

The Enduring Books of Shackleton's *Endurance*: A Polar Reading Community at Sea

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Introduction

After twenty years of Antarctic centenary anniversaries celebrating the “heroic age” of polar exploration, and its eponymous “heroes” Fridtjof Nansen, Roald Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott, Douglas Mawson, Ernest Shackleton, and others, it hardly seems necessary to recount yet again the story of Ernest Shackleton’s “epic voyage” of *Endurance* and his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-16 (ITAE). Its praises have been sung and its faults analyzed constantly during this period by hagiographers and debunkers and just about everyone in between. Materials have appeared in print, in movies, documentaries, exhibitions, in poetry and song, in comics and ceramics, among management gurus, in art, on cigarette cards, even in philately. The source of much of this attention, in North America at least, was a 1999 exhibition simply called “Shackleton” at New York’s American Museum of Natural History, and a large literature immediately followed.¹

In this study, I have tried to draw together all of the known documentary evidence about the book history and reading experiences of the journey. In effect, I am retelling the story of *Endurance* from the perspective of a reading community. The framework for the narrative begins with the role of Shackleton himself as the community leader, as a consummate bookman, an early and voracious reader, and an eager consumer of poetry who claimed to prefer history to fiction. Roland Huntford sums up Shackleton’s early literary appetite thus:

Shackleton, at any rate, was proving to be at home with all kinds of men, but he was still “old Shacks” always “busy with his books”. Sometimes he was working for his First Mate’s examination [in the mid-1890s]. More often, on his watch below... he was reading for pleasure. It was very rarely fiction, more often history: “A certain type of history,” as he once put it. “I read Motley’s *History of the Dutch Republic*...and its fascinating story of the way that little nation became a great naval power and a great colonizing race...Prescott I [also] read.”²

Hugh Robert Mill, the first biographer of Shackleton, sailed with him and Robert Falcon Scott on the first stage of the *Discovery* expedition in 1901, and remembered Shackleton for his obsession with books in general and poetry in particular. Mill describes Shackleton while sailing on the Bay of Biscay en route to Antarctica as “already familiar with every reference which rose to my mind from books I had read years before his thoughts had turned that way, and with many which I had never seen.”³

Shackleton’s knowledge of and love for poetry are well known, especially his esteem for Robert Browning, but also for Alfred Lord Tennyson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Rudyard Kipling, and Robert Service. His annotated copy of *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning* is in the Library of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.⁴

One other testimonial to Shackleton's reading comes from Thomas Orde Lees, the *Endurance* expedition storekeeper who spent a good deal of time with Shackleton throughout the expedition, and was condemned by some members as being overly unctuous towards the Boss:

Being a very rapid reader, Sir Ernest reads a great deal and is particularly fond of poetry. He has an extraordinarily good memory and can recite pages of almost any known poet, many of which he has read though but once or twice.⁵

There are many other traces of Shackleton's reading among his several voyages, his contributions to the *South Polar Times*, and especially of his reading and writing on the *Nimrod* expedition with its production of the first book printed in Antarctica, the *Aurora Australis*. But enough of Shackleton's bibliographical *bona fides* as we turn to the outline of the *Endurance* expedition itself for the chronological framework needed for this account of books and reading of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

The Chronology of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition to the Weddell Sea

- A. Planning and Fund-raising: 1913 and 1914.
- B. At Sea aboard *Endurance*: August 8, 1914, to December 5, 1914, from Plymouth, England, to departure from Grytviken, South Georgia.
- C. From South Georgia, until *Endurance* is beset in the Weddell Sea, December 5, 1914, to January 19, 1915.
- D. *Endurance* adrift in Icepack, January 19, 1915, to October 27, 1915; *Endurance* abandoned and sank by November 21, 1915.
- E. "Dump Camp," October 27, 1915, to October 30, 1915.
- F. "Ocean Camp," November 1, 1915, to December 23, 1915.
- G. "Patience Camp," December 29, 1915, to April 9, 1916.
- H. The Open Sea Voyage, April 9, 1916, to April 15, 1916.
- I. Elephant Island to South Georgia aboard *James Caird*, April 24, 1916, to May 10, 1916.
- J. Crossing South Georgia on Foot, May 18, 1916, to May 20, 1916.
- K. Elephant Island Awaiting Rescue, April 15, 1916, to August 30, 1916.

A Concise History of the Expedition

The *Endurance* left Britain on August 8, 1914, concurrently with the beginning of World War I; permission to proceed was granted by Winston Churchill himself. Shackleton's intention was to send two teams to Antarctica, one to begin the trans-continental journey on the *Endurance* by travelling from Buenos Aires to South Georgia to the ice shelf of the Weddell Sea, then advance to the South Pole with six men, continuing to the Ross Sea on the other side of the continent. The second team would travel via New Zealand to the Ross Sea to establish provisions and supply depots along the route of the primary team's final lap from the South Pole, north to the Ross Sea.

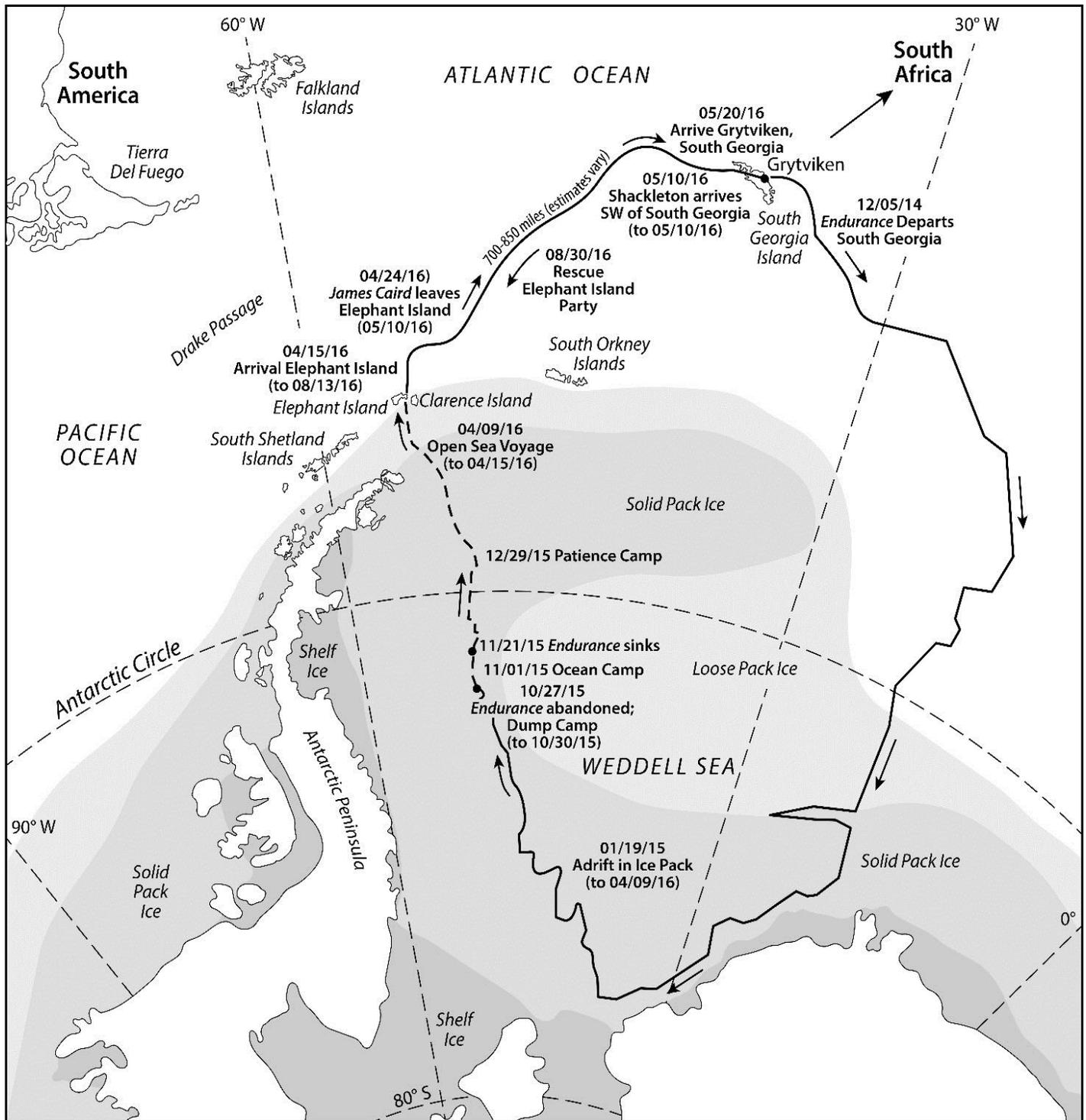


Figure 1. Path of the Expedition. Map by Joseph W. Stoll, Syracuse Univ. Cartographic Dept.

The depot-laying team successfully met its goal (despite three deaths), but its efforts were in vain because the *Endurance* never made it out of the Weddell Sea. On January 19, 1915, the ship was entrapped in the icepack. *Endurance* remained imprisoned through most of the year,

erratically drifting for well over 1,000 miles towards the northwest before being crushed by the ice and abandoned on November 21, far from any possible rescue ships. The men retreated to Dump Camp on a solid ice floe near the sinking ship as the Antarctic summer approached. There they stored most of the material, goods, and foods they could retrieve before the ship sank, including three whaleboats that made the group's ultimate survival possible. During five months on ice floes, Shackleton established two further bases, Ocean Camp and Patience Camp, where his crew awaited release into the open sea while drifting north.

The men embarked in their three boats on April 9, 1916, their only conceivable objective being Elephant Island where they fortuitously arrived on April 15 after a perilous journey. After some change in the base camp and some improvements to the largest boat, Shackleton took five men with him in the *James Caird* in hopes of reaching South Georgia, nearly 800 nautical miles away over very stormy seas, leaving behind twenty-two men on Elephant Island to await an uncertain rescue.

That hazardous sixteen-day journey to South Georgia, brilliantly navigated by Frank Worsley, and the subsequent unprecedented traversal of mountainous South Georgia, form much of the legendary status of the *Endurance* Expedition. Without their success, we likely never would have known what had happened and the legends would have died with the men. Although the expedition was a failure in all its goals, that journey was as thrilling a narrative as any novelist could invent, ending with the rescue and survival of all twenty-eight men. Eventually the Ross Sea Party was rescued as well, despite their loss of three men.⁶

The Books of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition **(1914-1916)**

What follows is an account of how books and reading sustained these explorers through every stage of their travails, the narrative organized according to the Chronology given above, including the final, bookless boat journey from Elephant Island to South Georgia.

On February 26, 2016, the BBC created considerable interest among Polar aficionados by releasing a report from the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London featuring a list of books that were shelved in Shackleton's cabin on the *Endurance*. Someone at the RLS had the bright idea to digitize a famous Frank Hurley photograph of those bookshelves and then to manipulate the digitized images enough to decipher the titles on the book spines. As the BBC pointed out, the shelves included a full *Encyclopædia Britannica* (combined 9th and 10th Editions), a number of reference works, some literary classics including Shelley, Dostoyevsky, and Lady Gregory, and a group of recent English novels. The list is included as Appendix I.



Figure 2 Ernest Shackleton's cabin on the 'Endurance'. Photograph by Frank Hurley.
Royal Geographic Society.

A. Planning and Fundraising (1913-14)

There appears to be no documentary evidence of any systematic efforts to acquire books for the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, the kind of evidence that exists for other expeditions such as Scott's British National Antarctic Expedition aboard *Discovery*, or Richard Byrd's three expedition libraries at Little America.⁷ Nor have I located any business archives resulting from voyage preparations, though they may very well exist. Shackleton's account of the Expedition in *South* is silent on the subject.

It is clear, however, that the books seen in Hurley's March 1915 photograph of Shackleton's bookshelves aboard *Endurance* were carefully selected to support study of polar exploration, to provide for both the intellectual and entertainment needs of the men, and above all to provide the testimony and counsel of past experience on the ice. Works by Polar explorers Amundsen, Collinson, Greely, Kane, Markham, McClintock, Nares, Adolf Nordenskjöld, and Schley, all present in Shackleton's cabin, provide an ample selection of Arctic works. There were other Antarctic works aboard, though not on Shackleton's cabin shelves. For more cerebral fare for the officers there was Conrad, Shaw, Shelley, Dostoyevsky, Dreyfus, and a number of reference works, including a thin-paper edition of the *Britannica*. Why the lighter fiction should have been in his cabin is something of a mystery—one would assume those would have been placed in the lower decks, as they had on Scott's *Discovery*.

B. At Sea aboard *Endurance*

August 8, 1914, to December 5, 1914.

There was a great deal of leisure time at sea during the voyage from Plymouth to the Weddell Sea, despite the diversions of shore visit, incidents of Argentine inebriation leading to a few dismissals, some new recruits, and one stowaway eventually added to the crew. Yet the diaries and journals written during that part of the voyage are much less rich in reading details than those of the ice floes and of Elephant Island. Some of the journals don't begin until after the ship is frozen in.

In Buenos Aires on October 17, 1914, Worsley records in his diary the gift of Charcot's book about the *Pourqua pas* [sic] and of some Argentine meteorological records, but nothing about reading them. There were two other books in George Marston's cabin as seen in a photograph of his shelves. The books present in the photograph are hard to explain: one about Badminton and Shuttles, and another about tennis. That is the best we can do for this early period of the Expedition, when no doubt the excitement of anticipated adventures itself alleviated a certain amount of boredom.

C. South Georgia to Frozen Imprisonment

December 5, 1914, to January 19, 1915.

Because or despite indications of heavy ice in the Weddell Sea and advice from the local whalers in the austral winter of 1914-15, Shackleton waited in Grytviken for over a month before heading south.⁸ This should have given ample time for study of the polar literature or leisure reading but indications are few.

On Jan. 16 Frank Hurley started reading Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life*. He continued the next day: "I remained in my bunk reading most of the time. I can glance out of the porthole onto a very dismal prospect of huge great white bergs, rough sea and lowering nimbus clouds. It is typical of moody Antarctica.... I finished reading Marcus Clarke's exquisite book, which impressed me greatly, especially as I have been to various places which he has mentioned in his book."⁹ An Australian thriller about a convict's escape from a Tasmanian penal colony, the novel was popular both with the *Endurance* team and among the Ross Sea Party.

Other Hurley reading during that month included Beatrice Grimshaw's *Guinea Gold*, Eden Philpotts' *Human Boy*, and William Locke's *Idols*, none of which is on the list of books on Shackleton's shelves, and may have been from his own personal collection. In December his diaries include references to his reading about Borneo, Sumatra, and Australia, as well as "Rope Manufacture," all from the *Britannica*. He also found that the "absorbing interest" of *Nicholas Nickleby* made the day of December 18th pass "more speedily than usual."¹⁰ But again we know little of any reading by other officers and men.

D. *Endurance* Adrift in Icepack

January 19, 1915, to October 27, 1915.

The ship drifted in the frozen icepack of the Weddell Sea for about 1000 miles from January 19, 1915, until the abandonment of the ship on October 27, 1915, and its sinking on November 21, 1915. Its furthest south was 77°00'S 35°W, on February 22. Shackleton named the relatively posh living quarters of the ship the “Ritz” where the men lived until October 26, 1915, before the ship was formally abandoned.

On January 23rd, 1915, Thomas Orde Lees reported that “There is not much to do on board and it is well to have something definite to do to keep oneself occupied, otherwise than by reading all day.” Two weeks later on February 6th, he says that “...our only fear is that we may one day get ahead of our tasks and find ourselves in the unenviable position of having nothing to do but read, sleep and eat.” On July 8th he reported that on Midwinter’s Day he opened several packages from home and found five numbers of the *Times History of the War*, which “afforded particular entertainment.”¹¹ On September 22, Worsley summed up the entire icepack experience with what Huntford calls an outburst about the “boring monotony & ennui of this purposeless drifting.”¹²



**Figure 3 '*Endurance*' frozen in the ice. Photograph by Frank Hurley.
Royal Geographic Society.**

E. Dump Camp

October 26, 1915, to October 30, 1915.

With the impending abandonment of the hapless ship, Shackleton began planning what available supplies and provisions would be needed for the unpredictable future, and how their weight might be reduced to manageable proportions:

[On October 30, 1915] Our leader proceeded to set an example by deliberately throwing away all he possessed—away went his watch, about 50 golden sovereigns, silver brushes and dressing case fittings, books and a dozen other things. Whereupon we all did likewise until there was a heap of clothing and private property probably of some hundreds of pounds value, lying all about all over the floe. It seemed imperative at the time to lighten ourselves in this drastic way, but some of us afterwards came to regret it for, as events proved, there was no need for it, and this litter of discarded valuables, which we called ‘Dump Camp’, later became the marauding ground of one or two of the sailors who were suspected of reaping and concealing on their persons a rich harvest of ill-gotten gains.¹³

One of the discards Shackleton used to demonstrate the need to reduce weight was Queen Alexandra’s Bible that she had given and inscribed to *Endurance* when the ship was leaving England on July 16, 1914. He had torn from the book only a few pages, the page from the Book of Job with its famous quote about “the hoary frost of heaven” (ch. 38, v. 29-30), the page with the 23rd Psalm, and the flyleaf inscribed by Alexandra. What he did not know, according to Huntford, was that Thomas McLeod, a Scottish seaman, had quietly rescued the book from Dump Camp. Throwing a Bible away, by McLeod’s lights, would have been a sacrilege or at the least bring bad luck. The book survived and is now in the Royal Geographical Society Library.¹⁴

Among other books rescued from the ship were Otto Nordenskjöld’s *Antarctic* [sic], seven volumes of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Carlyle’s *French Revolution*, Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, and Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering*.¹⁵ Weightier materials to be dealt with at Dump Camp were the equipment, film, and exposed photograph plates that Hurley had produced while the ship remained afloat. Despite Shackleton’s orders to leave it all behind, Hurley on November 2, 1915, rescued the glass plates and worked out a compromise with Shackleton to save 150 of the glass plate negatives, leaving behind 400 smashed plates.¹⁶

Hurley also claimed other feats of salvage, apparently defying Shackleton’s orders:

While on the subject of salvage, I might add that I recovered the volumes of the encyclopaedia from the chief’s cabin and a large part of my own personal library, as well as several packs of cards. Many a day we had cause to bless the fact. What tedious hours were whiled away in reading; what wonderful and purely imaginary fortunes changed hands at poker patience.

Hurley included this bit of doggerel from the diary he kept on Elephant Island:

Our hut is double-storied, with bedrooms twenty-two,

A library and a drawing room, although indeed 'tis true,
We haven't any bathroom, at which perhaps you'll smile,
But we found it warmer not to wash in our hut on Elephant Isle.

Then I discovered that cigarettes could be made with the India paper of the only remaining volume of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and pages of this went up in smoke.

Those who have read this story must have marveled that we survived the perils and ordeals without loss of life. Sir Ernest had absolute faith in Providential guidance, faith in himself, and faith in his men. His unconquerable spirit inspired his team and made them invincible.¹⁷

In his earlier diary entry for October 29, 1915, Hurley provided a good description of the scrapheap:

The dump heap is a heterogeneous collection of dress suits, hats, brushes, combs, portmanteaus, books etc., pleasant though useless refinements of civilization. I even noticed some gold studs, links and sovereigns.¹⁸

Caroline Alexander points out that Frank Worsley, in a moment of prescient intuition while preparing for his eventual navigation to Elephant Island and South Georgia, carefully checked through the many books that had been discarded at Dump Camp. "Worsley went through the ship's library, tearing maps, charts, even photographs of possible landfalls out of the books they would have to leave behind." [Oct 24, 1915]. Some of these maps and charts were the only printing to go with the final lap of the expedition from Elephant Island to South Georgia.¹⁹

We can only speculate as to what happened to the books discarded at Dump Camp, but it is likely that as the ice floe drifted north and melted, the books aboard gradually dropped off and sank many fathoms where, for all we know they are preserved frozen for eternity.

F. Ocean Camp

November 1, 1915, to December 23, 1915.

There are not many indications of reading during this short period, busy as it must have been in preparation for their indeterminate future, but much of the reading we do find is devoted to the Polar experience. Greenstreet was reading Nordenskjöld's *Antarctica*, convincing him at least of the need to gather ample food for long periods. Shackleton, unpersuaded, called him a "bloody pessimist," likely to convince the whole group of the impossibility of their situation. On December 5, McNeish was reading McClintock's *The Voyage of the Fox*, and cursing the British government for refusing to give Lady Franklin the rescue ship she wanted and had to pay for herself. On December 9 Macklin was immersed in his sleeping bag reading Amundsen's *South Pole*, and according to Huntford depressed by boredom.²⁰ The emphasis on exploration history is intriguing at this stage in the expedition, given their awareness of the proximity of their drift to where Nordenskjöld's *Antarctic* had perished a decade earlier.

Frank Worsley provides a general picture of life drifting on the icepack:

When we did not play [cards], or were not mending our clothes, we usually spent the evening in interminable arguments, mostly about nothing in particular. The following incident indicates the frame of mind of some of the sailors, who got so excited one night over a discussion on currency (of all things!) that the matter was looked up in one of the volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that we had saved, since they contained information that was valuable to us. When both sides were proved to be wrong, they united in declaring that “the ---- book was no good.”²¹

G. Patience Camp

December 29, 1915, to April 9, 1916.

The fourteen weeks at Patience Camp proved to be the ripest time for reading among several members of the expedition, or at least of our surviving knowledge of what the men read. Among various diary entries is a fascinating note prepared by Orde Lees on January 1, 1916, that includes a list of borrowed books, appearing to be an improvised circulation record indicating borrowers of specific titles. Several items include the date of 31.1 [Jan. 31], probably the due date by which the book was to be returned to Orde Lees. The list begins with the titles, authors in parenthesis, names and nicknames of borrowers in square brackets if given in the manuscript:

Handy Andy (Lover) [Alfred Cheetham] 31.1	
Voyage of Scotia (Brown)	List of books
*Monsieur de Rochefort (Stacpoole)	at Patience Camp
Twenty years after (Dumas) [Jock J.M. Wordie]	1. 1. 16.
Scoresby's Yarn [Skipper Frank Worsley]	OLees
Dombey & Son (Dickens) [Mack Alexander Macklin]	
Eothen (Kinglake) [Mack Alexander Macklin]	
Robert Ellesmere (Mrs. Ward) [Jock J.M. Wordie]	
*World's End (Rives) [Box E: This refers to Shackleton's suitcase in which he had locked all the papers of the expedition]	
Guy Mannering (Scott) [Lionel Greenstreet]	
Marriage of William Ashe (Mrs. Ward) [Skipper Frank Worsley]	
Tale of Two Cities (Dickens) [Rick [Rickinson?]	
*Oddsfish (Benson) [George Clark]	
Lord Jim (Conrad)	
A Knight on Wheels (Hay) [Thomas Holness] 31.1	
Life in the Antarctic (Bruce)	
Walden (Thoreau)	
Sea Captain (Anon)	
Marie Antoinette & Diamond Necklace (Dumas?)	
Browning's Poems [Charles Green?] 31.1	
Scottish Life & Character (Sanderson) [John Vincent] 31.1	

Science from an Easy Chair (Lankester)
Green Flag (Doyle)
Vandover & the Brute (Norris)
Salt Water Ballads (Masefield)
What I saw in Russia (Baring) [Alexander Kerr] 31.1
Spanish Gold (Birmingham) [William Stephenson] 31.1
Hereward the Wake (Kingsley)
*Pip (Hay) [Walter Howe] 31.1
*Potash & Perlmutter (Glass) [Frank Wild] 31.1
When God Laughs (London) [Leonard Hussey]
Brownings Plays & Poems²²

There are several fascinating aspects of this list. It was prepared at Patience Camp by Orde Lees, Shackleton's insufferably unctuous but highly competent storekeeper, as if part of his duties were to keep track of all expedition materials. Several of these books have indications of who had borrowed the book in question. For example, the first item appears to imply, as do several others below, that *Handy Andy* [by Samuel Lover], for example, was "loaned" to Alfred Cheetham until the 31st of January. It may be that Orde Lees expected to reclaim all of the borrowed books by January 31, a mere two weeks off. Only five of the books, those marked with asterisks, had been on Shackleton's cabin shelves. Unless some of the remaining titles in Shackleton's cabin had been on loan to others when the photograph was taken, they must have been discarded in the Dump Camp biblio-massacre.

Most of the "borrowers" were officers, though William Bakewell, George Clark, Walter Howe, and John Vincent were exceptions. By implication, above all, the absence from this list of most of the books from Shackleton's cabin gives a good indication of both the extent of the original holdings aboard ship and the amount of disposal and therefore weight that Shackleton felt necessary to make the journey across the ice and the sea feasible.²³

In his *South: A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage*, Shackleton gives an overview of the book resources left to the collective readership of the expedition, following the disposals that he felt necessary at Dump Camp to reduce the overall weight for the journey.

In addition to the daily hunt for food, our time was passed in reading the few books that we had managed to save from the ship. The greatest treasure in the library was a portion of the Encyclopædia Britannica. This was being continually used to settle the inevitable arguments that would arise....

We also possessed a few books on Antarctic exploration, a copy of Browning, and one of "The Ancient Mariner." On reading the latter, we sympathized with him and wondered what he had done with the albatross; it would have made a very welcome addition to our larder.²⁴

On the ice floes of Patience Camp Shackleton evidently had sufficient leisure for reading while waiting for an open sea and the next chapter of his ordeal:

To himself, Shackleton was reading Kinglake's *Eothen*, one of the motley volumes salvaged from the ship; 'a charming book', as he put it. An ice floe, drifting like a colossal raft over uncharted waters, was an odd background for a famous Victorian chronicle of Middle Eastern travel. Helpless in a gale, Shackleton could get an ironic satisfaction out of Kinglake's Turkish Pasha chanting 'whiz! Whiz! All by steam!' in admiration of English technical mastery over nature.²⁵

Later in January, Frank Hurley was reading the same book as Shackleton and left an extended paragraph on his own experience with *Eothen*:

Jan 30 Came to the end of *Eothen*. I would rather carry this excellent book than six times its weight in rations. Kinglake's magnificent description of the desert, resembles Byron's *Ocean*—an apostrophe written—not to be excelled. It transported me from the illimitable ice to the interminable desert sands, to the sphinx, to the great pyramids, and drew me transiently by the umbrageous olives of far Damascus and the knarled cedars of Lebanon. Alas! the book is finished and round me remains the ever unchangeable ice, the same leaden sky, the same existing patience—the same white line that girdles the boundary of vision and acts like a bar to our frigid captivity.²⁶

Huntford is not always scrupulous in his sources but he does provide helpful clues on the extent of Shackleton's reading. Here is Huntford on the two volumes of Otto Nordenskjöld's *Antarctica*, one of their most widely read works that travelled all the way from the *Endurance* cabin to Elephant Island. It was particularly redolent to the stranded men in that the Norwegian ship had perished (February 12, 1903), nipped in the ice in the same manner and in roughly the same place as the final drift and the sinking of *Endurance*. Nordenskjöld's account was a compelling tale of survival, helping to keep up the morale of Shackleton's colleagues:

Shackleton also had the two green volumes of Nordenskjöld's *Antarctic* [sic] to haunt him with other echoes of the past.²⁷ Nordenskjöld, being a Swede, was a moralistic man. One of his aims now, as the citizen of a neutral state, was to prevent future wars by rewriting school textbooks to encourage peace. On the other hand, as Shackleton knew from personal acquaintance, he was intellectually honest. Nordenskjöld had not cheated with his own experience in order to present a heroic vision. *Antarctic* was no simple schoolboy tale of derring-do; it was a rich guide to a vital store of other men's experience.

Nor was Nordenskjöld a selfish man. He had let his men tell their own tales. His book contained Larsen's own record of how *Antarctic* fared in the selfsame Weddell Sea. With the bare bones of the tale, of course, Shackleton was familiar. *Antarctic* had sunk. Her crew had escaped. It was in the manner of the deed, the way of leadership, that the lesson lay. "A seaman who loses his sense of humour and courage in the hour of need," Larsen had written in his diary as he watched *Antarctic* slowly being crushed by the ice, "ought really not to go to sea."²⁸

Orde Lees diary recorded that Frank Wild as the leader on Elephant Island was reluctant to have this much-desired book in circulation. Even though there was little prospect of getting the books back to England, some Arctic books seem to have inspired bibliophilic if temporary

possessiveness. There was, for example, a copy of Elisha Kent Kane's book about his first Arctic expedition to Grinnell Land, "lent to us by Mr. Facer of Northampton, a great polar enthusiast." Orde Lees talks about the Kane book in his diaries as well:

Hurley has possession of this book and is not disposed to lend it out because he desires to return it to Mr. Facer one day. I too have one of Mr. Facer's polar books, quite an antique one, a voyage to Spitzbergen in 1775, which I have kept absolutely secret in my sleeping bag ever since we left Ocean Camp on Xmas Day 1915, and which I intend one day to restore to its owner.²⁹

Another eager reader of the scientific group was Reginald James, a physicist who kept some informative diaries that are now at SPRI (Scott Polar Research Institute). On Jan. 9th he reports that:

"We have a little library, several people having brought along books, 5 vols. of Encyclopaedia Britannica brought officially, Carlyle's French Revolution, Guy Mannering, Iliad, Robert Ellesmere, Anna Karenina, The English Language, Keats and Browning."

The *Iliad* translation appears to be a newcomer to these lists.

On that Jan. 9th, James was reading Tolstoy and had hopes that most of these books "will be taken with us when we take to the boats." On Feb. 4th he read most of *World's End* by Amelie Reeves and "Like it very much." The 22nd he was "Reading article on Projective Geometry in Encyclopaedia Britannica to keep my mind oiled a bit." By Feb. 27 he had "read and absorbed nearly the whole article on projective Geometry. I find these encyclopaedias a great boon. They have splendid articles which are regular Textbooks." More follows after they arrive at Elephant Island, with more than usual comment:

June 12. Monday. Dull snowy day. Light variable winds, high temperature. Nothing doing. Pack in bay again. Heard in tent [from fireman William] Stephenson, turning over leaves of a book containing some of Wordsworth's poems "Imitations of Immortality." There's an 'ell of a name for a poem! Cook—"That's like you looking at them sort of things. You always 'unt the dirty things out."

July 10. [leaf 118-19] Nights now a contest between Lees the snoring and those who try to sleep. Lees has won the opening engagements of the war. I am starting on the 'French Revolution' again which I managed to bring along. It is a good stand-by in the case when literature is scarce. Our library consists of a few much mutilated E.B. vols. A couple of polar books (Kane & Nordenskjöld) carefully kept for reference and not in circulation. Wordie has Lockhart's 'Life of Scott', Greenstreet, Scott's Works, & Hurley "The Ancient Mariner" & a small volume of Keats & Pear's Encyclopaedia & Bacon's Essays. still have my translation of the 'Iliad' Clark has the 'Open Road'.³⁰

Frank Worsley was another of the ice floe readers, as Huntford notes in his Shackleton biography:

4 March 1916: Worsley tried to escape from his depression by burying himself in polar history, in particular Amundsen's *North West Passage*; as he put it, 'a well written most modest account of a well-conceived enterprise'³¹

Other works besides Amundsen's that Worsley had available for study while unable to navigate the ice floes included George Nares's two-volume *Voyage to the Polar Sea* and Arthur Young's *Travels in France* which he read in March 1916.³² Of these titles, the Amundsen and Nares were present among the books in Shackleton's cabin, another indication of the strength of the polar sources available to the engaged reader.

Alfred Lansing gives yet another report on leisure activities on the ice floe, based on his 1950s interviews with all of the *Endurance* survivors still alive:

The days were now considerably longer than the nights [Nov. 1915], with the sun setting about 9 p.m., and rising again near three o'clock in the morning. In the evening there was plenty of light for reading or playing cards. Frequently Hussey took his banjo around to the galley tent where the flicker of flames in the blubber stove warmed his fingers enough to play, and there was always a good turnout of singers. The seven men under Worsley's charge in No. 5 tent instituted the practice of reading aloud each night. Clark was first, and he chose a volume inappropriately titled *Science from an Easy Chair*. Clark and his seven listeners lay snuggling together for warmth, arranged in a circle around the tent with their feet thrust under a pile of sleeping bags to generate a little collective heat. When it came Greenstreet's turn, he elected to read Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion*. And Macklin allowed as how "I must confess I find his reading an excellent soporific."³³

Finally, another natural reader was ship's surgeon Alexander Macklin who kept a journal of much of the *Endurance* journey, starting on October 15, shortly before the smashup. On November 3 he rescued some books from the sinking ship for fellow-scientist Robert Clark. His diary entries until departure from Ocean Camp show a lively mind and conscientious diarist:

Dec 30th: I have been looking at a few pages I tore from an encyclopaedia and have seen the diet list of various prisoners.

Jan 9 & 10: Our few books are a great solace. I have just read 'Robert Elsmere' by Mrs. Humphrey Ward—and am now reading 'Dombey & Son' (Dickens). We have 5 volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica which are a great standby, providing a large amount of reading material....

Jan 21st: I have been reading 'Guy Mannering' by Scott, and this has passed several hours pleasantly...." Also Bridges?

Jan 30: I collected all the useful books I could find and several pounds of tobacco, some semolina and some soup spoons. [He had gone scavenging at Ocean Camp and returned the same day.]

Jan. 31: Lees made a tally of all the gear we brought up yesterday. We now have a fair supply of books, and the extra encyclopaedia should prove of great value.

Mar 6th: We have been reading "The Master of Ballantrae" (Stevenson) in the tent. Clarke reads it well, Greenstreet—who read last night—sent nearly all of us to sleep.

Mar 15th: I had plenty of reading and I kept a full and detailed diary.

April 8th: Hands are cold for writing to-day. Have been reading. Encyclopaedia Britannica this afternoon. Everything quiet.

The three boats left Patience Camp the next day, leaving the ice floes completely by April 11, concluding an ice drift of almost 1000 miles, and facing an open sea journey to the rocky coast of Elephant Island.³⁴

H. The Open Sea Voyage

April 9, 1916, to April 15, 1916.

On April 9, with the icepack thinning and the ice floes becoming unstable, the 28 men boarded their three boats: the *James Caird* (Shackleton in charge, Clark, Green, Holness, How, Hurley, Hussey, James, McNeish, Vincent, Wild, and Wordie); *Dudley Docker* (Worsley in charge, Cheetham, Greenstreet, Kerr, Macklin, Marston, McLeod, Orde Lees, and Stevenson); *Stancomb Wills* (Crean and Hudson in charge, Bakewell, Blackborrow, How, McIlroy, and Rickinson).³⁵

It was a miserable voyage for all three boats, with crowded conditions, tempestuous seas, wet and ragged clothing, insufficient food and acute thirst, fitful sleep if any, extreme cold, frostbite, sea-salt boils, and fear of shipwreck and imminent death. Macklin's diary does have a note that on April 14 Marston sang some songs to entertain men aboard *Dudley Docker*, possibly also heard by men on the *Stancomb Wills* which was towed by the *Dudley Docker* during parts of the voyage, a smidgen of diversion.

It's hardly surprising that we find no evidence of any reading distractions during this horrific journey between the ice floes about 200 miles east of the South Shetland Islands, the perilous arrival at Elephant Island's Cape Valentine, and the uneasy but successful transfer to a safer refuge seven miles west which they named Cape Wild after the leader of the Island contingent.

Nevertheless, there were the navigational books and charts necessary for this brief voyage. As noted earlier, Worsley had rummaged through the discarded books at Dump Camp for any charts or maps that might prove useful in celestial navigation or in identifying possible dead reckoning features. Some of these guides did prove valuable to Worsley during both this voyage and again on the longer and even greater navigational challenge of sailing from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Other than that use, reading would have been impossible.

I. Elephant Island to South Georgia

April 24, 1916, to May 10, 1916.

For the decisive final segment of the entire expedition, Shackleton decided to take the *James Caird* with five men (Frank Worsley, Tom Crean, Alexander McNeish, Tim McCarthy, and John Vincent) in a risky attempt to reach South Georgia, about 800 miles to the northeast. Shackleton had to decide what to take with them and according to Worsley, "Our stores were ferried off and stowed, our sleeping-bags, spare clothes, oars, my sextant and navigation books

were next handed in, then the two breakers of water and the lumps of ice. Unfortunately one of the two breakers of water got stove in while hauling it off through the increasing surf, and a quantity of sea water, mixing with the fresh, partly spoiled it, as, to our cost, we found out later on.” The navigation books were necessary for Worsley to reach a precise target on the broad ocean but there were more than a few difficulties:

Our fingers were so cold that he [Shackleton] had to interpret his wobbly figures—my own so illegible that I had to recognize them by feats of memory. Three months later I could read only half of them. My navigation books had to be half-opened, page by page, till the right one was reached, then opened carefully to prevent utter destruction. The epitome had had the cover, front and back pages washed away, while the Nautical Almanac shed its pages so rapidly before the onslaught of the seas that it was a race whether or not the month of May would last to South Georgia. It just did, but April had vanished completely.³⁶

Among other materials loaded aboard the *Caird* for its perilous journey were “McNish’s adze, a Primus Cooker, Shackleton’s shotgun, 36 gallons (164 l.) of water, 112 pounds (50.8 kg) of ice, and about a ton of rocks for use as ballast. Some of Hurley’s photographs also went aboard, probably in the box made up that morning by Orde Lees which contained Worsley’s logbooks.”³⁷

Somehow, they were able to keep their logs except in the strongest gales: “The eighth day the gale held steadily throughout from south-southwest, with a very heavy, lumpy sea. It was impossible to write—even a few remarks. These would have been illegible—but anyway unprintable—owing to the violent jerky contortions of the *Caird*. She was heavily iced all over outside, and a quantity of ice had formed inside her.”³⁸

J. Elephant Island, Awaiting Rescue

April 15, 1916, to August 30, 1916.

Four and a half winter months elapsed before the twenty-two men left on Elephant Island were rescued. Shackleton made three seaborne attempts to rescue them before succeeding with the loan of a Chilean ship called *Yelcho*. Orde Lees again has the most extensive description of the reading possibilities in the improvised hut of Elephant Island during an anxious and tedious wait.

18 May: The blizzard continues, routine same as yesterday. We fortunately brought five volumes of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* along with us and one or two fellows brought poetry books on their own, so that we have something to read and, by exchanging, can always get a change, though personally I prefer the encyclopaedia which I like to read from beginning to end. The knowledge we obtain, though varied, is confined to subjects beginning with the letters A, E, M, P and S only. We know all about the manufacture of paper and the arts of printing, mining, engraving etc., but butter-making, dyeing and flying are sealed books to us. The light is now so bad that it is seldom one can read in the hut for more than an hour at mid-day, except by artificial light, and we cannot afford much of that.³⁹

27 June: Those whose billets come within the range of the light from the blubber lamps are able to read a little, and the lamps have been placed to the best advantage so that as many as possible can benefit simultaneously, but unfortunately I am just out of reach of any of them except at night, when the night-light is placed on the sugar case... and shining in my eyes, keeps me awake so that I often elect to sit up during the night and read for several hours if it is not altogether too cold.

As to lights, the wretched fellows who sleep up in the thwarts of the [overturned] boats [the roof of the hut] are very badly off. Still they scrambled for those very places in order to secure the driest billets. All the sailors are quartered up on the thwarts, and the inability to read does not seem to trouble them much. [The aristocratic Lees is evidently speaking here.]

2 July: We have two collections of odd pieces of poetry, one of them called *The Pilgrims Way*, and a copy of Browning's poems, and a Life of Sir Walter Scott, but I never could find any real pleasure in reading poetry whilst the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, of which we have five volumes, fulfils all my requirements in the literary line. I read so slowly that I shall never be able to read all that these volumes contain even if we have to stop here five years, which God forbid.⁴⁰

Caroline Alexander adds a few details of the available books on Elephant Island, based on some unspecified source: "In addition to various nautical books and copies of Walter Scott and Browning, five volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had been saved from the *Endurance* library. The most entertainment per page was afforded by Marston's *Penny Cookbook*, which inspired many imaginary meals."⁴¹

In his diaries as quoted by Worsley, Frank Wild had a slightly different description and listing of the reading possibilities on Elephant Island:

The fellows who were on the floor could read and sew, which relieved the monotony considerably. The library, as you know, consisted only of two books of poetry, one of which was yours [Worsley's], one book of Nordenskjold's [sic] Expedition, two volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and a penny cookery book of Marston's. The cookery book was sometimes dashed annoying, because it reminded us of all the things we couldn't get."⁴²

On July 30 Reginald James is again grateful to have reading material, and for some reason repeats in his diary most of the inventory he had outlined on July 10th. He does say of these books that they are in good condition and will "bear reading twice." In his final diaries of the journey, a month later, he and Hurley are putting windows in their makeshift hut to improve light for reading and writing, little knowing that rescue was only three weeks off:

August 10, Thursday: ...Hurley and I proceeded to put a window in the side of the hut near our bunk. Three pieces film transparent celluloid about whole plate photography were found in Sir E's bag yesterday; they had formerly been photograph covers. They

will now be three windows in our house.... The new window, although it only looks on to a big snow dump gives fine light for reading and writing and supplies a long felt want. Weather vile.... [leaf 8]

August 30th, Wednesday—the day of rescue: The news from home startling to say least. It seems that the world has altered much. Feel rather like “Wells’ Sleeper.”⁴³ [*When the Sleeper Awakes*, by H.G. Wells]

Singing by Alexander Macklin had constituted the lone entertainment of the Open Boat journey. Once ashore on Elephant Island he continued his concerts and his eager book use, giving brief journal entries for his reading, some of it aloud, on the island.

June 15th: Tonight I recited three topical poems which I made up. 1. The snuggerly. 2. King’s birthday drink. 3. Scientific Staff.

June 24th. Vocal concert for Mid-Winter.

June 25th Sunday: I have felt in fine fettle after to-day’s good outing, and sat up a long time reading Encyclopaedia Britannica, Scott’s poetical work, and entering these notes. Our other literature consists of “The Open Road” (Lucas), “The Pilgrim’s Way” (Quiller-Couch), “Life of Scott” and a penny cookery book issued by some school authorities at Kendall. The latter I think is the favourite, and is continually being borrowed from its owner, Marston, by people wanting to look up the dishes they will have when they get home.

July 10: My turn for blubber lamp, and read Encyclopaedia Britannica and Scott’s “Lord of the Isles.”

[n.d.] I have been giving Greenstreet lectures on First Aid.... I have no books and have to trust to my memory for it all.

July 25th: There are no less than 7 blubber lamps going in the hut now.

July 16: To-day Wild called in all the Encyclopaedias, and distributed them 1 to 4 men. Kerr, Wordie, Marston and myself have MED-MUM, unfortunately a number I had read pretty thoroughly.

Aug 10: Wordie unearthed from among his possessions a piece of old “Times” newspaper giving news of the War (Sept. 15th 1914). We wonder what changes have taken place since then.

Monday, August 21st: Have borrowed Carlyle’s “French Revolution”, and find it pretty interesting, though one requires a pretty considerable knowledge of the period to thoroughly understand the book.

Sept. 1st [Macklin’s 27th birthday, and the day after the Rescue from Elephant Island.]

Nov. 19th: We all arrived safe in London. England we find very different from the England we left.⁴⁴

Huntford discusses Frank Wild’s preparations for departure if a relief ship should ever come. Finally, on August 30, the day had come with the sighting of the *Yelcho* offshore:

Every morning for months, Wild had ordered everything packed and ready to leave, in case rescue came that day. Originally it was to keep up morale. Now it bore fruit. As the ship turned, and headed for the spit, the baggage was brought down to the beach. Among the motley bundles, were Hurley’s three precious tins with his films and plates.

Somehow, he had brought them safely all the way from Patience Camp in the boats. Greenstreet too, in the best traditions of the sea, had saved the log of the *Endurance*.⁴⁵

For that alone, Lionel Greenstreet deserves the last word in this sad saga of the Elephant Island experience: “Everyone spent the day rotting in their bags with blubber and tobacco smoke.... So passes another goddam rotten day.”⁴⁶

By now the *Britannica* holdings apparently had been reduced from seven to five to two volumes in its long transit from the abandoned ship to Elephant Island. How much of their onion-skin paper was devoted to cigarette wrappings for faux tobacco is unknown, though Wild claims that the last volume went up in smoke.

K. Crossing South Georgia on Foot May 18, 1916, to May 20, 1916.



Figure 4 South Georgia mountains. Photograph by Frank Hurley. Royal Geographic Society.

Again, the dangerous overland journey by Shackleton, Tom Crean, and Frank Worsley from King Haakon Bay to Stromness on South Georgia was hardly conducive to reading, but there was one important exception:

“As usual,” said Worsley, “I navigated.” To help him, he had a sketchy chart of South Georgia. With ironic aptness it was German, having been prepared by Filchner’s expedition in 1911 while waiting to go south. Although the island was a British possession, the British

authorities had not yet mapped it. Some of the coastline on the chart depended on the running survey made by James Cook when he sailed along the island almost a century and a half before.

The chart was a blueprint—that is to say, it was like a photographic negative, with faint white lines breaking a mottled ground of blue. It had been roughly reproduced in the workshops of Grytviken, and was in any case only an outline of the coast. The interior was an absolute blank.⁴⁷

That map and Worsley's log, "the only record of the expedition they had brought all the way from Elephant Island," were the only writing that was brought to Stromness. Presumably, the rest of the supplies brought aboard the *James Caird*, including the Hurley photographs, were left at King Haakon Bay and rescued a few days later with the other three passengers, McNeish, McCarthy, and Vincent.

The story of the books of the *Endurance* unfortunately ends at this point with the unsolved mystery of which of these books still exist and might have been preserved in libraries or personal collections. A few survivals have been mentioned in the text but I know of no others. They ought to be regarded, just as the books that survived from the much more disastrous Franklin Expedition of 1845, as revered relics of the British spirit of adventure.⁴⁸

Conclusion

We have observed a tale of alternating terror and ennui, of adrenaline and enervation, and how the men of the *Endurance* expedition coped with their hardships through perseverance and patience in the first instance, and for many of the officers and some of the men through the power and diversion of print and reading:

On an ice-floe any little diversion is more welcome than people living in civilized conditions perhaps can imagine; for when you are drifting on the Polar pack-ice, if you are not in momentary danger nor working hard, monotony is your greatest enemy. I think that we came to dread monotony far more than we did any actual danger.⁴⁹

We also see a distinct contrast between the needs in print of the educated officers and civilian scientists, and the men of the forecabin:

2 June We are all allowed to burn candles after lights out and so we all read for an hour or two in our bunks after turning in, but the crew do not seem to avail themselves of this privilege. No, they just sleep the time away as best they can and never seem to look for any occupation.⁵⁰

Orde Lees class-based judgment is contradicted by Frank Worsley, though he emphasizes card playing, not reading, as the antidote to boredom:

The order to retrace our steps [on one of the sledging excursions from Ocean Camp] was received with acute disappointment by our men. They knew that it doomed them to the deadly monotony from which they had been so glad to escape, and that once more day would succeed day without any respite from the inactivity. However hard and thankless the work had been, it had represented to them at least an effort to save themselves, and had held out that which was prized by all of them—a chance of meeting with high adventure.⁵¹

Leonard Hussey, a meteorologist, was a very popular shipmate who helped alleviate this chronicle of boredom with musical entertainments on his five-stringed banjo, as he himself boasted:

Our fight was against monotony which we came to dread more than physical danger. The value of my banjo in enlivening the weary evenings was apparent. We also passed the time reading the few books that we had managed to save from the ship. These included a portion of the “Encyclopaedia Britannica”, and this was being continually used to settle the inevitable arguments that often arose.

Owing to shortage of matches we were unfortunately driven to use the Encyclopaedia for purposes other than a purely literary one, though; one man discovered that the paper used for its pages had been impregnated with saltpeter, thus making it a highly efficient pipe-lighter.⁵²

From the various diary accounts and other sources we have a fairly good picture of what the men actually read, the wide selection available until the ship was abandoned, and the gradual narrowing of available books until we reach the accidentally select little library of Elephant Island.

As to the content of their reading, only one category stands out, that of books of Polar exploration, obviously seen as preparation for what might lie ahead. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was a special source for a number of people, even when it had dwindled to five volumes. Although there were several other reference works aboard, EB was the only one cited. A variety of fiction, both serious and popular fills out the list. One author found on several earlier British expeditions, Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) was a subject of debate within the Ross Sea Party, but no copy was present on *Endurance*. The Bibles and prayer books common to many earlier British expeditions going back at least to Frobisher, are noticeably absent. There was at least one Bible, but only one acknowledged reader. Unlike several other British explorers, Shackleton strikes me as ambivalent about religion. He believed firmly in a benign Providence, joining the Freemasons for pragmatic reasons, but didn’t seem to take a divine being very seriously. Browning was his hero: “Man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for.”

Throughout this study we’ve also seen how perilously thin is the line between survival and extinction, both of men and things, and with impending death the potential extinction of any knowledge of what had taken place. Worsley has a compelling introspective reflection on this conundrum, about the time when the *James Caird* was being driven by a gale towards doom on

the rocky shore of South Georgia [May 9, 1916] when “it seemed inevitable that we should be wrecked”:

At such a time, no matter how occupied with vital work every second may be, one’s mind is peculiarly active. I remember my thoughts clearly. I said to myself: “What a pity. We made this great boat journey and nobody will ever know. We might just as well have foundered immediately after leaving Elephant Island.” Then I thought how annoying it was that my precious diary, which I had been at such pains to preserve, should be lost too. I don’t think that any of us were conscious of actual fear of death. I know that I did have, however, a very disagreeable, cold sort of feeling, quite different from the physical chill that I suffered. It was a sort of mental coldness. I felt, too, a sharp resentment that we all should be going out in such a way, and in sight of our goal, especially Shackleton. The recollection of the men on Elephant Island added a background of bitterness.⁵³

As I finished writing this article in late 2016, Volume 10 of *Nimrod: The Journal of the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School* arrived with a highly speculative but very pessimistic view of the whole Expedition. Robert Burton’s “Shackleton’s Crossing of Antarctica: Could he have done it?” is a provocative piece of “what if” history, critical of Shackleton’s planning, his secretiveness about his planning, his dubious and contradictory statements about his plans, and his failure to live up to many of the promises of his scheme to cross the Continent. The article ends with the judgment that Shackleton had no interest in the scientific pretensions of the journey, had planned no time for the magnetic and meteorological observations promised, and had planned to bring no scientist on the six-man crossing party.

For Shackleton, ‘the crossing is the thing I want to do’. It was an adventure for fame and fortune rather than for the enrichment of human knowledge. An incredible opportunity would have been missed. In my view it would have been the equivalent of Amundsen’s dash to the South Pole as a promotional device.

What we have instead of this conjectural fantasy, as Burton himself says, is one of the world’s great adventure stories and now a fuller account of the books which helped sustain these men through their travail.⁵⁴

Appendix I: Books in Shackleton’s Cabin aboard Endurance

The BBC News Magazine of February 24, 2016, published an article by Paul Kerley listing 42 titles found in a photograph of the book shelves in Shackleton’s cabin aboard *Endurance*. The titles were deciphered from a digitized image of the shelves. The list consists primarily of mostly obscure light fiction, about a dozen reference works, and a smattering of books of Arctic (not Antarctic) exploration, and an early edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Presented here are the listings from the photograph, presented alphabetically by author first, or by title, in what I believe were the most likely editions. All information in this list is taken from OCLC’s WorldCat. The speculative choices of edition are my own, based on the likeliest London editions and proximity in time of publication before the departure of *Endurance*

from Plymouth on August 8, 1914. Inaccuracies in the transcripts from the photograph have been silently corrected.

- Amundsen, Roald, 1872-1928. *The Northwest Passage: Being the Record of a Voyage of Exploration of the Ship; "Gjøa", 1903-1907*. Two vols. London: Constable, 1908.
- Askew, John Bertham. *Pros and Cons: A Newspaper Reader's and Debater's Guide to the Leading Controversies of the Day*. London: Constable, 1912.
- Atherton, Gertrude, 1857-1948. *Perch of the Devil*. London: John Murray, 1914.
- Beach, Rex, 1877-1949. *The Barrier*. London: Harper and Row, 1908.
- Bell, J. J., 1871-1934. *Thou Fool*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903.
- Bennett, Arnold, 1861-1931. *The Grand Babylon Hotel. A Fantasia of Modern Themes*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1902.
- Benham, W. Gurney, Sir, 1859-1944. *Cassell's Book of Quotations, Proverbs and Household Words*. London: Cassell, 1907.
- Benson, Robert Hugh, 1871-1914. *Oddsfish*. London: Hutchinson, 1914.
- Brewer, Ebenezer Cobham, 1810-1897. *The Reader's Handbook of Famous Names in Fiction, Allusions, References, Proverbs, Plots, Stories, and Poems*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1911.
- Conrad, Joseph, 1857-1924. *Almayer's Folly*. London: Collins, 1900.
- Bone, David. *The Brassbounder*. Gregory, Lady, 1852-1932. *Seven Short Plays*. London: G. P. Putnam's, 1909.
- Cassell's New German Dictionary in Two Parts: German-English, English German*. Edited by Elizabeth Weir. London: Cassell, 1906.
- Chambers's Biographical Dictionary; the Great of All Times and Nations*. Patrick, David and Francis Hinde Groome, Editors. London: Chambers, 1912.
- Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*. Edinburgh: Chambers, 1908.
- Collinson, Richard, 1811-1883. *Journal of HMS Enterprise, on the Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin's Ships by Behring Straits 1850-55....* London: Sampson Low, 1889.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, 1821-1881. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by Constance Garnett. London: Heinemann, 1912?
- Dreyfus, Alfred, 1859-1935. *Five Years of My Life, 1894-1899*. London: Newnes, 1901.
- Encyclopædia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Clark, 1875-1903. Either the Ninth edition with new volumes from the Tenth Edition, or possibly the Eleventh edition..
- Flowerdew, Herbert. *The Woman's View: A Novel about Marriage*. London, 1903.
- Fowler, Henry Watson, 1858-1933, Editor. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.
- Glass, Montague Marsden, 1877-1934. *Potash and Perlmutter: Their Co-Partnership, Ventures and Adventures*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914.
- Greely, Adolphus Washington, 1844-1935. *Three Years of Arctic Service: An Account of the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition of 1881-84, and the Attainment of the Farthest North*. Two vols. New York: Scribner's, 1886.
- Hey, Ian. [John H. Beith]. *Pip*. *Pip* was published in 1907, under the pseudonym of Ian Hey; I find no copies listed before the *Endurance* voyage began.
- Hornung, E. W. 1866-1921. *Raffles: The Amateur Craftsman* (sic: Crackman?). London: E. Nash, 1911.

Kane, Elisha Kent, 1820-1857. *United States Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin. A Personal Narrative*. Philadelphia: Childs and Peterson, 1856.

Leonard, Robert Maynard. *A Book of Light Verse*. London: H. Frowde, 1910.

Locke, William J. *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne*. London: Bodley Head, 1907.

Lubbock, Basil, 1876-1944. *Round the Horn before the Mast*. London: John Murray, 1907.

Markham, Clements R., Sir, 1830-1916. *The Threshold of the Unknown Region*. Fourth ed. London: Sampson Low, 1876.

Mason, Alfred Edward Woodley, 1865-1948. *The Witness for the Defence*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913.

McClintock, Francis Leopold, 1819-1907. *The Voyage of the "Fox" in the Arctic Seas: A Narrative of Discovery of the Fate of John Franklin and His Companions*. London with several editions from 1859.

Nares, George S., 1831-1915. *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea during 1875-6 in H M Ships 'Alert' and 'Discovery'*. Two vols. London: Low Marston, 1878.

Nesfield, John Collinson. *Manual of English Grammar and Composition*. London: Macmillan, 1898.

Nordenskjöld, Adolf Erik, 1832-1901. *The Voyage of the Vega round Asia and Europe*. Trans. by Alexander Leslie. Two Vols. London: Macmillan, 1881.

Orczy, Emmuska, Baroness, 1865-1947. *The Case of Miss Elliott*. London: Greenfield, 1909.

Reves, Amélie, 1863-1945. *World's End*. Third Edition. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1914.

Schley, Winfield Scott, 1839-1911. *The Rescue of Greely*. London: Sampson, Low, 1885.

Shaw, George Bernard, 1856-1950. *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*. Vol. II. Pleasant Plays. London: Constable, 1911?

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 1792-1822. *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Two vols. London: Dent, 1907. Everyman's Library.

Stacpoole, H. De Vere, 1863-1951. *Monsieur de Rochefort: A Romance of Old Paris*. London: Hutchinson, 1914.

Tracy, Louis, 1863-1928. *The Message of Fate*. London: Ward, Lock, 1910.

Whitaker's Almanac. London: Whitaker, 1913? Presumably Shackleton would have had a fairly current edition of this annual publication.

END NOTES

¹ For any readers unfamiliar with the *Endurance* chronicle, an excellent starting point is the audio book version of Alfred Lansing's *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*, as read by Timothy Piggott-Smith. (Auburn, CA: Audio Partners, 2000). Caroline Alexander's *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition* (1998) is also an excellent introduction.

I am grateful to the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University and for helpful counsel from Robert Headland and the late William Mills of SPRI during an extended research visit in 2003. SPRI is rightly considered the Mecca of Polar studies. Another research period spent at the University of Edinburgh's Centre for the History of the Book was also a valuable stimulant to the study of reading. I am happy to acknowledge my debt to the Centre and its former Director, Dr. Bill Bell, for his support and collegiality.

² Huntford, Roland. *Shackleton*. (New York: Ballantyne Books, 1987) p. 17. The William Prescott book was probably *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* or possibly *The Conquest of Peru*.

³ Huntford. Quoted in *Shackleton*. p. 46.

⁴ Mayer, Jim. "Shackleton: A Life in Poetry." *Nimrod: The Journal of the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School*. Vol. 9 (Oct. 1915) p. 89.

⁵ Orde Lees, Thomas. *Elephant Island & Beyond: The Life and Diaries of Thomas Orde Lees*. (Bluntisham, Hunts., UK: Bluntisham Books, 2003) p. 86.

⁶ The equally dramatic and fraught story of the Ross Sea Shore Party is an integral part of the *Endurance* saga, but a thorough study would require examination of archives in Australia and New Zealand, among others, and must be told separately by someone who can examine those archives. The two stories are quite different, one of the few points of bibliographic convergence being the reliance of both parties on copies of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

⁷ See Bill Bell's forthcoming "Antarctic Live" on the role of books on Scott's *Discovery* expedition (1901-1904), and David H. Stam. "Byrd's Books: The Antarctic Libraries of Little America, 1928-1941," *Coriolis: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Library History* (Mystic Seaport) VI, no. 1 (2016) p. 26-44.

⁸ Burton, Robert. "The Weddell Sea Ice: What the Whalers Didn't Tell Shackleton." *Nimrod: The Journal of the Ernest Shackleton Autumn School*. Vol. 9 (Oct. 1915) p. 16-21.

⁹ Hurley, Frank. SPRI MS 1605/1/2 Diary. p. 36-37, and 40-41.

¹⁰ Hurley. *Ibid.* p. 201, 205, 208

¹¹ Orde Lees, Thomas. SPRI MS 1605/5/1 Typescript of his Diary, leaves 198 and 217. *Elephant Island and Beyond*. (Bluntisham, UK: Bluntisham Books, 2003) p. 79.

¹² Huntford. *Shackleton*. p. 443.

¹³ Orde Lees. *Elephant Island and Beyond*. p. 129-30.

¹⁴ Huntford. *Shackleton*. p. 504. The Queen's inscription read: "May the Lord help you to do your deeds guide you by all dangers by land and Sea. "May you see the Works of the Lord & all His wonders in the Deep." [*Psalm 107:24*].

Caroline Alexander tells this story somewhat differently: During the abandonment of the ship, carpenter Harry McNish said, "I have placed my Loved ones fotos inside Bible we got presented with from Queen Alexandra & put them in my bag." See Alexander. *The Endurance*.

p. 76. I do not know whether McNish or McLeod rescued the famous Bible. McNish is commonly spelled McNeish.

¹⁵ Huntford. *Shackleton*, footnote, p. 467. The correct title of Nordenskjöld's book, consistently misspelled by Huntford, is *Antarctica: or, Two Years Amongst the Ice of the South Pole*, by Otto Nordenskjöld and Joh. Gunnar Andersson, with a foreword by Sir Vivian Fuchs. London: C. Hurst, 1905. The ship itself was named the *Antarctic*.

¹⁶ Hurley, Frank. *South with Endurance*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2001) p. 19.

¹⁷ Hurley, Frank. *Shackleton's Argonauts*. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948) p. 72-73, 116, 130, 139.

¹⁸ Hurley, Frank. Diary. (SPRI MS 1605/1/2. October 29, 1915). p. 72-73, 130, 139, 170.

¹⁹ Alexander, Caroline. *The Endurance*. p. 86.

²⁰ Huntford. *Shackleton*. p. 467-69.

²¹ Worsley, Frank. *Endurance: An Epic of Polar Adventure* (New York: Norton, 1999) p. 61-62. First published in 1931. Shackleton embellishes this story of "Money and Exchange" in his *South*, p. 93-94.

²² Orde Lees, Thomas. SPRI MS 967/3/2. Miscellaneous Diary Notes. Asterisks in the list indicate books that had been on Shackleton's bookshelves.

²³ Bakewell claimed that during his time aboard ship he had read every book more than once: "We had a very large library, containing one of the largest collections of polar books ever gotten together. I read the complete lot and many a pleasant hour I spent with the old explorers in the Arctic and in the previous expeditions in the Antarctic." Bakewell, William L. *The American on the Endurance*. (Munising, MI: Dukes Hall Publishing, 2004) p. 62, 67. That amount of reading in little more than a year, with the duties of an able seaman and the dim light of the forecabin and tent, would have been prodigious indeed and his claim hardly seems credible.

²⁴ Shackleton. *South*. (New York: Carroll & Graff, 1998) p. 93-94.

²⁵ Shackleton. *South*. 9 January 1916, quoted from Huntford. *Shackleton*, p. 463-64.

²⁶ Hurley, Frank. SPRI MS 1605/1/1. p. 14-15. According to Orde Lees' 1.1.16 list of Patience Camp books, this book was in the hands of Machlin and due for return on Jan. 31, the day after Hurley recorded his note on reading Kinglake. Other books Hurley says he read during 1916 were Bailey's *Sea Captain*, Maurice Baring's *What I Saw in Russia*, J. W. Gregory's *The Making of the Earth*, Frank Norris's *Vandover and the Brute*, P.I.P. by Hamilton, Stacpoole's *Monsieur D. Rocheforte*, *Henry V*, and Elisha Kent Kane's *United States Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin. A Personal Narrative*.

²⁷ There is a mystery here. Huntford must have been referring to the two green volumes of the first German edition of "*Antarctic*": *zwei Jahre in Schnee und Eis am Südpol*, published in Berlin in 1894. A single-volume English edition was published by Macmillan in London and New York in 1905. It is hard to believe that the copy so eagerly read by the men of Elephant Island was any but the one-volume English edition, despite Huntford's reference to two green volumes; his consistent spelling of the title as *Antarctic* (as in the German edition) may have been inadvertently correct. Perhaps they had both German and English editions.

²⁸ Huntford. *Shackleton*. p. 429.

²⁹ Orde Lees. *Elephant Island and Beyond*. 2 July [1916] p. 248. Mr. Facer's other book was *A Voyage towards the North Pole*, by Constantine John Phipps (Dublin: James Williams, 1775). I have been unable to identify Mr. Facer, the lender, although his is a prominent family name in Northampton.

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- ³⁰ James, Reginald. Diaries. SPRI MS 1537/3/2. January 9, 1916, through July 10. James does add some titles not mentioned by others, e.g., Bacon's *Essays*, and Pear's *Encyclopaedia*.
- ³¹ From Worsley's diary as quoted in Huntford. *Shackleton*. p. 492. See also Alexander. *The Endurance*, p. 86.
- ³² Worsley. SPRI MS No. 296. Typescript, p. 2 and 6.
- ³³ Lansing. *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959) p. 75-76.
- ³⁴ Macklin. SPRI MS1589. Typescript of his *Endurance* Journal. Two volumes, 1914-15 and 1915-16, commencing Oct. 15, 1915, p. 36-78.
- ³⁵ For a list of "Members of the Expedition" and their responsibilities, See F. A. Worsley. *Shackleton's Boat Journey* (New York: Norton, 1977) p. 9. Caroline Alexander's *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition* (New York: Knopf, 1998) has excellent descriptions and photographs of most if not all of the men, though they are a bit difficult to find without an index.
- ³⁶ Worsley. *Shackleton's Boat Journey*, p. 103, 116.
- ³⁷ Murphy, Shane. "The Endurance Expedition, in Frank Hurley. *South with Endurance, Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917: The Photographs of Frank Hurley*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) p. 24.
- ³⁸ Worsley. *Shackleton's Boat Journey*. p. 124.
- ³⁹ Orde Lees. *Elephant Island and Beyond*. p. 224.
- ⁴⁰ Orde Lees. *Ibid.*, p. 247-48.
- ⁴¹ Alexander. *The Endurance*. p. 177.
- ⁴² Worsley, *Endurance* (1999). p. 183-84.
- ⁴³ James. SPRI MS 1537/3/2/3. Aug. 10, Aug. 30, leaves 16-18. An online obituary states that when James had run out of paper, he used blank pages in Lang's translation of the *Iliad* to continue his entries. It claims that the book with its diary pages is safely kept by James's family descendants.
- ⁴⁴ Macklin. SPRI MS 1589. Typescript of his *Endurance* Journal, p. 110-32.
- ⁴⁵ Huntford, *Shackleton*. p. 621, but see footnote 34, Shane Murphy who says that some of the Hurley photographs went on the *Caird* to South Georgia.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted by Caroline Alexander, p. 176-77.
- ⁴⁷ See Huntford, *Shackleton*. Chapter 49: "The Crossing of South Georgia," esp. p. 583, 596.
- ⁴⁸ See *Books on Ice: British and American Literature of Polar Exploration*. Curated by David H. Stam & Deirdre C. Stam. (New York: Grolier Club, 2005) p. 33-34.
- ⁴⁹ Worsley. *Endurance*. p. 54.
- ⁵⁰ Orde Lees. *Elephant Island*. p. 67.
- ⁵¹ Worsley. *Endurance* (1999). p. 57. See also p. 61.
- ⁵² Hussey, Leonard. *South with Shackleton* (London: Sampson Low, 1949) p. 78.
- ⁵³ Worsley. *Endurance* (1999). p. 129-30.
- ⁵⁴ Burton. *Nimrod*. Vol. 10 (October 2016) p. 12-30.