



## **A Century of News Discourse\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper traces the development of news discourse across the 20th century through a case study of the coverage of three expeditions to the South Pole: Captain Scott in 1912, Sir Edmund Hillary in 1958, and Peter Hillary in 1999. The way the news about the three expeditions reached New Zealand media serves as a framework and an illustration to examine three related issues: how technology has changed the time and place dimensions of news delivery; the consequent and concomitant shifts in news presentation; and associated changes in how humans have understood time and place. News values remain the same at a broad level across the century, but different in detail. Nationalism is obtrusive, but its focus shifts. In news practice, the deadline and the scoop drive the news in all three periods, but the scooping medium shifts from press to radio to television. The lapse between an event and its reporting shrinks exponentially from months to hours to minutes. The design of newspaper front pages changes radically, and news language compresses. There are social impacts, with newsworthy figures receiving closer exposure and the audience being cast in a more voyeuristic role.

**KEYWORDS:** News discourse, Language change, News technology, News presentation, Time and place reorganisation, Globalisation, Antarctica, South Pole, Scott

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I take the media reporting of three expeditions to the South Pole as a case study in the development of news discourse across the 20th century. The expeditions are those under Captain Scott (1910-13), Sir Edmund Hillary (1956-58), and Peter Hillary (1998-99). They are parallel stories of exploration and hardship, spaced across the beginning, middle and end of the 20th century. I treat them and the way their news reached the world as a framework and an illustration to examine three related issues in the globalisation of international communication:

- (1) how technology changed the time and place dimensions of news delivery across the 20th century (e.g. how fast the news is received, and through what medium)
- (2) the consequent and concomitant shifts in news presentation (e.g. written versus live broadcast coverage)
- (3) associated changes in how humans have understood time and place across the century — that is, the reorganisation of time and place in late modernity (Giddens 1991; Bell 1999).

The remote location of Antarctica offers a specific advantage to these case studies: it stretches to the limits the technologies of communication and transport of the particular era, thus illustrating the boundaries of what is possible in news communication at the different periods. It also limits access to the news event to one (or few) reporting sources so that we can pinpoint the channel and timing of news despatch in a way which is becoming increasingly difficult in a world with multiple lines of news transmission.

The data for these case studies consist of New Zealand media coverage of the outcomes of the three polar expeditions. Antarctica is a very present place to New Zealanders. The country is located half way between the South Pole and the equator (Figure 1), and administers a sector of the Antarctic continent. Antarctica is the nearest land to the south of New Zealand, which has always been the main departure point for expeditions, and remains so today for the United States operation there.

In the early 20th century the South Pole was the last discovery left to make. At the time of Scott's expedition, most of the shape of the Antarctic continent was still unknown. A map published in the issue of the *New Zealand Herald* which reported Scott's death (1913) was able to show less than a quarter of the continent's coastline. It is a place that remains the most isolated on earth even today. The US polar station is cut off physically for half the year even by air transport because temperatures at the surface are too cold for aircraft to take off.

Geographically, the pole is the place of all 360 degrees of longitude (here you can "walk around the world" in a few steps). It is therefore also the location of all time zones —and of no time zone. It is the place of biblical day lengths, where a year is literally as a day, with the sun rising and setting once a year. It is, then, a place which shatters our conventional measures of time.

The paper's theme is the way in which time and place are being re-configured in

contemporary society, and the role played in that process by changing communications technology, journalistic practice and news language. *When* is a defining characteristic of the nature of news, a major compulsion in news gathering procedures, and a determinant of the structure of news discourse (Bell 1995). News time is time in relation to place: what matters is the fastest news from the most distant—or most important—place (cf Schudson 1987). I will track the changes in technology and the reorganisation of time/place across the 20th century, using the coverage of these three polar expeditions as timepoints

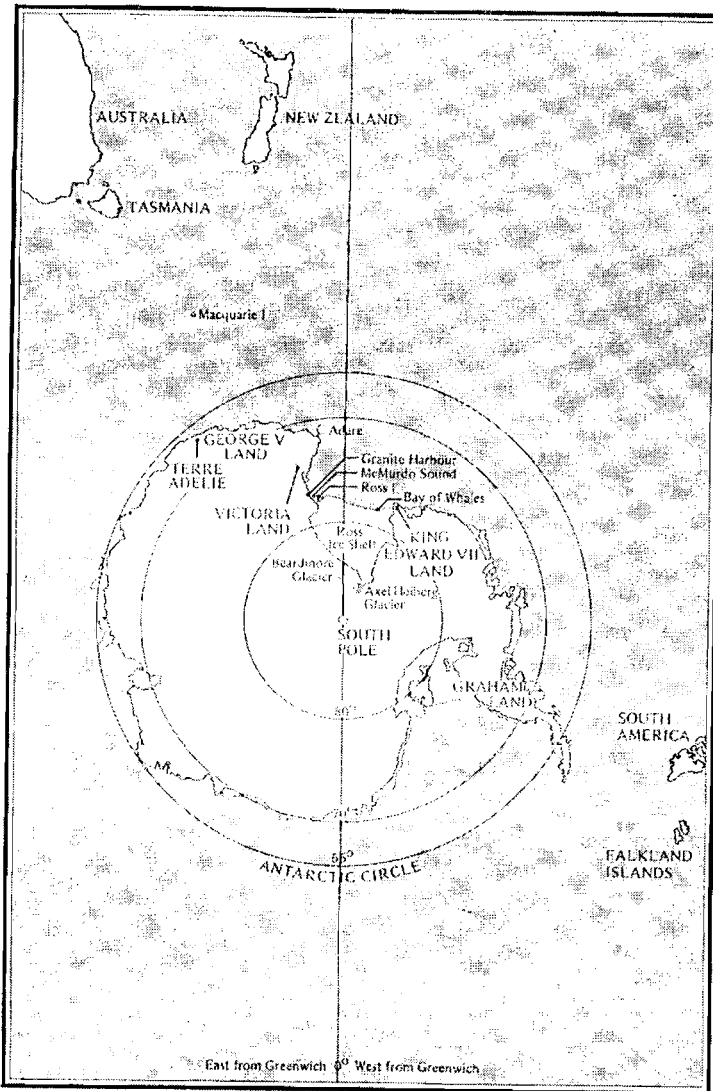


Figure 1: Map of Antarctica

## I. CAPTAIN SCOTT: 1912-1913

The British expedition led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott reached the South Pole on 18 January 1912. They hauled their own sledges 1000 miles across the world's severest environment from their base in McMurdo Sound on the edge of the Antarctic continent south of New Zealand. They found that the Norwegian Roald Amundsen had reached the pole just a month before them.

On the return journey Scott and his party died well short of their base, the last of them on or after 29 March 1912. They were found eight months later by a search party sent out as soon as the passing of the Antarctic winter allowed travel. The relief party also found the detailed diary which Scott kept nearly to the last to tell the story of the calamitous journey.

News of their gaining the pole and eventual fate did not reach the rest of the world until a year after it happened. In February 1913, the expedition's relief ship *Terra Nova* put in to a small New Zealand coastal town and telegraphed the news in secret to London. Local reporters pursuing the story were rebuffed. The news was then circulated from London and published in the world's newspapers on 12 February 1913, including in the *New Zealand Herald*, the country's largest daily. This became the archetypal late-imperial story of heroism for Britain and the Empire, which stood on the verge of the Great War that would signal the end of their pre-eminence.

In 1913 the *New Zealand Herald* was a broadsheet (an A2-sized page), and it remains in that format in the 21st century. It tends to conservatism in editorial stance, copy and design, and used to aptly sum up its own self-image as "a quality newspaper with a popular readership". The *Herald* reported the fate of Scott's expedition on 12 February 1913. The front page of that issue (Figure 2) carries the same masthead in the same type as is used today, but the rest of the page is totally different — eight columns of small-type classified advertisements. Some of these are the eternal announcements of human life which still run today — births, deaths, marriages; jobs wanted or vacant; possessions lost and found. Others are characteristic of an earlier age than our own — shipping news and domestics wanted.

The advertisements carry through the first six pages of the paper. News begins on page 7 and in this issue is dominated by the Scott story. There are some two pages of coverage, nearly half the news hole, split into a score of short pieces with headlines such as:

HOW FIVE BRAVE EXPLORERS DIED  
 HEROES LIE BURIED WHERE THEY DIED:  
 A TENT THEIR ONLY SHROUD  
 CAPTAIN SCOTT'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC



Figure 2: New Zealand Herald, 12th February 1913, front page  
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The stories cover the search for Scott's party, reaction from other Antarctic explorers such as Amundsen, background on earlier expeditions, commentary on the fatalities. Two characteristics of the coverage appear here which are echoed again in the stories later in the century—first, the imperial geography of news, by which the information was telegraphed secretly to London from New Zealand, released in London, and only then transmitted back for publication in the New Zealand press. Second is the motif of the waiting wife—on 12 February Katherine Scott was on a ship between San Francisco and New Zealand, coming to meet her husband on his return. She did not receive the news of his death till a week after it was public, when the ship came close enough to one of the Pacific islands to receive telegraph transmissions.

So we have here a "what-a-story" in Tuchman's terms (1978), dominating the news of the day—although not of course bumping the advertisements off the front page. In terms of the categories of news discourse which I use to analyse stories (see Bell 1991, 1998; cf van Dijk 1988), all the central elements of time, place, actors, action, and so forth are present. So are the ancillary components of news as shown in the headlines over individual stories:

Followup –consequences, reaction:

DEAD MEN'S EFFECTS

EXPLORERS DUMFOUND: POLE-WINNERS' SYMPATHY

EMPIRE'S GREAT LOSS: RESOLUTIONS OF SYMPATHY

Commentary –context, evaluation, expectations:

CAUSES OF THE DISASTER

TERRA NOVA DUE AT LYTTLETON TODAY

Background –previous episodes, history

A STRIKING ANALOGY: CAPTAN COOK AND CAPTAN SCOTT

ANTARCTIC'S DEATH ROLL: A LIGHT RECORD

The most obvious differences to a modern newspaper are visual—the absence of illustration, the small type even for headlines, the maintenance of column structure, and so on. What differs from later news discourse structure is that in 1913 the information was scattered among a myriad of short stories, as illustrated by the above headlines. Each sub-event has a separate story, which contemporary coverage in this kind of newspaper would now tend incorporate into fewer, longer stories. All the information is there, and the categories of the discourse are the same, but the way they are realized and structured has shifted.

Turning from the general tenor of the paper and its coverage in 1913, we can focus on the specifics of the lead story, particularly its headlines (Figure 3). There are 10 decks of headlines—not something one would see in a newspaper at the start of the 21st century.' This is an extreme example because of the scale of the story, but five decks were not uncommon in the

*Herald* at this period. As can be seen by the examples above, here the headlines are telling the story. In some cases they refer to other, sidebar stories separate from the story above which they are placed. By contrast the modern headline usually derives entirely from the lead sentence of the story below it (Bell 1991), and certainly not from any information beyond the body copy of that story. That is, there is a qualitative shift in this aspect of news discourse structure across the century, from multiple decks of headlines outlining the story, to 1-3 headlines which are derivable from the lead sentence, with the story being told in the body copy.

THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1913.

**DEATH IN ANTARCTIC**

**FATE OF CAPT. SCOTT AND PARTY**

**THRILLING OFFICIAL NARRATIVE.**

**MISFORTUNE FOLLOWS MISFORTUNE.**

**EVANS DIES FROM ACCIDENT.**

**OATES SEVERELY FROSTBITTEN.**

**DIES THAT OTHERS MIGHT PROCEED.**

**IN A BLIZZARD FOR NINE DAYS.**

**SHORTAGE OF FUEL AND FOOD.**

**A DEPOT ONLY ELEVEN MILES AWAY.**

Figure 3: NZ Herald, 12th February 1913, p. 8

The first striking thing in these headlines is an omission —they do not tell us that Scott reached the South Pole. No headline anywhere in the coverage in fact says that he reached his goal. The story is in the party's perishing —and it has remained so, as we shall see in the coverage of subsequent expeditions.'

In terms of the time structure of news stories (Bell 1995), these 10 headlines themselves form an inverted pyramid of time, beginning with the most recent situation in the first two decks, going back to the most distant chronological event in the fifth deck, then working chronologically through the subsequent sequence of events towards the present in the remaining decks. Let us assume that a contemporary newspaper would run a 10-deck headline like this. How would today's headline writer edit these into contemporary style?

#### DEATH IN ANTARCTIC

I think the modern headline editor would have no problem with this, it could as easily be used today as a century ago.

#### FATE OF CAPT. SCOTT AND PARTY

The honorific *Capt.* would be deleted. There was a move during the first half of the 20th century away from such official, military or hierarchical titles, and towards a greater democracy of newsworthiness (Bell 1991). The abbreviation *Capt.* is also archaic, and *party* in this sense falls into disuse during the century. While Edmund Hillary's expedition is still referenced as a "party" in 1958 (see below), the *Herald's* coverage of Peter Hillary's 1999 expedition refers to the group and Hillary's team-mates. It uses *party* but only in historical reference to Scott's expedition. There is thus an intertextuality here which refers to Scott using the vocabulary of reporting in his own era not the labelling current a century later.

#### THRILLING OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

This is an impossible headline nowadays – lexically because thrilling and narrative (meaning "news story") are both words of an earlier era, but more strikingly because of a shift in media and public consciousness. A century later thrilling and *official* can only be heard as mutually contradictory or ironical. Perhaps more tellingly, the concept of *official* narrative has shifted its significance. In 1913 it self-presents as the authoritative account of what really happened. The many stories about the Scott expedition published by the *Herald* on this day are sourced as "copyrighted official accounts", the description clearly intended to reinforce their authority. In the 21st century such a labelling characterizes one voice – the official – among others. After a century of growing media and public scepticism towards official accounts, the undertone is that the "official line or story" is to be regarded with suspicion. There has been a sea-change here in public and media attitudes towards authority and news sources.



## MISFORTUNE FOLLOWS MISFORTUNE

Too "soft" a headline for the press nowadays. It lacks hard facts, the repetition of *misfortune* wastes words, and the word is in any case too long. Linguistically it is the antithesis of modern headlining.

## EVANS DIES FROM ACCIDENT

This would be made more specific, the multisyllabic word would again be rejected, and the temporal conjunction *replace* the resultative, *because* the temporal sequence is now taken to imply the causation – "Evans dies after fall".

## OATES SEVERELY FROSTBITTEN

*Severely* would be deleted as unnecessary detail

## DIES THAT OTHERS MIGHT PROCEED

This sentence would *become* rather "dies to save others". The complementizer *that* plus subjunctive is archaic, giving way to the infinitive as a purpose clausal structure. *Proceed* again is 19th century lexicon – "continue" or "keep going" would be preferred.

## IN A BLIZZARD FOR NINE DAYS

Modern headlines do not start with a preposition, and this one would need a verb – "stranded" perhaps. The rather static *in* would be replaced with more of an indication of agency – "by". The article goes, and the preposition in the time adverbial is not required. The end result would be no shorter, but much more action-oriented and dramatic – "stranded nine days by blizzard".

## SHORTAGE OF FUEL AND FOOD

As a headline, this has too many words to be contemporary. *Fuel and food* would be combined as "supplies".

## A DEPOT ONLY ELEVEN MILES AWAY

Again, the article would go (even though in this case there is *some* semantic loss – the zero article could be reconstructed as definite not indefinite: "*the* depot"). Perhaps a verb would be introduced, and the order might be flipped to keep the locational focus on *Scott* rather than the depot – "(stranded) just 11 miles from depot"

Looking at the changes our mythical modern headline editor would *have* made, we can see both linguistic and social shifts:

- \* The ideological frame has changed —there is no longer just *the* "official narrative", but the official becomes one account among others.
- \* The discourse structure has moved from multiple decked headlines which almost tell the story, to single, short, telegraphic headlines which summarize the lead sentence.
- \* The lexicon has moved on. Some words strike as archaic less than 100 years later, for others length makes them out of place in a headline and they are replaced by shorter, punchier items.
- \* The syntax also has tightened. Function words drop out, there is a shift to emphasise action and agency through "by" and the introduction of verbs. An entire clausal structure ("that" + subjunctive) has become obsolete.

Journalistically speaking, the news has become harder, the language tighter.

## II. SIR EDMUND HILLARY: 1958

In 1957 the British began an expedition to make the first crossing of Antarctica by land. It left from the opposite side of the continent, south of South America, headed for the South Pole, and on to what was now called "Scott Base", on McMurdo Sound, south of New Zealand (see Figure 1). There was a support expedition from the New Zealand side of the continent. This headed south from Scott Base preparing the route for the British group which would be coming the other way. The support group of New Zealanders was led by Sir Edmund Hillary, the first person —with Norgay Tensing— to climb Mt Everest (in 1953).

The British side of the expedition made slow going. Hillary continued south, driving modified New Zealand farm tractors and laying supplies for the British to pick up on their way north. He eventually decided that instead of turning back as planned, he would keep going and reach the Pole himself. This he did on 3 January 1958, the first overland expedition since Scott, and therefore only the third ever. The British party arrived at the Pole some time later and in due course completed the crossing of Antarctica along the route Hillary had prospected.

Like Scott, the New Zealanders knew they were in sight of the Pole because of signs of human presence, but they were neither surprised nor disappointed to see the buildings that made up the American polar station. The group camped, slept, and were awoken on the morning after their arrival by a welcoming party of Americans who drove out to receive them and then hosted them at the polar station. The first news reached the world on radio that same evening. The next morning, 4 January 1958, it was the lead story in the *New Zealand Herald*. That same day the explorers flew back to Scott Base.

I cannot be sure which was the first medium to disseminate the news of Edmund Hillary reaching the pole. By 1958 the century had reached the era of electronic media, so the durable archive of hard copy had given way to the ephemera of often unrecorded radio broadcasting. This was however the period when radio ruled in New Zealand (television had not yet started), and

I assume that radio was the first medium to carry the news. Hillary reached the pole at 8pm at night, and reported the arrival by radio to Scott Base. He was interviewed by radio at the pole by a reporter back in McMurdo Sound. The news was relayed to Wellington, New Zealand's capital city. The then Prime Minister Walter Nash recorded a message of congratulations which was radioed to Scott Base and on to the American polar station, where Hillary and his companions heard it next morning.

I have not yet located any archival recordings of radio coverage. At this time there was still no independent radio news service in New Zealand, only distribution of government communiques. The main New Zealand stations were still relaying the BBC World Service news from London. It is therefore possible that the old imperial lines of communication meant that this very local news story was —like Scott's— first broadcast back to New Zealand from the mother country.

In the middle of the 20th century, the press was still an important breaker of news, even though radio had been added. New Zealand newspapers covered the story, which was received in Wellington from Scott Base and sent out on the NZ Press Association wire around New Zealand and the world at 10.19pm on Friday 3 January. But even in New Zealand it was not strictly speaking front page news.

In 1958 remarkably little has changed on the front page of the *Herald* since 1913. The masthead is the same, as one would expect, but so are the front-page classifieds, eight solid columns of small type —births, deaths, marriages, home helpers wanted, farm employees wanted— although the shipping news has gone. The type is tidier and more symmetrical, but still small. The main news still starts on page 8, and here things look different. There are photographs, and headlines run across several columns. But there is much less coverage of this story than of Scott —about a third of a page. This partly reflects the increasing taming of Antarctica, which now has airfields and the South Pole base. Advances in transport have changed the perception as well as the time lag. It also reflects that this story does not involve the death of the hero—that much of news values remains constant.

The headlines and copy run across 3-5 columns (Figure 4). There is a three-deck headline. The contents of the top two headlines can be derived entirely from the lead paragraph. Interestingly, the third headline comes from the lead paragraph of the second story (under ONE DRUM OF FUEL LEFT). In fact the lead story after the first two paragraphs is entirely background about Hillary's expedition, and the new news is carried in the adjacent shorter story. This probably came about because the copy for the long story was already set when news of Hillary's arrival broke in the newsroom after 10pm. This would have been shortly before the *Herald's* city edition was put to bed, and after the deadline for the rural edition. Thus the new news ended up being carried hastily in a short secondary story. But the main difference to 1913 is that the news is in print next day rather than next year.

# Sir Edmund and Party Reach Pole

## FIRST TEAM OVERLAND SINCE SCOTT

### Final March of 70 Miles In One Day

Sir Edmund Hillary and his party of four men and three tractors arrived last night at the South Pole—the first party to reach the Pole by land since Captain Scott made his tragic sledge journey 45 years ago.

A New Zealand Press Association flash, received in Auckland at 10.13 p.m., read: "Hillary Arrived at Pole! It was the end of a cold, hazardous 1200-mile haul along the Ross ice-sheet, up Skelton Glacier and over the treacherous, crevasse-torn polar plateau.

With Sir Edmund and Mr Murray King, of Invercargill, Mr Peter Mulgrew, of Lower Hutt, Mr Jim Bates, of Marlborough, and Mr Derek Wright, of Wellington. This brings the number of people at the Pole to 12—the New Zealand party plus the 17 Americans returned there.

Sir Edmund, who is the third Antarctic expedition leader in history to reach the Pole by land, has aspired to glory all time to complete the anniversary of Scott's arrival on January 18, 1912. Arrived the first man to reach the Pole, and three or twenty per cent.

Among the stores in one of the sledges are two New Zealand flags. They will be planted at the Pole to mark the first New Zealand effort to land on the continent. Already an air courier has a New Zealand flag and a message from the former Minister of Railways, Mr McEwen, flown over the continent.

**Flagpole Not Tip**  
Sir Edmund left Scott Base with three tractors and a "howler" as a power source. The tractors carried heavy sledges loaded with supplies and fuel. Fuel is scarce and was used in calculating a trip of 1200 miles. The tractors returned to the New Zealand party's return to Scott Base. Sir Edmund and his British Transantarctic Expedition.

As well as sledges the New Zealand expedition took a special caravan designed by Sir Edmund to provide "portable living" in the bitter Antarctic "blizzards" of the polar plateau. The tractor "howlers" were "argonauts" were fitted with little tanks and with a "howler" was tracked over the wheels.

A few days after the tractor party left Scott Base Sir H. Miller and the March were held to the east of Scott Base. They accompanied Sir Edmund to the glacier to Depot 100, where they were joined by another dog team from Sir H. Miller, Mr H. Ayres and Mr R. Callison.

Most of the trek was made in never-ending daylight. The party travelled at "night" when temperatures dropped a little and snow surface became harder, and clear during the "day" when the air was warmer. Each march started about 3 p.m. and finished the following morning.

**Wiley Led**  
In the first stages of the trek the dog teams led, but the sledges were pulled by the tractors. They, carrying the load in the first days of December, the dog teams worked ahead and reduced details of their capacity. The dog teams reached Depot 700 just 48 hours ahead of the tractor party.

Sir Edmund's original plans were to meet Dr Fuchs' expedition from the South Pole, at Invercargill. But the British party, which met appealing weather conditions, and the New Zealand party, which met appealing weather conditions, and the New Zealand party, which met appealing weather conditions.

The New Zealand tractor party carried the sledges across the beach, 2000 feet high. The sledges and dog teams were left at Depot 700.

## ONE DRUM OF FUEL LEFT

### Leader Tells Of Journey

Scott Base. The New Zealand Antarctic party reached the South Pole at 11.30 p.m. last night after a 24-hour forced march of 70 miles.

In a radio message, Sir Edmund Hillary told that these conditions had been steady and unobscured during the long run at three miles an hour from the Ross ice sheet.

Starting by the sun from earlier than, we came back on the base," said Sir Edmund. "We are all very tired but well, and very pleased to have arrived."

The success we have had could not have been possible without the help we have had from everyone from the time the expedition was first planned. Mr. King is in particular to every member of the expedition whose support is so important.

The tractor team arrived at the Pole with one unused drum of fuel. "This was sufficient for 20 miles, so we were cutting it rather than use it in the very last few miles," said Sir Edmund. "The Antarctic is not so much as we are."

The tractor team arrived at the Pole with all their fuel, the tractors and the sledges. The first day was happy party went to bed at the Pole about two miles from the American base and first morning the tractor team will travel forward to meet the Americans.

## NO REPORT FROM DR FUCHS

Although Dr Fuchs spoke to Sir Edmund by radio yesterday morning, his party's position is not known. The coalition was not reported to Scott Base.

An N.Z.P.A. (Travellers) message from London says it is believed the British party has completed the most part of the journey and there is now a reasonable prospect of speedy progress to the Pole.



Sir Edmund Hillary



J. G. Bates M. King P. D. Mulgrew H. Wright



The press group to reach the South Pole by land—Captain Scott and his party at the Pole 45 years ago. Left to right are Dr E. A. Wilson, Captain R. F. Scott, Party Officer E. Evans, Captain L. E. G. Oates and Lieutenant H. R. Bowen. This picture was taken on January 18, 1912.

NZ Herald, Saturday, 4 January 1958

In **1958** we can see the extent to which the disastrous Scott expedition has dominated media and public perception of Antarctic exploration. Scott figures in the headline and lead, and the classic **1912** photograph of his five-man party at the pole is the main illustration. Ironically, this is the only on-the-spot shot. The photographs of the **1958** expedition members are archival, studio mugshots. Photographs of Hillary's team actually at the pole could in **1958** not be electronically transmitted or physically flown out in time.

The top headline reads as slightly old-fashioned with its *Sir Edmund and Party* (compare this to the **1999** headline for Peter Hillary: *Hillary S trekkers*). The second deck has crisp, tight, modern phrasing, while the third strikes as dated and rather wordy with two prepositions and an article. With the internationalization of measurement, *70 miles* would now be given in kilometres.

The late breaking story means that much of the detail was carried on the next news day, Monday **6** January (no Sunday papers in New Zealand in **1958**). That day published detail on Hillary's arrival at the pole, with a raft of subsidiary stories, including interesting cross-cultural contrasts noted in the explorers' reception by the inhabitants of the polar station —*Each American had at least one still camera and often a movie as well*.

The national and imperial overtones of the arrival were strong, but rather differently inflected from Scott's day. The British press was reported as somewhat lamenting the coverage given to Hillary's achievement, which was supposed to be a sideshow to the main British crossing party. The French and American press did not have that problem. The accounts make it clear that Hillary had acted with a certain post-imperial independent-mindedness in deciding to head for the pole himself.

By **1958** we have moved from the era of communications which could take months to one which takes at most hours from the end of the earth. This is a qualitative shift, and it accompanies a shift in means of transport that enables Hillary and his crew to fly back in hours over the land they have laboured months to cross. In the discourse structure of the press coverage we can see the shift to fewer headlines, which are derived from the story leads rather than telling the story themselves. The syntax is more recognizably modern in its tightness, and the lexicon is crisp, although there are still some hang-overs from an earlier era. The front page remains 19th century in content and appearance.

### III. PETER HILLARY: 1999

Another **41** years later, on **26** January **1999**, the three-person Iridium Ice Trek arrived at the pole. They took **84** days to pull their sleds nearly **1500** km from Scott Base. Their explicit aim was to recreate Scott's man-hauled journey to the pole, and to complete the trek back. Their leader was Peter Hillary, Sir Edmund's son and a significant mountaineer and adventurer in his own right. There is video footage of Peter speaking from the top of Everest on a mobile phone to Sir Edmund, and in May **2002** he climbed Everest again as part of a documentary to commemorate **50** years since his father's original climb.

The 1999 polar expedition was named for its sponsor, the ill-fated communications company Iridium. The team recorded a video diary of the journey as they went, and Peter Hillary commentated the daily progress of the expedition by satellite phone to the media. Their arrival at the pole was videoed by Americans living at the polar station. The next day they flew back to Scott Base, having already decided to abandon the return journey on foot because of hardship and the lateness of the season.

The expedition arrived at the Pole at 5.17pm, and the world heard of their arrival within minutes. An hour after they got there, Peter Hillary was sitting on a sledge at the South Pole doing a live audio-interview on television and talking to his wife back home in New Zealand. The main television evening news programmes in New Zealand go to air at 6pm. Early in this night's programme, One Network News (on the channel which has most of the New Zealand audience) announced that Hillary was about to arrive at the pole and carried an interview with their reporter at Scott Base. At 6.20pm, a third of the way into the hour-long programme, news of the arrival was confirmed and one of the two news anchors conducted a live telephone interview with Hillary:

*John Hawkesby (news anchor)*

Returning now to the Iridium ice trekkers  
and news they have finally reached the South Pole.  
It's been one of the toughest treks in history  
through one of the world's most hostile environments.  
But after eight-four days and nearly fifteen hundred kilometres  
the Iridium ice trekkers have finally achieved their goal.

*Judy Bailey (news anchor)*

Along the way Peter Hillary, Eric Phillips and Joji Muir have conquered bad weather, illness and frostbite.  
But within the last hour they've put all that behind them, reaching the world's southernmost point.  
And joining us now live by phone from the South Pole is Peter Hillary:  
Peter, congratulations to you all. Has it been worth it?

*Peter Hillary*

Oh look it's – I must say having got here – ah – to the South Pole – everything seems worth it,  
Judy.  
I'm sitting on my sled at exactly ninety degrees south, it's nearly thirty degrees below zero, but  
I wouldn't – I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.  
It's just fantastic.

*Bailey* Peter, how are you going to celebrate this wonderful achievement down there?

*Hillary* Well I must say I think under different circumstances it could be very difficult but the Americans at the South Pole station have been most hospitable.  
 About a hundred of them came out and cheered us as we arrived at the pole and they've given us a wonderful meal.  
 They're making us feel very very included at home.  
 Look it's fine – I don't think it's going to be any difficulty whatsoever.  
 It's just wonderful to be here.

*Bailey* Wonderful.

Here we are in a different era —obviously different from **1913**, but also from **1958**. As Hillary says several times in the interview, he is sitting at the Pole talking live to New Zealand. The story is done in the manner of a scoop (the two main news channels in New Zealand are intensely competitive). This is treated as a what-a-story —that is, the general rules of coverage are broken, and even for live interviews this one is very unpredictable. The coverage gives the impression that the timing of the expedition's arrival may even have been orchestrated for television, or at least that Hillary was urged to get there in time so this could be carried live, because by the next night the story would be dead.

Nationalism runs strong in the story. The woman anchor, Judy Bailey, has in any case a tendency to assume—or be attributed with—another-of-the-nation role. Here she enthuses over Hillary's achievement, lets her hands fall to the desk in delighted emphasis, over-smiles, and exhausts the lexicon of ingroup self-congratulation (she and Hillary produce *wonderful* four times in the last few lines of the transcript above).

The Pole—one of the most hostile environments on earth—is also domesticated in this coverage, a feature which was already present in **1958** when Edmund Hillary's team was described having a meal and shower at the polar station. This is encapsulated in Peter Hillary's phrasing about the hospitality of the Americans at the station—*They're making us feel very very much at home*.

The domestication deepens later in the news programme when the other news anchor, John Hawkesby, does a live interview with both Peter Hillary at the pole (by phone) and his wife, Yvonne Oomen, live on camera at home in New Zealand. This is an extreme example of the private mingling with the public (cf Giddens **1991**):

*Hawkesby* Peter's able to listen to you at the moment.  
 Would you like – do you mind us eavesdropping if you just like to say to him –

*Oomen* Oh no, that's fine.  
 Darling, congratulations, I'm so proud of you.  
 It's just wonderful.

*Hillary* Oh look, I'm delighted to be here and I'm – I'm – ah – just glad to be talking to you  
– in fact I've –  
I partially did it for you too darling.

*Oomen* I kiiow, I kiiow.

Publicly-oriented clichés —*delighted to be here* echoes Hillary's repeated phrasings throughout the interview — mix with the very private: *I partially did it for you too darling – I know, I know*. There are catches in the couple's voices as they address each other direct. The sense of voyeurism becomes acute, and during the interview Hawkesby himself refers three times to this embarrassment. He eventually closes the interview with a quip about the lawns at home needing mowing, which both neatly defuses the tension and again counterpoints the public arena with the domestic.

The coverage casts Yvonne Oomen in the waiting wife role, just as was Kathleen Scott at the beginning of the century. It is a role she is clearly prepared to play, while it is equally evident from her on-air performance that she is a capable and independent woman (as was Kathleen Scott, according to the biographies).

The domestication intensified the following night during the half-hour magazine programme (“Holmes”) which follows the news at 7pm on Television One. On this night the programme was devoted entirely to this story. The family —Oomen, their son and Sir Edmund— gathered in the studio for a live televised conversation with Peter Hillary and his two companions, now having flown back to Scott Base. There is delayed video footage of the three explorers' arrival at the pole and their reception by the Americans the previous evening. TV1 makes a lot of play —in the manner of commercial media— that this is the world's first live television interview to be broadcast from Antarctica.

We can see the domestication of the most remote place on earth by means of a technology which makes people who are there appear, live and co-present on screen, with those who are comfortably at home. This leads to a different kind of coverage. The interviews are largely lacking in informational content. They abound in clichés, focussing on the phatic and affective. In one sense this eradicates the sense of distance and inaccessibility which was (literally) inescapable for Scott, who had no way out except to walk. Peter Hillary by contrast decides to cancel his intended return trek because it is too late in the season and flies back to base. However, the hostility of the environment and its ability to dominate humans is still present in the explorers' comments about their trek.

After the television bonanza, the press coverage is scarcely worth talking about, and this is obviously what the *Herald* thought too. The story in the next morning's paper is a very routine one, with a few column inches at the bottom of the front page. The front page is now the *Herald's* lead news page (and has been for decades). The masthead is the same but larger. Stories have single headlines, and the crisp tight wording of contemporary news style. There are photos, and teasers for the rest of the day's contents. In short, it looks a thoroughly up-to-date front page.



# The New Zealand Herald

Wednesday, January 27, 1999      NEWS PAPER OF THE YEAR      Classified Index p. F14

**10,000 & COUNTING**  
New recruits off to school - A3

**BACK TO BASICS**  
All Black fitness experts on water - E10

**SHELL LIFE**  
The new literature read in groups

**LOOKING FOR A CAR?**  
Come for sale, better.

### Front lines

**Foxy survives 25 days underground**  
The 19-year-old fox was rescued after being trapped in a hole in the ground near the town of Foxton. The fox was found by a local resident and taken to a vet where it was treated for injuries. It is now being kept in a secure enclosure.

### nation

**Test junkies**  
The New Zealand cricket team has been criticised for their performance in the recent test matches. Some fans are calling for a change in the team's strategy.

### sport

**Net gain**  
The New Zealand netball team has secured a victory in their recent match. The team's performance was praised by fans and commentators.

### on show

**In front**  
A new television show is set to air on national television. The show promises to be an entertaining and informative watch.

### Regulators

The government has announced new regulations for the financial services industry. These regulations are designed to protect consumers and ensure the stability of the market.

### Today's WEATHER

Cloudy with rain. High 15, low 10. Wind light to moderate.

### Today's TV

7:00pm News, 8:00pm Entertainment, 9:00pm Sports.

### Tomorrow

Partly cloudy with some rain. High 16, low 11. Wind moderate.

# Transport plan OK but cash questions

By BENJAMIN OGDEN

The Government's transport plan has been approved by Parliament, but the plan's funding remains a major question mark. The plan includes a range of measures to improve the transport system, including new roads, public transport services, and safety improvements. However, the cost of these measures is significant, and the Government is facing questions about how to fund them.

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# Suicide pact revealed in court

By TONY WALK

A court case has revealed a shocking suicide pact between a man and a woman. The couple had agreed to take their own lives together, but the man changed his mind and sought help. The court proceedings have shed light on the couple's relationship and the circumstances surrounding the pact.

The man, who is now in a secure psychiatric hospital, has been charged with the murder of his partner. The woman's death is being treated as a suicide. The court case is expected to last several weeks.

# Hillary's trekkers set a special pole

The Hillary's trekkers have set a special pole on Mount Everest. The pole is a tribute to the legendary mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary, who was the first person to reach the summit of Everest. The trekkers are hoping to reach the summit of Everest this year.

The Hillary's trekkers are a group of experienced mountaineers who have been training for months. They are hoping to reach the summit of Everest this year. The Hillary's trekkers are a group of experienced mountaineers who have been training for months.



# Irradiated food may soon be on menu for consumers

By TONY OGDEN

Consumers may soon be able to enjoy irradiated food. The government has approved the use of irradiation to kill bacteria in food. This process is safe and effective, and it can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Irradiated food is already available in some countries, and it is expected to become more widely available in New Zealand.

The government has approved the use of irradiation to kill bacteria in food. This process is safe and effective, and it can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Irradiated food is already available in some countries, and it is expected to become more widely available in New Zealand.

Two words for people sick of hefty bank charges.

# NO FEES

PREMIER

TSB Bank

Figure 5: NZ Herald, 27th January 1999, front page  
 O Servicio de Publicaciones. Universidad de Murcia. All rights reserved. IJES, vol. 3 (1), 3003, pp. 189-208

The press in 1999 was very aware of being scooped by electronic media, and reduced its own coverage accordingly. The headline in the story is oddly tangential, a followup type of headline, indicative of the *Herald* struggling to find an angle that the broadcast media have not already covered. Clearly no photos of Hillary's arrival at the pole had come through intime for use before deadline the previous night —we are not yet in the era of fully real-time communication. Nevertheless, the deadline and the scoop can be seen operating as news drivers at both ends of the century, from the era of the press to the era of television.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

These three cases are revealing about change and continuity in time and place, and their relationship across the 20th century. News values are the same at a macro level while different at the micro level. Nationalism for example is obtrusive in all three cases, but its object shifts from the self-assured, late-imperial character of the British Empire at the start of the 20th century, to a New Zealand versus Britain clash in the middle of the century as the ex-colony flexes its independence, to the rather brashly media-driven celebration of a local hero at the end of the 20th century. The waiting wife is part of both scenarios, showing that the underlying domestic construction of such undertakings has changed little over the century.

However, the way in which the person of the waiting wife has to behave has changed, along with the positioning of the audience, as part of the social impact of the reorganisation of time and space. For the newsworthy, exposure is now closer and more real —Yvonne Oomen is much more under scrutiny than Kathleen Scott was. For the audience, we are more voyeuristic, intruding on private lives in real time, not with the distancing of interview and the timelapse until publication. We are close up, but still of course at a distance. The hostile environment is presented as domesticated, and domestic life is introduced into the life of the expedition.

News practice also shows a mix of change and continuity. The deadline and the scoop drive the news in all three periods, but the scooping medium changes from press to radio to television. The press is there in each case, but cast in a changing role as its ability to be first with the news is lost. There is time compression, with the lapse between an event and its reporting shrinking exponentially from months to hours to minutes. The immediacy of the coverage grows in another sense, with the move from the arm's-length character of print reporting, through radio's ability to carry the voices of newsmakers, to television's display of events "as if you were there". True live coverage is not quite achieved in 1999 —the arrival at the pole could not be telecast live. What we actually see is a live interview filmed a day later from back at base. And there is a shift from the official handout to the live interview as the basis of news, and from *trust* in the official handout to reliance on directly media-sourced information.

Accompanying these shifts is a change in news presentation, discourse and language. Newspaper design changes radically, most notably from the placement of classified advertisements to news on the front page. Cross-column headlines and text increase (in part with

the technological shift from letterpress to offset), and photographs become the norm. The type size increases. Story structure is reconfigured with the shift from multiple headlines. There is linguistic compression, especially in the headlines, with function words dropped and the option for shorter, sharper lexical items. Some vocabulary is left behind as archaic. Thus the drive to linguistic compression which has characterized the development of news discourse for more than a century continues to be a major force in changing news language.

## NOTES:

\* An earlier version of this paper was published as Bell (2002), and a shorter version as Bell (in press). Acknowledgement is made to the New Zealand Herald for kind permission to reproduce the excerpts used in the paper.

<sup>1</sup> These kinds of headlines do, in fact, still exist, but only in eccentric, hyper-elite newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*. Here standard headlining practice includes several decks, and full sentences rather than the reduced syntax normally associated with modern "headline".

Among the many ironies of the expedition is that Scott ensured his immortality in Antarctic exploration by dying. If he had lived and returned, he would have been the man who came second to Amundsen. As it was, his "martyrdom" completely overshadowed Amundsen's successful expedition in both popular and historical exposure—to the extent, for example, that it did not occur to me until well advanced in this project that Amundsen would have arguably been the more apt case for comparative purposes than Scott. Amundsen's news of attaining the pole was transmitted within three months of the event, when his ship arrived in Hobart, Tasmania, on 7 March 1912.

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