MPs preview Captain Scott's 'Lost' photographs ahead of public exhibition

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MPs and Peers viewed this remarkable collection, which consists of 109 photographs that provide a unique view of the Antarctic as seen through Captain Scott's eyes. The photographs will now make their final journey to the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge where, after a period of cataloguing and conservation, they will go on public display.

SPRI purchased the images earlier this year with the help of an HLF grant. The Institute was able to secure the collection within a tight purchasing deadline, thanks to changes to HLF's urgent acquisitions criteria. Previously anyone asking for an HLF grant for an acquisition needed to put together detailed plans for learning and access. HLF has changed its criteria to make sure it can respond quickly so that valuable heritage is not lost. SPRI was simply required to demonstrate how the photographs could be effectively integrated into existing and future planned learning programmes and the result was a faster, more streamlined process which allowed SPRI to meet the timeframes of this purchase.

Antarctic explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, said: "It is a delight to learn that the Scott Polar Research Institute has been able to secure Scott's own photographs of the Terra Nova expedition, with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generosity of those donors who have provided match-funding. SPRI is a fitting home for this photographic archive and one which will ensure that the material is available to scholars and scientist for the foreseeable future."

Speaking at the event, Chair of the Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, Inga Grimsey, said: "This stunning collection provides a fascinating insight into the hardship, determination and sheer grit of Scott and his team in their endeavour to reach the South Pole. Although he was never to return, the research and records that were undertaken are of historic and scientific importance and it is almost unthinkable that images could have been 'lost' forever. This preview in parliament is a wonderful taster of what visitors to the Scott Polar Research Institute will soon be able to see for themselves in Cambridge."

The images will be on display to the public in the autumn 2012. More information can be found on the SPRI website.

Notes to editors

The expedition

The British Antarctic (Terra Nova) Expedition was led by Robert Falcon Scott with the objective of being the first to reach the geographical South Pole. Scott and four companions attained the pole on 17 January 1912, to find that a Norwegian team led by Roald Amundsen had preceded them by 33 days. Scott's entire party died on the return journey from the pole. Some of their bodies, journals, and personal effects were discovered by a search party eight months later.

Captain Scott's photographs were developed in the Antarctic by the geologist, Frank Debenham, who later became the founding Director of SPRI. The images were returned to the UK by members of the expedition in 1913 and it was intended that they be used to illustrate books, reports and lectures but difficulties with establishing copyright meant that

only a handful were ever used.

Scott Polar Research Institute

Alongside the acquisition of Scott's Photographs and the Herbert Ponting Archive, HLF funded the dramatic transformation of the Scott Polar Research Institute, enabling the museum to reinterpret and redisplay the history of polar exploration and the modern scientific significance of the Arctic and Antarctic in the context of our changing climate. The museum was reopened in June 2010.

Further information

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