

because they were waiting for the State Government to do it and that the Elliot government had not done anything because they assumed the council would. Nothing ever eventuated from either authority!

Ten days after he had arrived in Hobart, on Monday 18 March, Amundsen was invited to attend a meeting of the Royal Society. This meeting was held in the Royal Society Rooms at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the main business of the night was J.W. Beattie's illustrated lecture "The Physiography of Tasmania". The audience included Admiral King-Hall, the Premier Neil Elliot Lewis, the Anglican bishop of Tasmania, Mercer, as well as Amundsen and J.K. Davis, the captain of *Aurora*. Amundsen was welcomed and in his reply he referred to both the former governor of Van Diemen's Land, John Franklin, and the James Clark Ross Antarctic expedition. Ross, he said, was one of the greatest explorers. He also, diplomatically, mentioned Captain Scott commenting that he was not sure if he (Amundsen) had been the first to the South Pole and that it would be better to wait a while and hear what Scott had to say. He also wished Mawson every success. Referring to Hobart he said that it was a city with unique opportunities for exploration of the Antarctic.

One episode that is seldom referred to is that of Johansen. Hjalmar Johansen (1867 – 1913) was a hero to Norwegians after joining Fridtjof Nansen on several trips to the Arctic, and so Johansen was chosen to join Amundsen on the expedition. However, Johansen argued with Amundsen about their early start for the Pole – too early, said Johansen. On another occasion, after rescuing

Prestrud, Johansen argued with Amundsen in front of his men and was promptly dismissed from the Polar Team. While in Hobart he drank heavily and was sent back to London separately from those on the *Fram*. He received much criticism when he returned to Oslo. He killed himself in 1913. To the British press this seemed further proof that Amundsen was a tyrant and completely ruthless about his expedition. To Norwegians it was a sad reminder of the absolute need for a legitimate chain of command for all Antarctic Expeditions to ensure the safety of the group.

Fram left Hobart on Wednesday 20 March for Buenos Aires. Amundsen himself travelled by train to Launceston and then took a steamer to Melbourne for the start of his lecture tour through the mainland states. The arrival and presence of the Norwegian ship and crew brought much attention to Hobart, its services and its location. We had become familiar with the idea that we could host and provide everything required for Antarctic Expeditions here in our small city.

There is a connection too in the circumstances of Amundsen's death. When in 1928 Amundsen was talking to the press about the rescue of Umberto Nobile who had flown Amundsen's own airship over the North Pole, and become lost, Amundsen said again that like many of the explorers of the heroic era, Sir John Franklin, the former Governor of Tasmania, had been his role model – the man whose example started him on a career as an explorer. Ironically in searching for Nobile, Amundsen disappeared in an area that is not all that far from where Franklin himself disappeared in the far north polar regions.



ROALD AMUNDSEN IN HOBART



JOHN WILLIAMSON



By 1911 Hobart was attuned to the sight and sound of Antarctic Expeditions. During the previous decade the port of Hobart had accommodated the ships of various expeditions to the south: Bull, Borchgrevink, Mawson and others. So when the *Fram* sailed into the Derwent in March 1912 it was exciting but not really a novelty. Until, that is, Hobart's citizens realised just what Amundsen had done and what he had come to Hobart to tell the world.

The *Fram* appeared unannounced in the Derwent on Thursday, 7 March, 1912. After a flurry of signals to the Mount Nelson signal station she stated that she was "*Fram* from the Bay of Whales". She then dropped anchor some distance off Battery Point and, after a time, Roald Amundsen the expedition leader came ashore with the Harbour Master on the launch *Egeria*. The fact that the *Fram* did not dock immediately is likely to have been, in part, due to the fact that Amundsen's dogs had not been through the usual quarantine checks. After this there are conflicting accounts of the exact order of events. Amundsen's own diary claims that he went first to Hadley's Orient Hotel and, despite some initial troubles about being recognised (according to Huntford, and Amundsen's diary, he was treated like a tramp), he was given a room there: a fairly small room. It was not, however, the wonderful *Amundsen Suite* that graces the hotel today.

Then it seems that Amundsen was taken to the home of the Norwegian consul, James Macfarlane, at *Newlands* in Augusta Road,

New Town, and they went through Amundsen's mail. His next move was to the Hobart General Post Office where he sent his Norwegian telegrams to King Haakon VII of Norway, Fridtjof Nansen (his mentor) and then to his own brother Leon.

Amundsen had experienced troubles before after expeditions when news of his success had escaped before he could first tell his sponsors and his king. This time there would be none of that. Consequently, prior to sending his telegrams, Amundsen and his crew were silent about what they had done. In the book about the voyage of the *Fram*, the Captain commented that

The first week was quiet on board, as owing to the circumstances, there was no communication with the shore; but after that the ship was full of visitors, so that we were not very sorry to get away again.

On the next day, Friday 8 March, a long telegram was sent (it is unclear if Amundsen, Prestrud or Nilsen sent it) to his financial supporters at the *Daily Chronicle*. This telegraph allegedly cost £198! Then, one source suggests, Amundsen went to the Hobart photographer, J.W. Beattie where he engaged Beattie to develop his glass negatives (some of which remain in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery). Beattie therefore, or his assistant Searle, was probably the first person in the world to see a picture of the South Pole. It seems probable that the plates were developed during the afternoon and evening of Friday 8 March. In 2010 the Norsk Film Institute, in a paper attached to moving images as well as still photos of the expedition, refers to the glass plates being developed by Edward Searle in Hobart while working for J.W. Beattie – but they put the date at later in the week.

During the evening of Friday 8 March, telegrams began to pour in as the world realised that Amundsen had won the Race to the Pole. The next day, Saturday, the *Mercury* reprinted the Daily Chronicle article with the Heading *AMUNDSEN REACHES SOUTH POLE* and there was an editorial comment.

On the Monday, Macfarlane dined with Amundsen at his home in New Town. Macfarlane and his brother were the successful owners of a shipping firm and James was a fellow of the Royal Geographical society as well as the Norwegian Consul for Tasmania. This speaks of a man who had influence as well as interests in exploration.

On Tuesday 12 March, the ship of Mawson's Australian Antarctic Expedition (AAE), the *Aurora* entered port and, as she motored up the Derwent River, she dipped her flag in recognition of Amundsen's great feat, and her crew gave three cheers for the *Fram*. The next day, Wednesday 13 March, Davis and Eitel (the secretary of Mawson's AAE) visited Amundsen on the *Fram* and in return Amundsen went for lunch on the *Aurora*. During his first visit Davis commented on the fact that Amundsen's stern features were "capable of breaking into a ready and charming smile". Percy Gray, the 2nd officer on *Aurora* saw things differently. He felt very sorry for his old friend Wild who now could not attain the Pole first: he also suggested—probably correctly—that Amundsen's success would in all likelihood end that type of polar exploration. Frank Wild of course was the leader of the AAE's Western Party.

During these visits, Amundsen organised to have 21 of the Norwegian Huskies transferred to the *Aurora* – although why they wanted the dogs for the relief trip to Antarctica is unclear. The Wednesday visit by Davis and Eitel allowed them to have lunch on board with Amundsen and Lieutenant Nilsen (*Fram's* captain and second in charge over all) and later that day the *Fram* was visited by the Danish vice-Consul as

well as a cinematographer, E.H. Biggins (who took moving images of life on the *Fram* including of the officers and crew and the transfer of the dogs). During the early part of the week the Derwent Sailing Squadron had offered honorary membership of the club to Amundsen and he wrote a thank you back to the secretary, Mr. H. Peacock, on that Wednesday. Amundsen was also invited onto *Aurora* and there he inspected everything very closely.

At the end of the week the Norwegians were opening up a little. Amundsen gave some positive but cautious comments on the Mawson Expedition and Lieutenant Prestrud talked about his Eastern Expedition from the Bay of Whales. On the Sunday (17 March) one of the events that probably made the crew of *Fram* feel more at home was a visit to the farm of the Dane Otto Andersen at Bismark (today called Collinsvale). Andersen had invited Lieutenant Jensen and most of the crew (including three of those who went to the Pole – Bjaaland, Hassel and Hanssen) to lunch and afternoon tea. The party was loaned a coach, horses and a driver for the journey and there was much joy at being able to speak their own language during the pleasant day. The road to Bismark was rough and steep but the social engagement was a great success.

Local businesses were quick to use the visits of not one but two expedition vessels in the port. *Propsting and Morris*, booksellers of Liverpool Street, had a wonderful exhibition in their front windows of Antarctic paraphernalia donated by both expeditions. This was all to advertise a series of Antarctic maps bearing Amundsen's signature. All profits, generously, were donated to charity: in this case the Consumptive Sanatorium. However, some local citizens were concerned that Amundsen had not been given an official, public welcome. At a meeting of the Tourist Association on Monday 18 March, Mr. Seager urged authorities to hold such a welcome. The next day *The Mercury* went further by suggesting that the council had not organised anything