

An intoxicating blend combining heroic Antarctic adventure and whisky history

Although teetotaler Sir Ernest Shackleton — who talked of a 'mild spree' at times of celebration — could never have envisaged a book which would masterfully combine Antarctica, single malt whisky and an epic journey, he'd be sure to be the first to admit that it's a seductive blend and makes for a cracking yarn.

Dubbed the 'whisky find of the century', the 2007 discovery of the three cases of Mackinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt Whisky embedded in ice under Shackleton's hut, and its subsequent magical reblending by the Mackinlay distillery, captured the imaginations of people all over the world, including respected author, Neville Peat.

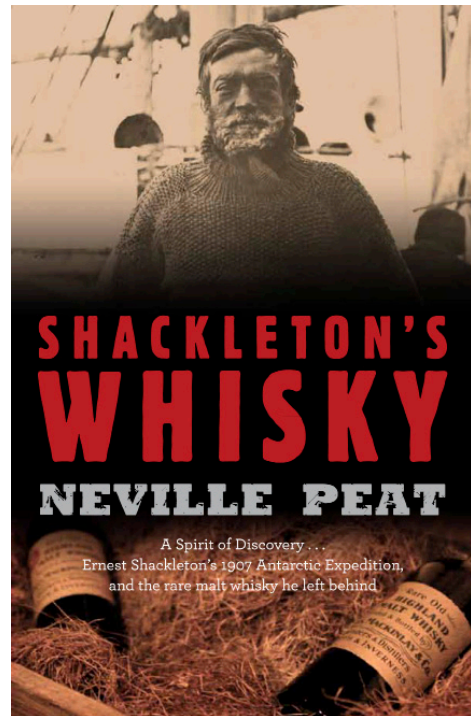
Already well-versed in things Antarctic, Peat immediately saw the power of the compelling back-story and he knew there was a fascinating book in it. "Antarctic exploration and whisky are both steeped in history, maturity, endurance, character, and edgy technology," he says.

The discovery of the whisky inspired Peat to embark on his own expedition of sorts, revisiting Shackleton's first Antarctic expedition, the 'heroic' era of Antarctic exploration, and the craft and lore behind Scotland's finest dram.

His amazing research for Shackleton's Whisky, published in early October to coincide with the 'NZ IceFest' in Christchurch, took him to the Antarctic, Scottish distilleries, and the homes of both Shackleton's granddaughter and a Mackinlay descendent who lives in Kaiapoi.

And, Peat believes he may even have solved the mystery of the missing bottle, thus completing locking down a puzzling piece of the whisky's story.

While researching the book, Peat became captivated by Shackleton and by what made him tick. He was a complex man: a rugged and restless adventurer who also loved poetry. He didn't drink, but he could still appreciate the celebratory comfort that the beguiling bottled liquid amber would bring to the rest of his expedition team. He knew it would keep their spirits up and so he managed to find the space for 25 cases in



Shackleton's Whisky

Author: Neville Peat

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the Nimrod's cramped hold — stowed away along with ponies, food supplies and building gear.

Although a lot has been written on legendary 1907-09 British Antarctic expedition, after having visited the hut himself, Peat began to think more about the human drama that must have played out in the cramped confines of the hut, which was 'no larger than that of a 50-seat tourist coach'.

Shackleton's Whisky celebrates the 'extraordinary achievements of men exploring the extraordinary' but it's also an up-close and personal view of day-to-day life in a hut where 14 men spent over a year in the world's loneliest, harshest environment. Peat notes that Shackleton talks a lot about this — the social life of the hut — in his 1909 book, *The Heart of the Antarctic*. "Even Shackleton himself concluded that 'an Antarctic explorer of his era, wintering over, could 'learn more about human nature than he ever learnt from this ice fastness,'" Peat says.

Whisky played its part in the legendary expedition lore, and it continues to be part of the great Shackleton story, doing its bit to keep his extraordinary legend alive. Some of the proceeds of the sale of the book will go to the Christchurch-based Antarctic Heritage Trust, for on-going protection of the Shackleton heritage at Cape Royds.

Peat notes the irony of the whisky illuminating Shackleton's name and his hut a century year later. "As a result of the discovery, thawing and replication of his whisky, 'Shackleton' and 'whisky' are now closely associated in the minds of millions of people across the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, Australia and beyond. There's also been a huge public relations boost for the Antarctic Heritage Trust in New Zealand."

Perhaps even Shackleton wouldn't be averse to stretching out with the book and a dram of the reblended drop.

ABOUT NEVILLE PEAT



Neville Peat is the author of over 30 books covering themes of geography, biography, natural history and the environment. His biographies include the bestselling *Hurricane Tim: The story of Sir Tim Wallis*. In the late 1970s he spent two summers at Scott Base, New Zealand's Antarctic station on Ross Island, as a journalist and photographer, and this is his fifth book on Antarctic themes. In 2007 he was awarded New Zealand's most valuable literary prize, the Creative New Zealand Michael King Writers' Fellowship for a book about the Tasman Sea (*The Tasman: Biography of an ocean*, 2010). Neville lives on the Otago Peninsula, Dunedin. www.nevillepeatsnewzealand.com



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