

# A Chronology of Antarctica

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THE HOMECOMING of the SANAE XV team to South Africa in 1975 coincided with the 200th anniversary of the return of the first Antarctic expedition. This is therefore an appropriate occasion to list the outstanding events in the development of Antarctica and the long association of South Africa with South Polar exploration.

To the lands of the north the Greeks gave the name Arctikos, because they lay under the constellation of Arctos, the Bear. They ran an imaginary line through the Arctic Pole about which the heavens appeared to rotate. To give the world balance they inferred the existence of an opposite fixed point, the Antarctic Pole. For centuries the existence of land in the Antarctic was a matter for speculation, and on a fifteenth-century map the area was covered by one word, Brumae (fogs).

## CHRONOLOGY

1772-1775 - Captain James Cook (Britain) headed south from Cape Town, and thus began the association of this port with polar expeditions. Captain Cook was the first to cross the Antarctic Circle and reach the ice packs at 71°10' South. He declared "The risk one runs exploring a coast, in these unknown and icy seas, is so very great that I can be bold enough to say that no man will ever venture farther than I have done, and that the land which may be to the south will never be explored".

The period up to 1900 was dominated by economic exploitation of the Antarctic. Some went to discover new trading routes and others to search for new fur-sealing grounds. One sealing vessel alone accounted for 100 000 seals in five years.

1819-1821 - The first sighting of the Antarctic Continent. The claim is shared by Bellingshausen (Russia), Palmer (America) and Bransfield (Britain). The Continent was discovered in 1820 but no landing made. This controversial topic is not clearly documented, partly on account of reluctance (at the time) to disclose the locations of good sealing grounds.

1822-1823 - Weddell (Britain) discovered the Weddell Sea and measured currents, temperatures and tides.

1837-1843 - D'Urville (France) discovered Adélie Land and named it (and the penguins) in honour of his wife. Ross (Britain) discovered the Ross Sea and the Ross Ice Shelf. He made the first accurate deep-sea soundings together with magnetic and hydrographic observations. Wilkes (America) explored 1 500 miles of the east Antarctic coast, and 127 men deserted during this expedition.

1874 - The *Challenger* (Britain) was the first steamship to cross the Antarctic Circle. Minerals obtained by dredging proved to be typical of continental shores, thus supporting Wilkes' idea that Antarctica was a single continent.

1895 - Kristensen (Norway) with three others was the first to set foot on the main continental land mass, at Victoria Land.

1898 - De Gerlache (Belgium) spent the first winter below the Antarctic Circle after his ship had been frozen in. Amundsen (Norway) was first mate on this ship.

The Twentieth Century: to be continued in the next issue.

# SANAE

Newsletter

Nuusbrief

## September 1974

"DID YOU REMEMBER THE PRIMUS PRICKERS?" "Have you got enough chocolate?" "You have got that special spanner for the cat, haven't you?"

The poor field party got fired with hundreds of questions in case some insignificant but necessary item was left out of the luggage. After many days of preparation the five chaps left for the mountains at noon on the 2nd in a keen adventurous spirit.

With the coming of summer, communications improved a great deal and one Saturday afternoon saw a very enjoyable darts match with Halley Bay. There were Arnie, Chris, John, Derek and Steve playing against the chaps in the English base. They beat us 7-3 in a very sociable game. The reason for our chaps' defeat had something to do with beer.

## October 1974

Bernie en Derek het die drie groot huskies begin oefen en fiks maak vir sleetogte. Brian, die hondemeester op Halley Bay, het baie raad verskaf en die honde het gou reggekrom en geniet dit weer om slee te trek.

Voor die tweede span na die veld vertrek het, is daar vir drie dae brandstof in die basis gebring wat behoort te hou tot net voor die skip aankom . . . en skielik was dit stil. Die span het vertrek en net agt van ons was in die basis. Terry en Guy het begin met die bou van 'n igloo hut volgens 'n Eskimo plan. John Scott, Lammie, Bernie en Guy het besig geraak met die skidoo om hom reg te kry en Gerrie was besig om so 'n ou stuk yster te verander en om te bou in 'n motorfiets. Dan wil almal die pad vat na 'n ander bukta toe. Bernie en Guy met die honde, Lammie en John met die skidoo en Gerrie met sy motorfiets.

## August 1975

Hierdie maand is gekenmerk deur 'n aansienlike toename in bedrywighede om die basis. Dit is moontlik gemaak deur die koms van die son en dus relatiewe lang dagligure. Basis skoonmaak en brandstof inbring word gewoonlik gekombineer. Dan word al die vuilgoed-dromme bymekaar gekry en na die oppervlakte getrek, om op sleë gelaai te word wat dan deur die kruiptrekker na die afvalhoop gesleep word. Intussen grawe 'n deel van die span, gewoonlik gelei deur ons dokter Stu Lund, dieseldromme uit die sneeu. Hierdie dromme word dan op die sleë gelaai as hulle leeg van die afvalhoop af terugkom. Terug by die basis word die dieseldromme afgelaai, die sewe meter tot onder per handkatrol laat sak, en in die ysgang gepak vir gebruik.

'n Interessante variasie op die tema was toe bogenoemde hele operasie in die maanlig uitgevoer is, soos voorgestel deur ons „far out" leier metkassie, KC. Eers moes die swetsende werktuigkundiges die kruiptrekker in die nag teen -39°C aan die gang kry. Die nagskofwerkers het darem na 'n paar uur se soek die brandstof gekry en toe die Antarktiese son verrys die volgende oggend, het hulle selfs al 'n paar dromme uitgegrawe. 'n Interessante eksperiment wat nie herhaal sal word nie, maar bewys dat ons span altyd bereid is om iets nuuts te probeer.

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