ENDURING EYE: THE ANTARCTIC LEGACY OF SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON AND FRANK HURLEY

One of the greatest photographic records of human survival has gone on display in a remarkable new exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in London*. Running to 28 February 2016 this exhibition honours the achievements of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the men of the Endurance Expedition of 1914-1917. Newly digitised images reveal previously unseen details of the crew’s epic struggle for survival both before and after their ship was destroyed.

The Enduring Eye exhibition opened on 21 November last, exactly 100 years to the day that the expedition ship Endurance sank beneath the sea ice of the Weddell Sea. At the heart of the display are more than 90 high resolution images taken by Shackleton’s official expedition photographer, Frank Hurley, and saved by him under the most extreme circumstances to provide a lasting record of the men of Endurance and their story.

For the first time the fragile glass and celluloid negatives, stored securely at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) for more than 80 years, have been digitised directly from the originals. Now viewed at full definition, the images unlock remarkable detail captured originally by Hurley and include interior images of Endurance and high resolution aspects of life on the pack ice of the Weddell Sea.

As one of the first truly modern documentary photographers and film-makers, Australian born Hurley hoped to have his images seen at as large scale as possible. A century later, this intention has been honoured with high dimension prints, some over two metres in width and height, at the heart of the exhibition.

In addition to the newly digitised images, the exhibition includes a number of what have been regarded as precious survivors – personal artefacts that were carried through every stage of the successive journeys for survival from the Weddell Sea to Elephant Island and onto South Georgia. These include a Union flag, generously loaned by HM The Queen from the Royal Collection, which King George V presented to Shackleton to fly at the South Pole, and was returned to the King in 1917.

*Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), 1 Kensington Gore, London, SW7 2AR.
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7591 300
The exhibition has been researched, written and curated by Meredith Hooper, Antarctic historian, writer and broadcaster, from original source material in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, while also drawing on information provided by descendants of some of the 28 on the expedition.

The Enduring Eye is kindly supported by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT), with the Governments of the British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851.

About RGS
The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) is the learned society and professional body for geography. Formed in 1830 for 'the advancement of geographical science'. Today it delivers this objective through developing, supporting and promoting geographical research, expeditions and fieldwork, education, public engagement, and geography input to policy.

RGS holds the world’s largest private geographical collection and provides public access to it.

The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914–17
Known as the Endurance Expedition, this was an attempt to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic continent. The expedition was led by Sir Ernest Shackleton, who had previously served on Captain Scott’s Discovery Expedition and led the British Antarctic Expedition of 1907-09.

*Endurance* left England on 8 August 1914 and sailed via Buenos Aires and South Georgia before departing for the Antarctic on 5 December. At the same time, a supporting group, the Ross Sea Party, travelled to the other side of the continent. Early in *Endurance*’s expedition, the ship and its 28-man complement became trapped in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea and drifted northward throughout the Antarctic winter of 1915.

Eventually, on 27 October 1915, the ship was crushed and subsequently sank on 21 November, stranding her crew on the drifting ice. After months spent in makeshift camps as the ice continued its northwards drift, the party took to three lifeboats to reach the inhospitable and uninhabited Elephant Island. Shackleton and five others then made an 800-mile open-boat journey in *James Caird* to reach South Georgia, crossing the island on foot to raise the alarm and find a ship to rescue those still stranded. On the fourth attempt, he returned to Elephant Island to rescue them all.