

88108

1938

88108

FALKLANDS.

CO 78:209/5



POLAR COMMITTEE.

CLOSED
UNTIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

Previous 88108/37

Subsequent

88108/45.

12m 25/11

L. Barlow. 26/11

Mr Bevir. 29/11

83

13m 13/1

Mr Barlow 16/1

Mr Bevir 17

Mr Barlow 21/2

Mr Bevir. 27/2

83

6.1
P.

1 Minutes of 46th Meeting held on 11.11.38

Mr Revin

If you have no objections, these can be put by

R.W. Barlow

26/11/38

Wait further minutes

Adm 29/11/38

atm

~~12/29~~
~~1/12~~
39

991

Revised. refce. minutes above - further minutes no record

W. Scotland

13/11

Mr Revin

Is any action required, or can this be put by indefinitely (Mr Pitblado is away until Jan 18th)?

R.W. Barlow

16/1/39

2 Minutes of 47th Meeting held on 25.11.38

These papers can now be put by

R.W. Barlow

21/2/39

Adm 27/2/39

atm

991

M. Barlow (CO)

2.

POLAR COMMITTEE.

The draft minutes of the 47th meeting of the Polar Committee are circulated herewith. If no observations are received by Monday, December 12th, these minutes will be regarded as final.

(Sgd.) D.B. FITBLADO.

Secretary.

DOMINIONS OFFICE.

2nd December, 1938.

POLAR COMMITTEE.

The 47th Meeting of the Polar Committee was held in Sir Harry Batterbee's Room at the Dominions Office on the 25th November, 1938.

Admiral Edgell was in the Chair, and the following were also present:-

Mr. Wordie	(Royal Geographical Society)
Mr. Stirling	(Australia)
Sir Cecil Day	(New Zealand)
Mr. Neethling	(South Africa)
Mr. Thomson	(Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries)
Mr. Bevir	(Colonial Office)
Mr. Borley	(Discovery Committee)
Mr. Dixon)
Mr. Pitblado (Secretary)) (Dominions Office)

The Chairman explained that Sir Harry Batterbee was unwell and that Mr. Fitzmaurice was unavoidably prevented from being present.

I. Proposal by the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia for a Further Antarctic Expedition.

1. The Committee renewed their consideration of this question. Mr. Stirling said that he had that morning received a reply from his Government stating that in view of the fact that the present Australian defence policy and campaign were calling for very onerous financial commitments and national effort, they did not feel able to entertain any proposals for a joint Antarctic expedition at the present time. The Commonwealth Government would, however, be very glad if the Polar Committee would be good enough to keep in mind the present proposal with a view to pursuing it further at a more favourable time, and they wished to convey to the Polar Committee their deep appreciation of the consideration which the Chairman and Members of the Committee have given to the matter, and of their offer of assistance and co-operation.

2. The Committee discussed the position in the light of this telegram and came to the conclusion that no further steps could usefully be taken at present, though, as the Commonwealth Government requested, the present proposal would be kept in mind for a more favourable occasion.

3. Mr. Bevir, on behalf of the Members of the Discovery Committee present, said that the Discovery Committee had been looking forward to co-operation with the Commonwealth Government and regretted the necessity that made it for the time impossible. The position would be reported to the Discovery Committee at their next meeting.

4. The Committee considered the memorandum prepared for transmission to the Discovery Committee setting out their general views on the desirability of the continuance of the work of the Discovery Committee in the Antarctic and of further Antarctic exploration. A copy of the memorandum as approved is attached to these minutes (Annex I).

II. Proposed International Polar
Exhibition at Bergen in 1940.

5. The Chairman explained that inter-departmental discussions were continuing on this matter, but that it seemed very unlikely that in present financial circumstances participation by the United Kingdom Government would be possible. The Committee expressed their regret, since on general grounds, in view of the position of the Commonwealth in the Arctic and Antarctic, it was very desirable that the United Kingdom should be represented, and worthily represented, at such an exhibition.

Annex I.

MEMORANDUM

The Polar Committee have considered the memorandum prepared by the Discovery Committee on Oceanographical Research in the Antarctic and are in agreement with the views expressed therein.

They are of opinion that the work already done under the auspices of the Discovery Committee has been not only of proved economic, but of great scientific value. The representatives of the Admiralty, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Royal Geographical Society in particular strongly endorsed the oceanographical, whaling and general geographical importance of these investigations, and the representative of the Foreign Office stressed their value in upholding and strengthening British territorial claims in the Antarctic.

The Polar Committee are convinced that it is most desirable on general grounds that investigation in the Antarctic should not be discontinued. The potentialities of the areas claimed to be under British sovereignty have been only partially explored, and further research might discover new resources or new ways of utilizing existing resources. Further knowledge of Antarctic conditions would assist in the understanding of conditions - in particular climatic and oceanographic - in other parts of the world. On political grounds, it is of importance not to weaken existing territorial claims in the Antarctic by discontinuing activity there.

The

The Polar Committee strongly endorse the considerations set out in the last two paragraphs of the Discovery Committee's memorandum. A technique of research, both navigational and scientific, has been slowly built up which has justified itself by results and which would be to a large degree lost if the personnel of the Discovery II were to be dispersed. The Discovery II is specially designed and equipped for this research, and if she were to be sold the cost of building a new ship at some future date might be prohibitive. Unless, therefore, work in the Antarctic were to be abandoned (a decision which on the results so far achieved would be unjustified and which future scientific progress might make it necessary to reverse) it would not only delay further results but would be a false economy to discontinue work at this stage. The Polar Committee consider it most desirable that the existing organisation should be utilised for further work and are of opinion that this could fruitfully follow the lines suggested in the memorandum.

The Committee has also considered the question where further investigations might most profitably be carried out. Experience has shown that conditions over the Antarctic continent and in the surrounding seas are, broadly speaking, uniform - especially so in comparison with the Arctic - and that results obtained in one area have a direct as well as an indirect value for the understanding of other areas. The work of Discovery II, though centred on the Falkland Island Dependencies, has for this reason in recent years been extended elsewhere. The Committee is therefore of the opinion that work in the Antarctic generally,

or

or work centring on other areas of the Antarctic, is desirable to implement the work done in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and would both increase the general understanding of the Antarctic and be of direct value to the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

For the above reasons the Committee welcome the initiative of the Commonwealth Government. The exact scope however of the proposals in that Government's despatch is not altogether clear, in particular whether they envisaged an expedition to the Australian Sector only, and an enquiry is being addressed to them to ascertain whether, if help were forthcoming from other Governments, they would be prepared to cooperate in an expedition continuing the general work of investigation in the Antarctic, but with perhaps special attention to the interests of the Australian Sector.

Approved by the Polar Committee.

November 25th, 1938.

R83

1

POLAR COMMITTEE.

The draft minutes of the 46th meeting of the Polar Committee are circulated herewith. If no observations are received by Monday, November 29th, these minutes will be regarded as final.

(Sgd.) D.B. PITBLADO.

DOMINIONS OFFICE.

19th November, 1938.

POLAR COMMITTEE.

The 46th Meeting of the Polar Committee was held in the Conference Room at the Colonial Office on the 11th November, 1938.

Sir Harry Batterbee was in the Chair, and the following were also present:-

Mr. Wordie)	Royal Geographical
Vice Admiral Sir H.P. Douglas)	Society)
Mr. Stirling		(Australia)
Sir Cecil Day		(New Zealand)
Mr. Scallan		(South Africa)
Rear Admiral Edgell		(Admiralty)
Mr. Thomson		(Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries)
Mr. Bevir		(Colonial Office)
Mr. Borley		(Discovery Committee)
Mr. Fitzmaurice		(Foreign Office)
Mr. Dixon)	(Dominions Office)
Mr. Pitblado (Secretary))	

The Chairman opened the proceedings by welcoming Mr. Wordie as the representative of the Royal Geographical Society.

I Proposal by the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia for a further Antarctic Expedition.

1. The Committee had before them a despatch from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs asking whether the United Kingdom Government would desire to co-operate in an expedition to the Antarctic with the primary object of exploring areas, especially in the Australian sector, the limits of which are not sufficiently defined, and whether the Discovery II might be made available for this purpose. They also had before them a memorandum by the Discovery Committee entitled "Oceanographical Research in the Antarctic", outlining the results already obtained from the work conducted under their auspices, discussing the need for further research, and indicating the lines which such research might follow.

2. The Chairman asked for the general views of members on the questions raised.

3. Mr. Bevir went through and commented on the Discovery Committee memorandum, and explained briefly the financial position of the Discovery Committee. From the point of view of the Colonial Office, the work had been of great importance not only to the whaling industry but also in establishing important scientific as well as topographical information in regard to the Dependencies sector, and indeed in the Antarctic generally, and ^{they} would like to see it continued. For this reason, the Colonial Office welcomed the Commonwealth Government initiative, and he

felt

felt that the Government of the Falkland Islands would be very willing to co-operate in any way they could in any further expedition in the Antarctic which would in any way bear on conditions in the Dependencies. He felt also that there were great advantages in continuity.

4. Mr. Borley said that the Discovery Committee would be very ready to consider co-operation with the Commonwealth Government. He wished to emphasise two points. The first was that experience had shown that carefully planned work over a period of years produced more valuable results than a set of isolated expeditions. For this reason the Discovery Committee would like to see the work of Discovery II continued, and something in the nature of a continuous organisation set up. Secondly, apart from surveying, the Antarctic needed to be considered as a whole. Conditions there were sufficiently uniform for work in any one area to increase knowledge of all. Therefore work in any one sector should be planned largely to increase general knowledge of Antarctic conditions.

5. Mr. Wordie expressed his agreement with Mr. Borley. In particular, he wished to stress his second point. He thought that it might in fact be in the general interest that work for the next two years should be concentrated in the Commonwealth sector, to increase general knowledge of the Antarctic and to supplement the results achieved in the Falkland Islands sector and the Weddell Sea.

6. Admiral Douglas expressed his agreement with the views

views put forward by Mr. Borley and Mr. Wordie.

7. Admiral Edgell endorsed the value of the work of the Discovery II, and said that the Admiralty would welcome any increase in hydrographical or oceanographical knowledge of any part of the Antarctic.

8. Mr. Fitzmaurice said that the Foreign Office welcomed the Commonwealth Government initiative. They agreed that a further expedition was very desirable on political grounds to give greater weight to existing British claims to sovereignty in the Antarctic, especially in view of the interest shown by other nations there.

9. Mr. Thomson also endorsed the value of the research done by Discovery II. It was on this work that the recent Whaling Convention was largely based, and the representatives of other countries at the Whaling Conference had paid high tribute to it.

10. The Chairman said that the discussion had shown agreement on three related points, the general desirability of further expeditions to the Antarctic, the value of the research done by Discovery II, and the desirability of the continuance of its work. The Committee therefore welcomed the Commonwealth Government's initiative. He felt that they would like to see an expedition in which other members of the Commonwealth co-operated with the Commonwealth of Australia, possibly paying special attention to the Australian sector, but planned to continue the general work of investigation in the Antarctic. The exact scope of the Commonwealth Government's proposals was however not altogether clear, and he asked Mr. Stirling whether he agreed to the Committee giving

giving preliminary and general consideration to the possibility of an expedition on the lines he had indicated.

11. Mr. Stirling agreed, and in the ensuing discussion the sources of possible assistance were indicated. The members of the Discovery Committee agreed, though they were not in a position to commit their Committee, that it would be likely to view favourably the possibility of recommending to the Falkland Islands Government the loan of Discovery II. The Government of the Falkland Islands might be prepared to approach the Colonial Development Advisory Committee for a small grant towards further investigations provided they could be shown to bear directly on the economic development of the Dependencies, the terms governing assistance from the Colonial Development Fund might make this difficult. Mr. Bevir said that he thought the Falkland Islands Research Fund had reached the point at which it could not be drawn on further, but the Colonial Office would consider whether any funds could be made available from that source. The Chairman said that the Treasury, which had been soundly, were very doubtful whether in the present financial situation any direct contribution could be made from the United Kingdom Exchequer.

12. It was generally felt that the matter could not be carried any further before the views of the Commonwealth Government on the general lines of the proposal were obtained.

13. Mr. Stirling agreed to telegraph to ascertain the views of his Government.

14. Sir Cecil Day and Mr. Scallan agreed to ascertain whether the Governments of New Zealand and South Africa might be prepared to co-operate in such an expedition.

15. It was agreed that a memorandum should be prepared

prepared for transmission to the Discovery Committee summarising the Committee's general views on the whole question, and that, since the next meeting of the Discovery Committee was to be held on Tuesday, November 14th, it should be transmitted to them in draft.

16. It was agreed that the Committee should meet again in the near future to discuss the matter further.

II Proposed International Polar Exhibition at Bergen in 1940.

17. The Committee had before it a letter from the Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, explaining that the Institute had been approached by the Exhibition authorities with a request to take part in the Exhibition, that it would be pleased to assist but that it could not incur expense in the matter. The Chairman explained that the position with regard to possible participation by the United Kingdom Government was being considered by the Department of Overseas Trade, and promised to report further at the next meeting.

18. The next meeting of the Committee was provisionally fixed for 12 noon on Thursday November 24th.