

TOURISM AND THE INVISIBLE HISTORIC SITES IN ANTARCTICA

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Abstract. This paper focuses on a number of especially endangered sites, which are the first human settlements in Antarctica related to whaling and sealing exploitation in the 19th century. Different cases detected in the South Shetland Islands are discussed in order to contribute to the development of concrete strategies of management and protection to meet the advance of tourism.

1. Introduction

The number of tourists visiting Antarctica has increased greatly in the last decade. Within this frame every season thousands of people visit historic sites, which are considered as one of the attractions offered in the white continent. Different studies have started interesting discussions on the impact caused by tourism on the Antarctic historical heritage and the tools currently available for its conservation (Hughes and Davis 1994, Schire and Stonehouse 2007). This paper focuses on a number of especially endangered sites, which are the first human settlements in the Antarctic Isles related to whaling and sealing exploitation in the 19th century. The particular situation of these sites is analysed and examples of different cases detected in the South Shetland Islands are discussed in order to contribute to the development of concrete strategies of management and protection to meet the advance of tourism among other hazards.

2. Tourism in Antarctica

From the time of its discovery in 1819, Antarctica was visited by sealers, whalers, explorers and scientific expeditions. As from the development of the tourist industry in the 1960s, travellers from all over the world were given the opportunity to visit this continent. The number of tourists and of places visited by them has increased as time went by. Different authors describe such an increase in tourism, present their analysis of the current situation and generate hypotheses as to the impact of such growth on the Antarctic continent in the

future (Eizenacher 1992, Bauer 2001, Snyder and Stonehouse 2007, Basberg 2008, Hall and Saarinen 2010, Lynch et al. 2010, Lüdecke 2010, Stonehouse and Snyder 2010, among others). Tourism in Antarctica presents certain specific characteristics: a) it is highly seasonal: that is to say that access to the continent is restricted to the Austral summer from October to March, and b) visitation is constrained in time and space: there are specific landing or access points and 90 % of the tourists are seaborne passengers. The policy of the cruise companies is to unboard small groups of passengers at specific areas. Currently about 50 ships carrying from 5 to 500 passengers reach the Antarctic coasts during the summer season every year. Approximately 200 sites including 20 research stations have been visited in the Antarctic Peninsula region since 1989. Tourism in Antarctica is under control within the frame of the Antarctic Treaty and those in charge are mainly members of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) formed in 1991 by tour operators “who were active in Antarctica to act as a single organization dedicated to advocate, promote and practice environmentally responsible private-sector travel to Antarctica”. Moreover there exists in Antarctica a non-IAATO type of tourism and landings at Antarctic sites developed by private or commercial yachts. “Some non-IAATO tour operators or visitors simply lack awareness of the Antarctic Treaty requirements, recommendations, and guidelines for visitors” (Lüdecke 2010: 227).

For this reason some authors like Haase *et al.* (2007) claim that the exponential growth in tourist numbers and a diversification of tourist activities experienced by tourism in the last decade have resulted in questions that challenge the effectiveness and adequacy of the current regulatory regime.

In this paper we are particularly interested in the South Shetland Islands which lie within the itineraries followed by the touristic cruises and consist of a group of more than twenty islands and islets lying northward of Antarctic Peninsula and extending about 280 mi between 61°00'S and 63°00'S, 54°00'W and 62°45'W, comprising from W to E Smith Island, Snow Island, Livingston Island, Deception Island, Greenwich Island, Robert Island, Nelson Island, King George Island, Gibbs Island, Elephant Island, and Clarence Island. Several stations settled in the islands, belonging to different countries are visited every year as well as other 17 landing points considered of the greatest interest. Year in year out there is not only an increase in the number of visitors but also the addition of new landing points and the diversification of the activities taking place in each (Pfeiffer *et al.* 2007, Serrano 2007, Dibbern 2009, among others). These islands are also the place where the archaeological sites related to 19th century whalers' and sealers' settlements were detected.

3. Invisible sites

This paper specifically deals with sites of historical interest which lie within the scope of tour cruises. We are a group of more than twenty islands and islets lying northward of Antarctic Peninsula and extending about 280 mi between 61°00'S and 63°00'S, 54°00'W and 62°45'W, comprising from W to E Smith Island, Snow Island, Livingston Island, Deception Island, Greenwich Island, Robert Island, Nelson Island, King George Island, Gibbs Island, Elephant Island, and Clarence Island presenting the situation of the historic and archaeological sites belonging to the whaling and sealing expeditions which frequented the South Shetland Islands during the 19th century.

The archaeological research developed during the last decades has offered a great corpus of information about them (see Stehberg 2003, Zarankin and Senatore 2005, 2007, Pearson and Stehberg 2006). Stone-fenced areas in the shape of enclosures form sealers' camps: that is spaces limited by piled-stone walls and also by other structures in various shapes (Figure 1). In all cases they were built using rocks or whale bones. Up to now more than 50 of these sites have been found and marked along the coasts of the South Shetland Islands.

A first archaeological map of the distribution of the sites related to 19th century whalers and sealers on



Figure 1. Archaeological excavation at Sealer 3 site by the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais research group (Byers Peninsula, Livingston Island) Photo by A. Zarankin 2011

the Shetland Islands has been drawn. It includes the information provided by all the different teams working in the area. This work has been possible through the joined effort of all the teams working together in an international research project supported by the Brazilian Government. We must bear in mind that only part of the islands has been explored, therefore this map only includes all the information gathered up to now which does not at all mean all the information about sealers and whalers in the Shetlands. Systematic surveys are yet to come in order to reach a total coverage of the islands.

These sites are at risk of being spoilt or destroyed at present. They share with most other polar sites their characteristics of frailty and simplicity (Barr 2010). What measures have been taken in order to preserve the identified sites? An evaluation of risk probability has been made in some areas of the islands which include the effects of accelerating tourism, disturbance by scientific researchers, disturbance by animal activity, burial or erosion by drifting sand, and climate change (Pearson *et al.* 2010). Issues of management and options for protection of sealing sites in the South Shetlands have been proposed and

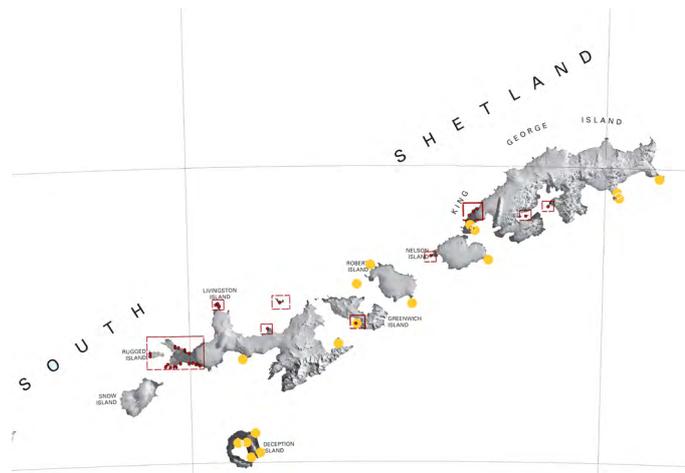


Figure 2. Distribution of archaeological sealer-whalers sites (red points) and the landing points used by IAATO tourist cruises (yellow points) on the South Shetland Island (The Coastal-change and glaciological map published by Ferriño et al. 2006 is used as a base)

discussed by the authors at different ICOMOS IPHC meetings in Chile (Viña del Mar, 2007, Punta Arenas, 2010) and at the 1er *Encontro Latinoamericano de Arqueología y Antropología Polar*, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2010).

The aim of this paper is to follow that track and contribute in the building of measures, which will articulate the preservation of those sites and the visit of tourists. In order to achieve this we must consider the tools available for the conservation of historical sites in Antártida.

4. Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments

It must be said that certain historical sites are part of the list of Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments, which proves to be a useful tool for the preservation of the Antarctic heritage. In the 1970s there awoke an awareness for the need of the preservation of historical sites and measures were taken in this sense. "The need to protect historic sites and monuments became apparent as the number of expeditions to Antarctica increased". At the Seventh Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (Wellington, 1972) it was agreed that a list of Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments be created.

This concern was also expressed in the academic world related to the preservation of the Antarctic heritage. En 1995 Hughes and Davis wrote that management strategies for historic huts and other cultural sites should be developed peremptorily (1995: 240) and claimed "There is no established criteria for determining historic sites and monuments, no clear philosophy about "conservation", "restoration", removal or "interpretation" and no Antarctic Treaty-recognized

guideline" (Hughes and Davis 1995: 235)

Successive Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings have developed guidelines to ensure that the process for designating Historic Sites and Monuments fully complies with the objective of identifying, protecting and preserving the historic and cultural values of Antarctica. The 2009 guideline established that "Parties who wish to nominate a particular Historic Site and or Monument should address in the proposal one or more of the following:

- A) a particular event of importance in the history of science or exploration of Antarctica occurred at the place;
- B) a particular association with a person who played an important role in the history of science or exploration in Antarctica;
- C) a particular association with a notable feat of endurance or achievement;
- D) be representative of, or forming part of, some wide-ranging activity that has been important in the development and knowledge of Antarctica
- E) bear particular technical, historical, cultural or architectural value in its materials, design or method of construction;
- F) have the potential, through study, to reveal information or to educate people about significant human activities in Antarctica;

G) bears symbolic or commemorative value for people of many nations". There exists an agreement that the Historic Sites and Monuments, which have been included in the list, may not be damaged, removed or destroyed. Tourist operators when organizing visits to these sites closely fulfil this rule.

The criteria for the designation of the sites in this list cover a wide scope. So far eighty six sites have been identified (see http://www.ats.aq/documents/ATCM34/WW/atcm34_ww002_e.pdf). However, the list does not represent the different moments in the history of Antarctica in the same way.

5. Visible sites

What is the result of the process of designation of historical sites in Antarctica? We have wondered what these sites commemorate and which stories they preserve. In order to answer these questions we analysed the list of sites designated up to now and we drew a time-line distributing these sites according to the dates mentioned. The number of sites designated has varied along time; at present there are eighty six in the list- five of which have been withdrawn for different reasons. For the purpose of our analysis we

focused on the first one hundred years of the history of Antarctica and we assessed the 35 historical sites which were designated to commemorate the period of time extending from 1820 to 1920.

We observed a clearly distinctive representation of the different moments and there appeared a great emphasis placed on the early 20th century. Thirty of the thirty five sites commemorate events that took place during the "Heroic Age" (Figure 3). Only five of the thirty five commemorate previous exploratory expeditions which took place during the 19th century. None of these sites are related or even mention the sealers' presence and only two refer to whalers' activities during all that period. One of them commemorates Henryk Bull and Cap. Leonard Kristensen's whaling expedition on board the Antarctic in 1895 and the other one the Whaling Station in Deception Island AHS&M N° 65). This site also commemorates the longest period of settlement on Antarctic lands which extended from 1912 to 1931 (AHS&M N° 71).

Which are the stories preserved? There is a conceptualization of Antarctic History in terms of exploration vs. exploitation. The stories related to scientific exploration are "preserved"

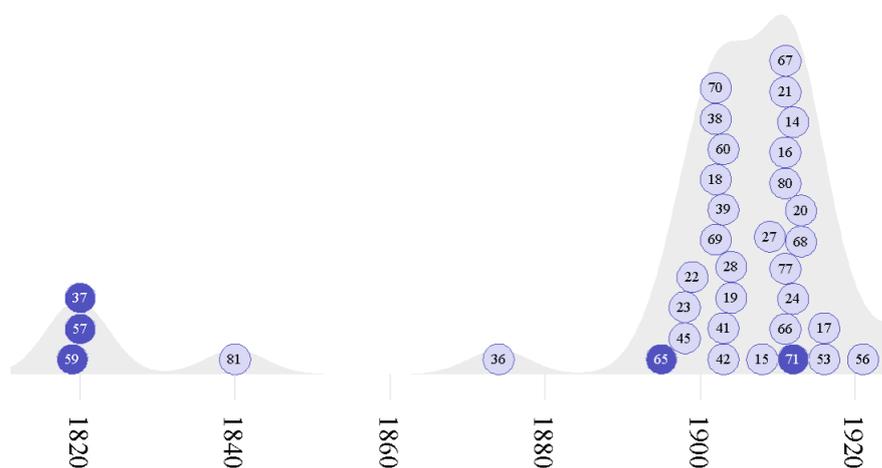


Figure 3. Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments by date. Exploration sites: light blue points

by means of the commemoration of specific events, dates, or people in specific locations (e.g. huts) whereas stories associated with the exploitation of Antarctic resources -as whaling and sealing- have been and are silenced and forgotten. These are the “invisible stories” in the history of Antarctica.

6. Heritage and Tourism

It is said that “For many visitors, the most evocative of Antarctica’s historic buildings are the living huts of expeditions of the so-called “heroic-age”, an ill-defined period of exploration covering the first two decades of the 20th century” (Stonehouse and Snyder 2010:135). In this sense, the designation of Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments is a tool which may work in meeting and articulating the interests of the tourist industry and those of the preservation of the Antarctic heritage. Hughes and Davis (1995: 250-253) have elaborated elements of an action plan for handling tourism at historic sites. For Stonehouse and Snyder (2010: 138) three points express what is needed first in the Antarctic field situation, on which more detailed action plans for individual sites can be developed: acceptance of responsibility for site management, preliminary

documentation before visits are allowed and a management plan, emphasizing the practicalities of management. Also for Stonehouse and Snyder (2010: 139) a problem in Antarctic historic site-management is the lack of income derived from tourist visits, which if available could be used for the maintenance and management of sites.

Nevertheless, even if these proposals can improve the management of historic sites in Antarctica, they do not solve the problem of the sealers’ and whalers’ sites which up to this day are neither conceptually nor practically included in the scope of the Antarctic Heritage (Senatore y Zarankin 2010).

7. Sealers’ and Whalers’ Sites Situation

Sealers’ and whalers’ sites are not a source of attraction for tourists, yet the places where they are form part of the itineraries of tourist cruises. We must stress the fact that sealers’ sites are not easily identified or clearly visible, therefore will not be seen by visitors except if they are specifically mentioned by the guide (Figure 4). This means that as long as tourist itineraries add new landing points the danger of involuntary damage of those sites grows.

The aim of this paper is to contribute in the building of measures, which will articulate the preservation of those sites and the visit of tourists. We consider that



Figure 4. View of the archaeological sealer-whalers site in Yankee Harbour, Greenwich Island. Photo by M.X. Senatore 2006.

the specific localization of the sites in the present geopolitical map of the islands is a key factor. Hence, we present the situation of different specific cases in the South Shetland Island

- **Yankee Harbour** (Greenwich Island) has been visited by 13.932 in the last 5 years and no systematic archaeological research has been developed there since a sealers' site was identified in the area (Figure 5).
- **Byers Peninsula** (Livingston Island) Tourism is not allowed - for it is an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) - and systematic archaeological research has taken place since 1995 (Figure 6).
- **Fildes Peninsula** (King George Island) Systematic archaeological research took place from 1980 to 1990 and new archaeological sites were found last summer season. Tourism allowed.

- **Hennequin Point** (King George Island) No tourism officially registered. Sealers' sites were identified in the area but no systematic archaeological research has been developed there.

- **Hannah Point** (Livingston Island) has been highly visited by tourism in the last years whereas no systematic archaeological research has been developed there. Due to the characteristics of Hannah Point and the historical references it appears highly probable that this area was used by sealers in the 19th century (Figure 7).

From this enumeration we can learn of different situations for different sites. Some of the sites where the presence of sealers has been confirmed are regularly visited by tourism (Yankee Harbour). Others can be easily reached although there are no official records of tourism (Hennequin Point). There are others



Figure 5. View of the archaeological sealer-whalers site and visitors in Yankee Harbour, Greenwich Island. Photo: M.X. Senatore 2006.

in which the presence of tourists is restricted (Byers Peninsula).

Of all these sites only Byers Peninsula and Fildes Peninsula count with a systematic programme of archaeological research which has allowed the assessment of the significance of those sites. At some of them - for instance Hannah Point- the flow of tourism grows by the year (Figure 7). We consider that relating the information coming from archaeological research to the higher or lower accessibility to tourism may be a starting point in order to produce measures to contribute to the preservation of the sites.



Figure 6. View of archaeological sealer-whalers site in Byers Peninsula, Livingston Island.
Photo: A.Zarankin 2011.

On the other hand there exist in the Shetland Islands many other places in which sealers' remains are highly probable but which have not yet been surveyed by archaeologists in order to determine their localization.

8. Available Tools and Building Measures

Results indicate that even though the whaler-sealer sites present similar characteristics in all the islands, the strategies for their preservation and exhibition to tourists cannot be planned to be the same. Which are the tools available in order to protect these sites?

8.1 ANTARCTIC TREATY PROTECTED AREAS

Is the problem solved by naming these sites as Antarctic Historic Sites or Monument? It is conceptually but not practically. Why? Because the Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments reflect the official history, then the incorporation of the "invisible sites" would break into the strong version of Antarctic history, yet for practical purposes as Stonehouse and Shire (2010) stated this does not mean that they will be preserved unless appropriate preservation plans are provided. Moreover the general tendency defines historical sites or monuments as specific places rather than as areas. This becomes a limitation for the chosen historical sites themselves because many spaces around them bearing potential interest for future archaeological research are left uncared (an example of this are the thrash deposits associated to the huts). However, sealers and whalers' activities cannot be conceived as developed in a definite spot in the landscape: they cover areas. Bearing this in mind, some steps have been taken for



Figure 7. Tourism in Hannah Point, Livingston Island.
Photo M.X. Senatore 2006.

their preservation by including them in the Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) Management Plans. This means that efforts for preservation of such areas are seeking other alternatives to that of going through

the process of designation of these areas as Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments.

The Antarctic Treaty established specially protected areas in 1964 under the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora but earlier categories of protected areas were replaced by the Environment Protocol (Annex V to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty Area protection and management, see http://www.ats.aq/documents/recatt/Att004_e.pdf), which was adopted in 1991 and entered into force in 2002 (http://www.ats.aq/documents/recatt/Att004_e.pdf). It provides for the designation of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) and Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMA). An area of Antarctica may be designated an ASPA to protect outstanding environmental, scientific, historic, aesthetic or wilderness values, any combination of those values, or ongoing or planned scientific research. An area where activities are being conducted or may be conducted in the future may be designated as an ASMA, to assist in the planning and co-ordination of activities minimizing environmental impacts (http://www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm). A permit is required for entry into any ASPA site. There are currently 71 sites and they are protected by the governments of different countries (http://www.ats.aq/devPH/apa/ep_protected_search.aspx?type=2andlang=e).

The Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMAs) are protected areas on the continent of Antarctica. Unlike the case of the Antarctic Specially Protected Areas, a permit is not required to enter the ASMAs. The purpose of the ASMA sites are "to assist in the planning and coordination of activities within a specified area, avoid possible conflicts, improve cooperation between ATCPs and minimise environmental impacts. ASMAs may include areas where activities pose risks of mutual interference or cumulative environmental impacts, as well as sites or monuments of recognised historical value" (http://www.ats.aq/documents/recatt/Att004_e.pdf). They are managed by the governments of different countries.

A first step has been taken seeking the protection of the areas in which the strongest archaeological research has taken place, such as Fildes Peninsula (King George Island) and Byers Peninsula (Livingston Island). Heritage Committee of ICOMOS representatives of the Southern Hemisphere at Viña del Mar, Chile, in February 2007, prepared a list of the historic sites on the Fildes Peninsula on the Byers Peninsula on Livingston Island (Stehberg 2004, Stehberg et al. 2010). These lists, containing the basic information about the location and nature of cultural resources that need to be protected, with brief recommendations on the basic preservation actions considered necessary, were submitted by the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH)

to the meeting of the Committee for the Environment (CEP) to the Antarctic Treaty Organization in April, 2007. In the submission the need to consider the sealing sites in the context of the Byers Peninsula ASPA Management Plan, and possible protective measures or site guidelines for the Fildes Peninsula was recognized (see CEP website <http://cep.ats.aq/cep/documentarchive.shtm>) (see Pearson *et al.* 2010: 63). That means that efforts for the preservation of such areas are seeking other alternatives to that of going through the process of designation of these areas as Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments.

8.2 ANTARCTIC TREATY SITE GUIDELINES FOR VISITORS

In the short term the Antarctic Treaty Site Guidelines for visitors might be used. (see ATS web site http://www.ats.aq/e/ats_other_siteguidelines.htm). Pfeifer 2007 expresses on the basis of his findings in Fildes Peninsula, that site-specific guidelines and visitor zones are recommended. Also Haase 2007 considers that site-specific guidelines are identified as effective tools for a targeted and flexible regulation of primarily ship-borne tourism.

For the Shetland Islands there exist guides for 9 places (Turret Point, Penguin Island, Yankee Harbour, Half Moon Island, Hannah Point, Telefon Bay, Baily Head, Whalers Bay, Barrientos Island) but only one of them - Yankee Harbour - mentions "artifacts from sealers operations" among the key features. The guide shows a photo of a trypot and includes in the general description "Artifacts from early sealing activities may be found along the inner shoreline". On the cautionary notes of the visitor code of conduct "Be careful around the sealing remains to avoid damage and do not move any artifacts". This can be highly improved by adding the archaeological information available.

Following this idea, the information provided for other sectors could be considerably enriched by producing this type of guide for every place in the Shetlands landscape where 19th century sealers' sites appear, including the information coming from the archaeological research. However, we must bear in mind that this is only a step in a long way towards the building of management plans which would prove appropriate for every one of the areas in which material remains significant to the history of Antarctica appear.

9. Discussion

The results indicate that even though the whaler-sealer sites present similar characteristics in all the islands, the strategies for their preservation and exhibition to tourists cannot be planned to be the same. A possible solution to this problem would be the building of management plans responding to the specific conditions in each area. These management plans should include instances of archaeological research

and a wide and adequate spread of the knowledge acquired in order to contribute to widening the scope of Antarctic heritage and to generate new kinds of preservation-committed tourism.

For the time being we count on basic information: distribution maps, identified sites and the scope of tourism. For the future our action should include and inventory of the sites, an evaluation of risk, a priority scale as regards research and preservation and specific management plans. Communication and integration will prove essential as well as the work of mixed teams related to the areas of history, archaeology and preservation among others. And of course a new relationship with tourism should be considered.

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