

HARBORD—A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF A *NIMROD* OFFICER

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Arthur Edward Harbord, naval officer and Antarctic explorer, was born in Hull on 13 September, 1883. He entered the Merchant Navy at the age of twelve and was apprenticed aboard clipper ships. He had earned his Extra Master Certificate by the time he was twenty-two. Harbord served in the Thomas Wilson Sons and Company (Wilson Line), the White Star Line and the Alfred Booth and Company (Booth Line). His family had many seafarers. His father was a master of the Wilson Line's *Vigo*. A brother, Captain R. C. Harbord, was a member of the Bluff, New Zealand, pilot staff in 1914. William James Harbord (died in 1944 aged fifty-eight), potentially a younger brother, was marine superintendent of the Wilson Line.

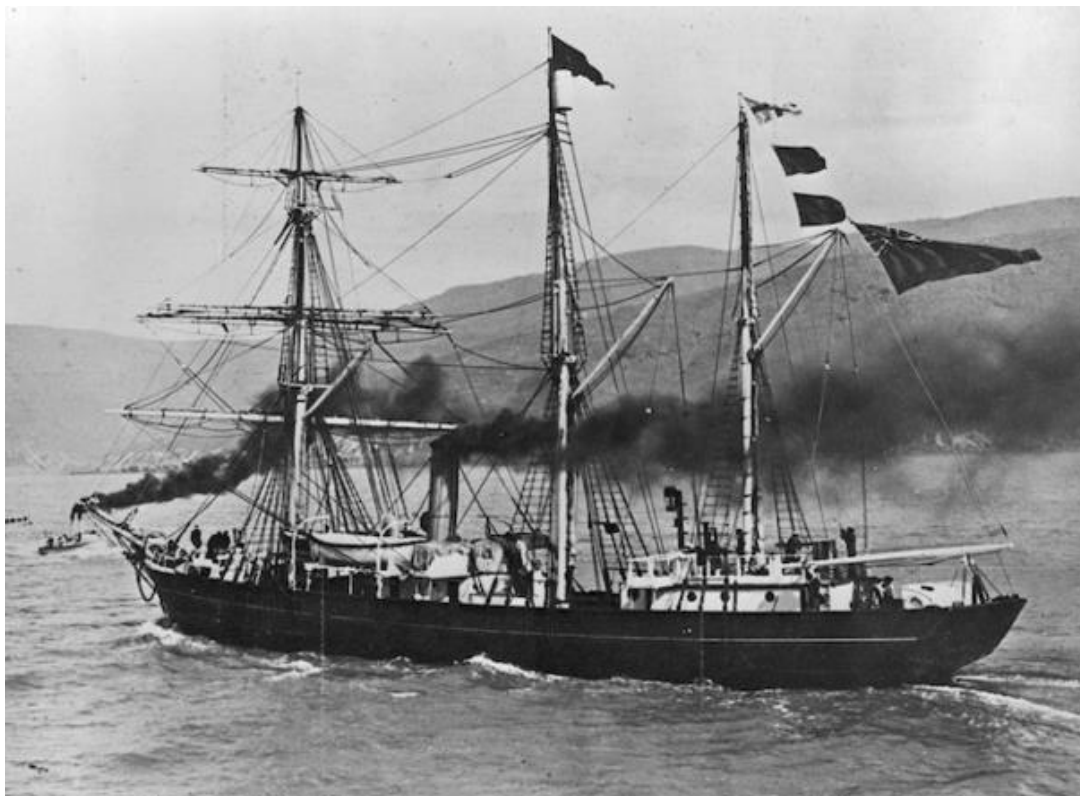
Harbord was fourth officer of *Runic* and then fourth officer of *Ionic* before resigning from the White Star Line to join Shackleton's British Antarctic Expedition aboard *Nimrod* as auxiliary second officer. The plan was for Aeneas Mackintosh to be amongst the shore party and Harbord was to relieve Mackintosh as second officer for the return to New Zealand. Mackintosh lost his right eye while unloading stores at McMurdo Sound on 31 January, 1908, and did not end up joining the shore party.



Harbord and Mackintosh, Christie's

The voyage to the ice was a challenge, even for the very experienced amongst the officer and crew. Harbord wrote: 'I have never seen such large seas in the whole of my seagoing career'. In the Antarctic, Harbord was struck by the awful silence of the frozen south despite the icebergs and landscape that the men took the time to admire. He told the press that the monotony and sameness of the great ice barrier was to some extent depressing. The bays and bights seemed to be the centre of life in the Antarctic as a focus of activity for whales, penguins and seals. He told of one particular experience to illustrate the intensity of the cold that was felt. He desired to attract the attention of the crew one day, and put his whistle to his month. It immediately froze to his lips and tongue, and in wrenching it away a quantity of flesh was torn out.

Following the return of *Nimrod* to New Zealand on 6 March, 1908, most of her officer and crew were soon on leave. Harbord and Dr William Arthur Rupert Michell, surgeon of the expedition, took a tour around the New Zealand with many walking excursions. They departed Christchurch (they may have had a Christchurch companion with them) and travelled to Broken River by train and walked to the west coast and on to Nelson. They took a steamer to Wellington on the North Island and walked to and from Woodville. They took a steamer to Picton back on the South Island and walked to their starting point of Christchurch via Blenheim and Kaikoura.



Nimrod leaving Lyttelton 1 December 1908, National Library of New Zealand

Nimrod departed for Antarctica again on 1 December, 1908, to collect the expedition's shore party, and Harbord was Second Officer. As Evans brought *Nimrod* along the Antarctic coast in search of the delayed Northern Party, Harbord was the first to sight the flags of their depots in early-February, 1909. Bertram Armytage confirmed it and a man was sent to the crow's nest. From there, the party's tents were spotted. Dr Alistair Forbes Mackay, Tannatt William Edgeworth David and Douglas Mawson were picked up from the Drygalski Ice Barrier after their exhausting sledge journeys. David later said of the timing: 'it was providential they saw our depot flag when they did'.



South Magnetic Pole, State Library of South Australia

John King Davis took over command of *Nimrod* from Frederick Pryce Evans on 29 March, 1909, and Harbord took over Davis's previous role as Chief Officer. Davis was to command the ship on her unusual journey home across five thousand miles in the high southern latitudes. Admiralty charts included sub-Antarctic islands of dubious credibility. Davis was instructed to land on the island if they existed and to take deep-sea sounding if they did not. Nothing was found at the maps' location for the Royal Company Islands, Emerald Island, the Nimrod Islands or Dougherty Island.

Harbord was awarded the Polar Medal in bronze with the clasp Antarctica 1907-1909 that was approved by Edward VII on 22 November, 1909.

Sub-Lieutenant Arthur Edward Harbord, RNR, and Gladys Penn were married by Rev W. J. Fleming in Holy Trinity Church, Hull, on 8 June, 1910. Harbord, previously a Sub-Lieutenant of the Royal Naval Reserve, was made Lieutenant of the Royal Navy as of 1 April, 1913. He was later promoted Lieutenant-Commander and then was retired as Commander. In 1914 he was with the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty and possible aboard the Royal Navy survey vessel HMS *Endeavour*

In early-1914, he was appointed master of *Discovery* and second-in-command of the Antarctic expedition of Joseph Foster Stackhouse. Harbord told journalists that Stackhouse had been engaged in preparatory work for some time. The expedition was not going to make a dash for the South Pole and though it would be operating at the same time as Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, there would not be the slightest rivalry. He said that it was a scientific expedition pure and simple.



Harbord, *The Birmingham Daily Mail*, 2 February, 1914.

Harbord said that he was rather keen on polar work and that the ice held a fascination for him. He thought that 'it will be a pleasant reflection in later years that one took part in exploring and charting these unknown regions, and that their physical features bear British names'. He was

particularly delighted by Stackhouse's success in obtaining Scott's old ship *Discovery* from the Hudson's Bay Company. He said: 'She is easily the best vessel in the world for the work in the Polar ice...When I remember the discomforts of the old *Nimrod*, I look forward to my command of the *Discovery* with great pleasure.'

This proposed Antarctic expedition of 1914 did not transpire due to delays to the expedition, the outbreak of war and Stackhouse's death aboard RMS *Lusitania*.

He served in the Royal Navy during World War I. Three of the ships on which he served were torpedoed and he survived each of these incidents. Harbord was aboard HMS *Hermes* when she was sunk by U-boat U-27 in the straits of Dover on 31 October, 1914. He also served on HMS *Vestal*.

Harbord joined the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board in 1922. He was appointed Assistant Marine Surveyor and Water Bailiff to the port of Liverpool in 1937 and succeeded Captain Hubert Viner Hart, OBE, RD, RNR, as Marine Surveyor in 1947. He retired the following year and live near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

Arthur Edward Harbord died on 11 October, 1961.



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Nimrod, National Library of Australia