



**RE-RELEASES**

# **South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic**

January 2022 is the centenary of the death of Sir Ernest Shackleton, which traditionally marks the end of the 'heroic age' of Antarctic exploration. A record of one of the greatest survival stories in the history of exploration, *South* is the original film – exquisitely photographed by Frank Hurley – of Shackleton's 1914-16 Endurance expedition to Antarctica, during which the ship was crushed by ice, stranding the crew. Now considered the world's first documentary feature, *South* was restored in pre-digital days by the BFI National Archive with its original tinting. The film has been digitally remastered for its centenary release, with a newly commissioned score by Neil Brand.

**Bryony Dixon, BFI National Archive Curator**

Photographed by Frank Hurley, *South* is the film record of Sir Ernest Shackleton's heroic but ill-starred attempt to cross Antarctica in 1914-16. It is both a unique historical document, and a tribute to the indomitable courage of a small party of men who set out on a voyage of discovery that turned into an epic struggle for survival.

When the news broke that Shackleton and his men had survived, there was great demand to hear and see their stories. Hurley spent three months putting together the surviving film footage and photographs from the expedition. He also went back to South Georgia to re-film the wildlife, footage that had not survived from the expedition.

Shackleton was restless for another adventure, but had no funds and still owed money to financiers of the expedition. In 1919, he launched himself onto the lecture circuit to raise money. He showed Hurley's film, *South*, and projected glass slides of his photographs, while lecturing the story to the audience. [Hurley's film was thereafter shown in various forms as both a lecture film and a conventional theatrical release abroad, including in Hurley's native Australia, where it was released as *In the Grip of Polar Ice* in 1920.] He had also published his book of the story, *South*, and was being interviewed for various newspapers and magazines.

In 1933 a film with sound was released called *Endurance: The Story of a Glorious Failure*. It was *South* re-edited, with commentary by Worsley, *Endurance*'s captain. It also contained film of Shackleton's last expedition on the ship *Quest*. Shackleton died on *Quest*, from a heart attack in 1922, aged 47.

## **Frank Hurley**

Photographer Frank Hurley (1885-1962) first made his name on Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic expedition in 1911-13. His stills and documentary film *Home of the Blizzard* (1913) secured his position as Shackleton's photographer.

Hurley was a superb and courageous photographer, whose intelligent interest in his subject is apparent in every shot. As Hurley was among those left on Elephant Island, there is no film record of the boat journey to South Georgia or

its crossing, but Hurley was later sent back to the island to take scenes that would complete the film, including the lengthy sequences of animal life that are quite exceptional for their time. The scenes of Shackleton's triumphant reception in Chile were filmed by a local cameraman.

After Shackleton, Hurley became an official war photographer and cameraman, and in peacetime established himself as Australia's best-known photographer. He also made such documentary films as *The Ross-Smith Flight* (1920), *Pearls and Savages* (1921), and the drama film of life on Papua, *The Jungle Woman* (1926).

He returned to the Antarctic as a filmmaker with Mawson in 1929-31, and made many further documentary and fiction films in the 1930s. In the Second World War he served as an official photographer once more, before returning chiefly to still photography and a number of popular books documenting the Australia of which he was so proud.

## **The Restoration**

The restored version of the film has been constructed by BFI Collections at the J. Paul Getty Conservation Centre. The painstaking restoration used a wide range of materials, including a print and negative 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, and which have been incorporated into this print.

The BFI National Archive has applied its own tinting and toning to match the original prints, to produce this handsome and richly coloured testament to a remarkable episode in the history of exploration.

The BFI took up the challenge of restoring Hurley's film record of the Endurance Expedition, *South*, in 1994.

There was no one original negative source for *South*. Overall, 99 different copies of film relating to Shackleton in the Antarctic, varying in length and age, were examined to piece together a restored version of *South* as authentically as possible.

Hurley had to abandon his movie cameras when *Endurance* sank, so the moving images end at this point. Still images were added to *South* to tell the rest of the story. Fortunately, a box of photographic glass slides was deposited with the BFI along with the film material relating to *South*. Eighteen of these slides were used in the restored *South*. Like most silent films, *South* had intertitles that narrated the story between scenes. The surviving intertitles were in poor condition. To improve their quality, the best frame was selected then copied many times as a freeze-frame to make the intertitle.

Hurley used film stock with a specific mark dating from 1913-14 when he was filming on *Endurance*, and different film and camera when he returned to South Georgia in 1916. With this information it was possible to identify footage shot by him. When his film was examined, it was discovered that numbers had been written along the side of the film. The numbers seemed to follow the story as written by Shackleton and other crew members. Whenever possible, the numbering system and these accounts were used to place the filmed sequences in order.

Many of the copies examined had been tinted and/or toned to give them colour. There were versions in blue, green and amber. The tinting and toning processes were authentically recreated to colour the restored version of *South*.

---

## SOUTH

*Production Company:* Imperial Trans-Antarctic Film Syndicate

*Director of Photography:* Frank Hurley

*Restoration [1998]:* National Film and Television Archive

### With

Ernest Shackleton (*expedition leader*)

F.A. Worsley (*captain of 'Endurance'*)

J. Stenhouse (*captain of the 'Aurora'*)

L. Hussey (*meteorologist*)

Dr McIlroy, Mr. Wordie (*scientific staff*)

Dr Macklin (*doctor*)

Frank Wild (*second in command of the 'Endurance'*)

Tom Crean, Mr. James, Mr. Clark, Mr. Greenstreet (*crewmen*)

Frank Hurley (*photographer*)

UK 1919

81 mins

## NEW RELEASES

### Boiling Point

From Fri 7 Jan

### Licorice Pizza

From Thu 13 Jan

### Memoria

From Fri 14 Jan

### Parallel Mothers (Madres paralelas)

From Fri 28 Jan

### The Souvenir Part II

From Fri 18 Feb

### Flee

From Fri 18 Feb

### La Mif (The Fam)

From Fri 25 Feb

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

### Silent Cinema presents: South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic + live score

Thu 27 Jan 19:00

### African Odysseys UK Premiere: African Redemption: The Life and Legacy of Marcus Garvey + panel discussion

Sat 5 Feb 14:00

### Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 7 Feb 18:10

### Preview: The Worst Person in the World (Verdens verste menneske) + Q&A with director Joachim Trier and actor Renate Reinsve

Sat 12 Feb 20:15

### The Proposition + Q&A (special guests TBA)

Wed 16 Feb 18:00

### Preview: La Mif (The Fam) + Q&A with director Fred Baillif

Sat 19 Feb 18:00

### A Tribute to Roger Michell: Preview: The Duke + Q&A (guests TBA)

Thu 24 Feb 18:00

### BFI Expanded: World Premiere: UNIQUE

Fri 25 Feb 19:00 and 20:30

### Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: Ali & Ava

Mon 28 Feb 20:20

## RE-RELEASES

### The 400 Blows (Les quatre cents coups)

From Fri 7 Jan

### South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic

From Fri 28 Jan

### South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic

From Fri 28 Jan

### Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)

From Fri 4 Feb

---

## BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at [bfi.org.uk/join](https://www.bfi.org.uk/join)

## BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on [player.bfi.org.uk](https://www.player.bfi.org.uk)

## BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

**Join the BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at [www.bfi.org.uk/signup](https://www.bfi.org.uk/signup)