

Cape Adare

Two scientists waved goodbye to over half a million penguins, when the Coast Guard ice-breaker Eastwind arrived to take them off wind-swept rock-bare Cape Adare in Antarctica, their campsite for three lonely weeks.

The scientists, Brian Reid, 30, of Rotorua, New Zealand, and Colin Bailey, 26, of Adelaide, Australia, were the first men in 50 years to spend over a day at the site of the first land wintering-over party in the Antarctic.

"We wanted to study an isolated penguin rookery," explained leader Reid, "So naturally we chose a place that was fairly accessible but untouched."

Along with 400 pounds of food and supplies, the Eastwind landed the scientists by helicopter on January 13. Then she had headed north for a week in Wellington, New Zealand for reprovisioning after spending over a month breaking ice for cargo ships supplying scientific stations throughout the South Polar regions.

A typical day for the two men at Cape Adare started at 9:30 in the morning with a hot breakfast of pork and beans, coffee, and cereal.

"Then we'd tramp about and count the penguins," said Bailey, an Australian medical doctor who is assisting Reid.

Going from colony to colony of squanking, squabbling, birds, the scientists made preliminary estimates from which final figures would be worked out. They also counted the number of skua gulls, large grey-brown Antarctic birds which prey on penguin chicks.

"In all, it proved to be a very fruitful mission, explained Reid. "We now have the basis for future study of this rookery. Scientists examining this same group in years to come will be able to tell if the penguin population is declining, remaining steady, or on the increase."

During their stay, the men were frequently buffeted by cold, cutting winds that picked up rocks and hurled them through their tents.

"I guess it was the inconvenience of getting literally 'rocked' to sleep that made us decide to dig out one of the old huts," remembers Reid with a smile.

There are three wooden buildings still standing at Cape Adare. One was built in 1899 by

the first party of men ever to winter over on the Antarctic Continent, headed by a Norwegian born Australian named Berchgrovink.

The other two, built by Scott's northern party when they wintered over in 1911, have fallen apart, mute testimony to the fierce winds which blast the exposed Cape.

"It's quite amazing that the oldest building is still standing," recalls Reid, "It was filled with hard-packed snow, and we worked like the very devil digging it out."

Once excavated, however, it formed a perfect shelter for the scientists, in addition to providing some excellent reading material. They found scientific journals and novels dating back to the mid 1800's.

In addition, the two men found old unexposed photographic glass plates, tins of fine choco-



Penguin families covort at Cape Adare.

lates, cans of pea soup, safety matches, knife grinders, and bunks enough to accommodate 10 men.

One day, while counting skua gulls on the sheer cliffs near the campsite, Reid and Bailey discovered an iron cross on a boulder, marking the grave of the first man to die while living on the Antarctic Continent.

Crudely chisled on a metallic plaque was the terse epitaph: "N. Hanson, zoologist, Norge, 28-10-1899, 28 Year." Also on the plaque was a six pointed star with the letters "S.C." within it. Although neither of the scientists could figure the meaning of the "S.C.", it is possible that it stands for "Southern Cross" the name of the ship that brought the party to Antarctica.