

British Captain Robert Falcon Scott



Born in 1868 in Devon, England, Scott became a Navy cadet at the then-customary age of 13. He was promoted to midshipman and, in 1889, to lieutenant. After his father died in 1897, leaving the family penniless, Scott became responsible for the welfare of his mother and unmarried sisters and needed a way to increase his income.

Opportunity came in 1899, when Scott heard that the planned National Antarctic Expedition was in need of a commander. He won the post and undertook his first journey to Antarctica (1901-04), during which he and two other men, one of whom was Ernest Shackleton, travelled farther south than anyone had previously. On Scott's return to Britain he was promoted to captain, allaying money worries. But he had unfinished business in the south. Scott married in 1908; the following September, the same month as the birth of his son Peter, Scott opened an

office for the "British Antarctic Expedition (1910)" and began raising funds for a new expedition. Scott set sail for Antarctica, with the South Pole as his goal, in 1910 aboard his ship *Terra Nova*.

Norwegian Explorer Roald Amundsen



Born in 1872 into a prosperous family that ran a fleet of trading ships out of Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, Amundsen first dreamed of exploring at the age of 15 after reading about Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, who had literally eaten boot leather to survive a particularly perilous expedition. In 1891, Amundsen enrolled in medical school to please his mother, but after his mother's death in 1893 he began to pursue his dream of becoming a polar explorer. In 1898 he joined the *Belgica* expedition, the first to overwinter in the latitude of the Antarctic Circle.

Amundsen thrived, although some of his companions died or became insane during the dark months of winter. He went on to become the first man to captain a ship through the Northwest Passage (1903-1906) and Amundsen spent more than two years living in the Canadian Arctic and learning from the Netsilik Inuit. He

learned to build igloos, drive sled dogs, and make loose and exceptionally warm fur clothing, carefully training in every aspect of polar survival in the hopes of winning the North Pole.

When that prize went to the American Robert Peary in 1909, Amundsen secretly set his sights on the South Pole. He and his companions set sail from Norway on the famed ship *Fram*, leaving just before Scott's ship left England. Amundsen had only one goal in Antarctica: to be the first to stand at the South Pole. Scott wanted victory as well, but he was also committed to the scientific exploration of the last unknown continent.