

THE STEAM YACHT SCOTIA

*And the establishment of the earliest Antarctic
Metrological Station in 1904*

by DENIS J HORGAN

Dr William Speirs Bruce who had experience of researching in Antarctica but when he wished to set up an expedition and asked the British Government for financial assistance, he was denied aid from that quarter.

He finally received funding from two Scottish brothers named Coats, and in 1901 Bruce was able to purchase the Norwegian whaler **HEKLA** built in 1872 by Johansen & Holman. The dimensions of this vessel was 139' 6" x 29' x 15' 8" and was wooden hulled, barque rigged and fitted with auxiliary steam engine. This vessel was refitted in a Scottish shipyard, and re-named **SCOTIA** in 1902.

Bruce then engaged the services of Thomas Robertson to captain the vessel for The Scottish National Antarctic Expedition 1902-1904. (This expedition was commemorated in a stamp issue of British Antarctic Territory in 2002 and the vessel 'Scotia' is illustrated on one stamp SG No:353)

The primary object of this expedition was to do an extensive hydrographical survey of the Weddell Sea and other research programs and surveys of the South Orkney Islands.

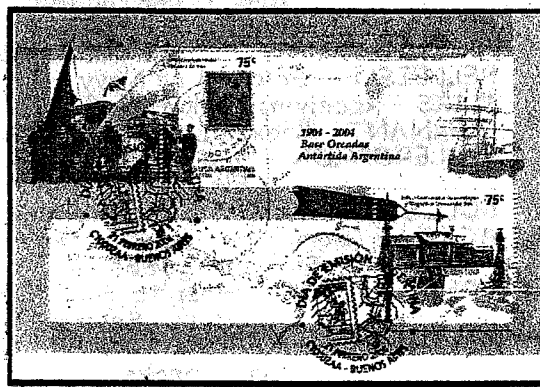
SCOTIA departed from Troon on 2nd November 1902, then after calling in at the Falkland Islands, arrived in the South Orkneys on 3rd February 1903. A base camp was finally established on the south side of Laurie Island and a wooden magnetic observatory was built. The base camp was named Omond House and six of the expedition party were left to carry out various researches which Bruce with the **SCOTIA** to enter into negotiations with the Argentine government for them to assume responsibility for continued metrological studies at their base on Laurie Island. Three Argentinian scientists accompanied Bruce back to Laurie Island, and assisted in establishing the metrological equipment whilst Bruce sailed off to carry out soundings in the Weddell Sea.

R.C. Ross, the cook, and three Argentineans had been left on Laurie Island, to complete the building of the station and commence the research work. British Antarctic Territory stamp SG No.354 issued 2002 commemorates the centenary of the Metrological Station being establish.

Bruce after completing his survey of the Weddell Sea returned to Kngstown Harbour, Northern Ireland on the 15th July 1904.

The Metrological Station passed into the control of Argentine in 1904 and the remaining members of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition vacated Laurie Island in January 1905.

On the 21 St February 2004 Argentine issued the stamp sheetlet that is depicted below this containing two stamps. For the 'ship' collector - in the upper right corner of the artwork the **SCOTIA** is depicted, together with two cachet marks of the Scottish Expedition. In the upper left corner there are images of members of the Scottish Expedition and the three Argentineans who took over the running of the station.



Actual size of sheetlet 150cm x 100cm

The cachet style cancel used for the First Day of issue includes part of the Argentine 1954 stamp issue SG No:856 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Argentine Postal Service in the South Orkneys

LETTER to the EDITOR

Macclesfield.
Cheshire



Dear Editor,

Through the years the Melanesian Mission have operated a succession of missionary ships in the Pacific, each one called the *Southern Cross*. Gibbons' catalogue lists Southern Cross II of 1866 as depicted on Norfolk Island (SG 85, 1968 15c) and Solomon Islands (SG 206, 1971 Bishop Pateson Centenary 4c), and Southern Cross IV as depicted on Kiribati (SG524, 1966 Nautical History 50c) and Tuvalu (SG442, 1987 Ships 15c).

Can any reader help identify which numerical suffixes were applicable to the Southern Cross ships shown on the stamps issued by Tuvalu (SG445, 1987 Ships 60c), Norfolk Island (SG721, 1999 Christmas \$1.20) and Solomon Islands (SG954, 1999 Christmas \$1.50) please? --- With thanks, Alan Dinnis.

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