



YOUR HERO, MY HERO

The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration

**SCOTT**

*"We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us . . ."*  
- Captain Scott in his MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC.

*Robert*

## ROBERT FALCON SCOTT

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was born in 1868 in Devonport on the outskirts of Plymouth, England. At thirteen he entered the Royal Naval College as a cadet. Six years later an event occurred, seemingly unimportant at the time, that was to direct his destiny. Clements Markham, influential in geographical circles, was watching a boat race from the bridge of his cousin's warship in St. Kitts in the West Indies. Scott's boat won the race. Markham took notice and wrote "that Scott was the destined man to command the Antarctic expedition." Other than in Markham's mind no such expedition was underway back in 1887, though by the turn of the century there was and Scott was its commander. A respectable though hardly distinguished naval career was about to head in new directions.

The National Antarctic Expedition was an ambitious effort run, at Markham's insistence, along naval lines. A considerable amount was accomplished despite deficiencies in preparation and

planning. Scott and the expedition returned to England to general acclaim. Briefly he found himself the social lion of London, a role he took to less well than Shackleton, now a rival. In late 1906 Scott met Kathleen Bruce at a luncheon, and though as different as night and day—she was something of a Bohemian—they were inexplicably drawn to one another and married. It was an odd match but with the birth of a son, Peter, their love for one another became deep and intense.

Meanwhile, Ernest Shackleton returned from his second Antarctic expedition, becoming then the man of the hour and a knight as well. The urge to return south grew in Scott, encouraged no doubt by the still obsessed Markham. The *Terra Nova* expedition had a full scientific program planned, but the goal was really the Pole itself, for King and Country. Shackleton had tried his hand; now Scott would finish the job. Of course, he hadn't expected Roald Amundsen to eye the same goal. Once the Norwegian shifted



his sights from the north to the south, it became a race, one that Amundsen ultimately won and Scott lost. Scott and his men perished, possibly as much from disappointment as from cold and starvation.

Some months later, before leaving Antarctica, the remaining members of the expedition hauled a large wood cross to the top of Observation Hill. It is there still, on it carved the words from Tennyson's *Ulysses*: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." The foundation for Scott's heroic legacy was even then being set. Within days of the tragic news reaching England a memorial service was held at St. Paul's Cathedral, attended by the King. Kathleen Scott sculpted a statue for Waterloo Place; and plaques, memorials, stained glass windows arose throughout the Empire. Scott was now *Scott of the Antarctic*, the nation's hero.

# THE NATIONAL ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

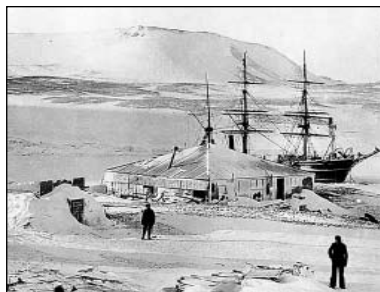
The National Antarctic Expedition was jointly sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Society. It was the first great land-based expedition to Antarctica and although an attempt at the Pole was among the objectives, geographical exploration and basic science were to be the prime pursuits. A specially designed and constructed ship, the 172-foot sail and steam powered *Discovery*, was built in Dundee, Scotland (where it may be seen today). Robert Scott was chosen leader, a victory for Sir Clements Markham (the Royal Society wanted the expedition

under the command of a scientist). *Discovery* left England in August of 1901 and after stops along the way, reached the Ross Sea in early 1902. Winter Quarters were established at Hut Point on Ross Island. The *Discovery* was the first ship to visit the area since the voyage of Sir James Clark Ross in 1841. A prefabricated hut was erected which still stands as an historic site at the edge of the giant U.S. McMurdo Station. The 40 men, however, lived on board the ship, which was frozen in at the shore, while the hut was used for storage and such things as entertainments,

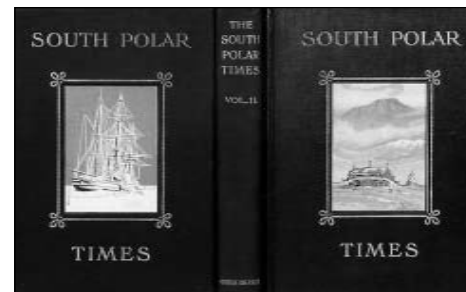
including productions of the “Royal Terror Theatre.” Up to this time the exploration of Antarctica had been limited to the coastal fringes. What lay beyond was entirely a matter of speculation. The first Antarctic aerial ascent was accomplished in a balloon named *Eva* from which Shackleton took the continent’s first aerial photographs. From an elevation of 800 feet Scott saw nothing but snow and ice stretching to the south. So when the Polar Party—Scott, Wilson and Shackleton—set out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1902, they had little idea of what might lie ahead. There was



The officers and crew of the *Discovery*. Scott is standing in the center; hands together; Wilson and Shackleton (arms folded) to his right in suits.



The *Discovery* at Winter Quarters, Ross Island, with the Hut in the foreground, and Observation Hill rising behind.



Volume II of the *South Polar Times*. The original was a periodical with light poetry and essays submitted anonymously. Shackleton was editor.

## 1901 – 04 “DISCOVERY”

difficulty with the equipment, the dogs, and with the weather, but they continued on and by the 30<sup>th</sup> of December they were at the furthest south yet attained by man—82° 16' 33". The limit had been reached and although the mountains and Polar Plateau were in sight, they turned homeward. They had been plagued by scurvy, Shackleton especially so. He was spitting blood and for awhile had to be carried on a sledge. They made it back to Hut Point, but just barely, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1903.

While Scott was on the southern journey,



Shackleton, Scott and Wilson starting off for the Pole, November 2, 1902. Note the sledge flags which were used on both of Scott's

Albert Armitage led a party to explore Victoria Land and the Western Mountains and became the first to walk on the Polar Plateau and to ascend an Antarctic glacier. Another team went to Cape Crozier to get Emperor penguin eggs, but they were too late, though this would be a prelude to the famous “Worst Journey” on the *Terra Nova* expedition.

The *Discovery* was to leave for home in 1903 but the ice still held her fast. The relief ship *Morning* got to within eight miles. Mail was exchanged, supplies transferred and personnel reduced, Shackleton being one that



Shackleton, Scott and Wilson on their return, February 3, 1903. The effects of the three-month journey are evident.

was headed home. The *Discovery* was going to have to spend another winter at Hut Point.

A year later, in February, two relief ships appeared on the horizon: the *Morning* and the *Terra Nova*. The ice conditions were no better this time and plans were proceeding to abandon the *Discovery* when at the last moment the ice began to break up and the ship was once again afloat. The three ships headed north thus ending man's longest stay in the Antarctic up to that time.

Over 900 miles of land and 150 miles of ice shelf were explored and a good start had been made along the South Polar Trail.



The *Discovery* still fast in the ice with the *Morning* in the background; she was finally freed on February 16, 1904.

# THE BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

The British Antarctic Expedition or ‘Scott’s Last Expedition’ was in many ways a continuation of the *Discovery* expedition: some of the same people returned, the science program built upon earlier accomplishments, the area of operations (the Ross Sea) was the same, and, of course, the ultimate goal was identical: to reach the Pole. The expedition’s ship—the 187-foot *Terra Nova*—left Cardiff, Wales, on June 17, 1910. Scott had chosen this as the port of departure because of the great financial support that had come from its citizens. The expedition, like nearly all at the time, had to

rely on significant private donations. There were 65 men in the party, 19 Siberian ponies, 34 dogs and several motor sledges. In the end, the main transport was man-hauled sledges just as it had been ten years earlier.

In Melbourne, Scott received a cable: “Beg leave to inform you, *Fram* proceeding Antarctica. Amundsen.” The pressure was now on. In December the *Terra Nova* entered the pack ice and on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1911, a landing was made at Cape Evans on Ross Island, a few miles north of *Discovery*’s Winter Quarters. Here the new hut was erected, a hut to be

lived in. In true naval tradition, the officers and the men had separate quarters, as best one can in a space 50 by 25 feet. The *Terra Nova*, before heading back to New Zealand for the winter, cruised along the Great Ice Barrier and by chance came upon Amundsen’s *Fram* at the Bay of Whales. Visits were exchanged, but the atmosphere was chilly at best.

Before winter set in, depot laying parties headed south in preparation for the polar dash in the spring. The Northern Party under Victor Campbell was dropped off at Cape Adare by the northward-bound *Terra Nova*. This



Sir Clements Markham, Kathleen and Robert Scott on the *Terra Nova*.



The *Terra Nova* meets the *Fram* in the Bay of Whales alongside the Great Ice Barrier, February 3,



Captain Scott writing up his journals in his ‘Den’ at Cape Evans.



Roald Amundsen, conqueror of the South Pole.



Amundsen (left) and three of his four companions at their South Pole camp, December 14, 1911.

# 1910-12 "TERRA NOVA" OR SCOTT'S LAST EXPEDITION

group of six was to suffer horrendous privations and had to winter-over in an ice cave.

The other amazing effort was the mid-winter trip made by Bowers, Wilson and Cherry-Garrard to Cape Crozier to retrieve three Emperor penguin eggs. Temperatures got as low as  $-77^{\circ}$ . Cherry-Garrard's classic book, *The Worst Journey in the World*, chronicles this month-long ordeal.

The Polar Party with its support group left Cape Evans on October 26, 1911. The final members were chosen once the Polar Plateau was reached: Scott, his best friend Edward

Wilson, Petty Officer Evans (all three had been together on the *Discovery*), L.E.G. Oates and the fifth man, added almost as an afterthought, 'Birdie Bowers.' They reached the Pole on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1912, only to find that Amundsen's party had beaten them by over a month. The disappointment was overwhelming. Scott wrote in his journal "Great God! This is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority." There was nothing to do but start the 800-mile homeward journey, a trip they were in no fit condition to make. Evans, the largest

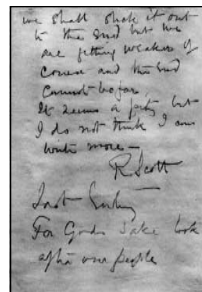
and strongest, was the first to succumb, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February. The next, a month later, was Oates, who on his birthday sacrificially left the tent during a blizzard, never to be seen again. The end came for Scott, Wilson and Bowers on March 29<sup>th</sup>, together in their tent, pinned down by a blizzard, only 11 miles from the depot that might have saved their lives. The next spring a search party found the tent. The journals and equipment were removed, the tent collapsed, and a snow cairn and cross erected. Nearly ninety years later this final resting place is slowly moving northward.



"Great God what an awful place!" At the South Pole, January 17, 1912. Oates, Bowers, Scott, Wilson and Evans.



"I'm just going outside and may be some time." Captain Oates walked willingly to his death in a blizzard to try to save his comrades.



Captain Scott's last entry in his journal, March 29, 1912.



The snow cairn built above the final resting place of Scott, Wilson and Bowers.

# YOUR HERO, MY HERO

This may seem a curious title for a talk or for this keepsake. What does it mean? From the late 1890s to about 1920 the focus of the world of exploration was on the Antarctic. The last significant blank spaces on the globe were at the bottom of the world, and



National memorial to Scott and his men on Mt. Wise in Plymouth, England.

these became the setting for great and stirring deeds of heroism.

Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton are names that will be ever tied to this Heroic Era. Each in his time had his eye on the South Pole. Amundsen beat out Scott in getting there, but his was a methodical

though expert journey that somehow never captured the world's imagination. Shackleton never got there at all, but it is Shackleton who is now the center of attention. A year ago an extraordinarily popular exhibit on his *Endurance* expedition opened at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. It continues to travel to other cities and will for some time. Caroline Alexander's book, *The Endurance*, has sold more

than half a million copies.

The book that first brought Shackleton to widespread attention in the U.S.—Alfred Lansing's *Endurance*—has been reprinted again and again since its appearance in 1959. In an earlier time, it was Scott who was the household word, the tragic hero who died with his companions on the return from the Pole. 'Scott of the Antarctic' was familiar to every British school

child. In 1979, Scott was the subject of a scathingly critical book by Roland Huntford; he championed Amundsen over Scott, and ever since Scott's star has dimmed. At least until recently. Just as certain as what goes



Lutyens' statue of Shackleton on the facade of the Royal Geographical Society.

up, must go down, Scott may now be in the ascendancy. Last September an auction was held in London which contained items associated with Scott, some having been retrieved from the tent where he died. The highlights of earlier auctions in the same series were mostly Shackleton related.

The Scott items generated far more attention and higher prices. Perhaps the pendulum is starting to swing in the other direction.

Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who was on Scott's Last Expedition, summed it up succinctly:

"What is the use of A running down Scott because he served with Shackleton, or B going for Amundsen because he served with Scott? They have all done good work; within their limits, the best work to date. There

are jobs for which, if I had to do them, I would like to serve under Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton and Wilson—each to his part. For a joint scientific and geographical piece of organization, give me Scott; for a Winter Journey, Wilson; for a dash to the Pole and nothing else, Amundsen; and if I am in the devil of a hole and want to get out of it, give me Shackleton every time. They will all go down in polar history as leaders, these men."



A statue of Amundsen at his house near Oslo. From left for the South from the fjord in the background.

So, as is probably always the case, we each have a favorite hero. Which one is yours?

# T H E H E R O I C A G E

The flurry of Antarctic exploration that began in the late 1890s had as perhaps its major impetus the declaration of the INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL CONGRESS—meeting in London in 1895—that “. . . the exploration of the Antarctic Regions is the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken.” Individuals and nations heeded the call, and The Heroic Age was launched.

Who were some of the leading lights in this quarter century of intense exploratory activity?

Among the first was the Belgian ADRIEN DE GERLACHE who sailed south in the *Belgica* (1897-99). As it turned out the expedition was the first to winter-over in the Antarctic (unplanned) when the *Belgica* found itself trapped in the ice. Two of the crew, who would make their names later in polar circles, were a young Norwegian, ROALD AMUNDSEN (first to the South Pole) and an American, DR. FREDERICK COOK (a claimant along with Pery to being first at the North Pole).

Other expeditions followed in quick succession: CARSTEN BORCHGREVINK in the *Southern Cross* (1898-1900), the ten men wintered-over at Cape Adare in a hut that still stands; the German ERIC VON DRIVENSKI in the *Gaust* (1901-03), it also got trapped in the ice; and the Swedish South Polar Expedition under OTTO NORDENSKIÖLD in the *Antarctic* (1901-04), which was eventually crushed in the ice and sank, three separate parties wintering-over, none knowing where the other was, and miraculously finding one another the next season. Each of these early encounters with Antarctica had its tale to tell and its share of heroes.

Two great expeditions of this time were Britain's National Antarctic or

*Discovery* Expedition (1901-04), under ROBERT SCOTT, and the British Antarctic Expedition or *Nimrod* Expedition (1907-09), under ERNEST SHACKLETON. Both of these and their leaders are the focus of this keepsake, as are 'Scott's Last Expedition' (1910-13) and ROALD AMUNDSEN's Norwegian expedition (1910-12), the first to reach the Pole.

Other noteworthy efforts: The Scottish National Antarctic Expedition under WILLIAM BRUCE in the  *Scotia*  (1902-04); the party included a piper who, dressed in a kilt, enjoyed serenading the penguins. The French were represented by two expeditions led by JEAN-BAPTISTE CHARCOT, first in the  *Francaise*  (1903-05) and later in the  *Pourquoi Pas?*  (1908-10). The Japanese were even trying their hand: NORU SHIRASE reached the Great Ice Barrier in the  *Kainan Maru*  (1910-12) and his seven-man 'Dash Patrol' covered 180 miles over the ice. The Australian, DOUGLAS MAMSON, who had been on the  *Nimrod*  expedition, reaching the South Magnetic Pole, went on to lead his own expedition to the "Home of the Blizzard," the windiest area of the windiest continent. His epic solitary sledge journey after the deaths of his two companions and the loss of most of their equipment is one of the great tales of survival.

By 1922, the year of Shackleton's death, The Heroic Age had come to a close. Really it had ended with the rescue of Shackleton's men from Elephant Island (1916): the intervening Great War caused minds to be on things other than exploration. Later, others made their names in the Antarctic—WILKINS, BYRD, ELLSWORTH, FUCHS & HILLARY (they succeeded in Shackleton's quest of crossing the continent in 1958)—but it wasn't quite the same.





YOUNG PRESIDENTS' ORGANIZATION

St. Louis Chapter - Thursday April 27, 2000

The Exchange Conference Center - Boston, Massachusetts

# SHACKLETON

*"I thought, dear, that you would rather have a live ass than a dead lion."*

- Shackleton explaining to his wife his turning back 97 miles short of the Pole.

*E. A. Shackleton*

# SHACKLETON-ROWETT ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION 1921-22

One of the first questions that Shackleton asked upon arrival at Stromness after crossing South Georgia was “Tell me, when was the war over?” He must have been shocked at the answer: “The war is not over. Millions are being killed. . .The world is mad.” Once the men of the *Endurance* were home, most, including Shackleton, immediately joined the war effort. Some who had survived so much in the Antarctic were to die in the trenches or on the seas.

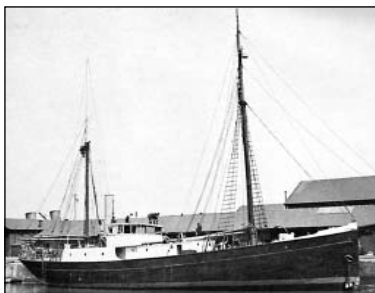
With the war finally won, Shackleton began to think of an expedition to the Canadian

arctic, but he changed his mind and looked south again, this time backed by an old school chum, John Rowett. The expedition’s goals were somewhat vague: map 2000 miles of continental coastline and search the southern seas for “lost” reefs and islands. The *Quest*, a small, decrepit Norwegian sealer was bought, and on the 17th of September, 1921, she sailed down the Thames, under Tower Bridge and on to South Georgia. Among his men were Frank Wild, Frank Worsley and several others from the *Endurance*; such was the pull of “The Boss.”

Now 47 and

looking tired, this would be Shackleton’s last voyage. The *Quest* arrived in Grytviken on the 4th of January, 1922. Early on the following morning, Shackleton died in his cabin. And with his death a great era came to a close.

The expedition continued under Frank Wild, Shackleton’s steadfast companion on all four expeditions. The *Quest* revisited Elephant Island. On the voyage home, the crew erected a cross for “The Boss” overlooking the harbor of Grytviken and the Whalers’ Cemetery where he had been laid to rest.



The *Quest* before departure in London. A former Norwegian sealer, she was in terrible shape, but managed to complete her voyage.



Shackleton (in the center with cap and tie) and his expedition members aboard the *Quest*. Frank Wild is to his left, then Frank Worsley.



The memorial cross erected by the crew of the *Quest*, Grytviken, South Georgia. Across the bay in the Whalers’ Cemetery is Shackleton’s



## 1914-16 "ENDURANCE"

### Eighty-Five Years Ago Today, 1915

#### The Day's Menu:

Breakfast - Tinned Pilchards in tomato sauce, porridge.

Luncheon - Pemmican hoosh.

Dinner - Stewed seals, kidney in onion, Boiled sultan pudding cake.

(From the diary of Thomas Orde-Lees)

"Poor Spotty dies during the night from pneumonia—this leaves 50 dogs."

(From the diary of Frank Worsley)

### Eighty-Four Years Ago Today, 1916



'Ocean Camp' on the ice floe: On the left, Sir Ernest with Frank Wild, his companion on all four of his Antarctic expeditions.

"The most wretched weather conceivable. Raining all night and day. Nearly washed out of tents. Work during the morning excavating ice shelter, which I am afraid will be of little use owing to the streams of thaw water running through it. The roof rains water and were it not for the wind one might just as well sleep in the open. Wet to the skin. With the prospect of coming relief, however, and being on land one can endure much.

Gloomy prospect out to sea, with storm seas breaking over the dull white bergs and sinister coast. This is truly a land where

nature shows but her sullen moods. Oh! for a gleaming ray of her smiling sunshine.

(From the diary of Frank Hurley)

Twelve days before today in 1916, the men of the *Endurance* landed on Elephant Island, their first dry land in 497 days.

Three days before today in 1916, Shackleton, Worsley, Crean, McNeish, McCarthy and Vincent and set out in the *James Caird* for South Georgia, 800 miles away.



Launching the *James Caird* at Elephant Island, April 24, 1916. Her gunwhales were raised and a deck installed for the 800-mile voyage.



August 30, 1916: Sir Ernest returns to rescue the men on Elephant Island. The Chilean tug *Yelcho* in the distance.

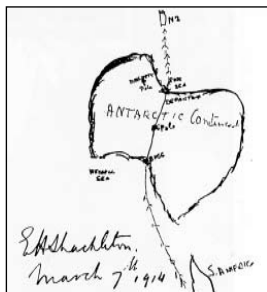
# IMPERIAL TRANS-ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

The Pole was conquered and Scott was dead. Shackleton, again with southward thoughts, saw no purpose or reward in being the 11th man to reach 90° South. But to cross the continent via the Pole, that would be a spectacular feat. Thus was born the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The plan was for the main party to approach the Pole from the Weddell Sea and once there to continue on to McMurdo Sound picking up depots that had been laid the season before by the Ross Sea Party. The *Endurance* sailed from Plymouth on the 8th of August 1914, four days after the

start of the Great War. The *Aurora*, with the Ross Sea Party, sailed from Sydney on the 15th of December. The *Endurance* never reached the proposed base in the Weddell Sea but got held in the ice in January 1915, and months later, on November 21, 1915, sank. The men of the *Endurance*, after 497 days of being away from land, arrived at Elephant Island. Perhaps the world's greatest survival story was actually just beginning. Sir Ernest and five others set out in the 22'6" *James Caird* for South Georgia, 800 miles away, landed on the south side, crossed unclimbed mountains

to the north side where the whaling stations were; later, after four attempts, the men on Elephant Island were rescued, on the 30th of August 1916.

And what of the men at the other side of the continent? The *Aurora* anchored at Scott's old base at Cape Evans. A great storm tore the ship away—leaving the men with only the clothes on their backs—and it too became trapped in the ice, not to get free for ten months. With great difficulty, the Party did its job and laid the depots, not knowing, of course, that they would never be used.



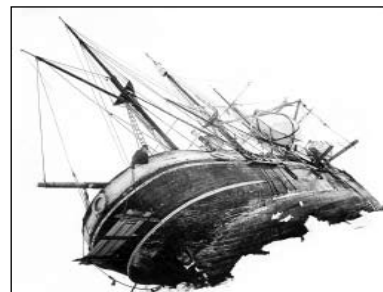
The proposed route of the expedition, scribbled by Shackleton on a menu



The actual circular route of the expedition, from December 3, 1914 to May 10, 1916.



The men of the *Endurance*. Shackleton in white sweater in the center; behind his left shoulder is Frank Wild, polar veteran.



The *Endurance* trapped in the ice of the Weddell Sea. She finally sank on November 21, 1915.

## BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION 1907–09 “NIMROD”

Shackleton, invalided home on the *Morning*, probably began thinking about his own Antarctic expedition even before the *Discovery* arrived in England, though his plans weren't made public until February, 1907. With support from several wealthy benefactors he purchased an old sealer, *Nimrod*, and began organizing. He placed a newspaper ad: “Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.” 400 men applied. The Poles—geographical and magnetic—were

the chief goals. The *Nimrod* left England on August 8, 1907, and New Zealand on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Terribly overloaded, as were most Antarctic expedition ships in those days, she only had 3'6" of freeboard. Shackleton had promised Scott he would avoid Ross Island as a base. This was Scott's neighborhood after all and he might go back one day! Ice and weather conditions were poor, though, and Shackleton had little choice but to set up his hut at Cape Royds, 20 miles north of Scott's old base. It was small (33 x 20 feet) but democratic, unlike Scott's hut.

The accomplishments of the expedition were many: Mt. Erebus, the nearby 12,448-foot active volcano was ascended; Antarctica's first motor vehicle actually worked, for awhile; the first book written, illustrated, printed and bound in the Antarctic (*Aurora Australis*) made its debut; Mawson, David and MacKay reached the South Magnetic Pole. But the feat that would catch the imagination and interest of the British nation was the Polar Journey undertaken by Shackleton, Adams, Marshall and Wild. They turned back 97 miles from their goal but they lived to tell about it.



The Hut at Cape Royds, Ross Island, with Mt. Erebus in the distance. It accommodated 15 men in 725 square



January 16, 1909: MacKay, David and Mawson at the South Magnetic Pole, a round-trip of 1260 miles.



January 9, 1909: Adams, Wild and Shackleton at the Furthest South, 97 miles from the Pole. Marshall took the photograph.

## ERNEST HENRY SHACKLETON

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was born in 1874 at Kilkea House, Co. Kildare, Ireland. The family moved to England in 1884, eventually settling in Sydenham. Ernest attended nearby Dulwich College until he was sixteen when he joined the merchant navy. Soon he was rounding the Horn on the square-rigged *Hoghton Tower*. Later, while a Third Officer with the Union Castle Line on the Cape Town run, he met the son of the major sponsor of the expedition Scott was then organizing. Before he knew it he was aboard the *Discovery* as a Second Lieutenant, RNR—Scott wasn't the only one destined to have a chance encounter shape the rest of his life. Shackleton took to Antarctic exploring with enthusiasm, and was rewarded when Scott chose him for the Polar Party, along with Wilson. The three ventured far further south than anyone before them; all suffered in the process, however, especially so Shackleton. They made it back—barely—but Scott decided to send him home on the relief ship, *Morning*. Ernest reluctantly

did his captain's bidding. Once back in London and with no rivals about, Shackleton lost no time in employing his considerable charm and natural speaking ability to publicize the expedition (and also himself).

Shackleton's four Antarctic expeditions spanned 20 years, each venture south interspersed with on-shore attempts in one field or another: He was secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, ran for Parliament and got involved in a variety of ventures and schemes, few proving very successful. The Ice seemed to have a hold on him.

He returned to the Antarctic as leader of the *Nimrod* expedition, unquestionably his most productive Antarctic undertaking, and got to within 97 miles of the Pole. He and his companions could have gone on; but if they had, would they have managed to get back? Shackleton thought not. As he later explained to his wife, Emily: "I thought, dear, that you would rather have a live ass than a dead lion."



Neither dead nor an ass, Shackleton came home a hero, and before the year was out he was *Sir* Ernest. Might his near-success have driven Scott to go South again and Amundsen to

change his plans and head there too? Maybe. Each went and each reached the Pole. This posed a question for Shackleton: with the Pole conquered, what's left? One answer: cross the continent, the "last great journey." Thus was born the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. Though ambitious and grand in scale, based on its objectives, it was an utter failure. But what an adventure! What a tale of pluck and survival!

With the War over, the South again called. In 1921 Sir Ernest set out on his last Antarctic expedition aboard the *Quest*. Within hours of arriving at South Georgia, "The Boss" was dead. As the *Quest* continued on its way, the curtain closed