

**FROM THE BARTHOLOMEW ARCHIVE - *Extract from CAIRT July 2008***

Susan Woodburn, Bartholomew Archive Curator in the National Library of Scotland, highlights an example of the influence of a mapmaker on place names.

**John George Bartholomew and the naming of Antarctica**

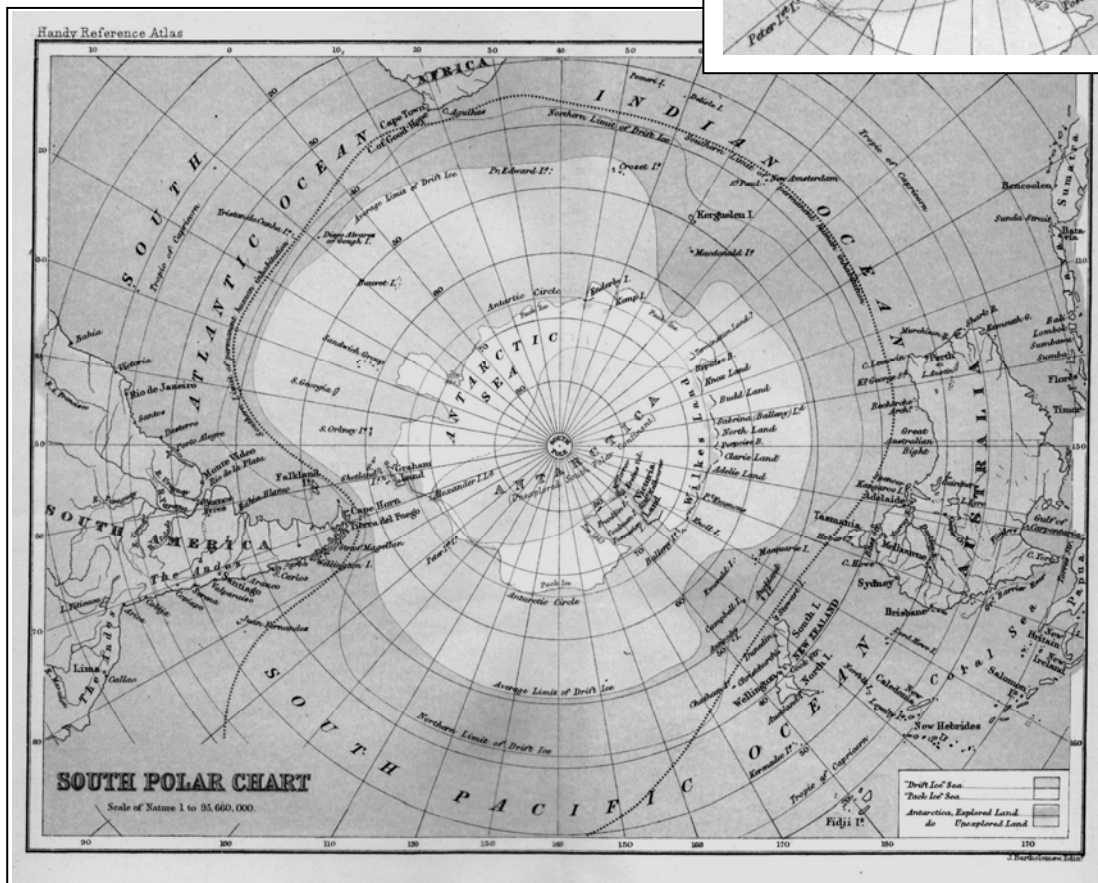
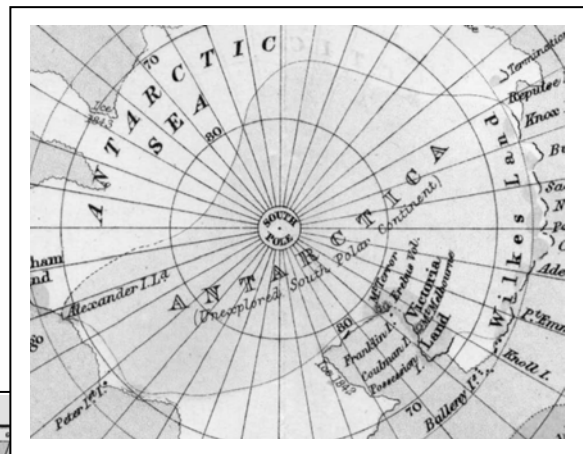
The name Antarctic, from the Greek Antarktos, literally opposite [side] of the Bear (Arktos), a northern hemisphere constellation, was used by Greek writers from the first century AD to describe the presumed mass of land in the south that 'balanced' the known northern section of the world. It is, however, John George Bartholomew, the Edinburgh geographer, cartographer and director of the firm of John Bartholomew and Co. [the Edinburgh Geographical Institute] from 1888-1920, who must be credited with establishing the name of the continent we know today as Antarctica.<sup>1</sup>

Representations of a great south land or 'terra australis' had appeared on world maps from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the first specific Polar map (Hondius, 1641) employed the name Polus Antarcticus, while the 1657 Polar map by Nicholas Sanson has the 'Antarctique ou Meridional' occupying most of the southern hemisphere. British maps and charts from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century most commonly used the term South Pole or South Polar continent for the land mass, though the names Antarctic Ocean and Antarctic Circle were well established by 1850 in maps and popular atlases.<sup>2</sup>

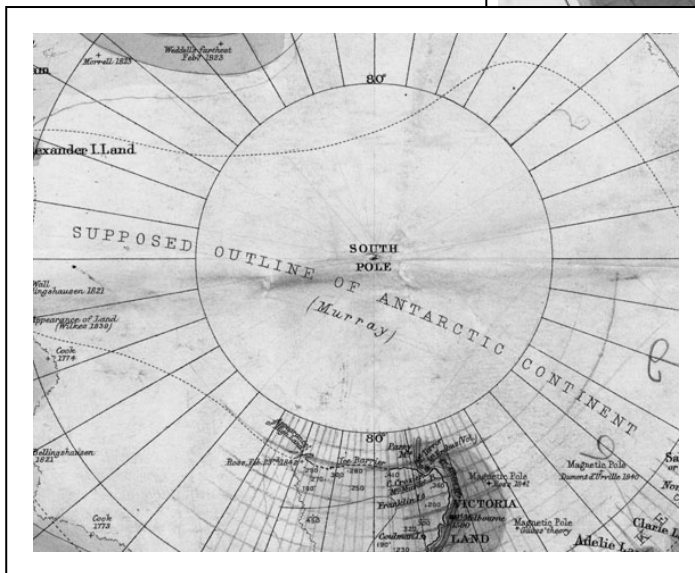
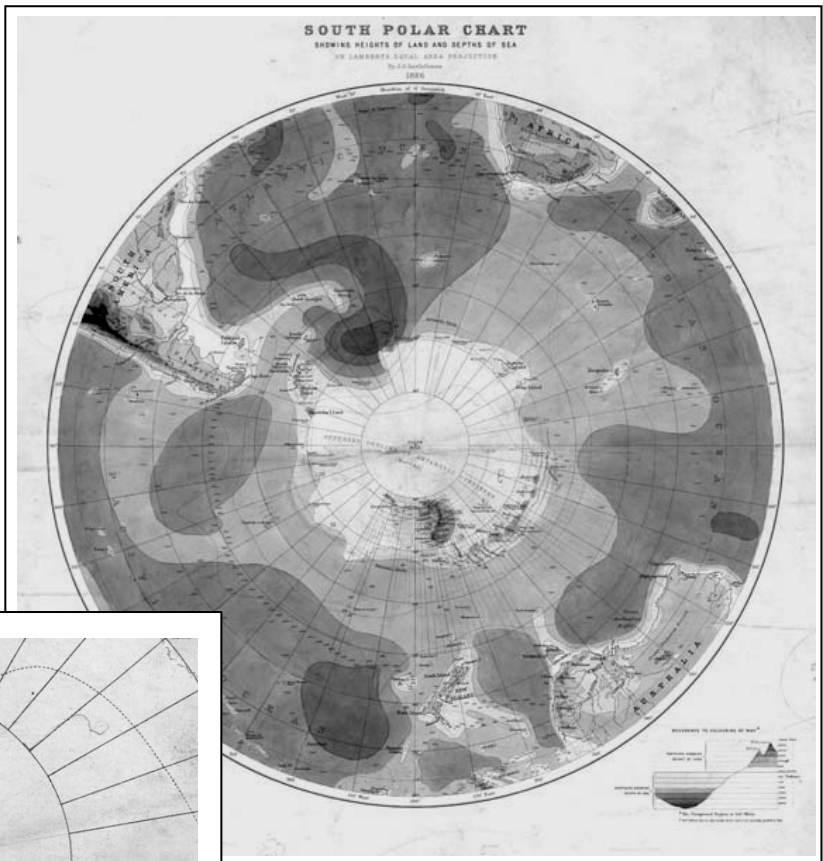
Antarctica first began to feature as a name for the South Polar continent in the mid-1880s. It appeared in print in the South Polar chart (plate 7) in the 1887 *Handy Reference Atlas* prepared by Bartholomew's for John Walker & Co., and again, more confidently, in these charts in the 1890 *Royal atlas and gazetteer of Australasia* (Thomas Nelson) and *Century Atlas* (John Walker and Co.) edited by John George Bartholomew.

**Below:**

John Bartholomew. South Polar Chart. Plate 7 in *Handy reference atlas of the world*. London: John Walker, 1887. [Source: NLS Map.1.f.1]



The impetus is likely to have come from the firm's earlier involvement with John Murray on southern hemisphere maps for the Challenger Commission reports: certainly the South Polar chart prepared by John George Bartholomew, printed by the firm on 31 August 1886, to illustrate Murray's paper before the Royal Scottish Geographical Society on 'The exploration of the Antarctic regions' was the basis for the maps in these atlases. The significant change was the assertive label 'ANTARCTICA (Unexplored South Polar Continent)' that now replaced the original 'supposed outline of Antarctic continent (Murray)'.<sup>3</sup>



**Above (and enlarged detail, left):**

Proof engraving with hand-coloured contours, showing 'supposed outline of Antarctic continent (Murray)'

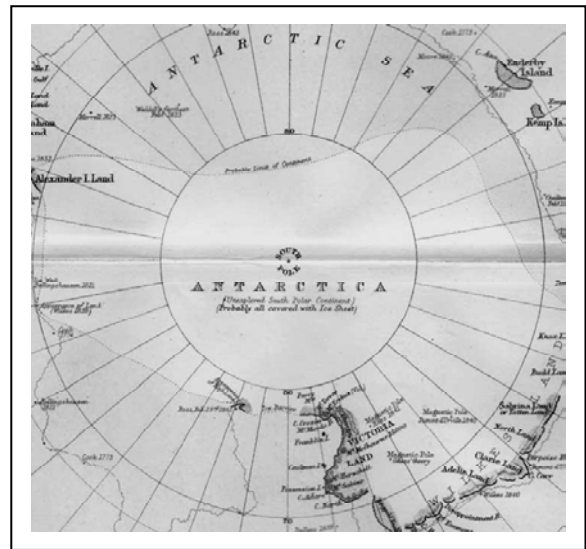
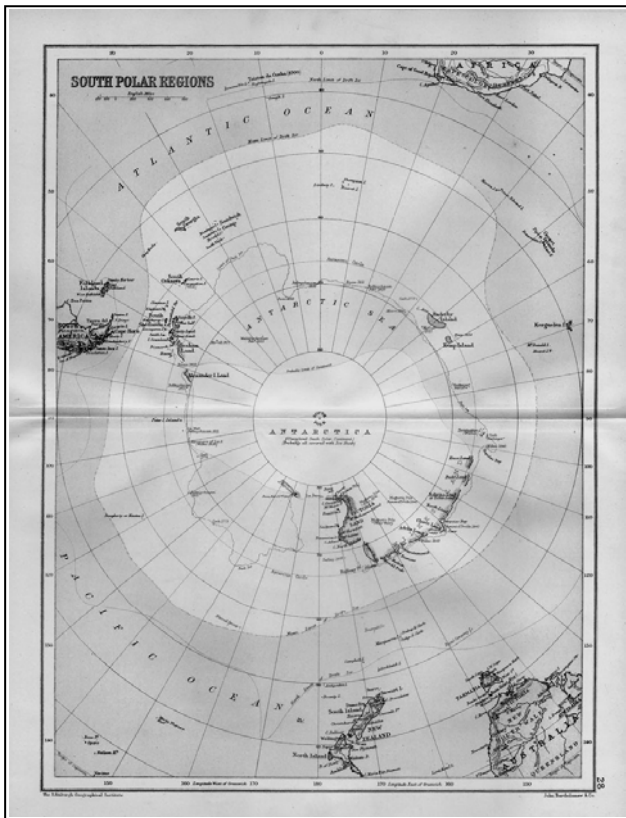
J.G. Bartholomew. *South Polar Chart ... on Lambert's Equal Area Projection*: prepared to accompany 'The exploration of the Antarctic regions' by John Murray, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 1886.

[Source: NLS, Bartholomew Archive, contract printing maps and plans]

In addition to the atlases a bathy-hypsometrical map of the world (in hemispheres) prepared by John George to illustrate a paper by James Geikie on 'The geographical development of coast lines' published (again in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*) in 1892 similarly shows the region clearly marked as Antarctica. Another map prepared to illustrate a paper by Henry Forbes on the Chatham Islands as part of an ancient continent has 'Antarctica' over-written large in red pen, and annotations that clearly rehearse the terminology for the continent. On this there is also pencilled what seems to be consideration of an alternative name, Antipodea, though this is also used in the vicinity of the Chatham Islands. As Allen Mawer suggests, Bartholomew may have thought that Forbes' ideas on an ancient continent were too speculative, and might compromise his own 'campaign' in favour of 'Antarctica' for the emerging continent that was being progressively defined.

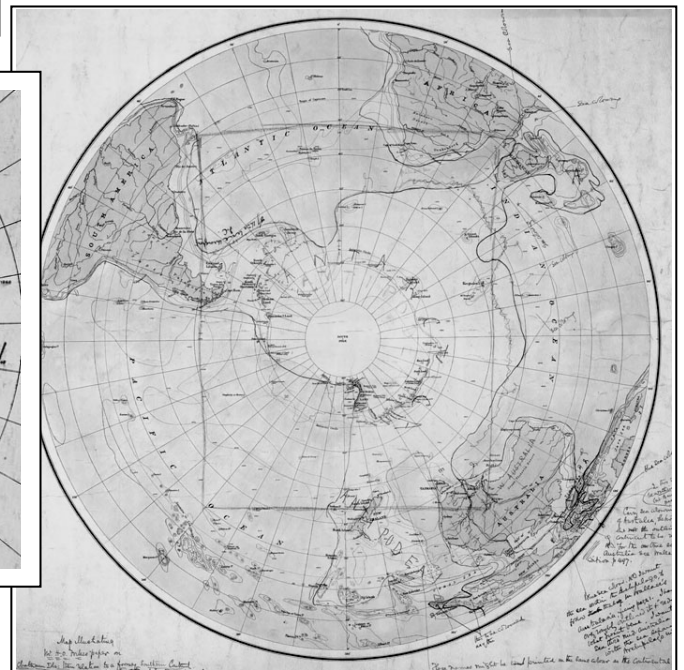
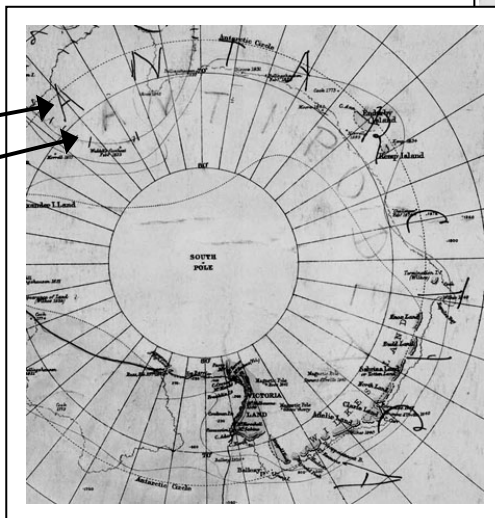
Certainly there is the strong impression from this map that the naming was still in flux – and that there was a visual as well as a scientific impetus for a professional cartographer.

In December 1898 a poem entitled *Antarctica* appeared under the initials 'J.G.B.' in the *Scotsman*, glorifying the 'Aurora-crowned' Queen of 'six months of light and six months of night'. By 1900 the name was already being taken up more widely, strongly influenced by J.G. Bartholomew, who contributed the maps for the atlases of many other British publishers as well as utilising it consistently in the firm's own publications and in maps he prepared for the Royal Geographical Society. Other suggestions for the continent were rehearsed and proposed as exploration and discovery continued, but by the late 1920s, a few years after John George Bartholomew's death, it was acknowledged that the name Antarctica had been 'established beyond challenge.'



**Left (and enlarged detail, above):**  
 J.G. Bartholomew, 1890.  
 South Polar Regions, in  
*The Royal atlas and gazetteer of Australasia*,  
 London: Nelson, 1890.  
 [Source: NLS Map.1.d.85]

Manuscript annotations, including names Antarctica and Antipodea.



**Right (and enlarged detail, above):**  
 J.G. Bartholomew, 1892.  
 South Polar Chart showing suggested connection of Antarctic land mass to other continents, based on 1886 original, prepared to accompany an article 'The Chatham islands and their relation to a former southern continent' by H.O. Forbes, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society (Great Britain)*, 1893.  
 [Source: NLS, Bartholomew Archive, contract printing maps and plans]

### Sources and further reading

1. G.A. Mawer 'Baptism of ice: J.G. Bartholomew and the naming of Antarctica' *Polar Record* (2008), 44:180-183. This article owes its inspiration to his article and has benefited from his comments and corrections.
2. R.V. Tooley 'Early Antarctica' *Map Collectors Circle* 1963, online re-print at [www.antarctic-circle.org/tooley.htm](http://www.antarctic-circle.org/tooley.htm)
3. It should be noted that in the *Library Reference Atlas of the World* of 1890 (Macmillan and Co.), which appeared under the name of John Bartholomew, the South Polar Regions map, with ANTARCTICA, is identified as by J.G. Bartholomew

*The illustrations in this article will be available later in the year as zoomable colour images on a new web page 'Discovering the Bartholomew Archive'*

[www.nls.uk/collections/maps/collections/special\\_collections.html](http://www.nls.uk/collections/maps/collections/special_collections.html)