

## **UK (London, Cambridge, Plymouth, Cardiff, Swansea) June 2008**

From my website

London, Cambridge, Plymouth, Cardiff and Swansea  
1-15 June 2008

Excerpts from my diary:

Sunday 1 June 2008. Headed for Boston in the late morning. Left the car at Jeff's and we went off for a late lunch at Skipjacks. Later he dropped me off at the Framingham bus station and soon I was at Logan for my 7:30 flight. First time I've flown Virgin Atlantic. More legroom than others and scores of movies on demand, not to mention free drinks.

Monday 2 June 2008. Arrived around 8 or so. Took the tube to Charing Cross and walked to the Strand Palace Hotel. Had a shower and walked over to Stanfords to check out some maps, then to the nearby Red Lion, an old favorite, where I had a pint and made some phone calls. Back to the hotel where I was soon joined by Marty Greene and Michael Smith. We went around the corner to the ?? near Covent Garden for a relaxing lunch and caught up on things. Afterwards we went our separate ways. Around 3:30 I headed to Kensington and the Royal Geographical Society for its AGM. Managed to just keep awake during the two-hour meeting.

Afterwards, the reception, which is always a lively gathering. Hundreds of people and flowing wine and lovely food. Among those in attendance who I spoke with: Rita Gardner, Sir Gordon Conway, Wendy Driver, Celene Pickard, Patrick Fagan, Zaz Shackleton, Ann Shirley, John Boneham, Julian Dowdeswell (director of SPRI who had just been awarded the Founders Medal), Keith Richards (past director of SPRI), et al.

Tuesday 3 June 2008. Up early and around the corner to Topps in Bedford Street for breakfast. Walked over to Regent Street and with time to kill before the British Tourist Office opened I continued on to Waterloo Place to visit yet again the statue of Robert Scott. The vegetation around it has grown ever denser. And then across the road to pay respects to the statue of Sir John Franklin. The two tragic polar heroes contemplating one another for eternity.

Picked up some brochures for Plymouth and Wales at the travel office after a cup of coffee at Caffe Mario on the ground floor of what was Shackleton's office. Looked hard for the former premises of Smith, Elder, publisher of many polar titles, at 15 Waterloo Place. Every other number, but no number 15.

Took the tube to Paddington Station and in time met up with Marty Greene and took the 11:18 train to Kintbury where we were met at the station by Franklin Brooke-Hitching. Thus commenced a lengthy and very interesting visit to one of the great private collections anywhere of British works on travel and exploration. An extensive lunch

beautifully pulled together by Emma and then to the books!

We were back in London around 4 and walked to John Bonham's house in Westbourne Terrace not far from Paddington. He has two flats in the building, the ground one filled with books and that's where we went and stayed. Sipping gin and looking through a new shipment that John had just received. Marty sorted the wheat from the chaff. I picked up a three titles, one—of course, I later learned I already had. Stuart Leggatt, late of Sotherans and now on his own as a bookseller, arrived and not long after we all strolled up the road to an Indian restaurant and did a pretty good job at tucking in. Back to John's for another drink and then by tube back to the Strand Palace.

Wednesday 4 June 2008. Up early and packed up and away to King's Cross although with plenty of time I had a walk around St Pancras Station which recently re-opened after a multi-year restoration. It is now the terminus for the Eurostar. An absolutely beautiful job.

Met up with Marty Greene and took the train to Cambridge arriving a bit before noon. Took a cab to Warkworth House where Mrs Collins met us.

We have the same family room that Mary, Krista and I shared back in 2005. Left our bags and walked across Parkers Piece to Scott Polar Research Institute, where soon after arriving who should show up but Joe O'Farrell and minutes later, Charles Swithinbank. Next came Bob Headland and soon we all were across the street in The Advocate having lunch. (Five beers on tap but only Guinness was available and they ran out of that before we could have a second one. In fairness, it is a wine bar.)

I left the four there around 1 p.m. as I had an appointment in the SPRI Archives where I had arranged to at least start a transcription of the Adelie Mail, the newsletter of Scott's Northern Party. Archivist Naomi Boneham got me started. Sat next to a woman from Miami (of Ohio) University—Muriel Gilchrist—who is working on Joseph Dalton Hooker (Ross's expedition). By closing at 5 p.m. I hadn't progressed very far.

By 5:30, Joe, Marty and I convened in Bob's garret lair, soon joined by Julian Dowdeswell, Peter Clarkson and Paul Berkman. Soon Joe's bottle of Irish had pretty much disappeared.

Joe, Marty, Paul, Bob and I went around the corner to the Curry Garden for a very good Indian meal.

Thursday 5 June 2008. Another lovely day weather-wise. A good filling breakfast and then we paid our bill (£30 each) and were off, back to SPRI. We all worked on various projects until about noon, then Joe, Marty and I headed for the station on foot and soon were headed back to London.

I took the tube to Covent Garden and walked to the Strand Palace to pick up the bag I had left there. Tube to Paddington, then a walk to the Orchard Hotel in Sussex Gardens where Marty had arranged a room. After some re-organizing we went up the road to find a pub which we did near the Indian restaurant we had been to on Tuesday with John and Stuart. Right next door was Mikey's fish and chips which we took advantage of as well. We parted ways and I went to Stanfords to buy a book and some Antarctic maps. Walked to 'The Champion Pub' not far from Oxford Circus as I had heard it might have some Shackleton decor. It didn't, so I can cross it off my list. Next stop was the Duke of Kendal in Connaught Street where I stopped for a leisurely pint. Then a short walk later I was in

front of 25 Hyde Park Gardens, a lovely grand house once owned by Dame Janet Stancomb Wills, Shackleton's great benefactor. Back into the tube at Lancaster Gate and eventually to Olympia where I spent a quick hour at the Antiquarian Book Fair. Met up with Joe and Marty there, then with Barbara Grigor-Taylor, and down the road to a Persian restaurant which was quite good. By cab to Paddington to drop Barbara off, and then to our hotel.

Friday 6 June 2008. Up early (6:15) and off by foot to Paddington to catch the 7:30 train to Plymouth. Waited in the first class lounge for a bit, mainly to load up with biscuits, tea and coffee, etc., for our stay at the Fort. Arrived in Plymouth on schedule and walked a jagged course to Sherwell United Church in plenty of time for David Wilson's talk on Captain Scott. After that, while others took a tour of Antarctic sites in Plymouth, I headed off on foot to pick up the rental car at Alamo/National: a VW Golf diesel. Headed towards Crownhill Fort where we would be the next three nights with a stop at Morrison's, a supermarket, to buy some essentials. Found the Fort without great difficulty. Quite a place. Not long after getting organized, Joe, Marty and Denis O'Connell showed up.

We had convened in Plymouth for one reason: to attend a dinner celebrating the 140th birthday of Captain Scott. He was born in Devonport, a part of Plymouth long associations right up to the present with the Royal Navy. The dinner was held at the Royal Plymouth Corinthian Yacht Club which is on The Hoe and overlooks the harbor. The gathering was organized largely by Paul Davies and the Devon and Cornwall Polar Society.

After a hosing down, followed by a drink, we headed off in a cab to the Yacht Club, leaving a note for Conrad Paulus who was arriving later that evening from France. (This wasn't an entirely simple matter as the enormous doors of the Fort have to be closed and locked when one leaves.)

We got to the Yacht Club without mishap and were welcomed with a glass of champagne. The setting was magnificent with panoramic views out over Plymouth harbor. Of course, it was helped by the perfect weather. Based on the seating plan, there were 62 in attendance including lots of old friends and acquaintances: Paul Davies of course, David Wilson, Seamus Taaffe, Mike Tarver, Jenny Killingbeck, Mary Royds Cleveland, Ann Shirley, Pauline Young, Robin Back. Each of the eight tables was named for one member of Scott's polar party plus Shackleton and Debenham (first director of SPRI and a member of Scott's last expedition). The last was 'Parsons' which I can't figure out at all. Can some one help me out?

An excellent dinner and plenty of wine.

We were about the last to leave. Rang for a cab and had a somewhat lively cab ride back to the Fort with a stop at the off-license on the way.

Arrived back to find that Conrad had arrived and had successfully gained entry to the quarters. We all stayed up far too long drinking and talking. I go to bed at 2 a.m. and they're still at it.

Saturday 7 June 2008. Joe O'Farrell left the Fort very early on Saturday morning, taking a cab to Newquay and then a flight to France. Too bad he couldn't stay longer. And Denis O'Connell left later in the day, too. I guess we set too hard a pace for them to keep up!

Another lovely day. I tour around the Fort and inspect some of the guns including a "Disappearing Moncrieff Gun" which is something to behold. There is a complex series of tunnels throughout the Fort.

We head into Plymouth around 1 p.m. Walked around The Hoe (took photos of the house, now a hotel, where Bickerton—Mawson expedition—once lived and Tim McCarthy's (Shackleton's Endurance) name on the Navy Memorial). Then to the Barbican where we parked and found a pub for lunch. Some more shopping at Morrison's on the way back to the Fort. Got back and found that Duffy Monahan had arrived after being re-routed to Edinburgh and taking an all-night bus from there.

There's now a fair amount of activity in the Fort as a wedding has taken place and now the reception is going on in a big white tent. A gunner sets off the cannon for the bride and groom.

That night we cook up a nice dinner featuring trout, rice and broccoli.

Sunday 8 June 2008. The weather remains lovely. After breakfast, Marty, me, Conrad and Duffy head off in the car. Through Yelverton and into Dartmoor and eventually to Castle Drogo, now a National Trust property (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-castledrogo/>) and an interesting property which we toured. Described as the "last castle to be built in England," it was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens for Julius Drewe and was completed in 1930. It's not really a castle, just a big, solid country house. Probably a bit grim on a cold and rainy day.

This was followed by lunch in the White Hart in Moretonhampstead.

We continued south eventually ending up in South Milton and the house of Paul and Andrea Davies where we had been invited for "tea and cakes." Also there were Seamus Taaffe, his wife and two young daughters and his parents-in-law. We enjoyed the resident peacock.

We're back at the Fort by around 7 or so. Decide to concentrate on eating up leftovers and not going out to the nearby Indian restaurant.

Monday 9 June 2008. The great weather continues. We're up early and Marty is off to the train station by cab at 8 a.m. Conrad, Duffy and I pack and tidy things up and are gone a little before 10. We head into Plymouth and drop Duffy off at the bus station, then Conrad and I head east to Exeter on the A38. Arrive a bit before noon and stash the car in a carpark and walk up to the Cathedral. I snap a photo or two of Captain Scott's sledge flag that hangs in a case near the front. His mother made it for the Discovery expedition. (Scott is a subject in the needlework cushion below the flag.) We have a sandwich and a pint at a nearby pub and stroll around the town. Stop at the library and check e-mail. Head off towards Exmouth and have a look at Budleigh Salterton which I walked through many years ago when I did the coast walk from Exmouth to Lyme Regis. Then on to Sidmouth, which I had also walked through. Had a 'smoothie' along the main drag. Next place was Beer, which I don't remember but is an attractive old fishing port.

Our next destination was Poundbury, ". . . a mixed urban development of Town Houses, Cottages, Shops & Light Industry, designed for the Prince of Wales by Architect Leon Krier on the outskirts of the Dorset County Town of Dorchester. Prince Charles, The Duke of Cornwall, decided it was time to show how Traditional Architecture and Modern Town Planning could be used in making a thriving new community that people could live

& work in close proximity." I loved it; Conrad wasn't so sure. We had a pint in the pub and plotted our next move which was to continue on to Blandford Forum where we had hopes of finding a place to stay. Stopped at The Crown as we entered Blandford. No room there but a bed and breakfast was arranged for us just outside the town, in fact, we had past it as we entered. The Lower Bryanston Farm is owned by Andrea and Tony Jones. They board horses and grow organic barley. A nice en suite room for £30 each. We went back into Blandford and got to The Crown just in time to have dinner.

Tuesday 10 June 2008. After a nice breakfast, we had the treat of being driven around the 275-acre farm by Tony in his 'Mule.' along with his two dogs.

We then headed into Blandford Forum which is a very attractive market town described as the best collection of Georgian architecture in England. I was interested in getting there because of a memorial plaque in the church that relates to George Vince who died during Scott's Discovery expedition. The large church is in the middle of the town and the plaque was easily found. A woman there seemed to think there was also a plaque on the Vince house but after some checking it appears she was thinking of some other local worthy.

We next found ourselves in Shaftesbury, another very nice town deep in Thomas Hardy country which may be most famous for Gold Hill, the steep, often-photographed street off of the High Street.

There was a flea market at the Town Hall which we had a look at. Conrad bought a plate and I picked up three nice silver serving spoons (£10).

On around Shepton Mallet to Holcombe which I had been to before because of the Scott connection. Scott's father took a job here as a brewery manager. The house still stands (on Brewery Lane) and outside of the town is the Old Church, which stands in a lovely setting which you approach through a field. Buried in the churchyard are Scott's parents and other family members and Scott's name itself appears on the monument.

We continued on to Wells, another of my favorite market towns (England's smallest city). The Cathedral is my favorite: perfect location, impressive surroundings, and those magnificent scissor arches. We got a room at the Ancient Gate Hotel where I had stayed once before sometime back. We walked around the town a bit and then took in an organ concert in the Cathedral. Seemed to last forever but it was impressive sitting in the choir in such a space.

Had fish and chips at The Crown afterwards.

Wednesday 11 June 2008. The perfect weather just doesn't stop. Conrad and I had a look around the market, then left town about 10 a.m. for our next stop, Glastonbury, where we did little other than drive to the base of the hill on which stands the Tor.

Continued on to East Lyng which I was interested in because of George Marston. He was the artist on Shackleton's Nimrod and Endurance expeditions and was said to be buried there. After three turns around the churchyard I finally found the grave in a corner. The inscription is now nearly gone.

Conrad is due at the Bristol airport for a flight back to France so we drive on, looking for a pub to have lunch at. We find one at Axbridge, The White Hart.

We arrive at the airport, totally perplexed by the signage. Nothing about departures. We

sort it out eventually and Conrad's on her way. And I head off, through Bristol and on to the M5 going north. My next destination is Jane and Michael Hogan's farm in Bickley, Worcestershire, not far from Tenbury Wells. I've visited many times over the years and little seems to change much. It's a delightful part of the country and the farm itself is a joy to visit.

I arrive to find Jane there and not long after we take my car into Tenbury Wells to get diesel for my car (\$100) and petrol for the farm vehicles. Also some food shopping. Back to Bickley and a welcomed drink. Michael arrives soon after and we check out the sheep and Michael's new tractor.

A lot of conversation and catching-up over a chicken dinner.

Thursday 12 June 2008. Jane is headed for Scotland and Michael's off too and I'm on my way to Wales. Head back through Tenbury Wells, through Leominster and then to Hay-on-Wye, the famous book town. (This was my destination many years ago when I walked Offa's Dyke from Chepstow.) Parked the car and walked around the town visiting several bookshops. Found one Antarctic book not yet in my collection. Had lunch at a pub and went on my way.

Drove through the Brecon Beacons to Merthyr Tydfil where the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery is located. Why would this be of particular interest? I had learned that a pair of Tom Crean's skis were on display. I looked everywhere through the eclectic collection and could find nothing. On inquiring I found they were on loan to the Country Kerry Museum in Ireland!

Merthyr no longer holding much appeal for me, I decide to continue on to Cardiff. I ring the hotel where I'm booked the next night and they have space so I set off for Cardiff where I arrived in the late afternoon.

Walked around the town a bit and later found a nearby place for dinner, China China, the best I could do without traveling too far. Chinese buffet which was actually pretty good.

Friday 13 June 2008. A busy day ahead and more lovely weather. After breakfast I walked to the Tourist Office and got directions to Newport where I wanted to go to find a grave. Picked up the car and headed first for Roath Park in the northern part of Cardiff to visit the Terra Nova Lighthouse. Following that I drove to the nearby Discovery pub. The sign has changed since my last visit; now it's just a painting of the Discovery. With those behind me I'm on my way to Newport which is perhaps 20 miles away if that. Perce Blackborow, who was the stowaway on Shackleton's Endurance expedition, is buried in St. Woolos Cemetery, reportedly the largest and oldest public cemetery in Britain. Went to the office to get directions and after perhaps an hour of searching through old ledger books the entry was found. Charles Dare, the superintendent, and his colleague, Alison Ludlow, took me to the grave. Oddly, the gravestone is relatively recent so now there's a mystery as to what happened to the original marker.

Back to Cardiff and now to Cardiff Bay, the old waterfront which has been radically re-developed. Took photos of the new Scott memorial sculpture by the Norwegian Church and had a pint at the Terra Nova pub and a burger across the way.

Back to central Cardiff and to the rental car garage where I return the car, all in good shape. Total mileage: 705

They drive me and another renter back into town. I then walk to the City Hall and

photograph the Scott Memorial tablet that is on the main stair landing. Last time I was there the City Hall was being restored and all was behind scaffolding.

Had a look at the National Museum next door which is a lovely building but nothing of Antarctic interest.

Back at the hotel I relaxed, had a drink, took a shower and decked myself up in my tux and about 7 p.m. walked up the St. Mary's Street to the Royal Hotel where the Captain Scott Society was convening its annual dinner. This commemorates the final farewell dinner given to Scott as he was about to leave Cardiff and Britain on the Terra Nova. That dinner was held on the same date and in the same hotel. And the menu was the same, too. There was a good turnout, all male with the exception of one young female awardee. Lots of toasts and conviviality. Bob Headland gave the featured short talk.

Saturday 14 June 2008. Up to yet another fine day. A little slow to get going after the night before. Left the hotel and walked to the bus station and went on my way to Swansea which I wanted to visit again anyway, but chose to this way as there was no accommodation left in Cardiff (Bruce Springsteen concert Saturday night). Things were tight in Swansea as it turned out, but I started walking along Oystermouth Road and got a room on the first try at the Sea Haven Hotel. Nothing luxurious but close by and only £20 for the night.

The two things I wanted to accomplish in Swansea were to make a return visit to the Swansea Museum and to go to the new National Waterfront Museum. The former has several Edgar Evans (Scott's two expeditions) items—a large marble bust, a boot and a few other things. The latter was supposed to have the figurehead of Scott's Terra Nova. When I first saw it, it was in Cardiff. The second time was also in Cardiff but at another location. I last saw it when it was in an exhibit at the National Maritime Museum. I had heard it was now in Swansea but there was no sign of it. The Museum is lovely and 'cutting edge' as far as the exhibits are concerned, but a figurehead wouldn't seem to fit in with what was on display. I got the curator's address and will pursue it once home.

My next stop was St. Mary's Church in the center of Swansea where there is a modern chair that has an inscription to Edgar Evans on the back. Last time I was in Swansea the church was closed. This time it was open and I was able to take a photograph.

Nothing much else seemed of interest to me in Swansea. It seemed to be inundated with kids; lots of public drinking and a lot of litter.

Back to the hotel and a much-needed nap, first of my trip.

That night had a good enough Indian meal at Miah's, not far from my hotel. Of particular interest was the setting: a large former church. A good job was done in adapting it for restaurant use.

Sunday 15 June 2008. Up first thing, about 5:15 a.m., and walked to the bus station. Soon I was on the National Express coach to Heathrow via Cardiff. Arrived in plenty of time at Terminal 3, which I don't recall using before. Less frenetic than Terminal 4. Good flight back to Boston on Virgin Atlantic, arriving on time. Through customs and all without difficulty and soon on the bus to Framingham. Jeff picked me up, we had a burger at Joe's, then back to Jeff's house. Picked up my car and was home in Jaffrey by midnight.