



## AAC Publications

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### Three Possible First Ascents

Antarctica, South Georgia

**On September 15 eight ski mountaineers departed Stanley in the Falklands, aboard Podorange, for a 35-day, yacht-supported ski trip to South Georgia. There were three sailing crew, and members of the mountaineering team were Anto Baird, Dave Baldwin, Trevor Craig, Bethan Davies, Tilly Ross, and Martin Vince, with mountain guides Jim Kerr and me. During our time on South Georgia we saw nobody on land other than at Grytviken, and there were no other yachts or cruise ships. It was a great privilege to visit the island without any other signs of the outside world.**

The reputation of South Georgia for weather and winds is well known, but we were hopeful for some days of sunshine and light winds, in order to be able to enjoy camping and skiable objectives distant from the coast. In the end we never had a sufficiently good weather window to consider using tents, and only once did we have consecutive days of good weather. On all but five days it was windy, very windy, or extremely windy, invariably from the southwest to northwest. As there was snow down to the shore, we preferred to make the best of each day by skiing from Podorange, rather than spend time holed up in tents.

We made ski ascents and descents, sometimes having to climb the last section to the summit on foot, of a number of small peaks that had been visited before, though in several cases only once. For instance, on September 25 we ascended Isthmus Dome South (945m, 54°07.784'S, 37°18.972'W), and on October 10 we climbed Bear (730m, 54°04.786'S, 37°28.992' W); both had seen one known previous ascent, but we climbed different lines on at least one of these small peaks. One highlight was our ascent on the 30th of the east point of the Szielko Range, which we believe is called Snorre Peak (824m, 54°18'58"S, 36°17'00"W). The weather was perfect, and the wind dropped as we started skinning from Ocean Harbor. The upper glacier gave easy skinning to the col between the central and eastern summits. The final ridge to the summit was climbed on foot, and it proved to be the first day we saw the high tops of South Georgia—Paget, Roots, Nordenskjold, et al—though they were in a huge Föhn cloud for most of the day.

The following summits may be new.

On September 23 we climbed a small summit above Blue Whale Harbor that we called Petrol Pique (456m, 54°04'49.5"S, 37°02'21.4"W). This was an impressive, steep little peak requiring a range of ski mountaineering techniques, thus giving good practice.

On October 2 we reached an unnamed summit of 836m at 54.434176°S, 36.278504°W. It had been sunny and calm that morning, so we decided to wander up the Heaney Glacier. After a couple of hours' skinning, a bowl opening to our right was perfect for skinning and skiing. At the head were two summits. We chose the left and higher of the two, which gave an enjoyable alpine ascent, involving the use of axe, crampons, and rope. There was a tricky step low on the ridge. This peak would appear to be the highest in the small group of mountains between the Heaney and east branch of the Nordenskjold Glacier. If it doesn't have a name, we would like to call it Mt. Emma.

On the 9th we summited an unnamed peak of 494m at 54°02.284'S, 37°29.495'W. The peak lies between Rosita Harbor, our starting point, and the Brunonia Glacier. The wind was very strong, especially above 500m, and all the summits were in cloud. There was a short section on foot to the top. After a similarly short foot descent we skied a great, steep line down to the Brunonia and the

shore at Sunset Fjord. Our name for this peak is Mt. Armistice.

Any visit to South Georgia is a challenging experience, particularly on a yacht. This was a big adventure for us all, and one that left us with lasting memories of friendship, wild places, raw beauty, wildlife, remoteness, relentless wind, summits, skiing, and much more. The expedition was a great success.

Jim Blyth, France

For the full expedition report, [click here](#).

## Images



The view south from Compromise Point over King Haakon Bay, en route to climbing Isthmus Dome South. It was from the head of this fjord (visible) that in May 1916 Ernest Shackleton began his epic trek across the island to Stromness.



Skinning above Right Whale Bay, en route to Mt. Regulator (off picture right). The attractive summit in center is Peak 787m, by Ernesto Pass, possibly unclimbed.



Approaching the summit of Snorre Peak in the Szielko Range, with a view southwest to Paget, South Georgia's highest mountain (in background left) and Sugartop above the climber.

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