

***South* (1919)**

Classic film centenary 1919-2019 with soundtrack, 80 minutes.

Sunday at 2pm July 7

Before the presentation Graham Shirley shall introduce the film. Graham, former senior curator and historian at the National Film and Sound Archive, now works on a freelance basis as an oral historian, film historian and archival researcher.



Sydney born Frank Hurley made this acclaimed 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 It is both a unique historical document, and a tribute to the indomitable courage of a small party of men who set out on a voyage of discovery that turned into an epic struggle for survival.

Read more about the celebrated Frank Hurley at

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hurley-james-francis-frank-6774>

This restored version of the film has been constructed by the National Film and Television Archive from a wide range of materials. The NFTVA has applied its own tinting and toning to match the original prints, and has produced this handsome and richly coloured testament to a remarkable episode in the history of exploration.



“Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914-1916 Antarctic expedition to the South Pole. A few months into the journey the ship HMS Endurance becomes trapped in pack ice and is ultimately crushed. Shackleton and his crew, in three lifeboats, begin an 18-month, 1200 mile journey to safety across one of Earth's most inclement and unremittingly beautiful continents.

South was first exhibited by Ernest Shackleton in 1919 to accompany his lectures, and it has some of the quality of a lecture. Excerpts of the journey are interspersed with scientific and biological observations and, towards the end, just when the dramatic tension reaches its height, there are almost 20 inexplicable minutes of nature footage, showing sea lions gambolling, penguins and other birds. Photographer Frank Hurley did not accompany Shackleton on the 800-mile rescue mission, so this material could not have been shot. All the same, it is a strange hiatus and obviously inserted as a crowd-pleaser.

Hurley was a genius of cinematography. As well as inventive camerawork, mixing close-ups, point-of-view shots and ingenious positioning of the camera, the film is shot through with colour, using the novel Paget colour process. In the Paget

system, two glass plates were used, a colour screen on which was laid a matrix of red, green and blue filters, and a standard black and white negative plate. The result is highly effective. In a vast landscape of various shades of white, colour - purple sunsets, ethereal green seas, ink blue silhouettes - invests the film with drama, beauty and tension. By contrast, the black and white, untreated sequences, particularly the long shots of the crew in Antarctica, look flat and time-bound.

But the most famous shots are the stills Hurley took of the *Endurance*. In an age when night photography was rare, he surrounded the ship with magnesium flares and used a slow exposure to create the ghostly images of the *Endurance* suspended in darkness. It is fair to say that the success of the film has more to do with the dramatic photography than the detail of what was filmed, although the sequence of the disintegration of the *Endurance* is incredible and, of course, the story itself could hardly be more spectacular.

There is little actual footage of Shackleton in the film; he is often a shadowy figure at a distance, separated from the men. This expedition was his second attempt at the South Pole. The first, in 1909 - for which he was knighted - came within 97 miles of the target. A third unsuccessful attempt followed in 1921. However, failure is relative, and his efforts undoubtedly spurred the success of Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott in 1911 and 1912. Shackleton's greatest achievement in 1916 was to return with all his men alive." BFI
<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/725774/index.html>

