

Media release

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● **Enduring Eye: The Antarctic Legacy of Sir Ernest Shackleton and Frank Hurley**

One of the greatest ever photographic records of human survival will shortly go on display in a remarkable new exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). Honouring the achievements of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the men of the *Endurance Expedition* of 1914-1917, newly digitalised images will reveal previously unseen details of the crew's epic struggle for survival both before and after their ship was destroyed.

The *Enduring Eye* exhibition will open to the public on Saturday 21 November, exactly 100 years to the day that the crushed *Endurance* sank beneath the sea ice of the Weddell Sea, and run until 28 February 2016.

At the heart of the exhibition are more than ninety high resolution images, taken by Shackleton's official expedition photographer Frank Hurley, and saved by him under the most extreme circumstances to provide a lasting record of the men of the *Endurance* and their story.

For the first time, the fragile glass plate and celluloid negatives, stored securely at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) for more than 80 years, have been digitised directly from the originals. Now viewed at full definition, the images unlock the remarkable detail captured originally by Hurley in his photographic processing, including interior images of the *Endurance* and high resolution information of life on the pack ice of the Weddell Sea.

As one of the first truly modern documentary photographers and film-makers, Australian born Hurley hoped to have his images seen at as large scale size as possible. 100 years later, this intention will be honoured with giant dimension prints, some over 2 metres in width and height, at the heart of the exhibition, providing viewers with a sense of awe and wonder.

In addition to the newly digitised images, the exhibition will include a number of 'precious survivors' – personal artefacts that were carried through every stage of the successive journeys for survival from the Weddell Sea to Elephant Island and onto South Georgia. These include the Bible from the Society's collections, originally presented to Shackleton by Queen Alexandra on visiting the *Endurance* on 16 July 1914 and inscribed by her.

The exhibition has been researched, written and curated by Meredith Hooper, the Antarctic historian, writer and broadcaster, from original source material in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, whilst also drawing also on information provided by descendants of some of the 28 men on the expedition.

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'The Enduring Eye' is kindly supported by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT), with the Governments of the British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851.

The Society acknowledges the generosity of the UKAHT as lead supporter of the curation and creation of the exhibition and in contributing specialist knowledge and expertise to the exhibition as part of its role in the protection, conservation and promotion of the public understanding of the United Kingdom's Antarctic heritage. We also thank Rolex for its support of the Society's Picture Library and contribution toward conservation of its collections.

Media enquiries

A full media briefing will take place at the Royal Geographical Society on 18 November from 9.00am to 12.30pm. During the briefing, there will be an opportunity to visit the exhibition as well as interview key members of RGS-IBG staff and those involved in creating the exhibition. Full details of the briefing are attached.

For further media enquiries, please contact RGS-IBG's Communications and Media Officer, Scott Edwards, at s.edwards@rgs.org or 020 7591 3019.

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Notes to editors:

1. The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) is the learned society and professional body for geography. Formed in 1830 for 'the advancement of geographical science', today we deliver this objective through developing, supporting and promoting geographical research, expeditions and fieldwork, education, public engagement, and geography input to policy. We aim to foster an understanding and informed enjoyment of our world. We hold the world's largest private geographical collection and provide public access to it. We have a thriving Fellowship and membership and offer the professional accreditation 'Chartered Geographer' www.rgs.org
2. The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914–17, also known as the *Endurance* Expedition, was an attempt to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic continent. The expedition was led by Sir Ernest Shackleton, who had previously served on Captain Scott's *Discovery* Expedition and the British Antarctic Expedition of 1907-09. Having left England on 8 August 1914, the *Endurance* sailed via Buenos Aires and South Georgia before departing for the Antarctic on 5 December. At the same time, a supporting group, the Ross Sea Party, travelled to the other side of the continent. Early in the *Endurance's* expedition, the ship and its 28-man complement became trapped in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea and drifted northward throughout the Antarctic winter of 1915. Eventually the ship was crushed and sank on 21 November 1915, stranding its crew on the drifting ice. After months spent in makeshift camps as the ice continued its northwards drift, the party took to three lifeboats to reach the inhospitable and uninhabited Elephant Island. Shackleton and five others then made an 800-mile open-boat journey in the *James Caird* to reach South Georgia, crossing the island on foot to raise the alarm, before returning to Elephant Island to rescue those still stranded.