For some, the idea of venturing to the coldest, most desolate realms of the earth sounds like their worst nightmare. However, for one man this became his very reason for being. In fact, it ended up grasping his life from him. This man was Robert Falcon Scott.

Robert Falcon Scott (now often referred to as ‘Scott of the Antarctic’) was born on 6 June 1868 in Devonport, which is a waterside neighbourhood of Plymouth - England. He was the third child of six, but, significantly, the eldest son. Did his parents ever imagine that they were bringing such a noteworthy individual into the world?

Although Scott’s father was a brewer and magistrate, naval and military tradition ran in the family – his grandfather and four uncles all served in the army or navy. There was little debate as to whether Scott would follow in the footsteps of his family. Therefore it was no surprise when, at the age of 13, Scott became a naval cadet. Throughout this period of his life, he served on numerous Royal Navy ships in the 1880s and 1890s. Quickly, he progressed through the ranks of responsibility and was made a lieutenant in 1889. One might say that Scott’s success in this role was a clear indicator of what he was bound to go on and achieve.

During his naval ventures, he attracted the attention of the Royal Geographical Society: a chance meeting with their President, in June 1889, led to him being appointed to command the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-1904. Interestingly, some historians argue that it was Scott’s desire to be a captain (and the financial gain that came with the position) that led to him accepting the role, rather than any predilection for polar expedition. Whatever his motivation, plans were set afoot by Scott and the expedition departed on 6th August 1901.

With great success, the expedition - which included Ernest Shackleton - reached further south than anyone before them and Scott returned to Britain a national hero. Whilst on this trip, he had caught the exploring bug and began to plan an expedition to be the first to reach the South Pole. The coming months and years were consumed with raising funds in order to fulfil his ambition. He was not going to be beaten!

Eventually, Scott had sourced all the resources he needed and the whaling ship, Terra Nova, left Cardiff, Wales, in June 1910. Thinking that they would be more than adequately prepared, the crew had equipped themselves with the most modern mechanical sledges, a string of healthy ponies and a strong pack of dogs. Surely their success was unquestionable? Only time would tell.

The journey to the Antarctic was nowhere near as smooth as Scott and his crew had hoped for: Terra Nova nearly sank in a storm when they’d not long departed New Zealand; they became trapped in pack ice and were stuck for 20 days and, once they’d reached their destination, one of the sledges was dropped as it was unloaded from the ship. Further to this, within days of arriving, the extremes of the polar climate were far more treacherous than they had ever perceived! The sledges and ponies could not cope with the conditions and the expedition had to carry on without them, through appalling weather and increasingly tough terrain. In mid-December, the dog teams turned back, leaving the rest to face the ascent of the Beardmore Glacier and the polar plateau. By January 1912, only five remained: Scott, Wilson, Oates, Bowers and Evans.

On 17 January, they reached the pole, only to find that a Norwegian party led by Roald Amundsen, had beaten them there.

Bitterly disappointed, they started the 1,500 km journey back; it was the last journey they would ever make. Evans died in mid-February. By March, Oates was suffering from severe frostbite and, knowing he was holding back his companions, walked out into the freezing conditions never to be seen again. The remaining three men died of starvation and exposure in their tent on 29 March 1912. Sadly, they were in fact only 20 km from a pre-arranged supply depot.

Eight months later, a search party found the tent, the bodies and Scott's diary. It is from his memoirs that we know of the trials and tribulations that the explorers experienced. Already famous from his first expedition, Scott became a national icon. Today, more than 30 monuments and memorials are set-up around Britain to honour this extreme explorer.