

Great Britain's Greatest Irish Polar Expeditioner

Purpose

Special, single-frame study of County Kildare's (Ireland) Sir Ernest H. Shackleton's five (1901-22) polar expeditionary exposures (three of which he led), using a concise presentation of the most significant material that postally documents them.

Background

Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton (1874-1922) emigrated to Great Britain from Ireland where he eventually joined the merchant marine and became infatuated with polar regions and their expeditions. He suffered discrimination (as both an Irishman in British organizations and as a former merchant mariner among Royal Navy officers).

A subtle form of discrimination also was endured as his fame and leadership skills developed. Senior officers and officials did not want to be overshadowed by the "Irishman." He became affectionately known as "Boss," by his men who very much admired his leadership. Today his effectively splendid, natural command style is studied in management courses.

Sir Ernest began his polar expeditionary exposures with Sir Robert Falcon Scott on both of their first Antarctic expeditions (1901-04). His positive impact was evident before he had to be invalided back to the UK.

He continued (1907-09) with his own Antarctic expedition that made historic achievements (including postally), followed by the dramatic *Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition* (1914-17), where he miraculously managed to save all those who had been abandoned in the main party.

The brief Russian Arctic NREF military interlude (1919) benefited from more of his talents and expertise, followed by the last expedition (1921-22 *Shackleton-Rowett Expedition* [S-R]) on which he would die.

Today Shackleton is one of the most admired in the pantheon of polar Heroic Age (up to 1924) leadership.

Scope

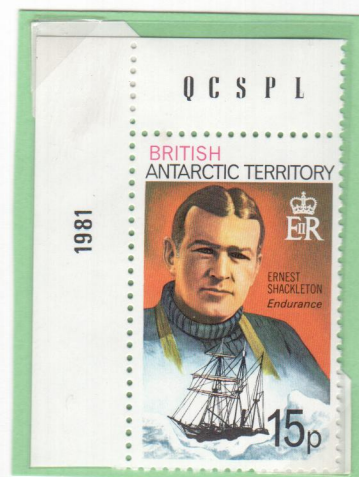
Shackleton's entire polar expeditionary career is covered, even by those activities from which very little material exists. More "material" attention is given to those events he led. The three expeditions he commanded have a balanced presentation, despite two of the three (*Endurance* and "S-R") ***having very limited material available.***

Plan

1. Polar "Apprenticeship" (1901-04)
2. First Led Polar Expedition (1907-09)
3. Second Led Polar Expedition (1914-17)
4. "Major" Polar Military Expedition (1919)
5. Last Led Polar Expedition (1921-22)

Highlighted Material

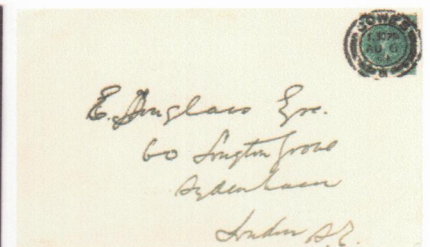
Much of the shown material has an extraordinary challenge factor, however, particularly notable items are emphasized in **RED** text.



Shackleton "*Endurance* Expedition" 15p (perf 12) stamp with tab from 1975-1981 reprint of 1973 British Antarctic Territory's "Antarctic Explorers" set.

Shackleton Develops Two Polar "Ailments" On His First Polar Exposure

Ernest Shackleton uses friendship with son of a financial supporter of Robert Falcon Scott's *British National Antarctic Expedition* (1901-04) for appointment as Third Officer aboard the expedition's main vessel *S. S. Discovery* and member of its shore party at McMurdo Sound, Antarctica. One of three on an arduous traverse (2 November 1902-4 February 1903), achieving a farthest south record. Earlier (4 February 1902) ascending in the expedition's tethered observation balloon (first flight in Antarctica). Suffering from scurvy gotten on the traverse and supposedly resented by Scott for his popularity, he was sent home (mid-expedition) on the expedition's relief vessel in early 1903. He also had contracted "Polar Fever" (urge for continued polar adventure).



Scan of address side

Shackleton signs No. 1 card from expedition's (serviced by and for expedition, printed in Saxony, Germany) four-card Wrench Postcard Company (1900-04) subscription set (with printed Scott autograph and facsimile expedition cancel) to send a farewell. Presumably to someone from his childhood (in Sydenham) living where his family had emigrated from County Kildare, Ireland. Posted on day of *Discovery*'s departure from Cowes (6 August 1901), unlike normal #1's that are cancelled 31 July at London.

His 1st Led Expedition Leads To 1st Antarctic Expedition Post Office And Postage Stamp



Souvenir expedition cancellation on NZ Post Office memo slip next to impression of "BRITISH EXP" seal used on postal bag. Unusual 7 January 1909 date not one of the five used on mail.



Block of "King Edward VII Land" overprinted NZ 1d "commerce" stamps expedition postmark cancelled 4 March 1909.

Shackleton's *Nimrod* left England via New Zealand for McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, 7 August 1907, on his first organized Antarctic polar expedition. It hoped to reach the Geographic South Pole and South Magnetic Pole. 29 October 1908-9 January 1909 the "Boss" (as he was affectionately known by his men) and three companions achieved a farthest south, though short of the South Pole. A separate party on 16 January 1908, led by Edgeworth David, became first to reach the South Magnetic Pole. *Nimrod* returned, 4 March 1909, to take expedition back to England (30 August 1909) via New Zealand, where Shackleton later was knighted for his achievement.



1 January 1908 Christchurch fictitious mailing to expedition, returned "unclaimed" 11 March, shows example of successful attempt (scan of 3 February receipt stamp) by clever philatelist to acquire an expedition postmark, even though post office intended only for personal member and official mail.

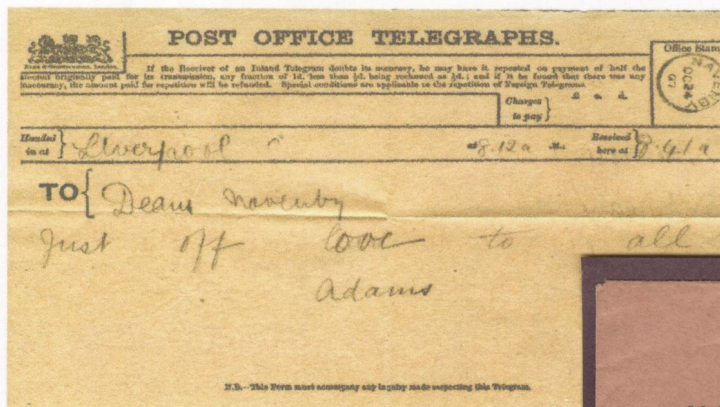


NZ Post Office swore Shackleton as postmaster of the officially established "KEVII" expedition Post Office (with postmarker reading "BRIT. ANTARCTIC EXPD."), issuing specially overprinted in green "King Edward VII / Land" 1d "commerce" stamps

First Led Polar Expedition

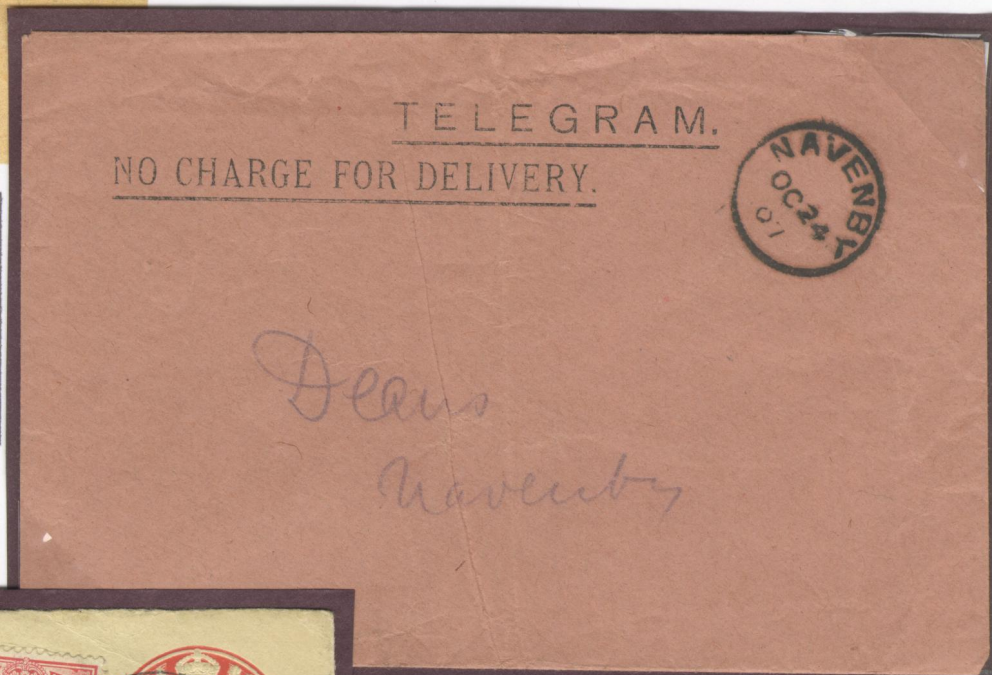
1907-09 British ("Nimrod") Antarctic Expedition

Second-in-Command's "Farewell" And Missed "Welcome Back"

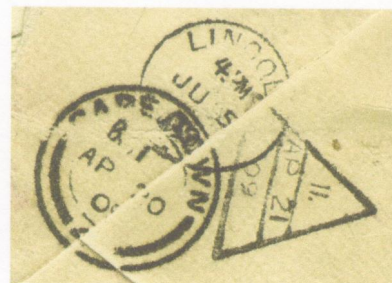


Lt. Adams sends farewell telegram, 24 October 1907, to friend at Navenby, Lincolnshire, from Liverpool, England, where he and Shackleton were about to board commercial steamer (after concluding expedition business in UK) to meet Nimrod at New Zealand that earlier had departed.

The expedition's second-in-command, Lt. Jameson Boyd Adams, was one of four on the Shackleton-led farthest south attainment traverse that came within 97 miles of the Geographical South Pole.



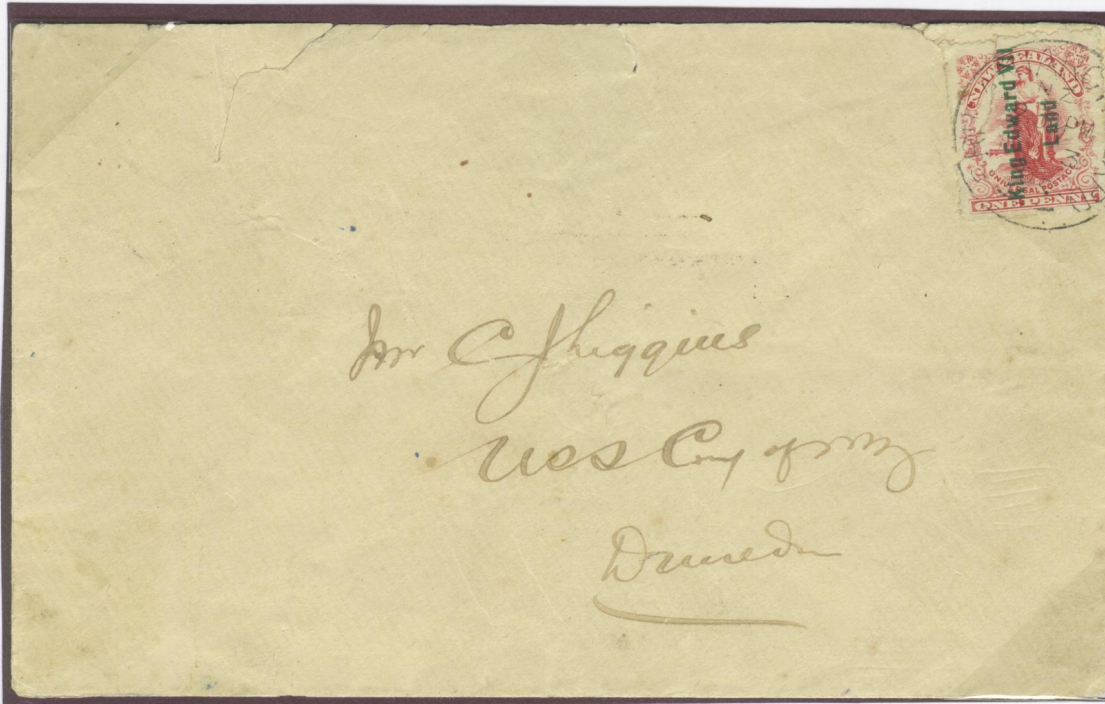
Lincolnshire friend (Lawrence T. Dean, see above) welcomes back Lt. Adams via mailing from Hythe, 27 March 1909, to expedition at Cape Town, South Africa, en route back to UK. Although a stop there en route to New Zealand in 1907, neither Adams (again traveling separately with Shackleton) nor Nimrod stopped at Cape Town, when coming back to UK, requiring its return to sender.



Scan of reverse

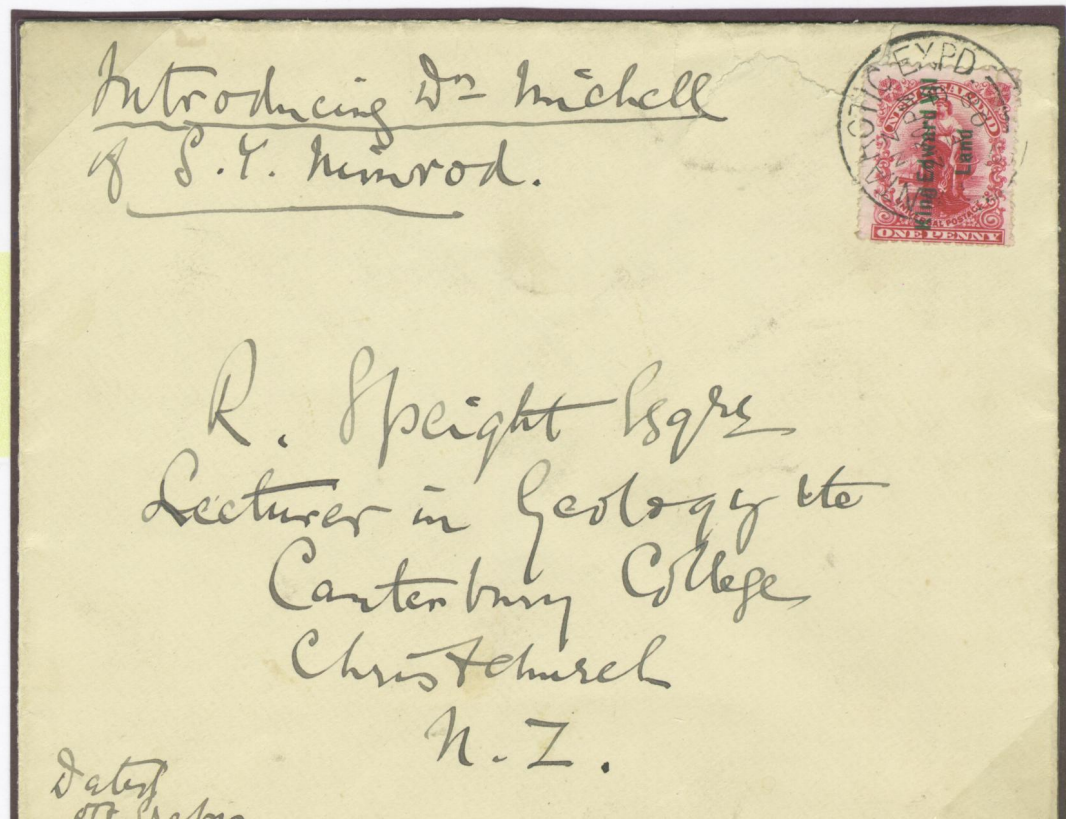
Overfranked 1d, probably because sender did not realize 1d rate (eff. 1907) now was for 1 oz., rather than previous 1/2 oz. Hythe 27 March 1909 to right of Cape Town 20 & 21 April 1909 receipt stamps (see scan of reverse). Redirected (UL boxed auxiliary marking) 14 May (lower left, front), received Lincoln (scan) 5 June.

First On Shore Expedition Antarctic Post Office Mailings (3 February 1908)



(Above) Former seaman Ernest Joyce, field dog handler and zoological assistant, sends in first shore station mailing (dated 3 February 1908) from expedition post office, using expedition stamp, to someone apparently he just met aboard a US Navy ship at Dunedin, New Zealand (scanned 3 March Lyttelton and Dunedin transit markings).

(Below) Director of scientific staff, Dr. Edgeworth David posts at same time a letter of introduction (on expedition official stationery [see scan of rear imprint]) to Canterbury College, Christchurch, NZ, to be used in the future for expedition colleague Dr. William Michell (see upper left). Lower left notation indicates enclosed letter written in late January 1908 "Off [Mount] Erebus" as *Nimrod* approaching shore in McMurdo Sound. David later would climb Erebus and was in the party of four to reach South Magnetic Pole.



BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION 1907.

Incoming Mail To Ship's (Nimrod) Crew Wintering In New Zealand

Nimrod wintered (1908-09) at Lyttelton (Christchurch port), New Zealand, before returning to Cape Royds, McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, 1 March 1909, to retrieve the shore party.



Unusual incoming mail to ship's wintering crew.

Scan of reverse



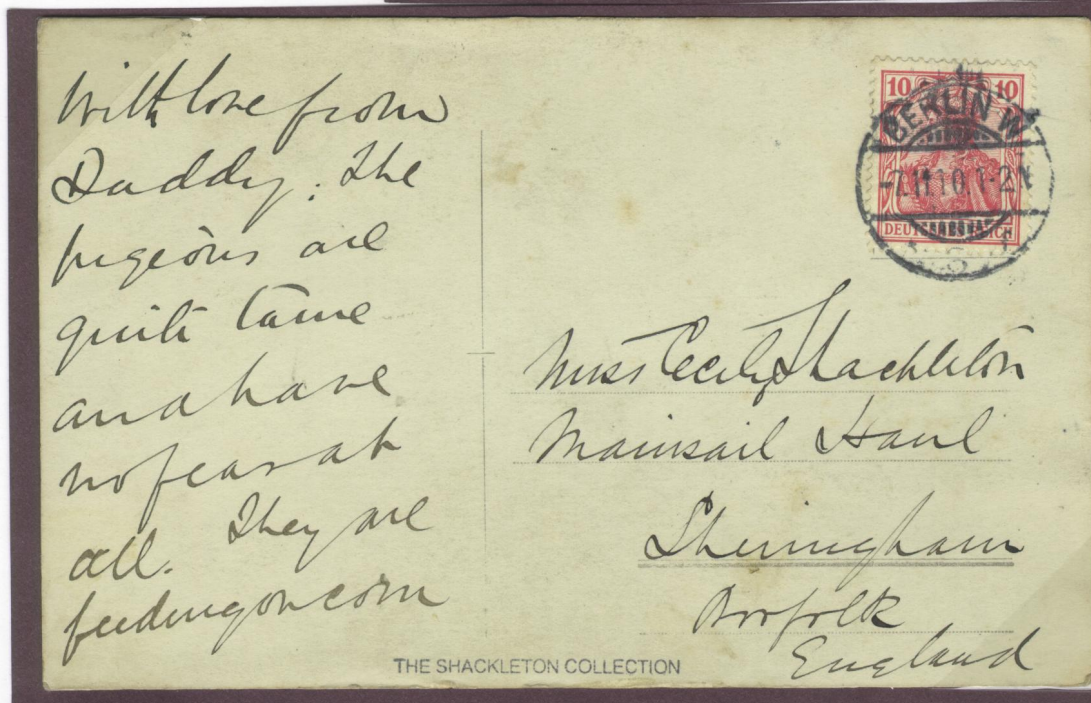
Expedition surgeon Dr. William Michell wintered with the ship's crew, where he received this (1d stamp missing) Gold Medal Series No. 10 "protected" (copyrighted) picture postcard of a Christchurch scene (mailed there, 28 August 1909) with message asking him to reschedule his arrival for a visit with a local.

Expedition's Ending Sends Shackleton Back To "Work"

Scan of reverse

BRITISH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION 1907.

Mail addressed to expedition's NZ agent (Joseph J. Kinsey) on official stationery (see scan) with its overprinted stamp cancelled with the last of five dates used in their postmarker (4 March 1909), which was when the returning expedition aboard *Nimrod* was en route from Antarctica to New Zealand.



Two days before being knighted, [Sir] Ernest sends 4 mark internationally-franked postcard (rate effective 1 April 1906) from Berlin, Germany (7 November 1910), to his young daughter Cecily in England, commenting on the pigeons shown on the view side (see scan). He was on his second post-"Nimrod Expedition" lecture tour, raising funds to support his family and settle expedition debts.

"Endurance" Did Not Only Apply To The Expedition's Ship

Sir Ernest's second-led (1914-17) Antarctic expedition (aboard *Endurance*) required **endurance** from everyone as the attempt to sail (leaving 1 August 1914) to Antarctica for a transcontinental crossing ended in the ship's sinking in the frozen Weddell Sea stranding everyone. This led to a phenomenal small, open boat crossing by six to South Georgia island for rescue of main party left behind. Meanwhile, three deaths on (other side of continent) Ross Sea shore support party occurred after loss of *their* ship, and finally the miraculous rescue of both abandoned parties after three years of unbelievable ordeal.



Nº 128/L.39694



London, 1st July 1914
Lloyds Bank Limited
 ST. JAMES'S STREET, S.W.



Pay The Yost Typewriter Co. Ltd. or Order
 Ten pounds

L10
 THE IMPERIAL TRANS-ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.
 E. H. Shackleton COMMANDER
 Fred R. W. White SECRETARY

M

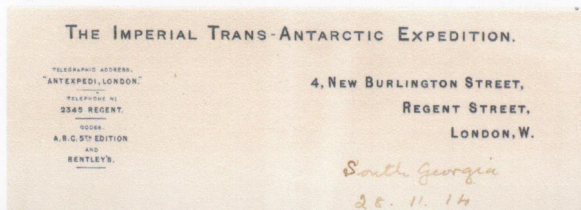
THE SHACKLETON COLLECTION

1d embossed tax stamp on 1 July 1914 check from expedition to Yost Typewriter Company during its planning phase exactly one month before departure of main party aboard *Endurance*. Signed in lower right by "E. H. Shackleton", countersigned by expedition secretary (Fred R.W. White) with expedition rubberstamp above both endorsements.

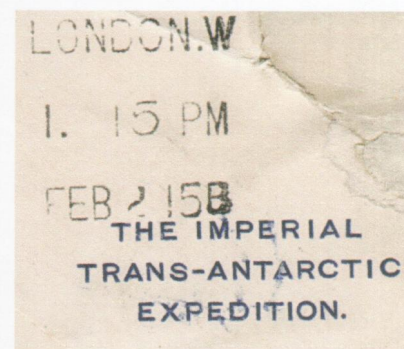
Second Led Polar Expedition

1914-17 Imperial Trans-Antarctic (*Endurance*) Expedition

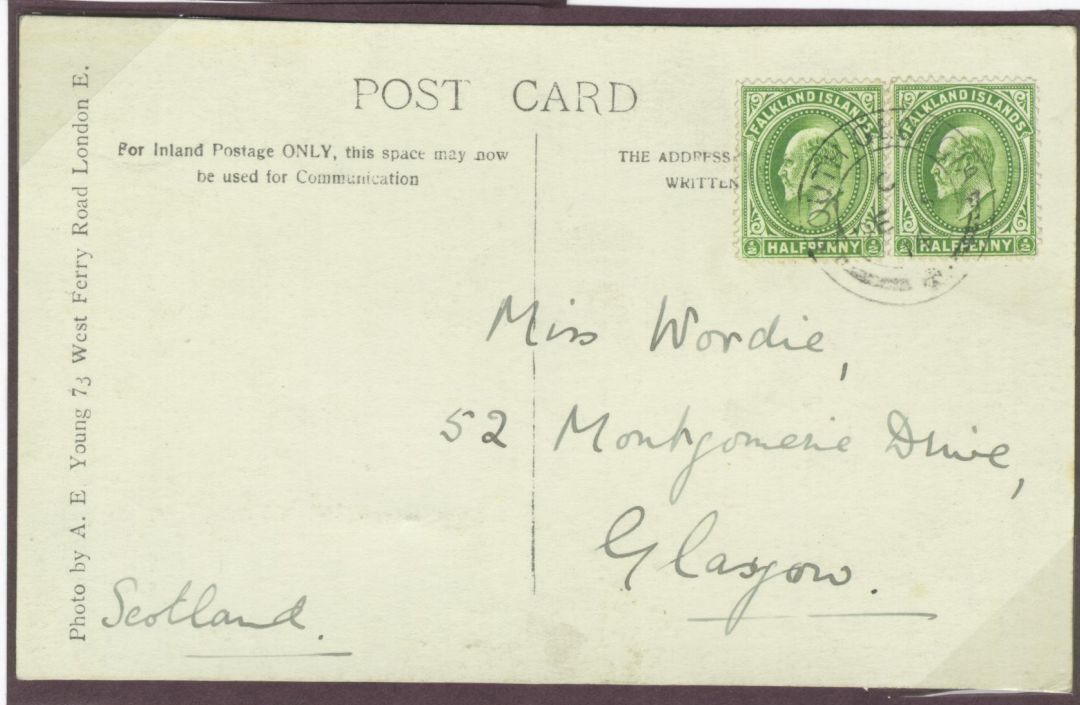
Farewell Mail (almost literally !) From South Georgia As They Sail Into Disaster



Shackleton writes (28 November 1914) properly franked appreciation on expedition stationery (see upper left and lower right scans) to supporter while at South Georgia (since 5 November), posting it from there upon departing (5 December) for Weddell Sea, where they would become beset in the ice (18 January 1915), sinking 21 November.



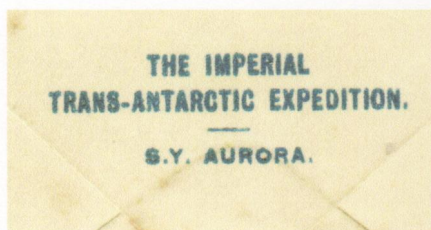
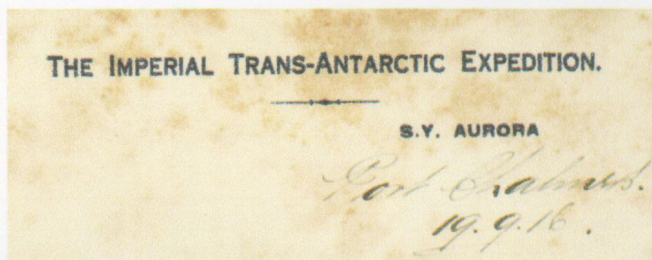
Expedition geologist James Wordie sends "farewell" 5 December 1914 South Georgia departure postcard (using A. E. Young, London, real photocard of *Endurance* before sailing [scan]) to his sister in Scotland. Correctly Falkland Islands postage-franked at the 1d commonwealth (same as for



Mail From Captain Of "Other" Expedition Ship That Also Met With Misfortune

Ross Sea shore (supporting) group sent aboard *Aurora* to other side of Antarctica for laying depots to be used by crossing [sic] party from *Endurance*. Their ship during a storm uncontrollably blown out to sea (7 May 1916) from McMurdo Sound before being able to deposit necessary supplies. Three members ashore eventually perished as *Aurora* hobbled back to New Zealand without its captain. *Aurora* returned 10 January 1917 to Cape Royds, Antarctica, for rescue of abandoned shore party survivors after repairs at Dunedin, NZ.

Aurora 1st officer/acting captain, Joseph R. Stenhouse, mails 20 September 1916 to an acquaintance in Australia, from aboard ship at Dunedin, New Zealand, at 1-1/2d commonwealth rate (1d + 1/2d war tax, effective 23 September 1915). He uses *Aurora*-specific Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition letterhead (upper scan) and envelope (lower left scan), as he prepares returning to Antarctica for retrieval of the Ross Sea shore party.



Hardly any expedition mail known on *Aurora* stationery.

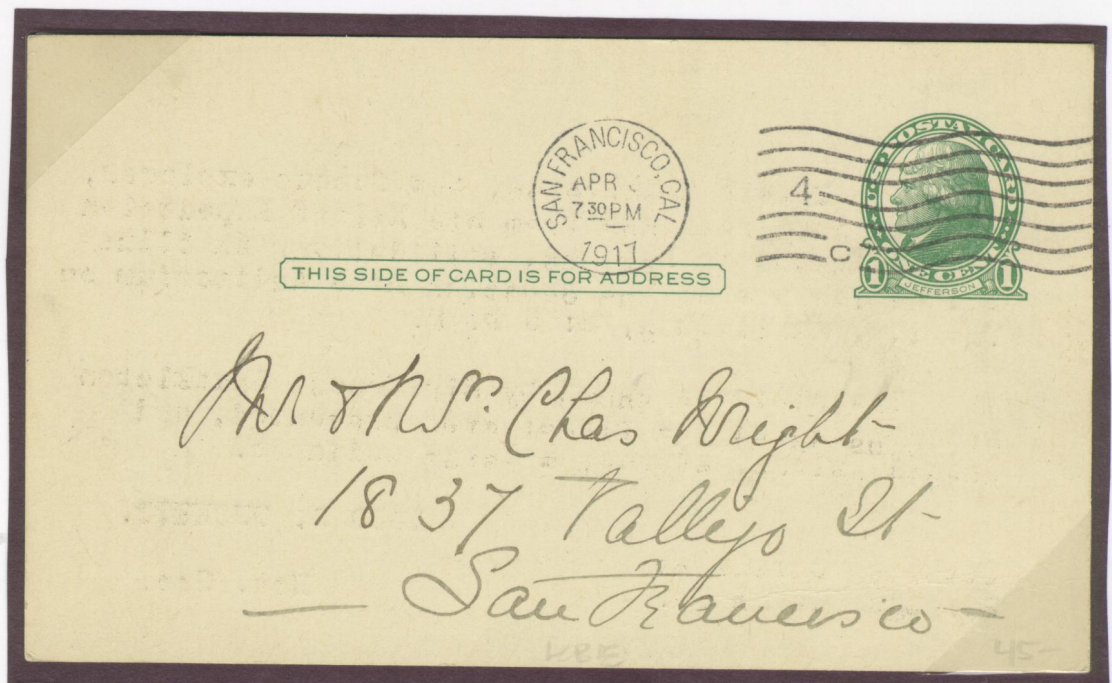
Long Lost Expedition Becomes Excellent Lecture Topic



"Dear Friend" writes to missing *Endurance* crewmen Seaman Thomas Frank McLeod from Port Isaac, North Cornwall, UK, 16 August 1915, to where he apparently last received mail from him (South Georgia). Returned from S. Georgia exactly a year later via Plymouth, England (16 August 1916). Addressee stranded on Elephant Island, Antarctica, during entire year this mail in transit (finally rescued by Shackleton aboard Chile's *Yelcho* two-weeks later).

One of seven via South Georgia incoming pieces to *Endurance* crew members

Sir Ernest uses trip back to UK from both parties' rescues (arrived for Ross Sea party, 10 January 1917) to earn income from en route lectures. 6 April 1917 ticket solicitation for 10 April lecture in Scottish Rite Auditorium, San Francisco, California, USA.



Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous explorer, who has just returned from his Relief Expedition to the Antarctic Regions, will deliver an illustrated lecture at the Scottish Rite Auditorium on Tuesday, April 10th, 8:15 P. M.

The pictures shown by Sir Ernest Shackleton are considered the finest ever presented, and should, alone, attract a large audience.

LOIS G. TUCKETT,

Tickets on sale at
Sherman Clay & Co.

Hon. Sec.

Makes Polar Military Postal History Via Ex-Convict Brother

Shackleton appointed temporary Major in the British Army after lobbying for service in WWI upon returning in late 1917 from his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. He was to advise The Allied Intervention of Russia's *North Russia Expeditionary Force* (1918-19 NREF) at its Subarctic headquarters in Murmansk, Russia, on matters related to polar environment equipment and operations. Despite designing the infamous "Shackleton boot," that the troops hated to wear, he remained popular with the men during his duty there (October 1918-March 1919), for which he was awarded an OBE.



Major Shackleton sends free-franked, self-censored (lower left) posting from British "Army (Base) Post Office" PB1 (Murmansk), 8 November 1918, with NREF X10 oval censor stamp (probably issued to him for use in his censorship duties) at Murmansk. Addressed to his disreputable brother, "Frank" (convicted felon also suspected of being involved in 1907 "Irish crown jewels" theft), in care of his solicitors' (lawyers) London office. "Frank Mellor" was the alias of Francis Richard Shackleton during WWI after his release from prison.

Shackleton's Expedition "To Die For"

The "Boss" last led polar expedition (1921-22 Shackleton-Rowett ["Antarctic"] Expedition) truly was his last -- of anything. He died aboard ship, 5 January 1922, the morning after the expedition's rickety vessel (R.Y.S. *Quest*) arrived at South Georgia, Antarctica. His ambitious plan had included an Antarctic continent circumnavigation, exploration of its coastal Enderby Land and oceanography. There also would be investigation of historically reported (though never found) islands by Sir James Ross and others and extensive use of new technology, including a wireless, electrified shipboard lighting, depth sounding equipment and an airplane (that never flew due to missing parts).



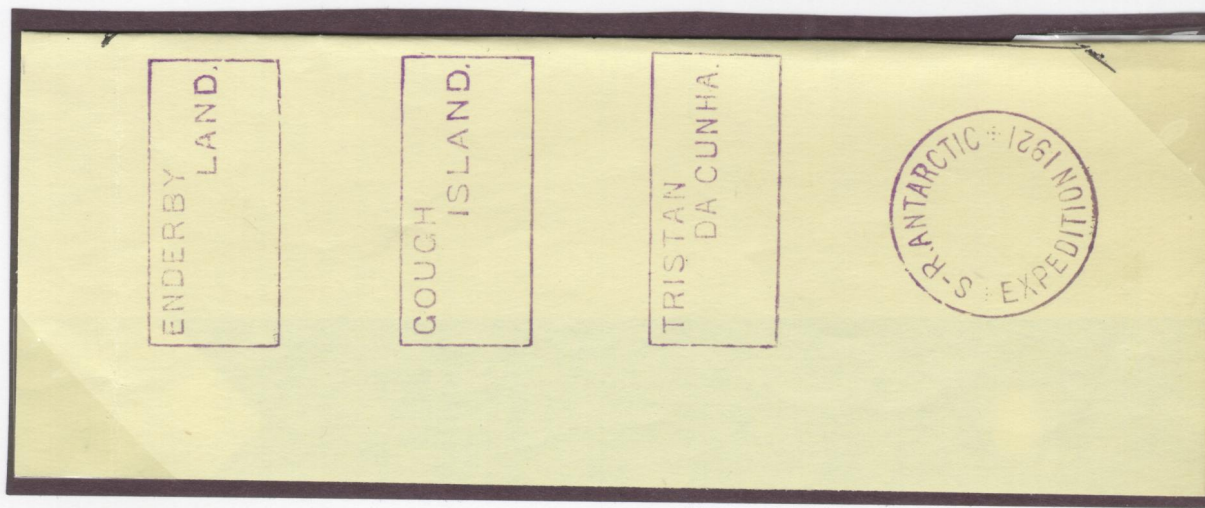
Frank Wild assumed command following Shackleton's death, however, poor state of their ship limited accomplishments. Leaving South Georgia, 4 February 1922, they did reach the pack ice, sight Enderby Land, attain Elephant Island (25 March) and explore parts of the previously impenetrable Weddell Sea. *Quest* returned to South Georgia (6 April-8 May), then resumed exploring (Tristan da Cunha, 20-25 May and Gough Island 27 May-3 June), before returning to England (16 September 1922).

Fewer than five examples known of *Quest's* cachet.

Posting from aboard Quest (using its cachet) at South Georgia, 5 May 1922, to the Antarctic island's constable, during the expedition's return to South Georgia (6 April-8 May) to make repairs and bury their leader, before completing the last phase of the expedition.

Shackleton's Last Led Expedition Resembled His First (In One Respect)

He was granted permission (this time by Great Britain) for *Shackleton-Rowett* to have an official post office with all accouterments, including a customized metal datestamper and three metal, named visitation site box "cachets" (later used to overprint pairs of on-consignment stamps). Unlike 1907, however, Shackleton was appointed an "unpaid agent of the Postmaster General," rather than "postmaster."



Proof sheet of Post Office-issued datestamper (using removable date slugs) and all three site-specific "cachets." Boxed cachets purposely made larger than a stamp, so they could not overprint (not authorized) individual stamps. Expedition nonetheless used them to overprint PAIRS of stamps.

One of two known proof sheets.

Some of the consignment postage not used on expedition mail was "overprinted" as pairs on piece with the three site "cachets" for crew mementos. "GOUGH ISLAND" and "TRISTAN DA CUNHA" cachets also used on mail from those places.



Crew memento "GOUGH ISLAND"-named cachet (cancelled with expedition postmarker, 25 May 1922) illegally used as overprint on pair of regular 6d British stamps.

Shackleton-Rowett (S-R) Expedition Post Office Makes Tristan da Cunha Postal History

Quest's second and final departure from South Georgia (8 May 1922) first headed for Tristan da Cunha, remaining 20-25 May, where it cancelled islander mail for onward transit. Expedition's postal strike was the first dated (official) postmark ever used at Tristan da Cunha.



One of only four known uses of (newly arrived) Tristan Type III Cachet on S-R mail.

Mail serviced to Kent, England, during Tristan stop struck with S-R expedition post office "May 25 / 22" (only date ever used) strike, plus Tristan Type III circular cachet. 1-1/2d (newly instituted [that month] commonwealth rate) Rochester & Chatham TPO postage due "compassionately" not doubled, because no stamps normally available and islanders without money could not benefit from expedition's stock.

Typically unfranked Tristan islander mail struck with S-R postmark, incorrectly (obliterated [T/30] compassionate rating) penalty double rate taxed (T/50) at Cape Town, Union of South Africa, to USA with (normally used then) Tristan Type II circular cachet, plus paquebot strike (because received from foreign ship, even if not foreign franked). Correct (10 cents) double rate postage due conversion at New York.



Only known paquebot S-R mail and only known S-R mail to USA.

**Insignificant Polar Island Hosts Highly Significant Postal Usage
Thus Ending Shackleton's Expeditionary Career**

S-R expedition's last polar stop made at uninhabited Subantarctic Gough Island, 27 May 1922. Crew visited and scientists researched, including assigned naturalist George Hubert Wilkins. Left 3 June for Cape Town, Union of South Africa, en route back to UK, arriving Plymouth Harbour, 16 September 1922.



One of only two recorded Gough Island postings from S-R expedition and first mail ever officially cancelled at Gough Island

Nearly proper use of "GOUGH / ISLAND" cachet (partial [unauthorized] overprint on S-R postmarked unchanged 25 May 1922 date) mail by G. H. Wilkins to South Africa. Properly franked at expiring (29 May) 2d commonwealth rate. Last polar region mail from S-R and the very last polar regions' postal documentation to record the polar expeditionary exposures of Sir Ernest Shackleton.