

A Tale of Two Knights

The Combined Legacy of Shackleton and Baden-Powell

Alan S. Noake



Fig1

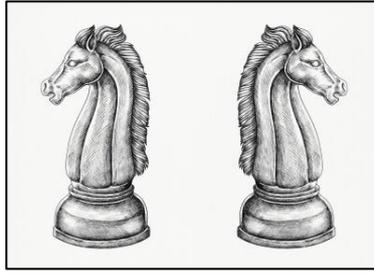


Fig2



Fig3

The Opening: In the game of life, just like in the game of chess, sometimes the pieces combine their strengths to create something even more powerful than they could each achieve alone. Both knights of the realm considered in this article – Sir Ernest Shackleton and Sir Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell – did precisely that. The legacy of their meeting still echoes on down through the years. This article considers the impact of their collaboration.

Knighted The Same Year

Development: Shackleton was knighted by King Edward VII in 1909 on his return home from the Nimrod Expedition in which he and three companions established a new record Farthest South latitude at 88°S, only 97 geographical miles (180 kilometres or 112 statute miles) from the South Pole.

Coincidentally Baden-Powell who had fought in defence of Mafeking in the Boer War in 1899 was also knighted in 1909, exactly the same year as Shackleton.

Knights in chess move in a very unconventionally way to all the other pieces and in turn these two peers both certainly stood out from the crowd and followed the beat of their own drum.

Two Knight Combination

The Middle Game: A copy of “Scouting For Boys” was presented to Shackleton in 1909:

*Robert S.S. Baden Powell, Baron Baden-Powell of Gilwell (1857-1941). Scouting for Boys A handbook for instruction in good citizenship... Revised Edition. London: William Brendon & Son Ltd. for C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., 1909. Small 8° in 16s (19.1 x 12.5cm.). Illustrations. (Browned.) Contemporary dark blue morocco, spine gilt, gilt turn-ins, gilt edges, by Ramage of London. A finely bound copy, with an inscription which recalls the popularity that Shackleton enjoyed after the return home from the British Antarctic Expedition of 1907-1909. The inscription, possibly in the hand of Baden-Powell, reads 'Presented to Lieutenant/Shackleton F.R.G.S./on behalf of the Boy Scouts'/Organisation, on the/occasion of his opening/the Travel Exhibition/July 6th 09.'*¹

In June 1914, a few months before setting off on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic (Endurance) Expedition, and only weeks before the outbreak of war, Shackleton attended the large Scout Rally at St Albans.



Fig. 4: Scout Rally, St Albans June 1914.

The Hertfordshire Scout County Commissioner, Percy Everett, Leading Sir Ernest Shackleton to the saluting base. They are followed by the Earl of Clarendon, County President and Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire and Charles Dymoke Green, District Commissioner of St. Albans.

At the St Alban's Scout Rally Sir Ernest gave the following Address:

“Addressing the Scouts Sir Ernest Shackleton remarked that he was very much impressed by their charge, in fact he had no idea the Boy Scouts could produce such a result. He had heard Scouts close to his own house; he had heard the drum and bugle going just as the children were being put to bed, and on looking out he had found perhaps two small boys (laughter). But when he thought of what the organisation was, and what it was doing all over the country, he thought it was one of the finest things they had in modern days (applause). He was just a Scout, perhaps in a bigger field, and he knew the interest the Scouts and others took in the work his comrades and himself had to do away in the frozen South.”²

On 9th July 1921, in the run up to the Shackleton-Rowett 'Quest' Expedition Shackleton wrote:

“For many years, I have been an admirer of the Boy Scout Movement, which I may say appeals to me particularly because it seems to give every boy a grounding in the practice of exploration.”³

So, it was no real surprise when Shackleton announced he would be interviewing candidates to take a Scout as cabin boy on the *Quest*. 1700 boys applied and this was whittled down to 10 who met with Shackleton. Eventually Shackleton chose two Scottish Scouts to go – Norman Mooney from Orkney and James Marr from Aberdeen.



Fig. 5: Sir Ernest Shackleton (centre) with Scouts Norman Mooney (left) and James Marr (right), prior to the Quest's departure from London, 1921.

So why take Scouts? Well firstly, Shackleton already knew the benefits of youth involvement and what they could bring to a project. Secondly, links had been building up for several years prior to the Quest expedition between Shackleton and Baden-Powell such as Shackleton attending the large Scout rally. Thirdly, was the influence of Emily Shackleton who went on to play a major role in the development of the Scouts and the Girl Guides. It seems it was her idea in the first place. Fourthly, and most importantly Shackleton instinctively knew (and was proved right) that the press would latch on to the idea of including a Boy Scout in the crew as cabin boy. It generated extra publicity in the Daily Mail for months on end. The timing was good for Shackleton because after WWI there was a huge upsurge in the popularity of Scouting and the first World Scout Jamboree in Olympia had just been recently held in 1920.

The Scout Heritage archives contain two original pieces of correspondence between Shackleton and Baden-Powell. The first is dated 11th August 1921 and the second 10th September 1921. The second was just a week before the *Quest* sailed from London and just shows how quickly the selection of the two Scouts was arranged.

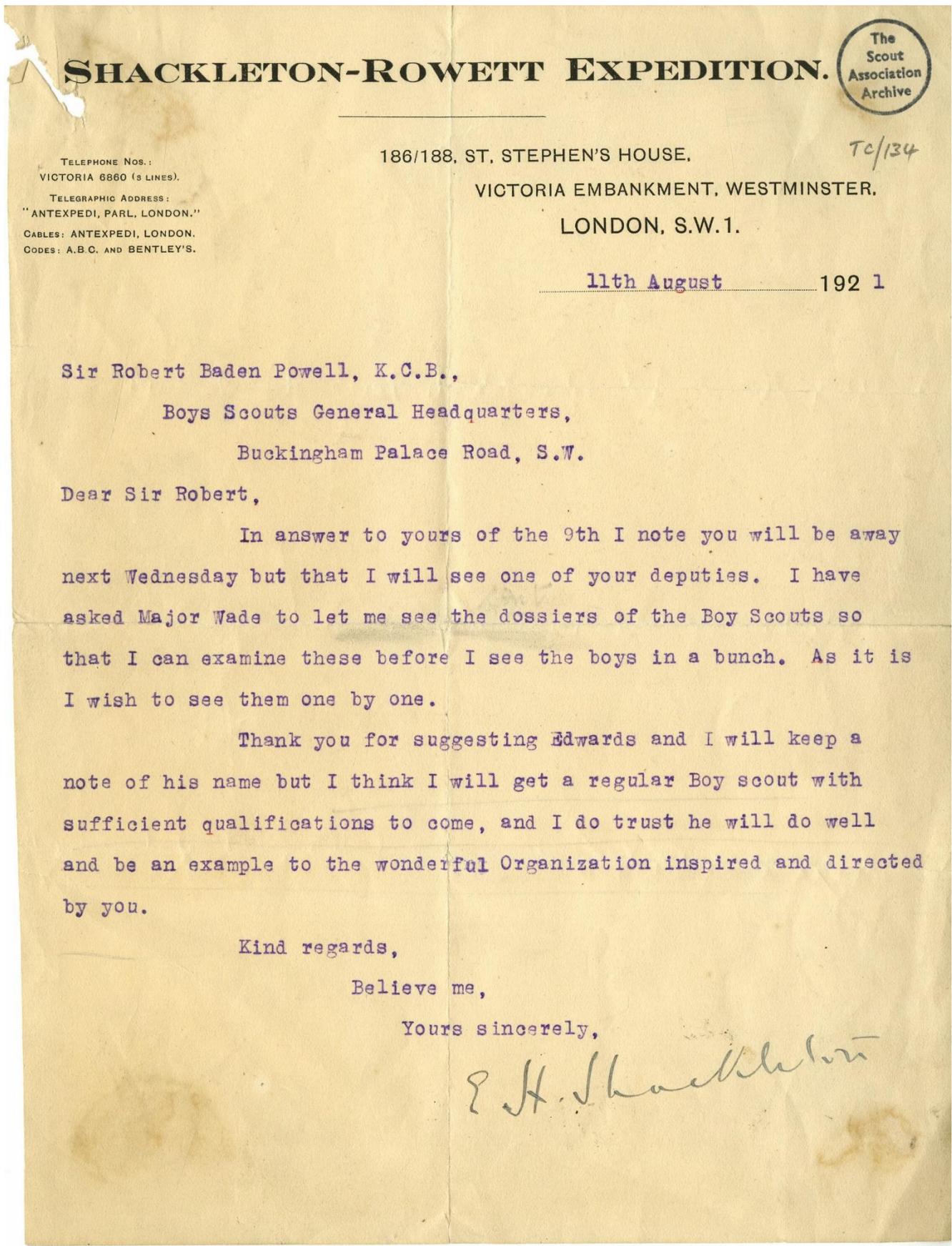


Fig. 6: Correspondence between Sir Ernest Shackleton and Sir Robert Baden Powell 11 Aug 1921.

SHACKLETON-ROWETT EXPEDITION.

91 S.
The Scout Association Archive

TELEPHONE NOS.:
VICTORIA 6860 (8 LINES).
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"ANTEXPEDI, PARL, LONDON."
CABLES: ANTEXPEDI, LONDON.
CODES: A.B.C. AND BENTLEY'S.

186/188, ST. STEPHEN'S HOUSE,

VICTORIA EMBANKMENT, WESTMINSTER,

LONDON, S.W. 1.

10th Sept 1921

My dear Sir Robert.
Many thanks for
your kind letter. I will
have the enclosures sent
on to Marr & Mooney
I hope the two will do well,
it is a great chance for
them. In haste
Yours sincerely
E. H. Shackleton
Sir R. Baden-Powell KCB.

Fig. 7: Further correspondence between Sir Ernest Shackleton and Sir Robert Baden Powell 10 Sep 1921.

TRANSCRIPT: "My dear Sir Robert, Many thanks for your kind letter. I will have the enclosures sent on to Marr & Mooney. I hope the two will do well, it is a great chance for them. In haste, Yours sincerely, E.H. Shackleton"

Baden-Powell often used stories in his regular 'Scouting Yarns' articles of British pluck as exemplified by explorer heroes such as Scott and Shackleton.

Apparently, Sir Robert was also absolutely delighted to read that the *Quest* was to have part of his old friend Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If' inscribed on a large plaque below the bridge.

One Knight Taken Early

The End Game: As we know, one our two knights “left the board” very early at the age of 47. Since Sir Ernest Shackleton’s untimely death on the 5th January 1921 in South Georgia during the Shackleton-Rowett Expedition many Scout Groups and units have been named in his honour. For example, in the UK, there are **Shackleton Explorer Units** based in Crawley District in West Sussex, Harpenden & Wheathampstead District in Hertfordshire, Cambridge District in Cambridgeshire and King Alfred District in Oxfordshire. Further afield, the **Shackleton Sea Scouts** have been strong for over 60 years in the seafaring traditions in Whangarei, on the North Island of New Zealand.



Fig. 8: Shackleton Explorer Unit Logo, Crawley District, West Sussex.

Soon after Shackleton’s passing ‘The Book of the Quest’ a twenty-six-page booklet was compiled and printed for Emily Shackleton, Sir Ernest Shackleton’s wife, by a devoted group – the 57th Salford Scouts. There were contributions from many distinguished Scouters of the time with articles on the theme of quests. Sadly, the 57th Salford Group no longer exists and after re-registering in 1928 it was finally closed in 1936.

By way of some background as to why the 57th Salford Scouts may have felt compelled to produce ‘The Book of the Quest’, Emily Shackleton (Shackleton’s wife) had a very important influence on both Scouting and the Quest expedition. In his Shackleton autobiography (Smith, 2014) talks about the selection of Shackleton’s Scouts as follows:

“As a publicity stunt, the idea aroused much attention from the press and public. For this, Shackleton could thank his wife. Since 1917, Emily had thrown a large amount of her time into the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. With the children at school it was a means of usefully filling her time. Baden-Powell later invited her to take control of the Guides in Eastbourne and, as her interest developed, Emily encouraged scout companies around the world to adopt the Shackleton name.”⁴

Many years later, on Saturday 11th May 2019, Girlguiding’s Eastbourne division welcomed a very important guest, the president of the James Caird Society – the Hon. Alexandra Shackleton – granddaughter of the great explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. She was there because her grandmother, Lady Emily Shackleton, was the first division commissioner of Eastbourne. Back in 1919, Emily had given the shield to the Guides of the division. The Shackleton Shield had been kept carefully in their archives since 1991.

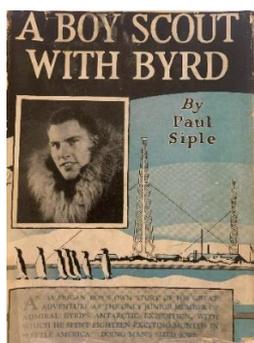
One Knight Played On

Baden-Powell however lived well into his 80s and lived his final years in Nyeri, Kenya, where he died and was buried in 1941. His grave is now a national monument. He lived to witness some of the incredible Scouting Antarctic legacy inspired by his fellow knight Shackleton.

The Legacy Of Both Knights

The combined legacy of Shackleton and Baden-Powell echoes down the years in many ways. Scouting's strong connections with Antarctica have continued since the original *Quest Expedition*. Some notable ones are the stories of Scout Siple, Richard Lee Chappell, The *Esperanza Blanca*, The *Discovery* as a Sea Scout Training Ship, The Girl Guides' *Quest Project*, *HSX Antarctica* and most recently *Kent Scouts ReQuest2021 Antarctic Research Project*.

Scout Siple

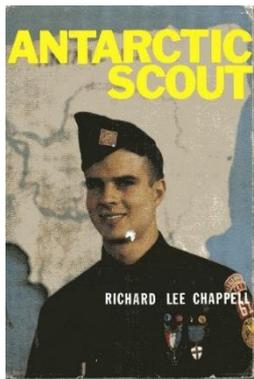


American-born Eagle Scout Paul Siple, like Marr, was selected from thousands of applicants to go on Admiral Richard E Byrd's 1927 Antarctic Expedition. Paul determined to keep a log, and on his return his book, *A Boy Scout with Byrd* was published in 1931.

For many years a very competitive programme made it possible for American Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts to win a trek to Antarctica, to follow in the footsteps of Paul Siple. The winners have helped to tag seals and observe penguins just as he did.⁵

Fig. 9: Book cover of 'A Boy Scout With Byrd' - Paul Siple.

Richard Lee Chappell



Another American Scout – Richard Lee Chappell – an Eagle Scout from Troop 61, Eggertsville, New York also ventured to Antarctica.

He was selected by a committee representing the United States National Committee for the International Geophysical Year to serve with scientists in Antarctica from 1957 – 1958.

In the Autumn of 1958 following his Antarctic tour of duty he entered Princeton University with a Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship.

Chappell also published a book all about his Antarctic exploits – *Antarctic Scout* in 1959. He subsequently became the youngest ever member of the infamous Explorer Club.⁶

Fig. 10: Book cover of 'Antarctic Scout' - Richard Lee Chappell.

Esperanza Blanca



The southernmost Scout unit of the world, the Grupo Scouts 1556 "Esperanza Blanca", is at the Esperanza Base at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula; it is affiliated to the Scouts de Argentina. Originally, the group belonged to the Asociación Diocesana de Scouts Católicos Argentinos Castrense (Diocesan Association of the Catholic Scouts of Argentina - Military Diocese), an independent Scout organization with links to the Union Internationale des Guides et Scouts d'Europe.⁷

Fig. 11: Chilly Willy. The mascot of the Esperanza Base Scout group.

Discovery – Sea Scout Training Ship

On the 7th October 1937 the Duke of Kent, Commodore of the Sea Scouts, accepted Scott's famous ship – the *Discovery* - on behalf of the Association from Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton, Governor of the Falkland Islands. Marr was present at the handover ceremony. She was moored alongside the Thames Embankment as a tourist attraction and sea scout training ship between 1937 and 1979.⁸

In her book about the history of the *Discovery* (Savours, 2001) elaborates upon how this all came about:

“Discovery was eventually offered in October 1936 to the Boy Scouts Association as a training ship for Sea Scouts and a memorial to Captain Scott and his comrades. The acceptance was mainly contingent on the need to raise sufficient money to ensure her proper upkeep, and the consent of the Port of London Authority to allot her moorings easily accessible to the boys who were to use her. The offer delighted Lord Baden-Powell, the Chief Scout, who wrote to Lady Houston, the sponsor of the British entry to the Schneider Trophy seaplane race, sending her a sketch of the barque and playing on her love for horses by adding the comment: ‘She’s going to the knacker’s yard unless you care to save her’. The result was a £30,000 trust fund for expenses. The agreement drawn up between Lady Houston and the Boy Scouts Association specified that *Discovery* would serve as a living memorial to Scott, Oates, Shackleton and other heroes of Antarctic exploration, as Sea Scout Headquarters, a training centre for Sea Scouts and their officers, including poor and unemployed Scouts, a rendezvous for Deep Sea Scouts and a hostel for Sea Scouts from overseas. A committee chaired by the Chief Sea Scout was to administer the fund and implement the agreement. Sadly, Lady Houston died before the handing-over ceremony on board ship on 9 October 1937.”⁹

The Girl Guides – Quest Project

Sea Ranger establishment (active 1946 – active 1956)

“The Sea Ranger Ship *Quest* was an establishment of Sea Rangers (a branch of the Girl Guides) based in Aberdeen, named after RYS *Quest*, a seal-hunting ship acquired by Sir Ernest Shackleton his final expedition, the Shackleton-Rowett Antarctic Expedition, and later by the British Arctic Air Route Expedition. In 1946, the SRS *Quest* received their own vessel, a rowing boat, after some years without one. Some years later, the crew was disbanded, to be revived again as SRS *Girdleness*. In 1956, a lifebuoy from RYS *Quest* was transferred from the Horniman Museum to the SRS *Quest*.”¹⁰

HSX Antarctica



Fig. 12: Joe Doherty at South Pole. 2019

In 2018/2019, after 8 years of planning, Hampshire Scout Joe Doherty completed the 566-mile journey to the South Pole. Setting off from the Messner (a start point named after the famed mountaineer Reinhold Messner, which lies on the edge of the Ronne Ice Shelf) on the edge of the Antarctic Plateau, Joe made the journey by foot and on skis, dragging his equipment and food behind him on a sled weighing 85kg.

The average temperature during his 45-day journey was -26 degrees.

Having completed the first part of his incredible challenge, Joe then embarked on a 700-mile return journey by kite ski, down the Hercules Inlet route.¹¹

ReQuest2021



Fig. 13

The overall aim of the Kent Scouts ReQuest2021 Antarctic Research Project has been to raise awareness of Scouting's strong link with Antarctica after 100 years by undertaking an adventurous Antarctic research expedition.

The team recreated the ethos of the original 1921 Shackleton Rowett (*Quest*) Expedition celebrating the legacy of Scouts Marr and Mooney. They helped crew the Bark Europa, a 100-year-old tall ship – a real Scouting experience! The mission for the ReQuest2021 project can be summarised under the 3 banners of Peace, Environment and Heritage. Each participant undertook a personal project – based upon either art, science or heritage.



Fig. 14: The REQUEST2021 team with fellow crewmates on board the Bark Europa after returning from Antarctica. Jan 2022.

IT REALLY WAS A FULL-ON SCOUTING ADVENTURE...

Following fully in the footsteps of Scouts Marr and Mooney on Shackleton's Quest after one hundred years the REQUEST2021 team faced some real adventurous Scouting challenges. It might be a cliché, but it really was the ultimate life changing experience that far exceeded all our expectations. People have asked us "What was it like?" and you try desperately to find the words to convey the magic of an Antarctic sunrise, the jaw dropping beauty of the icebergs, the sheer numbers of penguins, seals and seabirds we saw up close, the thrill of watching breaching whales, the excitement of climbing the masts and the joy of being part of a tall ship crew. You try to find the words but, in the end, we would say "Go find out..."



Fig. 15: The Bark Europa, Antarctica



Fig. 16: The REQUEST2021 Project Team – Port Lockroy, Antarctica

(More information about the ReQuest2021 Project can be found on www.request2021.org.uk)



Sir Robert Baden-Powell

Fig. 15

Sir Ernest Shackleton

Publication Sources

¹ Auction copy of "Scouting for Boys". <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-2777893>

² Hemel Hempstead Gazette 20th June 1914.

³ Daily Mail 9th July 1921.

⁴ Smith, M. 2014. *Shackleton: By Endurance We Conquer*. London: One World.

⁵ Siple, P. 1931. *A Boy Scout with Byrd*. G.P. Putnam's Sons. New York. The Knickerbocker Press.

⁶ Chappell, R. 1959. *Antarctic Scout*. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

⁷ *Scouting In The Antarctic*. [ONLINE]. [Accessed: 13/02/21]

Available from: https://www.wikizero.com/en/Scouting_in_the_Antarctic

⁸ *The Winnipeg Tribune, Manitoba, Canada*. 30th October 1937.

⁹ Savours, A. 2001. *The Voyages of the Discovery, The Illustrated History of Scott's Ship*. Seaforth Publishing.

¹⁰ Horniman Museum. 2020. *Sea Ranger Ship Quest*. [ONLINE]. [Accessed: 13/02/21].

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¹¹ Aldermore Webpage [ONLINE]. [Accessed: 13/02/21]

Available from: <https://www.aldermore.co.uk/about-us/newsroom/2019/01/the-worlds-first-scout-led-team-conquers-the-south-pole>

Image Sources

Fig1: Statue of Sir Ernest Shackleton, Athy Heritage Museum, County Kildare Ireland. [Author Photograph.]

Fig2: Knight Chess Pieces. [Royalty Free Image. rawpixel.com ID: 419657.]

Fig3: Bust of Sir Robert Baden Powell, Gilwell Park, UK Scout HQ. [Author Photograph.]

Fig4: Scout Rally, St Albans June 1914. [Source: Unknown.]

Fig5: Shackleton with Scouts Marr and Mooney. [Scout Association Archives – © The Scouts Heritage Service.]

Fig6: Correspondence 11 Aug 1921. [Scout Association Archives – © The Scouts Heritage Service.]

Fig7: Further correspondence 11 Aug 1921. [Scout Association Archives – © The Scouts Heritage Service.]

Fig. 8: Shackleton Explorer Unit Logo. [Shackleton Scout Explorer Unit.]

Fig. 9: Book cover of 'A Boy Scout With Byrd' - Paul Siple. [Paul Davies, Kingsbridge Books.]

Fig. 10: Book cover of 'Antarctic Scout' - Richard Lee Chappell. [Paul Davies, Kingsbridge Books.]

Fig. 11: Chilly Willy. The mascot of the Esperanza Base Scout Group. [Esperanza Base Scout Group.]

Fig. 12: Joe Doherty at South Pole on HSX Antarctica. 2019. [Photo: Joe Doherty.]

Fig. 13: ReQuest2021 – Shackleton The Penguin Logo. [Kent Scouts, Designer: David Norris.]

Fig. 14: The REQUEST2021 team with fellow crewmates on board the Bark Europa. [REQUEST Team Photo]

Fig. 15: The Bark Europa, Antarctica. [Author Photograph.]

Fig. 16: The REQUEST2021 Project Team – Port Lockroy, Antarctica. [Author Photograph.]

Fig. 17: Traditional Scouting 'Gone Home' image combined with Fig. 2 (above).