

ENDURANCE: TRAPPED IN ICE

SOUTH

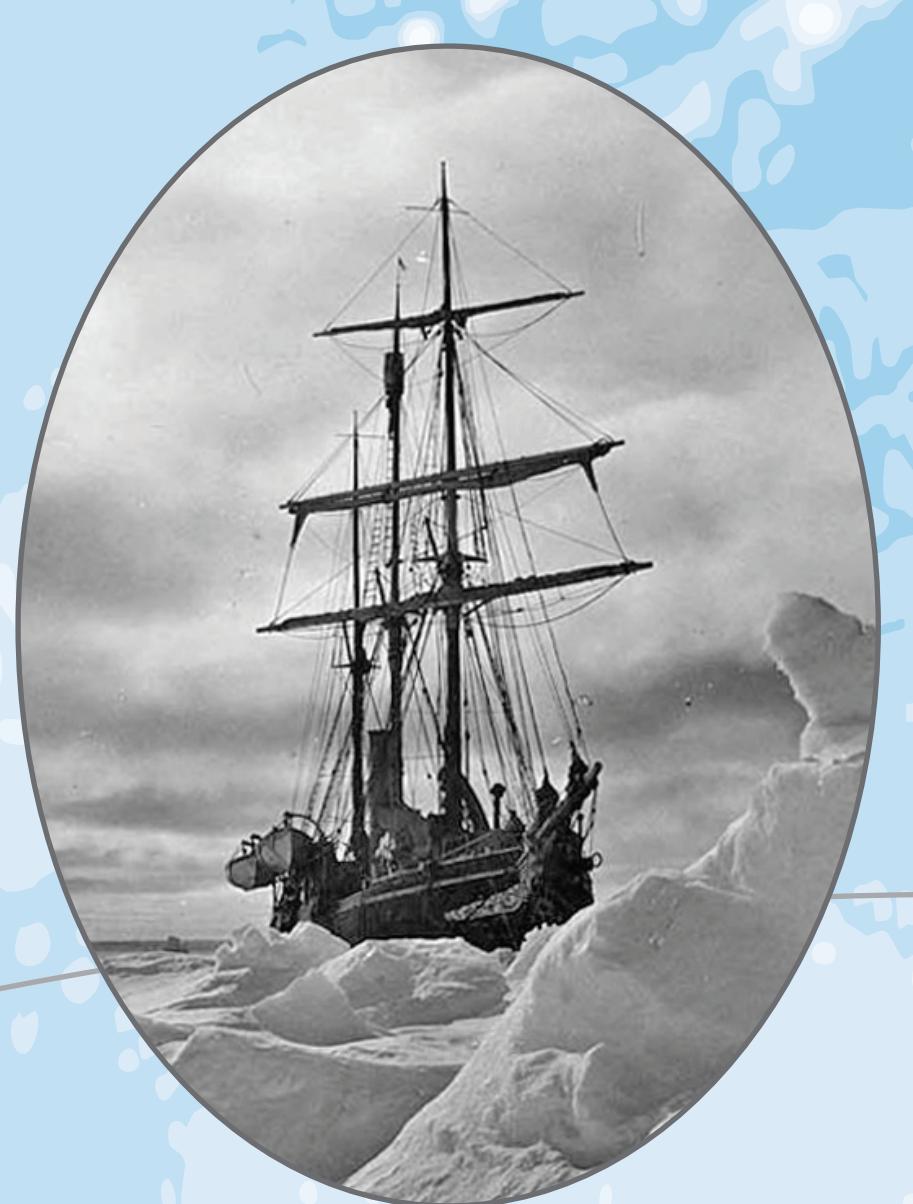
On December 5th 1914, the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition began in earnest. Departing from the island of South Georgia, the *Endurance* and her crew of 28, captained by Frank Worsley and led by famed polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, headed south for the Weddell Sea off the coast of Antarctica. Shackleton's plan was to transect Antarctica by way of the South Pole, a journey of over 2800 kilometres, and rendezvous with a second team approaching Antarctica from the Ross Sea whose mission was to lay supply depots for the *Endurance* crew and conduct scientific research. But the *Endurance* and her crew never made landfall at Antarctica...

TRAPPED

Endurance made painfully slow progress as it pushed south and picked its way through thick pack ice which was ominously further north than anyone had expected. By January 18, 1915, the crew found themselves surrounded by pack ice which had been pushed and condensed against the Antarctic landmass by a strong polar gale from the north. *Endurance* was trapped mere days away from making landfall if sailing conditions had been favourable.



Launching of the James Caird.



Endurance trapped in the ice pack.

DRIFTING

Endurance and crew drifted in a westerly direction with the ice pack for more than 10 months when on October 27, 1915 the massive pressure of the ice pack crushed and eventually sank the ship. Their shelter destroyed; the men were forced to survive completely on the surface of the ice. Stranded on the ice, the men continued to drift northwest with the ever-shifting ice pack. At times the men attempted to march to open sea, hauling the boats they would escape with, but each time they encountered brutal marching conditions and impassable terrain. After 6 months on the ice pack solid ground was eventually spotted in the form of the far-reaching Antarctic Peninsula to the west. As the ice pack drifted further a plan was developed to reach Elephant Island which was located to the north.



Hauling a boat across the ice.

SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND

CASTAWAYS

On April 9, 1916, with the ice pack slowly giving way to open water, the men launched their three boats and made for Elephant Island. After seven days of sailing the frigid waters in open boats, the men made landfall at Elephant Island. The island was an inhospitable mass of rock and mountains. In such a remote location, the chance of the men being spotted by passing ships was poor. A plan was developed for 6 men, led by Shackleton, to sail over 1200 kilometres north, back to South Georgia, from where their journey had begun. With luck, the prevailing winds would aid them and allow the men a chance to find help and rescue the remaining 22 crew members.

ESCAPE

On April 24, 1916, six men departed in the James Caird, the sturdiest of the three boats, and made way for South Georgia. After a harrowing seventeen days at sea the men made landfall at Cave Cove near King Haakon Bay, South Georgia.

Once reaching South Georgia, the six men faced a new problem. The closest inhabited location was a whaling station located at Stromness, on the other side of the island. The men would have to cross the interior of South Georgia, which had never been done before. Shackleton selected a team of three, which included Frank Worsley, an expert navigator, and Tom Crean, a veteran of polar exploration having journeyed to Antarctica twice before. The men made the 60 kilometre trek through the interior mountains of South Georgia to Stromness where they made contact with civilization for the first time in 532 days. The three men eventually returned on the Chilean ship *Yelcho* and rescued all 22 castaways.

WEDDELL SEA

ICE PACK

RONNE ICE SHELF

SOUTH POLE

Endurance trapped in ice; January 18, 1915

Endurance crushed; October 27, 1915

Voyage of the James Caird; April 24 to May 10, 1916

Scale 1:6,500,000

Coordinate System: WGS 84 / Antarctic Polar Stereographic

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