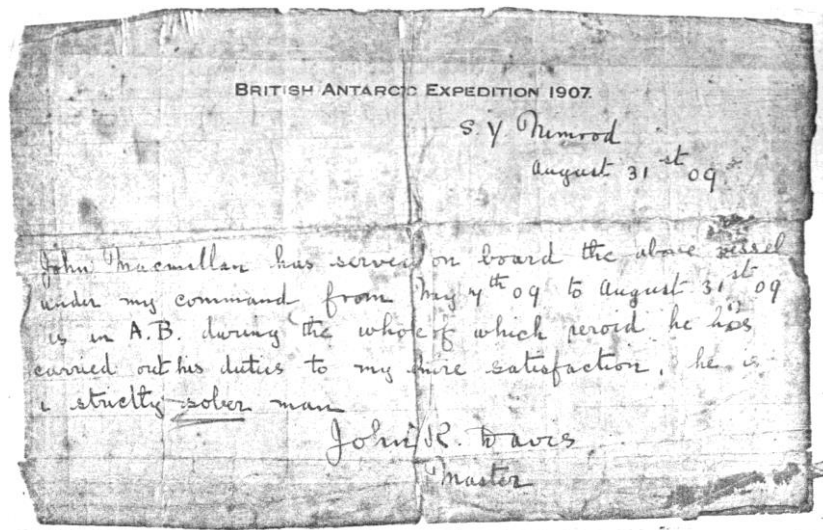


## LORD SHACKLETON CORRESPONDENCE



### Lord Shackleton in Antarctic

WELLINGTON (NZPA) — Lord Shackleton, son of Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, visited the South Pole this week, completing a journey begun by his father more than 70 years ago.

Sir Ernest Shackleton, who made several attempts to be the first person to reach the South Pole, died on an Antarctic expedition in 1922.

This week his son, Lord Shackleton, flew to Antarctica as a guest of the Antarctic Division of New Zealand's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.



THE 'NIMROD' IN THE ICE

Source:

[https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Ernest%20Shackleton\\_Nimrod\\_expedition-george-marston-paintings.php](https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Ernest%20Shackleton_Nimrod_expedition-george-marston-paintings.php)



Scott Polar Expedition with Sir Ernest Shackleton. Mr John McMillan A B of Lambton was a member of the crew. He joined in 1908.

*Mr John McMillan – 1883–1968*

His daughter, Mrs Myrtle Hoy of New Lambton offered me this information for inclusion in this history of Lambton because they were a Lambton family.

The Hoy family have all lived in Lambton since before the turn of the century. Myrtle's husband, Tom, and my husband, Alfred George Hoy, Jnr. were cousins. (My husband was always called 'Fred'.)



Mr and Mrs McMillan with their granddaughter, Kathleen, on her wedding day.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Shackleton, KG., PC., OBE.  
Enserch House, 8 St. James's Square,  
London SW1Y 4JU



House of Lords

4th March, 1986

PERSONAL

Mrs. Myrtle Hoy,  
34 Longworth Avenue,  
Near Lambton,  
Newcastle,  
N.S.W. 2305  
AUSTRALIA

*Dear Mrs Hoy*

Thank you for your letter which I received today and read with the greatest interest. You and I are both about the same age, since I am seventy-four. I still play tennis, and also ski, but try to avoid cutting the lawns, etcetera!

Furthermore, may I also say how sad I was that you should have lost your only son when he was only 21 years old. We lost our only son, owing to a malignant brain tumour, at the age of 36 and certainly it is the worst thing that has happened in our lives. I am sorry, too, that you lost your husband six years ago. However, you have the comfort of two married daughters, with four grandchildren - and my married daughter has two splendid boys now aged 13 and 15.

Turning now to the "Nimrod" and your father. I read the papers you sent with much interest. I was only 9 when my father died and, of course, was not born at the time of the "Nimrod" expedition. Interestingly enough, when I was Minister of Defence for the R.A.F. and they were finding a successor for the Shackleton maritime aircraft (which was named after my father), I suggested the Nimrod, which is now the present R.A.F. maritime aircraft. Unfortunately, I fear I have no pictures of the "Nimrod", but I will see whether I can get one - and, if so, I will send it to you.

*Best wishes  
for spring  
Edw. Shackleton*

SHACKLETON



to: Dr. D. J. DREWRY

SCOTT POLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
LENSFIELD ROAD, CAMBRIDGE  
ENGLAND CB2 1ER

Telephone: 0223-337733/336540  
Extension: 6555

Telex: 81240 CAMSPL G

4 April 1986

Mrs M. Hoy,  
34 Longworth Avenue,  
near Lambton,  
Newcastle,  
New South Wales 2305,  
Australia.

Dear Mrs Hoy,

Lord Shackleton recently forwarded me a copy of your letter and enclosures about Sir Ernest Shackleton and the *Nimrod* expedition. I have had a look through our photograph and paintings collections and hope the enclosed print of *Nimrod* in the ice will appeal to you. It is a copy of a water-colour by George Marston and shows the conditions the ship experienced, I believe, better than any of our contemporary photographs.

The enclosures to your letter concerning Mr John McMillan were most interesting. I shall add them to our archival records of the expedition. We have a fairly extensive set of papers and published material about Sir Ernest's three Antarctic expeditions as well as quite a lot of biographical details, much of which was given to us by Lord Shackleton. Any additional material is always greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



R.K. Headland  
Archivist

RKH/PML

## HE DREAMS OF TALL SHIPS

*by WH Fenwick*

I found Scottish sailorman John McMillan in bed, his small grey head peeping from a curl of eiderdown. A few days earlier he had fractured three ribs in a fall. It wasn't his week.

His wife, snow-haired, smiling, announced his visitor and called for a clearing of the decks. "Put your teeth in, Johnny. You're hard enough to understand at the best of times!"

I explained that I had dropped by to talk about ships, the sailing ships of another era and the men who manned them. I apologised for the intrusion, but my host wasn't listening.

At the mention of sail his chin appeared above the eiderdown; his old eyes lit up.

"Sailing ships? Yes, I can tell you about the sailing ships. Brave ships they were ..."

For a long period John McMillan served in sailing ships, three-masted barques most of them, that took him to the four corners of the earth as apprentice, able seaman and second mate.

For him they were things of beauty; a raw, unforgettable beauty and still man's noblest answer to the ancient challenge of the sea.

He delights in talking about them; writing verse about them. On his bedroom walls pictures of them abound.

He is a dreamer ever faithful to his dreams. "I didn't leave the sea," he confided. "The sea left me. When the sailing ship disappeared the heart went out of me. It was like losing an old friend."

I said I understood. He cocked a cooperative eyebrow.

"My memory isn't what it used to be, but I can still recall details of most of my voyages. What experiences they were!"

"There was the run in the old barque Gulfstream we thought would never end. From Antwerp to Vancouver it was, and we met foul weather and head winds all the way. It took 218 days.

"Then there were the voyages around Cape Horn – more than a dozen of them. Bad weather usually, but not always. I remember being becalmed off Cape Horn for 48 hours. On another occasion we survived a bad tossing at the Horn only to catch fire on the other side. We made the River Plate, but sank under the weight of water they pumped into our holds.

"I never saw the Horn, of course. Few men of sail did. At that point all sailing ships kept well out to sea. They were the days. We'll never see those ships – or those men again."

Born in Glasgow 84 years ago (1883), the son of a marine engineer, John McMillan went to sea at the age of 14 – as a mess boy in a steamer that tramped the Baltic. When the ship was laid up a year later he found himself a berth on a sailing ship and settled down to serve his time as a seaman.

He thrilled to the life, and studied hard to make his way in it.

Within five years he had won his second mate's certificate and was earning the magnificent sum of £5 a month – with keep.

He saw little of home and family, but in a day when a "quick" run to Australia occupied 100 days this was to be expected – and accepted.

He told me: "In those days it was not unusual for a sailor to be away from his home port for two years. The ship was his home, and he rarely left it for more than a few hours at a time." Sailing with veterans, he heard all the strange stories and legends of the sea, and took them to heart ...

"They believed many things, the old timers. They believed that when an old sailor died he became an albatross and followed tall ships over the sea."

Work was difficult, dangerous and constant, with conditions sometimes approaching the impossible. Accommodation was barely adequate; the food ...

"When I look back I wonder how we managed to stay alive. For breakfast you got coffee and biscuits, for dinner a piece of corned beef or corned pork and for supper a little tea and more biscuits. Water was rationed and we were always thirsty. As an apprentice I shared a bucket of water a day with eight other lads. We didn't get it all, of course – some had to go to the cook for tea-making." Yet he loved it. Every minute of it.

When berths in sail became hard to find, and the magic of the sea soured as a result, John McMillan looked to steam. But only to keep the wolf from the door. In 1908 he joined the Shackleton Antarctic expedition as a crew member of the *Nimrod*, a steam and sail vessel and a compromise not to his liking.

The *Nimrod* remained in Antarctic waters "a twelve month" looking for groups of islands that were never found, and John McMillan suffered the twin disasters of deep freeze and boredom ... "We were well fed on that voyage tinned stuff, and naturally there was no shortage of water, but cold ...!"

Arriving in Sydney around 1910, he married a girl from his native Glasgow and set about raising a family. For many years he worked on dredges at various points on the coast. Later he moved to Newcastle and the fo'csles of the BHP ore carriers. Since retirement at the age of 65 he has lived quietly in his little cottage in Lambton, grandfather and great-grandfather, dreaming of the old days, remembering the faces and ships that stole away with time.

Thinking of those old legends, giving his fancy form –

I wonder when I die, if I, an albatross, will soar on High,  
And watch those white crests breaking Down on the southern sea;  
Or lie with outstretched wings One chill grey morn  
High o'er the swaying masts Of some brave ship  
That battles round Cape Horn.

*Source: 1990, Mrs Myrtle Hoy, nee McMillan, a cousin (by marriage) of my late husband, offered me these papers, thinking I would like to include them in my History of Lambton. Thank you, Myrtle, I am sure people will enjoy reading the story, as much as I did.*