

Freeze Frame

historic polar images

Biography of Hurley, James Francis (Frank)

Hurley, James Francis (Frank) (1885-1962)



Born in Sydney, Australia in 1885. He left school without qualifications and worked in a steel mill before completing his education at the University of Sydney. He then worked for a firm of photographers but soon left to join the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911 - 1914 (leader Douglas Mawson). He took photographs of wildlife and was also a member of the party of three that sledged to the South Magnetic Pole in 1912.

Almost immediately after the return of this expedition, he joined the [Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition \[Weddell Sea Party\]](#), 1914 - 1916 (leader [Ernest Henry Shackleton](#)), sailing on *Endurance*. After the *Endurance* was crushed in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea, he and his companions escaped in boats to Elephant Island. A party of six led by Shackleton made the epic journey from Elephant Island to South Georgia to seek help from the Stromness whaling station and in August 1916, Hurley and the remaining members of the expedition were rescued from Elephant Island. Shackleton had forced Hurley to leave his glass negatives on board *Endurance* when they abandoned ship, however, before the ship

broke up Hurley went back and retrieved some of his negatives. He was only able to save about 150 of 500 negatives as this was all he could fit in his storage tin. He and Shackleton smashed the remaining negatives so Hurley could not be tempted to go back for them. He brought back memorable photographs of the wreck of the **Endurance** and scenes on Elephant Island together with the documentary film 'In the grip of the polar ice' [later titled *The Endurance* and now generally known as *South*].

During the First World War, Hurley served as an official war photographer in France and in the Middle East, his colour slides are among the few colour images of the First World War. In both his polar and war photography Hurley used a process of combination printing, combining several negatives to produce one dramatic image. After the war followed filming ventures in New Guinea and central Australia as well as lecture tours in America before he returned to the Antarctic with the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition, 1929 - 1931 (leader Douglas Mawson). After this expedition, Hurley served as a war photographer in the Second World War. He was awarded the OBE in 1941. In 1943 the British Ministry of Education appointed him director of British army features and propaganda films based in the Middle East. When he returned to Australia he produced photographic books on the different regions of Australia.

In 1918 he married Antoinette Thierault with whom he had three daughters and a son.

He died in Sydney on 17 January 1962 aged 77.

Published work:

Hurley, J.F. (1948) *Shackleton's argonauts: a saga of the Antarctic ice-packs*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. Reprint: McGraw 1979.

Hurley, J.F. (1925) *Argonauts of the south: being a narrative of voyaging and polar seas and adventures in the Antarctic with Sir Douglas Mawson and Sir Ernest Shackleton*. New York: Putnam's Sons.

Further Information:

Stonehouse, B. ed. (2002) *Encyclopaedia of Antarctica and the Southern Oceans*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

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