The *Discovery* hut at Hut Point

later his polar rival, has been muddied by speculation. The claim that it was personal animosity on Scott's part, rather than Shackleton's physical breakdown, that resulted in the latter being sent home on the supply ship in January 1903 seems largely to have been concocted by Scott's second-in-command, Albert Armitage.^[31] There would be tensions later between Scott and Shackleton, when their polar ambitions clashed, but mutual civilities were always preserved.^[32]

Between expeditions

Popular hero

Discovery returned to Britain in September 1904. The expedition had caught the public imagination, and Scott became a popular hero, awarded with a cluster of honours and medals, promoted to the Royal Navy (RN) rank of Captain,^[33] and invited to Balmoral for investiture by King Edward VII as a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO).^[34] Scott's next few years were crowded. For more than a year he was occupied with post-expedition duties – public receptions, lectures and the writing of the expedition record *The Voyage of the Discovery*. In January 1906 he resumed his full-time naval career, first as assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty and, in August, as Flag-Captain to Rear-Admiral Sir George Egerton on HMS *Victorious*.^[35] He was now moving in ever more exalted social circles – a telegram to Markham in February 1907 refers to meetings with the Queen and Crown Prince of Portugal, and a later letter home reports lunch with the Commander-in-Chief and Prince Heinrich of Prussia.^[36]

Shackleton

By early 1906 Scott had sounded out the RGS about the possible funding of a future Antarctic expedition.^[37] It was therefore unwelcome news to him that Ernest Shackleton had announced his own plans, to travel to *Discovery*'s old McMurdo Sound base and launch a bid for the South Pole from there.^[38] Scott claimed, in the first of a series of letters to Shackleton, that the area around McMurdo was his own "field of work" to which he had prior rights until he chose to give them up, and that Shackleton should therefore work from an entirely different area.^[39] In this he was strongly supported by Edward Wilson, who appeared to believe that Scott's rights extended to the entire Ross Sea sector.^[40] This Shackleton refused to concede. Finally, to end the impasse, Shackleton agreed, in a letter to Scott dated 17 May 1907, to work to the east of the 170°W meridian and therefore to avoid all the familiar *Discovery* ground.^[39] It was a promise that, in the event, he was unable to keep after his search for alternative landing grounds proved fruitless. He based his Nimrod expedition at Cape Royds in McMurdo Sound, and this breach of agreement strained relations between Scott and Shackleton thereafter.^[41] It has been said that the promise "should never ethically have been demanded",^[40] Scott's intransigence on this matter being compared unfavourably with the generous attitude of Fridtjof Nansen, who gave freely of his advice and expertise to Shackleton, and indeed to all-comers, whether potential rivals or not.^[42]



Ernest Shackleton, Scott's polar rival

Marriage

Scott, who because of his *Discovery* fame had entered Edwardian society, first encountered Kathleen Bruce early in 1907, at a private luncheon party.^[43] She was a sculptor, socialite and cosmopolitan who had studied under Auguste Rodin^[44] and whose circle included Isadora Duncan, Picasso and Aleister Crowley.^[45] Their initial meeting was brief, but when they met again later that year mutual attraction was obvious. A stormy courtship followed – Scott was not her only suitor and his absences at sea did not assist his cause^[46] – but his persistence was rewarded and, on 2 September 1908, at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace, the wedding took place.^[47] Their only child, Peter Markham Scott, was born on 14 September 1909.^[48]

By this time Scott had announced his plans for his second Antarctic expedition. Shackleton had returned, having narrowly failed to reach the Pole,^[49] and this gave Scott the impetus to proceed. On 24 March 1909 he had taken the Admiralty-based appointment of Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord which placed him handily in London. In December he was released on half-pay,^[50] to take up the full-time command of the British Antarctic Expedition 1910, to be known as the Terra Nova Expedition from its ship, *Terra Nova*.



Kathleen and Robert Scott, circa 1908

Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913

Preparation

It was the expressed hope of the RGS that this expedition would be "scientific primarily, with exploration and the Pole as secondary objects"^[51] but, unlike the *Discovery* Expedition, neither they nor the Royal Society were in charge this time. In his expedition prospectus Scott stated plainly that its main objective was "to reach the South Pole, and to secure for the British Empire the honour of this achievement".^[51] Later claims that the race to the pole was lost because Scott refused to compromise the scientific programme^[52] are somewhat undermined by this unequivocal announcement; Scott had, as Markham observed, been "bitten by the Pole mania".^[51] Scott took scientific work seriously, as his *Discovery* record shows, but despite its having "the largest and most efficient scientific staff that ever left England",^[53] Scott had made it clear that, on this second expedition, the priority lay with the Pole, and with getting there first.



A modern photograph of Scott's old Cape Evans headquarters hut, inundated by snow

Scott did not of course know that he would be in a race for the Pole until he received Amundsen's telegram in Melbourne, in October 1910.^[54] Before this he had set about fashioning the expedition according to his own preferences, without the restraints of a joint committee. In the decisions that he made with regard to the expedition's methods of travel on the ice he showed that his prejudices against dogs had not faded. They were to be merely one element in a complicated transport strategy that also involved horses and motor sledges and much man-hauling. Scott knew nothing of horses, but felt that as they had seemingly served Shackleton well, he ought to use them.^[55] Dogs expert Cecil Meares was going to Siberia to select the dogs, and Scott ordered that, while he was there, he should deal with the purchase of Manchurian ponies.^[56] Meares was not an experienced horse-dealer, and the ponies he chose proved mostly of poor quality, and ill-suited to prolonged Antarctic work.^[57] Meanwhile Scott spent time in France and Norway, testing motor-sledges, and recruited Bernard Day, from Shackleton's expedition, as his motor expert.^[58]

First season

The expedition itself suffered a series of early misfortunes, which hampered the first season's work and impaired preparations for the main polar march. On its journey from New Zealand to the Antarctic, *Terra Nova* was trapped in pack-ice for 20 days,^[59] far longer than other ships had experienced, which meant a late-season arrival and less time for preparatory work before the Antarctic winter. One of the motor sledges was lost during its unloading from the ship, disappearing through the sea ice.^[60] Deteriorating weather conditions and weak, unacclimatised ponies affected the initial depot-laying journey to the extent that the main supply point, One Ton Depot, was laid 35 miles (56 km) north of its planned location at 80°S.^[61] Six ponies died during this journey. The expedition also learned of the ominous presence of Amundsen, who was camped with a large contingent of dogs in the Bay of Whales, 200 miles (320 km) to their east.^[62]

Despite these trials Scott refused to amend his schedule to deal with the Amundsen threat.^[63] While acknowledging that the Norwegian's base was closer to the pole and that his experience as a sledge driver was formidable, Scott still had the advantage of travelling over a known route (that pioneered by Shackleton). During the 1911 winter his confidence increased, to the extent of recording, after the return of the Cape Crozier party from their winter journey, that "I feel sure we are as near perfection as experience can direct".^[64]

Journey to the Pole

The march south began on 1 November 1911, a complex caravan of mixed transport groups (motors, dogs, horses), with loaded sledges, travelling at different rates, all designed to support a final group of four men who would make a dash for the Pole. Scott had earlier outlined his plans for the southern journey to the entire shore party,^[65] without being specific as to precise roles – no one knew, for instance, who would form the final polar team. There was continuing uncertainty about how he proposed to use the dogs, a variety of different orders being issued which left it unclear whether they were to be saved for future scientific journeys, or were to assist the polar party home.^[66] The consequence was that his subordinates back at base were confused and uncertain as to how they should act, and failed to use the dogs in a concerted attempt to relieve the returning polar party when the need arose.^[67]



Scott, by the expedition photographer Herbert Ponting.

The southbound party continued, steadily reducing in size as the support teams turned back. By 4 January 1912 the last two four-man groups had reached 87°34'S.^[68] Scott announced his decision: five men (Scott, Edward Wilson, H. R.

Bowers, Lawrence Oates and Edgar Evans) would go forward, the other three (Teddy Evans, William Lashly and Tom Crean) would return.^[69] The chosen group marched on, reaching the Pole on 17 January 1912, only to find that Amundsen had preceded them by five weeks. Scott's anguish is palpable from his diary: "The worst has happened"; "All the day dreams must go"; "Great God! This is an awful place".^[70]

Last march

The deflated party began the 800-mile (1,300 km) return journey on 19 January. "I'm afraid the return journey is going to be dreadfully tiring and monotonous", wrote Scott on the next day.^[71] However, the party made good progress despite poor weather, and had completed the Polar Plateau stage of their journey, approximately 300 miles (500 km), by 7 February. During the following days the 100-mile (160 km) descent of the Beardmore Glacier saw the increasing decline of Edgar Evans, whose condition Scott had noted with concern as early as 23 January.^[72] A fall on 4 February had left Evans "dull and incapable",^[73] and on 17 February, after a further fall, he died near the glacier foot.^[74] From then on, with 400 miles (670 km) still to travel across the Ross Ice Shelf, the party's prospects steadily worsened, with deteriorating weather,^[75] and handicapped by frost-bite, snow-blindness, hunger and exhaustion, they struggled northward. On 16 March, Oates, whose condition was aggravated by an old war-wound to the extent that he was barely able to travel,^[76] voluntarily left the tent and walked to his death, in the faint hope that this sacrifice would save the others.^[77] Scott wrote that Oates' last words were, "I am just going outside and may be some time."^[78] After walking a further 20 miles, the three remaining men made their final camp on 19 March, 11 miles (18 km) short of One Ton Depot, but 24 miles (38 km) *beyond* the original intended location of the depot. The next day a fierce blizzard prevented them making any progress.



Roald Amundsen



Scott's party at the South Pole. Left to right: Wilson; Bowers; Evans; Scott; Oates

During the next nine days, as their supplies ran out, with frozen fingers, little light, and storms still raging outside the tent, Scott wrote his final words, although he gave up his diary after 23 March, save for a final poignant entry on 29 March.^[79] He left letters to Wilson's mother, Bowers's mother, a string of notables including his former commander Sir George Egerton, his own mother and his wife. He also wrote his "Message To The Public", primarily a defence of the expedition's organisation and conduct in which the party's failure is adduced to weather and other misfortunes, but ending on an inspirational note, with these words:

We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last [...] Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale, but surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for.^[80]

Scott is presumed to have died on 29 March 1912, possibly a day later. The positions of the bodies in the tent, when it was discovered eight months later, suggested that Scott was the last of the three to die.^[81]

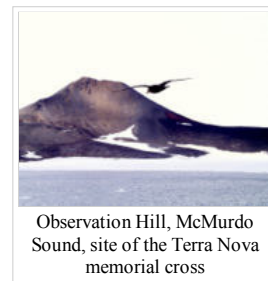
Scott's reputation

Glorification

The bodies of Scott and his companions were discovered by a search party on 12 November 1912 and their records retrieved. Their final camp became their tomb; a high cairn of snow was erected over it, topped by a roughly fashioned cross.^[82] In January 1913, before *Terra Nova* left for home, a large wooden cross was made by the ship's carpenters, inscribed with the names of the lost party and Tennyson's line from his poem *Ulysses*: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield", and was erected on Observation Hill overlooking Hut Point.^[83]

The world was informed of the tragedy when *Terra Nova* reached Oamaru, New Zealand, on 10 February 1913.^[84] Within days Scott had become a national icon.^[85] A fierce nationalistic spirit was aroused; the London Evening News called for the story to be read to schoolchildren throughout the land,^[86] to coincide with the memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral on 14 February. Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts Association, asked: "Are Britons going downhill? No!...There is plenty of pluck and spirit left in the British after all. Captain Scott and Captain Oates have shown us that".^[87] 11-year-old Mary Steel wrote a poem which ended:

Though naught but a simple cross
Now marks those heroes' grave,
Their names will live forever!
Oh England, Land of the Brave!^[88]



Observation Hill, McMurdo Sound, site of the Terra Nova memorial cross

The survivors of the expedition were suitably honoured on their return, with polar medals and promotions for the naval personnel.^[89] In place of the knighthood that might have been her husband's had he survived, Kathleen Scott was granted the rank and precedence of a widow of a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. This did not amount to Scott being posthumously knighted, and it did not entitle her to call herself "Lady Scott", although both of these claims are sometimes erroneously made.^[90] In 1922 she married Edward Hilton Young, later Lord Kennet (she becoming Lady Kennet), and remained a doughty defender of Scott's reputation until her death, aged 69, in 1947.^[91]

Amundsen heard of Scott's death while lecturing in the United States. "I would gladly forgo any honour or money if thereby I could have saved Scott his terrible death", he is reported as saying.^[92] He did forgo some honour anyway, in the English-speaking world at least. Scott was much the better wordsmith of the two, and the story that spread throughout the world was largely that told by him, with Amundsen's victory reduced in the eyes of many to an unsporting stratagem.^[93] Even before Scott's death was known, Amundsen's feat was reportedly the object of a sneer from RGS President Lord Curzon, at a meeting held supposedly to honour the polar victor, prompting Amundsen to resign his honorary RGS fellowship.^[94]

The response to Scott's final plea on behalf of the dependents of the dead was enormous by the standards of the day. The Mansion House Scott Memorial Fund closed at £75,000 (2008 approximation £3.5 million). This was not equally distributed; Scott's widow, son, mother and sisters received a total of £18,000. Wilson's widow got £8,500 and Bowers's mother £4,500. Edgar Evans's widow, children and mother received £1,500 between them.^[95]

In the dozen years following the disaster more than 30 monuments and memorials were set up in Britain alone. These ranged from simple relics (Scott's sledging flag in Exeter Cathedral) to the foundation of the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge. Many more were established in other parts of the world.^[96] The popularity of the 1948 film *Scott of the Antarctic* showed that the public perception of Scott as hero had continued into the post-war era. The US scientific base at the South Pole, founded in 1957, is called the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, to honour the memories of both polar conquerors.

Modern reaction

Scott's "Message to the Public" begins: "The causes of the disaster are not due to faulty organisation but to misfortune".^[80] This chimed with the prevailing image of heroic endeavour thwarted at the last by sheer bad luck, and was broadly unquestioned for half a century. In fact, Scott's diaries, even in their edited published form, contain repeated references to errors of organisation or judgement for which he accepts responsibility,^[97] but these tended to be overlooked or disregarded. Any unease at the public version, expressed by relatives of Scott's dead companions, was kept private.^[98]



Memorial window in Binton Church, Warwickshire, one of four panels. This one depicts the cairn erected over the site of Scott's last tent.

The catalyst that finally altered the public's perception of Scott was Roland Huntford's 1979 joint biography *Scott and Amundsen*, reissued as *The Last Place on Earth* in 1985 and tied into a serialised television docudrama. Two post-war biographies of Scott, by Reginald Pound (1966) and Elspeth Huxley (1977), had contained criticisms but had not questioned his heroism. By contrast Huntford's book attacks Scott's competence and character, blames him for all the failures of the Terra Nova Expedition and for the deaths of his comrades, and sums him up as a "heroic bungler".^[99] The television version reinforces this image, with added fictional sequences designed to discredit Scott.^[100] The extent of Huntford's practical experience of snow and ice conditions, and his credentials for criticising Scott on technical matters of polar travel, is challenged by Ranulph Fiennes,^[101] who also draws attention to Huntford's expressed prejudices, including his personal hatred of Scott.^[102] The power of television, however, is such as to imprint a negative impression of Scott in the public mind, especially among later generations for whom the legend is ancient history.^[103] Writing in the shadow of Huntford, Francis Spufford asserts that, like Sir John Franklin^[104] before him, Scott "probably died of incompetence". More harshly, he goes on: "Scott doomed his companions, then covered his tracks with rhetoric".^[105]

Fiennes, Scott's chief contemporary champion as well as Huntford's principal antagonist, claims to use logic based on his personal experiences as an explorer to reconstruct the events of the Terra Nova Expedition.^[106] In his 2003 biography of Scott, which he asserts is an unbiased account, he maintains a robust and unapologetic defence. He draws attention to the political motives (from Right and Left respectively, according to Francis Spufford)^[107] underlying

Huntford's and TV scriptwriter Trevor Griffiths's attacks, and casts doubts on the credibility of much of Huntford's evidence.^[108] Another fairly recent

book, Susan Solomon's *The Coldest March*, provides new information about the weather encountered by the polar party in February and March 1912, and makes the case that they were killed: "not primarily by human error but by this unfortunate and unpredictable turn of meteorological events".^[109] A long-term Huntford effect was perhaps reflected in the BBC's 2002 100 Greatest Britons nominations, in which Ernest Shackleton was eleventh, while Scott was fifty-fourth.^[110] One hundred years after their rivalry, Shackleton's bravura and charisma define a modern Britain which has "shaken off the straitjacket of class prejudice"^[111] and appears securely established in the nation's affections as "a hero for our time, a man who, like millennial Britain, has learned to crave the winning (even when it doesn't) rather than just the playing of the game".^[111] By contrast, Captain Scott, with his aura of heroic failure, is out of fashion.^[112]

Notes and references

- ↑ Officially the British National Antarctic Expedition, commonly called after its ship, the *Discovery*.
- ↑ Crane, p. 84
- ↑ Preston, p. 222 (Wilson's comment to Markham)
- ↑ Fiennes, p. 435
- ↑ Crane, p. 101 re Armitage, and Max Jones, p. 128 re Evans.
- ↑ This view was first stated explicitly by James Gordon Hayes in *Antarctica, A Treatise on the Southern Continent*, published in 1928, and has been repeated in most later Scott biographies. Hayes's book, however, had little impact compared with Stephen Gwynn's officially sanctioned hagiography published in the following year. Max Jones, pp. 265–66
- ↑ Crane, p. 14–15
- ↑ Crane, p. 22
- ↑ Fiennes, p. 17
- ↑ Crane, p. 23
- ↑ ^a ^b Crane, p. 82
- ↑ Crane, p. 34
- ↑ Crane, p.50
- ↑ *Scott and Amundsen*, later republished as *The Last Place On Earth*. See **Sources** section.
- ↑ Huntford, pp. 121–23, and Crane, footnote pp. 39–40
- ↑ ^a ^b ^c Fiennes, p. 21
- ↑ Crane, p. 59
- ↑ Crane, p. 90
- ↑ Preston. pp. 28-29
- ↑ Crane, p. 63
- ↑ Scott is honest about this, writing in *The Voyage of the Discovery*, p. 170, some years later: "Our ignorance was deplorable"
- ↑ Huntford *Shackleton* biography, p. 134
- ↑ The most severe of the "harsh lessons" (Crane's chapter heading) was the ill-fated Cape Crozier party that resulted in the death of George Vince, 4 February 1902. Crane, pp. 161–167
- ↑ Preston, p. 60–67
- ↑ Crane, p. 270
- ↑ Summarised by Fiennes, p. 148
- ↑ Huntford, pp. 229–30, Crane, pp. 392–93
- ↑ Preston, pp. 78–79
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 71, quoting from *The Voyage of the Discovery*
- ↑ Second-in-command Armitage, a Merchant officer, was also offered the chance to go home, on compassionate grounds, but chose to interpret the offer as a personal slight. Preston, pp. 67–68
- ↑ See Crane, pp. 240–41.
- ↑ Shackleton sent Scott a cordial letter to welcome him home in 1904(Crane, p. 310). Scott, however reluctantly, joined in the official receptions that greeted Shackleton on his return in 1909 (Crane, p. 396–97), and the two were exchanging polite letters about their respective ambitions in 1909–10 (Preston, p. 113).
- ↑ According to Scott's Navy record facsimile included in the Crane biography, Scott was promoted Captain on 10 September 1904, the day of his arrival in England. He did not command his first ship as Captain until 21 August 1906.
- ↑ Preston, pp. 83–84
- ↑ Preston, p. 86
- ↑ Crane, p. 334. The telegram related to a collision involving Scott's ship, by then *HMS Albatross*. Scott was cleared of blame.
- ↑ Preston, p. 87
- ↑ Shackleton publicly announced his plans to the RGS on 7 February 1907. Scott had enjoined RGS Secretary Keltie to secrecy about his own intentions. Crane, p. 335
- ↑ ^a ^b Crane, p. 335
- ↑ ^a ^b Riffenburgh, pp. 113–14
- ↑ Relations between the two had been good after the Discovery Expedition in spite of Shackleton's being sent home early for health reasons. However, Shackleton had felt "humiliated" (Riffenburgh, p. 111) by Scott's references in *Voyage of the Discovery* to his weakness on the 1902 southern journey. The disagreement over Shackleton's 1907 plans caused "a profound shift in their relationship". Preston, p. 89
- ↑ Riffenburgh, p. 118
- ↑ Crane, p. 344
- ↑ Preston, p. 94
- ↑ Crane, p. 350
- ↑ Crane reports that Scott's main rival was would-be novelist Gilbert Cannan, who later suffered a mental collapse.
- ↑ Crane, pp. 373–74
- ↑ Crane, p. 387
- ↑ see *Nimrod* Expedition
- ↑ Fiennes, p. 161
- ↑ ^a ^b ^c Crane, pp. 397–99
- ↑ For example, Cherry-Garrard, p. 608, says: "We were primarily a great scientific expedition", and, p. 275, "We travelled for science".
- ↑ Cherry-Garrard, p. 608
- ↑ Crane, pp. 425–28
- ↑ Preston, p. 107. Also Crane, pp. 432–33
- ↑ Huntford, on p. 305, implies that Oates, who had much experience with horses, should have been sent to choose them. But Meares left England for Siberia in January 1910, and Oates was not available to the expedition until May Huntford, p.262
- ↑ Preston, p. 113
- ↑ Preston, p. 112
- ↑ SLE Vol I pp. 30–71
- ↑ SLE Vol I pp. 106–07
- ↑ Crane, p.466. Prophetically, Oates is reported as saying to Scott: "Sir, I'm afraid you'll come to regret not taking my advice" (to kill ponies for food and advance the depot to 80°S). Oates became unimpressed with Scott's grasp of polar transport methods, as a letter to his mother makes clear. Crane, p. 462
- ↑ SLE Vol I pp. 187–88
- ↑ "The proper, as well as the wiser course, is for us to proceed exactly as though this had not happened". SLE Vol I, pp. 187–88
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 369
- ↑ SLE, Vol I, p. 407
- ↑ In his foreword to the 1965 edition of Cherry-Garrard's *Worst Journey*, George Seaver gives a concise account of the muddle that arose from the conflicting orders given at different times concerning the use of dogs. Cherry-Garrard, pp. 30–32
- ↑ See Atkinson's account in SLE Vol II, pp. 298–306
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 528
- ↑ Exactly when Scott decided on a five-man polar party is uncertain. On the first page of the fresh journal started on 22 December 1911 –two weeks before the polar party was chosen – Scott lists the five names of those eventually selected, but the list is not itself dated and could have been written later.
- ↑ SLE Vol I, pp. 543–44
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 548
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 551
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 560
- ↑ SLE Vol I, pp. 572–73 Wilson surmised that Evans had injured his brain in a fall, perhaps that on 4 February
- ↑ Research by Susan Solomon, published in *The Coldest March*, Yale UP 2001, point to the exceptional severity of the Barrier weather encountered by the party in February–March 1912 as the ultimate cause of their deaths.
- ↑ SLE Vol I, p. 589: "Titus Oates is very near the end" – Scott diary entry, 11 March 1912
- ↑ SLE Vol I, pp. 591–92
- ↑ SLE Vol I p. 592
- ↑ The scrawled "*Last entry. For God's sake look after our people*" is an undated afterthought to the 29 March entry, and is usually presumed to have been written on that date.
- ↑ ^a ^b From Scott's Message to the Public, SLE Vol I pp. 605–07
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 126. Huntford says (p. 509) that Bowers was probably the last to die, citing evidence on p. 528.
- ↑ SLE Vol II, pp. 345–47
- ↑ SLE Vol II, p. 398
- ↑ Crane, pp. 1–2
- ↑ Preston, p. 230
- ↑ Max Jones, pp. 199–201
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 204
- ↑ Max Jones, p. 205–06
- ↑ Lieutenant Evans was promoted Commander; Lashly and Crean each received the Albert Medal for saving Evans's life during the last support party's return journey to Cape Evans. Crean was also promoted to Warrant Officer.

90. ^ Fiennes, p. 383, and Huntford, p. 523, both refer to her as Lady Scott, but that is not in accordance with The Times announcement, 22 February, 1913
91. ^ Preston, p. 232
92. ^ Huntford, p. 525
93. ^ The word "stratagem" is used in the Publisher's Note to the 1976 reprint of Amundsen's *The South Pole*, to describe how many viewed Amundsen's achievement in the years immediately following Scott's death.
94. ^ Huntford, p. 538, Max Jones, p. 90. The "sneer", apparently, was a call for three cheers for the dogs.
95. ^ Max Jones, pp. 106–108. £34,000 (£1.6m) in total went to relatives, £17,500 to the publication of the scientific results, £5,100 to meet expedition debts, and the balance to the creation of suitable monuments and memorials
96. ^ See Max Jones, p. 295–96 for a full listing of British memorials.
97. ^ Fiennes, p. 490
98. ^ Huntford, p. 523, says that Oates's mother privately called Scott a "murderer", but quotes no source for this. He also quotes (p.524) from a letter to Mrs Oates from Teddy Evans: "One cannot state facts plainly when they reflect on the organisation".
99. ^ Huntford, p. 527
100. ^ Fiennes, p. 433
101. ^ Fiennes, p. 416
102. ^ Fiennes, p. 426
103. ^ Fiennes, pp. 432–34
104. ^ Sir John Franklin was the leader of an 1845 British Naval expedition to the Arctic, which resulted in the deaths of the entire expedition complement of 128 men.
105. ^ Spufford, pp. 104–05
106. ^ Fiennes, Introduction, p. xii
107. ^ Spufford, p. 5
108. ^ Fiennes, 416–17
109. ^ Solomon, p. xvii
110. ^ The list has numerous anomalies, e.g. actor Michael Crawford in 17th place ahead of Queen Victoria, Henry VIII and William Wilberforce. Other explorers listed are Captain Cook (12th), Francis Drake (49th), Walter Raleigh (91st) and David Livingstone (96th).
111. ^ ^a ^b Max Jones, p. 289
112. ^ Max Jones, p. 293

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