Lyttelton Harbour
W H A K A R A U P O

Antarctic Port

Lyttelton Historical Museum
Currently awaiting rebuild, the museum will again feature all aspects of Lyttelton’s colonial history. The old building had two floors and four galleries displaying an eclectic collection of model ships, whaling and maritime objects, Antarctic relics and numerous photos of people, buildings and places – even a sled dog.

Seafarers’ Centre
The original Seafarers’ Centre near the railway station offered a welcome space for visiting seafarers, including those voyaging in Antarctic waters. Destroyed by fire it was replaced on Norwich Quay but was again destroyed by the 2011 earthquake. Lyttelton continues to offer hospitality in Norwich Quay but was again destroyed by the 2011 earthquake. Lyttelton remains a watering hole for visiting Antarcticans.

Timeball Station
Before radio, navigators needed accurate time to determine longitude: heading east or west. A few seconds error could place a ship on rocks even in charted waters. With the invention of chronometers, Timeball stations were established. Lyttelton’s station was built in 1876 using an astronomical clock from the makers of London’s Big Ben. Every day at 1pm a 100kg ball was dropped above a tower so navigators could adjust their chronometers and determine error rates. By 1918 when times were broadcast by radio, the ball was dropped only twice weekly. The service ceased in 1934. The Station had to be demolished after the 2011 earthquake, but may be rebuilt. For more info, visit www.timeball.co.nz

Quail Island
Lying in the flooded crater of Lyttelton’s extinct volcano, this 81 hectare island offers beautiful scenery, great walks, wildlife, ships’ graveyard and glimpses into the past through the Information Centre and track panels. During the peak of Antarctic exploration, 1901–1929, the island was a quarantine and training area for the sled dogs and ponies of Scott and Shackleton’s expeditions. It also housed New Zealand’s only leprosy quarantine colony. Prisoners from Lyttelton Gaol did much of the heavy work, building stone terrace walls and tracks, and planting trees. Sadly only a replica of a sled dog kennel survives.

Lyttelton Sea Scouts
Sea Scouts, based in Lyttelton and Governor’s Bay, are active in outdoor training, development and competition, on and off water. Their original wooden lifeboat from RMS Niagara was given to the Troop in 1940 after the Niagara was sunk by a mine north of New Zealand, carrying a large quantity of gold which was salvaged in secret for the Bank of England. Longboat Terra Nova (90), a wooden, gall rigged cutter, was launched around 1948. She was damaged beyond repair in 1966 and replaced with a Duncan mould cutter (123), launched in 1969. Easter Regatta 2007 was her last outing under sail. She is now used for rowing.

Lyttelton Pharmacy and Post Office
Offers Antarctic (Ross Dependency) stamps and postal services.

Further information:

Christchurch
Christchurch i-SITE Visitor Centre
Find Christchurch Antarctic Links, visit www.christchurch.org.nz/antarctic or i-SITE on Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch. Tel. 03-379 9629

Akaroa
Akaroa i-SITE Visitor Centre
Find Frank Worsley, visit www.akaroa.com or i-SITE at 120 Rue Jolie, Akaroa 7820. Tel. 03-304 8600

New Zealand Antarctic ports
Find Antarctic links at NZ’s other Antarctic ports: Bluff, Port Chalmers (Dunedin), Oamaru and Wellington

Disclaimer: Information correct when printed: May 2014.
Seafaring in Lyttelton spans 500 years since Maori first arrived.

Captain James Cook voyaged to Antarctica in 1770 after naming Banks’ ‘Island’ (Peninsula) for his biologist Sir Joseph Banks. Whaler Benjamin Morell, in Antarctic, is the first recorded Antarctic to visit Lyttelton in 1830. Several whaling ships followed and by the 1840’s many had stayed.

Lyttelton became a haven for Antarctic exploration in the heroic era, which continued through International Geophysical Year (IGY) in the 1950s. Modern visitors are low key. Keep an eye out for Nathaniel B Palmer (US), Apostol Andrey (USSR), and private expeditions Gerof. Shackleton attributes the success of ‘Heart of the Antarctic’ to Saunders from the Lyttelton Times.

Many Lyttelton men joined heroic era expeditions including Mortimer McCarthy (Terra Nova), J Scotty Paton (Terra Nova, Morning and Nimrod), Charles Williams (Terra Nova), while several others settled in Lyttelton: W M McDonald, J R Deniston, Thomas Clissold, William Burton, Dimitri Gerof. Shackleton attributes the success of ‘Heart of the Antarctic’ to Saunders from the Lyttelton Times.

Other Lytteltonians served in Antarctica during IGY, Admiral Byrd saw Canterbury as ‘my second home’ and Lyttelton continues to enjoy a warm relationship with all Antarcticans. Gillian Wratt, first CEO of Antarctica NZ, lived in Lyttelton. Medal holders John & Margaret Bradshaw live across the harbour.

**St Saviours in Trinity**

The church has three foundation stones. Consecrated as a seafarers’ church in 1885, St Saviour’s West Lyttelton was designed in sections by Cyril Montefort. Robert Falcon Scott, his crews from Discovery and Terra Nova, and generations of seafarers worshipped here. After years of falling rolls, the church was moved in sections over Evans Pass to Cathedra Grammar School, Christchurch, in 1976. Its altar is in Scott Base’s Chapel of the Snows, Antarctica.

Holy Trinity Church, 1852, rebuilt in 1860, was the oldest stone church in Canterbury, one of three Lyttelton churches destroyed by earthquakes in 2011. St Saviours came home to Lyttelton in 2013 and was re-erected on the Trinity site.

**Tug Lyttelton**

Ordered from Scotland in 1906 Canterbury arrived in Lyttelton in September 1907, after a 14 week voyage via Suez. She escorted and towed Shackleton’s Nimrod to Lyttelton Heads on 1st January 1908. Renamed Lyttelton, she was seconded to the NZ Navy during the war but continued to assist Antarctic vessels until decommissioned in 1970. In 1973 she was completely overhauled with 2749 man hours of voluntary effort in dry dock and is now a much loved passenger vessel.

**Torpedo Boat Museum**

The Thornycroft torpedo boat was bought from Chiswick, UK in 1883 under fear of Russian invasion. The museum houses the partly reconstructed bow and stern, features a scale model of the vessel, an example of the steam engines that once powered it in full working order and, on request, can show a film of the political context, recovery and restoration, with historic footage and photos, including film of Shackleton’s Nimrod leaving Lyttelton harbour.

**Antarcticans in Lyttelton**

Baden Norris was raised in Lyttelton, first visited Antarctica in 1964, founded Lyttelton Historical Museum in 1965, is Emeritus Curator of Antarctic History, Canterbury Museum and was awarded the NZ Antarctic Medal in 2013 for a lifetime of service to Antarctic history. Harry McKechnie famously told Baden ‘Shackleton that’s my cat’. The scenic Baden Norris Reserve follows the coast east from the town, giving views of port and harbour.

**Terra Nova**

Terra Nova was to be Shackleton’s base for the 1907-09 expedition. It was ordered from Scotland in 1906 and arrived in Lyttelton in September 1907. It was 110 feet long and had a displacement of 572 tons. It was the first vessel designed specifically for Antarctic service to carry passengers and goods to port and harbour. It was also used to transport supplies to McMurdo Sound and the Ross Sea stations during the 1911-12 season.

**Lyttelton Graving Dock and Wharfs**

The graving dock, a remarkable feat of Victorian marine engineering, took 600 man years to build, being conceived in 1875 and completed in 1882. Heroic era ships Terra Nova, Discovery, Nimrod, Morning and Mawson’s Aurora all used Lyttelton’s facilities and services to prepare for their hazardous journeys south. From 1954-57 IGY vessels such as USS Glacier, Wyandot, Greenville, Victory and Icebreaker East Wind shipped materials, men and small planes to Antarctica to build Hallet Station, Scott Base, McMurdo and to support scientific research and the first ‘winter-over’. Lytteltonians still remember accidents that removed the wing of a small polar plane and a helicopter crashing into the harbour. No one was hurt.

“... the attitude of the New Zealand government stands out in sharp contrast to the dismal apathy and indifference which Lieutenant Shackleton had to contend against at home”

– Captain England

**Wildlife Visitors**

Often seen off Lyttelton Heads, sometimes in harbour and, rarely, on land, Lyttelton is a haven for Antarctic migrants. Take a voyage in a modern or historic vessel for the best views. Recent visitors include cetaceans (blue, orca, humpback, southern right and pilot whales), mammals (leopard seal, NZ fur seal), fish (black cod, an Antarctic overstayer from the Ice Age), and a wealth of birds (petrels, albatrosses, skuas, cape pigeons and mollymawks).