

# The Shipwreck Watch

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## The Lost *Endeavour*

The Australian Government's fisheries research vessel, *Endeavour* visited Macquarie Island at the end of 1914 to bring new staff and supplies for the weather station. The *Endeavour* left Macquarie Island and was never seen again.

### *An official visit to Macquarie Island*

Under the capable leadership of George Ainsworth, 1911-1913 and his successor, Harold Power in 1914, Macquarie Island proved its worth as a meteorological station. At the end of 1914, however, political decisions had to be made about whether the Macquarie Island station should be maintained. The New Zealand Government had a strong interest in the island even though it was, and still is, administered by Tasmania. New Zealand offered to contribute 500 pounds a year for three years to keep the station operating.



*Endeavour*, docked in Hobart. Photo H. O'May.

The New Zealand Government also proposed an experiment in sheep breeding on the island. The Australian Government decided to send its science research ship, *S.Y. Endeavour*, to Macquarie Island at the end of 1914. The reasons for this visit were to take meteorologist, A. C. Tulloch to relieve Power and to conduct research into fisheries. The *Endeavour* also took sheep to Macquarie Island for the breeding experiment. The Director of Australian Fisheries, Harald. Dannevig, was on board for this trip, as was biologist, Charles Harrisson, who had recently returned from the Australasian Antarctic Expedition.

The *Endeavour* left Hobart on 25 November 1914 in weather so poor that veteran Antarctic voyager, Harrisson, described the weather as the worst he had experienced. **Visibility was so poor that the Captain was lucky to see Macquarie Island in time to avoid being caught in the breakers.** The *Endeavour* steamed up Macquarie Island's east coast and anchored in North-east Bay near on Wireless Hill.

Power duly handed over the weather station to Tulloch and went aboard the *Endeavour*. Dannevig was interested in the fish species around Macquarie Island and put out a trawl net from the *Endeavour*. He obtained a splendid collection of fish, many of which the biologist, Harrisson had never seen before. Dannevig also searched the reefs for crayfish but was not successful, although he caught a few crabs in the nets.

*The Endeavour left Macquarie Island on 3 December 1914 in a heavy sea fog and was never seen again. She had twenty-three men on board.*

At first the authorities held no grave fears for the *Endeavour*. Although she was powered by steam, she also had sails that could be used if her engine failed.

The search for the *Endeavour* began on 17 December 1914, when the *Werribee* was despatched from Melbourne. Weather records showed that the yacht would have met heavy weather approximately 200 miles from Macquarie Island, but a thorough search showed of seas in that area showed no trace of the *Endeavour*.



Meanwhile, a land search party set out from the Macquarie Island station. Tulloch and wireless operator F.J. Henderson walked through hailstorms to the south of the island. Even though there was snow on the ground, they camped in the open on the first night. For most of the time they could see very little as the sea was covered in mist.

*When they reached Caroline Cove they climbed to the top of the plateau, but kept losing their bearings in the fog.*



Snow on the Macquarie Island coast. Photo Geof Copson

Tulloch and Henderson took fifteen hours to walk to Lusitania Bay. It was still raining and misty when they trudged back to the station along the east coast. During the trip one of Henderson's boots gave out and Tulloch spent two hours working on it with a rusty nail and a piece of fishing cord before they could get going again.

Another member of the party, J. Ferguson, searched the North Head and West Coast as far as Eagle Cove, but his search also failed to reveal any trace of wreckage or survivors.

In April 1915 an inquiry was held into the loss of the *Endeavour*. The court found that the crew of the *Endeavour* had been adequate, that the vessel had enough coal, stores and provisions, that proper lifesaving equipment had been on board and that she had been in a sea worthy condition.



*The court decided that after leaving Macquarie Island, the Endeavour had met a gale and foundered at sea.*

### References

Cumpston, J.S. 1968, *Macquarie Island*, Antarctic Division, Melbourne, pp. 275-281.

### Further Reading

[The Wireless Crew](#)