

Frank Browning and his Antarctic adventure with Captain Scott

Frank Browning was born in Stockland, near Axminster, Devon, but lived most of his life at 145 Windsor Road, Ellacombe, Torquay. He joined the Royal Navy in 1899 and even played occasionally for Torquay United Football Club.

He was one of only two men who were handpicked to join the crew of the Terra Nova, Captain Scott's world-famous expedition ship, and joined as Petty Officer RN. He was an extremely popular member of the crew – Commander Evans described him as 'the life and soul of every sledge journey he took part in'.

Part of Scott's historic expedition to be first to reach the South Pole included a Ross Sea base to carry out scientific work along the coast of South Victoria Land.

Frank was the cook for this six-man expedition to survey Robertson Bay, collect geological and glaciological data and make meteorological measurements.

He had to brave the elements to take two-hourly meteorological observations.

Raymond Priestly recorded the story of the expedition in his book 'Antarctic Adventure'.

Disaster struck the party when the Terra-Nova was unable to collect the expedition at the end of February, 1913, due to extreme ice.

VERONIKA VALIGURSKÁ
Torquay Museum

The stranded crew had to face a winter in the Antarctic with the minimum of provisions.

They named their winter home 'Inexpressible Island'. They carved out an ice cave in which to overwinter and Frank became expert at preparing a breakfast of porridge with seal or penguin steak.

During the winter, Frank became increasingly ill, the diet didn't suit him, and the other party members became increasingly concerned for him.

Priestley wrote of Frank: "One thing that must have contributed more than anything else to pull him through was his unfailing cheerfulness. He was a tower of strength to the party in this way."

Frostbite was a constant danger, there was no sunlight for six months and their diet and cooking conditions were hazardous to life.

Not knowing the fate of the Terra Nova, the decision was made to walk around 200 miles back to base at Cape Evans.

Frank was so ill he had to be pulled on a sledge but insisted on walking the final stage of the journey so it could be said that the members returned on foot.

They eventually reached the

safety of a depot in October 1913.

The incredible survival story of the Northern Party and their walk to safety, one of the greatest survival stories of all time, was entirely overshadowed by the loss of Captain Scott and his team during his return journey from the Pole.

Frank survived his expedition and contributed valuable knowledge of the weather patterns and geology of the Antarctic that are still in use.

The Antarctic is particularly important in understanding the effects of climate change and global warming on the earth today.

Frank died aged only 48 after a bout of double pneumonia, his premature death most likely a result of the hardships he faced in Antarctica.

He was presented with the Antarctic Medal by King George V in 1913 and is also commemorated with a memorial plaque in the foyer of Torquay Town Hall.

Mount Browning and Browning Pass in Antarctica were named after him.

Personal items and a penguin sent back by Frank from Antarctica are on display in the Explorers' Gallery at Torquay Museum.

You can adopt the penguin or make a small donation towards the museum's opening at Crowdfunder.co.uk.



The Terra Nova Scott's expedition ship



The Adélie penguin sent back by Frank to Torquay



Three members of the Northern Party after their return to Cape Evans (Frank is on the far right)



Frank Browning in his Terra Nova uniform