



Endurance

by Paul Mason



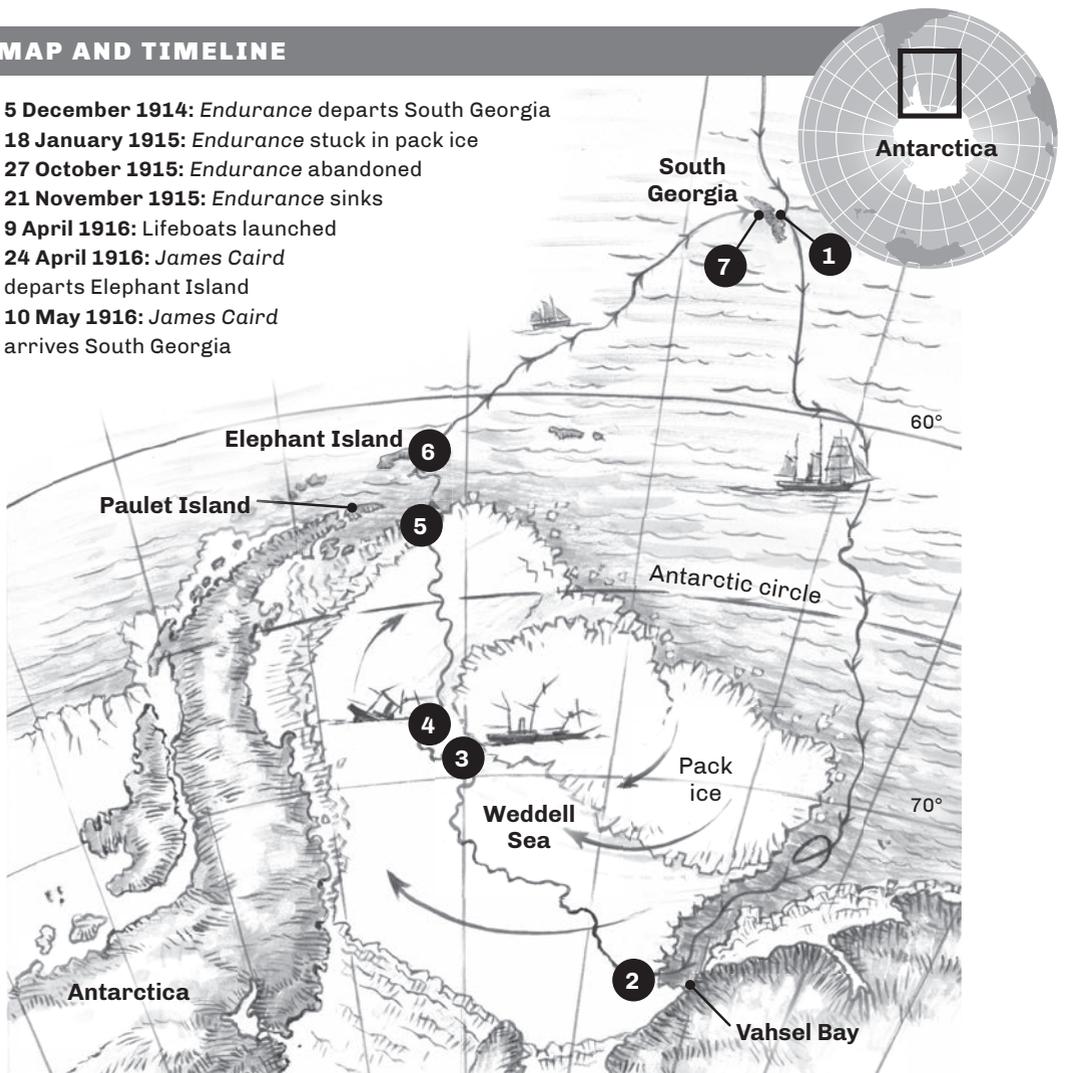
School Journal Story Library is a targeted series that supplements other instructional series texts. It provides additional scaffolds and supports for teachers to use to accelerate students' literacy learning.

Endurance has been carefully levelled. While the contexts and concepts link to English and social sciences at level 4 of the curriculum, the text has a reading year level of years 5 to 6.

Teacher support material (available at www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz) contains key information to help teachers to provide the additional support and scaffolding that some students may need to meet the specific reading, writing, and curriculum demands of *Endurance*.

MAP AND TIMELINE

1. **5 December 1914:** *Endurance* departs South Georgia
2. **18 January 1915:** *Endurance* stuck in pack ice
3. **27 October 1915:** *Endurance* abandoned
4. **21 November 1915:** *Endurance* sinks
5. **9 April 1916:** Lifeboats launched
6. **24 April 1916:** *James Caird* departs Elephant Island
7. **10 May 1916:** *James Caird* arrives South Georgia



“By endurance we conquer.”

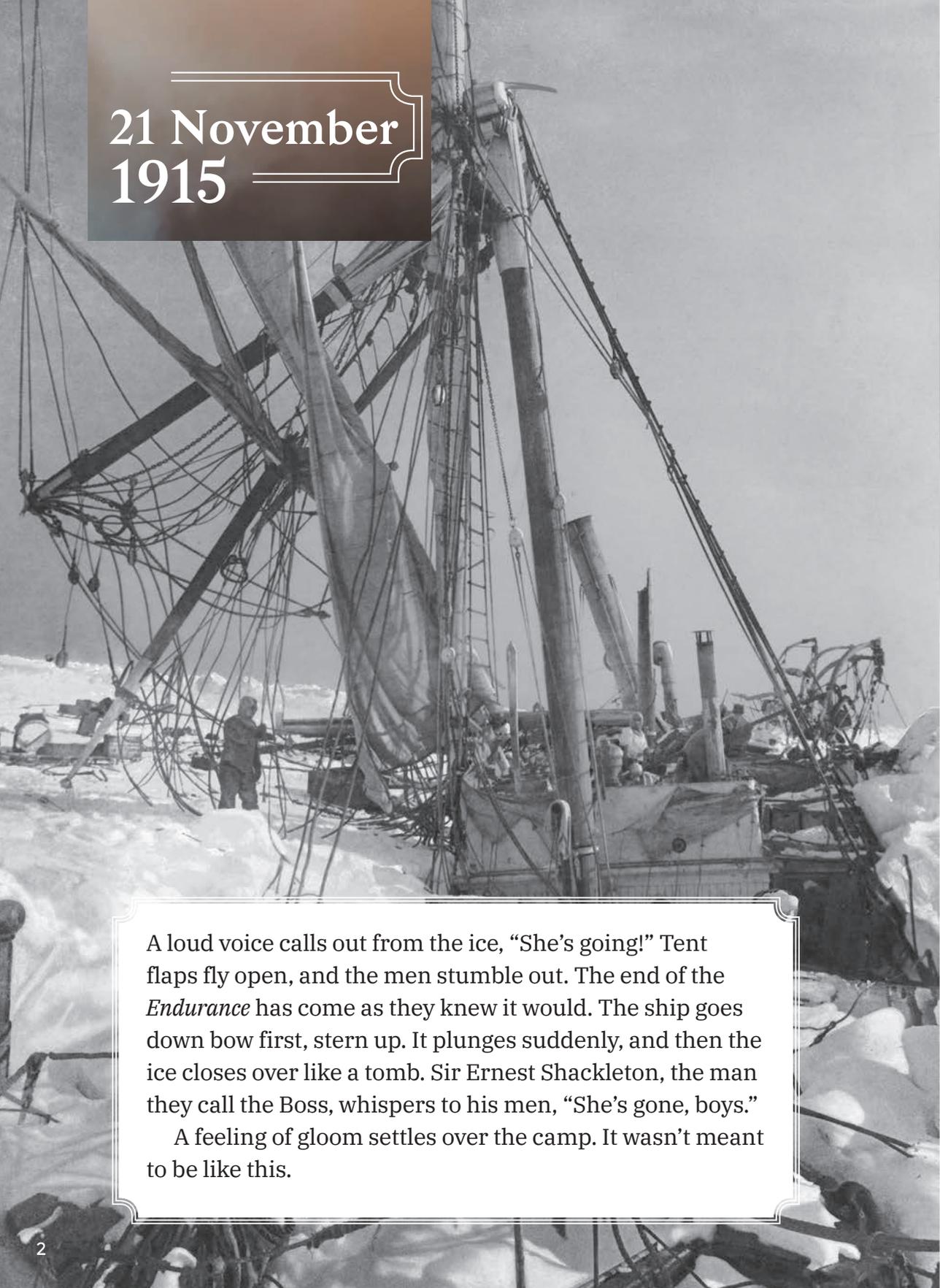
– Shackleton family motto

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CONTENTS

- 2 21 November 1915
- 3 Shackleton: Explorer of the South
- 4 The *Endurance* Sets Sail
- 6 Stuck in the Ice
- 8 Life on Board
- 9 Abandon Ship
- 10 Camping on the Ice
- 12 Rowing to Elephant Island
- 13 A Brief Rest
- 14 The Voyage of the *James Caird*
- 15 Crossing South Georgia
- 16 “They’re All There, Skipper!”

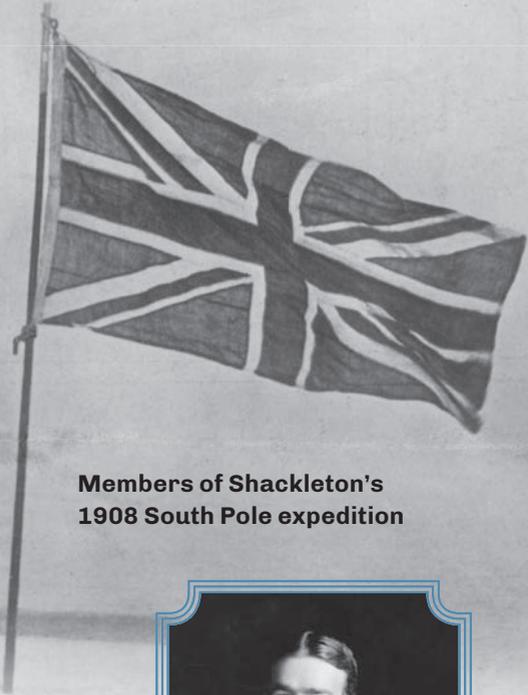


21 November
1915

A loud voice calls out from the ice, “She’s going!” Tent flaps fly open, and the men stumble out. The end of the *Endurance* has come as they knew it would. The ship goes down bow first, stern up. It plunges suddenly, and then the ice closes over like a tomb. Sir Ernest Shackleton, the man they call the Boss, whispers to his men, “She’s gone, boys.”

A feeling of gloom settles over the camp. It wasn’t meant to be like this.

Shackleton: Explorer of the South



**Members of Shackleton's
1908 South Pole expedition**

Sir Ernest Shackleton was an Irish-born British explorer. In 1908, he led an expedition (journey) to try to reach the South Pole. Although Shackleton and his team didn't achieve their goal, they came closer than anyone had before. Members of his team also became the first people to climb Mount Erebus – the second-highest volcano in Antarctica. Shackleton returned to England a hero.



Sir Ernest Shackleton

However, when Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole in 1911, Shackleton decided on a new challenge. He wanted to cross the Antarctic continent from sea to sea. It was seen as the last remaining feat of Antarctic exploration.

Shackleton and five others planned to make the journey using dogs and sledges. Another group of men would support Shackleton's team and carry out scientific work on the continent. The entire expedition was expected to take five months.

5 DECEMBER 1914

The *Endurance* Sets Sail

On 5 December 1914, a few months after the start of the First World War, Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* left the island of South Georgia. Twenty-eight men were on board. They planned to cross the Weddell Sea and set up a base

at Vahsel Bay on Antarctica's Luitpold Coast. From there, they would begin the 3,000-kilometre trek to the Ross Sea.

Shackleton was the leader of the expedition, but New Zealander Frank Worsley was the ship's captain. Born in Akaroa, Worsley was an experienced sailor. He was well-known for being able to navigate ships to small, remote islands. It was a skill that would later save the lives of the entire crew.



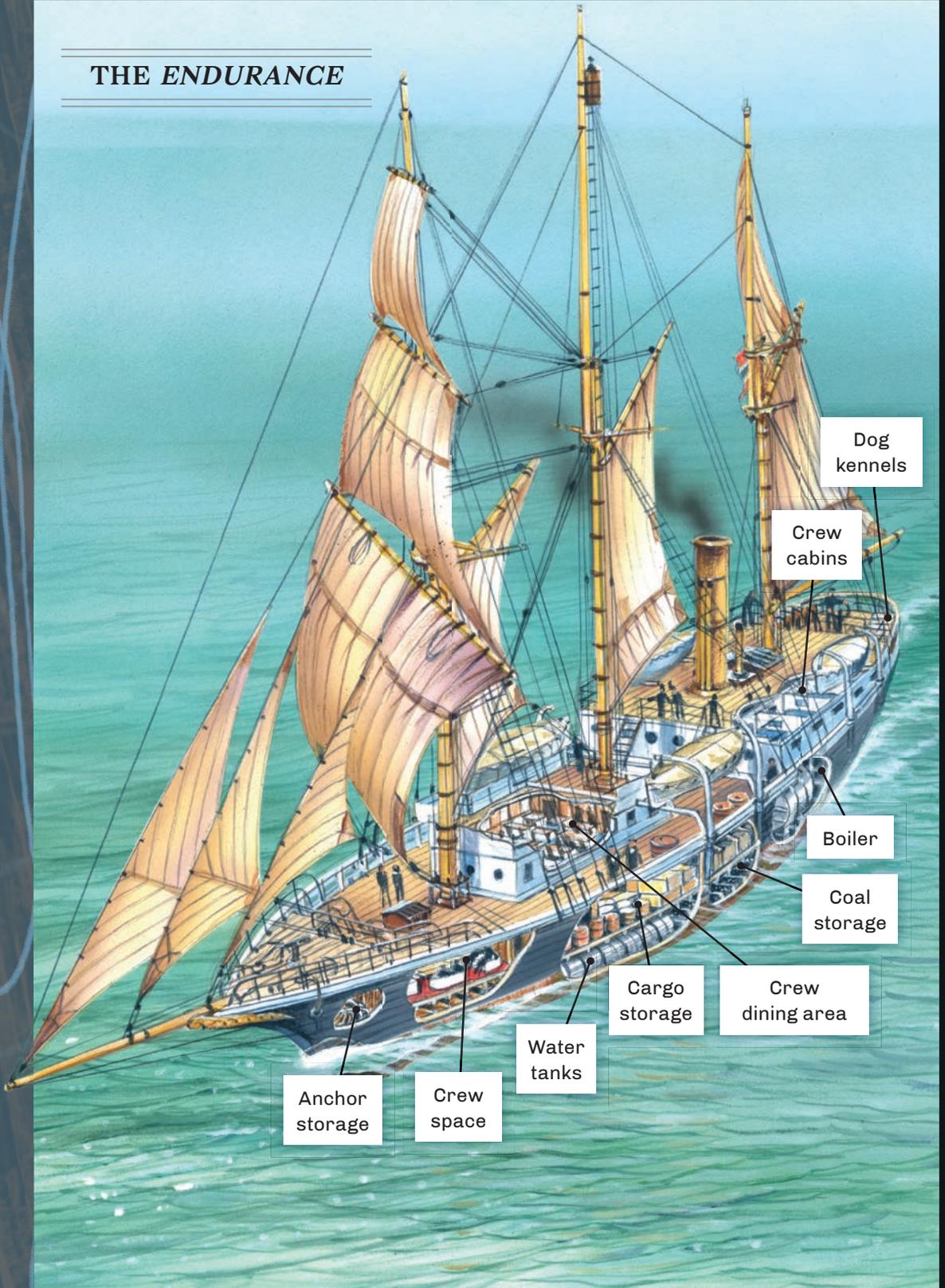
A STRANGE DREAM

Worsley's decision to join the expedition was based on a dream. In his dream, he saw himself steering a ship down Burlington Street in London through blocks of ice. The next day, Worsley hurried to the same street and saw a sign on a door for the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. He went inside, met Shackleton, and was hired on the spot!



Frank Worsley

THE ENDURANCE



Dog kennels

Crew cabins

Boiler

Coal storage

Crew dining area

Cargo storage

Water tanks

Crew space

Anchor storage



18 JANUARY 1915

Stuck in the Ice

For the first couple of days, the *Endurance* made steady progress. But it wasn't long before they came across floating sheets of ice. To begin with, the ice was light and thinly scattered. Shackleton continued south, steering a slow path through the clear patches of sea. But gradually the ice became thicker and denser. The paths ahead narrowed. Eventually, after weeks of slow progress, Shackleton gave the order to stop the engines. The ice had closed in, surrounding the *Endurance* as far as the eye could see.

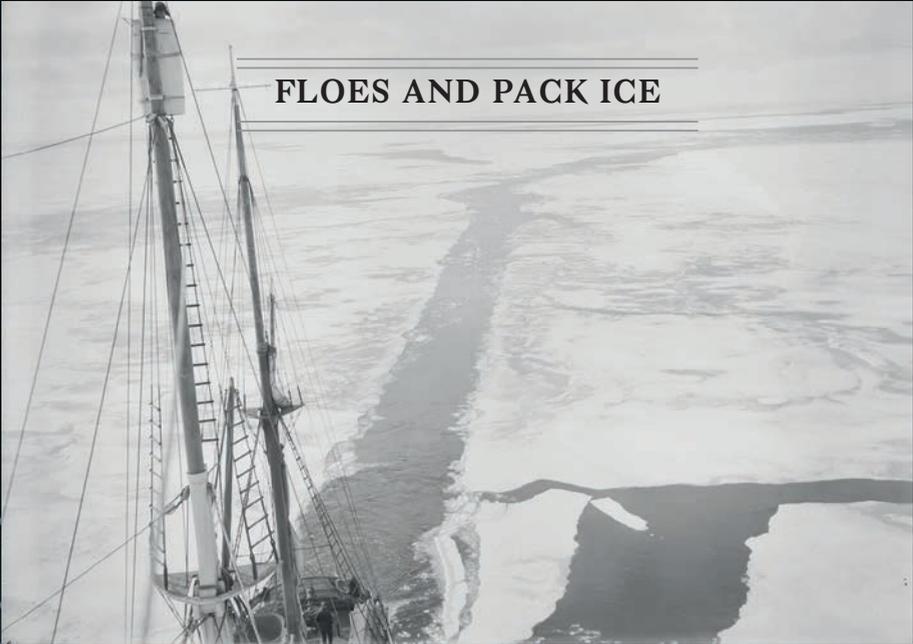


The crew attempting to clear a path through the ice

The men had no choice but to wait until spring – at least seven months away – for the ice to break up. After that, Shackleton still hoped they could attempt the crossing. But he faced a daunting task. The *Endurance* was caught in the drifting ice pack and he had no way of sending for help. The coming winter would be dark and long. Shackleton knew he had to keep his men busy.

“Standing on the stirring ice, one can imagine it is disturbed by the breathing and tossing of a mighty giant below.”

SHACKLETON



FLOES AND PACK ICE

Floating sheets of ice are called floes. Ice floes come in different sizes and thicknesses. Together, they make up a larger body of ice called pack ice. Pack ice changes constantly. It moves with the winds and currents, causing individual floes to collide and form ridges. Cracks often appear, and sometimes, clear stretches of water open up.

Life on Board



For months, the *Endurance* drifted with the pack ice. Each day, the floes squeezed the ship with added pressure. Shackleton did his best to keep his men's spirits up. They spent their days repairing the *Endurance* and hunting seals. They trained the dog teams and built "dogloos" on the ice. Some of the scientists **dredged** the ocean floor for rocks and sea life. For fun, the men would play hockey or football on the floes. And in the evenings, everyone gathered in the dining area for food, singing, and lively chat.



dredged: scooped up or collected material (in this case, using nets)

27 OCTOBER 1915

Abandon Ship

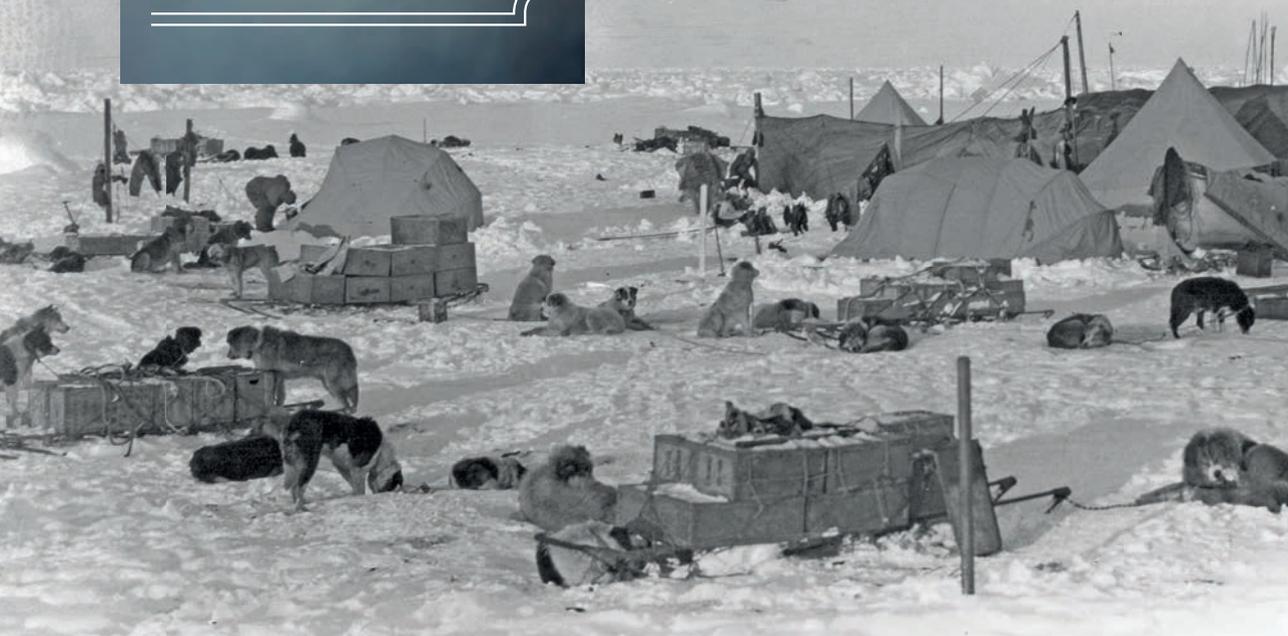
By the end of October, after nine months stuck in the ice, it became clear that the *Endurance* would not survive. The ship was leaking badly and beyond repair. Reluctantly, Shackleton gave the order to abandon ship. The men lowered the lifeboats, gear, and food rations (mainly biscuits and dried meat) onto the ice floe and set up a temporary camp. Now the Boss had a new goal, one that would occupy his every moment: to keep everyone alive.

"She has been thrown to and fro like a shuttlecock a dozen times. She has been strained, her beams arched upwards, by the fearful pressure; her very sides opened and closed again as she was actually bent and curved along her length, groaning like a living thing ..."

WORSLEY



Camping on the Ice



Shackleton hoped that the drifting ice would take them close to Paulet Island. It was their nearest source of food and shelter, but it was still 500 kilometres away. The men loaded the lifeboats with supplies and tried to drag them over the ice on sledges in the direction of the island. But their progress was painfully slow. Heavy snowfall and warmer weather had made the surface thick and soft. Shackleton decided to find a solid floe and make camp until the surface was harder. It was here, at “Ocean Camp”, that they watched the *Endurance* sink below the ice.

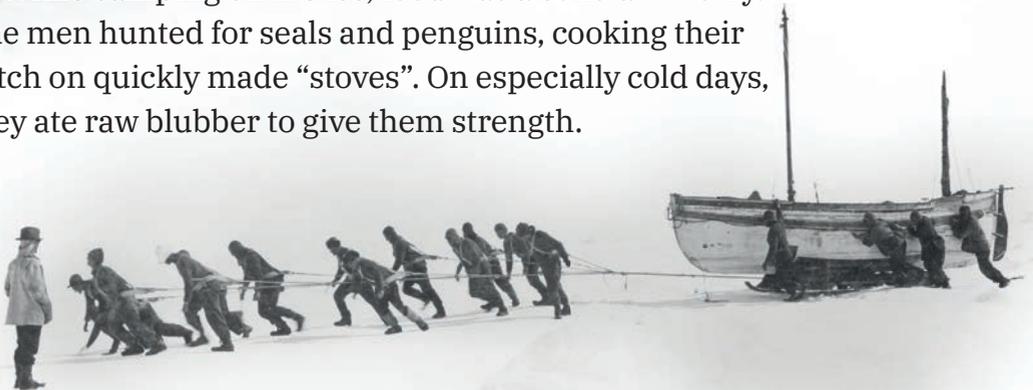
Ocean Camp

“There were twenty-eight men on our floating cake of ice, which was steadily dwindling under the influence of wind, weather, charging floes, and heavy swell. I confess that I felt the burden of responsibility sit heavily on my shoulders.”

SHACKLETON



While camping on the ice, food was a constant worry. The men hunted for seals and penguins, cooking their catch on quickly made “stoves”. On especially cold days, they ate raw blubber to give them strength.



The men again tried to haul the boats across the ice, but again the task was too difficult. They made camp once more. For three and a half months, Shackleton and his men were trapped at “Patience Camp”. Meanwhile, the drifting floe took them well past Paulet Island. Disappointed and running out of options, Shackleton again changed plans. Elephant Island, over 150 kilometres to the north, became his new target.

Finally, after more than five months on the floe, the ice began to break up. Shackleton ordered his men to the three lifeboats. They had to reach land.

9-15 APRIL 1916

Rowing to Elephant Island

It was Worsley's job to navigate the boats to Elephant Island. He used his sextant to take readings of the sun and calculate their position. The men steered their boats carefully through the moving floes. When they weren't rowing or on watch, they lay in each other's arms for warmth. Constant rain, icy temperatures, and seasickness made sleep almost impossible. Orcas lurked below.

But the Kiwi skipper guided them well. After a desperate week, the three boats landed on the rocky shores of Elephant Island. For the first time in nearly 500 days, the men stood on solid ground.

"The [men's] smiles and laughter caused cracked lips to bleed afresh. [Their] gleeful exclamations at the sight of two live seals on the beach made me think for a moment of that glittering hour of childhood when the door is open at last and the Christmas tree in all its wonder bursts upon the vision."

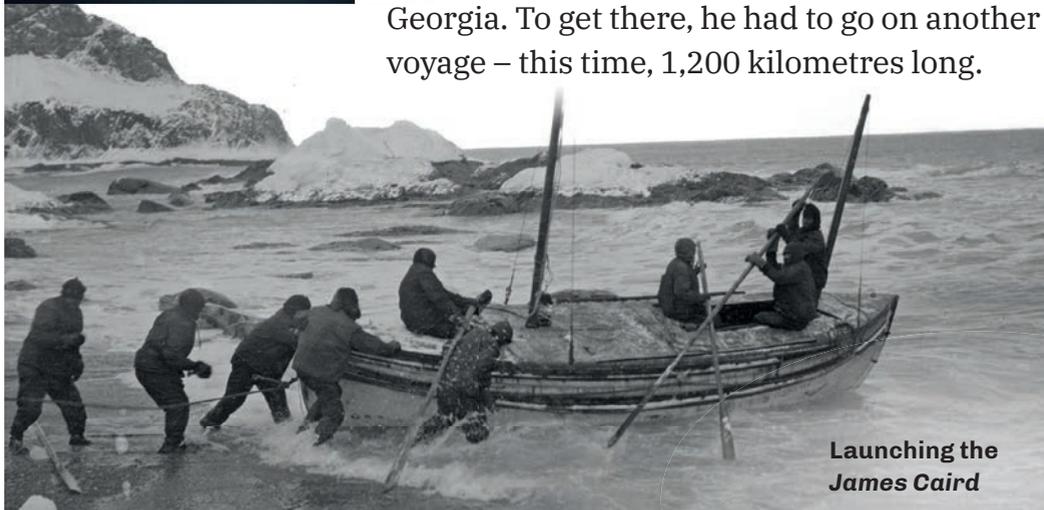
SHACKLETON

**The crew unloading
their lifeboats on
Elephant Island**



A Brief Rest

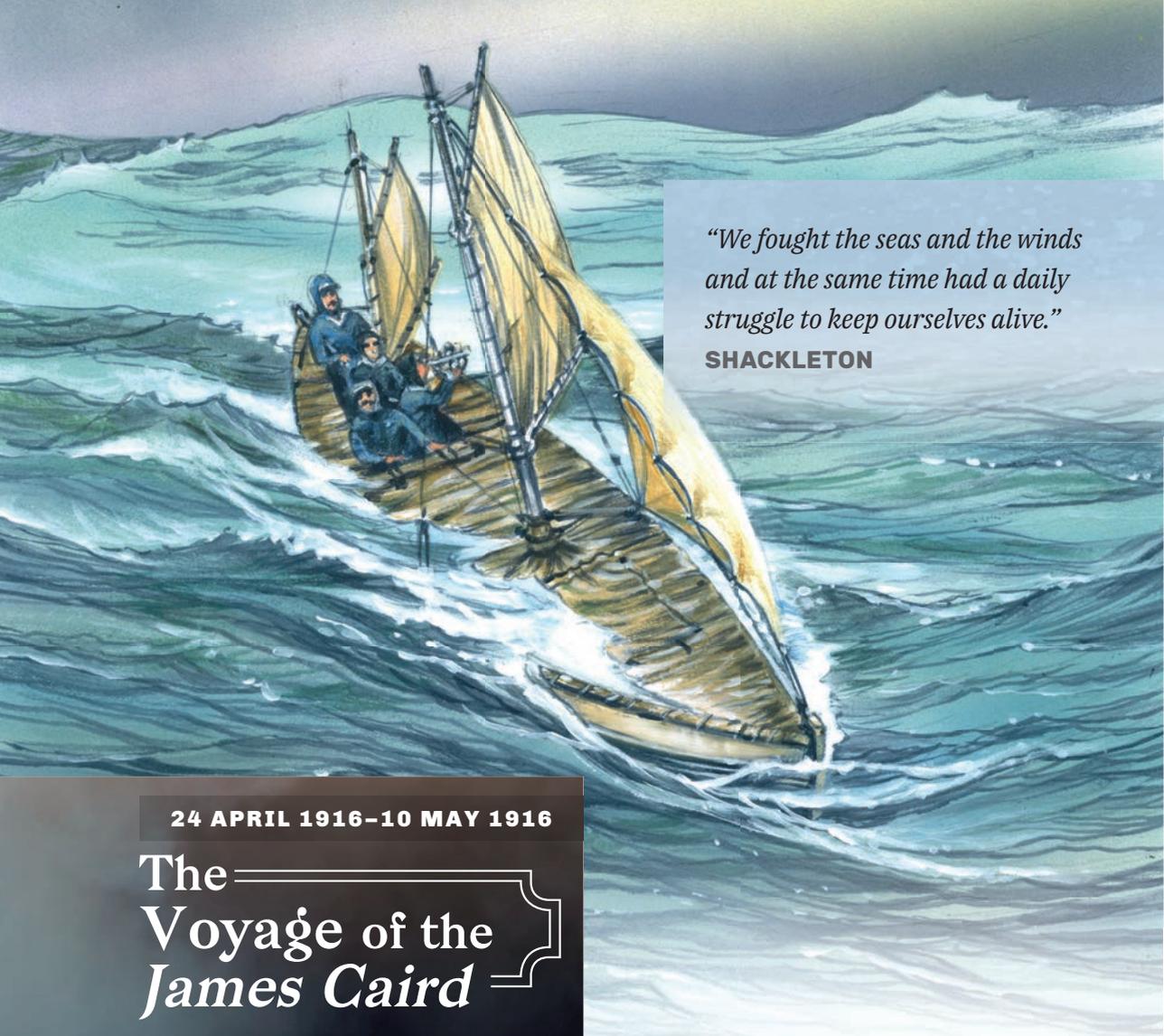
Mentally and physically exhausted, the men found a safe place to set up camp. But Shackleton couldn't rest for long. He knew their best chance of rescue lay at the whaling station on South Georgia. To get there, he had to go on another voyage – this time, 1,200 kilometres long.



Launching the
James Caird

Shackleton chose Worsley as navigator and three other men for the voyage. Carpenter “Chippy” McNish made one of the lifeboats, the *James Caird*, as seaworthy as possible. Second-in-command Frank Wild stayed behind to lead the others, building a shelter out of the two remaining boats.





“We fought the seas and the winds and at the same time had a daily struggle to keep ourselves alive.”

SHACKLETON

24 APRIL 1916–10 MAY 1916

The Voyage of the *James Caird*

For days on end, Shackleton, Worsley, and the others fought against some of the roughest seas on Earth. Strong gales and towering waves battered their small boat. They had to bail out water and chip ice off the boat to stop it from sinking. Meanwhile, Worsley waited for rare breaks in the weather to take readings with his sextant. Everything depended on these measurements. If his calculations were even slightly wrong, the *James Caird* would sail past South Georgia and disappear into the ocean. But Worsley kept them on course. Finally, after sixteen days at sea, the small boat reached South Georgia.

19–20 MAY 1916

Crossing South Georgia

Despite their effort, the journey wasn't over. The *James Caird* was on the opposite side of the island from the whaling station. With the boat too damaged to sail further, Shackleton knew they had to cross the island on foot, something no one had attempted before.

The men spent a few days regaining their strength and waiting for a break in the weather. Then the fittest of the group – Shackleton, Worsley, and Tom Crean – set out with enough supplies to last three days. They pushed screws into their boots for grip and struggled over the steep ridges and icy slopes. Up high and with night on its way, they risked freezing to death. But at long last, after thirty-six hours, the men stumbled into the whaling station. Stiff and sore, they were greeted with shock.

“Our beards were long and our hair was matted. We were unwashed and the garments that we had worn for nearly a year without a change were tattered and stained. Three more unpleasant-looking ruffians could hardly have been imagined.”

SHACKLETON

The whaling station on South Georgia, surrounded by steep mountains



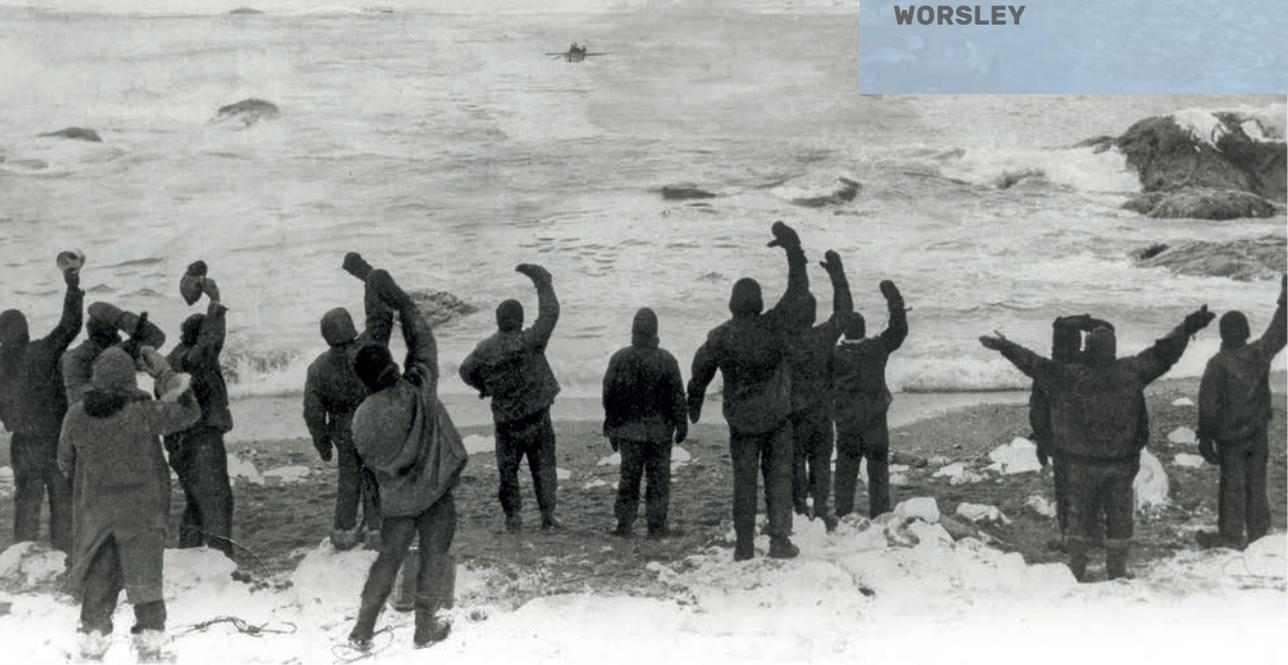
30 AUGUST 1916

“They’re All There, Skipper!”

The manager of the whaling station quickly arranged to rescue the remaining men on the other side of South Georgia. Then Shackleton borrowed a whaling ship to return to Elephant Island. After three unsuccessful attempts, and with a new ship borrowed from the Chilean government, Shackleton finally made it through the pack ice. On 30 August 1916, two years and twenty-two days since the *Endurance* first left England, he reached the rest of his expedition. Not a single life was lost.

“Shackleton peered through his binoculars with painful anxiety. I heard his strained tones as he counted the figures that were crawling out from under the upturned boat. ‘Two. Five. Seven.’ And then an exultant shout, ‘They’re all there, Skipper. They are all safe!’”

WORSLEY



Today, the *James Caird* rests in Shackleton’s old school in London. To the people who come and visit it, the small boat isn’t a reminder of a failed expedition. Rather, it is a testament to incredible bravery, bold leadership, and a journey of great endurance.

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