

Frank Hurley – Sledging diary, 1912-1913

Note: this transcript is an edited typescript version of the original handwritten diary, and the page numbering differs from that of the photographed diary.

Hurley
10th Nov 1912
10 Jany 1913

Copy of magnetic pole sledging journey. Mawson expedition.
from 10 Novr 1912 to 9 Jany 1913.

10 th Novr 1912

Temp at midnight -12o

After numerous attempts to push forward the sledging section of the Expedition, we have at last been able to make a start. The continuous blizzard conditions have every evidence of breaking up, or at least abating. As time is now becoming very short, we are all anxious to get under weigh. A good sledging programme has been outlined, which if carried out successfully, is all that remains to make the Expedition a huge success.

Our party left the hut at 12.30 p.m. Robert Bage in command, Eric N Webb-magnetician, and myself general handy man and photographic. It is our intention to steer Magnetic South, reaching a point, as near as possible, to the South Magnetic Pole. Magnetic, Meteorological and general exploration work is to be carried out. Our supporting party, comprising, Murphy, Laseron and Hunter, are to proceed inland 100 miles, if possible, during which time they will supply us with rations and about a fortnights extra "GRUB". The provision of our supports and our own are ample for 9 weeks sledging. Enabling us to return to the hut about the 15th Jany. Arriving at the 5 mile Depot, we loaded our sledge with the following –

Total weight of all equipment.

Norwegian sledge-decking- cooker and instrument boxes...	74 lbs
Instruments-primus and miscellaneous gear	184 lbs
Tent and legs--	26 lbs

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3 Sleeping Bags	31 ½ lbs
Clothes-boots ETC	72 ..
5 Tins Kerosene	50 ..
Perks Etc	14 ½ ..
7 Weeks' food	<u>350</u> ..
Total		802 ¼ lbs

Here also we met Dr Mawson, Mertz and Ninnis with the dogs, I took some Cine Film of the party, also a few snaps and after a hearty hand shake and good wishes on both sides we bid farewell to our comrades and made off to the south to join our supporting party. After "The Five mile" our way lay up a steep slope. Going was very hard, and not being in good sledging "NICK" our muscles felt the strain of the

heavy hauling and overburdened sledge. We fell through many crevasses to our waists, but without any serious mishap and came up with our supports at the "Eleven Mile" at 11.30 p.m. After a good "HOOSH" we turned into a our sleeping bags dead tired.

11th November

We felt very tired on turning out of bags at 1.30 p.m. although we have had nearly 12 hours rest. We slept poorly owing to the novelty of our surroundings and also the excitement in pushing out into new fields. The wind was freshening and shortly after starting snow began to fall. The conditions gradually accelerated into our usual Blizzard conditions..That is the wind attained a velocity of 70 miles per hour, with drifting snow. We only made three miles and were then right glad to pitch camp.

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Crawling into camp we divested ourselves of our frozen burberries and after preparing Hoosh turned into sleeping bags. During the night the tents flapped alarmingly and every moment we expected to see ours blown into ribbons over our heads. The drift increased and one could see with difficulty more than a yard or so.

12 November

The Blizzard raged throughout the night and this morning little alteration has taken place. In our tiny tent we can barely move about, while to converse with one another we have to raise our voices to a shout so terrific is the swish of drift and the blizzard din. Yet it is not without its humour- that is if one can see it when he is nigh frozen. To see BOB endeavouring to light the primus and make hoosh, is even more amusing than watching "AZZI" (Webb) donning his frozen burberrys. These indispensable garments are frozen as stiff as boards, and it feels like putting ones legs into stove pipes to don the trousers. I have been struggling with a helmet, frozen up with drift, and as for my mits (gloves) they are in a worse condition. The drift is frightful – it does make things in an hellish mess. All day we have been confined to the tent and as it is now 8.45 p.m. we are toggling up into our bags to await favourable conditions.

13th November

Although only confined to the tent for a day and a half, we were pleased when the weather moderated to enable us to resume the trail. At 10.30 a.m. we were off in light drift, but the surface was terribly heavy owing to the amount of loose and soft snow.

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Midday we came on patches of hard "NEVE", and the hauling became much easier. We only made five miles today – hard work battling against the cold stinging wind and draft. The snow finds its way into everything. The temperature is high plus 17-16. Again our burberrys and gear are badly frozen up, even our sleeping bags are wet and freezing. Yet I suppose we will soon be able to adapt ourselves to these trifles. The wind is sweeping along at about 50 miles per hour raising the loose drift and playing mischievous pranks generally. Turning in at 10 p.m.

14th November

At midnight (13) the wind blew up to 70 miles per hour, and although our light tent is pitched in the lee of our supporting patys we have grave apprehensions of it whirling away in these "Gentle Zephyrs". It is now 9 p.m. and the wind is bellowing at 80 miles per hour! The tiny tent threatens to rip at any moment, while the seething drift pelts like a sand-blast. It would be fatal to have our thin calico walls ripped by these terrific conditions, yet it seems impossible they can hold out much longer. Got out of our bags at 3.30 p.m. And it took us nearly two hours to put on our frozen garments and get the few necessaries off the sledge to make hoosh. We all got frost-bitten, though not very severely and were glad to return to our sleeping bags again. If one once gets cold it is a hard job to warm up again and much of the calorific value of the food is wasted; so we find the bags the best and only place. We long for a fine day so that we might dry our mitts and sleeping gear. At present when they come under the influence of our body warmth they are little better than wet rags, and when we take

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them off they freeze almost brittle! Our supports although in a tent a few yards away, have not been seen or heard the whole of the day. Yet thank Heaven we are as well off as circumstances will permit for as we say on the trail "It might always be worse".

15th November

I am so disgusted with the weather that I force myself to make this entry; "That we spent three hours patching our tent – a stitch every five minutes – Our fingers are painfully frostbitten, - That the wind is between 70 and 75 miles per hour – That it is drifting snow and the temperature is 48 degrees below freezing point, That we wonder if the plateau will be blown away and ourselves with it". In camp all day.

16th November

The weather moderated at noon and we made an extra speedy start. What a change! all day the weather improved and we made 5 ¼ miles, over hard sastrugi polished with drift and wind. At 6.30 p.m. Heavy nimbus clouds came rolling up from the South, and we are wondering if it is again going to snow and blow. A halt was made and tents were erected in a dead calm! What a striking contrast to the Blizzards eternal roar. Every sound seems frozen, Our voices seem strange in this awesome silence, whilst our ears so accustomed to continuous din, ache. What a stagnant silence! Our tent is limp, for not the gentlest Zephyr stirs. What is going to happen. Bob has just ordered our supports to throw snow onto the tent to make some noise so that we can go to sleep. What a place of excesses, and how welcome to us, wind battered toilers, this cessation comes.

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17th November

I am wondering what the folks at home are doing today whilst we tramp this great desolation. This morning we hauled in very light drift, but the sun and the distance were hidden by dense hazy clouds, The light was so diffused that it was impossible to discriminate rise from hollow, even the Sastrugi which were large and numerous were quite indiscernible. This was due to the even pall of light casting no shadows, so that the entire surface looked even and blank, We had many falls tripping

over the unseen obstacles but covered 5 ½ miles. Bringing the total up to date to 30 miles, and a week gone, At this point we noticed two tins of kerosene missing off our supports sledge – a most serious matter. Murphy and Laseron retraced the trail and found them 2 ½ miles astern; but for this mishap we could have added another few miles. The plateau surface is here much torn and is covered with large sastrugi. An eloquent testimony of the harsh wind conditions which prevail in this area. We had a fine sunset this evening and secured several photographs.

18th November

We were out at 6.30 a.m. eager to be on the move again. With calm weather favouring we made good way covering 11 ½ miles. The country has been on a continual rise since leaving the hut, and we are now about 3,500 feet above sea-level. Our surroundings are much more level – a great expansive snowfield covered with small sastrugi. The temperature was high plus 9.2, which, coupled with the calm made sledging hot work. We took off sweaters, then fleeces and finally hauled in our under clothes...Still we felt hot! All our gear dried and we are in a much happier frame of mind.

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19th November

Again fortune is with us. The weather is delightfully calm and sunshiny. Surface good. As far as eye reach we are girdled by a vast even plain, smooth, monotonous, and devoid of any mark or feature. At noon the sun blazed down upon us, and as yesterday, we divested ourselves of all warm apparel and hauled in our singlets and underpants. How strange it seems with 60 miles of snow and ice between us and the hut and yet we feel the heat as much as an Australian summer. The two parties cut a humorous sight hauling the sledges in this undress regalia, and we are extremely pleased there are none of the fair sex among the party. Took snaps of the party Turned in dog tired at 10.15 p.m.

20th November

The conditions are precisely as the past two days with the exception of the country becoming more undulating. Ten miles have been added, bringing the total to 63.5. Our supports a much weaker team than ourselves, are feeling the strain of the heavy pulling. Laseron became so exhausted that he had to be brought into camp on the sledge-dead beat. Murphy (whom I christened Sandow on account of his great haulage capacity – I don't think) is snow blind. His eyes gave trouble yesterday and poor chap has been trudging along all day in agony, blindfolded. To Johnny Hunter has been left the brunt of the work and he has been quite equal to the occasion. Our party are tip-top except Bob's eyes which are also showing symptoms of coming blindness. We intend allowing the supports to return in a day or two, after we have laid our first depot.

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21st November 1912 Thursday

21st November, How the time flies! Twelve months ago today we were just leaving Sydney, and strange too Hunt and Laseron were ship-mates as we are now. We all had "HOOSH" together this evening and discussed our trip on the "Baloona" and

the doings of the year. We have decided to lay our Depot at this camp 67 ½ miles from the hut. The supports after assisting to lay the depot will return tomorrow, As I write in my sleeping bag, I can look out of the tent opening across the great snowfield eleven miles to the northern horizon. The sun has just dipped below the horizon for a few hours and the sky is aglow with delicate prismatic flushings, We spent the afternoon building a large snow mount 10 feet high and about 12 feet in diameter at the base. In the centre of this we fitted a special flag vane about 20 feet high. These two marks should readily enable us to see the depot from a radius of eight miles. Bob's eyes are very painful through the snow glare and I am just going to pop into them ophthalmic tabaloids before turning in. We hope to be off again tomorrow.

22nd November

We stayed all day at the 67 ½ mile camp which we christened "Southern Cross Depot". Assisted Webb in magnetic observations and wrote up the meteorological log. The supporting party left at 6.30 p.m. and soon were out of sight in the low scudding drift. We felt quite lonely bidding goodbye with our last tie to civilization, for the plateau under these conditions is not the most cheerful place in the world. Nevertheless sledging has its touch of humor, for

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in sorting our chattels to cut down every ounce of weight, we found the lid had come off a Horlick's milk tin. The contents of the "Perk bag" (bag containing delicacies) became mixed with the powdered milk and drift snow, which had found its way in. The sun had thawed the mixture anddone the rest. Almonds and raisins were all mixed in a conglomerate like mass and everything was in a state of stickphast and refused to leave the bag. We cut the bag open and partook of the mixture with much relish. I put some almonds in the Hoosh and we had some frozen cocoa and raisins to celebrate the laying of the depot. It is blowing hard again and very cold and chill.

23 November

The wind increased since midnight and has been blowing a blizzard all day with drift snow. We have been confined to our bags and the tent all day. Today was Webbs birthday, and as we sat around the cooker smoking cigars (which we had brought for the occasion) We told tales of our past lives and incidents and dwelt lengthily on various banquets, for we are indeed very hungry. The day passed more speedily than usual though unfortunately we have covered no distance. However the weather looks like moderating.

24 November.

A fortnight since we have seen any other object than desolate expanses of snow. Even that has to be observed through goggles to avoid snow blindness. Today has been the most arduous since leaving the hut. We left Southern Cross depot in a 35 mile per hour wind. The drift cut our faces and the wind split our lips. After a long uphill struggle against this terrible wind, we came into an area

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of very bad sastrugi and snow ramps. The sledge was frequent over turned and the wind increased but still we plodded on. The sledge was blown sideways, and its windage added to the heavy load gave us all we knew to just keep it moving. The wind

after an increase to 60 miles an hour held us up. After a great deal of trouble we managed to erect our tent; and the wind again strengthening, we decided to build a breakwind of snow blocks. These we cut from the neighbouring sastrugi, and it took Bage and myself nearly two hours miserable work to erect it. The wall we have erected is 3 ft thick, 15 ft long and 5 ft high. It is now midnight and as we lay awake in our sleeping bags, the wind is roaring past at 75 miles per hour! The tent is effectually protected and safe for the time at least. Sledging under these conditions is –hell.

25th November

Heavy wind continued throughout the early morning and all day. It moderated a little at 5.30 p.m. and enabled us to patch our tent and look to our gear. About noon two snow petrels came hovering around our camp and settled on the snow a few yards away. We hailed these little creatures with joy for they are the only signs of living things we have seen for the past fortnight. From whence they came or whither bound gave us room for discussion. 80 miles inland on the plateau is the last place in the world we expected to see these beautiful creatures. They allowed me to approach within a few yards of them and secure a photograph. My camera is a bugbear and using it is a nightmare. Every time I have to set the shutter I have to take a number of tiny screws from the front and bend the

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mechanism into shape, and with frostbitten fingers! It is now past midnight and the sun is shining brightly. Bage is writing up his diary and Webb is commenting on the snugness of his sleeping bag. I needs must join him. We did not stop sledging until 11 p.m. this evening having added another 7 ¼ miles. Total 83 ¾. Bage's pipe is emitting acrid fumes, which he alone enjoys.

26th November.

Out of bags at 9.45 A.M. after a sound sleep. After hooshing we turned our breakwind into a snow mound for location purposes, and on the trail at 1.30 P.M. It was my turn leading and after the first mile we got into a good swing, and by 10.45 P.M. our sledge meter read 96 miles 20 yards. Nearly a hundred off the four we hope to accomplish. At camping time Bage and self erected the usual breakwind in the weather side of our frail tent. Observed the sun rise at 12.25 A.M. and it is now shining brightly 1.15 a.m. This evening Webb smoked his first cigarette, which he pronounced – filthy. It is quite warm and comfortable in the sleeping bag, due to a large extent, to the shelter afforded us from the breakwind. Tomorrow we hope to cover another twelve miles, which average will have to be maintained if we are to put up the 400. It is a problem hauling the sledge over the snow at this rate, its weight its 750 lbs, though there is a certain amount of satisfaction in knowing it lightens with each meal.

27th November

Our hopes to put up a record today were thwarted by a severe wind. We did not make a start before 13 hrs 45 min. and then in the

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teeth of a howling gale. We had to fight to gain every step. The frigid wind parched and stung our faces and it took every atom of our combined efforts to win 4 ¼ miles. The wind at 6.30 P.M. was up to 60 miles again and after our hard days toil had to turn to

and build a snow breakwind before we dared venture to erect our tent. Once up we crept into its shelter with a sigh of relief. We had a good hoosh and a perk in the way of a bar of butterscotch to celebrate our century. The surface and conditions show little moderation since leaving our 20 mile camp. In spite of these conditions there is something grand and inspiring in treading these virgin snows and breaking trail for the first time across the unknown, On, on, we go over undulating ice plains, whose surface is torn and swept by eternal blizzards. As we top one rise, another confronts us which we are just as anxious to conquer.

28th November

Wind again today. Our rough experience of yesterday did not induce us to push off again hurriedly. Bob contented himself by digging a hole to take ice temperatures of the various strata of surface. Webb made a complete set of Magnetic readings; to which I recorded, Bob has been tutoring me in navigation, but Webbs lesson on logarithms did not impress me. Without the blizzard roars on and looks like continuing forever.

29th November

As is our custom we did not start before late in the day (12,30) Hoping that the wind might abate by midday. As no change was evident, We pushed off in a 50 Mile per hour southerly. Directed by yesterdays magnetic reading, we altered our course to due south. Today

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has been the worst day of the journey. Every foot had to be won against a relentless and cruel wind with bowed backs and strained muscles. At 107 miles our troubles increased by having to climb a steep slope. A grade of about 1 in 40 with pitted ice surface and covered with large jagged sastrugi. We became parched and thirsty and tried to quench it by sucking pieces of ice which burnt our tongues and afforded us little relief. At camp time we were dead beat, but the inevitable breakwind had to be erected to save our tent and equipment. As our environment bears evidence of more than ordinary severe winds, we made a correspondingly solid breakwind. For the first time this year we have observed the sun at midnight. His rim just skimmed the horizon and then rapidly rose to shine on the toils of another troubled day.

30th November. 12.30 A.M.

The conditions today were worse if that were possible than yesterday; certainly the winds were more severe. At times we were nearly lifted off our feet, yet by dogged determination we won another 4 miles. It is a hell of a place. We might have done a little more but our axe and theodolite were discovered missing and we had to retrace the trail 2 ½ miles to bring them in. The wind all day has been doing 60 miles per hour but thanks to a staunch breakwind we are now in comparative comfort. Anywhere is comfort as long as one is out of the terrible wind which seems to scald ones face with its chill. The country is the most God-forsaken we have passed through, being furrowed deep by wind erosion and almost impassable. To add to our troubles the sledge keeps on turning over and it is a big effort righting it again. Tonight we amused ourselves by

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a mock ceremony, supplicating "OLD NICK" to exorcise the spirit of winds from further

harassing us.

1st December 1912

As I write, the midnight sun is shining brightly on the tent which is leisurely flapping away in the eddycurrent of wind behind our snow embankment. Perhaps "OLD NICK" heard our prayers for the conditions moderated considerably and we have made ten miles. Total 123 ½ miles from the hut. It has been an interesting day as we have seen new features in the ice-scape. About 5 p.m. we sighted low down on the horizon several large snow ramps, about 15 miles away, and we have decided to investigate them. To the S.W. we also observed several Huge Crevasses. A Skua gull visited us today, and we tried to snare him by bating our fishing line with a bit of pemmican- He wasn't having any. Today was the Dowager Queens Birthday and we celebrated it with flutter of flags.

2nd December. 12.30 A.M.

The surface was passable today and the weather moderate. We have made 8 ¼ miles. The snow ramps we were marching on yesterday are only another ¼ miles off. As we were nearing the end of our march we dipped into a curious valley depression, from which rise numerous snow mounds, - It is an uncanny place. In the evening light, the sastrugi surface resembles newly tilled land; and the surrounding snow mounds might easily be hills. We have christened the place "THE MODULES", tomorrow we will investigate. We have just been making the tent ring with an old tune "We are all waiting for a girl" -only with suitable words, applicable to the surroundings,

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My fingers are nearly frozen and writing is painful.

3rd December 11 P.M.

To [day] has been the most interesting and exciting since leaving the winter Quarters. Arose at 9.30 A.M. and after "HOOSHING" hauled our sledge up the south ridge of the Modules. Here an amazing field of huge crevasses confronted us. We left the sledge, and linking ourselves together by the Alpine rope when on a tour of exploration. Many of the crevasses were over 70 feet wide and were spanned by great bridges of compressed snow, Webb went down onto one of the bridges which had fallen in and lay jammed 60 feet below the plateau surface. The whole place resembled land cut up into allotments. It was crisscrossed and seared by crevasses in every direction. We went through the snow bridges occasionally and thankfully we were for the stoutness of our lifeline. Peering down one of these man traps, We looked into black nothingness, the walls were delicately festooned and covered with the most beautiful crystals imaginable. The light filtering through the icewalls made the chasms glow with a faint blue light and heightened the effect of these sledging nightmares. To take the sledge over this chaos was our next problem. It was my day leading; so attached to a long rope I would venture onto the snowbridges, stamping and jumping. If they held me during these manoeuvres, it was fair to surmise they would hold up my two comrades.. But I must say I didn't like the "vocation". We had to cross over 20 of these bridges, and it was with some relief that we put miles between ourselves and the Modules.

4th December. 12.15 A.M.

Left [whole line indecipherable]

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we have been toiling over wind torn surface, the furrows so sharp as to play havoc with our feet. How ever the sledge stands this racketing is a mystery to me. The surface was polished in places so that it was impossible to get a foot hold and we were continually falling; Even at Camping time there was not a spot smooth enough on which to erect our tent, so in addition to building our break wind we had to chip a site for the camp. It is almost calm, and after Hoosh we were able to sit outside our tent in the -4 temperature and feel comfortably warm. I found Bage an ardent motorcyclist, and so we discoursed on this topic whilst the midnight sun shone down upon us, and then it didn't seem so bad a place after all. The prospect around us looks just as if it were the ocean, that instorm had been suddenly frozen. The crests of the waves were lit by the golden glow of the midnight sun and the great wild plateau looked inexpressibly beautiful. Total mileage 150.

5th December. Midnight

The going and surface improved today so that we covered 12 miles, Our dipneedle is playing pranks; first our declinometer points one way East of South and then it will chop around to West of South. Webb took a set of observations this evening which shows our magnetic dip to be 89°11'. At 4 p.m. we crossed the 69th parallel, Light snow falling, but otherwise dead calm. Hypsometer boiled 2014 R4

6th December. 1045 p.m.

We awoke to find the sky overcast and wind at 30 miles per hr. This was sufficient to drift the snow that had fallen last night. Sledging was very heavy on account of the amount of soft snow lying about over the surface. The wind and drift increased and the

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light became so bad that we could not discern ridges from hollows, and so we stumbled on, floundering in holes and tripping over sastrugi. As I was leading I had to dispense with my goggles. The drift pelted in my eyes which are now extremely painful, feeling as though filled with sand. Our mits and burberrys are frozen stiff, our feet are wet, cold and tired, yet we must not drop our travelling average below 10 miles per day. We have 15 days yet to go forward which should take us 350 miles from the hut. Our appetites are terrific yet we dare not increase our ration by half an ounce. Whilst we were resting today, nigh frozen and desperately cold, Bob made us take an interest in life by talking of various delicacies, Apple dumplings, Beefsteak puddings, etc. Personally I could do with a good helping of steak and onions. This sledging ration is excellent and no doubt its calorific value is high, but it leaves one more hungry in the end than at the beginning of the meal. I have already made numerous entries that "today is the worst" but none have so far come up to the 10 ¼ miles covered today.

7th December. 10.30 P.M.

The wretched conditions of yesterday continued again today. The drift was heavy and the light so bad that we could not see where to place our feet.. Scores of times we were thrown down and the sledge kept on overturning and burying itself in the

soft snow. I often wonder if ever this journey will be appreciated, and is it worth while. After three hours hard toil we only covered 2 ¼ miles. It was snowing and blowing so as to make further headway intolerable so camp was decided on. The rest of the day was not wasted as a set

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of magnetic observations were taken. The DIP reading was 89o09' The highest recorded. We built a large breakwind 6ft6 high, x 30 feet which is an effectual shelter from the wind. As I make this entry it is blowing "GREAT GUNS" and the drift is swishing against our thin calico walls. Still we are as happy as possible and can still pass jocular remarks at the frozen state of our garments – I don't know that they are very sincere nevertheless. Our wet socks and stockings are pushed up our jerseys and taken into our sleeping bags. Here the body wasrmth prevents them from freezing solid. We are frightfully cold and shiver ourselves warm. Our west and frozen burberrys are spread over our sleeping bags which just cram into the small tent. Sledging in Adelie land is indeed without parallel; other expeditions have laid up during blizzards, we travel in them as our normal conditions.

8th December

We awoke to find the same gloomy and awful weather. Snowing blowing and drifting all day. So that we should not waste any of our valuable time, a 24 hours continuous magnetic observation was carried out. This necessitated giving up our tent, so we set to work to excavate a hole in the plateau surface for ourselves. So we finally found ourselves below the surface of the plateau in an ice cavern. It was much colder and worse in every way than the tent. After hoosh we turned in to shiver until it came our turn at watching the instruments. Our cavern measured 8ft x 5ft high. We laid side by side on the tent floor cloth and piled the frozen burberrys on the top of us. Soon everything became incrustated

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with frozen breath and the steam arising from the cooker condensed in a miniature shower of snow. The pale blue light that filtered in through the icy walls added to the gloom – Still this does not disparage us, and we are still three jolly sledgers, that sit in our sleeping bags at our hoosh- trying to imagine we are sitting at a banquet..Through the steam arising from the hoosh mugs, the outlines of my comrades are only faintly discernible,

9th December

We called our new abode "THE SARCOPHAGUS" and a fitting name for it, for it would be a far better place for the dead than us. Right glad we were to get a move on. The conditions moderated, though the wind and snow still drift on.

10th December

Owing to the snow which drifted overnight we had to dig our sledge out of a huge snow ramp this morning. Pushing out into a 30 mile an hour wind, we had a rough experience hauling the sledge through the soft snow through which we floundered knee deep. Covered 7 miles. Have just been entertaining my comrades with a few comics.

11th December. 12.15 a.m.

Good luck favoured us with the weather, and we were able to get our equipment dry and turn our sleeping bags inside out and aired. Eight and half miles covered with improving surface. Tomorrow we will establish another depot, so that the sledge might be lightened and we will then make a dash out as far as possible.

12th December. 12.39 a.m.

Reached 200 miles and will here make our final depot. We are

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in some measure disappointed with the distance, though considering the frightful and unprecedented conditions of weather and heart-breaking surface, we have not done so badly. Not a moment has been wasted – it has been one long fight and gain won by inches.

13 December. 1 a.m. Friday

Overhauled gear and anything not absolutely essential we “depoted”. We left at the depot “LUCKY DEPOT” enough food to take us back to the 67 mile depot and take on sufficient for 14 days. Clothing instruments etc we left at Lucky depot, and made our sledge 200 lbs The Depot is marked by a snow mound 9 feet high and 18 ft diameter at base, on the top is set a black canvas flag. We moved off at 8.30 p.m. and are now encamped – 4 miles from depot, which is still visible. Weather good and dried all gear.

14th December 1.15 a.m. TEMP -9

We were very elated at the prospect of hauling a light sledge but only covered at the end of the day 12 miles. This was caused by the bad surface of pie-crust snow which broke through under our weight. Altitude now is about 5000 feet and the way lies still upward. We are following the magnetic needle to the pole or as near as we can get to it. Each day the dip shows scarcely any variation, yet there is no telling what the next 80 miles might have in store. DIP 89o11' At camping time we came across an extraordinary snow ramp, 100 yards long and about 12 ft above the surrounding surface. In the front were great sastrugi, very hard and polished, These stood about 6 feet above the surrounding plateau surface.

15th December. Temp -16

Yesterdays severe pull was not as severe as today. The temp

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made our lives nigh intolerable; but this was not all; before we had bad surfaces of either sastrugi or piecrust, now we had both. The light was bad and we kept stumbling along over the razor blade ridges or floundering through the soft piecrust snow; our breaths froze in accumulated masses around our helmets and cemented our beards on to them. All day has been one long struggle and privation. We lost not a minute, however, and in spite of these conditions covered 12 ½ miles., for 12 hours labours. Total 228 ¼. The marvel to me is that we have not broken our limbs or done ourselves serious injury. We have five days yet to go ahead before turning back.

16th Decr. 1912. 1.45 a.m

With joyous feelings we welcomed a fine day; the first for weeks,. Immediately we got up we turned our sleeping bags inside out, so that the sun might ablate the accumulated frozen breath that has cemented all the hair together. Our socks, finnescoe and other gear we also dried. What a fine day means! The surface too was better and we made good progress as we were able to pull in our fleeces, which gave our limbs free play. Starting at 1.30 P.M. we had 6 ½ miles off by 5 oclock lunch. As it was my turn to serve the tea and make the ration, I laid down inside the tent. It was indeed hard to imagine we were on the plateau, with 250 miles away to the hut. There was not enough wind to stir the tent; I dreamt I was in the Australian bush, when the cooker boiled over and brought me back to my whereabouts. At lunch we were all merry and sang old favourites - What a fine day means – and these are as a rule the sledging conditions of other expeditions! Our sleeping bags were dried and all our equipment. We added another 5 ½ miles and felt it uncomfortably

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19th December 12.30 A.M.

I take back all I said about the harsh weather dealt out to us, for it really does seem as if Antarctica is trying to do the best for us. Today was heavenly – perfectly calm and cloudless. The temperature in the tent when we got out of our bags was 66o! which did indeed astonish us very greatly. The black bulb thermometer gave a reading of 107.5o in the sun! Whilst in the shade, the temperature was 34o below freezing point. I always said this was a humorous country, if you cared to look on the funny side of things. Sledging was terrifically hot, what with reflection from the snow and sun glare, that we were mightily glad to strip ourselves and haul in our shirts. What characters we looked! Faces nearly black with sunburn and seared with frostbites, begoggled and whiskered. An absolute hush brooded over the plateau, broken only by the creak of our runners, as they glided over the wind polished surface. We all remarked the weather was quite Australian, and we could easily have partaken of and relished ice-creams. We covered 14 miles which makes a total of 282 from the hut and 18 before we turn back. At camping time, 11 p.m. heavy banks of nimbus clouds rolled up from the south, and our prayers are that the weather will continue good, so that we might conclude our journey to our satisfaction and return in safety.

[The previous pages covering the period from the 14th to the 19th December have also been transcribed from the original handwritten diary, and follow here]

14th December 1.15 a.m. TEMP -9

We were very elated at the prospect of hauling a light sledge but only covered at the end of the day 12 miles. This was caused by the bad surface of pie-crust snow which broke through under our weight. Altitude now is about 5000 feet and the way lies still upward. We are following the magnetic needle to the pole or as near as we can get to it. Each day the dip shows scarcely any variation, yet there is no telling what the next 80 miles might have in store. DIP 89o11' At camping time we came across an extraordinary snow ramp, 100 yards long and about 12 ft above the surrounding surface. In the front were great Sastrugi about 6 ft. high, hard & polished. The midnight sun, throwing its sidelight ~~on the~~ gave a weird effect. The usual Hoosh put us in good spirits & we are now turning in to our bags, to be ready for another hard day tomorrow or rather today.

15th December 1912, 1.30 a.m. Temp -16

Yesterdays heavy pull was not so severe as today. The temperature averaged well below zero all day & till 6 p.m. we had a cold 35 mph wind with drifts. Our breaths froze & accumulated in large lumps on the outside of our helmets while our whiskers, moustaches & beards froze to the inside. We travelled over shifting Sastrugi that overturned one sledge & ourselves frequently. I must have gone down a dozen times in the mile. At 7 miles we had a recurrence of Pie crust snow, our legs becoming so stiff & tired with lifting them, that it seemed more of a struggle than even a slow march. Not a minute is lost in sledging & after 10 minutes rest we were off again & completed 12½ miles for 12 hrs labor. Total 228½. Sledging is hard work over this awful harsh country which seems to try and bar our progress at every step. How we have escaped accident in (indecipherable) or broken limbs so far, is good luck more than care. Had we trust to providence to so preserve us from so disastrous happening. We have five days yet to go ahead before returning.

16th Decr. 1912. 1.45 a.m

With joyful feelings we welcomed a calm day; the first for weeks. Immediately we turned our sleeping bags inside out & laid them out in the delightful sunshine Five weeks have lapsed since ~~we were able to do the~~ they underwent this luxury. The hair inside was coated with ice & frozen breath so that they crackled as we turned them. Our socks, finnescue & (indecipherable) were also dried. What a fine day means to us. The surface was better & we made good progress, ~~we were~~ being able to pull on our fleeces, which gave our limbs free play. Our sledge, in striking contrast to our previous progress, seemed to glide over the surface. Starting at 1.30 P.M. we had made 6½ miles by 5 oclock lunch. As it was my turn to make tea & ~~have~~ serve the ration ~~ready~~ I had a few spare moments, & laid down inside our tent. It was hard to imagine we were ~~250 miles~~ on the plateau with nearly 250 miles of ice separating us from the hut. ~~The tent~~ There was not even enough wind to stir the tent & although zero, was warm. I thought it seemed as if camped in the Australian bush & was only brought back to Antarctica by the vigorous boiling of the cooker. At lunch we were all merry & sang old favourite ditties. What a contrast to our usual conditions. Our bags were airing while we lunched & on repacking we found them ~~nearly dry in a~~ much more satisfactory ~~state~~. After lunch we made another 3 miles & although -3 we perspired freely & commented on the hot weather. ~~We made~~ Another 5½ miles was covered, the temperature still falling & when -15 that is 47° below freezing point & began to get nippy. ~~Any-~~ I felt it a little owing to holes in the seat of my fleeces, which I have not had time to repair. We camped at 242 ms. 200 yds, having covered 14¼ miles our biggest run for a day so far. Temp. now (1.45 a.m.) is -21.

17 Decr. 1912 2.15 a.m. (18th)

Again delightful weather. Started at 1.30 p.m. & had good surface till lunch 5 p.m. covered 7 miles. ~~The surface~~ After lunch Azimuth made a set of magnetic observations (dip 89.25) so we did not move off till 8 p.m. The surface gradually became worse & from 10 miles we had to go along through the intolerable pie crust snow. We pitched camp at midnight tired out, yet contented that we had covered another 14¼ miles towards our goal. As we ~~passed~~ sledged over the plateau toward midnight the ~~sun~~ low sun seemed to change the whole surface to a delicate French grey, the high sastrugi, that caught the full gleam of light being white. The effect combined with absolute calm & unearthly stillness ~~was~~ seemed to be a vast necropolis. The temperature is still falling. When we pitched camp it was 50 degrees below freezing pt.

Total mileage 256¼ miles.

(My lead during the day.)

Lowest Temp. -21

At 3 o'clock we crossed the 70th parallel (indecipherable).

18th Decr. 1912 1.30 a.m. (19th)

Have just finished darning my mittens. We were so tired after yesterday, that we did not get out of the bags till ~~noon~~ 11.30 a.m. Preparing Hoosh & packing the sledge kept us going till 2 p.m. When we set off on our improving surface, under glorious weather conditions we covered 13 miles. Total 269¼. Towards the end of our march we came into an extensive field of fine Sastrugi, ranging in size up to about 4 ft. 6 in. high by 20 or 30 ft. in length. They were highly polished & in the slanting rays of the midnight sun, closely resembled marble. All shapes were noticed some like huge clam shells others like ocean rollers but the majority ~~close~~ appeared as schools of ~~porpoises~~ white porpoises or dolphins, all the results of wind action & carving. I greatly regretted not having an efficient Stereoscope camera to record the magnificent sight.

Temp –

19th December 1912 12.30 A.M.

I take back all the evil I thought of the ~~terrific blizzard & the~~ harsh treatment dealt out to us by our previous bad weather, for I really think Antarctica is doing its best for us. Today was heavenly. Perfectly calm and cloudless. The temperature in the tent when we got out of our bags was 66! which did indeed astonish us very greatly. The black bulb thermometer gave a reading of 107.5 in the sun! Whilst in the shade, the temperature was 34o below freezing point. I always said this was a humorous country, if you cared to look on the funny side of things. Sledging was terrifically hot, what with reflection from the snow and sun glare, that we were mightily glad to strip ourselves and haul in our shirts. What characters we looked! Faces nearly black with sunburn and seared with frostbites, begoggled and whiskered. An absolute hush brooded over the plateau, broken only by the creak of our runners, as they glided over the wind polished surface. We all remarked the weather was quite Australian, and we could easily have partaken of and relished ice-creams. We covered 14 miles which makes a total of 282 from the hut and 18 before we turn back. At camping time, 11 p.m. heavy banks of nimbus clouds rolled up from the south, and our prayers are that the weather will continue good, so that we might conclude our journey to our satisfaction and return in safety.

[The edited typescript transcript continues]

20th December 1912 midnight

We are nearing our goal, or rather, the point where we are compelled to turn back. We covered 15 ¼ miles, our record on the outward trip. It was my turn leading, and although the sledge was light we had difficulty in hauling it up the undulating

slopes.

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A 15 mile per hour wind made things mightily uncomfortable, driving the temperature, which stood at 20o below zero, through our thick garments.

21st December.

Today has been the most momentous since leaving the hut. By 3 p.m. we reached 301 miles. Latitude 70.37 long 148.13. Ours has been a difficult task, hauling dead in the eye of the wind and under such wretched conditions of surface. Still its done and we feel our best has been done. With feelings half glad, half regretful, we turned back. Behind us lay still the interminable ridges and personally I must say I felt regretful to have been compelled to turn back, as the lure of the ridges was strong, and the vacant places seemed to beckon irresistibly. We all felt sad, for beyond the ridges a something seemed to call us back, eager to unfold to a distant world, the mysteries of countless ages. Yet it was not to be. The food will run out by the 15th Jany, when we must be back to the hut. The Aurora will be waiting, and then home again to sunny lands and dear faces. Webb calculates our position to be about 45 miles from the South Magnetic Pole. At Turn back camp we hoisted sail on our sledge and in less than an hour had covered the 2 ½ miles to last nights camp. No more shall we face the blizzard nor toil up steep ice slopes. The winds will be fair and help us on our way, yet it will be no picnic. What took us many weeks to accomplish on the outward journey, must now be covered in 20 days. Our observations placed the magnetic dip at 89o43'. The temperature -25 below zero.

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22nd December, 1912

We commenced our flight from 298 mile camp at 10 a.m. We hoisted a sail on our sledge, and the wind being favourable, we set off at a great pace. The area of the sail is about 49 square feet, too much for the breeze that was blowing. This necessitated Webb and myself going behind, and holding it back with guy ropes! Bage taking the lead to keep the bows turned homeward. Even then we found it hard to keep the sledge from overrunning Bage. It appears more anxious to get home than we do. Eventually we were compelled to reef sail, so that the load was just balanced. Webb and myself then joined Bage and we made good speed. 18 ½ miles were covered with little more exertion than walking. We felt right proud of our craft as she glided majestically over the polished sastrugi, and very beautiful she looked with white wings out-spread – Like a tiny barque on a frozen sea. We picked up our old tracks on the march back and passed old camping spots. There seemed a something pathetic in passing these old camping places of cherished memories, that marked like pillars of victory our combat and mastery over the raw wild.

23 December. Temp -15

We crossed our tracks many times during the day and accounted for 20 ¼ miles.-Making already 40 ¼ from our furthest South. Bage has been having a bad time with snow blindness, and today we hauled him some distance on the sledge.

24th December. 10.30 P.M. Christmas Eve

Christmas eve on the plateau. We were out of bags at 6.30 A.M. and after breakfast got on the trail at 9.30 a.m. with a fair

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breeze of 15 miles per hour we made good going, till we run into the area of detested pie-crust snow, met on the outward journey. Here we floundered and slipped. It was indeed a slough of despond. By lunch, however, we had covered 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. A set of magnetic obs. were here taken and our position determined. Again we set off, very tired, at 7 P.M. continued till 8.15 P.M. Reducing our distance to the hut to 246 miles. To night we amused ourselves discoursing on various Christmas days we have spent under unique conditions, feasts and banquets and thoughts of home. We intend deferring our Christmas feast until "Lucky Depot" has been reached. Here I will surprise my chums by my culinary knowledge.

25th December

Christmas day has been and gone. Last Xmas morn we were rather rudely awakened by the "Aurora" bumping on the rocks at Caroline Cove Macquarie Islds. The Year has been filled with pleasant times and memories although we have lived in the most tempestuous and inhospitable spot on the face of the globe. Today we have been toiling against diminishing rations on the great plateau. We struck about 5 miles of the dread pie-crust snow which tired us greatly lifting our feet from the deep foot holes. We made 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles and are now 249 miles from the hut. The wind was of little use being 40o on our starboard. This skidded the sledge along sideways so that we had to shorten all sail. Temperature -10.

26th December

An unfavourable wind on our beam, causing the sledge to skid sideways badly, and patches of piecrust snow made going unpleasant. We made a slight detour from our outward course, and by lunch had covered 15 miles. After a frugal repast- feeling very hungry – we

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covered another 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles. We are now only 8 miles from our 200 mile Depot. On account of the postponed Xmas dinner, we intend having, we have been keenly looking forward to reaching it, and every evening at the end of the days march, our conversation turns to the concocting of the banquet courses.

27th December

We experienced little difficulty in locating "LUCKY DEPOT" the big mound we had erected on our outward journey, shining out as a white pillar across the grey surface of the plateau. The tent was at once erected and I set about preparing a light lunch. This was to appease our appetites, which are now ravenous, for the feast to come. I was "Unanimously" elected cook, and forthwith set about my onerous task. The following menu was all concocted from a half dozen ingredients, which had to be tediously separated from the compounded sledging ration. We allowed ourselves an extra ration for the feast, the rest were savings which had accumulated from day to day – about another ration.

MENU. Horsd'oeuvre, Angels on gliders. Made by placing a raisin on top of a

bar of chocolate, previously fried.

Entrees,	Biscuit fried in sledging suet.
Roast,	Frizzled pemmican on fried biscuit
Piece de resistance. Extra thick and greasy sledging ration.	
Sweets.	Plum pudding. Made by grating up three biscuits
with	the bonsa saw Glaxo, sugar, raisins 7, flavoured
	3 drops Meth.Spirit. All mixed with snow and
boiled	in sock. 5 minutes.

The pudding about which we were rather dubious, turned out with great satisfaction. We brewed a strange mixture by boiling 5 raisins

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in a little of our primus methylated spirit. A drink known as "Tanglefoot" and the recipe of one-BOB BAGE. It was as distasteful as its appearance, and could only be drunk in gulps by holding the nose and breath. It was in troth, as Webb announced, a brew of much "STINGO" and fire. No doubt the King and others would have been greatly amused at the grimaces with which we drank their healths; Still there is loyalty and sincerity amongst the men that sledge the plateau, and the cheers we gave for the welfare of our king and comrades could not have been more hearty, had we celebrated the occasion with Champagne and a "Slap up" banquet. We enjoyed our dinner thoroughly- probably because we were mightily hungry, and I never knew a happier and more jolly Christmas, than this one I spent with Bob Bage and Azzi Webb at "LUCKY DEPOT" 200 miles on the plateau. Below I append a doggerel which I wrote on the occasion, when in the vicinity of the 67 mile Depot. When we were starving!

○○○-----CHRISTMAS DAY ON THE TRAIL.-----○○○

I always like Christmas for it reminds me of the trail,
And if you'd care to listen I'll relate my Christmas tale.
It happened down Antarctic way down in the frozen South,
It's hardly a tale, it's the truth, for a lie ne'er passed my mouth.
We'd all been out a-sledging 300 miles from home,
the toughest time I've spent though in many lands I roam.
There was Azzi Webb and old Bob Bage, and me they nicknamed "Hoyle"
No better chums I've met, for they didn't mind the toil,
Comrades that wouldn't see a pal starve for a paltry "feed".
Those are the men I like, for my friend is a man of deed.
We struggled through a hell, oft frozen to the core,
Frost-bitten and snowblinded, for the blizzards smote us sore.
We came at last on a dreary waste – more desolate than the rest,
And we called it "Lucky Depot" – it's the way we sledgers jest.
Of all days in the year too 'twas December the twenty fifth,
So I thought of home and Christmas and proposed us all a gift.
Then says I to BOB, say chum, there's good "grub" on behind,
It's better to carry it inside than to tow it there you'll find,
Come let us feast, tis Christmas day, It comes but once a year,

And as soon as I had said it, quoth he, it brings good cheer.
Now **bob** was a sensible sort o' chum, one that brims with reason,

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Says he "Unless the King we toast, I'm sure it would be treason".
And so from out our meagre store a double ration took,
He added that as you've proposed, you'd better be the cook.
Ay, Ay, Sir – says I, Cook is just about my line,
So straight away he orders gave, as how to brew the wine.
We'll do the thing in style too, and a menu we'll prepare,
So a lengthy programme we drew up of dishes rich and rare.
And we wrote it all in English-French isn't in my line,
I like to know what I'm eating when I'm about to dine.
Now I've dined at many places, but never such as these,
It's like the gates of heaven when you've found you've lost the keys.
I've dined with kings and emperors, perhaps you scarce believe,
But even they do funny things when round comes Christmas eve
I've dined off seals and penguins, I've dined off a counter lunch,
I've grubbed at a "Slap-up" Café, where only the Swanker munch,
I've dined off an iguana, on a lonely desert isle,
And in the shade of the Golden Wattle by a maiden's winsome smile.
And so I've dined from Horn to Cape and up Alaska way,
But the finest funniest fest I've dined was on that Christmas day.
So the "Grub" and gear assembled, I got to work at once,
And scrubbed the mugs and Hoosh pot – the first washup for months,
On the Annulus snow melter I next bestowed by care,
And scraped from out its "innards" a pound of greasy hair.
Then I pumped hard up the primus, and made the lard to "fizz"
And as floats off its aroma, I heard sighs of – "Jeewhizz"
For when you've toiled on rations short all day and half the night
You feel quite hollow, lose some weight, but gain an appetite.
Finally first course, appeared, we didn't mind the order,
The savoury introduced the feast in place of the Hors d'oeuvre',
As soon as I had served it, with a gulp 'twas out of sight,
For there were courses fifteen and some were but a bite.
Then came the soup called "OX TAIL" it was a tale about the ox,
But "Lor" 'twas just as good a soup as any turtle mocks!
And as it gurgled down inside came murmurs of, alright,
But ere the click, of half a tick, likewise it went from sight!
Then followed, game, joints, entrees, they filled us with delight,
But scarcely were they dished up when they too went from sight!
Says I. I'LL make a filling plug – a double barrelled "HOOSH".
But strike me pink, ere you could wink, it went without a push!
At last I made them "spell-O" I never was a glutton,
So I told them, for the next course, their burberrys to unbutton.
Then as I racks my mind, to think of something really wooden,
I heard a voice within me say, "Why not a Christmas pudding?"
So I took a fullish measure and grabbed the bag of "perks"
And picked out all the pemmican – A cooks resource is "Lurks".
Then I mixes butter and raisins, with just sufficient snow,
With a dose of Cocoa compound plus Sugar and Glaxo,
The butter scotch was handy – it might improve the paste,
I sniffs, and stirred it round and round, and takes a sampling taste.

Perspiring from exertion – it had a vigorous mix,
My fingers felt frost-bitten so I gave ‘em frequent licks.
Then whatever else was handy went in that Christmas dough,
Not omitting hair from sleeping bags and moulting finnescoe.
The fearsome thing was finished – we hid it in a bag,
Which served us for a pudding cloth – a dirty looking rag.
Then I pumped hard up the primus and made its burner roar,
‘Twas hard to watch it boiling, for our hunger panged us sore.

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With watches as at prize fight, at the finish of a bout,
Four minute rounds we ticked off – then the pudding counted out!
With the savoury steam that rises a vision faintly blends
We’re home again with dear ones, with pals and distant friends,
The vision fades quite dream-like, back to the icy south,
The pudding lay before us, we gape with hungry mouth.
Then sitting us around it – it turned out quite a treat,
It began to vanish quickly then more slowly did we eat.
Says I with cookly satisfaction, You’ve plugged us well plum duff,
And as a jest I asked the rest, if they had had enough.
But never a word they answered, but lay down on the floor,
And as if dying of starvation, they feebly signalled more!
Now I knew they didn’t want it, and their hunger was – champagne,
So methinks as I had cooked enough I needs must do the same.
Then – all of a sudden - as I lay there, hearing my poor pals pine,
I called out “HO! come, cheer up lads How about the wine”
Now when you see men laying round with ills and groans so tragic,
As quick as life they’re smiling cured, you put it down to magic.
Then each looks at me, and me at each, and each at one another,
Why yes, By “Gum”, the wines to come, and we winked on at the other.
So out I brought the fiery juice, which I had hidden warm and snug,
And measured out three equal shares into each grimy mug.
Then up and spake our Bobby Bage ‘YOUR GLASSES CHARGE – THE KING,
And scarcely had he said it when loud did our cheers ring,
They seemed to echo far and wide across that lone plateau,
The Blizzard winds, they whirled them, to the limits of the snow.
When the mugs had finished clinking, we drank full well and long,
I could read it in their faces, that there was something wrong.
Yet still another toast we drank – TO OUR COMRADES OF THE SNOWS,
To the men that brave Antarctic wastes and brave its icy woes.
With bated breaths, our noses held, and faces all awry,
Each took a gulp of the fiery stuff and each thought that he’d die,
Then up and spake good Azzie Webb “A noble draught” Quoth he,
It tangles alike both head and foot and scarcely can I see,
Pray tell me of its vintage, it seems without compare,
Its “GUTROT” HOYLE 1912 – A vintage very rare.
Then I told him all about it how the flaming stuff was brewed,
How I mixed the primus alcohol, with the raisins I had chewed.
Then I explains how to taste and give a proper boil,
and after straining in a sock, You’ve brewed the famous “HOYLE”,
Alas! says he, then that’s the reason I’m in such painful state,
For the alcohol you say you’ve used, was the spirit methylate!
The midnight sun he seemed to dance, all wav’ry was our sight,

So into bags we drifted and toggled for the night.
And on the morrow we arose, we felt refreshed and strong,
We set off at a swinging gait singing our sledging song.
The miles fair whizzed by, one by one, we never seemed to tire,
Bob said 'twas the Christmas pudding, but Azzie, the Gutrot fire,
Anyway whatever it was, we marched all day and half the night,
Hauling our sledge across the snows with 40 miles in sight.
And thats the record for the Great White Southern Trail,
'Twas the Christmas feast that did it, here ends my CHRISTMAS TALE.

28TH December

Contrary to what might be expected, after our feast, we had an

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28th December 1912

Contrary to what might be expected we had an excellent night's rest. With perhaps an exception of the usual visitation of nightmare dreams; even these we recount in the morning to amuse one another. We left "LUCKY DEPOT" 'Feeling refreshed and Strong' as draught horses. The surface was good and the breeze fair, so that the miles treated us lightly – or rather we treated them so. By 5 P.M. Lunch we had nearly a dozen up. Bob suggested we put up a record for manhauled sledge; we were unanimous. Favourable conditions continued and we moved off again at 7 P.M. At 11 P.M. another halt was made for "Hoosh" and rest. Luck favoured us with weather and surface and at 1 A.M we were striding it out as fit as when we began. It was frightfully cold, however, and the low midnight sun in a drifty sky seemed to accentuate that fact. As I was in the lead I had plenty of time to muse and my thoughts wandered back to home and dear ones. The hours slowly crept by and the sun rose higher in the heavens, dispelling the gloom and invigorating us with his warm beams. With the returning warmth a new life imbued us and at 5 A.M. Camp 33 ½ miles had been won. Here we rested until 7 a.m. when the trail made the last call on us. Nearly asleep and dog tired we plugged ahead for another three hours, when camp was finally set up. We covered as the result of our exertions 41.5 miles – the record for a man-hauled sledge. The actual time occupied, minus six hours for rest and food, was 22 hours. Nearly 3 miles per hour. We are unanxious to repeat the performance and will be content with a modest 18. After a good Hoosh we turned into our bags contentedly and soon to sleep.

29th Decr.

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29th December 1912

30th December 1912

Temperature -3

After 17 hours in the sleeping bag – during which time we were awakened many times by the cold – we finally arose at 7 a.m. We were very tired after yesterday's feat but were on the trail again at 10 A.M. We plodded on till 4 P.M. when camp was pitched for the day with 12 miles to the good. Webb took a full set of magnetic observations to which I recorded. We felt the cold bitterly sitting in the lee of a snow breakwind and mightily glad to have a good hoosh and into bags.

31st December. New Years Eve.

Time has flown! Looking back this time twelve month we were nearing our destination in Adelie land. Last year I beheld the sun set on the old year and give birth to the new, from the deck of the Aurora. This Year is ending in a blaze of glory. The sun is sinking in a halo of gorgeous clouds and will arise on the new-born year without a punctuation. Who would have dreamt that we were destined to live through such calamitous and furious weather as we have done this past year. Still I have spend happy times on the trail and in the hut in spite of these circumstances, free from worry and care. It has been one of the experiences of my life and much I have learnt. We are now approximately 133 miles from the hut which we hope to make in 10 days time.

1st January 1913

The light was extremely bad when we took to the march at noon. An even pall of light blotted out all shadows and made it impossible to see more than a yard or two ahead. Toward evening the sky cleared off and I noticed about 4 miles ahead a bright white speck

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on the horizon, which, on further investigation proved to be the 109 mile mound. This mark is the first camp we have picked up since the 200 mile depot, having slightly deviated from our course taken on the outward run. The mound was much eroded by wind and practically had turned into a large sastrugi. We pushed down the long slope to the 105 mile mount, covering in less than an hour what had taken us more than half a day to accomplish on the outward run. We covered 31 ¼ miles. Our lips are giving us much trouble being badly cracked by the wind and sunburnt in addition; our efforts to treat them are futile. Bage's eyes are also painful, he is having a bad time with the glaring headlight and has been unable to see to write for the past 3 weeks. Tonight the clouds were phenomenal and took on a rare blue tint and fantastic shapes.

2nd January 1913

Under the 100 miles to go. We covered 12 today in the most unfortunate weather imaginable. The heavy Nimbus clouds that rolled up last night, shut out all bright light, so that the plateau surface and sky were the same slatey tint. Heavy snow fell without intermission. We might just as well have had ground glass before our eyes for we could discern nothing. The strain told on Bob's eyes so that he became stone blind and we hauled him on the sledge. Soft snow put an end to our hauling and we camped for the day. 93 mls

3rd January

Today covered 15 miles of soft snow. Going was very heavy as we had to flounder through soft snow knee deep. Heaven help us if the wind springs up in this flocculent snow! Temperature is high plus 14 for the day. The Nimbus clouds cleared off evening, and

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we were glad of the sunlight to locate ourselves. Turned in at 2 A.M. Feeling very cold. The total mileage travelled 536.

4th January 1913

Surface improved today – the recent snowfall apparently being only local. Covered 13 miles. We can now only be 2 or 3 miles from Southern Cross Depot. (67 miles from hut). One of the bearings, a large pile of ramps is now in sight. Amusing myself and two comrades composing ditties and Topical verse. Camped at 10 P.M.

5th January 1913

(2 A.M. 6th) The weather was again overcast which precluded us taking an observation for Latitude. We walked four miles in the direction where we anticipated the depot should lie, but owing to the atrocious light observed nothing. We turned into our bags to keep warm, and rations being short we decided to cut them down to half. On the reduced rations we have about sufficient to last out another two days. Things are looking exciting for under these prevailing weather conditions, one might as well try to find a grain of gold against the desert sands. There is nought to do but await and see what the morrow will bring forth. On the reduced rations it is imperative to remain in bag as much as possible to avoid radiation and keep warm, so I'm just going to tuck in.

6th January 1913 Vicinity 67 mile Depot

At noon today the sky was again overcast though Webb managed to secure a poor Latitude when the sun burst through a wrack in the clouds. We moved off at 2 p.m. But snow fell and blotted out all things more than a few yards away. To conserve our strength we pitched camp and turned into our bags to await a clearing

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MIDNIGHT.

Have been in bag since 4 p.m., and it has been snowing from a dead calm sky. Extremely depressing and monotonous. We have just had the first snack for 12 hours – 1/3 Biscuit and a tiny stick of chocolate, also 1/3 oz butter and a cup of tea made with a spoonful of used tealeaves to 3 CUPS. If the sun would but shine doubtless we could locate the depot which can be no great distance away. In the meantime into bags again. I am trying to amuse myself and the others by writing a dogerell on our Christmas feast at "Lucky depot". Rather hard to do on a starving stomach.

7th January 1913

To-day the light was as bad as ever. It snowed all night and was stagnantly calm. Heaven only knows where the Depot lies. I think it must be buried deep by snow. We kept in bags until 5.30 PM, when we had ¼ ration Hoosh – the first for 17 hours. We struck camp at 6.30 and moved East along Latitude 67.57.Sth. The light was so bad that we could see nothing beyond a slatey expanse of snow and sky. Things are now serious. We have but a days ration left, and have the choice of remaining here to gambol with the weather, or make a desperate dash for the hut. If we stay here and the weather does not clear we starve miserably. (In my opinion we are as good as dead, if we decide on this latter course). We held a consultation and decided that should the weather be bad on the morrow we will make a bid for the hut. It will be our desperate yet only chance, for the hut is 70 miles away and the trail runs through blizzard and rough surface to travel over. Still it is better to peg out fighting than bartering with the weather. We move off at 6A.M.

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8th January 1913

We did not sleep during the night, being anxious and nervy over our ignominious position. We feel like caught in a trap. Early this morning we held another consultation; the remainder of the rations was intimately gone into and Bob and Azzi decided we could not make the hut on them. I was for making the dash, but finally consented, much against my wish, to their ideas. Extending from the Coast to 100 mile inland, extends an area of fogs, probably brought about by oceanic influence. It is indeed a veritable Death trap. We arose at 3.30 A.M. with bright sunshine and Azzi was just about to take a bearing to the "RAMPS" whilst Bage and I walked out to fix the distance peg. Scarcely had this been done when heavy Nimbus clouds again rolled up from the south, The harbinger of fog and snow. Treacherous conditions that might continue indefinitely. We looked at each other and neither spoke, now was the time to make the grand attempt to save our lives. We were all unanimous now that it was the only thing to be done, a dash for the hut. Quickly we went through all our instruments and gear on the sledge and depoted all things not essential to life - excepting our records, Our rations comprise. Pemmican for 1 – 1/3 day 5 plasmon biscuits, 1 – 1/3 cake chocolate –cocoa compound and 4oz sugar. This is all we three men have to see us through 70 miles of snowy country, blizzard and fog. We are resolved to make the hut or perish, This trifling ration has been split up to last 4 days! It is insufficient to keep warmth in us – there is no other alternative. We run five fleets in the morning and five in the afternoon hoping to cover 2 miles each fleet. This we accomplished today, so that 20 miles have been covered, leaving but 48 to go. If the

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[line of typing missing] present navigation is difficult. The compass needle is useless owing to its proximity to the magnetic pole; There is no sunlight so we are compelled to take the capricious wind, Southerly, as our pilot. Fortunately we are three hefty and stout hearted individuals. How we struggled through the day is beyond me. A fierce blizzard raged and whirled up the loose snow that fell during the past two days so that we marched in a river of snow. Often time our leading man was hidden we could not see a yard ahead. We are feeling very weak and another two days of this will about make statues of us. I have been trying to cheer up my companions, but can't say I like our present prospect. If we had but a glimpse of the sun we could get at least our direction. My comrades are fine men and breathe no pessimism. If we dont reach the hut I will feel myself to blame as I was so eager to push off on this hazardous endeavour. Late this evening we observed the ocean ahead of us and the heavens cleared. Although in pitiful plight I could not but admire the wonderful vista unfolded before us. The distant sea littered with innumerable icebergs- lit by the low evening sun, glowing pink. The ocean a blue mirrory expanse rippleless; above a canopy of the most wonderful blue Nimbus clouds I have looked on. We three stood together gazing on this profound sight spellbound, but where we are or whether to go East or West we know not. Estimated covered 20 miles. Another day and we can reach the hut.

9th January 1913

It was as much as we could do to force ourselves out of bags this morning. Webb looks bad, I suppose Bage and myself look the same. We decided we must make 5 miles to the West and then make

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down to the coast on this route. We found ourselves in badly crevassed and serraced ice bridged with snowbridges, which gave way beneath us and precipitated us at the end of our harness into the abysmal depths. Towards mid-day we recognised the great icecliffs of Commonwealth bay, and a few hours later sighted the Mackellar Islets. It seemed our very eyes were lying to us. In his great excitement Page stepped on the lid of a large crevasse which gave way beneath him precipitating him into the depths. With much trouble we hauled him out and then retraced our steps to get out of this impassable country. At midnight we sighted 5 mile Depot. What touched us most was the hand grip we gave each other and the sight of some dog biscuits, on which we made a hasty start. We crawled into the Five Mile Excavation, and after a Hoosh, slept sounder and happier than we had done for many months.

10 January 1913.

We left the 5 Mile Depot at noon today. Poor Bob's eyes had to be bandaged as he was stone blind. We hauled him on the sledge and had an exciting time preventing it from capsizing into the crevasses. At 5 P.M. we came down the long ice slope at the back of the hut. Those in the hut came running out cheering. We had a Royal reception and were carried into the Hut where Good Old Close had a banquet prepared for us. Although we did not reach the Magnetic Pole, Our records are unique and will comprise some of the most valuable scientific assets of the Expedition.

"Hauling, toiling, tireless on we tramp,
O'er vast plateau, sastrugi high,
o'er deep crevasse and ramp.
Hauling, Toiling, through drift and blizzard gale,
If it has to be done – then made of it fun,
For we're men of the Southern TRAIL.

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[Map showing the track of the Discovery (outward) and track of the Discovery (return)]

[Transcribed by June Pettit and Judy Gimbert]