

1917.
NEW ZEALAND.

“AURORA” ANTARCTIC RELIEF EXPEDITION

(REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE), BY CAPTAIN JOHN KING DAVIS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Excellency.

“AURORA” RELIEF EXPEDITION, 1916–17.

“AURORA,” auxiliary barquentine. Tonnage, 580 gross, 386 net. Built 1876, by Stephens, of Dundee. Length, 165 ft.; breadth, 30 ft. 6 in.; depth, 18 ft. 9 in. Loaded draught, carries approximately 600 tons, dead-weight. Engines, steam, compound; nominal horse-power, 98.

Crew List.—Master, John King Davis; chief officer, C. F. de la Motte; second officer, A. le Gros; third officer, W. Aylward; staff officer, M. H. Moyes, R.A.N.; surgeon, F. G. Middleton; purser, A. H. Ninnis; wireless operator, T. M. Ryan; chief engineer, F. C. Gillies; second engineer, A. Dakin; boatswain, J. Paton; chief steward, A. Webster; second steward, B. P. Robertson; cook, H. Voegeli; donkeyman, M. Hannan; A.B.s, W. Peacock, W. Kavanagh, E. McDonald, A. Mackinnon, — MacNeill, C. Brock, J. Rafferty, E. Murphy, T. Smith.

REPORT.

SECTION—PORT CHALMERS TO ANTARCTIC CIRCLE.

The “Aurora” completed loading on the evening of 19th December, 1916, and at 6.55 a.m. on 20th December left Port Chalmers wharf and proceeded to an anchorage. The vessel carried a crew of twenty-four hands, was provisioned for eighteen months, and had on board 524 tons of coal. Her draft was 18 ft. 9 in. aft and 17 ft. 5 in. forward.

At 9 a.m. the tug “Plucky” arrived alongside and Sir E. Shackleton was embarked. The Minister of Marine, New Zealand (Hon. Dr. McNab), handed me final instructions, and at 9.20 a.m. the “Aurora” proceeded to sea.

We were provided with an efficient wireless installation of ordinary ships’ type—a 2½ kw. set, motor generator; the aerial, “L” type, Navy pattern, 85 ft. high and 85 ft. long. Power was provided by a shunt-wound 9.2 kw. dynamo, direct-coupled to a steam-engine. This generating-set was also in daily use for ship’s lighting and charging of storage batteries.

On 21st December antarctic clothing was issued to the officers and crew.

A southerly course was followed from Port Chalmers in moderate weather until 24th December, when the high north-westerly seas made it necessary to bear away to the south-east, and on this course we continued until the evening of 27th December. Wind and sea then moderated, and it was possible to haul more to the southward. On this day the first ice was sighted—two tabular bergs, each about ¼ mile long and 100 ft. in height—in lat. 60° 50′ S., long. 179° 10′ W.

Nothing of importance occurred until 29th December, when we arrived in lat. 64° 55′ S., long. 176° 40′ W., the latitude in which pack ice has usually been encountered by previous expeditions. Here a considerable swell and remarkable absence of ice were noticeable, and indicated, apparently, that the Ross Sea was more or less open this season.

Wireless communication was maintained until the aerial was blown down during a gale on 26th December. At this time we were 700 miles from the receiving-station, Avarua. On 29th December, when approximately 1,200 miles from the receiving-station, the wireless officer “read in,” but was not able to make himself heard by them in reply, the period of twenty-four hours daylight having been reached.

On 30th December the Antarctic Circle was crossed, after a fair passage across the westerly wind belt. During the passage constant high sea caused the vessel to labour and strain considerably. The repairs may therefore be considered to have been efficiently carried out as, although deeply laden, she made very little water.

The food, stores, clothing, and equipment supplied to the Relief Expedition have proved suitable and of excellent quality, and in this connection I should mention the debt that the Expedition is under to Mr. J. J. Kinsey, of the New Zealand Committee.