

Milestone Film & Video presents:
A Film by Frank Hurley

SOUTH Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition

A Milestone Film Release
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SOUTH

Ernest Shackleton & the Endurance Expedition

Director: Frank Hurley. 1919. England. Produced by the Imperial Trans-Atlantic Film Syndicate. Black & White with Tinted-and-Toned sections. Running time: 88 minutes. Restored by Brenda Hudson for the British Film Institute's National Film & Television Archive. Copyright 1998 British Film Institute. Silent with a new piano score by Neil Brand. Filmed on location on South Georgia Island, Elephant Island and on the pack ice of the Weddell Sea off the coast of Antarctica from December 1914 – August 1916.

The Crew of the *Endurance*:

Sir Ernest Shackleton, Expedition leader
Frank Wild, Second in Command
Frank Worsley, Captain
Lionel Greenstreet, First officer
Hubert T. Hudson, Navigator
Thomas Crean, Second officer
Alfred Cheetham, Third officer
Louis Rickinson, First engineer
A.J. Kerr, Second engineer
Dr. Alexander Macklin, Chief surgeon
Dr. James McIlroy, Surgeon
James M. Wordie, Geologist
Leonard D.A. Hussey, Meteorologist and banjo player
Reginald W. James, Physicist
Robert S. Clark, Biologist
James Francis (Frank) Hurley, Official photographer
George E. Marston, Official artist
Thomas H. Orde-Lees, Motor expert and later storekeeper
Harry H. MacNeish, Carpenter
Charles J. Green, Cook
Walter How, Able seaman
William Blakewell, Able seaman
Timothy McCarthy, Able seaman
Thomas McLeod, Able seaman
John Vincent, Able seaman
Ernest Holness, Fireman
William Stevenson, Fireman
Percy Blackborow (sometimes spelled Perce Blackboro), Stowaway and later steward

And:

The expedition's sled dogs; the ship's cat, Mrs. Chippy; along with penguins, seals, sea lions, orcas and other Antarctic wildlife.

The Age of Exploration

"The factual film holds an extraordinary power over the dedicated cineaste. It somehow represents a purity, an integrity, to which the commercial entertainment film can never aspire."
—Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness*

From the earliest days of the cinema, the travelogue was a popular audience attraction. After 1910, this category expanded to include exploration films such as Herbert Ponting's *With Captain Scott to the South Pole* (1913), Frank Hurley's *South*; documentary reconstructions, like Edward S. Curtis' film on the Kwakiutl tribe, *In the Land of the Headhunters* (1914); and adventure epics, like Lowell Thomas' career-making blockbuster, *With Lawrence in Arabia* (1919).

The end of World War I brought great progress in mechanical inventions and new prosperity, ushering in the Golden Age of photographic exploration. The success of Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, the enormous popularity of Martin and Osa Johnson's Pacific Island and African films, and the new lightweight cameras (especially Carl Akeley's brilliant invention which bore his name) pointed the way for the adventure films of the 1920s. These included films of Admiral Byrd's polar explorations, William Beebe's undersea voyages, Roy Chapman Andrews' discovery of dinosaur eggs in the Gobi Desert and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's adventures in Persia (*Grass*, 1925) and Siam (*Chang*, 1927).

The films were inexpensive to produce, featured real life-and-death situations, and returned solid profits at the box office. Many — including *Nanook* and *Chang* — were never meant to be considered, what we call today, documentaries. Curtis and Flaherty showed the way for a genre of films that attempted to show a cultural realism — an inner truth — that went beyond the facts to present something meaningful and poetic. As Flaherty wrote, *"I am not going to make films about what the white man has made of primitive peoples. What I want to show is the former majesty and character of these people, while it is still possible — before the white man has destroyed not only their character, but the people as well."*

It was the heyday of the hero, and these adventurer-filmmakers steered the audience's imagination away from war and toward exotic lands and strange customs, while becoming heroes themselves for their daring and artistry. Many of their films were box office hits and the *New York Times* regularly chose them for its list of the "Ten Best Films of the Year." In the first year of the Academy Awards, *Chang* was one of three films nominated for "Artistic Quality of Production," along with *Sunrise* and *The Circus*. It must have been a heady experience for Cooper and Schoedsack to be placed in the company of F. W. Murnau (who, with Flaherty, would later direct the Tahitian idyll, *Tabu*) and Charlie Chaplin. With the sudden success of *The Jazz Singer* (1928), came the need for the heavier and bulkier sound cameras and motion pictures became studio-bound for the most part. The transition to talking films was fast and furious — by the end of 1929 some 8,700 movie theaters were equipped to show "talkies." *Tabu*, which was released with a synchronized music score, was one of the last major films to be shot "silent" and one of the last great adventure-exploration films for some thirty years, until the advent of television, Jacques Cousteau and the National Geographic specials.

The Endurance Expedition

When Sir Ernest Shackleton set sail on the *Endurance* on August 8, 1914, he was already an internationally renowned Antarctic explorer and a national hero. After a career in the Merchant Marine, he joined the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901, headed by Robert Falcon Scott aboard the *Discovery*. With Scott and Dr. Edward Wilson, Shackleton man-hauled sledges over the frozen continent to 82°17', the furthest point south ever reached. After an acrimonious break with Scott and weak from scurvy, he was "invalided home" in 1903.

In 1907, Shackleton led his own expedition aboard the *Nimrod*. In January 1909, he and his sledging party reached 88°23', as he wrote in his diary *"What ever regrets may be we have done our best. Beaten the Southern Record by 366 miles the North by 77 miles. Amen."* Within 97 miles and possible reach of the pole, Shackleton turned back to save the lives of his men.

Now, seven years later, he stood once again on the deck of his own ship, the *Endurance*, as the leader of a crew of 27 about to embark on an Antarctic exploration. But much had changed since the *Nimrod*

expedition. In 1911, Scott had led another attempt to reach the South Pole. The *Terra Nova* expedition had ended in tragedy — Scott and four crewmates reached the South Pole, only to find that Roald Amundsen and his party had beaten them by a month. On their journey back, exhausted, frostbitten and suffering from starvation, Scott and his men died within 11 miles from the next food depot. To other explorers, Scott and his comrades were foolhardy amateurs, but to the world, they were heroic martyrs. Scott's magnificently written diary, found on his frozen body a year later, further established his legend. His final entry was: "*Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale.*"

The expedition's cinematographer, Herbert Ponting, produced a film made of the journey, *With Captain Scott to the South Pole*, that became an enormous critical and financial success. So not only had Amundsen beaten everyone to the Pole, but Shackleton's arch rival, Scott, had garnered worldwide fame as a doomed romantic hero.

Shackleton's hope now lay in going his predecessors one better. He planned a brave attempt to *cross* the continent of Antarctica via the Pole. Raising money for the Imperial Trans-Antarctic (ITA) expedition was a huge struggle. With an eye toward profiting from their adventures, Shackleton hired experienced cameraman Frank Hurley, whose films and photographs would hopefully pay for part of the expedition. Indeed, a Fleet Street syndicate, impressed by Hurley's previous work, volunteered to complete the funding of the expedition if they could secure the film rights.

The Endurance sailed from Buenos Aires in October, 1914. The plan was to land on the Weddell Sea coast and then cross Antarctica via the Pole to the Ross Sea, where a relief party based on the other side of the continent would meet them. But within a day's travel (80 miles) of land, the *Endurance* was trapped in unusually heavy pack ice. Completely stuck, Shackleton and his crew drifted helplessly northward for the next nine months frozen in the ice (during the long Antarctic winter where it is perpetually night) while listening to the shrieks and moans of the *Endurance* slowly being crushed by the mounting pressure.

After the ship fell victim to the horrific force of the pack, Shackleton initially ordered the crew to leave as much gear behind as possible on the sinking ship, so as not to encumber their planned march across the ice to safety. All of Hurley's films and bulky glass plates were included in the things left behind (somewhat rashly, in view of their importance to the expedition's finances.) When it became apparent after a couple of days that such a march was impractical, Hurley returned to the ship and dove into the icy water in the ship's hold to rescue his films and plates. He then faced the heartbreaking task of destroying about 400 of the lesser plates because he could not carry everything and he did not want the temptation of wanting to go back for them. He took the remaining 120 plates, along with his precious rolls of motion picture film, with him. *The Endurance* finally sank a month later on November 27, 1915.

For the following five months, Shackleton and his 27 men camped on the ice floes and drifted northwards. The condition of the ice was so bad that the crew had to remain watchful night and day. They were repeatedly forced to move from ice floe to ice floe because the ice would crack and split in the rough waters. Shackleton and his men had taken the *Endurance's* three lifeboats with them and finally, when there was no safe ice on which to make camp, they took to the boats. After a harrowing sea journey, the three boats reached the uninhabited and desolate Elephant Island. There, on the icy shoreline, Shackleton left 22 of his men as he and five companions sought to do the impossible.

They had no choice. Their only hope for rescue was to row the *James Caird*, the largest of the three lifeboats, across 850 miles of the wildest seas in this world to reach the whaling station on South Georgia Island. It was a miraculous journey — one of the greatest adventures in history. Navigating through pack ice and unimaginably rough seas, Captain Frank Worsley was further hindered by gray skies that made his sextant all but useless. He later wrote "*Navigation is an art, but words fail to give my efforts a correct name. Dead reckoning or DR — the seaman's calculation of courses and distance — had become a merry jest of guesswork.*" But if he had been one degree off, their lives would have been lost. Amazingly, they reached South Georgia — but their adventure was not over. Shackleton and two others — weary, frostbitten and near death — had to cross the mountainous island by foot to reach the whaling station.

As soon as they reached civilization, Shackleton's first goal was to rescue his companions on Elephant Island. But heavy pack ice made travel dangerous and it took four tries before Shackleton was able to defeat the rough waters to rescue his men. When the *Yelcho*, a small steamer lent by the government of Chile, finally reached Elephant Island, he stared through his binoculars, frantically counting the men on the shore. All the men were there. It was, according to Worsley, the most emotion Shackleton had shown the entire journey. He had kept them together through the worst of times, and they had all survived. As he wrote his wife, "*Not a life lost and we have been through Hell.*"

Almost as miraculously, Hurley's precious records of the journey survived. The undeveloped film and negatives had been buried beneath snowdrifts on Elephant Island for months to secure their safety.

When Shackleton first set out on his expedition in 1914, Britain had just declared war on Germany. The British government had encouraged the expedition, hoping to promote the image of the heroic Englishman. When they reemerged from the pack ice, two years later, Shackleton and his men knew nothing about the way that World War I had transformed the world they had left behind. The romantic Edwardian world with its heroes and hero-worship, had been shattered by the brutality and devastation of the war. A war-weary Britain, devastated by the casualties of trench warfare, barely noted the amazing journey of the 28 crewmen long presumed dead. Many of Shackleton's men enlisted as soon as they returned to England, and two died very quickly thereafter, in battle.

Debt-ridden as he was, Shackleton made no attempt to profit from his adventures until after the war. In 1919, Shackleton published a written account of his journey, *South*, and between December 1919 and May 1920 he lectured twice daily at the Philharmonic Hall with Hurley's film and slides as an accompaniment. The film, as intended, did cover many of the expedition's expenses.

In late 1921, Shackleton started south on his fourth expedition, but died of a heart attack aboard the *Quest*, anchored off the Falkland Islands. His wife Emily, whom he had married in 1904, requested that Shackleton be buried on South Georgia Island, in the land he truly loved. He was just 47, and with his passing the heroic age of polar expedition came to an end.

The Restoration

Frank Hurley's film of the *Endurance* expedition was first shown as *South* in 1919, in a version used by Shackleton to accompany his lectures. It was thereafter shown in various forms as both a lecture film and a conventional theatrical release abroad, including in Hurley's Australia where it was released under the title *In the Grip of Polar Ice* in 1920. Frank Hurley was a superb and courageous photographer, whose intelligence and interest in his subject is apparent in every shot. As Hurley was among the men left on Elephant Island, there is no film record of the boat journey to South Georgia or its crossing. Hurley did return to the island to film scenes, including lengthy sequences of animal life that are exceptional for their time and remain fascinating. A local cameraman filmed the scenes of Shackleton's triumphant reception in Chile.

The ITA Syndicate, who had sponsored the expedition, went into voluntary liquidation in 1926 and all rights to the film were sold to Sir William Jury. In 1933, Jury produced a sound film version entitled *Endurance: The Story of a Glorious Failure*, with a commentary by Frank Worsley. Jury died in 1944 and eleven years later, the British Film Institute acquired the rights and all the surviving material — including some of Hurley's original glass slides — from the executors of the Jury estate.

In 1994, the British Film Institute's National Film and Television Archive began the daunting task of restoring a definitive version of *South* from a wide range of available (and sometime contradictory) materials, including the original print and negative material deposited by the distributor Sir William Jury, a tinted print from the Nederlands Filmmuseum, and a set of glass slides that originally accompanied the film and lecture. Preliminary examination revealed that all the materials were in different order. Then began the painstaking task of matching all the versions scene by scene, to establish continuity and the best quality material — a task further complicated by the fact that no reliable record of either the original footage or running time exists. Added to this were the printing anomalies such as variations in framelines, and the complex variety of source material. The NFTVA then needed to re-create and perfect the tinting and toning to match the original prints. This epic restoration took nearly four years of intense work, mostly by the

NFTVA's archivist Brenda Hudson, to produce a beautiful and richly colored testament to a remarkable episode in the history of exploration.

Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874–1922)

After a successful career in the British Merchant Marine, Ernest Shackleton began his Antarctic career as a member of Captain Robert Scott's 1901–1904 Antarctic expedition on the *Discovery*. He journeyed with Scott and Dr. Edward Wilson across the Ross Ice Shelf in a failed attempt to make a "dash" for the Pole. The mutual antipathy between the two great explorers began on this expedition (a clash of egos), which saw Shackleton, weakened by scurvy, break down on the return journey before being sent home by Scott. In 1908 Shackleton returned to Antarctica, this time as leader of his own expedition on the *Nimrod*, and headed the party that reached within 97 miles of the Pole as early as January, 1909. Faced with dwindling supplies and exhausted men, Shackleton made the courageous decision to turn back. It was the closest any one had gotten to either Pole. He was knighted on his return to Britain. Following the 1914–1916 *Endurance* expedition, he headed a fourth expedition on the *Quest* in 1921, but died of a heart attack near the Falkland Islands, on January 5, 1922. His wife Emily, whom he had married in 1904, requested that he be buried on South Georgia Island, in the land he truly loved.

Frank Hurley (1885–1962)

Frank Hurley won fame as a filmmaker and photographer as a member of Douglas Mawson's Australian Antarctic Expedition in 1911–1913. His stills and documentary film *The Home of the Blizzard* (1913) secured his position as Shackleton's photographer. After the *Endurance* expedition, he became an official war photographer and cameraman. In peacetime, he established himself as Australia's best-known photographer. Hurley also made such documentary films as *The Ross-Smith Flight* (1920), *Pearls and Savages* (1921) and the drama film of life on Papua New Guinea, *The Jungle Woman* (1926). He returned to Antarctica as a filmmaker with Mawson in 1929–1931 and made many more documentary and fiction films in the 1930s. In World War II he served as an official photographer once more. After the war he turned chiefly to still photography and created a number of popular photography books celebrating his native Australia.

Neil Brand, composer

Neil Brand has been playing silent film accompaniments for nearly fifteen years, most frequently at London's National Film Theatre but also on tour throughout the U.K., America, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, Israel, Slovenia, France and Luxembourg. He also performs regularly at the annual Pordenone silent film festival in Italy. He has appeared on BBC 2's *The Late Show*, twice presented *Radio 2 arts programme* and composed the soundtracks on many video releases of silent films (including Milestone's *Early Russian Cinema* series), radio features, TV documentaries and also does regular live movie performances.

Currently touring with his own BFI/NFTVA co-produced show *Through the Sound Barrier*, he has just completed work developing and scoring a CD-ROM for Channel 4 entitled *Backtracks*. He also has a book, *Dramatic Notes*, for the Arts Council/University of Luton Publications on music as narrative, containing twelve interviews with distinguished composers and directors. Neil Brand is internationally acknowledged as one of the world's foremost silent film pianists.

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Milestone Film & Video

Milestone is a prestigious boutique distribution company with nine years experience in art-house film distribution. The company has earned an unparalleled reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces,

new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to Milestone's rediscovery, restoration and release of such important lost films as Mikhail Kalatozov's award-winning *I am Cuba*, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, and F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, the company now occupies an honored position as one of the most influential independent distributors in the American film industry.

Amy Heller and Dennis Doros started Milestone in 1990 to bring out the best films of yesterday and today. The company's new releases have included the films of famed artist Eleanor Antin, the art documentaries of Philip Haas (*Music of Chance* and *Angels and Insects*), Wim Wenders' *Notebook on Cities and Clothes*, Bae Yong-kyun's *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East*, Luc Besson's *Atlantis*, Yoichi Higashi's *Village of Dreams* and Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Maborosi*. Currently Milestone is releasing the Venice Golden Lion winner and critically acclaimed, *Fireworks (Hana-Bi)* by Japanese superstar Takeshi Kitano and Edoardo Winspeare's *Pizzicata*.

Milestone's re-releases have included restored versions of Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers*, F. W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *Grass* and *Chang*, Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*, and Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes* and *Antonio Gaudi*. Milestone is also working with the Mary Pickford Foundation on a long-term project to preserve, re-score and release the best films of the legendary silent screen star.

Milestone is also known for rediscovering, acquiring, restoring and distributing unknown "classics" that have never been available in the US and Canada. These include Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, Alfred Hitchcock's "lost" propaganda films, *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, *Early Russian Cinema* (a series of twenty-eight films from Czarist Russia from 1908–1919), Mikhail Kalatozov's astonishing *I am Cuba* and Jane Campion's *Two Friends*. The new discoveries for 1999 are Roy and John Boulting's anti-Nazi drama *Pastor Hall* (1940), Roland West's *The Bat Whispers* (1930), and Kevin Brownlow's feature films, *It Happened Here* (1964) and *Winstanley* (1975).

Milestone received a Special Archival Award in 1995 from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I am Cuba*. Five of its preserved films — *Tabu*, Mary Pickford's *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Clarence Brown and Maurice Tourneur's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur* and *Grass* — are listed on the Library of Congress's National Film Registry. In 1999, the LA Weekly chose Milestone as the "Independent Distributor of the Year".

Fumiko Takagi joined the company in 1995 and is now Vice President of acquisitions. Megan Powers started working at Milestone as an intern in 1997 and is now Director of non-theatrical sales.

This press kit was adapted from notes written by Luke McKernan of the British Film Institute's National Film and Television Archive for the London premiere of South in December 1998. Any mistakes are the responsibility of Milestone alone.

Milestone would like to thank:

Rod Molinare, Erich Sargeant and Heather Stewart, British Film Institute
Anne Fleming and Brenda Hudson, BFI's National Film & Television Archive
Kevin Brownlow and Patrick Stanbury, Photoplay Productions
Scott Eyman
Neil Brand
Scott Polar Research Institute

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