

# Sir Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition

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Ernest Shackleton was an Edwardian gentleman and Antarctic explorer from a hundred years ago





He was born in Ireland in 1874 to an English family, one of 10 children.

His family moved to London in 1884.

He wasn't keen on school and went to sea at the age of 16.



He became a certified master mariner able to command a ship.

In 1901 he went to Antarctica for the first time with Captain Scott and came within 530 miles of the South Pole.

In 1907 he led his own expedition and came within 97 miles of the South Pole.

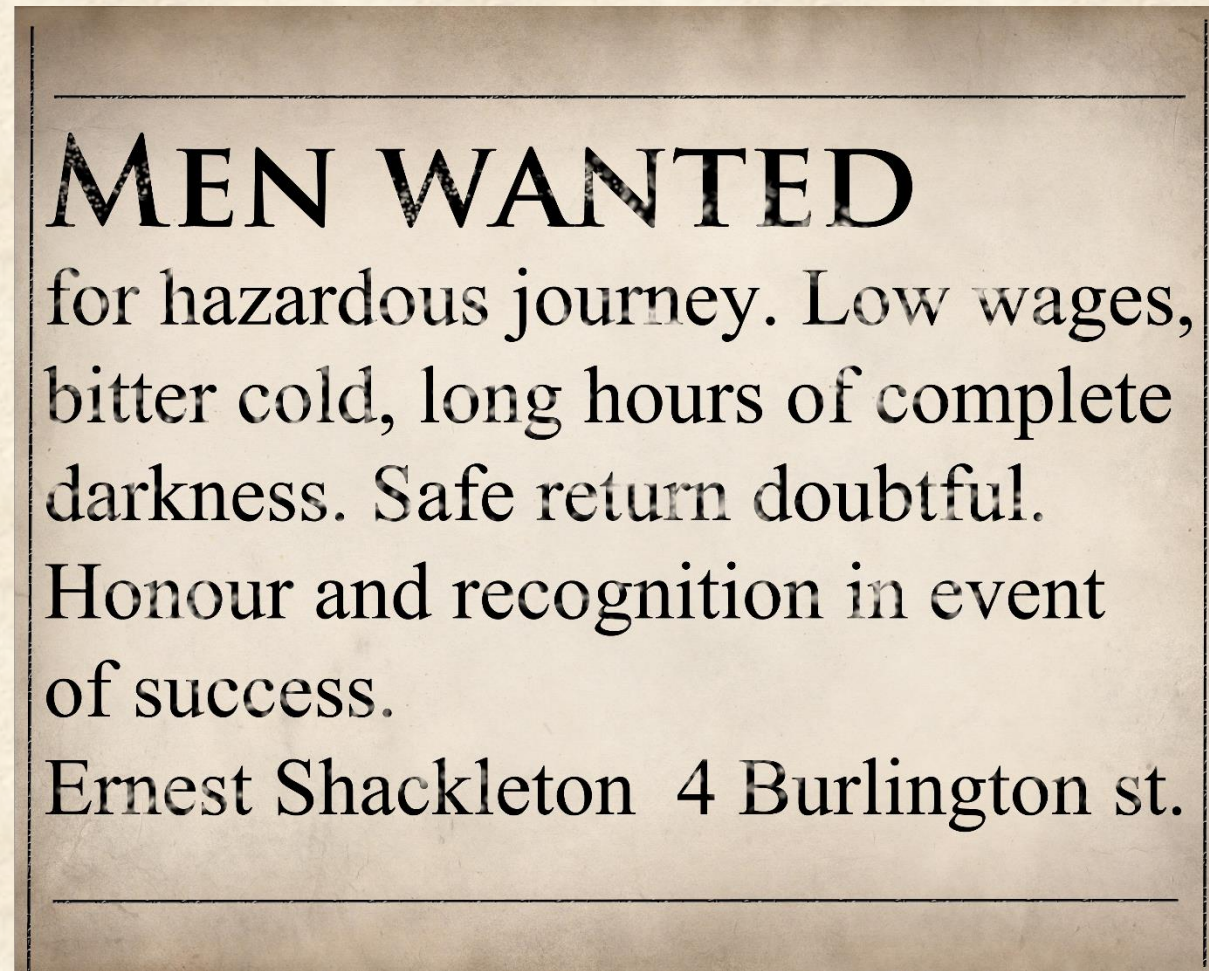


Heading to Mount Erebus on the way to the South Pole



By 1914 he had been made Sir Ernest Shackleton.

The South Pole had been reached by Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott in 1911/1912, so Shackleton organized a trans-Antarctic expedition to cross Antarctica from one side to the other via the South Pole.



An advert said to have been placed in a London newspaper by Shackleton for his Endurance expedition

Picture copyright Paul Ward



The ship to be used was called the Endurance, this is sometimes called the Endurance expedition, though was properly called:

## The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition

The Endurance set off from England just as the 1<sup>st</sup> World War was about to happen.

Shackleton volunteered his ship and crew for the war effort but was told in a telegram to “Proceed”. It sailed in August 1914.

28 men including Shackleton were to reach the Antarctic.



The journey started as expected, except a stowaway was found three days out of port after leaving South America for Antarctica.

It was too late for Shackleton to turn back and so he offered the stowaway, 19 year old Perce Blackborow, a position of steward with the condition "If anyone has to be eaten, then you will be the first!".

Blackborow accepted.

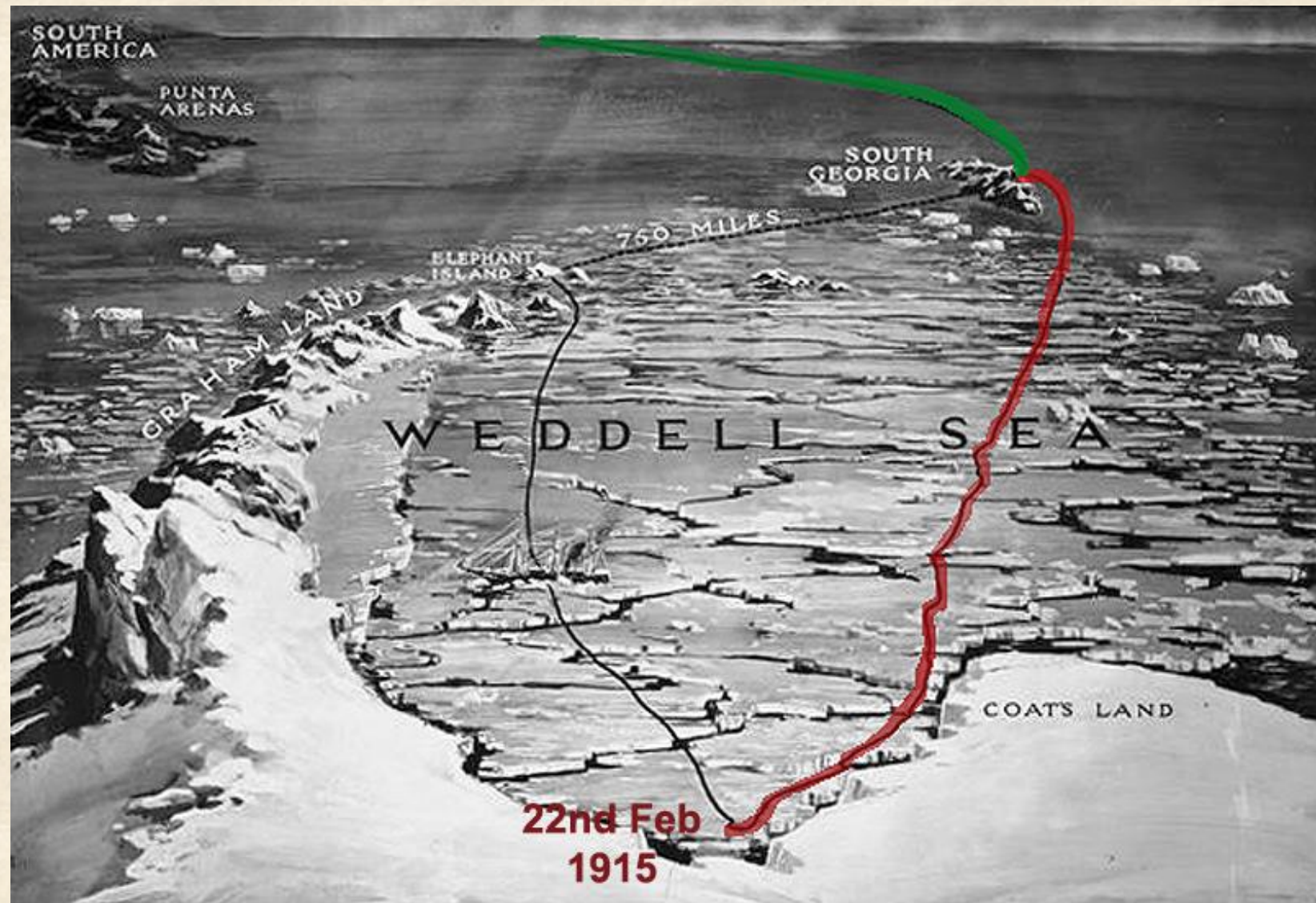


Stowaway Perce Blackborow with Mrs. Chippy, the ships cat



Some whalers he met at South Georgia on the way to Antarctica told Shackleton that it was a particularly bad year for sea-ice in the Weddell Sea.

The ship made progress though it was difficult. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Feb 1915, the ship became frozen solid into sea-ice just one days sail from where the ship was headed.



The route of the Endurance via South Georgia to where it became beset in the pack-ice





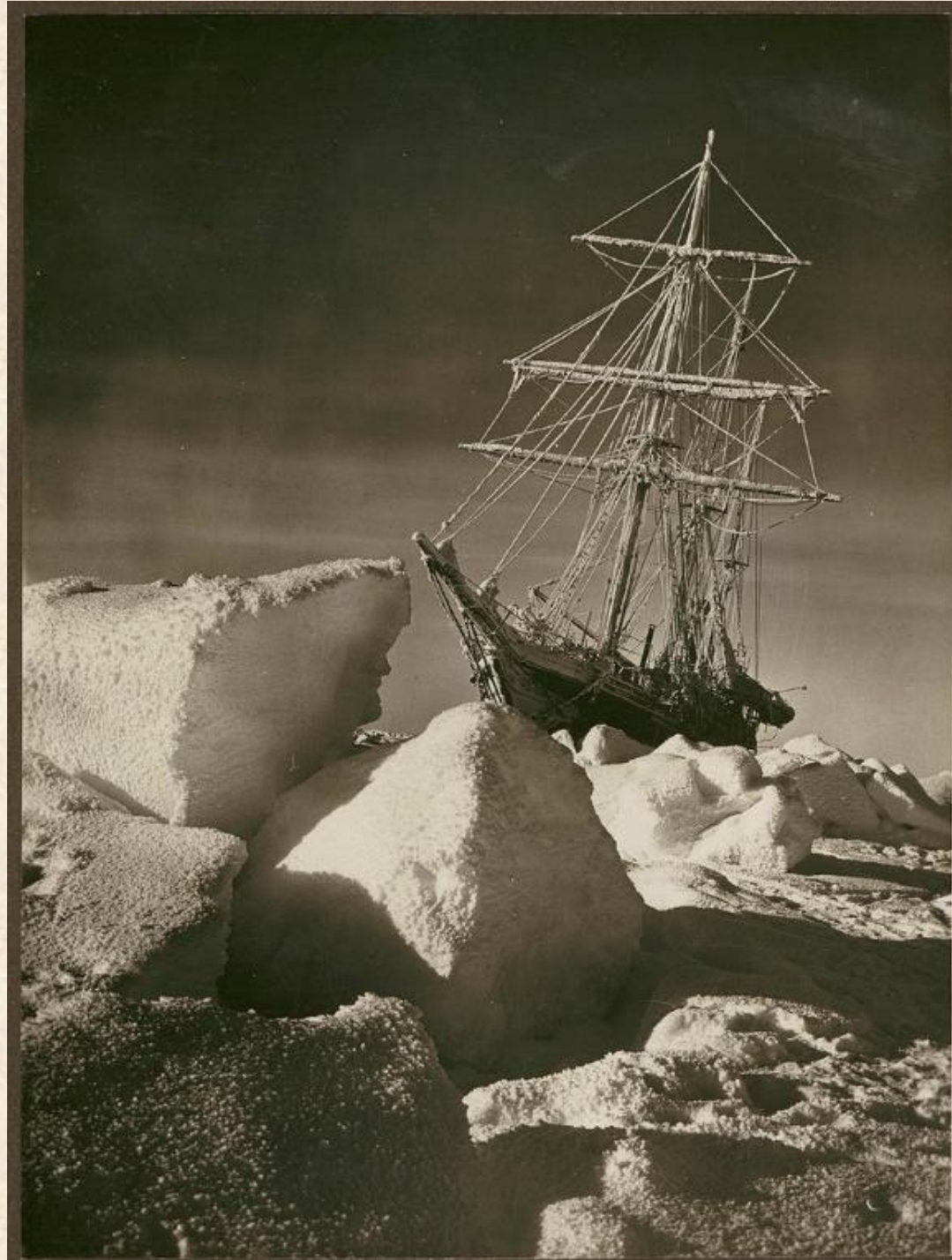






All through the winter, the crew were looking forwards to being released in the spring to carry on their expedition.

In September 1915 however, the surrounding pack ice started to push on the ship, it creaked and groaned, floors buckled, doors no longer closed. Then the pressure was relaxed and the ship lived again, but was left tilted over at 15 degrees.



In late October, the ice pressed again, this time the ship sprang a leak.

The pressure continued, Shackleton ordered all stores and equipment to be taken off the ship which was now beyond hope. This first place off the ship became known as “Dump Camp” because of the amount of gear that was thrown away there.

“Ocean Camp” was established a mile and half from the Endurance on more solid older ice.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1915, the broken and splintered ship sank below the ice into the Weddell Sea.





The crew now were living at “Ocean Camp”.

There was no radio, no one in the outside world knew what had happened, no rescue was going to come. They were on their own.



Ocean Camp on the sea-ice, Ernest Shackleton at left





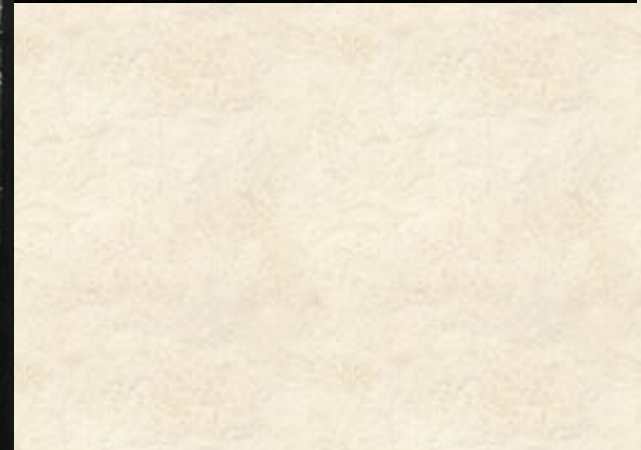
**16** - After only a week un-negotiable broken and ridged ice to 5m high was encountered, a new camp is established "Patience Camp", they were to live there on the floe for nearly three and a half months.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1916 the ice around had broken and the floe was surrounded by water.

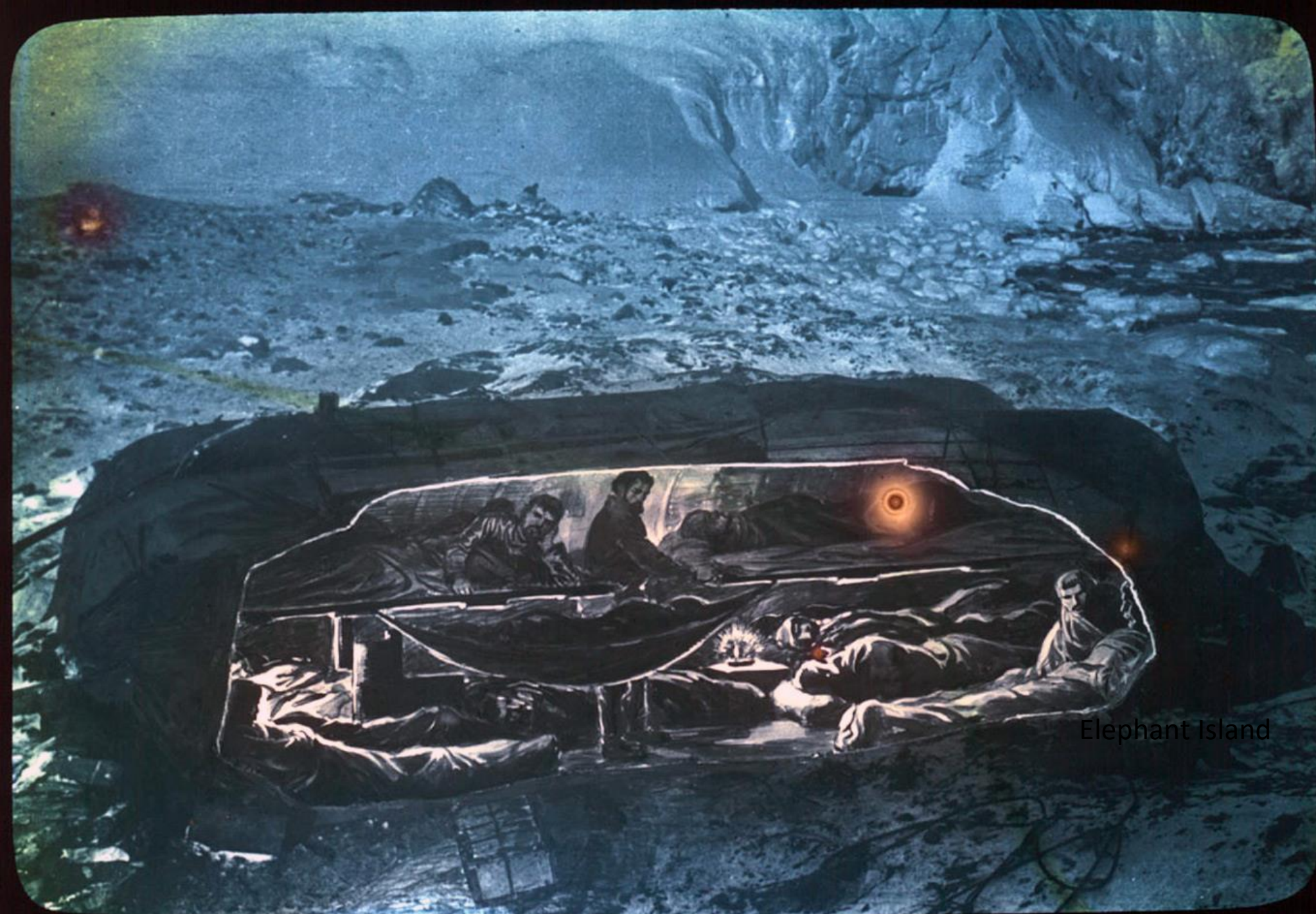
It was time to take to the boats and head towards the South Shetland Islands.











Elephant Island











beach



South Georgia meant rescue was nearby, but first Shackleton had to alert the whaling station. They had landed on the wrong side of the island. To reach the whaling station 22 miles away, the backbone of mountains and glaciers that ran the length of the island had to be crossed, no one had ever done this.

Shackleton set off with Tom Crean and Frank Worsley to cross the mountainous island. Two of the other men were unable to walk, the third was left to look after them.



South Georgia, looking towards the central ridge of mountains that Shackleton had to cross



Once again with all the odds against them, Shackleton and his two companions succeeded. They reached the whaling station filthy and with torn clothes, unrecognisable at first.

"When we got to the whaling station, it was the thought of all those comrades that made us so mad with joy... We didn't so much feel safe as that they would be saved."

*Shackleton in his diary*

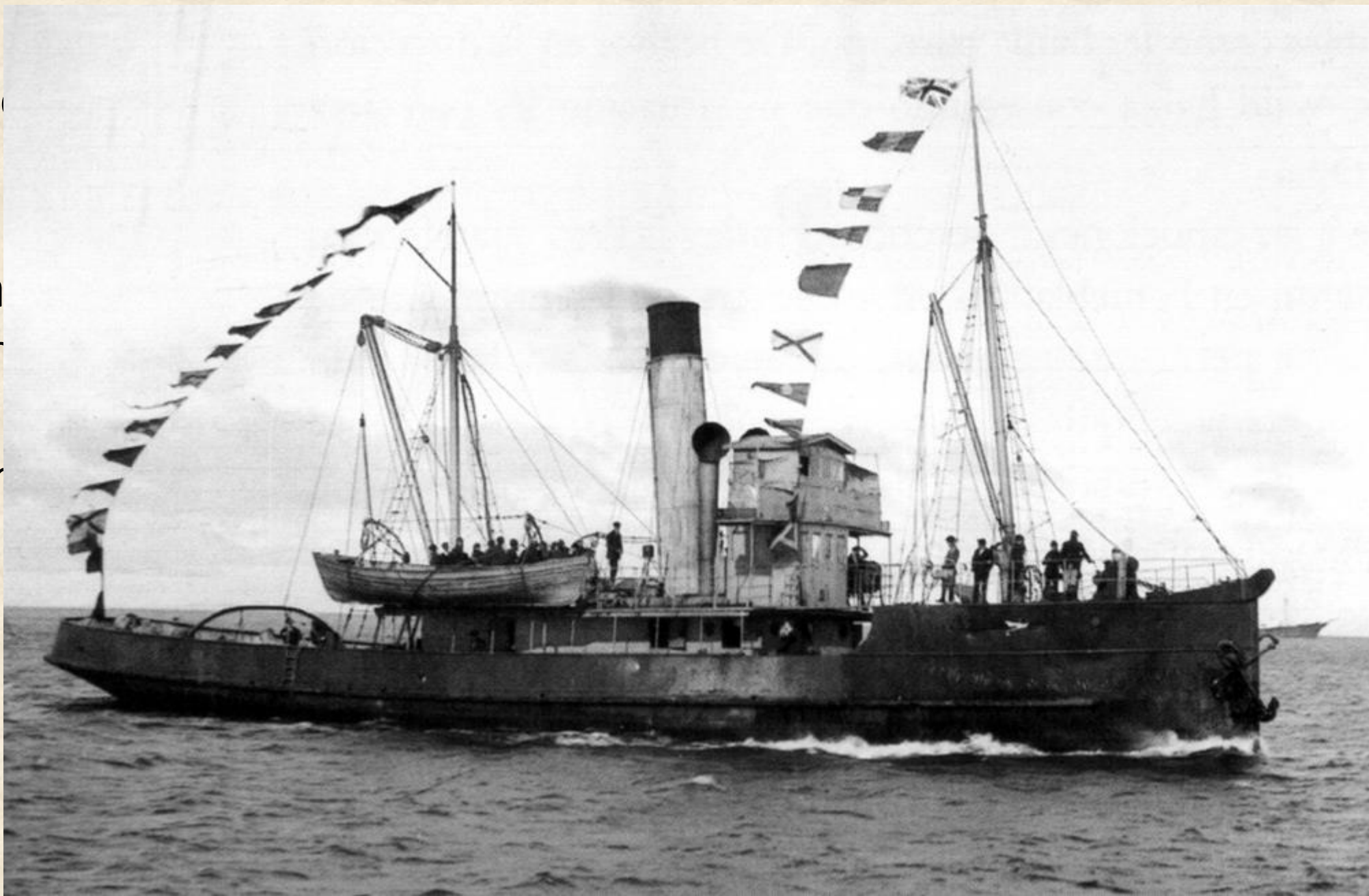


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# Not a single life was lost

For scientific leadership, give me Scott; for swift and efficient travel, Amundsen; but when you are in a hopeless situation, when there seems to be no way out, get on your knees and pray for Shackleton. Incomparable in adversity, he was the miracle worker who would save your life against all the odds and long after your number was up. The greatest leader that ever came on God's earth, bar none.

*Sir Raymond Priestley.*

Right here is where I wish to tell about the only unfair deal that happened on the expedition. There were not enough fur bags for all hands, so some of the wool bags were used to make up the deficiency. We drew lots to see which kind of a bag each would get. There was some crooked work in the drawing as Sir Ernest, Mr. Wild ( second in command ), Captain Worsley, and some of the other officers all drew wool bags. The fine warm fur bags all went to the men under them. I think that action was enough to show what wonderful men were in charge. They always took the brunt of things and when there was any danger they were first to go ahead. The safety of his men was Sir Ernest's first thought, his own last.

*William Bakewell*

Asked by an interviewer asked 60 years after rescue:

"How were you able to survive, as so many other people perished with expeditions?"

"Shackleton"

*Lionel Greenstreet*



The pictures in this presentation were taken by Frank Hurley, the expedition photographer.

They were taken mainly on glass negatives with a large, heavy, wooden box camera.

They were rescued from the Endurance as she was sinking, dragged across the sea-ice for 4 months, taken in the lifeboats to Elephant Island and eventually brought home by the Yelcho.

