

Exploring Shackleton

Beau Riffenburgh

Oslo: The Fram Museum, 2015.

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The party now settled down to five months trapped in one small area. Initially, they could work outside but as winter approached they were confined to tasks inside or near the hut. This was built of sections of fir timber lined with match-boarding, and the external walls and roof were covered with heavy roofing felt, a layer of tongue-and-groove boards, and more felt. At 33 by 19 feet (10 x 5.8 m) with eight feet (2.4 m) to the eaves, it was exceedingly small for 15 men. The main areas were the darkroom, Shackleton's room, the kitchen area, the central work area—which had a dining table that could be raised to clear a space—and seven tiny cubicles, each of which held two people. With only two small windows, lighting was provided by an acetylene gas plant on a raised platform and charged with carbide, with flexible steel tubes allowing the use of four portable lamps.

Each cubicle was six feet by seven (1.8 x 2.1 m), and was separated from those next to it by walls of packing boxes, and from the central area by hanging blankets. The most crowded cubicle was that in which Wild and Joyce were joined by a printing press and a type case. Shackleton had wanted to go one better than Scott's *The South Polar Times*, so he had decided to publish an entire book. Lent all the equipment necessary to do so, he had sent Joyce and Wild to learn the basics of typesetting and printing. Along with Marston, who was in charge of print etching and lithography, the former *Discovery* men put out a publication named *Aurora Australis*. It included 10 written contributions—two by Shackleton—and was dedicated to Elizabeth Dawson-Lambton. When the printing was complete, Bernard Day, the motor-car expert, produced covers for it out of the Venesta boards used in the packing boxes.