South Georgia Dispatch
Issue 4, January 2011

The Habitat Restoration Programme begins......
We thought you’d like to know how our plans are coming along. You can follow our progress on http://www.facebook.com/pages/South-Georgia-Heritage-Trust.

A note from our Chairman

Howard Pearce - Chairman
South Georgia Heritage Trust

2011 promises to be the most exciting and challenging year in the Trust’s history. At the beginning of March we shall be spreading the first bait in South Georgia aimed at the total eradication of rats from the island - the Habitat Restoration Project. Tony Martin and his team are even now making their last minute preparations. One of our helicopters has already arrived in the Falkland Islands, en route to South Georgia, and the other is on its way. The bait and most of the rest of the kit are also in the Falklands awaiting transhipment. I wish the team every good fortune and success with their task.

We expect the project to take some five years to complete. We have the funds for the first phase. Our challenge now is to raise the funds we still require - some £5 million - for the second phase, due to take place from 2013 to 2015. We are actively engaged with fundraising activity, not least through the engagement of our team on South Georgia with cruise ship visitors to the island.

Meanwhile, our other activities continue, through active management of the Museum at Grytviken, the oral history project being undertaken by Elsa Davidson, the preparation of a book on South Georgia wildlife, and the conference which we shall be holding jointly with the South Georgia Association in Dundee in September on the industrial heritage and archaeology of South Georgia.

My thanks go to all of you for your continued support for the Trust, and my best wishes for 2011. We value your interest and encouragement enormously. Please give generously to the Habitat Restoration Project, perhaps through our “Sponsor a Hectare” scheme - no need to confine yourself to just one hectare! The details can be found on our website at www.sght.org.
Lynsey Easton, Curatorial Assistant 2010-11

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All Change at the Museum Shop..

Those of you who have been fortunate enough to visit Grytviken this season will have seen the improvements our new buyer Liz Adams has made in the shop. Liz has been working hard this season to update and revamp the shop. Over the summer she has been selecting and ordering new stock, redesigning the layout of the shop.

“A lot of hard work was needed to re-plan the shop to improve the presentation of our merchandise. People have a limited amount of time in the shop – especially if it’s a sunny day and want to get outside so everything has to be accessible and the last thing our visitors want is to have to queue up to buy their gifts! It’s been a wonderful experience coming here and real privilege – but sadly not long enough. I’ll be busy back in the UK planning for the rest of this season and for next year. I have particular plans to expand and develop the range of crafts made exclusively for us in the shop”.

Sue Edwards, Museum Assistant for this season - has enjoyed her first taste of South Georgia.

“The 2010/2011 Antarctic summer season started at the South Georgia Museum at Grytviken with a radical overhaul of the shop. Our new buyer, Liz Adams, came down with the new Museum team and improved the shop layout, stock control system and she has also brought in new items for the shop. Tony Hall (who was a Museum Assistant last year and is managing the Museum this year) brought with him his partner Julia Hughes as Museum Assistant, and was joined by Lynsey Easton (our Curatorial Assistant) and myself. Lynsey and I got stuck in straight away and carried out the deep clean of the Museum rooms after the long winter.

Visitor numbers have been slightly down this season with fewer cruise ships arriving, but passengers continue to be delighted with the Museum, and judging by the amount they are spending are also very appreciative of the wide range of items for sale in the shop! Christmas was very busy here, with five ships calling on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day alone. In between ships, we at the museum like make the most of our stay here, walking and camping in the beautiful surroundings of Cumberland Bay.”

MANAGING INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Looking forward to September 2011, an event for your diary is a conference organised by the South Georgia Heritage Trust(SGHT) in association with the South Georgia Association (SGA), The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), Institut Minos and the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich islands (GSGSSI). Titled Managing Industrial and Cultural Heritage: South Georgia in Context, the conference will be held in Dundee, 7-9 September.

One of the principal aims of the South Georgia Heritage Trust is to preserve, protect and promote an understanding of the historical heritage of South Georgia in relation to its whaling, sealing, exploration and maritime history. This, the first conference to be held by SGHT, will take forward ideas discussed by the Cultural Heritage Workshop at the 2003 SGA Next 10 Years Conference and issues raised in GSGSSI’s South Georgia: Plan for progress 2006-10.

In addition to promoting a wider awareness of the heritage activities of SGHT and a discussion on cultural heritage management in polar and sub-polar regions, the aim of the 2011 conference is to focus attention on the future of South Georgia’s whaling stations. Papers will explore aspects of recording, researching, interpreting and managing industrial heritage sites with the aim of informing future heritage priorities and strategies.

In addition to the main conference programme, there will be receptions at SGHT headquarters in the award-winning Verdant Works Jute Museum and aboard RRS Discovery as well as a dinner at Discovery Point overlooking the River Tay. A conference website linked to the SGHT website (www.sght.org) will be up and running with full details and registration facility by the end of February.
Leisure activities were an important part of life on the whaling station as they provided a welcome break from the drudgery of daily life. In 1927 the Community Social Club introduced twice weekly shows in the church. These were so popular that in 1930 a cinema called “Kino” was built beside the church for this purpose. The Kino was capable of seating 300 people on a random assortment of benches and chairs. On the first floor there was a gallery where the officials and their wives sat. Many of the whaling stations had a cinema and each summer a stock of films was brought down and circulated throughout the Island. The Leith Christmas listings board shows that westerns were a particular favourite! The Kino was also used for sports such as table tennis and badminton. It gradually collapsed during the 1990s.

'In her book Antarctic Housewife (1996) Nan Brown describes the kino at Grytviken (also known as Pesca): “The cinema (Kino) at Pesca, which doubled as a table tennis hall, was a small wooden building, with an upstairs gallery, capable of seating about three hundred on a miscellaneous collection of benches and chairs. Whatever the film, it commanded a capacity audience, with first in getting the best seats. I did not have to join in this scramble, as I enjoyed the privilege of the front seat on the balcony, reserved for ‘top brass’, ladies and their husbands. Heating was no problem; though there was a stove, most of the heat came from the closely packed bodies, with the result that the atmosphere often became quite uncomfortable. Since it was a wooden building, smoking was forbidden, so that interval time saw a general stampede of smokers, and the overheated bent on cooling off in the night air.

A whaling audience is an uninhibited one, with spectators expressing views and suggestions freely throughout the show. Love scenes progressed to the accompaniment of cheers, whistles, ecstatic moans, and from one fellow, a cat-like purr of pure feline contentment that never failed to reduce me to giggles. Boring programmes were enlivened by reversing the film and by the men’s comments, so outrageous that I must surely have been blushing to the roots of my hair. At such times the dim light was a blessing indeed! ‘Kino’ nights were a welcome break from the normal hard routine of a whaler’s life and an atmosphere of light-hearted frivolity prevailed, accentuated occasionally by a group with a jealously guarded bottle of spirits, celebrating a birthday or a happy event at home.”

Nan & George Brown. Photo I.M. Brooker
Explore the South Georgia Museum online.....

By Elsa Davidson

The South Georgia Museum has been using an online documentation system to record its artefacts since 2009. The eHive database was developed by Vernon Systems, a New Zealand based company that produces computer databases for museums, galleries and archives around the world.

eHive was specially developed for small museums and private collectors and provides a remarkable opportunity to promote, share and develop collections. eHive allows the museum to offer access to the collection worldwide, something that is very important due to its remote location. The system allows the team to upload information on each artefact on display along with related photographs. It also gives the opportunity to promote the artefacts held in storage due to lack of space or replication in the museum displays.

The South Georgia Museum collection can be viewed at http://ehive.com/account/3408. Here you will find the museum homepage and from there the collection can be browsed or searched by section (art, history and natural science), images or keywords. There is also a selection of keywords on the homepage that can be clicked on to explore related artefacts. The system also offers the opportunity for museums with similar collections or in the same geographical area to set up an online community in order to link and promote each other’s collections.

There are now almost 300 artefacts available for everyone to view online with many due to be added in the coming months. You can find out more about the objects collected from the whaling stations around South Georgia, view our remarkable natural history collection and discover artefacts used by Sir Ernest Shackleton. You can also learn more about the scientific work on the Island through artefacts used by the British Antarctic Survey and other research bodies. Go and Explore!

Please contact me for further information: elsa.davidson@sght.org

A Big “Thankyou” to all of our visitors

By Ruth Fraser

It’s been a very busy season so far – and we’re only half way!
This season saw the beginning of ramping up our local fundraising efforts, in collaboration with the cruise ships visiting Grytviken and of course, its passengers & crew. We are extremely grateful to all those who have been generous with their time in helping us to gain more profile and support for our “Sponsor a Hectare” Campaign.

The response of our passengers has been really encouraging and we have so far managed to raise £40,000 on the ships alone and we have hopes to continue to increase this figure throughout the rest of the season.

If you would like to become part of this project, please go to: www.sght.org

ruth.fraser@sght.org

Above: Ruth fundraising onboard the cruise ships

When we clear the remainder of South Georgia and return the island to a pristine, rodent-free Wildlife sanctuary We will transform the Birdlife of South Georgia...