

Perilous Shackleton Antarctic bid sets off

January 24 2013, by Martin Parry

A British-Australian expedition recreating Ernest Shackleton's perilous 1916 crossing of the Southern Ocean in a small boat set off Thursday, braced for fearsome seas and icy, bleak conditions.

Led by renowned adventurer Tim Jarvis, the team of six plans to sail 800 nautical miles (1,480 kilometres) in a spartan lifeboat from Elephant Island off the [Antarctic Peninsula](#) to rugged South Georgia, their support team said.

While there were unusually moderate winds and a small swell as they pushed off, the team was heading for looming pack ice to the east as they bid to relive part of what is widely regarded as one of the greatest ever survival tales.

They plan to only use the equipment, navigational instruments and food available to Shackleton during his 16-day voyage before facing a two day climb to 900 metres (2,950 feet) over the mountainous, crevassed interior of South Georgia.

That will take them to the old whaling station at Stromness on the other side of the island, where Shackleton and his crew, with little more than the clothes on their backs, raised the alarm about the sinking of their ship, the Endurance.

"We are well aware of the dangers but believe we have a good little boat (an exact replica of the original James Caird), a great team and the spirit and courage to be able to honour the legend of Shackleton," Jarvis said.

"I hope this expedition not only does his memory justice but also reminds us all of how incredibly beautiful, yet fragile, this part of the world is," the [environmental scientist](#) and [polar explorer](#) added as the boat left.

He said he was expecting "constant hardship" and the crew would need to be vigilant, with icebergs and whales among the obstacles they expect to face.

Along with Norway's Roald Amundsen, the first man to reach the South Pole in 1911, Australian explorer Douglas Mawson and Briton Robert Falcon Scott—his patron-turned-rival—Shackleton was among the great Antarctic explorers.

When he set off on his third trip to the region in 1914 with the ship *Endurance*, he planned to cross Antarctica via the South Pole.

But the vessel became trapped in 1915, and sank 10 months later as it was crushed by the advancing ice. Shackleton and his crew lived on the floating ice until April 1916, when they set off in three small boats for Elephant Island.

From there, Shackleton and five crew made the treacherous voyage to South Georgia, reaching their destination 16 days later to face the mountainous trek.

All members of the *Endurance* mission were eventually rescued with no fatalities.

Shackleton died of a heart attack off South Georgia in 1922 during his fourth Antarctic expedition, aiming to circumnavigate the continent, and is buried on the island.

His granddaughter Alexandra initially approached Jarvis, who in 2007 re-enacted Mawson's 1912 odyssey across the frozen continent, and said she was confident of "a triumphant conclusion".

"The expedition will be incredibly demanding both at sea and on land, but I have every confidence that the men will remember my grandfather's words: 'Difficulties are just things to overcome'," she said.

A support vessel, the Australis, a modern and fully equipped steel-hulled motor boat will trail the lifeboat, but will only go to its aid in the event of a serious emergency.

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