

'Gloriously Widowed': Public Mourning and Private Grief in the Aftermath of Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition, 1910-1913

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the emotional experiences of two families who were bereaved by the *Terra Nova* expedition. The very public nature of these deaths, and the intensive press coverage of the losses and aftermath of the expedition saw an outpouring of public mourning within Britain; yet for the Scott and Evans families, these deaths were also hugely personal losses. The article argues that press intrusion into the families' grief profoundly altered their emotional experiences of loss, not only in the immediate aftermath of the deaths, but also in the years that followed. The two families came from profoundly different backgrounds in terms of class, social influence, and the resources available to them after their loss; however, this paper shows how the actions of the press and the persistence of the public gaze briefly united them in this unique experience of loss under the spotlight of Edwardian Britain.

KEYWORDS: Grief; Antarctic History; Women's History; Public Memory; Legacy; Polar Exploration



THE BRITISH ANTARCTIC Expedition 1910-1913 (also known as the *Terra Nova* expedition) holds a specific niche within the British cultural imagination of historic polar exploration. The expedition's goal was to reach the South Pole for the first time – an aim that was shared by a separate, Norwegian expedition, and led to the depiction of the mythologised 'Race for the Pole' by the British press. While both parties reached the Pole within five weeks of one another, only the Norwegian team returned safely. The British team of five had man-hauled themselves and their belongings to the Pole; but as their return journey progressed, their journal entries traced their diminishing hopes of reaching safety, punctuated by the decline and deaths of Petty Officer Edgar Evans (1876-1912), and Captain Lawrence Oates (1880-1912). The remaining three men –

Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912), Dr Edward Wilson (1872-1912), and Lieutenant Henry Bowers (1883-1912) became stranded in a blizzard eleven miles from safety; and as their food and fuel supplies dwindled, they knew there was little they could do but wait for death to arrive. In the time they had left, all three men wrote as much as they could, ensuring that they would leave behind a clear narrative of how their deaths had come to pass, and letters for those who would grieve them.

The remaining expedition members found the journals, letters, and bodies six months later. Despite the rapid developments in communications technologies during this period, the surviving men had no way to transmit the news of the party's deaths from the Antarctic to the outside world until they arrived back in New Zealand, almost a year after the men had died. The deaths had occurred slowly and silently; however, once the story reached Britain, it was met with an explosion in the press that lamented and glorified the sacrificial deaths of these tragic heroes. The heavy news coverage not only amplified the national mourning for the dead, but also focused a spotlight on those who had been 'gloriously widowed' by the expedition.¹ Scott, Wilson, and Evans were married; and Scott and Evans both had young children. Their families had already endured three years of anxiety, being unable to communicate with their absent loved ones except via the annual supply ship's visit to exchange news and letters. However, this anxiety was not relieved by the return of their loved ones, but instead transformed into grief by the news of their personal loss.

Two families in particular – those of Captain Scott and Petty Officer Evans – became the focus of intense press attention. This paper will explore the families' emotional experiences of and responses to their bereavement through the lens of the explorers' widows, alongside the influence of the public gaze and press intrusion on their grief. It is crucial to acknowledge the profound differences in class, agency, and influence between these families as shaping forces on their experiences during this challenging period. While they were united by this brief and almost unique experience of grief under the public spotlight, their lives were otherwise fundamentally different. Kathleen Scott (1878-1947) held powerful connections in social, political, and artistic spheres that she developed both through her career as a sculptor, and through her position as a celebrated explorer's wife. Upon her husband's death, she inherited a role in the framing of the expedition's public narrative and memory. Lois Evans (1879-1952)

¹ 'Casket for Lady Scott', *Daily Mirror*, 27th May 1913. Hosted by the Mirror Historical Archive.

was a working-class woman who balanced her grief with the necessity of providing for her three children – Norman, aged 7; Muriel, aged 5; and Ralph, aged 4 – without her husband’s emotional or financial support. The intense press intrusion, combined with her lack of agency over her husband’s legacy, exacerbated the pressures that Lois and her family faced.

This article builds upon recent work undertaken by Anne Fletcher, Kari Herbert, and Katherine MacInnes to recover the life histories of polar explorers’ wives.² With this valuable biographical work as a foundation, I explore the experiences of these two families both through the lens of polar exploration, and within the sociocultural contexts that they lived and worked in. Historians including Geoffrey Cubitt, Max Jones, and Stephanie Barczewski have explored the cultural impacts and understandings of this expedition within Britain, whilst Beau Riffenburgh has highlighted the power of the press in shaping these public understandings of polar exploration.³ I examine the pressures, mindsets and expectations that shaped these families’ experiences of private grief in the context of national mourning by uniting this sociocultural backdrop with contemporary understandings of masculinity, death, and bereavement within this period.

My work centres the surviving primary sources which inform the experiences of these families – however, it is vital to acknowledge the disparity in the extant first-hand accounts available from each family. Kathleen Scott was well-connected, and her letters have been preserved in collections across Britain – including the Scott Polar Research Institute, the University Library, Cambridge, and the National Maritime Museum. Her partial autobiography and diaries were edited and published posthumously in 1949 by

² Anne Fletcher, *Widows of the Ice: The Women That Scott’s Antarctic Expedition Left Behind* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2022); Kari Herbert, *Polar Wives: The Remarkable Women behind the World’s Most Daring Explorers* (Vancouver: Greystone, 2012); Katherine MacInnes, *Snow Widows: Scott’s Fatal Antarctic Expedition Through the Eyes of the Women They Left Behind* (London: William Collins, 2022) and *Woman with the Iceberg Eyes: Oriana F. Wilson* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2019).

³ Geoffrey Cubitt, *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, ed. by Allen Warren and Geoffrey Cubitt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Max Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott’s Antarctic Sacrifice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Antarctic Destinies: Scott, Shackleton, and the Changing Face of Heroism* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*, Polar Research Series (London: Belhaven, 1993).

her second husband, Edward Hilton-Young, and offer a clear insight into her experiences of this expedition, and her life in the following decades. This volume has been vital to this article, and is cited throughout under the name Young, which Kathleen adopted after her second marriage. Unfortunately, Lois's archival presence is extremely limited in comparison to many of her contemporaries, and particularly in comparison to that of Kathleen. None of her personal correspondence has been preserved, and the only surviving instances of her in her own words are found within archived newspaper articles. In order to recover as much of her lived experience as possible, this article draws from newspaper clippings books held by the Scott Polar Research Institute, and from several online newspaper archives.

The fundamental inequalities between the two families shaped their lives, their archival footprints, and their experiences of bereavement in the public view. These disparities must be acknowledged, and also recognised as a shaping force on this article and its methodology. By piecing together the fragments that each family left behind, I have traced something of their individual lived experiences from this challenging period in their lives. Where their stories have previously been buried beneath press prioritisation and celebration of the sacrifices made by the tragic heroes for King, country, and knowledge, I bring them to the forefront. I examine the families' experiences of private grief under the public gaze, and the power of class and influence in shaping how grief was expressed and experienced by the immediately bereaved.

Taking the Strain

The disparities between the social circumstances of the Scott and Evans families are brought into sharp relief by their experiences during the expedition's absence, which went on to determine the resources and influence available to them following their loss. Prior to her marriage, Kathleen's career had generated a set of influential connections. Her position as the wife of a renowned polar explorer and expedition leader saw her network and status continue to grow into high societal and political spheres. Lois's husband also had previous Antarctic experience, having been part of Scott's first expedition, but his rank of Petty Officer set him apart from the influence of the expedition's officers and scientists, and placed him alongside the other seamen.

Kathleen had entered her marriage in 1907 in the knowledge that her husband planned to lead another Antarctic expedition within the next few years. Despite having

given birth the day after the expedition was publicly announced in September 1909, Kathleen threw herself whole-heartedly into the preparations and fundraising efforts for the expedition from this point until the ship's final departure from New Zealand in November 1910.⁴ After returning to London, she led a busy life – attending scientific lectures, fulfilling her first sculpture commissions, and receiving regular visits from influential figures including Prime Minister Asquith and Sir Lewis Beaumont.⁵ She recorded this all in her diaries, which were written for her husband to read upon his return and often addressed him directly as 'you' or by his nickname 'my dear Con'.

To her frustration, Kathleen's public status placed her among the first to be contacted by the press whenever new expedition rumours or updates arose. When the news broke that the Norwegian party had reached the South Pole, unfounded rumours emerged that Scott had also reached the Pole. In her diary, Kathleen recalled how the press descended upon her home by phone, telegram, and in person, all claiming to have exclusive news of her husband's success.⁶ Despite her refusal to engage with the reporters, one paper published an interview they claimed to have conducted with her. In response, she spoke out:

I put a short note in the 'The Times' and 'The Morning Post' that I had no reason to believe the reports, and that I was too occupied to see any reporters whatsoever. But I tasted of hell all the same.⁷

Her frustration at this intrusion is palpable, as her name was used without permission to give credibility to the false reports; however, her connections enabled her to publicly challenge these reports in the press by making her stance clear in her own words. This incident illustrates both the power and influence connected to Kathleen's word as the wife of the expedition's leader, as well as the beginnings of the press interactions and intrusions into the lives of those with ties to the expedition – a theme that would continue to grow over the following years.

Lois's experience of her husband's absence was drastically different. Unlike the other wives, Lois had not been able to travel with the expedition to New Zealand to be

⁴ Fletcher, p. 82.

⁵ Kathleen Bruce Young, *Self-Portrait of an Artist, from the Diaries and Memoirs of Lady Kennet, Kathleen, Lady Scott*, ed. by Edith Young (London: Murray, 1949), p. 101, 93.

⁶ Young, pp. 107-108.

⁷ Young, p. 108.

present for its final departure – instead, she traced Evans’s journey through his letters after the ship left Cardiff in June 1910. In his absence, she navigated a difficult balance to provide for her young children, maintain her home, and support her parents on the expedition salary. This situation was intensified when the first letters from the expedition arrived in Britain in late 1911, bringing a double blow to Lois. The first was that her husband’s absence would last for at least another year; the second that the expedition members had opted to forfeit a year’s wage in order to relieve some of the expedition’s debts.⁸ Not only was Lois alone in managing this emotionally and practically delicate situation for another year, but she would have to do so on a severely reduced income. Before long, she was forced to sell her husband’s Polar Medal from his previous Antarctic work; and within the year, the family had no choice but to leave their home in Portsmouth, and move to live with Lois’ parents in Wales, where she could take on a variety of work to support herself until Evans’ return.⁹ By this point, she knew that Evans had been chosen to be part of the Polar party – what she did not know was that he had been dead for over six months.

The circumstances that the two families experienced during these intervening years could not have been much more different. However, they were united by the anxieties and absences that the expedition’s extended silences caused, as well as by the sharp reminders of these concerns that expedition news often provoked. For Kathleen, this was in the emotional labour of managing the Press’s responses to new information; for Lois, this emotional labour revolved around managing her increasingly difficult situation.¹⁰

In his study of the Arctic as a spectral space, Shane McCorristine highlights the power of hope in maintaining connections with absent explorers. In this case, the men were in a dangerous polar environment that was beyond the reach of contemporary communication technologies and imagined by those at home through a lens of

⁸ Fletcher, pp. 109-110.

⁹ Fletcher, p. 133.

¹⁰ The term emotional labour comes from Arlie Russell Hochschild's *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), in which she looks at unpaid emotional labour within the context of paid work. However, both Kathleen and Lois were expected to carry out this emotionally taxing work without any recompense due to their intimate connections to the expedition and its members.

anxieties, promises, and hopes for a future reunion with their loved ones.¹¹ The power of hope for a simpler future following their husbands' return sustained both families during the difficult years of the expedition's absence, only to be abruptly shattered in February 1913. Following this long silence, the families' hopes and anxieties were compounded by grief, and the emotional labour of coping with temporary absence replaced with that of processing the permanence of their loss. It was an experience further complicated by the public nature of their loss, and the press involvement in shaping the national narrative of their personal bereavement.

Breaking Point

The decline and deaths of the polar party were carefully recorded by its members within their journals. Scott was among the three who were found dead in their tent after being stranded by a blizzard in late March 1912. Evans, however, had died weeks earlier after sustaining a cerebral haemorrhage during a fall into a crevasse, which added confusion, dizziness, and a severe loss of strength to the symptoms of scurvy that troubled the whole party.¹² Scott carefully recorded the rapid decline and deaths of Evans and Oates, in hopes that the documents would be found and taken home to their loved ones. These vital records allowed for the events that led to the party's deaths to be pieced together, granting a limited sense of closure to those they left behind.

The expedition had been expected to return to New Zealand in March 1913, allowing for further scientific work to be conducted during the Antarctic summer season. However, in light of the Polar party's deaths, the expedition departed from the Antarctic a month early, arriving in New Zealand late on 10th February 1913. At this time, Kathleen had left her toddler son with her mother-in-law, and was travelling to New Zealand ahead of the expedition's anticipated arrival date. Thus, when the news of the deaths broke on 11th February, she was unreachable, as her ship was out of range of any existing telegram systems. The press seized upon this fact, publishing conflicting information from Reuters and Central News as they attempted to establish whether the

¹¹ Shane McCorristine, *The Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration* (London: UCL Press, 2018), p. 101.

¹² Fletcher, p. 196.

news had reached the ship and its passengers.¹³ Her absence was frequently remarked upon as the nation plunged into public mourning, particularly in regards to a memorial service for the Polar party that was held at St Paul's Cathedral on 14th February, and attended by the King, while schoolchildren across Britain were read an account of the deaths.¹⁴

Eight days after the news broke, a brief message finally reached the ship's captain, who quietly informed Kathleen of the deaths; yet beyond the fact of Scott's death, no further information was available. Kathleen's diary speaks to the distress, anxiety, and frustration that this caused her, as the lack of information gave rise to further fears of what her late husband might have suffered. On 21st February, she wrote:

Anything to get the awful, haunting picture out of my head. [...] All these long weary days with no more news. Always only his pain, his mental agony, burning into my brain... all the different aspects of it come to me one by one.¹⁵

When the telegram system came back into range late on 23rd February, Kathleen sat in the Wireless Room, waiting for news. Her hopes soon shifted into further frustration, as condolence messages flooded the system for two consecutive nights, preventing any further information from getting through. The ship's name had been regularly published in several newspapers since the news had broken, enabling those beyond Kathleen's social circle to send her messages. Referring to these 'long nights of anxiety', Kathleen wrote that 'without knowing it, my kind friends [...] are baulking my news and keeping me absolutely in ignorance except of the main fact'.¹⁶ And the following night, she regrets that 'none of them [the messages] were what I wanted, none of them news, just condolences'.¹⁷ Her frustration here is palpable; after the hopes of reuniting with her husband had been devastated by the news of his death, she faced the fact alone,

¹³ *The Morning Post*, 11th February 1913; *The Daily Mail*, 11th February 1913; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12th February 1913. Held in Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, University of Cambridge, press clippings book SPRI MS 1453/40. I would like to thank Naomi Boneham, archivist at the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, and Gwilym Games from Swansea Council Library for their invaluable help and patience in tracing surviving copies of the newspapers that bring this article to life.

¹⁴ *Daily Mail*, 14th February 1913, SPRI MS 1453/40.

¹⁵ Young, p. 122.

¹⁶ Young, p. 122.

¹⁷ Young, p. 123.

without any details that could ease her mind from imagining what might have happened to him, and what he may have suffered.

On 27th February, Kathleen was met in Wellington, New Zealand, by her brother Wilfrid, fellow expedition widow Oriana Wilson, and acting expedition leader Dr Atkinson, who bore a telegram from Sir Joseph Kinsey, the expedition's agent in New Zealand, offering condolences, reassurances, and hospitality during her stay in New Zealand.¹⁸ As acting commander, Atkinson had read the relevant parts of the recovered journals in order to reconstruct the events of the polar journey into a narrative for the expedition members, their families, and the press. Upon Kathleen's arrival, he gave her Scott's journals and the letters that he had written to her throughout the expedition, and the following day, he made himself available to answer any questions that she had and felt able to ask.¹⁹ Once she had the answers, Kathleen spent the afternoon with Oriana, the widow of Dr Edward Adrian Wilson who had been the expedition's Chief Scientific Officer and one of Scott's closest friends. In her diary that day, she wrote that 'he [Atkinson] told me details of how he found you, but it was not enough [...] I am so, so grateful it was Atkinson who found you, he is so quiet and tactful and reverent'.²⁰ A fortnight after receiving the news, Kathleen was still directly addressing her late husband, even as she finally began to process the reality of her loss.

This reception, and the support that Kathleen received in the following days, is indicative of the sociality that the expedition had generated, built from its surviving members, their families and friends, and those whose line of work had involved them with the expedition and its tragic outcome. This sociality provided a form of emotional community, founded in the shared experience of the expedition, which recognised and anticipated Kathleen's needs and was prepared to meet them upon her arrival. This community, and their actions in sharing their memories of the deceased, creates what Pat Jalland has termed a 'social memory' between those who knew the dead individual best, making space for them to grieve their individual losses.²¹ With her brother to accompany her on her journey home, Atkinson to help her understand her husband's

¹⁸ Sir Joseph Kinsey to Kathleen Scott, 25th February 1913. Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, SPRI MS/1453/126/3.

¹⁹ Young, p. 123.

²⁰ Young, p. 124.

²¹ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 360.

death, Oriana to share her sorrow with, and Kinsey working behind the scenes to communicate with the press and committees on Scott's behalf, the expedition community gave Kathleen the time, information, and emotional support that she needed to privately process her grief. Kathleen's distance from Britain also enabled her to avoid direct engagement with the press while the story of the tragedy was at its peak. Within a week of her arrival in New Zealand, Kathleen began her journey home, arriving in Dover on 11th April. Ten days later, she put out a statement, which was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

Sir, -- Would you be kind enough to convey to the public my very grateful thanks for the remarkable sympathy and generosity shown to me? [...] May I also take this opportunity of tendering my real thanks to the Press for their consideration on my return to England that they have refrained from asking for information or interviews with a courtesy that has not lacked appreciation. – Sincerely yours, Kathleen Scott.²²

Kathleen's experience of grief was shaped by her varying degrees of agency, communication, and control throughout this difficult time. After a frustrating period of silence and isolation from the information and community that could help her cope with her grief, she was greeted and supported by the expedition sociality. This allowed her to come to terms with what had happened, and the enormity of the public response to her personal loss, without needing to engage with the press or public until she was ready to do so.

When the news reached Britain on 11th February 1913, it was received with a national outpouring of grief, which was simultaneously generated by and the cause of intensive press coverage. Lois was at work, collecting cockles on a local beach, when a telegram from the *Terra Nova* crew reached her, which read 'Members wish to express deepest sympathy in your sad loss'.²³ No further information was given – again, all Lois knew was that her husband was dead. She quickly returned home where reporters soon found her; with Kathleen at sea and Oriana in New Zealand, Lois was the only polar

²² 'Lady Scott's Thanks', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21st April 1913. Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, University of Cambridge, press clippings book SPRI MS 1453/39/2.

²³ 'Lady Scott's Thanks', p. 153.

widow accessible to the British press. This coincidence led reporters to her doorstep, and placed her and her family under the intensity of the public gaze.

A local newspaper, *The Cambria Daily Leader*, used their proximity to the family home to demonstrate their journalistic prowess, highlighting that they had been the first to interview the family after the news broke, and had printed the first photographs of Lois and her children by 5:30pm that evening.²⁴ In the following days, more photographs of the family, taken during this vulnerable time, appeared in national papers such as *The Daily Sketch*, *The Daily Graphic*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Daily Mirror*, including two of the eldest children being brought home from school before they knew of their father's death.²⁵ The latter two newspapers also published the family's address within their correspondents' interviews with Lois. The *Mirror's* correspondent took interviews both on the day the news broke, and a more extensive one the following day, which filled a column and included the children's responses to being told of their loss. Norman supposedly replied that 'I shall see him in heaven. I must work hard for you now mummy', and Muriel asked her mother what should replace her daily prayer of 'Please God, take care of Daddy and bring him safely home'.²⁶ The reporter appears to have stayed for most of the day, as he also narrated a visit from the expedition secretary that afternoon and spoke to Lois's father, who highlighted the dire financial situation that the family now found themselves in.

Before they knew the circumstances of their loved one's death, Evans's family were put under a press spotlight which used their words and image to illustrate and intensify the grief that gripped the nation. This decision simultaneously fed into and was shaped by the powerful cultural ideal of heroic sacrifice of lives in the name of national progress. This ideal developed continuously throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, peaking in the early 1910s.²⁷ It was shattered by the violence and volume of deaths resulting from the Great War, which could not be rationalised or

²⁴ 'Grief in Gower', *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 11th February 1913; 'Our Pictures', *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 13th February 1913, hosted by the National Library of Wales.

²⁵ 'Dead Heroes', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1913, hosted by The Telegraph Historical Archive; also *The Daily Sketch*, 13th February 1913, *The Daily Mirror* 13th February 1913, and *The Daily Graphic*, 14th February 1913, SPRI MS 1453/40.

²⁶ 'Mother's Tears In A Cottage', *The Daily Mirror*, 13th February 1913. Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, press clippings book SPRI MS 1958/1.

²⁷ Barczewski, p. 140.

justified through the idealised lens of heroic sacrifice.²⁸ In order to reach the Pole for King and country, Evans had given up his home, his wife, and his children; and now the press showed the nation precisely what – and who – he had left behind in their name.

The situation is not only reminiscent of a modern paparazzi encounter, but also illuminates Joanne Begiato's work on concepts of masculinity, and their variations between classes, occupations, and public or private spheres. Evans had not only been an explorer, but also a 'Jack Tar' – a British naval seaman, whose popular image had a strong cultural pull within late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Begiato argues that the Jack Tar, as a military figure who simultaneously worked to protect his nation, his home, and his family, was a key part of this period's ideals of working-class manliness.²⁹ Begiato frames farewells on the doorstep as a key moment for the middle-class public to assess the manliness and character of working-class men through their interactions with those they worked to protect and provide for.³⁰ In this case, however, the man in question was not present at the doorstep, and would never return to it – therefore he could only be accessed and assessed through the responses of those he had left behind. As Lois's words were made public, they were used to assess her character as well as her husband's.

Lois's words reflect the same characteristics that Begiato highlights as those used to evaluate manliness both within and beyond the home.³¹ Speaking to the *Daily Telegraph*, she described him as 'such a brave, strong man [...] and he was kind, and such a devoted father!'.³² Her words frame Evans both in terms of the strength and bravery ascribed to men serving in the Navy, and as a caring provider for his family. Despite her unfamiliarity with the power and workings of the press, Lois said all the 'right' things to the reporters to ensure that her husband was presented to the public in a favourable light.

²⁸ This conflict is referred to as 'the Great War' throughout this article in order to remove the juxtaposition between the First and Second World War, and avoid post-war contexts being applied to pre-war events and cultural understandings.

²⁹ Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain, 1760-1900: Bodies, Emotion, and Material Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 10-11.

³⁰ Begiato, p. 161.

³¹ Begiato, p. 12.

³² *The Daily Telegraph*, 14th February 1913.

With the reporters returning multiple times in the days after the news broke, Lois's family had little time to process their loss and emotions privately within their domestic space. Their words, images, and grief were commodified by the press as articles of interest to feed the national mood of mourning, which was prioritised over the family's loss, feelings, and the privacy of their home. These intensely invasive encounters shaped the family's emotional experience and memory of their grief; however, it had resulted almost entirely from chance. Had Kathleen or Oriana also been in Britain, it is unlikely that the Evans family would have been the sole focus of so much attention in this crucial moment.

The press clearly perceived the family to be valuable at this point. Unlike Kathleen, Lois was not a key character in the unfolding expedition narrative – she had no influence over the expedition, or in the development of its public legacy. However, with no official expedition spokesperson available at this point, the press shifted its focus to match the national emotional response to the deaths by highlighting the intensity of the loss for those left behind. Lois's family, home, and grief were used by the reporters as an emotional tool to illustrate and focus the public's mourning; yet this focus was not on the family members as individuals, but framed through the familiar archetypes of a grieving widow with a hero's children to raise in the story of lives sacrificed for the nation.

Once the expedition's officers were within reach, and Kathleen was back on British soil, Lois and her family fell from the public's focus and sympathy as quickly as they had come into it. Their value for the press lay in their vulnerability and accessibility rather than their personal experiences. In most cases, this would have been the end of the press intervention within their lives, leaving the Evans family alongside the thousands of families bereaved in the course of British maritime and colonial services. Yet in this case, the family's experience with the press, and its power to shape formerly unknown lives to fit a selected narrative, was far from over.

A Lasting Legacy

The public interest in the tragic outcome of the expedition quickly embedded its story within the national consciousness, cementing its place as a heroic narrative to be remembered, celebrated, and used to inspire the next generation. Max Jones has traced the expedition's shifting moral and social currency across the rapidly changing cultural

landscape of 1913-1939, and demonstrates how its narrative was repeatedly reworked to suit specific historic moments.³³ The creation of this heroic legacy for the polar party relied on the rewriting of the individual members' lives to hold a specific meaning and place within the collective memory of the expedition, as Geoffrey Cubitt has demonstrated.³⁴ However, Julie-Marie Strange argues that, in cases where a corpse was absent, the bereaved family's ability to take ownership over the individual's death and memory became vital in enabling them to process their loss.³⁵ Thus while the actions of the press created a strong public legacy, it also complicated the grieving process for those facing a personal loss.

The collision of these forms of memory-making aggravated the emotional challenges that both families were experiencing; yet it was particularly catastrophic for Lois. Despite her best efforts, she had no influence over the legacy that was assigned to her husband, nor the connections requisite to make her voice heard. Kathleen, meanwhile, became overwhelmed and frustrated by the weight of her late husband's legacy, as his memory fell to her to protect, maintain, and frame for the public. Nonetheless, she used her influence to ensure that Scott would be remembered in a positive light, and in a way that represented him best.

From the outside, it appears that Kathleen quickly took to her new position in the aftermath of the expedition. She was involved in the shaping of the expedition reports, the editing of Scott's journals for publication, and the practical logistics of wrapping up the final strands of the expedition as a part of the London Committee.³⁶ Fletcher highlights how the death of explorers often gave their female relatives the power and influence to shape their loved ones' legacies and life stories; and Kathleen, with her own set of skills and connections, used this power to the full.³⁷ Her influence remains visible in the published versions of her husband's expedition journals, with modern versions often including her deliberate alterations and exclusions as an appendix, and in many of the sculptures erected in memory of the Polar party. Beau

³³ Jones, p. 5.

³⁴ Cubitt, p. 3.

³⁵ Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief, and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 273.

³⁶ Sir Joseph Kinsey to Kathleen Scott, 25th February 1913. Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, SPRI MS/1453/126/3.

³⁷ Fletcher, p. 179.

Riffenburgh, in his valuable study of the role of the press in creating the idealised cultural concept of the explorer, identifies Kathleen as one of the 'mediators' of the growing mythology surrounding Scott's life, death, and legacy.³⁸ During Scott's life, and immediately after his death, many individuals were involved in this work, including the press, institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society, and Sir Clements Markham, who had personally selected Scott to lead his first expedition, and had supported and guarded his reputation and career in the following years. However, in taking on the work of editing Scott's journals into a publishable format, Kathleen was able to shape and present his career, words, and character to match the glorified, mythologised version of his life; and for these to be published and sold as Scott's final writings under his name, rather than under hers.

Kathleen's role, therefore, gave her significant power over her husband's legacy in ensuring that the published version and public memory of her late husband would meet her wishes. Despite this, her diaries show that this power did not ease her adjustment into her new life as a hero's widow, and as the mother of a hero's son. The editor of the published version refers to several failed attempts to resume her life in London; twice in the summer of 1913, and again at the start of 1914.³⁹ The latter is accompanied by a diary entry from 12th January 1914, which consisted of a single sentence. 'I am worn out by the Antarctic work of publicity, so I am off to the Sahara alone'.⁴⁰ The brevity of this entry is unusual within the broader context of the diary, and is followed by a silence, briefly broken by a single entry, which lasted until July 1914. A similar silence followed her departure from New Zealand after learning of her husband's death, which speaks to the strain that these events had put on her. These absences are explained by the editor as resulting from 'the glare of publicity which fell upon her and her child which drove her from home, first to the Pyrenees and then to the Sahara'.⁴¹ She also opted not to attend the unveilings of her own work to avoid being visible to the press and public, including the ceremony revealing her statue of her late husband in London in November 1915.⁴²

³⁸ Riffenburgh, p. 7.

³⁹ Young, pp. 124-125.

⁴⁰ Young, p. 127.

⁴¹ Young, p. 117.

⁴² Young, p. 130.

Kathleen had managed to create, shape and preserve a positive legacy for Scott, but it had clearly taken a toll on her, as the press intrusion that she had found frustrating during his absence became overwhelming after his death. Despite the power she held over the official published narratives, this continued public intrusion into her domestic life complicated her attempts to find her feet in the aftermath of her loss, to the extent that she opted to leave the country behind in order to escape it. Her diaries may not clearly acknowledge her feelings at this point in the way that they did in the immediate aftermath of her loss, but her actions speak to the frustration and exhaustion that this continuous public interaction and influence had caused for her.

Kathleen's emotional experience of this period was clearly an uncomfortable and challenging one – however, she had the option and resources to temporarily escape the commotion and find the privacy she craved. For Lois, there was no escape; nor did she have any influence over the public opinion and memory-making surrounding her husband's life and achievements. The press quickly discarded Scott's explanation of the unusually severe weather conditions as the cause of the party's deaths, and began the search for a scapegoat. Louise Watling's careful analysis of Evans's public legacy frames this transitional period in terms of Evans being simultaneously a member of the heroic party, and an un-heroic individual who could shoulder the blame for their deaths.⁴³ As the first to have died, the only working-class member of the party, and the only man mentioned by name in Scott's 'Message to the Public', Evans became a target. Scott attributed Evans's death to 'a concussion of the brain'.⁴⁴ However, his prior reference to 'the astonishing failure of the man [Evans] whom we had least expected to fail' was framed by the press as evidence of Evans having been the weak link within the party.⁴⁵ This mention of 'failure' was used to establish Evans's decline as a cause of the deaths of the remaining party members, as the loss of manpower and reduction in the distances travelled each day that resulted from his illness hampered their progression towards their destination and safety.

⁴³ Louise Watling, "There was a contest in heroism between Captain Oates and his comrades, Captain Scott, Dr Wilson, and Lieutenant Bowers.": An analysis of the presentation and portrayal of Petty Officer Edgar Evans, the first man to perish in Captain Scott's Pole party of 1912' (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2009).

⁴⁴ Robert Falcon Scott, 'Message to the Public', *Journals: Captain Scott's Last Expedition*, ed. by Max Jones, Oxford World's Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 421.

⁴⁵ Scott p. 421.

The day after the news broke, the *Daily Express* published an article discussing why Evans had 'failed' the expedition, with input from an 'eminent mental specialist'.⁴⁶ This article shifted Evans's cause of death from a haemorrhage to his educational status, alleging that 'the uneducated man' was more vulnerable to the 'the mental strain and dreary, monotonous life amid eternal snows', whereas the 'educated man [...] would be able to stimulate his brain from his store of learning', and thereby avoid being driven to 'mania' by 'the absence of stimulus'.⁴⁷ Despite challenges from several expedition members, this idea spread quickly, alongside rumours that Evans had become insane.⁴⁸

As these rumours continued to gain ground, one reporter took them a step further, and interviewed Evans's elderly mother in her home. Sarah Evans was clearly distraught by her loss and the allegations made regarding her late son; and with no further answers available, nor a body that could be mourned and buried, her distress at the uncertainty and lack of closure was palpable. Her response echoes many of the conflicting feelings discussed in modern studies of grief, including anxiety, blame, and confusion.⁴⁹ The reporter published Sarah's fears, expressed in the safety of her home, into the press context of blame and guilt:

[I am] troubled because it was through Edgar that the other members of the party lost their lives. I am worried because I feel if he hadn't broken down they – Captain Scott and the rest of them – would have been alive today. I can't help thinking about it all the time ever since I read about them being forced to wait for him, and carry him along with them, when it was all they could do to get along themselves. Perhaps it would have been better if they had left him behind.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ 'The Problem of Seaman Evans. Why He "Failed" The Expedition. Was He Handicapped by His Strength?', *The Daily Express*, 12th February 1913, SPRI MS 1453/39/2.

⁴⁷ 'The Problem of Seaman Evans', *The Daily Express*.

⁴⁸ *Westminster Gazette*, 15th February 1913, SPRI MS 1453/40.

⁴⁹ See Strange, p. 65; also P. C. Rosenblatt, 'Grief: The Social Context of Private Feelings', *Journal of Social Issues*, 44 (3), (1988), 1-25; and Elizabeth Hallam and Jennifer Hockey, *Death, Memory, and Material Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

⁵⁰ 'Hero's Mother: Her Pathetic Grief', *The Cambrian*, 21st February 1913. Held in Swansea, Swansea Council Library Service.

A few pages later, a section titled 'Family's Record: Three Consumptives' used the fact that nine of Sarah's twelve children were dead, including three deaths from consumption, to establish a history of supposed family weakness, arguing that while Edgar may have been strong, 'his family by no means shared that characteristic'.⁵¹ Having been asked to face the complicated issue of Evans' death, Sarah was then forced to relive her grief for her other children. She had been able to care for these children during their illness, prepare and bury their bodies; a process that Strange argues allowed the bereaved to confirm the reality of death, and to find reassurance in seeing that their loved one was at peace.⁵² Yet none of this had been possible in Edgar's case, setting his death apart from those of his siblings and leaving Sarah grieving without closure.

When read together, the articles framed the alleged family weakness as having not only led to Evans's death, but also those of his four heroic companions, thereby negating his claim to a positive legacy as a tragic hero. In publishing Sarah's fears, provoked by the public nature of these accusations, the reports simultaneously added weight to the allegations, and brought further distress to his grieving family, who were now also implicated in causing the deaths of the rest of the party. Evans's reputation has never fully recovered from these allegations to regain equal footing with his counterparts, despite the continued efforts of his family, the surviving expedition members, and the expedition's committees to reiterate that the extreme weather was the sole cause of the party's deaths.

Once again, the intrusion of the press and public opinion into the lives of the grieving family had caused harm; however, Lois had no influence or connections to draw on to stop it. This assault on his legacy and memory infiltrated every part of the family's life; intruding into their home, twisting their words to fit this narrative, and even reaching the schoolground, where his children were bullied for his supposed failure and culpability in the deaths of the polar party.⁵³ They did not have the chance to construct a personal memory, nor to take any control or ownership over his legacy as public opinion loudly turned against him. His continued presence in their lives did not come from a reassuring memory of happier times that they had shared, but as one which

⁵¹ 'How Scott Died', *The Cambrian*, 21st February 1913.

⁵² Strange, p. 268.

⁵³ Fletcher, p. 204.

needed continuous defence against the distressing public accusations that came from all angles.

As time passed, both families did what they could to commemorate the lives of their lost loved ones. Kathleen's work has stood the test of time; her sculptures of her husband stand in Cambridge, London, and Christchurch, New Zealand, and her handiwork is still visible within modern editions of her husband's journals. The published volume of her diaries and partial autobiography offers a memorial to her life, relationships, and social influence. Lois also worked hard to create a positive legacy for Evans, despite her financial difficulties and the hostility towards her husband's memory. She paid for a memorial plaque in their home church in Rhossili, which remained the only memorial erected for Evans during her lifetime. Her legacy lies in her continuous fight for her family throughout huge emotional upheavals and challenges; however, her limited archival presence is rooted in the press interviews that caused so much distress to her family. Her responses and experiences are key to the press history of this moment, as her emotional response to her bereavement was deemed to be a valuable evocative and illustrative tool that the press used to enhance the tragic nature of the polar party's deaths.

Once this moment had passed, Lois was not deemed to be significant enough to local or exploration history for her documents to be preserved – likewise, her exclusion from the memory-making process for her husband meant that she was not a priority for those collating a material history of the expedition. The need for her emotional experiences, which had profoundly shaped not only her own life, but also the immediate public response to the tragedy, had passed, and her work in attempting to preserve her husband's legacy quickly fell into silence.

Conclusion

The events explored within this article occurred within a historical moment marked out by distinctive pre-war cultural norms – the celebration and public mourning for tragic heroes who had made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation; the social expectations placed on the bereaved families; and the cultural backdrop to the scapegoat narrative that surrounded Evans and his family. To fully comprehend these emotional experiences, we must take into account the extraordinary nature of this situation within

its cultural contexts, alongside the shaping powers of class, gender expectations, and agency on each family's individual experiences.

As the intrusion of the public gaze and memory-making pushed further into private space, both families were forced to come to terms with the archetypal legacies that their loved ones had been ascribed: Scott as the tragic, heroic leader, and Evans as the fatal flaw within the party. Kathleen was able to shape her husband's life and career to fit her preferred version of this archetype, allowing her to protect his legacy for the moment and for the future. Lois, on the other hand, was left to cope with the continued harm caused by the public criticism levelled at Evans, and her inability to publicly contest the allegations that stained his legacy.

This created two distinctive forms of emotional labour for the two women. Kathleen's influence allowed her to undertake the work of editing her late husband's journals to ensure that they matched the positive public narratives surrounding the expedition without any contradictions or unintended accusations. Lois's work is less clear-cut, but no less vital – in coping with the harm caused by repeated press intrusion and criticism, contesting the accusations as and when she could, and erecting a memorial to testify to her husband's life and achievements, she did all that she could to protect Evans's memory. Her lack of agency speaks to the lack of opportunities available to her and her family to remember Evans as the man they loved without the interference of the public opinion, and not to a lack of emotional labour. These acts of emotional work are unquantifiable and incomparable to one another due to the radically different circumstances that these families found themselves in; however, they speak to the labours of love and loss that each woman quietly undertook within devastating emotional and social conditions.

The unique circumstances experienced by these families occurred within a brief, yet distinctive, set of historic conditions that would soon be swept away by the end of the so-called Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, and more critically by the colossal impact of the Great War on families across the globe. These huge cultural shifts removed the various ideals, expectations, and structures that had shaped, exacerbated, and extended the families' period of grief, and added further feelings of frustration, anxiety, and vulnerability to their experiences of loss. The inescapable nature of the press coverage and public interest in their personal bereavements united these families in an experience of loss and grief that came second to the public's mourning for their

loved ones. Although their lives and experiences quickly diverged once again, both families saw their emotional futures altered by their lack of privacy to grieve their losses and build a personal memory of their loved ones. While the conditions that shaped these events vanished almost as soon as they had emerged, the impacts on the two families were lifelong, and shaped their emotional experiences not only of this fleeting historic moment, but of their futures without the presence of the men they had loved.



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