

SHACKLETON

Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton CVO OBE FRGS FRSGS (15 February 1874 – 5 January 1922) was an Anglo-Irish Antarctic explorer who led three British expeditions.

Born in Kilkea, County Kildare, Ireland, Shackleton and his Anglo-Irish family moved to Sydenham in suburban south London when he was ten. Shackleton's first experience of the polar regions was as third officer on Captain Robert Falcon Scott's Discovery expedition of 1901–1904, from which he was sent home early on health grounds, after he and his companions Scott and Edward Adrian Wilson set a new southern record by marching to latitude 82°S.

During the Nimrod expedition of 1907–1909, he and three companions established a new record Farthest South latitude at 88°S, only 97 Geographical miles (112 statute miles or 180 kilometres) from the South Pole, the largest advance to the pole in exploration history. Also, members of his team climbed Mount Erebus, the most active Antarctic volcano. For these achievements, Shackleton was knighted by King Edward VII on his return home.

After the race to the South Pole ended in December 1911, with Roald Amundsen's conquest, Shackleton turned his attention to the crossing of Antarctica from sea to sea, via the pole. To this end, he made preparations for what became the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1914–1917. Disaster struck this expedition when its ship, *Endurance*, became trapped in pack ice and was slowly crushed before the shore parties could be landed. The crew escaped by camping on the sea ice until it disintegrated, then by launching the lifeboats to reach Elephant Island and ultimately South Georgia Island, a stormy ocean voyage of 720 nautical miles (1,330 km; 830 miles) and Shackleton's most famous exploit. In 1921, he returned to the Antarctic with the Shackleton–Rowett Expedition, but died of a heart attack while his ship was moored in South Georgia. At his wife's request, he was buried there.

Away from his expeditions, Shackleton's life was generally restless and unfulfilled. In his search for rapid pathways to wealth and security, he launched business ventures which failed to prosper, and he died heavily in debt. Upon his death, he was lauded in the press but was thereafter largely forgotten, while the heroic reputation of his rival Scott was sustained for many decades. Later in the 20th century, Shackleton was "rediscovered", and became a role model for leadership in extreme circumstances.

In his 1956 address to the British Science Association, Sir Raymond Priestley, one of his contemporaries, said "Scott for scientific method, Amundsen for speed and efficiency but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton", paraphrasing what Apsley Cherry-Garrard had written in a preface to his 1922 memoir *The Worst Journey in the World*. In 2002, Shackleton was voted eleventh in a BBC poll of the 100 Greatest Britons.

Childhood

Blue plaque marking the home of Ernest Shackleton at 12 Westwood Hill, Sydenham, London Borough of Lewisham

His father, Henry Shackleton, tried to enter the British Army, but his poor health prevented him from doing so. He became a farmer instead, settling in Kilkea. The Shackleton family are of English origin, specifically from Yorkshire. Abraham Shackleton, an English Quaker, moved to Ireland in 1726 and started a school at Ballitore, County Kildare. Shackleton's mother, Henrietta Letitia Sophia Gavan, was descended from the Fitzmaurice family. Ernest was the second of their ten children and the first of two sons; the second, Frank, achieved notoriety as a suspect, later exonerated, in the 1907 theft of the so-called Irish Crown Jewels, which have never been recovered.



In 1880, when Ernest was six, Henry Shackleton gave up his life as a landowner to study medicine at Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), moving his family to the city. Four years later, the family moved again, from Ireland to Sydenham in suburban London. Partly this was in search of better professional prospects for the newly qualified doctor, but another factor may have been unease about their Anglo-Irish ancestry, following the assassination by Irish nationalists of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the British Chief Secretary for Ireland, in 1882. However, Shackleton took lifelong pride in his Irish roots, and frequently declared, "I am an Irishman".

Education

From early childhood, Shackleton was a voracious reader, a pursuit which sparked a passion for adventure. He was schooled by a governess until the age of eleven, when he began at Fir Lodge Preparatory School in West Hill, Dulwich, in southeast London. At the age of thirteen, he entered Dulwich College. The young Shackleton did not particularly distinguish himself as a scholar, and was said to be "bored" by his studies.

He was quoted later as saying: "I never learned much geography at school ... Literature, too, consisted in the dissection, the parsing, the analysing of certain passages from our great poets and prose-writers ... teachers should be very careful not to spoil [their pupils'] taste for poetry for all time by making it a task and an imposition." In his final term at the school he was still able to achieve fifth place in his class of thirty-one.

Merchant Navy officer



Shackleton in 1901, at the age of 27

Shackleton's restlessness at school was such that he was allowed to leave at 16 and go to sea. The options available were a Royal Navy cadetship at *Britannia*, which Shackleton could not afford; the mercantile marine cadet ships *Worcester* and *Conway*; or an apprenticeship "before the mast" on a sailing vessel. The third option was chosen. His father was able to secure him a berth with the North Western Shipping Company, aboard the square-rigged sailing ship *Hoghton Tower*.

During the following four years at sea, Shackleton learned his trade, visiting the far corners of the earth and forming acquaintances with a variety of people from many walks of life, learning to be at home with all kinds of men. In August 1894, he passed his examination for second mate and accepted a post as third officer on a tramp steamer of the Welsh Shire

Line. Two years later, he had obtained his first mate's ticket, and in 1898, he was certified as a master mariner, qualifying him to command a British ship anywhere in the world. In 1898, Shackleton joined Union-Castle Line, the regular mail and passenger carrier between Southampton and Cape Town.

He was, as a shipmate recorded, "a departure from our usual type of young officer", content with his own company though not aloof, "spouting lines from Keats [and] Browning", a mixture of sensitivity and aggression but, withal, sympathetic. Following the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, Shackleton transferred to the troopship *Tintagel Castle* where, in March 1900, he met an army lieutenant, Cedric Longstaff, whose father Llewellyn W. Longstaff was the main financial backer of the National Antarctic Expedition then being organised in London.

Shackleton used his acquaintance with the son to obtain an interview with Longstaff senior, with a view to obtaining a place on the expedition. Longstaff, impressed by Shackleton's keenness, recommended him to Sir Clements Markham, the expedition's overlord, making it clear that he wanted Shackleton accepted. On 17 February 1901, his appointment as third officer to the expedition's ship *Discovery* was confirmed; on 4 June he was commissioned into the Royal Navy, with the rank of sub-lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve. Although officially on leave from Union-Castle, this was in fact the end of Shackleton's Merchant Navy service.

Discovery expedition 1901-1903

The British National Antarctic Expedition, known as the *Discovery* expedition after the ship *Discovery*, was the brainchild of Sir Clements Markham, president of the Royal Geographical Society, and had been many years in preparation. It was led by Robert Falcon Scott, a Royal Navy torpedo lieutenant lately promoted commander, and had objectives that included scientific and geographical discovery.

Although *Discovery* was not a Royal Navy unit, Scott required the crew, officers and scientific staff to submit to the conditions of the Naval Discipline Act, and the ship and expedition were run on Royal Navy lines. Shackleton accepted this, even though his own background and instincts favoured a different, more informal style of leadership. Shackleton's particular duties were listed as: "In charge of seawater analysis. Ward-room caterer. In charge of holds, stores and provisions. He also arranges the entertainments."

Discovery departed London on 31 July 1901, arriving at the Antarctic coast, via Cape Town and New Zealand, on 8 January 1902. After landing, Shackleton took part in an experimental balloon flight on 4 February.

He also participated, with the scientists Edward Adrian Wilson and Hartley Ferrar, in the first sledging trip from the expedition's winter quarters in McMurdo Sound, a journey which established a safe route on to the Great Ice Barrier. During the Antarctic winter of 1902, in the confines of the iced-in *Discovery*, Shackleton edited the expedition's magazine *The South Polar Times*.

According to steward Clarence Hare, he was "the most popular of the officers among the crew, being a good mixer", though claims that this represented an unofficial rival leadership to Scott's are unsupported. Scott chose Shackleton to accompany Wilson and himself on the expedition's southern journey, a march southwards to achieve the highest possible latitude in the direction of the South Pole. This march was not a serious attempt on the Pole, although the attainment of a high latitude was of great importance to Scott, and the inclusion of Shackleton indicated a high degree of personal trust.

The party set out on 2 November 1902. The march was, Scott wrote later, "a combination of success and failure". A record Farthest South latitude of 82° 17' was reached, beating the previous record established in 1900 by Carsten Borchgrevink. The journey was marred by the poor performance of the dogs, whose food had become tainted, and who rapidly fell sick. All 22 dogs died during the march. The three men all suffered at times from snow blindness, frostbite and, ultimately, scurvy. On the return journey, Shackleton had by his own admission "broken down" and could no longer carry out his share of the work.

Robert Falcon Scott



He later denied Scott's claim in *The Voyage of the Discovery*, that he had been carried on the sledge. He was in a seriously weakened condition; Wilson's diary entry for 14 January reads: "Shackleton has been anything but up to the mark, and today he is decidedly worse, very short winded and coughing constantly, with more serious symptoms that need not be detailed here but which are of no small consequence one hundred and sixty miles from the ship".

On 4 February 1903, the party finally reached the ship. After a medical examination (which proved inconclusive), Scott decided to send Shackleton home on the relief ship *Morning*, which had arrived in McMurdo Sound in January 1903. Scott wrote: "He ought not to risk further hardship in his present state of health." There is conjecture that Scott's motive for removing him was resentment of Shackleton's popularity, and that ill-health was used as an excuse to get rid of him.

Years after the death of Scott, Wilson and Shackleton, Albert Armitage, the expedition's second-in-command, claimed that there had been a falling-out on the southern journey, and that Scott had told the ship's doctor that "if he does not go back sick he will go back in disgrace." There is no corroboration of Armitage's story. Shackleton and Scott stayed on friendly terms, at least until the publication of Scott's account of the southern journey in *The Voyage of the Discovery*. Although in public they remained mutually respectful and cordial, according to biographer Roland Huntford, Shackleton's attitude to Scott turned to "smouldering scorn and dislike"; salvage of wounded pride required "a return to the Antarctic and an attempt to outdo Scott"

Shore work 1903-1907.

After a period of convalescence in New Zealand, Shackleton returned to England via San Francisco and New York. As the first significant person to return from the Antarctic, he found that he was in demand; in particular, the Admiralty wished to consult him about its further proposals for the rescue of *Discovery*. With Sir Clements Markham's blessing, he accepted a temporary post assisting the outfitting of the *Terra Nova* for the second *Discovery* relief operation, but turned down the offer to sail with her as chief officer. He also assisted in the equipping of the Argentine *Uruguay*, which was being fitted out for the relief of the stranded Swedish Antarctic Expedition under Otto Nordenskjöld.

In search of more permanent employment, Shackleton applied for a regular commission in the Royal Navy, via the back-door route of the Supplementary List, but despite the sponsorship of Markham and William Huggins, the president of the Royal Society, he was not successful. Instead, he became a journalist, working for the *Royal Magazine*, but he found this unsatisfactory.^[38] He was then offered, and accepted, the secretaryship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS), a post which he took up on 11 January 1904. On 9 April 1904, he married Emily Dorman, with whom he had three children: Raymond, Cecily, and Edward, himself an explorer and later a politician.

Shackleton's wife Emily Dorman



In 1905, Shackleton became a shareholder in a speculative company that aimed to make a fortune transporting Russian troops home from the Far East. Despite his assurances to Emily that "we are practically sure of the contract", nothing came of this scheme. He also ventured into politics, unsuccessfully standing in the 1906 General Election as the Liberal Unionist Party's candidate for Dundee constituency in opposition to Irish Home Rule. In the meantime he had taken a job with wealthy Clydeside industrialist William Beardmore (later Lord Invernairn), with a roving commission which involved interviewing prospective clients and entertaining Beardmore's business friends. Shackleton by this time was making no secret of his ambition to return to Antarctica at the head of his own expedition.

Beardmore was sufficiently impressed with Shackleton to offer financial support, but other donations proved hard to come by. Nevertheless, in February 1907, Shackleton presented to the Royal Geographical Society his plans for an Antarctic expedition, the details of which, under the name British Antarctic Expedition, were published in the Royal Geographical Society's newsletter, *Geographical Journal*. The aim was the conquest of both the geographical South Pole and the South Magnetic Pole. Shackleton then worked hard to persuade others of his wealthy friends and acquaintances to contribute, including Sir Philip Lee Brocklehurst, who subscribed £2,000 (approximately equivalent to £212,000 in 2019) to secure a place on the expedition; author Campbell Mackellar; and Guinness baron Lord Iveagh, whose contribution was secured less than two weeks before the departure of the expedition ship *Nimrod*. On 4 August 1907, Shackleton was appointed a Member of the Royal Victorian Order, 4th Class (MVO; the present-day grade of lieutenant).

Nimrod expedition 1907-1909.

South Pole party: Frank Wild, Shackleton, Eric Marshall and Jameson Adams.

On 1 January 1908, the *Nimrod* set off on the British Antarctic Expedition from Lyttelton Harbour, New Zealand. Shackleton's original plans had envisaged using the old *Discovery* base in McMurdo Sound to launch his attempts on the South Pole and South Magnetic Pole. Before leaving England, he had been pressured to give an undertaking to Scott that he would not base himself in the McMurdo area, which Scott was claiming as his own field of work. Shackleton reluctantly agreed to look for winter quarters at either the Barrier Inlet—which *Discovery* had briefly visited in 1902—or King Edward VII Land.



To conserve coal, the ship was towed 1,650 miles (2,655 km) by the steamer *Koonya* to the Antarctic ice, after Shackleton had persuaded the New Zealand government and the Union Steamship Company to share the cost. In accordance with Shackleton's promise to Scott, the ship headed for the eastern sector of the Great Ice Barrier, arriving there on 21 January 1908. They found that the Barrier Inlet had expanded to form a large bay, in which were hundreds of whales, which led to the immediate christening of the area as the Bay of Whales.

It was noted that ice conditions were unstable, precluding the establishment of a safe base there. An extended search for an anchorage at King Edward VII Land proved equally fruitless, so Shackleton was forced to break his undertaking to Scott and set sail for McMurdo Sound, a decision which, according to second officer Arthur Harbord, was "dictated by common sense" in view of the difficulties of ice pressure, coal shortage and the lack of any nearer known base. *Nimrod* arrived at McMurdo Sound on 29 January, but was stopped by ice 16 miles (26 km) north of *Discovery*'s old base at Hut Point. After considerable weather delays, Shackleton's base was eventually established at Cape Royds, about 24 miles (39 km) north of Hut Point. The party was in high spirits, despite the difficult conditions; Shackleton's ability to communicate with each man kept the party happy and focused.

The "Great Southern Journey", as Frank Wild called it, began on 29 October 1908. On 9 January 1909, Shackleton and three companions—Wild, Eric Marshall and Jameson Adams—reached a new Farthest South latitude of 88° 23' S, a point only 112 miles (180 km) from the Pole.

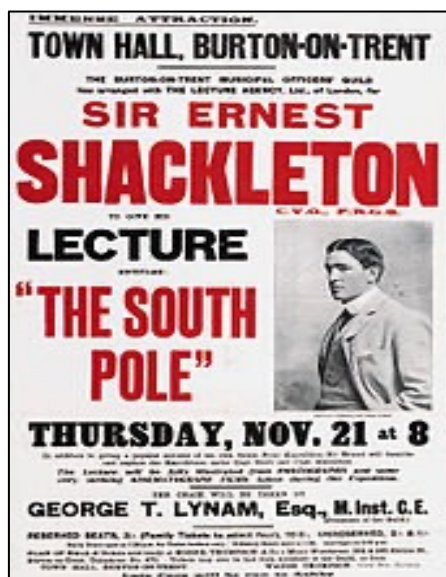
En route the South Pole party discovered the Beardmore Glacier—named after Shackleton's patron—and became the first persons to see and travel on the South Polar Plateau. Their return journey to McMurdo Sound was a race

against starvation, on half-rations for much of the way. At one point, Shackleton gave his one biscuit allotted for the day to the ailing Frank Wild, who wrote in his diary: "All the money that was ever minted would not have bought that biscuit and the remembrance of that sacrifice will never leave me". They arrived at Hut Point just in time to catch the ship.

The expedition's other main accomplishments included the first ascent of Mount Erebus, and the discovery of the approximate location of the South Magnetic Pole, reached on 16 January 1909, by Edgeworth David, Douglas Mawson, and Alistair Mackay. Shackleton returned to the United Kingdom as a hero, and soon afterwards published his expedition account, *Heart of the Antarctic*. Emily Shackleton later recorded: "The only comment he made to me about not reaching the Pole was 'a live donkey is better than a dead lion, isn't it?' and I said 'Yes darling, as far as I am concerned'".

In 1910, Shackleton made a series of three recordings describing the expedition using an Edison phonograph. Several mostly intact cases of whisky and brandy left behind in 1909 were recovered in 2010, for analysis by a distilling company. A revival of the vintage—and since lost—formula for the particular brands found has been offered for sale with a portion of the proceeds to benefit the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust which discovered the lost spirits.

Between expeditions 1909-1914 - Public hero



Shackleton embarked on an extensive lecture tour in which he talked not only about his own polar journeys but also those of Scott and Roald Amundsen

On Shackleton's return home, public honours were quickly forthcoming. King Edward VII received him on 10 July and raised him to a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order; in the King's Birthday Honours list in November, he was made a knight, becoming Sir Ernest Shackleton. He was honoured by the Royal Geographical Society, who awarded him a gold medal; a proposal that the medal be smaller than that earlier awarded to Captain Scott was not acted on. All the members of the Nimrod Expedition shore party received silver Polar Medals on 23 November, with Shackleton receiving a clasp to his earlier medal. Shackleton was also appointed a Younger Brother of Trinity House, a significant honour for British mariners.

Besides the official honours, Shackleton's Antarctic feats were greeted in Britain with great enthusiasm. Proposing a toast to the explorer at a lunch given in Shackleton's honour by the Royal Societies Club, Lord Halsbury, a

former Lord Chancellor, said: "When one remembers what he had gone through, one does not believe in the supposed degeneration of the British race. One does not believe that we have lost all sense of admiration for courage [and] endurance". The heroism was also claimed by Ireland: the *Dublin Evening Telegraph's* headline read "South Pole Almost Reached By An Irishman", while the *Dublin Express* spoke of the "qualities that were his heritage as an Irishman".

Shackleton's fellow-explorers expressed their admiration; Roald Amundsen wrote, in a letter to RGS Secretary John Scott Keltie, that "the English nation has by this deed of Shackleton's won a victory that can never be surpassed". Fridtjof Nansen sent an effusive private letter to Emily Shackleton, praising the "unique expedition which has been such a complete success in every respect". The reality was that the expedition had left Shackleton deeply in debt, unable to meet the financial guarantees he had given to backers. Despite his efforts, it required government action, in the form of a grant of £20,000 (2008: £1.5 million) to clear the most pressing obligations. It is likely that many debts were not pressed and were written off.

Biding time

In the period immediately after his return, Shackleton engaged in a strenuous schedule of public appearances, lectures and social engagements. He then sought to cash in on his celebrity by making a fortune in the business world. Among the ventures which he hoped to promote were a tobacco company, a scheme for selling to collectors postage stamps overprinted "King Edward VII Land"—based on Shackleton's appointment as Antarctic postmaster by the New Zealand authorities—and the development of a Hungarian mining concession he had acquired near the city of Nagybanja, now part of Romania.

None of these enterprises prospered, and his main source of income was his earnings from lecture tours. He still harboured thoughts of returning south, even though in September 1910, having recently moved with his family

to Sheringham in Norfolk, he wrote to Emily: "I am never again going South and I have thought it all out and my place is at home now". He had been in discussions with Douglas Mawson about a scientific expedition to the Antarctic coast between Cape Adare and Gaussberg, and had written to the RGS about this in February 1910.

Any future resumption by Shackleton of the quest for the South Pole depended on the results of Scott's Terra Nova Expedition, which left from Cardiff in July 1910. By early 1912, the world was aware that the pole had been conquered, by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen. The fate of Scott's expedition was not then known. Shackleton's mind turned to a project that had been announced, and then abandoned, by the Scottish explorer William Speirs Bruce, for a continental crossing, from a landing in the Weddell Sea, via the South Pole to McMurdo Sound. Bruce, who had failed to acquire financial backing, was happy that Shackleton should adopt his plans, which were similar to those being followed by the German explorer Wilhelm Filchner. Filchner had left Bremerhaven in May 1911; in December 1912, the news arrived from South Georgia that his expedition had failed. The transcontinental journey, in Shackleton's words, was the "one great object of Antarctic journeyings" remaining, now open to him.

Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917.



Voyage of the [Endurance](#)

Drift of the *Endurance* in pack ice

Sea ice drift after the *Endurance* sinks

Voyage of the *James Caird*

Planned trans-Antarctic route

Voyage of the [Aurora](#) to Antarctica

Retreat of the *Aurora*

Supply depot route

Shackleton published details of his new expedition, grandly titled the "Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition", early in 1914. There is a legend that says Shackleton's newspaper article was written a certain way so that he could better narrow down and select candidates for his expedition.

Two ships would be employed; *Endurance* would carry the main party into the Weddell Sea, aiming for Vahsel Bay from where a team of six, led by Shackleton, would begin the crossing of the continent. Meanwhile, a second ship, the *Aurora*, would take a supporting party

under Captain Aeneas Mackintosh to McMurdo Sound on the opposite side of the continent. This party would then lay supply depots across the Great Ice Barrier as far as the Beardmore Glacier; these depots would hold the food and fuel that would enable Shackleton's party to complete their journey of 1,800 miles (2,900 km) across the continent.

Shackleton used his considerable fund-raising skills, and the expedition was financed largely by private donations, although the British government gave £10,000 (about £900,000 in 2019 terms). Scottish jute magnate Sir James Caird gave £24,000, Midlands industrialist Frank Dudley Docker gave £10,000, and tobacco heiress Janet Stancomb-Wills gave an undisclosed but reportedly "generous" sum. Public interest in the expedition was considerable; Shackleton received more than 5,000 applications to join it.

His interviewing and selection methods sometimes seemed eccentric; believing that character and temperament were as important as technical ability, he asked unconventional questions. Thus physicist Reginald James was asked if he could sing; others were accepted on sight because Shackleton liked the look of them, or after the briefest of interrogations. Shackleton also loosened some traditional hierarchies to promote camaraderie, such as distributing the ship's chores equally among officers, scientists, and seamen. He also socialized with his crew members every evening after dinner, leading sing-alongs, jokes, and games. He ultimately selected a crew of 56, twenty-eight on each ship.

Despite the outbreak of the First World War on 3 August 1914, *Endurance* was directed by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, to "proceed", and left British waters on 8 August. Shackleton delayed his own departure until 27 September, meeting the ship in Buenos Aires.

Crew

While Shackleton led the expedition, Captain F. Worsley commanded the *Endurance* and Lieutenant J. Stenhouse the *Aurora*. On the *Endurance*, the second in command was the experienced explorer Frank Wild. The meteorologist was Captain L. Hussey, also an able banjo player. McIlroy was head of the scientific staff, which included Wordie.

Alexander Macklin was one of two surgeons and also in charge of keeping the 70 dogs healthy. Tom Crean was in more immediate charge as head dog-handler. Other crew included James, Hussey, Greenstreet, a carpenter Harry McNish, and a biologist named Clark. Of later independent fame was the photographer Frank Hurley, known on this mission for his perilous shots.

There was a (male) cat named Mrs Chippy that belonged to the carpenter Harry McNish. Mrs Chippy was shot when the *Endurance* sank, due to the belief that he would not have survived the ordeal that followed.

Loss of *Endurance*

Endurance departed from South Georgia for the Weddell Sea on 5 December, heading for Vahsel Bay. As the ship moved southward navigating in ice, first year ice was encountered, which slowed progress. Deep in the Weddell Sea, conditions gradually grew worse until, on 19 January 1915, *Endurance* became frozen fast in an ice floe.

On 24 February, realising that she would be trapped until the following spring, Shackleton ordered the abandonment of ship's routine and her conversion to a winter station. She drifted slowly northward with the ice through the following months. When spring arrived in September, the breaking of the ice and its later movements put extreme pressures on the ship's hull.

Shackleton after the loss of *Endurance*

Until this point, Shackleton had hoped that the ship, when released from the ice, could work her way back towards Vahsel Bay. On 24 October, water began pouring in. After a few days, with the position at 69° 5' S, 51° 30' W, Shackleton gave the order to abandon ship, saying, "She's going down!"; and men, provisions and equipment were transferred to camps on the ice. On 21 November 1915, the wreck finally slipped beneath the surface.



For almost two months, Shackleton and his party camped on a large, flat floe, hoping that it would drift towards Paulet Island, approximately 250 miles (402 km) away, where it was known that stores were cached. After failed attempts to march across the ice to this island, Shackleton decided to set up another more permanent camp (Patience Camp) on another floe, and trust to the drift of the ice to take them towards a safe landing. By 17 March, their ice camp was within 60 miles (97 km) of Paulet Island; however, separated by impassable ice, they were unable to reach it. On 9 April, their ice floe broke into two, and Shackleton ordered the crew into the lifeboats and to head for the nearest land.

After five harrowing days at sea, the exhausted men landed their three lifeboats at Elephant Island, 346 miles (557 km) from where the *Endurance* sank. This was the first time they had stood on solid ground for 497 days. Shackleton's concern for his men was such that he gave his mittens to photographer Frank Hurley, who had lost his during the boat journey. Shackleton suffered frostbitten fingers as a result. On 9 March 2022, it was announced that the *Endurance* had been located 4 miles (6.4 km) from the location where it was lost, 10,000 feet (3,000 m) below the surface.

Open-boat journey



Launching the *James Caird* from the shore of Elephant Island, 24 April 1916. Elephant Island was an inhospitable place, far from any shipping routes; rescue by means of chance discovery was very unlikely.

Consequently, Shackleton decided to risk an open-boat journey to the 720-nautical-mile-distant South Georgia whaling stations, where he knew help was available.

The strongest of the tiny 20-foot (6.1 m) lifeboats, christened *James Caird* after the expedition's chief sponsor, was chosen for the trip.

Ship's carpenter Harry McNish made various improvements, including raising the sides, strengthening the keel, building a makeshift deck of wood and canvas, and sealing the work with oil paint and seal blood.

Shackleton chose five companions for the journey: Frank Worsley, *Endurance's* captain, who would be responsible for navigation; Tom Crean, who had "begged to go"; two strong sailors in John Vincent and Timothy McCarthy, and finally the carpenter McNish. Shackleton had clashed with McNish during the time when the party was stranded on the ice, but, while he did not forgive the carpenter's earlier insubordination, Shackleton recognised his value for this particular job. Not only did Shackleton recognize their value for the job but also because he knew the potential risk they were to morale. This allowed for Shackleton to remain in control of the morale of his crew members. The attitudes of his men were a point of emphasis in leading his men back to safety.

Shackleton refused to pack supplies for more than four weeks, knowing that if they did not reach South Georgia within that time, the boat and its crew would be lost. The *James Caird* was launched on 24 April 1916; during the next fifteen days, it sailed through the waters of the southern ocean, at the mercy of the stormy seas, in constant peril of capsizing. On 8 May, thanks to Worsley's navigational skills, the cliffs of South Georgia came into sight, but hurricane-force winds prevented the possibility of landing. The party was forced to ride out the storm offshore, in constant danger of being dashed against the rocks. They later learned that the same hurricane had sunk a 500-ton steamer bound for South Georgia from Buenos Aires.

On the following day, they were able, finally, to land on the unoccupied southern shore. After a period of rest and recuperation, rather than risk putting to sea again to reach the whaling stations on the northern coast, Shackleton decided to attempt a land crossing of the island. Although it is likely that Norwegian whalers had previously crossed at other points on ski, no one had attempted this particular route before. For their journey, the survivors were only equipped with boots they had pushed screws into to act as climbing boots, a carpenter's adze, and 50 feet of rope. Leaving McNish, Vincent and McCarthy at the landing point on South Georgia, Shackleton travelled 32 miles (51 km with Worsley and Crean over extremely dangerous mountainous terrain for 36 hours to reach the whaling station at Stromness on 20 May.

The next successful crossing of South Georgia was in October 1955, by the British explorer Duncan Carse, who travelled much of the same route as Shackleton's party. In tribute to their achievement, he wrote: "I do not know how they did it, except that they had to—three men of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration with 50 feet of rope between them—and a carpenter's adze".

Rescue

"All Safe, All Well", allegedly depicting Shackleton's return to Elephant Island, August 1916. A photograph of the departure of the *James Caird* in April was doctored by photographer Frank Hurley to create this image.

Shackleton immediately sent a boat to pick up the three men from the other side of South Georgia while he set to work to organise the rescue of the Elephant Island men. His first three attempts were foiled by sea ice, which blocked the approaches to the island. He appealed to the Chilean government, which offered the use of the *Yelcho*, a small seagoing tug from its navy. *Yelcho*, commanded by Captain Luis Pardo, and the British whaler *Southern Sky* reached Elephant Island on 30 August 1916, at which point the men had been isolated there for four and a half months, and Shackleton quickly evacuated all 22 men. The *Yelcho* took the crew first to Punta Arenas and after some days to Valparaiso in Chile where crowds warmly welcomed them back to civilisation.



There remained the men of the Ross Sea Party, who were stranded at Cape Evans in McMurdo Sound, after *Aurora* had been blown from its anchorage and driven out to sea, unable to return. The ship, after a drift of many months, had returned to New Zealand. Shackleton travelled there to join *Aurora*, and sailed with her to the rescue of the Ross Sea party. This group, despite many hardships, had carried out its depot-laying mission to the full, but three lives had been lost, including that of its commander, Aeneas Mackintosh.

First World War.

When Shackleton returned to England in May 1917, Europe was in the midst of the First World War. Suffering from a heart condition, made worse by the fatigue of his arduous journeys, and too old to be conscripted, he nevertheless volunteered for the army. Repeatedly requesting posting to the front in France, he was by now drinking heavily. In October 1917, he was sent to Buenos Aires to boost British propaganda in South America. Unqualified as a diplomat, he was unsuccessful in persuading Argentina and Chile to enter the war on the Allied side. He returned home in April 1918.

Shackleton was then briefly involved in a mission to Spitzbergen to establish a British presence there under guise of a mining operation. On the way he was taken ill in Tromsø, possibly with a heart attack. Appointment to a military expedition to Murmansk obliged him to return home again, before departing for northern Russia.

Russian Civil War.

Shackleton was specially appointed a temporary major on 22 July 1918. From October 1918, he served with the North Russia Expeditionary Force in the Russian Civil War under the command of Major-General Edmund Ironside, with the role of advising on the equipment and training of British forces in arctic conditions.

For his "valuable services rendered in connection with Military Operations in North Russia" Shackleton was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 1919 King's Birthday Honours, and was also mentioned in despatches by General Ironside. Shackleton returned to England in early March 1919, full of plans for the economic development of Northern Russia. In the midst of seeking capital, his plans foundered when Northern Russia fell to Bolshevik control. He was finally discharged from the army in October 1919, retaining his rank of major.

Final expedition and his death.

Shackleton returned to the lecture circuit and published his own account of the *Endurance* expedition, *South*, in December 1919. In 1920, tired of the lecture circuit, Shackleton began to consider the possibility of a last expedition. He thought seriously of going to the Beaufort Sea area of the Arctic, a largely unexplored region, and raised some interest in this idea from the Canadian government. With funds supplied by former schoolfriend John Quiller Rowett, he acquired a 125-ton Norwegian sealer, named *Foca I*, which he renamed *Quest*. The plan changed; the destination became the Antarctic, and the project was defined by Shackleton as an "oceanographic and sub-antarctic expedition". The goals of the venture were imprecise, but a circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent and investigation of some "lost" sub-Antarctic islands, such as Tuanaki, were mentioned as objectives.

Rowett agreed to finance the entire expedition, which became known as the Shackleton–Rowett Expedition. On 16 September 1921, Shackleton recorded a farewell address on a sound-on-film system created by Harry Grindell Matthews, who claimed it was the first "talking picture" ever. The expedition left England on 24 September 1921.

Although some of his former crew members had not received all their pay from the *Endurance* expedition, many of them signed on with their former "Boss". When the party arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Shackleton suffered a suspected heart attack. He refused a proper medical examination, so *Quest* continued south, and on 4 January 1922, arrived at South Georgia.

Shackleton's grave at Grytviken



In the early hours of the next morning, Shackleton summoned the expedition's physician, Alexander Macklin, to his cabin, complaining of back pains and other discomfort. According to Macklin's own account, Macklin told him he had been overdoing things and should try to "lead a more regular life", to which Shackleton answered: "You are always wanting me to give up things, what is it I ought to give up?" "Chiefly alcohol, Boss," replied Macklin. A few moments later, at 2:50 a.m. on 5 January 1922, Shackleton suffered a fatal heart attack.

Macklin, who conducted the post-mortem, concluded that the cause of death was atheroma of the coronary arteries exacerbated by "overstrain during a period of debility". Leonard Hussey, a veteran of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic expedition, offered to accompany the body back to Britain; while he was in Montevideo en route to England, a message was received from Emily Shackleton asking that her husband be buried in South Georgia. Hussey returned to South Georgia with the

body on the steamer *Woodville*.

On 5 March 1922, Shackleton was buried in the Grytviken cemetery, South Georgia, after a short service in the Lutheran church, with Edward Binnie officiating. Macklin wrote in his diary: "I think this is as 'the Boss' would

have had it himself, standing lonely in an island far from civilisation, surrounded by stormy tempestuous seas, & in the vicinity of one of his greatest exploits."

Study of diaries kept by Eric Marshall, medical officer to the 1907–09 expedition, suggests that Shackleton suffered from an atrial septal defect ("hole in the heart"), a congenital heart defect, which may have been a cause of his health problems.

Shackleton's will was proven in London on 12 May 1922. Dying heavily in debt, Shackleton's small estate consisted of personal effects to the value of £556 2s. 2d. (equivalent to £31,046 in 2020) which he bequeathed to his wife. Lady Shackleton survived her husband by 14 years, dying in 1936.

On 27 November 2011, the ashes of Frank Wild were interred on the right-hand side of Shackleton's gravesite in Grytviken. The inscription on the rough-hewn granite block set to mark the spot reads: "Frank Wild 1873–1939, Shackleton's right-hand man."

Legacy.

Shackleton statue by C.S. Jagger outside the Royal Geographical Society

Before the return of Shackleton's body to South Georgia, there was a memorial service held for him with full military honours at Holy Trinity Church, Montevideo, and on 2 March a service was held at St Paul's Cathedral, London, at which the King and other members of the royal family were represented. Within a year the first biography, *The Life of Sir Ernest Shackleton*, by Hugh Robert Mill, was published. This book, as well as being a tribute to the explorer, was a practical effort to assist his family; Shackleton died some £40,000 in debt (equivalent to £2,233,083 in 2020). A further initiative was the establishment of a Shackleton Memorial Fund, which was used to assist the education of his children and the support of his mother.

During the ensuing decades Shackleton's status as a polar hero was generally outshone by that of Captain Scott, whose polar party had by 1925 been commemorated on more than 30 monuments in Britain alone, including stained glass windows, statues, busts and memorial tablets. A statue of Shackleton designed by Charles Sargeant Jagger was unveiled at the Royal Geographical Society's Kensington headquarters in 1932, but public memorials to Shackleton were relatively few. The printed word saw much more attention given to Scott—a forty-page booklet on Shackleton, published in 1943 by OUP as part of a "Great Exploits" series, is described by cultural historian Stephanie Barczewski as "a lone example of a popular literary treatment of Shackleton in a sea of similar treatments of Scott". This disparity continued into the 1950s.

Later

In 1959, Alfred Lansing's *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* was published. This was the first of a number of books about Shackleton that began to appear, showing him in a highly positive light. At the same time, attitudes towards Scott were gradually changing as a more critical note was sounded in the literature, culminating in Roland Huntford's 1979 treatment of him in his dual biography *Scott and Amundsen*, described by Barczewski as a "devastating attack". This negative picture of Scott became accepted as the popular truth as the kind of heroism that Scott represented fell victim to the cultural shifts of the late twentieth century. Within a few years, he was thoroughly overtaken in public esteem by Shackleton, whose popularity surged while that of his erstwhile rival declined. In 2002, in a BBC poll conducted to determine the "100 Greatest Britons", Shackleton was ranked 11th while Scott was down in 54th place.



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