

# The Bowers Plaque

**HENRY ROBERTSON  
BOWERS OW**

**1883 – 1912**



The Plaque in Position on Worcester III.  
Andrew Langsdale is the Cadet



Colin,  
This is the Plaque that was in the Tabernacle on the Mizzen mast on the upper deck. You would have sailed past it every day. When the ship closed it was transferred to the Discovery (Scott's 1st Expedition) and was on display for many years. When the Discovery was removed to Dundee it was again removed and put into storage in the vaults of the Historic Dockyard at Chatham where it languished for a number of years as the property of the Marine Society.

I have always been very interested in the heroic age of Antarctic Exploration and for years have been a member of the 'Friends of the Scott Polar Research Institute' in Cambridge. The SPRI was founded in memory of Scott and the four members of his party who died with him on their way back for the South Pole and Bower's name is recorded above the door as you enter. When I joined the Council of the AOW I put forward a suggestion that we should approach the Marine Society and ask that they release it into the care of the SPRI in Cambridge for permanent display.

For details of the SPRI go to this link.

<http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/about/history/>

It is now on display outside the library, the largest polar archive in the world. Every day students go in and out and see the plaque which is a much better resting place than in the vaults of the Dockyard in Chatham.

For a number of years I have given illustrated lectures on Bowers, the last being at the Conway/Worcester/Pangbourne Reunion in NZ. I attach a copy of my lecture notes for this should you be interested in the tale of his life. Clive.

*On the following pages is a Version of a lecture given by Clive Bradbury OW to various audiences at various occasions. This one in NZ. A very interesting read and well worth the time to read about this very interesting subject and "The Fifth Man - H Bowers OW in particular. This is an opportunity to view the lecture if you have, like myself, never seen him do it in person.*

*The version is as faithful to Clive's lecture as I can make it.*

*Colin Thurlow. OW*

# THE FIFTH MAN

## HENRY ROBERTSON BOWERS 1883 – 1912 OW

by

**Clive Bradbury**

Welcome

For over 1000 years seamen have been at the cutting edge of Polar exploration. The Vikings, in the 6th century. John Cabot who sailed from Bristol in the 15th century on two voyages of discovery to North Canada, Sir Martin Frobisher's two expeditions to find the elusive NW Passage in Tudor times - John Davis, Henry Hudson & William Baffin all who left their names for us to see on maps today. And of course Sir John Franklin who with his ships, *Erabus* and *Terror*, together with all their Officers and crews just vanished in the icy Polar wastes North of Canada. And in the Antarctic in the 19th & 20th centuries, Capt James Cook & Sir James Clark Ross of the Royal Navy, Lt. Charles Wilkes of the USN, Commodore Dumont d'Urville of the French Navy, Sir Ernest Shackleton, who incidentally had been a deck officer with *Union Castle*, and of course Capt. Robert Scott.

So it is good today to see I have an audience made up almost entirely of examiners and their partners.

Not all mariners succeeded in their wish to take part in Polar Expeditions!! Relate story of Chris Willis and *Union Castle*

The Music - In 1902 Relief Ship 'Morning' -

Lt. Teddy Evans RN,  
Lt. Gerald Doorly RNR



CD Cover



Lt Doorly



Officers on the 'Morning'

Piano gift of Sir Clements Markham

To set the scene and get us all in spirit of the Antarctic we have some music.

Symphonia Antarctica By



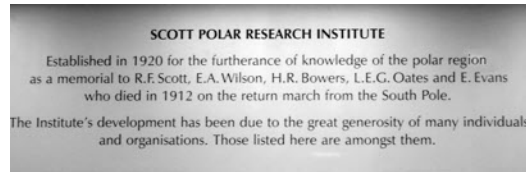
Vaughan Williams composed for the 1950 film 'Scott of the Antarctic'

[This is a link to you tube - so take your pick](#)



Entrance to the  
Scott Polar Research Institute - SPRI

The SPRI in Cambridge holds the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of archive material relating to Polar history exploration as well as current studies including Glaciology, Geology, Anthropology. The SPRI Building was Established in 1920, it is dedicated to the memory of the 5 men who died in Scott's last Expedition.



For various reasons three have received a lot of recognition through the years. Scott the leader, Titas Oates whose heroic end and last words have been immortalized and Edward Wilson whose Art forms some of the most valuable possessions of the SPRI. Today I want to go some way towards allowing Bowers that long overdue recognition by telling you of his enormous contribution and pivotal role in the heroic and tragic journey to the South Pole.

This is the story of the life of Lt. Henry Robertson Bowers R.I.M. and OW. Baby Bowers



Henry was born in Greenock, Scotland on 29th June 1883, the only son of Capt. Alexander Bowers RNR and his wife Emily. Henry's father was an adventurous seafarer in his own right, a member of the RGS and took part in Sir Edward Sladden's expedition of discovery up the Irrawaddy River in 1869. At the age of 13 he had run away to sea & six years later (at the age of 19) he was the Captain and owner of his own ship, the 'Geelong', a tea clipper. He became immensely prosperous with a fleet of ships but lost almost all of his wealth, when having borrowed money to build the ships, there was a severe downturn in trade. In debt and reduced to one ship, he died prematurely in the Far East following a cyclone during which he battled for 36 hours lashed to the wheel trying to save his ship. His widow, Emily Bowers sold up in Scotland and came south with her family and set up home in Sidcup, Kent where Henry was to spend his early years. Outwardly Henry

appeared a sturdy jolly lad and given to pranks. However, inwardly, there was a bond between mother & son that was stronger than normal family affection. It was a spiritual affinity, which grew with age. Emily Bowers was deeply religious and passed this on to all her children. To Henry, religion was one of the main pillars of his life. Before breakfast each day, the family would gather to sing a hymn, have a bible reading and pray. Throughout his short life Henry never doubted the simplicity and happy faith of his childhood.

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At the age of 5, Henry attended a private school in Sidcup where he collected butterflies & moths and showed particular



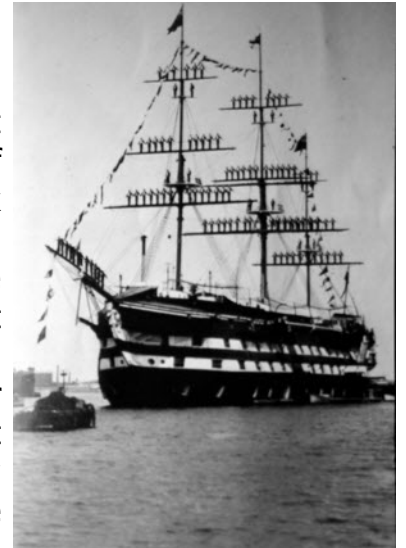
Bowers Family

fascination with deserts & polar areas. In 1890, these areas were remote & unexplored. At the age of 7 he wrote, with pardonable confusion, regarding the inhabitants of Antarctica to a supposed Eskimo dwelling in Wilkes Land. "Dear Eskimo, please write and tell me about your land. I want to go there some day, your friend, Henry." Henry joined H.M.S. Worcester as a cadet. Like countless other boys plucked from the bosoms of their loving



Cadet Bowers In 1897

families, he was within minutes of boarding the ship, in an adult world full of complicated rules and regulations. Judged by today's standards, conditions would have been distinctly primitive, with ill light & unheated decks, inadequate washing and bathing and extremely plain food. Schoolwork would have been thorough in what was taught and seamanship, knowledge of sailing ships and boat work would have of course have been exceptionally good!!!!!! The Captain of the Worcester at that time was Sir David Wilson-Barker RNR, a former Worcester cadet; he was a past president of the Meteorological Society and a member in council of the Royal Geographical Society. He was also a close friend of Sir Clements Markham, a patron of



HMS Worcester II

British Government expedition to try and solve the mystery of the disappearance of Sir John Franklin, his ships and all his party. Sir Clements came on board a regular intervals to give lectures on Polar exploration which must have inspired boys at a very formative time in their lives, especially when Antarctica was the last truly unexplored region in the world. It must be one of the reasons that during my research I came across 7 former Worcester cadets who were members of Antarctic Expeditions of the period. Sir David Wilson-Barker's main hobbies and interests were Lepidoptery, (the study of butterflies and moths), Photography and of course Meteorology. He also taught interested boys the art of Taxidermy particularly with birds and Bowers soon formed a bond with the Captain, which was to strengthen into a lifelong friendship on leaving the Worcester. Sir David's influence was to have a major impact on Henry's life and was destined to change the course of his career twice in the future.

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On Bower's death, his closest friend on the Worcester wrote to Capt Wilson-Barker a letter in which he referred to Henry saying:

"He was deeply religious and was the strongest and best character I have ever known. It was his never failing practice during the whole time he was on board the Worcester to read his Bible for a quarter of an hour each evening on a school bench on the main deck during time when everyone else was slewing around the upper deck. I thought nothing of it at the time but have since realized the moral strength required for such a habit."



Worcester Captain -  
Sir David Wilson-  
Barker

Henry passed out from Worcester with flying colours with a 1st Class Extra in both



Cadet Bowers Leaving Certificate

Seamanship and Scholastic Studies. The Merchant Navy was by this time well on the road of transition from sail to steam but Henry chose to serve his indentures in sail and in 1899, joined the four masted barque "[Loch Torridon](#)", bound for Australia via the Southern Ocean and returning via the Horn. Designed for speed, the [Loch](#) Torridon was the cargo ship equivalent of a Formula One racing car. Henry was to do four voyages on the [Loch Torridon](#).



A four Masted Ship & Worcester II

Henry, who had a close relationship with both his sisters as well as his mother Now started a regular

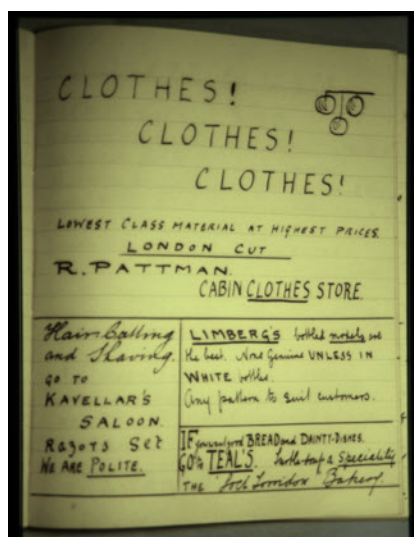
correspondence, which was to continue for the rest of his life. Irrespective of whether he could post letters, he would write home. In the early 1990s, the SPRI managed to purchase the complete collection of his letters to his mother and sisters numbering over 300, as well as journals, passage notes, and certificates for the sum of £78,000.00.

In his letters home from his 1st trip he writes of the Captain.

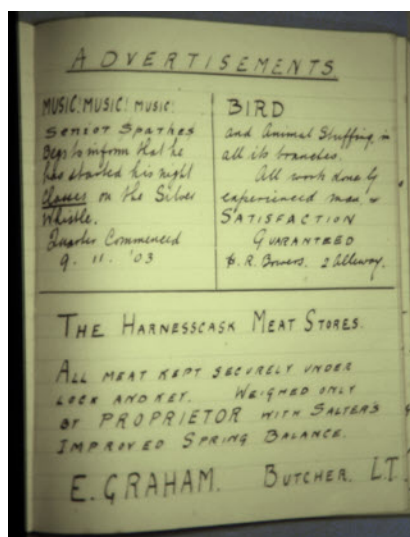
.....very much feared by everyone and I may say heartily disliked by most. He has a kind of grey steel eye which seems to have the power of withering those that come against him, also nothing escapes him. All the same, he is a splendid seaman.....of the old school of course! Capt. Patten was an extremely tough man who eventually died whilst amputating his own leg! (Presumably whilst following the instructions in the 'Ship Captain's Medical Guide')

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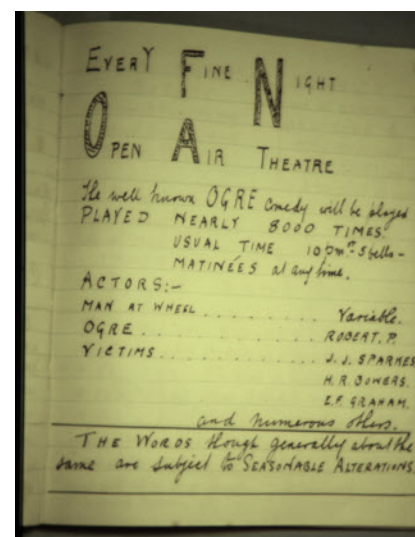
When becalmed Henry became a passionate swimmer, a habit in which he took every opportunity to indulge for the rest of his life. He writes home that he has skinned and stuffed a wide selection of birds and plans to bring the best specimens home as the basis for a collection. Ship's Newspaper During the passage, the Cadets occupied their time with a spoof ship's newspaper. He arrived in time for the Worcester's sports day and went down to the ship where Capt. Wilson-Barker invited him to dinner on board. Amongst the



Ship's Newspaper



Ship's Newspaper



Ship's Newspaper

other guests were two other OWs involved with Polar exploration. One was Lt. Armitage



Armitage & Scott

RNR, recently appointed to the Discovery and second in command of the forthcoming 1901 Antarctic Expedition. Armitage was already a seasoned polar explorer having been 2nd in command of the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition of 1894-97 to Franz-Joseph Land. He had been in charge of the magnetic, meteorological & astronomical work as well as gaining experience of ice navigation and sledge travel. On the Discovery expedition he was to lead a party of men that were to be the first humans to ascend a glacier onto the Antarctic Plateau, 9,000 feet above sea

## How Scott's No 2 was left out in the cold

By Daiya Alberge  
Arts Correspondent

THE discovery of unpublished diaries has for the first time revealed the strained relations between Scott of the Antarctic and his second in command.

Captain Albert Borlase Armitage, navigator and magnetic observer of the SS Discovery under Robert F. Scott, recorded in meticulous detail one of the most arduous and hazardous tests of human endurance: the Antarctic expedition of 1901 to 1904.

The manuscript relates how clashes and quarrels between two hardened men became so acute that Scott wanted to expel Armitage from the expedition. Their rivalry reached a climax over Scott's apparent fears that a member of his team might outshine him by wanting to explore further towards the South Pole than anyone had previously managed.

The damp-stained and dog-eared volume was described by historians and explorers yesterday as "an extraordinary piece of polar history".

The Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, the world's premiere polar library, is now desperately trying to raise money to save it for the nation. No one had known of the journal's existence until it surfaced from a private collection. Its anonymous owner is to sell it at Bloomsbury Auctions in London on April 22, where it is estimated to fetch between £30,000 and £40,000.

Scott (1868-1912) went on to lead the expedition to the South Pole, where he arrived in January 1912 only to find that Roald Amundsen had beaten him by little more than a month. Sickness, a shortage of food and severe weather took their toll and a search party eventually found Scott's frozen body in his tent.

Armitage's diary dates from

PAUL BOGGS



Surviving pages of the diary to be auctioned next month

'When the captain went to turn in I went to his cabin to ask the reason of his unfriendly manner towards me, for since his return he has hardly spoken a word to me, & ignored me when I have spoken to him, or answered very briefly. After hesitating for a little, he replied ...'

The next few pages have been cut from the diary

each other, but as the expedition wore on, their differences of opinion and rivalry descended into frustration and hostility. Armitage recorded conversations and nuances in intricate detail, only to leave readers today on tenterhooks: some of the pages after the heated exchanges have been torn out of the diary by an unknown hand.

Simon Luterbacher, manuscripts expert with Bloomsbury Auctions, said that we could draw our own

Armitage omitted to mention the hostility in his book, *Two Years in the Antarctic* in 1905: "He was not going to mention that sort of thing," he said.

"He had to get permission from Scott to publish his own version. You are not going to put that you fell out with your captain."

In his entry for April 26, 1903, Armitage recorded his wish to take a small expedition and push it further south than Scott had done. Scott told him that "I had no idea of

went to turn in I went to his cabin to ask the reason of his unfriendly manner towards me, for since his return he has hardly spoken a word to me, & ignored me when I have spoken to him, or answered very briefly.

"After hesitating for a little, he replied ..." At this point, the pages have been carefully removed. Eventually, Scott, at the end of his tether, wanted to send his navigator home. Instead, he banned Armitage from the sledging runs.

Scott may well have had reason to fear being undermined by his deputy, an important explorer in his own right. Armitage became the first person to penetrate the polar icecap, journeying from sea level to 9,000ft. Bloomsbury Auctions will also sell his 110-page handwritten report on that exploration.

Mr Luterbacher said: "Obviously with nearly 50 men living in close proximity in conditions of extreme hardship for a period of three years, tensions were bound to arise, egos were bound to clash and there might well have been professional jealousies."

The journal features many descriptions of the physical and mental state of the men. In one passage, referring to Sir Ernest Shackleton as he was to become, Armitage wrote: "Shackleton had been unable to do any work all the way back. He suffered from bronchial asthma and threw up blood."

"The Capt feared he would never get him back to the ship and Wilson [Edward Wilson, a naturalist who died with Scott on the second expedition] assured me that it was only Shackleton's pluck that enabled him to do so. All of them, too, were attacked by scurvy."

Robert Headland, curator of the Scott Polar Research



Frosty: Armitage, centre, on board the SS Discovery in 1901 with Scott seated to his right

## Explorer led first group on Antarctic ice cap

Albert Borlase Armitage (1864-1943) was an important explorer in his own right (Daiya Alberge writes).

He was the first person to travel on to the polar ice cap, leading a party from Scott's 1901 expedition to 9,000ft above sea level in South

Polar Expedition. In 1901 he was lent to Scott's National Antarctic Expedition as second-in-command and navigator and was responsible for Ernest Shackleton's appointment as an executive officer of the expedition.

During the First World War

as an excellent practical navigator, but their relationship deteriorated.

Despite Scott's animosity towards him, Armitage was popular. He was nicknamed "Pilot" by other expedition members.

The explorer Sir Clements Markham, who became Pres-

Armitage News Article

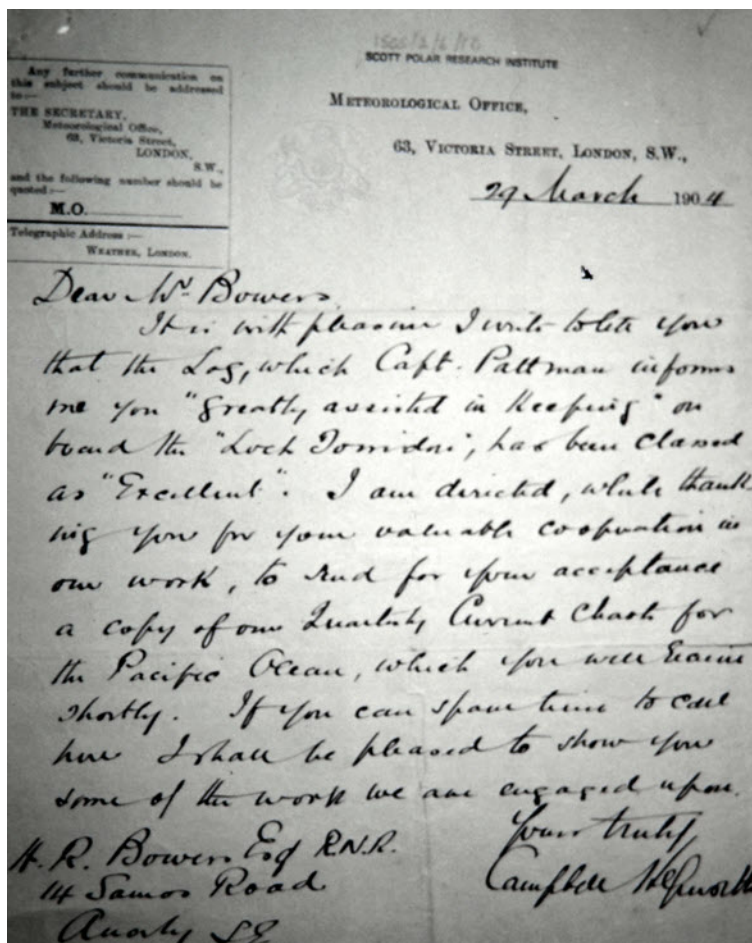
level. His unpublished journal (in pencil in an exercise book) sold in auction in 2004 for £56,000.00. Another guest at the dinner was Lt. Teddy Evans RN, an OW who would be an officer on the relief ship Morning and later be Scott's 2nd in command on the fatal Terra Nova expedition of 1910. On his next trip, Henry was appointed un-certificated 3rd Mate, raising him above the other two cadets. He received a letter from the Meteorological Office thanking him for the high standard of his observations, which he had taken every 4 hours

during the trip. The trip proved difficult as Capt. Patten quarrelled with the 1st Mate and had him paid off in Adelaide. This left Bowers with considerable amount of extra watch keeping and work but allowed him to gain in-valuable experience.

Good news awaited his homecoming. He had been appointed Midshipman RNR and he decided to try for a position in the Royal Indian Marine Service. This was Imperial India's Royal Navy; not quite the status of the RN, but close and a lot more respectable in Edwardian society than the Merchant Navy. Whilst on leave he wrote to Capt. Wilson-Barker telling him of his wish to join the RIM.

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For his 4th and final trip on the Loch Torridon, he was appointed 2nd Mate, a considerable compliment by the martinet Capt. Patten. The Loch Torridon achieved a record passage across the Pacific, the fastest that any ship had achieved in 16 years and faster than steamships of the time. It was written up widely in the newspapers in San Francisco! On returning home he qualified as 1st Mate. In February 1905 he was gazetted to the RIM as Sub-Lt. This was mainly due to the help of Capt. Wilson-Barker who had personally visited the RIM section of the India Colonial Office in London and had also got Sir Thomas Sutherland, the Chairman of both P&O and the college to give his support. Before leaving for India, Bowers visits the Worcester again to thank Capt. Wilson-Barker for his help. Also present at the lunch was Sir Clements



Markham, patron of both Scott's expeditions and as mentioned earlier Chairman of the RGS, which was at the height of its influence. Sir Clements was clearly extremely impressed with the stocky, powerfully built, red haired Scotsman. In October 1905, Bowers sailed for India and was appointed to the RIMS Dufferin (next page) In his letters home he indicates how immensely proud he was to be an officer in the RIM. He stayed on the Dufferin for a year sailing round the Indian Coast and was then appointed to the Sladden, a flat-bottomed river steamer, drawing only 4 feet



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Sub Lt Bowers RIM

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RIMS Dufferin



RIMS Sladden

and designed for plying the 1000 miles of the Irrawaddy River. Bowers took every opportunity to discover the country and frequently took long bicycle trips alone in the hills where he was able to study butterflies and practice photography, which he had learnt from Capt Wilson-Barker.

This picture, taken by Bowers in the Burmese jungle, was developed and printed by him on the Sladden and he has written on the back. "The Mangoon Bell, about the largest intact Bell in the world. I understand that it weighs 85 tons!"



The Mangoon Bell

In June 1907, Bowers was appointed to the temporary command of the Bhamo. This was totally unexpected and although temporary, was a huge boost to his ego. He took command on his 24th birthday. The Bhamo was the only stern-wheeler gunboat in the RIMS and although 255 tons and almost 200 feet in length, drew only 2 ft. 6 inch in draft.



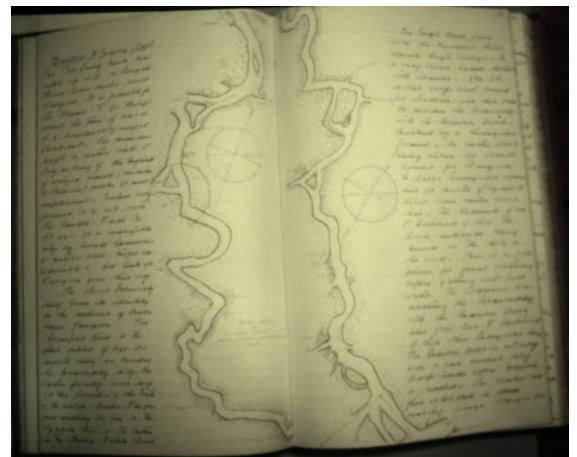
RIMS Bhamo

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She was the only vessel that could navigate the 300 miles north of Bhamo on up the Chindit tributary. Only later did he find that the Bhamo was considered the most difficult ship in the fleet to handle. His letters at that time are full of his excitement, pleasure and almost disbelief at his luck. He soon used his position to good advantage by surveying the river and making up pilot journals and and charts of the river.

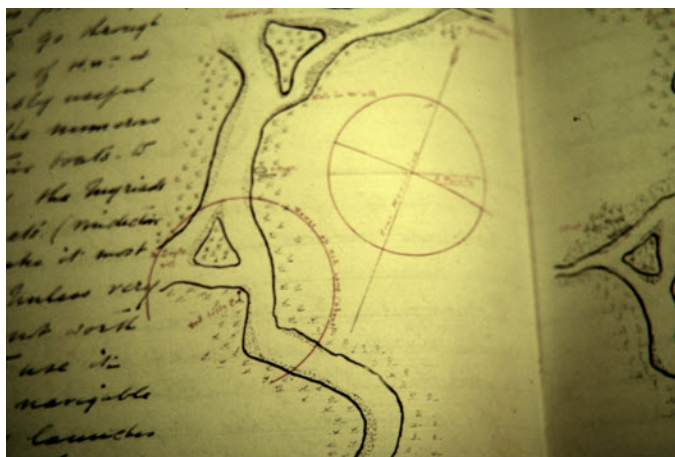


The Irrawaddy River

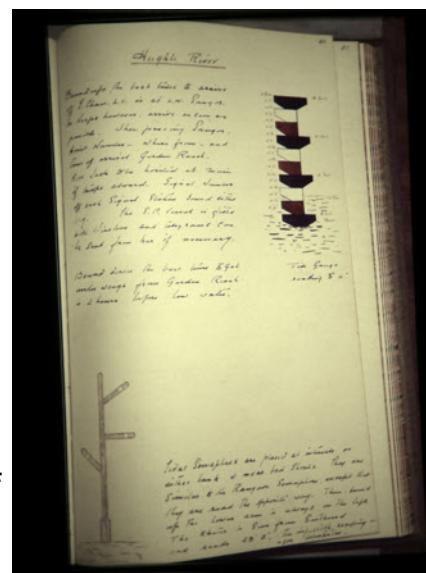


The Pilot Journal

Although he was only supposed to be in temporary command for a week or two the weeks slipped by into months. After 7 months, his term as captain of the Bhamo came to an end when he was appointed to the Minto as navigating officer. Although sad to leave the responsibility of command, he relates in letters that he was glad to be back in the



The Pilot Journal



Pilot Journal Tidal Gauge

open sea and steaming down the Malay coast. He returns to Scotland on leave and records swimming each day



RIM Minto Officers

in the Clyde up until Christmas, long after all his companions have given up. He also records climbing Ben Nevis three times in a week!! His next appointment to



RIM Minto

HMS Fox meant that he had been seconded to the Royal Navy - a considerable privilege for a RIM officer and one in which reflected the high regard in which the Indian Navy held him. The ship was ordered to the Persian Gulf in support of the Shah whose regime was suffering from rebellion and insurgency. Shortly after joining, his luck and tenacity bought him to the attention of the of his seniors when a renegade Customs launch, which was loaded with contraband and guns, was apprehended, but made a run for it. Pursued by Bowers in a fast cutter with an unarmed small boarding party, he catches them up in the night and bluffs them in the darkness into surrendering. He writes home: They were simply furious and outraged when they found out how they had been bluffed and that we were



Guns on HMS Fox

unarmed. As an officer in the RIM where crews were all Indian, Bowers had been required to pass practical and written exams in Hindustani, which he had done with flying colours. He now studies in his spare time and



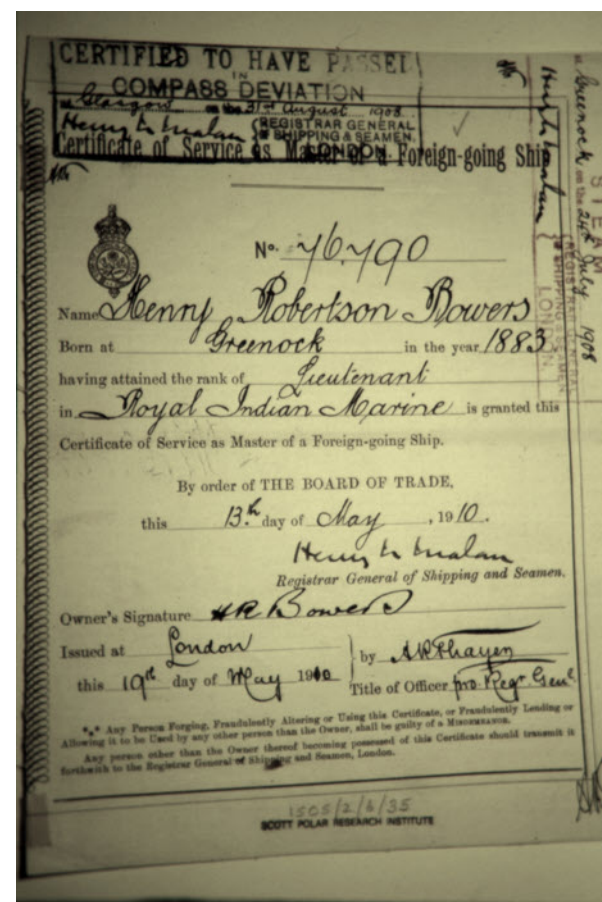
Guns on HMS Fox

becomes proficient in Persian.

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Life for Bowers carries on with him being in charge of a cutter, sailing at night without lights, just waiting for the Dhows to try and get their arms and contraband ashore. Ever industrious, whilst on the cutter on blockade, he also surveys the coastline, much of which was uncharted. This was done with a plank across his knees and at other times by landing, a highly risky undertaking for a foreign naval officer at this time of insurrection. The captain of the Fox was so impressed that he had copies made and sent them to the Hydrographic Office in London. During this time, Henry wrote regularly to Capt. Wilson-barker at the Worcester, expressing his interest in being included in the next Antarctic expedition, which was to be led by Capt Scott and supported and promoted by Sir Clements Markham. Sir Clements Markham had been reminded by Capt. Wilson-Barker of their lunch meeting with Bowers and as a consequence Sir Clements had no hesitation in recommending him to Scott. Scott immediately agreed and Bowers the only member of the expedition not to have been interviewed or even to have officially applied. From over 8000 applicants, he had been taken on without any Polar experience, sight unseen and without ever having formally applied to join the expedition. On arrival back in London, on special leave from the RIM, he also receives his Masters Ticket.

Bowers goes to the expedition office where he makes his initial



Bowers Master Certificate

introduction to Scott who was taken back and shocked by the sight of this rather short, sun burnt, florid, red headed man with a huge beak for a nose. Reports exist of Scott's reaction to this first meeting, that he turned to Dr. Wilson and quipped, "Well we are all landed with him now and must make the best of a bad job" Bowers hurried down to the Terra Nova, which was berthed at the West India Docks. The Terra Nova was a 749-ton whaling service vessel measuring 187 feet and almost 40 years old. Ironically the Terra Nova was smaller by 15 feet than the Bhamo, which he had only recently commanded. She had previously been used on the Jackson-Harmsworth Arctic Expedition and had been purchased for £12,500 from C.T.Bowring & Co. Surgeon-



Terra Nova

Commander Atkinson, a member of the expedition remarked in a report that she was "decidedly smelly from the storage of whale oil".

Henry's first minutes aboard the Terra Nova almost proved his last. He stepped through the main hatch presuming the boards were in place, only to find he was falling 19 feet onto a pile of pig iron ballast. Fearing the worst, every one rushed to his aid only to find he just picked himself up, dusted himself down and went to work. Henry was immediately put in charge of the stores that were chaotically piled all over the place on the dockside, the wharf and the ship. These were the only provisions and materials that the Antarctic shore party would have for up to two years. Ladies, imagine ..... The author Huntford wrote in "The Last Place":

"...the little man in the hold, rotund of figure and very damp and pink in the face, with tunic unbuttoned and peak cap tilted on the back of his head, stowing cases all day as though his life depended on it."

During May whilst organising the stores, drawing up a stowage plan and loading, Bowers started to meet the men who were to be his colleagues on the trip South.

Among them was Victor Campbell, an RN officer and 1st Mate of the Terra Nova. A tough hard workingman with a quick temper and known as the "Wicked Mate". Bowers and he soon hit it off together.

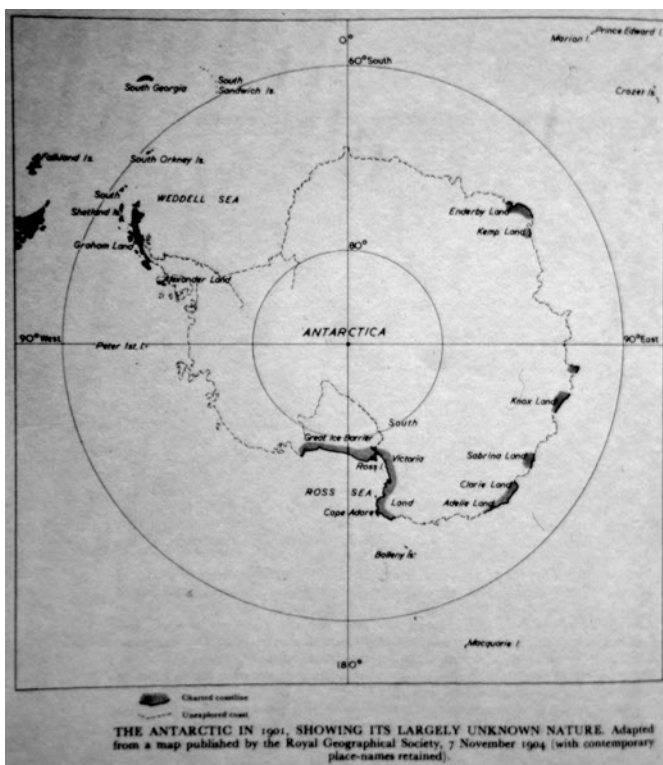
Laurence Edward Grace Oates, a member of the landed gentry, Dragoons Cavalry Officer and recently returned from India. He was to care for the 21 Siberian and Manchurian ponies the expedition hoped would pull the stores to the Beardmore Glacier. His leg shattered in the Boer War, he walked with a slight limp and still had the bullet lodged in his leg. He had however donated £1,000.00 of his own money towards expedition costs. Known variously as "Farmer", "Hayseed" and "Titas". Oates, however, had not been sent to Siberia to choose the ponies as Scott had sent Mears and his brother-in-law Lt. Wilfred Bruce RNR ( who incidentally was also an OW), both of whom knew nothing about horses. This decision would come back to haunt the expedition later.

Oates and Bowers hit it off straight away, although they were poles apart in temperament. Oates, having experienced incompetent leadership during the Boer War, did not suffer fools gladly. However sense of duty and honour kept him from voicing his thoughts openly.

## 10

Apsley Cherry-Garrard was the expedition's Assistant Zoologist and was included at the

insistence of Edward Wilson, Scott's Chief Scientist and closest confidante. Like Oates he came from a wealthy family and had recently graduated from Oxford. He had little or no experience, had bad eyesight, but made it up with energy and loyalty. He had contributed £1,000.00 of his own money to the expedition! Lt. Harry Pennel RN, navigator of the Terra Nova was one of the most competent expedition members. He and Bowers were recognised as the two hardest workers and became close friends. Pennel was to be in charge of the Terra Nova after landing Scott and Bowers expected to be with him and take the ship back to NZ for the winter. It should be remembered that Antarctica was the last great exploration challenge and that at the turn of the 20th century, prior to Scott's Discovery expedition, very little of the size and extent of the Antarctic was known. On the 1st June 1910, the Terra Nova sailed from the West India Dock. The first



Antarctica 1901

stop down river was Greenhithe, the home of the Worcester, where they anchored for the night to allow cadets to visit. On leaving, the cadets manned the yards and gave three cheers in honour of the three OWs who were taking part in the expedition and so on to Cardiff. One of the main reasons for visiting Cardiff was that coal for the voyage was a major expenditure but with good Welshmen like 'Teddy' Evans as



Terra Nova's Crew 1st June 1901



HMS Worcester II

Captain of the Terra Nova and P.O. 'Taff' Evans as a seasoned member, they had been promised free bunkers for the voyage from the City of Cardiff. Teddy Evans was a very effective public speaker and had spent several months prior to the expedition doing fund raising talks all around the country. The Expedition was still short of £8,000.00 of funding towards costs already expended and hoped to extract a sizeable contribution from the City Council.

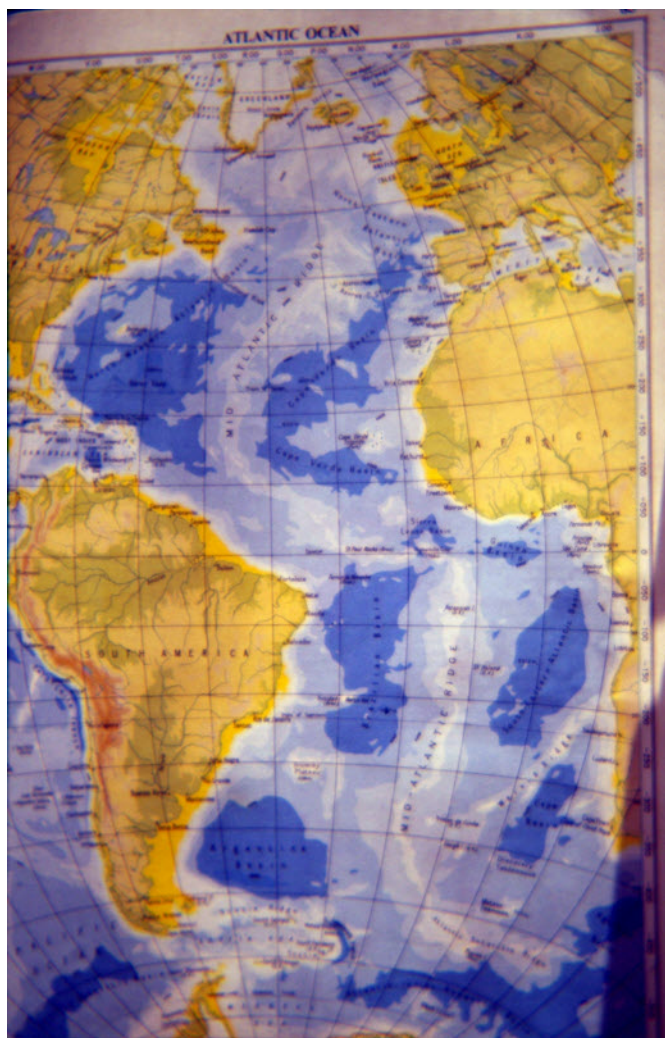
A Lord Mayor's reception was held for the expedition members including P.O. Taff Evans, a favourite of Scott's from the Discovery Expedition. Alcohol flowed freely and some of the sailors over-indulged, most notably Taff Evans. P.O. Evans did not pass up any of the many drinks being offered and as a consequence became roaring drunk. He made a dreadfully embarrassing scene in front of

the good and noble civic reception guests and collapsed resulting in six men having to carry him back aboard ship. Bowers wrote to his mother: ...our departure from Cardiff did not do some of us credit.

11

Scott left the ship at Cardiff in order to use the time for further fundraising, planning to re-join in Australia. Lt. Teddy Evans was to captain the ship to Australia but before sailing he requested from Scott that P. O. Evans should be paid off and dismissed following his outrageous behaviour. Taff Evans, Cap in hand, saw Scott and persuaded him to over-rule Lt. Evans. This incident was probably the start of tensions between Scott and Evans as the expedition proceeded, but to Evans credit, he never ever mentioned the incident again even in his memoirs in later years.

The Terra Nova set sail for Madeira en route for Antarctica. The route was to take them..... Under Evans' leadership the Terra Nova was an extremely happy ship. During the voyage Bowers wrote to his mother.



Map of the N.& S. Atlantic

"The person who has most impressed me is Dr. Wilson. He is the soundest man we have, a chap whom I would trust with anything. I am sure that he is a real Christian. - there is no mistaking it, it comes out in everything. Although he is the Chief Scientist, he has taken the smallest laboratory and will assist anybody and everything".

Almost at the same time Edward Wilson is writing to his wife Oriana.

"Bowers, whom you will remember by sight, a short thick set little man with a very large nose, is a perfect marvel of efficiency, but, in addition to this, he has the most unselfish character I have seen in a man anywhere".

From Madeira, the Terra Nova set sail for the South Atlantic and Henry, the only officer with extensive sailing ship experience, delighted in driving the ship hard under sail. It was vital that they sailed whenever possible in order to conserve the coal which would be needed not only for driving the ship through the ice pack but also for heating the hut and the shore party through two long Antarctic winters. Although not originally planned, they stopped over at anchor at S. Trinidad Is., 700 miles off the coast of Brazil. A

party of officers

and crew, including Bowers, went ashore to collect specimens and do scientific research. Due to enormous surf, which had built up during the day, they could not bring in the boats to the beach for their return. Bowers immediately volunteers to swim out in the surf to the boat and attach a lifeline to drag the non-swimmers back to the boat. Only later did Teddy Evans tell Henry and the others that he saw sharks around at the time.



South Trinidad Island

## 12

Talk in the mess invariably revolved around Antarctica and their individual roles. Bowers had no idea of his future role or even if he would be included in the shore party. However his worth had already been recognised by key members of the expedition, as he writes home again.

" By the by, Evans and Wilson are very keen on me being in the Western party, while Campbell want me to go with him on the eastern party. I have not asked to go ashore, but am keen on anything and am ready to do anything."

It should be remembered that Bowers was only taken on as the storekeeper and expected that he would be appointed as Lt. Pennel's 2nd in command of the Terra Nova on her winter voyage back to NZ.

The ship arrived late in Cape Town to find an anxious Scott awaiting their arrival. Accompanying him on the Union Castle ship south was his wife, the commanding and some say domineering Kathleen Scott, as well as Oriana Wilson and Hilda Evans, Teddy Evans

wife who was a New Zealand girl. Whether because of the strained atmosphere between Hilda Evans and his wife Kathleen, Scott now decides to join the Terra Nova for the trip down to Melbourne and asks Dr. Wilson to take his place and accompany the women on the Shaw Savill ship Corinthic to Melbourne. This must have been a disappointment for Dr. Wilson whose Christian asceticism clashed badly with Kathleen Scott's pagan hedonism and would result in a strained atmosphere.

During the voyage south on the Terra Nova, Scott frequently consults Bowers as the only man with intimate and detailed knowledge of the location of the stores and provisions. Scott was clearly impressed with his organization and decides to change the original plan where Bowers was to be on the ship party and informs him that he was to be a member of the prized shore party. In Melbourne Scott receives a telegram informing him that the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amunson aboard the Fram was also proceeding to Antarctica. Scott feels deceived and betrayed as in Norway the year previously, whilst investigating skiing, he had heard that Amunson was planning another trip to the Arctic. However although Scott had informed Amunson of his plans, Amunson had avoided the direct meeting, which Scott had tried to arrange. On arrival in NZ they took on board 19 ponies and 33 howling dogs bought by Meares and Lt. Wilfred Bruce who had just returned from eastern Siberia. Neither knew much about ponies and Oates was appalled at their condition!

13

Whilst in Lyttleton, Bowers position grew in importance & stature due to the reliance that Scott was placing in him regarding the stores, which were continually arriving on the dockside. He worked tirelessly scrutinizing every list and item whilst Kathleen Scott insisted on checking all his work. It should be mentioned that the dominant Kathleen Scott had probably been Scott's driving force for the expedition. Bowers, who very rarely made any critical comment and was extremely loyal to Scott, did write home and in reference to Kathleen Scott say:



Pennel, Evans & Bowers with dogs

"When with us, her presence casts a dark cloud over our group, which is only relieved by her departure"

During this period there had been rising tensions between the expedition wives. Hilda Evans, a NZ girl, had put up with the forceful Kathleen Scott since they left England. Now, in her home country, she had had enough. Something set the two women off and by all accounts it was a terrific battle. Oates mentioned in a letter to his mother in sporting terms.

"Mrs. Scott & Mrs. Evans had a magnificent battle - they tell me it was a draw after 15 rounds. Mrs. Wilson flung herself into the fight after the 10th round & there was more blood & hair flying about the hotel than you would see in a Chicago slaughterhouse in a month. The husbands got a bit of the backwash & there is a certain amount of coolness, which I hope they will not bring into the Hut with them."

During their time in Lyttleton, there was an endless round of socializing. During one reception on the upper deck with local notables, P.O. "Taff" Evans arrived back on the dockside from a run ashore roaring drunk and then fell into the dock in front of all the visitors whilst trying to board the ship. Scott could not protect him this time and at the insistence of Teddy Evans, he was put ashore in disgrace. The Terra Nova sailed for Port Chalmers without either Scott or P.O. Evans! Port Chalmers was to be the last port of call before leaving for Antarctica and Scott planned to travel down overland after last minute fundraising in Christchurch as the expedition was still heavily in debt. Taff Evans, the

picture of contriteness, approached Scott cap in hand, time & time again asking to be taken back. Scott relented, much to the anger of Teddy Evans, who had again been overridden. It was clear to the other members that Taff Evans was a Scott favourite. From then on there was a certain coolness between the leader & his 2nd in command.

14

Finally the ship sailed from port Chalmers, seriously overloaded, but high on excitement & expectation. Three days out from NZ, the Terra Nova encountered the worst storm of its entire passage. It was one of those moments



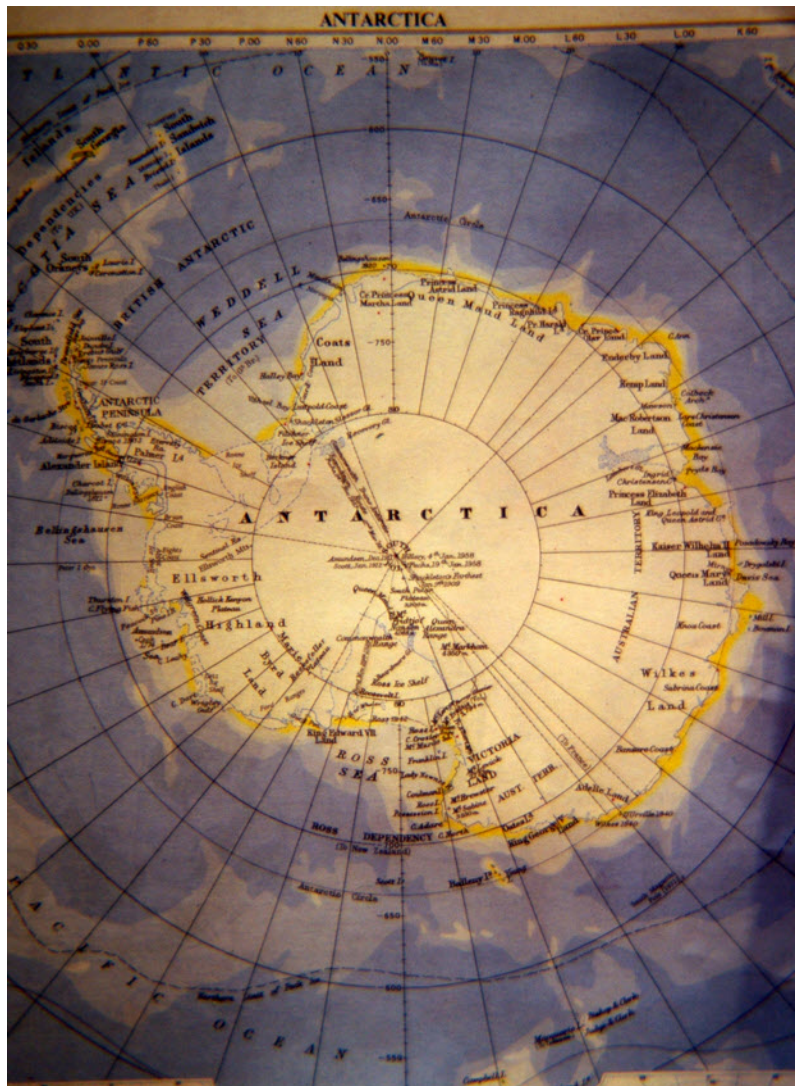
Tera Nova Leaves for Sea

when peoples true character come out. Bowers thrived in this situation & appeared calm & confident whilst many of the men were nervous and anxious. Frank Debenham, the Australian geologist and later 1st Director of the SPRI wrote:

".....leaden sky and the mournful howl of the wind in the rigging were depressing enough, but when in addition I watched the ship lurching like a sodden log, each wave sweeping green across the main deck where it had breached the bulwarks, washing the deck cargo overboard bit by bit, and when healing sullenly to the wave that had just passed, she buried the lee covers of the main hatch under water, I thought it a horrid sight indeed and staggered down below again. I was overtaken by Birdie who slapped me on the back and said - 'Isn't that a wonderful sight; didn't I tell you that a sailors life is the only one worth living?' I probably said, "You can have it..."

In the early stages of the storm it became vital to shorten sail and put up the storm sails. Bowers volunteers to go forward with four others and Cherry Apsley-Garrard records "...they went out on to the bowsprit and were buried deep in enormous seas every time the ship plunged into them with great force. It was a real education to see him lead those men out into that roaring inferno."

As the storm increased rising to force 10 with 40 foot waves, Campbell and Bowers were on the bridge. watching helplessly as the ship rolled so that the main hatch submerged beneath the sea. For a few moments, it appeared as though the end were near, but slowly she righted herself. By this time stores had broken free of lashings and were sliding around



South Pole Map The route they were to take

the deck acting as battering rams. During this mayhem and to make matters worse, the ship's pumps suddenly clog and the water in the bilges begins to rise. They are now in serious danger of foundering! Scott seemed paralysed by the situation and Teddy Evans organizes the men into a chain to bail with buckets, which they continued to do for two days and nights but fail to reduce the water level. Disregarding the danger of shifting cargo, Teddy Evans, Bowers and the ship's carpenter now go below and reach the pumps by cutting through a bulkhead. They submerged themselves under the icy water to access and clear the strum boxes allowing the pumps to now successfully lower the water level. On returning on deck there is a general cheer from the crew! By the time the storm had eased, one dog had been lost and Oates reported the loss of two ponies, ironically named Davy & Jones.

On 8th December 1910, the Terra Nova entered the pack ice & Bowers & Evans spend much of the time in the crows nest acting as ice pilots. 22 days later they finally broke through the last of the pack ice and into the open Ross Sea. They set course for the Eastern edge of Ross Is. where it met the Great Ice Barrier, a sheet of snow and ice several hundred feet high & comparable to the size of France. After failing to in an attempt to land at Cape Crozier they sailed round the island passing Cape Royds and eventually chose a small headland which Scott names Cape Evans in honour of his 2nd in command. The job of unloading the ship began. As storekeeper this



McMurdo Sound & Ross Island

finished hut on 17th January. Bowers, who had worked non-stop since their arrival, had been the chief architect of the winter quarters and would, in all but name, run the base.

Scott's priority before the onset of the long Antarctic winter was to lay storage depots along the route to the South Pole all the way up to 80 South. The polar parties would then use these stores the following year. January was now more than half over & it was vital that they were soon



The Great Ice Barrier

was Bowers' moment and he immediately took charge of unloading and organizing the stores. Ponting the expedition's photographer, remarks: "...from the hour we landed, this capable young officer became Scott's right hand in everything connected with stores." Working 14 hrs a day, they hauled the stores 1½ miles from the ship to Cape Evans. By 12th January, all the stores had been landed and the job of erecting the pre-fabricated hut was commenced. The winter party of 23 members officially moved into the



The Hut



Mount Erabus

on their way. Scott now turns to Bowers, who has been battling with mountains of stores and equipment on Cape Evans beach, to also organise all of the depot party's gear by 25th January. It was a daunting task, as sledging rations had to be carefully counted and minutely weighed. He worked tirelessly and, whilst others rested, he was constantly at work listing and weighing amounts needed for each man for each day for the long haul to the pole.

Whilst others slept at night, Bowers turned his bunk into an office and continued working. In fact he proved so capable that the first depot parties were able to leave a day early. Gran, the Norwegian ski expert wrote:

16

"Bowers had been preparing lists of everything that had to be taken. 'How much have we forgotten then?' ..asked Scott jokingly. 'Nothing, absolutely nothing'...replied the competent Birdie. Indeed no omissions occurred, which could be set at his door. Bowers was a really tremendous man."



Bowers with the Stores



The route to Beardsmore Glacier

Bowers was so busy that he was the last of the depot party to leave. He was by this time, extremely exhausted but also had a bad knock on his knee, which he had received from one of the ponies. Apsley C-Garrard records that Bowers came to him to help bandage it, as he did not want the doctors to know, afraid that they would stop him going forward with the others. He had had no sleep for 72 hours. The route to Beardsmore Glacier. The route they were to take laying down the depots can be seen.....

The aim was now to proceed south as far as 80 , establishing food and provision depots on the way that can be used the following season for the race to the South Pole.

As they pushed southwards, it became increasingly apparent that the ponies were not only of a rather poor quality, but were also very inferior to the dogs. The dogs were not only faster, but also quickly adapted to conditions. The ponies struggled in the soft snow and made slow progress. They eventually

reach 79 South on 12th February 1911 where they set up Bluff Camp - still only 90 miles from Hut Point. Scott wrote in his journal of Bowers:

"Throughout the night he has worn no head gear, but a common green felt hat kept on with a chin stay and affording no cover for the ears. His face and ears remain bright red - I have never seen anyone so unaffected by the cold. Tonight he remained outside for a full hour after the rest of us had got into the tent. He was simply pottering about doing small jobs to the sledges, etc."



Ponies

Scott finally gives the order to turn back and they make their

last depot of the season - One Ton Depot - 142 miles from Hut Point, 79° 28,5'S. This was 31.5 miles short of his target of 80 S & this would weigh heavily on his mind when later they were stranded in a blizzard for days, 11 miles short of One Ton Depot. Oates tries to persuade Scott to continue and kill the weak ponies, leaving the meat for the return journey from the pole the following season. Scott would have none of it and insists on turning back to the winter camp at Cape Evans taking the sick and weak ponies with them.

## 17

Scott returns to Cape Armitage and the Discovery Hut to hear further devastating news. Amunson had made camp at the Bay of Whales on the Eastern end of the Ross Ice Shelf - 1° closer to the Pole than their camp at Cape Evans. (i.e. 60 miles). Not only was he closer, but also had landed over 100 fit capable dogs. (Scott had only 32) This must have been extremely depressing for Scott.

Scott now orders Bowers, P. O. Tom Crean and Apsley C-Garrard to take the four remaining ponies together with sledges and supplies, over the sea ice, round Cape Armitage and back to the winter camp at Cape Evans,

The three men and four ponies descended from the Barrier onto the sea ice and it soon became apparent that the ice was unstable and with cracks appearing between the flows. With darkness fast approaching Bowers decides to take no risks, turns inwards from off the cracking ice, onto old sound ice, threw up pony walls, and camped. At 4.30AM, Bowers hears a noise and steps outside. He writes in his journal:

"I cannot describe my feeling. We were in the middle of a floating pack of broken ice. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing solid, it was all broken up and heaving up and down on the swell - long black tongues of water everywhere. The flow on which we had camped had split right under one of the ponies. He had gone and a dark streak of water showed the place where the ice had opened under him."

They were on an ice flow, which measured only 30 yards across. They gathered up all the gear and slowly jumped with the ponies from flow to flow towards the ice barrier shelf. Suddenly they realized that they had some sinister unwanted company in the form of killer whales cruising between the flows, attacking and killing seals. After 6 hours they were close to the Barrier. With bitter realization, they find there is a broad lane of water between the last flow and the barrier. Cruising in this channel, which was filled with smashed ice and was heaving up and down, were again the killer whales. Scott immediately orders

them to abandon the ponies and make their way onto the barrier. Next morning, Bowers sharp eyes again saw the ponies in the distance on a flow and proposes trying to rescue them, to which Scott agrees. One of the ponies now falls in and Oates kills it with one stroke of an ice axe before the killer whales can get to it. They now manage to save one pony by getting him up a make shift ramp onto the barrier, leaving just one pony, Bowers' favourite named 'Uncle Bill', still marooned on a flow.

Getting ever dangerous with the flows breaking up, Scott orders every one back up onto the barrier but Bowers pretends not to hear. After many hours efforts, during which Scott repeatedly orders Bowers to abandon the pony, who has in the meantime fallen in the water and been hauled out again, he is forced to admit defeat.



Ponies on Ice Flows



Hut Point

Unwilling to leave the last pony for the whales, Bowers grabs an ice axe, kills the pony with one blow and jumps across the water from the flow to the barrier. Scott takes the loss of a further three ponies very badly! 16 men were now marooned at the Discovery expedition hut at Hut Point waiting for the sea to freeze over so that they can return to Cape Evans and the winter quarters. Bowers works feverishly salvaging and hauling provisions back to the hut & records in his journal. "I found a steady

plod up a steep hill is less

exhausting than a rush and a number of rests. This theory I put into practice with great success. I don't know whether everyone saw eye to eye with me over the idea of getting to the top



Mount Erabus



Sea Ice

without a spell. After the second sledge was up Atkinson (the surgeon) said: 'I don't mind you as a rule but there are times when I positively hate you' Not until the end of April, eight weeks later, was the sea ice firm enough for the 16 men to return to the winter quarters. On the 23rd April, the sun set for good and the long six month Antarctic winter night descended on the party. During the winter months, the men tended to turn, for advice, sympathy or just to smooth over disputes, to Wilson, Bowers and Oates. Wilson writes home to his wife, asking her to visit Bowers mother saying:

"I should so like you to go and see them, he is such a brick. He takes the edge off a lot of difficulties for everyone by accepting everything that is said to him as a matter of course in the most solemn manner imaginable. He then becomes irresistibly humorous, and there isn't a thing that happens that he does not find a funny side to. He is the perfect treasure

- and improves every day!" Bowers also helped to set up three meteorological screens at varying distances from the hut. The farthest and most difficult was the one checked and recorded by Bowers on a daily basis, usually accompanied by Wilson. In early June, Wilson sketches Bowers as he checks the readings, whilst Ponting, the expedition photographer, captures the scene with a flash.

18

Bowers was the first up in the morning and almost always the last to bed. Using his bunk as a desk and standing on a chair he worked continually at not only organizing the stores and



Met Screen



Bowers at Met Screen. By Wilson

working out what rations had to be left at each depot but also writing for the expedition's paper, 'The Polar Times'. Bowers at Bunk First thing in the morning, he would be

outside the hut in the snow, usually only with Wilson, to strip off and have a snow wash. No one else it appeared to appreciate the pleasure of snow baths. Previously, whilst approaching Antarctica, he and Wilson had been the only ones to have a daily wash on deck with a bucket of ice slush thrown over them. Bowers carried on long after Wilson had given up!

Bowers loved helping others! For the geologists he collected rock. In the kitchens he helped the Expedition cook. He helped Oates with the daily exercise of the 10 remaining ponies, taking particular fancy to Victor, the largest, whom he road bareback for exercise. The Meteorologist, George Simpson, was also helped with the launching and retrieving of the large balloons and he recorded later:

".....one day I had just released a balloon when I exclaimed to Bowers, 'Damn it all, I have forgotten to take the number of the instrument.' Bowers replied it was No.23. I was surprised for



Bowers at his "office" bunk

I did not know that he knew there was a number stamped on each instrument. After expressing my surprise, I added, 'I suppose you did not notice the number of the

instrument that I sent up last week.' 'Yes', he replied, 'that was no.15.' I don't think I have ever met a man, other than a scholar, who had such a good memory. I can only add my testimony to the splendid character of the man. Indefatigable, helpful, cheerful and humorous and, above all, dependable. What more can one expect of a man? It was no wonder that he was, with Wilson, the favourite of the whole expedition."

Scott was amazed by Bowers' industriousness and wrote:

"Bowers is for the open air, seemingly incapable of realizing any discomfort from it and yet his hours within doors spent with equal profit. For he is intent on tracking the problems of sledging food and clothing to their innermost bearings and is becoming an authority on past records. This will be of no small help to me and one which others never could have given."

## 19

In May Scott announced his plans for the coming season for the attempt on the South Pole. He proposes to leave at the beginning of November & return at the end of March. This meant a sledge journey of 144 days & came as a shock to some members of the party. The end of March was too late to leave Antarctica and would mean another winter at Cape Evans!

Much discussion was had on the merits of dogs versus ponies, with Scott having little confidence in the dogs, but relying on the ponies to get them the bulk of their provisions as far as the Beardmore Glacier. They would then man-haul the sledges the 10,000 feet up the glacier, across the plateau to the Pole, return on the same route and man haul all the way back to Cape Evans.

It was a daunting prospect but the challenge greatly appealed to Bowers.

Oates keenly felt the pressure and what he considered were the unreasonable expectations from his 10 remaining ponies. A mid-winter dinner was held to celebrate Scott's birthday and he comments with amazement what Bowers has managed to provide the cook from his hidden unrecorded stores. Before leaving England, it had been Wilson's ambition to make a winter trip, in the darkness of permanent night, to Cape Crozier to study the Emperor Penguins whom they had visited on the discovery expedition. He had confided to Scott that he would only do it with the two members he most admired and liked. He chose Apsley C-Garrard and Bowers.

(Describe male role in roosting on eggs in winter)

No one had ever travelled extensive distances in



Emperor Penguins - Wilson

Antarctica during winter and they would have to drag 800 lbs of gear and provisions more than 70 miles to the opposite end of the island. The trip was to be one of the

most dramatic episodes of the

expedition. By far the most graphic description was immortalised by C-Garrard in his book 'The Worst Journey in the World'. It is a brilliant and compelling book, a Polar classic which, all these years later, is still in print. Setting off in the dark they man hauled the sledge and after rounding cape Armitage see the 'Southern Lights' and also the incredible sight of an eruption on Mt. Erabus. After rounding cape Armitage the wind stiffened and blew mercilessly in their



Dinner in the Hut

faces. 20 Man hauling became more difficult and they had to relay the load due to the sledge sinking into the snow. This meant that they had to walk three times the distance. The temperatures dropped steadily to -30 , then -40 , and then -50 . Finally it was averaging -60 . Two days out and both Wilson and Cherry-Garrard were frostbitten on fingers, face and feet. Bowers seemed quite immune and even when the night temperature dropped to -75; Bowers snored loudly throughout the night. Specially made reindeer sleeping bags gave trouble from the start as moisture from



Bowers, Wilson & Apsley C-Garrard

their bodies saturated material and then froze solid. Bags weighing 50 lbs. soon weighed over 100 lbs. The bags froze into grotesque shapes and took quite some time to thaw out after entry at



Wilson

night. After a night spent shivering, the men would turn out and quickly stuff clothing into the mouths

of their bags. Once frozen these plugs provided openings for them to get back in the following evening. The cold was so intense that it required 4 or 5 hours to get underway in the morning. Their clothing became like boards and stuck out at all angles, making it extremely uncomfortable and difficult to move. Wilson and Cherry-Garrard suffered greatly, but Bowers appeared almost unaffected and therefore devoted time to camp work, chores, and scientific reading.

George Simpson, the expedition's meteorologist, later called Bowers' meteorological log a



masterpiece. Observations were taken three times a day, regardless of weather conditions, with results recorded by candlelight. It was only when their tent was blown away in a gale that the observations fell to ONE a day. On 15th June, the men staggered onto cape Crozier and, totally exhausted,



Tent in Snow

spent 5 days building a stone igloo/hut. It was so small that the left some of their gear in a tent beside the hut. They proceeded down to the penguin colony, with great difficulty. Bowers puts his leg through



3 Man Tent

a tide crack and immersing one of his legs in the water, which instantly froze. They quickly gathered 5 eggs and begin their long hike back to the igloo through steep rubble, fractured ridges and masses of ice. Two of the eggs burst in Cherry's mitts. Eventually they get back just as a blizzard hits. They climb into the stone hut, which is now rapidly filling with snow from between the cracks. After managing to light the blubber stove, Wilson gets a spit of burning oil directly in his eye which was not only excruciatingly painful but incapacitates him for several days.

21

Next morning, in the half-light of the winter Antarctic day there is an eerie stillness, which is the sign of the imminent arrival of another storm. Within minutes, there was a howling gale and their tent had been blown away. All that remained was some equipment and belongings on the open ground. The tent on which they would rely on their journey home had simply disappeared. To compound their troubles, they now find that the soldered feed



Cape Crozier Sketch

pipe to the stove had fallen off, rendering it useless. It was a desperate situation, as they could not survive without hot food.

The canvas roof of the stone/igloo hut was now causing them acute concern. Suddenly it explodes into pieces the size of pocket-handkerchiefs and disappears downwind. They now all dive into their bags and roll together for warmth and to block drifts of snow from separating them.

They stayed that way for two whole days and nights and Bowers records:

"I was resolved to keep warm - I paddled my feet and sang all the songs and hums I knew to pass the time. I would occasionally thump Bill and as he still moved and was groaning with the pain of his eye, I knew he was alive - what a birthday for him."

Eventually there was a lull in the storm and they managed to fabricate a crude stove out of a tin, and using their cooking oil managed to get their first hot meal for 48 hours. With no tent, a makeshift stove and low on cooking oil, they set about planning how they would get back the 70 miles to Cape Evans.

In the half-light of the next day, Bowers successfully searches and finds the tent intact and undamaged over ½ mile away. Buoyed up by this incredible bit of luck, the irrepressible Bowers immediately suggests they make another try at the penguin rookery but is overruled by Wilson who decides they must return to the base camp at Cape Evans. And so the pitiful party now pile all their gear onto the sledge. Bowers is the strongest. Wilson is still suffering from his burnt eye and also frostbite. Cherry- Garrard, who had not been sleeping and was permanently cold, was weakest and failing fast. In an act of supreme charity, Bowers gives Cherry-Garrard the eiderdown lining for his sleeping bag. He had

been offering it for some time as Cherry was in a pitiful state but he now finally relents and takes the eiderdown. This self-sacrificing gesture made a huge impression on Cherry-Garrard and one, which will stay with him for the rest of his life. The journey home was excruciating, with even Bowers falling asleep whilst marching due to the combined effects of acute exhaustion, the intense cold and insufficient rations.

22

On the 28th July, Cherry-Garrard records that even Bowers was shivering in his sleeping bag. Bowers records:

"I was beginning to think that I could stand anything, but when one has to deal with 109 degrees below freezing, I did not want to ask for more." Bowers runs out of luck when, trudging along in darkness, an ice bridge over a crevasse gives way and he plunges down, only halted in his fall by the sledge harness which leaves him suspended. Cherry-Garrard records:

"It was a near go for Birdie ; the crevasse was probably 100 foot deep and did not narrow up as it went down. We were just too weak to pull him up."

Whilst suspended, Bowers remarkably suddenly thinks up a new way of getting out using an alpine rope for his foot. Afterwards it became standard practice - a remarkable presence of mind by an exhausted frozen man suspended on a rope.

On 1st August, after 36 days, they struggle into the base hut. Cherry in his extensive account of the trip to Cape Crozier, concludes:

"Antarctic exploration is seldom as bad as you imagine, seldom as bad as it sounds, but this journey has beggared our language - no words could express its horror." The party took some time to recover, but were soon happy to record the events in a lighter amusing way for the 'South Polar Times'. Wilson contributes the hieroglyphics.

1. Asterisks mean snow - Crowns Aurora Borealis. The smallest figure is Bowers.- It is dark and sometimes the stars are shining. The cold air flowing down the Barrier.-

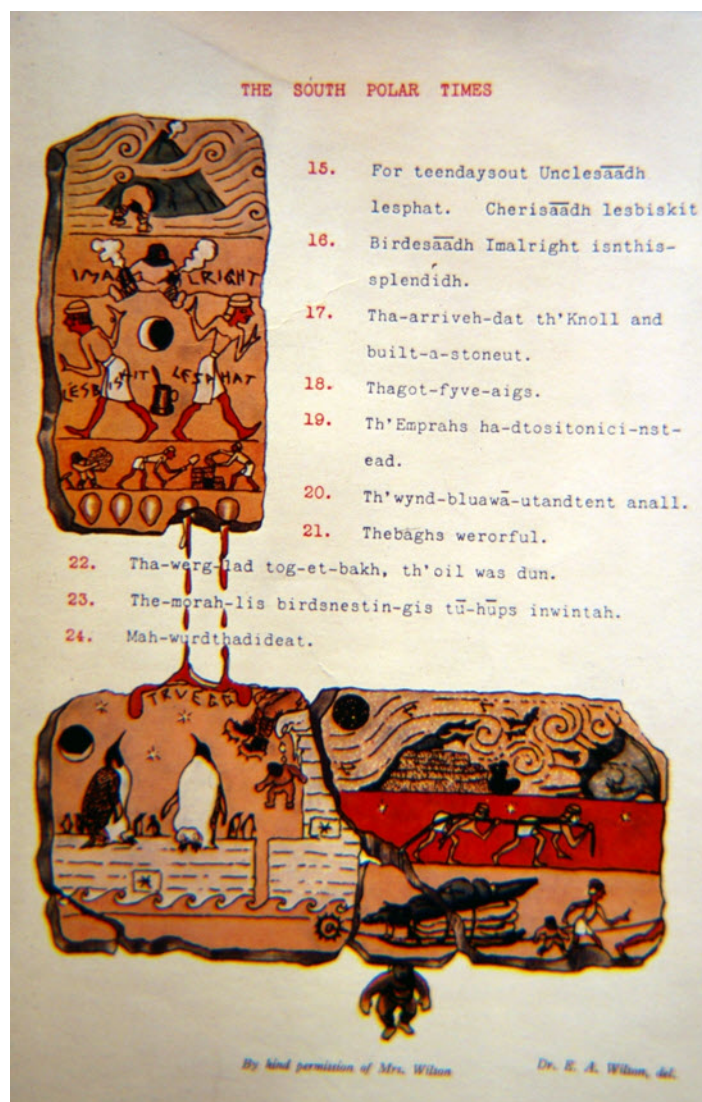
Going back for the second sledge. The various nose protections - except Birdie. Birdie's special home made hat. 2. The find emperors not having eggs are holding lumps of ice. Bowers jumping down onto the ice with Wilson following. The tide cracks the ice - The moon is going away. The wind blows away the tent and it is dark - Bowers pulled out of crevasse. Heading for home - Tent on top of sledge as too frozen to fold.

23

Back at the hut and recovering from the effects of the trip, Bowers was within one day making tentative plans for a return journey to the rookery the following season. Scott writes in his journal of Bowers:



Crevasse about four days out from Cape Evans



"I believe he is the hardest traveller that ever undertook a Polar journey, as well as one of the most undaunted; more by hint than direct statement I gather his value to the party, his untiring energy and the astonishing physique which enables him to continue to work under conditions which are paralysing to others. Never was there such a sturdy, active, undefeatable little man." Bowers is soon back in the thick of it again preparing the rations and stores for the forthcoming season, as well as about everything else in the camp. However he still finds time to get Herbert Ponting to teach him how to operate the expeditions camera. Ponting was an exceptional photographer and taught a number of members, the most proficient of which turned out to be Debenham and Bowers. In the middle of August Scott announced that he would lead a small expedition to the Ferrar Glacier consisting of Simpson, Taff Evans and Bowers. Bowers inclusion surprised many of the shore party in the hut as he had joined as a junior officer with little chance of doing anything except as part of the Terra Nova's crew. Not only had he been selected for the shore party, but also now for Scott's initial spring expedition prior to the main push for the pole. In the final days of October, the motor sledges roared to life and Teddy Evans departs south to the accompaniment of cheers with each sledge hauling one ton of supplies. The route south was to be ..... On 1st November,



Bowers with stores

the ponies were bought out and harnessed to their sledges. As always, Bowers is almost the last to leave, having been checking off stores and supplies for everyone else.

Meanwhile, Teddy Evans' motorised party was already in trouble. They were less than 100 miles from Cape Evans and both motorised sledges had blown their cylinders and could not be repaired. Evans now had no alternative but to organise the men into two parties and manually haul the two tons to the various staging depots on the route to the pole.

Also, the ponies, after starting well, soon started to show signs that they would not accomplish what was expected and progress was slow.



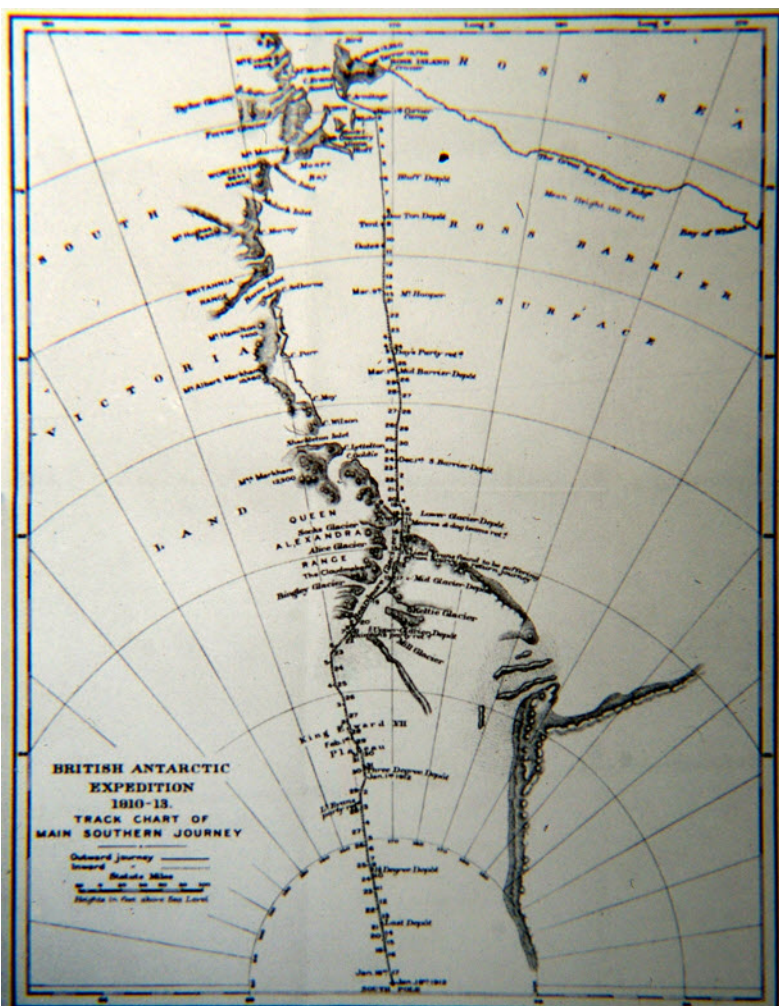
Group shot of all Shore Party

24

Just two weeks in and the expedition was already getting behind schedule. Teddy Evans' man hauling party were already exhausted and hungry, as no provision had been made in rations for the huge number of calories that are required to haul overloaded sledges as against sitting in a motor sledge. By the 21st November, both the dogs and ponies had overtaken Evans' party.

By the end of November, the southern most party was nearing the Beardsmore Glacier, the route to the 10,000 feet high Polar Plateau. Already some of the ponies had been shot after weakening and sinking into the soft snow and also because they were required as food for the dogs. One pony gave food for all the dogs for two days!

On 5th December, close to the bottom of the Beardsmore Glacier, a storm hit them and the temperature rose. Rain fell and men returned to their tents soaking. Confined to tents, all their kit became saturated and by 7th December, they started to eat the rations that were



specifically reserved for the plateau. This meant that the party going to the Pole would have to go short on the rations on the return journey. By now, they are considerably behind schedule. The last of the ponies are shot and fed to the dogs.

Scott now decides to get Meares to take the dogs up the glacier. On 11th December, Meares, Dimitri and the dog sledges, having come much further and longer than Scott and many other members of the expedition expected, is ordered to return to base camp. On



the 450 miles back to Cape Evans, they made the sacrifice of going without meals, rather than take food from the depots, which would be vital for the returning party. Now they were all hauling sledges, although it should be pointed out that Teddy Evans' party had all been doing so for over a month and were physically exhausted. Evans was also suffering from the first signs of scurvy. Conditions on the march up the glacier had been terrible, with soft snow and many of the men suffering from snow blindness - Although still marching. Bowers suffered from this and, for four days, walked blind as well as being unable to write in his journal. On 21st December, 300 miles from the Pole, they built Upper Glacier Depot and stored most of their remaining food. Atkinson, the Surgeon, Wright (scientist/physicist), Cherry-Garrard (zoologist), and P.O. Keohane are now ordered to return to Cape Evans.

25

The remaining team now consisted of Scott with Oates, Wilson and Taff Evans in one group and Teddy Evans with

P. O. Lashly, P. O. Crean and Bowers in the other. Oates was not in good shape and on 19th December had written in his private journal: "My feet are giving me a lot of trouble!"

On Christmas day 1911, the two parties finally reach the plateau. Teddy Evans is now showing clear signs of faltering and scurvy after he and his men had hauled



Beardsmore to S. Pole

their sledges over 600 miles. Bowers

meanwhile shows no sign of tiredness.

On New Year's Eve, Scott for no obvious reason, orders teddy Evans party to cache their skis and proceed southwards on foot whilst his party continues on skis. On 1st January 1912, Scott orders the sledges to be cut down from 12 to 10 feet for ease of handling on the plateau. In the bitter cold wind, Taff Evans badly cuts his hand, a fact he now conceals from Scott for fear of not being included in the final party. In the rarefied air at 10,000 feet, the wound would not only have difficulty in healing but also be liable to develop gangrene.

On 3rd January, Scott walks over to Teddy Evans tent and asks everyone to step outside except his 2nd in command. Scott then informs Evans that he and his sledge team, with one exception, are now to return to the base camp at Cape Evans. This would have been deeply disappointing for Evans as when he originally joined the

expedition as 2nd in command, it was on the promise and understanding that he would be in the final party to the Pole.

Scott then asks Evans if he would consent for Bowers to be included in the final team as the fifth man! This was asking Evans to make a real sacrifice, as the sledge required four men and taking into account the possibility of illness or injury on the return journey left no safety margin. In the event they came within a hair's breadth of death by starvation, scurvy and exhaustion.

Scott's sudden decision to include Bowers in the final party was not only a shock but must have been unplanned, for the following reasons: All supplies had been worked out on the basis of 4 men. The tent was only designed for 4 men. All arrangements had always been for 4 men. The cookers held 4 mugs, 4 pannikins & 4 spoons. Additional cooking for 5 men would take longer and needed more fuel.

## 26

Bowers had no skis, having been told to leave them behind for days previously.

However Scott had made his mind up and it may have been his desire for a representative party to share in the glory of the success of being first at the Pole. Also it may have been without Teddy Evans, who had been doing all the navigating, Scott wanted a replacement, as on the journey to the Pole, he made NO attempt at navigating and fixing their position. He left it all to Bowers who toiled at Navigation long after the others had turned in for sleep.

As the other party headed back north, Teddy Evans grew weaker by the day, until he finally collapsed and was placed on the sledge with all the provisions, stores and tent to be dragged by the two remaining men. He told them to leave him behind and save themselves, but loyally they pushed on for several hundred miles until, 30 miles short of the base they could go no further. Only by the heroic effort of P. O. Tom Crean walking alone without food and water for two days back to the Hut at Cape Armitage for help, were Evans and Lashly snatched from the jaws of death. A dog team, under the control of Atkinson and Dimitri raced to the tent where Evans was within hours of death to convey him back to the security of the base. For his courage, Tom Crean was awarded the Albert Medal, the forerunner to the George Cross.

Meanwhile, Scott's team were 150 miles from their goal. Bowers, the only man on foot whilst others skied, seemed tireless. Not only was he doing a share of all the chores on setting up and striking camp, but he was also doing the navigating (with sextant and theodolite) and keeping a meticulous meteorological journal.

George Simpson later wrote: "The log is an almost perfect meteorological record, with eye observations of wind, cloud and weather set down with ample and clear remarks."

However, even as Bowers eventually starts to tire, keeping up with the others on skis, Oates condition was steadily deteriorating. His feet were now causing him anxiety with the onset of frostbite and the result of the bitter cold on the Beardsmore Glacier.

Taff Evans' hand had not healed due to the intense cold, poor diet and altitude and it was now fairly useless. Additionally he became careless and his face got constantly bitten. Even Bowers, for the first time, started to feel the cold, probably due to lack of food and sleep.

## 27

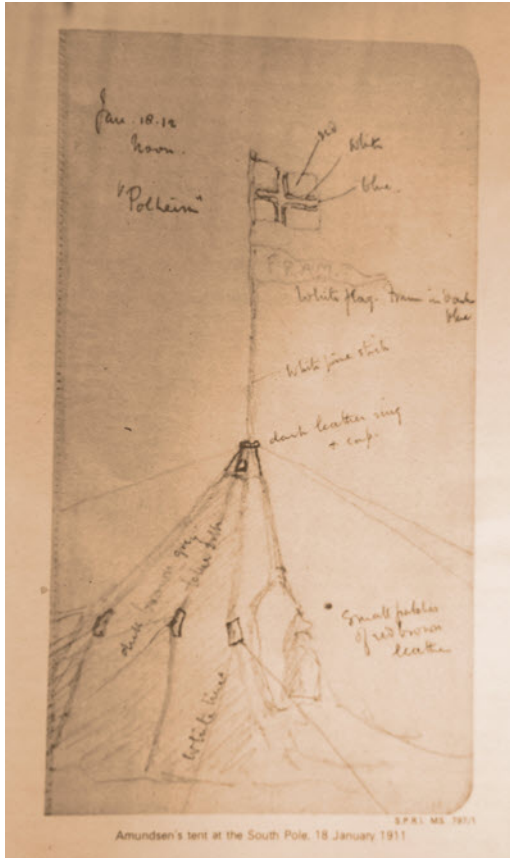
Finally of the 15th January, they set up their last camp before the Pole, which is now only 27 miles away. Bowers stays up late, gets sights and works out their position. Next morning the party got under way and within minutes of starting their march after lunch, Bowers sharp eyes pick up a cairn amid the flat landscape. Marching onwards they soon see a tattered black flag and a tent with the Norwegian flag. All around the tent were the paw marks of what appeared to be dozens of sledge dogs! It must have been a crushing blow for them all, and particularly Scott, to have come so far, and endured so much only to find that Amundson had beaten him to the Pole.

A number of writers have intimated that an air of depression settled on the group. From the papers that I have read I cannot detect anything but slight disappointment. Wilson sketched the Norwegian's tent with the colour codes for a watercolour or pastel that he intended to make on his return. Bowers took numerous photographs of everyone with a remote string to the camera. When Ponting developed the film taken by Bowers, he found one shot, unfortunately out of focus, with them all laughing, obviously at some mishap by Bowers. Henry also found time to write to his Mother:

"I don't suppose you ever thought your son would be at the apex of the earth. Well, here I really am and very glad to be here too. It is a bleak spot - what a place to strive so hard to reach. I am nearer you here than at the winter quarters, in fact a rapid flight up the Greenwich Meridian would be my shortest way home. Now the great journey is done and it only remains for us to get home."

Having lingered long enough, they packed their sledge and headed on the long journey back to the Base. The wind, which had been constantly in their faces, was now on their backs, enabling them to rig a sail on the sledge. However, they were all tired and suffering with frostbite on their noses and cheeks, with Evans appearing listless and Oates increasingly troubled by his feet.

In late January, the weather starts to turn and there are signs that the all too short Antarctic summer is coming to an end. On 25th January, Scott writes that he and Bowers were the only members without troubles. Evans, the biggest and strongest of the party, appears to weaken the most. Oates too, was being bothered by his old war wound that was threatening to re-open due to a lack of Vitamin C.



Amundson's Tent

28

On 29th January Scott records:

"... Evans has dislodged two fingernails tonight; His hands are really in a bad state, and to my surprise shows signs of loosing heart over it. He hasn't been too cheerful since the accident.." - He had fallen down a crevasse!

On 31st January they reach the spot where Teddy Evans' party had cached their skis and Bowers at last retrieves his set. He had marched 360 miles on foot whilst his colleagues had been on skis!!

On 4th February they stumble into a mass of crevasses. Scott and Evans both fall into one, the second time for Evans. Evans probably got concussed at this point because he became dull and incapable. On the 6th February they find their way blocked and have to retrace their steps to where they were the previous day. Evans by this time had lost all his fingernails and his wounds were suppurating with gangrene. Reaching the Upper Glacier



The Party at the Pole

Depot they find one full days rations short. Only Scott was now writing a regular daily journal although Bowers was still continuing with his meticulous meteorological log. By mid-February, as they neared the bottom of the Glacier, Evans becomes totally disorientated and Oates comments:

"Evans says that he could not go on. If he does not get up by tomorrow, God knows how we are going to get him home. We cannot possibly take him on the sledge."

The following day Evans lags behind and all four ski back to find him on his knees barely conscious. They erect a tent and Evans slips into a coma and dies shortly afterwards. He died at the foot of Beardsmore Glacier with 300 miles of the open ice barrier between them and the base.

Progress thereafter was slow, with only 6 or 7 miles posted a day, far short of what was needed. Not only was food short, which resulted in lack of energy, but also they were finding that 2/3 of the fuel at the depots had evaporated.

The weather now turned unseasonably cold with temperatures way below what they had experienced at 10,000 feet on the plateau. From now on until their final camp they were to experience constant temperatures of -30 to -45 Fahrenheit.

## 29

On 2nd March, events reached a crisis with another fuel shortage being found at the middle barrier and Oates revealing that his feet had turned gangrenous. It is unlikely that he can go much further. Twelve days later, at camp in the tent, Oates now says that he cannot carry on and asks them to leave him in his bag when they leave, to which Scott refuses. Two days later, he was still with them when, on the morning of the 16th they wake to find themselves tent bound in a furious blizzard. Sometime that day, he gets out of his bag and says: "I am just going outside and may be some time." ...and disappears out of the tent into the blizzard, never to be seen again. It was his 32nd birthday.

Now desperate, with Scott suffering from frostbitten feet, they strike camp setting out desperately for One Ton Camp in the howling wind and blizzard. On 18th March, Scott records that they are 21 miles from One Ton Depot and his right foot had gone. Still maintaining his journal he records:

"I don't know what I would do if Bowers and Wilson weren't so determinedly cheerful over things. Bowers and Wilson are still confident of getting through - I don't know."

On 21st March, with virtually no rations or fuel, they are stopped by another blizzard just 11 miles short of One Ton Depot. They make camp, hoping to set out on their final journey to the depot the following morning. It was to be their final stop as the following day the blizzard continued.

Bowers and Wilson now make plans to make a dash for the depot, leaving Scott in the tent. Waiting for the blizzard to abate the both write final letters to their loved ones. Bowers writes to his Mother:

"As this may possibly be my last letter to you - I am sorry it is such a scribble. I have written little since we left the Pole but it has not been for the want of thinking of you and the dear girls. We have had a terrible journey back. Seaman Evans died in the glacier and Oates left us the other day. We have had terrible low temperatures and that, and our sick companions have delayed us till too late in the season which has made us very short of fuel and we are now out of food as well. Each depot has been a harder struggle to reach but I am strong and hope to reach this one with Dr. Wilson and get the food and fuel necessary for our lives. God alone knows what will be the outcome of the 22 miles we have to make but my trust is still in Him and in the abounding grace of my Lord and Saviour. Although the end will be painless enough for myself I should so like to come through for your sake. It is splendid to pass however with such companions as I have and as all of us have mothers and wives you will not be alone. There will be no shame however and you will know that I have struggled to the end."

It is clear from this that Bowers and Wilson still wanted to get to One Ton Depot.

30

Whatever happened in that tent between 21st to 29th March we will never truly know, as the only records are Scott's. The last words in his journal on 29th March.

"I don't think we can hope for any better things now. We shall sit it out to the end, but are getting weaker of course and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity but I do not think I can write any more."

The following season, on 8th November a search party reached and camped overnight at One Ton Depot. On the following day they came across Scott's tent and the frozen bodies. There is an assumption or even myth that Scott was the last to die which was heavily promoted after the event in the media. Wright, who first spotted the tent, wrote that they found a message scribbled in Bowers' handwriting on the back of one of Scott's personal letters. It said: "Dr. Wilson's note to Mrs. Wilson is in the satchel in the instrument box with his diary and two sketch books."

It probably indicates that Wilson is already dead, but typical of Bowers that, up to the very end, he is thinking of others. It is also doubtful whether he would have written on the back of one of Scott's personal letters if he were still alive.

On the news reaching England, it soon dominated the newspapers. Churches, chapels and institutions all over the Empire organised memorial services including St Ninian's church in Rothesay and in St. Thomas's Cathedral in Bombay where the memorial plaque you see now was installed. All around India, the colonial service and forces mourned the passing of one of their own. On HMS Worcester, the cadets and OWS subscribed to a plaque, which was placed at the foot of the main mast in a tabernacle with the ship's bell. This simple plaque was unveiled by Sir Clements Markham and witnessed by Bowers' mother, Teddy Evans, Apsley Cherry-Garrard and Capt. Sir David Wilson-Barker. After the Worcester closed down it was stored in the vaults at Chatham Historic Dockyard. Five years ago it was



Worcester Bowers Plaque

removed and installed in a prominent position, on a wall outside the library of the SPRI, the Cambridge Institute dedicated to his memory and that of his colleagues with whom he died.



St Thomas's Plaque - Bombay

31

I ought to mention that Teddy Evans, despite his falling out with Scott, worked tirelessly doing lectures in the years following, raising money to pay off the Expedition debts. He rose to become a war hero, full Admiral, and given a hereditary peerage as Lord Mountevans of the Broke. There were many people who criticised Scott, but despite his differences, Evans never, in any of his books, wrote critically of his relationship with Scott.

The post publicity which lionized Scott and Oates, has to a large extent played down the huge role that Bowers had in

the Expedition. However, as Shackleton has been re-appraised in recent years as a good leader, I hope people will look upon Bowers in a new light in future years.

In conclusion of our talk, I would like to read the words of Cherry-Garrard who, with Edward Wilson, had done the winter trip to Cape Crozier. He felt a huge debt of gratitude to Bowers for his actions on the trip, which he says, saved their lives.

"as he was one of the two or three greatest friends of my life I find it hard to give the



Comdr. Teddy Evans

reader a mental picture of Birdie Bowers which will not appear extravagant. There were times when his optimism appeared forced and formal, though I believe it was not really so; there were times when I have almost hated him for his cheerfulness. To those accustomed to judge men by the standards of their fashionable and corseted drawing rooms Bowers appeared crude. 'You couldn't kill that man if you took a pole axe to him,' was the comment of a New Zealander at a dance at Christchurch. Such men may be at a discount in conventional life; but give me a snowy ice-flow waving about on the top of a black swell, a ship thrown back, a sledge party almost shattered and I will cry for Bowers to come and lead me to food and safety..... For him difficulties did not exist; he was temperamentally one who refused to admit them. There was nothing subtle about him. He was transparently simple, straightforward and unselfish."



Birdy Bowers