

= Tom Crean (explorer) =

Thomas " Tom " Crean (Irish : Tomás Ó Croidheáin ; 25 February 1877 ? 27 July 1938) , was an Irish seaman and Antarctic explorer from Annascaul in County Kerry . He was a member of three major expeditions to Antarctica during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration , including Captain Scott 's 1911 ? 13 Terra Nova Expedition . This saw the race to reach the South Pole lost to Roald Amundsen and ended in the deaths of Scott and his polar party . During this expedition , Crean 's 35 statute miles (56 km) solo walk across the Ross Ice Shelf to save the life of Edward Evans led to him receiving the Albert Medal for Lifesaving .

Crean had left the family farm near Annascaul to enlist in the Royal Navy at the age of 15 . In 1901 , while serving on Ringarooma in New Zealand , he volunteered to join Scott 's 1901 ? 04 Discovery Expedition to Antarctica , thus beginning his exploring career . After his Terra Nova experience , Crean 's third and final Antarctic venture was as second officer on Ernest Shackleton 's Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition , on Endurance . After Endurance became beset in the pack ice and sank , Crean and the ship 's company spent months drifting on the ice before a journey in boats to Elephant Island . He was a member of the crew which made an open boat journey of 800 nautical miles (1 @,@ 500 km) from Elephant Island to South Georgia , to seek aid for the stranded party .

Crean 's contributions to these expeditions sealed his reputation as a polar explorer , and earned him a total of three Polar medals . After the Endurance expedition , he returned to the navy ; when his naval career ended in 1920 he moved back to County Kerry . In his home town of Annascaul , Crean and his wife Ellen opened a pub called The South Pole Inn , where he lived quietly and unobtrusively until his death in 1938 .

= = Early life and career = =

Thomas Crean (generally known as Tom Crean) was born on 25 Feb 1877 , in the farming area of Gurtuchrane near the village of Annascaul on Corca Dhuibhne in County Kerry , Ireland , to Patrick Crean and Catherine , née Courtney . One of ten children , he attended the local Brackluin Catholic school , leaving at the age of 12 to help on the family farm . At the age of 15 , Crean enlisted in the Royal Navy at the naval station in nearby Minard Inlet , possibly after an argument with his father . His enlistment as a boy second class is recorded in Royal Navy records on 10 July 1893 , 10 days before his 16th birthday ; lacking his parents ' consent , he probably lied about his age .

Crean 's initial naval apprenticeship was aboard the training ship Impregnable at Devonport . In November 1894 , he was transferred to Devastation . By his 18th birthday , in 1895 , Crean was serving in Royal Arthur , and rated ordinary seaman . Less than a year later , he was in Wild Swan as an able seaman , and later joined the Navy 's torpedo school ship , Defiance . By 1899 , Crean had advanced to the rate of petty officer , second class and was serving in Vivid .

In February 1900 , Crean was posted to the torpedo vessel Ringarooma , which was part of the Royal Navy 's New Zealand Squadron based in the South Island . On 18 December 1901 , he was demoted from petty officer to able seaman for an unspecified misdemeanour . In December 1901 , the Ringarooma was ordered to assist Robert Falcon Scott 's ship Discovery when it was docked at Lyttelton Harbour awaiting to departure to Antarctica . When an able seaman of Scott 's ship deserted after striking a petty officer , a replacement was required ; Crean volunteered , and was accepted .

= = Discovery Expedition , 1901 ? 1904 = =

Discovery sailed for the Antarctic on 21 December 1901 , and seven weeks later , on 8 February 1902 , arrived in McMurdo Sound , where she anchored at a spot which was later designated " Hut Point " . Here the men established the base from which they would launch scientific and exploratory sledging journeys . Crean proved to be one of the most efficient man @-@ haulers in the party ; over the expedition as a whole , only seven of the 48 @-@ member party logged more time in harness than Crean 's 149 days . Crean had a good sense of humour and was well liked by his

companions . Scott 's second @-@ in @-@ command , Albert Armitage , wrote in his book Two Years in the Antarctic that " Crean was an Irishman with a fund of wit and an even temper which nothing disturbed . "

Crean accompanied Lieutenant Michael Barne on three sledging trips across the Ross Ice Shelf , then known as the " Great Ice Barrier " . These included the 12 @-@ man party led by Barne which set out on 30 October 1902 to lay depots in support of the main southern journey undertaken by Scott , Shackleton and Edward Wilson . On 11 November the Barne party passed the previous furthest south mark , set by Carsten Borchgrevink in 1900 at 78 ° 50'S , a record which they held briefly until the southern party itself passed it on its way to an eventual 82 ° 17'S .

During the Antarctic winter of 1902 Discovery became locked in the ice . Efforts to free her during the summer of 1902 ? 03 failed , and although some of the expedition 's members (including Ernest Shackleton) left in a relief ship , Crean and the majority of the party remained in the Antarctic until the ship was finally freed in February 1904 . After returning to regular naval duty , Crean was promoted to petty officer , first class , on Scott 's recommendation .

= = Between expeditions , 1904 ? 10 = =

Crean came back to regular duty at the naval base at Chatham , Kent , serving first in Pembroke in 1904 and later transferring to the torpedo school on Vernon . Crean had caught Captain Scott 's attention with his attitude and work ethic on the Discovery Expedition , and in 1906 Scott requested that Crean join him on Victorious . Over the next few years Crean followed Scott successively to Albemarle , Essex and Bulwark . By 1907 , Scott was planning his second expedition to the Antarctic . Meanwhile , Ernest Shackleton 's Nimrod Expedition , 1907 ? 09 , despite reaching a new furthest south record of 88 ° 23'S , had failed to reach the South Pole . Scott was with Crean when the news of Shackleton 's near miss became public ; it is recorded that Scott observed to Crean : " I think we 'd better have a shot next . "

= = Terra Nova Expedition , 1910 ? 13 = =

Scott held Crean in high regard , so he was among the first people recruited for the Terra Nova Expedition , which set out for the Antarctic in June 1910 , and one of the few men in the party with previous polar experience . After the expedition 's arrival in McMurdo Sound in January 1911 , Crean was as part of the 13 @-@ man team who established " One Ton Depot " , 130 statute miles (210 km) from Hut Point. so named because of the large amount of food and equipment cached there on the projected route to the South Pole . Returning from the depot to base camp at Cape Evans , Crean , accompanied by Apsley Cherry @-@ Garrard and Henry " Birdie " Bowers , experienced near @-@ disaster when camping on unstable sea ice . During the night the ice broke up , leaving the men adrift on an ice floe and separated from their sledges . Crean probably saved the group 's lives , by leaping from floe to floe until he reached the Barrier edge and was able to summon help .

Crean departed with Scott in November 1911 , for the attempt at the South Pole . This journey had three stages : 400 statute miles (640 km) across the Barrier , 120 statute miles (190 km) up the heavily crevassed Beardmore Glacier to an altitude of 10 @,@ 000 feet (3 @,@ 000 m) above sea level , and then another 350 statute miles (560 km) to the Pole . At regular intervals , supporting parties returned to base ; Crean was in the final group of eight men that marched on to the polar plateau and reached 87 ° 32'S , 168 statute miles (270 km) from the pole . Here , on 4 January 1912 , Scott selected his final polar party : Crean , William Lashly and Edward Evans were ordered to return to base , while Scott , Edgar Evans , Edward Wilson , Bowers and Lawrence Oates continued to the pole . Crean 's biographer Michael Smith suggests that Crean would have been a better choice for the polar party than Edgar Evans , who was weakened by a recent hand injury (of which Scott was unaware) . Crean , considered one of the toughest men in the expedition , had led a pony across the Barrier and had thus been saved much of the hard labour of man @-@ hauling . Scott 's critical biographer Roland Huntford records that the surgeon Edward L Atkinson , who had

accompanied the southern party to the top of the Beardmore , had recommended either Lashly or Crean for the polar party rather than Edgar Evans . Scott in his diary recorded that Crean wept with disappointment at the prospect of having to turn back , so close to the goal .

Soon after heading north on the 700 statute mile (1 000 km) journey back to base camp , Crean 's party lost the trail back to the Beardmore Glacier , and were faced with a long detour around a large icefall . With food supplies short , and needing to reach their next supply depot , the group made the decision to slide on their sledge , uncontrolled , down the icefall . The three men slid 2 000 feet (600 m) , dodging crevasses up to 200 feet (61 m) wide , and ending their descent by overturning on an ice ridge . Evans later wrote : " How we ever escaped entirely uninjured is beyond me to explain " .

The gamble at the icefall succeeded , and the men reached their depot two days later . However , they had great difficulty navigating down the glacier . Lashly wrote : " I cannot describe the maze we got into and the hairbreadth escapes we have had to pass through . " In his attempts to find the way down , Evans removed his goggles and subsequently suffered agonies of snow blindness that made him into a passenger . When the party was finally free of the glacier and on the level surface of the Barrier , Evans began to display the first symptoms of scurvy . By early February he was in great pain , his joints were swollen and discoloured , and he was passing blood . Through the efforts of Crean and Lashly the group struggled towards One Ton Depot , which they reached on 11 February . At this point Evans collapsed ; Crean thought he had died and , according to Evans 's account , " his hot tears fell on my face " .

With over 100 statute miles (160 km) still to travel before the relative safety of Hut Point , Crean and Lashly began hauling Evans on the sledge , " eking out his life with the last few drops of brandy that they still had with them " . On 18 February they arrived at Corner Camp , still 35 statute miles (56 km) from Hut Point , with only one or two days ' food rations left and still four or five days ' man @-@ hauling to do . They then decided that Crean should go on alone , to fetch help . With only a little chocolate and three biscuits to sustain him , without a tent or survival equipment , Crean walked the distance to Hut Point in 18 hours , arriving in a state of collapse to find Atkinson there , with the dog driver Dmitri Gerov . Crean reached safety just ahead of a fierce blizzard , which probably would have killed him , and which delayed the rescue party by a day and a half . Atkinson led a successful rescue , and Lashly and Evans were both brought to base camp alive . Crean modestly played down the significance of his feat of endurance . In a rare written account , he wrote in a letter : " So it fell to my lot to do the 30 miles for help , and only a couple of biscuits and a stick of chocolate to do it . Well , sir , I was very weak when I reached the hut . " .

Scott 's party failed to return . The winter of 1912 at Cape Evans was a sombre one , with the knowledge that the polar party had undoubtedly perished . Frank Debenham wrote that " in the winter it was once again Crean who was the mainstay for cheerfulness in the now depleted mess deck part of the hut . " In November 1912 , Crean was one of the 11 @-@ man search party that found the remains of the polar party . On 12 November they spotted a cairn of snow , which proved to be a tent against which the drift had piled up . It contained the bodies of Scott , Wilson , and Bowers . Crean later wrote , referring to Scott in understated fashion , that he had " lost a good friend " .

On 12 February 1913 Crean and the remaining crew of the Terra Nova arrived in Lyttelton , New Zealand , and shortly after returned to England . At Buckingham Palace the surviving members of the expedition were awarded Polar Medals by King George and Prince Louis of Battenberg , the First Sea Lord . Crean and Lashly were both awarded the Albert Medal , 2nd Class for saving Evans 's life , these were presented by the King at Buckingham Palace on 26 July 1913 . Crean was promoted to the rank of chief petty officer , retroactive to 9 September 1910 .

= = Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition (Endurance Expedition) , 1914 ? 17 = =

Ernest Shackleton knew Crean well from the Discovery Expedition , and also knew of his exploits on Scott 's last expedition . Like Scott , Shackleton trusted Crean : he was worth , in Shackleton 's own word , " trumps " . Crean joined Shackleton 's Imperial Transantarctic Expedition on 25 May

1914 , as second officer , with a varied range of duties . In the absence of a Canadian dog @-@ handling expert who was hired but never appeared , Crean took charge of one of the dog @-@ handling teams , and was later involved in the care and nurture of the pups born to one of his dogs , Sally , early in the expedition .

On 19 January 1915 the expedition 's ship , the Endurance , was beset in the Weddell Sea pack ice . In the early efforts to free her , Crean narrowly escaped being crushed by a sudden movement in the ice . The ship drifted in the ice for months , eventually sinking on 21 November . Shackleton informed the men that they would drag the food , gear , and three lifeboats across the pack ice , to Snow Hill or Robertson Island , 200 statute miles (320 km) away . Because of uneven ice conditions , pressure ridges , and the danger of ice breakup which could separate the men , they soon abandoned this plan : the men pitched camp and decided to wait . They hoped that the clockwise drift of the pack would carry them 400 statute miles (640 km) to Paulet Island where they knew there was a hut with emergency supplies . But the pack ice held firm as it carried the men well past Paulet Island , and did not break up until 9 April . The crew then had to sail and row the three ill @-@ equipped lifeboats through the pack ice to Elephant Island , a trip which lasted five days . Crean and Hubert Hudson , the navigating officer of the Endurance , piloted their lifeboat with Crean effectively in charge as Hudson appeared to have suffered a breakdown .

On reaching Elephant Island , Crean was one of the " four fittest men " detailed by Shackleton to find a safe camping @-@ ground . Shackleton decided that , rather than waiting for a rescue ship that would probably never arrive , one of the lifeboats should be strengthened so that a crew could sail it to South Georgia and arrange a rescue . After the party was settled on a penguin rookery above the high @-@ water mark , a group of men led by ship 's carpenter Harry McNish began modifying one of the lifeboats ? the James Caird ? in preparation for this journey , which Shackleton would lead . Frank Wild , who would be in command of the party remaining on Elephant Island , wanted the dependable Crean to stay with him ; Shackleton initially agreed , but changed his mind after Crean begged to be included in the boat 's crew of six . The 800 @-@ nautical @-@ mile (1 @,@ 500 km) boat journey to South Georgia , described by polar historian Caroline Alexander as one of the most extraordinary feats of seamanship and navigation in recorded history , took 17 days through gales and snow squalls , in seas which the navigator , Frank Worsley , described as a " mountainous westerly swell " . After setting off on 24 April 1916 with just the barest navigational equipment , they reached South Georgia on 10 May 1916 . Shackleton , in his later account of the journey , recalled Crean 's tuneless singing at the tiller : " He always sang when he was steering , and nobody ever discovered what the song was ... but somehow it was cheerful " .

The party made its South Georgia landfall on the uninhabited southern coast , having decided that the risk of aiming directly for the whaling stations on the north side was too great ; if they missed the island to the north they would be swept out into the Atlantic Ocean . The original plan was to work the James Caird around the coast , but the boat 's rudder had broken off after their initial landing , and some of the party were , in Shackleton 's view , unfit for further travel . The three fittest men ? Shackleton , Crean , and Worsley ? were decided to trek 30 statute miles (48 km) across the island 's glaciated surface , in a hazardous 36 @-@ hour journey to the nearest manned whaling station . This trek was the first recorded crossing of the mountainous island , completed without tents , sleeping bags , or map ? their only mountaineering equipment was a carpenter 's adze , a length of alpine rope , and screws from the James Caird hammered through their boots to serve as crampons . They arrived at the whaling station at Stromness , tired and dirty , hair long and matted , faces blackened by months of cooking by blubber stoves ? " the world 's dirtiest men " , according to Worsley . They quickly organized a boat to pick up the three on the other side of South Georgia , but thereafter it took Shackleton three months and four attempts by ship to rescue the other 22 men still on Elephant Island .

= = Later life = =

After returning to Britain in November 1916 , Crean resumed naval duties . On 15 December 1916 he was promoted to the rank of warrant officer (as a boatswain) , in recognition of his service on

the Endurance , and was awarded his third Polar Medal . On 5 September 1917 Crean married Ellen Herlihy of Annascaul .

In early 1920 , Shackleton was organising another Antarctic expedition , later to be known as the Shackleton @-@ Rowett Expedition . He invited Crean to join him , along with other officers from the Endurance . By this time , however , Crean 's second daughter had arrived , and he had plans to open a business following his naval career . He turned down Shackleton 's invitation .

On his last naval assignment , with Hecla , Crean suffered a bad fall which caused lasting effects to his vision . As a result , he was retired on medical grounds on 24 March 1920 . He and Ellen opened a small public house in Annascaul , which he called The South Pole Inn . The couple had three daughters , Mary , Kate , and Eileen , although Kate died when she was four years old .

Throughout his life , Crean remained an extremely modest man . When he returned to Kerry , he put all of his medals away and never again spoke about his experiences in the Antarctic . Indeed , there is no reliable evidence of Crean giving any interviews to the press . It has been speculated that this may have been because Kerry had long been a centre for Irish republicanism , and it would have been inappropriate for an Irishman to speak of his achievements on polar expeditions organised by a once occupying power . In fact , Crean and his family were once the victims of a Black and Tan raid during the War of Independence . The raiders ransacked his property and the Creans felt threatened until the Black and Tans happened across a framed photo of Crean in Royal Navy dress uniform and medals . They then left his inn .

Crean 's older brother was Cornelius Crean , a sergeant in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) . Cornelius was based in West Cork , where he served with the RIC during the War of Independence . Sgt. Crean was killed during an IRA ambush near Upton in West Cork on 25 April 1920 .

In 1938 Crean became ill with a burst appendix . He was taken to the nearest hospital in Tralee , but as no surgeon was available to operate , he was transferred to the Bon Secours Hospital in Cork where his appendix was removed . Because the operation had been delayed , an infection developed , and after a week in the hospital he died on 27 July 1938 , shortly after his sixty @-@ first birthday . He was buried in his family 's tomb at the cemetery in Ballynacourty .

Crean is commemorated in at least two place names : Mount Crean 8 @,@ 630 feet (2 @,@ 630 m) in Victoria Land , and the Crean Glacier on South Georgia . A one @-@ man play , Tom Crean ? Antarctic Explorer , has been widely performed since 2001 by its author Aidan Dooley , including a special showing at the South Pole Inn , Annascaul , in October 2001 . Present were Crean 's daughters , Eileen and Mary , both in their 80s . Apparently he never told them his stories ; according to Eileen : " He put his medals and his sword in a box ... and that was that . He was a very humble man " .

In July 2003 , a bronze statue of Crean was unveiled across from his pub in Annascaul . It depicts him leaning against a crate whilst holding a pair of hiking poles in one hand and two of " his " beloved sled dog pups in the other .