

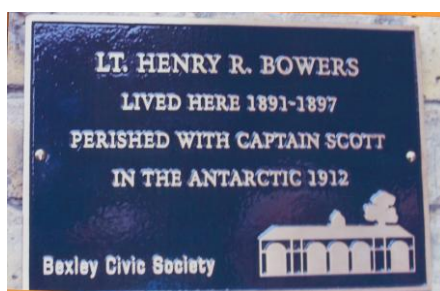
## Henry Robertson, (Birdie), Bowers (1883-1912), polar explorer

Henry Bowers was born at Greenock on 29 July 1883. His father Alexander Bowers, a naval captain and merchantman, died in Burma in 1887. His mother Emily brought up Henry and his two sisters in Sidcup, Kent. They are shown on the 1891 census at 13 Carlton Road. He was educated at Streatham High School for Boys and joined HMS *Worcester* as a cadet on 16 September 1897. After voyages around Cape Horn he was appointed a midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve in September 1904 and gazetted a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Indian Marine service on 28 February 1905. Before leaving for India he met Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, where they talked about Captain Scott's recent expedition to the Antarctic.



In 1910 Bowers received a telegraph from Captain Scott inviting him to join the *Terra Nova* as a junior officer. His expedition name was Birdie, on account of his red hair and beaklike nose. They disembarked at Cape Evans in January 1911 and prepared for the polar journey which began on 1 November 1911. The South Pole was reached on 18 January 1912 and the return journey was hampered by lack of food rations, temperatures of -40°F and blizzards. Bowers and his companions died on or about 29 March 1912, the date given by Scott for his last journal entry.

A plaque erected by Bexley Civic Society was unveiled by the Mayor of Bexley Cllr Sharon Massey at 13 Carlton Road, Sidcup on 30 May 2014.



Anne Strathie, writer and researcher, talked to the Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society on June 2014 on the subject of Birdie Bowers. Her book, drawing on letters and journals, "Birdie Bowers: Captain Scott's Marvel", is published by The History Press (2012).