

### Who was Meares?

Cecil Henry Meares (1877-1937) travelled all over the world as an adventurer, explorer and British Naval Officer. He was the son of a British Army Officer. Born in Ireland and educated in Scotland and England, he left home at 17 to travel across Europe and Asia, learning languages along the way. He worked in the Siberian fur trade, was in Peking (Beijing) during the Boxer Uprising, served in the British Army during the Boer War and explored the Chinese-Tibetan borderlands with the J.W. Brook expedition. Cecil Meares had driven dog sleds in Siberia and this experience led Robert Scott to recruit him for the British Antarctic Expedition in 1910 as the officer “in charge of dogs.” Meares helped prepare for the expedition, then set up a telephone line and ran supplies between camps. In 1912, he received a message from home urging him to return to attend to family affairs. He left shortly before Scott’s team perished on the ice. Later, Meares signed on with the British Air Mission and in 1921 a sword was presented to Commander Meares as a gift for helping to train Japanese naval pilots.

### Why does the Royal BC Museum have his pennant?

Meares eventually settled in Victoria, BC in the 1920s. His pennant, sword, medals and many other materials and documents came to the collections of the Royal BC Museum and BC Archives in the 1970s, via his wife’s estate. Meares’ sledge pennant will be on display as part of the *Race to the End of the Earth* exhibition at the Royal BC Museum, May 17 to October 14, 2013.



### Making repairs to Meares’ pennant

The *Race to the End of the Earth* exhibition was organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York, the Royal BC Museum, Victoria and the Musee des Confluences, Lyon, France. Before Meares’ 100-year-old flag could make its 4,800 km journey from the Royal BC Museum to the opening of the exhibition in New York a few years ago, the RBCM conservation department had to make a few repairs on this delicate artifact. To reinforce and protect

the fragile George Cross, Royal BC Museum textile conservator Colleen Wilson first had to sew a backing of red material onto the flag. Next, she meticulously dyed virtually invisible silk gauze to match the colour of the cross. Finally, she hand sewed the silk directly over the cross with a thread finer than spider’s silk.

*Photo © Royal BC Museum.*

*Colleen Wilson, Textile Conservator, Royal BC Museum, repairing Cecil Meares’ sledge pennant.*

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*High-res versions of images available on request for media use.*