Crushing of the Endurance

The *Endurance* departed from South Georgia for the Weddell Sea, Antarctica, on 5 December 1914, despite warnings of dangerous pack ice en route. During January and February of 1915, the ship became trapped in the ice. The men were confined to the ship's winter quarters, termed 'the Ritz', and were put on constant watch to check for changes in conditions. The pressure on the ship from the surrounding ice was extreme - wrenching, twisting and contorting the ship as the ice floes moved and shifted around it.

By October 1915, the ship was leaking badly and the men worked the pumps in shifts around the clock. The roar of pressure from the ice outside was almost constant.

The pressure reached its height on 27 October 1915. The ship was pushed up and a floe moved across it destroying the rudder and the stern post. The decks began to break upwards, and as the keel was ripped out, the water poured in. Shackleton gave the order to abandon ship.

"Awful calamity that has overtaken our ship that has been our home for over 12 months...We are homeless & adrift on the sea ice"

(Frank Hurley diary, 27 October 1915, MLMSS 389/2)

Transcript:

18 Mon October 1915
Day of great Excitement at 4.45 PM Floes came together nipping the Ship & forcing her out of the ice. The ice presses under the port bilge heeling the ship over onto her starboard side with a list of 30 ° So quickly did this take place 5 to 7 seconds, that everything moveable on deck, Timbers Kennels & dogs were thrown onto the lee side & for the moment it seemed the Ship would be thrown on her beam ends. Secured several fine photographs of our gallant ship. At 8 PM floes open again & to our relief the Endurance arights herself.

19 Tue
Two seals & 8 Emperor pengs [penguins] secured. Had fine view of killer swimming in the pool alongside the Ship this evening. His graceful & sinuous evolutions could be clearly studied in the clear water, causing great excitement & uproar amongst the dogs. All available empty cases & timber thrown into bunkers for the boilers. Boilers pumped up with the Downton taking 2 hr 50 min - Fires lighted under boilers Low Barometer 28.96
October 10th Month

18 Mon

Day of great excitement, at 6.30 a.m., the ice came together, sparking, the ship forcing her way through, the ice pressure under the ship's bridge, buckling the ship over onto her starboard side, and a list of 30°. So quickly did this take place 5 to 7 seconds. The everything movable on deck, Timbertime, kennels, cases were thrown onto the side of the ship, for the moment it seemed the ship would be thrown on her beam ends. Several fine photographs of our gallant ship flow among us, to our relief, but no further action was taken to our relief. The Endurance righted herself.

19 Tues

Two sails and the Empress flew, secured, had fine view of Kuru in the pool alongside the ship this evening. This graceful phenomenon could be clearly observed in the still water, causing great excitement. Upward amongst held all available empty cases amongst shovels into bunkers for the boilers. Boilers pumped up with the bow, taking the 50 min. times righted until 2 a.m. Barometer 28.96.
Transcript:

20 Wed

69. 17 S Long 51. 5 W 4 seals secured Sea watches set in the event of necessity & also to be in readiness to work ship at any moment steam raised Taking 1 ton of Coal, remainder being made up of wood, blubber etc. It has been thought necessary to have the engines ready for any emergency. To maintain steam only consumes 1¼ to 1½ cwt coal daily. Engines given a turn. All O.K. after being frozen up for 8 months.

21

Thurs Malignant rumbling through the night. We are however pretty well habituated to this kind of thing & it now disturbs us little.
20 Wed. Byz 175, Long 51, SW.

4 Saus. Scoured.

Sea watches set as the event of

necessity. Also took in readiness
to work ship at any moment,

sham passed. Taking ton of coal;

remainder being made up of wood

hull. It has been thought

necessary to have the engines ready

for any emergency. To maintain

steam only consumed 1/2 to 1/2 cord

coal daily. Engines given a turn all

t.K. after being frozen up for 8 months.

21 Thurs.

The nights are bitterly

pretty well bedecked to this kind

of thing. We are off the

note.
Diary of Frank Hurley

22 Fri
69° 11´ 30? LAT long 51 7 W Heavy deposit of rime crystals all over ship & rigging A welcome capture of two crab-eaters which replenish our depleted larder. Blubber packed in boxes for the furnaces to supplement coal Two killers push their vicious heads through the thin ice

23 Sat
Now have 22 hrs daylight Cloudy with mist & snow 69.11 S 51. 6 W
22 Fri 69°.11° 20" lat Long 51°.7 W.

Heavy deposit of ice on deck prevents lowering the anchor. All sails and rigging are taken down. Welcome capture of two elephants when released from temporary stocks. Blubber sent in boxes for the furnace toSydhaven.

Two hundred thousand litres of water were brought through the thin ice.

23 Sat

Now have no daylight.

Cloudy with thick fog.

69° 11° S 51° 6 W
Transcript:

24 Sun
Ships stern post twisted & seriously damaged by heavy pressure. Hidden ends of planking started All pumps working & steam raised for engine room bilge pump All take watch & watch on pump & leak just kept under. Carpenter works all night building coffer dam abaft engines. Calk same with strips of blanket & pour cement in

25 Mon
Leak kept under All hands assist on main pump & Downton. The building of the coffer dam nearing completion Pressure moderating but large ridges menacing us on the starboard quarter & stern.
24 Sun—21 aft Trinity
Chips steam tender it seriously damaged by heavy pressure. Had to make a new one. All pumps working & steam raised by engine room bilge pump. All late watches on pumps. 8th late watch & 1st kept. W. Carpenter works all night building boat davits aboard Engines clock cleaned with strips of blanket upon cement in.

25 Mon—Labour Day—Bank Holiday
Leak kept under all hands work on main pump & davits. The building of the boat davit nearing completion. Pressure moderating but large ridges menancing as on the Starboard quarter & stern.
Transcript:

26 Tues
Lat 69.8 Long 51. 28 W Bright clear weather Temp 0 to -15 Extremely heavy pressure set in again opening planking 4 & 5 inches on starboard side while the ship twisted like a bow. At 7 PM the order was given to lower boats & they with all necessary gear provisions & sledges were passed onto the floe out of immediate danger at midnight the floes ceased working so that the leak took up somewhat. We work all night taking watch & watch on the pumps. All hope is not give up yet for saving the ship. Six Emperor penguins watch the crushing of the ship 69.5 S 51.32 W

27 Wed
The position became very grave this afternoon heavy pressure continuing. The ship rising on the crest of a great ridge was so squeezed that her beams cracked & great ice blocks were forced under her [indecipherable] allowing the water to rush in.
Emergency stores also the dogs were lowered on the floe. The whole time there was an incessant cracking & groaning of timbers as the ice began crushing the stout timber walls in. I went down into the Ritz & found the water rapidly rising & fearing being jammed by cracking beams returned speedily to the deck. The night was hideous in the extreme, cold & lit by the half grey midnight light we were hemmed in by crushing pressure on all sides. [indecipherable] times we had to shift the boats & stores owing to the floe cracking beneath us. While the booming & cracking
October 10th Month

26 Tues
Extremely heavy pressure set in again opening the uncle 4 75 inches on starboard side. While the ship twisted like a bow. At 7PM the order was given to lower boats & they with all necessary gear provisions \\n
27 Wed

Page 13 of 41
Transcript:

of splintering timber told only too vividly the awful calamity that was overtaking the ship that had been our home for over 12 months & our only means of communication with the world. We are homeless & adrift on the sea ice. Yet cheerful & hopeful as it is possible to be under the circumstances. It is our intention to sledge to Snowhill some 300 miles distant – a great undertaking with such a large (28) & inexperienced party. The pressure continued throughout the day. I had the Camie [?] trained on the ship the whole time. The foremost & jibboom [?] were snapped off by the starboard bulwark being forced under the pressure & she has the appearance of sinking at any moment. It seems impossible that the awful force of nature could so completely destroy such [indecipherable] that hardly now resembles a ship. [in margin] Temp -15 at midnight. Got up early cold & miserable with toes [indecipherable] & makes hoosh
Day spent in sorting out & dumping all unnecessary equipment. In the dump are observable – gold links – watches – latest cut dress suits & relics of civilised gear all entirely useless here. Went aboard the wreck this morning to rescue miscellaneous oddments. The ship is in a frightful condition crunched to fragments. She was entirely full of water & is merely held up by the ice pressure which has splintered the bulwarks almost severing the top deck. The port & starboard cabins are crushed together & all that remains of the sturdy Endurance is a squashed concertina like chaos of splintered timbers.

[Image: a2503182h.jpg]
28 Thurs

为契机 of the Endurance

The latest intelligence from 10 o'clock tonight was that the ship had
filed to have as they expected. We are on the

29 Fri

none on the deck at the moment. It seems impossible to make

any further progress in the present state of the weather. The

day spent in sorting out and cleaning

all unnecessary equipment. The decks

have been cleaned. Gold and silver -

latest and a few in addition to some of tinned

in the baggage. The ship is in a

fractured condition. The upper parts

were entirely filled with water, and the

Ice lace the forecastle which was

the height of the forecastle almost covering

the top deck. The lower and Starboard cabins

were flooded with water, and all that

remains of the ship is a mass of twisted

pieces of machinery, the chairs, and

vessels.
28–29 October 1915
Frank Hurley

**Transcript:**

1915

30 Sat October
– Morning snowing. Finished preparations for starting. Made Blubber cooker from spirit drum. Visited ship during the morning & entered again the looking bearing away in triumph 3 tooth brush & a couple half used tubes of Kolynos. A creaking of splintered timbers caused me to beat a hasty retreat. The whole party started out during the early afternoon, 28 men, a party of 3 leading as scouts & path cutters – 7 dog teams (50 dogs). Balance of party relaying on the two boats.

31 Sun –
22 aft Trinity 2 hrs 1 mile covered. Rowing all day & surface knee deep in soft snow. Hudson & I with my team return to last nights camp for sundries. At my suggestion we have altered our sledging routine & dispense with
party relaying on boats & the party are proceeded by a pioneering party of five, then follows 5 sledges drawn by
dogs, each laden with about 800lbs – Wilds team coupled together with mine draws one of the boats, succeeded
by 14 men on another boat. As there are ten sledges. The five teams return for an additional relay. The Coupled
team (15 dogs) dragged the boat more effectively than an equal number of men.
30 Sat

Morning Snowing

Finished preparations for starting

made Blubber Cooker from Spent drum

Early ship during the morning

Entered again the Reckoning heavily away

in triumph 3 Trench boxes & a couple

half used tubs of Kelvyns A cooking

of Splinter islands now is covered me to treat

a hearty refresh The whole party

started out during the early afternoon

22 men a party of 3 leading as scouts

of the other 7 my team (3 dogs) Balancing

of party relaying on the two boats

31 Sun—22 aft Trinity

Passed all day & Surface froze deep in

ice & snow, division of both my teams return

to last nights camp for Sundine At my

Suggestion we have added one team +

drilled with party relaying on boats

The two boats preceded by a portion of party of

five then follows 5 Sledges drawn by dogs, each

leader with about 800 lbs. With teams coupled

togather draws one of the boats succeeded by my team

on another boat as there are ten sledges

The five teams return for an additional relay

The leaders team covered the boat more effectually

(15 days)
Diary of Frank Hurley

1 Mon November

Shot a seal tonight & had a seal hoosh. Seals are both food & fuel as the blubber provides the necessary fire for the flesh & everything is sodden & wet owing to the high temperature. Snowing heavily & light atrocious. Sir Ernest, Wild, Worsley & self who comprise a directive committee climbed to some adjacent hummocks. The prospect was frightfully rough & the surface so soft that we sank to our hips. Under these conditions with boats & large party further travelling is impossible & the quorum unanimously agreed to erect a permanent camp on the floe – having selected one unlikely to crack up & await the breaking up of the ice – we will then navigate the leads with the boats.
Went to wreck this afternoon to rescue whatever foodstuffs or fuel possible endeavoured to rescue negatives. Alas! Covered by 3 feet water ice. Hands employed in breaking spurs etc. on back, cut away [indecipherable] & mizzen.

2 Tuesday
Spent day taking team to & from ship for salvage. Salved canvas True milk & case [indecipherable]. Have now in camp food 1lb per diem per man for 180 days. Hacked the side out of refrigerator etc to try & salve negatives & bared from head to waist probed for same by the mushy ice. The cases which fortunately were zinc lived & soldered & containing the negatives in soldered tins I located submerged beneath 3 feet of mushy ice & practically all were intact. Returning team startled by killer breaking through ice only about 20 yards ahead. 3 seals killed.

a2503184h.jpg [17]
November 1915

30 Days

1. Mon

Everything is becoming life for the first time.

Sudden, heavy snowfall, day and night.

Sir Ernest Shackleton, Commander, climbed 250 feet above the deck. The men were very high, rough to

2. Tues

Two days falling from cold. Most salvage, except Janus, had mostly died and the

sea now on ice. Ends broken, dead ship. On to war for 100 days. Hard. Too hard. I

try to salvage. Negative to head. From the head, which fortunately, had

your hand and covered all the negatives with 

November 1915

Frank Hurley

Polar castaways

A makeshift camp, known as 'Ocean Camp', was set up on the drifting sea ice near the sinking ship. The lifeboats, sledges and as many supplies as could be gathered were salvaged from the ship before it eventually sank. They later established 'Patience Camp' further west.

"It is beyond conception, even to us, that we are dwelling on a colossal ice raft, with but five feet of ice separating us from 2,000 fathoms of ocean, and drifting along under the caprices of wind and tides, to heaven knows where" (Frank Hurley diary, 7 November 1915, MLMSS 389/2).

Then, as the ice began to crack and break up beneath them, Shackleton gave the order to launch the three lifeboats on 9 April 1916. The men made their way in open boats toward Elephant Island in the north-west, braving wild and freezing seas in search of land. They had been trapped in ice for fifteen months, but their real ordeal had only really just begun.
Transcript:
[first half not transcribed]

13 Thursday April 1916
I am mildly superstitious of numbers for this day had well nigh made an end to us all. During the morning the three boats were running under sail with a fair SE wind, which developed into a half gale by noon with a treacherous cross sea. The heavily laden boats were driven before it & were forced into the open sea which they weathered remarkably well. As night drew
6 TUESDAY [56—256]
Easter Tuesday. (Last Quarter, 8.12 p.m.

The boats we combating the new enemy by steering it off with boat hooks & come. Shortly after noon, the wind changing, we began to drive back onto the ice. The anchoring line had taken immediately. 

The remainder of the night was spent drifting in a sea of loose brash ice & newly formed pancakes. The boats in order, not too far apart, remained belayed together. Several tried to smooth slip, but most preferred rowing to dicker the gangs of chiseling starting till dawn. Everyone was wel extended & awfully cold.

Now there was sufficient light to take self-navigaiton, the four boats were cast adrift. Though the SSW wind our destination was changed for Elephant Island.

13 THURSDAY

From midly separation of numbers for this day had well begun. The wind was to the east. During the morning the three boats were running back sail with a good SE wind which developed into a half gale by noon with a strong sea. The heavily loaded boats were driven before it & were forced onto the open sea. Which they reached nearest falling clouds. So on the 14th.
Diary of Frank Hurley

13 April 1916

Frank Hurley

Call # MLMSS 389 / Box 2 / Items 4-5 [20]

Digital ID: a2504076

View collection item detail [21]

Transcript:

on with increasing seas, Sir E. decided to “heave to”. A sea anchor was hastily constructed with the Dudley Docker’s oars, to which she was moored, the Caird’s painter being attached to her stern, the Caird taking a line from the Wills.

Throughout the night the boats were continually shipping seas which broke over & froze onto them. The ice had to be chipped away hourly. The Wills being in an especially bad way, ice forming on her focstle head & keeping her down at the bows. Owing also to the cross seas & currents, the boats would not be true to their moorings & were constantly bringing up on each other, having to be staved off with boat hooks.

To add to our trials our ejection into the open sea had been so rapid that we had been unable to take any ice on board & all were in sore need of water. Our wet condition, the agonising cold &; the need of sleep, made life well nigh unbearable, furthermore, we were without any definite bearings as to our position. Never was dawn more anxiously awaited, never did night seem so long. Never do I wish to endure such a night. Some tried to sleep
on with increasing seas Mr E decided to heave off the anchor and heave it<br>constructed with the Badley Jack t's sail<br>to which he was moor. The Badley Jack t's<br>dug attached to the Badley and the wind<br>came from the Wills. Throughout the<br>night the boats were continually dipping<br>bows which brought over a surge onto them.<br>There had to be shipped awash bodily. The<br>Wills being in an especially bad way, the<br>firing was the forth time to keep her down<br>at the bows. Owing also to the crooked seas<br>and currents the boats would not hold true<br>to their course and were constantly bringing<br>up on each other having to be stopped off<br>with boat hook. To add to our trials<br>our ejection into the open sea had been<br>so rapid that we had been unable to<br>take any ice on board as all were in one<br>bulk of water. Our wet condition, the<br>boiling cold and the need of ice to make<br>life not only unbearable but moreover<br>the boats without any definite bearings<br>to our position. There was known more<br>抗震 awarded. Even child might<br>sum be longer live in dark to admire<br>such a night. Some tried to sleep
Diary of Frank Hurley

13 April 1916

Frank Hurley

Call # MLMSS 389 / Box 2 / Items 4-5

Digital ID: a2504077

Transcript:

Sir E & self snuggling together for warmth.
Sleep was however more distant than [indecipherable] on the stern sheets for the cold wet penetrated to ones backbone &; all shivered as with ague.

14 April 1916 Friday

Welcome dawn! & with it something even more welcome a glimpse of land! Clarence &; Elephant Islands immediately ahead some 30 miles. What a contrast to the Terrors of the night. Calm & peaceful the sun rose from out the ocean with the promised land ahead, tipping the peaks of Clarence Island, till it resembled a vast gilt pyramid peering through the pink mists of dawn.

As Elephant appeared closest, it was decided to make all speed for its shores. With a light fresh breeze the three boats made fair progress, but at noon the breeze calming we took to rowing. How anxiously we watched the land gradually loom clearer & the details of the snowy peaks assume finite detail.
At 3 pm we were but 10 miles from land when it was observed that row as strenuously as we could we were making no headway. This disheartening circumstance was caused by a strong
8 THURSDAY [98-267]

April 14, 1916

Welcome dawn! With it something even more welcome: A glimpse of land; Clarence & Elephant Islands immediately ahead, some 30 miles ahead. What a contrast to the horrors of the night! Came ashore the sun rose from out the ocean, lifting the peaks of Clarence Island till the island seemed as vast as if imprisoned, bearing through the path of mist. On drew to Elephant appeared, closed it was decided to make all speed for its shore. We left the high fair breeze, the three boats made fair progress, but at noon the breeze calmed, we took to rowing. How anxiously we watched the land gradually become clearer, the details of snowy peaks assume finite details. At 2 pm we were but some miles from land. When it was observed that rowing was strenuous as we could. We were making no headway. This distressing circumstance was chased by a strong

Diary of Frank Hurley ("type":"image","clickUrl":"https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au"
Crushing of the Endurance
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14 April 1916
Frank Hurley
Call # MLMSS 389 / Box 2 / Items 4-5 [20]

Transcript:

A WSW wind springing up enable us to hoist sail, & with the Stancombe Wills in tow, to “heave to” under full sail. Everyone was parched with thirst, when it was remembered we had some frozen seal meat on board. This was cut into small pieces &; eaten raw which allayed our thirst considerably.

As evening drew on the wind increased to a gale raising a big cross sea & taxing to the limit the exhausted capacities of the party. Seas raked the boats & icy sprays hurled by the wind struck ones face like a whip. The carpenter through exhaustion fell asleep at the tiller allowing a big sea to come onboard & Wild after an unbroken spell of 24 hours took his place. I was given an 8 hour spell at the sheet & thanks to the freezing sprays was kept awake. Several times we lost sight of the Wills which we were towing, thinking she had foundered when she would suddenly emerge from the blackness of the sea on a white crest as we would glide into a deep gulf.

I enjoyed the...
9. FRIDAY [39-266]

Lady Day Fire Insurance ceases.

The current of a nor’east wind, swinging up enabled us to have sail, and the Stancomb Wills, now to “heave to” and fall sail. Everyone was passed with a drink, when it was remembered we had some frozen seal meat on board, this was cut into small pieces, melted, which allayed the thirst considerably.

As evening drew on the wind increased to a gale varying a big cross sea, and thus to the almost exhausted capacity of the party. Sails tailed the boats and they swung about, but the wind struck these fast little ships. The carpenters through exhaustion fell asleep at the tiller, following a big sea to come onboard. We had another spell of 24 hours both in the boat. I was given an 8 hour spell at the wheel, and thanks to the freezing spray, was kept alert. Several times we had sight of the Wills which we were towing, thinking she had found where She would suddenly emerge from the blackness of the sea on a little crease as we would glide into a deep gulf. I enjoyed the
15 April 1916
Frank Hurley

Call # MLMSS 389 / Box 2 / Items 4-5 [20]
Digital ID: a2504079
View collection item detail [27]

Transcript:
the fascination of this wild scene, exulting in our mastery over this savage elemental display. With dawn's first light land was observed the loom of the land immediately ahead &; a subsidence in the gale.
During the night we lost sight of the Dudley Docker.

15th April 1916
Saturday
We coasted leisurely along in the lee of indistinct peaks & glacier, phantomlike in the dim misty light of dawn, until the light was sufficiently advanced for safe navigation. Much gratification was caused by running into some glacier brash ice, a quantity of which was hauled on board & eaten with avidity to quench or burning thirsts.
The presented a barrier of sheer cliff & glacier faces. Wild & savage beyond description. At Cape Valentine however, a small sheltered beach was observed, which being exploited was found a capable landing.
Whilst the Caird & Wills were so engaged The Dudley Docker hove in view
14 APRIL, 1915.

10 SATURDAY [100–265]

S.R. 5:20, S.S. 6:45

Fascination of this wild scene, resulting
in our missing one of savage elements,
spills still down in that light land
We observed warmly, and a
submarine in the gale.

During the night we took sight
of the Endurance.

15 April 1915

Saturday

We coasted leisurely along on the
sea of undulating peaks & glaciers
phantomlike in the dawn. Scanty light of
dawn, the light was sufficiently
advanced for safe navigation.

The coast presented a barrier of sheer
cliffs, reared jagged, wild & savage
beyond description. At Cape Denison,
however, a small sheltered beach
was observed which, being explored
was found a safe landing.

Much gratification was caused by
running into some glaciers, broad
ice, a quantity of which was hauled on
board & eaten with avidity to quench
our burning thirsts

Whilst the cables were secured
The Endurance rose in view.
15 April 1916

Frank Hurley

Transcript:

she having been driven into an adjacent bay during the night; miraculously escaping foundering. Landing was conducted expeditiously – without accident. The boats being hauled above high water on the shingly beach. Conceive our joy on setting foot on solid earth after 170 days of life on a drifting ice floe. Each day filled with anxiety patience & watching & and being driven whither? – to an obscure destination by the vicissitudes of Winds & Seas. It is sublime to feel solid earth under ones feet after having trod but heaving decks & transient ice for nearly eighteen months & feel that on what one is walking is reality – not subject to drifting & gaping Caprices that maroon & drop one into the sea. On landing, a number of seals basking on the beach were immediately stripped of blubber & a long draught of trumilk [true milk] prepared. Our phenomenal escape was drunk in hot steaming milk that set our frozen nerves tingling. The landing was effected but just in the eve of time, for so many of the party were emaciated by exhaustion fatigue & exposure, that they could not have survived another 12 hours.
Saturday

The heavily driven above half was on the shingle beach, Condee was on foot on the ice, after 170 days of life on a drifting ice floe, each day filled with anxiety, patience watching and being driven whether to an obscure destination by the winds and ice or to feel solid earth under one's feet, after having been on the ice and drift 18 months. I feel that on what one is walking is reality, not subject to drifting or raging. The ice floe on which one is walking is the Sea, a vast, faceless expanse of ice, vast and empty, with the land stripped of blubber, a long draught of food prepared. Our phenomenal escape was drunk on hot steaming milk that set our frozen nerves tingling. The landing was effected but just in the nick of time, for so many of the party were exhausted by the journey.
Diary of Frank Hurley

15 April 1916

Frank Hurley

Call # MLMSS 389 / Box 2 / Items 4-5

Digital ID: a2504081

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Antarctica: Frank Hurley

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Marooned on Elephant Island

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