

Charlie Sabin – Captain of School
Address – Presentation Evening 2024

As you breathe out, you see the air turn into a freezing cloud. It's now so cold over the Southern Ocean that each breath you take is icy and excruciating.

It seems like a lifetime ago that you replied to the advertisement in the newspaper:

'MEN WANTED for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honour and recognition in case of success.'

It feels that it was a long time ago that you dared to dream of glory and discovery, of what you could achieve, to be the first to stand upon the South Pole.

More than a 100 years ago, a man by the name of Ernest Shackleton ventured to be the first person to cross Antarctica, over the South Pole, sea to sea. Many of you, I am sure, have heard the story.

Shackleton set out for Antarctica on his ship, the Endurance, but upon reaching the continent, he and his crew were met early on by an unstoppable expanse of sea ice. As you can imagine, they battled through it valiantly, night and day, but finally, their ship surrendered to the pack ice, frozen in place only 100 miles from their destination.

The Endurance, their ship, shelter and mode of transport, was trapped. They were trapped. And eventually, the Endurance was crushed by the shifting ice and sank to the very depths of that freezing ocean, leaving Shackleton and his men stranded upon the ice for more than 19 months.

The adventure was a brilliant failure, and a famous one too. Not least because they never crossed the continent, but because every single one of the 28 men on board survived, and they did so with valour.

However, there is another story. An untold story...

Good evening, members of the official party, staff, parents, and boys. It is my absolute honour and privilege to be standing here this evening as the Brighton Grammar School Captain for 2025, alongside two exceptionally capable Vice-Captains, Hamish and James.

I would like to thank Joe Weber, Sam Linder, the 2024 prefects, and the class of 2024 for their outstanding service to this school over the past year, and I am truly grateful to have been given the opportunity to build upon the legacy that they have developed.

Much of what I remember about my early years at BGS is of looking up to the Year 12s at the time, and thinking, 'One day...one day, I'll get there. One day, I'll be just like them', and I am excited by the prospect of challenging myself, and challenging the 2025 prefects, to strive, in our year ahead, to live up to the astounding leadership of those Brighton Grammar students who have gone before us.

Two such Old Boys were Andrew Keith Jack and Sir Lionel George Hooke.

There is an untold story in Shackleton's adventure. The story of Andrew and Lionel.

You see, Shackleton's Endurance was not the only vessel in this expedition. There was in fact, another ship called the Aurora.

Andrew and Lionel sailed upon the Aurora, with 16 other brave men, to reach the opposite side of Antarctica to Shackleton, who was 1200 miles away. Their mission was to lay supplies along the later parts of what would have been Shackleton's journey, if he had not been trapped with his crew by the ever-expansive ice. It was the job of 10 of those men from the Aurora to place these supplies.

But one night, when they were camped away from the ship, there was a terrible storm, and they woke up to find that the Aurora and their eight other companions had disappeared. Nowhere to be found.

The Aurora had been hurled away by storm, and like the Endurance, 1200 miles away, it too had been trapped by ice.

For the two Brighton Grammar old boys, it just so happened that Lionel had been swept away on board the Aurora, and Andrew had been stranded upon the ice.

Yet despite this, those 10 men on the icecap pressed on. They laboured and toiled to place those supplies for Shackleton and his crew, unaware that it was futile. Those supplies would never be reached, and they remain there to this day, frozen in time and place.

Meanwhile, on board the stranded Aurora, Lionel had had an idea.

You see, on that ship, Lionel had found a damaged radio antenna and saw an opportunity. Ten months he spent working on that piece of equipment. Ten months with no connection to the outside world. Ten months of dedication before finally he managed to transmit a distress signal that crossed 900 miles, more than four times the distance that it had been originally designed for.

It was this remarkable feat of engineering that led to the Aurora's eventual rescue, and then ultimately the rescue of those men left on the ice, of which only seven of the ten had survived their almost two-year isolation.

It is this forgotten story (of those 18 men on the far side of Antarctica) that perhaps moves me more than Shackleton's well-known adventure upon the Endurance.

These two Brighton Grammar Old Boys, Andrew and Lionel, took a risk. They dared to make a difference. They attempted something difficult, without seeking the glory promised to those who were attempting to make the historic crossing on the other side of Antarctica. And they did so trusting that their fellow Tonner and their fellow companions would have their backs in doing so. Trusting that they would not leave each other stranded. One on the ship, one on the ice.

It is their leadership, their optimism, and their bravery in taking a risk that are what stand the test of time. Whilst they may not have achieved the outcome that they had set out for, that is not what defines the success of their expedition.

The premierships won this year at Brighton Grammar are not only what define the success of the school. The academic and co-curricular successes achieved this year at Brighton Grammar are not only what define the success of the school. But rather, it is our fearlessness and unrelenting drive, our effort, that does so.

To close this story, let me take a step back.

Shackleton took a risk in leading one side of his expedition, and his story is praised and commended in the spotlight.

But Andrew and Lionel dared to challenge themselves outside of this spotlight, even when they were lost and separated by that terrible storm. They dared not for the glory, but for the challenge itself.



As we close upon another successful year, I look forward to 2025 and speak now to the Brighton Grammar students of the year ahead.

Do you dare to challenge yourself? Do you dare to face hardship in the uncertain hope of success? Do you dare to face obstacles even when that spotlight is turned off?

Another outstanding year will not just happen. It will take work, effort, and determination but what an opportunity that is.

Going into 2025, I urge you to take a risk: to take up a challenging subject, to join the production, to try a new sport, to step outside of what is comfortable and easy, to do something difficult - and to trust, just like Andrew and Lionel did, that in doing so, your fellow Tonners, those sitting next to you right now, will support you, no matter what.

I am incredibly excited for the year ahead, and I look forward to everything that we will achieve together.

Meliora Sequamur.