

## The story of The Terra Nova

Robert Falcon Scott was born near Plymouth where the ships sailed in and the ships sailed out. Salt spray and the cry of the seagulls was in his blood and he knew one day he would leave land far behind and sail the seven salty seas. He joined his first ship when he was 13 and served his time scrubbing decks, climbing the rigging, and dreaming – that one day he would be in charge of a ship sailing where he commanded. He would bring back treasures from the four corners of the world, and see further than anyone had ever seen, go further than anyone had ever been. He dreamed his dreams and put them in his heart where they grew like the pearl inside the oyster.

In 1901 he led his first Expedition on the steamship Discovery, to reach the rumoured South Pole, a mysterious frozen land covered in snow somewhere far away. He didn't make it that far and had to abandon the ice-bound ship, but his team had reached further south than anyone before them. When Scott returned home, he decided he would not give up. He dreamed of that next time, to be the first to reach South Pole, to travel to the last place on earth yet to be discovered. He turned the dreams into plans. Raising money, recruiting a team. Planning what to take. Scott's expedition would have to bring everything it needed to live and work for years and years. He packed a wooden hut, clothes, tents, sleeping bags, stoves, fuel, enormous quantities of food, medical stores, scientific instruments, books, board games, musical instruments. Finally, skis and sledges, 19 ponies and 33 dogs. The expedition's ship – Terra Nova - was crammed full when she departed in 1910.

Bad luck seemed to stow away on board as the team faced storms, icebergs and the ship being stuck in heavy pack ice for three weeks, barely moving forward, using up precious coal supplies. Finally, the Terra Nova was anchored to the ice and the unloading began. The ponies were especially happy to finally be on firm ground as they rolled and kicked in snow.

Have you ever run a race you think you are winning and then you see someone just ahead? What do you do? Give up...or keep going? Scott found out that another explorer - the Norwegian Roald Amundsen - was planning to reach the South Pole too. Scott said "I decided to act exactly as I should have done had he not existed. After all, it is the work that counts, not the applause that follows." He would keep going.

Temperatures never rose above minus 18°C. There was extreme cold, then warmer blizzards that melted the snow and made everything wet and travelling impossible. The ponies had a difficult time of it sinking to their bellies in the soft snow, which meant the team had to pull all the equipment.... But they didn't have anywhere near enough food or energy to do this heavy work. And every step of the way had to be taken on foot...

Scott decided that most men should return home leaving a final team of five to continue to the pole. They were now 97 miles from the pole, further south than they believed than anyone had been before. But they were growing so tired by this point, every step made their bones ache. But they thought one more day, one more day and they would be the first to reach the South Pole.

Until... they saw something in the blank white of the empty world, something in a land where no person had ever stepped before! Except they had, and had tied a flag to a sledge and nearby there were tracks made by sledges and dogs. Someone was far ahead of them. And Scott wrote "This told us the whole story. The Norwegians had won, they were first at the Pole. A terrible disappointment. Tomorrow we must march on the Pole, and then hurry home with all the speed we can. All the day-dreams must go."

Scott's team did reach the South Pole on January 18th, 1912 and found a small tent flying a Norwegian flag.

The next important step they would take would be to return home safely... But they were exhausted with snow-blindness, frostbitten feet, fingers and noses. They were down to their last meals. The weather was against them, intense cold of minus 40°C. They were unable to leave their final camp having run out of food and fuel, too weak to attempt the march homewards. On 29th March 1912, Scott made his last diary entry. "Outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. I do not think we can hope for better things now. We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker of course, and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more."

Scott and his companions died as the storms raged outside their camp.

When they were discovered, a great cairn of snow was raised over their bodies topped by a cross made from skis. They had not given up. They would never be forgotten.