

Eggs from a cold climate

The new exhibition at the National Maritime Museum has a distinct Easter flavour to it, though you would be forgiven if at first you don't see the connection.

South: Race to the Pole, currently running at the museum, brings to life the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.

But what has that got to do with either eggs or chocolate? Well, among the artefacts on show that were rescued from Captain Robert Falcon Scott's 1901 Discovery expedition are two squares of a 100-year-old Cadbury's chocolate, part of the explorer's food supply.

The sweet-toothed Scott took 3,500lbs of expertly packed chocolate and cocoa supplied by the company especially for the expedition.

Some of this chocolate was left behind by Scott's team when it left camp for the last time. Several years later Ernest Shackleton's Nimrod expedition (1907-09), which was also trying to reach the South Pole, used Scott's old hut as a supply depot.

At this point the chocolate was recovered and eventually brought back to England. It is now on display for the first time.

If the idea of 100-year-old chocolate does not grab you how about some equally old eggs?

Two penguin eggs from the same expedition are also featured in the exhibition. They were brought all



DAYS OUT

the way from the south Atlantic thanks to Dr Wilson.

He was the scientific officer on Scott's expedition and had a fascination with Emperor penguins, subscribing to the theory that they were the missing link – at the time not a lot was known about penguins.

A passionate zoologist, Dr Wilson wanted to recover some specimens to work out where the Emperors had come from.

He risked his life in the Antarc-

tic winter by walking 60 miles from the base camp accompanied by two other men to the nearest penguin colony just to collect five eggs. Three of them made it back to England undamaged, of which two take pride of place in the exhibition.

Continuing the penguin theme, the exhibition is home to Ponko, a soft toy. He takes his name from the nickname of Scott's photographer in Antarctica, Herbert Ponting. After he returned from the Antarctic, Ponting toured the country giving lectures accompanied by his mascot Ponko.

South: Race to the Pole features the epic expeditions of Sir Robert Falcon Scott, Sir Earnest Shackleton and Captain Roald Amundsen. The exhibition captures the explorers' personalities, the extreme hardships they endured and the incredible landscape.

Among the 180 exhibits on display are the Union Jack placed at the pole by Scott, the Norwegian flag taken by Amundsen and Shackleton's boat compass from the James Caird.

□ The National Maritime Museum is open from 10am-5pm. Information call 020 8858 4422 or visit www.nmm.ac.uk



Well-travelled: Antarctic photographer Herbert Ponting's mascot, Ponko

To see you ice: One of Herbert Ponting's photographs of Robert Scott's 1901 journey to find the South Pole. The explorer and his team perished on their second journey in 1912