

ANTARCTIC NON-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY NEWS (14)

BULK DISTRIBUTION

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For previous editions of ANAN see 'News Briefs' at <http://www.antdiv.gov.au/tourism>.

An abbreviated version of this newsletter will also be available in Spanish.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor is currently away from the office and preparation of this issue has been an interesting challenge due to e-mail and other problems. This newsletter could not function at any time without contributions from many individuals around the world, but on this occasion people went to extra special trouble to provide comments and information at short notice. Thank you to all involved. Particular thanks go to the Antarctic Unit of Argentina's Tourism Board of Terra Del Fuego in Ushuaia who readily made available their invaluable facilities in support.

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IN READING PLEASE NOTE:

This newsletter is produced in the interest of improved information sharing in the Antarctic community. Inclusion of information in it should not be taken to imply endorsement, by the publishers of ANAN News, of any company, program or associated activity that is listed, nor that the activity has necessarily completed all environmental impact assessments required under the legislation of the 'home' nation.

CLIMBERS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THIRD ASCENT OF HEARD ISLAND [ANAN-14/01]

Four climbers reached the 2745 m volcanic summit of sub-Antarctic Heard Island in the South Indian Ocean on 10 January thus becoming only the third group of mountaineers to achieve the feat. This latest success was achieved via a new route at the western end of the island, an area considered by many to offer a particularly difficult climbing challenge, and within tight time constraints set by the fishing vessel which supported the four men (ANAN-12/08, 5 January 2000)

Robb Clifton, Stuart Davies, Matthew Rogerson, and David Tonna, all experienced mountaineers from Perth, Western Australia, were landed at Atlas Cove at the western end of the island on New Year's Day by the fishing vessel 'Southern Champion' and a small base camp was quickly established ashore.

Few details of the exact route used to the summit are available at this time except that was in the area inland of Atlas Cove. Apart from the base camp at sea level two other camps were reported as having been established at elevations around the 1000 and 2000 m levels. Difficult conditions slowed the group on the ascent with crevasses and generally poor climbing conditions being present for much of the time.

The 2000 m level was reached on the evening of 8 January and an attempt at a final push to the summit from there was made the following day, however bad weather forced them back to their tents. On 10 January conditions were described as being near perfect with little wind and good visibility and the climbers made what they described as a 'make or break' push for the top. By this time weather delays had resulted in the four having virtually no food or fuel at the 2000 m level, and if the weather had remained poor a retreat down the mountain would have been necessary at the earliest opportunity for safety reasons.

Despite the relatively pleasant conditions at the 2000 m level first thing on 10 January, by the time the summit was reached a strong wind was blowing, although no cloud was present which allowed the group to see sulphur and steam issuing from a large volcanic vent close by. The stay at the top was brief however as the four needed to move from the mountain as quickly as possible in case the weather again deteriorated.

The return to the base camp was reported as being relatively straight forward. The four men were eventually picked up by 'Southern Champion' on 16 January after spending a few days climbing on Laurens Peninsula, a day walk to the top of Mount Andree, and voyages in their 'Zodiac' in the Atlas Cove and Corinthian Bay areas. 'Southern Champion' eventually arrived back in Albany, Western Australia on 25 January.

LACK OF KEY DEPOT, RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS, LIMITS 'MILLENNIUM' ACHIEVEMENTS [ANAN-14/02]

The Russia-based, multinational, 'Millennium Expedition' completed its Antarctic operations in mid-January with hot air balloon flights at the South Geographic Pole (SGP) and the successful return of personnel and 'snow bug' transports to the Patriot Hills, Ellsworth Land, and Punta Arenas, Chile. The expedition's achievements, which included skydives by thirty-five people at the Patriot Hills on 1 January (ANAN-12/02, 5 January 2000) and what is reported to have been the generally good performance of the snow bugs, were however well below the original aims announced by organisers in the middle of last year (ANAN-4/01, 15 September 1999).

Millennium's original aims included supporting non-government skydiving and hot air ballooning activities at the South Geographic Pole on New Year's Day using the blue ice runway at the Patriot Hills as a staging point for flights by an Ilyushin-76 (IL-76) aircraft from Punta Arenas (ANAN-4/01, 15 September 1999). While the IL-76 has the capability of flying the Punta-Patriot-Punta route without refuelling, a key part of the overall operation was the need to depot up to sixty tonnes of fuel at the Patriot Hills in order that the aircraft could fly beyond there to the SGP to conduct skydiving operations.

A number of separate sources in Russia and elsewhere recently told ANAN that the expedition was precluded from establishing the large fuel depot needed at the Patriot Hills because they could not obtain approval via that nation's environmental assessment process for such a facility.

Initial Millennium plans called for large bladders to be used for fuel storage at the Patriot Hills, but this was apparently later changed by organisers to drum-based storage in an attempt to meet environmental requirements. Independent sources have suggested that pressure on the Russian government from environmental groups and some governments concerned about key aspects of Millennium planning was behind the failure to obtain approval for the depot. Several persons contacted by ANAN, all of whom have a good knowledge of Antarctic field operations, say that given that drummed fuel storage in 'out field' areas of Antarctica is standard practice for both national operator and non-governmental air operations, the lack of approval for Millennium to establish such a depot is surprising.

A second aircraft, an Ilyushin-18 was also to have been part of the expedition resources, however this appears to have been removed from the group's logistics inventory several months ago in an attempt to limit mounting costs.

Information now available suggests that Millennium leaders were only made aware of the fuel depot decision a few days before they were due to leave Moscow for the Antarctic. This would have caused major problems and explains the uncertainties about the program that particularly became apparent publicly in early December (ANAN-10/01, 8 December 1999). Apart from logistics issues, organisers would have also had the difficult task of explaining the significantly curtailed program to participants from many nations who had already paid to take part in skydiving and ballooning activities at the SGP, as well as obtaining their continued commitment to the venture.

Following the Patriot Hills skydives on 1 January and the successful completion of a fuel depoting trip by the snow bugs to the Thiel Mountains en route to the Pole just before New Year (ANAN-12/02, 5 January 2000), the next stage of the operation called for delivery of balloons and associated personnel to the SGP for flight operations via the snow bugs. At about this time commercial air operator Adventure Network International (ANI) turned down a request from Millennium organisers for a SGP skydiving flight via an ANI aircraft for 'operational reasons'. While the skydivers thus no longer had the opportunity to jump at the Pole, many still wanted to travel there and organisers added them to the manifest for the snow bug journey southwards.

The eight snow bugs left Patriot Hills for the Pole on 3 January carrying thirty-one people from eight nations, two balloons and general supplies. They completed the 550 km journey to the fuel depot near the Thiel Mountains in two days, arriving there late on 5 January. Despite achieving an average speed of 25-30 kilometres per hour en route however, the vehicles were reported to have been plagued with problems to the drive units on each wheel. Apparently organisers recognised that there was a design issue prior to the expedition's departure for Antarctica, but with insufficient time for modifications, opted to take a large number of spare units in anticipation of problems occurring. As a result frequent stops were required to undertake repairs.

A complicating factor for the bugs was that original Millennium planning called for them to travel southwards and generally up hill to the Pole with relatively light loads. It was only during the down hill journey back to the Patriot Hills with the wind at their rear and

after the skydivers had landed at the Pole that they would need to operate fully loaded. Changes to expedition plans which resulted from the lack of a major fuel depot changed plans however, and sources say that pressure from participants to travel to the Pole was intense and led to the decision to travel southward with such large numbers of people on board.

As a result of the heavy loadings fuel consumption was higher than expected. While sufficient fuel was reported to be available at the depot, the frequency of problems with the bugs meant that there were insufficient spares for all eight to travel to the Pole. As a result the decision was taken to leave four of the vehicles at the Thiel Mountains, along with sixteen people and one of the hot air balloons. The group who stayed there had, according to Millennium participants, a 'big tent', fuel and supplies, and were to remain at the depot until the return of the group from the Pole. During the time they were at the Theil depot the opportunity was taken to fly the single person capacity hot air balloon that remained with the group. This balloon had previously been flown at the Patriot Hills.

A few days after the four remaining bugs left the Theil depot for the Pole, one of the depot group was reported to have had a health problem and his insurance company apparently arranged for Adventure Network International (ANI) to fly the person back to the Patriot Hills and later Punta Arenas. ANI's Cessna 185 later flew to the depot, and returned with four 'Millennium' people to the expedition camp at the Patriot Hills, although why that many people took the flight is unclear at this time. ANI later flew the insurance company's client to Punta Arenas, while the remainder stayed on at the 'Millennium' base camp in the Patriot Hills.

The four bugs selected for the journey to the Pole left the Theil Mountains late on 6 January with fifteen people on board from five nations, and arrived at the U.S. Amundsen-Scott station at the Pole three days later. Reports from within the Millennium program have told ANAN that despite the wheel drive unit problems the vehicles generally performed very well on the journey in what was their first test in Antarctic conditions, and that engineers believe that a redesign of these units to solve the problems experienced is feasible.

Within an hour of reaching the Pole late on 9 January, the Pole the group had the remaining hot air balloon, a 'Cameron 66', in the air, two Spaniards making the flight. After less than twenty-four hours at the Pole the vehicles headed north for the Patriot Hills, picked up the people and equipment at the Thiel Mountains depot, and arrived at their based camp in the Patriot Hills on the 15th.

The fourth and final flight of Millennium's Iluyshin-76 (IL-76) from Punta Arenas, Chile, to the Patriot Hills and return was undertaken on 17 January. The southbound leg of the flight carried drummed fuel for ANI use. This was the second time the U.K. based operator had contracted the Russia-organised expedition to deliver fuel to the Patriot Hills (ANAN-12/02, 5 January 2000). On the return flight to Chile all but six of the people involved in the Millennium program, snow bugs and general equipment were carried, thus ending the Antarctic phase of the expedition. ANI is believed to have subsequently flown the remaining six to Punta Arenas, although no details of this are available to ANAN at this time.

ARGENTINIAN ICE BREAKER ASSISTS 'CLIPPER ADVENTURER' [ANAN-14/03]

The Argentinian national program ice breaker 'Almirante Irizar' towed the vessel 'Clipper Adventurer' from Matha Strait on the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula on 30 January after the tour ship had encountered heavy ice and requested assistance. 'Clipper' is ice strengthened and was not reported to be in any danger, however its Captain took the prudent course of action by requesting support.

Matha Strait lies astride the Antarctic Circle and runs between Adelaide Island to the south, and the Biscoe Islands to the north. Details of the actual ice conditions encountered by 'Clipper Adventurer' are not known at this time.

When it received the request for assistance 'Irizar' was in Paradise Bay 280 km to the north and was about to leave for the Bransfield Strait area, however she responded immediately to the call from the tour vessel. 'Clipper' was towed northward into the south part of the Gerlache Strait from where she resumed normal operations. No damage to the vessel has been reported and it is understood that she is continuing her operations in the north-western Peninsula area.

'Clipper' had had to cancel one of its planned voyages earlier in the season after sustaining propellor damage and went into dry dock in Puerto Belgrano in north-west Argentina for repairs. This week's problem is not believed to be related to propellor damage. 'Clipper' departed from Ushiaia on the current voyage on 28 January and at this time she is due back there on 8 February.

SHACKLETON RE-INACTMENT VOYAGE DEPARTS ELEPHANT ISLAND FOR SOUTH GEORGIA [ANAN-14/04]

The four members of the Shackleton 2000 group who are re-inacting Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1916 open boat journey from the edge of the pack ice in the north-western Weddell Sea to Elephant Island and on to South Georgia, have arrived and left Elephant Island and are now reported to be en route to South Georgia.

Those participating in the boat journey, Arved Fuchs and Martin Friederichs (Germany), Sigridur Ragna Sverrisdottir

(Iceland), and Henryk Wolski (Poland), and their boat the 'James Caird II', left Ushuaia, Argentina, on 6 January on board German company Hapag Lloyd's tour vessel 'Hanseatic'. They were eventually deployed at Hope Bay at the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula and commenced their re-inactment journey from there on 19 January.

The expedition support vessel, the twenty metre sailing vessel 'Dagmar Aaen', was with them in Hope Bay, however it journeyed first to Deception Island in order that the German television crew on board could undertake filming there. 'Dagmar Aaen' continued to monitor Inmarsat C transmissions from the 'James Caird II' however, as did 'Hanseatic', and Hapag Lloyd's other tour vessel in the region, 'Bremen' (ANAN-9/05, 24 November 1999).

'Dagmar Aaen' arrived of Point Wild, Elephant Island, on 28 January, and the 'James Caird II' the next afternoon. Point Wild is where the original 'James Caird' left for South Georgia, and is the place where twenty-two men under the leadership of Frank Wild awaited Shackleton's return. The re-inactment group went ashore there and the television crew undertook a range of filming activities. Arved reported that during the nine-day, 230 km journey from Hope Bay, his vessel had proved very seaworthy, although those on board had had to deal with difficult currents, drifting pack ice areas and winds which shifted frequently in both the force and direction. He was also reported as saying that conditions on board 'James Caird II' were very cramped.

After completion of filming activities and making a final check of their boat, Fuchs, Friederichs, Sverrisdottir and Wolsk set sail from Point Wild on the morning of 30 January to commence the 1100 km journey to King Haakon Bay on the south coast of South Georgia from where Shackleton made the very difficult crossing of the island to Stromness. On arrival at King Haakon Bay, the crew of the 'James Caird II' plan to attempt to cross the island to the former whaling station at Stromness in the north, using equipment similar to that used by Shackleton and his men.

When the crossing of South Georgia is completed, probably around the last week of February or early March, the 'Hanseatic' is scheduled to pick up members of the party and their boat, and return them to South America. At this time the 'Dagmar Aaen' is expected to sail from South Georgia to the Falkland Islands (Isle Malvinas) then on to Ushuaia from where it is to conduct filming for a second TV documentary about Cape Horn prior to returning to Germany.

DUTCH SCHOONER TO UNDERTAKE FIFTH ANTARCTIC VOYAGE [ANAN-14/05]

A restored, fifty metre three-masted schooner, the 'Oosterschelde', is to leave Ushuaia, Argentina, on 2 February with twenty-four passengers on board to undertake her final voyage of the season to the Antarctic Peninsula region. Following that voyage the vessel, which first visited Antarctica in 1997-98, will have carried a total of 120 tourists to the region on five voyages over two seasons.

'Oosterschelde', whose home port is Rotterdam, was originally built in Holland in 1918 to carry freight around the North Sea region of Europe, and over the next seven decades was modified significantly from her original form, including having all three masts removed and operating on engine power only. The vessel belongs to the last generation of three-masted schooners the first types of which were developed in the 17th Century. In the mid 1980s a group of enthusiasts in Holland, concerned that this type of vessel was rapidly disappearing, set out to restore her externally to as close to her original form as possible with the idea of maintaining her from there using funds derived from tourist operations.

The restoration project commenced in 1988 and took four years to complete. Funds required for the work involved totalled \$US1.6, and this had to be raised from a variety of sources in Holland, including the general public, other private sources, the City Council of Rotterdam, and the Dutch Government. Since her restoration was completed in 1992 she has been operated by the non-profit Oosterschelde Shipping Company based in Rotterdam.

In the first few years the vessel carried passengers to various parts of the North Sea and as far north as Spitzbergen in the Arctic. In the two years from 1996 however she undertook a voyage around the world and it was then that she first visited the Antarctic Peninsula region, making two voyages to there from Ushuaia. The current season is the second she has worked in Antarctica and a total of three voyages were scheduled. All are to the Peninsula region only, although pre-season planning called for a visit to South Georgia on the way northwards at the end of the season, however that has now been cancelled. The 1999-2000 season commenced on 18 December and to date two voyages have been completed, and the third, which is about to depart, is expected to end in Ushuaia around 19 February. After that she will head north for the United States and Europe.

Voyages from Ushuaia to the Peninsula and back generally take the vessel close to three weeks, about ten days of which are spent visiting sites in the north-western part of the region. The journey across the Drake Passage varies according to weather and sea conditions and takes between three and six days each way depending on the conditions experienced.

The ship normally visits locations such as Deception Island, the Lemair Channel, Port Lockroy, Trinity Harbour, Aitcho Island, Paradise Bay, Hannah Point, Petermann Island, the Melchior Islands, and Vernadsky station. She generally spends a day at each place, arriving where possible in the morning and leaving in the evening. Two Zodiacs are carried on board for ship-shore

transfers, and according to Hylke Tromp, the vessel's spokesman, passengers are free to spend as much time ashore during the day as they require, provided weather and sea conditions are suitable. According to Hylke passengers are provided with information on Antarctica and the need to follow guidelines established under the Antarctic Treaty System is emphasised.

Hylke says that the particular nature of the sea bottom at most anchorages in the Peninsula area means that great care has to be taken to ensure that the vessel is securely moored. Normally both anchors and a 'lot of chain' are required and close attention needs to be paid to ensure she holds her position during periods when visits ashore are being made.

'Oosterschelde' has a steel hull, an overall length of 50 m, breadth of 7.5 m and draft of 3.0 m. She has been completely refitted internally with two or four berth cabins for up to twenty-four passengers and eight crew. Most Antarctic passengers have come from Holland, France, Germany and the U.K., with Australians and U.S. citizens occasionally involved. The crew are primarily from European countries. The schooner has a total sail area of 891 square metres and carries out as much of its work using its sails only. She has a six cylinder Deutz engine however it is normally only used for manoeuvring to anchorages or when approaching harbour, although occasional it must also be used at sea. The vessel is also fitted with an Inmarsat C facility.

Currently there are no concrete plans for the vessel to visit the Antarctic again, although Hylke Tromp says that it is likely that 'Oosterschelde' will return in a later season.

ORIENT LINES PARENT SUBJECT OF TAKEOVER BID [ANAN-14/06]

Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL), the parent of Orient Lines operator of the 'Marco Polo' which conducts voyages to Antarctica each austral summer, is currently the subject of a take over bid by U.S. Carnival Cruise Lines, the world's biggest cruise ship owner. At present NCL operates a total of nine ships in the Caribbean, South America and elsewhere.

Miami-based Carnival, which currently operates forty-five cruise vessels world-wide under the Cunard, Carnival Cruise Lines and other titles, originally made an offer to take over the Norwegian Company last December but without success. On 27 January Carnival announced that it had revived and sweetened the take over bid with an offer which now totals \$US1.3 Billion. According to the company its had been constrained by U.S. commercial regulations in its original bid for NCL.

The Star Cruise Line of Malaysia, which controls forty-seven per cent of NCL shares, now also appears interested in taking control of the Norwegian group after originally indicating that it wanted to continue as a minority shareholder in an independent NCL. Star subsequently made its own bid in January but NCL's Board recommended last week that shareholders reject Star's thirty-five Norwegian Crown share offer. The revived Carnival offer translates to forty Crowns a share, but is apparently contingent upon NCL's Board delivering more than fifty per cent of the company's equity to the Miami company. Carnival stressed that if accepted the new offer must pass the scrutiny of U.S. regulators before it can be completed.

Several North American industry analysts contacted by ANAN expressed the view that the current manoeuvrings were unlikely to have any impact on Orient Lines annual Antarctic program with the 'Marco Polo' in the medium term. A senior shipping industry source said however that the main interest for the Antarctic scene was what he saw as a slow drift towards Antarctic ships being under the umbrella of very large companies who have world-wide cruising and tourist interests.

A large world-wide Swiss travel group, Kuoni Travel Holding Limited of Zurich, purchased the parent company of Clipper Cruise Lines, operator of the Antarctic tour vessel 'Clipper Adventurer', last September for \$US115M in a move designed to take advantage of an expected major increase in for growth in US-sourced ecotourism to all parts of the world over the next decade (ANAN-6/02, 13 October 1999).

PRIVATE FLIGHT TO PENINSULA AREA VISITS CHILEAN, ARGENTINIAN, STATIONS [ANAN-14/07]

Four tourists spent three days flying in their Cessna Caravan aircraft in the Antarctic Peninsula region in mid-January during a three-day operation from southern South America which included visits to Chilean and Argentinian stations.

The four persons, Dick and Pip Smith, and Gerard and Margi Moss, all from Australia, made the 1200 km flight from Punta Arenas, Chile, to Chile's Marsh station on King George Island on 12 January. There they were accommodated at the Chilean facility and their aircraft, whose Australian registration letters are 'SHW' for Sir Hubert Wilkins who made the first aircraft flight in Antarctica, was refuelled there.

On 13 January the 250 km flight to Argentina's Marambio station on Seymour Island off the north-eastern tip of the Peninsula was undertaken, the aircraft returning from there to Marsh later in the day. Weather conditions apparently curtailed much of the sightseeing operations during planned for that flight, including an overflight of Deception Island from where Wilkins made the first aircraft flight in Antarctica on 12 November 1928. The brief report available on flying operations does not indicate that the proposed overflight of the Jones Ice Shelf occurred however (ANAN-12/07, 5 January 2000). That ice shelf is on the western coast of the Peninsula opposite Adelaide Island and is some 650 km by air

south of Marsh station.

Operations in Antarctica were completed on 14 January with an uneventful flight from Marsh to Ushuaia, Argentina. Reports indicate that the aircraft has since been flown from there to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas).

GREENPEACE VESSEL ENDS ITS MONTH-LONG TRACKING, HARRASSMENT, OF WHALING FLEET
[ANAN-14/08]

The Greenpeace vessel 'Arctic Sunrise' arrived in the Western Australian port of Fremantle on 25 January after a sixty-eight day voyage from Hobart, Australia, during which she spent four weeks attempting to disrupt whaling catching activities being carried out by Japanese company Kyodo Senpaku Ltd. in the Southern Ocean north of Enderby Land (ANAN-12/10, 5 January 2000). Reports indicate that the whaling fleet will continue its catching operations in the Indian Ocean sector of the Southern Ocean until mid-April under a permit issued by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (ANAN-11/06, 22 December 1999).

During the month that 'Arctic Sunrise' shadowed the fleet numerous attempts were made by its personnel to disrupt whaling operations using inflatable rubber boats which operated from the environment group's vessel. To date Kyodo Senpaku have not indicated what impact if any the protest action has had on their operations, although Greenpeace has worked hard to maximise publicity of their activities in the world media, and a small number of governments have expressed their official concern at the on going whale hunt. Japanese government officials have however made clear support for the whaling program in the Southern Ocean and the issue is expected to be a difficult negotiating topic at the next meeting of the International Whaling Commission which is to be held in Adelaide, Australia, in July this year.

It seems likely that 'Arctic Sunrise' was forced to break off from the whaling fleet due to the need to refuel after her ten weeks at sea.

NEW BOOK DETAILS 1997-98, THREE-MAN TRAVERSE TO THE POLE
[ANAN-14/09]

A new book titled "Extreme South" written by Ian Brown, who in 1997-98 was a member of a three-man team which man-hauled from Berkner Island to the South Geographic Pole, was published in Australia late last year. Brown, together with Peter Treseder and Keith Williams took fifty-seven days for the journey, arriving at the Pole on 31 December 1997. Treseder returned to Antarctica during the current season in an attempt to man-haul across the continent (ANAN-11/01, 22 December 1999). The 255 page full-colour book, which has the sub-title "Struggles and triumph of the first Australian team to the Pole", is published by Australian Geographic Pty. Ltd., of Sydney, Australia. (ISBN 1 86276 031 4).

COMING MEETINGS
[ANAN-14/10]

25-28 June 2000. IAATO annual meeting. Hobart, Australia.

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##ANAN-14 ends.

ANAN's aim is to provide a periodic summary of non-government program activities in Antarctica. It is prepared by the Australian Antarctic Division from contributions from company, governmental, academic and private individuals with an interest in this area of endeavour on or around the southern-most continent. Your contributions are most welcome at the e-mail address in the signature block below. Addressees can be added to or deleted from the mailing list by sending a note to that address. Please advise of any errors you note and where appropriate corrections will be run in the next edition. The newsletter is also available on the web at: <http://www.antdiv.gov.au/tourism> under 'News Briefs' on the Home Page.

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