



Lt Col A E H (Henry) Worsley MBE

4.10.1960 – 24.1.2016

From The Daily Telegraph:

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Worsley, who has died aged 55, was the only person ever to have completed the two classic routes to the South Pole established by his Edwardian predecessors, Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton; his third expedition to the Antarctic, however, ended in tragedy.

A special forces veteran who had served in Bosnia and Afghanistan, Worsley was a descendant of Frank Worsley, Sir Ernest Shackleton's skipper on *Endurance*, and confessed to being a Shackleton obsessive. After a distinguished 36-year career in the Army, on November 14 last year he set off on the most challenging expedition he had ever attempted, hauling a 148kg sledge in a bid to complete the first solo crossing of Antarctica, from Gould Bay to the Ross Ice Shelf via the South Pole, unaided and unassisted even by a dog sled team. Shackleton had failed in the same attempt 100 years earlier when *Endurance* was crushed by pack ice even before he had set off.

Worsley aimed to complete the 1,100-mile journey in 75 days, to mark the centenary of Shackleton's expedition and to raise money for the Endeavour Fund, which supports injured servicemen and women, and of which the Duke of Cambridge is patron.

In his daily audio diaries Worsley spoke of battling ferocious storms, temperatures of minus 40C and bouts of depression, becoming disoriented by white-outs and navigating down a 6,000ft glacier with the constant threat of falling into a crevasse. On one occasion he lost a front tooth after biting into a frozen energy bar and on another he was trapped in his tent by a storm that wiped out an entire penguin colony.

Having reached the South Pole on January 3 and after raising more than £100,000 for the Endeavour Fund, he was just 30 miles short of his goal when he collapsed, unable to go any further. After two days trapped in his tent, he was airlifted to hospital in Chile, where he subsequently died from bacterial peritonitis. Alastair Edward Henry Worsley was born on October 4 1960 in London into a military family. His father, General Sir Richard Worsley, GCB, would serve as Quartermaster General of the Army in the early 1980s. Henry's interest in polar exploration began as a boy when he came across accounts of the exploits of Shackleton and Scott in the his prep school library, though it was the story of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition that really inspired him.

From Stowe, where he excelled in sports, captaining the school's cricket team, Worsley trained at Sandhurst and was commissioned into 3rd Battalion, the Royal Green Jackets, in 1980. He went on to become adjutant of his battalion and accomplished the rare feat of passing both the selection for the SAS (in 1988) and, a few years later, for "special duties" in Northern Ireland, where he served with 14 Intelligence Company – work for which he was appointed MBE in 1994.

For two years from January 1996 he commanded 1st Battalion, Royal Green Jackets, on a tour of Bosnia. He commanded 2nd Battalion, Royal Green Jackets, from 2000 to 2002. Altogether he completed four tours with the SAS, including two tours of Afghanistan where, in 2006, he was the first member of the coalition forces to enter Helmand province – as part of a recce operation. He played cricket for the Army, and his last job before his retirement in October 2015 was as special forces liaison officer in Washington.

Worsley recalled that whenever he faced a challenging situation he would ask himself: “How would Shacks get out of this then?” He had asked this question in Bosnia, when he had become separated from his comrades and trapped in a small café by a violent, stone-throwing mob, who were trying to flush him out. “I had to be decisive and make a move as Shackleton had done,” he wrote. “I made a dash for it and somehow avoided the rocks and bottles as I ran for cover.” A friend has recalled Worsley telling him how, to calm his nerves during his first time in a war zone, he had taken up sewing as a hobby. He was delighted in later years to be given a cushion by an inmate at Wandsworth prison, where he had volunteered to teach needlework. His kindness and concern for others also shone through in his polar adventures.

He embarked on his first major Antarctic expedition in 2008-9, when he joined forces with two descendants of, respectively, Shackleton and Jameson Boyd Adams, a member of Shackleton’s team on the “Nimrod” expedition to the South Pole of 1908-9, which the team hoped to complete, Shackleton having stopped about 100 miles short of the prize to head for home. The expedition led the three men, with Bill Shipton, an old comrade-in arms of Worsley’s, to set up the Shackleton Foundation, an organisation which provides seed-corn funding for social entrepreneurs working with disadvantaged young people.

In his memoir *In Shackleton’s Footsteps* (2011), Worsley described how, on entering Shackleton’s hut at Cape Royds, he stopped dead in his tracks: “Despite the silence, I could hear Shackleton and his men chatting, laughing and coughing. I could smell the tobacco, the tea and the coal burning in the stove. I could even hear the invitation to come over and join them for a brew. In the kitchen area, dried hams hung from the wall. Jars of pickled onions and golden syrup stood in neat rows beside stacks of chipped enamel plates. Safety pins, buttons, matches, candles and frayed bootlaces lined the shelves. Everywhere I looked, there were items that had been touched, eaten from, read, washed in, slept on or owned by the 15 men who for a year had called this most southerly refuge their home.”

Three years later, in 2011-12, Worsley returned to Antarctica, leading a team of six soldiers in a race along the original 1912 routes charted by Captain Scott and Roald Amundsen to be first to the South Pole. He led the Amundsen route from the Bay of Whales, up the Axel Heiberg Glacier to the South Pole, a 900-mile unsupported journey.

In 1993 he married Joanna Stainton who, in a recent interview, described her husband as a man of “enormous mental strength” who felt a huge sense of responsibility to the Endeavour Fund: “He believes that he was one of the lucky ones in the Army – he was never injured but lots of colleagues were.”

She survives him with their son and daughter.

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Worsley, born October 4 1960, died January 24 2016