

# WILEY



---

The Return of Sir Ernest Shackleton

Author(s): Hugh Robert Mill

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jul., 1916), pp. 68-71

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1779327>

Accessed: 08-04-2016 19:58 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Geographical Journal*

known districts. One Alpine glacier may advance while its neighbours are receding ; and this difference must be due to some local accident in precipitation and not to the formation of wind screens by earth-movements in the Alps.

Mr. Ward's evidence seems to me conclusive that the different behaviour between the eastern and western glaciers of his district is due to a local variation in precipitation, but the explanation may be meteorological and not tectonic. His paper is very suggestive and a useful contribution to the physical geography of Yun-nan.

## THE RETURN OF SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON.

Hugh Robert Mill, D.Sc.

NEWS has been received of the safe return of Sir Ernest Shackleton to the Falkland Islands on May 31, after the most adventurous journey in the records of Antarctic exploration. The *Daily Chronicle* of June 2 published a long account of the expedition forwarded by wireless telegraphy from Port Stanley, and to this we are indebted for the following condensed summary.

The *Endurance*, with Sir Ernest Shackleton and the party who hoped to cross the Antarctic continent, left South Georgia on 6 December 1914, and met heavy pack-ice two days later off the Sandwich group, entering the pack in  $58^{\circ} 40' \text{ S.}$ ,  $18^{\circ} \text{ W.}$  The ship pushed her way southwards through the ice for about 1000 miles, sighting Coats Land on 10 January 1915. Very heavy ice was encountered, and 200 miles of new coast-line was discovered and named the Caird Coast. Great glaciers were observed discharging from this land. The season proved abnormally cold, summer conditions not occurring. In the middle of February the ship was beset and never got free again. It was impossible either to land or to return, and the party prepared to winter in the ship. The winter was comparatively mild for the latitude, the lowest temperature being  $35^{\circ}$  below zero Fahr.; but the usual blizzards were experienced in full force. The *Endurance* first drifted to the south-west, her extreme southerly position being  $77^{\circ} \text{ S.}$  in  $35^{\circ} \text{ W.}$  She remained immovably locked in the pack, and then drifted in a zigzag course through the Weddell Sea in a generally north-westerly direction. The menace of ice-pressure became serious in June, the mid-winter month, and increased in July, when all preparations were made for leaving the ship in case of need. On one occasion in a terrific pressure the ship was hove bodily out on the ice, but stood the strain ; but in September she was badly nipped, and this happened again more than once early in October, causing much damage to the hull. At this time she was drifting over the position assigned to Morrell's New South Greenland, and got a sounding in 1900 fathoms. On 27 October 1915, in  $69^{\circ} 5' \text{ S.}$ ,  $51^{\circ} 32' \text{ W.}$ , a very intense "screwing" of the pack under pressure burst the ship's sides in and tore out her stern-post and rudder-post, while water entered and extinguished the fires. The boats,

sledges, dogs, tents and equipment were got out on the ice and all hands left the ship, which next day was submerged to her upper deck. An attempt was made on October 30 to sledge northward, dragging the boats over the ice, but this had to be abandoned on account of the difficulty of transport over working pack-ice. It was then decided to camp in the neighbourhood of the wreck, and trust to the northward drift and the break-up of the pack in summer. During November the drift to northward was only 60 miles, and that in December was equally disappointing. At the end of December another attempt was made to travel over the floe, but only 9 miles' progress was secured in five days, and as the ice was softening the boats could not be got over it. Another camp was formed on the solid floe, and in this the party waited while they drifted slowly north through January (when the Antarctic circle was crossed), February and March 1916. The dogs had to be killed for food, as few seals were met with, and both provisions and equipment were approaching exhaustion when the distant peaks of Joinville Island were sighted on March 23. It was, however, impossible to cross to the land over the moving floes. On April 7 Clarence Island, the most easterly of the South Shetlands, was sighted, and next day the increasing ocean swell split the small floe on which the party was encamped and made it necessary to take to the boats. The next few days were spent in a desperate fight with heavy seas and drifting ice, and on April 13 Sir Ernest decided to abandon the attempt he had been making to reach Deception Island, and set out with the three boats for Elephant Island which was nearer. A landing was at length made on April 17, when the party was in a very exhausted condition. As the beach would be swept by heavy gales a cave was cut in the ice-cliff to serve as a shelter. Provisions being very short, and many of the men in a state of collapse, Sir Ernest decided to leave twenty-two men under the charge of Mr. Frank Wild with five weeks' full rations, and himself to undertake in one of the boats the risk of a winter voyage of 750 miles to South Georgia for help. The largest boat, 22 feet long, was accordingly partially decked with sledge-runners, box-lids, and canvas, and with five men, who volunteered for the forlorn hope, Sir Ernest set out on April 24. After encountering innumerable dangers in very bad weather they succeeded in landing at King Haakon Bay on the uninhabited west side of South Georgia on May 10. He marched for thirty-six hours with three companions across the snowclad mountains, and reached the Stromness whaling station on May 20. The Norwegian whalers rendered every assistance; the two men left at King Haakon Bay were sent for, and the best whaler at the island, a little craft of eighty tons, was provided for a return voyage to Elephant Island. In this vessel, under Captain Thom, Sir Ernest Shackleton set out to rescue his party. But much ice was met with, and the little vessel was without protection; so after repeated attempts to get round the streams of pack, he was compelled to steer for the Falklands in search of a more powerful ship.

The special committee at the Admiralty, who were arranging for a relief expedition to the Weddell Sea when the news arrived, at once took steps to find a suitable ship, and the best available, an Aberdeen-built trawler, the *Instituto Pesca*, was lent by the Uruguayan Government and left the River Plate on June 8 for Port Stanley in company with H.M.S. *Macedonia*. She proceeded from Port Stanley on the 17th with Sir Ernest on board.

It would be undesirable, even if it were possible, to anticipate Sir Ernest Shackleton's discussion of the drift of the *Endurance*; but a few comments may be useful. The ship was drifting northward with the ice of the Weddell Sea during the whole time that the *Aurora* was drifting northward with the ice of the Ross Sea, and a detailed comparison when it becomes possible will be interesting. Had the *Endurance* been strong enough to resist the ice-pressures she would probably have broken out almost at the same date as the *Aurora*. Throughout the drift meteorological and other scientific observations were carried out, and these will prove of much value. Geographically, the discovery of 200 miles of new coast is a clear gain of definite knowledge, and as the settlement of a controversy recently revived the proof of the non-existence of Morrell's imaginary "New South Greenland" is very welcome. The most substantial gain is, however, to our knowledge of the ice conditions and circulation of the Weddell Sea. So far we have only received three definite positions, and the track of the *Endurance* based on these is of course very rough and general. It shows, however, a remarkable parallelism to the drift of Dr. Filchner's expedition in the *Deutschland* four years earlier, and it lies about 200 miles further west than that line of drift. It seems probable from the two tracks that the east coast of West Antarctica runs continuously or as a chain of close islands from the new land discovered in the far south to the shores explored by Larsen, the Dundee whalers in 1892, and Norden-skiöld, and that no great bulk of land lies to the east of the main coast-line.

As an example of heroic endurance and daring effort in contempt of danger this achievement of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his company will take a high place in the history of Antarctic adventure. Unable to carry out the main object of his expedition, he has nevertheless succeeded in adding to our knowledge of the Weddell Sea some facts of considerable importance, under circumstances of great difficulty. He takes with him on his return voyage to Elephant Island the best wishes of all for a successful relief and safe return of the whole party.

---

At the meeting of the Society on June 5 the President referred as follows to Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition :—

Before we proceed to our business this evening I have two announcements to make to you. The first is one which we shall all regret—that Commander Pennell, who was with Captain Scott on his second Antarctic expedition, has perished in the late battle off the coast of Jutland.

With regard to Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition, I need not repeat to-night what has been published in the newspapers. We all know what has happened. We congratulate Sir Ernest on having escaped and on having by wonderful energy and endurance brought all his party alive out of that terrible place, the Weddell Sea. We condole with him on his failure to carry out the objects of his expedition—landing on that side of the Antarctic coast and crossing the Antarctic Continent—and we look forward with the deepest interest and sympathy to the release of his comrades whom he has left on that desolate land, Elephant Island. I do not know that we can say that the result of the expedition is any surprise, though it may be a disappointment, for the experts of the Antarctic all anticipated the greatest possible difficulties in effecting a landing in the Weddell Sea, which has the worst reputation of any sea in the world. We feel that it is as much perhaps as we could expect that Sir Ernest Shackleton has brought his party safe out of that horrible place. But the present interest is in what has been done and is being done with regard to rescuing the party. Of course the conditions have been entirely changed by the late news. His Majesty's Government, after consulting the Geographical Society, acted with the utmost promptitude in appointing a Committee of the Admiralty to arrange for the rescue of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his party. Full arrangements had been made to send a ship to search the Weddell Sea and to do everything that could be done to solve perhaps the most difficult problem that could be set. Then came the news, and no time has been lost, and every effort is now being made by the Admiralty Committee to find a ship to send and bring off the men who are in the ice cave on Elephant Island. Even this comparatively simple problem is not at all an easy one. Owing to the war it is very difficult to find a proper ship. Generous offers have been made by private persons, and inquiries have been made by Government Departments in every quarter to find a ship. It is hoped that within a day or two the proper ship may be found. One of the difficulties of the problem is that at this time of the year in travelling so far south one must expect to meet ice, and therefore an iron ship is risky. But you may rely that everything that can be done is being done by His Majesty's Government, and we geographers feel grateful to them for the extreme promptitude, and, if I may say so, wisdom with which they have acted in the matter, in consulting the right people and acting at once upon their advice. I may say that our Society has been represented on the Admiralty Committee by Major Leonard Darwin, our former President. With regard to the prospects of the men who are thus interned in the ice we need not be too despondent. Sir Douglas Mawson tells me that he thinks they may be able to find provisions to last until relief reaches them. Their greatest sufferings are likely to be from lack of fuel and possible lack of sufficient warm clothing; but we have every hope that they may be able to endure, despite their sufferings.

---

## REVIEWS.

### EUROPE.

**La Campagna Romana al tempo di Paolo III. Mappa della Campagna Romana del 1547 di Eufrosino della Volpaia. . .** — Con introduzione di Thomas Ashby. Roma: Danesi. 1914. 15½ × 12. Pp. ix., 117. *Facsimile Maps.*

THE authorities of the Vatican Library are conferring a boon on students of early cartography by undertaking photographic reproductions of the most