

= Shackleton ? Rowett Expedition =

The Shackleton ? Rowett Expedition (1921 ? 22) was Sir Ernest Shackleton 's last Antarctic project , and the final episode in the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration . The venture , financed by John Quiller Rowett , is sometimes referred to as the Quest Expedition after its ship Quest , a converted Norwegian sealer . Shackleton had originally intended to go to the Arctic and explore the Beaufort Sea , but this plan was abandoned when the Canadian government withheld financial support ; Shackleton thereupon switched his attention to the Antarctic . Quest , smaller than any recent Antarctic exploration vessel , soon proved inadequate for its task , and progress south was delayed by its poor sailing performance and by frequent engine problems . Before the expedition 's work could properly begin , Shackleton died on board the ship , just after its arrival at the sub @-@ Antarctic island of South Georgia .

The major part of the subsequent attenuated expedition was a three @-@ month cruise to the eastern Antarctic , under the leadership of the party 's second @-@ in @-@ command , Frank Wild . The shortcomings of Quest were soon in evidence : slow speed , heavy fuel consumption , a tendency to roll in heavy seas , and a steady leak . The ship was unable to proceed further than longitude 20 ° E , well short of its easterly target , and its engine 's low power was insufficient for it to penetrate southward through the pack ice . Following several fruitless attempts , Wild returned the ship to South Georgia , on the way visiting Elephant Island where he and 21 others had been stranded after the sinking of the ship Endurance , during Shackleton 's Imperial Trans @-@ Antarctic Expedition six years earlier .

Wild had thoughts of a second , more productive season in the ice , and took the ship to Cape Town for a refit . Here , in June 1922 , he received a message from Rowett ordering the ship home to England , so the expedition ended quietly . The Quest voyage is not greatly regarded in the histories of polar exploration , the event that defines it in public memory , overshadowing its other activities , being Shackleton 's untimely death .

= = Background = =

= = = Shackleton after the Endurance = = =

Shackleton returned to Britain from the Endurance expedition in late May 1917 , while World War I was raging . Too old to enlist , he nevertheless sought an active role in the war effort , and eventually departed for Murmansk with the temporary army rank of major , as part of a military mission to North Russia . Shackleton expressed his dissatisfaction with this role in letters home : " I feel I am no use to anyone unless I am outfacing the storm in wild lands . " He returned to England in February 1919 and began plans to set up a company that would , with the cooperation of the North Russian Government , develop the natural resources of the region . This scheme came to nothing , as the Red Army took control of that part of Russia during the Russian Civil War ; to provide himself with an income , Shackleton had to rely on the lecture circuit . During the winter of 1919 ? 20 he lectured twice a day , six days a week , for five months .

= = = Canadian proposal = = =

Despite the large debts still outstanding from the Endurance expedition , Shackleton 's mind turned to his next exploration venture . He decided to turn away from the Antarctic , go northwards and , as he put it , " fill in this great blank now called the Beaufort Sea " . This area of the Arctic ocean , to the north of Alaska and west of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago , was largely unexplored ; Shackleton believed , on the basis of tidal records , that it contained large undiscovered land masses that " would be of the greatest scientific interest to the world , apart from the possible economic value " . He also hoped to reach the northern " pole of inaccessibility " , the most remote point in the Arctic regions . In March 1920 , his plans received the general approval of the Royal Geographical Society

(RGS) and were supported by the Canadian government . On this basis Shackleton set about acquiring the necessary funding , which he estimated at £ 50 @, @ 000 (about £ 1 @. @ 6 million , 2008 value) . Later that year , Shackleton met by chance an old school @-@ friend , John Quiller Rowett , who agreed to put up a nucleus of cash to enable Shackleton to get started . With this money Shackleton was able , in January 1921 , to acquire the wooden Norwegian whaler Foca I , and to proceed with the purchase of other equipment and the hiring of a crew .

In May 1921 the policy of the Canadian government towards the funding of expeditions changed with the advent of a new Prime Minister , Arthur Meighen , who withdrew support from Shackleton 's proposal . Shackleton was required to rethink his plans , and decided to sail for the Antarctic after all . A varied programme of exploration , coastal mapping , mineral prospecting and oceanographic research in southern waters would replace the abandoned Beaufort Sea venture .

= = Antarctic preparation = =

= = Objectives = =

Even before his problems with the Canadian government , Shackleton had been considering a southern expedition as a possible alternative to the Beaufort Sea . According to the RGS librarian Hugh Robert Mill , as early as March 1920 Shackleton had talked about two possible schemes ? the Beaufort Sea exploration , and " an oceanographical expedition with the object of visiting all the little @-@ known islands of the South Atlantic and South Pacific " . By June 1921 , it had expanded to include a circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent and the mapping of around 2 @, @ 000 miles (3 @, @ 200 km) of uncharted coastline . It would also encompass a search for " lost " or wrongly charted sub @-@ Antarctic islands (including Dougherty Island , Tuanaki , and the Nimrod Islands) , investigations of possible mineral resources to be exploited in these rediscovered lands , and an ambitious scientific research program . This was to include soundings around Gough Island to investigate an alleged " underwater continental connection between Africa and America . " Shackleton biographer Margery Fisher calls the plan " diffuse " , and " far too comprehensive for one small body of men to tackle within two years " . According to biographer Roland Huntford the expedition had no obvious goal and was " only too clearly a piece of improvisation , a pretext [for Shackleton] to get away " .

Fisher describes the expedition as representing " the dividing line between what has become known as the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration and the Mechanical Age " . Shackleton called the voyage " pioneering " , referring specifically to the aeroplane that was taken (but ultimately not used) on the expedition . In fact this was only one of the technological " firsts " that marked the venture ; there were gadgets in profusion . The ship 's crew 's nest was electrically heated ; there were heated overalls for the lookouts , a wireless set , and a device called an odograph which could trace and chart the ship 's route automatically . Photography was to figure prominently , and " a large and expensive outfit of cameras , cinematographical machines and general photographic appliances [was] acquired " . Among the oceanographical research equipment was a Lucas deep @-@ sea sounding machine .

This ample provision arose from the sponsorship of Rowett , who had extended his original gift of seed money to an undertaking to cover the costs of the entire expedition . The extent of Rowett 's contribution is not recorded ; in an (undated) prospectus for the southern expedition Shackleton had estimated the total cost as " about £ 100 @, @ 000 " . Whatever the total , Rowett appears to have funded the lion 's share , enabling Frank Wild to record later that , unique among Antarctic expeditions of the era , this one returned home without any outstanding debt . According to Wild , without Rowett 's actions the expedition would have been impossible : " His generous attitude is the more remarkable in that he knew there was no prospect of financial return , and what he did was in the interest of scientific research and from friendship with Shackleton . " His only recognition was the attachment of his name to the title of the expedition . Rowett was , according to Huntford , " a stodgy , prosaic looking " businessman , who was , in 1920 , a co @-@ founder and principal contributor to

an animal nutrition research institute in Aberdeen known as the Rowett Research Institute (now part of the University of Aberdeen) . He had also endowed dental research work at the Middlesex Hospital .

== Quest ==

In March 1921 , Shackleton renamed his expedition vessel Quest . She was a small ship , 125 tons according to Huntford , with sail and auxiliary engine power purportedly capable of making eight knots , but in fact rarely making more than five @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half . Huntford describes her as " straight @-@ stemmed " , with an awkward square rig , and a tendency to wallow in heavy seas . Fisher reports that she was built in 1917 , weighed 204 tons , and had a large and spacious deck . Although she had some modern facilities , such as electric lights in the cabins , she was unsuited to long oceanic voyages ; Shackleton , on the first day out , observed that " in no way are we shipshape or fitted to ignore even the mildest storm " . Leif Mills , in his biography of Frank Wild , says that had the ship been taken to the Beaufort Sea in accordance with Shackleton 's original plans , she would probably have been crushed in the Arctic pack ice . On her voyage south she suffered frequent damage and breakdowns , requiring repairs at every port of call .

== Personnel ==

The Times newspaper had reported that Shackleton planned to take a dozen men to the Arctic , " chiefly those who had accompanied him on earlier expeditions " . In actuality , Quest left London for the south with 20 men , of whom eight were old Endurance comrades ; another , James Dell , was a veteran from the Discovery , 20 years previously . Some of the Endurance hands had not been fully paid from the earlier expedition , but were prepared to join Shackleton again out of personal loyalty .

Frank Wild , on his fourth trip with Shackleton , filled the second @-@ in @-@ command post as he had on the Endurance expedition . Frank Worsley , Endurance 's former captain , became captain of Quest . Other old comrades included the two surgeons , Alexander Macklin and James McIlroy , the meteorologist Leonard Hussey , the engineer Alexander Kerr , seaman Tom McLeod and cook Charles Green . Shackleton had assumed that Tom Crean would sign up , and had assigned him duties " in charge of boats " , but Crean had retired from the navy to start a family back home in County Kerry , and declined Shackleton 's invitation .

Of the newcomers , Roderick Carr , a New Zealand @-@ born Royal Air Force pilot , was hired to fly the expedition 's aeroplane , an Avro " Antarctic " Baby : an Avro Baby modified as a seaplane with an 80 @-@ horsepower engine . He had met Shackleton in North Russia , and had recently been serving as Chief of Staff to the Lithuanian air force . In fact , the aeroplane was not used during the expedition due to some missing parts , and Carr therefore assisted with the scientific work . The scientific staff included Australian biologist Hubert Wilkins , who had Arctic experience , and the Canadian geologist Vibert Douglas , who had initially signed for the aborted Beaufort Sea expedition . The recruits who caught the most public attention were two members of the Boy Scout movement , Norman Mooney and James Marr . As the result of publicity organised by the Daily Mail newspaper , these two had been selected to join the expedition out of around 1 @, @ 700 Scouts who had applied to go . Mooney , who was from the Orkney Islands , soon dropped out , leaving the ship at Madeira after suffering chronic seasickness . Marr , an 18 @-@ year @-@ old from Aberdeen , remained with the expedition throughout , winning plaudits from Shackleton and Wild for his application to the tasks at hand . After being put to work in the ship 's coal bunkers , according to Wild , Marr " came out of the trial very well , showing an amount of hardihood and endurance that was remarkable " .

== Expedition ==

= = = Voyage south = = =

Quest sailed from St Katharine Docks , London , on 17 September 1921 , after inspection by King George V. Large crowds gathered on the banks of the river and on the bridges , to witness the event . Marr wrote in his diary that it was as though " all London had conspired together to bid us a heartening farewell " .

Shackleton 's original intention was to sail down to Cape Town , visiting the main South Atlantic islands on the way . From Cape Town , Quest would head for the Enderby Land coast of Antarctica where , once in the ice , it would explore the coastline towards Coats Land in the Weddell Sea . At the end of the summer season the ship would visit South Georgia before returning to Cape Town for refitting and preparation for the second year 's work . However , the ship 's performance in the early stages of the voyage disrupted this schedule . Serious problems with the engine necessitated a week 's stay in Lisbon , and further stops in Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands . These delays and the slow speed of the ship led Shackleton to decide that it would be necessary to sacrifice entirely the visits to the South Atlantic islands , and instead he turned the ship towards Rio de Janeiro , where the engine could receive a thorough overhaul . Quest reached Rio on 22 November 1921 .

The engine overhaul , and the replacement of the damaged topmast , delayed the party in Rio for four weeks . This meant that it was no longer practical to proceed to Cape Town and then on to the ice . Shackleton decided to sail directly to Grytviken harbour in South Georgia . Equipment and stores that had been sent on to Cape Town would have to be sacrificed , but Shackleton hoped that this shortfall could be made up in South Georgia . He was vague about the direction the expedition should take after South Georgia ; Macklin wrote in his diary , " The Boss says ... quite frankly that he does not know what he will do . "

= = = Death of Shackleton = = =

On 17 December , the day before Quest was due to leave Rio , Shackleton fell ill . He may have suffered a heart attack ; Macklin was called , but Shackleton refused to be examined and declared himself " better " the next morning . On the ensuing voyage to South Georgia he was , from the accounts of his shipmates , unusually subdued and listless . He also began drinking champagne each morning , " to deaden the pain " , contrary to his normal rule of not allowing liquor at sea . A severe storm ruined the expedition 's proposed Christmas celebrations , and a new problem with the engine 's steam furnace slowed progress and caused Shackleton further stress . By 1 January 1922 , the weather had abated : " Rest and calm after the storm ? the year has begun kindly for us " , wrote Shackleton in his diary . On 4 January 1922 , South Georgia was sighted , and late that morning Quest anchored at Grytviken .

After visiting the whaling establishment ashore , Shackleton returned to the ship apparently refreshed . He told Frank Wild that they would celebrate their deferred Christmas the next day , and retired to his cabin to write his diary . " The old smell of dead whale permeates everything " , he wrote . " It is a strange and curious place A wonderful evening . In the darkening twilight I saw a lone star hover , gem like above the bay . " Later he slept , and was heard snoring by the surgeon McIlroy , who had just finished his watch @-@ keeping duty . Shortly after 2 a.m. on the morning of 5 January , Macklin , who had taken over the watch , was summoned to Shackleton 's cabin . He found Shackleton complaining of back pains and severe facial neuralgia , and asking for a painkilling drug . In a brief discussion , Macklin told his leader that he had been overdoing things , and needed to lead a more regular life . Macklin records Shackleton as saying : " You 're always wanting me to give up things , what is it I ought to give up ? " Macklin replied " Chiefly alcohol , Boss , I don 't think it agrees with you . " Immediately afterwards Shackleton " had a very severe paroxysm , during which he died " .

The death certificate , signed by Macklin , gave the cause as " Atheroma of the Coronary arteries and Heart failure " ? in modern terms , coronary thrombosis . Later that morning Wild , now in command , gave the news to the shocked crew , and told them that the expedition would carry on . The body was brought ashore for embalming before its return to England . On 19 January , Leonard

Hussey accompanied the body on board a steamer bound for Montevideo , but on arrival there he found a message from Lady Shackleton , requesting that the body be returned to South Georgia for burial . Hussey brought the body back to Grytviken , where on 5 March Shackleton was buried in the Norwegian cemetery . Quest had meantime sailed , so only Hussey of Shackleton 's former comrades was present at the interment . A rough cross marked the grave , until it was replaced by a tall granite column six years later .

= = = Voyage to the ice = = =

As leader , Wild had to arrange where the expedition should now go . Kerr reported that the furnace problem was manageable , and after supplementing stores and equipment with what was available in South Georgia , Wild decided to proceed in general accordance with Shackleton 's original plans . He would take the ship eastward towards Bouvet Island and then beyond , before turning south to enter the ice as close as possible to Enderby Land , and begin coastal survey work there . The expedition would also investigate an " Appearance of Land " in the mouth of the Weddell Sea , reported by Sir James Clark Ross in 1842 , but not seen since . Ultimately , however , progress would depend on weather , ice conditions , and the capabilities of the ship .

Quest left South Georgia on 18 January , heading south @-@ east towards the South Sandwich Islands . There was a heavy swell , such that the overladen ship frequently dipped its gunwales below the waves , filling the waist with water . As they proceeded , Wild wrote that Quest rolled like a log , was leaking and required regular pumping , was heavy on coal consumption , and was slow . All these factors led him , at the end of January , to change his plan . Bouvet Island was abandoned in favour of a more southerly course that brought them to the edge of the pack ice on 4 February .

" Now the little Quest can really try her mettle " , wrote Wild , as the ship entered the loose pack . He noted that Quest was the smallest ship ever to attempt to penetrate the heavy Antarctic ice , and pondered on the fate of others . " Shall we escape , or will the Quest join the ships in Davy Jones 's Locker ? " During the days that followed , as they moved southward in falling temperatures , the ice thickened . On 12 February they reached the most southerly latitude they would attain , 69 ° 17'S , and their most easterly longitude , 17 ° 9'E , well short of Enderby Land . Noting the state of the sea ice and fearing being frozen in , Wild retreated to the north and west . He still hoped to tackle the heavy ice , and if possible to break through to the hidden land beyond . On 18 February he turned the ship south again for another try , but was no more successful than before . On 24 February , after a series of further efforts had failed , Wild set a course westward across the mouth of the Weddell Sea . The ship would try to visit Elephant Island in the South Shetlands , before returning to South Georgia on the onset of winter .

For the most part , the long passage across the Weddell Sea proceeded uneventfully . Wild and Worsley were at odds with each other , according to Macklin , and there was other discontent among the crew which Wild , in his own account , dealt with by the threat of " the most drastic treatment " . On 12 March they reached 64 ° 11'S , 46 ° 4'W , which was the area where Ross had recorded an " Appearance of Land " in 1842 , but there was no sign of it , and a depth sounding of over 2 @, @ 300 fathoms (13 @, @ 800 ft , 4 @, @ 200 m .) indicated no likelihood of land nearby . Between 15 ? 21 March Quest was frozen into the ice , and the shortage of coal became a major concern . When the ship broke free , Wild set a course directly for Elephant Island , where he hoped that the coal supply could be supplemented by blubber from the elephant seals there . On 25 March the island was sighted . Wild wanted if possible to revisit Cape Wild , the site of the old Endurance expedition camp , but bad weather prevented this . They viewed the site through binoculars , picking out the old landmarks , before landing on the western coast to hunt for elephant seals . They were able to obtain sufficient blubber to mix with the coal so that , aided by a favourable wind , they reached South Georgia on 6 April .

= = = Return = = =

Quest remained in South Georgia for a month , during which time Shackleton 's old comrades

erected a memorial cairn to their former leader , on a headland overlooking the entrance to Grytviken harbour . Quest finally sailed for South Africa on 8 May . The first port of call , however , was Tristan da Cunha , a remote inhabited island to the west and south of Cape Town . After a rough crossing of the " Roaring Forties " , Quest arrived at there on 20 May . On the orders of the Chief Scout , Marr presented a flag to the local Scout Troop .

During the five @-@ day stay , with the help of some of the islanders , the expedition made brief landings on the small Inaccessible Island , 20 miles (32 km) south @-@ west of Tristan , and visited the even smaller Nightingale Island , collecting specimens . Wild 's impressions of the stay at Tristan were not altogether favourable . He noted the appalling squalor and poverty , and said of the population : " They are ignorant , shut off almost completely from the world , horribly limited in outlook . " After the Scout parade and flag presentation , Quest sailed on to Gough Island , 200 miles (320 km) to the east , where members of the expedition took geological and botanical samples . They arrived at Cape Town on 18 June , to be greeted by enthusiastic crowds . The South African Prime Minister , Jan Smuts , gave an official reception for them , and they were honoured at dinners and lunches by local organisations .

They were also met by Rowett 's agent , with the message that they should return to England . Wild wrote : " I should have liked one more season in the Enderby Quadrant ... much might be accomplished by making Cape Town our starting point and setting out early in the season . " However , on 19 July they left Cape Town and sailed northwards . Their final visits were to St Helena , Ascension Island and St Vincent . On 16 September , one year after departure , they arrived at Plymouth Harbour .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Assessment = = =

According to Wild , the expedition ended " quietly " , although his biographer Leif Mills writes of enthusiastic crowds in Plymouth Sound . At the end of his account , Wild expressed the hope that the information they had brought back might " prove of value in helping to solve the great natural problems that still beset us " . These results were summarised in five brief appendices to Wild 's book . The summaries reflected the efforts of the scientific staff to collect data and specimens at each port of call , and the geological and survey work carried out by Carr and Douglas on South Georgia , before the southern voyage . Eventually a few scientific papers and articles were developed from this material , but it was , in Leif Mills 's words , " little enough to show for a year 's work " .

The lack of a clear , defined expedition objective was aggravated by the failure to call at Cape Town on the way south , which meant that important equipment was not picked up . On South Georgia , Wild found little that could make up for this loss ? there were no dogs on the island , so no sledging work could be carried out , which eliminated Wild 's preferred choice of a revised expedition goal , an exploration of Graham Land on the Antarctic Peninsula . The death of Shackleton before the beginning of serious work was a heavy blow , and questions were raised about the adequacy of Wild as his replacement . Some reports imply that Wild drank heavily ? " practically an alcoholic " , according to Huntford . Mills suggests that even if Shackleton had lived to complete the expedition , it is arguable whether under the circumstances it could have achieved more than it did under Wild 's command .

The non @-@ use of the aeroplane was a disappointment ; Shackleton had hoped to pioneer the use of air transport in Antarctic waters , and had discussed this issue with the British Air Ministry . According to Fisher 's account , essential aeroplane parts had been sent on to Cape Town , but remained uncollected . The long @-@ range , 220 @-@ volt wireless equipment did not work properly , and was abandoned early on . The smaller , 110 @-@ volt equipment worked only within a range of 250 miles (400 km) . During the Tristan visit , Wild attempted to install a new wireless apparatus with the help of a local missionary , but this was also unsuccessful .

= = = End of the Heroic Age = = =

An Antarctic hiatus followed the return of Quest , there being no significant expeditions to the region for seven years . The expeditions that then followed were of a different character from their predecessors , belonging to the " mechanical age " that succeeded the Heroic Age .

At the end of his narrative of the Quest expedition , Wild wrote of the Antarctic : " I think that my work there is done " ; he never returned , closing a career which , like Shackleton 's , had bracketed the entire Heroic Age . None of the other Endurance veterans returned to the Antarctic , although Worsley made one voyage to the Arctic in 1925 . Of the other crew and staff of Quest , the Australian naturalist Hubert Wilkins became a pioneer aviator in both the Arctic and Antarctic , in 1928 flying from Point Barrow , Alaska to Spitsbergen . He also made several unsuccessful attempts during the 1930s , in collaboration with the American adventurer Lincoln Ellsworth , to fly to the South Pole . James Marr , the Boy Scout , also became an Antarctic regular after qualifying as a marine biologist , joining several Australian expeditions in the late 1920s and 1930s . Roderick Carr , the frustrated pilot , became an Air Marshal in the Royal Air Force .