

# The Seeing is Believing Trans-Antarctic Winter Expedition

Supported by the Commonwealth



**TheColdestJourney.org**

**PATRON:** HRH The Prince of Wales  
**EXPEDITION LEADER:** Sir Ranulph Fiennes Bt OBE

---

Under embargo until 0600GMT 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013

## Summary

- Spirit of adventure and expedition alive and well
- Survived the Antarctic winter in darkness and incredible cold
- Helped raise nearly US\$2m for the visually impaired
- Increasing man's knowledge through scientific experiments
- With SAMSA allowed more than fifty young Africans a taste of Antarctica
- Created educational programmes used by numerous schools

## Detail

In January 2013 six men set out from Cape Town on board the South African Maritime Safety Authority's ice-strengthened cadet training ship *SA Agulhas*. They were bound for Crown Bay, Antarctica. Under the leadership of veteran explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and known as "The Coldest Journey", their mission was to be the first team ever to cross Antarctica in winter. The 4,000 km journey across the continent via the South Pole would take 6 months in some of the harshest conditions on Earth. Included in their ambitions was a comprehensive science programme which required the collection and recording of data on glaciology, meteorology and the physiological and psychological effects of solitude on the team members themselves.

However, in late February, while laying depots of supplies in readiness for the crossing, Sir Ranulph Fiennes suffered severe frostbite damage to one hand. Such was his condition that it became clear he would need immediate expert treatment and reluctantly, he left his colleagues and took the last flight of the season out of Antarctica. For the next 9 months, no facilities existed to rescue or repatriate the remaining five team members, who continued under the leadership of Brian Newham, a man with over 20 years of experience working in Antarctica. Using two 25 tonne Cat® track-type tractors, supplied and modified by Finning, and hauling sledges loaded with their accommodation modules, science equipment and stores, they set out from the coast and climbed up to the polar plateau at 3,500 meters above sea level. On their way they encountered many uncharted crevasses and progress was slow. Despite the best local knowledge, conditions required extreme caution as

---

### **The TAWT Trust Limited is a UK Registered Charity No. 1140147**

**REGISTERED OFFICE:** Fairfax House, 15 Fulwood Place, London WC1V 6AY. Company No. 07424188

**TRUSTEES:** Tony Medniuk (Chairman), Anton Bowring, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Joanna Lumley, Richard Jackson, Gavin Laws, Michael Payton, Eric Reynolds & Alan Tasker

**CHAIRMAN of SCIENCE COMMITTEE:** Sir Peter Williams CBE FRS FEng, Vice President The Royal Society

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of SCIENCE COMMITTEE:** Prof. Dougal Goodman FEng, Deputy Director British Antarctic Survey 1995 – 2000

**SCIENCE CO-ORDINATOR:** Dr Tim Cullingford **MEDICAL RESEARCH LEADER:** Dr Michael Stroud OBE

**MARINE SCIENCE CO-ORDINATORS:** Dr Christopher McQuaid and Adrian McCallum

**EXPEDITION LEADER:** Sir Ranulph Fiennes **MARINE LEADER:** Anton Bowring **LONDON HQ OPERATIONS MANAGER:** Tristram Kaye

**EDUCATION LIAISON:** Phil Hodgson, Durham's Education Development Service **COMMONWEALTH LIAISON:** Derek Smail

**COLD WEATHER EQUIPMENT DEVELOPMENT:** Steve Holland & Team **POLAR CONSULTANTS:** Martin Bell, Liz Pasteur

**EXPEDITION MEMBERS:** Brian Newham, Ian Pickett, Spencer Smirl, Richmond Dykes, Dr Robert Lambert

darkness approached and the temperature dropped. Danger faced the team continuously as they crawled onwards and upwards. By June, having struggled to the plateau, so appalling were the conditions they faced and with an indication of at least a further 100 kms of crevassing ahead of them, a point was reached where it became clear that they had neither adequate fuel to complete their journey nor the time remaining to achieve a truly 'winter' crossing. Despite the strong desire to press on, it would have been fool hardy to do so and the decision was made to focus their attention on their scientific work and abandon the attempt to cross the continent in winter. Sir Ranulph said "what this team has achieved has broadened man's knowledge of Antarctica. In this world of instant gratification they, and many supporters, have carried on the finest traditions of exploration for the benefit of many. I am immensely proud of all of them".

Since then, the team members have remained completely isolated high on the plateau camped in their modest accommodation unit. Modern technology has enabled them to have global communications and, over the months, they have attracted many thousands of followers around the world via their website ([www.thecoldestjourney.org](http://www.thecoldestjourney.org)) including a growing number of schools. They have completed their research work and have collected data commissioned by scientific institutions from around the world which, among other things, it is hoped, will contribute to the knowledge of the extent and rate of climate change. They are the first team ever to camp throughout the Antarctic winter in the permanent darkness and temperatures as low as -60° C. And, they achieved one of the longest Antarctic journeys in winter. In addition, through their association with the international charity Seeing is Believing, which is committed to eradicating avoidable blindness in the developing world, the expedition has raised funds which are being matched dollar for dollar by Standard Chartered Bank.

On Thursday 21st November, Brian Newham and his colleagues Ian Prickett, Dr Robert Lambert, Richmond Dykes and Spencer Smirl returned to Cape Town. With the generous support of the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA), Standard Chartered Bank, the Stonehage Group, The Singer Group, Finning and over 200 sponsor companies, their work, survival and safe return have proved entirely successful. Sir Ranulph Fiennes, friends and colleagues were at Cape Town airport to greet the team as they arrived by air at sunrise. Team leader, Brian, comments "we left the ice with many emotions and are pleased to be coming back to our families and friends. However this great challenge remains unfulfilled and knowledge we have gained will be invaluable to explorers who continue to look for ways to broaden man's understanding".

Thanks to the generosity of the Singer Group, who have provided the expedition with a base in South Africa, there will be a chance for members of the press to meet and interview Sir Ranulph and the team at the Colosseum Luxury Hotel, Century City, Cape Town.

For further information please visit [www.coldestjourney.org](http://www.coldestjourney.org) or contact:  
Tristram Kaye: [tris@thecoldestjourney.org](mailto:tris@thecoldestjourney.org) / +44 7811446250  
Hugh Bowring: [hugh@thecoldestjourney.org](mailto:hugh@thecoldestjourney.org) / +44 7768275731