

## Book Reviews

**Shackleton's journey.** William Grill. 2015. London, New York: Flying Eye Books. iii + 68p. Illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-1-909263-10-9. £14.99, US\$ 24, €19. doi:[10.1017/S003224741500073X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S003224741500073X)

This is not the sort of volume usually reviewed in the columns of *Polar Record*, as it is neither weighty nor profound. However as it achieved some notoriety in the publishing world, and was reviewed favourably in the daily press, it is worth noticing. Being ostensibly a book for children, it may be a suitable present from those with polar interests to their children, nephews or nieces whom they might wish to interest, at an early age, in Antarctic history, that most fascinating of subjects.

The author received the 2015 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal for children's illustration. Moreover being only 25 at the time he was the youngest winner of this prestigious award for more than 50 years. The name of the prize indicates the fundamental nature of the work which is, put simply, a series of illustrations in coloured pencil of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition with a reasonably informative text.

The text can be dealt with simply. It is just an admirably short, potted version of the great adventure that could have been 'knocked off' in a very short time by any Antarctic writer. It mentions Shackleton's participation in the *Discovery* expedition but does not refer to the *Nimrod* expedition which seems somewhat odd. It has no more than the usual number of errors characteristic of such reduced histories. For example when *Endurance* left Plymouth on 8 August 1914 it is incorrect to state that 'Shackleton and his brave crew set out...' Shackleton, himself, was not of course on board. At the end of the book it has nothing about Shackleton's death or burial.

The real point of interest in the book, however, is the illustrations. These have charm and idiosyncrasy in equal measure. It should be noted that Grill's artistic style is reminiscent, perhaps rather more so than might be acceptable if accusations of plagiarism are to be avoided, of that 20th century master L.S. Lowry. To comment on the selection of topics, one finds at the start a sketch of each member of the expedition both human and canine. The crew appear on pages 5 and 6 and the artist has done his best to pick out the characteristics for which each is noted. For example we have an oddly and excessively fat Thomas Orde-Lees on skis, Hurley with a camera, Macklin

with his medical bag and the curiously spelt Huberht Hudson chasing a penguin. McNeish [*sic* McNish] has an animal in close attendance, surely intended to be a cat, but which looks more like a fox. All the figures are portrayed as being more or less corpulent which as far as is known to this reviewer none of them were and some have no distinguishing features at all. But to be fair, which reader of *Polar Record* could state confidently what it was that would distinguish Lionel Greenstreet, for example?

The dogs are treated in the same way with a notional sketch of each one... veering even closer to Lowry's stylised depictions in many of his works. Much better are the illustrations of *Endurance* herself and including sketches of the trees that provided the wood for her construction, tools used etc and on pages 9 and 10 a good deal of interesting information is imparted. We are told that she was 'perhaps the strongest wooden vessel in the world' except *Fram*... but we are not told whose vessel the latter was! There is a page for equipment and supplies and then we are into the voyage itself. Here we have informative maps (the route map omits the stop in Buenos Aires) and sketches... that of Grytviken is particularly attractive. We also arrive in that part of the book which has more full page illustrations including a map of the voyage of *Endurance* to destruction plus subsequent events. The pictures entitled 'Into the Weddell Sea', 'Pack ice', '*Endurance* stuck' etc. including 'Isolation' which is an almost featureless sheet of white with a diminutive ship close to a corner, are unexpectedly evocative. We then proceed to '*Endurance* lost', 'Ocean camp', 'The march', 'Patience camp' and eventually to 'Sailing to Elephant Island' and 'Preparing the *James Caird*'. The voyage is dealt with clearly as is the march across South Georgia. It is difficult to avoid the view that the author is rather better at what one might call, in his limited media, landscapes than he is when there are several people in a picture. Somewhat to the surprise of this reviewer the author does not neglect the Ross Sea party of which rather comprehensive details are provided including the identities of the casualties on that party.

To sum up, a charming and inoffensive book, well prepared and printed on high quality paper with a sound binding. Ideal for a present for a youngster who has yet to get the polar bug. This book would certainly assist in the infection and it is highly recommended. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Rd. Cambridge CB2 1ER. ([irs30@cam.ac.uk](mailto:irs30@cam.ac.uk)))