In 1914 Sir Ernest Shackleton, an established Polar explorer, set out to cross the Antarctic continent. He failed. However, he achieved one of the greatest feats of the turn of the century polar exploration; he returned with his 28 man team – alive. The story of the 1914-17 Endurance expedition is one of courage and leadership in the face of true adversity. Stoicism and belief during complete uncertainty; by endurance they conquered. Here is a timeline of events as they unfolded:

• AUGUST 8, 1914 The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition departs from Plymouth aboard Endurance.
• OCTOBER 26, 1914 The Endurance departs Buenos Aires.
• NOVEMBER 5, 1914 Endurance arrives at the whaling station of Grytviken, South Georgia Island.
• DECEMBER 5, 1914 The Endurance sails south from South Georgia; next landfall: 497 days.
• DECEMBER 7, 1914 The Endurance first encounters pack ice.
• JANUARY 18, 1915 Endurance becomes immobilized and drifts in the ice. 76 deg 34’S.

• FEBRUARY 22, 1915 The Endurance reaches its furthest south, 77 deg S off Luitpold Land.
• OCTOBER 27, 1915 The Endurance, now badly damaged, is abandoned (except 2lbs of personal possessions, Frank Hurley’s photographs and Leonard Hussey’s banjo). Ocean Camp is established.
• NOVEMBER 8, 1915 The Endurance first encounters pack ice.
• DECEMBER 29, 1915 After a failed attempt to march across the ice to the safety of land, Shackleton establishes “Patience Camp,” hoping that they will drift north, on an ice floe, to safety.
• APRIL 9, 1916 The James Caird, Stancomb Wills and Dudley Docker are launched for the voyage to Elephant Island.
• APRIL 15, 1916 The three boats land on Elephant Island, a remote uninhabited island far from shipping lanes. This is the first time that the men have stood on solid ground in 497 days. Two days later the party moves to Cape Wild.
• APRIL 24, 1916 Shackleton sails the James Caird back to South Georgia, where a whaling station is located, to get help. He brings just five men; Worsley, Crean, McNeish, Tim McCarthy and Vincent.
• MAY 10, 1916 After a treacherous two week journey, the James Caird lands on the south coast of South Georgia. Five days later the six-man party moves to Peggotty Camp on King Haakon Bay.
• MAY 19, 1916 Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean begin their trek across the island’s unexplored interior to get help at a whaling station on the north coast; McNeish, McCarthy and Vincent all too ill to move.
• MAY 20, 1916 Sir Ernest, Worsley and Crean arrive at Stromness, on the north coast of South Georgia. Shackleton and his men arrive at Stromness whaling station. Worsley sails to the south coast to pick up the three men left behind.

Left: ‘The Endurance keeling over’
Photograph by Frank Hurley
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• MAY 23, 1916 Shackleton borrows the Southern Sky, and sails for Elephant Island to rescue his men. The pack ice prevents passage, and the ship returns. Two subsequent rescue attempts, aboard the Instituto Pesca No. 1 in June and the Emma in July, are also stopped by pack ice.
• AUGUST 30, 1916 Sir Ernest, aboard the Yelcho, rescues the 22 men on Elephant Island, 24 months and 22 days since leaving England.
• SEPTEMBER 3, 1916 The Yelcho arrives at Punta Arenas, Chile.
• DECEMBER 20, 1916 Sir Ernest, aboard the Aurora, sails from New Zealand to rescue the members of his Ross Sea Party (Sister, Food Depo ship). Under extreme conditions they had successfully laid supply depots for the Weddell Sea party that ironically was never to reach land.
• JANUARY 10, 1917 The Aurora reaches Cape Royds and collects the Ross Sea party.