

Explorers Successfully Recreate Shackleton Survival Journey

Written by Matthew Scott

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Ernest Shackleton's 800 mile Antarctic survival journey in an unforgiving lifeboat is often regarded as one of the greatest survival stories in history. Shackleton, stranded with his crew on the remote and inhospitable Elephant Island, after knew that he needed to reach the whaling station of South Georgia or the entire party would be perished. Hurricane-force winds did all they could to capsize the open-top boat, but just over two weeks later Shackleton and his five crew reached the south shores of the island. A successful traverse of an unproven 32 mile mountain route eventually landed the crew in the whaling station of Stromness just 36 hours later, where they would receive the help they needed to rescue the entire crew. A group of intrepid explorers, including Expedition Leader Tim Jarvis, have just successfully recreated the epic journey complete with period-correct attire and hardware. The expedition is appropriately named *Shackleton Epic*.[□]

The team attempted to recreate the journey as authentically as possible, only requiring the use of modern outdoor equipment once on the entire journey. The team faced swells in excess of eight metres, gales packing 50 knot winds, sleep deprivation and dehydration on their 800 mile crossing of the Southern Ocean aboard their 22.5' lifeboat, Alexandra Shackleton; named for the granddaughter of the explorer.

Of the entire team consisting of Tim Jarvis, Barry Gray, Paul Larsen, Nick Bubb, Seb Coulthard and Ed Wardle, only Expedition Leader Jarvis and Navigator Larsen made the treacherous mountain crossing to Stromness.

During the crossing, the explorers were pinned down by a dangerous blizzard for nearly 24 hours on the plateau at Shackleton's Gap, forcing Larsen to retreat back to the rest of the crew, later to rejoin Jarvis after the blizzard had calmed.

"It was epic, really epic, and we've arrived here against the odds," said Jarvis. "The ice climb at the Tridents is a serious thing and Shackleton didn't exaggerate - with ice at 50 degrees, with one wrong foot, we could have careened down a crevasse. It was the same for the Crean and Fortuna glacier. We had more

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than 20 crevasse falls up to our knees and Baz fell into a crevasse up to his armpits, Paul and I had to haul him out," a breathless Jarvis said. The difficult traverse also saw the only use of non-period-correct equipment, with the duo requiring a modern tent and sleeping bag to survive the blizzard.

Even though the mountain crossing took the team double the time it took Shackleton due to the extreme weather the team encountered, they able to make the sea journey five days shorter than Shackleton in the replica boat.

"These early explorers were iron men in wooden boats and while modern man mostly travel around in iron vessels, I hope we've been able to emulate some of what they achieved. There's no doubt in my mind that everyone has a Shackleton double in them and I hope we've inspired a few people to find theirs," he said.

<http://shackletonpic.com/>

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