CENTENARY SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING
FOR THE COURAGE AND ENDURANCE OF
SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON CVO
AND HIS MEN
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WESTMINSTER ABBEY

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HRH The Princess Royal at Sir Ernest Shackleton’s grave, South Georgia.
Sir Ernest Shackleton had hoped that his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914 – 17) would achieve glory by crossing the Antarctic continent but when Endurance was destroyed in the sea ice he set a new goal, to bring his men safely home. Today marks the centenary of Sir Ernest, Frank Worsley and Tom Crean crossing South Georgia’s uncharted mountains after the epic voyage of the James Caird. Exhausted and unrecognisable from their ordeal they reached the whaling station at Stromness and raised the alarm about their marooned colleagues on Elephant Island. Dangerous sea ice conditions thwarted three brave attempts to reach the men but on 30 August 1916, Piloto Luis Pardo of the Chilean Navy sailed Yelcho south, the sea ice abated, and all the men were rescued.

On the other side of Antarctica, the Ross Sea Party were confronted by disaster when the Aurora was swept away by a storm, leaving the shore party with the supplies for Shackleton’s depots – essential for his planned crossing – but most of their personal equipment still aboard the ship. Despite extreme hardship, they laid all the depots but sadly the Rev. Arnold Spencer-Smith, Lt. Aeneas Mackintosh RNR and Victor Hayward lost their lives.

Antarctica in the 21st century is still majestic and dangerous and through international cooperation science, art and heritage conservation is undertaken in this beautiful but challenging region. The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust, the Scott Polar Research Institute, the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust, the South Georgia Heritage Trust and the James Caird Society ensure that the historical and cultural legacy of Shackleton and his men will endure in Antarctica and beyond.

Touring internationally are major exhibitions from the Scott Polar Research Institute’s Polar Museum and the Royal Geographical Society. I hope that these and other events inform and inspire current and future generations to learn more about Antarctica and to find endurance, courage and discovery in their own lives.
The Scott Polar Research Institute, founded in 1920, is a centre of excellence for the study of the Antarctic and Arctic, undertaking research in the natural and social sciences – topics range from reconstructing the growth and decay of past ice sheets to the cultures of northern indigenous peoples. The Institute also houses the world’s premier polar library, including the Shackleton Memorial Library, and Britain’s only dedicated Polar Museum. A replica of the James Caird reminds staff and visitors of the endurance and achievements of the early polar explorers.

For almost a century, the Institute, as part of the University of Cambridge, has been an important source of information and expertise, providing a strong core of intellectual activity focused on the Arctic and Antarctic and their adjacent seas. The Institute provides authoritative information on a variety of polar topics including issues of climate change and the management of natural resources. Its broad audience ranges from schools, the general public and governments, to students and scholars at Cambridge and researchers from other higher education institutions worldwide.

The Institute is a hub for the international polar community and attracts scholars and students from around the world. Our faculty members are fellows of Cambridge colleges and teach in undergraduate courses, also sitting on many national and international scientific and advisory committees concerning the Arctic and Antarctic. About thirty science and social-science doctoral and masters students are based in the Institute, the latter taking our highly regarded Polar Studies course. Staff and research students are regularly involved in field work: this year, research will take place in Greenland, Svalbard, Siberia and Antarctica.

The Polar Museum engages and informs its many visitors about polar history and science, emphasising the contemporary significance of the poles in the context of global environmental change. Displays utilise the Institute’s historic collections and current scientific...
research. The museum was recently transformed with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and many generous private donations, and receives over 50,000 visitors a year.

The Institute’s Archive and Picture Library are renowned internationally as a research resource for polar history. The collections of the Institute include manuscripts, photographs and objects of remarkable historical, cultural and scientific importance, charting the advance of geographical and scientific knowledge about the Arctic and Antarctic. Shackleton’s original diaries from each of his four Antarctic expeditions are examples of the richness of the collections, which have formed the basis for decades of scholarship.

The Institute’s scientific research on ice, snow and environmental change, is also an important legacy of the early scientific endeavours of those on, for example, the expeditions of Shackleton and Scott and their ground-breaking investigations of Antarctica. To learn more about our work, visit www.spri.cam.ac.uk
The United Kingdom has played a pivotal role in the history of human endeavour in Antarctica – from Cook’s circumnavigation in 1773 through to the heroic era of Shackleton and Scott and on into the period of science and exploration led by teams of British Antarctic scientists. The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust exists to ensure that the legacy of the pioneers, including the huts and artefacts from which they explored this geographically, scientifically and politically important region of our planet, are actively sustained and conserved. Communicating their stories enables us inspire people from all over the world to discover, enjoy and respect our Antarctic history. We care for and manage six historic sites on the Antarctic Peninsula and also work in partnership with other heritage organisations to ensure our distributed national Antarctic collection is well-known, well managed and is made accessible through events and learning programmes so that it may inspire new generations.

The six historically important British bases we look after on the Antarctic Peninsula were built in the decades following the heroic era of Shackleton
and Scott. The significance of these modest and fragile buildings constructed by members of the wartime Operation Tabarin and the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS), should not be underestimated. The scientific work undertaken at these sites, some of which contributed to the remarkable International Geophysical Year of 1957-58, helped to establish Antarctica as a scientific laboratory for the world and to lay the foundation for the international cooperation which governs the continent today. Each of these sites has been designated a Historic Site and Monument under the Antarctic Treaty, which protects them in perpetuity.

Port Lockroy, our most famous site, has been meticulously renovated through a sustainable conservation programme enabling it to continue to withstand the harsh climate. It operates as a living museum as well as a post office run on behalf of the Government of the British Antarctic Territory during the Austral summer, welcoming visitors from visiting tourist vessels each year. We also send a conservation team to maintain and conserve our other historic sites at Damoy, Stonington, Horseshoe, Wordie House and Detaille.

The work we do is funded by the generosity of people who share our passion and are inspired by the tales of human endeavour in Antarctica that we work hard to preserve and share. Visitors to Port Lockroy who buy souvenirs from our gift shop along with donors and the Friends of Antarctica provide our income so we can continue this vital work. To find out more about our work and how you can get involved visit www.ukaht.org or find us on social media.
The United Kingdom has a long and proud Antarctic history dating from the earliest sightings in the 19th century, through the heroic age of Shackleton and Scott and right up to the groundbreaking science conducted by British scientists today. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office’s Polar Regions Department (PRD) leads within Government on all matters relating to Antarctica, and has a dual mission – both as the UK’s representative in the Antarctic Treaty system and as the Government of the British Antarctic Territory.

The UK was the first nation to claim territory in Antarctica, depositing letters patent for the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) in 1908, and there has been a continual British presence on the Antarctic continent since 1943. The BAT is by far the UK’s largest Overseas Territory, and includes the Antarctic Peninsula and stretches to the South Pole. The Territory has its own set of laws and judicial system, coinage, tax system and philatelic system, all administered within the Polar Regions Department. British presence in the territory is provided by the scientists of the British Antarctic Survey and the Royal Navy’s ice patrol ship HMS Protector. The Antarctic Treaty holds territorial claims to the continent in abeyance, and as a result, the UK does not seek to apply BAT laws to non-British nationals.

The UK was instrumental in the formation of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, was the first to ratify the Treaty, and remains one of its leading advocates and most active Parties. The Antarctic Treaty System safeguards Antarctica exclusively for peace and science, provides for its environmental protection, conservation of its wildlife and conserves special sites such as the historic huts of Ernest Shackleton. The UK’s obligations under the Treaty are set out in statute through the Antarctic Acts of 1994 and 2013. These responsibilities include permitting all activity undertaken by British nationals in Antarctica, ensuring all activity is carefully planned, environmental risks are mitigated, and that activities are undertaken safely.

The Antarctic Treaty System involves over fifty nations
The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties meet every year to exchange views and further develop rules to underpin the objectives of the Treaty and its Protocol on Environmental Protection. PRD lead for the UK at these meetings and also represent the UK at the meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, which also occur annually and are intended to ensure that fishing in the Southern Ocean does not impact negatively on the marine life of the Southern Ocean. A UK proposal in 2009, led to the development of the world’s first high seas marine protected area, which is located south of the South Orkney Islands (which are part of the British Antarctic Territory).

You can find out more about the work of the FCO’s Polar Regions Department and the British Antarctic Territory on the www.gov.uk website.
South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) is a United Kingdom Overseas Territory situated 1,450 km south-east of the Falkland Islands. The main island of South Georgia is about 170 km long and between 2 and 40 km wide, more than half of which is permanently ice covered. Mount Paget rises to 2,934 m and is one of the highest points in the United Kingdom and its territories. The South Sandwich Islands are a chain of eleven small volcanic islands, 550 km to the south-east of South Georgia, extending to nearly 60°S.

South Georgia was claimed for Great Britain by Captain James Cook on 17 January 1775. Today, SGSSI is administered by a small Government in Stanley in the Falkland Islands, with representatives at King Edward Point (KEP) on South Georgia. The Government recently launched its five-year Strategy 2016–2020 (www.gov.gs/information/south-georgia-strategy/) which sets out its headline objective of world-class environmental management underpinned by the highest standards of governance.

The Government aims to safeguard the territory’s natural heritage for future generations. SGSSI is home to globally significant populations of seabirds and marine mammals. Habitat restoration programmes, including a landmark project to eradicate rodents undertaken by the South Georgia Heritage Trust, and the Government’s own work to remove reindeer and manage non-native plants, are enabling threatened species to re-establish a major presence in South Georgia. Today, the British Antarctic Survey operates two research stations on South Georgia, one at KEP run under contract to the Government and the UK
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the other at Bird Island. These contribute to one of the longest and most detailed scientific datasets in the Southern Ocean, having many decades of population data on seabirds and marine mammals.

SGSSI’s fisheries are managed to the highest international standards and are certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. The fisheries are regulated through the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The SGSSI Maritime Zone occupies over 1.3 million km² of the Southern Ocean and is managed as one of the largest sustainable-use Marine Protected Areas in the world. This is based on scientific research which has been important on South Georgia from the pioneering work on the ecology of the Southern Ocean by the *Discovery Investigations* which began in 1925.

South Georgia is visited by around 9,000 tourists each year who come to see the spectacular wildlife and scenery, and to appreciate the unique heritage. This heritage includes the remains of the former whaling stations and their historic buildings and the links to polar exploration, notably Sir Ernest Shackleton who arrived at South Georgia on 5 November 1914 at the start of his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. After a month-long stop at Grytviken whaling station, the expedition sailed into the Weddell Sea with the aim of crossing the Antarctic continent. Eighteen months later Shackleton returned to South Georgia, albeit in very different circumstances. The expedition ship *Endurance* had been lost in the ice and her 28-man complement had spent months in makeshift camps on the ice before they took to the lifeboats to reach Elephant Island. It was from here that Shackleton and five companions made their 1,300 km boat journey aboard the *James Caird* to King Haakon Bay, South Georgia. After a short period of recuperation Shackleton, Tom Crean and Frank Worsley crossed South Georgia on foot to Stromness whaling station where they arrived on 20 May. Shackleton began his – ultimately successful – efforts to rescue his men on Elephant Island. Shackleton returned to South Georgia in 1922 where he died suddenly on 5 January. He is buried at Grytviken.

You can find out more about South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and the work of the Government at www.gov.gs

King Edward Point and Grytviken with the Allardyce Range, South Georgia
King penguins and chick, South Georgia
THE ROSS SEA PARTY

While Shackleton led his men on the Weddell Sea, members of the Ross Sea Party, located on the opposite side of Antarctica from Endurance, had moored Aurora close to Scott’s hut at Cape Evans. On 6 May 1915, with ten men sleeping ashore, the ice that surrounded Aurora was swept out to sea – taking the ship and supplies with it. With scant resources and items scavenged from previous expeditions, the shore party nevertheless established all the supply depots for Shackleton’s intended journey.

After almost ten months, Aurora escaped from the ice and sailed to New Zealand. When the ship was repaired, she sailed south with Shackleton aboard to rescue the marooned Ross Sea Party. Upon arrival, to his deep sorrow, Shackleton learnt that three of the party had perished. A memorial cross was erected and the following message left in a copper cylinder:

I.T.A.E.
1914–1917
Sacred to the memory of
Lieutenant Æneas Lionel A. Mackintosh, R.N.R.
V.G. Hayward and
The Rev. A.P. Spencer-Smith B.A. who perished in the service of the Expedition.

“Things done for gain are nought.
But great things done endure.”

“I ever was a fighter so one fight more
The best and the last
I should hate that death bandaged
my eyes and bid me creep past.”

“Let me pay in a minute life’s glad
arrears of pain darkness and cold.”
Discovery Hut, Ross Island, was one of the huts used by the Ross Sea Party
'It has been an open secret for some time past that I have been desirous of leading another expedition to the South Polar regions,' Ernest Shackleton wrote in *The Times* on 29 December 1913. ‘I am glad now to be able to state that … an expedition will start next year with the object of crossing the South Polar continent from sea to sea.’

It was an audacious plan – one that smacked of Shackleton’s unbounded energy and imagination. Four years earlier, following his triumphant return from a farthest south of 88°23’S on his *Nimrod* Expedition (1907–09), Shackleton had hoped to return to the Antarctic to become the first man to the South Pole. That goal had been pre-empted by both Roald Amundsen and Robert Falcon Scott, but Shackleton still viewed the far south as a venue in which to achieve fame and fortune. Crossing the continent seemed just the project to catapult him once again onto the international stage.

Not that the idea was unique to him. In 1908 the Scottish scientist William Speirs Bruce had proposed an expedition to cross the continent from the Weddell Sea to McMurdo Sound, but he had been unable to attract the necessary funding. Three years later, when he published his small book *Antarctic Exploration*, Bruce was still extolling the value of such an expedition, and one explorer who agreed with him was the German Wilhelm Filchner. In 1911 Filchner launched an expedition to attempt such a crossing and, after discovering a giant ice shelf at the base of the Weddell Sea, he erected a station at its extreme eastern end, at what he named Vahsel Bay. But only a day after it was completed, the whole area upon which it stood calved away from the ice shelf. The bad luck did not end there: within days the expedition ship *Deutschland* was trapped in the drifting pack ice, ending any hope of land operations.
Filchner’s misfortunes did not make Shackleton hesitate, nor did the scepticism of a variety of polar experts, including his friend (and later biographer) Hugh Robert Mill. Shackleton’s plan was to land a dozen men at Vahsel Bay, six of whom would make the trans-Antarctic journey of approximately 1,700 statute miles, slogging with dogs to the South Pole and thence on to McMurdo Sound via the Beardmore Glacier and the Great Ice Barrier (now known as the Ross Ice Shelf). A second ship would go directly to the Ross Sea region, where the party would establish a base in McMurdo Sound and then lay depots of food and fuel across the Barrier, ready to be used by the group crossing the continent. Scientific studies would be conducted at both bases as well as by the trans-Antarctic party and from both ships.

The two vessels chosen for the expedition were Polaris and Aurora. The former was a Norwegian-built barquentine of 350 tons, which Shackleton immediately renamed Endurance in honour of his family motto: ‘Fortitudo Vincimus,’ or ‘By endurance we conquer.’ The latter, at 386 tons, was a one-time Newfoundland sealer purchased from Shackleton’s old comrade Douglas Mawson, who had used it for his Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE). Although Shackleton received several large donations – £24,000 from the Scottish textile manufacturer Sir James Caird, £10,000 from the English businessman Dudley Docker, and £10,000 from the British government – the costs of running ships in separate regions of the Antarctic meant that the expedition was desperately underfunded.

Although more than five thousand men and boys (and three girls) applied for positions, the number of expedition members with Antarctic experience was extremely limited. Among the intended shore party, Shackleton’s second-in-command, Frank Wild, had been south with Scott, Shackleton and Mawson; artist George Marston had been part of Shackleton’s Nimrod Expedition; and photographer Frank Hurley had been a key member of Mawson’s AAE. Aboard Endurance, second officer Tom Crean had served under Scott on both Discovery and Terra Nova, and third officer Alf Cheetham had served on Morning, one of the relief ships for Discovery, then Nimrod, and finally Scott’s Terra Nova. However, the captain, Frank Worsley, and eventual first officer, Lionel Greenstreet, were Antarctic novices. On the other side of the continent, only three members of the Ross Sea Party had spent much time in the Antarctic: commander Æneas Mackintosh on Nimrod; Ernest Joyce on the Discovery and Nimrod expeditions, and boatswain James Paton on Discovery, Nimrod, and Terra Nova.

Endurance sailed from London on 1 August 1914, but was still in British waters when the general mobilisation of troops was announced in anticipation of the coming war. In a grand gesture typical of the flamboyant Shackleton, he offered the ship, men, and provisions to the government for the war effort. The Admiralty declined his offer, but several of the expedition members – including two army officers and the ship’s chief officer, D.G. Jeffrey – felt their duty lay at home and
resigned from the venture. The rest continued south, except Shackleton, who remained behind to address a number of financial matters, eventually catching up with the slow-moving *Endurance* at Buenos Aires.

In October *Endurance* continued to South Georgia, where the whalers told Shackleton that the pack ice was unusually heavy and had drifted farther north than usual. They advised him to delay his departure, so, for more than a month, the party remained at South Georgia, making improvements to the ship, training sledge dogs, and laying in additional stores. *Endurance* finally sailed for the Weddell Sea on 5 December 1914, but, as foretold, the pack ice was much farther north than usual. For the next six weeks the ship made slow time south, as she dodged around or forced her way through the heavy ice. The Antarctic coast of Coats Land was sighted on 10 January 1915, and Shackleton briefly considered landing at what he named Glacier Bay, but decided instead to maintain course for Vahsel Bay. It was a fateful choice, because not far from their destination the ice closed tightly about the ship – holding her in a grip that, with the temperatures already beginning to drop, it would never release.

Drifting at the mercy of the ice, on 22 February *Endurance* reached the 77th parallel, her farthest south. But there, with land on the horizon, the ship drifted slowly to the west, away from her intended destination. ‘It was more than tantalizing, it was maddening,’ Alexander Macklin, one of the ship’s two surgeons, noted in his diary. ‘Shackleton at this time showed one of his sparks of real greatness. He did not rage at all, or show outwardly the slightest sign of disappointment; he told us simply and calmly that we must winter in the Pack, explained its dangers and possibilities; never lost his optimism, and prepared for Winter.’

The interior of the ship was converted into more comfortable winter quarters, and although the Sun disappeared the first week in May, Shackleton kept his men busy with regular duties, training with the dogs, and other activities and entertainments, while the scientists turned their land-based research into a sea-based programme. Perhaps the man least affected by the turn of events was Hurley, who, after more than a year at Commonwealth Bay – the windiest place on Earth – and man-hauling towards the South Magnetic Pole, was ready for most anything the Antarctic could throw at him. ‘H is a marvel,’ Worsley wrote. ‘[H]e perambulates alone aloft & everywhere, in the most dangerous & slippery places he can find, content & happy at all times but cursing so if he can get a good or novel picture. Stands bare & hair waving in the wind, where we are gloved & helmeted, he snaps his snaps or winds his handle turning out curses of delight.’

Throughout the winter, the gyre in the Weddell Sea continued to take *Endurance* in a roughly clockwise direction. In the middle of July, a 70-mile-per-hour blizzard struck, and thereafter the pressure from the ice increased. In the following months, the ship groaned and howled as she was tormented by the ice – beams were twisted, door frames were thrown out of alignment,
and wooden braces were dislodged. On 24 October the pressure forced the entire ship to shake furiously, then list to starboard. As water began to pour in by the damaged sternpost, Shackleton ordered the engines fired up to drive the pumps. It was not enough, and despite men frantically pumping throughout the day and night, the water continued to rise. Finally, on the evening of 27 October, Shackleton gave the order to abandon ship.

With the dogs and everything that could be readily carried, the 28 men set up five tents to form what they called Dump Camp about 100 yards (90 m) away on a large ice floe. Understanding the need to keep his party in good spirits – particularly the seamen, who seemed ill at ease away from the confines of the ship – Shackleton made sure that the 18 fur sleeping bags were given to the sailors and junior expedition members, while the higher ranks and scientists kept the less well-insulated wool bags. Shackleton also explained his plan: to man-haul two of the three lifeboats – *James Caird* and *Dudley Docker* – and any necessary supplies over the ice towards Snow Hill Island, some 300 miles (480 km) away, where the Swedish explorer Otto Nordenskjöld had left a well-stocked hut in 1903. The men all had new winter clothing, and each was allowed to take two pounds of personal possessions, although exceptions to this limit were made, including meteorologist Leonard Hussey’s banjo, which Shackleton knew would be important for entertainment.

In anticipation of the march ahead, on 30 October, Crean shot the three puppies and Mrs Chippy, carpenter Harry McNish’s cat, which had become the ship’s mascot – a realist, Shackleton knew they could not afford to carry anyone who could not contribute. For parts of the next three days the boats were dragged over brutally difficult surfaces before, having made less than one and three quarters miles (2.8 km) in total, Shackleton decided such efforts were futile and the attempt was abandoned. A new living site – known as Ocean Camp – was established, and the party settled in to await the breakup of the ice, when the men could take to the boats and attempt to reach Paulet Island, some 350 miles (560 km) away.

In the following weeks, huge amounts of material were salvaged from the ship and the area around it, including the third boat, *Stancomb Wills*; containers of food; materials to build a kitchen; and the 120 negatives that Hurley and Shackleton adjudged the best of the more than 500 images already taken. Hurley had gone into the depths of the wreck and dived into four feet of mushy ice to retrieve these, which had been soldered in tin containers. It had been a courageous undertaking because *Endurance* was not safe, as shown on 21 November, when her bow dipped, her stern raised in the air, and she slipped beneath the ice.

A month later, concerned that their drift was actually taking them farther from potential safety, Shackleton, in consultation with Wild and Hurley, determined to try again to man-haul the boats to open water. On 23 December, leaving behind *Stancomb Wills*, the men – many of whom harboured doubts and resentment about the decision – began to drag the other boats and the necessary
supplies west. Each back-breaking day’s labour resulted in an average gain of little more than a mile (1.6 km), and on 27 December McNish – still aggrieved over the loss of his cat, and bitter that Shackleton had rejected his offer to build a sloop from the wrecked parts of Endurance – verbally abused Worsley and refused to proceed, claiming that with the loss of the ship his duty to obey orders had terminated. Shackleton promptly mustered all hands and read aloud the ship’s articles, which, according to him, kept them under his command for the duration of the expedition. There have been conflicting reports as to whether he also threatened McNish with a pistol. Regardless, on the surface Shackleton ‘won’ the confrontation, but he was evidently swayed by the incident, for within two days he gave up on the march and established a new camp.

The party remained at what was called Patience Camp for about three months, during which Wild returned to Ocean Camp to retrieve Stancomb Wills. While at Patience Camp, the drift took the party past Paulet Island, and Shackleton decided on Elephant Island as his new target. On 9 April 1916, when the ice had finally broken up enough to allow them into the boats, the expedition set sail between ice floes and into stormy seas. For six days the men huddled in the small boats, cramped and constantly soaked by freezing water, while suffering terribly from thirst, hunger, and seasickness. But Shackleton and Worsley drove them on, and on 15 April they landed at an exposed rocky beach on Elephant Island, named Cape Valentine. A number of the men were incapacitated, but the next morning Wild and four others located a safer place to set up camp – a spit of land they named Cape Wild.

Although the members of the expedition were now on dry land for the first time in 16 months, they were far from safe, because their supplies were low, their health poor, and no one from home knew where they were. In true Shackletonian fashion, their leader determined to go for help – to South Georgia, some 800 nautical miles (1,480 km) across one of the most dangerous seas on Earth. ‘Shackleton sitting still and doing nothing wasn’t Shackleton at all,’ Macklin wrote. ‘We’d had all that at Patience Camp.’ Thus, there would be no waiting, and in the following days McNish carried out extensive work on the 22-foot (6.7-m) James Caird, including stiffening the keel, adding an extra mast, and overseeing the construction of a canvas decking to protect its interior.

Shackleton carefully selected five companions for the voyage – Worsley, who was an exceptionally skilled navigator; Crean, who had consistently proved his stamina and value; McNish; and seamen Tim McCarthy and John Vincent. It is likely that McNish and Vincent were taken in part so that Shackleton could keep an eye on them – McNish was an obvious malcontent, and Vincent’s bullying had seen him demoted from boatswain to AB.

The six men left on 24 April, heading north to clear the pack ice, and then turning east towards South Georgia. For the next two weeks, the small boat was buffeted by gales and mountainous seas, including one giant wave that nearly swamped her. There was little protection from the icy water,
which soaked the men and their sleeping bags below. The freezing conditions meant that the boat was soon covered with ice, and the undernourished men had to chip it off while desperately holding on, knowing that if anyone’s grip slipped, he would go overboard to certain death. The continuing storm and regular heavy cloud cover also meant that it was extremely difficult for Worsley to take the necessary observations for navigation. Nevertheless, on the fifteenth day they sighted South Georgia. Heavy seas and weather prevented them from landing for two days and threatened to wreck James Caird on the cliffs, but on 10 May they were finally able to make a landing near the entrance of King Haakon Bay on the island’s south side. Unable to sail around the island, the men rested for several days before moving to the head of the bay, where they turned the boat over to create a shelter they named ‘Peggotty Camp.’

As Vincent was too weak to continue, he and McCarthy were left under the command of McNish, while Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean headed inland. Their aim was to cross the interior of South Georgia and find help at a whaling station at Stromness Bay. However, although three stations were only about 22 miles (35 km) away, the island’s spine comprised an unmapped mountain range crisscrossed with glaciers and snowfields. Equipped only with an adze for an ice axe, screws in their boots for crampons, and a rope, the three marched for 36 straight hours, ascending, according to Worsley, to more than 5,000 feet (1,525 m), rarely stopping for food or rest, and having to backtrack up steep hills when attempted ways forward proved impossible. Exhausted and near the end of their endurance, they finally reached Stromness, where they were taken to the station manager, Thoralf Sørli, to whom they told their story. Yet despite the first proper food, wash, and shelter they had enjoyed in months, Worsley set out that very night with a relief ship to collect the three men – and James Caird – from King Haakon Bay.

Shackleton was now determined to rescue the men at Elephant Island as soon as possible. Having organised passage back to England for McNish, Vincent, and McCarthy, he arranged for the whaler Southern Sky, then in Stromness Bay, to pick up the rest of his stranded crew. However, she was thwarted by pack ice about 60 miles (100 km) from Elephant Island and forced to withdraw to the Falkland Islands. There, Shackleton boarded the trawler Instituto de Pesca, no. 1, which the Uruguayan government loaned for another rescue attempt. But she, too, was forced back by ice, this time about 18 miles (30 km) short of Elephant Island.

Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean then travelled to Punta Arenas in Chile, where, with contributions from local residents, they chartered the schooner Emma. However, about 90 miles (150 km) north of Elephant Island, the engine broke down, and the ship had to retreat. Finally, the Chilean government agreed to send down the steel tug Yelcho, under the command of Luis Pardo. On 30 August 1916, after 137 days on Elephant Island, the men there were ferried out to Yelcho, which departed the moment the last expedition member was aboard, before the ice could trap her. They returned to Punta Arenas, and then continued to Valparaiso.
The men at Elephant Island had not had an easy time. The two remaining boats had been overturned and placed atop stone walls about four feet (1.2 m) high, and they had been forced to live for more than four months in this tiny shelter. Several of the men had suffered serious physical or psychological problems during the boat journey to the island – navigator Huberht Hudson had a nervous breakdown, steward Perce Blackborow’s toes were severely frostbitten, and engineer Lewis Rickinson had a heart attack during the landing. In the months there, Macklin and fellow surgeon Jim McIlroy had to amputate Blackborow’s toes, as well as dealing with numerous other medical issues. Despite these problems, Wild managed to hold the party together, and all 22 men were brought back safely.

Soon after arriving at the Falklands, Shackleton had been informed that 10 of his men from the Ross Sea Party had been stranded in McMurdo Sound. Once those from Endurance were safe, Shackleton’s attention turned to rescuing his men in the far south.

The Ross Sea Party had been poorly organised and equipped from the beginning. Aurora had entered McMurdo Sound in mid-January 1915, but had been unable to reach Hut Point, the most desirable location to set up base, due to its proximity to the Great Ice Barrier. Instead, Æneas Mackintosh, the party’s commander, unloaded the supplies for the depots some 12 geographical miles (22 km) north, at Scott’s old base at Cape Evans. Placing first officer John Stenhouse in charge of Aurora, Mackintosh and the land party began sledging oil and food south to Hut Point and thence on to the Barrier to establish initial depots for the crossing party, which they thought could already be on its way.

In the following months, while the depot operations slowly continued, Aurora was anchored off Cape Evans. However, as Mackintosh intended to use the ship as the main living quarters, large quantities of food, fuel, and clothing were never landed. In the first week of May, Aurora broke loose from her moorings and, firmly held in a large ice floe, drifted helplessly into the sound and away from the base, leaving 10 men ashore in two locations. For the next nine months, with her engines out of commission, she drifted slowly north, until in February 1916 the ice holding her broke up and she was able to limp to New Zealand. Stenhouse attempted to organise a relief expedition, but nothing happened until the British, Australian, and New Zealand governments finally decided to take charge. Then Aurora was quickly repaired, refitted, and placed under the command of John King Davis, the former captain of Nimrod, the master of Aurora under Mawson, and the man who had been Shackleton’s first choice as captain of Endurance. Little had Davis known when he turned down the offer that he would later have to rescue some of Shackleton’s men in his own former ship.

Those men were in desperate straits. After wintering at Cape Evans – where they used the supplies left by Scott’s expedition – nine of them resumed depot-laying in the expectation that Shackleton’s party was en route. Three had to return to base in January 1916 due to a faulty Primus
stove, but by late that month the other six had laid depots all the way to Mount Hope at the base of the Beardmore Glacier. One of them, the Revd Arnold Spencer-Smith, who had been suffering from scurvy, died on the return journey across the Barrier. Mackintosh, too, was ill, and Joyce, by far the most experienced of them, became the de facto leader. The five remaining men struggled to Hut Point in March, where they were forced to wait for the sea to freeze over before crossing it to Cape Evans. When the sound froze in early May, Mackintosh and Victor Hayward immediately headed north, despite the knowledge that the sea ice might still be unstable. A blizzard blew in shortly thereafter, and the two were never seen again. It was not until July that the remaining three men were able to return safely to Cape Evans, to be reunited with the four already there.

Once in Valparaiso following the rescue of the men from Elephant Island, Shackleton discovered that the governments organising the Ross Sea relief expedition were exasperated by having to do so and did not want him involved in it. Nevertheless, he headed to New Zealand, where Davis, although firmly retaining command, allowed his old friend to join the ship. With Davis’ expertise, Aurora made rapid progress south, arriving at Shackleton’s old base at Cape Royds on 10 January 1917. While the members of the relief party were ashore, the seven surviving members of the Ross Sea Party arrived unexpectedly. Following a thorough but unsuccessful search for Mackintosh and Hayward, Davis turned the ship north. With Aurora’s arrival at Wellington on 9 February, the expedition had finally ended.

In many senses, the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition was a failure. Not only had none of its geographical or scientific goals been attained, but a ship and three men had been lost, along with most of the scientific specimens. And yet the manner in which Shackleton held his party together on the ice, and then proceeded to rescue them via one of the most astonishing open-boat voyages in history and a remarkable crossing of South Georgia made not only an epic tale of adventure but earned Shackleton recognition as one of the greatest leaders in the history of exploration. A century on, his successes in protecting and saving his men are much more admired than the actual crossing of the Antarctic continent, which was finally completed 40 years later on an expedition led by Vivian Fuchs. So although Shackleton did not succeed in carrying out his plans, he left a glorious legacy of what can be achieved by the human will and indomitable spirit.
THE IMPERIAL TRANS-ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

FRANK HURLEY
Cecily, Raymond and Edward Shackleton before *Endurance* sailed from London.

SPRI Picture Library P2001/86/133
Shackleton, standing by HM Queen Alexandra, leads a hearty cheer.

SPRI Picture Library P2001/86/116
The upper deck of *Endurance* was where the dog kennels were located.

SPRI Picture Library P66/19/3
Sailing south, *Endurance* entered the pack ice much farther north than usual.

SPRI Picture Library P66/18/7
Hoping to release *Endurance*, the men attempted to cut a path through the ice to an open lead.

SPRI Picture Library P66/19/67A
Worsley and James taking astronomical observations during the winter.
SPRI Picture Library P66/19/137
Hurley’s classic image of *Endurance* in the winter ice was taken with multiple flashes for lighting.

SPRI Picture Library P66/18/43
Wordie, Cheetham, and Macklin participate in the most menial of ship’s tasks: scrubbing the floor.

SPRI Picture Library P66/18/42
Marston stands next to the gramophone and a pile of 78 rpm records during a regular Sunday evening concert.

SPRI Picture Library P66/19/87
In October, ice pressure forced *Endurance* to list precariously to port.

SPRI Picture Library P66/19/152
Wild and Shackleton survey the remains of *Endurance.*

SPRI Picture Library P2001/86/182
Shackleton, Wild, and the men on the sea ice at Ocean Camp.
SPRI Picture Library P66/19/X43
Hurley, Wild, and Shackleton stand in front of the observation platform built at Ocean Camp.
SPRI Picture Library P66/19/X31
A number of the men have the initial meal at Elephant Island, which was their first on solid ground after 16 months.

SPRI Picture Library P66/18/62
The launching of *James Caird* on its voyage to South Georgia.

SPRI Picture Library P66/18/66
Crossing the uncharted mountains of South Georgia was an immense challenge for Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean.

SPRI Picture Library P2001/86/198
On 20 May 1916 Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean reached Stromness whaling station.

SPRI Picture Library P66/19/39A
Piloto Pardo and the crew of the Chilean Navy vessel Yelcho.
SPRI Picture Library P2001/86/235
The rescued members of the Elephant Island party in Punta Arenas, Chile, with Wild, Shackleton, and Piloto Pardo in the centre.
SPRI Picture Library P66/19/X1
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Back cover
Shackleton and his Men. 1 September 1915
SPRI Picture Library P66/19/146
Endurance sailed from Grytviken on 5 December 1914.

On 11 December 1914, Endurance entered the pack ice.

On 18 January 1915, Endurance was trapped in the ice.

On 21 November 1915, Endurance sank.

On 27 October 1915, Endurance was abandoned.

On 1 November 1915, "Patience Camp" was established.

On 29 December 1915, "Ocean Camp" was established.

On 9 April 1916, lifeboats were launched.

On 15 April 1916, Elephant Island was reached.

On 24 April 1916, "Patience Camp" was established.

On 1 November 1915, "Ocean Camp" was established.

On 18 January 1915, Endurance was trapped in the ice.

On 27 October 1915, Endurance was abandoned.

On 10 May 1916, James Caird arrived on Elephant Island.

On 8 May 1916, "Patience Camp" was established.

On 24 April 1916, "Ocean Camp" was established.

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