Claiming the Ice

Claiming the Ice:

Britain and the Antarctic 1900-1950

By

John Dudeney and John Sheail

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Claiming the Ice: Britain and the Antarctic 1900-1950

By John Dudeney and John Sheail

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-3048-5
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3048-5

For the Grandchildren
Kira, Jasmine, Daniel and Astrid

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIVE BOXES

FOREWORD

Several studies of what may rightly be called *The Antarctic Problem* have appeared in recent years using a variety of sources which, necessarily, have influenced their conclusions. None of these has made so much use of the basic British documents held by The National Archives in London as has this work. Thus the detailed investigation and analysis of those records forms a valuable addition to the published literature. The period in question, 1900 to 1950, is a critical one during which two major government reports appeared: the 1920 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Research and Development in the Dependencies of the Falkland Islands,* and the 1945 *Territorial Claims in the Antarctic* (Roberts, B. B. [Secretary], London; Research Department, Foreign Office). The first was published, and the second remained classified until the Australian National Archives in Canberra released a copy. Both discuss similar problems but demonstrate vast changes in 25 years that are principally due to repercussions of changed circumstances after two World Wars. The pioneer volume published on these subjects appeared in 1951 (Christie, E. W. H.; *The Antarctic Problem: A historical and Political Study*), but this was mainly confined to the 'ABC' region in dispute [Argentina, Britain, Chile] whereas this book is more comprehensive. Much detailed study of associated problems caused the Research Department of the Foreign Office to maintain very detailed records of Antarctic history and related concerns – an important, although often under-estimated, academic resource.

Fundamental to the comprehension of the documents is knowledge of the methods of government, the bureaucracy, involved. When understood this is a systematic process with a formal structure of reference and cross references, marking and recording, with notes and commentary, as files pass between different officers through a series of administrative and registry clerks. Most of those involved are identifiable thus personal approaches become evident. In this computer age it is revealing how effective the manual systems were, and how much data are left for historians.

The problem of Antarctica in 1900 was a relatively minor question at a time when knowledge was so imperfect. However, with the brief but intense 'heroic age', this changed vastly until exploration generally halted

during the First World War. During this period, however, the beginning of the rapid growth of the whaling industry, and continuous Argentine occupation of the South Orkney Islands, became two enduring factors. The formalisation of territorial claims soon followed as resources were exploited and geographical knowledge consolidated.

A revealing aspect of the book is the ways of government, what the authors term 'the official mind'. The Admiralty, Board of Trade, Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Munitions, Treasury, War Office, and others became involved at various times as the body politic diversified. Civil servants and committees provided advice for Ministers whose responsibility was the development of policy, many of whom are also identified in the correspondence. Circumstances often altered cases, as they changed. Administrative cooperation was not perfect with some amount of departmental competition, and even a 'wayward officer' being involved. There was liaison with the governments of the Dominions, particularly those with the strongest Antarctic interests: Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Information and advice were also sought externally from the British Museum (Natural History), Royal Geographical Society, Royal Society, Scott Polar Research Institute, and several other non-governmental bodies. There are many vignettes with an image of a 'mandarin' (a senior civil servant) appearing with his concise biography. Similarly details of vessels, committees, and other factors are provided throughout the text.

Those early years involved the associated problems of preserving the whaling industry by conserving whale populations. From 1904 until the latter parts of the 20th century, especially until 1950 when the book finishes, the wealth from whaling was a very important factor, although control became less practicable as the pelagic part of the industry became dominant from about 1930. In 1925 the *Discovery* Investigations began the earliest, and one of the largest, biological and oceanographical research programmes in the Southern Ocean. The Norwegian dominance in Antarctic whaling was major but competition among separate companies caused relatively little governmental interest until this was stimulated by a private entrepreneur. However, convergence of interests became apparent between the Norwegian companies and the British Government, the former for the regulation and the stability it provided for investment, the second for income and recognition of territorial claims. Eventually three Norwegian territories in the Antarctic were defined within the general alignment of British and Norwegian interests. Mutual interests led to some agreement of whaling regulation, especially after the 'stille året'

('silent year', 1930-31) for whaling – but as the industry operated increasingly on the high seas, this was far from ideal and effective.

The consolidation of sovereign claims into defined territories began in 1908 and concluded with the current Argentine specification in 1947. The negotiations varied much, which is recorded in Government minutes. First the Falkland Islands Dependencies were specified in 1908 and 1917; then the Ross Dependency in 1923 under the administration of the Governor-General of New Zealand; French claims consolidated after diplomatic exchanges in 1924 and 1938 as Terre Adélie; a British Order in Council established Australian Antarctic Territory in 1933. By then the majority of the continent was claimed as several British Imperial territories. In 1939 Dronning Maud Land, proclaimed by Norway, just preceding German claims although these were not sustained after the war. Here, a significant aspect of the book is the attention given to planning for the Bergen Polar Exhibition. This, though cancelled on the beginning of war, concentrated Chilean and Argentine interests, leading to formal claims: in 1940 over Territorio Chileno Antártico followed by Antártida Argentina in 1943, extended in 1947. Thus the circumstances had become increasingly complicated by 1950 (perhaps a later work may take this to the present indicating subsequent territorial changes). As well as these claims over Antarctica, comparable claims over the peri-Antarctic islands were also involved with Australia, France, New Zealand, Norway, and South Africa as well as the complications with Argentina and Chile. Even some of the 'non-existent islands' became involved, such was the accuracy of contemporary charts. After the Second World War much of the relevant material was published in *The Polar Record* at a time when public interest intensified as permanent stations rapidly increased.

Enterprises developed slowly in the far south of South America, but pioneers such as Julius Popper with his effectively independent state, whaling and pastoral interests in Punta Arenas, and the last few Antarctic sealing voyages which occurred around the end of the 1800s were precursors. Government interest in expeditionary activities during the early decades of the 1900s were much concerned with public monies and expenditure required by quasi-governmental involvement. A distinct subject, which came to pervade all politics of the period was the meteorological observatory established on Laurie Island, South Orkney Islands, in 1903 by William Bruce's Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, and transferred to Argentina in 1904. Now it is the oldest continuously operating station in the Antarctic, becoming a major aspect of Argentine sovereignty. Recurring problems were associated with attempts to negotiate a territorial exchange in the 1910s and with attempts

to establish a radio-telegraph station at Laurie Island using an Argentine call-sign, which was achieved in 1927. The microcosm of the South Orkney Islands, with the Falkland Islands, inevitably caused complications with the macrocosm of British relations with Argentina, where trade and other financial involvement formed a major diplomatic conundrum – one that has not been resolved.

Much diplomacy and negotiation after the First World War involved the Arctic with particular emphasis on the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920 and the East Greenland case before the International Court of Justice which concluded in 1933. British involvement in the former was major, with the result of a treaty solving sovereign disputes and having a precedence relevant to the Antarctic Treaty 39 years later. The series of Imperial Conferences included increasing deliberation on polar regions. Renewed United States interest, dormant for almost a century, also complicated a chronic problem with its public policy of not recognizing any territorial claims whilst its citizens established a basis for a future claim. Soviet Union interests were, at this time, largely directed elsewhere, particularly in the Arctic.

The Second World War brought additional complications with Axis forces involved. German raiders operated in the Southern Ocean and had a highly adverse effect on the strategic whaling industry. This was also a time when problems with the Argentine and Chile became acute. Examples such as those on Deception Island demonstrate the differences between local administration, such as the Magistrate and naval operations, with reactions in Buenos Aires and Santiago as reported in London. The Hope Bay incident in 1952 was an unprecedented consequence, although just outside the years covered by this book.

Responding to these circumstances, the secret naval Operation Tabarin became the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey of which the first four winters of its establishment are described in this book. An analysis of costs and benefits of Antarctic sovereignty involved several differing policies. A significant policy considered was an internationalism of the problem – a delicate and prolonged procedure as circumstances became more complicated. Financial difficulties affected all proponents such that agreements to limit naval operations made as much monetary as diplomatic sense. Gradually the ascendency of science became more influential in policy and relationships – but this was beginning as this book comes to its limit in 1950.

The documentation in The National Archives is very comprehensive (a very small proportion remains closed) but the trail through it is complex. The careful provision of file numbers and other references is a particularly

valuable aspect of this book – vastly helping scholars in understanding the Antarctic Problem. Appointing Magistrates, establishing Post Offices, and even sending the occasional gunboat all became aspects of Claiming the Ice: Britain and the Antarctic from 1900 to 1950.

R. K. HEADLAND, Scott Polar Research Institute (11 June 2018)

AUTHORS' PREFACE

One of the authors spent his career with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The other was an historian in the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, another component body of the Natural Environment Research Council. Retirement has given us the opportunity to research how the British Government came to play a pivotal role in the affairs of Antarctica.

We are deeply grateful to Bob Headland for his much needed encouragement and for the Foreword, and to David Walton for his participation in earlier drafts of this work. Jane Rumble, Head of the Polar Regions Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has been consistently supportive, both personally and through the provision of financial support from the British Antarctic Territory budget. John Dudeney acknowledges the financial support of the Leverhulme Foundation, and of the Trans-Antarctic Association during the early preparatory work for this book.

It will be obvious to readers the extent of our gratitude to The National Archives, as a remarkable institution and for the unfailing kindness and helpfulness of those in the Search Rooms. We similarly acknowledge the support given us by the Cambridge University Library; the archives of Churchill College, Cambridge; the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG); the Libraries and Archives of BAS and the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI), and the very many individuals for their valuable suggestions from which this book has greatly benefitted.

Unless otherwise stated, the footnotes given in this volume identify the documents cited, and which are available in The National Archives, Kew. The full citation of the published works cited by author and date of publication will be found in the Bibliography at the end of the book.

John Dudeney and John Sheail 3 February 2019
75th anniversary of Operation Tabarin

CHAPTER ONE

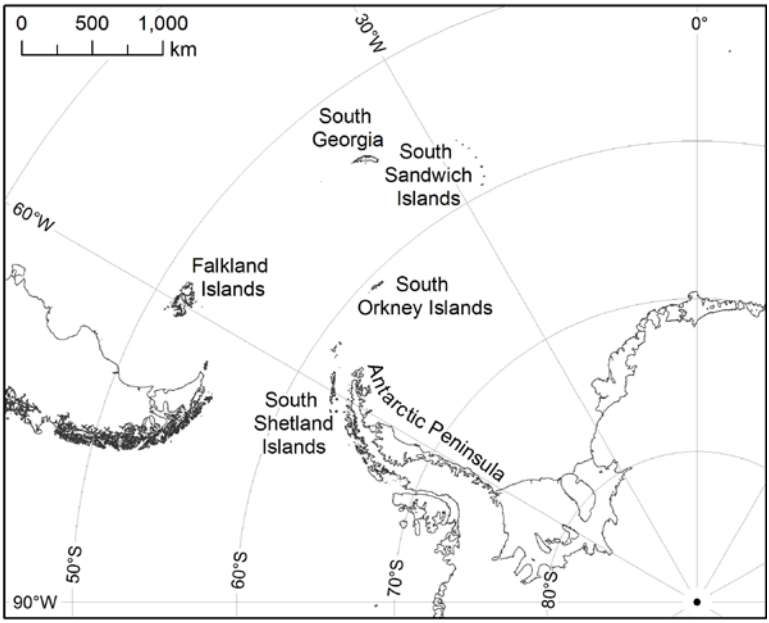
INTRODUCTION

Among the many histories of the Antarctic, this book is distinctive for ranging beyond the individual explorers and their patrons to appraise the part played by Government ministers and, more particularly, their officials, in the formative years 1900 to 1950. Never before have their respective contributions been so comprehensively assessed as a cause, catalyst, trigger and accelerator of the dramatic and enduring changes of that formative period in Antarctic history.

The centenary celebrations of Robert Falcon Scott's trek to the South Pole, and of Ernest Shackleton's later ventures, have come and gone. Tourists can now experience the Antarctic for themselves, and over 35,000 do so each year. Jeff Rubin's first tourist guide, in the Lonely Planet Publications series, has now been joined among others by David Day's *Antarctic Biography* and Jean Boothe's *The Storied Ice*, their providing an historical context to what so many tourists come to see and experience (Rubin 1996; Boothe 2011; Day 2012). Over a hundred cruise ship-visits bring roughly 17,000 tourists to Port Lockroy - the over-wintering British post established by the wartime Operation Tabarin, and now a heritage museum.

The Antarctic is the world's largest nature reserve, big enough to accommodate both the USA and India with room to spare. Much has been written on its harsh environments. As well as the curiosity-led sciences, more applied studies are made of the marine ecosystem, and of the changes taking place on land and in the upper atmosphere, and their relationship to global warming and rising sea levels (Priestley 1964; Walton 2013). Alongside the scientific texts, there are accounts of what it is like to participate in such data-gathering expeditions (Walton 1955, Swithinbank 1998; Francis 2012). Vivian Fuchs' book *Of Ice and Men* similarly describes what it is like to live and work for two or more years in such conditions. Fuchs, appointed field commander in 1948, retired as Director in 1973, by which time some 1,250 young British men had taken part in what had become the British Antarctic Survey (Fuchs 1982).

Peder Roberts has shown, in his book *The European Antarctic* that, for 'all its unique and sublime majesty and the awe it inspires in visitors', the Antarctic is essentially 'a mirror reflecting the values, ambitions and anxieties' of those who come to visit it. The reasons why the Antarctic has exerted so powerful an attraction are to be found largely in European and North American cultures. The principal initiatives were taken not upon the continent itself, but from what was decided in 'boardrooms and offices' (Roberts 2011, 4-6). The book focuses upon the decisions taken for the most part in London.



(Map produced by Mapping and Geographic Information Centre, British Antarctic Survey)

1.1 The main regions of interest in the Antarctic in this book.

Every Antarctic nation has a tale to tell, which Robert Headland has brought together in his remarkably detailed, annotated chronology of Antarctic expeditions (Headland 2009). *Terra Australis* as he calls it, was first exploited by sealing parties between 1780 and 1892, before expeditions came explicitly to explore. A third period of 1919 to 1943 can be distinguished for its whaling activity, and a fourth, 1944-1958, for the establishment of permanently-occupied stations. The period following the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 became what Headland (2004, 16) characterises as one of regulation by 1987.

Sealers and whalers typically published very little about what they found, whereas Scott, Shackleton, Mawson and Rymill, for example, authored firsthand accounts, as much to raise the royalties required to cover their Expedition's costs, as to convey what their Expeditions had accomplished in the name of their country. Much has been written about their leadership qualities and the support they received, particularly from such bodies as the Royal Geographical Society and, much later, the Scott Polar Research Institute. Relatively little attention has been paid to the third essential element in determining whether an expedition set off and how it fared, namely the British Government.

The importance of that official support, or more often its denial, was shown by the fact that there was only one significant British land-based expedition between the wars. There was no lack of potential expeditions. It was the Treasury's refusal to provide the necessary Exchequer support which prevented them leaving. A principal object of this book is to explain how and why the position changed so profoundly during the Second World War, and why Fuchs should dedicate his book *Of Ice and Men* to 'the taxpayers who made it all possible'. Initially this was through the Admiralty's covert funding of the Colonial Office to prosecute the wartime Operation Tabarin, and then with peace the Colonial Office's direct support of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. Restyled the British Antarctic Survey, following the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty in 1961, it became a component part of the Natural Environment Research Council in 1967.

E. W. Hunter Christie wrote what stood for many years as the most authoritative account of what he called *The Antarctic Problem*. Christie, seriously wounded and invalided from the Coldstream Guards in 1944, had joined the South American Department of the Foreign Office, serving as the Third Secretary at the Buenos Aires Embassy between 1946 and 1948, when he left to read for the Bar. Sir Reginald Leeper (the Ambassador) recalled, in a foreword to the book, how Christie's task had been 'to master the past history of the Falkland Islands and of the other lands farther south known by us as the Falkland Islands Dependencies in order to answer the claims to all this territory which were being put forward by the Argentine Government'. The Foreign Office raised no objection to the book's publication. (Christie 1951; Tatham 2008, 150-2).[1]

Peter Beck, in his numerous research papers, and a pioneering volume *The International Politics of Antarctica*, has similarly emphasised the importance of 'the Anglo-Argentinian-Chilean relationship' in the opening up of the Antarctic (Beck 1983a, b and c, and 1986). Klaus Dodds, in *Pink*

[1] FO 371/74770 (AS5470)

Ice and his many further publications, has described how 'British officials and political figures maintained what he called a foothold on the apparent edge of the world', and how these distant territories were not only administered and mapped in a literal sense, but also invested with cultural and national importance (Dodds 2002). As Dodds wrote later, with Mark Nuttall, the polar regions have become embedded within the global economic and political systems, encompassing such diverse activities as oil and gas prospecting (although both these activities are actually banned under the Protocol for Environmental Protection!), as well as the development of tourism. No longer a remote and barely understood landmass, the Antarctic was fast becoming absorbed into the public cultures the world over (Dodds and Nuttall 2016)

Peder Roberts adopted an explicitly transnational perspective in his volume *The European Antarctic*, using Norwegian and Swedish, as well as British sources, to investigate the impacts of science and strategy (Roberts 2011). Adrian Howkins has drawn upon both British and South American sources in his published doctorate *Frozen Empires* (Howkins 2008). He has since published two environmental histories, the first encompassing the polar regions generally (Howkins 2016), and a second focusing on the Antarctic Peninsula. How did a seemingly worthless and hostile environment become so contested? Drawing largely upon the secondary literature, Howkins (2017) has used the notion of an 'environmental authority' to demonstrate 'the various strategies used to connect political power, science and the environment, and thereby 'legitimate political control over the environment'.

These earlier authors have drawn on the archives available. Dodds (1996a) made use of the despatches and telegrams which he found in the various Commonwealth archives. Now, with the opening of much of the relevant documentation at The National Archives at Kew, on the edge of London, different interpretations frequently emerge from the minuting, drafting and interdepartmental exchanges preparatory to those telegrams and despatches, which the respective Dominion Governments eventually received. Using the documentation now to hand, a much fuller understanding emerges of the first half-century of British involvement in the Antarctic.

Dodds has gone on to demonstrate, with Richard Powell, how the polar regions provide exceptional opportunities to appraise the use of what they call 'knowledges, resources and legal regimes' across what was the British Empire (Powell and Dodds 2014). Sanjay Chaturvedi has further developed what he calls geopolitical analysis in his *The Dawning of Antarctica*, and a political geography of *The Polar Regions*, both focusing

on the later twentieth century. For Chaturvedi (1990 and 1996) the imperial/colonial forces behind the penetration of the polar regions, far from being unique, were part of the self-same process as affected the world over. In that sense, British retention of the Falkland Islands Colony and Dependencies (what Dodds calls 'one of Britain's most persistent limpet colonies') was not so much a global sideshow, but an integral part of the wider imperial process.

This book's purpose is to look more closely at the individual decision-making within the formal structures of Government, which impacted so closely on the development of interest in the Falkland Islands Dependencies in the first half of the twentieth century, as encompassed the increasing British commitment to the Antarctic. The dynamics were determined not by some inexorable process of government, but by personalities within those formal structures, where instinct and traditions played a significant part and where even the most senior posts were held by career civil servants, regardless of the ebbs and flow of politics (Reynolds 2000, 49 and 60).

Close reference is accordingly made to what can be found in The National Archives. W.M. Bush (the retired Australian diplomat) called them 'a gold mine' in his international compilation of documents on the Antarctic (Bush 1982). As Henry Hall wrote, in a pioneering history of the Colonial Office, there can be no detailed understanding without access to the minuting, as conveyed the private opinions of those populating 'the corridors of power'. Hall (1937, 6) was writing of the origins of the Colonial Office in the nineteenth century, but the relevance of that personal input to the formulation and implementation of Colonial policy becomes all the greater in the twentieth century in achieving what, in this instance, is a much fuller understanding of how and why Britain became so deeply involved in Antarctic affairs; secondly the part played by Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United States in affecting that commitment, and thirdly the extent to which the scientific effort helped secure that wider political and economic goal.

It is the contention of this book that the true authors of the policies and practices instigated in the name of the Minister, namely their officials and expert advisers, need to be identified for the revelation of how government – and for that matter geopolitics – really operated. Full advantage needs to be taken of the further releases of documentation since the earlier geopolitical studies were written. The originality will lie in the detail of how those who actually staffed the Government really operated in applying the 'knowledges, resources and legal regimes' that have come to characterise at least the British dimension of polar politics.

However much the newspapers and public generally focused on the exploits of Scott and Shackleton, the British Government's primary concern was not so much with the flag hoisting, but protecting the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, which had been reoccupied in 1833 for their strategic value in protecting routes around South America and towards the Antipodes (Hall 1937, 175; Beck 1988). It was from this Falklands perspective that the British Government became so closely associated with the island of South Georgia, the archipelagos of the South Shetlands, South Orkneys and South Sandwich Islands, and the Antarctic Peninsula of Graham Land. 'Knowledges' of these territories had come from such pioneers of the Southern Ocean as Edmund Halley in 1698, James Cook (1775) and James Clark Ross (1843-1845). The only readily-exploitable resources proved to be the seal rookeries, whose populations were soon slaughtered to near extinction.

Historians have long focused on the presumptions and mechanisms by which the natural resources of such remote territories came to be exploited by the respective imperial governments. Governments might use the language of 'command and control', and indeed the Admiralty was intimately involved in the decisions affecting the Falkland Islands and Dependencies, but there was invariably a constant reshuffling of priorities. 'No single imperial ideology ruled the Victorian roost' (Darwin 2012, 12). The Empire was never more than 'a collection of distinct political units', each with an often ill-defined relationship with the metropolis (Fieldhouse 1981, 31). The Falkland Islands were more remarkable than most in having, as a Foreign Office official remarked in 1940, a population of some 2,000 of exclusively Anglo-Saxon and Celtic extraction. Although more purely British than any self-governing Dominion, their miniscule economy and society meant the Falkland Islands must remain a dependent territory.

What caused the British Government to take an increasing interest in those remote and hostile territories to the south of the Falkland Islands in the early twentieth century? What impelled a determination to retain them, even in the thick of the Second World War, by installing permanently manned posts? Three questions pervade imperial history and indeed the structure of this book: firstly, the extent to which economics (wealth creation) led to colonies being established and retained; secondly the part played by politics in wanting to wield sovereign power over others, and thirdly how those two aspirations were accommodated (appeased) within the ambitions of other claimants to the territories?

The Falkland Islands Dependencies offer an outstanding example of how developments on the periphery influenced Imperial policy, where

even individual territories of apparently little worth were acquired to buttress in this case the Falkland Islands themselves (Robinson and Gallagher 1981). It was the opportunism, on the part of the Governor of the Falklands Islands, which caused British imperialism to extend southward to the Antarctic, following the decision of Norwegian whaling entrepreneurs to exploit the waters of South Georgia, and then the archipelagos and coasts of the Antarctic Peninsula itself. The whaling companies, in purchasing the leases and licences, and thereby exploiting the monopoly granted them, provided the Colonial Government with the financial self-sufficiency expected by the Imperial Government of its colonies, and, by inference, their recognition of the British sovereign right to administer those territories. The incredibly rapid development of whaling, and the consequent pressures from British companies to participate, compelled the British Government to formalise its claim to sovereignty in 1908, with revision in 1917, long before any other governments publicly made any formal claims.

'Empire' has come to be perceived as consisting of a 'metropole' and 'periphery'. Ronald Hyam has extended the model in the sense that the centre was also the topmost level, representing the essentially strategic calculations required of a metropolitan 'elite' in London, and what were invariably perceived as the sectoral concerns of the lower level, or periphery. Much hinged on the Governor, as 'the man on the spot', in contriving to align those geopolitical and sectoral priorities (Hyam 1999 and 2002, 285-90). Those tensions, as exemplified by the governance of the whaling industry, were replicated on an altogether greater scale as the Australian Government became increasingly involved in Antarctic affairs.

The time span of this book begins shortly after Europe's leading statesmen agreed at the African Conference, held in Berlin in 1884-1885, that the greater part of Africa should be partitioned according to which colonial power had established an effective presence - what the historian Niall Ferguson calls 'a true thieves' compact' (Ferguson 2003, 236). The frozen continent to the south, *terra nullius* (No-Man's Land) remained largely ignored until a personal donation by Kaiser Wilhelm allowed Erich von Drygalski's *Gauss* Expedition of 1901 to 1903 to proceed, the territory so visited being named Kaiser Wilhelm Land. Wilhelm Filchner similarly honoured the patron of his Expedition of 1911-1912 by naming his newly-discovered length of the Weddell Sea coastline as 'Prinzregent Luitpold Land' (Filchner 1984, 84-5). A little-noted purpose of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 was to expunge these potential German claims. Seven governments had, by the Second World War, claimed an aggregate 4.5 million square miles (11.65 million km^2) of the Antarctic, of which the

United Kingdom and Dominion Governments claimed two-thirds. Only a Pacific Ocean sector – some 15 per cent of the land mass of Antarctica – remained and still remains without formal claims (Conrad 2012, 36; Hall 1989a, 139).

Klaus Dodds perceives the installation of British over-wintering posts in the 1940s, first by Operation Tabarin and then the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, as an 'imperial administrative fiction', in the sense of occupying thousands of square kilometres of sea and mountains by some twenty to 30 surveyors and a small group of administrators at Port Stanley. But what Dodds (1996a, 395) perceives as 'absurdities' stemmed not from imperial pretence but from what was actually required by international law at that juncture of time in establishing sovereignty in such inhospitable territories. Their installation closely followed the advice of the Departmental Legal Advisers, as they interpreted the most recent and relevant examples from East Greenland and the Canadian and Russian activities in the Arctic.

Of the many legal studies made of the polar regions, Gillian D. Triggs has written perhaps the most succinct, focused on Australian sovereignty (Triggs 1986). The United States authority, James Brown Scott, emphasised, as early as 1909, that discovery establishes no more than 'a presumption, an inchoate right', which, if followed by occupation, might ripen into title, provided that person was, or became, vested with the requisite authority. The time required to establish occupation necessarily varied, but any failure to do so in a reasonable period would 'undoubtedly be regarded as a renunciation of any original priority and of the rights springing from discovery' (Scott 1909, 939).

Although settlement was assumed to be impossible in the conventional sense, some form of governance was seen to be necessary to avoid the kind of anarchy described by Robert Rudmose Brown upon the Arctic Archipelago of Spitsbergen, most obviously from the ravages of mineral prospectors and over-hunting. A controlling authority was needed for Spitsbergen to realise its potential as 'a great mining country' and 'the grandest playground in Europe' for its hunting (Brown 1919). The Treaty of 9 February 1920, which granted Norway sovereignty, guaranteed continued access to citizens of those nations already established upon a defined region of the Archipelago or which subsequently signed the treaty (Ulfstein 1995; Fitzmaurice 2014, 315).

Spitsbergen was something of an exception in its immediate potential for development, and the form of governance devised. International tribunals have more usually been appointed to resolve claims by two governments, the most significant polar case, between the wars, being East

Greenland. Here the Permanent Court of International Justice dismissed Norway's claim based on prior discovery, ruling that Denmark had exercised a sufficient degree of authority to confer a valid title to its sovereignty. The effect of the judgement was to weaken the meaning of 'occupation', in that, as the Court acknowledged, Danish authority had only been exercised 'as and when occasion demanded', whether by official visits or licensed commercial activity (Fachiri, 1933; Hill 1945, 148-9; Jessup and Taubenfeld 1959, 140-2). All parties in such cases had to agree to submit their claims to arbitration – a requirement which made the refusal of the Argentine and Chilean Governments all the more difficult for the British Government in their rival claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Argentina was historically the exemplar of Britain's 'informal empire'. As Edward H. Carr (the diplomat and historian) observed in 1939, British power was by no means confined to territories under the British flag. 'Many other lands could be called, without much exaggeration, 'economic dependencies' (Carr 1939, 22; Porter 1975, 2-6 and 9; Ferns 1992). Local connivance was secured, in the Argentine case, through the 400 or so wealthy landed-families, the *estancieros*, who formed the Argentine elite, and their allies in banking and commerce. The eighth largest country in the world, Argentina extended from the sub-tropical forests to the desolation of Tierra del Fuego. An Argentine diplomat and historian, Guido di Tella, characterised it as the United States come lately, with its economy growing on average by 6 per cent per annum between 1890 and 1914, with the triumphal 'westward march' of its pastoral development (Tella 1989 182-4 and 1992, ix-x).

Argentina provided over half of British imports from South America, and imported almost half of British exports to the continent. William H.D. Haggard (the British Minister in Buenos Aires) wrote, in June 1906, of how Britain had imported over £20 million of foodstuffs in 1905, and had investments of over £300 million, the greater part in the railway and port infrastructure required. Argentina provided the fifth largest market for British manufactures. The Argentine Foreign Minister had, with considerable prescience, laid particular stress on how, as the agricultural produce of the United States was needed to feed its own cities, Britain would depend, especially in time of war, 'chiefly on the almost boundlessly increasing produce of the Argentine Republic for the food of our people' (MacDonald 1992, 81; Cain and Hopkins 2002, 252-3 and 272-4).[2]

[2] FO 371/5 (25002)

This book follows a broadly chronological order focussing first on the wealth derived from whaling and the associated pressures to survey and research the sustainability of the resource. Chapters follow on the Argentine challenge to the British sovereignty of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and the concurrent moves made, more particularly by Australia, to 'paint the Antarctic red'. Of the various private ventures to explore the Antarctic, the most substantial were American to the point that the United States Government mounted an official expedition in 1939. Although the installation of British posts, some four years later, was intended primarily to stall Argentine and Chilean encroachment, it came to achieve in the immediate post-war years a much wider purpose. Britain had neither the strategic priority, nor the material resources, to counter those foreign incursions in the straitened circumstances of post-war recovery. It was rather by establishing a scientific purpose that the British Government avoided the possibility of having to make a humiliating withdrawal, by becoming a principal collaborator with a United States-inspired form of internationalisation.

In retelling, from a British perspective, how the notion first took hold, which was to lead some ten years later to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, a close account is provided of the skills and experiences obtained by ministers and their officials, alongside the various lobbyists, in the early development of the Antarctic and its waters, Rather than exploring further the theoretical dimensions of Antarctic geopolitics and of imperial governance generally, topics which have received so much attention, the book uses the primary documentation (much of it newly-released) to explore the range of situations and practices alluded to in those wider debates. It sets out particularly to encourage those who want to know more fully *where* and *when*, and *how* and *why*, particular initiatives were taken, and the significance to be placed on them. Through closer study of the original printed material and documentation, there is the possibility of identifying more exactly the role of personalities and events in determining the course of Antarctic policy-making. Who, among those officials, individually and collectively, made so large a contribution, for good or ill, as to merit their recognition alongside the heroic explorers, and their patrons, whose identities continue to figure so large in the Antarctic literature?

1.1 The Official Mind

The British Empire was more than a military, or for that matter, an entrepreneurial triumph. Diplomacy and administration played a large part,

emanating not from some dedicated imperial bureaucracy, but from what Dodds (1996b, 27) characterises as small and overworked government departments. It was what Thomas Richards calls an essentially 'paper empire', through which, in an amalgam of structures, persons and attitudes, Britain attained the most extensive empire by far; the most powerful navy, and largest volume of overseas investment (Richards 1993, 1-5; Young 1997, 57). The Antarctic afforded a further example of the scale and complexity of the diplomatic and administrative effort, and more particularly of the role played by those who held political office and by the administrative departments which constituted 'the official mind' of British imperialism (Robinson and Gallagher 1981, 19-21).

Whilst Ministers personally approved the policies which were conveyed in their name by despatch and telegram to the respective colonies, it was their officials who largely initiated, drafted, amended and followed up those individual policies. Who were these men who populated 'the corridors of power'? What did they bring by way of ability, imagination and sympathy to their allotted tasks? Most came from landed families and, more particularly, those with an involvement not so much with manufacturing as in banking and insurance. They came almost invariably from public schools and an Oxbridge college, excelling in the written competition and interview required for nomination to a particular department (Cain and Hopkins 2002, 648-52). Their conscientiousness and assiduity (qualities they had in abundance) made them 'grave and responsible professional servants', possessing 'the temper and the habits of an assured and self-confident élite' (Connell 1958, 17-8). Only the most naïve of archive-seekers would imagine them to have had a monopoly of policymaking, or to have consciously left a paper-trail for future historians to follow. It is nevertheless through their working papers, where preserved in The National Archives, that the 'drivers' of policy begin to be identified (Louis 1976, 10; Kesner 1981, 197). Here may be found the further relevant detail, the private emotions and covert motives, as well as the blunders and errors of judgement, which frequently belie the impression otherwise so easily obtained from the published Government record (Lisio 2014, 317). In trying to reconstruct the general and multi-national Antarctic endeavour, these archives merit a prominent place, alongside those of the Scott Polar Research Institute and Royal Geographical Society, in explaining the extent and character of British involvement.

The obvious starting point to probing the official mind might seem to be the Cabinet Conclusions that Ministers handed down by way of instructions to those officials listed in the *Imperial Calendar and Civil Service Yearbook*. Except where the Cabinet Secretary's handwritten

proceedings survive, there is no way of knowing for certain who spoke upon what, let alone the tone and temper of the debate around the Cabinet table (Walker 1972, 51). It is for the most part the files and papers of the individual government departments which offer the opportunity to explore the particular role of those involved with the Imperial Government in London. It is within these 'lower level records' that ministers and their officials could be most frank about their underlying assumptions and feelings, providing a most necessary corrective to what might otherwise be inferred from published and oral evidence (Lowe 1997). By investigating their various minutes and memoranda, conference reports, despatches and telegrams, the briefs may also be found for the rare occasions when Ministers were required to respond to a Parliamentary Debate or Question upon some aspect of the Antarctic. These same archives are also found to contain much that was received from foreign governments and lobbyists generally. Individual departmental files, particularly when studied in conjunction with those of other departments, constitute an immense historical resource and provide the substance of this book.

Their comprehensiveness should not however be exaggerated. Only the main policy and precedent files are likely to have been preserved. The files never speak for themselves, in as much as the principles, and much else that lay behind them, would have been already evident to their intended reader (Lee and Petter 1982, 15). The political heads of the department, namely the Secretary of State, Parliamentary Under-Secretary and Minister of State, wrote comparatively little. As Lord Elgin (as Secretary of State for the Colonies) remarked to his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Winston S. Churchill, in November 1906, 'where the political element comes in, the less *we* write the better' (Hyam 1968, 490-1). The urgency of issues, and perhaps the Minister's working style, meant policy was often made at *ad hoc* meetings, from which officials drafted the necessary directives. Many discussions, particularly on the telephone, went unrecorded (Adamthwaite 1986, 11). What may be found, by way of documentation, was invariably a hastily-written first impression, emotional response, or temporary hypothesis (Steiner 1986, ix-x). Even the most carefully-considered position paper might convey only the merest whiff of the 'unspoken assumption' behind it (Otte 2011, 3-6).

There has always been a presumption that the most sensitive records should be withheld from public disclosure. The continuing dispute with Argentina over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands and, therefore, the Dependencies, has meant some records remain closed, or their content has been in part removed or redacted. The Foreign Office files for 1948 are particularly affected. Peter Beck has written of the historian's frustration at