Mechanical centrifugal separators and their tank for recovering oil from the glue-water from the cookers

David Walton
Heritage

Sealers’ sites

Sealing began at South Georgia as a consequence of Captain Cook’s reports of abundant colonies of fur seals, with vessels arriving from Britain and then America from 1786. Sealers would often live in shelters and caves ashore for a few months and some wintered on the island. They used smaller boats called shallops to get around the bays.

There are many relics of the sealing period. Try-pots are the most widespread. They are large cast iron cauldrons with a capacity of around 400 litres, which were used for boiling up blubber from elephant seals to extract oil. Many of these were just left on beaches or close to the coast.

There is evidence of several caves having been used by sealers, such as those at Maiviken, Fortuna Bay, Will Point in Royal Bay, Dartmouth Point and Carlita Bay. Some have constructions such as hearths inside them and inscriptions on the walls.

There are also the remains of barrels, shallops and shipwrecks.

Many sealing remains have not survived the ferocious South Georgia weather. Ironically, another cause of damage and destruction of sealing remains has been the recovering fur seal population. For example, they are held responsible for flattening the hut ruin on the beach on the north side of Stromness Harbour and for exposing partly buried try-pots and sealers’ huts at Elsehul through soil erosion. Some sealing artefacts have been removed to the South Georgia Museum.

A full list of heritage sites, which includes sealers’ sites, is on the South Georgia website.

South Georgia Heritage Trust

The South Georgia Heritage Trust was established as a private, charitable and international entity in 2005 to raise funds to help South Georgia. It was recognised that Government income could not possibly address the range of challenges confronting South Georgia’s unique environmental and historical resources.

Trust funds help efforts to conserve and protect indigenous fauna and flora and raise awareness of threatened species, assist in efforts to preserve the historical heritage of South Georgia and increase international awareness of lessons and achievements of the human history of South Georgia. In particular the Norwegian branch of the Trust has raised funds to undertake the restoration of the whaling manger’s villa at Husvik. The Trust also supports the South Georgia Museum and helps to promote all forms of education about the island.

The Trust is a Scottish registered charity and has a board of seven international trustees from the USA, Norway, Sweden, Falkland Islands and UK. The Trust’s office is in Dundee, Scotland, and there is also a branch in Norway and a representative in the USA.

For further details see www.sght.org.

David Nicholls
Chairman Trustees, SGHT
Life at the Museum

It’s early in the morning and a couple of noisy elephant seals are fighting in front of the Museum – we hope they won’t knock anything over. The saturated golden light floods the mountains – funny how it changes from gold in summer to the pinker, rosier hues in winter. Sometimes the island feels like two different places as it varies from deep snow almost covering the windows, to the green abundance around the coasts in summer. As always we feel enormously privileged to live here.

In 1992, when we first sailed to South Georgia on our 28 foot engineless sailing boat, the Museum was only one step away from derelict. We had no power, water, or heat and there were just six cruise ship visits. The exhibits were only about whaling, and in just two rooms.

Now the Museum has grown to encompass all aspects of the island. There are eight main exhibition rooms and the Museum’s shop with the favourite attractions being the Shackleton exhibit and natural history.

The South Georgia Museum Trust also has responsibility for the church and the whalers’ cemetery, where Sir Ernest Shackleton is buried, and for the entire whaling station. The station is now more of an open-air Museum and visitors can wander through and look at the massive machinery, cookers, centrifuges and bone saws all used in the processing of the huge whale carcasses.

The first passengers from the cruise ship anchored in the cove are coming ashore. “You must be very lonely” says one. Hardly, there are over 6,000 visitors per year and in winter we have our friends at the British Antarctic Survey base to visit and ski with. “What do you do in the dark winter when there are no ships?” says another visitor. “That is when we do the bulk of the development work on the Museum, the accounts, the annual report, the inventories and indents – and it is really not dark with at least 7 hours of daylight at a minimum, and it’s a wonderful time to go skiing.”

Visitors come to view the incredible wildlife and scenery, but we also hope that from their visit to the South Georgia Museum they will carry with them better insights into this amazing and historic island.

Tim and Pauline Carr
Curators, South Georgia Museum

Remains of expeditions

South Georgia has been a key calling point for many expeditions on their way south as well as providing an important scientific focus for some. The earliest substantive remains of this type are those of the German International Polar Year Expedition in Moltke Harbour, Royal Bay. This small expedition overwintered here in 1882/83 and the remains of their encampment, including the granite blocks for mounting their magnetic instruments, can still be seen together with other detritus scattered around the site.

Whilst many of the later expeditions, like the Swedish Antarctic Expedition led by Nordenskjöld, left no physical remains their visits live on in the place names they proposed. Some visitors found their final resting place on the island, one of them being Sir Ernest Shackleton. Sailing south in 1923 on his last visit to the Southern Ocean, he died of a heart attack onboard the Quest at anchor at Grytviken and is buried in the cemetery there. His
shipmates raised a memorial cross on top of a stone cairn at Hope Point and beneath it they placed a signed photograph of the whole ships' company in a tribute to the man they called "The Boss".

Just behind the Grytviken cemetery on the hillside is a lone cross marking the death of Walter Slossarczyk, an officer from the German Antarctic Expedition lead by Wilhelm Filchner. He went out into King Edward Cove in a small boat on 26 November 1911 and, although the boat was found, his body was never recovered.

**Whaling stations**

South Georgia was one of the most important places in the world for whaling from the early 1900s until the 1960s. From 1904 to 1965, about 175,250 whales were killed and processed there.

Whaling was established on South Georgia by the Norwegian sealer and whaler Carl Anton Larsen. Whales were hunted mainly for the oil that can be rendered from their flesh, but also for meat and baleen. The first whaling station was built at Grytviken in 1904 and whales were so plentiful that they took 183 whales in their first year with one whaling ship operating just in Cumberland Bay.

Six shore stations were eventually built on South Georgia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Operational years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grytviken</td>
<td>1904–64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Harbour</td>
<td>1909–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leith Harbour</td>
<td>1909–65 (closed for one year in 1933 and for WWII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husvik Harbour</td>
<td>1910–31 and 1945–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stromness Harbour</td>
<td>1912–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Olav Harbour</td>
<td>1917–31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of floating factory ships were also used during this period. Gøtthul (1908–29) was a whaling storage depot for factory ships with only a rudimentary base ashore. In 1921, a small whalers' hut, still standing today, was built at Jason Harbour. The whalers' huts at Dartmouth Point and Hercules Bay are now ruins. There are two postal huts which date from the whaling period at Sörling Valley and Sandefjord Bay.

1925/26 was a record season, with a total catch of 7,825 whales, producing 404,457 barrels of whale oil. The Great Depression of 1929 slowed down the industry leading to the closure of Prince Olav Harbour and Stromness stations in 1931. Husvik Harbour also closed, but reopened in 1945.

By 1961/62, the British companies still operating on the island could no longer make a satisfactory profit. In the 1963/64 season Japanese companies took over, but also found the industry unprofitable. They closed the last shore station, Grytviken, in the 1964/65 season.

In the 1991 the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the leaseholders of the whaling stations, Christian Salvesen Ltd., funded a small scale and partial clean-up of the former whaling stations at Grytviken, Leith Harbour, Stromness and Husvik. Thereafter the whaling station leases reverted to the South Georgia Government.

The South Georgia Government funded a comprehensive environmental clean-up of Grytviken whaling station during 2003/04 to remove asbestos, oil and collapsing buildings (see page 48). A project is currently being undertaken to preserve the Manager’s Villa at Husvik by the South Georgia Heritage Trust using funds raised by the Norwegian Branch from Vestfold County. Norwegian volunteers restored the external part of the building in early 2006.
It is the long term aim of the South Georgia Government to clean up Leith, Stromness and Husvik whaling stations, which like Grytviken are riddled with asbestos and other hazardous substances, and make them safe for visitors. It is also their intention to conserve the Stromness Manager's Villa, as the iconic endpoint of Shackleton's epic journey. However, the Government do not currently have access to the very substantial resources which would be required to undertake this work. These stations therefore remain closed to visitors.

Norway has a significant cultural legacy on South Georgia. Norwegians managed and manned many of the island's whaling stations. All the whaling stations used Norwegian technology and many of the buildings, including the church in Grytviken, were of Norwegian design and materials. Many Norwegians are buried in the whaling station cemeteries, far from home. Whilst the stations were operating, the cemeteries were maintained by the whalers. Subsequently, some maintenance was undertaken by the British Antarctic Survey and the military garrisons stationed on the island. Since the early 1990s the South Georgia Museum Trust has maintained the Grytviken Cemetery, and maintenance work at the other cemeteries has also been funded by the Trust. A website, intended primarily for the families and friends of these men, gives details and photos of the graves (see www.wildisland.demon.co.uk).

King Edward Point

The Government settlement established at King Edward Point was built in 1912 to house the magistrate separately from the whaling companies. Various other functions were slowly added so that in due course the settlement grew to include a customs officer and policeman (with a gaol), communications with the Falklands, a post office, a meteorological station and, after 1925, the laboratories and accommodation for the Discovery Investigation scientists as well as whaling and sealing inspectors. Government staff were often accompanied by their wives and children and lived mainly in separate small houses. To this small group of white painted wooden buildings was added a large two storey accommodation building (Shackleton House) in 1964 to house visitors and unmarried staff.

In November 1969 the British Antarctic Survey established a research facility at King Edward Point, manned by a mixture of scientists and support staff. The new incumbents continued to maintain and use the buildings on the Point until the 1982 Argentine invasion. After the liberation, the buildings were occupied by successive British military detachments sent on rotation from the Falkland Islands. Following a decision to withdraw the troops from the island and to construct new accommodation and a fisheries research facility, the old buildings (with the exception of Discovery House and the gaol) were demolished in 2001. Most of the buildings were by that time in a poor condition and many contained substantial amounts of asbestos.
Discovery House

Norwegians from Grytviken whaling station built Discovery House on King Edward Point in 1925. It was used as a marine laboratory by the Discovery Investigations’ scientists, who studied the biology of the whales being processed at the whaling station.

Discovery Investigations’ scientists used Captain Scott’s former ship, RRS Discovery, and the William Scoresby and made numerous science cruises around South Georgia studying krill and whale populations and ocean currents and continued with RRS Discovery II until 1951. The 13 Discovery voyages around the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic islands also improved the navigational charts of the regions.

Thirty-seven volumes of Discovery Investigations’ reports were published and the data continue to be used by scientists worldwide. Discovery scientists pioneered a whole ecosystem approach, which is now used in the management of the Southern Ocean fisheries.

In later years, British Antarctic Survey scientists used Discovery House as a laboratory, workshop and storeroom. Today the South Georgia Government has refurbished the exterior of the building and removed asbestos from its interior.

Plans exist to develop Discovery House into a visitors’ centre which would:

- Celebrate the achievements of the Discovery Investigations
- Explain the management of South Georgia’s fisheries and demonstrate the applied fishery science currently being undertaken on and around South Georgia
- Include the Post Office

The aim is to recreate the laboratory area as it was in the 1920s and 1930s. A display area would include modern audio-visual and interactive displays. Further funds are still required before this work can be undertaken.

David Nicholls
Director Project Atlantis
Heritage

Shipwrecks

The combination of remoteness, severe weather, deep fjords and other anchorages, and the large number of vessels visiting South Georgia for sealing and whaling, in connection with the 1982 conflict, and more recently for fishing operations have resulted in shipwrecks on and around South Georgia. Records are imperfect, but about 70 are known. This is a far greater number than for any of the other sub-Antarctic islands.

There are records of ten vessels associated with the early sealing industry being lost on the island. The circumstances of six, between 1796 and 1829, are known but the others are not. There may also be various unrecorded wrecks.

The whaling stations closed several abandoned vessels, including two floating docks, sank at their moorings. A variety of dilapidated water-barges and other small craft remain ashore.

South Georgia’s only war, in April 1982, increased the vessel losses by three: an Argentine submarine and landing barge, and the base launch. After the war, visits by fishing vessels and yachts became more frequent. Fishing vessels were wrecked in 1998 and twice in 2003, the latter in the comparatively sheltered waters of Cumberland Bay.

Winter on a whaling station

In the winter time all the stations took turns at holding the winter sports, ski runs were formed for running and ski jumps were built up on the mountain slopes. We all visited whichever station had the honour of being host. After all it was a change of whaling station if nothing else. So the winter sports day was looked forward to with great anticipation.

Time off was precious, reserved for darts, dominoes and brew parties, not necessarily in that order, washing clothes or just talking to someone, other than cabin mates, they were for living with or possibly confiding in. Wednesdays were for hobbies, there was all kinds of them practiced in the winter period. Cribbage was the favourite game for the half hour we had after dinner, but at night there were all kinds of games. Brag, nap, whist, canasta, pontoon euche or any adaptation of any one of them. Other men worked in groups to get a project off and going. I’ve seen beautiful models of harpoon guns plus a fitting harpoon! I’ve also seen a working model of a ship’s engine and boiler.

Brewing was an art invented for occasions such as whaling. I’m fairly sure of that as many men became preoccupied with it! The brewing usually progressed into the art of stilling. The stuff that was to be stillled was the home brew. From a five gallon brew a bottle to a bottle and a half of spirits could be obtained. It was always strong enough! It could almost blow your head over the moon, after all it was moonshine! There was always plenty of things for fermentation, hundreds of bags of spuds were peeled and there was rotting fruit like apples and pears. They were turning out some very refined stuff. They had done in for taste now and the thing to get was essence of all kinds. Of course the baker was the man to contact.

Tam Gordon

Whaling thoughts recalled. Personal account of whaling in the 1950s.

Bayard, Ocean Harbour

Martin Collins
Military heritage

During the Second World War (1939–45) the Norwegian Defence Forces mounted and manned two 4 inch guns (made in 1918) to defend the entrances of Cumberland Bay and Stromness Bay, at Hope Point, (later moved to near Horse Head) and above Leith Harbour (later moved to Hansen Point). The guns, their emplacements and huts are now in a poor condition.

Remains of the 1982 conflict include Fenix (a wrecked Argentine landing craft) at King Edward Point, a wrecked Argentine helicopter at the foot of Brown Mountain, the grave of an Argentine sailor (Petty Officer Felix Artuso) killed on the submarine Sante Fé in the Grytviken cemetery and two crashed British helicopters on the upper part of the Fortuna Glacier.

Management of heritage sites

Sites can merit “heritage” status for a wide variety of reasons: historic, aesthetic, scientific, social, spiritual or any combination of these. The assessment of any individual site will consider whether the type is common or rare, complete or damaged, can be preserved and at what cost. The Government will use a standard set of tests to decide on removal or alteration, conservation, preservation and access.

Relevant factors include the cultural importance of the place, its unique features (both natural and human), and any special associations it might have with a particular person, community or cultural group of importance in South Georgian history. Those historic sites already identified as such are listed on the South Georgia website. Some are Specially Protected Areas (see page 16) to which access is restricted and will be managed in accordance with a management plan. The Government encourages individuals and organisations such as the South Georgia Heritage Trust and the South Georgia Association in activities involving documentation and conservation of sites and reporting on site condition.

Location of archival resources

Information on South Georgia is kept at a number of different locations around the world. They include the Falkland Islands Government Archives, the National Archives in London, the Sandefjord Whaling Museum in Norway, Project Atlantis in Dundee, Scotland, Edinburgh University Archives, the National Oceanographic Centre at Southampton, the Hydrographic Office in Taunton, the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) Archives and the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, England. At present there is no consolidated description of what is in each of these holdings, but specific locations do have particular strengths. In the Falklands Archives and in London there are various materials associated with the governance of the island. Whaling records and materials from Norwegian activities are largely in Sandefjord, whilst the archives of the company Christian Salvesen who operated Leith and Stromness whaling stations are in Edinburgh. SPRI has many of the records from Grytviken whaling station, whilst the BAS material is mainly scientific but also includes...
the Duncan Carse archive on mapping the island. Material at Dundee is more recent and comprises a large photographic collection. The records of the Discovery Investigations are now in the archives at the National Oceanographic Centre whilst the many specimens collected are partly there and partly at the Darwin Centre of the Natural History Museum in London. There are also archives at the South Georgia Museum at Grytviken, South Georgia.

It is the intention of the Government to improve access to scientific and historical data relating to the island by providing access to listings of the present archival materials, encouragement of the continuing documentation of sites on the island and the deposit of such material in one of these archives.

### Industrial archaeology of the whaling stations

After whaling at South Georgia ended in the mid 1960s, the stations were closed down and left to deteriorate. From the late 1970s, plans were made to dismantle the stations and sell what was of value as scrap. Against this background The South Georgia Industrial Archaeology Project was initiated. The aim was to study the physical remains and survey the stations, and to gain as much information as possible about this very special industrial heritage.

The project was carried on throughout the 1990s, as part of the Norwegian Antarctic Research Expeditions (NARE), with grants from the Norwegian Research Council. Husvik and Stromness whaling stations were surveyed in 1989/90, Grytviken in 1992/93 and Leith Harbour in 1996/97, by way of preparation of site plans, building plans, exterior and interior photographs. Site plans were made based on theodolite surveys, photogrammetry and revision of existing maps. The most important part of the survey was the mapping and photographing of every single structure (interior and exterior) and identification of functions and functional relationships. This type of information had not previously been collected in any systematic way, and would have been lost as the buildings progressively deteriorated and collapsed.

The results of the surveys are a photo archive with approximately 2,600 photographs deposited with Sandefjord Whaling Museum in Norway, printed photo journals and printed survey reports on each station including site plans, building plans (300 structures) and information on 1,645 identified rooms. The book *The Shore Whaling Stations at South Georgia* (Basberg, 2004) reviews the project in the wider context of South Georgia history.

The only whaling station which remains to be surveyed in detail is Prince Olav Harbour. Future industrial archaeology at South Georgia should also include the limited remains at Godthul and Ocean Harbour, as well as sealing sites. The survey results will hopefully also be made electronically accessible.

Bjørn L. Basberg

*Professor of Economic History, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration*
Heritage Policies

Aim: To record and conserve to the extent practicable the historical heritage of South Georgia for future generations

Site protection and management
A Historic Site or Monument is ‘any artefact, land, site, building or structure, or combination thereof, that forms part of the historical and cultural heritage of South Georgia’.

- A comprehensive list of historic sites will be collated and maintained by the Government
- Sites and artefacts will be considered on an individual basis – ie. no age limit to be set. The key criterion will be historical significance
- The Government will obtain expert advice when making management decisions which may affect the heritage values of historic sites
- All activities will be planned and conducted so as to avoid degradation of areas of historical significance
- The Government will continue with a program of documentation and conservation of heritage buildings and sites as funds allow
- Historic sites of particular value may be designated as Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) by the Government
- Guidelines are being prepared for managing the multiple uses of Cumberland East Bay, including Grytviken and King Edward Point
- Signs will be used at Grytviken/KEP but will be minimised elsewhere
- Assessment of the impacts of proposed activities on heritage will be undertaken as part of the environmental impact assessment process

Priorities for environmental clean up of whaling stations
- The Government’s long term aim is to make all of the whaling stations on South Georgia safe for visitors, when resources allow
- This may require removal of asbestos, heavy oils and other hazardous materials and remedial work to or removal of buildings which are not structurally sound
- The aim would be to conserve as much of each of the original whaling stations and associated equipment as possible to maintain their heritage values
- Documentation of the sites will be undertaken, as far as possible, before any major works commence

Removal of artefacts
- Articles must not be removed from any site on South Georgia without express permission, unless they are in immediate danger of damage or loss from natural causes such as trampling by fur seals or flooding. Larger items should be moved to a safe site nearby; small or fragile items may be collected and taken to the South Georgia Museum in Grytviken
- If any items are moved, the curators at the South Georgia Museum must be notified of the new location and the reason for moving. Prior to moving, photographs should be taken of the item(s) in situ and a sketch map prepared to show the location relative to other features and landmarks. If possible a GPS position should be recorded
- Disturbing, defacing, vandalising, destroying or removing any items or site is prohibited

Historical documents
The Government encourages the deposit of documents relating to South Georgia, including scientific papers and data, in archival collections run to a national standard and recommends that artefacts be offered to the South Georgia Museum

For further information about South Georgia, please visit our website www.sgisland.org