

WHERE IS ANTARCTICA?

WHAT IS THERE?

THIS REPORT IS TO ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS AND TO REPORT ON THEM SO THAT CAPITAL MAY BE MADE FROM IT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS USED TO BEST ADVANTAGE.

I WENT TO MARION ISLAND IN 1955 AND FROM THEN UNTIL 1966 TO OTHER ISLANDS OR PARTS OF ANTARCTICA.

ANTARCTICA IS THE HUGE CONTINENT THAT SURROUNDS THE SOUTH POLE. THE MOUNTAINS ARE COVERED IN ICE AND SNOW. THERE ARE NO CITIES OR HABITATIONS THERE EXCEPT FOR A FEW BASES BELONGING TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

ONE OF THOSE COUNTRIES IS SOUTH AFRICA. THEY NOW HAVE BASES ON MARION ISLAND, GOUGH ISLAND AND IN QUEEN MAUD LAND, PUT THERE BY A CURRENT WWII VETERAN.

The story begins in 1954 when Jannie Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, sent a confidential message to certain scientific authorities warning that S.A. had better occupy the Prince Edward Islands before Russia did. This would be by means of a weather-research station.

The writer arranged a trip there in a naval vessel and found a lonely, wild, volcanic island halfway to the Antarctic mainland.

A small group of weather-men were put there in a tiny hut. They were the only human inhabitants. This was Marion Island.

Back in South Africa the Department of Transport, which includes the Weather Bureau, asked the Public Works Department to put a proper weather station there.

The P.W.D. enquired in South Africa's Public Works' offices for a leader who had the experience to organise and execute the whole project.

Several looked at it but it seemed no-one wanted it. So the writer volunteered. He had ship experience and also construction experience and was used to leading men.

The Department of Transport gave the outline of what was needed. It was up to him to design the base, prefabricate it, find a crew, find a ship, load it, sail it some 1500 miles into the Antarctic, get it up a cliff, sink piles, set the building on the piles etc, and then come home. Estimated time on the island- 6 months.

Weather-terrible.

He did all the above and was commended by the Heads of the

*2.0 to 1000 ft  
OK for ...  
Museum for ...*

Departments for a successful mission. He was later promoted in rank.

BUT, he had to handle mutiny, attempted murder, shipwreck, drownings and much more, which data may follow as anecdotal. The South African Admiralty commended the writer for saving lives and providing a means to rescue half of the crew of the frigate "Transvaal" from being stranded on this island. There were other commendations from other sources.

Having gained safe point in the P.W.D he then began to introduce work by statistics into the Cape Town P.W.D. with some org-boarding and seminars, hating each officer during lunch breaks on their work.

Then each one was given a stat. This was a bit unpopular with the loafers but the workers went for it. Also brought order into the area by publishing a standard issue on the decoration of the public buildings to a higher tone than the terrible dark greens and browns used for decades. This was adopted in the Cape Province and then it began in other provinces.

In 1961 the Secretary for Public Works came to Cape Town from Pretoria, the capital, and described how S.A. needed to create a scientific base on the Antarctic mainland. But that the various departments or bodies were going round in circles and no agreement could be reached. It was a never-ending cycle. He had decided to work only with the one Department, the meteorologists, and just build it. That Department provided sketches of what was required and it was given to the writer. It was a huge base, to be erected on the ice shelf in Queen Maud Land, south of Africa, a Norwegian territory. Norway had granted permission.

The writer was given a budget. He then planned the base and then pre-fabricated the whole base on a nearby airforce station. He wrote to an expert in expeditions about crew selection and followed his advices.

(One member was a politician's son, not wanted by the writer, and he turned out to be a washout. All the others did very well).

The Dept of Transport provided an icebreaker, built for this task in Japan. The buildings, the construction crew and the scientists were loaded. On the way south the writer held seminars with his crew using certain principles on how to make this project a success.

The buildings were erected over 2 weeks working around the clock, each crew member hatted and with his WQSB before arrival and before the first blizzard that would bury everything. According to the experts four days was the maximum without a blizzard. In this case it was 14 days! But on the 14th day the leader (writer) smelled a change, handed over the base to the scientists. The leader and his construction crew fled in their Muskies for the ship. The blizzard hit on arrival at the ship. The base was buried but safe.

On the way out from the iceshelf the ship was frozen in and could not move. This dragged on for forty days with the ice mounting up the ship's sides. There was little hope as winter was building up. We each had worked out how to survive when the ice would sink the ship. Two American icebreakers left New Zealand with helicopters aboard to come and fish us out. That meant a long wait as they were on the other side of the continent. Luckily on the fortieth day there was an earthquake and it broke up the ice and we got out before it could refreeze. During those forty days the writer organised seminars with all the passengers aboard participating on any subject.

The ship redocked in Capetown. The writer was then commended by the Secretary for Public Works, the Secretary for Transport and the Secretary for the South African Antarctic Association. The story of the base erected in Queen Maud Land was then recorded in the book "Symposium on Antarctic Logistics" by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

The writer was again promoted in rank in the P.W.D., Cape Province.

Another project was carried out by the writer to take more buildings to Marion Island. The additions had to be modified due to violent weather washing parts of the buildings overboard from the deck of the transport vessel. But it was successful.

Then came another trip to Prince Edward Island to survey that island for a future base. Another group aboard was headed by the son of Dr Verwoerd, the President of South Africa. The son was a Vulcanologist. He surveyed the whole island and recorded one mountain in the writer's name.

Then a project to Gough Island to work out where to put a base on that uninhabited island which lies south of Tristan Da Cunha. Some weather-men were left there in a small hut pending the building of the base. When the writer went back there 6 months later, the "leader" was raving. He had tried to exercise authoritarian rule over his group and they "sent him to Coventry" (refused to talk TO him.)

The writer had to just listen for over an hour.

Then another project to Bouvet Island (Norwegian) to survey for a possible future base there. This has its anecdotes, too.

Finally he was promoted to the next-to-top rank in the P.W.D. and at this point the top man asked him not to usurp him as he wanted his full pension and needed more years as top-dog. The writer resigned and went back to sea on a archeological expedition in the Canaries and Mediterranean islands.

The above is enough for a reader to decide whether he wishes to read further.

Documents, maps, letters, excerpts from books or magazines

are included in case authentication is required.  
Colour slides or prints could be made should PR require this.

It will be seen that the South Africans have built subsequent bases in Queen Maud Land and the most recent one is huge.

Added out of interest are some comms to me in WW11 from Churchill, and Smuts.

#### ANECDOTES:

Here are a couple of anecdotes to give an idea of what is available if called for (as recalled by the writer):

"There were about 7 weather-men on this island (Marion). They had been there for months. The P.W.D. group of 12 joined them. Something happens to people in such isolation. We had built enough of the main building for us all to move in. We had set up a nice roomy dining area with a long table. 19 of us sat around it. The "medico" (medical orderly) who had been there for a year had been a preacher but sickened of it and joined the army.

At each meal he would sit opposite one of the 19 and start a glare fight—just sit and glare at the person. The person would slowly or quickly drop his knife and fork and quit the table, feeling weird. My turn came and all watched, but without making it obvious. What the medico was suddenly faced with someone who would not be the effect of his nonsense.

I just ate my meal and smiled at his furious glares. He got more and more furious and foamed and RAN. There were no more "glare fights".

"While stuck in the ice off Queen Maud Land the medical Doctor aboard, a famous neuro-surgeon, came to my cabin and pleasantly asked for some conversation. Dr Ronnie Plotkin was erudite, a man of letters. He asked whether I could explain how the brain worked. He felt I had some knowledge that he did not have. I explained that I did not have the data he had on it. He persisted, hinting there WAS something I knew in this area that maybe he did not. I asked for clarification and it got around to mental pictures and what they were in relation to the brain.

I told him I had data in that area but did not wish to get into it. But he was adamant and insistent. So I explained in simple terms how the mind was made up of these pictures. This was done in such a irrefutable way that he could not speak. Then he told me he would never talk to me again. Luckily we got out of the ice after being stuck in it for 40 days.

On Marion Island, on completion of the buildings I radioed for a ship to pick us up. The S.A. naval vessel "Transvaal" arrived captained by my good friend George Green. She anchored "offshore". There was no shore, just cliffs and huge slippery rocks laced with sea elephants.

I had built a crane and landing platform at the end of the cliff. The sea was calm. "Transvaal" landed the relief weather-men

crew plus half of the ship's crew, the latter to help offload a year's stores.

A fair amount of stores were gotten ashore but the weather had beefed up. The captain wanted his crew back, just in case. He sent the whaler to pick them up in series. About 50 yds off the rocks a surfing swell grabbed the whaler and overturned it. The crew were in COLD water. They were washed on to the rocks but the undercurrent pulled them back. I got a long rope and crew on the rocks and we "skipped" the rope out over them and pulled them in one after the other. They were carried up to the base and spent hours in a heated room recovering. Except for the Coxn. He was killed when the boat overturned.

The ship now sent the cutter, the only remaining boat. The same thing happened and we rescued them.

Now we had half the ship's crew, plus the boatmen, plus the P.W.D. crew ashore and no means of getting back to the ship. The Captain radioed he was going to go back to South Africa for more boats and crew. I grabbed an Aldis and asked him for 24 hours. He agreed. The whaler was ashore on the rocks, a wreck.

I asked all ashore for solutions, but none was feasible. So I got four of my crew and told them we could do it if they were willing to work around the clock and do what I asked.

We began putting this boat together with Masonite strips and blankets soaked in grease, paint, fat etc. At one point one of the weathermen went nuts and came at me with some sort of weapon to stop me. I had to swipe him and then others restrained him. By morning we had a makeshift boat.

Then we had to rig a platform to slide the boat over the rocks and sea elephants down to the sea.

We did that and launched the boat and pulled it to the landing platform. With that we got everybody who should leave back to the ship.

It was hauled aboard and put in a nautical museum in South Africa and a highly commend was issued by the S.A. Admiralty to the P.W.D. crew.