

“Antarctic Sites outside the Antarctic - Memorials, Statues, Houses, Graves and the occasional Pub”

Presented at the 6th ‘Shackleton Autumn School’
Athy, Co, Kildare, Ireland, Sunday 29 October 2006

THE ANTARCTIC is very far from where I grew up and have spent most of my years. As a town planner I saw little prospect of having a job that would take me there and I couldn’t afford paying money to get there. So I travelled to Antarctica in a vicarious way, collecting ‘sites’ of mainly historic interest with some association to the seventh continent *but not actually there*. My collection resides in what I call my “Low-Latitude Antarctic Gazetteer” and began close to forty years ago with its first entry, Captain Scott’s house at **56 Oakley Street** in London (one of several associated with him but the only one bearing the coveted ‘blue plaque’). The number of entries now totals 887. Fully 144 of these relate to a greater or lesser degree to Sir Ernest Shackleton (Scott comes in second at 122, Amundsen 37). Herewith are some of my Shackleton favorites (and a few others, too):

SOME HOUSES

Shackleton houses abound. The first and most important is **Kilkea House**, not far from Athy, Co. Kildare, where Ernest was born on the morning of 15 February 1874. The house still stands in a lovely rural setting. But by 1880 the family had moved to Dublin to **35 Marlborough Road**, an attractive brick row house south of the city center and one of three Shackleton houses commemorated with plaques, this particular one being unveiled on May 20, 2000. Four years later, in 1884, the Shackletons were on the move again, this time to England and **South Croydon** where they lived for a few months (the actual address has eluded me and Shackleton experts alike) before relocating to **12 West Hill** (now 12 Westwood Hill; then it was Aberdeen House, now it’s St Davids) in Sydenham. This large house was the family’s home for many years and represents Ernest’s longest association with any one address.

It was from here that he walked each day to DULWICH COLLEGE and later set off to sea when a boy of sixteen years. Shackleton's parents remained at this address for 32 years. The house was rather unsympathetically converted to flats not long ago. On a recent visit I managed to get into one of the flats which was then for sale. A large marble fireplace, pictured in a contemporary photograph of the Shackletons' parlor, happily was still there, the only recognizable feature in the flat. On the façade is a London County Council blue plaque, installed in 1928, reading "Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922) Antarctic Explorer Lived Here."

After the *Discovery* expedition and his marriage to Emily Dorman (who at the time was living with her family at **19 Wetherby Gardens, South Kensington**), Shackleton was in Edinburgh for a couple of years serving as Secretary of the ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY and living at **14 South Learmonth Gardens**, Shackleton's first place of his own. The house is now an upscale hotel—CHANNINGS—where you can have a very nice room for a night for about what the Shackletons paid per year: £125! The Society's headquarters were then on the ground floor of **1 Queen Street**, now the SCOTTISH NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.

During the planning of the *Nimrod* expedition the Shackletons took a furnished house for a few months at **29 Palace Court** off Bayswater Road in Notting Hill. (The expedition's office was at **9 Regent Street**, above what's now a coffee bar; later, the office for the *Endurance* expedition could be found not far away at **4 New Burlington Street**.) The handsome Palace Court house is now Brigham Young University's LONDON CENTRE FOR STUDY ABROAD. In the library a description of the Shackleton connection hangs on the wall.

Once back from the Antarctic, the Shackletons spent some time in 1910 in Sheringham on the Norfolk coast. The house on the corner of St Nicholas Place was called **Mainsail Haul** but is now known as 'Martin Cross.' Another famous resident (with a plaque to prove it) was Ralph Vaughan Williams who composed the *Sinfonia Antarctica*. (The playwright Patrick Hamilton—*Gaslight*—also lived there.) And nearly within sight stands **The Burlington**, a large hotel where Captain Scott had earlier spent some time working on his account of the *Discovery* expedition.

From April 1911 to sometime in 1913 the Shackletons found themselves at **7 Heathview Gardens**, a fine house in a quiet section of Putney Heath. After awhile central London must have beckoned because they headed off to **11 Vicarage Gate** off Kensington Church Street, not too far from their earlier lodgings in Notting Hill. This quite substantial house is now the ABBEY HOUSE HOTEL where one can stay today at a reasonable rate

(but don't expect any luxuries). The hotel's brochure claims the house was once home to a bishop and a member of Parliament—but no mention of a certain Antarctic explorer. At about this time, Emily Shackleton recounted to H.R. Mill, her husband's biographer, "3 moves within 5 years, 2 rents from 1916 to end of 1919. Dilapidations. £200 Vicgate 'fine' for breaking lease, £100 . . ." It was at 'Vicgate' that Emily learned that Ernest had survived the loss of the *Endurance*. She had also told Mill about their taking "a flat at J.A. Mansions in 1917," an address still awaiting discovery.

The last house that Sir Ernest actually knew is in Eastbourne, Sussex, at **14 Milnthorpe Road**. (This is the third house with a plaque, this one put up by the Eastbourne Civic Society and the Borough Council and unveiled on 23 November 1994. The Hon Alexandra Shackleton—Sir Ernest's granddaughter—did the unveiling as she did with the plaque at the Dublin house.) The Fishers in their biography of Shackleton place Sir Ernest here between April and December 1919, June to December 1920 and April to August 1921. Following Shackleton's death, Emily stayed on here until November 1924 when she moved to Yorkshire. Milnthorpe Road is a tree-lined street in a very pleasant section of Eastbourne called The Meads, only a block or two from the seafront. The house was reconfigured for four flats about 20 years ago.

Not long ago I was told by a fellow Antarctic explorer that Shackleton had lived in a house near Devizes on the **Bath Road**. The building is now the BRAESIDE EDUCATION AND CONFERENCE CENTRE and this is what appears on its website: "Sir Ernest Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer, is thought to have lived at Braeside for about a year, probably in 1913. It is believed that his sledge once hung in the entrance hall, although it has since disappeared." This date would coincide with when the Shackletons were either in Putney or Kensington. It's hard to imagine why they would be in Wiltshire and for a year but as one can see, they did move around a lot.

PLAQUES AND STATUARY

The only non-house plaque associated with Shackleton that I know of is in **Lyttelton**, New Zealand, in a not very impressive location: a pedestrian bridge column beside the harbor. It commemorates the Antarctic expeditionary ships departing to the Antarctic and Shackleton and the *Nimrod* are mentioned along with others. There are many plaques and memorials and statues devoted to Scott, of course, but quality always wins out over quantity, and by far the best depiction of an Antarctic explorer is

that which stands above London's Exhibition Road in a wall niche of the **Royal Geographical Society**. It's a larger-than-life-size powerful depiction of Shackleton in sledging clothes, sculpted by Charles Jagger. It was unveiled on 9 January 1932, the 23rd anniversary of Shackleton reaching his furthest south. (Around the corner, in the forecourt, is a bust of **Sir Clements Markham**, Britain's great force in Antarctic exploration and champion of Robert Scott.) Jagger's statue is the only public art I'm aware of that depicts Shackleton in an exterior setting. The only other Shackleton statuery is a bronze bust by J.A. Stevenson at Christchurch's **Canterbury Museum** that has as its base a globe. (There's also a version in plaster at the **Scott Polar Research Institute**.)

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

What Shackletonia can be found in some of the great polar repositories? London's **Royal Geographical Society** has Hurley's *Endurance* glass plate negatives, a sledging 'helmet' signed by Shackleton and a variety of other artifacts, the Bible that Queen Alexandra presented to the *Endurance* expedition (Shackleton saved the signed flyleaf but jettisoned the Bible; McNeish retrieved it) and the full set of the nine original volumes of the *South Polar Times* issued during the *Discovery* expedition (Shackleton was the editor during the first winter).

The **Canterbury Museum** can boast one of the world's great polar collections. Among its Shackleton items: An oil portrait done on venesta board (the same used for binding copies of the *Aurora Australis*), Hurley's Kodak Model B pocket camera, the Ross Sea Party's Arrol Johnston motor sledge and the primus stove used on the *James Caird* boat journey.

In Cambridge, **Scott Polar Research Institute** has, of course, some superb Shackleton items, not to mention a library named for him: A model of the *Quest*, a chronometer from the boat journey to South Georgia; the diaries of Worsley, Orde-Lees and James; the 'Endurance Spar'—the only surviving relic of the *Endurance* (mounted over the doorway into the Shackleton Library and brought back from Elephant Island by Sir James Wordie); some Marston paintings; a Chelsea ship's clock from the *Quest*; the wood box for submissions to the *South Polar Times* during Shackleton's time as editor; Walter How's model of the *Endurance*; numerous letters, diaries & journals (from all four Antarctic expedition), many photographs and certainly a lot more that either isn't on display or of which I know nothing about.

There's a Shackleton sledge at New Zealand's **Lyttelton Historical Museum**; an Orde-Lees' Journal at the **Alexander Turnbull Library** in Auckland (and another at **Dartmouth College** in New Hampshire); hand soap and matches from the Cape Royds hut at the **Navy Museum** in Washington, D.C.; a compass and sextant from the *James Caird*, Hussey's autographed banjo, and a Reginald Eves oil portrait of Shackleton (there's another Eves portrait at the **National Portrait Gallery**, which, unlike Scott's portrait, is on display) at the **National Maritime Museum** in Greenwich; the **Peabody Essex Museum** in Salem, Massachusetts, has a pair of Shackleton's socks, and a good complement to these—boots—are at the **Central Museum & Art Gallery** in Northampton, Britain's one-time centre of shoemaking. And a *Nimrod* sledge, a giant-scale model of the *Endurance*, and lot more at the **Athy Heritage Center** in Athy, Ireland

PUBS, HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

There's more than a handful of pubs and hotels that have Shackleton connections. Many are somewhat tenuous—a dinner was held there and the famous explorer attended—but several are worth highlighting. On the 6th of August 1907, the night before *Nimrod* departed England for Antarctica, a farewell dinner was held at the **Torbay Hotel** in Torquay. A hundred years later the hotel still stands, though perhaps not as elegant as it probably was in 1907. The menu for that dinner starts off with a *Consommé a la Beardmore* and ends with *Canapes a la England* (presumably the named for the captain not the country).

Another celebratory dinner was the one held at **The Savoy** on 15 June 1909, about six months after Shackleton reached his 'Furthest South.' Among the attendees: Marston, Joyce, Mackintosh and Brocklehurst; not to mention Shackleton's brother Frank, Arthur Rackham and William Heinemann (publisher of *The Heart of the Antarctic* and *South* and Mill's *The Life of Sir Ernest Shackleton*). The Savoy's other Antarctic connection is that Charles Royds (Scott's Lieutenant on the Discovery expedition and later Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) dropped dead on the dance floor during a 1931 charity ball.

Grandly occupying a stretch of King Edwards Parade in Eastbourne is the recently renovated **Grand Hotel**. Shackleton's name appears in the guestbook in both 1914 and 1917, prior to his residence at 14 Milnthorpe Road, just a short walk away, suggesting an earlier Eastbourne connection. And he sketched out his plans for the *Nimrod* expedition on the hotel's

letterhead perhaps while lunching with a potential backer (this is in the collection of the National Maritime Museum). There's an Eastbourne association with Captain Oates, too. On October 25, 1913, a memorial plaque was unveiled by Commander Evans in **St Anne's church**—"where the deceased officer was accustomed to worship." The church, and presumably the plaque, were destroyed by incendiary bombs on the August 11, 1942.

And who would have thought that one could enjoy skiing in Sestrière, Italy, at the **Shackleton Mountain Resort**? Or have a drink at the **Bar Shackleton** at the Hotel José Nogueira, in Punta Arenas, Chile? Or a second one further east at the **Shackleton Lounge** in Santa Cruz, Argentina (the proprietor, Agustin Calvetti, being an ardent Shackleton fan)? Prefer coffee perhaps? Relax in the Shackleton Room (decorated with Hurley photographs) at **The Troubadour** in Old Brompton Road, Earl's Court, a classic coffee house where Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan once played.

Among those that are sadly no more: **The Sir Ernest Shackleton** public house in Tulse Hill, a bit south of Shackleton's old school, Dulwich College. When Jonathan Shackleton and I went looking for it in late 2007 it had been demolished and was a construction site. On the other hand, a pub website had described it as a "a down-at-heel local . . . that fails to live up to its illustrious namesake" so perhaps we didn't miss a real gem (but wouldn't it have been nice to have retrieved the pub sign?). The **Whaler's Rest and Shackleton Diner** in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, is also now closed (it had been owned by 'Jock Murray' who whaled with Christian Salvesen between 1960 and 1962, finishing the last season that Leith Harbour was operational.) And a stone's throw from Athy in Crookstown, the **Crookstown Inn-Shackleton's Restaurant** is likewise no more.

The South Pole Inn in Anascaul, Co. Kerry, was, of course, Tom Crean's pub and has become a destination for all Antarctic pilgrims. But Crean and Shackleton were so closely linked that I think the pub deserves to be on our list. There is a model of the *Endurance* on a windowsill and a photo or two.

SHIPS, BOATS, PLANES AND TRAINS

Shackleton and ships naturally go together. There's **Discovery**, of course, which took him to the Antarctic for the first time. It's now in Dundee where it was built. I first saw it along the Embankment where it was for many years; then in St Katharine's Docks. It travelled north in a floating dry-dock

to end back in Dundee where it is now the center piece of a very fine museum and visitors' center. One can hire the wardroom for private dinners.

Shackleton's second ship was *Nimrod* which took him south in 1906 for what would be his most successful time in the Antarctic. Alas, she is no more, having succumbed off the Norfolk coast at the end of January in 1919.

The third ship would be the most famous of all, the *Endurance*, crushed by the Weddell Sea's ice. Though possibly as famous was the little 22 foot, 6 inch *Sir James Caird*, the salvation of the expedition, that made that remarkable voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia (and then to England and to Middlesex Hospital, the Albert Hall, the roof of Selfridges, Ely Place (the country seat of John Quiller Rowett, Shackleton's patron) and then to Dulwich College and then to the National Maritime Museum, then back to Dulwich where it is today (except when it is travelling here and there around the world). Besides the *James Caird*, **Dulwich College** has a substantial amount of Shackletonia in its archives and on its walls, including Kipling's copy of the *Aurora Australis*, a leather-bound volume of Hurley photographs that Sir Ernest donated to his old school, a Union Flag that covered his casket in Grytviken, a large and dramatic Norman Wilkinson oil painting of the *James Caird* in high seas, an ornate armchair from the manager's villa, Stromness, and not one but two sledges from the *Nimrod* expedition.

The rescue of the men at Elephant Island—after three failed attempts—was accomplished by the Chilean tug *S.S. Yelcho*, built in Greenock, Scotland, and captained by Luis Alberto Pardo Villalon (whose very formal bust solitarily stands at Point Wild). Nothing remains of the *Yelcho* other than her cut-off prow erected as a monument at Puerto Williams, a Chilean navy base on the Beagle Channel and the southernmost city in the world.

The last Shackleton ship of note was the *Quest* on which Sir Ernest died early in the morning of 5 January 1922. She departed London the previous September from Hay's Wharf on the south bank of the Thames close to Tower Bridge. The wharf has been filled in and glassed over and is now the very nice **Hay's Galleria** with shops and restaurants and an office block named **Shackleton House**. Two bits of the *Quest* can still be seen today. Her **Crow's Nest** (a converted wood barrel) is close by in the crypt of All Hallows Barking next to the Tower. Exactly why it ended up there is not altogether clear. (Across the way from the church stands the modern European headquarters of Marsh & McLennan which not long ago bought Bowring Brothers which had owned both the *Terra Nova* and the *Aurora*. Fine builder's models of each are displayed in glass cases on the top floor overlooking the Tower and the Thames.) The second bit of the *Quest*, her

deckhouse, is on the grounds of the Saltdal Museum at Saltnes in Norway. Exactly how it ended up there is a question awaiting an answer. In 1930 Frank Wild presented to the Shackleton Lodge of the SONS OF ENGLAND PATRIOTIC & BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in Johannesburg the **bell** from the *Quest*. The Lodge and the Society appear to have disappeared along with the bell. But the Chelsea ship's **clock** from the *Quest* is at SPRI. Engraved on the rim: "To the Boss from the Boys".

Two modern polar ships with Shackleton connections include the HMS *Endurance*, which deploys annually to the Antarctic from her home port of Portsmouth, and the British Antarctic Survey's RRS *Shackleton*.

We can't overlook airplanes. You can see two Shackleton aircraft (WR974 and WR982) at the **Gatwick Aviation Museum**, a quirky and interesting place worth a visit. These planes were used for maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine work in the 1950s and 60s. There are also Shackletons at the **Imperial War Museum Duxford** (XF708), **Newark Air Museum** in Nottinghamshire (WR977) and the **Pima Air & Space Museum** (WL790) in Tucson, Arizona. Apparently the only one that still flies is at the **South African Air Force Museum** at Swartkop (WR1721).

What about trains? There's a Virgin Super Voyager Train named *Sir Ernest Shackleton*. Others are named for Amundsen, Scott, Bruce, Oates and Petty Officer Evans.

OTHERS AND SUNDRY

Streets and roads named for Shackleton may be found throughout the UK, in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. At least 24 examples have been found. There are Shackleton-named **craters** on the Moon and on Mars, **mountains** in Canada and Australia (and the Antarctic Peninsula), and **canyons** and **fracture zones** deep below the sea. And in Kentucky, a race horse named *Sir Shackleton*.

For additional information and many other 'Low-Latitude Antarctic' sites, visit the author's website at www.antarctic-circle.org/lagNEW.htm