

## = Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition =

The Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition ( 1914 ? 17 ) , also known as the Endurance Expedition , is considered the last major expedition of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration . Conceived by Sir Ernest Shackleton , the expedition was an attempt to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic continent . After the conquest of the South Pole by Roald Amundsen in 1911 , this crossing remained , in Shackleton 's words , the " one great main object of Antarctic journeyings " . The expedition failed to accomplish this objective , but became recognised instead as an epic feat of endurance .

Shackleton had served in the Antarctic in Captain Scott 's Discovery Expedition , 1901 ? 04 , and had led the British Antarctic Expedition , 1907 ? 09 . In this new venture he proposed to sail to the Weddell Sea and to land a shore party near Vahsel Bay , in preparation for a transcontinental march via the South Pole to the Ross Sea . A supporting group , the Ross Sea party , would meanwhile establish camp in McMurdo Sound , and from there lay a series of supply depots across the Ross Ice Shelf to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier . These depots would be essential for the transcontinental party 's survival , as the group would not be able to carry enough provisions for the entire crossing . The expedition required two ships : Endurance under Shackleton for the Weddell Sea party , and Aurora , under Aeneas Mackintosh , for the Ross Sea party .

Endurance became beset in the ice of the Weddell Sea before reaching Vahsel Bay , and drifted northward , held in the pack ice , throughout the Antarctic winter of 1915 . Eventually the ship was crushed and sunk , stranding its 28 @-@ man complement on the ice . After months spent in makeshift camps as the ice continued its northwards drift , the party took to the lifeboats to reach the inhospitable , uninhabited Elephant Island . Shackleton and five others then made an 800 @-@ mile ( 1 @, @ 287 km ) open @-@ boat journey in the James Caird to reach South Georgia . From there , Shackleton was eventually able to mount a rescue of the men waiting on Elephant Island and bring them home without loss of life . On the other side of the continent , the Ross Sea party overcame great hardships to fulfil its mission . Aurora was blown from her moorings during a gale and was unable to return , leaving the shore party marooned without proper supplies or equipment . Nevertheless , the depots were laid , but three lives were lost before the party 's eventual rescue .

## = = Preparations = =

## = = = Origins = = =

Despite the public acclaim that had greeted Shackleton 's achievements during the Nimrod Expedition in 1907 ? 09 , the explorer was unsettled , becoming ? in the words of British skiing pioneer Sir Harry Brittain ? " a bit of a floating gent " . By 1912 his future Antarctic plans depended on the results of Scott 's Terra Nova Expedition , which had left Cardiff in July 1910 , and on the concurrent Norwegian expedition led by Roald Amundsen . The news of Amundsen 's conquest of the South Pole reached Shackleton on 11 March 1912 , to which he responded : " The discovery of the South Pole will not be the end of Antarctic exploration " . The next work , he said , would be " a transcontinental journey from sea to sea , crossing the pole " . He was aware that others were in the field pursuing this objective . On 11 December 1911 , a German expedition under Wilhelm Filchner had sailed from South Georgia , intending to penetrate deep into the Weddell Sea and establishing a base from which he would cross the continent to the Ross Sea . In late 1912 Filchner returned to South Georgia , having failed to land and set up his base . However , his reports of possible landing sites in Vahsel Bay , at around 78 ° latitude , were noted by Shackleton , and incorporated into his developing expedition plans .

News of the deaths of Captain Scott and his companions on their return from the South Pole reached London in February 1913 . Against this gloomy background Shackleton initiated preparations for his proposed journey . He solicited financial and practical support from , among others , Trygve Gran of Scott 's expedition , and the former Prime Minister Lord Rosebery , but

received no help from either . Gran was evasive , and Rosebery blunt : " I have never been able to care one farthing about the Poles " . Shackleton got support , however , from William Speirs Bruce , leader of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition of 1902 ? 04 , who had harboured plans for an Antarctic crossing since 1908 , but had abandoned the project for lack of funds . Bruce generously allowed Shackleton to adopt his plans , although the eventual scheme announced by Shackleton owed little to Bruce . On 29 December 1913 , having acquired his first promises of financial backing ? a £ 10 @, @ 000 grant from the British Government ? Shackleton made his plans public , in a letter to The Times .

= = = Shackleton 's plan = = =

Shackleton called his new expedition the Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition , because he felt that " not only the people of these islands , but our kinsmen in all the lands under the Union Jack will be willing to assist towards the carrying out of the ... programme of exploration . " To arouse the interest of the general public , Shackleton issued a detailed programme early in 1914 . The expedition was to consist of two parties and two ships . The Weddell Sea party would travel in the Endurance and continue to the Vahsel Bay area , where fourteen men would land of whom six , under Shackleton , would form the Transcontinental Party . This group , with 69 dogs , two motor sledges , and equipment " embodying everything that the experience of the leader and his expert advisers can suggest " , would undertake the 1 @, @ 800 @-@ mile ( 2 @, @ 900 km ) journey to the Ross Sea . The remaining eight shore party members would carry out scientific work , three going to Graham Land , three to Enderby Land and two remaining at base camp .

The Ross Sea party would set up its base in McMurdo Sound , on the opposite side of the continent . After landing they would lay depots on the route of the transcontinental party as far as the Beardmore Glacier , hopefully meeting that party there and assisting it home . They would also make geological and other observations .

= = = Finance = = =

Shackleton estimated that he would need £ 50 @, @ 000 ( current value £ 4 @, @ 327 @, @ 000 ) to carry out the simplest version of his plan . He did not believe in appeals to the public : " ( they ) cause endless book @-@ keeping worries " . His chosen method of fund @-@ raising was to solicit contributions from wealthy backers , and he had begun this process early in 1913 , with little initial success . The first significant encouragement came in December 1913 , when the Government offered him £ 10 @, @ 000 , provided he could raise an equivalent amount from private sources . The Royal Geographical Society , from which he had expected nothing , gave him £ 1 @, @ 000 ? according to Huntford , Shackleton , in a grand gesture , advised them that he would only need to take up half of this sum . Lord Rosebery , who had previously expressed his lack of interest in polar expeditions , gave £ 50 . In February 1914 The New York Times reported that playwright J. M. Barrie ? a close friend of Captain Scott ? had confidentially donated \$ 50 @, @ 000 ( about £ 10 @, @ 000 ) . With time running out , contributions were eventually secured during the spring and early summer of 1914 . Dudley Docker of the Birmingham Small Arms Company ( BSA ) gave £ 10 @, @ 000 , wealthy tobacco heiress Janet Stancomb @-@ Wills gave a " generous " sum ( the amount was not revealed ) , and , in June , Scottish industrialist Sir James Caird donated £ 24 @, @ 000 ( current value £ 2 @, @ 080 @, @ 000 ) . Shackleton informed the Morning Post that " this magnificent gift relieves me of all anxiety " .

Shackleton now had the money to proceed . He acquired , for £ 14 @, @ 000 ( current value £ 1 @, @ 210 @, @ 000 ) , a 300 @-@ ton barquentine called Polaris , which had been built for the Belgian explorer Adrien de Gerlache for an expedition to Spitsbergen . This scheme had collapsed and the ship became available . Shackleton changed her name to Endurance , reflecting his family motto " By endurance we conquer " . For a further £ 3 @, @ 200 ( current value £ 277 @, @ 000 ) , he acquired Douglas Mawson ? s expedition ship Aurora , which was lying in Hobart , Tasmania . This would act as the Ross Sea party 's vessel .

How much money Shackleton raised to meet the total costs of the expedition ( later estimated by the Daily Mail to be around £ 80 000 , is uncertain , since the size of the Stancomb Wills donation is not known . Money was a constant problem for Shackleton , who as an economy measure halved the funding allocated to the Ross Sea party , a fact which the party ' s commander Aeneas Mackintosh only discovered when he arrived in Australia to take up his duties . Mackintosh was forced to haggle and plead for money and supplies to make his part of the expedition viable . Shackleton had , however , realised the revenue earning potential of the expedition . He sold the exclusive newspaper rights to the Daily Chronicle , and formed the Imperial Trans Antarctic Film Syndicate to take advantage of the film rights .

= = Personnel = =

According to legend , Shackleton posted an advertisement in a London paper , stating : " Men wanted for hazardous journey . Low wages , bitter cold , long hours of complete darkness . Safe return doubtful . Honour and recognition in event of success . " Searches for the original advertisement have proved unsuccessful , and the story is generally regarded as apocryphal . Shackleton received more than 5 000 applications for places on the expedition , including a letter from " three sporty girls " who suggested that if their feminine garb was inconvenient they would " just love to don masculine attire . " Eventually the crews for the two arms of the expedition were trimmed down to 28 apiece , including William Bakewell , who joined the ship in Buenos Aires , his friend Perce Blackborow who stowed away when his application was turned down , and several last minute appointments made to the Ross Sea party in Australia . A temporary crewman was Sir Daniel Gooch , grandson of the renowned railway pioneer of the same name , who stepped in to help Shackleton as a dog handler at the last moment and signed up for an able seaman 's pay . Gooch agreed to sail with Endurance as far as South Georgia .

As his second in command , Shackleton chose Frank Wild , who had been with him on both the Discovery and Nimrod expeditions , and was one of the Furthest South party in 1909 . Wild had just returned from Mawson ' s Australian Antarctic Expedition . To captain Endurance Shackleton had wanted John King Davis , who had commanded Aurora during the Australian Antarctic Expedition . Davis refused , thinking the enterprise was " foredoomed " , so the appointment went to Frank Worsley , who claimed to have applied to the expedition after learning of it in a dream . Royal Navy Chief Petty Officer Tom Crean , who had been awarded the Albert Medal for saving the life of Lieutenant Evans on the Terra Nova Expedition , took leave from the navy to sign on as Endurance 's Second Officer ; another experienced Antarctic hand , Alfred Cheetham , became Third Officer . Two Nimrod veterans were assigned to the Ross Sea party : Mackintosh who commanded it , and Ernest Joyce . Shackleton had hoped that the Aurora would be staffed by a naval crew , and had asked the Admiralty for officers and men , but was turned down . After pressing his case , Shackleton was given one officer from the Royal Marines , Captain Thomas Orde Lees , who was Superintendent of Physical Training at the Marines training depot .

The scientific staff of six accompanying Endurance comprised the two surgeons , Alexander Macklin and James McIlroy ; a geologist , James Wordie ; a biologist , Robert Clark ; a physicist Reginald James ; and Leonard Hussey , a meteorologist who would eventually edit Shackleton ' s expedition account South . The visual record of the expedition was the responsibility of its photographer Frank Hurley and its artist George Marston . The final composition of the Ross Sea party was hurried . Some who left Britain for Australia to join Aurora resigned before it departed for the Ross Sea , and a full complement of crew was in doubt until the last minute . Within the party only Mackintosh and Joyce had any previous Antarctic experience ; Mackintosh had lost an eye as the result of an accident during the Nimrod expedition and had gone home early .

= = Expedition = =

= = Weddell sea party = =

### === Voyage through the ice ===

Endurance , without Shackleton ( who was detained in England by expedition business ) , left Plymouth on 8 August 1914 , heading first for Buenos Aires . Here Shackleton , who had travelled on a faster ship , rejoined the expedition . Hurley also came on board , together with Bakewell and the stowaway , Blackborow , while several others left the ship or were discharged . On 26 October the ship sailed for the South Atlantic , arriving in South Georgia on 5 November . Shackleton 's original intention was that the crossing would take place in the first season , 1914 ? 15 . Although he soon recognised the impracticality of this , he neglected to inform Mackintosh and the Ross Sea party of his change of plan . According to the Daily Chronicle 's correspondent Ernest Perris , a cable intended for Macintosh was never sent .

After a month @-@ long halt in the Grytviken whaling station , Endurance departed for the Antarctic on 5 December . Two days later Shackleton was disconcerted to encounter pack ice as far north as  $57^{\circ} 26' S$  , forcing the ship to manoeuvre . During the following days there were more tussles with the pack , which on 14 December was thick enough to halt the ship for 24 hours . Three days later the ship was stopped again . Shackleton commented : " I had been prepared for evil conditions in the Weddell Sea , but had hoped that the pack would be loose . What we were encountering was fairly dense pack of a very obstinate character " .

Endurance 's progress was frustratingly slow , until on 22 December leads opened up and the ship was able to continue steadily southward . This continued for the next two weeks , taking the party deep into the Weddell Sea . Further delays then slowed progress after the turn of the year , before a lengthy run south during 7 ? 10 January 1915 brought them close to the 100 @-@ foot ( 30 m ) ice walls which guarded the Antarctic coastal region of Coats Land . This territory had been discovered and named by William Speirs Bruce in 1904 , during the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition . On 15 January Endurance came abreast of a great glacier , the edge of which formed a bay which appeared a good landing place . However , Shackleton considered it too far north of Vahsel Bay for a landing , " except under pressure of necessity " ? a decision he would later regret . On 17 January the ship reached a latitude of  $76^{\circ} 27' S$  , where land was faintly discernible . Shackleton named it Caird Coast , after his principal backer . Bad weather forced the ship to shelter in the lee of a stranded iceberg .

They were now close to Luitpold Land , discovered by Filchner in 1912 , at the southern end of which lay their destination , Vahsel Bay . Next day , the ship was forced north @-@ westward for 14 miles ( 23 km ) , resuming in a generally southerly direction before being stopped altogether . The position was  $76^{\circ} 34' S$  ,  $31^{\circ} 30' W$  . After ten days of inactivity the ship 's fires were banked , to save fuel . Strenuous efforts were made to release her ; on 14 February Shackleton ordered men on to the ice with ice @-@ chisels , prickers , saws and picks , to try and force a passage , but the labour proved futile . Shackleton did not at this stage abandon all hope of breaking free , but was now contemplating the " possibility of having to spend a winter in the inhospitable arms of the pack " .

### === Drift of Endurance ===

On 21 February 1915 Endurance , still held fast , drifted to her most southerly latitude ,  $76^{\circ} 58' S$  . Thereafter she began moving with the pack in a northerly direction . On 24 February Shackleton realised that they would be held in the ice throughout the winter , and ordered ship 's routine abandoned . The dogs were taken off board and housed in ice @-@ kennels or " dogloos " , and the ship 's interior was converted to suitable winter quarters for the various groups of men ? officers , scientists , engineers , and seamen . A wireless apparatus was rigged , but their location was too remote to receive or transmit signals .

Shackleton was aware of the recent example of Wilhelm Filchner 's ship , the Deutschland , which had become icebound in the same vicinity three years earlier . After Filchner 's attempts to establish

a land base at Vahsel Bay failed , his ship Deutschland was trapped on 6 March 1912 , about 200 miles ( 320 km ) off the coast of Coats Land . Six months later , at latitude  $63^{\circ} 37'$  , the ship broke free , then sailed to South Georgia apparently none the worse for its ordeal . Shackleton thought that a similar experience might allow Endurance to make a second attempt to reach Vahsel Bay in the following Antarctic spring .

In February and March the rate of drift was very slow . At the end of March Shackleton calculated that the ship had travelled a mere 95 miles ( 153 km ) since 19 January . However , as winter set in the speed of the drift increased , and the condition of the surrounding ice changed . On 14 April Shackleton recorded the nearby pack " piling and rafting against the masses of ice " ? if the ship was caught in this disturbance " she would be crushed like an eggshell " . In May , as the sun set for the winter months , the ship was at  $75^{\circ} 23' S$  ,  $42^{\circ} 14' W$  , still drifting northwards . It would be at least four months before spring brought the chance of an opening of the ice , and there was no certainty that Endurance would break free in time to attempt a return to the Vahsel Bay area . Shackleton now considered the possibility of finding an alternative landing ground on the western shores of the Weddell Sea , if that coast could be reached . " In the meantime " , he wrote , " we must wait " .

In the dark winter months of May , June and July , Shackleton was concerned to maintain fitness , training and morale . Although the scope for activity was limited , the dogs were exercised ( and on occasion raced competitively ) , men were encouraged to take moonlight walks , and aboard ship there were attempted theatricals . Special occasions such as Empire Day ( 24 May ) were duly celebrated . The first signs of the ice breaking up occurred on 22 July . On 1 August , in a south @-@ westerly gale with heavy snow , the ice floe began to disintegrate all around the ship , the pressure forcing masses of ice beneath the keel and causing a heavy list to port . The position was perilous ; Shackleton wrote : " The effects of the pressure around us was awe @-@ inspiring . Mighty blocks of ice [ ... ] rose slowly till they jumped like cherry @-@ stones gripped between thumb and finger [ ... ] if the ship was once gripped firmly her fate would be sealed " . This danger passed , and the succeeding weeks were quiet . During this relative lull the ship drifted into the area where , in 1823 , Captain Benjamin Morrell of the sealer Wasp reported seeing a coastline which he identified as " New South Greenland " . There was no sign of any such land ; Shackleton concluded that Morrell had been deceived by the presence of large icebergs .

On 30 September the ship sustained what Shackleton described as " the worst squeeze we had experienced " . Worsley described the pressure as like being " thrown to and fro like a shuttlecock a dozen times " . On 24 October , the starboard side was forced against a large floe , increasing the pressure until the hull began to bend and splinter , so that water from below the ice began to pour into the ship . When the timbers broke they made noises which sailors later described as being similar to the sound of " heavy fireworks and the blasting of guns " . The supplies and three lifeboats were transferred to the ice , while the crew attempted to shore up the boat 's hull and pump out the incoming sea , but after a few days , on 27 October 1915 , and in freezing temperatures below  $15^{\circ} F$  (  $25^{\circ} C$  ) , Shackleton gave the order to abandon ship . The position at abandonment was  $69^{\circ} 05' S$  ,  $51^{\circ} 30' W$  . The wreckage remained afloat , and over the following weeks the crew salvaged further supplies and materials , including Hurley 's photographs and cameras that had initially been left behind . From around 550 plates Hurley chose the best 150 , the maximum that could be carried , and smashed the rest .

== == Camping on the ice == ==

With the loss of the ship the transcontinental plans were abandoned , and the focus shifted to that of survival . Shackleton 's intention now was to march the crew westward , to one or other of several possible destinations . His first thought was for Paulet Island , where he knew there was a hut containing a substantial food depot , because he had ordered it 12 years earlier while organising relief for Otto Nordenskiöld 's stranded Swedish expedition . Other possibilities were Snow Hill Island , which had been Nordenskiöld 's winter quarters and which was believed to contain a stock of emergency supplies , or Robertson Island . Shackleton believed that from one of these islands

they would be able to reach and cross Graham Land , and get to the whaling outposts in Wilhelmina Bay . He calculated that on the day Endurance was abandoned they were 346 miles from Paulet Island . Worsley calculated the distance to Snow Hill Island to be 312 miles ( 500 km ) , with a further 120 miles ( 190 km ) to Wilhelmina Bay . He believed the march was too risky ; they should wait until the ice carried them to open water , and then escape in the boats . Shackleton overruled him .

Before the march could begin , Shackleton ordered the weakest animals to be shot , including the carpenter Harry McNish 's cat , Mrs. Chippy , and a pup which had become a pet of the surgeon Macklin . The company set out on 30 October 1915 , with two of the ship 's lifeboats carried on sledges . Problems quickly arose , as the condition of the sea ice around them worsened . According to Hurley the surface became " a labyrinth of hummocks and ridges " , in which barely a square yard was smooth . In three days the party managed to travel barely two miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) , and on 1 November Shackleton abandoned the march ; they would make camp and await the break @- @ up of the ice . They gave the name " Ocean Camp " to the flat and solid @- @ looking floe on which their aborted march had ended , and settled down to wait . Parties continued to revisit the Endurance wreck , which was still drifting with the ice a short distance from the camp . More of the abandoned supplies were retrieved until , on 21 November 1915 , the ship finally slipped beneath the ice .

The ice was not drifting fast enough to be noticeable , although by late November the speed was up to seven miles a day . By 5 December they had passed 68 ° S , but the direction was turning slightly east of north . This was taking them to a position from which it would be difficult to reach Snow Hill Island , although Paulet Island , further north , remained a possibility . It was about 250 miles ( 400 km ) away , and Shackleton was anxious to reduce the length of the lifeboat journey that would be necessary to reach it . Therefore , on 21 December he announced a second march , to begin on 23 December .

Conditions , however , had not improved since the earlier attempt . Temperatures had risen and it was uncomfortably warm , with men sinking to their knees in soft snow as they struggled to haul the boats through the pressure ridges . On 27 December ship 's carpenter Harry McNish rebelled and refused to work . He argued that Ship 's Articles had lapsed since Endurance 's sinking , and that he was no longer under orders . Shackleton 's firm remonstrance finally brought the carpenter to heel , but the incident was never forgotten . Two days later , with only seven and a half miles ( 12 km ) progress achieved in seven back @- @ breaking days , Shackleton called a halt , observing : " It would take us over three hundred days to reach the land " . The crew put up their tents and settled into what Shackleton called " Patience Camp " , which would be their home for more than three months .

Supplies were now running low . Hurley and Macklin were sent back to Ocean Camp to recover food that had been left there to lighten the sledging teams ' burden . On 2 February 1916 Shackleton sent a larger party back , to recover the third lifeboat . Food shortages became acute as the weeks passed , and seal meat , which had added variety to their diet , now became a staple as Shackleton attempted to conserve the remaining packaged rations . In January , all but two teams of the dogs ( whose overall numbers had been depleted by mishaps and illness in the preceding months ) were shot on Shackleton 's orders , because the dogs ' requirements for seal meat were excessive . The final two teams were shot on 2 April , by which time their meat was a welcome addition to the rations . Meanwhile , the rate of drift became erratic ; after being held at around 67 ° for several weeks , at the end of January there was a series of rapid north @- @ eastward movements which , by 17 March , brought Patience Camp to the latitude of Paulet Island , but 60 miles ( 97 km ) to its east . " It might have been six hundred for all the chance we had of reaching it across the broken sea @- @ ice " , Shackleton recorded .

The party now had land more or less continuously in sight . The peak of Mount Haddington on James Ross Island remained in view as the party drifted slowly by . They were too far north for Snow Hill or Paulet Island to be accessible , and Shackleton 's chief hopes were now fixed on two remaining small islands at the northern extremity of Graham Land . These were Clarence Island and Elephant Island , around 100 miles ( 160 km ) due north of their position on 25 March . He then

decided that Deception Island might be a better target destination . This lay far to the west , towards the South Shetland Islands chain , but Shackleton thought it might be attainable by island @-@ hopping . Its advantage was that it was sometimes visited by whalers , and might contain provisions , whereas Clarence Island and Elephant Island were desolate and unvisited . To reach any of these destinations would require a perilous journey in the lifeboats , once the floe upon which they were drifting finally broke up . Earlier , the lifeboats had been named after the expedition ? s three chief financial sponsors : James Caird , Dudley Docker and Stancomb Wills .

= = = Lifeboat journey to Elephant Island = = =

The end of Patience Camp was signalled on the evening of 8 April , when the floe suddenly split . The camp now found itself on a small triangular raft of ice ; a break @-@ up of this would mean disaster , so Shackleton readied the lifeboats for the party ? s enforced departure . He had now decided they would try , if possible , to reach the distant Deception Island because a small wooden church had been reportedly erected for the benefit of whalers . This could provide a source of timber that might enable them to construct a seaworthy boat . At 1 pm on 9 April the Dudley Docker was launched , and an hour later all three boats were away . Shackleton himself commanded the James Caird , Worsley the Dudley Docker , and navigating officer Hubert Hudson was nominally in charge of the Stancomb Wills , though because of his precarious mental state the effective commander was Tom Crean .

The boats were surrounded by ice , dependent upon leads of water opening up , and progress was perilous and erratic . Frequently the boats were tied to floes , or dragged up on to them , while the men camped and waited for conditions to improve . Shackleton was wavering again between several potential destinations , and on 12 April rejected the various island options and decided on Hope Bay , at the very tip of Graham Land . However , conditions in the boats , in temperatures sometimes as low as ? 20 ° F ( ? 30 ° C ) , with little food and regular soakings in icy seawater , were wearing the men down , physically and mentally . Shackleton therefore decided that Elephant Island , the nearest of the possible refuges , was now the most practical option .

On 14 April the boats lay off the south @-@ east coast of Elephant Island , but could not land as the shore consisted of perpendicular cliffs and glaciers . Next day the James Caird rounded the eastern point of the island , to reach the northern lee shore , and discovered a narrow shingle beach . Soon afterwards , the three boats , which had been separated during the previous night , were reunited at this landing place . It was apparent from high tide markings that this beach would not serve as a long @-@ term camp , so the next day Wild and a crew set off in the Stancomb Wills to explore the coast for a safer site . They returned with news of a long spit of land , seven miles ( 11 km ) to the west . With minimum delay the men returned to the boats and transferred to this new location , which they later christened Cape Wild .

= = = Voyage of the James Caird = = =

Elephant Island was remote , uninhabited , and rarely visited by whalers or any other ships . If the party was to return to civilization it would be necessary to summon help . The only realistic way this could be done was to adapt one of the lifeboats for an 800 @-@ mile ( 1 @,@ 300 km ) voyage across the Southern Ocean , to South Georgia . Shackleton had abandoned thoughts of taking the party on the less dangerous journey to Deception Island , because of the poor physical condition of many of his party . Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands was closer than South Georgia , but could not be reached , as this would require sailing against the strong prevailing winds .

Shackleton selected the boat party : himself , Worsley as navigator , Crean , McNish , John Vincent and Timothy McCarthy . On instructions from Shackleton , McNish immediately set about adapting the James Caird , improvising tools and materials . Frank Wild was to be left in charge of the Elephant Island party , with instructions to make for Deception Island the following spring , should Shackleton not return . Shackleton took supplies for only four weeks , knowing that if land had not been reached within that time the boat would be lost .

The 22 @. @ 5 @- @ foot ( 6 @. @ 85 m ) James Caird was launched on 24 April 1916 . The success of the voyage depended on the pin @- @ point accuracy of Worsley 's navigation , using observations that would have to be made in the most unfavourable of conditions . The prevailing wind was helpfully north @- @ west , but the heavy sea conditions quickly soaked everything in icy water . Soon ice settled thickly on the boat , making her ride sluggishly . On 5 May a north @- @ westerly gale almost caused the boat 's destruction as it faced what Shackleton described as the largest waves he had seen in twenty @- @ six years at sea . On 8 May South Georgia was sighted , after a 14 @- @ day battle with the elements that had driven the boat party to their physical limits . Two days later , after a prolonged struggle with heavy seas and hurricane @- @ force winds to the south of the island , the party struggled ashore at King Haakon Bay .

= = = = South Georgia crossing = = = =

The arrival of the James Caird at King Haakon Bay was followed by a period of rest and recuperation , while Shackleton pondered the next move . The populated whaling stations of South Georgia lay on the northern coast . To reach them would mean either another boat journey around the island , or a land crossing through its unexplored interior . The condition of the James Caird , and the physical state of the party , particularly Vincent and McNish , meant that the crossing was the only realistic option .

After five days the party took the boat a short distance eastwards , to the head of a deep bay which would be the starting point for the crossing . Shackleton , Worsley and Crean would undertake the land journey , the others remaining at what they christened " Peggotty Camp " , to be picked up later after help had been obtained from the whaling stations . A storm on 18 May delayed their start , but by two o 'clock the following morning the weather was clear and calm , and an hour later the crossing party set out .

Without a map , the route they chose was largely conjectural . By dawn they had ascended to 3 @, @ 000 feet ( 910 m ) and could see the northern coast . They were above Possession Bay , which meant they would need to move eastward to reach their intended destination of Stromness . This meant the first of several backtrackings that would extend the journey and frustrate the men . At the close of that first day , needing to descend to the valley below them before nightfall , they risked everything by sliding down a mountainside on a makeshift rope sledge . There was no question of rest ? they travelled on by moonlight , moving upwards towards a gap in the next mountainous ridge . Early next morning , 20 May , seeing Husvik Harbour below them , they knew that they were on the right path . At seven o 'clock in the morning they heard the steam whistle sound from Stromness , " the first sound created by an outside human agency that had come to our ears since we left Stromness Bay in December 1914 " . After a difficult descent , which involved passage down through a freezing waterfall , they at last reached safety .

Shackleton wrote afterwards : " I have no doubt that Providence guided us ... I know that during that long and racking march of thirty @- @ six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers it seemed to me often that we were four , not three " . This image of a fourth traveller ? echoed in the accounts of Worsley and Crean ? was taken up by T. S. Eliot in his poem The Waste Land .

= = = = Rescue = = = =

Shackleton 's first task , on arriving at the Stromness station , was to arrange for his three companions at Peggotty Camp to be picked up . A whaler was sent round the coast , with Worsley aboard to show the way , and by the evening of 21 May all six of the James Caird party were safe .

It took four attempts before Shackleton was able to return to Elephant Island to rescue the party stranded there . He first left South Georgia a mere three days after he had arrived in Stromness , after securing the use of a large whaler , The Southern Sky , which was laid up in Husvik Harbour . Shackleton assembled a volunteer crew , which had it ready to sail by the morning of 22 May . As the vessel approached Elephant Island they saw that an impenetrable barrier of pack ice had formed , some 70 miles ( 110 km ) from their destination . The Southern Sky was not built for ice



breaking , and retreated to Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands .

On reaching Port Stanley , Shackleton informed London by cable of his whereabouts , and requested that a suitable vessel be sent south for the rescue operation . He was informed by the Admiralty that nothing was available before October , which in his view was too late . Then , with the help of the British Minister in Montevideo , Shackleton obtained from the Uruguayan government the loan of a tough trawler , Instituto de Pesca No. 1 , which started south on 10 June . Again the pack thwarted them . In search of another ship , Shackleton , Worsley and Crean travelled to Punta Arenas , in Chile , where they met Allan MacDonald , the British owner of the schooner Emma . McDonald equipped this vessel for a further rescue attempt , which left on 12 July , but with the same negative result ? the pack defeated them yet again . Shackleton later named a glacier after McDonald on the Brunt Ice Shelf in the Weddell Sea . After problems arose in identifying this glacier , a nearby ice rise was renamed the McDonald Ice Rumples .

By now it was mid @-@ August , more than three months since Shackleton had left Elephant Island . Shackleton begged the Chilean Government to lend him Yelcho , a small steam tug that had assisted Emma during the previous attempt . The Government agreed , and on 25 August Yelcho , captained by Luis Pardo , set out for Elephant Island . This time , as Shackleton records , providence favoured them . The seas were open , and the ship was able to approach close to the island , in thick fog . At 11 : 40 am on 30 August the fog lifted , the camp was spotted and , within an hour , all the Elephant Island party were safely aboard , bound for Punta Arenas .

= = = = On Elephant Island = = = =

After Shackleton left with the James Caird , Frank Wild took command of the Elephant Island party , some of whom were in a low state , physically or mentally : Lewis Rickinson had suffered a suspected heart attack ; Blackborow was unable to walk , due to frostbitten feet ; Hudson was mentally depressed . The priority for the party was a permanent shelter against the rapidly approaching southern winter . On the suggestion of Marston and Lionel Greenstreet , a hut ( nicknamed the " Snuggery " ) was improvised by upturning the two boats and placing them on low stone walls , to provide around five feet of headroom . By means of canvas and other materials the structure was made into a crude but effective shelter .

Wild initially estimated that they would have to wait one month for rescue , and refused to allow long @-@ term stockpiling of seal and penguin meat because this , in his view , was defeatist . This policy led to sharp disagreements with Thomas Orde @-@ Lees . Orde @-@ Lees was not a popular man , and his presence apparently did little to improve the morale of his companions , unless it was by way of being the butt of their jokes .

As the weeks extended well beyond his initial optimistic forecast , Wild established and maintained routines and activities to relieve the tedium . A permanent lookout was kept for the arrival of the rescue ship , cooking and housekeeping rotas were established , and there were hunting trips for seal and penguin . Concerts were held on Saturdays , and anniversaries celebrated , but there were growing feelings of despondency as time passed with no sign of the ship . The toes on Blackborow 's left foot became gangrenous from frostbite , and on 15 June had to be amputated by the surgeons Macklin and James McIlroy in the candle @-@ lit hut . Using the very last of the chloroform that had survived in the medical supplies , the whole procedure took 55 minutes , and was a complete success .

By 23 August , it seemed that Wild ? s no @-@ stockpiling policy had failed . The surrounding sea was dense with pack ice that would halt any rescue ship , food supplies were running out and no penguins were coming ashore . Orde @-@ Lees wrote : " We shall have to eat the one who dies first [ ... ] there ? s many a true word said in jest " . Wild ? s thoughts were now turning seriously to the possibility of a boat trip to Deception Island ? he planned to set out on 5 October , in the hoping of meeting a whaling ship ? when , on 30 August 1916 , the ordeal ended suddenly with the appearance of Shackleton and Yelcho .

= = = Ross Sea Party = = =

Aurora left Hobart on 24 December 1914 , having been delayed in Australia by financial and organizational problems . The arrival in McMurdo Sound on 15 January 1915 was later in the season than planned , but the party ' s commander Aeneas Mackintosh made immediate plans for a depot @-@ laying journey on the Ross Ice Shelf , since he understood that Shackleton hoped to attempt the crossing during that first season . Neither the men nor the dogs were acclimatised , and the party was , as a whole , very inexperienced in ice conditions . The first journey on the ice resulted in the loss of ten of the party ' s 18 dogs and a frostbitten and generally demoralised shore party ; a single , incomplete depot was their only achievement .

On 7 May Aurora , anchored at the party ' s Cape Evans headquarters , was wrenched from her moorings during a gale and carried with drifting ice far out to sea . Unable to return to McMurdo Sound , she remained captive in the ice for nine months until on 12 February 1916 , having travelled a distance of around 1 @, @ 600 miles ( 2 @, @ 600 km ) , she reached open water and limped to New Zealand . She carried with her the greater part of the shore party ' s fuel , food rations , clothing and equipment , although the sledging rations for the depots had been landed ashore . To continue with its mission the stranded shore party had to re @-@ supply and re @-@ equip itself from the leftovers from earlier expeditions , notably Captain Scott ' s Terra Nova Expedition which had been based at Cape Evans a few years earlier . They were thus able to begin the second season ' s depot @-@ laying on schedule , in September 1915 .

In the following months the required depots were laid , at one @-@ degree intervals across the Ross Ice Shelf to the foot of the Beardmore Glacier . On the return journey from the glacier the party was attacked by scurvy ; Arnold Spencer @-@ Smith , the expedition ' s chaplain and photographer , collapsed and died on the ice . The remainder of the party reached the temporary shelter of Hut Point , a relic of the Discovery Expedition at the southern end of McMurdo Sound , where they slowly recovered . On 8 May 1916 Mackintosh and Victor Hayward decided to walk across the unstable sea ice to Cape Evans , were caught in a blizzard , and were not seen again . The survivors eventually reached Cape Evans , but then had to wait for eight further months . Finally , on 10 January 1917 the repaired and refitted Aurora , whose departure from New Zealand had been delayed by lack of money , arrived to transport them back to civilization ; . Shackleton accompanied the ship as a supernumerary officer , having been denied command by the governments of New Zealand , Australia and Great Britain who had jointly organised and financed the Ross Sea party ' s relief .

= = Return to civilization , and aftermath = =

The rescued party , having had its last contact with civilization in 1914 , was unaware of the course of the World War . News of Shackleton ' s safe arrival in the Falklands briefly eclipsed war news in the British newspapers on 2 June 1916 . The expedition returned home in piecemeal fashion , at a critical stage in the war , without the normal honours and civic receptions . When Shackleton himself finally arrived in England on 29 May 1917 , after a short American lecture tour , his return was barely noticed .

Despite McNish ' s efforts on the in preparing and sailing on James Caird voyage , his prior insubordination meant that , on Shackleton ' s recommendation , he was one of four men denied the Polar Medal ; the others whose contributions fell short of Shackleton ' s expected standards were John Vincent , William Stephenson and Ernest Holness . Most of the members of the expedition returned to take up immediate active military or naval service . Before the war ended two ? Tim McCarthy of the open boat journey and the veteran Antarctic sailor Alfred Cheetham ? had been killed in action , and Ernest Wild of the Ross Sea party had died of typhoid while serving in the Mediterranean . Several others were severely wounded , and many received decorations for gallantry . Following a propaganda mission in Buenos Aires , Shackleton was employed during the last weeks of the war on special service in Murmansk , with the Army rank of Major . This occupied him until March 1919 . He thereafter organised one final Antarctic expedition , the Shackleton ? Rowett Expedition on Quest , which left London on 17 September 1921 . From the Endurance crew ,

Wild , Worsley , Macklin , McIlroy , Hussey , Alexander Kerr , Thomas McLeod and cook Charles Green , all sailed with Quest .

Shackleton died of a heart attack on 5 January 1922 , while Quest was anchored at South Georgia . After his death the original programme , which had included an exploration of Enderby Land , was abandoned . Wild led a brief cruise which brought them into sight of Elephant Island . They anchored off Cape Wild , and were able to see the old landmarks , but sea conditions made it impossible for them to land .

It would be more than 40 years before the first crossing of Antarctica was achieved , by the Commonwealth Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition , 1955 ? 58 . This expedition set out from Vahsel Bay , following a route which avoided the Beardmore Glacier altogether , and bypassed much of the Ross Ice Shelf , reaching McMurdo Sound via a descent of the Skelton Glacier . The entire journey took 98 days .

Films and documentaries about the Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition include the 2002 two @-@ part television drama Shackleton , written and directed by Charles Sturridge , with Kenneth Branagh as Shackleton . In preparation for his role , Branagh spent six weeks in the Antarctic . In 2013 PBS screened a three @-@ part documentary that recreates the James Caird voyage using a replica lifeboat and original materials .

= = Films = =

South . ( 1919 ) . Frank Hurley 's original documentary film of the Endurance voyage

The Endurance : Shackleton 's Legendary Antarctic Expedition . 2000 film directed by George Butler ; a retelling of the story .

Shackleton 's Antarctic Adventure Reconstruction , filmed in 1999 and 2000

Great Adventurers : Ernest Shackleton ? To The End Of The Earth Documentary film from 1999

Shackleton ( TV film ) Two @-@ part television film from 2001 starring Kenneth Branagh as Ernest Shackleton