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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Endurance Found – page 3

Antarctica A Creative Journey – page 7

Congratulations Nick – page 7

# POLAR BYTES

ISSUE 103 - MARCH/APRIL/MAY 2022

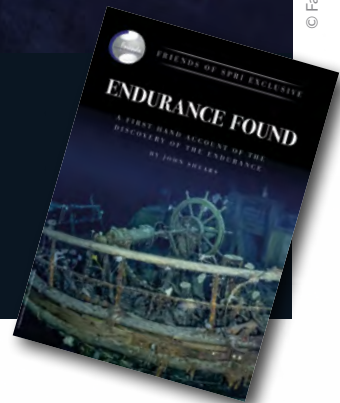
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## ENDURANCE FOUND

Your EXCLUSIVE first hand account of the discovery of the Endurance,  
written by our very own Chair John Shears



### SPRI Centenary Dinner to celebrate the 'Past Present and Future of SPRI'

**Exciting news for everyone associated with SPRI; we now have a date for the long-overdue Centenary Dinner. Hooray! It will be held on Saturday November 5th 2022 and we hope it will go with a bang!**

It will be a smart affair with a Royal presence from our Patron for the Centenary Campaign, HSH the Prince of Monaco. It will also be a lovely way for us to celebrate everything that Professor Julian Dowdeswell has done for SPRI over the last twenty years (a fifth of SPRI's life!), as we weren't able to properly celebrate his achievements when he retired last year.

We will start with a drinks reception and then adjourn for dinner in the splendid hall of Robinson College. Robinson is the youngest college in Cambridge, chosen for our celebration partly to reflect our forward looking Centenary Campaign, fundraising as we are, for the next 100 years.

We are all very much hoping to see as many Friends as possible at this event. Everyone at SPRI has missed, thanks to the pandemic, having events and seeing Friends.

We are also hoping SPRI students, staff and volunteers who missed out on celebrations over the past few years will be able to join us too.

Seats at the dinner will be £100 per head which includes the meal and drinks, and a small donation. More information will follow in due course.

If you have questions about the event or would like to host a table please contact:  
**[directors.pa@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:directors.pa@spri.cam.ac.uk)**

**Please put the date in your diaries and book your seats now.**

**BOOK ONLINE:**  
**[www.bit.ly/SPRI-Gala](http://www.bit.ly/SPRI-Gala)**

Thank you to Argos Froyanes for their generous sponsorship



# Welcome to our Spring Newsletter



Dear Friends,

I hope you are all safe and well. It is wonderful to see life getting back to normal at SPRI, and across the wider UK, after two years of misery, chaos and disruption caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

When I last wrote to you all on 25 January 2022, I was in self-isolation at home in the Cambridgeshire fens and preparing to fly out to Cape Town, South Africa and begin the Endurance22 expedition to Antarctica aboard the icebreaker S.A. Agulhas II.

As I'm sure you will have seen in the news, the expedition was a fantastic success culminating in the historic discovery of Shackleton's Endurance on the 5 March 2022 at a depth of 3000m on the bottom of the Weddell Sea. We found the ship well preserved and intact, sitting upright on her keel on the seabed, and the photographs and video film we took of the wreck are stunning and awe inspiring. I've written a short account about the incredible day we discovered Endurance which you can read in this edition of Polar Bytes.

Thank you to all the Friends who took the time and effort to send me cards, letters, and e-mails of congratulations on finding Endurance. It was amazing to receive such wonderful support, and I really appreciated getting every message. I would also like to thank the Directors and staff at SPRI for all the help they gave me, and our Expedition marine archaeologist - Mensun Bound, in our research to find the wreck. Access to the SPRI Archives enabled us to study a range of historical documents about the Endurance expedition, including Captain Frank Worsley's diary and Leonard Hussey's meteorological records, which provided important clues in our search.

Following my return from Antarctica, I've been catching up with Celene Pickard, our first-class Executive Secretary, and with the Friends generally. I was very pleased to be able to attend the opening of Shelly Perkins art exhibition "Antarctica: A Creative Journey" in the Polar Museum at SPRI on 30 March 2022. Shelly is an excellent wildlife artist, and was the Friends Artist in Residence in 2017. She travelled to the Antarctic Peninsula aboard HMS Protector in January and February of that year. Her exhibition of paintings is on display in the Museum until the end of July. To find out more please click on: <https://tinyurl.com/2axc93t8>

We hope to restart other Friends events at SPRI later in 2022. The Friends Committee will be meeting in person for the first time in over two years on 24 May 2022, and an important item on our agenda will be to agree a new programme of activities. Two very important events have already been confirmed. First, is the Friends AGM and farewell to Julian Dowdeswell, to be held at SPRI on 29 October (details to follow). The second is the SPRI Centenary Gala Dinner, with special guests, which will be held at Robinson College, Cambridge on 5 November 2022. Tickets cost £100 each. To book your place please click on: [www.bit.ly/SPRI-Gala](http://www.bit.ly/SPRI-Gala)

Fund raising for the SPRI Centenary campaign continues. The latest financial summary, dated 28 April 2022, shows that we have now raised the grand total of £207,839.93! A big thank you to the Endurance22 expedition team, and the crew of the S.A. Agulhas II, who together raised £2,890 from the sale of SPRI 100 Centenary First Day Covers. Also, thank you to Andrew Wordie for his donation of £50, following a talk he gave on the life of his grandfather - Sir James Wordie (who was the chief scientist and geologist on the Endurance expedition). We now have only £42,160.07 to raise and finally reach our target of £250,000 to endow a studentship at SPRI. All donations, both large and small, will be gratefully accepted.

The FoSPRI expedition voyage to Spitsbergen and Greenland is confirmed for 27 August - 9 September 2022 onboard the M/V Ortelius. I'm pleased to tell you that all places allocated to the Friends have now been taken but there are still a few remaining places left onboard so do hurry if you wish to book. For more details click on: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8c3p56>

Finally, I would like to send our warmest and best congratulations to the landscape artist Nick Jones on being awarded the highly prestigious Cherry Keaton Medal 2022 by the Royal Geographical Society for his magnificent paintings of polar landscapes. Nick was the Friends Artist in Residence in 2018. The citation from the RGS reads: "As 'Arctic Artist in Residence' of the Friends of SPRI, Nicholas's evocative icy landscapes follow in the legacy of great polar artists such as Seago and Wilson". Well done Nick!

My best wishes to you all,

John Shears

Chairman of the Friends of SPRI

## SAVE THE DATE

Friends of SPRI AGM to be held on  
Saturday 29 October 2022 at 1600 hrs at SPRI.  
Our farewell and thanks to Professor Julian  
Dowdeswell as director of SPRI.  
Further details to follow.





FRIENDS OF SPRI EXCLUSIVE

# ENDURANCE FOUND

A FIRST HAND ACCOUNT OF THE  
DISCOVERY OF THE ENDURANCE

BY JOHN SHEARS







**On 9 March 2022, the Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust issued a Press Release announcing that Shackleton's Endurance had been found at the bottom of the Weddell Sea in Antarctica. The news made headlines around the world.**

***The announcement said:***

“The Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust is pleased to confirm that the Endurance22 expedition has located the wreck of Endurance, Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship which has not been seen since it was crushed by the ice and sank in the Weddell Sea in 1915. One hundred years after Shackleton's death, Endurance was found at a depth of 3008 metres in the Weddell Sea, within the search area defined by the expedition team before its departure from Cape Town, and approximately four miles south of the position originally recorded by Captain Worsley”.

It was my privilege and honour to lead the Endurance22 expedition, and this is a first-hand account of what happened to me on the historic day we found Endurance on 5 March 2022.

The Endurance22 sub sea team launch the Saab Sabretooth AUV in a snowstorm. © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Ester Horvath.



The day started when I woke at 6am in my cabin onboard the powerful South African icebreaker S.A. Agulhas II. I'd not had much sleep, and was very worried.

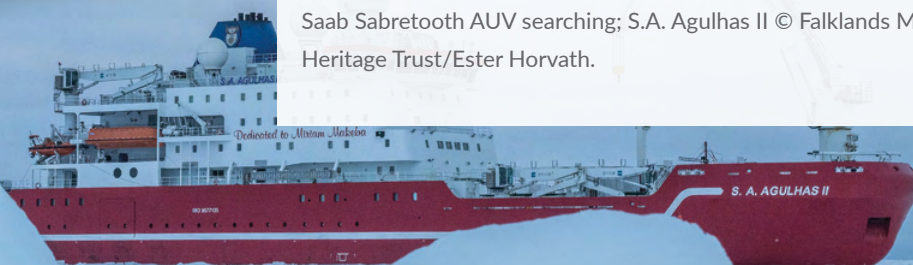
We had spent eighteen days hunting for the Endurance, but with no success. The sub-sea engineering team had been working day and night to deploy our two Saab Sabertooth Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) and carry out the underwater search for the wreck. The crew were tired and exhausted after weeks battling with technical problems with the winches, the constantly shifting sea-ice, high winds and blizzards and temperatures sometimes dropping down to -18°C.

Time was fast running out. We had only a further three days before we would have to abandon the search because of the approach of Antarctic winter, and I knew that at any moment the weather could turn for the worse.

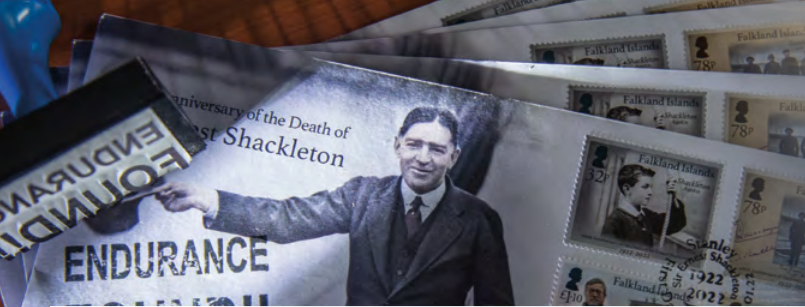
At 7am, I was up on the Ship's Bridge for the daily Captain's meeting with Captain Knowledge Bengu, the Master of S.A. Agulhas II, Mensun Bound, the Expedition Director of Exploration, and Nico Vincent, the Sub-sea Project Manager. Nico told us the Sabertooth had just completed its 27<sup>th</sup> dive, but nothing had been found, and the vehicle was returning to the surface to get its batteries recharged. The AUVs had by now searched 81% of the search box, and surveyed a huge area of nearly 310 km<sup>2</sup>, about the same size as inner London. The focus now was to complete the survey of the southern part of the search box as quickly as possible.

While the AUV was on charge, Captain Knowledge sailed the ship through 1m thick sea ice to the next dive location, about 1 km to the east, and docked us into a large ice floe as had been decided at the Captain's meeting. Just after lunch at 12.30pm, we deployed the Sabertooth from the aft deck lowering it into a small pool of open water at the stern of the vessel. The dive launch went well, and the vehicle was soon surveying the sea bed at 3000m using its side scan sonar.

*Images clockwise from top: S.A. Agulhas II breaking sea ice while searching for the Endurance in the Weddell Sea. © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Nick Birtwistle; John Shears onboard the S.A. Agulhas II; Saab Sabretooth AUV searching; S.A. Agulhas II © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Ester Horvath.*







To help take my mind off making the big decision to call off the search, I decided to go out and explore the frozen sea ice surrounding the ship. I took Mensun with me, as he was also feeling the pressure, and needed a break. The ship's crane lowered us slowly onto the ice in a rope basket. Together we walked out to have a look at a huge iceberg frozen into the pack, about 2km away from the ship, and we stopped to gaze at it towering above us and enjoy the silence. As we returned to the ship, my spirits raised, I told Mensun "Today will be a good day" and then turned to him, grinned and said "I think she's beneath our feet!".

As soon as we were back on deck, Mensun and I got an urgent message on the radio. The Ship's Bridge demanded our presence, immediately. I was extremely worried by the call, and feared the worst: an accident or the AUV lost on the seafloor. We raced up onto the Bridge and found Nico waiting for us. He simply held up his iPhone and said "Gentlemen, let me introduce you to Endurance", and showed us a beautiful high-resolution sonar image of the wreck. She had been discovered just after 4pm, while Mensun and I were out on the ice. I was absolutely stunned by the news. The sonar image showed the ship complete, with her funnel and masts clearly visible. Incredible! We laughed, hugged each other and shook hands, and celebrated the amazing moment along with the crew on the Bridge.

John Shears and Mensun Bound celebrate the discovery of the Endurance on 5 March 2022. © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/ Frederic Bassemayousse.

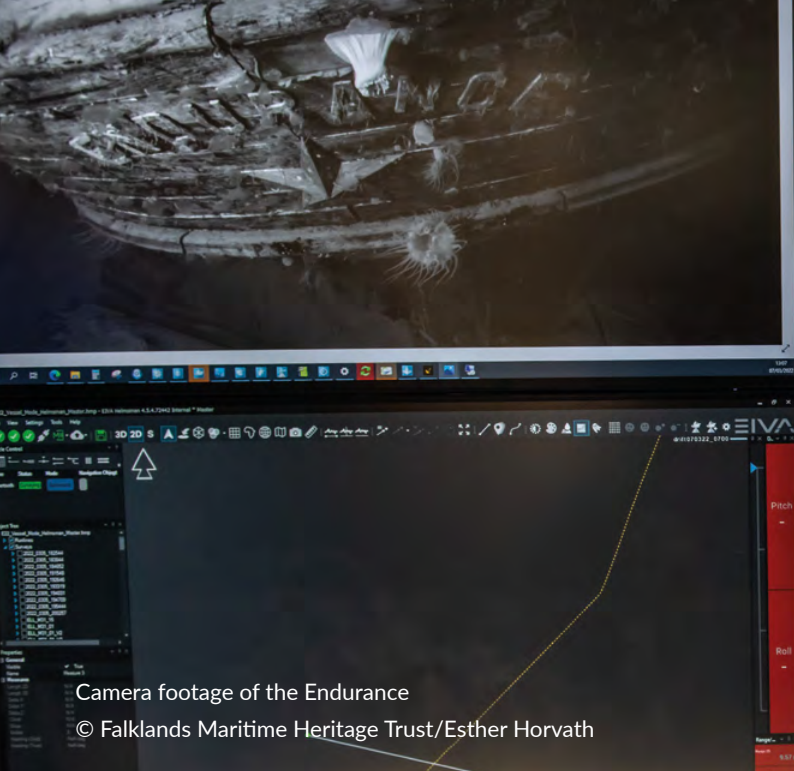


Later that evening Nico called Mensun and I down onto the back deck and we were allowed to go into the Operations room to view live video film of the wreck. It was jaw dropping. We watched in amazement as the AUV flew slowly in and over the Endurance revealing her resting proud and upright on the seafloor, and looking just as she did on 21 November 1915 when she sank. We could see the hull intact, with the paint still on her. Masts, stays, ropes and rigging lay on the deck. The ship's wheel was still in place on the aft well deck, and both anchors and chains visible at the bow. We could see boots, pots, pans and crockery on the deck near the galley. But most amazing of all we could read the ship's name – ENDURANCE – arched in gleaming brass across the stern, and below the five pointed star, Polaris, after which the ship was originally named. I was lost for words, and didn't speak for 10 minutes as I watched the dramatic footage.

*Images clockwise from top:* Endurance found © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Ester Horvath; Landscape © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Nick Birtwistle; The stern of the Endurance with the name and emblematic polestar; Taffrail and ship's wheel, aft well deck on the Endurance; Starboard bow. © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/ National Geographic.







Camera footage of the Endurance  
© Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Esther Horvath

The dive finally ended at 10.30 pm and I was out on the back deck to watch the Sabertooth being brought back onboard. It was a smooth and quick recovery taking only 20 minutes. There was loud cheering and applause when the AUV was safely back on deck. Official photographs and film were then taken of me and Mensun laughing with a wildly excited subsea team and deck crew. It was a wonderful moment of utter joy.

Late that night Mensun and I celebrated in his cabin with a cup of English tea and piece of Lindt dark chocolate. The magnitude of what we had achieved was only just beginning to sink in. But we knew we couldn't dwell on the momentous discovery. We had to ensure Endurance was properly photographed, filmed, scanned and surveyed, and we only had two days to complete the job. Also, I needed to ensure we didn't get stuck in the ice and get us all back to Cape Town safely.

John Shears, Mensun Bound, Nico Vincent, and JC Caillens.  
© Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Esther Horvath



The Expedition team pay their respects at Shackleton's grave, Grytviken cemetery, South Georgia. © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/Esther Horvath

I finally returned to my cabin at 2am to try and snatch a few hours rest. But before I could sleep, I started planning a brief visit to South Georgia. Earlier in the evening it had been decided by the FMHT, Captain Knowledge and myself, that we should try to detour via South Georgia to pay our respects at Shackleton's grave. He was buried in the cemetery at Grytviken whaling station on 5 March 1922. Exactly one hundred years later we had found his ship Endurance. Visiting his grave would be a fitting and proper way to end the expedition.

The day ended with me writing up my diary. The last lines I wrote were: "What a day. We have found the Endurance and completed the world's most difficult shipwreck search!". Seconds later I was fast asleep.

*John Shears*

J.R. Shears - 12 May 2022

S.A. Agulhas II breaking sea ice  
© Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust/James Blake



# Antarctica A Creative Journey

*An exhibition of art by Shelly Perkins*

**Shelly Perkins is a wildlife artist who aims to present the beauty and fragility of the natural world in an accessible way through her work.**

**In 2017, Shelly travelled to Antarctica aboard the Royal Navy's ice patrol vessel, HMS Protector as the Friends of Scott Polar Research Institute's Antarctic Artist in Residence.**

Open now until 28 July 2022, free as part of your visit to the Polar Museum.

"Just the name Antarctica sends a frisson of excitement down the spine of any would be adventurer. It's one of the last places on our planet where a true wilderness experience can still be had." – Shelly Perkins

Shelly has a particular interest in wildlife and conservation issues, and she creates engaging and accessible works with a focus on wildlife. Her innovative working methods, combining a mix of traditional and digital techniques to create textural collaged works, made her an excellent choice for one of our residencies.

During her time on HMS Protector, Shelly was lucky enough to visit some remarkable places including Port Lockroy, Base Y on Horseshoe Island, Deception Island, Lagotellerie Island and Rothera. These different locations and their incredible landscapes and wildlife are brought to life in Shelly's wonderful artworks, now on display at the Polar Museum.

Visit Shelly's website: [www.shellyperkins.co.uk](http://www.shellyperkins.co.uk)



Shelly's book is available through the Polar Museum shop; it is hardbound and comprises of 125 pages of photographs, text and artwork from her trip.

**Priced at only £30**



Images clockwise: Glacial Monuments artwork; Charlotte Connelly, Shelly Perkins and John Shears at the Polar Museum

## Congratulations Nick

**We are thrilled to report that former Friends of SPRI Arctic Artist in Residence Nick Jones has been awarded the Royal Geographical Societies Cherry Kearton Medal and Award for 2022 for his polar landscapes.**

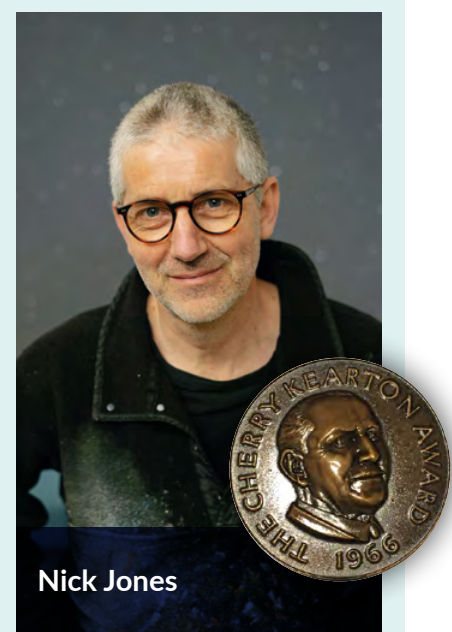
Each year the Royal Geographical Society makes a series of awards that 'recognise extraordinary achievement in geographical research, fieldwork, teaching, policy,

and public engagement.' The Cherry Kearton Medal and Award is presented to 'a traveller concerned with the study or practice of natural history, especially those with an interest in nature photography, art or cinematography.' Recent previous recipients include iconic photographers Steve McCurry and Yann Arthus Bertrand, artists Tacita Dean and Andy Goldsworthy, and going further back, Sir David Attenborough.

Nick said, "Finding ways to evoke the endless richness of the natural world through paint on canvas has been a great pleasure and passion of my life. To receive the RGS Cherry Kearton Award for doing what makes me feel so alive is a wonderful affirmation and a great honour."

**The ceremony is due to take place on Monday 6th June.**

Medal right: RGS Cherry Kearton Award © Royal Geographical Societies



Nick Jones



## From the Institute

A few words from Interim Director  
Neil Arnold email: nsa12@cam.ac.uk

As I am sure you have noticed, this edition of Polar Bytes has been sent out together with the 95th Annual Review of the activities of the Scott Polar Research Institute. I hope you enjoy reading about the research and other activities undertaken by members of the Institute during 2021. In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, research at SPRI was as vibrant and wide-ranging as ever, and toward the end of last year we saw the resumption of polar fieldwork to Antarctica and Greenland. The Review also reports the range of activities within the Polar Museum, the Library, and the Archives over the last year. I'd like to thank all the staff for their contributions, and particularly my new PA (and Assistant to the Museum Curator) Lucy Grabiner, for all her hard work putting the review together.



I'm pleased to say that we have begun to resume the planned but deferred series of events and exhibitions within the Polar Museum, starting with an exhibition of works by Shelly Perkins. Shelly travelled to Antarctica aboard the Royal Navy's ice patrol vessel, HMS Protector, as the Friends of SPRI's Antarctic Artist in Residence. Her works are beautiful; I hope you can travel to the Institute in the coming months to see them.

I'm also truly delighted to be co-hosting the Gala Dinner later this year marking the centenary of the Institute with Julian Dowdeswell, who has led the way as Institute Director, and on our fundraising activity, for the last twenty years. The dinner will be an excellent opportunity to thank Julian in person for his many years of service in the Institute, especially as his retirement gathering had to be held online due to Covid restrictions. Do please look out for the invitations, and I hope to meet many of you on the 5th of November.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO BOOK!

## Spitsbergen & Northeast Greenland Cruise



There are still remaining places for our trip of a lifetime fund-raising voyage for the Friends.  
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## Lesley Burr & make:connections project

**The arctic residency enabled me to experience a vast wilderness that is the polar arctic, the breath-taking physical beauty, remoteness and increasing vulnerability as the environment changes.**

This voyage added to a long-standing fascination with life in the North, encounters with nature, people, wilderness and polar iconography. It is proving a very fruitful journey creatively. During lockdown I was able to focus on making new prints and paintings that are ready to be exhibited. Lesley has several exhibitions in 2023 including Stirling Smith Art gallery & museum. Currently you can see the oil painting 'Greenland Iceberg in Rose Light' recently selected for 2022 RSA annual exhibition, the Mound, Edinburgh, until 14 June. You can view the online exhibition using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/3hjnzmnw>



## A note from the Executive Secretary

Friends Secretary Celene Pickard  
email: friends@spri.cam.ac.uk

Dear Friends

**NEW FRIENDS** - A very warm welcome is extended to all new members.

**PASSING FRIENDS** - One of our intrepid sponsored 'dog-sledgers' of 2007, Colin Cameron, sadly passed away in August 2021. He raised substantial funds for the Friends by participating in one of our dog-sledging challenges in Northern Norway and became a LIFE member. We send our sincere condolences to his family.

**Friends Secretary** – Celene Pickard Email: friends@spri.cam.ac.uk  
Tel: 01223 336 540 The Friends Office, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER, England



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