

THE *NIMROD* ANTARCTIC EXPENDITION

Dr. W. A. Rupert Michell (1879-1966)

Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton (1874-1922), a giant of Antarctic exploration, made four journeys into the earth's most southerly continent. On the *Discovery* Expedition of 1901-1904 he was Third Officer to Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912)¹. Then, between 1907 and 1922, he organized and led three expeditions² himself. On the first of these his team included a 28-year-old doctor from Perth, Ontario, W. A. R. Michell.

William Arthur 'Rupert' Michell was born at Perth, on October 18, 1879, the second son of Francis Lambton Michell (1849-1928) and Margaret Helen Bell (1854-1930). His father was, first, a teacher and later principal at the Perth Collegiate Institute and then, County Inspector of Public Schools.

Michell received his primary and secondary education at Perth and in 1902 graduated from the University of Toronto Medical School. He was on staff at Hamilton General Hospital until 1904 when he returned to Lanark County and purchased the practice of Dr. Herbert Edwin Gage (1867-1926) at McDonalds Corners, in Dalhousie Township, north of Perth.

In 1906 Michell left McDonald's Corners and Canada for England where he planned to undertake post graduate studies. Before doing so, however, he signed on with the Elder-Dempster Line as a ship's surgeon. The shipping line had been founded in 1868 specifically to serve travel and trade between the United Kingdom and colonial outposts on the west coast of Africa. Elder-Dempster ships provided scheduled service to-and-from Sierra Leone; Cape Palmas (Liberia); Cape Coast Castle and Accra (Ghana); Lagos, Benin Bonny and Old Calabar (Nigeria); and Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea). In the early 1900s the company also sent ships to the Congo River as it held a contract with Belgian King Leopold II (1835-1909) to transport goods and supplies for his private colony, the Congo Free State.



Elder-Dempster steamers were custom-built for the African trade, "*comfortably fitted up for passengers [with] extensive cargo space, which will enable them to carry rough goods at moderate rates*"³. Their ships offered a wide range amenities and services, including a doctor (Ship's Surgeon) to provide medical care for passengers and crew during long weeks at sea in a taxing climate. For Ship's Surgeon Rupert Michell however, after only two trips to African ports, a more exciting opportunity presented itself in the form of Ernest Shackleton's proposed attempt to reach the South Pole.

¹ Scott died in Antarctica during a later expedition, succumbing to cold and hunger on his return march from the South Pole where he discovered that Roald Amundsen (1872-1928) had beaten him to the prize by five weeks.

² *Nimrod* Expedition 1907-1909, Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917, *Quest* Expedition 1921-1922.

³ Elder-Dempster promotion circular of 1868 quoted in *Trade Makers: Elder-Dempster in West Africa*, by Peter N. Davies (2000).

When Shackleton's force was being formed, he [Michell] was acting as surgeon on one of the Elder-Dempster boats running to the west coast of Africa. Aboard this ship he met one of the future officers of [Shackleton's ship] the 'Nimrod', who told him of the expedition. "Put me down as Surgeon", said Dr. Michell, and the officer promised to remember him. The promise was fulfilled, for not long afterward Dr. Michell received an offer to go as surgeon on the 'Nimrod' to the South Pole and accepted.⁴

Officially titled the 'British Imperial Antarctic Expedition of 1907-1909', the venture was more commonly known as the 'Nimrod Expedition', so-named for the little ship in which it would sail. Its primary objective, among a range of geographical and scientific tasks, was to be first at the South Pole.

Shackleton had hoped to recruit a strong contingent of experienced men from among his teammates on the 1901-1904 *Discovery* Expedition. He found, however, that almost all had committed themselves to a second South Pole attempt by Robert Scott, then in the planning stage⁵. Only two of his former comrades joined him. As a result, he was forced to assemble a completely new squad of adventurers, which probably explains how a young doctor from small-town Ontario, with only two tropical voyages to his credit, secured the post of Ship's Surgeon on the *Nimrod*.

When fully assembled, the Shackleton team numbered 58 men. The ship itself, commanded by Captain Rupert England (1878-1942), was manned by eight officers, including Surgeon Rupert Michell, and 33 crewmen. The shore party consisted of 16 scientists and other specialists, led by Shackleton. Dr. Rupert Michell was the only Canadian on the team, the others came from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.



Ernest Henry Shackleton
(1874-1922)

The venture being seriously under-financed, Shackleton had to settle for purchase of the elderly ship *Nimrod*, a 40-year-old, wood-built, Newfoundland sealer of just 334 tons⁶, 136 feet (41.5 meters) overall, with a beam of 26 feet nine inches (8.2 meters). She was less than half the size of the ship *Discovery* in which he had ventured with Scott's expedition three years earlier. *Nimrod* also needed new masts, re-caulking and smelled strongly of seal oil but after an overhaul Shackleton and his team became extremely proud of the sturdy little vessel. Crammed with men and supplies, Michell's cabin measured only six feet by three, providing just enough room for a bunk on top of a cupboard, small settee, wash-basin, and oil lamp. Following a visit of inspection by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, *S.Y. Nimrod*⁷ put to sea on August 11, 1907.

⁴ *Perth Courier*, September 24, 1909.

⁵ The *Terra Nova* Expedition of 1910-1912.

⁶ Gross register tons, built in Norway.

⁷ Classified 'S.Y.' as a 'Steam Yacht' for purposes of a scientific expedition.

Shackleton himself was delayed in England by last minute fundraising efforts, but *Nimrod* was a slow-sailor. Rigged as a barquentine and equipped with 60 hp. steam engine driving a single screw, she could only make a top speed of six knots per hour. With stops to take on coal at Cape Verde and Cape Town, *Nimrod* did not arrive at Christchurch, New Zealand, until November 23rd. By taking passage on the much faster P&O liner S.S. *India*, and despite fundraising stops in Australia, Shackleton reached Christchurch only 19 days behind her.

At Christchurch, members of the expedition were interviewed by newspaper reporters from across New Zealand and Australia. The *Otago Witness* reported that,



The Ship's Surgeon is Dr. Mitchell⁸, a genial young Canadian who took his degree at Toronto University. "The health of the crew of the ship is my first consideration, but I take any other work that comes along in connection with working the ship." Dr. Michell was quite enthusiastic about the little 'Nimrod'. "She is a splendid sea boat, very seaworthy in every way, though a bit lively at times. I had a splendid time on the way out and enjoyed the long voyage very much. I don't think we carried away a single block".

Dr. Mitchell stated that he was quite acclimated to the cold induced by snow and ice. "I have been in it all my life in Ontario", he said, "and I don't suppose it will be much worse in Antarctica".⁹

Dr. W. A. Rupert Michell (1879-1966)

On New Year's Day 1908 the expedition sailed for Antarctica. Surgeon Rupert Michell would later recall that, during the first days of the voyage, *Nimrod* was struck by a force-12 hurricane and,

... started to roll frightfully ... we all suffered the inconveniences of sea-sickness. The 'Nimrod', through being so heavily laden, went through all the combinations of motions one could conceive. When the heavy weather struck us, things were as wet and disagreeable as they could be ...¹⁰

Once across the Antarctic Circle, however, weather and sea conditions greatly improved.

We had very fine weather in the Circle, and we just steamed along, without bothering to sail much. We encountered no pack ice, but there were countless numbers of icebergs, of a flat, tubular variety - the typical Antarctic bergs. The sides were white with the action of the sea, deeply fissured, and in places the beautiful dark blue ice could be seen.

⁸ This newspaper story spells the surname as both Mitchell and Michell, as do Dr. Michell's military records and many other documents. The correct spelling is Michell.

⁹ *Otago Witness*, November 27, 1907. Published at Dunedin, New Zealand.

¹⁰ *Marlborough Express*, March 11, 1908. Published at Blenheim, New Zealand.

*After passing through the bergs we came into perfectly open sea—the only ice visible was on the horizon. At this time, we were getting twenty-four hours’ daylight— you could only tell what time it was by your mealtimes, and everybody lost a lot of sleep. Wake up at midnight, and the sun would be bright.*¹¹

As *Nimrod* approached the continent, however, it was blocked from landing the expedition at any of the three sites originally selected by Shackleton. “*The Ice Barrier*¹², when we sighted it, was just like one huge iceberg,” Michell recalled. On February 3rd Shackleton concluded there was little sign the ice would shift and decided to establish his headquarters at the nearest practicable landing place, Cape Royds, on Ross Island, at the foot of Mount Erebus, a 12,450 foot (3,790 meter) active volcano described by Michell as standing,

*... as the sentinel of Antarctica. It has the true volcanic cone, and is covered with snow, and ice from the base to the summit. The snow-clad sides are deeply fissured right from the sea level to the top. It is wonderful to see the steam issuing ceaselessly from the icy top.*¹³



Nimrod crossing the Antarctic Circle

On January 31st, as *Nimrod* stood off Ross Island preparing to land the shore party with its equipment and supplies, a crate hook lifting sledging gear through the aft hatch broke free and, swinging across the deck, struck the ship’s Second Officer, Æneas Lionel Acton Mackintosh (1879-1916), in the eye. Taken to Captain England’s cabin, Dr. Eric Stewart Marshall (1879-1963) (shore party surgeon and cartographer) found “*what appeared to be a portion of retina protruding through the eye*”¹⁴.

Laying Mackintosh out on the cabin floor, anesthetized with ether, in the light of a single oil lamp, Marshall, Dr. Alistair Forbes Mackay (1878-1914) (shore party surgeon) and Dr. Rupert Michell excised the eye “*using instruments that included a retractor made from rigging wire*”¹⁵. The following day, Mackintosh returned to duty.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Later known as the Ross Ice Shelf.

¹³ *Marlborough Express*, March 11, 1908.

¹⁴ *Shackleton’s Forgotten Expedition: The Voyage of the Nimrod*, by Beau Riffenburgh (2004).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ On their return to New Zealand Mackintosh was fitted with a glass eye.

In addition to such medical duties, Michell assisted in landing the *Nimrod's* cargo at Cape Royds in circumstances severely hampered by foul weather. Blizzards repeatedly enveloped work parties without warning and the little ship frequently had to suspend operations and make for the comparative safety of open water. Michell recalled that,

... the ship became practically an iceberg. She was coated with ice from stem to stern, and each sea that came over seemed to be frozen in the process. Work was carried on day and 'night'. No one knew any difference until soft sleep put his chains on the eyelids. The sun was very brilliant, but no one suffered from snow-blindness, that scourge of some Arctic exploration parties.¹⁷

By the time they began landing coal at the Cape Royds camp, the sea ice had broken away from the shore, but it had not left the vicinity. Much to the frustration of Shackleton and his men, Captain England became more cautious than ever.

Refusing to go within a mile of the landing area he condemned the men transporting the coal to agonizingly difficult labor. A party consisting of [Edgeworth] David [geologist], [Douglas] Mawson [physicist], [Bertram] Armytage [pony wrangler]¹⁸ and [Dr. Rupert] Michell rowed and poled back and forth for more than 12 hours straight.¹⁹

With the *Nimrod's* First Officer, John K. Davis (1884-1967), serving as helmsman, oarsmen Edgeworth David (1858-1934), described the journey from ship to the shore.

We would pull for about half a mile across a nearly ice-free sea; then we would reach the belt of dense floe-ice ... The heaving of the sea scrunched the floe-ice together every now and then, so that Davis had to choose, and choose quickly, from moment to moment, down which opening to force our boat ... The little lanes, or rather paths, of water were so narrow that they were barely wide enough for the boat itself; indeed, we frequently had to force the floes apart in order make room for the boat, so that the blades of the oars had nothing on which to catch but soft snow or an occasional lump of ice frozen down on to the top of the ice floe ... After much meandering and skillful steering, but not without a few scrunches, Davis piloted us at last to safely at the landing place.²⁰

Rupert Michell long remembered the brutal labor and fierce weather conditions he endured at the oars of that ship's boat. It was, he said,

... fearful work, for wielding a heavy spruce oar in a whaleboat in the midst of a sea filled with loose pack ice is not pleasant, especially in zero weather with a south-easter blowing. We had often the greatest difficulty in approaching the shore, owing to pack ice which nearly capsized us several times as we pushed our way through it ... We toiled amidst slush and coal-dust and were all tired and dirty and disgusted. On one occasion we worked for forty hours and nearly slept on our feet.

¹⁷ *Marlborough Express*, March 11, 1908.

¹⁸ The *Nimrod* Expedition included 10 Manchurian ponies as well as sled dogs and a modified motor car.

¹⁹ *Shackleton's Forgotten Expedition: The Voyage of the Nimrod*, by Beau Riffenburgh (2004).

²⁰ Quoted in *Shackleton's Forgotten Expedition: The Voyage of the Nimrod*, by Beau Riffenburgh (2004).

Towards the close we encountered a fearful blizzard. A wind of hurricane violence (force 12) sprang up and the temperature became very low. Thick, blinding snow began to fall and was driven along by the force of the gale. How the wind did howl in our rigging! The temperature fell to 18 degrees, each sea as it came aboard froze solid on our bulwarks, decks, and lower rigging, and she was soon a floating iceberg.²¹

While *Nimrod* was at Cape Royds, Rupert Michell also took part in the first exploratory marches across Ross Island. On the expedition roster, Michell's name appears twice, once among the *Nimrod's* officers and once among the shore party – the only man to be named in both squads.

The sun began to dip about the 10th of February, and a kind of twilight, not darkness, prevailed for several hours of the day. The colours on the snow-covered and ice-tipped mountains during these few hours were something wonderful - you had every conceivable shade and tint. On the mountain peaks the glow of the declining sun was marvellously beautiful. The cold, of course, became much greater when the sun disappeared in this way.²²



Ross Island exploration party approaching Mount Erebus, February 1908

²¹ Rupert Michell speech to Empire Club of Toronto, March 31, 1910.

²² *Marlborough Express*, March 11, 1908.

The landing of men, equipment and supplies was finally completed on February 22nd. The following day *Nimrod* and her crew, including Dr. Michell, sailed for safe harbor back in New Zealand, completing a round-trip from Christchurch of 3,742 miles (6,022 kilometers).

*I think a great many of us would rather liked to have wintered in the Antarctic. The landing party were in fine fettle, and confident of success. The last sight we had of them was their dark figures on the top of the ice cliff, outlined against the skyline, when we dipped our ensign in farewell.*²³

While *Nimrod* refitted and re-supplied at Christchurch and awaited its return voyage to Ross Island, Rupert Michell took the opportunity to tour parts New Zealand and to visit Australia.

On Antarctica, Mount Erebus was successfully summited on March 10th. Then, operating from their base hut measuring only 33 x 19 feet (10m x 5.8m), the 16 men of the shore party conducted geological, zoological, and meteorological research and, in anticipation of the coming south polar summer, prepared for the attempt on the pole.



²³ Ibid.

Shackleton, accompanied by Dr. Eric Marshall, Frank Wild (1873-1939), and Jameson Adams (1880-1962) set out on October 29th. After more than two months on the ice, exhausted and with food supplies depleted, a last dash without the sledge or other equipment reached 88° 23' S on January 9, 1909. Their resources had given out just 97.5 geographical miles (157 kilometers) short of the prized objective - but they had set a 'farthest south' record to that date. Covering the return trek in just under seven weeks, the pole team reached the Cape Royds' base on February 28th. Their journey out-and-back had covered 1,700 miles (2,736 kilometres). In the base camp hut, they found a note saying that *Nimrod* was sheltering nearby, anchored off the Glacier Tongue²⁴.

While Shackleton had fallen short of the geographic South Pole, team members Edgeworth David, Douglas Mawson (1882-1958) and Alistair Mackay (1878-1914) trekked 1,100 miles (1,610 kilometers), out and back, to successfully reach the Magnetic South Pole at latitude 72°25' south, 155°16' east, on the 8,000 foot (2,440 meter) plateau behind the coastal Transantarctic Mountains.

By March 4th both parties were aboard, and *Nimrod* was making full steam northward. Not a man had been lost but, "*a look at their emaciated forms and sunken cheeks showed what they had endured*"²⁵. Nevertheless, Dr. Michell was only called upon to treat the four men who had made the pole attempt. In addition to being malnourished, they were suffering from severe enteritis, the result of eating tainted pony-meat²⁶.

Nimrod docked at Christchurch on March 23rd and by June 14th was back in England²⁷ where the team enjoyed massive public acclaim. Shackleton was knighted while the men, including Dr. Rupert Michell, received the Royal Geographical Society Antarctic 1907-1909 medal. The *Nimrod* Expedition's farthest south record, however, stood for less than three years. Norwegian Roald Amundsen (1872-1928) reached the South Pole on December 15, 1911.

Having spent nearly four years since leaving Canada travelling on the coasts of Africa and Antarctica, Michell passed the summer of 1909 escorting his spinster sisters on a European tour and then returned with them to Canada.

Dr. Rupert Michell, surgeon on the 'Nimrod' with the Shackleton Expedition to the South Pole, returned on Sunday to his parental home in Perth after an absence of four years. He was accompanied home by his sisters, Misses Kathleen and Helen, who had spent the summer months with him in European centers of culture and art.

²⁴ A mountain outlet glacier and seaward extension of the Erebus Glacier from Ross Island.

²⁵ Rupert Michell speech to Empire Club of Toronto, March 31, 1910.

²⁶ The ponies had not proven effective. A number died on the ship before reaching Antarctica, others died of cold or from falling into crevasses in the ice. Several carcasses had been butchered to augment food caches that sustained the party on its return trek from the pole attempt, but some of the meat had spoiled.

²⁷ On January 31, 1919, 10 years after her return from the Antarctic, the *Nimrod*, then serving as a collier, ran aground on the Barber Sands off the Norfolk (UK) coast. The North Sea battered her to pieces and only two of her 12-person crew survived.

*Dr. Michell has seen much of the world in the last four years which were crammed with experiences that do not happen in an ordinary man's lifetime. He had trying experiences on the west coast of Africa and in the Antarctic, a far cry between two extremes, but they were successfully bridged by him, who is by no means test of good physique.*²⁸

*To live a while in a country where the temperature is fever heat and then go to an ice-bound barren tract with the thermometer continually from 20 to 40 below, is to become acclimated, in the third degree. The trip up the Congo and Kalabar [Calabar] Rivers was altogether different from the journey's over glacial tracts.*²⁹

In the months following his return Michell engaged in a round of speaking engagements to such groups as the Empire Club, the Women's Canadian Club, the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, and other organizations. In late 1909 Ernest Shackleton published *The Heart of Antarctica*, his account of the *Nimrod* Expedition, and when his speaking tour promoting the book reached Canada in May 1910 Rupert Michell joined him at Toronto, participating in a joint lecture to students at Upper Canada College and to a paying audience of 4,000 at Massey Hall.



Breaking Lava From Mount Erebus

L to R - Æneas Mackintosh (1879-1916), *Nimrod's* Second Officer, with his eye bandaged following the January 1908 emergency surgery off Cape Royds; Australian geologist Leo Arthur Cotton (1883-1963), a guest on the 'Nimrod' voyage Christchurch-Antarctica-Christchurch in 1908; Dr. W. A. Rupert Michell (1879-1966), Ship's Surgeon, who assisted with the removal of Mackintosh's eye. The pieces of volcanic rock later donated to the Perth, Ontario, Museum were probably those chipped off by Leo Cotton.

This photo was taken in March 1908 at Lyttleton, near Christchurch, New Zealand, by Able Seaman Victor Berry, a *Nimrod* crewmember, shortly after the ship's return from depositing the Shackleton shore party on Ross Island.

In 1911 Michell worked briefly at the Neal Institute³⁰, a substance abuse clinic in Toronto, and then as a family doctor serving the area of Warsaw-Norwood, Ontario, before establishing a practice at Perth, with his office on the corner of Wilson and North Streets³¹. Then, in early December 1915 as the war in France bogged down in the trenches, the *Perth Courier* reported that,

²⁸ Michell's Canadian Army medical records of 1918 describe him at age 39 as 5'8" tall, weighing 143 pounds, with blue eyes and a scar over his right eye.

²⁹ *Perth Courier*, September 1909.

³⁰ The Neal Institute was a rehab clinic for the better (i.e. moneyed) class of alcoholic. Founded by Dr. Benjamin Neal in 1892 at Des Moines, Iowa, it had franchises in 63 cities, including eight in Canada. The Institute advertised that anyone could kick their "drink habit" in only three days and provided patients/customers with a contract guaranteeing that promise. The primary element of the Institute treatment was Dr. Neal's "purely vegetable medicine taken only internally".

³¹ 55 North Street.

*Dr. Rupert Michell's application for service in the medical corps in Europe has been accepted, and he is liable to go overseas any day. He was in Kingston last week proving his qualifications.*³²

Rather than enlisting with the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), however, Michell joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) of the British Army. Commissioned a Captain, he was briefly assigned to the 10th Royal West Kent Regiment in England and then, in France, attached to a series of British units; the 56th Field Ambulance, 7th Bedford Regiment, XIII Corps, Royal Flying Corps (3rd Wing, 4th Army) and 1st Cavalry Reserve. At the end of 1917, after three years' service with the RAMC, he resigned his commission and returned to Canada where, on June 4, 1918 he re-enlisted with the CAMC and was posted as a Captain to the CAMC Training Depot and Camp Hill Convalescent Hospital, at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Michell's decision to switch from British to Canadian military service would appear to have been prompted by matters of the heart. Two months after returning to Canada, he married Katie Violet Beatrice Dowdall on August 15, 1918. The wedding took place at Toronto, but Violet Dowdall had been born in 1886 at Althorpe, South Sherbrooke Township, Lanark County, Ontario, the daughter of Thomas Dowdall (1847-1935) and Eliza Jane Deacon (1842-1918). The newlyweds paid a brief visit to the groom's parents at Perth and then moved to Halifax, where they lived for the next year.

Following his discharge from the Canadian Army in June 1919, Michell briefly resumed his practice at Perth before returning to the University of Toronto to complete a degree in Public Health. Shortly after graduation, he set sail again, in July 1921, this time for the West Indies where he took up a post as Medical Officer of Health with the British colonial government of the tiny island of Montserrat.



³² *Perth Courier*, December 10, 1915.

Dr. Rupert Michell returned to Canada in March 1922 and joined the staff at Monteith Academy, Iroquois Falls, Ontario, a co-ed boarding school providing secondary education to Northern Ontario at a time when there were few high schools in the region. From 1925 he worked as Director of the Ontario Public Health Service laboratory at Owen Sound, and from 1927 as Director of the Ontario Department of Health Office at North Bay. In 1935 he was transferred to the Department's Ottawa office, where he worked until his retirement in 1949.

Over the years and many miles of his travels, Rupert Michell assembled an eclectic collection of souvenirs and curiosities. In 1932 and again in 1941 he gifted many of these items to the museum in his hometown of Perth. The items donated included,

Antarctic rock specimens [from] the slopes of Mt. Erebus [Erebus] which ... is situated on an island at the southernmost extremity of the Ross Sea. One of these specimens consists of a fragment of a granite 'erratic' or boulder, while the other four probably represent varieties of volcanic breccia. These were the only geological specimens obtained by Dr. Michell on the Antarctic continent where he acted as medical officer to the famous Shackleton Expedition. It is doubtful if any rock specimens were ever brought from nearer the South Pole than these, and Perth Museum is indeed fortunate in thus obtaining probably the only rocks from that area that ever reached Canada.³³

Michell also gave the museum his collection of West Indian seashells and coral that he had brought back from Monserrat, including "a bowl made of native gourd and decorated by a Negro"³⁴. He also donated some relics of the Great War scavenged from the Somme battlefield in France.

Dr. William Arthur Rupert Michell died at Ottawa, on July 20, 1966 and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, at Perth. Katie Violet Beatrice Dowdall-Michell died at Ottawa in 1971 and was buried beside her husband.

A year before Violet Dowdall-Michell's death she attempted to sell her husband's personal *Nimrod* Expedition diary to the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University in England. An appraisal of the diary concluded, however, that it contained little that was new in the way of historic or geographic interest and the Institute declined the offer.

Following Violet Michell's death, the diary disappeared for three decades until 2005 when, while researching an article on Rupert Michell's contribution to Antarctic exploration, *Toronto Star* journalist Adam Mayers went looking for the missing journal. He began in Michell's hometown, by contacting Ann MacPhail, Library Technician at the Perth campus of Algonquin College, repository of a substantial collection of local genealogical and historical material. McPhail soon narrowed the search to a solid lead.

³³ *Perth Courier*, September 16, 1932 – 'Museum Notes' by Archibald McDiarmid Campbell (1868-1948), Honorary Curator.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Rupert and Kate Michell had no children, but Dr. Michell had three siblings. He was pre-deceased by his brother, Robert Barford Bell Michell (1878-1959), a professor of French at the University of Wisconsin, and by his unmarried sister, Helen Elizabeth Michell (1883-1970). However, Dr. Michell's other sibling, Kathleen Mary Michell (1881-1961), married William Andrew McKim (1872-1942),³⁵ in 1912 and had two children - Helen A. McKim (b.1914) and Francis 'Frank' S. McKim (b.1915-2006). Mayers later wrote in his *Toronto Star* story that the diary ...

*... had passed to nephew, Frank McKim [executor of Rupert Michell's estate] as part of his uncle's effects. We traced McKim, then 89, to an Ottawa retirement home and, sure enough, he had a large envelope in a dusty old box in the closet. After reading the 100-odd pages of the diary, I agreed that ... it didn't add to detailed accounts of Shackleton's adventure. But it still bore unique witness, in a Canadian voice, to a great moment in history. It told the story of hurricanes and blizzards, superhuman efforts to land stores and equipment in Antarctica, their rescue of Shackleton and the simple joys of an adventuring life.*³⁶

When Mayers' article was published, a rare book dealer in England contacted McKim with an offer to purchase the diary on behalf of a wealthy collector of Antarctic memorabilia. McKim, however, who died at age-91 in 2006, decided to bequeath his uncle's papers to Library and Archives Canada.

*Fonds consists of Rupert Michell's diary for July-November 1907 (123 pages); two handwritten manuscripts 'South in the Nimrod' (44 and 70 pages), one of them marked 'Address to Empire Club T.O., March 31, 1910'; handwritten manuscript 'Voyage of the Nimrod' (10 pages); correspondence; 421 photographs (b&w); three medals on broach awarded to Dr. W.A. Rupert Michell, Antarctic 1907-1909 medal, 1914-1918 British War Medal, and World War One Gilt Victory Medal", etc.*³⁷



Nimrod anchored off Cape Royds, Ross Island, Antarctica, February 1908

- Ron W. Shaw (2020)

³⁵ William A. McKim was born at Kincardine, Bruce County, the son of Sylvester McKim (1827-1900) and Abigail McLeod (1833). He was a languages teacher at Perth Collegiate Institute from 1900 and Principal 1905-1912, then taught at Calgary Collegiate Institute and Harbord Collegiate in Toronto.

³⁶ *Toronto Star*, March 22, 2007.

³⁷ LAC Archival Reference R1520-0-2-E / MG30-B90 / Box RV3 155.