

# Sir Ernest Shackleton: Britain's Bravest Explorer [B2]

Il temerario esploratore gareggiò con il norvegese Roald Amundsen per essere il primo uomo a raggiungere il Polo Sud e a mappare l'Antartide. È passato alla storia per il suo carisma come esempio del comportamento di un leader in circostanze estreme.

---

Ernest Shackleton was an Anglo-Irish explorer famous for his Antarctic expeditions more than a century ago. At that time there was an international race to be the first to reach the South Pole, which was finally won by Norway's Roald Amundsen in 1911. Shackleton's subsequent [attempt](#) to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic in the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-1917 is an epic story of bravery and survival against almost [insurmountable odds](#).

## A MASTER MARINER

Shackleton was born in Kilkea, Ireland (then part of Britain) in February 1874. Eight years after leaving school at sixteen to become a sailor, he received his certificate as a master mariner. Shackleton was first linked to the world of exploration in 1901, when he joined Captain Robert Scott's Antarctic expedition. Scott's long-distance [sledge](#) journey into the continent's interior — a world first — reached a record-breaking 805 kilometres from the South Pole.

## THRESHOLD OF GREATNESS

Shackleton returned to the Antarctic race as the leader of the Nimrod expedition in 1907. He got to within 180 kilometres of the South Pole. On the [threshold](#) of greatness, he turned back, as he thought there were insufficient rations [to ensure](#) a safe return. When his team reached their base camp, their food was long finished and their clothes were [in rags](#). However, his expedition had succeeded in climbing and [surveying](#) Mount Erebus, an active volcano, and they had found the magnetic south pole. Shackleton returned a hero and [was knighted](#) by King Edward VII.

## CROSSING THE CONTINENT

With his Antarctic expedition in December 1911, Roald Amundsen made history. [Not to be outdone](#), three years later, Shackleton decided to try to cross the entire

continent of Antarctica, saying it was “the one great object of Antarctic journeying” still open to him. However, the expedition was [doomed](#) from the beginning. Shackleton’s ship, Endurance, became trapped in moving ice before it reached the Antarctic. After [drifting](#) for ten months, it was finally [crushed](#) and [sank](#).

## SURVIVAL

Shackleton’s team lived on [ice floes](#) for five months, before escaping in small boats to Elephant Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. The explorer and five men then sailed north 1,300 kilometres to the island of South Georgia, part of the British Overseas Territory of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, in stormy, freezing seas in a tiny open boat, before organising a [rescue party](#) for their trapped colleagues. It was an extraordinary feat of survival. His failure forgotten, Shackleton was [lionised](#) at home.

## FINAL EXPEDITION

[Astonishingly](#), Shackleton was not finished with Antarctica — but the continent was finally finished with him. On 5 January 1922, preparing [to set off](#) from South Georgia for the frozen continent one more time, he suffered a fatal heart attack at the age of forty-seven. The [strain](#) of the expeditions, heart problems, and his [worsening](#) alcoholism finally proved too much. His death was met with [grief](#) throughout Britain. The explorer continues to hold a special place in the country’s heart.

---

# Glossary

- **attempt** = tentativo
- **odds** = contro ogni previsione
- **sledge** = slitta
- **drifting** = andare alla deriva
- **rescue party** = squadra di salvataggio
- **surveying** = rilevare, mappare
- **Not to be outdone** = per non essere da meno
- **doomed** = desinata al fracasso
- **ice floes** = banchi di ghiaccio
- **lionised** = lodare
- **grief** = dolore
- **to ensure** = garantire
- **was knighted** = nominare cavaliere
- **Astonishingly** = sorprendentemente
- **to set off** = partire
- **worsening** = aggravarsi, peggiorare
- **insurmountable** = insormontabili
- **threshold** = soglia
- **in rags** = ridotti a brandelli
- **crushed** = schiacciare
- **sank** = affondare
- **strain** = sforzo