



# CASE STUDY

## Sandford Award Criteria 2

*The education programmes at the site contribute to an understanding of the local and national heritage*

Find out how pupils are inspired by a visit to the Antarctic explorer Captain Robert Scott's research ship, the RRS Discovery, and how they learn about the ship's links to Dundee and scientific exploration today.

### Discovery Point and RRS Discovery, Dundee



The Royal Research Ship Discovery returned to her home port of Dundee in 1986, and the Discovery Point centre with its custom-built dock opened in 1993 to interpret the history of the Discovery. The displays focus primarily on the British National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-1904 led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott.

## **Session Description: 'Life as a Polar Explorer and Setting Sail' – P3/Key Stage 1**

In setting sail pupils have the chance to explore the decks of Captain Scott's RRS Discovery, learning of her uses and voyages throughout the world. In Life as a Polar Explorer pupils compare replica 1901 polar clothing with its modern equivalent and consider the pros and cons for survival in the coldest place on earth.

### **How did the two learning sessions inspire, inform and engage the pupils?**

Life as a Polar Explorer:

'This first session focused on life for explorers in Captain Scott's time and the contrast with modern day exploration. Two children were asked to volunteer to dress up in layers from both eras to demonstrate the huge amount of clothing that is necessary to keep explorers warm and how modern technology has transformed exploration in terms of keeping explorers warm and dry.'

The quality of the experience kept them engaged throughout and the workshop leader ensured that the presentation was made relevant to the children's own experience - they were fascinated by contrasts between modern and late 19th century equipment, clothing and technologies. The Education Officer delivered this workshop and used a variety of techniques to encourage pupils' participation including:

- Always relating information and stories to pupils' own experience
- Introducing 'surprises' – for instance that the Antarctic gets warmer in summer, or that oil is used to make materials such as polyester
- Integrating a variety of different activities within the workshop – for instance inviting pupils to 'model' polar clothing and equipment and more
- Importantly asking them how they felt about what they were wearing, and allowing free time for all pupils to handle/try on the handling items at the end of the workshop
- Asking questions about what the pupils could directly see and feel when studying the handling material
- Introducing questions that broadened out discussion where appropriate – for instance encouraging children to think about the science behind the stories, equipment and technological improvements

## Setting Sail:

'The second part of the workshop was a tour of the RRS Discovery ship which compliments the Polar Explorer workshop. The tour of the ship was conducted by an education volunteer and themed to focus on what life was like living aboard a ship in such treacherous conditions for months on end. The class learnt the proper terms for various parts of the ship, explored the navigational equipment on board and entered the chartroom to see where Scott and his officers planned their voyage. The class learnt more about the types of jobs on board and the harsh realities of a life at sea.'

## **How did the learning sessions contribute to an understanding of Dundee's history and Scotland's national heritage?**

'The content of the tours and the workshop support experiences and outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) which is established in primary schools throughout Scotland. The structure of the workshops in particular allows opportunities for developing pupils as 'confident individuals' and 'effective contributors' which are two of the four central capacities of the CfE.'

## Curriculum Links:

- Personal link to the past by exploring items or images connected with important individuals or special events
- Explored how people lived in the past and used imaginative play to show how their lives were different
- Compared aspects of people's daily lives in the past with their own by using historical evidence and the experience of recreating an historical setting

People, past events and societies: SOC 0-02a, SOC 0-04a, SOC 1-04a English and Literacy. Listening and Talking: LIT 1-02a, ENG 1-03a, LIT 1-07

## **The Sandford Award judge was impressed by:**

How the session inspired an understanding of Dundee's role in Captain Scott's expedition and scientific exploration today

'... one of the very first questions asked of all three groups touring the ship was 'why is RRS Discovery in Dundee' and the tour group leaders explained the links to Dundee's whaling industry and the expertise in designing and building ice-going ships – including Discovery – which existed in the city as a result. The emphasis throughout the tour on the fact that Discovery was a working ship – and not built as a museum also helped to reinforce the real story of the ship and its links to the city.'

I felt that the scientific legacy of Scott's Antarctic expedition and the scientific importance of contemporary polar expeditions was also well brought out in the workshop that I observed. Children are able to see the 'Lab' on board ship and to hear about the reasons why scientific expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic continue today.'

## The connections made between the past and the pupils' own lives and experiences

'I observed many excellent strategies for engaging pupils during the tours which included: challenging pupils to work out the purpose of particular pieces of equipment and features on deck and allowing them to handle some of the unfamiliar equipment for example, removing deck compass covers to find out what was underneath. Another really effective strategy for the primary groups was giving groups a puzzle to solve as they moved through the ship (to work out the purpose of a particular function - 'post-box' slots in the wooden sides of the hull). This was a great way of bringing the group back together at points during the tour and allowing them to present their ideas. The tour leaders throughout the tour consistently ensured that the children made connections with their own lives and experiences - for instance getting them to think about the length of an Antarctic expedition being the same as being at school, with the same friends, for between 3 and 4 years - this had a noticeable impact on all of the groups. The primary groups in particular asked a great number of questions and responded well to the tour leader's questions.'