

The Polar and Exploration Photographs of Dr Reginald Koettlitz

Polar Explorer, Geologist, Botanist

Aubrey ‘Gus’ Jones

Author of Scott’s Forgotten Surgeon

As readers of the Dover Society Magazine will know Dr Reginald Koettlitz was an explorer of total contrast. Not only did he spend three years on Franz Josef Land as expedition surgeon on the Jackson Harmsworth Expedition, he also travelled across North East Africa as a crucial member of the Weld Blundell expedition, made a solo journey along the River Amazon to Manaus, and finally went to the Antarctic as expedition surgeon during the Discovery expedition to the South Pole. What is not generally known is his great skill and knowledge when taking both black and white photographic images and, crucially, the first ever colour images on the Antarctic continent. These colour images were only seen once in public, at his significant talk in Dover at the Maison Dieu Hall on his return to England.

These colour images were handed in to the expedition committee, chaired by Sir Clements Markham, and controversially have never been seen since. In 2024 the entire Koettlitz collection of polar images was gifted to the Discovery Museum, Dundee by Ann (Koettlitz) Jones in order that researchers and members of the public have access.



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In this article a selection of his wide-ranging images are displayed with a brief description as to their location and in which expedition they were taken.



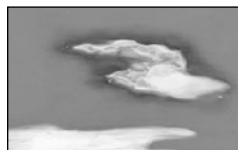
Solo Trip Along the Amazon to Manaus



High Life Bar Manaus

Jackson-Harmsworth Arctic expedition 1894-97

On this journey, he worked as both the doctor and a geologist, studying rocks and the Earth.



Koettlitz Island



Arctic clothing used during the Jackson Harmsworth expedition 1894-1897 taken in the garden of the Koettlitz residence Dover.



The polar bear, in Dover Museum, shot by Dr Koettlitz during the Jackson-Harmsworth Arctic Expedition



Officers and Scientists on Discovery Koettlitz, Hands in Pockets, Right of Scott



Dr Koettlitz medical chest for the Discovery expedition located at the Wellcome Museum, London by Aubrey Jones

The Discovery Expedition 1901-04

Dr Koettlitz went on this expedition both as a doctor and botanist. The oldest member of the Discovery Expedition, he was aged forty at the time. This was Koettlitz's second polar journey after being the doctor on an earlier Arctic journey. His position in the Discovery expedition was a condition imposed by Sir Alfred Harmsworth, who donated the very large sum of £5000 toward the expedition, Armitage (also of the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition) was also included as a member of the expedition in the same manner.



The Discovery, Daily Cronicle 1894



Dover Powder from the Koettlitz Medical Chest



Antarctic camp during the trip to The Bluff led by Dr Koettlitz



Attempts to Release the Discovery by Sawing Through the Antarctic Ice



Camp during the Western sledge journey led by Armitage and Koettlitz



Captain McKay's Desperate Attempt to Free the Discovery from the Antarctic Ice using gun cotton explosives another failed attempt to release the Discovery



Koettlitz personal sledging flag for the Discovery Expedition

Attempts to release the Discovery Trapped in the Antarctic Ice



The Discovery locked in the Antarctic ice



Grobbelaar's Kraal the Koettlitz Farm in South Africa



Marie Louise Koettlitz



Koettlitz Memorial, Cradock Cemetery, South Africa