

Polar Castaways



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When Sir Ernest Shackleton's dreams of crossing Antarctica foundered with his ship "Endurance" in the ice of the Weddell Sea in October 1915, he could only wonder what had become of his support party on the other side of the continent. After almost ninety years Polar Castaways finally tells that story, filling one of the major gaps in the history of the "heroic era" of polar exploration. The task of the Ross Sea component of the expedition was to lay the all-important depots in support of the traverse party to be led by Shackleton. The party was dogged from the outset by lack of funds and inadequate preparation. Matters were made even worse when, in May 1915, their ship "Aurora" was carried away from its winter moorings, leaving ten men stranded and without proper equipment and supplies. At great personal hardship and cost they went on to lay the depots across the Ross Ice Shelf to Mount Hope. Three men died during this courageous and perilous endeavour. "Aurora," refitted in New Zealand, eventually sailed south amidst considerable controversy to rescue the seven survivors.

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