

## Tom Crean

Tom Crean was born in Annascaul, Co. Kerry in 1877. When he was fifteen years old, he met a man in uniform signing people up to join the British Royal Navy. Crean liked the idea of joining a crew and sailing the seas aboard naval vessels so he lied about his age and told the officer that he was sixteen!



In 1901, while serving as an Able Seaman on board the HMS *Ringarooma* in New Zealand, Crean encountered Commander Robert Scott and his ship *Discovery* while en route to the Antarctic. He volunteered to join the *Discovery* and was accepted for the expedition. The Antarctic is a bitterly cold place covered in ice where nothing grows. It can reach temperatures lower than minus 40 degrees Celsius. The only

animal life to be seen is penguins and seals. Winds and blizzards rage throughout the land and it is dark for 24 hours a day in winter time.

During the voyage the *Discovery* got stuck in the ice and could not be moved. Tom Crean was chosen to head on a trip inland with a few others. This was the first time ever an Irish flag had been on the Antarctic!

They set off with sledges, which carried their supplies such as food, medicine, and tents. The men were exhausted due to the hazardous conditions, and many suffered from frostbite.

They remained in the Antarctic for over two years until 1904, discovering land never seen before and exploring the area. Rescue ships were sent to free the *Discovery* and the men were able to return home.



In 1910, Tom Crean set off on a second Antarctic adventure with Scott on a ship called the *Terra Nova*.



The crew trekked to within 150 miles of the South Pole, however Lt Teddy Evans, William Lashly and Tom Crean were instructed to return to base camp, an 800 mile journey in extreme weather conditions. They trekked over the glacier, sliding down hundreds of feet of icefalls and often finding their way blocked by huge crevasses.

One of their comrades, Lieutenant Evans, became sick and was no longer able to stand. They were over 100 miles from the base camp. Lashly and Crean pulled him on a sledge to within 35 miles of safety whereupon, weakened by fatigue and hunger, Crean left a dying Evans with Lashly and attempted to finish the final 35 mile journey alone to try to get help. Crean offered to do the hazardous journey alone with only three biscuits and two sticks of chocolate. This was to go down in history as Crean's lone march of bravery which saved the lives of Evans and Lashly. Crean and Lashly were awarded the Albert Medal, a high award for bravery from King George V in England, for their courage.



Tom's third and final expedition to the South Pole took place in 1914 on the ship *Endurance*. This expedition was headed by Sir Ernest Shackleton. He wanted to walk from coast to coast of the Antarctic Continent, a very daring and dangerous mission of over 2,800 kilometres. When the ship was crushed in the pack ice, the crew made the dangerous voyage to Elephant Island. Twenty two of the men remained on Elephant Island while Crean, Worsley and Shackleton journeyed by open-boat to South Georgia to get help. They then set out on foot over uncharted territory, marching continuously for 36 hours, until they reached a whaling station to get rescue for the remaining crew.

Crean then moved back to Ireland and opened a pub in Annascaul, called the South Pole Inn and it survives to this day. He died on 27 July 1938, aged 61.