



## ***Mrs Chippy***

Mrs Chippy is the name of the ship's cat that accompanied the carpenter and master shipwright Harry McNeish from their home in Cathcart, Scotland on Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914-1916 journey to the Antarctic on the legendary *Endurance* expedition.

This was Shackleton's third Antarctic expedition. The objective was to cross the Antarctic Continent from Vahsel Bay, on the icy shores of the Weddell Sea, over barrier ice, glaciers, crevasses and snowdrifts to the Ross Sea, fifteen hundred miles away. Crossing the ice-bound continent from sea to sea was the last great prize in polar exploration.

Mrs Chippy, a tiger-striped tabby, is the most famous cat to visit Antarctica. Mrs Chippy set sail from London's East India Docks on 1 August 1914 with explorer Ernest Shackleton and the *Endurance* crew. It was the first time Mrs Chippy had accompanied Shackleton on an expedition.

Mrs Chippy became a great favourite, gaining admirers by a winning personality and an impressive ability to walk along the ship's rail even in the roughest seas. Actually a male, Mrs Chippy was so named because his best friend, the ship's carpenter, was known as 'Mr Chippy'.

In October 1915, *Endurance* was crushed by ice. Shackleton and some others, after a perilous 800-mile voyage in an open boat, managed to get help. Eventually the entire crew made it safely home in 1916 – except for Mrs Chippy, who died on the ice.

Harry McNeish (Mr Chippy) is buried in Karori Cemetery.

Further reading: *Mrs Chippy's Last Expedition 1914-1915*, Caroline Alexander (available from the Museum of Wellington City & Sea Shop).