

Tour Name: The Irish Beyond Endurance Expedition 2008

Tour Leaders: Pat Falvey (Leader), Niall Foley (Coordinator)

Total Dates: 7th Nov – 2nd Dec 2008

Travel: Dublin/Cork – London – Buenos Aires – Ushuaia

Voyage Route: Ushuaia - South Georgia – Elephant Island – Antarctic Peninsula - Ushuaia

Voyage extras: South Georgia Crossing 3-5 days allowed

Ship: Ushuaia (Antarpply)

Ship dates: 10th – 28th Nov 2008

Aim: This is our second time doing such a tour with the first being completed on similar dates in 2006. The overall aim was to re-trace the historic route of the ‘Endurance’ with a group of Irish Adventurers. The aim of our Expedition in relation to the South Georgia Crossing was to train 12 ordinary people with an interest in Antarctic History to become proficient at glacier travel and cold weather survival enabling them to work within a guided team and follow in the footsteps of Shackleton, Crean and Worsley by completing a similar route on the island of South Georgia nearly 100 years on. Training began in February 2008 in Ireland with a winter training session in Norway in June 2008 also.

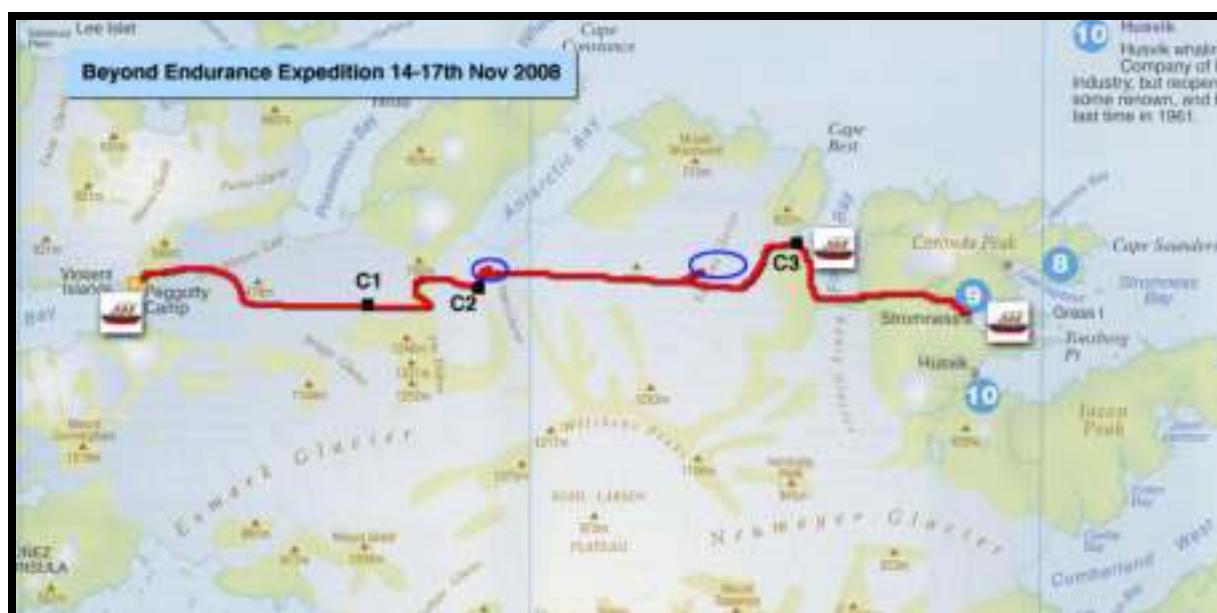
Team members: 12

Guides: 4

SG Crossing report follows:

Post expedition report compiled by Niall Foley, images mostly by him or team members. More Images are available on request.

SG Crossing route:



Key: **Route** **Campsite** **Crevasse zones**

Nov 14th - Crossing Day 1



We entered King Hakkon Bay aboard the 'Ushuaia' at 5am. The wind was Westerly touching South westerly later in the day helping us into our anchor position off Pegotty Bluff. Once the Zodiacs had tested the landing we all gathered ready in our on the back lower deck to aid the loading of our gear before waiting at the gangway to be given a green light. On reaching the beach it took us 30mins to get out of our wellies and into our boots and do a final check on gear before saying goodbye to Monika and the staff ashore, they were called back by the captain as wind speed had risen to 40-50 knots and Jorge was concerned they may have to stay ashore until it eased.



After getting up to the snow following a river crossing and various melt water outlets, we headed now toward the Shackleton Gap on snow shoes, the conditions were very poor with visibility down between 200m and 25m at times. The wind was very blustery but aided us somewhat upwards onto the snowfield leading up to the Murray. We released the waiting ship and went on a little before realizing we had to swing around and back toward a rock outcrop before heading on again. A long march across the Murray in very poor conditions ensued with lots of gusts and wind chill. Some of our sled pullers were changed half-way and finally we crested a top and down from there on until the triangular peak splitting the trident range on that western side about 2 km before the trident itself. Camp 1 was positioned onward and to the left around a little where it was more sheltered. Conditions were now easing as evening approached. No injuries or problems.



Nov 15th - Crossing Day 2



We woke to a little more visibility showing just about the trident ridge ahead about a km or so. By the time we were breaking camp it was snowing hard but the wind had eased. We headed over to the ridge start and veered off right after a little and upwards. After an hour of helping the sleds, two of us scouted up to the top to check the other side and it was too steep over a corniced edge. These gullies are probably possible but the visibility was very poor so we went back down and moved over the ridge a bit more and got up to the crest of the ridge nearly 2 hours later as the top section was fairly steep.



The snow was waist high in places also which didn't help and the sun was scorching us even through the clouds and mist to the extent where we had to warn our team quite regularly. The final push to get the sleds up and over had to be done using a pulley system and most of the group pulling. Once on top the skies opened and the views toward Antarctic Bay and the Crean Glacier were amazing.

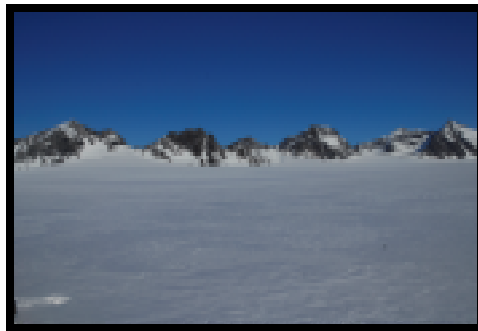


Our team, were now fairly shagged as we grouped for decent on the col to the far left which had very deep snow. It was now after lunch and once down to lower altitude we admired the scenery for a few moments before deciding to cross the first leg of the Crean to beside the rock outcrop dividing the Crean with the next glacier east. We camped on the Crean in a very windy spot but it was a good position to start the following day. Visibility was now good.

Nov 16th - Crossing Day 3



We set off toward our GPS coordinate after breaking camp and roping up. Once out onto the glacier we veered right to aim for Nunatak. After a couple of minutes some small crevasses were now getting more frequent. They were not visible until breaking the 12 inches of snow and ice covering. We proceeded with caution then our lead guide went down with his sled holding fast wedged above the ground. We made contact with him and he was ok before setting up a pully system to get him out. The existing ropework was wedging him more, so we setup another at a right angle to the crevasse line which slowly got him out, he was a bit shaken but no injuries except a little graze and feeling cold having spent 15-20 minutes touching off the cold icy walls. We headed off again after going back and inland 200m before regaining our route. We came across many more here but kept away.



Progress was now good and we finally got to the Nunatak where we rested in stunning sunny low-wind conditions. We knew we could make it off the ice that evening if we kept a good pace. On descending on to the Fortuna Glacier in the afternoon we came to another crevasse zone as reached the centre or approach to the decent. At approx 4pm, a helicopter passed right over us flying NE to SW. After a few more small waist high falls we backed up and again veered right and aimed for the rocky side of the glacier where there is a snow gully taking us down from 350m to about 200m above sea level, half way to the beach avoiding any dangers. We remembered this option from 2006 and we could now hear the hum of and see our ship.



Once on to the snout of the glacier we picked our way down with no need for crampons and onto a moraine, across a stream and onto the back beach proper where Monika and Agustin were approaching us to rendezvous. We were all wrecked tired but elated to have the hard part done. Agustin advised on a campsite on the main beach 100m from shore same as 2006. We got some fresh water sent from the ship after 2 team members went aboard, one with tummy ache and another who just wanted to.

Nov 17th - Crossing Day 4



The following morning we broke camp at 8am and started our circular trek around the shore to meet up the rest of our ship members on the final pass. We noticed Kings mostly adult, Elephant males in or near water, females on beach or near males, some gentoo's nesting, reindeer on high ground with grass, Giant petrels, some Skuas and a pair or two of Albatross, one sooty for definite. There was a blood bath near the water with various of the above tearing a seal pup apart. The Fur seals were aggressive at times especially where there is a bottleneck on the shore, they kept us there for 4-5 minutes before letting us pass.

On getting to the main beach we got a zodiac to drop us across the other side, rather than fording the fast river. We picked up the rest of our ship and staff just before Crean Lake and joined them in walking over the pass. Some of our crossing went ahead and down to Stromness with Niall as guide with them.



We could see two ships in the bay and we were told it was Australians and the Navy, then a little later our ship arrived also. There seemed to be a lot of activity on the shore with High powered ribs coming and going. Once we were all within 30mins of the shore and the navy and Aussies were gone, our first group headed down to get ready for leaving. The fur seals were very angry beside Stromness, who knows what the Aussies or navy said to them!!

Conclusion:

Our successful completion of the crossing this year was not without its sense of adventure. All of our members were very much blown away by the experience. They thought it was tougher than expected. The team also expressed the need of completing crevasse rescue and glacier training prior to going there. They said more winter environment experience would be of benefit and also different scenario's of rescue training would be of benefit. Everyone of them said they would do it again. As guides we found it harder due to poor visibility and deeper snow.

Environmental:

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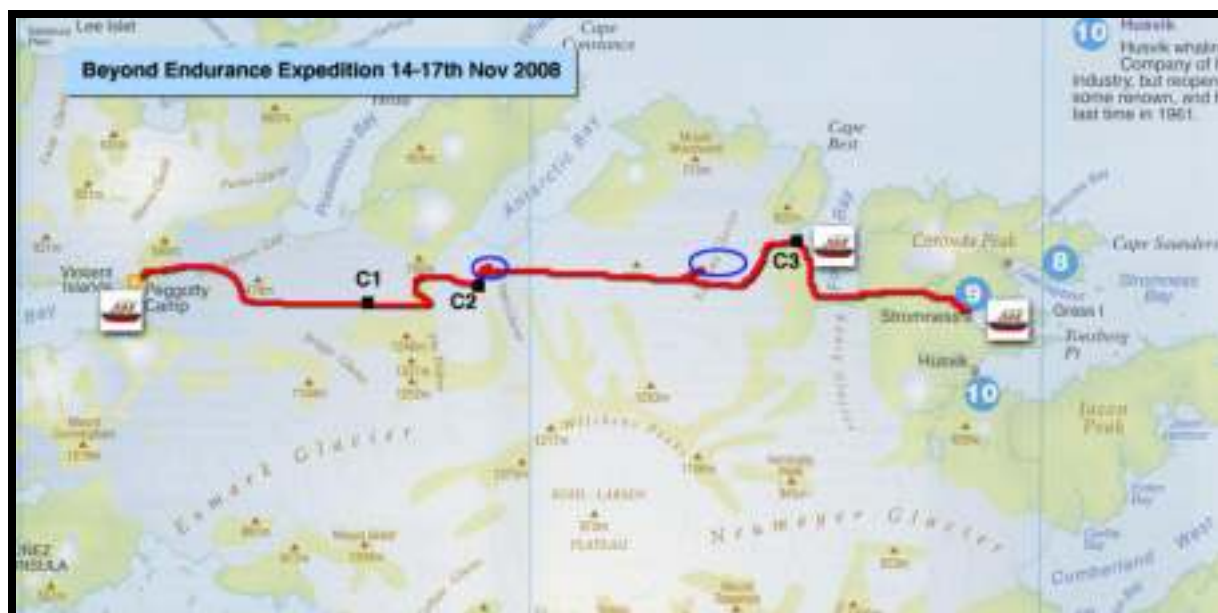
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