

THE BRITISH SOUTH GEORGIA EXPEDITION

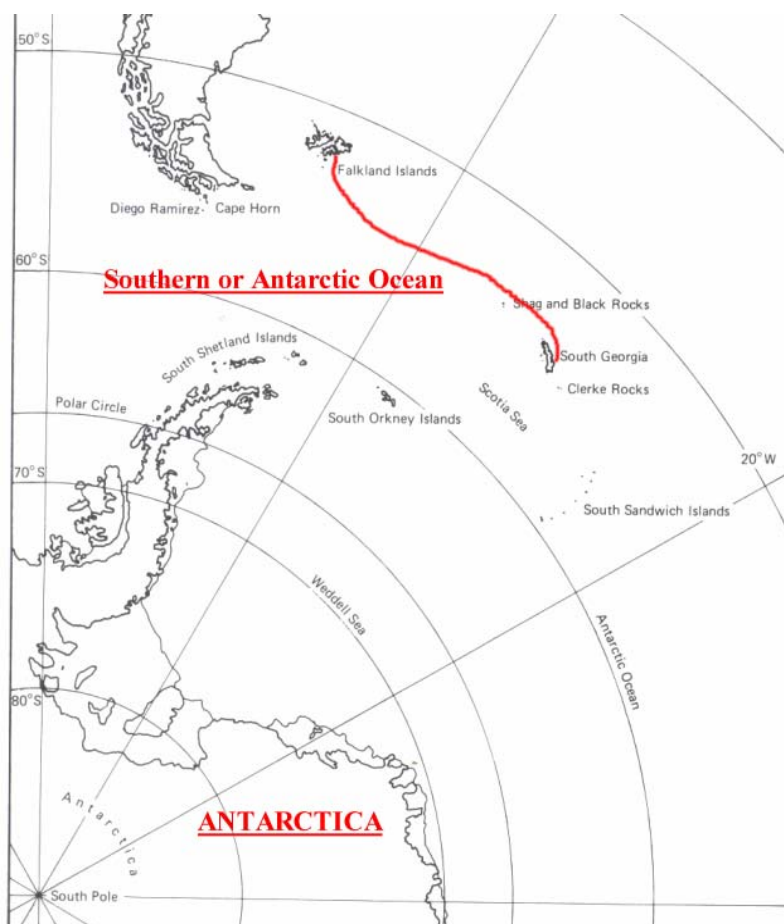
2005

A report for the Mount Everest Foundation, The British Mountaineering Council, The Expedition Advisory Centre (RGS), and the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

By
Julian Freeman-Attwood.

The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

(All heights in this report are in feet and distances in nautical miles.
Peak heights and positions are from the Bomford/Carse map)



Brief description of Island

The Island lies between Lat S 54 to 55 degrees / and Long W 36 to 38 degrees. It is a crescent shaped island orientated NW to SE with a length of approximately 100 miles and a width of between 15 and 25 miles. It was named after King George III following its discovery in 1775 by Captain James Cook who claimed sovereignty in a ceremony in Possession Bay. The Island is comprised of two main mountain ranges, the Allardyce in the north and the Salvesen in the south. The highest peak Mt Paget rises to a little under 10,000 ft. The island is 65% covered in perpetual snow and glaciers, with the bulk of snow free land lying on the NE coast.

It is not the object of this report to go into a lengthy history of the Island which is well documented elsewhere. With regard to mountaineering most notably:-

Bob Headland.....*The Island of South Georgia* Cambridge University Press 1984
Damien Gildea*The Antarctic Mountaineering Chronology*
Stephen Venables...*Island at the Edge of the World*



View of the Salvesen Range looking south from Mt Paget (photo Skip Novak)

The objectives of the Expedition:-

1. To complete a sled journey from Larsen Harbour to Royal bay.
2. To make an ascent of one or other of the many unclimbed peaks along our route with particular emphasis on either Mts Baume, Pk 6854, Smokey Wall, Mt Fraser.

Team Members

The expedition comprised 4 members onshore and 3 others who remained on the sailing vessel Pelagic. The 3 who remained onboard were Dion Poncet and Laurent and Jeremine Pasteur. The 4 climbers were:-

James 'Skip' Novak. 50yrs, U.S. Sailing Captain, Mountaineer .

15 seasons climbing in Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia, South Georgia and Antarctica including ascents of Sharp Pk, Mt Paget, Mt Pelagic, Mt Williams, Mt Francais, Mt Scott, and other un-named peaks. (Author of 2 Whitbread round the World sailing books / numerous articles.) Sikkim 1996. / Nepal 1997 / Many Alpine seasons / 2 seasons South Is New Zealand / West Face Batian Mt Kenya /

Rich Haworth, 37yrs British Climber and Yacht captain... Has climbed in New Zealand, Alps, Patagonia, Bolivia and Antarctica (west ridge Noble Peak) and to South Georgia (ascent Mt Senderens). Extensive sailing experience in the Southern Ocean.

Caradoc 'Crag' Jones. 46 yrs, British. Extensive research and management experience of South Georgia fisheries. Karakoram: 1st Ascent of Hunza Peak and 1st British Ascent of Biblototin. Africa: Kilimanjaro via new route 'The Stiff Upper Grip' TD, Mt. Kenya, 1st Solo ascent of Diamond Couloir. Torres del Paine: 1st Ascent and solo of E. Wall of Peneta (not to summit) and ascent of North Tower. South Georgia: 1st Alpine ascent of Mt Paget via new route and 1st ascent and solo of Three Brothers. Antarctica: Mt. Italia – Weinke Island 2nd ascent via new route. Himalayas: Solo ascents of ImjaTse and Pokalde, Everest via N. ridge from Tibet, Winter traverse of Zanskar Gorge. E.Greenland: 1st Ascents of S.Ridge of Ritterknekten and W. Wall of Faushorn. N. America – Rockies: Lotus Flower Tower, One day traverse of Tetones. Alps: Croz Spur, Dru Couloir, NE Pillar Direct of Courtes and assorted classics.

Julian Freeman-Attwood. 50 yrs., British, Forester ... over 25 expeditions to the greater ranges.

Previously to South Georgia in 1989 first ascent Mts Kling and Carse and 2nd ascent Vogel. To Antarctic Peninsula 3 times inc. ascent of Mt William and attempt Cape Renard tower. / Tibet 7 expeditions inc first ascent Targo Gangri 6550m , Solo Pk 6263m, Pk6202 Loinbo, Xagangsham 6822m..etc, Attempt east face Shishapangma, Solo Imja Tse, 1st ascent Mt Pelagic Tierra del Fuego, West ridge Kenya.



From left, Rich Haworth, Julian Freeman-Attwood, Skip Novak and Crag Jones in Drygalski Fiord

Origins of the expedition:-

The greatest problem for any expedition aspiring to go to South Georgia is one of transport. We were all lucky therefore that renowned sailor and mountaineer Skip Novak, owner of two robust sailing vessels fitted out for Antarctic work, was willing to put together a trip to the island. Through his great generosity this was to be essentially a non commercial trip. All four climbers (and indeed to an even greater extent Dion Poncet who was to remain on board the vessel with Laurent and Jeremine whilst the climbers went ashore) have extensive knowledge of the island from previous trips. Dion has the distinction of being born at Leith harbour. His mother, Sally, and father Jerome have had an extensive and ongoing involvement with South Georgia for decades, which has included much environmental research work and extensive yacht cruising. Dion himself has been to the island more than a dozen times. Furthermore, Crag Jones has been involved for many years in fisheries protection around the island and in duties as harbour master at King Edward Point. Rich Haworth has had extensive sailing experience in the Southern ocean.

Weather

One of the greatest problems to overcome for any South Georgia traveller is that of extremely high winds. The temperatures to be encountered are not particularly low and there are no high altitude problems but the winds can, at times, defy proper description. It is essential to be prepared for rapid changes from being in control one minute to being well out of control the next. The wherewithal to dig snow shelters is paramount and the correct tents no less so. The author remembers being told by the late Duncan Carse that, when in tents, it is better to be out in the open than near to ridges and buttresses where katabatic winds can greatly increase the mean wind speed. These gusts are what generally cause structural damage to tents. I have found on a number of occasions that Carse was correct in this assertion.

The author was confined for a long period in 1989/90 in a snow cave on the Ross Pass due to high winds. This cave was, in retrospect, located in a particularly bad wind funnel and we all thought at that time it would have been preferable to be more mobile and to have taken sleds. For the 2005 expedition we adopted this theme and would take sleds (pulks). We would dig ice shelters only when necessary.

Permits

Since the author's last visit, a system for the requirement of a permit has been established. (The same goes for the Antarctic mainland but that comes under the Antarctic Treaty.) South Georgia lies outside of the Antarctic Treaty zone which effectively begins south of the 60th South parallel. The permit application is to the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands through a screening committee. This is run by Dave Nichols and at present includes both Skip Novak and Crag Jones. There is a permit fee of £1000 to pay and the main requirement of the permit is that a dedicated vessel will remain at South Georgia whilst a party is ashore and that the shore party have communications with their boat.

Diary of events

Skip, Crag and Julian provisioned the 'Pelagic' in Ushuaia (Tierra del Fuego) and were joined by two French sailors, Laurent and Jeremine Pasteur who were to assist Dion Poncet with the boat when the climbers were ashore. We were very fortunate in having Laurent and Jeremine; two knowledgeable and affable companions for the journey.

31st December 2004 Ushuaia to the Falklands

We set sail east down Beagle channel to Puerto Williams. We moored up beside Pelagic Australis, Skip's new boat, which was about to set off for the Antarctic Peninsula.

1st-4th January 2005

This period spent sailing to Falkland Islands after passing through the straits of Lemaire. With adverse winds on the 4th January we pulled into the Lively islands (Lafonia, Falkland Islands) for shelter and arrive in Port Stanley at midnight.

5th January

In Stanley provisioning boat and picking up Rich Howarth and Dion Poncet. Climbing gear and sleds taken from port container having been brought down from the UK earlier in the year.

6th January to 10th January. The Falklands to South Georgia

Period spent sailing the 800 miles to South Georgia. We get no big blows, except for a period of 35 to 40 knots on the night of 6th/ 7th requiring a double reef in the main and a furled staysail.

The remainder of the voyage was a mixture of good sailing and motoring in horrible lumpy, rolling seas. Arrive 2am on 10th/11th in Drygalski Fiord and anchor off it in Larsen harbour. (We had been given permission to sail straight to Larsen harbour and land there, rather than checking in to the harbour master at King Edward Point first.)



Iceberg near Cape Disappointment



**The Southernmost tip of South Georgia
and Cape Disappointment.**

11th January

A fine sunny day. We decide to check out the Risting glacier ice front at the head of Drygalski Fiord in case there was a way ashore at either flank of it. We noticed the amount of glacial recession since the Carse / Bomford map was printed in the 1950's. At that time the Risting and Jenkins glaciers had a common calving ice front. They now have distinct separate fronts in their own bays with a Risting recession of about 1.5 miles. The front is now at S.lat 54,46.4 / W. long 36,07.0

We saw no good landing either side of the Risting but got good views of Douglas Crag, Mt Maklin, the south summit of Mt Carse, plus Mts Dow, Sabatier and Senderens. We returned to Larsen to sort out gear and check out the slopes leading up to the Philippi glacier from the end of Larsen harbour. We were dismayed at how receded and broken the small glacier descending down to Larsen had become. Although the col. we want to get to is only about 1000ft up, it was not going to be that easy an operation to haul the sleds up to that point. Some Weddell seals lay around here plus fur seals and a few Gentoo penguins.

12th January. Windy / light drizzle

We sorted out food for 18 days and did a first load carry to the col. at the edge of Philippi glacier and returned to the boat.

13th January Windy/ unsettled

We left the boat permanently today by 11am, and carried massive loads halfway to the col. where we had stashed a rope the day before. Rich and Crag do their carry in one. Skip and I returned to sea level for the other half of our loads. With massive sacks and pulks we gain the col. after a couple of hours in slushy snow with a wind

blowing in gusts through a funnel at the top. We found a wind scoop just to the east of the col. and pitched tents in it with valances dug well in. Camp position S.Lat54,50.1 / W. Long 36,03.3



Hauling up the glacier out of Larsen Harbour

14th January. NW gale

It has been windy all night and continues 35 to 40 knots with 50+ knot gusts. This tends to bury our tents since we are in a wind scoop. We have to get up quite frequently to dig out tents but then realise that once they are just buried to about half height the snow blows off them and does not increase in depth. We don't want to get bogged down in this place at the very start of the journey. Blown snow continues all day and we do not move.

15th January. NW gale abating

By 6am next morning there is a sign of change but it takes us until 11am to dig out tents from the drift, haul the sleds onto the glacier from the wind scoop and get ourselves ready for the first march. We set off NW towards a pass just to the east of Mt Sabatier which divides the Phillipi from the Graae Glacier. To begin with the ground descends to a point that the ice heads down east to Brandt Cove, a point between the entrance to Larsen Harbour and the Risting ice front. This was a little crevassed but became better as we rose up towards the Sabatier pass. At this time the weather was much improved and the wind had died down. We got to the col. at 3pm. The route then descends onto the Graae glacier to another crevasse field where it levels out. We could see west out to sea at this point, and with snow flurries starting to come in, we decided to camp at 8pm. The wind dies down again and we are a lot dryer than the previous night. This Graae Glacier camp at S.Lat54,47.6 / W. Long 36,11.7

16th January / Slushy snow and light to moderate wind

Although the weather was dry overnight we wake at 6am to slushy rain and a rising wind and then just as we wanted to be away, bad gusts came in from the SE which we thought a strange quarter for a wet wind. We stay put for the time being but packed up at midday when there was a slight improvement. We got away by 2pm in zero visibility.

Skip went first and I 'steered' him by compass from the no2 position. This means I have the rope to look along as a point of reference for the compass. The first sled has no reference is zero visibility and is more concerned with looking out for crevasses than with steering a course. I would shout occasional instructions of left a bit, right a bit or confirmation of good course.

After an hour we needed to turn more to the north through a narrower defile according to the map. After some discussion as to whether we were attempting this too soon or whether we needed to go on a mile, we decide to head up right. If correct this would lead to the next pass; that between the Graae Glacier and the Harmer Glacier. Sometimes we could see the flicker of a rock buttress a few hundred yards to our right which should be that forming part of Mt Starbuck's south ridge. With a hard pull in poor snow to the pass we descended into a crevasse field which required quite a few minor detours. Keeping to the east of these we decided to camp as snow was falling. We were quite tired as we are not yet fit enough. Persistent light snow driven by a moderate north wind continued until midnight. This Harmer Glacier camp is at S.Lat54,45.4 / W. Long 36,13.5

17th January Harmer Glacier

Damp snow and moderate wind continues to dump snow which accumulated faster than we thought it would and at times alarmingly so. Visibility zero. No hope of moving on. Stay tent bound all day occasionally digging out the worst of the snow pressure.

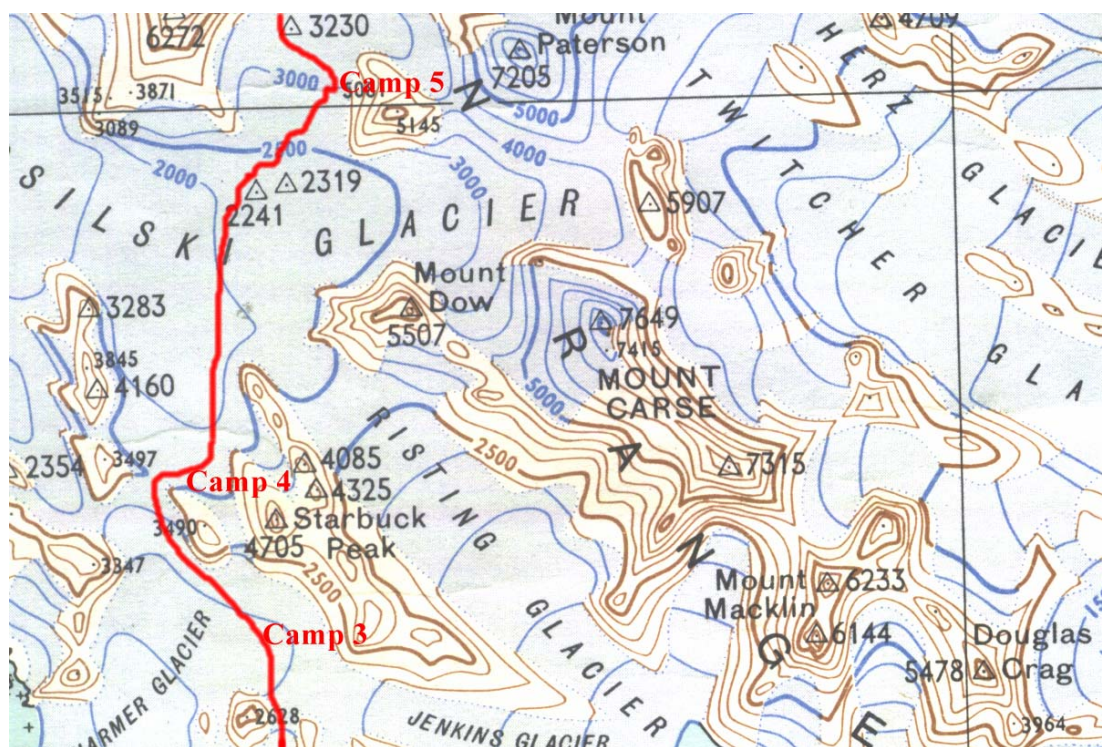


Harmer / Novosilki glacier col.

18th January Wet snow and light to moderate wind

It is still snowing and borderline whether we continue today or not but decide, on balance, to pack up and move on. It is a miserable business trying to keep things dry. Again there is zero visibility although the Starbuck buttresses are sometimes a comfort to see when they come out of the mirk. We head though another crevasse field and then haul up our sleds for 700ft through appalling snow which piles up in front of the sled like a bow wave. This gets us to the pass which separates the Harmer glacier from the Novosilski glacier. Visibility still zero so we don't know just where we are on the col. but more annoyingly we are not getting views of Mt Starbuck which we would like to have obtained.

This Harmer / Novosilski pass camp at S.Lat 54,43.9 / W. Long 36,14.0



19th January

We set off in better visibility. The mountain tops are still in cloud so we have still not seen Starbuck. It is strangely warm with the sun not quite breaking through. We feel that the peaks must almost certainly be in sunshine 2000ft or so above us. Slushy snow means a very devilish sled pull, even when going downhill, to the edge of the Novosilski glacier.

We need to move fast at this point as there is a marked venturi effect here with wind liable to blow hard up the Novosilski and over the col. to our SE down the Risting to Drygalski Fiord. We cross the main basin of the Novosilski in good weather but still in low cloud, except that Mt Fraser could be seen to the NW on the true right bank of the glacier. From the lowest point of the glacier circa 2241 ft, we hauled up to 2800ft en route for the Spenceley Glacier col. and make camp. Probably the hardest day yet. This Novosilski glacier camp at S.Lat 54,40.3 / W. Long 36,11.0

20th January

Light snow and zero visibility. About the same as the 18th Jan. We haul up the steepest ground to date a total of 1300ft which brings us out on the pass which separates the Novosilski from the Spenceley Glacier. We set up camp in the middle of the highest part of the col. at 4120ft. To our west is Mt Baume and to our east a 4792 peak which is more of a large Nunatak than a peak. We will stay here as long as we can and wait for a weather window.

This Spenceley glacier col. camp at S.Lat 54,38.9 / W. Long 36,12.2

21st January

At 4am we are astonished to wake to clear skies. Snow conditions are far from consolidated but we feel we should go and see if there is a safe way up Mt Baume. The East Ridge which looked simple enough from a photograph we have, now could be seen to be a desperate and long crenulated ridge. We skied around to the north side where there seemed to be, as seen from an acute angle, a way up a steep glacier. When we saw this from a head on position, it was plainly swept by huge seracs and tottering ice towers. Nevertheless, on the left was a rock buttress which looked like it might go with some hard climbing, and which might lead to a point on the glacier above the dangerous towers.

The other alternative discussed was the peak immediately to the south of Mt Baume, a peak marked on the map as Pt 5680. This had a technically easy east ridge but it was felt the snow conditions would be very poor so soon after the large snow falls.



Mt Baume as seen from the Spenceley Glacier col. with route to high point

Baume looked like it would go in a day. We had no bivvi gear or food more than snacks and a water bottle each, but we thought it could be done in daylight hours. We were well deceived by the distance up the face. Our progress was extremely slow due to very poor snow and ice conditions. We were confronted with some 9 pitches on the buttress, much of which was Scottish grade IV in nature. There was also a great deal of difficulty in placing protection in the shattered or blank rock which anyway gave very little in the way of natural nut placements. Some ice screw placements were good but they were not wholly to be relied on and belays took a long time for the leader to arrange properly and safely most especially as we were all following up arrow fashion after the leader. Crag did some very fine leads with a sparse amount of gear. By the time we had completed the 9 pitches and got level with the top ice tower (one of these had already thundered down the glacier as expected and peppered us with fine ice dust) it was nearly 5pm. The amount of mountain above was huge and it was later seen we were actually only at slightly more than the half way point. Any change in weather would put us in a precarious position and the amount of abseil gear we had was limited. In effect we should have come prepared for a two day climb with some reserves of clothing for a night out. It must be said Crag was for going on, Skip and I were for going back and Rich was ambivalent. The decision was made to abseil off which took us at least the next 4 hours. By the time we picked up our skis at the bottom of the route it was dark and we navigated back by moonlight on a very beautiful night.



Pk5680 on the right and Mt Fraser beyond as seen from Mt Baume

22nd January

Exhausted from the sledging two days before, and from some 20 hours activity on Mt Baume we took the day off. Eyes are now on a quick ascent of Pk 5680. The weather stayed very fine and cloudless so I, to some extent, regretted the retreat from Baume although having gone to climb it without a bivvi bag or a stove was the reason for a feeling of helplessness if the weather had changed.

23rd January (Ascent of Pk 5680)

The weather does look like changing sometime today. Skip, Crag and Rich go off to Pt5680 and ski to the bottom of the east ridge having set off at about 1.30 am. Relatively consolidated snow slopes led to an 'alpine classic' east ridge in fine positions which was climbed moving roped together, finding a crevasse near the top as the only place which required a belay. All were on top by about 5am with very fine views to Annenkov Island to the west and down to the Novosilski glacier ice front. (From a GPS it was thought the top to be nearer 5900ft but this is not conclusive considering altitude errors with GPS. It does seem likely the summit exceeds 5680ft) Views to Mt Baume confirmed that we had only been a little over half way up the face.

Descending from Pt5680 by the same route in good order, all were back at the Spenceley glacier col. at 8am.

Just before the return to camp, the wind was starting to rise and it looked ominous down towards the Allardyce range. Now a vicious looking lenticular cloud and associated fronts far below it, was heading down from the north and was by now over the Ross pass.



Summit of Pk5680m

The gusts were beginning to badly deform Crag's tent and, although my double poled Wild country tent was still fairly rigid, the flysheet was beginning to tear along the zip stitching on the windward door. Also the blasts were emptying the snow off the valances and wind was starting to get under the fly sheets. Trouble was looming and inaction was in my view not an option. Crag and I got up and headed off east towards the base of the nunatak peak 500 yards away with two shovels. It was already hard going with the wind at 90 degrees to our left, buffeting us around and sometimes knocking us down. We could see a bergshrund 100ft up from the glacier and we hoped we might be able to get down into it and dig sideways. The bergshrund was

too deep and the ice too hard so we headed south for 300 yards to a windscoop below a rock buttress. Windscoops are of course windy places but they usually have reasonable compacted snow to dig into, and this scoop was no exception. We could have done with the angle of the slope being steeper than it was so that we could dig in quicker. After an hour digging I became worried about the tents and with the wind rising ever more, I left Crag and headed back across. Now I was knocked down every 10 meters or so, either partially or completely over. It was therefore a fairly exhausting business even though it was virtually flat glacier.



Skip in the ice cave entrance just to the west of Pt 4792

Back at the tent I raised Rich Haworth who agreed to go and help Crag who would by then need a rest. Meanwhile Skip and I started to load up the sledges with gear in outrageous conditions. Sometimes there were ominous lulls in the wind only to be replaced by the worst of the gusts. In any event we could not get the tents down without at least one of the others back with us so Skip headed off to get Crag. This took some time as he inadvertently followed our original tracks to the bergshund before realising his mistake and heading for the windscoop. During this period I became quite concerned that the tents would be destroyed before anyone returned and there was little I could do in such conditions on my own.

The lenticular cloud was 10,000ft overhead and looked like a monster with a mind of its own. It really was quite a daunting sight.

About an hour after he had left, Skip returned with Crag and now we could all work together and get his tent down which now had no snow on the valances as nearly all of it had blown away. With difficulty and without losing any gear we managed to get everything into 3 pulks (the 4th having already been taken across by Rich to facilitate the removal of snow from the enlarging cave.)

When ready we all three took one sled, one of us in harness and the other two holding a rope on the sides, and made it across returning for the other two sleds.

We were now in some shelter and much more in control than before, but it had taken 4 or 5 hours and we had been somewhat unprepared. In hindsight we should have built some kind of an ice cave here when we arrived as the law of averages dictate that we were likely to get a blow, most especially as we had not had any very severe winds up to this time.

We carried on digging and all managed to just get into the cave by nightfall.



24th January (in ice cave)

The next morning there was still much spindrift although the worst of the wind had died away. With the cave crowded I decided to pitch one tent at the base of the wind scoop outside but not long after that the gusts got worse and there was some evidence of stone fall down the buttress nearby. Whilst taking it down again with Skip, the inner tent was whisked magically off the poles and having inflated to the shape of a tent and reached 70mph in a matter of seconds, it disappear out of the wind scoop heading south. That was the end of that. Later we got in contact with the boat for a weather forecast and we found that no good settled spells were imminent and therefore made the decision to sledge onwards as soon as was possible.

25th January (in ice cave)

The spindrift continued and we had to continually dig out the entrance which kept filling up with snow and entombing us completely every couple of hours. This continued all through the night.

26th January

Despite some spindrift in the morning and although the weather did not look too good with low cloud, we got up early and after some 3 hours of digging out and loading sleds, we were off by 5.30am. The surface was not brilliant but we made steady progress to the lip of the Spenceley glacier and down. The weather then amazingly cleared up completely, into a sunny and windless one. We had some very satisfactory skiing all the way down the glacier with some quite fast sections being pushed along by the weight of the pulks. A crevasse field had to be skirted near the point where glaciers came in from the east below Smoky Wall but after no more than 6 hours we were on the watershed between the Spenceley and Brogger glaciers. This col. I had been to before in 1989 and it was in affect a col. between nunataks separating the two glaciers. Across the Brogger we had the finest views of Paget, Roots, Nordenskjold, Kling (which we climbed in 1989) and Brooker. To the east was Mt Vogel, climbed by us in 1989 but which was not a first ascent. We carried on up the last bit of the Brogger heading east to the Ross Pass but now some ugly weather was at our backs racing up from the west. At least we had turned the corner and the next storm would be on our backs.



The Salvesen and Brogger Glacier divide. Looking north to Mt Roots (background left), Nordenskjold (centre, face in cloud) and Mt Kling (summit just visible pluming).

The Ross Pass windscoop where we had dug an ice cave 15 years before looked very different insofar as there seemed to be glacial recession. I was wondering what the Ross glacier would be like. We soon found out when still 1000ft above sea level and no more than 60% of the distance to the sea. The glacier was completely dry and covered in a maze of crevasses, over areas we had happily skied down previously. With sleds tipping over on a frequent basis we ended up stashing them in a small crevasse, taking a GPS position for them and continuing down to Little Moltke harbour (Royal Bay) with rucksacks in driving sleet, rain and wind. Somewhere at Little Moltke, Dion had left an emergency barrel with another tent, some food and spare VHF radio. We eventually found it and in foul wet and very windy weather we erected it amongst some King Penguins and fur seals. A message was sent to the Pelagic which we hoped would turn up on the following day.

27th January

By 10am the Pelagic was lying offshore in a heavy offshore wind. We did not go aboard until after the remaining gear was picked up off the Ross Glacier. Getting the dingy back out through the surf from the beach took good timing. A veritable gale of wind blowing offshore meant that any engine failure would mean an ignominious drift out to sea and as the engine was indeed spluttering at this time, there were some anxious moments until we tied up to the Pelagic, itself straining at the anchor which happily was holding. When all were aboard we motored round to the comparative shelter of Moltke Harbour. Wind gusts down Whale valley were not a lot less than down the Ross Glacier.



King Penguins in St Andrew's Bay

28th January

Dion, Laurent and I motored around to St Andrew's Bay while the others walked over via Kelp and Doris Bays. Before we left I had a look at the site of the old BAS hut which we had lived in for a while in 1989. There was almost nothing of it left.

On the way around to St Andrews we passed the site of the German scientific expedition observatory site of 1882-83. This was the first scientific expedition ever to visit the Antarctic regions and included a successful sighting of the transit of Venus and, amongst many other scientific discoveries, made tidal observations which indicated on 27th August 1883, the Tsunami effect of the eruption of Krakatoa the previous day.

It was good to be back at the huge King penguin colony in St Andrews, the largest in the world, according to Dion, other than one colony in Kerguelen which is only a little bigger. I was taken by how many more Fur seals there seemed to be since my last visit. The others turned up after 8 hrs and we carried on up to Grytviken, in Cumberland East Bay where we arrived just as it was getting dark.

29th January

On a very sunny morning it was good to meet Ken Passfield, the harbour master along with Allison, the welcoming BAS station commander. Later we lunched with Tim and Pauline Carr who, over the past 8 years or so, have started up a very creditable museum of South Georgia which now gets a great many visitors from cruise ships. They really have done a splendid job and in the expedition section there were photographs of Skip's Paget ascent, Crag's Paget and Three Brothers ascent and some of my trip of 15 years before.

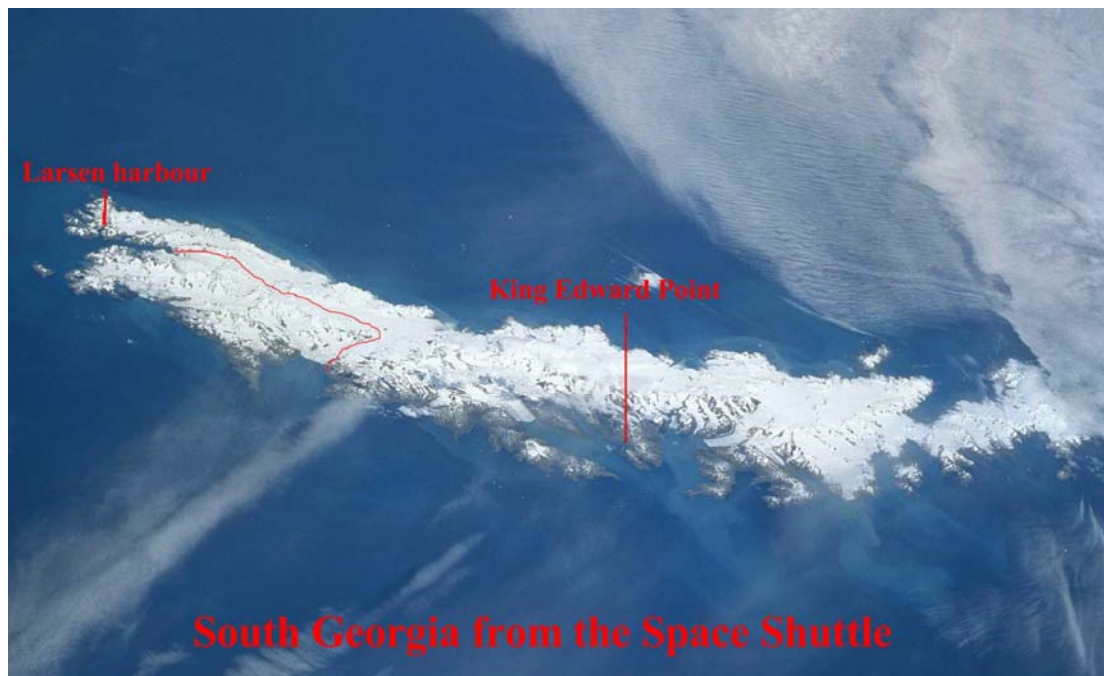
The whaling station had changed greatly since I was last there as old asbestos had been removed recently along with most of the roofs of the building to prevent corrugated sheets blowing off in high winds. I looked at Shackleton's grave and we left for Prince Olav harbour at 6pm.



South Georgia from the NE with from left Nordenskjold, Roots and Paget

30th January

From Prince Olav we sailed past Prion Island and anchored the night in Rossita Harbour. We waited for a favourable wind to begin the 800 mile return to Port Stanley.



31st January to 7th February

Although we hit no bad storms or big seas, we had a very laborious and long motor-sail back to Stanley taking 7 days and with winds varying only from NW to SW. Since our course was just north of west these winds were not a lot of good to us and meant an average speed of only 4.5 knots, with the engine requiring a diesel pump change half way through.

Stanley, Falklands.

Skip and the others dropped off Dion and me before sailing on to Ushuaia.

Government House, Port Stanley.

I was fortunate to make the acquaintance of Gordon Liddle, Harriet Hall and Richard McKee at Government House.

I talked to Gordon Liddle who thinks that it might be possible in future to arrange for one vessel to be stationed at South Georgia for a part of any season and that this vessel would be considered sufficient to cover more than one expedition on the basis that it would be extremely unlikely that an emergency would happen to more than one party on the same day. This yacht could be paid for jointly by the various expeditions who might that year be going down (possibly assisted by the South Georgia Government from the permit fees) and it would enable the parties to 'hitch' a lift there and back on one or other of the cruise ships. We think this sounds a very good solution to the dedicated vessel problem and we hope Gordon is able to take this idea further.

The reindeer on the island have created an environmental problem in some areas since their introduction by the Norwegians in 1911. It may be that the Government have come to the conclusion that one of the two herds may be taken out to benefit the delicate coastal flora, and thus bird nesting territory.

Gordon is looking at the feasibility of resurrecting the hydro electric system at Grytviken. If this was up and running again it would be a first, as the BAS station there would become the first scientific base in any of the Antarctic to be run on renewable resources. We all hope this comes about and of course much will depend on cost.

South Georgia Glaciology

We bumped into Charlie Porter in Stanley, who had been in South Georgia whilst we were ashore. He is a renowned glaciologist, with his own sailing vessel, and has done much in Antarctica as well as Tierra del Fuego. He showed me a map where he had overlaid South Georgia's present ice front positions from satellite imagery, onto the Carse / Bomford map of the 1950's.

This showed a glacial recession on the NE of the Island (with the exception of the Nordenskjold Glacier which is fed by the bulk of Paget and Roots), matched by a glacial accession on the south side of the island. He thinks this could be because of greater precipitation over the years on the south side despite a general warming overall. Whether this accession comes to a halt as things warm up further (and what had fallen as snow instead falling as rain) remains to be seen. Nevertheless, Charlie feels that South Georgia's unique position between Antarctica and temperate regions will make it a very important place to monitor global weather change patterns in the future.

Tents

Nearly every expedition to South Georgia in recent years has had tents ripped apart or blow away. We were no exception and the fly sheet of the tent we lost was already starting to rip along the zip stitching. The double poles on our Wild Country Hyperspace worked well but even having had stronger zips and extra large valances fitted, the fabric simply was not strong enough. Furthermore valances started ripping along the stitching with the fly sheet. My conclusion was that if I were to return to the island I would take a modern pyramid tent of the type used by British Antarctic Survey. The only other solution would be to use a dome tent but have a completely purpose built fly sheet made from scratch, using very strong materials and with pull string entrances rather than zips.

Pulks

These were basically very good and came from Snowsled. One big problem was that the covers are not waterproof (being made with the dry conditions of the Antarctic mainland in mind). Water gets in and tends to pool in the base of the plastic sled. Any party using pulks in South Georgia in future would be well advised to put a waterproof cover on them.

Accounts Expenditure

Air fares 3 x £1200.....	£3600
Provisions for boat and food.....	£1200
Diesel fuel for boat.....	£ 530
Sat phone time.....	£ 240
Government permit.....	£ 500
Nominal charter of boat enough to cover wear and tear.....	£ 2000
<u>TOTAL expenditure.....</u>	<u>£ 8070</u>

Accounts Income

Mount Everest Foundation.....	£ 450
British Mountaineering Council (Have promised a grant but amount unknown as yet, could be £1000)	
Personal contributions..... 4 x £1905.....	£ 7620
<u>TOTAL Income.....</u>	<u>£ 8070</u>

We would like to thank the following for their kind support of our expedition:-

The Mount Everest Foundation

The British Mountaineering Council

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands for our permits.

Aerolineas Argentinas (special thanks to Carol Paterson and staff.)

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Dion Poncet, Laurent and Jeremine Pasteur for looking after the boat.

To Skip Novak, without whose generosity we could not have reached South Georgia.

Expedition summary:-

1. A successful sledge trip from Larsen harbour to Royal Bay.
(Crossing the Philippi, Graae, Harmer, Novosilski, Spenceley, Brogger and Ross Glaciers.)
2. An attempt on the north buttress of Mt Baume.
3. A first ascent of Pk5680, to the south of Mt Baume.