

Shackleton whiskey found in Antarctica

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Researchers from New Zealand have recovered five crates of whiskey and brandy belonging to Irish polar explorer Ernest Shackleton.

The crates had been buried for more than 100 years under the Antarctic ice. The spirits were excavated from beneath Shackleton's Antarctic hut, which was built during his unsuccessful attempt to reach the South Pole in 1908.



Richard Paterson, master blender at Whyte and Mackay, whose company supplied the Mackinlay's Whisky for Mr Shackleton, described the find as 'a gift from the heavens' for scotch lovers.

'If the contents can be confirmed, safely extracted and analysed, the original blend may be able to be replicated,' he said.

'Given the original recipe no longer exists this may open a door into history.'

Al Fastier of the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust said: 'To our amazement we found five crates, three labelled as containing whiskey and two labelled as containing brandy.'

'The unexpected find of the brandy crates, one labelled Chas Mackinlay & Co and the other labelled The Hunter Valley Distillery Limited Allandale are a real bonus.'

Some of the crates have cracked and ice has formed inside, which will make the job of extracting the contents delicate.

The Shackleton expedition ran short of supplies on the long trek to the South Pole from Cape Royds from 1907-1909 and they eventually fell about 160km short of their goal.

No lives were lost, vindicating Mr Shackleton's decision to turn back from the pole, first reached in 1911 by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen.

Mr Shackleton's expedition sailed from Cape Royds hurriedly in 1909 as winter ice began forming in the sea, forcing them to leave some equipment and supplies - including the alcohol - behind. The excavation of the whiskey follows the discovery last month of two blocks of butter in an Antarctic hut used by British explorer Robert Falcon Scott on his doomed 1910-12 expedition.

The butter had been stored in stables attached to the expedition hut at Cape Evans in Antarctica.