AUTUMN 2021

HOUSE & GARDENS

### THE WAKES NEWS

The official newsletter of Gilbert White's House & Gardens



#### Note from the Editor

#### **KIMBERLEY JAMES**

What a summer, we have been so lucky to have been able to do so much in the last few months. Most notably (for me anyway) was finally to be able to celebrate Gilbert White's 300th with our visitors and partners and the addition of our new displays. But we've also fitted in 4 outdoor theatre performances, countless weddings and private events, as well as a busy summer holiday program. But there is no rest for the museum Autumn has plenty to look forward to with the Creative Footsteps Festival and a lot more besides. What's in this issue:

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#### **Clare Balding helps Gilbert White to** celebrate 301 years.

We did it! We finally celebrated Gilbert White's tercentenary on his 301st birthday on Sunday 18th July with a party to remember. Tv and radio broadcaster Clare Balding joined 600 visitors and 25 stall holders to celebrate his life and work at the fun filled event.

It was Clare's first visit to the museum and she visited the brand new displays which she then informally unveiled on the day, before presenting 'Gilbert White'

with his birthday cake in front of the guests. Speaking on the day, Clare Balding said: "I've never been to Gilbert White's House & Gardens before; I feel now that part of my life has been completed from being invited here today.

"What Gilbert White did 300 years ahead of his time really highlights the impact that we have as human beings on the environment and our interaction with living things, be that flora, fauna, trees or wild animals and how we have a responsibility to do the right thing and live the right way."

Visitors enjoyed a full day of activities including a performance from the Alton Fringe Theatre of excerpts from their play 'Zig Zag', based on the life of Gilbert White, and The Hampshire Regency Dancers who performed their first dance since the beginning of the pandemic. The Historical Huzzahs theatre company also treated everyone to hilarious re-enactments of life relevant and important today as it was nearly 300 on the sea in the 18th century by singing well known sea shanties.

The 25 stall holders included the National Trust. West Meon Bee Society, The South Downs Society, Liss Archaeology and Portsmouth Natural History Museum to name a few.

The birthday celebrations also provided an opportunity for us to unveil our refurbished displays. Funded by the AIM Biffa Award: History Makers Scheme, each room within the museum has

something new for visitors to see, with a new display case featuring never-before-seen items of Gilbert White's. The Great Parlour, which Gilbert added to the house in 1777, was Gilbert's room for entertaining - which he loved - and is now laid out

to reflect his love of partying.

Judith Bowles, Director at Gilbert White's House & Gardens, said: "Gilbert White's birthday

celebration was a fantastic success! We were delighted to welcome so many visitors on the day to enjoy the array of stalls and entertainment for which we are most grateful. Thank you to Clare

Balding for joining us and presenting Gilbert White with his birthday cake and thank you to our stall holders and visitors for making the day one to remember."

"Gilbert White's legacy continues to live on, with his work, as Clare Balding said, still being as years ago. We're looking forward to welcoming more visitors over the summer to explore the brand new displays, spend time in the beautiful gardens and enjoy some of the other exciting events we have planned."

#### Gilbert White is a hit at the Chelsea Flower Show

As part of Gilbert White's House & Garden's delayed celebrations of Gilbert White's 300th anniversary we teamed up with Sparholt College to enter a miniature version of Gilbert's Garden into The RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

During a year like no other, Sparsholt College, have continued their RHS Chelsea Flower Show medal-winning run with the news of a Silver-Gilt medal awarded to the garden.

The fantastic news comes after an action-packed Press Day where celebrities got an exclusive view of the gardens. Famous faces visiting the Sparsholt College stand included BBC Radio presenters Nick Grimshaw and Jo Whiley, and comedians Lee Mack and Bill Bailey and later on Chelsea Flower Show presenters Angellica Bell and Monty Don also spoke to the team.

The 2020/21 garden was entitled 'The Natural Kalendar' and celebrates Gilbert White a true hero of Hampshire and the natural world for the tercentenary (plus 1!) of White's birth.

Created in collaboration between Sparsholt College and Gilbert White's House & Garden, the garden is sponsored by seed and plant specialist Thompson & Morgan. The garden takes as its theme climate change, showing how observations by White (1720-1793), the father of ecology, enlightened people to the changing seasons and species activity.

'The Natural Kalendar' brings to life phenology – the study of nature's lifecycles and seasonal variations in climate from 300 years in the past through to the present day, looking into the potential impact on future plant species survival.

The museum invited BBC Countryfile and Radio 4 presenter Tom Heap to help support the stand, who spoke to the team and visitors on the impact of climate change on the environment and the world of horticulture.

The garden is the first in the College's history to have two cohorts of students work on the design and build, as COVID-19 disruptions saw the rescheduling of the 2020 May show to the autumn term of 2021.

Undeterred, the team have adapted the garden for the different season and have enjoyed rolling over the celebrations for the 301st anniversary of Gilbert White's birth.

This exciting accolade is Sparsholt College's fourth Silver-Gilt medal, adding to the collection of nine Gold Medals, six Silver medals and three Bronze medals, alongside five 'Best in Category' awards. As part of the Level 3 Horticulture course at the College, students work with our experts on garden displays entered into the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Chris Bird, Horticulture Lecturer at Sparsholt College, commented on his medal-winning run with the College: "It's absolutely fantastic to have received a Silver-Gilt medal from the RHS. The award is a true credit to the students and wider team who helped bring this beautiful and educational garden together over a very strange two years".

2021 Horticulture student Ethan has shared his delight on working on recreating features from Gilbert White's garden 'The Wakes' into the RHS Chelsea garden design: "One of the main challenges for us was to move the garden from a spring to autumn palette and we found a lot of plants that have good autumn structure such as the Cercis 'Eternal Flame'. I would say we're definitely embracing autumn instead of fighting the change in season, and in some ways I think a colourful autumn garden works wonderfully to showcase our theme of phenology."

Visitors have been able to experience features from White's garden 'The Wakes' – the thatched, spinning 'Wine Pipe Seat', a mini Haha wall and the 'Six Quarters' – recreated using plantings familiar to him alongside cutting edge cultivars such as the Thompson & Morgan Plant of the Year 2021 entries.

The garden features slate signs, changed daily, quoting from Gilbert White's 18th century manuscripts for 'The Natural History of Selborne' a publication never since out of print which resonates through the centuries and is still a reference point for naturalists, ecologists and ornithologists today, such as Gerald Durrell and David Attenborough.



#### **Revealing Gilbert White**

As we prepared for Gilbert White's 300th anniversary celebrations in 2020 we felt one of the most important things we needed to do was give our Gilbert White areas a much needed make-over. Although the house is always lovely, with the inclusion of new displays in 2012 and 2018 for the Oates Collections displays, the Gilbert White half of the house was beginning to look tired. It also didn't really tell his story properly and our visitors didn't necessarily get a feel of him once they left the museum.

So we embarked on a project to change this and were lucky enough to be part of History Makers supported by AIM Biffa Award, as part of the Landfill Communities Fund.



Of course the Pandemic did rather slow things down, our hope to involve schools and young families in the decision stages were scuppered by the continuous lockdowns, not really the time for location specific focus groups. However the project did lead throughout the pandemic to some fantastic connections and future projects with The University of Winchester & our local secondary schools, specifically with their climate change groups.

In Autumn 2020 we were finally able to get going with the project and commission Workhaus and Lima Studio to help us transform the house, many zoom meetings later in Summer 2021 we were finally able to get contractors on site to begin work! The idea around the house is to tell a different aspect of Gilbert White's life in each room.

In the Little Parlour the original part of the house we talk about Gilbert White and Selborne, the village he would go on to immortalise. Where would Gilbert White be without Selborne? Was Gilbert White simply lucky that he grew up in an area with such a bountiful mix of habitats and soil types, so that it's biodiversity was so rich? Gilbert White was a big part of his community in the village too acting as Curate for many years.

The Great Parlour was the room Gilbert White himself added to the house. He was a very sociable and the use of the parlour was for hosting friends and family. In this room we've added a new display case full of items relating to Gilbert White's family, which until now we've never been able to display before. We've added the portraits of Gilbert's close family to walls, many of whom had a big influence on Gilbert's nature career. On the table we've set it as one of Gilbert's most famous parties told to us by Kitty Battie in her journal of the summer of 1763.

It was in Bell's Library that we made the most changes, we wanted the room to actually feel like a Library, as it hasn't had any books in it probably since Professor Bell built the library on to the house back in 1850! In this room we wanted to celebrate *The Natural History of Selborne* from it's begining with Gilbert's inspiration to it's publication in 1789. We built a new display case for the manuscript one of the museum's greatest treasures and added a new touch screen digital version which will mean you can flick through it's pages.

In the Study we celebrate White's approach to Natural History and his domestic life in his bedchamber. In the Kitchen we wanted a closer look at the relation between Gilbert's dinner plate and what he grew in the garden. We also have produced on the wall one of his accounts which lists not only lobster and wine, but a 'petticoat for Tull's naked wench!' In each room there is a wildlife panel which features species that White was particularly interested in. It explains White's relationship to the animal, for example the Harvest mouse which White was the first to record. The explains it's status today which very often makes for a difficult read, when you realise what a loss we have had to our biodiversity compared to what White would have found on his doorstep. AND we managed to finish in time for Gilbert's 301st birthday and the lovely Clare Balding was able to view the new displays before joining the party outside. We are so grateful to AIM and Biffa Award for granting Gilbert White into the History Maker's hall of fame!

#### **Hyper-Nature** 28th September till 28th November 2021

Artist Joe Shaw has been intensively photographing nature around Selborne for over a year now, observing the changes and looking closely at detail. Using the camera lens as a tool has enabled Joe to magnify detail not seen by the naked eye. These photographs inspired a series of digital re-workings to transform the originals into something unrecognisable.

Joe has taken impressions of elements within the gardens that are usually undiscovered, bringing them inside and presenting them as precious artifacts. With respect to Gilbert White's ethos of 'watching narrowly', Joe wants the viewer to be intrigued by the unfamiliar, to make them look more closely, and to be curious. The exhibition is free with admission and open in line with house & garden opening hours

Joe Shaw graduated from Fine Art at UCA Farnham in 2018. Joe has a versatile approach to his art practice, exploring concepts through different media including painting, photography, sculpture, installation, projection, and digital creations. Being a resident of Selborne for over a decade, Joe has an affinity with the local area and has a love of Selborne's history and natural environment.



# Flora Selborniensis: The mystery of the absent Butterflies

Museum volunteer Debbie Vodden writes about some of observations made in our 2020 study of the Flora of Selborne based on Gilbert White's 1766 study.



In the tricentenary year of Gilbert White's birth, we started a project to repeat the year-long document that became the Flora Selborniensis. White made regular observations of plants, particularly when they came into flower, during 1766. He also recorded what the weather was like and observed first appearances of birds, insects and a few other animals. The record of observations is known as the Flora Selborniensis (FS). During 2020 and into 2021, similar observations are being made around Selborne, and recorded alongside those of White.

While we may envy Gilbert White the sheer variety of wildlife that appeared to be around in his time, we have the advantage of easily making a pictorial record of observations. White took great pains in appointing an artist to ensure the illustrations for the Natural History of Selborne were up to his exacting standards, as described in Richard Mabey's biography, and of course the work has been a

great inspiration to artists ever since publication in 1789. All we need do now is point a digital camera or mobile phone, and we have a picture for the record.

Garden plants, including flowering plants, feature heavily in White's record, and here we have a pictures of plants beginning to flower in the gardens of Selborne residents.

White refers to red dead nettles on 6 March in the FS and to 'Butterfly-orchis, orchis alba bifolia minor calcari oblong, in flower' on 13 June. With rather more patience we can achieve beautiful images of insects, like these two superb pictures taken by volunteer Chris Piper.

Strangely Gilbert White recorded only one observation of butterflies, 'March 8 Saw ye first butterfly, papilio, sulphureus, a brimstone coloured one: some people saw several of these , and several that were coloured with black spots; these are, I believe, papiliones urticae'. White appears to be referring to brimstone butterflies, usually the first to appear, and small tortoiseshells. The mystery is why only one mention of butterflies in all the FS, since there must have been an abundance. Maybe they were just too common, or the snow and ice recorded late in March had depleted their numbers. Most likely, as noted by Andy Barker in a Butterfly Conservation article, Gilbert just wasn't interested in them. White does note many other insects, including bees, beetles and grasshoppers, and seems to have a particular fascination with flies! (Flies must have been plentiful, so a great abundance was probably not the reason for ignoring butterflies.)

Birds seem to have been White's particular interest in addition to plants. Observers at the Wakes were 'Entertained by a lovely small group of spotted flycatchers emerging from the hanger and feeding on the insects at the top of the Ewell near the butterfly transect' on 30 July 2020 (picture below). White notes the bird's first appearance on 16 May.

White may not have had an instant pictorial record, but he did leave us with a sound-scape of the many songs of birds. We count ourselves very fortunate to hear some he mentions such as the nightingale, nightjar, turtle dove and even the cuckoo. Other birds, thankfully, are still delighting us with their music – skylarks, yellowhammers, wrens and chiffchaffs are all mentioned in 2020/21 and one lucky person did hear a cuckoo in Selborne on 4 May 2020.

You can see Gilbert White's Flora Selborniensis in our exhibition at Gilbert White's House until the 26th September 2021.



#### Nature Journaling for beginners

#### Wednesday October 27th 10 am- 3pm

Join author and professional storyteller Dawn Nelson and spend the day in the beautiful gardens at the Wakes as you walk in the footsteps of Gilbert White. Create the beginnings of your very own nature journal, learn some hints and tips on how to get started, ways to 'watch narrowly', observe the seasons and how to make recording these observations a regular habit.

The day will be based at the Field Studies Centre but will include time spent outside; please come dressed for the weather and wearing walking boots or wellies. A light lunch of soup or sandwiches as well as tea and coffee during the day are included in the price. All participants will be given a journal book to take away but please bring a camera or phone to take images for use in the session. All other materials and equipment will be provided.

> £40 per person Suitable for Adults & Teenagers.

## Half Term Timothy Tortoise Story Walk



#### <u>Tuesday 26th October 11am – 12 noon and 2-3</u> pm

Timothy was Gilbert White's much-loved tortoise and Gilbert wrote about Timothy's escapades in his letters and journals. Join us for an interactive story walk around the grounds, following in the footsteps of Timothy, hearing stories of his adventures and taking part in activities to get a 'tortoise-eye' view of the world! Ages 3-6

£3 per adult £2 per child Under 3s free of charge

<u>Thursday 28th October 10.30am -12.00 noon and 1.00-2.30pm</u> Get up close to a spider! We will be using magnifiers and microscopes to take a closer look at some familiar UK native spiders: finding out where they live, what they eat, the different types of webs they make and going on a 'spider safari' to find some spiders ourselves. Have a go at drawing a spider from first hand observation.

£5 per child Ages 5-10 Children must be accompanied by an adult Accompanying adults free.

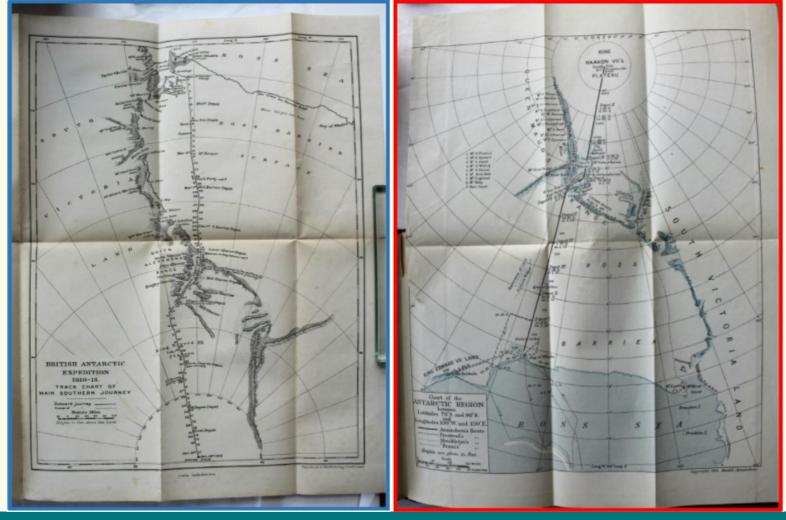


## **Retracing Scott & Amundsen's** Journey to the South Pole. Part 6

Part 6 of our Retracing the Footsteps of Amundsen and Scott series written and researched by volunteer Anthony Fogg.

Roald Amundsen's team (the Fram expedition) had suffered extreme cold temperatures late August 1911 following their departure for the South Pole. They had to return to Framheim and wait for conditions to improve and set off a second time on the 8th September. Robert Falcon Scott's team (the Terra Nova expedition) had opted to wait for more stable weather conditions and were still preparing for departure as Amundsen risked being thwarted again by the extreme early Austral Spring weather.

The two expeditions took different routes to the Pole. Scott's team laid depots with a planned route up the Beardmore glacier on to the Polar Plateau. Ernest Shackleton had discovered this route when he led the Nimrod expedition of 1907-09 where he achieved a furthest south on 9th January 1909 at a latitude of 880 23', less than a hundred nautical miles short of the Pole. Amundsen's team forged a new path on to the Polar Plateau discovering the subsequently named Axel



Heiberg glacier.

Fram: 12th September 1911: The extreme cold weather had forced Amundsen's team to postpone their initial departure. They were now attempting to head for the Pole again. On this day the temperature was -52C with a headwind which he describes as "undeniably bitter".

"It was easy to see that the temperature was too much for the dogs. They lay rolled up as tightly as possible, with their noses under their tails. I had to admit that with this temperature it would not pay to go on; the risk was too great. We therefore decided to drive on to the depot in 80 degrees South and unload our sledges there. On that day, too, we made the awkward discovery that the fluid in our compasses had frozen, rendering them useless. The best thing we could do, therefore, was to pitch our camp, and wait for a better state of things."

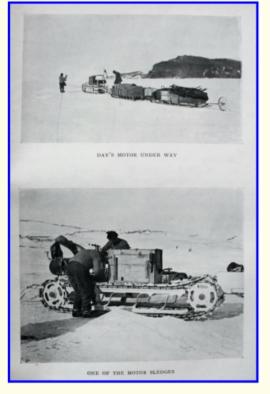


Fram: 14th September 1911: The team made it to the depot at 80 degrees South. The temperature that day was -56C. Everything there was in order, they left excess supplies, drank a cup of hot milk and started the return back to base at Framheim. Two of the team got frostbitten in their heels. The expedition was back at base by the 16th September.

Fram: 20th October 1911: The next sledging expedition to the Pole commenced with 13 dogs for each of the four sledges and on 23rd October Amundsen's team again reached the depot at 80 deg south where they "fed our dogs richly".

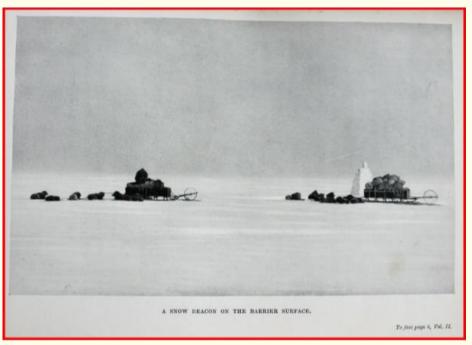
Terra Nova: Oct 1911. Scott wrote "I don't know what to think of Amundsen's chances. If he gets to the Pole, it must be before we do, as he is bound to travel fast with dogs and pretty certain to start early. On this account I decided at a very early date to act exactly as I should have done had he not existed. Any attempt to race must have wrecked my plan, besides which it doesn't appear the sort of thing one is out for."

Of Oates he wrote "The Soldier is very popular with all – a delightfully humorous cheery old pessimist – striving with the ponies night and day."



Terra Nova: 24th October 1911. The motor sledges commenced their journey across the ice barrier, but proved temperamental in their performance, particularly on ice covered in a layer of snow where the studded tracks just ground grooves in to the ice below without gaining proper traction. Scott writes "I find myself immensely eager that these tractors should succeed, even though they may not be of great help to our southern advance. A small measure of success will be enough to show their possibilities, their ability to revolutionise Polar transport."

Fram: 26th October 1911: The team set off heading for the next depot 1 degree further south. The weather was fine and the surface was perfect for driving dogs and sledges. They were now building snow cairns to head height every 7-8km to assist in navigation for the return journey (see below).



Terra Nova: 26th October 1911. Scott received a telephone call! They had rigged up a telephone line over the first stage of the route across the barrier reporting the progress, or lack of, of the motor sledges. The chains were slipping on the light snow covering on hard ice.

Fram: 30th October 1911: The team reached the depot at 81 degrees South. Terra Nova: 31st October 1911. Whilst waiting to set off Scott wrote "The future is in the lap of the gods; I can think of nothing left undone to deserve success." Fram: 3rd November 1911: Amundsen writes "Southerly breeze with very low driving snow. The going has been exceptionally heavy and the dogs have struggled to get the sledges forward. I have begun to use snow goggles." Terra Nova: 3rd November 1911. The main departure of parties from Hut Point began with several teams of men, horses and dogs and their loaded sledges heading south across the Barrier. 15 men, two motor sledges, 12 sledges, 10 ponies and 24 dogs. The motor sledges were a few days ahead of them with supplies for depoting.



Fram: 5th November 1911: The team reached the depot at 82 degrees South. "The small (black) flags ... stood out proudly against the white background. We have shown that it is possible to lay out depots on these endless plains and mark them so that with accurate navigation one can find them again".
Terra Nova: 15th November 1911. The expedition reached One Ton Depot at ~80 degrees south.

Terra Nova: 17th November 1911. Camp 13. Scott writes "On the whole, and considering the weights, the ponies did very well. It is early days to wonder whether the little beasts will last; one can only hope they will. Behind the pony walls it is wonderfully warm and the animals look as snug as possible." A picture of the ponies behind the snow walls is shown below:



Fram: 17th November 1911: The team were at 85 degrees South near the mountain range (pictured below).



Fram: 18th November 1911: Started up the Axel Heiberg Glacier, in the steepest parts using 16 dogs per sledge.

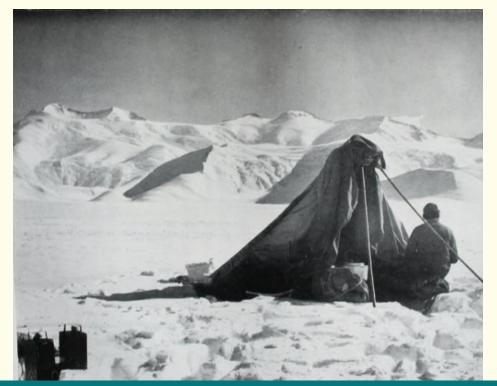
Fram: 21st November 1911: Amundsen's party made it to the Polar plateau at 3230m (10,600 feet). 24 dogs were shot and depoted as food for dogs and men. 18 dogs were now left.

Terra Nova: 28th November 1911. The first horse was shot some 90 miles from the Glacier. There was 120lbs of forage left which was calculated to be enough to get the remaining horses to the foot of the glacier.

Terra Nova: 5th-9th December 1911. A blizzard forced the parties to camp. Losing four days. Scott writes "The ponies – head, tails, legs and all parts not protected by their rugs – are covered with ice. We have had breakfast, rebuilt the walls, and are now again in our bags. No foresight – no procedure – could have prepared us for this state of affairs." After a march on 9th December the remaining ponies were shot. Scott wrote "Poor beasts, they have done wonderfully well considering the terrible circumstances under which they worked." The dogs were still going well in

spite of the soft surface due to recent heavy snow falls during the blizzard. Fram: 8th December 1911: Amundsen's team passed Shackleton's furthest south record achieved in 1909 of 88 degrees 23 mins. They raised their pole flag on one of the sledges to commemorate the event.

Terra Nova: 11th December 1911: The dogs and their drivers are sent back to base near the foot of the Beardmore Glacier. Twelve men in three sledge teams start hauling the sledges up the glacier (a vertical climb of some 3000m). A picture of Edward Wilson sketching next to one of the tents on the glacier is shown below.



Fram: 11th December 1911: Amundsen write "Fine weather again. Little SSE breeze. -28C. Great big ring around the sun. Now lying at 88 degrees 56 minutes latitude. We can feel that it is harder to work at this height. Looking forward to coming down again to normal altitude."

Terra Nova: 15th December 1911. Scott's team were at 84 degrees and 8 minutes south on the Beardmore Glacier and he writes "oh for fine weather, surely we have had enough of this oppressive gloom".

Fram: 15th December 1911: Amundsen arrived at the South Pole at 3pm with 17 dogs and 3 sledges. He writes "at last we reached our destination and planted our flag on the geographical South Pole. Of course, we are not exactly at the 90 degree point, but ... very near. Tomorrow we shall go out in three directions to encircle the

pole area. We had a celebration dinner, a small piece of seal meat each. We will leave here the day after tomorrow with two sledges. The third will be left here. At the same time we shall leave a small three-man tent with the Norwegian flag and a flag marked 'Fram'."



Fram: 16th December 1911: 89 degrees and 56 minutes south. The team set off on skis to go a distance of 19km in three different directions, each carrying a pole with a black flag on it. Tied to each pole was a little bag containing the position of "Polheim" (Pole Home). With further observations they were able to travel to Pole Point.

Fram: 18th December 1911: 89 degrees and 59 minutes south. 11000 feet above sea level. They set up the small tent and left within it a sextant, a hypsometer (for measuring altitude), three reindeer food bags, some reindeer fur boots and a pair of mittens. Amundsen left a letter to the King of Norway and a few words to Scott. Amundsen's team then left from the Pole with two sledges and 16 dogs.



Terra Nova: 18th December 1911. Still on the glacier Scott writes "On our right we have now a pretty good view of the Adams Marshall and Wild Mountains and their very curious horizontal stratification. Wright has found, amongst other bits of wind blown debris, an undoubted bit of sandstone and a bit of black basalt. We must get to know more of the geology before leaving the glacier finally. This morning all our gear was fringed with ice crystals which looked very pretty." Examples of rock specimens collected by the expedition can be seen at The Oates Collection (see below):



Scott was unaware that Amundsen had reached the geographical South Pole and was now heading back north to Framheim. Scott's team was still ~300 nautical miles (345 miles, 555km) from the pole. We'll join the teams again for one final time as they celebrate Christmas 1911, Antarctic style, and the journeys for both expeditions conclude but in tragically contrasting ways.

## Friday Night @ Whites



White's has a great array of Friday Night at White's events, starting with an Italien Small Plates night on the 29th October, Indian Night on the 5th November, a French themed night on the 12th, Thai on the 19th and Tapas on the 26th.

Our Christmas menus have been published too and if you are interested in booking a Christmas dinner with us let Jo and the team know.

Menus are on our website and to book a table all you need to do is email Jo at whitescatering@gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk

# **Dates for your Diary**



Until 21st November 'Watching Narrowly'

Autumn Photography Competition 27th September- 27th November Hyper-

Nature Exhibition 26th October: Timothy Tortoise Story Walk 27th October: Nature Journaling for

Beginners 28th October: Spiders! 29th October: Friday Night @ White's:

**Italian Small Plates** 

**5th October:** Friday Night @ White's: Indian **12th October:** Friday Night @ White's:

French

19th October: Friday Night @ White's: Thai26th October: Friday Night @ White's: Tapas27th & 28th November: Wreath Making

Workshop

4th December: White's Christmas

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