Scotland and the Antarctic

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Inside front cover (above): The Scottish Thistle. Source: wikimedia
Background: The Antarctic Tartan.
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Scotland and the Antarctic

Scotland has played a significant part in Antarctic exploration through her sea captains, sailors and scientists. In the eighteenth century no-one had seen the Antarctic continent and only Captain Cook had crossed the Antarctic Circle.

In the nineteenth century Scottish names began to appear on maps of the Antarctic islands and mainland Antarctica. The Weddell Sea was named in 1822 after the Scottish sealer James Weddell while the other great indentation in the Antarctic, the Ross Sea, was named after James Clarke Ross in 1843. The Ross family came from Wigtownshire.

Between 1872 and 1876 the Challenger expedition was the first major oceanographic expedition in the world. The captain, Sir George Nares, came from Aberdeen. Much of the work on the specimens and information brought home from the Challenger expedition was processed in the Challenger offices in Edinburgh. One of those working on these reports when a student in Edinburgh was William Speirs Bruce.

In 1892 four Scottish whalers from Dundee sailed south looking for right whales. On board the Balaena was the Scottish scientist William Speirs Bruce. Although this was a commercial venture, and despite obstruction by the captain of the Balaena, Bruce managed to collect a lot of meteorological information, descriptions of life in the Antarctic and a few specimens. On his return Bruce was to speak to leading scientists in London about his experiences in the Antarctic. This was one of the stimuli which resulted in the ‘Heroic Age of Polar Exploration’ (1895-1917).

Exploration of the Antarctic was rather limited until the beginning of the twentieth century. In the period 1901-05 five major European expeditions sailed to different parts of the Antarctic. The ship Discovery, used in the British Antarctic Expedition, was built in Dundee. The captain of the Discovery, the famous explorer Robert Falcon Scott, had Scottish ancestry. Scott’s second expedition south was in another Dundee ship, the whaler Terra Nova.

The Scottish National Antarctic Expedition sailed in 1902 on the whaler Scotia. This ship had been rebuilt in Troon, had an entirely Scottish crew, most of the scientists were Scots and the expedition was financed by Scots—mainly by the Paisley thread firm of Coats. William Speirs Bruce was to become one of the greatest explorers of his time, although he never achieved the fame of those attempting to reach the South Pole. This, however, was probably the greatest oceanographic expedition since the Challenger expedition.

Bruce was extremely well known to all of the Antarctic explorers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Many consulted him at the Scottish Oceanographic Laboratory in Edinburgh. Peary—who was the first to reach the North Pole—obtained his furs from Bruce after the Scotia expedition.

Ernest Shackleton was another friend of Bruce. He was secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society after his return from the Discovery expedition, and arranged the welcome home for the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition. On
Shackleton’s *Nimrod* expedition the Scottish doctor Alistair Forbes Mackay was in the party of three who were the first to reach the South Magnetic Pole. Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition was partly financed by James Caird, the Dundee jute manufacturer. Again some of the crew were from Scotland.

The most famous polar explorer—the Norwegian Roald Amundsen—sailed to the South Pole in the polar ship *Fram*. This was designed by the Norwegian/Scot Colin Archer. Amundsen met Bruce on several occasions.

Scots have continued to serve in the Antarctic on expeditions and as scientists working for the British Antarctic Survey as worthy successors to the first great Scottish scientist and explorer—William Speirs Bruce.

Source: http://sites.scran.ac.uk/voyage_of_the_scotia/scotia/vserm/index.html

### Some Scottish Antarcticans

*Antarctic explorers and travellers born—with two exceptions—in Scotland.*

**Major Source:** Antarctica—An Encyclopedia by John Stewart, 2nd edition. This is a work-in-progress

**Aeneas Aitken** (1742-1806) Joined the *Resolution* as Quartermaster on Cook’s Second Voyage *Resolution* and *Adventure* 1772-75. *Born:* Fife.

**Douglas George Allan** (1951-?) BAS Diver at Signy; Base leader at Halley Bay. *Born:* ? Scotland.


**Robert Anderson** (1742-?) Gunner, Cook’s Second Voyage *Resolution* and *Adventure* 1772-75. *Born:* Inverness.

**William Anderson** (1750-78) Surgeon’s mate, Cook’s Second Voyage *Resolution* and *Adventure* 1772-75. *Born:* North Berwick, East Lothian.


**Andrew Francis Balfour** (1851-1906) Sub-lieutenant, Challenger Expedition *Challenger* 1872-76. *Born:* Edinburgh.

**William Bee** (1883-?) Established a meteorological station on Booth Island, South Orkneys, 1906. *Born:* Edinburgh.


Matthew Brisbane (1787-1833) Master mariner; Captain of the Beaufoy. Born: Perth.


William ‘Coiler’ Cant (1873-?) Crew member on the Balaena, Dundee Whaling Expedition 1892-93. Born: Broughty Ferry, Forfarshire.


Alexander Cumming (1933-?) Joined FIDS as a Medical officer; Wintered-over, Base F, 1959. Born: Rassay, Isle of Skye.


Ian William Drummond Dalziel (1937-?) Geologist. Taught at Edinburgh, University of Wisconsin, Columbia University and University of Texas; Numerous trips to the Antarctic. Born: Glasgow.


**Alexander Dewar** (c1748-92) Clerk on Cook’s Second Voyage *Resolution* and *Adventure* 1772-75. *Born:* Cockburnspath, Berwickshire.


**David Donald** (1885-?) Ordinary seaman on the *Polar Star*, Dundee Whaling Expedition 1892-93. *Born:* Dundee.


**David Ferguson** (1857-1936) Geologist with Salvesen and Co. in South Georgia, Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetlands and South Orkneys. *Born:* Glasgow.

**John Fitchie** (1848-?) Promoted from Third to First mate in Stanley, Scottish National Antarctic Expedition *Scotia* 1902-04. *Born:* Dundee.


**David Henderson Frederick** (1873-?) Mate on the *Polar Star*, Dundee Whaling Expedition 1892-93; Able Seaman on the *Terra Nova*, during the 1903-04 relief expedition British National Antarctic Expedition *Discovery* 1901-04. *Born:* Montrose, Forfarshire.

**John Frederick** (1876-?) Fireman on the *Terra Nova*, during the 1903-04 relief expedition British National Antarctic Expedition *Discovery* 1901-04. *Born:* Montrose, Forfarshire.


Andrew MacFarlane (c1780-?) Captain of the Dragon, South Shetlands, November 1820. Born: ? Scotland.

William MacFarlane (1873-?) Petty Officer 1st class RN, British National Antarctic Expedition Discovery 1901-04. Born: Inverness.


Colin MacGregor (1855-?) Third Engineer and Blacksmith on the Terra Nova during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition 1901-04 Discovery. Born: Perth.


Kenneth Norman Mackenzie (1897-1951) First officer of the *Discovery* during the first half of BANZARE and Captain for the second half (1930-31). Born: Oban.


Alexander Hepburne Macklin (1900-67) Surgeon, Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition *Endurance* 1914-17; *Quest* Expedition 1921-22. Born: India.


Alexander McDougall (1875-?) Ordinary seaman on the *Polar Star* during Dundee


William A. McKinley (?-?) Meteorologist; Wintered-over at Orcadas Station in 1905. Born: ? Scotland.


Terrence McMahon (1875-?) Stowaway on the Balaena during Dundee Whaling Expedition 1892-93. Born: Dundee


Ernest Alexander Miller (1883-?) One of four over-winterers at Órcadas Station in 1908. Born: Perth.


Edward Morrison (1870-?) Sailmaker on the Terra Nova during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition Discovery. Born: Dundee.


Andrew Laidlaw Nelson (1904-58) Second officer, 1929; First officer and Navigator, 1930-33; Captain, 1933-35, Discovery II. Born: Clydebank.

David Nelson (1875-?) Fireman on the Morning during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition Discovery; Second engineer, second half of British Antarctic Expedition Nimrod 1907-09. Born: Kirkcaldy, Fife.

John Nelson Norman (1932-?) Seconded to FIDS in 1958 to be Medical officer at Halley Bay, 1959; Director of BAS Medical Unit, 1970. Born: Ross-shire.


Allan George Ramsay (1878-1903) First engineer, died on board Scotia on August 6, 1903, Scottish National Antarctic Expedition 1902-0. Born: Monifieth, Angus.

Angus Fraser Rankin (1863-?) Leader of the 1907 wintering-over party at Órcadas Station. Born: Dores, Inverness-shire.

James Reilly (1876-?) Able seaman on the Terra Nova during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition Discovery. Born: Dundee.


Alastair Ross (1881-?) Taxidermist, Scottish National Antarctic Expedition *Scotia* 1902-04. 
*Born:* Newington, Edinburgh.

Thomas Ross (1874-?) Ordinary seaman on the *Polar Star* during Dundee Whaling Expedition 1892-93. *Born:* Dundee.


Alexander Sharp (1864-?) Chief engineer on the *Terra Nova* during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition *Discovery*. *Born:* Lochee, Dundee.


Thomas Sinclair (?-?) Skippered the *Coronda* in the South Shetlands, 1908-09, and the *Neko*, probably 1911-12. *Born:* Waas, Shetlands.


Alexander Smith, Jr. (1884-?) Carpenter’s mate on the *Terra Nova* during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition *Discovery*. *Born:* Aberdeen.

Alexander Smith, Sr. (1848-?) Carpenter on the *Terra Nova* during the 1903-04 relief of the British National Antarctic Expedition *Discovery*. *Born:* Aberdeen.


William Harvie Thomson (1922-?) Joined FIDS in 1946; Pilot at Base D. Born: Airdrie, Lanarkshire.


George Lennox Watson (1851-1904) Naval architect who assisted Bruce in fitting-out of the whaler Hekla which was to be renamed Scotia. Born: Glasgow.


Not born in Scotland but closely associated with it: Colin Archer (Norway), William Speirs Bruce (London, but included above), Alexander Macklin (India, but included above), James Clark Ross (London) and James Weddell (Belgium).

Back cover: The Saltire (St Andrew’s Cross), the national flag of Scotland.

Background: The Antarctic Tartan.