



**THE JAMES CAIRD SOCIETY**



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## JOURNAL

Number Nine

*Antarctic Exploration*



*Sir Ernest Shackleton*

May 2018



# The James Caird Society Journal – Number Nine

Welcome, once more, to the latest JCS Journal ('Number Nine'). Having succeeded Dr Jan Piggott as editor, I published my first Journal in April 2007 ('Number Three'). As I write this introduction, therefore, I celebrate ten years in the 'job'. Unquestionably it has been (and is) a lot of hard work but this effort is far outweighed by the excitement of being able to disseminate new insights and research on our favourite polar man. I have been helped, along the way, by many talented and willing authors, academics and enthusiasts. In the main, the material proffered over the years has been of such a high standard it convinced me to publish the *The Shackleton Centenary Book (2014)*, Sutherland House Publishing, ISBN 978-0-9576293-0-1, in January 2014 – cherry-picking the best articles and essays. This Limited Edition was fully-subscribed and, if I may say so, a great success. I believe the JCS can be proud of this important legacy. The book and the Journals are significant educational tools for anyone interested in the history of polar exploration.

In 'Number Nine' I publish, in full, a lecture (together with a synthesised timeline) delivered by your editor on 20th May 2017 in Dundee at a polar convention. It is entitled '*The Ross Sea Party – Debacle or Miracle?*' The RSP has always fascinated me and in researching for this lecture my eyes were opened to the truly incredible (and often unsung) achievements of this ill-fated expedition. The RSP was every bit as extraordinary (if not more so) than the events which unfolded, in parallel, in the Weddell Sea (1914-16). I would urge you, also, to take another look at the wonderful article written by Anna Lucas in 'Number Eight' (pp 38-55) (*Planning the Rescue of Shackleton's Ross Sea Party: the leadership controversy*).

During 2017 I was asked to write a small piece for an on-line adventure publication. I have included it here - I hope you enjoy *Shackleton's Lost Fortune*.

Liam Maloney discusses the personal faith of our hero. This is a most interesting insight into Shackleton's 'spirituality' - an aspect which certainly deserves attention in the light of those poignant words in *South* (Heinemann, 1919) in which our explorer declared, 'When I look back at those days I have no doubt that Providence guided us I know that during that long march over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia it seemed to me that often we were four, not three'.

At the Dundee Shackleton Convention in May 2017 Gary Lee delivered a fascinating lecture on the *Titanic* disaster and how this, in a more direct way than might be imagined, impacted on the contemporary activities of the main polar protagonists of the time, not least Shackleton (who gave an expert testimony at the London Inquiry – see 'Number Eight' (pp 15-30)). I invited Gary to write a piece for 'Number Nine' and I include it here in full.

In a challenging piece of research authors of *When Your Life Depends on it: Extreme decision – making lessons from the Antarctic* (amazon.com) - David Hirzel and Brad Borkan offer us an opinion on how Shackleton's 'genius' might inspire people today. David presented this work in Dundee in May 2017 and his lecture had some people baffled, others amazed.

The centenary of the *Quest* expedition remains a few years ahead - however, the circumstances surrounding the sad demise of our man is never far from the mind. What *really* caused his death? Was it a dicky heart or something more? Ian Calder and Jan Till (both eminently qualified medical professionals) offer their views on the matter.

Without fail I always discover a 'gem' or two when scouring my sources for another Journal. I believe Damien Wright's wonderful article (first published in the Journal of the Orders Medals and Research Society (OMRS) in September 2017) will fascinate the reader. Here, we have a detailed, well-illustrated and absorbing account of the Arctic military careers of

numerous polar men (not least Shackleton) in North Russia between 1918-1919. I am most indebted to OMRS and the author for their friendly co-operation and generous permission to reproduce this article for the enlightenment of JCS members.

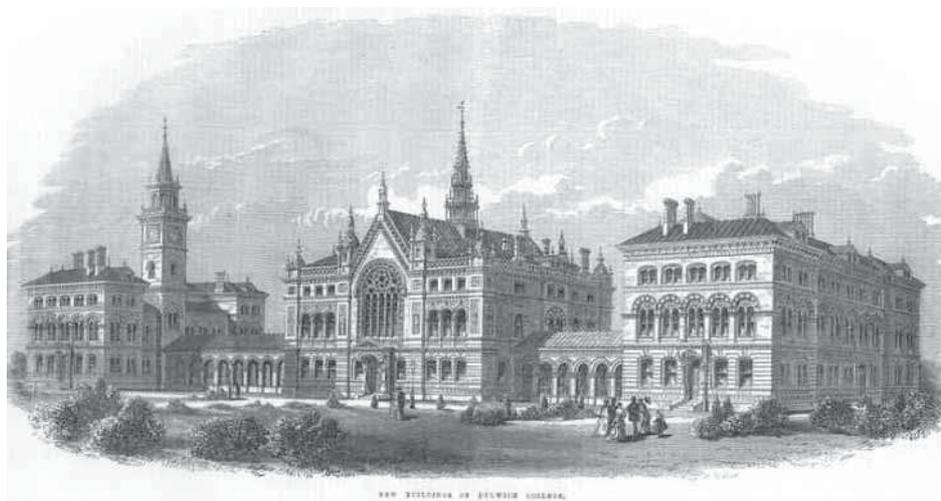
Author (and former journalist) Michael Smith is no stranger to polar investigation. Once again, he has agreed to write an article for the Journal– this time on the topical and fiercely-contested debate – who saw Antarctica first? The two main characters (Bransfield and Bellingshausen) are assessed. Whilst there is but one ‘winner’ both men remain obscure and largely forgotten to this day.

Last but not least, renowned polar historian and author, Anne Savours Shirley, kindly agreed for me to include, in this Journal, an important extract from her book *The Voyages of the Discovery* (Chatham Publishing, 2001) in which the *facts* about the return of Scott, Wilson and Shackleton from the ‘Furthest South’ (the southern journey) are described. I felt this addition to the Journal’s corpus of material was important as Shackleton’s part in this drama (not least his relationship with Scott) is often misreported and /or misunderstood.

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December 2017  
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### **Post Script**

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 the Society lost (far too early) an important member and a wonderful lady – Mrs Janice Tipping. She was a devoted Shackleton ‘fan’ and loved reading the JCS Journal and discussing polar history face-to face (as well as through the extraordinary medium that is the internet). She will be missed by the polar community and your Editor dedicates ‘Number Nine’ to her in loving memory.



# Contents

## *Essays/Articles*

- **The Ross Sea Party - Debacle or Miracle?** A lecture (adapted) delivered at a Shackleton convention in Dundee on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017 – *Stephen Scott-Fawcett* 7
- **Shackleton's heart – is there a problem?** A diagnosis by a retired Consultant Anaesthetist and a Consultant Cardiologist (The Royal Brompton Hospital, London, UK) – *Ian Calder and Jan Till* 23
- **The Lord and all his wonders in the deep: Sir Ernest Shackleton and the 'Power that informs the whole living world'** – an exploration of the Boss's personal faith – *Liam Maloney* 26
- **The Cold Truth – The Titanic tragedy and the Legacy of Britain's Antarctic Explorers** – *Gary Lee* 33
- **Shackleton's Genius – Valuable Lessons for Modern Living** – a closer look at Sir Ernest's 'methodology' of success – *David Hirzel and Brad Borkan* 52
- **Shackleton's Lost Fortune** – the elusive quest for fame and fortune – *Stephen Scott-Fawcett* 60
- **Bransfield or Bellingshausen** – Who Saw Antarctica First? – *Michael Smith* 63
- **Shackleton's men in the Arctic: polar explorers and Arctic warfare in North Russia 1918-19** - Damien Wright. 67
- **The Southern Journey:** the facts behind the return of Scott, Wilson and Shackleton from 82° 17 'S (30th December 1902/3<sup>rd</sup> February 1903) – *Ann Savours Shirley* 80

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Please note that the views expressed in the *Journal* do not represent an official view or stance of the Society, the Editor or the JCS Committee. Copyright of all articles, essays and reviews is vested in the authors.

## *Acknowledgements*



*Ernest Shackleton.*  
*The Endurance Drawings 2016.*  
*Charcoal on panel.*

The main front cover image and the image on the reverse of the title page ('Endurance Ice') is by Irish artist Medbh Gillard. Born in County Galway in 1969, Medbh lives and works in Co. Sligo. Her work is drawing-based and, recently, she produced a series of charcoal portraits of Arctic and Antarctic explorers for an exhibition in the R.O.I. The first phase of this body of work includes portraits of the crew of *The Endurance* for the centenary of the Imperial Transantarctic Expedition (ITAE) under the command of Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton. The *Endurance Drawings* is a thought-provoking series depicting all 29 individuals who were part of that expedition, using archive photographs as reference material. Although some of the crew members had their contributions publicly recognised, delivered lectures and published books about their experiences, others were killed during the bloodbath of WW1 or faded into relative obscurity.

The main rear cover image is of a metal plaque erected at Shackleton House, Holt, Norfolk - the editor's former residence.

The inside front cover image of Aeneas Mackintosh is a family portrait reproduced by kind permission of his grand-daughter, Anne Phillips.

The inside rear cover image is of Sir Ernest *en route* to Murmansk in October 1918 (North Russian Expeditionary Force 1918-20). He wears the uniform and insignia of a British Army staff officer Major, including, 'Shackleton' boots and a thick woollen staff officer's hat. Alfred Carey Collection, Naval Air Museum, New South Wales.

The images in the Liam Maloney articles derive from a variety of sources: the author (photographs); Royal Geographical Society (*Endurance Bible*); National Portrait Gallery (Browning) and the Scott Polar Research Institute (archival images on board *SY Endurance*).

The images shown in the Arctic warfare article by Damien Wright are those contained in the original article published in the *Journal of Orders & Medals Research Society* (September 2017).

The Southern Journey 'return' image of Shackleton, Scott and Wilson: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, UK.

All other images have been provided by the authors and the Editor from personal and online sources.

# The Ross Sea Party – Debacle or Miracle?

(Adapted from a lecture given by Stephen Scott-Fawcett FRGS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017)

Over the 32 years I have been researching Shackleton, giving lectures and writing various articles for the James Caird Society Journal (of which I am Editor), I have been acutely aware of a gaping hole in my knowledge of the affairs of the Ross Sea Party (RSP). Whilst I have understood, always, that Sir Ernest sent a team of men down to the Ross Sea region to lay depots across the Ice Shelf – from the coast to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier (a ‘mere’ 360 geographical miles) – I had never really paid a great deal of attention to it. Like most enthusiasts of Shackleton’s polar legacy my focus has been on the *Nimrod* and *Endurance* expeditions. Indeed, the Boss’s gaining of 88°23’ South on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1909 (along with Frank Wild, Eric Marshall and Jameson Adams) and his brave decision to turn back (so near yet so far) still ranks, to my mind, as the pinnacle of all his polar achievements - the ‘Great Escape’ from the Weddell Sea in 1916 comes a close second.

However, in preparing for this lecture I have examined closely (for the first time it should be said) the events and circumstances surrounding the *SY Aurora* Ross Sea expedition. This was, in fact, not only a parallel and *integral* part of the Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition (ITAE) – a technicality often overlooked or underplayed – but very much an expedition on two distinct levels.

On one level there is the extraordinary story of the two depot-laying sledge journeys in 1915 and 1916 (the latter lasting an unbelievable 199 days – the longest sledge journey in Antarctic history).

On another level there is the unbelievable saga of Joseph Stenhouse, the substitute but very experienced captain of *SY Aurora*, who found himself, along with his anxious crew, battling against the odds as a massive storm (which lasted 12 days) tore the ship from its moorings in the early morning of 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915 and sent it careering down McMurdo Sound and eventually out into the Ross Sea. The ship drifted for 10 months (7 months fully trapped in the ice) and eventually reached Port Chalmers (NZ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1916 under tow - having been rudderless since 21<sup>st</sup> July 1915 and mostly without steam (the fuel had run long ago)! Stenhouse’s game of ‘cat and mouse’ in the ice for weeks on end was nothing short of miraculous and his thankful crew were quick to sing his praises once back on dry land.

This lecture will focus on the main events on shore (see the Timeline). It will be the story of the Ross Sea Shore Party. If you would like to learn more of the equally- riveting story of the Ross Sea Ship Party (and make no mistake - this is an *incredible* saga) I do commend Stephen Haddelsey’s book, *The Ice Captain* (see bibliography). That human politics dictated a new ship’s captain (the highly-experienced ice navigator John King Davis) should relieve Joseph Stenhouse of his command when the relief *SY Aurora* returned to the Antarctic on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1916 seems incredibly harsh.

As we shall see, the post-Weddell Sea Shackleton of late 1916 was a changed man whose views and decisions commanded less respect and attracted no little ridicule in some quarters. Some felt he was out of touch - John King Davis thought so. Some felt Shackleton was irresponsible (Douglas Mawson and many in officialdom (especially ‘down-under’) felt he had been too cavalier in sending such an under-funded, ill-equipped and poorly-led group of men south in an ailing ship). Here was a man who could not be trusted to lead the relief party nor even his ‘sidekicks’ – Joseph Stenhouse and even Frank Worsley (Worsley had accompanied Shackleton to New Zealand on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 in determined mood to take over the reins of the relief mission, along with the Boss).



*S.Y. Aurora (with Stenhouse's jury rudder)*

I have prepared an abbreviated Timeline of the main events (see on) - it makes interesting reading. I found there to be a lot of inconsistencies with dates when doing my research. Accordingly, I have adopted the basic outline of events and dates given by Richards in *The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914-17* (1962) and cross-checked them with Shackleton's resumé in *South* (1919) and the thorough work of Wilson McOrist in his book *Shackleton Heroes* (2015). This seems to me to be a reasonable method.

As the bibliography illustrates, despite the general notion that there is not much 'out there' about the RSP this is, in fact, not really the case.

The primary sources are always the best places to start. There is Shackleton's somewhat 'dry' and mostly 'second-hand' factual account of the RSP in the second portion of *South* (1919); There is the (most would say, opinionated) version of Ernest Joyce's *The South Polar Trail* (1929); and there is the later 'short and sweet' and matter-of-fact description of Dick (Wally or Richie) Richards's, *The Ross Sea Shore Party* (1962).

For secondary sources I commend, especially, Kelly Tyler-Lewis's book *The Lost Men* for its balance. For sheer research, you couldn't do much better than to read *Polar Castaways* by New Zealanders Richard McElrea and David Harrowfield – both are consummate polar historians (McElrea is a past-president of the Antarctic

Heritage Trust (NZ) and Harrowfield studies historic site preservation in the polar regions). It might be said that both men have a pre-disposition against Shackleton – certainly when it comes to his overall control (or lack of) the RSP expedition.

### **Debacle or miracle?**

There have been many criticisms levelled at this expedition – both by those who were directly involved in it and by some commentators.

The idea that any Shackleton expedition was a failure, let alone a *debacle*, is not one often espoused by those who think of Shackleton and his forays south. There were the huge geographical advances made during the *Nimrod* (**British Antarctic Expedition**) 1907-09. Although Shackleton failed even to attain the Weddell Sea north coast (let alone cross the continent) in 1915 the icy misfortunes of the *Endurance* faded in the glorious 'light' of the extraordinary and successful open-ocean voyage of the little *James Caird*, the (on occasions cavalier) South Georgia crossing and the final rescue of Wild and his fellow men from Elephant Island. Shackleton's abbreviated polar 'apprenticeship' with Scott in 1901-3 should be regarded as a significant success, also. With Scott and Wilson, he ventured into the wholly unknown and attained a 'Furthest South' on the Ross Ice Shelf (82°11' S) on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1902.

And as for the idea the RSP was a *miracle* – could there, perhaps, be some mileage in this assertion? Despite death and calamity the achievements of the shore party in hugely-reduced circumstances were quite extraordinary.

I will confess that as I set about researching this subject I was already somewhat biased in my opinion of the RSP, shaped as it was by the rumours of underfunding, of a lack of organisation, of ambivalent leadership, of poor seamanship and, above all, of a largely inexperienced team (ship and shore) when it came to ice conditions in Antarctica. As my research progressed, however, I became increasingly aware that, whilst the Expedition fell far short in terms of overall organisation and expertise at many levels, and whilst Shackleton himself (the man in ultimate authority as commander) was thousands of miles away fighting his own demons in the Weddell Sea region, the events on the *SY Aurora* and on shore were neither a debacle or a miracle. They were, quite simply, an incredible achievement against all the odds.

Some of these odds were, without question, man-made and, therefore, avoidable (the lack of proper preparation before 1914, underfunding, poor diet and leadership tensions - all come to mind). However, the main odds were wholly natural – well beyond the control of any human being. The fierce storms that raged in the austral summers of 1915 and 1916 were severe and daunting – especially for those who had never set foot on the polar continent before. There is, it appears, a parallel in the unusual weather conditions met by the RSP shore party on the Ross Ice Shelf with those met by Scott and his men only three years earlier - described by Susan Solomon in her book *The Coldest March* (2001) Yale University Press (this book set out to demonstrate that Scott's fate in 1912 had more to do with exceptionally frigid weather than mismanagement and depression). It is wholly likely that as the small sledging teams of the RSP (never any more than nine men and often reduced to three) battled their way across the Ice Shelf they, too, met with very extreme weather.

Reading the background to the second sledge depot-laying journey (incredibly, this lasted a total of 199 days (01/09/15 to 10/03/16!)) and reading the diaries of the six-man team returning from Mount Hope (the furthest south depot) one cannot help but feel inspired by their endurance and, yet, mortified by their suffering. On the day of Spencer-Smith's demise, Joyce writes, *Had a very bad night, cold intense. Temperature down to -29 Celsius\* all night. Smith was groaning and singing out practically the whole time as he was in pain with gripes for which he was taking opium*'. This was suffering in the extreme. Add to this the fact that these men were living off ad-hoc supplies and wearing makeshift clothing (after the original Burberry gear has fallen apart) and often pulling overladen sledges (supplies for themselves and Shackleton + crossing team!) - their achievement in laying depots from Hut Point to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier (over 360 geographical miles away) was nothing short of outstanding. (\* -34 Fahrenheit)

**I list, here, a few noteworthy quotes connected with this expedition:**

1. Sir Ernest Shackleton writes in *South* (1919); *'I think that no more remarkable story of human endeavour has been revealed than the tale of that long march'*. He was, in fact, not referring to his own exploits on the Weddell Sea ice but to the extraordinary march of the 'Mount Hope Party' (Wislon McOrist's term in *Shackleton's Heroes* (2015)) between 27/01/16 and 18/03/16. That party of six (one was to die just nine days short of the 82-day slog back from the Beardmore Glacier – and only 20 miles from their immediate destination of Hut Point) comprised: the leader, Captain Aeneas Lionel Acton Mackintosh; ex-Petty Officer Ernest Edward Mills Joyce; Petty Officer Harry Ernest Wild (brother of Frank); The Reverend Arnold Patri Spencer-Smith; Victor George Hayward and Richard (known as 'Wally' or 'Dick') Walter Richards (one of three Australians in the Ross Sea shore party but the only one who made the trail to Mount Hope).

2. Ernest Joyce (who employed a certain amount of self-congratulation in his book *The South Polar Trail* (1929) claimed that the second sledge journey of 199 days was, '*Without parallel in the annals of polar sledging*'. Remarking on the trek back from Mount Hope he notes in his diary, '*I have never known such shocking conditions...this is one of the hardest pulls since we started trekking. All we can do is to slog on with the greatest possible speed*'.
3. When John King Davis saw the seven RSP survivors clamber on board the *SY Aurora* on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1917 he is reported to have declared them to be, '*The wildest looking gang of men that I have ever seen in my life*'.
4. During the quite remarkable second sledge journey so dire were the circumstances on the return from Mount Hope that Richards declared, '*I cannot now recall my thoughts at this time. I cannot even remember whether we thought we would ever reach the food depot*' (*The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914-17* (1962))

These are telling statements and hint of something altogether remarkable. Let's consider some of the facts – the negative and the positive:

### **The negative**

1. Without question there was a general lack of preparation by Shackleton from the outset. The RSP was, in some ways, and almost 'last-minute' throwing together of a crew and a ship. Whilst in overall command, Shackleton delegated much of the organising to a London lawyer – Robert Tripp (who headed up a small Committee).
2. When *SY Aurora* was purchased from Douglas Mawson in Adelaide (having returned from the Australasian Antarctic Expedition in late February 1914) it was in very poor shape and without essential equipment. On the ship's arrival in Sydney in mid-November 1914 Aeneas Mackintosh was forced to 'beg steal and borrow' to get things in order. So bad was the ship's condition that two experienced crew members from England resigned. As a result, fresh recruits had to be found in NZ and Australia – most of those recruited were very inexperienced in sailing in the ice.
3. Whilst Mackintosh was appointed overall leader (Joseph Stenhouse assumed control of the ship when the captain headed off on the first sledging journey in January 2015) there was often tension between those who respected his official position and those who preferred to listen to the opinions of the experienced (and sometimes outspoken) Ernest Joyce. Joyce had an impressive polar record having been South many times – in 1901-4 (BNAE); 1907-09 (BAE); 1911-14 (AAE)). One of the main bones of contention was the use of dogs (excuse the pun). Joyce was all in favour of them, Mackintosh was not. Another area of difficulty was one of 'style'. Joyce always chose caution when making important decisions and taking significant action. His experience on the ice had taught him this. Mackintosh, on the other hand, preferred a more 'cavalier' approach. He was a man prepared to take a calculated risk – sometimes contrary to advice from others. In the end, tragically, this trait killed him and a companion.
4. Despite important lessons from past polar expeditions the risk of scurvy was ignored. This dietary laziness led to unnecessary suffering (of many of the shore party) and, eventually, to the death of Spencer-Smith.
5. There were many communications failures. This happened often between Shackleton and the London RSP Committee, (later) between Shackleton and the RSP Relief Committee and between Shackleton and some of his prominent polar contemporaries (not least Douglas Mawson and John King Davis). Most extraordinary of all, there was a total breakdown in communication between Shackleton in South Georgia (outward-bound) and Mackintosh in the Ross Sea region. In December 1914 Sir Ernest had declared publicly to the Daily Chronicle (in England) that he had *no* intention of starting his crossing of Antarctica in the first season (austral summer 1914/15). Neither

Shackleton nor the London RSP Committee had informed Mackintosh. Had he known this crucial logistical fact the entire strategy of the RSP would have been different and, perhaps, lives not lost.

6. The value of the dogs was under-estimated in the early stages. Too few had been sent and too many had perished on the first sledge journey. It became abundantly clear to the men of the second sledge party that without the dogs they were all done for. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1916 Ernest Joyce wrote, '*the dogs are our only hope, our lives depend on them*'.
7. The most negative fact of all is, of course, that three men lost their lives (Spencer-Smith, Mackintosh and Hayward). It is perfectly true that Shackleton never lost a single man under his direct command – however, he did lose three under his *indirect* command. This affected him badly at the time, perhaps out of a sense of shock but also of guilt?

### The positive

1. For all the poor preparation and underfunding the main task of the Expedition (the laying of depots across the Ross Ice Shelf) *was* achieved against incredible odds.
2. After an initial steep learning-curve the entire team (both on the ship and on the shore) got it 'together' and handled calamity after calamity with a great deal of ingenuity and no little courage. The handling of *SY Aurora* by Stenhouse is a case in point – his crew were quick to sing his praises as a fine mariner the minute they stepped on NZ soil on 03/04/16. The extraordinary ingenuity of all ten men marooned on Ross Island cannot be underestimated, either. How they scavenged and improvised to somehow gather 4000lb of supplies for the depot-laying from Hut Point to Mount Hope is quite remarkable. Despite the tension on occasions (inevitable in such a hostile environment) the men re-focused and worked as a team. It was all about survival. There is a wonderful anecdote recalled by Richards in *The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914-17*. On the 29<sup>th</sup> February (1916), when Joyce, Richards and Hayward returned from collecting supplies at Minna Bluff to the tent where Spencer-Smith and Mackintosh had been left in the care of Ernest Wild (five days without food) Wild nonetheless came out to greet them and assist. Richards recalls, '*It was an emotional moment, and I cannot even now recall it (Ed. Richards is writing this in 1962 – some 46 years later) without a lump in the throat*'.
3. Despite the criticism levelled at Shackleton from many quarters (members of the RSP, Douglas Mawson, John King Davis, the English, NZ and Australian Governments) the Boss's charisma and bluff won through. More importantly, thanks to the efforts of Tripp (the RSP London lawyer and agent) and McNab (the Shipping Minister (NZ)) the Expedition's debts (£20,312 to be precise (£1m today)) were *fully* met.
4. Whilst, there was an undercurrent of tension and frustration from time to time (especially on the second remarkable 199-day sledging party) the combined efforts and expertise of Mackintosh and Joyce were nevertheless maximised. It would be a mistake and gross simplification to characterise the shore party as one split in two 'camps'. There was obvious mutual respect between these two main men. The advent of extreme conditions occasionally blurred the lines and it was the easiest and most natural human response to sink into vitriol. There was a telling moment when, on 18th March 1916, a very weak Mackintosh arrived back at Hut Point assisted by Joyce and Wild. Richards recalls that it was an emotional moment for all concerned. Mackintosh's gratitude was palpable as he '*shook hands all round, and with considerable emotion, thanks all for their efforts*' (Richards, *The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914-17*). Earlier on in the struggle to make it back to Hut Point, Richards records (on 29/01/16) that Mackintosh was getting weaker and weaker but that he did not give up and limp-marched as much as possible. He recalls, '*It hugged our hearts to see the distress of AM*'. Even onboard ship, the early disunity and discord among the crew members on the outward trip from NZ morphed into a new focus and outright loyalty to their new captain, Joseph Stenhouse, in the

days, weeks and months following the dreadful storm and the awful drift of the *Aurora*. It was a reformed and ice-hardened crew that arrived in Port Chalmers (NZ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1916.

5. Whilst three men perished on the Expedition only one can be said to have died from the sheer cold, diet and exhaustion of the journey. The deaths of Mackintosh and Hayward could have been avoided had the leader just been a little more cautious and listened to the wise counsel of others.

## Conclusions

The RSP was not a *debacle*. It was an adventure into the awful face of Mother Nature. It was always going to be a tough challenge. The austral weather was particularly extreme (who knows how typical those austral seasons were?).

The RSP was not a *miracle*. That is to suggest something 'supernatural' happened. It did not. The affairs of the RSP were 100% natural – for man, animal and the elements. However, there is no question that it took a super-human effort for the RSP to achieve all it managed to achieve (on land and on sea).

In short – the RSP was a stunning victory. A victory of human ingenuity and endurance over natural adversity. It was a remarkable feat where seven men somehow survived a truly outrageous ordeal. Two of the three deaths most certainly could have been avoided had Mackintosh been a little more patient and waited at Hut Point for the weather to settle reliably. Just nine weeks after the loss of the two men the remaining seven rest (plus surviving dogs) crossed the sea ice between Hut Point and Cape Evans successfully.

It should be said that Mackintosh was no fool – after all, he *had* crossed this way before with five men on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1915. Joyce (and others) had been right to warn Mackintosh of impending bad weather but no-one could have predicted, perhaps, that the blow would last for twelve long days! The leader was frustrated by being holed up in a God-forsaken store hut for far too long and took a calculated risk. He failed, tragically.



THE ROSS SEA PARTY  
Mackintosh and Stenhouse in the centre

Hurley

Spencer-Smith died because, well, something had to give! No human being should have had to face the grim and dangerous conditions of the Ross Ice Shelf over ten long and extreme months – barely clothed and barely (and incorrectly) fed.

Joyce described the 199-day sledging journey as, '*Without parallel in the annals of polar sledging*'. In fact, the entire events of the RSP (including the 700-mile drift of *Aurora*) were (and are), quite probably, without parallel in the annals of polar exploration.

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## Ross Sea Party Timeline (abbreviated)

*According to R (Dick).W.Richards (The Ross Sea Party 1914-17, 1962, SPRI) the initial Expedition plan was for the RSP to lay depots every 60 miles from Hut Point to foot of Beardmore Glacier @ 83°37' S during the austral summer 1914/1915, winter at Cape Evans 1915, continue depot-laying in late spring /early austral summer 1915/16 and return to NZ in early 1916. However, delays prevailed and all the best plans had to change (as so often happened on polar expeditions of the time!). The planning of the Expedition had been rushed and rather ill-thought through by Shackleton. Most of the arrangements had been left in the hands of a lawyer- agent (Leonard Tripp) in London and his small Committee)*

- 11/11/14** SY *Aurora* arrived in Sydney. Aeneas Mackintosh (AM) (expedition leader) found the ship unfit to travel south. Purchased from Douglas Mawson who had stripped it of equipment. Shackleton allotted £1000 funds but £2000 needed. AM expected to raise the additional cash by fundraising (seeking 'freebies' from donors or raising capital by mortgaging the ship). Edgeworth David (chief geologist on *Nimrod*) saw their plight and assisted. Some of the original crew resigned and AM had to find last-minute replacements (raw/inexperienced). This all caused delay and led to late arrival in Hobart (H), Tasmania. Departed for H on **14/12/14**.
- 24/12/14** SY *Aurora* arrived in H. Further delays. Impromptu training of men and dogs. Frenetic rush on board to finalise stores. Ship grossly overladen (including x18 huskies) but as it was registered with the Royal Yacht Squadron it was not subject to the usual safety inspections. On 23/12 inspected by Governor of Tasmania and his wife (Sir William and Lady Macartney). Lady M was Captain Robert Falcon Scott's sister and she presented a portrait of RFS to the crew.
- 25/12/14** Ship departed for Antarctica (via Macquarie Is).
- 09/01/15** Attempted to land a small party at cape Crozier to winter over and Study Emperor Penguins. Too difficult – ship grazed the ice shelf.
- 10/01/15** Arrived at entrance to McMurdo Sound, 20 miles north of Cape Evans.
- 10/01/15** Moved inshore to Cape Evans (CE) and off-loaded 10 tons of coal and x100 cases of oil in readiness for using the hut as a base.
- 24/01/15** **The first depot-laying sledge party.**  
The ship worked south to a position 9 miles north of Hut Point (HP).  
Made-fast on the shore.  
AM impatient to start the depot-laying asap as he assumed Shackleton (S) would be setting off to cross the continent in the first season. EJ urged caution. Early signs of tension between AM and Ernest Joyce (EJ) (polar veteran) who claimed S had made him i/c of the sledging parties (unfounded). AM wanted to take the dogs as far as 80° S. EJ wanted no dogs so far south. AM prevailed. X3 dog-sledge parties of x3 and x1 motor sledge party of three set off. The aim was to leave supplies at Minna Bluff (MB) (79° S) and another at 80° S. The motor-sledge party broke down close to HP and reconnoitred the area just south and returned to HP mid - 02/15.
- 09/02/15** EJ's team lay supplies at Minna Bluff (79° S)
- 11/02/15** AM's team reaches MB.
- 19/02/15** AM, EJ, EW put down depot at 80° S.

- 21/02/15**  
**to** Victor Haywood (VH), Dick Richards (DR) + others lay depots close to HP.  
**06/03/15**
- 12/03/15** By this time x6 men had returned early to HP (Ninnis (AHN), Stevens (AS), Hooke (LH), Richards (DR), Gaze (IG) and Spencer-Smith (SS). There was some disgruntlement among the men over AM's leadership. They were picked up by SY *Aurora* during its search for winter quarters along the nearby coast (see on) and taken on board and taken to Cape Evans (CE).
- 14/03/15** There was a bad storm on 13/03 but next day the ship was eventually secured onto the beach by x2 anchors and x7 steel hawsers. As per the expedition shore party plans x4 men were transferred from the ship to the hut at CE (AS, SS, IG, DR). Their task was to do science and collect food supplies. Few stores off the ship had been landed by this time. The ship was made ready for winter. The fires were drawn. The boilers blown down.
- 25/03/15** The remaining x6 men (AM, EJ, EW, John Cope (JLC), Hayward (VH), Andrew Jack (AKJ)) from the sledge journey eventually return to HP - all in a very bad way. Because of the bad sea ice and the poor weather they were stranded there until **01/06/15**.

*[ED. In fact, this depot-laying party proved unnecessary and demonstrates the (perhaps inevitable) lack of communication between the Weddell and Ross Sea sides – on 05/12/14, whilst still in South Georgia on the outward journey of SY Endurance, Shackleton had stated publicly in a letter to the Daily Chronicle (UK) that he had NO intention of starting his crossing of the continent in the first season].*

**07/05/15** *SY Aurora loses its anchorage.*

A storm developed in the previous afternoon and by 03:00hrs on 07/05 the ship anchor cables broke (one anchor is still there to this day) and Joseph Stenhouse (JS) – now captain of the ship in AM's absence - struggled to control her and eventually she drifted through McMurdo Sound and out into the Ross Sea. *[see on\*]*

When DR came out of the hut on his watch at 04:00 on 07/03 he found the ship had gone. He woke the others – however, they were sure the ship would return in a few days. A major storm lasting from 10 to 13/05 put paid to that notion. In fact, the x4 marooned men feared all was lost. They worried about the physical damage to the ship as the anchor cables snapped. They worried how JS had managed to control the ship bearing in mind it had to raise steam at a time when the boilers were cold and the engine intakes iced up.

All the men had in their possession were the clothes they stood in. These were the original clothes issued on arrival in Antarctica (see on). They had off-loaded very little from the ship before the storm. There was no soap. Only the emergency sledge party medical kits. No tobacco. However, a stockpile of food was found in and around the hut (including a floor made from full timber cases of jam, some oatmeal, pemmican and flour). For fuel and food there was a plentiful supply of fresh seal meat. There was much improvisation (including making 'HP Mixture' tobacco – sawdust/tea/coffee/herbs).

- 02/06/15** The six men at HP arrived back at Cape Evans – much to the surprise and joy of AS, IG, SS DR. It had been a slightly risky journey over quite young sea ice (13 miles sea-ice crossing from HP to CE). The men soon learn of *Aurora's* 'loss' and quickly set about a daily routine and forthcoming winter preparations for the main set depot-laying journey to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier.

**26/06/15** AM realised there would be a 2-year wait for rescue. He convened a meeting of the men and stressed the focus must be on laying food depots for Shackleton and his men. They set about gathering provisions for themselves (x10 men) + the 6 men crossing Antarctica (S + 5). Problems = old equipment, only x2 old primus stoves, inadequate clothing (including footwear/wind-proofs), most of food was old (Scott's), limited manpower (x9 men + x1 at base). Improvised: Cut up old tents and used canvas to make wind-proofs (used in camp to save Burberrys for sledge journey) and canvas boots + fur boots from sleeping bags. Found kerosene + x2 primus stoves at CE – 'lifesavers' + sundries – cake, chocolate, sleeping bags, socks, underwear.

#### **Plans laid for the second depot-laying sledge party.**

**The plan outline:** 9 men (3 x 3 men) were to haul a calculated 1800 kilos (4000lb) of supplies (including sledge weight etc – see on) across the sea ice to (1) HP; (2) from HP across the Ice Shelf to MB (79°S); (3) further depots at @ 80,81/82° S and eventually to a southern depot at Mount Hope (MH) (83°40' S). AM to man-haul. EJ to use remaining (x4 dogs)-x1 was pregnant and stayed at CE. AS was to stay at CE to keep watch and do science (he was Chief Scientist + his health not good). The motor tractor abandoned in the first sledge journey near HP was to be rescued, repaired and used (the latter was achieved, a new clutch fitted but it proved useless in pulling heavy loads on the icy surface so was eventually left behind at CE). There was a debate about the use of the dogs for the sledge journeys but they were to prove 'lifesaving' on the return from MH team. EJ deferred to Joyce but there were strains in camp.

**15/08/15** Ongoing scavenging for stores and equipment at Cape Royds (CR) – cigars, tobacco, food, soap. EJ & EW made clothing/supply bags from canvas. DR & AKJ weighed out supplies (critical to get right – just enough food to provide calories for each man per day. HOWEVER impossible to carry fresh meat and vegetables – thus scurvy inevitable (typically after 90 days w/o fresh)). See on for typical daily diet. All collected food (seals) and water (ice lumps then melted by stove).

**(22/08/15)** – first wash for the 1st sledge journey men (x6) since 24/01/15

**01/09/15** **Start of the second depot-laying sledge party.** Cape Evans to Hut Point – one advance team of x3 men took 600lb to HP + established a mid-way camp. This was followed by x4 more trips by 3x3 groups. Conical tents used. Daily routine - 6.00 wake up; 08.00 set off; 18.00 end march. Stop every 30 mins to lay snow/ice direction cairn. Arrived finally at HP on **01/10/15**.

**09/10/15** **Hut Point to Minna Bluff** - 3 teams x3 men head off to MB. Very slow progress. In x2 days only x5 miles covered. AM & EJ discussed a remedy. Loads to be lightened and x2 separate sledge teams created. (Team 1) AM, SS, EW to travel by ski: (Team 2) EJ, DR, VH, JLC, IG, AKJ to travel with dogs (x4). Better progress was made this way - in total x4 trips made between HP and MB transferring 2900lb.

In the process, the men found remnants of an old EJ *Nimrod* depot + at Scott's 1911-12 'Corner Camp' (40 miles south of HP) a buried sledge and marker left for Scott in on 16/03/1912 by Apsley Cherry-Gerrard + 6 boxes of dog biscuits, olive oil, '*At last we have struck gold in Antarctica*' (EJ). The dogs were tried out on one of the trips made on – 5/11/15 – they were found to be essential and this realisation was a providential one for later Dogs: Con, Oscar, Gunner & Touser.

**28/12/15** Arrived Minna Bluff (79° S) and established a depot.

**29/12/15** Team 1 (AM +2) set off first for next depot @ 80°S. Team 2 (EJ+ 5) caught up on 31/12/15.

- 03/01/16 Team 2 - One of the primus stoves failed and EJ had to rearrange the parties.
- 06/01/16 JLC, IG, AKJ returned to HP. The other x3 (EJ, DR, VH) continued south + 4 dogs (increasingly realising how good the dogs were and making sure their welfare was well looked after) - 1240lb pulled. The dogs ate better than the men - *'the dogs are our only hope. Our lives depend on them'* (EJ).
- 12/01/16 Both teams eventually met up at 81° S (AM, EJ, EW, VH, DR, SS). Another primus stove failed. AM signed an agreement with DR that it would be 'all or nothing'. The teams would either plough on or turn back – as a unit. It was noticed that AM was very tired and SS was limping. The march to the next proposed depot to be laid at 82°S was a slow slog. AM became quite weak. SS had scurvy. The dogs ate better than the men - *'the dogs are our only hope. Our lives depend on them'* (EJ).
- 18/01/16 The men reached 82° S.
- 22/01/16 The men reached 83° S. SS partially collapsed. He remained cheerful so it was decided it was safe to leave him with x2 weeks rations whilst the rest of the men made a dash towards MH (40 miles away). The x5 men shared one sledge, one tent.
- 25/01/16 Arrived at an area of disturbed terrain (caused by pressure from the Beardmore Glacier spilling onto the Ice Shelf). The men rested and x3 man team went ahead to scout/assess the route. Found a suitable depot site - gap between MH and Western Mountains. After 9 hours they returned to the other men. AM was showing more signs of scurvy and had become very lame. Back to MH site and established depot (2 weeks food/3 weeks oil + biscuits for x6 men (S + 5)).
- 27/01/16 Started north towards SS tent at 83° S. EJ suffered from snow blindness.
- 29/01/16 The party of x5 men arrived back from MH to find SS in a poor state and unable to walk from his tent. He was placed on a sledge and hauled. He never once complained. AM was still very weak and EJ was 'de- facto' in charge with DR his 'deputy'. The other 3 men were ailing, too. *'I have never known such shocking conditions...this is one of the hardest pulls since we started trekking. All we can do is to slog on with the greatest possible speed'* (EJ). EW became a considerate and dedicated carer for both ailing men – nurturing AM over 40 days of the homeward journey of 300 miles. It was a grim struggle. All men getting weaker by the day. Equipment was jettisoned (stupidly (says DR) - also the sledge-meter). The second sledge was discarded. A sail was used to take advantage of the southerly winds. Achieved 20 miles one day. AM was more and more in distress but limp-marched as much as possible. *'It tugged our hearts to see the distress of AM'* (DR). VH now ailing, too (of x6 men x3 were invalids – SS, AM, VH).
- 02/02/16 Arrived 80° S
- 07/02/16 Arrived 81° S. (209 miles to HP. Forced marching. Heads down into the wind).
- 11/02/16 Arrived 80° S
- 18/02/16 12-day blizzard hit the team and are halted 10 miles south of MB depot. Supplies very low (3 days)
- 24/02/16 With the storm still raging they attempted to get to MB but AM and SS were too weak. SS strapped to sledge. AM collapsed. Ernest Wild (EW) is left i/c of the x2 sick men (with some biscuits, little chocolate and oil). He is fitter than VH but better for morale. The other x3 (EJ, DR, VH)) head off to MB for supplies (20 - mile round trip which took 7 days).
- 26/02/16 Arrived at MB (with no food left at all).
- 27/02/16 Set off back to the x3 men (EW, SS, AM) left behind.

- 29/02/16** Arrived back at the tent. The x3 men had been without food for x5 days and yet EW came out to greet them and assist. Emotional for DR. Meal then set straight off north. AM and SS each strapped on a sledge.
- VH collapses. The remaining x3 (EJ, EW, DR) just too weak to haul all x3 invalids., 'I cannot now recall my thoughts at this time. I cannot even remember whether we thought we would ever reach the food depot' (DR). Lost sight of cairns. Dead reckoning. Weakness. No sledge meter to assess where the tent was they had left and where MB might be. The dogs pulled on, sensing the emergency and urgency (DR).
- 01/03/16** MB reached. Tent poles dropped on the way but DR recovered them. Had hoped for news of the *SY Aurora* by note from the others but nothing. Expected the ship to be in Antarctica but now assumed lost and the prospect of another polar winter ahead (1916/17). However, the focus was to survive and return to HP – some 90 miles distant. Slow progress. X3 men 'down' – AM, SS and VH.
- 06/03/16** EJ told AM to stay put in the tent while the others (EJ, EW, DR, VH) set out for HP with SS in a bid to save the latter. 3 weeks rations left them.
- 08/03/16** The x3 'strong' men + x1 weaker man set off to haul SS to HP.
- 09/03/16** **Between 04:00 and 06:00 SS died** – he was simply worn out with scurvy and exhaustion. Shallow grave made + snow/ice cairn over. Compass bearings taken to fix the position. Only 20 miles from HP.
- 11/03/16** The remaining x4 (EJ, EW, DR, VH) arrived back at HP in a desperate state after 6 months on the ice. There was no-one there to assist them as the other x4 (AS, IG, JLC, AKJ) long-since at CE. The men were very weak and without proper clothing.
- 14/03/16** Despite the parlous situation, EJ & EW set off to collect AM. VH & DR stayed at HP. VH 'comfortable'.
- 16/03/16** EJ & EW arrived back at AM's tent. He'd been alone x8 days. All well. Set off back north to HP.
- 18/03/16** EJ, EW & AM arrive back at HP. AM emotional moment and thanked all for their unfailing help.
- 19/03/16** Holed up by poor sea-ice conditions (too thin) and winter darkness - so unable to march across to CE to join the rest of the team. EJ estimated they would have to wait x4 months (07/16) for sea-ice conditions be safe and the light to improve to be able to march across to CE.
- 04- 05/16** Waiting for sea ice to freeze and allow passage to CE. DR postulates in his book *The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914-17* (1962) SPRI that scurvy had been creeping on as there had been a general lack of Vitamin C in the diet on the sledge journeys. Lessons had not learnt from the past (1901-4; 1907-9; 1910-12). Scurvy sets in, as a rule, after 90 days w/o fresh food. Furthermore, it was likely that the sledges had been too heavily laden from MB southwards. And too many dogs had perished on the first sledge journey in 1915.
- Life in HP was a Troglodyte existence. Improvised blubber lamps were used. The x4 dogs became a focus of attention. Sealing occurred when blizzards died down.
- [Recap: At Cape Evans (CE) = AS, JLC, AKJ & IG. At Hut Point (HP): AM, VH, EJ, EW & DR. The journey had taken 199 days (from 01/09/15 to 18/03/16)].*
- 08/05/16** AM's patience ran out and he declared over breakfast that he and VH will start to march across the sea ice that day. It would be necessary to travel light and it would not be suitable for all to go as the ice was still too young to carry the weight of the sledges. This news surprised and frustrated the others – DR writes - (a) ice too

thin/just too dangerous; (b) Both men not fully fit – had only walked 1 mile since return from south; (c) weather indications to the south not promising (MB not visible due to clouds). According to DR, EJ stated, *'You may call me 'old cautious' but I would not go to Cape Evans today for all the tea in China'*. AM agreed to head for the nearest land (coast) some 3-4 miles away IF bad weather struck. Soon after the x2 men set off a blizzard arrived and persisted for x12 days.

**20/05/16** The storm over, the men at HP traced AM & VH's footprints for 3 miles to a point where young ice was forming and, beyond, was an open sea. They could only hope that the two men had made it safely to CE.

DR postulates that it is probable that AM was simply fed up with the wait and the grime in the hut. After all, he had crossed the same route with x5 men in early 6/15. In his book DR states that they watched the two men march off in the distance from an elevated vantage point (the small mound by Vince's Cross). He felt a 'little bitterness' at the risk AM/VH were taking given the trouble the others had taken to bring both men safely back to HP from the sledge journey.

**15/07/16** (Throughout June and much of July blizzards raged). Then on this day EJ, EW, DR, set off (+ 4 dogs) for Cape Evans to join JLC, IG, AKJ AS. The light was hindered by an eclipsing moon. As they approached the hut they were met by young dogs – born whilst the party was on the ice. Their first question – have you seen AM & VH? The answer was no. There then ensued a x6 -month wait for rescue from NZ. The men hadn't washed since 01/09/15!

All men assumed *SY Aurora* had been lost and that rescue might arrive later that year. They were unaware of world events. They judged that IF WWI was still raging this would hinder a relief/rescue. They had about x12 months of supplies left at the hut. X2 men now sick. DR – effects of the journey and x1 other (identity?) suffering 'aberrations in behaviour'.

When the sun returned they searched for AM & VH. No signs. x3 men travelled to where SS was buried and erected a cross in commemoration.

At the hut, relations between the men were cordial.

**20/12/16** *SY Aurora* left Port Chalmers, NZ with 25 crew for Ross Island. S was on board and his dark mood lifted and he became the life and soul of the party.

**10/01/17** The ship arrived off the coast of Cape Royds (CR). S entered his old *Nimrod* Hut and found nothing much had changed. He found, too, a note explaining that the RSP men were wintering over at Scott's old hut at CE.

As the ship proceeded south to CE she was spotted by DR. There was a hasty dash to prepare for evacuation. x3 figures approached across the ice from the ship (S, Commander Moyes, Dr Middleton). DR states that it was a 'dramatic' meeting. The x7 surviving men were excited but amazed to see the Boss appear FROM THE NORTH. They had assumed he had perished as he never arrived overland and they had no knowledge of the Weddell Sea events.

When Shackleton discovered x3 were lost to the expedition he + the other 2 laid down in the ice as a signal to John King Davis, on board the ship. The x7 survivors boarded the ship and JKD recorded that they were, *'the wildest looking gang of men that I have ever seen in my life'*. At first their speech was jerky and it took a few days for their conversion to become intelligible.

Their first question was, 'When do the war finish?' and were told that it was 'worse than ever'. They learned of the continuing events of the war in Europe and were appalled by the carnage going on there. They were left agog, too, by the story of the *SY Aurora's* escape, following the storm of 06/05/15.

Notwithstanding their pleasure to be safe on board and going home there was an element of tension in the air. Some of the survivors felt S had let them down by failing to provide the best leader for the expedition (there were those who tended to side either with AM or EJ during the sledging forays. AS felt 'disgusted' with S's 'general behaviour and attitude'. EJ took S to task for recruiting men 'only fit for drawing room tea parties'.

S was affected by the loss of x3 men and, perhaps out of guilt, he went on shore and spent a few days looking for AM & VH along the west coast. EW and AKJ erected a cross in memory of the men at Wind Vane Hill, overlooking CE. The ship's doctor recorded that S didn't look well. Whilst the loss of x3 men was not his direct fault he was, at the end of the day, commander of the Expedition and no doubt felt full responsibility for their loss.

*[Following the rescue of his men from Elephant Island Shackleton turned his attention to the Ross Sea and he + Frank Worsley headed off to NZ. Publicly, S announced that the x 10 men of the RSP (he was unaware of all the facts) had enough stores for 3-4 years. He assumed that he would lead the rescue mission but events had shifted out of his control as the Governments of England, Australia and NZ took the lead. Costs had soared and many in authority had little patience with S's perceived cavalier organisation and haphazard funding of the Expedition from the outset. Douglas Mawson had taken a very dim view of things declaring, 'Shackleton's crooked dealings have brought it on himself'. The Governmental Relief Committee faced up to the escalating costs of relief which now amounted to £20,312 (£1 million today). They blamed JS for the SY Aurora's entrapment in the ice, after the storm, and decided that he should be relieved of duty in favour of John King Davis (JKD) – a man of huge experience in navigating the ice, having been Chief Officer on Nimrod and Captain on SY Aurora during the Mawson-led Australasian Antarctic Expedition 1911-1914. On hearing of this appointment (en-route to NZ) S attempted to block this (via his agent) but without success.*

*01/12/16 – S + FW arrived in Wellington NZ in a determined mood to take over the reins of the relief mission. They faced up to JKD who did offer to step down but the Relief Committee refused to hear of it. JKD felt that S was rather out of touch and only knew the world of 2014. S wished for JS and FW to accompany him on the mission south, along with JKD but the latter refused (x4 captains on the bridge??). A compromise was reached and S went under the command of JKD as supernumerary officer. JS + FW were given first class tickets back to England by steamship]*

**17/01/17** SY Aurora set off back to NZ to avoid the winter ice.

**09/02/17** The ship arrived in Wellington Harbour. Despite the human politics on board the NZ media and population received the men (including S) with great acclaim. S, knowing he had his detractors at high level, faced them full-on with bravado and bluff. The mood changed. S's charisma worked the magic and his reputation (not least the *Endurance* saga) went before him. The x7 survivors were made the guests of the NZ Government and treated like royalty by the Government and its people. Fed, clothed, accommodated, free travel. DR even managed to relent his earlier opposition and declared him to be a 'great man'. S toured and gave lectures to full houses. The money raised went to The Red Cross and AM's widow. S's agent, Robert Tripp, worked wonders and, along with the huge support of McNab (NZ shipping minister, the debts of the expedition were all met. S then headed for Australia to face his critics there -shamelessly using AM as a scapegoat for the ills of the RSP. There were yet more lectures to great popular acclaim (3500 audience on one occasion).

*Events on board SY Aurora*

- [ 07/05/15 After the great storm the ship careered down Mc Murdo Sound helpless with x2 bow anchors and 75 fathoms of cables dangling. Took x3 days to get up steam (ice blocks were lowered into the engine room to fill boilers). 40lb steam engine pressure achieved – enough to thaw out auxiliary equipment). But the ship became trapped in the ice and engines couldn't be used (+ very limited coal supply).
- 23/05/15 The boilers were blown. The ship then drifted for TEN months with ice pressure risk no different to that faced by *SY Endurance* in the Weddell Sea. The ship drifted some 700 miles whilst trapped. There ensued a game of 'chess' between the captain, Joseph Stenhouse (JS), and the pack ice.
- 21/07/15 The ship was squeezed badly, the rudder smashed '*The ship was visibly hogged*'. (JS). [Lionel Hooke attempted to raise the alarm by wireless but no communication was achieved until 23/03/16 (wireless technology still in its infancy)]. As the ship drifted a jury rudder was made
- 12/02/16 The pack started to separate but the ship couldn't break free.
- 14/03/16 Ship finally freed but it sprang numerous leaks (propeller shaft + damaged stern timbers where rudder has collided under ice pressure).
- There were x4 weeks of anxious pumping by the crew to keep the ship afloat. JS had to manipulate the *SY Aurora* WITHOUT steam and WITHOUT RUDDER (and only occasional sail) through the loose pack and open leads. Sometimes the remaining single ice anchor was tied to floes and the ship warped forward. Often no headway could be made because of lack of power in the face of strong headwinds and mountainous seas. Eventually, the ship limped back to NZ, covering some 2000 miles]
- 03/04/16 The ship arrived at Port Chalmers, near Dunedin, under tow. The ship, however, was in a bad way and needed major overhaul before it could return and rescue the men on Ross Island – this was the huge task JS now faced. Having shown great seamanship JS now proved his worth in coordinating the recovery of the ship as it was vital it returned to rescue the men stranded south. The task was huge, however, and finally the Governments of Australia, NZ and UK agreed to help but strictly on THEIR terms. This eventually led to the replacing of JS as captain by John King Davis. Shackleton (who had arrived late on the scene in NZ because of the Elephant Island rescue mission) was allowed by the Relief Committee to travel on the ship purely as a supernumerary officer.
- 20/12/16 The ship left NZ for Antarctica.
- 09/02/17 The ship returned to NZ.

**AFTERMATH VERDICT**

EJ claimed that the expedition was, '*Without parallel in the annals of polar sledging*'. Note that - 1903/4, Scott's South (with Wilson and Shackleton) = 93 days; Shackleton's 'Furthest South (1908/9) = 120 days; Scott's Final Journey (1911/12) = 150 days. However, the RSP = 199 days – WITHOUT 'proper' supplies and equipment/much improvisation/ hugely over-laden with depot items for Shackleton's crossing. An incredible achievement.

**Post Script:** Huts at Cape Evans and Hut Point remain and have been conserved over the past 15 years, thanks to the AHT. *SY Aurora* was sold as a coal-carrier serving a route between Australia – South America. Lost in the Pacific in 01/18.

## The Ross Sea Party – personnel

### Shore party

Name	Born	Died	Position	Additional information
Aeneas Mackintosh	1879	1916	Commander	Died during the expedition
Ernest Joyce	1875	1940	Sledging Equipment and Dogs	
Ernest Wild	1879	1918	Storekeeper	
Reverend Arnold Spencer-Smith				Died during the expedition
	1883	1916	Chaplain and Photographer	
John Lachlan Cope	1893	1947	Biologist and Surgeon	
Alexander Stevens	1886	1965	Chief Scientist	
Richard W Richards	1893	1985	Physicist	
Andrew Keith Jack	1885	1966	Physicist	
Irvine Gaze	1890	1978	General Assistant	
Victor Hayward	1887	1916	General Assistant	Died during the expedition

### Aboard the Aurora

Name	Born	Died	Position	Additional information
Aubrey Howard Ninnis	1883	1956	Motor Tractor Specialist	Intended for the shore party but stranded when the <i>Aurora</i> broke adrift
Lionel Hooke	1895	1974	Wireless Telegraph Operator	Intended for the shore party but stranded when the <i>Aurora</i> broke adrift
Joseph Stenhouse	1887	1941	1st Officer (subsequently Captain)	
Leslie Thompson			2nd Officer	
Alfred Larkman	1890	1962	Chief Engineer	
C. Adrian Donnelly/Donolly			2nd Engineer	
James Paton	1869	1918	Boatswain	
Clarence Maugher/Mauger			Carpenter	
Sydney Atkin			Able Seaman	
Arthur Downing			Able Seaman	
William Kavanagh			Able Seaman	
A. "Shorty" Warren			Able Seaman	
Charles Glidden			Ordinary Seaman	
S. Grady/Grade			Fireman	
William Mugridge			Fireman	
Harold Shaw			Fireman	
Edwin Thomas Wise	1872	1943	Cook	
Emile d'Anglade			Steward	

### Footnote:

This lecture was first delivered at a Shackleton convention organised by Stephen Scott-Fawcett FRGS on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and held at Discovery Point, Discovery Quay, Dundee DD1 4XA (Dundee Heritage Trust) <https://www.rrsdiscovery.com>

# Shackleton's heart – something wrong?

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Sir Ernest Shackleton took part in four Antarctic expeditions, and one to Spitsbergen. He endured extraordinary hardships and was at times a very powerful traveller; his two most notable exploits being the forced march in 1909 (with Frank Wild) of some thirty miles to prevent the *Nimrod* leaving, before leading a rescue party back to his exhausted men, and the crossing of South Georgia in thirty-six hours in 1916. But he had periods of unexplained ill health during *all* his expeditions, which sometimes threatened the safety of his companions.

We suspect that his problems may have been the result of episodes of an abnormal cardiac rhythm.

There are descriptions of seven events that suggest heart malfunction. During these episodes he had symptoms and signs such as weakness, breathlessness, cough, colour change, chest pain or discomfort, and an abnormal pulse. They affected him at intervals over a twenty-year period from the age of 28, as listed in the table.

Event	Reporter	Date	Expedition	Age	Remarks
1	Wilson	1903	<i>Discovery</i>	28	Ross Ice Shelf: Unable to pull sledge.
2	Marshall	1908	<i>Nimrod</i>	33	Voyage to Antarctica: "very ill after pulling on a rope —something wrong?"
3	Marshall	1909	<i>Nimrod</i>	34	Beardmore glacier: Unable to pull sledge.
4	McIlroy	1918	Spitzbergen	44	Tromsø: "changed colour very badly"
5	McIlroy	1921	<i>Quest</i>	47	South Trinidad? "very white in the face, almost green"
6	Wild	1921	<i>Quest</i>	47	Rio de Janeiro: "taken suddenly ill"
7	Macklin	1922	<i>Quest</i>	47	South Georgia: Severe back and jaw pain. Terminal event.



*Wild, Shackleton, Dr Marshall, and Adams after nearly reaching the Pole. Marshall noted an abnormal pulse whilst Shackleton was unwell on the Beardmore Glacier, and heard a heart murmur before they started.*

Events 1 and 3 were arguably the most significant because his illness compromised the safety of the party. Fortunately, in 1903 they were relatively close to home, and in 1909 Shackleton recovered in a few days.

If Shackleton had a heart problem it was something that only intermittently affected his ability to exercise, and did not completely disable him. A possible explanation is that Shackleton suffered from an intermittent abnormal heart rhythm that caused a periodic reduction in the output of his heart. Support for this suggestion is found in the diary kept by Dr Marshall during the *Nimrod* expedition. Dr Marshall felt Shackleton's pulse whilst he was unwell on the Beardmore Glacier, and found it to be "thin and thready, irregular at about 120". This suggested that Shackleton's heart was beating too quickly in an irregular, inefficient rhythm.

Shackleton was a young man, only 33 at the time of his difficulties on the Beardmore Glacier, and disturbances of heart rhythm are rare at that age. However, he may have had an abnormality that would have increased his chances of developing an abnormal heartbeat. When Dr Marshall examined the men before their journey towards the South Pole he found that Shackleton had a "pulmonary systolic murmur". A pulmonary systolic murmur is heard with a stethoscope as the blood is ejected from the right ventricle towards the lungs, over the area of the chest where sound is transmitted from the pulmonary valve of the heart. The sound is caused by turbulent flow through the valve, which can be because the valve is abnormal, or because the volume of blood being forced through the valve is abnormally large. In a healthy young adult, like Sir Ernest, a likely cause would be a congenital heart abnormality such as a narrowing of his pulmonary valve or an atrial septal defect (ASD), often called "a hole in the heart". When an ASD exists, blood can leak from the left atrium to the right atrium, which fills the right ventricle more than usual and results in an increased flow through the pulmonary valve as the ventricle contracts ("systole"). Overfilling of the atrium is associated with a tendency to go into an abnormal rhythm such as atrial tachycardia, fibrillation or flutter. If an ASD is undetected it is common for the patient to first notice a problem in early adulthood when their heart goes into an abnormal rhythm, and they suddenly feel tired, weak and breathless.

There can be little doubt that Sir Ernest knew he had an abnormality that could be detected by a doctor with a stethoscope, because he repeatedly refused to allow any examination of his heart. This was remarked upon by Drs Marshall, McKay and McIlroy at various times. Biographer, Roland Huntford, claimed that Shackleton deliberately avoided a medical before the *Discovery* expedition. Sir Ernest's father was a doctor, moreover a doctor with a special interest in listening to hearts, so it is tempting to believe that Shackleton's father alerted him to the presence of a murmur.

Sir Ernest's chances of fame and fortune rested upon his ability to raise finance for his expeditions, by "hanging round the doors of rich men" as Apsley Cherry-Garrard put it, and a question mark over his heart could have been catastrophic. It should be emphasised that little was known about the condition of ASD at the time and there was no treatment available.

Although we think that intermittent abnormal heart rhythms associated with an ASD or other heart defect was the basis of some of Sir Ernest's difficulties, it is likely that there were important contributions from scurvy on the *Discovery* expedition, and from coronary artery disease on the *Quest* expedition.

On the *Discovery* expedition, Scott, Wilson and Shackleton had all developed signs of scurvy before Shackleton became ill. Scott and Wilson continued to be able to pull the sledge whereas Shackleton could only ski alongside. It could be that he just had worse scurvy than the others, but the expedition doctor (Koettlitz) wondered whether he had "a sort of asthma". Sir Ranulph Fiennes, in his analysis of their journey, concluded that "Shackleton's lungs and heart were clearly susceptible to some ailment unconnected to scurvy".



*Shackleton onboard R Y S Quest in September 1921 –  
thin and gaunt and not looking as healthy as his earlier years*

Scott seems to have been pretty sure that Shackleton was likely to break down again, and sent him home. Scott was right, as Shackleton did break down again on his *Nimrod* expedition six years later, when there was no question of scurvy.

Dr Macklin's description of Sir Ernest's death (event 7) sounds consistent with coronary artery disease, in that Shackleton complained of severe pain in the back and jaw immediately before, and Drs Macklin and McIlroy found diseased coronary arteries when they opened his chest to perform an embalming procedure. But pain was not mentioned in the accounts of events 2-6, which would be inconsistent with coronary artery disease. Coronary artery disease was uncommon at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably because cigarette smoking was also unusual, but it is thought that Sir Ernest became a heavy cigarette smoker after the *Discovery* expedition.

Our ideas are speculative of course, but we feel that they fit the facts that are known. Sir Ernest did have an unusual murmur, and he did have an abnormal pulse both in rate and rhythm during one of his attacks. We think it is likely that periods of abnormal heart rhythm caused his repeated problems. Shackleton was indubitably an outstanding leader, but as far as his heart was concerned, we think that Dr Marshall was right to be worried that there was "something wrong".

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# The Lord and all His wonders in the deep:

## Sir Ernest Shackleton and the 'Power that informs the whole living world'

Liam Maloney

Sir Ernest Shackleton had a personality strong enough to carry the attention of men and women and to bring sailors and adventures to the icy ends of the Earth. The weight of his charisma and loyalty is well-known and testified. However, the personal faith of the Boss is not as deeply explored. The Shackleton family was one of faith and devotion, with strong connections to the churches of Ireland. As a pathway into the possible spirituality of Sir Ernest, this paper considers the *Bible* given to Shackleton by Queen Alexandra as well as biblical verses that were of comfort to the Boss during the struggles of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917. The words of friends and colleagues, as well as Shackleton's own cryptic descriptions, are then used to fill out the picture of how the Irish Antarctic explorer saw himself, the divine and the cosmos.

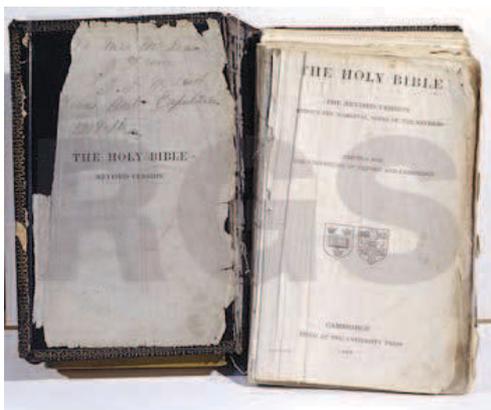
In July 1914, Queen Dowager Alexandra and her sister Empress Maria Feodorovna, mother of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, visited Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* shortly before its departure. Emily Dorman Shackleton, Sir Ernest's patient wife, and their children were also present for the occasion. Alexandra presented Shackleton with two copies of the *Bible*, one for the ship and one for his own personal use. Inspired by Psalm 107:24, Queen Alexandra inscribed one of them with the following words:

May the Lord help you to do your deeds, guide you through all dangers by land and sea. May you see the works of the Lord and all His wonders in the deep.

Following the abandonment of the ship in October 1915, Shackleton was keen to discard any needless weight to be carried by his crew. In a dramatic and exemplary action, Shackleton tore out the pages from the *Bible* with the Queen's message, left the book on the ice and walked away. The rest of that *Bible* was picked up and kept, however, by Thomas McLeod, a devout Scot, who smuggled it along, thinking it unlucky to throw away scripture. As well as the lucky talisman from Alexandra, Shackleton also tore out the 'wonderful page of [the Book of] Job' that contained the verses:



*In July 1914 Queen Dowager Alexandra (third left) and her sister, DowagerEmpress Maria Feodorovna (fourth left) presented EHS (second left) with an Expedition Bible, onboard SY Endurance.*



*The Bible presented to EHS  
Image: Royal Geographical Society*

Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

After leaving the *Endurance* behind, Shackleton, in his concealed stress, appealed to God for help. 'I pray God,' he wrote, 'I can manage to get the whole party to civilisation and then this part of the expedition will be over'. However, this was unlikely to be an indication of frequent prayers or devotions. Despite his religious upbringing, he was no longer a follower of his Church even at times of strain. He was not a man to call on God only when he was in trouble, as

Hussey once described—'If he didn't believe in the Lord when things were going well, he wasn't going to call on his protection when things weren't going well.'

Although Sir Ernest used and referred to Christian scriptural texts, he may have had, what could be called, a spiritual sense of the world, as opposed to a religious view of any of the Christian churches. In 1922, Shackleton's companion, Harold Begbie, published a memoir containing recollections of conversations with Sir Ernest. In it he assessed his friend's views:

He was really profoundly conscious of the spiritual reality which abides hidden in all visible things—a strange, mysterious depth in the soul of one whose surface was a reckless gaiety and a playful, easy, tolerant good nature.

This great sense that Shackleton held of an energy, power, occasionally referred to as 'God,' comes through in the description of the experiences of himself, Tom Crean and Frank Worsley as they crossed South Georgia in May 1916.

Jonathan Shackleton, in his book, *Shackleton: An Irishman in Antarctica*, wrote that Shackleton's 'use of strong spiritual language in recounting how the journey across South Georgia affected him is hardly surprising.' His spiritual awareness led him to see the world in these terms. Shackleton's love of using poetry and literature came through at these moments of intense experience when his own words to describe his feelings were inadequate. Biblical verses and imagery of the divine, as well as the powers of the unknown, were called upon as he looked to make sense of his emotions. Almost seven years after their epic journey from Elephant Island in the *James Caird* and the crossing of South Georgia, Worsley wrote that 'each step of that journey comes back clearly'. However, when he recalled the men on South Georgia, something changed:

I again find myself counting our party—Shackleton, Crean, and I and – who was the other? Of course, there were only three, but it is strange that in mentally reviewing the crossing we should always think of a fourth, and then correct ourselves.

He simply summed this up by stating: 'Providence had certainly looked after us.' Jonathan Shackleton points out the 'echoes of Luke 24: 13-16 are unmistakable':

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.



*Tom Crean, Ernest Shackleton and Frank Worsley at Stromness (May 1916)*

In the Book of Daniel (Daniel 3:25), three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to pray before the golden statue of the king Nebuchadnezzar. For this, they were thrown into a furnace to die.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Although their situation, 'the burning fiery furnace,' is at the opposite extreme of temperature from the glaciers and frozen winds of South Georgia, the allusion is appropriate—three men close to death felt the saving presence of a fourth with them.

Begbie recalled that Shackleton had said that the three men never doubted 'there was always something above'. In a similar fashion to Worsley, Shackleton said that they called it Providence and that 'we left it at that'. As he was willing to say:

We were comrades with Death all the time; there was no mistake in that; but I can honestly say it wasn't bad. I mean we always felt there was something above.

This wasn't the first time Shackleton had spoken of a presence above in time of hardship. Following the conclusion of his 1907-1909 expedition with the *Nimrod*, Shackleton was honoured by the Royal Societies Club with a luncheon in London on Tuesday, 15 June, 1909. During his speech to the attendees (including international dignitaries, well-known scientists and authors, Capt. Scott, and men of the recently-returned *Nimrod*), Shackleton told his audience of 'miraculous escapes' and of times when 'all seemed black'. There were mornings when they were unsure whether it 'would bring forth a day for them or a death'. However, all worked out for the best, particularly when only the worst seemed possible. In the report from *The Times* of the following day, Shackleton had ascribed this

...to a Higher Power than our own. No amount of leadership would have helped them as they were helped...It was fitting and right, and only his duty, there amongst his

friends, to say that the members of the expedition believed in that Higher Power now that they were safe home again.

In a later, more specific description to Begbie, Shackleton said that the presence he felt during the hardships of the *Endurance* expedition was 'of a Power that informed the whole living world.' However, following this, he didn't want to discuss these feelings any further:

There are some things which can never be spoken of. Almost to hint at them comes perilously close to sacrilege. This experience was eminently one of those things.

Looking to Shackleton's book, *South!*, he wrote the following concerning the experience crossing South Georgia Island:

When I look back at those days I have no doubt that Providence guided us, not only across those snowfields, but across the storm-white sea that separated Elephant Island from our landing-place on South Georgia. I know that during that long and racking march of thirty-six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia it seemed to me often that we were four, not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterwards Worsley said to me, "Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us." Crean confessed to the same idea. One feels "the dearth of human words, the roughness of mortal speech" in trying to describe things intangible, but a record of our journeys would be incomplete without a reference to a subject very near to our hearts.

Shackleton's belief in an order in the world was elusive and very personal. However, if anyone had a clear insight into these facets of the Boss's mentality it would have been Hugh Robert Mill. Mill was a long-standing friend and confidante of Shackleton, who understood him better than most. Below is an extract from Mill's biography of his friend published soon after his death in 1922:

In Shackleton the religious sense was strong, though he could hardly be said to conform to any of the recognized modes of expression. He believed the soul was immortal, and was very sure of providential guidance. His God was the God of Nature, of the stars, the seas, and the open spaces, of the great movements of history and the abysmal depths of personality. But no creed going beyond the bottomless words, 'I believe,' could contain a definition of his faith. There was goodness permeating Nature and the world was progressing towards good. So he believed, and hence it is difficult for those who hold to forms and articles to realize that he had the vision of Truth; and impossible for the school of thought, which sees only disgrace in the past and gloom in the future of human endeavour, to understand the ground that Shackleton stood on.

Perhaps for Shackleton, the persistence of the human spirit, assisted by the knowledge of a greater universal order, was of greater personal importance than the presence of an omnipresent Almighty. This order's providence, perhaps, made the ventures and enterprises of ambitious individuals possible, in a reciprocal fashion. In their study of Shackleton, the Fishers wrote that a working principle for the Boss was 'God helps those who help themselves'. The reference to 'God' here could perhaps be more accurately substituted with a phrase akin to 'the order of Nature' to reflect Shackleton's beliefs, but it would likely have made little difference to the man himself. Expressions and phrases such as 'thank God,' were not true expressions of faith but rather told of a mixture of superstition, wishful thinking and the emotional response to the human interaction with the awe of nature.

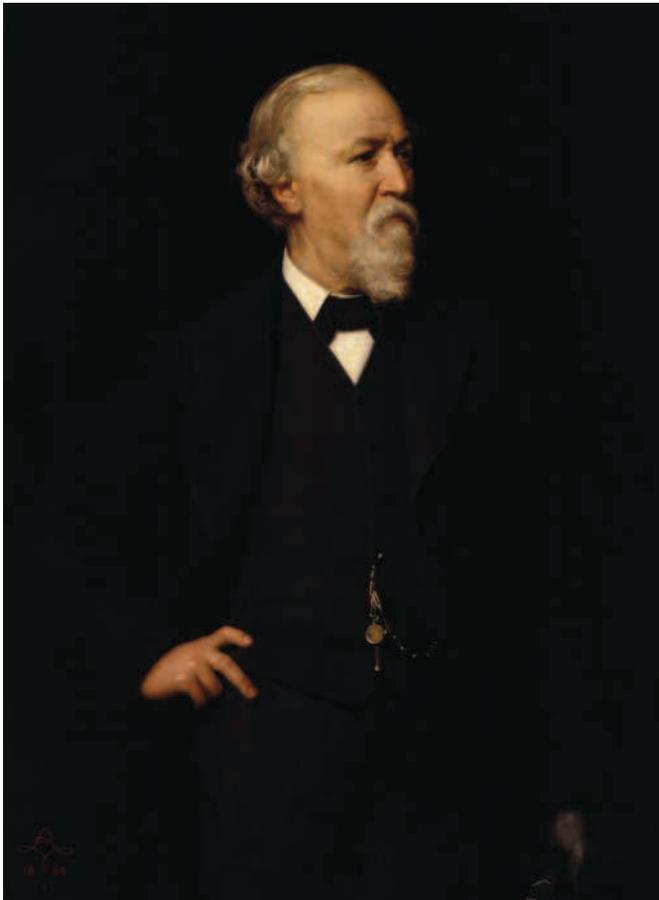
Shackleton was drawn to lines of poetry that emphasised this kind of philosophy and the lines below from Browning were well-known to Sir Ernest:

Do your best, whether winning or losing it,  
If you choose to play!—is my principle.  
Let a man contend to the uttermost  
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

In March 1917, Shackleton gave a lecture in Sydney. His words on death are illuminating for his character:

Death is a very small thing—the smallest thing in the world... I know that death scarcely weighs in the scale against a man's appointed task... If we have to die, we will die in the pride of manhood, our eyes on the goal and our beating time to the instinct within us.

Perhaps, in keeping with these sentiments, it is appropriate that the Boss be laid to rest on South Georgia Island, under a stone that bears the following words:



*Robert Browning (Shackleton's favourite poet)*

To the dear  
memory of  
ERNEST HENRY SHACKLETON  
EXPLORER  
Born  
15th Feb. 1874  
Entered Life Eternal  
5th Jan. 1922

On the reverse side of the headstone is added a section of the aforementioned poem:

"I hold...that a  
man should strive  
to the uttermost  
for his life's set  
prize"

*Robert Browning*

No god is invoked here on this stone, no crucifix to mark the Christian heritage of the man buried below. A nine-pointed star is carved at the top of the stone. Shackleton entered life eternal marked by the stars and words that led him in life to strive for great things.

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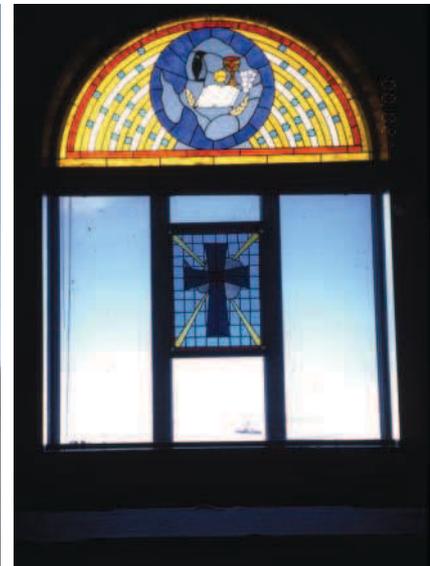
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*Chapel of the Snows, McMurdo Station(USA),  
Ross Island, opened in 1989*



*View through the main chapel window  
looking west across McMurdo Sound*

# THE COLD TRUTH

## The Titanic Tragedy and the Legacy of Britain's Antarctic Explorers

Gary Lee

An apparition startled the residents of a peaceful Norwegian whaling village in the South Atlantic on the afternoon of May 20, 1916. Matthias Andersen, station foreman of Stromness on South Georgia, heard frightened cries as he supervised the unloading of gear from a whale catcher. He looked up to see two eleven-year-old boys running in terror from three dark, subhuman-looking figures dragging along behind them in the distance.

Andersen, once a sailor himself, expressed no surprise at the weird seafaring men who occasionally turned up in a remote post like Stromness. The bizarre appearance and weary gait of these strangers did not puzzle him as much as the direction from which they came. Had they been hobbling up the waterfront he would have recognized them instantly—hung over sailors looking for their ship. But these bedraggled characters trudged down from the mountains. Deemed impassible, the interior of South Georgia remained unexplored, full of glaciated peaks rising to nearly 10,000 feet.

No one could be coming from that way.

As these gaunt scarecrows slowly approached, Andersen found himself confronting not spectres but what had to be the three dirtiest men on earth. Bloodshot eyes peered from haggard faces etched in grime. Their skin looked dusky as mahogany from exposure and blubber soot. Grease stiffened their shoulder-length hair into helmets, while their untamed beards spread into filthy, matted mops. Nothing but stinking rags remained of their clothing. One had pinned what remained of his trousers together with safety pins. They did not wear seamen's sweaters, but what appeared to have once been parkas.

One of the men spoke English, as did Andersen. With a strained, curiously low voice, the malingeringer asked to see the station master. "Whalers, group VIII," Andersen surmised—the bottom of the barrel. He would leave it to Thoralf Sorlle, manager of the Tonsberg Whaling Company, to sort out these ruffians.

Despite their vile condition, Andersen courteously escorted the visitors 100 yards away to Sorlle's neat, white-painted house. As they passed along the docks, workers fell silent, leaving their tasks to gape at the grotesque procession led by their boss.

Three "funny-looking men" were outside, Andersen told Sorlle. They claimed to have lost their ship and crossed the island on foot in search of rescue. Sorlle, a dark, imposing man with a handlebar moustache, dubiously went to the door in his shirtsleeves. He had heard everything now. Crossed the island?

Sorlle's authoritarian figure filled the door frame. He recoiled in disbelief at the sight of his callers. After a long moment, he regained command of himself, gruffly demanding, "Well?"

"Don't you know me?" said the man in the center stepping forward, who had spoken to Andersen.

"I know your voice," responded Sorlle hesitantly, disconcerted, perhaps, that this vagrant presumed his acquaintance. "You're the mate of the *Daisy*."

"My name is Shackleton," the man said quietly.

Too astonished to speak, Sorlle remained rooted to the spot. Sir Ernest Shackleton sailed from South Georgia in 1914 with 27 men aboard the *Endurance*, intending to be the first to march across the Antarctic continent via the South Pole. No one had heard from him since. South Georgians assumed he and his crew long ago met a bitter fate. Sorlle himself, who once sailed the waters of Antarctica, said when they departed that he held little hope that their ship could escape the ice intact. Until this moment, no one had guessed that Ernest Shackleton might still be alive.

Sorlle, so the legend goes, turned away and wept.

"Come in, come in," he insisted, putting out his hand. He and Shackleton did know one another. Before starting out, Shackleton had entertained Sorlle aboard the *Endurance*, the very ship Sorlle now heard was lost.

Yet with safety and comfort only inches away at last, Shackleton's English decorum would not let him enter. "I'm afraid we smell," he protested.

"No matter," Sorlle countered, "we're used to it in a whaling station."

Upon stepping inside, Shackleton had another pressing matter to address before all else. "Tell me," he asked Sorlle, "when was the war over?"

"The war is not over," Sorlle declared. "Millions are being killed. Europe is mad. The world is mad."

Sorlle's discovery of Shackleton on his doorstep may rank as the most momentous encounter in exploration history since Stanley found Livingstone. His return truly was an apparition, "an appearance in history or before the world," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. How Shackleton's men survived the foundering of the *Endurance* in the ice, eventually to find rescue 1,500 miles away in Sorlle's parlor constitutes one of the greatest sagas of determination, suffering, and daring in the annals of exploration. Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian discoverer of the South Pole, called it, "The most brilliant incident in the history of the Antarctic."

For the moment, all that mattered was that the explorer given up for dead was alive. Sorlle bountifully played the proverbial rescuer to whom Shackleton, the biblical prodigal, returned. In all probability, a Norwegian whaler who witnessed the reunion, most likely was the one who wept, while Sorlle's greeting for his preposterous intruders may have been far saltier than, "Well?" On this point, Shackleton perhaps softened his recollections for the sake of discretion. Nevertheless, Sorlle fed the men, let them bathe, and then kept on feeding them, nearly starving as they were, while he also fed these Rip Van Winkles news of the conflict ravaging Europe. They listened in astonishment, unable to take it in. Sorlle's description of the unprecedented horrors of modern warfare exceeded what even survivors of the *Endurance* could imagine of terror and travail.

Everyone on the island surely knew of the great ship *Titanic's* tragic encounter with ice four years earlier in the far-off North Atlantic. But they probably had no inkling of the influence that the disaster may have had in bringing Shackleton to their outpost. Could Shackleton's decision to attempt to cross the Antarctic have been his reaction in some small measure to the aspersions cast on his seamanship and ability as a navigator after he testified at the British Inquiry into the *Titanic's* fate? Apart from Shackleton's personal mortification, could the blow to British national pride represented by the *Titanic* disaster been one of the factors that influenced First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill to allow a far-fetched endeavor

like Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition to "Proceed" despite the outbreak of war with Germany at that time?

The phenomenal social, technological and commercial marvel of the *RMS Titanic*, intended cross seas and link continents in unparalleled comfort and glamour, would seem entirely unrelated at first glance with the gritty and unprofitable quest to explore an uninhabited land mass that seemed remote as the moon. Yet both *Titanic* and British Antarctic exploration helped define the ethos of the Edwardian age. Both arose from an impulse of the times for the absolute conquest of nature and the attainment of omnipotent human powers. Accordingly, the Edwardians looked favorably upon heroic enterprises such as creating the world's largest, most luxurious, and most technically advanced liner and heroic deeds such as capturing the South Pole. Both expressed their society's tendency toward chauvinistic self-aggrandizement and both came to grief on the ice at opposite ends of the world within a few days of each other in 1912.

The sinking of the *Titanic*, the era's most widely known calamity at sea, and the demise of Sir Robert Falcon Scott's polar party, the most widely known calamity in the Antarctic, amounted to classic exercises in ineptitude compounded by a mean twist of unforgiving fate. In their wake, both tragedies fueled the Edwardian love of heroic myth-making, which, far from foundering as well, attained new forward momentum and certitude from the disasters. In the popular mind of today, the *Titanic's* demise helped bring the halcyon "Gilded Age" of industrial advance and social ostentation to an abrupt end and signaled the onset of the calamities of the Twentieth Century, beginning with the Great War. At the time, romanticizing Scott's dismal fate in the Antarctic might have been one-way Edwardians tried to deny the unwelcome realities being thrust upon them, of which the *Titanic* disaster was one.

Some observers regard England's efforts in Antarctica during the Heroic Age as a metaphor for British society in the opening two decades of the Twentieth Century - similar to the way the *Titanic* is often viewed. The empyrean forces that launched and then sank the *Titanic* can thus be seen in a more approachable and intimate scale in the exploits of Britain's two most well-known Antarctic explorers, Scott and Shackleton.

The British with their long tradition of firsts in global exploration considered the South Pole theirs by right. In 1900, Sir Clements Markham, president of the Royal Geographical Society, anointed Scott to dutifully march to the pole to secure it for the king. Markham had met Scott by chance on a street in London the year before. About the only qualification that the obscure 31-year-old torpedo lieutenant possessed for the errand was that Markham took a liking to him.

Shackleton, 26, decided to vie for a place on the RGS venture, christened the British National Antarctic Expedition, leaving in 1901. Why not, he reasoned? Neither he nor Scott had experience on the ice. Merchant seamen like Shackleton often felt they did all the work while navy men like Scott merely gave orders and went about acting socially superior. Furthermore, he was nearly six years younger than Scott. Age was a major factor in the brutal calculation of fitness for Antarctic service.

Born in 1874 in County Kildare, 50 miles southwest of Dublin, Ernest was the second of ten children of Anglo-Irish parentage. In 1884, with the Irish question in ferment, the Protestant Shackletons moved to a suburb of London. Ernest loved poetry (in his twenties, he wooed Emily, his bride-to-be, with swooning quotations from Browning), but Victorian school life bored him abysmally. Brimming with vigor and eager to make a name for himself, he fled school at age 16 to join the British merchant marine.

Begotten of the governing elite in Ireland at the point of their decline, the tricky game of class conferred upon Shackleton prestige—the family had a coat of arms with the providential

motto *Fortitudine Vincimus*, “By Endurance We Conquer”—but not advantages. Consigned to make his own way in the world, he seized upon a novel feature of the times, the fever for the South Pole, as a ‘vehicle’ to vault into the ranks of the prominent men of his day. Fame, honour, a place in history, social standing, and likely riches awaited the adventurer who conquered the earth’s last prize.

Britain’s imperial image suffered setbacks during Shackleton’s boyhood. Unarmed Zulus at Isandhlwana defeated armed British forces when he was seven. Two years later, the Boers did the same at Majuba Hill. The culminating disaster came in 1885 with the pointless death of Gen. Gordon at the fall of Khartoum. The British redeemed their pride in what became an all-too-familiar pattern in Shackleton’s adulthood—trumping humiliating defeat with a compensatory triumph—real or imagined. The ironic enterprise to which Shackleton now attached himself—Antarctic exploration—proved a case in point.

Using his shipboard connections and his considerable powers of persuasion, Shackleton finagled the Third Mate’s berth on Scott’s expedition ship *Discovery*. After their final stop in New Zealand to complete their preparations, Scott, Shackleton, and 31 others departed from Lyttelton on Christmas Eve, 1901, for their first, fateful look at what Shackleton called the “weird white world” of Antarctica.

Scott conceded to their mutual friend on board, Dr. Edward Wilson, that Shackleton was the best choice from among the *Discovery* crew to be the third man to march with him and Wilson to claim the pole. Shackleton’s dreams of glory seemed within reach. But the journey turned out to be the first in a lifetime of “what-might-have-beens” and “if onlys” for Ernest Shackleton.

Woefully unprepared, the trio struggled less than 300 of the 900 miles to the South Pole before turning back three months later. Despite his imposing 5’10” physique and seeming robustness, Shackleton became ill, probably from scurvy. Scott and Wilson eventually had to cart him on the sledge one day, to Shackleton’s excruciating shame. Scott mean-spiritedly criticized Shackleton to Wilson for Shackleton’s “failure,” even as they raced for their lives back to the ship.

Their safe return did not erase Scott’s animosity. He ordered Shackleton home to England on the relief ship *Morning* as an invalid. Before leaving their base camp at McMurdo Sound, Shackleton’s companions gave him three cheers. From the deck of the departing ship, with tears in his eyes, he watched Scott’s figure recede in the distance and vowed to himself that he would someday return to Antarctica to prove himself the better man.

In *Voyage of the Discovery*, Scott’s 1905 published account of the expedition, he blamed their failure to reach the pole solely on Shackleton’s physical collapse, omitting any mention of scurvy. While his infirmities certainly did not aid their cause, Shackleton bitterly resented being faulted for Scott’s own failings as commander.

The humiliating accusation grew out of more than Scott’s disingenuous attempts to cloak his own inept leadership of the expedition. Personally, Scott resented Shackleton. Aboard *Discovery*, Shackleton got the upper hand by sheer charisma and force of personality. Shackleton dominated Scott as well by his inherent capability as a leader. Scott priggishly operated by the book, behaving as an aloof, hidebound military officer with little feel for the human dimensions of command. Wilson functioned as a quiet conciliator. Once on the ice, Shackleton naturally took psychological command of the party until he became incapacitated.

In truth, Scott left all the men in his charge ludicrously unprepared for the rigors of Antarctic travel. The whole *Discovery* Expedition proceeded as an exercise in improvisation. Nowhere did that amateurism show more clearly than in Scott, Shackleton, and Wilson’s woeful march

on the pole. The Norwegians had amply demonstrated skiing to be the best means for efficient polar travel. Scott's men never learned to ski. In addition, Norwegians methodically killed and ate the dogs pulling the sledges as the load lightened. But sentiment would not permit such a practice for the British, who found killing dogs repugnant and the use of skis beneath them. They would man-haul the sledges themselves to the pole, the only honorable way befitting an Englishman. It was the traditional British way, already antiquated at the time the *Discovery* left New Zealand, but Markham insisted on it. Skis remained dead weight on their sledges for most of the trip, and food in short supply.

Because of Scott's *laissez-faire* attitude toward the challenges, headlines charging "POLAR EXTRAVAGANCE" greeted him when the expedition returned home a year late. The expedition's backers ran out of money and could not fund the rescue. The necessity for the public purse to pay to retrieve the long-overdue ship created a scandal.

Nevertheless, Scott, Shackleton and Wilson now held the record for Furthest South, a tremendously important marker in the race for the South Pole and a robust source of national pride. No one had ever set foot beyond the coastal zones of Antarctica before. Thus, the mere fact that they had penetrated inland, regardless of how far, handed them the distinction, despite their ineptitude.

Still intent on finding his place in the sun in Antarctica—and to forestall Scott, whom Markham would surely send again—Shackleton mounted his own expedition aboard the *Nimrod* in 1907. During that mission, he and three companions marched to within 97 nautical miles of the pole. At that point, exhausted and starving, Shackleton made the toughest decision of his life. He ordered retreat. "We have shot our bolt," he wrote in his diary, "and the tale is latitude 88 degrees 23 minutes south...Whatever regrets may be, we have done our best." He had no interest in sacrificing their lives to an empty heroic gesture, no taste for posthumous glory. The decision showed his astute judgment as a leader—and haunted him the rest of his life.

Knighted by King Edward VII on his return to England in 1909, celebrated as a national hero, he now represented the flesh and blood embodiment of Britain's vaunted ideal of the Polar Explorer. King Edward heralded Shackleton's achievement as "the greatest geographical event" of his reign. Sir Ernest found himself immensely admired and greatly in demand on the lecture and the social circuits as the human being who had come closest to, at that time, either pole of the earth.

But his Furthest South proved a brittle triumph. "All this is not the pole," he reminded himself, and he knew the record would not stand long. In 1910, Scott set out on the *Terra Nova* for another attempt to reach the South Pole. Scott succeeded this time, but only under the most bitter circumstances.

Arriving in Melbourne at the start of the expedition, Scott received one of history's most famous telegrams. It read, simply, "Am going south. Amundsen."

Norway's most formidable polar explorer ostensibly had embarked on a scientific mission to the Arctic. But secretly, Roald Amundsen planned a coup. Much to everyone's surprise, he changed course after leaving his last port of call. With this terse parting shot to Scott, he proclaimed the South Pole as his true goal. Had Amundsen made his ambition known from the outset, he might not have received the backing he needed nor the blessing of his king, who did not wish for newly independent Norway to antagonize Britain. He apparently deceived his friend Fridtjof Nansen, the eminence grise of Norwegian polar exploration, to convince him to lend his trusty ship, *Fram* for a supposed scientific foray to the Arctic, when in fact his sole aim was to be first to conquer the South Pole. Hence the last-minute switch in plans unknown even to his crew until his ship *Fram* was out of reach in mid-ocean.

To his dismay, Scott now found yet another explorer preempting his presumed right, as Markham's protégé and the UK's deputy, to be the first to set foot at the South Pole. The Norwegian challenger would be incommunicado until his gambit proved won or lost. Scott could only proceed as planned and hope for the best.

On January 17, 1912, the British under Scott did indeed stand for the first time at the South Pole. Agonizingly, at his long-sought destination, Scott found himself a visitor to Norwegian territory. According to the note left for Scott by Amundsen's party, the Norwegians reached the pole a month earlier on December 14, 1911. There, bewilderingly, stood the Norwegian flag.

Trusting to their sense of innate British superiority rather than to skill and preparation, Scott's party arrived "without the reward of priority," as he wrote in his famous diary of the journey. News of the Norwegian triumph did not reach the outside until Amundsen arrived in Tasmania. On March 7, 1912, world headlines proclaimed Norway's conquest of "the last place on earth."

"Heartiest congratulations magnificent achievement," Shackleton cabled Amundsen, unfazed by the dismay in the U.K. over Norway's victory. More than anyone, Britons expected Shackleton to lead the chorus of nay-sayers. But, resigned to knowing when he turned back 97 miles from the pole that the victory would inevitably go to someone else, what probably mattered most to him was that he had not lost the pole to Scott. Scott's imperious wife Kathleen, observing Shackleton's ebullience, wrote in her diary, "Shackleton is behaving in a thoroughly Shackletonian fashion. I think he is delighted at the turn things have taken—I would willingly assist at that man's assassination."

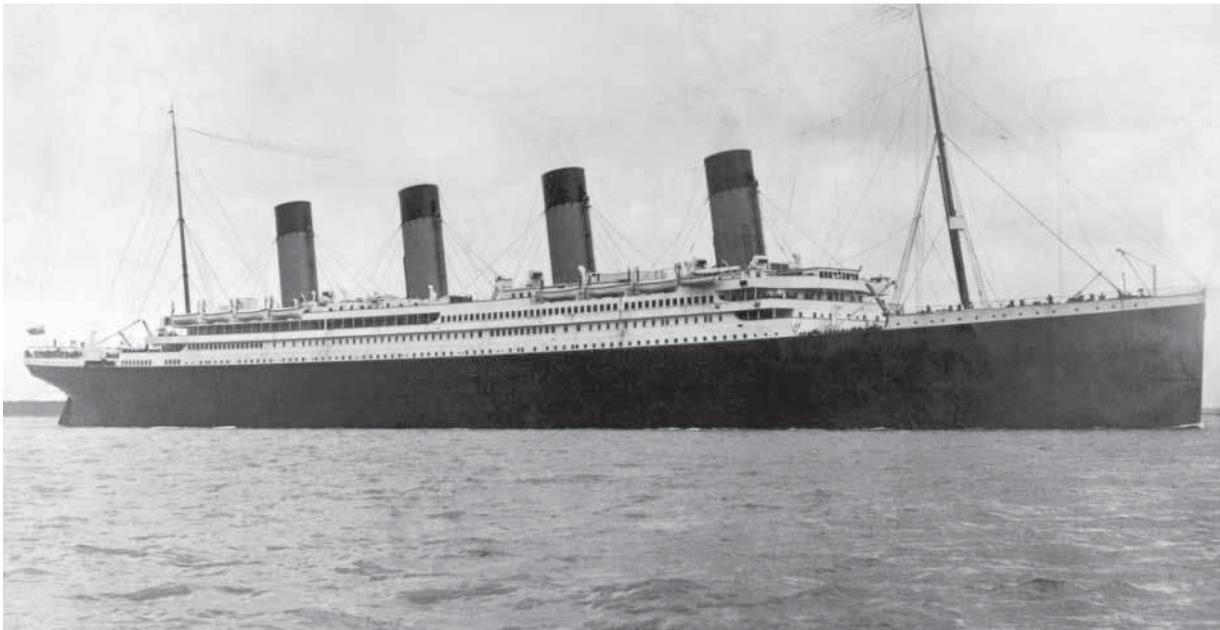
No word of Scott's fate had yet surfaced when, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, *The New York Times* blared the dumbfounding news that the *Titanic* went down early the previous morning. "What an awful disaster the *Titanic* is," Shackleton wrote to a friend later that week. "One can hardly realize it yet."

However, he soon found himself trying to help the British Board of Trade realize it. Although he had no previous connection with the *Titanic*, he had sailed the waters south of the Antarctic Circle twice. The Board of Trade summoned him as an expert witness on navigation in icy waters.

The Board of Trade sought to avoid corporate culpability by the White Star Line for steering the *Titanic* into an iceberg. To find the accident preventable would open the line to possibly ruinous lawsuits. White Star insured the *Titanic* for only \$5 million, not nearly enough to cover the total loss. Judgements against the line could so damage Britain's lucrative shipping and passenger trade that rival Germany might once again take the helm as the premier trans-Atlantic passenger carrier. *Titanic* was built, after all, precisely to help recapture Britain's supremacy in the North Atlantic from Germany.

The inquiry was determined to exonerate Captain Smith and the way that British officers and crew acquitted themselves that night on the *Titanic's* bridge, decks, below decks, and in her lifeboats. The board also wished to escape its own negligence for inadequately regulating the number of lifeboats aboard.

Writing on the hearings, novelist Joseph Conrad, a master seaman, presaged the verdict of later historians on the inquiry. Conrad found the board complacent, ignorant of the design implications of such a giant steamship as *Titanic*, and susceptible to pressure from commercial concerns. With its mandate so severely compromised by vested interests, the board's investigation can only be called a whitewash.



*RMS Titanic*

After decades at sea with the British Mercantile Marine, Shackleton must have recognized the Board of Trade's agenda to keep the records of *Titanic's* officers, living and dead, free of tarnish. The Board of Trade regulated the merchant marine, after all. Furthermore, Shackleton was no stranger to political maneuvering himself. His resume included an unsuccessful stand for Parliament—an attempt to ride the crest of national acclaim he received after the Discovery Expedition. But that brief, unhappy cruise through the iceberg-strewn seas of electioneering hardly indicate his true abilities as a politician. He organized and led his Nimrod Expedition outside the auspices of the all-powerful Royal Geographical Society. He managed to forestall Scott, Markham's favorite, in the bargain. Shackleton surely understood the undeclared objectives that lay behind his grilling by the Board of Trade as keenly as he understood the ice he was summoned to describe.

Shackleton's testimony struck at the heart of one of the most sensitive issues. Did *Titanic* go too fast for conditions that night on the icy sea? He testified on June 18<sup>th</sup>, seated before a huge picture of the ship dominating dreary Scottish Drill Hall at 75 Horseferry Road in the heart of London. Guglielmo Marconi also testified on that day, explaining distress signals and the rules pertaining to wireless operators at sea. Marconi emerged from the hearings as a hero, acclaimed for the invention that brought rescue for those who did survive. Shackleton did not fare as well.

Shackleton suggested his opinion in an edition of *The Times* on April 26, before the Board of Trade had even begun its work. Asked to comment on how the inquiry should be conducted, he replied that the question as to visibility of ice at night was most important. Sailors accustomed to navigation in ice-laden seas know that the difficulty of spotting ice increases the higher above the deck the lookout goes, he said. He stated he always positioned his lookout as close to the waterline as possible in mist and at night. An iceberg viewed from a high angle would blend with the sea, whereas from the deck it would loom up on almost the darkest night, he concluded.

Thus, warned that they dealt with a potentially damaging witness, Attorney General Sir Rufus Isaacs, leading counsel for the Board of Trade, sought to put Shackleton on the defensive on the question of speed. He began by questioning Shackleton about the difficulty of spotting icebergs. Shackleton repeated the assertions he made earlier to the press. When traveling in an ice zone a lookout should be posted at the stem as well as the crow's nest to detect icebergs even on a clear night. "I would take the ordinary precaution of slowing down," he added.

“And supposing that you were going 21 to 22 knots,” Isaacs continued. “I suppose that would be an additional reason for slowing down?”

“You have no right to go at that speed in an ice zone,” Shackleton replied.

Even though the *Nimrod* was specially built for ice, Shackleton testified that he took the precaution to slow down because one could never tell the condition of any ice that was seen.

Lord Mersey, the Wreck Commissioner who presided at the inquiry, realized that were sailing into dangerous waters. “What was the speed of the boat you were in?” he queried, referring to the *Nimrod*.

“She was only six knots at full speed,” Shackleton responded.

“You slowed down with a vessel of six knots?” Mersey asked incredulously.

“I always did,” Shackleton said, peeved that the court would question his competency in ice.

“Then where did you get to?” Mersey asked, continuing his attempt to make Shackleton look foolish.

“We got very near the South Pole.” Shackleton’s antagonized retort drew laughter in the hearing room.

“To what speed did you slow down?” the unbelieving Mersey inquired.

“To about four knots,” Shackleton answered.

Isaacs then returned to the former line of questioning about the positioning of a lookout. “Supposing you had two men, in the crow’s nest and it was a clear night and you were going through a region where ice had been reported. Would you put any person in the bow on the lookout?” the Attorney General asked.

“I should put a lookout in the bow or as near to the water line as possible, even on a clear night,” the witness replied. He continued, “I would only have one man in the crow’s nest. One man alone gives more attention to the work in hand than two men.” A good point, Mersey agreed (in fact, it became the practice in later years to post only one lookout to prevent lookouts from socializing and lowering their vigilance). Shackleton said too that there was a risk of missing small objects by narrowing the field of vision with binoculars, thus he did not permit lookouts to use them. The *Titanic* lookouts had none, the result of oversight, not design.

Later, Sir Robert Finlay, leading counsel for the White Star Line, questioned Shackleton on technical matters concerning the reliability of water temperature tests, which had been previously discussed at the American inquiry. *Titanic*’s senior surviving officer, Charles Lightoller, earlier discounted the usefulness of checking water temperatures to determine if ice was near. The British commission’s report goes so far as to quote a reference book used by pilots stating the tests—which were not done on the *Titanic*—were baseless. The hearing transcript duly notes Shackleton’s dissent, as reported by the *Times*:

Sir Ernest Shackleton was, however, of opinion that “if there was no wind and the temperature fell abnormally, for the time of the year, I would consider that I was approaching an area which might have ice in it.”

In answer to what precautions should be taken when ice has been reported, Shackleton suggested slowing to 10 knots per hour, but added he was not really qualified to render an opinion on a specific speed for a liner.

Finlay asked if he knew that for 25 years it had been the standard practice of navigation in the North Atlantic not to slow down when ice was seen.

"I think those gentlemen have been acting under the instructions of owners," Shackleton forthrightly replied. His surmise drove a proverbial stake through the commission's heart. He had not only delved into the sensitive subject of whether the *Titanic* was going too fast because J. Bruce Ismay, chairman and managing director of the White Star Line, was onboard, but violated the general taboo on the question of how the relationship between owners and operators influences the way a ship runs. Although the public vilified Ismay for fleeing the sinking ship, the commission's agenda would hardly permit making the managing director of the White Star Line a target for blame.

"Have you any ground for saying that?" Finlay pressed.

"No more than a general feeling I have had...that when the owner is on board you go," Shackleton emphasized. "It is my view that there is a general feeling amongst people at sea that you have to make your passage, and that if you do not it is not so good for you."

Shackleton concluded by noting it was only his personal opinion, and wondered whether he should have even refused to answer the question.

"Supposing," Mersey asked, "it had been the invariable practice to navigate ships of this kind, following the usual track to America, at full speed, notwithstanding ice warnings, in your opinion would a captain who had been brought up in that trade be justified in following the practice?"

"It opens such a very wide question of relationship between owners and captains that I am not competent to answer it," Shackleton responded. "I think it would be a natural thing for a captain who been brought up in a line doing the same thing, to continue doing it." After agreeing with the commissioner, Shackleton then rubbed salt in the wound by concluding, "But in view of the fact that there is wireless now, I think any accident could be avoided."

"Well, that is quite true," Mersey continued craftily, ignoring the witness's tactless remark on the preventability of accidents. "If you are right in saying that the better thing would be to reduce the speed to half-speed, about 10 or 11 knots, and if you are right in saying that this berg might be approached practically without any warning to the lookout, it seems to me you would have an accident all the same, 11 knots or 22 knots, you would have to reduce it to four knots?"

"Well, it would be better to do that," admitted Shackleton, discomfited. Mersey had cleverly trapped him in the logic of his own argument carried to an absurd extreme.

Shackleton's unvarnished testimony stands in stark contrast to that of Second Officer Lightoller, who came two days after him. Lightoller made himself as hard to pin down as a loose sheet in a gale. He testified unhesitatingly that in his years at sea he had never served aboard a ship that reduced speed when closing on ice. He defended and upheld the practice, nimbly sidestepping any admission that it could be negligent or reckless. Nor could prosecutors get him to admit to anything else in which White Star could be found liable.

He pitched a roundelay of double talk, circumlocution, and fallacious reasoning that bamboozled prosecutors. He betrayed no trace of the conscience that Shackleton showed on

the witness stand. In fact, Lightoller's artful testimony led barristers by the nose, bringing White Star through the hearings relatively unscathed—unlike the ship he helped pilot.

Shackleton could be formidable in discourse as well. Yet browbeaten by legal authorities, he seems overmatched, allowing them to make him appear curiously inept. Nor did his physical appearance impress, unlike that of the imposing Lightoller. Heavy smoking and drinking had taken their toll on Sir Ernest, signs of his gradual decline since the Nimrod Expedition. He appeared wan and weary, a man baffled and thwarted at every turn, a lion in winter.

On June 26, Finlay—without Shackleton present—reviewed Shackleton's statements. During his testimony Finlay had induced Shackleton to admit that he would not compare the North Atlantic to the South. Finlay now declared that, in relation to the South Pole, Shackleton was supreme. But he was no better than an ordinary seaman in relation to the very different North Atlantic where he had served only as a boy of 17. Shackleton could not speak with authority, Finlay charged, but was only repeating rumors and stirring up trouble. Branding his experience as highly specialized and thus irrelevant, the White Star's barrister defiantly concluded that there was nothing in Shackleton's evidence to suggest that there had been any negligence on the part of those who sailed the *Titanic*.

Finlay and Mersey dismissed Shackleton's testimony in one condescending exchange, printed in *The Times* the following day, that ended by citing Finlay's comment to Mersey:

This enormous loss of life strikes the imagination, people speculate as to how it happened, and Sir Ernest Shackleton refers to "this terrible competition of racing across the Atlantic." Your Lordship will appreciate all such talk as that as its true worth.

Presumably, it was precisely that "irrelevant" highly specialized experience, as well as his popularity, that made Shackleton a witness the board could not avoid calling to maintain the appearance of thoroughness and objectivity. Given the board's ulterior motives, Scott, the navy man, careerist, Markham's protégé, in with the establishment in a way that Shackleton never was, would likely have been the more amendable choice as their man in the witness box on ice navigation. But, confound the luck, Scott was nowhere to be found, off yet again in the Antarctic in search of the pole. Sadly, what no one yet knew was that Scott and his immediate companions by this time were dead.

But given who ended up in front of them, it was imperative that the esteemed counsellors impugn Shackleton's prestige as a master and an ice navigator to achieve the hearing's underlying purpose. Finlay's criticism of Shackleton's statements succeeded in its intended effect. The board largely ignored Shackleton's trenchant testimony.

In arriving at its findings, the Board of Trade bypassed Shackleton's inconvenient remarks—all of them, about accidents being preventable, the need to slow down near ice, post a lookout on the bow, take water temperature tests, his disturbing thoughts on the wireless presumably preventing accidents and the allusive questions of the relationship between owners and captains on the issue of speed. The inquiry did conclude that the cause of the collision was excessive speed, and judged certain of Captain Smith's actions as mistakes, but not negligence. In failing to change course or reduce speed, he was merely following the nearly universal practice of the past quarter century. Nor did the inquiry fix blame on any other officer or crew members of the *Titanic*.

The official finding was that the accident could not have been prevented. The hearing might have been held on "Horsefeathers" Road, rather than Horseferry.

Was Shackleton now a tarnished hero, perhaps considered "unpatriotic" for making such unflattering statements about British seamanship when Britain wanted to make its seagoing

sons out to be heroes? Did he decide to launch the Endurance Expedition in some degree to recapture the public's good opinion of him?

William Mills, library and curator at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, responded to this author's inquiry on that subject. The SPRI began in 1934 as a memorial in Sir Robert Falcon Scott's name with a family bequest as well as donations that poured in from a grief-stricken public at the time of Scott's death. Its archives hold the world's greatest collection of original documents from the explorers of the Heroic Age, many written while they were traversing the ice.

Mills stated that the question deserved investigation. The answer would be found in Shackleton's private papers, he wrote this author in the year 2000. The difficulty, he said, was that the bulk of Shackleton's papers are in private hands and inaccessible. He noted that the years following the Nimrod Expedition found Shackleton restless and depressed in London. Given his larger than life character, which chafed at the confines of civilization, Shackleton would inevitably embark on another Antarctic foray. His actions over the next thirty months in organizing the Endurance Expedition confirm this view of Shackleton's temperament, Mill concluded. In other words, Shackleton would have gone anyway, regardless of the Board of Trade's slander.

Shackleton was a patriot, but "a patriot for me," and he had always been treated as an outsider by the geographic regime. Thus, he probably had little empathy for the Board of Trade's determination to protect the maritime establishment. He told the truth as he knew it. Flouting the Edwardian public's veneration of heroism may have been his deeper transgression. Raising nettlesome implications of human error in the navigation of the *Titanic* somehow violated the tacitly understood pact between the public and its martyrs.

Surprisingly, the major London dailies of that summer offer no comment on Shackleton's appearance before the Board of Trade. They prominently featured detailed news of the inquiry day by day, and thus dutifully quoted his testimony. But they point no accusatory finger at him for flying in the face of the self-serving myth already taking hold—that the *Titanic's* destruction was due to inexorable fate. Did the press simply miss Finlay and Mersey's summing up of their opinion on Shackleton's testimony, coming as it did eight days after he appeared? Were there more urgent things to report on that day? Or, were wily correspondents well-aware of the Board of Trade's motives, appreciated all such talk as that as its true worth, and proved reluctant to repeat the board's smear against a national hero?

From this lack of opprobrium in the papers, we might conclude that Shackleton emerged unscathed from the hearings, but arguments from silence are always risky. We don't know what was being said behind closed doors, or in Shackleton's diaries or letters. We don't know if upon embarking on the fundraising campaign for his newest expedition, there were donors who demurred because the Board of Trade said Shackleton doesn't know his job. He never mentions his grilling before the Board of Trade in subsequent public statements or in *South*, his account of the Endurance Expedition.

The story of the *Titanic* is often likened to a Greek tragedy. "The Ancient Greeks knew that a true hero is in fact a deeply flawed human being," documentary filmmaker Ken Burns observes. "What is heroic are not good deeds, but the struggle, the negotiation between strength and weakness." Shackleton had faced that heroic struggle once before, 97 miles from the South Pole. Those who understood the courage he showed in turning back hailed the greatness of that decision. But no one applauded the heroic decision he made this time before the commission.

Lightoller lost that struggle. His dodge and weave at both the American and British inquiries may have been a calculated attempt to advance his career. With time, he would discover

that cooperation with the cover-up would not bring him command of his own ship as an expression of White Star's gratitude for his loyalty. Though he and Shackleton took opposite tacks before the Board of Trade, neither emerged unscathed from the hearings.

The inquiry did not directly jeopardize Shackleton's interests in the same way as it did Lightoller's. Yet to testify as he did may have seemed improvident if he harbored further ambitions for the Antarctic. Funding for Antarctic expeditions depended heavily on the largesse of wealthy patrons, some potentially ship owners, whose noses he tweaked. By Burns' definition, Shackleton's struggle before the inquiry was part of what made him a hero—a part the public did not comprehend.

That the myth of fate was already more than a preoccupation of the popular press soon became apparent when one of England's greatest novelists and poets, Thomas Hardy, unveiled his elegy *The Convergence of the Twain (Lines on the Loss of the 'Titanic')*. If ever a tragedy seemed custom-made for Hardy's fatalistic sensibilities, it was the *Titanic*. Commissioned for the *Dramatic and Operatic Matinee in Aid of the Titanic Disaster Fund* on May 14, 1912, at Covent Garden Opera House, Hardy's stately but ominous poem foretells a predestined meeting between the ship and the iceberg:

The Imminent Will that stirs and urges everything  
Prepared a sinister mate  
For her—so gaily great—  
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate  
And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace and hue,  
In shadowy silent grew the Iceberg too.

That the ship's doom was foreordained had already started to become a foregone conclusion throughout the nation. Too much fate and not enough negligence made up the *Titanic* equation. The fatuous search for heroes was merely British face-saving rather than a sober and dispassionate owning up to the causes of the accident and extending true compassion, rather than cheap public sentiment, to the victims' families.

The *Titanic* was financed by the interests of American millionaire J.P. Morgan, designed and built by the Irish at Belfast's Harland & Wolff shipyard. But she was sailed by the British company White Star Line who hired Captain Edward Smith of Litchfield, England, as her captain along with his British officers. Britain could not evade culpability for her demise. But it might disguise the truth by making heroes out of the officers and crew, and the male passengers who loaded their wives and children in the lifeboats and said their last goodbyes. There were heroes on the *Titanic* that night: the two valiant young Marconi operators, only one of whom survived, as well as the engineers, many of whom sacrificed themselves to stay below and keep the lights burning until just before the ship foundered. There is an impressive monument to the engineers in Southampton, England, from whence the *Titanic* sailed on her maiden voyage and from whence most of her crew was hired. There was hardly a street in the working-class quarters of this seafaring city that did not lose a crew member on the *Titanic*—in some cases, fathers and sons together went down with her.

There is no monument to Captain Smith in Southampton.

There is one in his home town of Litchfield, sculpted by, who else? Kathleen Scott, Robert Falcon Scott's widow. Appropriate because, as we shall see, myth-making became an integral part of both the *Titanic's* tragedy and Scott's.

Before the rescue ship *Carpathia* reached New York with details of the disaster, the press heralded 'First' and 'Second Class' gentlemen as heroes, spinning tales of how they sacrificed

themselves to let women and children into the lifeboats first. To assuage the pain, to somehow bring the awesome dimensions of the loss into human proportion, the public needed heroes. By the same token, they also needed villains. Blaming Ismay, or Captain Lord of the SS *Californian* for failing to come to the rescue, somehow made the cause of the catastrophe comprehensible.

George Bernard Shaw vigorously debunked the myth of *Titanic* heroes in the British press. The eminent Anglo-Irish playwright and social critic characterized talk of heroism and national honor in the wake of the tragedy as “an explosion of romantic lying” for which he felt “profound disgust.” Shaw called it “a calamity which might well make the proudest man humble, and the wildest joker serious,” but instead had only served to make the British “vainglorious, insolent, and mendacious.” Rather than squarely owning up to the true causes of the tragedy, Shaw scornfully claimed that the real agenda of the British public was to save face by twisting the disaster into an occasion for national pride rather than the national shame it should rightfully engender.

The public definition of a hero would soon undergo an apotheosis. On February 10, 1913, the world received word that searchers in the Ross Sea area had found a tent containing the frozen body of Robert Falcon Scott, along with his companions Dr. Edward Wilson and Henry “Birdie” Bowers.

Scott’s diary, which he had placed with care beneath his head before dying, told a forlorn story of pluck, anguish and lost hope that would electrify the nation. Here at last was a story to rival, perhaps even erase the stain, of the *Titanic*.

According to Scott’ diary recovered at the death scene, the party encountered a relentless blizzard on their return march from the cruel disappointment of arriving second at the South Pole. By then, one of the five members of the group, Edgar “Taff” Evans, had already perished. The unseasonable storm pinned the battered survivors to the ice day after day. Only 11 miles from their next cache of gravely needed supplies, Scott and his remaining three companions tarried haplessly as their lives ebbed away.

Lawrence “Titus” Oates, the uncomplaining “Soldier” as Scott called him, suffered unendurably. Unable to stand on his frostbitten, gangrenous feet, he crawled barefoot into the storm on the morning of his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. His final words to his companions as he exited the tent resonate to this day, “I am just going outside and may be some time.” His body was never found.

The remaining three eschewed opiates or bullets, lingering for the end. From the diary, it was determined that they had died on March 29<sup>th</sup> or shortly thereafter, only days before the *Titanic*’s maiden voyage. Searchers discovered the grim scene of the explorers’ demise the following November. They collapsed the tent over the bodies inside and erected a cross made of skis over the site. There would be no transport of the bodies home for potentially embarrassing autopsies. Thus, the *Terra Nova*’s lost Argonauts continue their journey to this day. The ice of Antarctica flows, gradually swallowing all in its creep toward the coast. Someday, centuries hence, a glacier at the water’s edge will disgorge the remains of Scott, Wilson and Bowers to the sea.

“In the charged atmosphere of the last year before the outbreak of the Great War,” writes Roland Huntford in his biography *Shackleton*, “the loss of five explorers was a sensation to supplant the *Titanic* in the pantheon of heroic disaster.” While lurid fascination with the deaths of a luckless little party of adventurers on the ice overshadowing the epic encounter of the *Titanic* with an iceberg may signal a change in focus, the dynamic of turning bunglers into heroes remained the same.

In her novel *Antarctic Navigation* about a fictional attempt to recreate the Terra Nova Expedition, Elizabeth Arthur observes that the British fear cowardice, while Americans fear losers. Predictably, Scott's widow Kathleen, intensely devoted as always to her husband's cause, sprang into action to rescue his story from the taint of cowardice or the ignominy of defeat.

Kathleen Scott (nee Bruce, 1878-1947), known as Lady Hilton Young after remarriage, reveled in the culture of empire. She sculpted idealized portraits of public figures for monuments and war memorials, including the bas-relief medallion of Queen Mary aboard the liner *Queen Mary*, permanently moored in Long Beach, California, with her medallion still in place over the central staircase.

She was the perfect choice to sculpt the imposing memorial statue of the *Titanic's* captain. Her heroic rendition of Edward J. Smith bears the epitaph that Smith bequeathed to his fellow British the "example of a great heart, a brave life, and a heroic death."

The race for the South Pole captivated her imagination as a peak manifestation of the inevitable triumph of British imperialism. When her husband once expressed doubts to her about his fitness to go south, she bristled, "Tell me that you shall go to the Pole. Oh, dear, what's the use of having energy and enterprise if a little thing like that can't be done?"

She despised women because they were not the movers and shakers of empire. In her fierce desire to bear a son (emphatically *not* a daughter), Robert Scott was merely a means to an end, a "probationer" as she refers to him in her diary. She regarded him as entirely expendable, telling him before his departure on *Terra Nova* that should he find himself confronted with the choice of glory or retreat under potentially fatal circumstances, he should not hesitate to sacrifice himself to be a hero. His family will continue to carry on quite successfully without him and he should not allow concern for them to be a factor in his decision.

Once son Peter was born, her view of her husband turned from utilitarian to iconographic. She self-admittedly worshipped Scott as her personification of empire, feeling that in him she had wedded the notion of empire itself to which she was so enthralled. Put simply, she married the heroic bronze sculpture of Scott that she erected in London's Waterloo Place in his memory.

Lady Scott learned of her husband's death while en route to meet him in New Zealand. Her diary entry on the day she received the news distills the essence of her character:

I read a book on the wreck of the *Titanic* and determined to keep my mind off the whole subject until I was sure I could control myself...My god [Scott] is godly...Let me maintain a high, adoring exultation, and not let the contamination of sorrow touch me...Loneliness is a fear I have never known. Had he died before I had known his gloriousness, or before he had been the father of my son, I might have felt a loss. Now I have felt none for myself. Won't anybody understand that? (probably nobody).

Her final plea for empathy for herself as a wife is odd, as she apparently felt none for her deceased husband. She hardly knew him as a person, he was simply her "god." His career as a naval officer proved convenient for her. His long absences at sea forestalled the necessity of becoming acquainted with him as a flesh and blood man, and possibly having her god-like image of him tarnished.

Bronze alone would never be enough to memorialize her husband. In the enterprise of sculpting her husband's legend, Lady Scott began not with his visage but his words.

The diary might be taken as Scott's unspoken contract with his resolute spouse. He would not be coming out alive. His reputation might fare better if he did not. He knew the disdain he would encounter for failing a second time, for losing the race to the Pole by one month to the Norwegians, allowing such semi-barbaric interlopers who ate their dogs to steal the prize that was rightfully belonged to England. Among the British there was a sense that the Norwegians had done so by unfair means, making it look all too easy with their efficient use of skis and dogs.

Scott knew ,also, he would likely face court-martial for the deaths of Evans and Oates, not to mention diminished prospects for his career and being relegated to a footnote in history. And then, of course, there was facing Kathleen's thwarted ambitions for him.

Like her, he understood the Edwardian love of tragic heroes. In the diary, he clearly writes for posterity, concluding with his poignant final words, "For God's sake look after our people."

Did Scott sacrifice himself in a bid to save his legacy? By refusing to make a last try for the depot only a few miles off, was the storm a convenient cover for his suicide, forfeiting the lives of Wilson and Bowers in the bargain? The diary was a gambit, his posthumous plea for how he hoped history might judge him. If found, he could depend on Kathleen to know exactly what to do with it.

She did.

Behaving in a thoroughly Kathleonian fashion, she connived with the "Old Crocodile" Markham to eliminate all references that could be interpreted as Scott's inept leadership of the mission. Eliminated also were Scott's frequent personal barbs directed at others. When published, the purportedly unexpurgated account, *Scott's Last Expedition*, had its calculated effect. The public was galvanized. Hard questions were deflected. Scott's myth was born.

The pathos of the story proved a national catharsis. One ironic outcome of the blow to Britain's brash confidence in the loss of the *Titanic* was the way the disaster fed misplaced adulation of Scott. Britain assuaged her wounds by seizing the opportunity to lionize Scott and his bold companions.

"A morbid myth arose to cloak each sorry tale," Huntford notes of the *Titanic* and the *Terra Nova*. The country seemed to revel in romanticizing Scott's failure, he writes. Observing that the events seem linked by more than coincidence, he posits that both *Titanic* and *Terra Nova* represent technical failures that were eminently preventable, and each debacle gave rise to a false heroic ideal.

Antarctic explorers became so fiercely popular in Britain that Sir Robert's name even became an exclamation of wonder, "Great Scott!" Scott and Shackleton further defined the role of the hero as a symbol of national aspiration, moral exemplar—and scapegoat.

The humiliation Shackleton suffered in the *Titanic* inquiry made him a scapegoat for the failings of White Star and the Board of Trade in a scramble of big money, international rivalries, and national face-saving. His heroic demeanor, by Burns' definition, at the hearings violated an implied social contract regarding public expectations for how heroes should conduct themselves. The luckless Scott's scapegoating went far deeper. Shackleton was the cheeky adventurer, who by his own pluck and determination dug up his own support, thumbed his nose at the officials and went off with banners flying—someone easy to cheer on, and not put too much store by should he fail. By contrast, Scott bore the oppressive mantle of being Britain's appointed son to fulfill the empire's lofty symbolic dreams of conquest in the south. His conduct on the ice fell short of heroic, but he became a scapegoat by fulfilling the implied

social contract for heroes all too well: the hero who in his downfall bore witness to the greatness of British character, who failed with British panache.

Novelist Arthur points to that tacit agreement between the public and its heroes when she asserts that Scott was hailed as a hero because he died for society's errors. After losing the race and dying, his contemporaries could hardly regard him as a hero in the traditional sense. But he could be thought heroic for another reason entirely, as a sacrificial victim. Scott became the victim of an imperialistic drive that made conquest a staple, "then sent their man off to the Antarctic where true conquest simply was not possible," she declares.

Her words could equally apply to Captain Smith, smugly ensconced on the bridge of the *Titanic*, being sent off into an ice field. As Shackleton testified, conquest was unlikely for a ship speeding virtually blind into such treacherous waters at night. For paying the price for society's sins, Edwardians elevated Scott and Smith to a curious kind of sainthood.

To expiate the sins of an empire, Scott has to first fit the bill as a moral exemplar. Scott was neither a great explorer like Amundsen nor a great leader like Shackleton, Arthur continues. But his tragic journey meant something to the British far more than Amundsen's merely expedient run to the Pole. Scott's reliance on man-hauling (using men in the traces to pull the sledges, rather than dogs) as the primary means of polar travel qualified him in the public imagination as a symbol of national aspiration. Cherry-Gerrard, a scientist on the *Terra Nova*, called man-hauling the "physical expression of intellectual passion."

"It was not conquest but conceptual art," Arthur avers. Markham, who insisted on putting men in the traces, would have instinctually resonated with the truth of that statement.

The "Intellectual passion" expressed in man-hauling was an ardent belief in the natural superiority of the British race. Choosing such a counterproductive mode of transport made no sense as transport, but was unsurpassed as symbolism. Britons expected to rule the world because they assumed they were inherently better than anyone else, as individuals and a culture. Man-hauling exactly expressed this belief, elevating Scott to the status of a cultural icon.

Scott called man-hauling a "fine conception." No need to mistreat dogs, unlike certain other nationalities. The British preferred mistreating themselves. They chose the purest, most elemental struggle that nature offers, undergoing probably the most strenuous exercise the human body can endure in an ice environment. Thus, they embraced the noble spectacle of men arduously tugging their 700-pound sledges across the uneven surface of the ice, hour after unending hour, day after bone-weary day in temperatures as low as -80°F, often as the dogs ran alongside. It was meant to prove a point.

This was, after all, the era of "muddling through," the time of the gentleman amateur so in vogue at Oxford. Simply being British automatically conveyed the ability to handle whatever challenges life presented. Preparing extensively for anything—too much preparation or practice, was considered bad form. Skills should come naturally with little effort; trying too hard was an admission of weakness or doubt, whether in fencing, debating, fighting a war with Dutch farmers in South Africa, evacuating the newest advance in ocean liners one cold night on the North Atlantic after an unthinkable accident, or trekking to the South Pole.

Thus, the British press naturally assumed that the 'First Class' gentlemen on the *Titanic* behaved splendidly as exemplars of British manhood. American Jewish passengers Guggenheim and Strauss even joined the honorary ranks of Anglo-Saxon aristocracy for the occasion, given the "True Brit" these two First Class men displayed the night of her foundering. In extreme circumstances on the sea that night, it was imperative to believe that the upper echelon acquitted themselves admirably, far above the conduct of the foreign rabble

on board. Gentlemen of the First Class surely strove not to save themselves but to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, the public affirmed. The sobering fact is that more men than women turned up in several *Titanic* lifeboats. Despite the legendary dictum of “women and children first” the statistics show that roughly as many men survived as women. Yet nothing seemed to alter the public and press’ preconceived notion.

Faced with extreme circumstances on land, the same moral conceit prompted British Antarctic explorers to eschew all tested means of transport. Man-hauling resonates alongside the class divisions aboard the *Titanic* as a metaphor for British mentality at the time, reminiscent of Captain Smith’s alleged last words as the *Titanic* sank, “Be British, boys, be British!”

Man-hauling exemplified the triumph over nature by Antarctic pioneers that the “unsinkable” *Titanic* represented on behalf of shipbuilders. Both endeavors attempted to deny our limits as human beings, to make us omnipotent. The hubris, the denial of finitude that looms large in the *Titanic*’s destruction echoes in Britain’s quest for the pole and Scott’s tragedy.

Edwardians had one further use for heroes. As Shaw acerbically pointed out, it was to divert attention from the real issues. The scorn of human limits and the vagaries of nature, what we might call “triumphalism,” not only instigated failures in the North Atlantic and the Antarctic but characterized public reaction to the scandals as well. In the aftermath, the public refused to acknowledge hard realities in favor of a kind of revisionist fairy tale of greatness, in this case the greatness of heroes.

Edwardian triumphalism harbored spectacular dangers. The *Titanic* debacle indelibly demonstrated the error in asserting, “God Himself could not sink this ship.” It arose from complex roots.

The Edwardian era was a lovely time, a brief, profound flowering of the so-called “Gilded Age” as England threw off the dour shackles of Victorian restraint. King Edward, expansive and free-living, led the social set in rounds of calling on country houses, foreign visits, garden parties, glittering evenings in the theater, regalia at Ascot and regattas at Cowes. His short reign (1901-10) proved indelible, its influence lingered a decade after his death, only to be swept away in the horrors of the Great War. Thus the “Edwardian Era” usually refers to the period from 1901 to 1919.

Faith in the unbroken advance of progress and technology balanced an undercurrent of domestic and international upheaval at the culmination of the British Empire. Britain faced decline of its power abroad. The rise of democratic movements such as suffrage for women spelled an end to the rigidities of the class system at home. Man-hauling was anti-technology at a time of remarkable technological innovation. That fact may have been its charm. In the end, the pole would have to be won in a contest of human sinew and muscle alone against the elements. It might be pulverizing, but the human individual was still in control. Man-hauling could be understood as a reaction against the dizzying pace of social change and its accompanying insecurities, induced in part by technological revolution such as the *Titanic* represented with its many mechanical advances.

The *Titanic* epitomized innovation during one of the most intense periods of technological advance in Western history. Inventions during the Edwardian Era ranged from the glass milk bottle to the airplane. Although the telegraph, motion pictures, and the automobile first appeared during Victoria’s reign, they came into widespread use during Edward’s. The *Titanic* notwithstanding, perhaps no invention symbolizes the era more than the humble bicycle, which liberated townsfolk from the inflexible railway timetable and gave them a new freedom and mobility. Electric lights transformed the urban landscape as profoundly as did the internal combustion engine. Typewriters and telephones transformed the nature of work, especially for women, releasing them from the drudgery of domestic service.

In politics, Britain experienced a zeal for democratic reform, symbolized by militant suffragettes. Contributing to social unrest was an outcry for resolution of the question of Irish home rule. Agitation for labor reforms culminated in the coal strike of 1912. Many Southampton passengers found themselves transferred to the *Titanic* for her maiden voyage because the steamships on which they had originally booked could not depart as scheduled for lack of fuel.

Coal was one of the three great strikes in 1911 and 1912 that brought Britain to a standstill, dramatizing the discontent of the working class. Along with militant unionism arose socialism as a means of redressing the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the capitalist class.

The performance of the British economy lay at the root of Britain's decline in world power. By 1900, Germany and the United States overtook Britain as great manufacturing nations. The British failed to invest in their own country, sending capital overseas to the colonies for greater returns. London ranked as the world's financial capital, with British overseas investment comprising two-fifths of the world's total. As money and talent went abroad, England neglected education. Her machinery and techniques became outmoded. Britain seemingly forgot that her empire did not produce her power, but resulted from it. Her might lay in her industrial pre-eminence.

Railways and technological advances in mining reduced the international impact of Britain's premier instrument of force, her navy, as the military balance of power shifted toward land forces. Britain now faced an increasingly ominous threat from Germany, industrially and militarily. The year 1897 not only marked Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In that year Germany surpassed England in steel production. Thus, the Board of Trade's determination at the *Titanic* inquiry to control possible damage to Britain's shipping interests was partly attributable to her nervous rivalry with Germany for supremacy in the North Atlantic and everywhere else.

Although ultimately victorious in South Africa, Britain took an international drubbing for her conduct in the Boer War. Atrocities dimmed Britain's moral prestige in the eyes of her European neighbors. Regarded when it began in 1899 as a small colonial war, it got totally out of hand, costing 20,000 lives and 300 million pounds by the time Britain annexed South Africa in 1902.

Prime Minister Balfour, the Conservative leader, sensed the political earthquake about to change the face of Europe. The Conservative-Liberal Unionist ministry, finding itself in mounting difficulty, resigned in December 1905. A Liberal ministry formed that dissolved Parliament and held new elections. The election of January 17, 1905, in which Shackleton ran as a Liberal-Unionist candidate, proved an overwhelming victory for a coalition of progressive parties: the Liberals, the Labour party, and the Irish Nationalists. Churchill crossed over from being a Conservative to a Liberal. Shackleton stayed put and along with Balfour, lost.

"It was a gigantic and unprecedented Liberal and Labour landslide," writes Huntford. "Shackleton had taken part in perhaps the most significant event of the Edwardian age." The coalition remained in office until 1916. Its sweeping program of social reforms ranged from establishing a minimum wage to the start of national health insurance.

While one cannot assert a direct cause and effect relationship, this unsettling milieu may account for the rise of triumphalist attitudes to mask social foment and unease. Perhaps the more insecure the Edwardians felt underneath, the more they tried to cover it up by convincing themselves their tradition way of life was unsinkable.

In 1914 the newspapers were aglow with the prospect of Shackleton's latest Antarctic crusade. Whatever slings and arrows his reputation may have suffered, he remained a popular and influential, if frayed, hero. The eyes and hopes of the British nation went with him as hostilities with Germany commenced. *The Montreal Star* summed up, "No matter what splendid compensations there were in the story of Capt. Scott's journey to the South Pole, his failure to be first there was a sore blow to British pride." *The Times* intoned that the "ambition of Sir Ernest Shackleton" was to "re-establish the prestige of Great Britain in...Polar exploration." He gave "one more proof of the dogged nature of British courage," and as such, his announcement of the Imperial Transantarctic Expedition brought "a satisfaction which will be universally shared."

Apparitions such as the *Titanic* and polar exploration helped delude the Edwardians into a romantic dream world. They did not face the death of these dreams within a few days of each other on opposite ends of the earth as a wake-up call, but made them palatable as heroic epics. The Edwardian mirage evaporated in the battlefields of Gallipoli and Somme, as well as on the streets of Dublin on Easter, 1916. In the sobering new realities of world war, Britain had little further use for her Antarctic heroes. The valiant men of the *Endurance* were dismissed to the trenches and battleships, where several of them died. Triumphalism finally died there, too.

Glittering sea palaces and imperialist domination symbolized by a drive for the South Pole were both metaphors for *La Belle Époque* of Edwardian England. The careers of Britain's two most well-known polar explorers of the Heroic Age, Shackleton and Scott, collided with the *Titanic* tragedy and were deflected in different directions. For many years, part of what obscured and distorted the record regarding Shackleton and Scott's relative merits as explorers was the blow to British pride of the *Titanic* disaster, which reverberated far beyond Britain's shores. The search for heroes was a national catharsis to assuage the pain. It also masked the unease in British consciousness created by the social upheaval leading up to the Great War. How Shackleton's reputation may have been unfairly diminished by the repercussions of the *Titanic* tragedy, while Scott's may have been undeservedly enhanced, takes its place as one of the endless ironies attending the saga of the fabled White Star liner.

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# “Shackleton’s Genius: Valuable Lessons for Modern Living”

by David Hirzel and Brad Borkan

## Why Shackleton?

Among the Antarctic explorers, one name stands out in the popular imagination: Sir Ernest Shackleton. Certainly, great credit accrues to the geographical triumphs of his 1907-1909 *Nimrod* expedition, and even greater fame to the spectacular rescue of his *Endurance* expedition in 1916. A deeper look within these reveals a leader of exceptional ingenuity and fortitude able to pull off singular successes despite shoestring budgets and catastrophic reversals of fortune. Even when factoring in his modest contributions to Scott’s *Discovery* expedition and the relatively aimless meanderings of his own *Quest*, Shackleton’s fame seems to outshine that of the other great Antarctic leaders of the era.

He is a man of the people - indifferent to class or status, attentive to rank only as necessary to within the chain of command. Possessed of a convivial charm, he could instill a communal sense of purpose in his men, and draw from them enormous feats of discovery and fortitude.

These are but brushstrokes to a well-known portrait of the man. Faced with an ever-changing field of extreme and dangerous circumstances - sometimes the result of his own earlier decisions - he intuitively found a path to a solution, and set a course to bring it about. His innate capacity to make the best decisions under extreme duress ensured not only his own survival and that of his men, but also that that of his own legacy.

## A Romantic view of the risk-taker

The first of many such decisions arose at the start of his British Antarctic Expedition, while searching for a landing place on the shore of Ross Island. Captain England was perfectly right to refuse to endanger the *Nimrod* simply because the leader of the expedition on board wished to proceed through a dangerous field of ice. The captain of any ship is obliged first to avoid undue risk to his ship and his men. In the end, Shackleton’s force of personality prevailed, and his expedition was safely landed at Cape Royds, to his lasting fame. This was the first of many such decisions, to take what seemed at the time to be an acceptable risk in to achieve the goals of the expedition.

It established a pattern to be repeated throughout his career, that of looking beyond the problems of the present towards a lofty or impossibly distant goal, and trusting to the strength of his men and their preparation to win through in the end. Such gambles did not always pay off as intended, but - nothing ventured, nothing gained - the rewards, tangible and intangible, left their imprint on the history of Antarctic discovery.

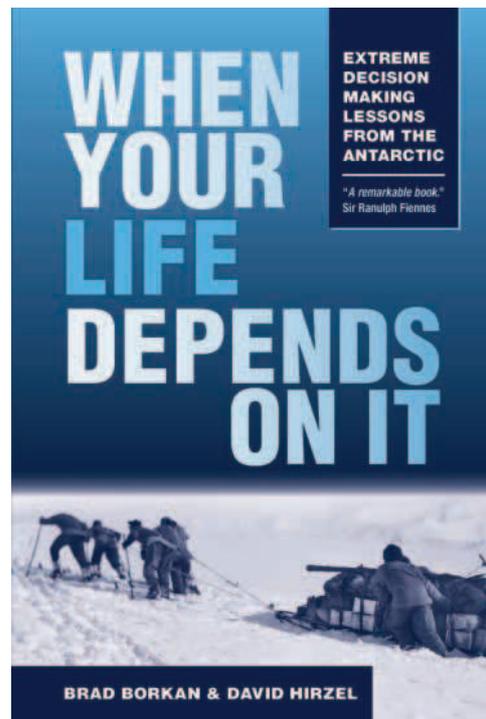
## Experimental ideas

History and experience are two great teachers. Shackleton understood that new ideas and approaches would have to take the place of some of the old British naval ways of going about polar exploration. Gone were the large ships with their large crews that must be fed and housed, in favor of a small compact band of multi-talented specialists.

Shackleton’s decision to rely on pony transport rather than dog has been roundly criticized over the years, but despite outward appearances they proved their worth. Dog team

transport in his view was ineffective; man-hauling more certain, but tedious and debilitating. He'd heard reports of the relative success of Siberian ponies from the Jackson-Harmsworth North Polar Expedition, that they ". . . had already proved their great value for taking heavy loads over firm ice."<sup>1</sup>

He departed for the South Pole on schedule despite having lost half of his transport capacity; four of the eight horses landed had already died of various causes. A detailed preliminary calculation of daily requirement, for a given number of days on the trail, assuming good weather for most of those days, seemed to indicate that it could be done with those four ponies that had survived the first winter. When their value as transport came to an end along the trail, the meat on their bones was cached to feed the men on their homeward journey. The last of the ponies met his untimely end down a crevasse at the mouth of the Beardmore Glacier. His meat would be as sorely missed as his strength.



available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

Shackleton's relative success in depending on such an outwardly unorthodox plan deserves note. Had all eight of his ponies lived to work on the Barrier, he would have been able to advance twice the amount of stores along the trail, and thus begun the ascent to the plateau with much more food to sustain a greater advance—that final one hundred miles to the Pole.

## Months in the Field

The *Nimrod* expedition was nothing if not ambitious. The stated goals of discovering the exact location of the South Magnetic Pole and the South Pole itself would be a great benefit to maritime navigation and global geography, as well as to the finances of the expedition itself. The commitment was made, and had to be honored. With only 14 men landed in the shore party, the field parties for each of these grand goals must be necessarily small.

It is difficult to understand, in today's risk-averse world, how such enterprises could be envisioned with so little in the way of human resources. Although Scott's forays in the *Discovery* proved that such journeys could be made, they also showed at what great human cost. Shackleton's decision to send small parties of three and four, on projected round trips of 1,200 miles and more over completely unknown and glacier-riven territory, was not lightly made. Frankly, the chief physicist, T. Edgeworth David, at the age of 58 was too old to undertake the arduous trip toward the South Magnetic Pole, but there was no available substitute for his expertise. Shackleton and three men set out on the longer, 1,800-mile round trip to discover the South Pole. Those left behind at Cape Royds could only wait, wondering and wonder when, or if the field parties would make it home.

And yet they all did. None of this could have been accomplished without the impetus of a visionary mind proposing extravagant goals to be attained on a minimum of resources, a calculated risk on long odds that could at any moment could have come to grief. But Shackleton had faith in the resourcefulness and durability of his men, that they could and would overcome the known and hidden dangers that lay before them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Jackson-Harmsworth North Polar Expedition: An Account of Its First Winter and of Some Discoveries in Franz Josef Land, by Arthur Montefiore. *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 6, No. 6 (Dec., 1895), p. 516

## **A shared vision**

One facet of that resourcefulness shone in their capacity to accept defeat in the attainment of one stated goal, and find another that could be won. Shackleton's natural ability to relate personally to each of his men, seeming almost to be a friend and confidante while never relaxing his ultimate leadership, would move them to first accept, and then share his vision. This uncanny knack for convincing others to see the new goal through his eyes, as worthy - even more desirable in the circumstances - was a talent he would use again and again in his later expeditions to energize the latent spirit in his men and lead them on to a new and different goal.

It first came to light on the windswept plain of the South Polar Plateau. After a 425-mile trek from Cape Royds to the Beardmore Glacier, after the last pony Socks vanished into a crevasse, the grueling climb 10,000 feet up the glacier was harder and longer than anyone had anticipated.

Despite encroaching setbacks, he believed South Pole could be reached and the return journey safely made, with shortages resulting from unanticipated delays made up by "spinning out" the rations. As the days wore on, their increasing hunger became a discomfort to be borne as a part of the work at hand, a minor price to pay for the honor and glory of discovery. No one really thought of it in real terms of the debilitation that was even now sapping their strength, and from which they would never recover on the reduced rations the four had all agreed to.

Falls and injuries threatened success, but there was nothing to be done but bandage the wounds and march along in pain and silence, hoping for the best. Their timetable fell off, their food diminished accordingly. And yet they kept on, up to the head of the glacier and out on to the plateau.

## **Summit Fever**

It is one thing to devise a plan and then commit all resources to its fulfilment. It is quite another to push beyond the physically possible in a futile attempt to achieve the impossible.

The term "summit fever" encapsulates in two words the very broad notion of completion of a long-sought goal in the face of overwhelming obstacles, just below the summit of the mountain. That real geographical place represents for many the metaphysical summit of a life's ambition, an accomplishment available only to the few, and at great financial and personal expense.

Reading Shackleton's words in the comfort of our modern rooms, we can sympathize with the struggle he faced with his men as they slowly drew nearer to their goal. We can imagine the conversations they must have had beneath the fluttering canvas of their tent, the debates about the wisdom of pushing forward when they were at such extremes of hunger and deprivation. Whatever their private reservations may have been, their collective decision remained: "Push on!"

We can see today, however, what they could not, or would not. Shackleton wrote on December 29, adding in a classic understatement, "The Pole is hard to get." "Only 198 miles—almost four hundred out and back to *this* desolate point—four more weeks' man-hauling at the present rate of twelve miles [19 km] a day, with another thousand after that to the safety of the base camp." New Year's Eve found them camped at 86° 54' south, with three weeks' food and two week's biscuits.

They had yet to wake up to the fact that what they were asking of themselves was impossible. Had a blizzard not stopped them in their tracks, they might have gone onward, most likely beyond the limit of their endurance. As it turned out, the four men barely made it home alive. They had fallen short, and yet they had done something truly remarkable in doing so, something so worthy of note it seemed to demand just a little more effort.

Shackleton suggested a new goal. Something that everyone back home safe in England would understand. The decision was made to turn back, but only after one day's march farther on, to reach different mystical point - a place on that unchanging windswept plateau, within 100 miles of the South Pole. That magic circle, that 100-mile radius, became the new goal - a new point of honour they could all claim for their great effort, and that would be enough.

The South Pole was, after all, only one of the several aims of the expedition. The others were attained. The expedition returned to great acclaim, not least because the failure to reach the Pole had been recast as the success of having come within one hundred miles of it. We all fall short of our goals sometimes. Shackleton's gift was his ability to reframe what had been achieved into something on a par with, or even more spectacular, than the original plan.

### **New approaches**

The Pole was finally attained by Amundsen in 1911 and Scott in 1912. Shackleton, still eager to get to that place himself, in 1913 proposed a new expedition—the first crossing of the Antarctic continent, from the unexplored Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea on the opposite side, stopping at the South Pole along the way. He had a new vehicle designed, and commissioned the development of a new concentrated ration, the very high calorie 'Streimer's Nut Food' that would better sustain the strength of his men in this new enterprise.

Shackleton's lofty ambition, again to test the very limits of human endurance, was not to be met. His ship the *Endurance* became trapped in the Weddell Sea pack ice in early 1915, and began her slow drift northward. Shackleton immediately proposed a new approach—to wait out the drift until the ship was freed, refit at South Georgia, and make another attempt at landing in 1916. For a time, this tack helped keep up the spirits of the men; rather than admitting defeat, they could anticipate success in a different way than had been originally planned.

They were able to hold on to this belief only until the *Endurance* sank beneath them. Undaunted, "the Boss" buoyed their spirits with the strength of his own ebullient personality and faith in the future. The new goal became an extended march over the sea ice to the nearest known land, some 300 miles away.

And when the march had proven too difficult and too slow to ever reach that land, the next goal became to ride the drift to the open sea, take to the boats, and get every man safely home. His belief in these ever-diminishing goals remained itself undiminished. There was nothing that a band of men with heart and a common purpose could not accomplish. In making himself available to each of them not as an officer but as one of the men, he built a personal connection that helped assure a common belief in a different kind of success—that of returning home. His instilled in them a sense of security and hope belied by the fact that they were camped on a thin piece of ice floating over a bottomless sea.

When that ice broke up beneath them, the 28 men crowded into their three open boats and set off for the nearest known land to their position. Five days exposure to the wet and cold wind was almost more than some of them could stand, but survive they did, grounding on a gravel beach on Elephant Island. That they had made it this far, after the sinking of the

*Endurance* nine months earlier, was a testament to Shackleton's faith in his men and his ability to inspire that same faith in themselves.

### **No one in the world knew**

Such faith was challenged by a few indisputable facts. No one in the world knew they were marooned on this remote island. The expedition had not yet been out of contact with the world long enough to be reported missing, so no one would come looking for them here, or anywhere - yet. The three battered boats had been dangerously overloaded during the passage to the island, and the men were too weakened to sail them anyway. Any attempt to carry 28 men any farther in them would be doomed from the outset. The few provisions they had been able to carry here, and the meagre resources of this desolate and ice-bound coast would not be sufficient to sustain them all for long.

How long they could survive here was a matter of conjecture into which few cared to deeply delve. "Not indefinitely" was the most optimistic answer. If they were to get off the island alive, they must arrange for their own rescue. There seemed but one avenue for this—to strengthen the largest of the three boats and with six men sail her 800 miles across the stormiest seas on the planet, to the nearest downwind inhabited island to arrange for a ship to rescue the rest.

The failure of such an audacious plan was almost guaranteed. No amount of strengthening or decking would keep the boat from swamping and going down amid the huge waves and thunderous gales wracking that vast stretch of open water. The men left on the beach on Elephant Island would have to manage their own survival until help - from whatever source - should arrive.

Here is where Shackleton's genius for recasting certain failure into a glimmer of hope shone in perhaps its finest hour. His perennial optimism led to the belief that if anyone could do this—survive that dangerous open-boat journey and arrange a rescue—he could. He left in charge the estimable Frank Wild, who shared that optimism and kept it alight during the four months of doubt that followed the sailing of the *James Caird*. "Lash up and stow!" he ordered every single morning, "The Boss may be coming today."

And one of those days, the Boss finally *did* return, on the Chilean little pilot-tug *Yelcho*. He came to shore, took one quick look around at the remains of the camp, and quickly departed with every one of the men that had left South Georgia in the *Endurance* sixteen months earlier. They had not done what they set out to do—an Antarctic crossing would not be accomplished for another forty years.

### **On facing adversity**

But as fate and circumstance dictated the expedition's ever-diminishing prospects, Shackleton was able to bring about another measure of success, based not on a projected vision of accomplishment and glory, but a pragmatic approach to the circumstances at hand. By reframing the immediate goal to something that could be reached in practice, and by sheer force of personality sharing the belief that it could be met by hard work and calculated risk, he set an example for facing adversity. This idea is as useful today in our modern lives as it was for Shackleton over one hundred years ago.

Like all of us, Shackleton grew in experience as his career progressed, addressing problems and circumstances as they arose before him with a clear-eyed confidence in the ability of himself and his men to win through. He chose his teams from the best men available and led

from the front. In doing so he taught us a valuable lesson: no matter how challenging circumstances, it is possible to achieve a positive outcome. The secret is to adapt your goals as needed, and never, ever give up trying. Will the results be worth the effort? Sometimes we have to go the distance to find out.

*David Hirzel and Brad Borkan are co-authors of the new book 'When Your Life Depends on It: Extreme Decision-Making Lessons from the Antarctic' (Terra Nova Press, 2017). The book, with a foreword by Dr. David Wilson, has received powerful endorsements from the best-known names in the field. More than a basic retelling of these stories of survival in extreme environments, this book uses the true stories - many of them harrowing in the extreme - to unveil decision-making strategies that can be useful in approaching the (sometimes) difficult decisions we face in our twenty-first century personal and business lives.*

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*David Hirzel books and articles about polar exploration and maritime history include a three-part polar biography of the Irish explorer Tom Crean (Antarctic Voyager, Sailor on Ice, and Hold Fast), one of the key players in Scott's and Shackleton's expeditions.*



*The crew of SY Aurora arrive at Port Chalmers (NZ) on 3rd April 1916 after a horrific journey from the southern ice*

# Shackleton's 'Lost' Fortune

Stephen Scott-Fawcett

Ernest Henry Shackleton, the eldest son of tenant-farming parents, was born on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1874 at Kilkea House, County Kildare, Eire. He was the oldest male and, therefore, the 'elder statesman' of eight sisters (one older than him) and one brother. His sibling role might well have shaped his destiny as a leader. His later exploits in the frozen and mysterious Antarctic regions marked him out to be, quite simply, a leader of men *par excellence*.

Having transmuted from tenant-farmer to newly qualified medical doctor, Mr Shackleton senior gathered his family tribe about him, crossed the Irish Sea and ventured into the suburbs of south London. There, at the tender age of 13, a young Ernest attended the rarefied atmosphere of Dulwich College for boys. He was not the most-engaged student and never the scholar. He did, however, embrace the works of Keats and Browning and his love of poetry stayed with him throughout his life, on and off the ice.

Grabbing his chance (and with the tacit help and approval of Dr Shackleton) he entered the Merchant Navy, age 16. It was 1890 and a defining moment for the youngster. From mediocre, 'landlubber', academe Ernest positively flourished in his new-found maritime environment. In only a short span of time (eight years, in fact) and after many hours relishing the steep learning-curve of seamanship he was certified 'Master Mariner'.

By 1900 Shackleton found himself on a troopship and, by pure chance, in contact with the son of a wealthy father who was in the throes of financing Britain's first foray into Antarctic waters (under the leadership of Captain Robert Falcon Scott RN). And here is the rub – Shackleton loved the sea life, no question, but he wanted more, much more. He wanted, like many alpha males before (and after) him, fame. He wanted to be recognised and paraded. Fame, he imagined, would lead inexorably onto fortune. Fame and fortune – a heady and inevitable mix (or so he thought). They went well together, like gin and tonic. Now age 26, the Irishman desperately wanted to win his fortune and enjoy more of the 'high' life – the life of the derring-do male about town (vibrant London City being a great favourite). He knew, also, that one day soon he would be expected to provide for a wife (in fact, four years later he was to marry the very capable Emily Dorman).

So, a plan was hatched and through a network of naval contacts Ernest found himself sailing south as Captain Scott's third officer on the expedition ship *RRS Discovery* bound for the polar regions. It was 31<sup>st</sup> July 1901.

The story of Shackleton's four polar expeditions 1901-2 [with Scott as leader]; 1907-9 1914-16; 1921-21 [as leader] is the stuff of history. His success in 1907-9 (he reached within 97 geographical miles of the South Pole before, alas, being forced to turn back due to lack of food and the advancing austral winter) saw him return home to a popular hero's welcome, a Knighthood and endless celebrations and celebrity lectures. He had found the fame he wished for. The ladies loved him. The ordinary people loved him. Even the Royal Family loved him. Curiously, however, the Establishment (The Royal Geographical Society, and many in the corridors of power), suffered him, often ungladly. For them he was the maverick Irishman, the merchant seaman, son of an anonymous doctor from Sydenham Hill, the man with the abrasive style who kissed the Blarney Stone once too often for their liking, the square peg in a round hole. Scott, on the other hand, was the archetypal, well-spoken, subservient, clean-shaven, groomed, young Royal Naval officer who needed a career opportunity- and so they gifted it.

Whereas Scott's expeditions of (1901-4 and 1910 -12) were fully funded by the State and leading authorities, Shackleton's polar forays were private ventures - never properly funded and always in debt, despite the philanthropy of some. For the 'Boss' (Shackleton's nickname on expeditions) fame arrived without fortune. In fact, in 1909 – on his much-heralded return from the south – the Irishman failed (some kindly suggest 'forgot') to pay some of the men's wages (and this after 3 years in his service and having been away from families and friends under extremely difficult conditions). Such was Sir Ernest's impecuniosity that he, along with Emily and his two (then) children, Raymond and Cecily, were forced to live in 'exile' miles away in the coastal village of Sheringham, Norfolk. This rather large house was owned by an aunt of Emily's. He simply could not afford to pay London rents. This domestic arrangement lasted just under a year. It was not Shackleton's favourite place and for chunks of time he was away on tour delivering charismatic lectures to adoring crowds of fans. The proceeds from these lectures went only a little way, however, to paying for the debts of the recent expedition. Expedition debts remained large and obstinate throughout his relatively short life.

In 1914 Shackleton embarked on what became his most renowned expedition (his second trip to the South as leader and his third overall) – the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (aka ITAE) in the *SY Endurance*. Having lost polar priority to the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen (arriving at the South Pole on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1911), and Robert Falcon Scott (a 'close' second on 17th January 1912) Sir Ernest turned his attention to the one thing left him if he was to attain the ultimate prize of unchallengeable fame and glory (and, hopefully, financial security at last) – the first crossing of Antarctica on foot. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914, the ship slipped anchor at Millbay Docks, Plymouth and headed south, towards the polar regions. The plan was to navigate through the (mostly uncharted) icy Weddell Sea towards the Antarctic continent and establish a base on the coast. From there, the Boss intended to cross the whole continent, west to east, via the Pole, arriving at the Ross Sea coast some 1800 miles later.



To make this possible, he sent a second expedition ship (*SY Aurora*) with another team of men to the Ross Sea (the 'Ross Sea Party' (RSP)) with the mandate to lay depots of food and equipment from the coast of Ross Island southwards, to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier. Without these provisions, Shackleton would most certainly fail (with fatal consequences) in his bold quest. In fact, the RSP was an unmitigated disaster. Three men were lost to the severe cold and sea ice, there was high tension among the men with two of them vying for supremacy and the entire enterprise was appallingly planned both in terms of logistics and funding. That said, the depots were laid (in the face of huge adversity) and Shackleton's path was made ready – except, he never appeared over the polar horizon! Unbeknown to the RSP the *SY Endurance* had been trapped in the Weddell Sea and sunk by the vice-grip of the early winter sea ice. Instead of achieving landfall and setting out on a journey to end all journeys across 'Terra Incognita' Shackleton was forced to take emergency action. He had to devise an escape mission which eventually involved: camping out on sea floes in mid-winter for just over 5 months; sailing in makeshift converted lifeboats on the open sea to a desolate, uninhabited, island for 14 days; leaving twenty eight men on the island for 4 months; sailing with six men in a converted lifeboat for 16 days over a distance of 800 nautical miles to the island of South Georgia; three men crossing the mountainous interior of the island (the first ever such crossing) to Stromness (a Norwegian whaling station) to, finally, raise the alarm. The subsequent quest to retrieve the men marooned on Elephant Islanders is another story.

Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton failed gloriously in his attempt to be the first to cross Antarctica. He failed, also, to reach the South Pole at any time. Out of the ashes of these failures, however, rose the 'phoenix' of supreme endurance, ingenuity of leadership and survival. It is these attributes that are Shackleton's heroic legacy and they inspire people to this day – whether they be captains of adventure or industry. Shackleton's supreme example of leadership is, arguably, unsurpassable.

Ever since Roland Huntford's controversial biography *Shackleton* was published (1985, Hodder & Stoughton) there has been a groundswell of interest in this enigmatic Irish explorer, often (and unfairly) at the expense of Scott's polar reputation. Shackleton died on the outward journey of his fourth expedition to the South. He was in his cabin on-board the *M/S Quest* as it was moored at Grytviken, South Georgia. It was 5<sup>th</sup> January 1922. He was just a few days shy of his 48<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Shackleton was a hero and a failure. He was accoladed and ignored. On his return from the ice in 1917 there was a war on. Polar celebrities were out of fashion. From the turmoil of death and suffering people needed a new kind of hero, a new distraction - enter the pioneer aviator and film star. There is a sad irony here. Shackleton had sought fame and fortune but, in the end, only transient fame arrived. There was to be no fortune. By 1920, just 18 months before the Irishman's demise, Charlie Chaplin was a millionaire. In 1927, just 5 years later, Charles Lindbergh took his little plane, 'Spirit of St Louis' on a precarious jaunt across the Atlantic and into unbelievable fame and a level of wealth Shackleton couldn't even have imagined.

*This article first appeared on-line in May 2017.*

*<https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/sir-ernest-shackleton-antarctic-exploration-endurance-expedition-culture-news-62000/>*

# Bransfield or Bellingshausen – Who Saw Antarctica First?

Michael Smith

Almost 200 years have passed since humans first set eyes on the mainland of Antarctica in 1820 and opened the chapter of history which reached its climax in the epic stories of exploration involving characters such as Roald Amundsen, Robert Scott and Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Yet almost two centuries later the two central characters in the earliest voyages of discovery - the enigmatic Irish navigator Edward Bransfield and the Russian naval captain, Fabian von Bellingshausen - remain strangely obscure and under-recognised figures. Moreover, the debate over who was first to see the mainland of Antarctica in the run-up to the bi-centenary in 2020 is still fiercely contested.

One half of the story began in February 1819 when the small merchant vessel, *Williams*, was caught in a storm while taking an assorted cargo of tobacco and medicines around Cape Horn from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso, Chile. Captain William Smith, the skipper and part owner of the brig, sailed deep into the Drake Passage in search of more favourable winds and saw land not marked on his charts. Smith, an accidental explorer, had discovered part of a chain of 11 islands and small islets which make up the South Shetland Islands lying some 500 miles south of Cape Horn. The experienced 28 years old seafarer from the colliery port of Blyth, Northumberland, had found a bleak headland at the north-eastern tip of what is today Livingstone Island.

In accordance with custom, Smith reported his discovery to naval authorities in Valparaiso where Captain William Shirreff of HMS *Andromache* was the most senior officer available. However Shirreff was unsure about the discovery and allowed Smith to make a return voyage around Cape Horn to Montevideo.

Smith's second trip found no sight of land but his third voyage back to Valparaiso proved more significant. *Williams* once more ran into uncharted land and on October 16, 1819, Smith landed on King George III Island before reporting back to Shirreff in Valparaiso.

Shirreff moved quickly, particularly as rumours of new hunting grounds had excited American whalers and sealers in South American ports. Shirreff chartered *Williams* and appointed Ship's Master, Edward Bransfield to investigate Smith's findings.

Bransfield, an experienced and capable navigator of 34, was an ideal choice. He was born in 1785 in the small village of Ballinacurra near Midleton, Cork and picked up useful knowledge of the sea by helping on his father's fishing boat along Ireland's south coast.

Very little is known about his early years but in 1803, as Britain's war with Napoleon intensified, the country mobilised and sent the ruthless press-gangs in search of able-bodied men to man its warships. Bransfield, just 18 years old, was "pressed" in mid-1803 and summarily thrown into the brutal fighting against the French fleet which would eventually cost the lives of over 90,000 British sailors.

Bransfield survived the war and became an accomplished seaman, advancing through the ranks to become a Ship's Master with special responsibility for navigation. He was decorated for his role in the successful Bombardment of Algiers in 1816 and two years later sailed on *Andromache* to help safeguard British interests in newly independent Chile.

Bransfield's orders were to verify Smith's findings, chart any new discoveries and observe any wildlife or inhabitants they encountered. More important, Bransfield was to take possession of any new lands for the King and specifically ordered to "conceal every discovery that you may have made during your voyage."

*Williams*, a two-masted brig of 216 tons, left Valparaiso on December 20, 1819 with a crew of about 30 men. The vessel, which sailed alone, was provisioned for 12 months and Shirreff told the Admiralty that Bransfield was "well qualified for the undertaking..."

The 2,000 mile journey south ran into immediate difficulties and took nine days to travel the first six miles. Fog, a common feature of the Drake Passage, hampered visibility and it was three weeks before the South Shetlands came into clear view. On January 22, 1820, Bransfield took a party ashore on King George Island to raise the flag on the Empire's most southerly outpost. Next day the first rock specimens ever taken from Antarctica were collected.

Bransfield ran along the shores of the island chain before turning south into unexplored seas. The uncharted 60-mile wide stretch of water, which separate the South Shetlands from the Antarctic Peninsula, is today called the Bransfield Strait and among the main thoroughfares carrying tourists to the continent.

*Williams* crossed latitude 63° and on January 30, 1820 all hands were amazed as the misty haze parted. Midshipman Charles Poynter recorded the moment by writing: "At 3 our notice was arrested by three very large icebergs and 20 minutes after we were unexpectedly astonished by the discovery of land..."

Poynter reported being "half encompassed with islands." The land, he explained, appeared as "immense mountains, rude crags and barren ridges covered with snow."

Under Bransfield's command, the expedition had discovered the north western slopes of the Antarctic Peninsula which he named Trinity Land after the Trinity House maritime body in London. A visible peak, which rises to 2,500 feet, was later named Mount Bransfield. Poynter even wondered if the party had found "the long contested existance (sic) of a Southern Continent."

Bransfield sailed *Williams* through some atrocious weather and established a "furthest south" of 64° 56' S in the outer reaches of the Weddell Sea. Before turning north, the ship passed Elephant Island where less than 100 years later Shackleton's men from *Endurance* would be marooned and in a brief visit ashore, a Union flag was planted on the adjacent Clarence Island.



*The Bransfield Strait, discovered by Edward Bransfield in 1820 and the route to Antarctica by modern day tourists.*

After a remarkable journey lasting four months, *Williams* crept back to Valparaiso in mid-April 1820. Not a man was lost.

At the same time as Bransfield's pioneering journey, a further episode in Antarctic history was unfolding on the other side of the continent under the aegis of Russian explorer, von Bellingshausen.

Captain Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen (Faddei Faddeyevich Bellingshausen in Russian) was a highly experienced mariner and cartographer in his early 40s who had been at sea for 30 years and had sailed on the first Russian circumnavigation of the globe in 1803-06. He was born into an aristocratic Baltic German family on the island of Saaremaa in the Gulf of Riga, then part of the Russian Empire and today in Estonia. He joined the Imperial Russian Navy at only 10 years of age.



*Fabian von Bellingshausen,  
the Russian naval captain*

In 1819, Tsar Alexander had developed his own imperial ambitions and saw the unexplored regions toward the South Pole as potential new territories for Russia. The man given responsibility for investigating the area was Bellingshausen.

After leaving Kronstadt in June 1819 with a total of 190 men, the 985-ton frigate, *Vostok* and *Mirny*, a 530-ton sloop, stopped at Portsmouth and London on the way south. Months later the Russians became the first ships to cross the Antarctic Circle since Captain Cook almost half a century earlier.

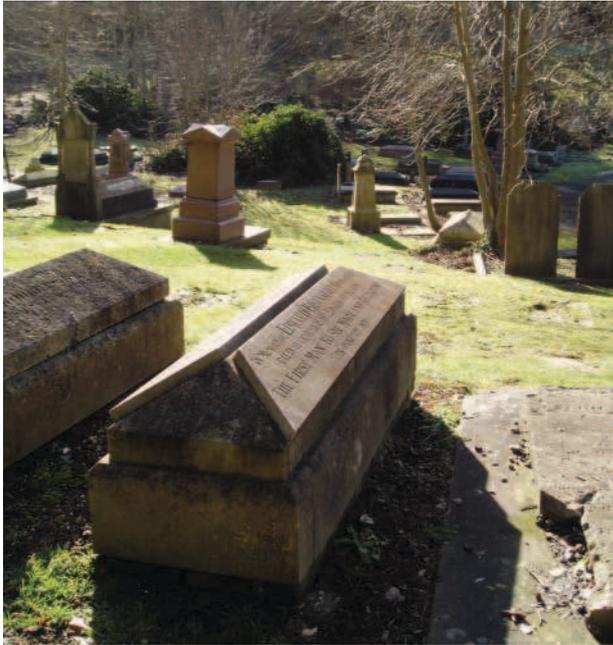
By January 1820, *Vostok* and *Mirny* were an estimated 20 miles from the Antarctic coastline which is now called Dronning Maud Land. On January 27 (Bellingshausen was keeping nautical time and called it January 28) the ships observed "continuous ice" and "ice mountains" in a southerly direction.

But crucially Bellingshausen did not mention land in his official reports and did not distinguish between ice and solid ground. Nor did he ever claim to have been the first to set eyes on the Antarctic mainland.

Contemporary newspaper accounts in 1821, after the expedition had returned from the south, quoted Bellingshausen as saying: "...there is no southern continent or should there be one, it must be inaccessible from being covered with perpetual snows, ice, etc."

Bellingshausen's two year voyage failed to ignite great interest at home and he went back into the navy, where he enjoyed a long and distinguished career. He eventually served the Imperial Russian Navy for over 50 years.

However the debate over who was first to see the mainland was severely hampered by the loss of crucial documents. First the log book of *Williams* disappeared and has never been found, which left Bransfield's claim reliant on the surviving charts and some magazine articles from the 1820s. But the most significant development was the discovery in the 1990s of the journal kept by Poynter, which contains the most valuable first-hand account of the expedition.



*No photographs or paintings of the enigmatic Edward Bransfield have ever surfaced and his last resting place in Brighton is the only link with the past*

Bellingshausen's account of the 1819-21 expedition did not appear until a decade later in 1831 and a detailed English version of events did not appear until 1945. More recently, the author Rip Bulkeley has conducted the most thorough investigation ever made in English. According to Bulkeley, the original manuscript of Bellingshausen's book, his expedition journals and the naval records of the expedition have all disappeared.

After exhaustive examination, Bulkeley concluded that "...Bellingshausen was not the first commander to see the Antarctic mainland..."

Immediately after reaching Valparaiso, Bransfield offered to return south in the following season to make further searches. However the navy's primary focus in the 1820s was the elusive the North West

Passage and it is possible Antarctica was seen as an unnecessary diversion. As a result, the offer was turned down and within a year Bransfield left Royal Navy.

Bransfield went back to sea as a merchant mariner and drifted into obscurity. No personal account of his great voyage was ever written and to add to the mystery, no photograph or painting of Bransfield has ever been found. What is not open to doubt is that Bransfield was the first to accurately record and chart his discoveries.

The enigmatic Edward Bransfield finally died a forgotten man in Brighton on October 31, 1852 at the age of 67. He outlived Bellingshausen, who died on January 25, 1852, by nine months.

Plans to erect the first ever memorial to Edward Bransfield on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his first sighting of the Antarctic mainland are now being arranged. Remembering Edward Bransfield, a voluntary group seeking to increase awareness of Bransfield, is raising funds to place the monument in his birthplace of Ballinacurra, Cork on January 30, 2020.

#### **Further reading:**

Rip Bulkeley, *Bellingshausen & The Russian Antarctic Expedition 1819-21*, Palgrave Macmillan  
R.J. Campbell (Editor) *The Discovery of the South Shetland Islands 1819-1820:*

*The Journal of Midshipman C.W. Poynter*, The Hakluyt Society

David Day, *Antarctica: A Biography*, Oxford University Press

Frank Debenham, *The Voyage of Captain Bellingshausen To The Antarctic Seas, 1819-1821*, Hakluyt Society

A.G. E. Jones, *Polar Portraits: Collected Papers*, Caedmon of Whitby

Michael Smith, *Great Endeavour – Ireland's Antarctic Explorers*

Website: [www.Rememberingedwardbransfield.ie](http://www.Rememberingedwardbransfield.ie)

*Michael Smith is an author specialising in the history of Polar exploration. Michael has written nine books, including Shackleton – By Endurance We Conquer, An Unsung Hero – Tom Crean and Sir James Wordie – Polar Crusader.*

# Shackleton's Men in the Arctic: Polar Explorers and Arctic Warfare in North Russia 1918-19

by Damien Wright

After three years of great loss and suffering on the Eastern Front, Imperial Russia was in crisis and on the verge of revolution. In November 1917, Lenin's Bolsheviks (later known as 'Soviets') seized power, signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers and brutally murdered Tsar Nicholas and his children so that there could be no return to the old order. As Russia fractured into loyalist 'White' and revolutionary 'Red' factions, the British government became increasingly drawn into the escalating Russian civil war after hundreds of thousands of German troops, transferred from the Eastern Front to France, were used in the 1918 'Spring Offensive' which threatened Paris.

## **The North Russian campaign**

What began with the landing of a small number of Royal Marines at the port city of Murmansk, 200 miles within the Arctic Circle, in March 1918 to protect Allied-donated war stores, quickly escalated with the British government actively pursuing an undeclared war against the Bolsheviks on a number of fronts in support of British-trained and equipped 'White Russian' allies.

Due to its geographic proximity to the Pole, North Russia experiences both climatic extremes, a hot dry summer with few hours of darkness where the temperature can rise to 34°C, followed by a bitterly cold Arctic winter which lasts from November to March when temperatures can drop to -45°C. During the dark months of December and January the sun barely rises above the horizon.

In North Russia, British forces chased the Red Army south east from Archangel until they were halted in October 1918 by the freezing of the Dvina River. Facing a harsh winter without the mobile artillery support of the Royal Navy river flotilla, the British, American and Canadian troops began earnestly building a static defensive line of wooden blockhouses. Conditions for the RAF were especially difficult as engines, valves, joints and throttles all froze solid. Riggers and fitters could not remove their gloves for the fear of frostbite.

The cold also had a dramatic effect on the range of artillery shells. The British 18pdrs had to be ranged to 3,750 yards for the shells to have an effective range of only 2,000 yards in the subzero temperatures. Machine guns froze solid and artillery shell fuses did not detonate in the deep snow.

To compound the discomfort of the soldiers, there was a campaign by zealous teetotallers back in Britain not to send rum to the troops in North Russia. General Ironside at Archangel was furious:

I wish I could have some of the placid prohibitionists on sentry-go for an hour in 72 degrees of frost and they would have changed their opinions as to whether it should be issued or not.<sup>11</sup>

## **Enter Sir Ernest Shackleton**

Into this campaign was sent the polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. The War Office was making preparations to despatch Shackleton to Russia as early as 22 July 1918, when he was commissioned as a temporary major 'whilst specially employed'. A commission in the Navy

<sup>1</sup> Dobson and Miller, *The Day We Almost Bombed Moscow*, p185



*Sir Ernest Shackleton en route to Murmansk, October 1918. He wears the uniform and insignia of a British Army staff officer including 'Shackleton' boots, red and black brassard with white star insignia of the NREF (not visible in this photo), red collar tabs and a thick woollen hat with staff officer badge (Alfred Carey Collection, Naval Air Museum, NSW)*

would have seemed more appropriate, however the sponsorship of his duties in North Russia by the War Office and not the Admiralty resulted in an Army commission. Although delighted to be in uniform supporting the war effort, the old sailor was a little perplexed to be uniformed in khaki:

'I'm a sailor really. I'm only dressed up like a soldier.'<sup>2</sup>

After a number of delays, Shackleton was recalled to London in late August 1918 and ordered to make all haste to prepare the supply of Arctic equipment for the troops in North Russia. He arrived at Murmansk in late October and was invigorated to return to polar climes. In a letter to the patron of the *Endurance* expedition, Janet Stancomb-Wills, he wrote:

All is sheer beauty and keen delight. The very first ... snow squalls bring home to us the memories of our old South Lands. There is a freshness in the air, a briskness in the breeze that renews one's youth.<sup>3</sup>

Shackleton's arrival within the Arctic Circle was also cause for reflection. On 26 October, soon after arriving at Murmansk, Shackleton wrote to his youngest son, seven-year-old Edward:

This day 3 years ago the "Endurance" was crushed in the ice. I have been to many places since then, now it is the other end of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently keen to experience harsh polar conditions again and looking forward to a scrap ('... it was a job after my own heart ... winter sledging with a fight at the end'<sup>5</sup>), Shackleton was disappointed once the reality of his role set in and he resigned himself to the work of equipping, advising and training British troops in the use of the Arctic equipment he had brought from England.

Officially appointed 'Staff Officer, Arctic equipment, North Russia Expeditionary Force' (NREF), Shackleton hand-picked several polar explorers to join him at Murmansk to assist in his work including Frank Worsley, Joseph Stenhouse, Leonard Hussey, Dr Alexander Macklin, Sir Philip Brocklehurst and Victor Campbell. Shackleton reported directly to the commander, Major General Charles Maynard, CB, CMG, DSO, The Devonshire Regiment. Maynard was an old soldier with 20 years of campaigning under his belt before he was appointed to command 'SYREN' Force, NREF and he wore ribbons for campaigns in Burma, the North-West Frontier and South Africa.

Maynard was initially not keen on having Shackleton under his command, although his expectations for the arrival of an intransigent tyrant were quickly proven wrong:

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Shackleton: By Endurance We Conquer*, p410

<sup>3</sup> Plimpton, *Ernest Shackleton*, p143

<sup>4</sup> Shackleton letter, 26 October 1918: SPRI MS 1537/2/9/11

<sup>5</sup> Mill, *The Life of Sir Ernest Shackleton*, p259

I must admit that I heard the news of Shackleton's appointment with somewhat mixed feelings. Whilst I was only too anxious to get the assistance of someone with a wide experience of such conditions as those obtaining in North Russia during winter, I was not certain that Shackleton was the right man for the job. I had never met him, but the impression I had gathered from hearsay was that he was somewhat dictatorial if not overbearing; and that, though doubtless a fine leader of men, he was unlikely to accept gladly a subordinate position. Events soon proved, however, that my fears on this score were totally unfounded, for from the moment of his arrival to the time of his departure he gave me of his very best and his loyalty from start to finish was absolute.<sup>6</sup>



*Two of Robert Falcon Scott's Terra Nova expedition men en route to North Russia: Warrant Officer Francis Scott, RN and Major James Mather, RE. Both wear the all-white ribbon of the Polar Medal*

### **Outfitting and training the NREF**

As poorly equipped as the NREF was in other areas, the Arctic kit brought by Shackleton from England and issued to the troops for the winter with its distinctive gloves and goggles proved to be more than adequate, apart from the much maligned 'Shackleton boot' which proved less practical. The canvas over-shoe, designed to be worn over standard-issue army boots primarily for use with skis or snowshoes, had little grip on the soles, was very slippery on ice and was not completely waterproof. Use of studs made the 'Shackleton boot' slightly more suitable for garrison duty in winter blockhouses, however the shoes were rarely used in the manner for which they were originally intended.

The cold was so extreme that soldiers could not touch their rifles with bare hands for fear of skin sticking to the bare metal. No one ventured outside unless it was a short trip from one blockhouse to another. In such an environment it was exceedingly easy to lose a finger, toes or sometimes even limbs to frostbite. Due to the diligence and close supervision of officers and non-commissioned officers, cases of frostbite were very few. The fighting became largely defensive, similar to the Western Front but whereas in France and Flanders men could not advance due to massed machine guns and artillery, in North Russia movement was restricted due to the harshness of the winter.

Few of the British soldiers had any experience in winter pursuits and time was spent training in new modes of transport. Those with particular aptitude were selected to form snowshoe and ski platoons which roamed the frozen forests looking for the enemy but encounters were very uncommon and the men spent much of the winter in blockhouses and billets doing their best to keep warm.

In December 1918, Shackleton briefly returned to England accompanying Maynard aboard the Chatham-class light cruiser HMS *Dublin* in an attempt to resolve with the War Office a local currency crisis at Murmansk. Sir Ernest also joined Maynard for a private audience with the King who had been intrigued by the British presence in North Russia and had requested a personal update on the progress of the campaign.

On their return to Murmansk, Maynard began planning for a winter offensive against the Bolsheviks along the railway south of Murmansk. Shackleton utilised his experience of

<sup>6</sup> Maynard, *The Murmansk Venture*, p163



*Three examples of 'Shackleton kit' in use in North Russia. The soldier on the left is Sergeant Bertram Perry, MM, AIF attached NREF, the soldier on the right is Sergeant Charles Tozer, RAMC. The soldier with rifle and webbing belt is unidentified (AWM AO5184)*

expeditions in the Antarctic to develop a system for packing supply sleighs for each of the attacking mobile columns. Each sleigh carried a specific quantity of supplies and equipment for a specific number of men for a specific number of days.

To conduct a mobile offensive in Arctic conditions required troops skilled in extreme climatic conditions, of which Maynard had few. Only a small number of British troops had been trained in cross-country skiing. By the time sufficient British troops could have been trained to the level required for Arctic operations the spring thaw would already have arrived.

In July 1918, anticipating the need for skilled Arctic troops in North Russia, the War Office had requested that the Canadian government form a unit with experience operating dog sleds in Arctic conditions specifically for service at Murmansk. A unit of 18 officers and 70 NCOs was formed in England and placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Leckie, DSO, Manitoba Regiment. The special mobile unit was titled 'Canadian Malamute Company, NREF' and arrived with dogs at Murmansk in late September 1918.

Transport requirements for the mobile columns were significant. Maynard contracted local Laplanders, hardy people from the Karelian frontier with Finland, to supply 600 reindeer sleighs alone. Four mobile columns of 200 men each were formed and equipped with



*North Russia 1919 Military Cross and Order of St Anne group of medals awarded to Captain Arthur Glover, RE, commanding 'SYREN' Signal Company*

Shackleton's Arctic kit. Instruction in the use of skis, snowshoes and sleigh driving was placed under the supervision of another Antarctic explorer, Commander Victor Campbell, DSO\*, RN. Campbell had been a member of Sir Robert Falcon Scott's ill-fated *Terra Nova* expedition in 1910-13 and had led the Northern Party to safety after Scott perished.

A serving Naval officer, at the start of the war Campbell was appointed by the Admiralty to command Drake Battalion, Royal Naval Division and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for leadership of the battalion during the Gallipoli campaign (*London Gazette*, 3 June 1915) and a Bar (*London Gazette*, 22 June 1917) for services in the sinking of a German U-boat in 1917. On St George's Day 1918, in command of Vice Admiral Roger Keyes's flagship, W-class destroyer HMS *Warwick*, Campbell took part in the raid on Zeebrugge, an attempt by the Royal Navy to blockade the Belgian port from use by the German navy. By the time he was appointed for special service to the Admiralty as an Arctic adviser at Murmansk (much in the same manner as Shackleton although Campbell was already a serving Naval officer) he had had a very lively war. Campbell would add an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) to his already impressive set of awards for his services in North Russia, 'For valuable services in connection with operations carried out on shore at Murmansk' (*London Gazette*, 24 May 1919).

Not all British and Commonwealth troops in North Russia during the winter of 1918-19 had the benefit of instruction by polar explorers. Commanding SYREN Signal Company, NREF, Captain Arthur Bernard Glover, RE (TF) was responsible for maintaining communications over a huge area with only a small number of men, no Arctic training and no specialised equipment. He was decorated for his service in North Russia with the Military Cross (*London Gazette*, 3 October 1919), although he may well have joked that he deserved the Polar Medal instead. His citation states:

he has worked splendidly, directing the repair of broken lines under heavy fire and maintaining communications. This meant at times walking twenty miles in a night under severe Arctic conditions ...

This is believed by the author to be the only occasion when a British military decoration has been awarded where service under severe Arctic conditions was a specific contributing factor for the award.

### **The 1919 winter offensive**

Planning for Maynard's winter offensive was diverted in the New Year when orders were received from the War Office for the transfer of 6th and 13th Battalions, the Yorkshire Regiment from Murmansk to ELOPE Force at Archangel. Shackleton was assisted in planning the transfer by Lieutenant Joseph Stenhouse, DSC, RNR, formerly the master of the steam yacht *Aurora* (expedition vessel of the Ross Sea Party of Shackleton's 1914-16 expedition) during its 312-day drift stuck in sea ice. After service in Antarctica, Stenhouse immediately returned to England and resumed naval duties. On 26 September 1917 while gunnery officer on Q-ship *Q61*, captained by famed polar seaman Frank Worsley, Stenhouse participated in the sinking of a German U-boat in the Irish Sea, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (*London Gazette*, 17 November 1917). After the Armistice he was one of several polar explorers dispatched by the Admiralty to North Russia.

A handful of experienced men, trained in cross-country skiing by Victor Campbell, would travel in advance of the columns to establish rest and supply stops along the way. Each man would wear 'Shackleton kit' and, where available, fur caps, fur coats and moccasins with three pairs of socks. The move would be made under front-line conditions; each man would carry 120 rounds of rifle ammunition with battle kit and gas mask and all a full complement of 44 drums of ammunition for the Lewis guns. Each column would be accompanied by a Royal Army Medical Corps doctor and medical equipment loaned from SYREN Force.

The advance party of one officer and 32 ORs left Soroka on skis on 4 February 1919 and established supply stops along the route and made arrangements for billeting overnight at Sumski Posad. The two main columns departed at intervals on 5 February and reached Nukta three days later. There being no billets after Sumski Posad, the columns had to push on for a continuous 18-hour stretch before reaching Nukta where control of the columns was handed over from SYREN Force (Murmansk) to ELOPE Force (Archangel).

After a further four days overland in the snow the columns reached the Allied front line on the Archangel-Vologda railway front at Obozerskaya from where the Yorkshires were sent to garrison the ring of winter blockhouses. Of the conditions of the journey, 13th Yorkshires' commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lavie recorded:

...at about every 40 miles were depots with RASC rations for the Battalion; we started every day about 9 a.m. and marched from one town to another, the towns being about two hours march apart. On arrival all the men were put into billets so as to thaw their clothes and themselves, the cold being so intense that clothing, such as greatcoats, stood up by themselves, while all food and drinks were solid blocks of ice which had to be thawed before they could be consumed. Only one event of importance occurred on the way and that was when we ran into a blizzard, the temperature dropping to 57–70 degrees [Fahrenheit] below zero; this lasted about ten hours and of course held up the march while it lasted, but no man suffered frost-bite during the whole march.<sup>7</sup>

The plan was repeated three weeks later by 6th Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment which departed Soroka on 1 March arriving at Obozerskaya a week later. The total distance from Soroka to Obozerskaya of 550 miles was travelled entirely on sledges and skis in severe sub-Arctic conditions without a single case of frostbite, thanks in no small part to the equipment, preparation and training provided by Shackleton and his team of polar explorers. Shackleton himself was proud of what he had achieved:

The mobile columns there [North Russia] had exactly the same clothing, equipment, and sledging food as we had on the Expedition. No expense was spared to obtain the best of everything for them, and as a result not a single case of avoidable frost-bite was reported.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the significant reduction in troops under his command, General Maynard launched his winter offensive on 19 February 1919. Maynard had initially planned on using reindeer-drawn sleighs to transport the attacking troops, however the use of reindeers had to be abandoned when it was discovered that they would eat only a specific type of lichen moss which did not grow along the axis of advance southwards along the Murmansk-Petrograd Railway.

The multi-national force including the Canadian Malamute Company (which would be operating without their sled dogs which were found unsuitable for the terrain over which the advance would be made), British 253rd Company MGC and French, Serbian and Karelian Russian troops had been equipped with 'Shackleton kit' and trained by Victor Campbell in Arctic movement over long distances.

The offensive was a success with all objectives captured despite the long overland traverse in exceptionally bad weather. Rugged up against the cold, the Canadian Malamute Company attacked the village of Novoitskaya where Sergeant R. McNaughton, a veteran of the Western Front with the Central Ontario Regiment, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (*London Gazette*, 27 May 1919) for advancing with a sleigh over 800 yards of open ice against an enemy strong point and taking a Lewis gun through the deep snow under fire to clear the

<sup>7</sup> Jackson, *At War with the Bolsheviks*, pp103-4

<sup>8</sup> Shackleton, *South*, p327



*Sir Ernest Shackleton photographed in army uniform shortly before departing for Murmansk*

village of enemy snipers. This is surely one of the few occasions in British and Commonwealth military history where an attack has been made over a frozen lake on a sleigh.

### **Shackleton's departure**

With the thaw due in early April and the winter campaign nearly over, there was little more for Shackleton to do in North Russia and he was recalled to London in early March 1919. Having not heard a shot fired in anger and his hopes for a front-line role in an Arctic campaign dashed, Shackleton was likely to have been keen to return to England to pursue business opportunities and to raise funds for his next polar expedition.

Although he may not have considered his uniformed service in North Russia to have been particularly compelling, one correspondent at Murmansk recounted Shackleton's service in rather bombastic terms:

How I recall his striking figure during the North Russian campaign daily exhorting by his magnetic influence suffering humanity to

greater tasks ... Eccentric in some ways; almost totally unheeded of cold, and clothed lightly for such parts, Shackleton forced upon all whom he encountered a lasting impression of real merit. An idol of the mobile columns, an inspiration to all, he aided materially the moral [*sic*] of the troops and effectively equipped the entire Russian Force against the rigours of winter with a scrupulous thoroughness.<sup>9</sup>

In the King's Birthday Honours list of 1919 (*London Gazette*, 3 June 1919) Shackleton was awarded the OBE for his services with the North Russia Expeditionary Force 1918-19:

The KING has been graciously pleased, on the occasion of His Majesty's Birthday, to give orders for the following appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for valuable services rendered in connection with Military Operations in North Russia (Murmansk Command):- To be Officers of the Military Division of the said Most Excellent Order:- Shackleton, Maj. Sir Ernest Henry, CVO, Spec. List.

The following year he was mentioned in despatches (*London Gazette*, 11 June 1920) by the commander of the NREF:

The names of the undermentioned Officers are to be added to those brought to notice for valuable and distinguished services by Major-General W.E. Ironside, CMG, DSO, Commanding in-Chief, Northern Russian Expeditionary Force:- Shackleton, T./Maj. Sir E.H., CVO, OBE, Spec. List.

Shackleton's service in North Russia also earned him British military campaign medals, namely the British War Medal and Victory Medal (with MiD emblem). Both medals had originally been awarded for service in various First World War campaigns which ended on 11 November 1918 but as the campaign in Russia dragged on, eligibility for the medals was extended for service in Russia up to July 1920.

Shackleton's uniformed service officially ended on 20 October 1919 when he relinquished his commission in the rank of major on ceasing to be militarily employed. His service in North Russia was also recognised by the Provisional White Russian Government at Murmansk

<sup>9</sup> Mill, *op cit*, pp260-1



*Medals awarded to Sir Ernest Shackleton for service in North Russia 1918-19, as well as the CVO awarded in 1909. Shackleton was also the recipient of the Polar Medal and numerous foreign awards. (courtesy Christies)*

which granted Shackleton the high award of the Imperial Russian Order of St Anne, 2nd Class.

### **Experiences of the other Antarctic men**

Joseph Stenhouse remained in North Russia, and as the ice began to thaw on Lake Onega south of Murmansk was appointed in May 1919 to command a flotilla of motor boats operating on the lake to counter the threat of Bolshevik vessels known to operate south of the Shunga Peninsula. Dubbed 'SYREN Lake Flotilla', the small force originally comprised five motor boats transported by rail from Murmansk in various states of disrepair and several steam launches stuck fast in the ice and abandoned by the Bolsheviks. Stenhouse's second-in-command was another polar explorer, Major James Mather, Royal Engineers, seconded to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve with the rank of lieutenant commander, who had served as a petty officer on Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition.

On 5 June 1919, Stenhouse was absent for the flotilla's first engagement with the Bolsheviks on Lake Onega having temporarily handed command over to Mather. With seaplanes of RAF 'Duck' Flight flying overhead, Mather led the flotilla to meet the enemy who were encountered attacking several White Russian launches. The Bolsheviks had a significant advantage with their guns outranging those on the British vessels, but under attack from the Lake Flotilla and RAF the Soviet commander decided discretion was the better part of valour and withdrew from the fight, pursued by Mather and the plucky British boats.

For his command of SYREN Lake Flotilla during the engagement Mather was awarded the DSO (*London Gazette*, 21 January 1920) and later a MiD (*London Gazette*, 11 June 1920), a rare award to an Army officer for services afloat:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, on the 5th June, 1919, before Shunski Bor, Lake Onega. When in command of four motor boats he engaged four enemy steamers, carrying many heavy guns, in order to relieve the Russians who were being heavily attacked. Notwithstanding the disparity in armament, he caused the enemy vessels to retire south, and so enabled the Russians to counter-attack with success. He showed throughout great courage and devotion to duty and set a fine example to all.

Between June and September 1919 sailors of SYREN Lake Flotilla fought a number of actions both afloat and ashore until the flotilla vessels were handed over to the White Russian navy in preparation for the British withdrawal from Murmansk in October. For his command of the flotilla Stenhouse was awarded the DSO and MiD in the same *London Gazette* of 3 February 1920.



*Officers and crew of gunboat Jolly Roger on Lake Onega, summer 1919. Seated officers from left to right are: Major James Mather, DSO, RE (seconded RNVr); Lieutenant Joseph Stenhouse, DSO, DSC, RNR; and Captain Herbert Littledeale, MC, RGA (IWM Q16773)*

In 1920 Joseph Stenhouse was awarded the OBE for his services in the Antarctic, 1914-16 (*London Gazette*, 26 March 1920). He returned to Antarctic waters as captain of *Discovery* during its 1927-29 oceanographic and research expeditions. During the Second World War he resumed active service and was reported missing, presumed killed in the Gulf of Aden on 12 September 1941 when his ship exploded and sank having probably struck a sea mine in the Red Sea. His body was never recovered and he remains commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

By the time of his arrival in North Russia, Lieutenant Commander Frank Worsley, DSO, RD, RNR was a maritime legend. Captain of *Endurance* during the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-16, the New Zealander accompanied Shackleton on the whaleboat *James Caird* in the epic 16-day, 800-mile journey across the treacherous South Atlantic from Elephant Island to South Georgia to seek help after *Endurance* was crushed by sea ice, an extraordinary feat of seamanship and navigation.

On his return to England from the Antarctic, Worsley had volunteered for active service and was appointed captain of Q-ship *PQ61* with Joseph Stenhouse as his hand-picked gunnery officer. On 26 September 1917 while in command of *PQ61*, Worsley rammed and sank a German U-boat in the Irish Sea, for which he was awarded the DSO (*London Gazette*, 17 November 1917).

Recruited by Shackleton to assist him in North Russia, Worsley arrived at Murmansk in late 1918 and initially worked with Shackleton and his team on preparing British mobile columns for operations in Arctic conditions before he was transferred across the White Sea to Archangel to command the large China gunboat *HMS Cricket* operating as part of the Royal Navy flotilla on the Dvina River.

The flotilla had been withdrawn to Archangel in October 1918 to avoid being frozen in, leaving the British troops in the forward line of blockhouses without mobile artillery support for the winter. By early May 1919 the river had thawed enough to allow the Royal Navy



*The remarkable group of medals awarded to Joseph Stenhouse (courtesy Dix Noonan Webb)*

flotilla to steam the 480 miles south east to the British front line, dynamiting routes through the partially thawed river ice. Worsley recorded:

My knowledge of ice stood me in good stead the Commodore allowed us to be the first gunboat to work through the broken ice up the Dvina River, and the first to engage the Bolsheviks. I had two happy months of fighting in her [HMS *Cricket*]: that is, we'd have two hours' fighting every other day we shelled 'bolo' [slang for 'Bolshevik'] gunboats, land batteries, villages and troops and assist in the re-capture of some 10 miles of ground lost in the autumn and winter.<sup>10</sup>



*Lieutenant Commander Frank Worsley, DSO\*, RNR and Lieutenant Joseph Stenhouse, DSO, DSC, RNR pictured in 1917 when they were serving as captain and gunnery officer respectively of Q-ship PQ61 (National Library of NZ 12-182001-F)*

Not much is known about Worsley's later service in North Russia although it is known that he was detached to serve ashore during the summer and was awarded a Bar to his DSO (*London Gazette*, 17 October 1919) for his leadership of White Russian troops in an operation deep behind Bolshevik lines:

In recognition of the gallantry displayed by him at Pocha in North Russia between 2nd and 5th August 1919. This officer formed one of a large patrol which in circumstances of great danger and difficulty penetrated many miles behind the enemy lines, and by his unfailingly cheery leadership he kept up the spirits of all under trying conditions. By his assistance in bridging an unfordable river behind the enemy lines, he greatly helped the success of the enterprise.

Before he left Archangel, Worsley was also awarded the Imperial Russian Order of St Stanislaus and the following year an OBE for his services as navigating officer of *Endurance* in the Antarctic (*London Gazette*, 26 March 1920).

<sup>10</sup> Thomson, *Shackleton's Captain*, p125



*Medals awarded to Major Alexander Macklin (courtesy Dix Noonan Webb)*

In 1919, Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition doctor, Major Alexander Macklin, MC, RAMC, arrived in North Russia. After being rescued from Elephant Island and returning to England, Macklin had immediately offered his services to the War Office and was commissioned into the RAMC. Macklin was serving as a medical officer on the Western Front when his unit, 11th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, was posted to the British Expeditionary Force being sent in November 1917 to Italy to aid that country's fight against Austro-Hungarian forces in the Italian Alps. For his services on the Italian front, including during the battles at Asiago Plateau and Piave River, Macklin was awarded the MC (*London Gazette*, 1 January 1919).

The specifics of Macklin's service as a military doctor in North Russia are unknown, however in October 1919, only days before the British evacuation of North Russia, he gave evidence at Murmansk at the field general court martial of one hundred Royal Marines of 6th Royal Marines Battalion charged with mutiny in the field. Macklin's evidence for the prosecution secured a number of convictions (all but four marines were found 'guilty') including 13 marines who were sentenced to death, but their sentences were commuted to five years' penal servitude at hard labour after King George V had issued secret orders that no executions of British troops were to be carried out in respect of offences committed in Russia.

For his services in North Russia, Macklin was awarded the OBE (*London Gazette*, 3 February 1920) and the Imperial Russian Order of St Stanislaus. He was also twice mentioned in despatches by General Maynard and General Lord Rawlinson (*London Gazette*, 5 June 1919 and 3 February 1920) for services at Murmansk.

Yet another distinguished polar explorer to serve in North Russia was Lieutenant Eric Stewart Marshall, MC, RAMC who had been expedition surgeon with Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition 1907-09. Little is known about Marshall's service in North Russia other than he served as a senior medical officer at Archangel and was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (*London Gazette*, 3 February 1920) for his services there and was also awarded the Imperial Russian Order of St Stanislaus.

Although not himself a polar explorer at the time he was serving in North Russia, New Zealander Major Charles Roderick Carr would later play a prominent role in Shackleton's final *Quest* expedition. Having served with the Wellington Mounted Rifles, New Zealand



*New Zealander Major Charles Carr, DFC, AFC, RAF. In 1921 Carr was appointed as pilot to Shackleton's final Quest expedition (Fielding Public Library, NZ)*

Expeditionary Force (NZEF) before being commissioned into the Royal Naval Air Service for pilot training, Carr arrived at Archangel as RAF aircrew reinforcement for the summer campaign and served as a pilot at the RAF aerodrome at Bereznik. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (*London Gazette*, 18 November 1919) for a bold low-level raid on a Soviet air force base while flying a Sopwith Snipe:

On the 17th June, 1919, this officer flew a scout machine over the enemy aerodrome at Puchenga, at an average height of only 50 feet, for thirty minutes. During this time he succeeded in setting fire to a Nieuport enemy machine, to a hangar which contained three aeroplanes (all of which were destroyed), drove all the personnel off the aerodrome, and killed some of the mechanics.

Carr was later selected by Shackleton for his final expedition to Antarctica as the pilot of the modified 80hp Avro Antarctic Baby aircraft carried on the expedition ship *Quest*. Shackleton died of heart failure at South Georgia in 1922 before *Quest* entered

Antarctic waters and Carr was denied the opportunity to fly operationally in the Antarctic. Serving during the Second World War in a number of senior RAF appointments, Carr was knighted before retiring as an air marshal.

The last NREF troopship bound for England left Archangel on 27 September and Murmansk on 12 October 1919, bringing an end to British military intervention in North Russia, although Whitehall continued to send troops, aircraft, tanks and ships to other fronts although no polar explorers are known to have served in other theatres of the Russian Civil War.

### **Conclusion**

The contribution of polar explorers to the British campaign in North Russia 1918-19 was completely disproportionate to the small number who served there. Without the expertise of 'Shackleton's men' at Murmansk and Archangel it is likely that the NREF would have experienced significant setbacks in the conduct of the winter campaign and suffered significant losses in the extreme climatic conditions. It is surprising, given the academic attention which polar explorers of the 'heroic age' have attracted over the past 100 years, that the distinguished and important service of some of the most prominent personalities in North Russia during the Russian Civil War has received relatively little attention.

### **The following polar explorers are known to have served in North Russia 1918-19:**

ATKINSON, Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Edward, DSO, AM, RN  
(*Terra Nova* expedition 1910-13)

BROCKLEHURST, Major Sir Philip, Bart., 1st Life Guards (*Nimrod* expedition 1907-09)

CAMPBELL, Commander Victor Lindsey Arbuthnot, DSO, OBE, RN  
(*Terra Nova* expedition 1910-13)

CARR, Squadron Leader Charles Roderick, DFC, AFC, RAF (*Quest* expedition 1921-22)

DAVIES, Warrant Officer Francis Edward Charles, RN  
*(Terra Nova expedition 1910-13, Discovery II expedition 1927-33)*

HUSSEY, Captain Leonard Dunan Albert, RGA  
*(Endurance expedition, Weddell Sea Party, 1914-16, Quest expedition 1921-22)*

MACKLIN, Major Alexander Hepburne, OBE, MC, RAMC  
*(Endurance expedition, Weddell Sea Party, 1914-16)*

MARSHALL, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Stewart, CBE, MC, RAMC  
*(Nimrod expedition 1907-09)*

MATHER, Major James Henry, DSO, RE (Lieutenant Commander, RNVR)  
*(Terra Nova expedition 1910-13)*

SHACKLETON, Major Sir Ernest Henry, CVO, OBE, Spec List  
*(Discovery expedition 1901-04, Nimrod expedition 1907-09, Endurance Expedition, Weddell Sea Party, 1914-16, Quest expedition 1921-22)*

STENHOUSE, Lieutenant Joseph Russell, DSO, OBE, DSC, RNR  
*(Aurora expedition, Ross Sea Party, 1914-16, Discovery II expedition 1927-29)*

WILD, Lieutenant Frank, RNVR *(Discovery Expedition 1901-04, Nimrod expedition 1907-09, Aurora expedition 1911-14, Endurance expedition, Weddell Sea Party, 1914-16, Quest expedition 1921-22)*

WORSLEY, Lieutenant Commander Frank Arthur, DSO\*, RD, RNR  
*(Endurance expedition, Weddell Sea Party, 1914-16, Quest expedition 1921-22)*

### **Background**

This article has been derived from research undertaken in the production of the author's recently released book *Churchill's secret war with Lenin: British and Commonwealth military interventions in the Russian Civil War, 1918-20*, Helion & Company, 2017

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# THE SOUTHERN JOURNEY

(An extract from 'The Voyages of the Discovery' by Anne Savours Shirley)

*[Editor's note: The first great sledge - journey South (from 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1902 to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1903 inclusive) into the complete unknown was a feat of great courage and endurance. For those who 'follow' Shackleton – there is much discussion on their hero's decline on that pioneering 93-day march and (especially) his relations (at that time and in subsequent years) with Scott. In chatting this through with Anne Savours, recently, she pointed me to her excellent book and gave me permission to reproduce a pertinent extract here. I am left with these words ringing in my ears, "I say, Shackles, how would you fancy some sardines on toast?" (Scott's words as the three men gradually recovered after the march – related by Gerald Doorly - an officer of the relief expedition ship, the Morning)]*

A blizzard followed by fog prevented (the men) seeing much more from slightly further south and (so) they turned for home between lat.82° 16'S and 82° 17'S, the dogs being too exhausted to notice the change. Unfortunately, a great chasm in the ice prevented the party from reaching the land from the ice shelf, and no specimens of its rock were brought back.

Scott had hoped to reach a more southerly latitude, but could not, because of the failure of the dogs, which one after another tragically 'left their bones on the great southern plains'. He had realised that most of the weaker dogs would have to be sacrificed to the stronger, but had hoped 'that a remnant of the larger and stronger beasts would survive to enjoy again a life of luxury and ease'. The reason they did not was that the dog-food, Norwegian dried 'stock fish', contained no vitamins and might have gone bad in the tropics. By New Year's Day 1903, the state of the dog team had become pitiable, only a few being able to pull. Some had to be held on their feet at the beginning of the march before their limbs became stiff enough to support them. 'Poor "Spud" fell in his tracks today', wrote Scott, 'we carried him for a long way on the sledge and then tried him once more, but he fell again, and had to be carried for the rest of the journey tucked away inside the canvas tank...Towards the end of our days march it had always been possible to get a semblance of spirit into our poor animals by saying "up for supper". They learnt early what the words meant and it has generally been "Spud" who gave the first responsive whimper. This afternoon it was most pathetic; the cheering shout for the last half mile was raised as usual, but there was no response, until suddenly from the interior of the sledge-tank came the muffled ghost of a whimper. It was "Spud's" last effort: on halting we carried him back to his place but in an hour he was dead'.

A sail improvised from the floorcloth of the tent helped the remaining two sledges along while the wind blew from the south. By 7<sup>th</sup> January, the remaining dogs merely walked alongside the sledges. Scott admitted to his moral cowardice in allowing Wilson and Shackleton to do his share in the dirty work of killing the animals, which they all three hated.

On 13<sup>th</sup> January they picked up depot B and were able to have a really filling and nourishing 'hoosh'. A medical examination the next day revealed more symptoms of scurvy especially in Shackleton whose throat seemed congested, causing him to cough and occasionally to spit blood. Everything had to be sacrificed (including a closer look at the northern coast) in the effort to reach the next depot and keep Shackleton on his feet. He was to do little pulling and no camp duties. He wrote afterwards:

'Well, eventually found our depot, after which I broke down and haemorrhage started. Then everything we did not absolutely need was thrown away, and all the weight of the pulling devolved on my two companions, and it was only owing to their care of me and kindness during this trying period that I was enabled to reach the ship, for I could do no pulling and could only just struggle on ahead of the sledges. Captain Scott and



turned out to be the remains of our last year's depot, and before we reached it, we had the great pleasure of seeing two figures hurrying towards us on ski. Just 6 miles from the ship we met them – Skelton and Bernacchi - clean tidy looking people they were. And imagine our joy on hearing that the relief ship 'Morning' had arrived a week or more before and that all our mails and parcels were waiting for us in our cabins. All the news was good about everything, except that there were still eight miles ice floe to go out before we should be free to leave our winter quarters. However, that didn't trouble us much.

We camped and had a good lunch and then these two pulled our sledges in for us. Our flags, of course, were flying and we had a very gay march in, listening to scraps of the world's news, and scraps of our little world's news, the news of the ship. We had been doubly cut off for three months from any news but what we had brought ourselves from the unknown south. Three miles from the ship we were met also by Sub. Lieut. Mullock, one of the 'Morning's' officers, a very nice young fellow who is to join up with us on the 'Discovery' - he is an R.N. Officer of the Survey Department. Next, we were met by Koettlitz, Royds and all the rest, and a crowd of men. It was a great home-coming and, as we turned Cape Armitage, we saw the ship decorated from top to toe with flags and all the ship's company up the rigging round the gangway ready to cheer us, which they did most lustily as we came on board. They were all most enthusiastic and everyone shook us by the hand all round, it was a most delightful welcome...A lot of photographs were taken and indeed we must have been worth photographing. I began to realise, then, how filthy we were – long sooty hair, black greasy clothes, faces and noses all peeling and sore, lips all raw, everything either sunburnt or bleached, even our sledges and the harness – things one didn't realise before, and our faces the colour of brown boots, except where the lamp soot made them black.

'Then came the time for a bath, the clothes came off that had been on since November 2<sup>nd</sup> of the year before and then a huge dinner. Captain Colbeck, Engineer Morrison, Lieuts. Doorly and Mulock were all there, and a long and tiring evening followed. But instead of drink and noise and songs and strangers, I know I was longing to lie down on my bunk and have a long quiet yarn with Charles Royds. I was in no hurry at all to spring at my letters for I felt an absolute confidence that everything was well with all that I care for most at home...Such was our homecoming after an absence of over 13 weeks'.

Scott described the joy of rounding the Cape of seeing 'our beloved ship', which was still held fast in her icy prison, but trim and neat. 'She was fully prepared to face again the open seas, and the freshly-painted side glistened in the sunlight. A fairer sight could scarcely meet our snow-tried eyes; and to mark the especial nature of the occasion a brave display of bunting floated gently in the breeze, while, as we approached, the side rigging were thronged with our cheering comrades'. He goes on to tell of the great welcome the party received and how they revelled in the 'unwonted luxury of clean raiment', which clothed them 'at a feast which realised the glories of our day-dreams'.

Gerald Doorly, an officer of the relief expedition in the *Morning*, was present at the welcome-home feast and slept afterwards on board the *Discovery*. He described how the southern party's hunger remained unappeased, despite the banquet. Shackleton and Wilson enjoyed the feast in their cabins. Afterwards, Captain Scott kept them surreptitiously supplied with more food from the pantry. Doorly relates that he had not been asleep for more than hour, when he heard Scott 'rousing Shackleton, whose cabin was next-door. "Shackles" I heard him call, "I say, Shackles how would you fancy some sardines on toast?". In a little while the smell of toasting bread at the wardroom fire permeated the place, and a few minutes later I heard Wilson thanking the captain for the luxury! This continued at intervals during the early hours and struck me as being at once humorous and pathetic'. The extract is interesting in that it does away with the idea of any estrangement between Scott and Shackleton during

the journey. The last entry in Scott's sledging diary on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1903, some days after their return, recorded that all three were recovering from the strain. He ended by saying, 'there is every reason to think however, that our return was none too soon'.

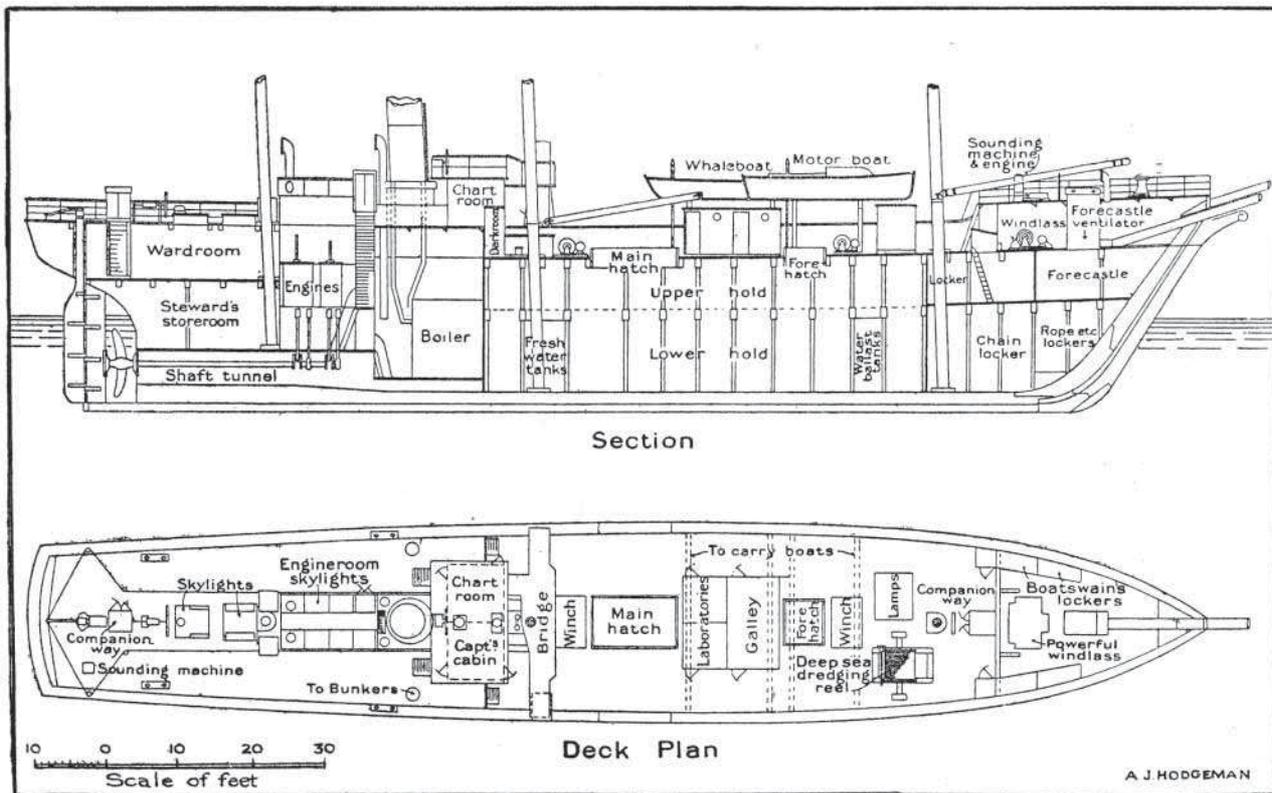
In concluding his account of the Southern Journey, Scott wrote:

'And so our southern sledge journey came to an end on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1903, when, for 93 days, we had plodded with ever-varying fortune over a vast snowfield and slept beneath the fluttering canvas of a tent. During that time we had covered 960 statute miles, with a combination of success and failure in our objects, which I have endeavoured to set forth in these pages. If we had not achieved such great results as at one time we had hoped for, we knew at least that we had striven and endured with all our might'.

This modest appraisal cloaks the achievements of Scott, Shackleton and Wilson. They had, in fact, made the first extended journey into the interior of the unknown southern continent, not merely making a beeline towards the Pole, but altering course to approach the coastline and the Western Mountains, thus enabling these to be surveyed and sketched. The recovery of geological specimens had to be left to later comers, since a great chasm blocked the way from the ice sheet to the coast. All in all, and considering the state of dietary knowledge and their lack of previous experience, this was an effort of which they could be proud.



*Discovery Hut was built by Scott and his men during the British National Antarctic Expedition in 1902 and is located at Hut Point on Ross Island by McMurdo Sound*



PLAN AND SECTION OF THE S.Y. AURORA

