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Severe weather delays Greenwich explorer's Shackleton quest

Anne W. Semmes Published 10:00 pm, Monday, October 27, 2014



Greenwich resident Luc Hardy and his team of adventurer's have been stymied by severe weather as they attempt to follow in the footsteps of arctic explorer Ernest Shackleton. Here, they try to build a snow wall around their tent to fend off the howling winds

When Greenwich adventurer/environmentalist **Luc Hardy** set out earlier this month to follow in the footsteps of Antarctic explorer **Ernest Shackleton**, he knew he could be in for a rough trip. But not this rough.

Hardy's nine-member team has met with such severe weather conditions in their attempts to traverse South Georgia Island that they have had to abandon their attempt and seek safety with the hope of continuing under better conditions.

"In some ways our situation is similar to a Shackleton one," Hardy writes. "Our goal should not necessarily be to finish the crossing of the island but for all to return to safety as soon as possible."

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Hardy has been chronicling his journey on his Pax Arctica blog at www.paxarctica.org.

"We're in the kind of situation where when one wakes up, we all wake up and today it's around 6 a.m. We were so exhausted last night that we slept relatively well. I was woke up suddenly at 11:30 p.m. because there was total silence -- wind has stopped blowing. But unfortunately there was not much we could do at that time. Around 3 a.m., the unnerving sound of very strong winds blowing against the tarp started again, similar to last night. Quite a bit of snow found its way into the tent. Add that to the humidity in the tent from 9 sleeping bodies and consequently the canvas, my sleeping bag (even on the inside) and everything else is very wet," he writes.

He adds: "Now we must wait. What should we do? Get ready and continue on the traverse itinerary? Go back to King Haakon Bay where the boat is? Go to Possession Bay to find protection and wait for the boat to pick us up? We know that the weather forecast is not so good but we are still hoping for a few hours of calm to dismantle the tent and move forward. At our scheduled satellite phone call with [Ben Wallis](#), the boat captain, we discuss the idea of moving the boat to Possession Bay. It will take them about 24 hours but it will be a good safety for us if all hell breaks loose with the weather.

We spend the next three hours or so just waiting. Everyone is calm but we can tell from all of our faces -- from the most experienced (Ben) to the rookie (Keith) -- that we are all nervous and anxious. And all the while the tent is getting smaller because the wind has been pushing snow around the perimeter. It gets harder and harder to fit all nine in the tent just sitting. Left to continue the tent will eventually be buried by snow. We know that we have to make some decisions, soon. . . . At 10 a.m. we send an urgent SMS to Yan, our weather forecast analyst in France, using our inReach GPS/communication device. He works for Meteo France. Using all the data at his disposal, he can give us a precise forecast for the next day or two. Within an hour we get an answer. The forecast calls for more 50-100 km/h winds all day. There seems to be no chance of this ending soon so at 11:30 a.m. we decide to try to put an end to this misery. We will each carry only a backpack, no skis, no sleds. And we will attempt to go down to Possession Bay. By 12 noon we are all packed and ready to go. The visibility is relatively good, but the wind is extreme. We hope that by the time we reach lower altitudes it will calm down. After almost three hours of descent, sometimes with only 50 feet visibility, we cross a beautiful glacier and finally make it to the beach area. From there we communicate again with Ben Wallis who should be arriving in Possession Bay around 6 p.m. We are fine but exhausted and now have to wait a couple of hours for the boat to arrive so we spend time 'on the beach' photographing seals and birds.

When we finally get on board Australis, Ben Wallis tells us that he had 50 knot winds at sea level in King Haakon Bay where he was waiting for us. The crew was very anxious for us as they had no news for the entire night.

Our plan now is to wait for a window of good weather to go up again and resume the crossing from our abandoned camp."

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