

= Aeneas Mackintosh =

Aeneas Lionel Acton Mackintosh (1 July 1879 ? 8 May 1916) was a British Merchant Navy officer and Antarctic explorer , who commanded the Ross Sea party as part of Sir Ernest Shackleton 's Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition , 1914 ? 17 . The Ross Sea party 's mission was to support Shackleton 's proposed transcontinental march by laying supply depots along the latter stages of the march 's intended route . In the face of persistent setbacks and practical difficulties , Mackintosh 's party fulfilled its task , although he and two others died in the course of their duties .

Mackintosh 's first Antarctic experience was as second officer on Shackleton 's Nimrod Expedition , 1907 ? 09 . Shortly after his arrival in the Antarctic , a shipboard accident destroyed his right eye , and he was sent back to New Zealand . He returned in 1909 to participate in the later stages of the expedition ; his will and determination in adversity impressed Shackleton , and led to his Ross Sea party appointment in 1914 .

Having brought his party to the Antarctic , Mackintosh was faced with numerous difficulties . Confused and vague orders meant he was uncertain of the timing of Shackleton 's proposed march . His problems were compounded when the party 's ship , SY Aurora , was swept from its winter moorings during a gale and was unable to return , causing the loss of vital equipment and supplies . In carrying out the party 's depot @-@ laying task , one man died ; Mackintosh barely survived , owing his life to the actions of his comrades who brought him to safety . Restored to health , he and a companion disappeared while attempting to return to the expedition 's base camp by crossing the unstable sea ice .

Mackintosh 's competence and leadership skills have been questioned by polar historians . Shackleton commended the work of the party , and equated the sacrifice of their lives to those given in the trenches of the First World War , but was critical of Mackintosh 's organising skills . Years later , Shackleton 's son , Lord Shackleton , identified Mackintosh as one of the expedition 's heroes , alongside Ernest Joyce and Dick Richards .

= = Early life = =

Mackintosh was born in Tirhut , India , on 1 July 1879 , one of six children (five sons and a daughter) of a Scottish indigo planter , Alexander Mackintosh , a descendant from the chieftains of Clan Chattan . Aeneas would in due course be named as an heir to the chieftainship , and to the ancient seat at Inverness that went with it . When Aeneas was still a young child , his mother , Annie Mackintosh , suddenly returned to Britain , bringing the children with her . The reasons for the family rift are unknown , but it was evidently permanent . At home in Bedfordshire , Aeneas attended Bedford Modern School . He then followed the same path as had Ernest Shackleton five years earlier , leaving school at the age of 16 to go to sea . After serving a tough Merchant Officer 's apprenticeship , he joined the P and O Line , and remained with this company until he was recruited by Shackleton 's Nimrod Expedition , which sailed for Antarctica in 1907 . Before the expedition 's departure Mackintosh was commissioned Sub @-@ Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve .

= = Nimrod Expedition = =

The Nimrod Expedition , 1907 ? 1909 , was the first of three Antarctic expeditions led by Ernest Shackleton . Its objective , as stated by Shackleton , was to " proceed to the Ross Quadrant of the Antarctic with a view to reaching the Geographical South Pole and the South Magnetic Pole " . Mackintosh was recommended to Shackleton as a suitable officer by the P & O Line , and soon earned Shackleton 's confidence while impressing his fellow @-@ officers with his will and determination . While the expedition was in New Zealand , Shackleton added Mackintosh to the shore party , as a likely candidate for the polar march .

= = = Accident = = =

On 31 January 1908 , not long after Nimrod 's arrival at McMurdo Sound in the Antarctic , Mackintosh was assisting in the transfer of sledging gear aboard ship when a hook swung across the deck and struck his right eye , virtually destroying it . He was immediately taken to the captain 's cabin where , later that day , expedition doctor Eric Marshall operated to remove the eye , using partly improvised surgical equipment . Marshall was deeply impressed by Mackintosh 's fortitude , observing that " no man could have taken it better . " The accident cost Mackintosh his place on the shore party , and required his return to New Zealand for further treatment . He took no part in the main events of the expedition , but returned south with Nimrod in January 1909 , to participate in the closing stages . Shackleton , who had earlier fallen out with the ship 's master , Rupert England , had wanted Mackintosh to captain Nimrod on this voyage , but the eye injury had not healed sufficiently to make this appointment possible .

= = = Lost on the ice = = =

On 1 January 1909 , on its return to Antarctica , Nimrod was stopped by the ice , still 25 miles (40 km) from the expedition 's shore base at Cape Royds . Mackintosh decided that he would cross this stretch of ice on foot . Historian Beau Riffenburgh describes the journey that followed as " one of the most ill @-@ considered parts of the entire expedition " .

Mackintosh 's party , which left the ship on the morning of 3 January , consisted of Mackintosh and three sailors , with a sledge containing supplies and a large mailbag . Two sailors quickly returned to the ship , while Mackintosh and one companion went forward . They camped on the ice that evening , only to find next day that the whole area around them had broken up . After a desperate dash over the moving floes , they managed to reach a small glacier tongue . They camped there , and waited for several days for their snow @-@ blindness to subside . When their vision returned , they found that Cape Royds was in sight but inaccessible , as the sea @-@ ice leading to it had gone , leaving a stretch of open water . They had little choice but to make for the hut by land , a dangerous undertaking without appropriate equipment and experience .

On 11 January they set out . For the next 48 hours they struggled over hostile terrain , through regions of deep crevasses and treacherous snowfields . They soon parted company with all their equipment and supplies . At one point , to proceed , they had to ascend to 3 @, @ 000 feet (910 m) and then slide to the foot of a snow @-@ slope . Eventually , after stumbling around in the fog for hours , they fortunately encountered Bernard Day , a member of the shore party , a short distance from the hut . The ship later recovered the abandoned equipment . John King Davis , then serving as Nimrod 's chief officer , remarked that " Mackintosh was always the man to take the hundredth chance . This time he got away with it . "

Mackintosh later joined Ernest Joyce and others on a journey across the Great Ice Barrier to Minna Bluff , to lay a depot for Shackleton 's polar party , whose return from their southern march was awaited . On 3 March , while keeping watch on the deck of Nimrod , Mackintosh observed a flare , which signalled the safe return of Shackleton and his party . They had fallen just short of their South Pole objective , having reached a Farthest South of 88 ° 23 ' S.

= = Between expeditions = =

Mackintosh returned to England in June 1909 . On reporting to the P & O , he was informed that due to his impaired sight he was discharged . Without immediate prospects of employment , he agreed , early in 1910 , to accompany Douglas Mawson (who had served as a geologist on the Nimrod Expedition and was later to lead the Australasian Antarctic Expedition) on a trip to Hungary , to survey a potential goldfield which Shackleton was hoping would form the basis of a lucrative business venture . Despite a promising report from Mawson , nothing came of this . Mackintosh later launched his own treasure @-@ hunting expedition to Cocos Island off the Panama Pacific coast , but again returned home empty @-@ handed .

In February 1912 , Mackintosh married Gladys Campbell , and settled into an office job as assistant secretary to the Imperial Merchant Service Guild in Liverpool . The safe , routine work did not satisfy

him : " I am still existing at this job , stuck in a dirty office , " he wrote to a former Nimrod shipmate . " I always feel I never completed my first initiation ? so would like to have one final wallow , for good or bad ! " He was therefore delighted , early in 1914 , to receive an invitation from Shackleton to join the latter 's Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition , which was to attempt the first crossing of the Antarctic continent .

= = Ross Sea party = =

= = = Early difficulties = = =

Shackleton 's expedition contained two separate components . The main party would establish a base in the Weddell Sea , from which a group of six led by Shackleton was to march across the continent , via the South Pole . A supporting Ross Sea party , based on the opposite side of the continent in McMurdo Sound , would lay supply depots across the Great Ice Barrier , to assist the transcontinental party on the final stage of its journey . Mackintosh was originally to have been a member of Shackleton 's transcontinental party , but difficulties arose over the appointment of a commander for the Ross Sea party . Eric Marshall , the surgeon from the Nimrod expedition , turned the assignment down , as did John King Davis ; Shackleton 's efforts to obtain from the Admiralty a naval crew for this part of the enterprise were rejected . The post of Ross Sea party leader was finally offered to , and accepted by , Mackintosh . His ship would be the Aurora , lately used by Mawson 's Australasian Antarctic Expedition and presently lying in Australia . Shackleton considered the Ross Sea party 's assignment routine , and saw no special difficulties in its execution .

Mackintosh arrived in Australia in October 1914 to take up his duties , and was immediately faced with major difficulties . Without warning or notification , Shackleton had cut the Ross Sea party 's allocated funds in half , from £ 2 @,@ 000 to £ 1 @,@ 000 . Mackintosh was instructed to make up the difference by soliciting free gifts , and to mortgage the expedition 's ship to raise further money . It then emerged that the purchase of Aurora had not been legally completed , which delayed Mackintosh 's attempts to mortgage it . Also , Aurora was unfit for Antarctic work without an extensive overhaul , which required co @-@ operation from an exasperated Australian Government . The task of dealing with these difficulties within a very restricted timescale caused Mackintosh great anxiety , and the various muddles created a negative image of the expedition in the eyes of the Australian public . Some members of the party resigned , others were dismissed ; recruiting a full complement of crew and scientific staff involved some last @-@ minute appointments which left the party noticeably short of Antarctic experience .

Shackleton had given Mackintosh the impression that he would if possible attempt his crossing during the coming 1914 ? 15 Antarctic season . Before departing for the Weddell Sea , he changed his mind about the feasibility of this timescale . Mackintosh was not informed of this change of plan ; this misunderstanding led to the underprepared and near @-@ chaotic depot @-@ laying journeys of January ? March 1915 .

= = = Depot @-@ laying , first season = = =

Aurora finally left Hobart , Tasmania , on 24 December 1914 . On 16 January 1915 the shore party landed at McMurdo Sound , where Mackintosh established a base camp at Captain Scott 's old headquarters at Cape Evans . Believing that Shackleton might have already begun his march from the Weddell Sea , he was determined to begin depot @-@ laying at once . Joyce , the expedition 's most seasoned Antarctic traveller ? he had been with Scott 's Discovery Expedition in 1901 ? 04 , and with the Nimrod Expedition ? protested that the party needed time for acclimatisation and training , but was overruled . Joyce was shocked by the rebuff ; he had expected that Mackintosh would defer to him on sledging matters : " If I had Shacks here I would make him see my way of arguing " , he wrote in his diary . The depot @-@ laying journey which followed began with a series of mishaps . A blizzard delayed their start , a motor sledge broke down after a few miles , and

Mackintosh and his group lost their way on the sea ice between Cape Evans and Hut Point . Conditions on the Barrier were harsh for the untrained and inexperienced men . Many of the stores taken on to the Barrier were dumped on the ice to reduce loads and did not reach the depots . After Mackintosh insisted , over Joyce 's urgent protests , on taking the dogs all the way to 80 ° S , all died on the journey . The men , frostbitten and exhausted , returned to the old Discovery expedition hut at Hut Point on 24 March , but were cut off from the ship and from their Cape Evans base by unsafe sea ice and had to wait , idle , for nearly three months . After this experience , confidence in Mackintosh 's leadership was low , and bickering rife .

= = = Loss of Aurora = = =

When Mackintosh and the depot @-@ laying party finally reached Cape Evans in mid @-@ June , they learned that Aurora , with 18 men on board and carrying most of the shore party 's supplies and equipment , had broken loose from its winter mooring during a gale . Ice conditions in McMurdo Sound made it impossible for the ship to return ; the shore party of ten was effectively marooned , with drastically depleted resources . However , most of the stores required for the depots had been landed . Mackintosh therefore resolved that the following season 's work would be carried out to the full : depots would be laid across the Great ice Barrier all the way to the Beardmore Glacier . The party would seek to make up its lack of supplies and equipment by salvaging the stores left by earlier expeditions , particularly from Captain Scott 's recent sojourn at Cape Evans . The entire party pledged its support to this effort , though it would require , wrote Mackintosh , a record @-@ breaking feat of polar travel to accomplish it . However , the long months of preparation were difficult for Mackintosh . The only officer in the party , he found it hard to form close relationships with his companions . His position became increasingly isolated , and subject to the frequent vocal criticisms of Joyce in particular .

= = = March to Mount Hope = = =

On 1 September 1915 , nine men in teams of three began the task of hauling approximately 5 @,@ 000 pounds (2 @,@ 300 kg) of stores from the Cape Evans base on to the Barrier ? the scientist Alexander Stevens remained at base camp , alone . This operation was the first stage in the process of laying down depots at intervals of one @-@ degree latitude (60 nautical miles / 110 km / 69 statute miles) , down to Mount Hope at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier . A large forward base was then established at the Bluff depot , just north of 79 ° , from which the final journeys to Mount Hope would be launched early in 1916 . During these early stages , Mackintosh clashed repeatedly with Joyce over methods . In a showdown on 28 November , confronted with incontrovertible evidence of the greater effectiveness of Joyce 's methods over his own , Mackintosh was forced to back down and accept a revised plan drafted by Joyce and Richards . Joyce 's private comment was " I never in my experience came across such an idiot in charge of men . "

The main march southward from the Bluff depot began on 1 January 1916 . Within a few days , one team of three was forced to return to base , following the failure of their Primus stove . The other six carried on : Mackintosh , Joyce , Ernest Wild , Dick Richards , Arnold Spencer @-@ Smith and Victor Hayward . The 80 ° depot laid the previous season was reinforced , and new depots were built at 81 ° and 82 ° . As the party moved on towards the vicinity of Mount Hope , both Mackintosh and Spencer @-@ Smith , the expedition 's photographer , were hobbling . Shortly after the 83 ° mark was passed , Spencer @-@ Smith collapsed and was left in a tent while the others struggled on the remaining few miles . Mackintosh rejected the suggestion that he should remain with the invalid , insisting that it was his duty to ensure that every depot was laid . On 26 January , Mount Hope was attained and the final depot put in place .

On the homeward march , Spencer @-@ Smith had to be drawn on the sledge . Mackintosh 's condition was deteriorating rapidly ; unable to pull , he staggered along , crippled by the growing effects of scurvy . As his condition worsened , Mackintosh was forced at intervals to join Spencer @-@ Smith as a passenger on the sledge . Even the fitter members of the group were handicapped

by frostbite , snow @-@ blindness and scurvy , as the journey became a desperate struggle for survival . On 8 March , Mackintosh volunteered to remain in the tent while the others tried to get Spencer @-@ Smith to the relative safety of Hut Point . Spencer @-@ Smith died the next day . Richards , Wild and Joyce struggled on to Hut Point with the now stricken Hayward , before returning to rescue Mackintosh . By 18 March , all five survivors were recuperating at Hut Point , having completed what Shackleton 's biographers Marjory and James Fisher describe as " one of the most remarkable , and apparently impossible , feats of endurance in the history of polar travel . "

= = = Disappearance and death = = =

With the help of fresh seal meat which halted the ravages of scurvy , the survivors slowly recovered at Hut Point . The unstable condition of the sea ice in McMurdo Sound prevented them from completing the journey to the Cape Evans base . Conditions at Hut Point were gloomy and depressing , with an unrelieved diet and no normal comforts ; Mackintosh in particular found the squalor of the hut intolerable , and dreaded the possibility that , caught at Hut Point , they might miss the return of the ship . On 8 May 1916 , after carrying out reconnaissance on the state of the sea ice , Mackintosh announced that he and Hayward were prepared to risk the walk to Cape Evans . Against the urgent advice of their comrades , they set off , carrying only light supplies .

Shortly after they had moved out of sight of Hut Point , a severe blizzard developed which lasted for two days . When it had subsided , Joyce and Richards followed the still visible footmarks on the ice up to a large crack , where the tracks stopped . Neither Mackintosh nor Hayward arrived at Cape Evans and no trace of either was ever found , despite extensive searches carried out by Joyce after he , Richards and Wild finally managed to reach Cape Evans in June .

After Aurora finally returned to Cape Evans in January 1917 , there were further searches , equally fruitless . All the indications were that Mackintosh and Hayward had either fallen through the ice , or that the ice on which they had been walking had been blown out to sea during the blizzard .

A memorial to Mackintosh exists on the grave of his mother Annie in the grave yard of St. Johns church in Burgess Hill in West Sussex . The memorial also mentions two of Mackintosh 's brothers who died prematurely in Thailand and Southern Rhodesia and a sister who lived into old age and died in 1962 .

= = Assessment = =

Mackintosh 's own expedition diaries , which cover the period up to 30 September 1915 , have not been published ; they are held by the Scott Polar Research Institute . The two main accounts available to general readers are Joyce 's diaries , published in 1929 as *The South Polar Trail* , and the account of Dick Richards : *The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914 ? 17* . Mackintosh 's reputation is not well @-@ served by either , particularly Joyce 's partisan record which is described by one commentator as a " self @-@ aggrandizing epic " . Joyce is generally scathing about Mackintosh 's leadership ; Richards 's account is much shorter and more straightforward , although decades later , when he was the only member of the expedition still alive (he died in 1985 , aged 91) , he spoke out , claiming that Mackintosh on the depot @-@ laying march was " tremendously pathetic " , had " lost his nerve completely " , and that the fatal ice walk was " suicide " .

The circumstances of Mackintosh 's death have led commentators to emphasise his impetuosity and incompetence . This generally negative view of him was not , however , unanimous among his comrades . Stevens , the party 's scientist , found Mackintosh " steadfast and reliable " , and believed that the Ross Sea party would have achieved much less but for Mackintosh 's unwearying drive . John King Davis , too , admired Mackintosh 's dedication and called the depot @-@ laying journey a " magnificent achievement " . Shackleton was equivocal . In South he acknowledges that Mackintosh and his men achieved their object , praises the party 's qualities of endurance and self @-@ sacrifice , and asserts that Mackintosh died for his country . On the other hand , in a letter home , he is highly critical : " Mackintosh seemed to have no idea of discipline or organisation ... " .

Shackleton did , however , donate part of the proceeds from a short New Zealand lecture tour to assist the Mackintosh family . His son , Lord Shackleton , in a much later assessment of the expedition , wrote : " Three men in particular emerge as heroes : Captain Aeneas Mackintosh , ... Dick Richards , and Ernest Joyce . "

Mackintosh had two daughters , the second born while he was in Australia awaiting the Aurora 's departure . On the return Barrier journey in February 1916 , expecting to die , he wrote a farewell message , with echoes of Captain Scott . The message concludes : " If it is God 's will that we should have given up our lives then we do so in the British manner as our tradition holds us in honour bound to do . Goodbye , friends . I feel sure that my dear wife and children will not be neglected . " In 1923 , Gladys Mackintosh married Joseph Stenhouse , Aurora 's first officer and later captain .

Mackintosh , who had received a silver Polar Medal for his work during the Nimrod Expedition , is commemorated by Mt . Mackintosh at 74 ° 20 ' S 162 ° 15 ' E.