

# 1914

## The British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition

In 1914 the explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton set out on an ambitious expedition to cross the continent of Antarctica from one side to the other. He failed. However, he achieved one of the greatest feats in polar exploration; he returned with all his 27 men – alive, despite the loss of his ship.

On 5 December 1914, the *Endurance* set sail from South Georgia, a British Overseas Territory in the Southern Ocean. This was Shackleton's last contact with land for 497 days.

*Endurance* was a three-masted wooden vessel, built to withstand harsh polar conditions. It had 10 passenger cabins, a dining saloon and galley, a smoking room, a darkroom to develop photographs, electric lighting and a small bathroom.



Ernest Shackleton was a keen polar explorer, born in Ireland in 1874.

# 2022

## The Endurance22 Expedition

The expedition aimed to locate the wreck of *Endurance*, the lost ship of polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. Endurance22 followed the Weddell Sea expedition of 2019 which first attempted to find *Endurance* and surveyed the waters around the Larsen C Ice Shelf.

The Endurance22 expedition was a 35-day mission, led by Dr John Shears. The S.A. Agulhas II departed for Antarctica's Weddell Sea from Cape Town, South Africa, on 5 February 2022.

The S.A. Agulhas II is a Polar Class 5 research vessel. It is one of the world's largest and most modern scientific research ships, able to break through ice a metre thick at five knots. It has 6 containerised laboratories, a hangar, helideck and moon pool.



Dr John Shears is a polar geographer and expedition leader who led both the 2019 Weddell Sea and Endurance22 expeditions.



**The captain**  
In 1914, with nearly 27 years' experience behind him, Sir Ernest Shackleton hired Frank Worsley on the spot for his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition and made him captain of the expedition ship *Endurance*.

### The mission

The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition was Shackleton's boldest adventure: he intended to cross Antarctica from coast to coast, unsupported and on foot. At the time, this transcontinental crossing was the last great polar journey.



The ice immediately ahead of *Endurance*, August 1915



**The crew**  
The crew of *Endurance* was made up of 28 men, as well as Mrs Chippy, a male ship's cat, and sixty-nine sledge dogs. Crew positions included an engineer, a surgeon, geologists, a meteorologist, a photographer, artists, carpenters, a cook and a stoker.

### What happened?

The expedition was an audacious challenge which led to *Endurance* being trapped in sea ice and crushed. It sank to the bottom of the Weddell Sea in November 1915. The stranded crew trekked to the edge of the sea ice, then sailed in the ship's salvaged lifeboats to Elephant Island where there were seals and penguins to eat. Shackleton and Worsley led a small party in one of the open lifeboats, called the *James Caird*, to get help. Against the odds they survived an 800-mile journey and on 30 August 1916 returned to rescue the expedition party on Elephant Island. Shackleton had saved the lives of all his men.



The James Caird

### The captain

Knowledge Bengu, born in the Durban township of Umlazi, is South Africa's first black licensed ice pilot. He is permitted to navigate some of the most dangerous parts of the world's oceans.



Knowledge Bengu

### The mission

The Endurance22 Expedition aimed to locate, survey and film the wreck of *Endurance*, the lost ship of polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. It was the most complex subsea project ever undertaken, with several world records achieved in the process.



The Endurance22 team

### The crew

Endurance22 had 67 crew involved in the expedition, a mixture of men and women from Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the USA. The team included helicopter pilots, a mathematical statistician, scientists, and a documentary crew.

### What happened?

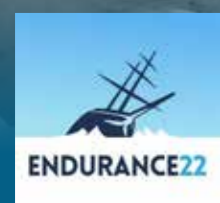
The Endurance22 team found the sunken ship in March 2022, 3008 metres beneath the surface of the Weddell Sea. It was teeming with bizarre ocean life, and was "upright, well proud of the seabed, intact, and in a brilliant state of preservation."



The Endurance22 team



The Endurance22 team



**Resources** [www.rgs.org/about/the-society/what-we-do/teachers/endurance22/](http://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/what-we-do/teachers/endurance22/)  
**Endurance22** The Hunt For Shackleton's Lost Ice Ship [www.endurance22.org/](http://www.endurance22.org/)  
**Exploring Shackleton's Antarctica** [www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/exploring-shackleton-s-antarctica/](http://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/exploring-shackleton-s-antarctica/)