

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888



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NEWSLETTER

No. 92 OCTOBER, 2012

SUBDIVISIONAL SALE OF
SPLENDID RESIDENCE SITES
And Handy SMALL PADDOCKS adjoining the Progressive Town of
ORBOST
5TH MARCH, 1915, AT 11 A.M.,
At the Rooms of H. JAMES & CO., Orbost.

These Building Sites are beautifully situated, and occupy a commanding position overlooking the Town, and are also within a few minutes' walk of the Post Office.

As every Lot offered will be Sold, it is a rare chance to secure a Block of Land in this rising Town at a low price.

TERMS.
One-fifth Cash; balance extending over 5 Years, with interest at 5% per annum; or Purchaser may pay Cash.

Full Particulars on Application to—
H. JAMES & CO., Orbost.
J. W. BIRD & CO., Auctioneers, Orbost.
R. J. MOSLEY, Solicitor, Orbost.

2012 is the centenary of THE YEAR THAT THE WORLD DISCOVERED ANTACTICA.

This Newsletter acknowledges this centenary and also pays tribute to the lives of those explorers whose names are memorialised with street names at the northern end of Orbost: **Scott, Bowers, Oates, Wilson, Evans, Shackleton, David and Mawson.**

This section of town was first put up for sale in March 1915 in a large subdivision which expanded Orbost past its previous limit of Boundary Road.

Of the eight names commemorated, no fewer than five (Oates, Scott, Wilson, Evans and Bowers) are of men who died on Robert Scott's ill-fated British expedition to bring honour to his country by being the first to reach the South Pole.

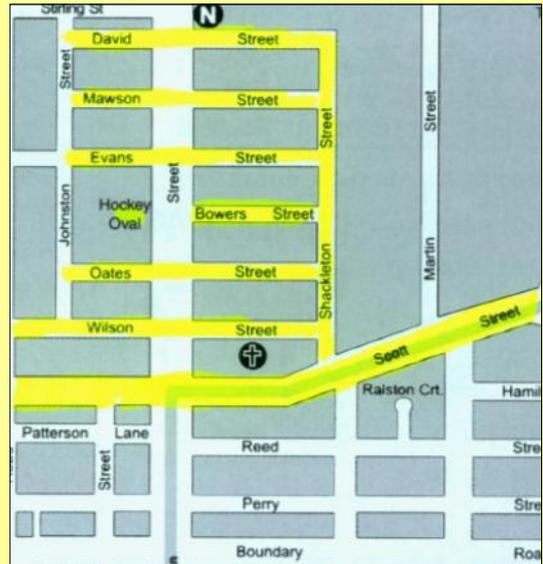
I live down the end of Oates Street and definitely call Lawrence Oates one of my heroes.

- May Leatch

The year 1912 is without doubt the “Year that the world discovered Antarctica.” During this year, no fewer than five expeditions went to Antarctica: a British expedition led by Robert Scott; the Norwegian expedition under Roald Amundsen; the Australian/New Zealand expedition headed by Douglas Mawson; a German expedition under Wilhelm Filchner and a Japanese expedition led by Nobu Shirase.

Orbost’s commemorative street names not only reflect our British heritage but give particular recognition to the tragedy of the five who lost their lives on Scott’s ill-fated race to the pole for Britain.

For instance, the name of Roald Amundsen, leader of the Norwegian expedition and the “winner” of the race to the South Pole on December 14th 1911 is not seen here. Neither are the names of Mertz and Ninnis who both died during Mawson’s 1912 expedition in which Mawson also almost lost his life.



COMPETITIVE FRENZY

We need to take a few steps back in order to understand the competitive frenzy of 1912.

Although the mysterious great south lands had intrigued explorers for centuries, luring men like James Cook into the ice fields in 1774, followed by James Weddell (Br.) in 1823, James Ross (Br.) in 1842, it was not until **the success of the 1901-04 expedition led by naval Captain Robert Falcon Scott** that Britain intensified its determination to not only be the first to the South Pole but also to claim further territory for the Empire and to advance scientific knowledge. This expedition was supported by the Royal Geographical Society and had **Shackleton, Wilson and Evans** amongst its members.

By 1907, Scott had decided to return to Antarctica, this time with a determination to be the first to the South Pole. Meanwhile, Shackleton was also mounting his own trip to the South Pole. This competition led to a rift between Scott and Shackleton which was never to be repaired. They met and made a gentlemanly agreement to explore different parts of Antarctica.

In 1909, Robert Peary and Matthew Henson reached the **North Pole** on their sixth attempt. The North was won, now all attention focussed on a race to the South Pole.

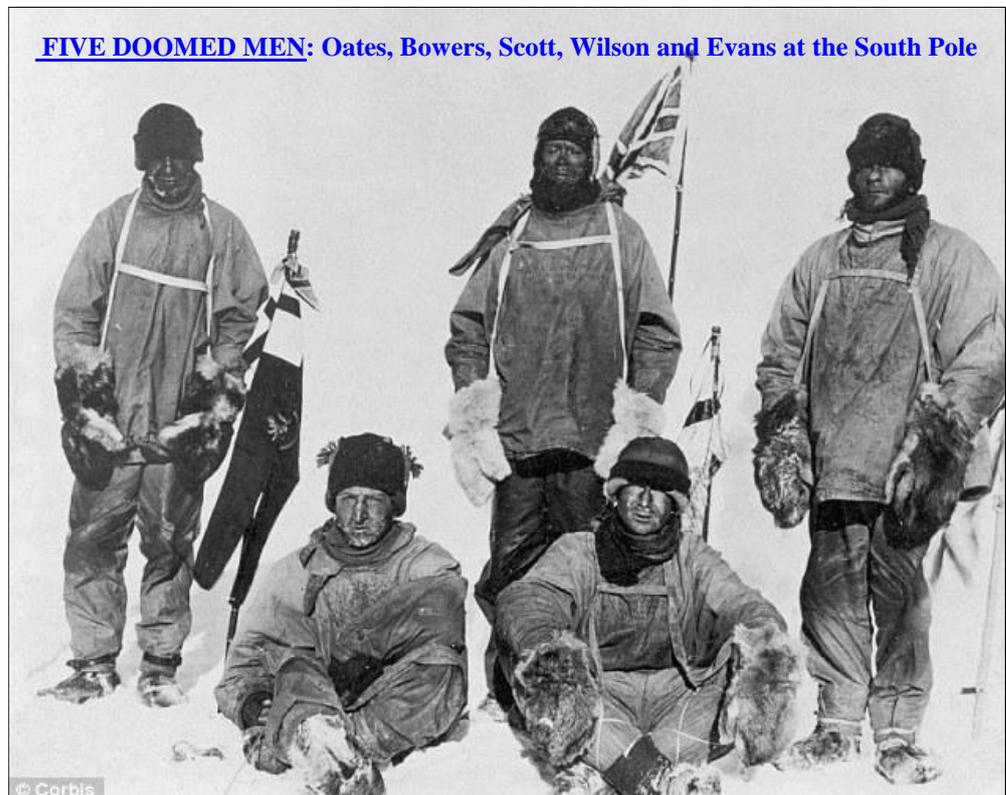
Scott raised money and galvanised Britain with the spirit of exploration. More than 8,000 men volunteered to be selected for Scott’s next expedition.

Scott’s ship the *Terra Nova* reached Sydney on 12th October 1910 bound for Antarctica.

Waiting for Scott in Sydney was a telegram from the Norwegian expedition saying,

"Beg leave inform you proceeding Antarctic. Amundsen". The race is on!

FIVE DOOMED MEN: Oates, Bowers, Scott, Wilson and Evans at the South Pole





Lawrence OATES b 7/3/1880 London, d 17/3/1912 in Antarctica. As a young man, he joined the Army and served in the Boer War, then in Ireland, Egypt and India. In 1910, he applied to join Scott's Antartic Expedition. The expedition sailed in the *Terra Nova* in June 1910. The final push for the Pole was begun in November 1911. **After an extremely difficult trip, the party of five reached the Pole on January 18th 1912, only to find Roald Amundsen's Norwegian flag had been planted there 34 days previously.** In horrendous weather, they headed back. Evans was the first to die on 15th February. Oates suffered severe frostbite on his feet and continued on till he could go no further. On the morning of 17th March, during a blizzard, Oates told Scott he was "**just going outside and may be some time**" and was never seen again. His self-sacrifice allowed the other three men to push on to the next food depot. Unfortunately, a blizzard stopped them

before reaching this depot and they all died on March 29th 1912 or thereabouts. Oates' body was never found. Near the site of his death is a cairn and cross with the inscription:

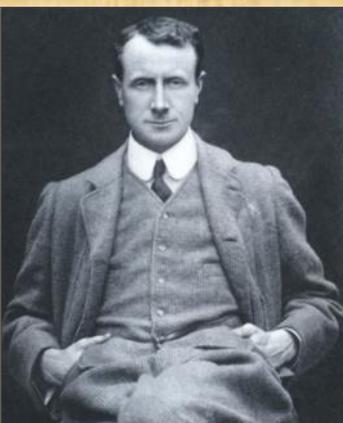
"Hereabouts died a gallant gentleman, he walked willingly to his death to save his companions...."



Edgar EVANS b 7/3/1876 Wales, d 17/2/1912 in Antarctica. He joined the Navy and served on the *Majestic* at the same time as Scott. Later, he joined Scott's first Antarctic Expedition of 1901- 04 and was in charge of sledges, tents, sleeping bags and harness. On the 1911-12 expedition to the South Pole, Evans cut one of his hands and found that the wound would not heal. During the desperate return journey, his health deteriorated, further aggravated by a fall into a crevasse. Evans collapsed on 17th February and was temporarily left behind while the others continued to man-haul the sledge to the next food depot and set up camp. On returning to Evans, they found him in a very bad state of confusion and frostbite. After placing him on a sledge, he was taken back to the camp but he died that night. Scott unfortunately did not record in his diary what was done with Evans' body which was never found.



Henry BOWERS b.29/7/1883 at Greenock, d. 29/3/1912. In a letter to Bower's mother retrieved from the tent containing the bodies of Scott, Bowers and Wilson, Scott wrote "**I write when we are very near the end of our journey, and I am finishing it in company with two gallant, noble gentlemen. One of these is your son. He had come to be one of my closest and soundest friends, and I appreciate his wonderful upright nature, his ability and energy. As the troubles have thickened, his dauntless spirit ever shone brighter and he has remained cheerful, hopeful, and indomitable to the end.**" Unlike the others, Bowers had no prior polar experience before the 1911-13 expedition and his choice as the 'fifth man' for the final push for the Pole seems to have based on Bower's navigating skills. Scott was concerned that he needed a back-up to confirm their arrival at the Pole and put this fact beyond challenge. It was Bowers who took the sights to fix the exact location of the geographic South Pole for the Polar party.



Edward WILSON b 29/3/1912 Cheltenham, d 29/3/1912. He studied Natural Science, later also Medicine and was a skilled artist. Like Evans, he joined Scott's 1901 expedition where he acted as surgeon, zoologist and artist. On the 1910-12 expedition, Wilson was Chief of Scientific Staff and one of the 'chosen five' to try for the Pole. After the death of Evans and Oates on the return journey, the remaining three men (Scott, Wilson and Bowers) became tent-bound in a blizzard where they died of hunger, cold and exhaustion. Their bodies were found by a search party in the following Spring on November 12th 1912 and they were buried where they lay. When news of the tragedy reached Britain in February 1913, it created an immense national mourning. Scott had enormous respect for Edward Wilson, "**Words must always fail me when I talk of Bill Wilson. I believe he really is the finest character I ever met.**"

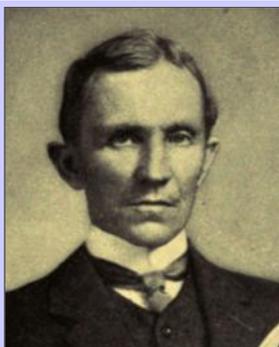


Robert SCOTT b. 6/6/1868, d. 29/3/1912. The consummate expedition leader, Scott kept writing his diary and observations to the very end. His last entry read: ***“We shall stick it out***

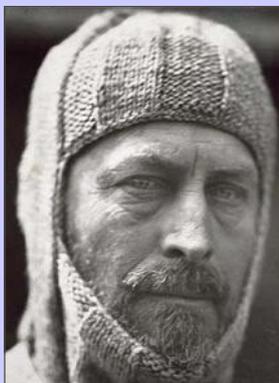


to the end, but we are getting weakerand the end cannot be far. It seems a pity but I do not think I can write more - R Scott.” On November 12th 1912, the search party found the bodies of Scott, Bowes and Wilson in their tent which was almost buried in snow. Scott’s last letters to his wife, his account of Oates’ heroic death, and his diary were also there.

News of the tragedy reached London on January 11th 1913. A time of national mourning followed with a memorial service in St Paul’s Cathedral. The world was stunned by the tragedy. In Australia, the Sydney Morning Herald reported the tragedy on January 12th. Also in NSW, the Govt. instructed that a special lesson on heroism be given in all schools throughout the State using the examples from Scott’s expedition. As with the Burke and Wills expedition across Australia, another legend inspired by tragedy had begun.



T. Edgeworth DAVID b. 28/1/1858, d. 28/8/1934 was a Welsh Australian geologist and a household name during his lifetime. After studying at Oxford, David came to NSW in 1882 as a government geologist . Here he surveyed the Hunter Valley coalfields. In 1907, he joined Shackleton’s Antarctic expedition, along with two of his students, Douglas Mawson and Leo Cotton. While in Antarctica, he led the first ascent of Mt Erebus and also to the South Magnetic Pole. Professor David received many awards throughout his life and in 1920 was knighted for his services to science, to geology and to polar exploration. On hearing of Scott’s death, he said ***“This sad disaster has deeply stirred the world. I knew them all well and to receive news of their deaths is a great blow.”***



Douglas MAWSON b. 5/5/1882, d. 14/10/1958. The famous image of Douglas Mawson at left appeared on the Australian \$100 notes from 1984-1996. A Yorkshire born geologist, Mawson made several trips to Antarctica and very nearly died there in 1912. His sledging companions, Xavier Mertz and Belgrave Ninniz paid the ultimate price. Along with Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton, Mawson was a key exploration leader during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration. Instead of joining Scott’s expedition in 1910, Mawson chose to lead his own Australian Antarctic Expedition. He is credited as being the first to take an aeroplane to Antarctica although it was used only as a tractor on skis. Mawson was knighted in 1914, and in 1916 was awarded the American Geographical Society’s David Livingstone Centenary Medal. Significantly, Livingstone’s and Stanley’s names also appear as street names in Orbost .



Ernest SHACKLETON b. 15/2/1874, d. 5/1/1922 is the other giant of Antarctic exploration. His name and leadership qualities were immortalised in one of the greatest open-boat voyages ever recorded - 15 days aboard a small boat in the wild southern ocean. That they survived was truly amazing. Shackleton began his Antarctic experiences with Scott in 1901-04, returned again in 1907 and again in 1914-17 when his ship

Endurance was slowly crushed by ice leading to several months of camping on ice flows. They escaped in small boats to Elephant Island was followed by the famous trip in the ***James Caird*** to South Georgia and ultimate rescue. In 1921, Shackleton returned to Antarctica again, only to die of a heart attack near the island of South Georgia where he is buried.

