

Scott Polar Research Institute

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(Scott Polar Research Institute, 2023)

Alias: None

Title: Mr

Dates: 1872-1943

Nationality: New Zealand

Awards: Polar Medal (silver); Distinguished Service Order; Order of the British Empire; Royal Naval Reserve Decoration

Frank Worsley was born in the seaport of Akaroa, on the South Island of New Zealand. He became an apprentice seaman at 15 years of age, and had 27 years of experience, mainly with the New Zealand Shipping Company, the New Zealand Government Steamer Service, and the Allan Line Royal Mail Steamers, before he joined Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

Worsley's reason for applying for a position with Shackleton was highly unusual. As he wrote in his book *Endurance*: 'One night I dreamed that Burlington Street was full of ice blocks, and that I was navigating a ship along it ... when I woke up next morning I hurried ... down Burlington Street ... a sign on a doorpost caught my eye. It bore the words "Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition," and no sooner did I see it than I turned into the building with the conviction that it had some special significance for me. Shackleton was there. He and I spent only a few minutes together, but ... He quickly divined what I wanted, and presently said to me, "You're engaged." When *Endurance* sailed from [] mouth, Worsley was the leader on board, until Shackleton joined in Buenos Aires.'

Worsley was in charge of Dudley Docker on the way to Elephant Island. Then, on the journey towards South Georgia, his navigation during the 800-mile journey was truly remarkable. During the 15-day voyage, he managed only four sightings, and they were far from ideal, but he still navigated the boat to a safe harbour at King Haakon Bay. With Shackleton and Tom Crean, Worsley thereafter crossed South Georgia. For his valuable contributions to the expedition, Worsley was awarded the Polar Medal in silver.

Upon his return from the Antarctic, Worsley captained the Q-ship PC.61. He was responsible for the sinking of a German submarine by a skilful ramming manoeuvre. For this action, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). Later in the war he worked in the transportation of supplies in Arctic Russia and in the intervention in north Russia against the Bolsheviks, earning a bar to his DSO. He later received an OBE.

In 1921, Worsley joined the Shackleton-Rowett Antarctic Expedition 1921-22 (*Quest*) as captain of *Quest*. After the expedition, he captained many vessels sailing between Britain, Norway, and Canada. In 1934 he hunted for treasure around the Cocos Islands. During the Second World War he initially served with the International Red Cross in Norway and then commanded the Motor Ambulance Training Station at Balham, London. In 1941, having lied about his age, he was given command of a merchant ship, *Dalriada*, which was in clearing wreckage from the harbour at Sheerness. When it was discovered he was actually 70 years old, he was taken off the ship and appointed a lecturer at HMS King Alfred, a training school at Hove. Worsley



5th

died of lung cancer in 1943, and his ashes were scattered at sea.

~~Worsley was a prolific writer about his own career. He wrote 'Under Sail in the Frozen North' (1927), 'Endurance' (1931), 'Shackleton's Boat Journey' (1933), and 'First Voyage, in a Square-Rigged Ship' (1938).~~

Worsley's contributions to Antarctic exploration are commemorated by Cape Worley (64°39'S, 60°24'W) on the east coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, Mount Worsley (54°11'S, 37°09'W) on South Georgia, and the Worsley Icefalls (82°57'S, 155°00'E), near the head of Nimrod Glacier.

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