South Georgia Museum

Annual Report

2016-17

This report covers the period September 2016 to August 2017
**Background and Statement of Purpose**

The South Georgia Museum is located in the old whaling station manager’s villa, and surrounding buildings, at Grytviken in the remains of the whaling station. The museum buildings and the museum collection belong to the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and are managed on their behalf by the South Georgia Heritage Trust.

The South Georgia Museum exists to protect, document and promote the cultural and natural history and heritage of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The museum aims to make this history and heritage accessible both to the visiting public and to those unable to visit this remote region, through exhibitions, education and outreach.

**Introduction**

This season’s visitors to the museum found it brighter, better interpreted and with more information; such as the new exhibit on the products made from whales. Through the evaluation process the visitors showed that they appreciated the displays, guided tours and everything else we offer by scoring the museum highly. The gift shop is also well supported and had its best ever year.

A new, in-depth, tour of the whaling factory was developed to engage the more mechanically-minded. And Steve Massam returned for a short while as Taxidermist and Artist in Residence. Steve’s expertise was very useful in various areas of the museum work including identifying some mysterious artefacts. You can read all about it below.

Plans for the future include appointing a full-time curator who will be involved in SGHT’s project to open a major whaling station building to visitors.

**Staff**

The museum team rose to the challenge of a busy summer. For the 2016-17 season the core team was SGHT Director (South Georgia) Sarah Lurcock, Curatorial Intern Lorna Weir and the Museum Assistants Danielle Mates and Jo Hardy.

Danielle, a teacher and cruise ship staff member, was returning for her second season at the museum. Jo, who originally qualified as a nurse, had had extensive experience working in the Antarctic region both for the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and for the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust at the museum at Port Lockroy.

Volunteer Fundraiser Vickie Heaney joined us for three months, taking a break from her usual occupation as an artist and bird biologist on the Isles of Scilly in the UK. Vickie will return as a Museum Assistant next season.

We were also joined by Taxidermist/Artist in Residence Steve Massam for the early part of the season and Volunteer Patrick Lurcock joined us for two months at the end of the season.

Shop Buyer Liz Adams works from her home in the UK.
Ship Visits and Tourism

The gentle rise in cruise ship passenger numbers continued, with 8,946 tourists arriving on 68 cruise ship visits. We had also expected a record number of cruise ship visits which was predicted to top the record of 70 ship visits set in 2008-9, but there was a higher than usual number of cancellations due to factors including severe weather and ship breakdown.

The season started with the arrival of two charter yachts in mid-October and finished in early April; although the last ship was one of those unable to visit Grytviken due to poor weather. The actual number of visitors, including cruise ship passengers, crew and expedition staff and those arriving by yacht was 15,377.

Twenty-three different cruise ships called in, most coming two to four times, with one, *Polar Pioneer*, making five visits. January was the busiest month with 21 cruise ship visits as well as several other vessels. Sixty-two different nationalities were represented amongst the passengers; the highest proportion (26%) came from the USA, with English-speaking nations making up just over half the visitors (USA, UK 12%, Australia 11% and Canada 3%). The second highest proportion was of German nationality (13%).

There were 8 yacht visits by 6 different yachts; all but one of which was on charter. This was much lower than the 22 yacht visits last season.
Seven military or RFA vessels called, and there were 9 visits from 5 research vessels.

South Georgia and the Antarctic region continue to be an attractive place for tourists to visit and cruise ship passenger numbers to the island are going to increase steeply in the coming season. We are expecting more than a 20% increase in passengers and around 10 more ship visits. The overall increase in tourism to South Georgia is expected to continue, and several new ships are known to be planned or under construction for use in the polar cruise ship industry.

Museum Displays

The most notable change to the display areas this year was the installation of new lighting. This has made a huge difference to the feel of the museum; it is brighter and more welcoming, and the new spot lights and diffused lights on tracks can be easily moved so that we can change displays and use light to highlight key artefacts or improve the lighting for reading labels. Other lights, LED strips, have been installed inside

The fire effect light can be seen beneath the coals in the forge display.
display cases and some more novel light features created, such as a fire effect in the forge display and working bulbs in the old light fittings that form part of the Whalers’ Bunkroom display. The new lights are also better for the preservation of the collection. The LED lamps do not produce damaging light wavelengths; they will also use less power.

The lights were sourced and installed by the GSGSSI electrician Andy Porter with the assistance of Adrian Fail. The work was done between ship visits so that there was very little need to close areas to visitors. More work is planned for next season to complete the new lighting, including more lights within display cases, and there will be new lights in the staff areas.

A ‘Whaling End Products’ exhibit was added to the whaling displays in the Allardyce Room to show what sort of products were made from whales. We had been working towards this over two seasons which gave us time to source specific items such as the lipstick and soap (see ‘Acquisitions, Gifts and Loans’ section below).

With thanks to the Vestfoldmuseene in Norway, the Temporary Exhibition Area this season had two panels about the construction of Shackleton’s ship Endurance. The ship, originally called Polaris, was built at the Framnæs shipyard in Sandefjord and the South Georgia Museum enjoys a strong link with the Vestfoldmuseene which runs a whaling museum there.

Apologies there isn’t a better image available! The Whalers Bunkroom was altered to give it a more realistic, lived-in, feel with the help of visiting SGHT Heritage Director Ed Simons. Clothes now strew the turned down bed, boots are on the floor where they may have been taken off. There is rubbish in the waste paper basket and the illicit still has been hidden in the cupboard, though it can be seen through the open door.

The relabelling programme that has been taking place over several seasons is almost at an end. This season all the labels in the Allardyce and Prince rooms were replaced. Only one room still remains to be done. Many improvements like these would normally go unnoticed by visitors,
so it was gratifying that that someone who works at a small museum in London complimented us on our museum labels and the clarity and quality of the information, explaining that he knew how hard it was to achieve this.

To assist people with limited time for their visit a ‘South Georgia Museum Highlights’ leaflet was designed to give an overall view of the themes of each room in the museum, and of the history of the island itself, and to highlights some of the more important and interesting objects on display. In the coming season we will attempt to have this leaflet translated so that it can be made available in other languages such as German, French, Spanish and Chinese.

A new platform was built in the Allardyce Room to better protect and display some large artefacts, including whale meat sacks and boxes and whale oil barrels which had formerly just been placed on the floor. The platform, which is similar in style to the one in the Fullerton Room, was built by Dickie Hall of the GSGSSI Building Team. Dickie also helped with several smaller display projects.

In the whaling station, volunteer Patrick Lurcock was able to improve the interpretation of the site by exposing the main blubber chute and fitting a blade to the blubber cutter. He also exposed a small section of the old wooden plan (flensing platform) nearby, and stacked some whale bones in the base of one of the bone cookers.

There is plenty planned to keep us busy in the near future. Within the museum we plan to redisplay the Bonner Room (entrance hall) and are working towards a display showcasing the habitat restoration work to remove reindeer, rodents and control or eradicate introduced plants.

Guided Tours

Guided tours are a key way in which we engage with visitors and help them understand the huge industry that took place at Grytviken during the whaling era. By talking about the whaling process, factory conditions and social aspects of whalers’ lives we attempt to bring what remains of the industrial site alive in peoples’ imaginations.

Tours are offered to all visitors and are made accessible to as many people as possible by working with the translators who often travel with non-English speaking groups.
At times, four different tours were on offer to the visitors. These were led by three staff members. The main tour, ‘The Whaling Station Tour’, was requested for all but nine cruise ship visits. It is often performed twice for each ship.

The ‘Shackleton at South Georgia Tour’ remained on offer as it was the centenary of Shackleton’s *Endurance* Expedition rescue in which the island played an important role. The tour was requested for around quarter of the cruise ship visits. Although it was developed to celebrate the *Endurance* Expedition Centenary, we feel that there is sufficient interest in this tour to continue to offer it, as those who go on the tour enjoy it very much. Curator Lorna Weir said “Shackleton is a big draw for many tourists who come to this island, and the opportunity to learn a bit more about his activities here is very valuable”.

The ‘Museum Tour’ was also on offer but is rarely requested. This year we gave it a new twist by starting with a general overview of the history covered in each display room, then focussing on one object that may otherwise have been overlooked and explaining why it is in the museum. Through this we were able to highlight the early sealing history and the exciting potential for archaeology on sealing sites to be carried out on the island; to talk more about one of our most prized artefacts, the tattered looking *James Caird* almanac; to invite visitors to peer inside the whalers’ lookout barrel to see the carved graffiti; or point out why there is a stuffed toy panda in the collection (it belonged to a child on the island and helps people realise children once lived here), or how the whalers took home pickled whale foetuses as a macabre souvenir. Changing the object chosen to focus on each time kept us on our toes!

Tours are usually only conducted by the SG Director and the Curatorial Intern, but this season we were able to make use of Volunteer Patrick Lurcock’s in-depth knowledge of the whaling process to add another tour at the end of the season. The ‘In Depth Whaling Station Tour’ may be too specialist for most visitors, so it is designed to be given to smaller groups that can be taken amongst the machinery to give a much greater insight into the industrial process from whale to whale products. Having been researched and developed by Patrick, the tour has been written up so that in future others can perform it.

**The Museum Collection: Acquisitions, Gifts and Loans**

Main text by Curatorial Intern Lorna Weir

Comparatively this year’s intake of new acquisitions for the collection was quite low, that said, 35 new artefacts were collected this season, including a couple of very exciting items. Possibly the most exciting is the seal skin washer recovered from the ridge of the Main Store roof during renovations. This was identified by taxidermist Steve Massam as being made of elephant seal pup skin. Leather washers were used on other whaling station buildings, but the use of local materials is intriguing. The discovery adds another element to the knowledge we have of the whalers, and how they lived and maintained the station.
Several projects, both ongoing and recently completed, will do much to return South Georgia to its condition prior to the arrival of man. We have been collecting some artefacts relating to these and have now added the windsock that had been flown from the roof of the Engineers Workshop until recently removed during maintenance work. The windsock was used during the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project by helicopters landing close by. Combined with Chief Pilot Peter Garden’s flying helmet, accessioned last year, this helps to build a better picture of how the project was run, and will be of great use in future exhibitions on this subject.

Another newly acquired item is a Norwegian ‘kaker’ or cake tin with a very colourful floral design. This was recovered from the electricians’ workshop at Leith Harbour whaling station. There are various reasons why this tin would have been in the whaling station. It could be that it was sent down by a family member with treats in it, then used by a whaler to store electrical bits and pieces - but we will never know for sure how it came to be there. It is important for the collection as we don’t have any item similar to it, and it paints a picture of life on the station; as whatever its use, it shows that the whalers liked to have items around that made the place feel more homely.

As part of the new Whaling End Products display in the Allardyce Room, we added a bar of Sunlight soap in its original wrapping and a Max Factor lipstick. The Sunlight soap is particularly interesting. Sunlight soap is mentioned in the Diary of James Wordie of the Endurance Expedition, as a product made from whale oil. He made the observation on a visit to Leith Harbour Station. The lipstick will also prove to be of much interest; many will not have realised that cosmetics regularly used whale oil as an ingredient.

A sealers’ blubber hook was brought into the museum by expedition staff from the Polar Pioneer. It had been found on the beach at St Andrews Bay, and, although rather bent, was otherwise in very good condition considering how long it may have been lying around. Although we have similar objects in the collection, some in better condition, it gives solid proof of sealing having taken place at St Andrews Bay, and so adds to our knowledge of the sealing industry on South Georgia.

Lastly, a number of items were added to the Bill Loftus Archive. He was a helicopter pilot who flew from factory ships to spot whales. The items include his flying logbook, 110 black and white photographs, and much more relating to Mr Loftus’s work around South Georgia, and later in Canada. It is wonderful that this collection is still growing, and it now contains a great deal of valuable information about the work and life of Mr Loftus.

We also have a number of other objects recently arrived and ready for formal collection, or due to arrive soon. These include a set of four plans: two of the whaling station, one of Grytviken and one of the whale factory ship Ernesto Tornquist. They were donated by Andy Turner who purchased them in 1972 when he stationed at the BAS base at King Edward Point. Ricky Chinn was the Base Commander at the time and his Polar Medal and MBE will also soon be in the collection.
The loan of several key Shackleton-related artefacts to the Falkland Islands Museum will end shortly. They include Shackleton’s walking stick, a framed signature and a set of clothing from the Shackleton Epic expedition (2012-13).

Items returned from loan to the Keswick Mountain Museum were back in for display in the Fullerton Room South Georgia Survey display before the start of the season.

Many people may think that a museum is no more than the items on display, but of course there is much more going on behind the scenes and many more artefacts are held in storage. There is never enough space to have the entire collection on display and there are items that may be needed for future displays, or for research, that are too fragile for permanent display or are duplicates. Objects stored in the main Artefact Store have been repackaged to ensure they are kept in the best possible environment to ensure their longevity. A number of objects in the store that were not formerly part of the collection were identified and assessed to decide their future. From this group, 58 items were formally accessioned into the collection.

After establishing that the environmental conditions are suitable, we are now able to use the new Large Artefact Store at the top of the Slop Chest. The priority is to move objects out of unsuitable storage areas where the humidity is too high for long-term preservation.

The collection on line on eHive.
http://ehive.com/account/3408

Curatorship

Since 2010, the main curatorial work of the museum has been undertaken by a recent graduate of the University of St Andrews Museum and Gallery Studies course who is granted the David Nicholls Bursary. This year our Curatorial Intern was Lorna Weir.

As we showed in last season’s annual report, this has been a very effective spring board into a career in Museums for the seven interns so far. In her end of tenure report Lorna wrote, “The opportunity to have such responsibility over a collection at this very early stage of my career has been incredible, and it has given me the experience and confidence that I require to move forward within my museum career. On a personal level the opportunity to live and work on this island has been a fantastic experience. I have been fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of many opportunities to see the place, and to work on the history of the island in situ has been very enjoyable.”

Visitor Experience Evaluation

The museum evaluation process, which was started last season, has now become an important tool for measuring performance and encouraging comment from visitors.

The evaluation forms are deliberately short and easy to fill in, and participation is encouraged with a raffle for participants. We also use the opportunity of going on board a cruise ship after a shore visit to hand out forms and solicit input; just over quarter of responses were collected this way. The two collection methods can be analysed separately, but their results have proved to be broadly similar. Over 100 people filled out evaluation forms this season. Some of the results are represented in the graphs below.
Almost all scored areas (guided tours, attitude of staff, exhibition/gallery information, and gift shop) received ratings of good (4) or very good (5). The vast majority (90%) of visitors scored their overall museum visit as ‘very good’, and the remaining 10% scored their visit as ‘good’. The winner of the evaluation raffle for a cold-cast bronze penguin figurine was Natalie in Canada.

As well as the evaluation process, the Visitor Comments book is also still in place.

A couple of comments received after a visit from cruise ship expedition staff were:

- “Wonderful visit yesterday. Everyone came back thrilled at all the different activity options. The (museum) staff did an exceptional job with all our passengers and they truly appreciated the whole package! Thank you”
- “Just to say thank you all so much for once again making everyone feel so welcome and creating a fabulous morning for our guests. They were all very impressed and had a great time.”
The museum retains a ‘Certificate of Excellence’ on the travellers review website TripAdvisor with 97% of all reviewers rating the museum good (18%) or excellent (79%). Of the 28 reviews added during the period covered by this report 97% were also good (32%) or excellent (65%).

The TripAdvisor reviews can be read here: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g1593028-d1598504-Reviews-South_Georgia_Museum-Grytviken.html

Projects and Special Events

Special visitors
We enjoyed engaging with some special visitors hosted by GSGSSI on a visit in early March 2017. Commissioner Colin Roberts was joined by representatives of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Worldwide Fund for Nature, Pew Environmental Trusts, British Antarctic Survey, the Australian and Norwegian governments as well as the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Part of the visit considered the cultural heritage of SGSSI and included a visit to the museum with a museum tour. We were especially pleased to meet Siri Wolland who, as a Norwegian Government representative, has a special interest in the Norwegian cultural heritage on the island.

The knowledge of SGHT Heritage Director Ed Simons was an asset during his visit in October. He was here to consider a number of potential SGHT cultural heritage projects, including the opening of the Main Store to visitors. He was able to visit the other whaling stations to assist his research. A professional archaeologist, Ed helped us to identify some items from a shipwreck that had been

Lorna, Ed and Steve investigate the contents of the felt hat recovered some years ago from the site of a shipwreck.
Steve has specialised in water-like effects to enhance his taxidermy specimens, he added this watery base to the wandering albatross in the Carr Maritime Gallery.

deposited at the museum. He also investigated a potential early sealing site. His visit coincided with that of Taxidermist/Artist in Residence Steve Massam. Steve, who has collaborated with the museum for many years, is responsible for the superb bird, fish and many other specimens on show in the natural history displays in the Prince Room. He enhanced the wandering albatross, currently on show in the Carr Maritime Gallery, by building a water-like base for it.

Steve’s knowledge of the natural world helped us learn more about some mysterious objects. Not only the seal skin washer (see above) but also a strange concretion in a suspected old sealers’ hearth which he identified as a clinker partly made up of seal flipper bones. The sealers burned seal flippers in their cooking fires (they would also eat them). This adds to a list of examples of sealers and whalers making use of whatever was to hand in a place where resources were scarce. Examples include lining the roofs of store rooms with planks from broken-down packing cases and then insulating the roof space with a layer of sods of turf or peat; wooden whale oil barrels used as forms into which concrete was poured to make foundation plinths for buildings; whale baleen plates used to face harbour walls, newspapers used to line the walls of the bunk rooms before painting; seal skin to make washers, and the consumption of penguin eggs and any other palatable wildlife!

Steve has started preparing an elephant seal pup skin (in the early black velvet stage) which will eventually be added to the very popular ‘touchy feely’ section in the Prince Room. This exhibit is often listed as the visitor’s favourite. A skeleton of a spectacled porpoise had been placed outside where it was cleaned by natural forces. Steve further cleaned and recovered the bones including all the tiny spade-shaped teeth and small ear bones (bullae). The skeleton was then partially reassembled to show the immensely-strong structure of the backbone. The skeleton has proved very interesting to cruise ship expedition staff who we regularly take to the Taxidermy Workshop to see it and other interesting objects such as a leopard seal skull and mummified cat.

Steve reviewed the taxidermy collection, maintaining and repairing as necessary, and, with Curator Lorna, cleaned the specimens. With all his handy skills Steve was also an asset for many other jobs such as making new moulds for the SG Island Craft range and training staff to make the crafts, putting together new display structures and helping to set up the new Main Workshop.

**Artists in Residence**

Steve Massam spends an increasing amount of time making sculptures to be cast in bronze. With his understanding of the structure of animals, he often builds a sculpture as if he was assembling a taxidermy piece; with a skeletal structure, covered by a layer to representing the musculature, topped off with the final outside coating. We were delighted to have his fantastic bronze king penguin sculpture to sell through the Gift Shop.
It is super to have the work of at least three of our past Artist in Residents represented in the goods we sell, including a book, postcards and gift cards based on the photographs of photographer Jamie Grant and the fabulous bronzes by sculptor Anthony Smith. Anthony continues to work in the Antarctic on cruise ships and to produce artworks inspired by the region. He recently completed a bust of Shackleton which will be displayed in the Fullerton Room with our main exhibit on Shackleton and his expeditions. We would like to find a way to purchase the bust so it can remain on permanent display.

**Plans for Dias**
The Viola Trust is hoping to recover the ex-sealing vessel and former Hull steam trawler *Dias* from Grytviken next season and take her for restoration and display in Hull, UK. At the beginning of the season surveyors assessed the vessel to see if she could be moved. She currently lies alongside another sealing vessel, *Albatros*, at the jetty directly in front of the museum. *Dias* was formerly called *Viola* and the Viola Trust was set up to raise £3 million to transport the vessel and to set up an apprenticeship scheme to restore her as an education centre and put her on display in her home port. [http://www.violatrawler.net/](http://www.violatrawler.net/)

**Events for the Locals**
There is only a small local population, but it is an important part of the museum’s activities to engage with them. We had a particularly rich programme for them this season including: running several tours (with tea and cake after, of course); the annual Church Christmas decoration festivities with mulled wine and goodies; a community practical session with Steve the taxidermist, on casting and moulding objects (or even body parts). Our staff gave slide-talks on: taxidermy of an emperor penguin and ostrich (!); rodent eradication in the Scilly Isles; and working at the museum at Port Lockroy. They also organised a ceilidh in the Church.

Locals and visitors travelling on yachts, navy vessels, research ships and the cruise ship staff are assured of a warm welcome in the staff room. Through this we can keep up the great relations we enjoy with other agencies and can sometimes even quietly educate our special visitors by talking about what the museum is working on, or looking at one of our mystery objects...it is always a bit of fun to see if they can guess what they are.
Tourists and other visitors support the work of the SGHT by buying goods in the museum Gift Shop. The South Georgia Heritage Trust got a boost towards funding its projects as the shop had its highest ever sales year.

A huge range of goods are stocked in the shop, from clothing and jewellery to books, mugs, toys and artworks. Ever popular is the South Georgia Island Craft range made by the museum staff. New designs were added this year, one, a new super elephant seal pup figure, was sculpted by builder Tim Stenning. Staff could not keep up with demand for the handmade magnets, Christmas decorations and figurines.

We trialled a gorgeous soft merino wool South Georgia beanie which proved very popular indeed. We have ordered lots more in lovely colours for the coming season. Also popular was a smart range of pewter goods with bird motifs.

We sold several original bronzes by two of our Artist in Residence, Anthony Smith and Steve Massam, and will be stocking more of these next season. They are heavy to take home in air luggage, so most customers arrange for them to be shipped. If you would like to own one of these limited edition artworks do please get in touch for prices.

For next season Shop Buyer Liz Adams has arranged to have the delicious and beautifully-packaged Shackleton whisky on sale. This whisky is blended to represent the whisky discovered at one of Shackleton’s historic huts in the Antarctic. We are currently looking for another distiller for the popular South Georgia Museum own label whisky as Gordon and MacPhail are no longer able to provide it.

A range of goods, including books, clothing, and exclusive gifts and artwork, can also be bought from the SGHT website. The online shop also stocks several items that differ from those stocked at the museum www.sghtonline.gs
Buildings and Maintenance

Each year the outdoor artefacts need work to ensure they are looking good, but most importantly they need to be protected against the island’s severe climate. Whilst everything is maintained, we concentrate on one or two artefacts and give them a really good overhaul. This year we focused on the boom of the sealing vessel *Albatros* which is displayed in front of the museum. The paint had cracked, water was getting into the wood and a couple of small areas of rot were beginning to develop. We scraped back many layers of paint to strip it to the wood. This was then treated and repaired as necessary and repainted. The project lasted several weeks with several of us working on it. Frustratingly of course, after all that work, it looks pretty much the same as before we started. Dickie Hall made a new wooden support to replace the one crushed by a somnolent big male elephant seal.

The GSGSSI building team is responsible for the larger maintenance works, with the museum team taking on the smaller tasks. The building team spent a good bit of time on the museum this season on the improvements to the lighting which was provided by GSGSSI. We are especially grateful to Dickie Hall who helped with a variety of smaller jobs including improving visitor safety by securing a section of the bone saw exhibit.

In the cemetery we made some repairs to headstones and kept the grass down. The GSGSSI builders repainted the fence.

The builders have started to move the variety of modern building supplies and storage containers that had been distributed widely throughout the whaling station onto the foundations of the old Freezer Store. Although it still intrudes on the wider view of the historic site of Grytviken, this area is at least set to one side of the station. The work is still in progress and there is already a big improvement, making it less likely, when conducting a whaling station tour, that we will be saying “if you look past those modern shipping containers you can just see the remains of the old ....”

A major project for the building team was to start replacing rotten windows and painting the inside of the Church. Specialist carpenter Thies Matzen rebuilt the window frames, preserving as much original wood as possible with commendable results. Fixings that were beyond restoration are being replaced by authentic fixings sourced by Thies in Norway. A visiting Heritage Architect complimented the sympathetic work that has been done to the over the years to the Church. He had not even noticed that some of the windows were brand new.

Work on the church windows will be completed next season.
Works were planned so that the Church was available for the popular cruise ship Christmas celebrations (scaffolds inside were made festive with tinsel!). The Church was also made accessible for a wedding in the New Year. The ship arrived earlier than planned so the wedding photographer had to position himself to avoid showing the two blanked-off windows. The couple, Ash and Merf, had previous associations with the island, Ash as Boatman with BAS at KEP and Merf was working on the QE2 when it was requisitioned and brought to Cumberland Bay in 1982.

We look forward to working with Steve Brown who takes up the role as GSGSSI Director of Operations. He has a long association with South Georgia, starting 15 years ago when he worked for BAS at KEP. His new role will include oversight of works and heritage.

The Museum Online

Keep an eye out for occasional news and the monthly updates from the museum team posted during the season in the ‘Latest News’ section on www.sgmuseum.gs
New blogs are also posted on the SGHT Facebook page.

The SGHT website is also a useful source of information www.sght.org

Whale sightings in South Georgia waters are collected at the museum and uploaded onto a website. They can be viewed on a chart reached from the SGHT website.

Environmental and Pest Monitoring

We are always working to improve the environmental conditions in the museum display areas and stores to ensure the longevity of the artefacts. We have a programme to monitor temperature and humidity in a variety of areas, as well as pest monitoring and checking on light levels and damage. The new LED lights in the display areas will reduce light damage as the LED bulbs do not give off damaging UV or IR radiation. UV-excluding film is being fitted on the main entrance hall doors.

Looking Ahead

We are in the process of changing our collections management to Adlib. This is software widely used by museums around the world and is also the system that our Curatorial Interns are trained to use. The new package will be an improvement on our previously over-complex documentation process. To further streamline the process we also plan to change the way we share our collection online - but that change will not take place for a while yet.

SGHT is now seeking to raise funds to reinstate the post of full-time curator. The museum would benefit from more curatorial input and planning, and from having someone in place for a longer period to build up knowledge of the collection and history of the island. With few people able to visit the museum due to its remote location, a key part of the role could be to further develop and extend the museum’s outreach, as well as more actively developing the museum collection and displays and fostering closer relationships with other relevant organisations.
Fundraising

The SGHT Habitat Restoration (rodent eradication) project should hopefully come to an end in the coming season. A field team, including detector dogs, will be working to monitor the areas baited to remove rats and mice from the island. If no signs of rodents are found then, after many years of work, the project can be declared successfully concluded; what a day that will be. The museum team help to fund this and all the work of the SGHT through fundraising activities that include on-ship presentations and encouraging on-board auctions. We are now fundraising for a variety of projects including the long-term curator, opening the Main Store to visitors, work to protect albatrosses and petrels, an archaeological study of sealing sites and projects to preserve key heritage items and structures.

Artist Bruce Pearson has been working on a series of illustrated charts for auction and sale to support the work of the SGHT. Bruce, who worked on Bird Island in the mid-1970s, is a regular visitor to South Georgia as a staff member on a cruise ship. The limited edition prints and one-off art pieces will be available to lucky shoppers and auction bidders next season.

Volunteer Fundraising Assistant Vickie Heaney supported our fundraising activities for half the season, giving presentations and taking on the fundraising administration as well as generally assisting the museum activities. This is really useful support and we are very grateful for Vickie’s dedication and hard work.

It was pleasing to hear that one of the people who has done wonders raising funds for us through the auctions on board a cruise ship used that experience on her CV to get her new job as a fundraiser for an environmental NGO in Tasmania.

This illustrated sea chart was painted by Bruce Pearson.
How to Support Our Work

Artefacts
The South Georgia Museum is always glad to hear of any artefacts, papers, photographs or books that could be donated to the museum collection, archives and library. So if you have anything that you think may be of interest please get in touch. Information on how to contact us is below.

Donate
Please support the South Georgia Museum or the work of the SGHT to protect the heritage and natural history of South Georgia by making a donation.

People who care about South Georgia and want to support our work can become ‘Guardians of South Georgia’ and receive regular newsletters and special offers as part of the package of exclusive goodies they get in return. To find out more go to http://www.sght.org/guardians

Online donations can be made through the Trust’s website at
www.sght.org/make-donation

US citizens can make tax deductible gifts via Friends of South Georgia Island
www.fosgi.org/donation

Donations can also be sent by post to the South Georgia Heritage Trust at the Dundee address below. Cheques, payable to “South Georgia Heritage Trust”, can be sent in Sterling or US Dollars.

Contact Us

Do please keep us up to date if your contact details have changed recently.

SG Museum Postal Address: South Georgia Museum, Grytviken, South Georgia, S1QQ 1ZZ, via Falkland Islands, South Atlantic.
(Add ‘via UK’ if posting from outside the UK)
Email: museum@sght.org or sghtdirectorsg@sght.org

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We are happy to expand the circulation of this report. If you know of anyone who would like to receive an electronic copy, please give us their name and email address.
Acknowledgments

Operating a museum in such a remote place as South Georgia can only happen with the assistance and goodwill of many organisations and people; many more than we can mention by name. Thank you all for your support, be it financial, through donating an artefact, by providing a service or by working with us. It simply would not be possible without you all.

We would also like to thank:

GSGSSI who maintain the museum buildings (including the new lighting this season) and provide the logistics and infrastructure on the island. GSGSSI provide an annual grant to cover the museum’s running costs.

The GSGSSI Government Officers, local BAS employees and others who, maybe lured by the promise of another cuppa and a slice of cake, are so willing to cooperate and help us to ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible on the island.

Thank you to the many people who have donated artefacts, books, photographs, historical information, papers etc.

To those involved at MPA (Falklands) and to the Captain and crew of the HMS Clyde, we are once again grateful for your assistance to get our staff in at the start of the season. A regular visitor, we on the island consider HMS Clyde “our Navy ship”.

Thank you to Lindblad Expeditions and the National Geographic Explorer who are amongst a generous group of cruise operators always ready to help us move staff in and out from the island. Three lucky staff members started their long trip home at the end of a busy season in a very comfortable way and also enjoyed seeing a little more of the island en route.

Bob Burton, a former SG Museum Director, is a constant source of information and assistance. We work with him regularly and greatly benefit from his huge knowledge of the area and its history. A good example is his recent suggestions for improving and updating the timeline on the Museum website. Bob also acts as a collection point for artefacts and arranges for them to be shipped to us with the further assistance of the people at BAS Cambridge.

BAS Cambridge, and in particular Rod Strachan, the BAS Logistics Coordinator for KEP, are ever helpful.

The GSGSSI building team are always ready to share their expertise and lend a helping hand (or some muscle). They all deserve a mention, but we need to especially thank Andy and Adrian who did all the electrical work and Chris and Jakey made good the ceilings afterwards. Also, as you read above, Dickie assisted us with many small build or practical projects in and around the museum.

Andy replacing the lights in the Allardyce Room.
Thank you to Darren for finally getting to the bottom of the eccentric plumbing problems and going into battle with the boiler in the staff house. He came out victorious after a long campaign.

Part of the building team’s role is to maintain the outside of the museum buildings which, thanks to them are currently looking very well kept. We are also reliant on this team to dig out any remaining winter snow and open the track so we can move the cargo round from where it is landed at KEP; another job they willingly pitched in with. Thank you all.

Thanks go to Captains Gerry and Chris and the wonderful crew of Pharos SG. They are both companions and collaborators. We are reliant on them to bring in everything needed to run the show and they will always help with our weird and wonderful requests if they can.

Tom Adams donated his time and the materials to make a considerable number of craft items for the shop.

We greatly appreciate the time and dedication of this season Curatorial Intern Lorna Weir who has continued to work with us to improve our collection management system since returning to the UK and has assisted with interviews and training for next season’s staff.

We can never thank enough all of the hundreds of cruise ship staff members and the cruise ship companies that assist our fundraising efforts. Without their help we would not be able to raise the considerable sums we do on island towards paying for the Habitat Restoration Project and other SGHT projects. In particular we appreciate the considerable effort that goes into fundraising on our behalf by holding auctions on board the vessels later on in their cruises. So many of you deserve a special mention - we hope you know our appreciation is heartfelt.

Thank you to the many translators amongst the cruise ship staff who work with us on tours and presentations. Almost half our visitors do not speak English as a first language, so working with translators allows us to offer a more meaningful experience to them, helping us to communicate with as many of our visitors as possible.

Thank you also to the cruise ship staff for your friendship and hospitality. We are regularly invited to have meals or a drink on the ships in harbour making a pleasant change for us.

Thank you to all who make or donate items for our auctions. And of course thank you to the generous people who bid enthusiastically to help our work. We are always thrilled to hear about the $100 paid for a tiny glass rat or the lucky person who bid much more for a one-off art piece that may have been made by a staff member of the museum or on the ship.

Øydas Venner can be relied on to support our work in a variety of ways. Also, each year we receive a box full of their fabulous calendars which we use to boost our fundraising.

With her previous work as a bird biologist and on the Scilly Islands rat eradication project, Volunteer Vickie Heaney was such an asset in her role as Fundraising Assistant. We are so glad she is returning again next season to work with us.

The Museum vehicles are a couple of old bikes, so thank you to both Dickie and Pat for helping us maintain them and keep them on the track.
We thank BAS scientist Vicki Foster (known as Vicki Fish!) for her help topping up the preservative in the extensive benthic and fish specimens we have on display in Prince Room.

We always need an extra hand for the biggest ship visit of the year, Seabourn Quest with 450 passengers. Out thanks to Jerry and others on the BAS team for helping on what is always a challenging but fun day.

Volunteer Patrick Lurcock has useful skills in IT and has supported us with this in his spare time for many years. As he joined the team for a couple of months he was able to do an IT review and update our documentation relating to it.

We were happy to have the expertise of Dr Paul Brewin, GSGSSI Marine Environment and Fisheries Manger, to ensure the new labels for the benthos and fish specimens in the Prince Room were correct.

Sullivan Shipping Services Ltd are based in the Falkland Island and have provided excellent service for many years to ensure our cargo, everything from loo rolls and specialist curatorial materials to shop goods and paint, reaches us as quickly as possible.