

ANTARCTICA

# Melting footsteps

by Sergio Ramazzotti





A cigarette card for American Tobacco Company's Hassan Cork Tip cigarettes shows portrait of Ernest Shackleton in parka, in front of a frozen landscape.



## 100 YEARS AFTER ERNEST SHACKLETON'S DEATH, THE FUTURE OF ANTARCTICA IS AT STAKE. AND IT MAY NOT LAST ANOTHER CENTURY

**Antarctica is one of the most pristine places on the planet. This gigantic region of the southern hemisphere – which contains about 90% of the ice and 70% of the world's fresh water – plays a crucial role for the Earth's climate and marine ecosystems: the Antarctic ocean absorbs 75% of the excess global heat and almost a third of the CO2 emissions captured by the seas around the world.**

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In 2022, exactly one hundred years after the end of the so-called “Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration”, and exactly as many years after the death of the famous explorer Ernest Shackleton, who wrote some of the most significant pages of that era (and whose ship *Endurance* was recently announced to be found, after 106 years underwater), the ice continent is at risk. Climate change is causing visible

impacts on the region's biodiversity and potentially irreversible and devastating impacts on the entire planet. Over the past 30 years, Antarctica's temperature has risen by 1.8°C, three times the global average. In 2020, the continent registered a new record temperature of 18.3°C. As a main effect, sea ice has declined rapidly. But in Antarctica, rising levels of greenhouse gases and a shrinking ozone hole could result in temperatures rising by as much as 3°C over the next century. If this happens, the resulting melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet will contribute to a rise in sea levels that is expected to reach 1.4 meters by 2100.

The Antarctic Treaty, stipulated in Washington in 1959, and to which 53 countries adhere, establishes that the continent of ice can be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and scientific research, preventing any form of commercial exploitation, territorial claim or military

activity. However, some countries adhering to the Treaty, such as China and Russia, which heavily exploit the fish resources of the continent, seem to want to hinder projects to create new marine protected areas in order to preserve the Antarctic ecosystem and, with it, the future of the Earth.

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*“The heroic era of Antarctic exploration was ‘heroic’ because it was anachronistic before it began, its goal was as abstract as a pole, its central figures were romantic, manly and flawed, its drama was moral (for it mattered not only what was done but how it was done), and its ideal was national honour. It was an early testing-ground for the racial virtues of new nations such as Norway and Australia, and it was the site of Europe’s last gasp before it tore itself apart in the Great War.”*

*Tom Griffiths, Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica*

An iceberg in the Argentine Islands archipelago, in the Antarctic Peninsula.





A hand-painted 1916 map depicts the route followed by Ernest Shackleton's ship *Endurance* in its attempted voyage to the South Pole.



A pair of goggles photographed in one of the rooms of Wordie House, a British meteorological station built in 1947 on Winter Island in the Antarctic Peninsula, and abandoned in the mid-1950s.



The *Endurance*, partially submerged and mast heads broken, is stuck in the ice. A dog team hitched together sit in snow away from the ship.



Sir Ernest Shackleton, approximately 1915-1920.



The back of a minke whale swimming in Paradise Harbour, in the Antarctic Peninsula.

The remains of a boat used for whaling operations in the early 20th Century rest among whale bones in Mikkelsen Harbor, in the Antarctic Peninsula.





A mitten photographed in one of the rooms of Wordie House, a British meteorological station built in 1947 on Winter Island in the Antarctic Peninsula, and abandoned in the mid-1950s.



A gentoo penguin near a whale skeleton collected and arranged by Jacques Cousteau in 1972, while filming a documentary in Jougla Point, near Port Lockroy in the Antarctic Peninsula.



*Endurance* crew members push the boat *James Caird* off the coast of Elephant Island on April 24, 1916. Shackleton and five crew members sailed on the boat for over 750 miles to South Georgia.



An abandoned hut painted with the Argentinian flag on Wiencke Island in the Antarctic Peninsula.



Inside Damoy Hut, a British base on Wiencke Island in the Antarctic Peninsula. Built by the British Antarctic Survey in 1975, it was used until 1993 as a summer transit station for personnel flying into Antarctica on planes landing at nearby Damoy Point.



A young male elephant seal at Hannah Point on Livingston Island, in the South Shetland Islands.



A colony of Antarctic shags in Jougla Point, near Port Lockroy in the Antarctic Peninsula.



Members of the *Endurance* crew remaining on Elephant Island bid farewell to Shackleton and the five men that set out in the *James Caird* to reach South Georgia.



Whale bones on the beach at Hannah Point on Livingston Island, in the South Shetland Islands.

Gentoo penguins on an iceberg  
at Cierva Cove, in the Antarctic  
Peninsula.





The *Endurance* stuck in an ice floe.



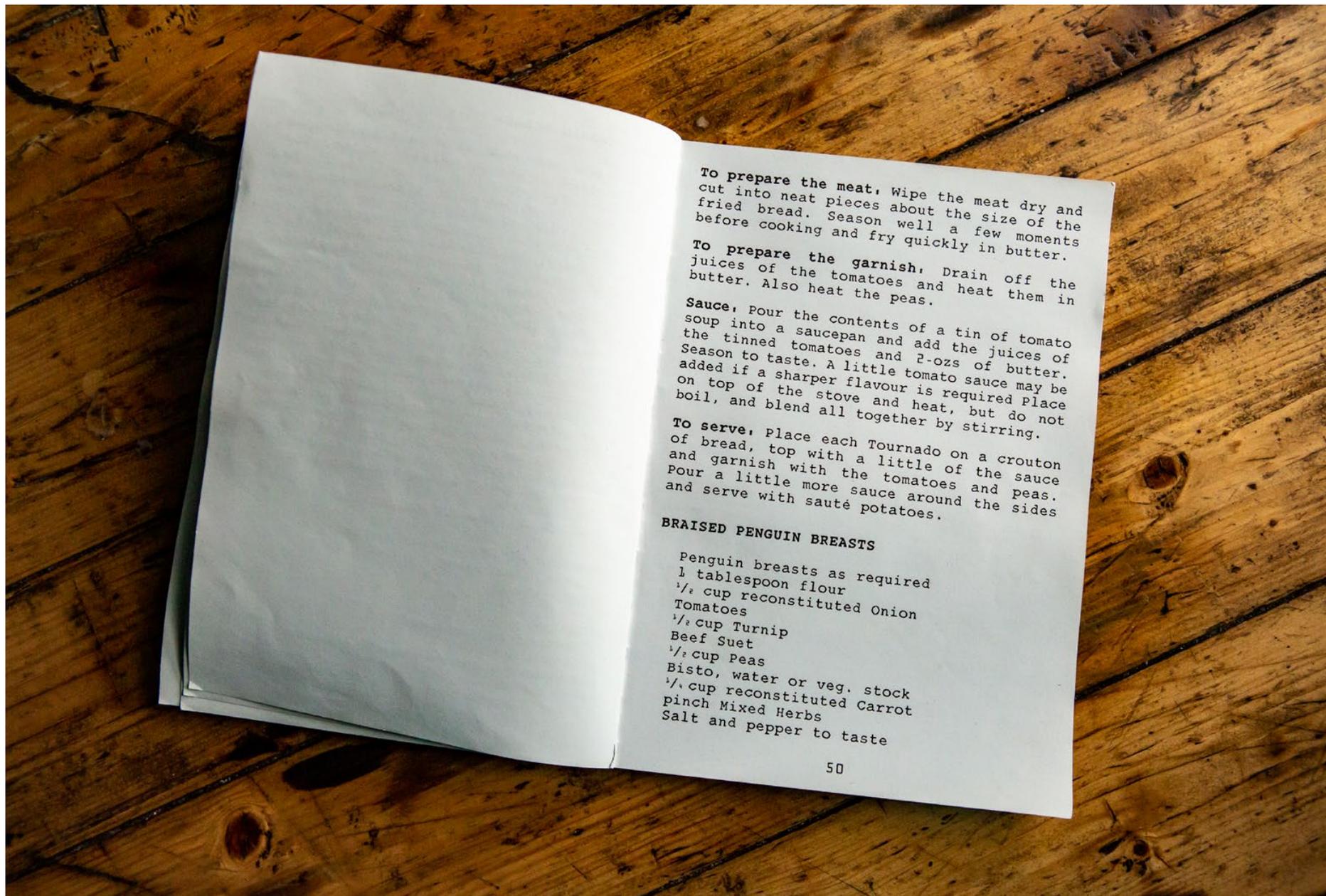
One of the rooms of Wordie House, a British meteorological station built in 1947 on Winter Island in the Antarctic Peninsula, and abandoned in the mid-1950s.



Gentoo penguins on Petermann Island, in the Antarctic Peninsula.



Sir Ernest Shackleton, standing in the foreground, and *Endurance* crew members at their campsite on Elephant Island.



To prepare the meat, Wipe the meat dry and cut into neat pieces about the size of the fried bread. Season well a few moments before cooking and fry quickly in butter.

To prepare the garnish, Drain off the juices of the tomatoes and heat them in butter. Also heat the peas.

Sauce, Pour the contents of a tin of tomato soup into a saucepan and add the juices of the tinned tomatoes and 2-ozs of butter. Season to taste. A little tomato sauce may be added if a sharper flavour is required Place on top of the stove and heat, but do not boil, and blend all together by stirring.

To serve, Place each Tournado on a crouton of bread, top with a little of the sauce and garnish with the tomatoes and peas. Pour a little more sauce around the sides and serve with sauté potatoes.

#### **BRAISED PENGUIN BREASTS**

Penguin breasts as required  
1 tablespoon flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup reconstituted Onion  
Tomatoes  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Turnip  
Beef Suet  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Peas  
Bisto, water or veg. stock  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup reconstituted Carrot  
pinch Mixed Herbs  
Salt and pepper to taste

A recipe book photographed in one of the rooms of Wordie House, a British meteorological station built in 1947 on Winter Island in the Antarctic Peninsula, and abandoned in the mid-1950s.



Gentoo penguins in front of icebergs in a bay in Pleneau Island, in the Antarctic Peninsula.



Sir Ernest Shackleton and wife Emily Mary Dorman, 1900.

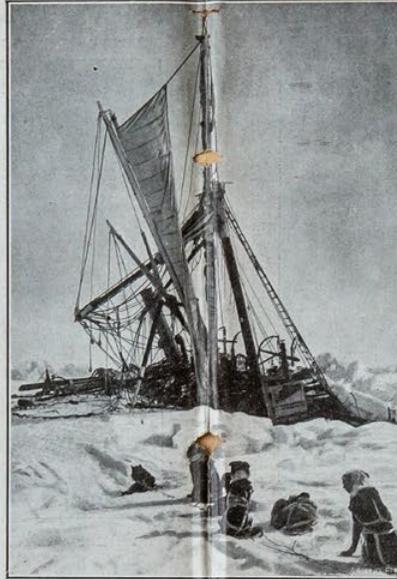


# LA EXPEDICION POLAR SHACKLETON



El "Endurance" levantado por la titánica presión de los hielos, poco antes de irse a pique en el mar de Weddell

En Febrero de 1914, el ilustre explorador Sir Ernest Shackleton exponía ante la Real Sociedad Geográfica de Londres, el programa de su expedición antártica: atravesar el continente polar austral de un mar á otro, ó sea desde el mar de Weddell al de Ross, es decir, la mayor jornada polar intentada hasta ahora, con la finalidad principal de explorar la misteriosa continental del Antártico. El 28 de Octubre del mismo año partió de Buenos Aires, con sus compañeros, el buque del "Endurance", y todo le fué como se había proyectado hasta Febrero de 1915, en que se perdió toda huella de los exploradores. Temiéndose que hubiesen sido víctimas de una tragedia como tantas otras de arrolladas en las regiones polares, el jefe del Gobierno británico, á principios de Junio del año pasado, propuso al Parlamento la organización y envío rápidos de socorros á los expedicionarios, cuyo paradero se ignoraba en realidad. Por fin, hace pocos meses volvió á saberse de Shackleton. El 20 de Mayo último llegaba con cinco de sus hombres á los establecimientos balnearios de la Georgia del Sur; desde allí giraba las islas Falkland, desde donde telegrafió á los periódicos ingleses el relato emocionante de su terrible aventura entre las soledades heladas. Si había podido escapar á la muerte, la mayor parte de su tripulación había quedado prisionera de los hielos en una desolada isla del Atlántico, esperando angustiosísima el socorro que su jefe iba á procurarles. La travesía del vasto mar suroriental del Polo Sur, objeto de la jornada, no había podido lograrse ni siquiera en sus comienzos. En el mar de Weddell, el "Endurance" había quedado cautivo entre los hielos, en las proximidades de la Tierra del Príncipe Leopoldo. La temperatura descendió de día en día hasta los 21 grados bajo cero. Estas circunstancias hacían imposible un desembarco. La distancia que separaba al "Endu-



El "Endurance" destruido por la presión de las masas de hielo

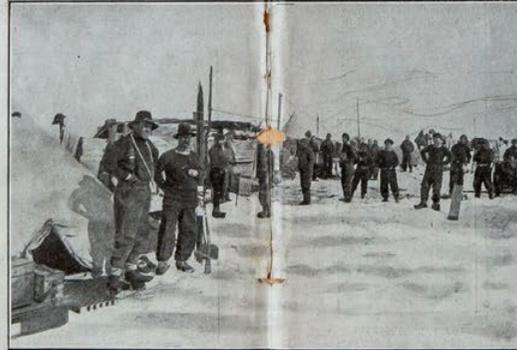


Un campo de hielos flotantes en el mar de Weddell, con el "Endurance" en el fondo, abandonado por los exploradores

rance de la costa, era larga y erizada de peligros, el principal de los cuales era que mientras la caravana de ellos aproximarse á la costa, el barco donde se almacenaban las provisiones había de alejarse cada vez más hacia el Norte, empujado por el movimiento de los hielos. Otro gravísimo peligro era la dislocación de los bancos de hielo por la acción de los vientos y de las corrientes marinas, lo que hace que los bergs vuelen en el agua, se laceren á pedruzcos fantásticos, chocando con tal violencia y tales presiones, que pulverizan un buque como si fuese un puñalillo de arena. Ante la horrible perspectiva de morir aplastados, Shackleton ordenó á sus compañeros que abandonasen el "Endurance". Eligieron el tiempo en apariencia más sólido de cuantos apalancaban el barco, y tras portar el chalupas y viveres en abundancia. Durante sesenta y cinco días, los exploradores vivieron en constante alerta, esperando la muerte á cada momento. Estropeado el "Endurance", abandonaron el buque y se dirigieron á la isla más próxima, llamada Puntet, y distante nada menos que 640 millas, arrastrando á brazo las chalupas y las viandas. Pero ante el peligro de que la fatiga les extenuase, los naufragos arribaron á la isla Elefante, al Oeste de la de Clarence, donde en un campo de hielos escavaron su gruta. Después de instalar allí á su gruta, Shackleton, con cinco de sus hombres, partió con rumbo á la Georgia del Sur en busca de socorros de los balleneros noruegueses. Por fin, después de arriesgar tremendos peligros, y de cruzar mucho tiempo, escalando montañas y salvando abismos, con la muerte siempre sobre sus cabezas y una heroica travesía de 700 millas, á pie, llegaron por fin á la factoría noruega, y después de tres épicas tentativas, Shackleton ha tenido la tremenda alegría de salvar á todos sus compañeros abandonados.



El explorador Shackleton embarcando en la Isla del Elefante, para realizar su heroica travesía de 750 millas, en demanda de socorros de los pescadores de Georgia del Sur



Campamento improvisado por Shackleton y sus compañeros sobre el mar de hielo, después del naufragio del "Endurance" (FOT. CENTRAL NEWS)



Salvamento de los tripulantes de "Endurance" en la Isla del Elefante, liberados por Shackleton el 20 de Agosto último, en el cuarto y desesperado intento

A double spread published on a Spanish magazine in 1916 describes Sir Ernest Shackleton's attempted voyage to the South Pole and the rescue of his crew 17 months after their ship had been blocked and destroyed by ice.



Detail of a bookshelf photographed in one of the rooms of Wordie House, a British meteorological station built in 1947 on Winter Island in the Antarctic Peninsula, and abandoned in the mid-1950s.



An *Endurance* crew member with a dog team hitched together sitting among ice floe. In the far background the *Endurance* is stuck.



Gentoo penguins on Petermann Island, in the Antarctic Peninsula.



A gentoo penguin during low tide in Mikkelsen Harbor, in the Antarctic Peninsula.

A ship in the Drake Channel,  
between Argentina and the  
Antarctic Peninsula.



