



Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912)

Robert Falcon Scott - original photograph by Dinham of Torquay, Devon
Courtesy of Paul Davies / Kingsbridge Books

Robert Falcon Scott was born at Milehouse, near Plymouth, on 6 June 1868. 'Outlands', the family home, was in Devonport. Scott was baptised at Stoke Damerel Church and, as a child, spent four years at the local public day school. He then attended a boarding school in Hampshire until 1881.

Scott's father was a brewer and magistrate - but the family had naval and military traditions. Robert Falcon, and younger brother Archibald, were destined for a career in the armed forces. It was as a Royal Navy officer and South Polar explorer that Captain Scott became internationally famous - leading two expeditions to the Antarctic; the *Discovery* Expedition of 1901-04, and the ill-fated *Terra Nova* Expedition of 1910-13.

Already a popular national hero after the *Discovery* Expedition, Scott married Kathleen Bruce on 2 September 1908, at Hampton Court Palace. Their only child, Peter Markham Scott, was born on 14 September 1909.



'Outlands' - Scott's childhood home.
Painting by H.M.B., dated 1904.
Courtesy of St Bartholomew's Church, Plymouth



Ground plan of 'Outlands', 1864
Plymouth and West Devon Record Office



National Memorial at Mount Wise, Devonport, 2011- the bronze figure of *Courage*
 Courtesy of S-L Evans



The National Memorial to Scott and the Polar Party,
 Devonport, c.1930
 Courtesy of Paul Davies / Kingsbridge Books



Bronze of Captain Scott by his widow Kathleen Scott, c.1913-14
 - to be seen at Stoke Damerel Community College, Plymouth
 Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

When news of Captain Scott reached Britain, a Fund was set-up for the families of the men who died on the ill-fated Polar Party. Some of the money raised paid for two national memorials; the first, in St Paul's Cathedral, London, by a Plymouth born sculptor - the second, unveiled in Plymouth, at Mount Wise Park, Devonport.

Among the many privately funded memorials was a bronze bust of Scott by his widow Kathleen - commissioned by Devonport Corporation in c.1913-4, and now displayed at Stoke Damerel College.

One hundred years on, many events will take place across the country to mark the centenary of the *Terra Nova* Expedition and commemorate the centenary of Scott's death. These include modern expeditions, exhibitions and memorial services. Locally, the 'Scott 100 Plymouth' group has co-ordinated a special programme of events.

Commemorating Scott

National Memorials

The first National Captain Scott Memorial was unveiled at St Paul's Cathedral, London on 5 May 1916. The winning sculptor was Plymouth born Stanley Nicholson Babb (1874-1957).

The National Memorial to Scott and the Polar Party at Mount Wise, Devonport, was unveiled on 10 August 1925 by the Commodore of the Royal Naval Barracks, C. W. R. Royds - who went on Scott's *Discovery* Expedition. The listed monument was re-furbished and re-dedicated in June 2004 - on the anniversary of Scott's birthday. There will be a Centenary event on 23 March 2012.

The Plymouth Memorial was designed in 1913-14 by Albert H. Hodge (1875-1917). It is in the form of an obelisk, supporting a statue representing *Courage*, supported by *Devotion* and crowned by *Immortality*. Four bronze relief panels show Scott's journey to the South Pole and five bronze medallions feature portraits of the ill-fated Polar Party



The Polar Party reach the Pole - bronze panel on the National Memorial to Scott and the Polar Party, Devonport
 Courtesy of S-L Evans



British Antarctic Survey 'Field Camp', c.2000 Courtesy of British Antarctic Survey

Commemorative Expeditions

The combined British Armed Services will mount the British Services Antarctica Expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula in late December 2011 - also raising money for the UK charity *Help for Heroes*. In the spirit of the 'Heroic Age', they will set-up an Antarctic base and carry out scientific research.

The International Scott Centenary Expedition has been organised by Antony Jinman, a modern day Plymouth-born explorer. It will involve people from mixed backgrounds and ages - visiting the last tent site of Scott and his Polar Party. Besides offering a unique experience, the Expedition plans to deliver a wide mix of educational opportunities and outcomes.



Famed or Flawed?

1948 = Positive

Release of 'Scott of the Antarctic', a positive and flattering Ealing Studios Film, starring John Mills. Nominated for Best British Film by BAFTA.

1966 = Character Flaws

Reginald POUND is the first biographer to be given access to Scott's original sledging journal. His book 'Scott of the Antarctic' reveals Scott's personal failings.

1977 = Critical

In David Thomson's book 'Scott's Men', Scott's planning is described as "*haphazard*" and "*flawed*"; his leadership lacking in foresight.

1979 = Very Critical

'Scott and Amundsen', a biography by Roland Huntford - later re-titled 'The Last Place on Earth' - depicts Scott as a "*heroic bungler*" and Amundsen as a much better planner. Scott's heroism in the face of death is challenged.

1985 = Critical

A British ITV mini-series 'The Last Place on Earth' is broadcast. It is written by Trevor Griffiths but influenced by Huntford (1979).

1996 = Still Critical

Francis Spufford's book 'I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination' refers to "*devastating evidence of bungling*".

2001 = Blame the weather

In 'The Coldest March', meteorologist Susan Solomon ties the fate of Scott's party to the extraordinary weather conditions of early 1912, but accepts some criticisms of Scott.

2002 = Shackleton's rising popularity

The reputation of Scott's colleague and later rival Ernest Shackleton is on-the-up. A BBC TV public vote for the '100 Greatest Britons' puts Shackleton at No.11 - and Scott, well down at No.54.

2003 = Hero out of step with our time

Max Jones, in 'The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice', argues that the fall in Scott's public standing is linked to a steady decline in Britain's national self-confidence.

2004 = Scott defended

Polar explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes strongly defends Scott in his book 'Captain Scott' and is very critical of Huntford (1979); the book is dedicated "*To the Families of the Defamed Dead*".

2005 = Man of his age

David Crane's 'Scott of the Antarctic: A Life of Courage and Tragedy' praises Scott's humanity and judges him by the standards of the world and age he lived in.

2008 = Do we still need heroes?

Stephanie Barczewski's 'Antarctic Destinies' suggests late 20th century cultural shifts saw a reassessment of traditional heroism as represented by Scott - but had little to do with Scott himself.

2010 = Still Critical - Scott & Amundsen compared

Roland Huntford returns to the debate with 'The Race for the South Pole: The Expedition Diaries of Scott and Amundsen'. Based on the unedited diaries, Huntford concludes Scott's Expedition was "*monumentally unsuited to the task in which they were engaged*".

2011 = Sacrifice for Science

In 'An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science' Edward Larson argues it is not about being first to the Pole, but who did the best science along the way. "*Science gave meaning to the death of Scott and his men...*" Scott's failings are outweighed by his scientific legacy.



Robert Falcon Scott, in full dress uniform with Polar Medal, 1905
Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

At the time of his Antarctic expeditions, Captain Scott was a national hero. His achievement and the story of his death became a symbol of British spirit; a tale of self-sacrifice and an example to those joining-up for the First World War (1914-18). By 1925, Scott and his Polar Party had been remembered by over thirty monuments and memorials in Britain alone.

However, Scott was beaten to the Pole by Amundsen - and, from the first, some privately questioned his decision making and leadership. In spite of these doubts, Scott's national reputation survived, largely intact, into the 1960s. Over the last fifty years, Scott's legend has been re-assessed and there have been less flattering accounts of the man, his character and his expedition planning and leadership skills.

One hundred years on and Scott is once again being recognised for his personal bravery and endurance - but also for the scientific achievement of his two Expeditions.

What do you think?



Captain Scott writing his journal in the Winterquarters Hut, October 1911. Ponting Photograph
Licensed with permission of the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge



The Polar Party at the South Pole, 1912. Ponting Photograph - from original photograph by Henry Bowers (Left to right: Oates, Bowers, Scott, Wilson and Evans)
Licensed with permission of the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge

The overall success of the first British Antarctic *Discovery* Expedition (1901-04) put Scott in the public eye. He was promoted to Captain, created a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order and awarded a cluster of honours and medals, some from overseas. However, it was following the events of the second, ill-fated, British Antarctic *Terra Nova* Expedition (1910-13) that Scott's fame was secured.

During this second venture, Scott led the Polar Party and reached the South Pole on 17 January 1912 - only to find that Amundsen's Norwegian expedition had arrived there before them. Scott and his four comrades - Edward Wilson, Henry "Birdie" Bowers, Lawrence Oates, and Edgar Evans all lost their lives on the return journey.

Scott is presumed to have died on 29 March 1912 - possibly a day later. The bodies of Scott and his companions were discovered by a search party on 12 November 1912. Their final camp became their tomb; a high cairn of snow was erected over it, topped by a roughly fashioned cross.

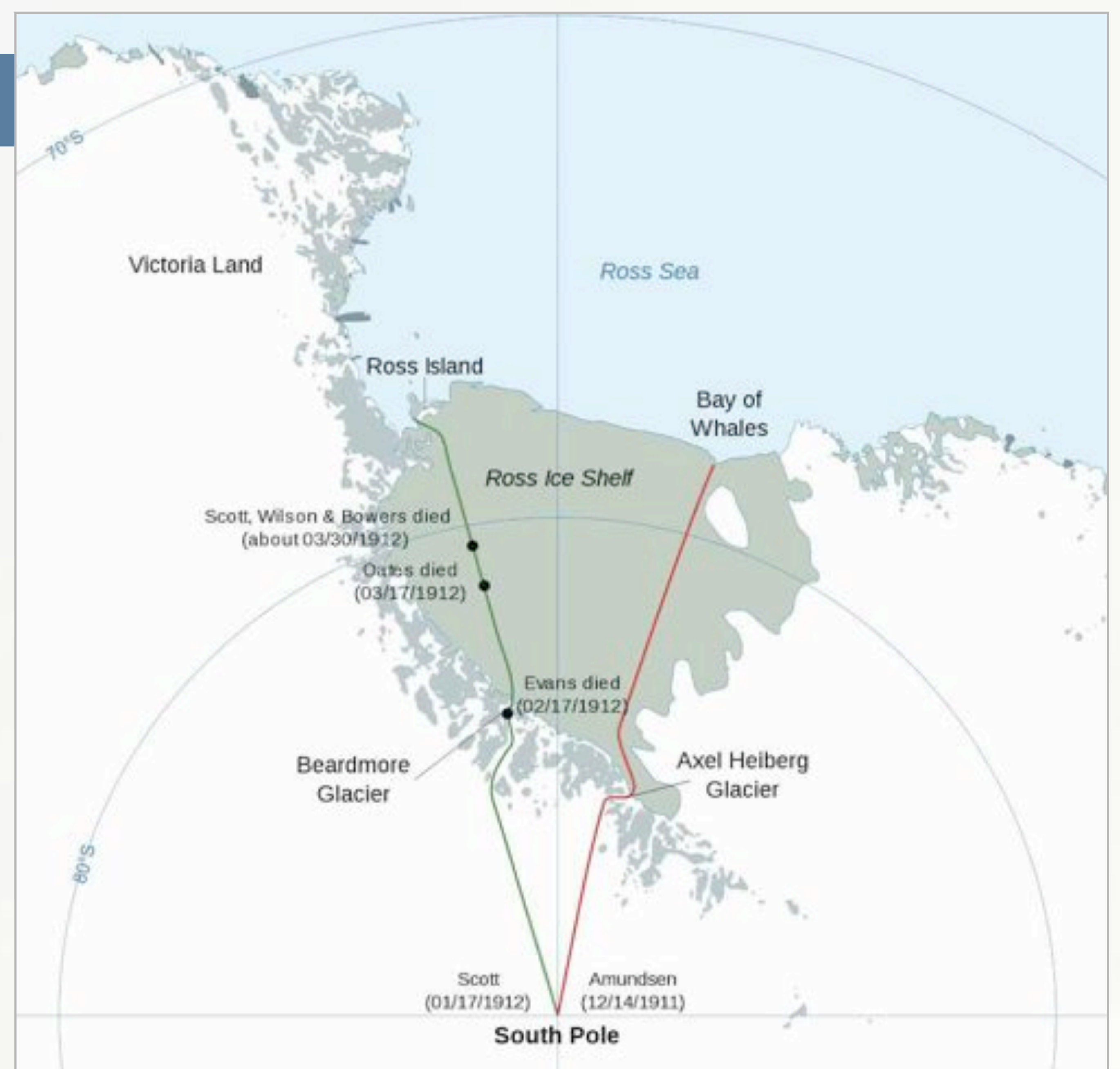
Race to the Pole

The march South began on 1 November 1911 - a number of loaded sledges pulled by ponies, dogs and men, travelling at different speeds and all in support of the final group who would go onto the Pole. The support party steadily reduced in size as teams' depoted supplies for the returning Polar Party, and turned back.

By 4 January 1912, only two four-man groups remained. Scott announced his decision: only five men would go forward, the other three - Teddy Evans, William Lashly and Tom Crean - would return. The chosen group marched on and reached the Pole - only to find that the Norwegian Amundsen had beaten them by five weeks.

The Polar Party set out on the 1300km (800mile) return journey on 19 January and, despite poor weather, made good progress. Some 500km (300miles) had been completed by 7 February. On the 160km (100mile) descent of the Beardmore Glacier, Edgar Evans was weakening fast - he had possibly fractured his skull in a previous fall. Evans died on 17 February 1912. With 670km (400 miles) still to go, things worsened - with deteriorating weather, frostbite, snow blindness, hunger and exhaustion. On 16 March, Oates, with badly frostbitten feet, left the tent and walked to his death.

On 19 March 1912, after walking a further 16km (10miles), the three survivors made their final camp - just 18km (11miles) short of 'One Ton' Depot and the food and fuel they desperately needed. A blizzard prevented further progress. Scott and his remaining companions died in their tent later that same month.



The 'Race to the Pole'. Image Creative Commons



The Last Rest, 1913. Ponting Photograph
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Scott's Fate

The search party set-out on 29 October 1912, at the start of the Antarctic spring. They found the tent and the frozen bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers on 12 November. Their equipment, diaries, scientific records and collected specimens were safely removed before a cairn of snow was built over the three dead men. The search continued, further South for Oates. They found only his sleeping bag - and raised another cairn in his memory.

Arriving back at Hut Point on 25 November, the Expedition re-grouped and was joined by the returning Northern Party. *Terra Nova* arrived on 18 January 1913. Before the Expedition left for home, a large wooden cross was made by the Plymouth born ship's carpenter, Frank Davies, and erected as a permanent memorial on Observation Hill, overlooking Hut Point.

The world was informed of the tragedy on 10 February 1913, when *Terra Nova* reached New Zealand.



Memorial Cross on Observation Hill
Private Collection



Scott of the Antarctic

Captain Scott on ski, October 1911. Ponting Photograph
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Scott as a young boy
Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Early Years

Robert Falcon Scott was the eldest son of John and Hannah Scott. "Con", as his parents called him, had two older sisters, Ettie and Rose, a younger brother, Archie, and younger sisters, Grace and Katherine. John Scott owned a small Plymouth brewery off Hoe Gate Street.

Scott had a happy childhood in Plymouth and loved the family home and large garden. He sang in the choir of St Mark's Church, Ford. At the age of thirteen years, having passed his Naval Entry exams, Scott became a cadet aboard HMS *Britannia* - the RN Officer training ship at Dartmouth, Devon.

In the Navy

Scott joined his first ship, HMS *Boadicea*, as Midshipman in 1883. In 1888, he passed his examinations for Sub-Lieutenant. Scott's career progressed well, serving on several ships and with promotion to Lieutenant in 1889. In 1891, after a spell in foreign waters, Scott applied for the torpedo training course at HMS *Vernon* in Portsmouth.

In 1894, as torpedo officer on HMS *Vulcan*, Scott learnt that his family had financial problems. His father had sold the family brewery, invested the proceeds, lost the money and was nearly bankrupt. Aged sixty-six and in poor health, John Scott had to move the family and find work again. Scott's father died in 1897. A year later, Scott's brother Archie died of typhoid - having given-up the army for a better paid job with the Colonial Service.

Robert Falcon Scott was now responsible for the care of his widowed mother and his two un-married sisters. Naval promotion and the extra money it would bring became his priority.

Antarctic Opportunity

It was in March 1887, while serving aboard HMS *Rover* in the West Indies, that Scott first met Clements Markham, the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS). Markham was keen to find young naval officers suited to Polar exploration work; he was impressed by Scott's intelligence, enthusiasm and charm.

In June 1899, while on leave, Scott had a second chance meeting with Markham - now Sir Clements and President of the RGS. Scott learnt of the plans for an Antarctic expedition. This was Scott's opportunity for an early command and a chance to distinguish himself. On 11 June 1899, Scott called at Markham's home and volunteered to lead the expedition.

This was the first of Scott's two Antarctic expeditions - and he would become famous as 'Scott of the Antarctic'.



Kathleen and Scott on bridge of *Terra Nova*, 1910. Ponting Photograph
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