



Scots who made their mark on.....

The Known Extremes : 1 Sir John Ross



Sir John Ross (1777—1856)

John Ross, a native of Wigtownshire, was a pioneering Arctic explorer who sought the famously illusive North West Passage, accompanied by his London born nephew James Clark Ross, who was himself to become a famous Arctic and Antarctic explorer and baronet, celebrated on a handful of stamps.

Raised as a son the manse, John Ross became a Royal Navy apprentice when barely nine years old sailing in European waters and becoming a Captain in the Swedish navy in 1808. Ten years later he was charged with finding a solution to the location of the North West Passage and he led two ships, the *Isabella* and the *Alexander*, on this mission.

When in 1818 he reached Lancaster Sound (shown almost dead centre of this aerial photo) in North West Canada he reflected on the 200 year old observations made by English explorer William Baffin when Shakespeare was alive, but confused by mirages suggesting dead end fjords Ross went no further. This decision was disputed by Ross's senior officers and when later proved to have been a wrong one, it badly affected his reputation.

Ten years later, this time with private finance, Ross tried again, sailing on the steamship *Victory* through Lancaster Sound but becoming stuck in ice and stranded for four years. With the help of local Inuits, much exploration was undertaken in this period and James Clark Ross deduced the magnetic North Pole on Boothia Peninsula, shown left centre of the map below.

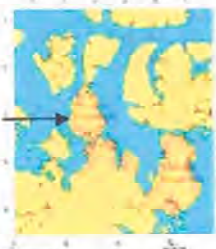
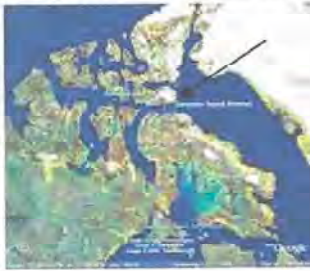
Ross and his crew were eventually able to escape the ice in 1833 in the longboats of a previous wreck they found and were taken home, reputation restored, by a British ship. However mistakes made in cartography—Ross had charted islands he had not seen—brought about new controversies.

In 1850, he returned to the Arctic for a third time, having received many

international honours and having been knighted 16 years before, looking unsuccessfully for the lost party led by Sir John Franklin. Returning to Scotland he settled down and died in London in his eightieth year.

Named after Whom ?

The Ross Sea, a major feature in Antarctica, may have been named after Sir James Clark Ross or by him after his uncle. As Trew and Burns point out in *Scots and Philately*, it therefore follows that any land feature, or flora and fauna named after the Ross Sea where they were indigenous could be arguably associated with Ross sen. or Ross jun. |



Ross Dependency 1957



B.A.T. 1983 (above top) and 1998 (above right) showing a Ross seal.



St Pierre and Miquelon 1988 showing Ross Cove on left stamp

- Isle of Man 2007:
- 28 Ross and ice-bound *Victory*
- 31 Flares from *Victory* guide returning
- 55 *Victory's* crew hunting with Inuit
- 75 Hunted musk ox
- 90 Crew on 300 mile trek having abandoned *Victory*
- 117 Crew in whale boats rescued by *Isabella*



B.A.T. 1973 showing James Clark Ross

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The Search for the North West Passage

Sir John Ross (24 June 1777 – 30 August 1856) a native of Wigtownshire, was a pioneering Arctic explorer who sought the famously illusive North West Passage, accompanied by his London born nephew James Clark Ross, who was himself to become a famous Arctic and Antarctic explorer and baronet, celebrated on a handful of stamps. Raised as a son the manse, John Ross became a Royal Navy apprentice when barely nine years old sailing in European waters and becoming a Captain in the Swedish navy in 1808. Ten years later he was charged with finding a solution to the location of the North West Passage and he led two ships, the *Isabella* and the *Alexander*, on this mission.

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