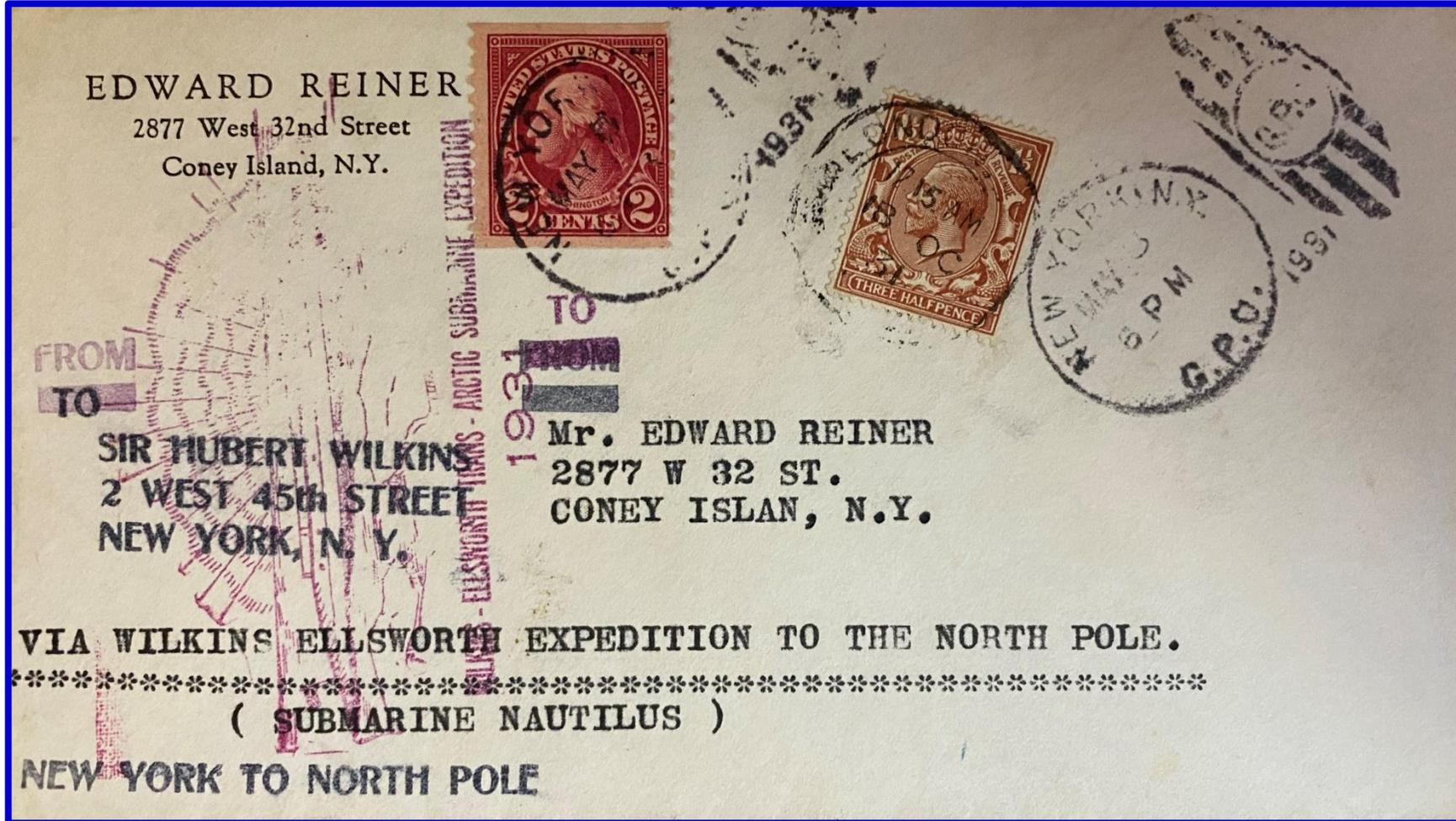


**WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931  
ILL-FATED EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE  
BY SUBMARINE NAUTILUS**



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**SIR HUBERT WILKINS**

- \* **Born October 31 1888 Hallett South Australia (one of 13 children )**
- \* **Pioneer in Aerial Photography**
- \* **1928 Aerial Trans Arctic Expedition – sponsored by Randolph Hearst  
1<sup>st</sup> to fly across the Arctic Ocean. Knighted by George V**
- \* **1930 with friend Lincoln Ellsworth planned sub Arctic expedition**
- \* **1931 the ill-fated sub Arctic expedition by submarine Nautilus**
- \* **Died Framingham Massachusetts in 1958**
- \* **1959 Ashes scattered at the Arctic by crew of USS Skate**
- \* **His papers are at the The Ohio State University Byrd Polar Research Center**

# WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931 ILL-FATED EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE BY SUBMARINE NAUTILUS

## LINCOLN ELLSWORTH

- \* Born May 12<sup>th</sup> 1880. Son of a wealthy coal man.
- \* Failed academic but had a thirst for adventure funded by his father.
- \* 1925 flew with Roald Amundsen on a failed attempt to the North Pole.
- \* 1926 flew to North pole again by dirigible. North Pole sighted on May 12 1926
- \* **1931 Ill fated sub Arctic expedition by submarine Nautilus**
- \* 1935-1939 4 expeditions to Antarctica.
- \* Awarded 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional Gold medal for Arctic flights of 1925 & 26 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1936 for claiming 350,000 sq. miles of Antarctica for the United States
- \* Died May 26 1951
- \* Major benefactor of American Museum of Natural History  
Hall of Lincoln Ellsworth dedicated to his Arctic and Antarctic voyages

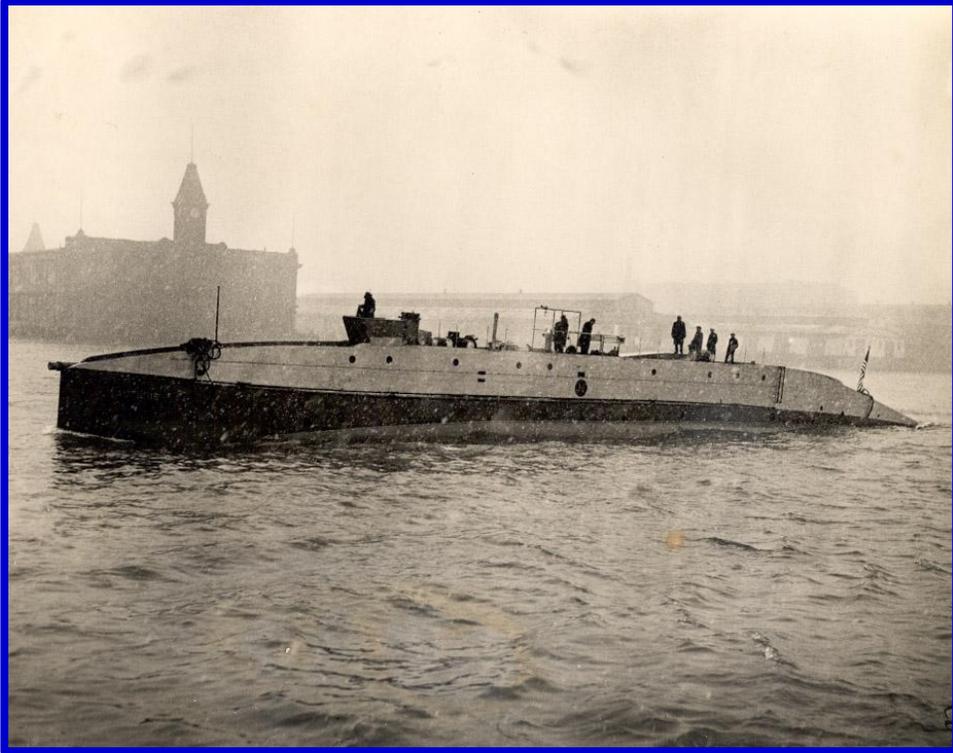
**WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931  
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- **The project was conceived while Hubert Wilkins and his wife were on their honeymoon at Lincoln Ellsworth's Schloss ( Castle ) in Switzerland.**
- **Hubert Wilkins tried to buy the submarine from the US Navy but they would not sell it to him as he was not a US citizen so they leased it to him.**

**GOALS OF EXPEDITION**

1. **Conduct scientific experiments and observations while moored to ice floes.**
2. **To successfully navigate to the North Pole while submerged beneath the ice floes.**

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**The O-12 (SS 73), built in 1916 by  
the Lake Torpedo Boat Co. of  
Bridgeport, Connecticut,**

- **The submarine was then moved to Mathis Shipyard in Camden NJ where it was stripped of its military armaments**
- **Fitted out with latest scientific equipment**
- **Superstructure modified to operate beneath the ice**

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**Christening the *Nautilus* at Brooklyn  
Navy Yard**

- Arrived at Brooklyn Naval Yard on March 23rd
- On March 24 Lady Suzanne Bennett Wilkins christened submarine Nautilus.
- She used a bottle of ice water since prohibition made champagne unavailable

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- **Left Bergen on August 5<sup>th</sup> and headed North.**
- **Finally reached first ice flow on August 19<sup>th</sup>.**

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- Although not reaching the North Pole under the ice, on August 31<sup>st</sup> the Nautilus did submerge under a 3 foot thick ice flow.

The team did manage to conduct scientific experiments on the ice surface and took various samples of ice water.



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**WHY ILL-FATED**

- **First omens: They left Camden NJ on March 16<sup>th</sup> only to have snow storms delay them at Philadelphia Naval Yard and at Marcus Hook**
- **While entering New York Harbor seaman Willard Grimmer fell overboard and drowned.**
- **Crossing the Atlantic they encounter severe storms and on June 13<sup>th</sup> both engines fail.**
- **RESCUED! By USS Wyoming (BB-32)**

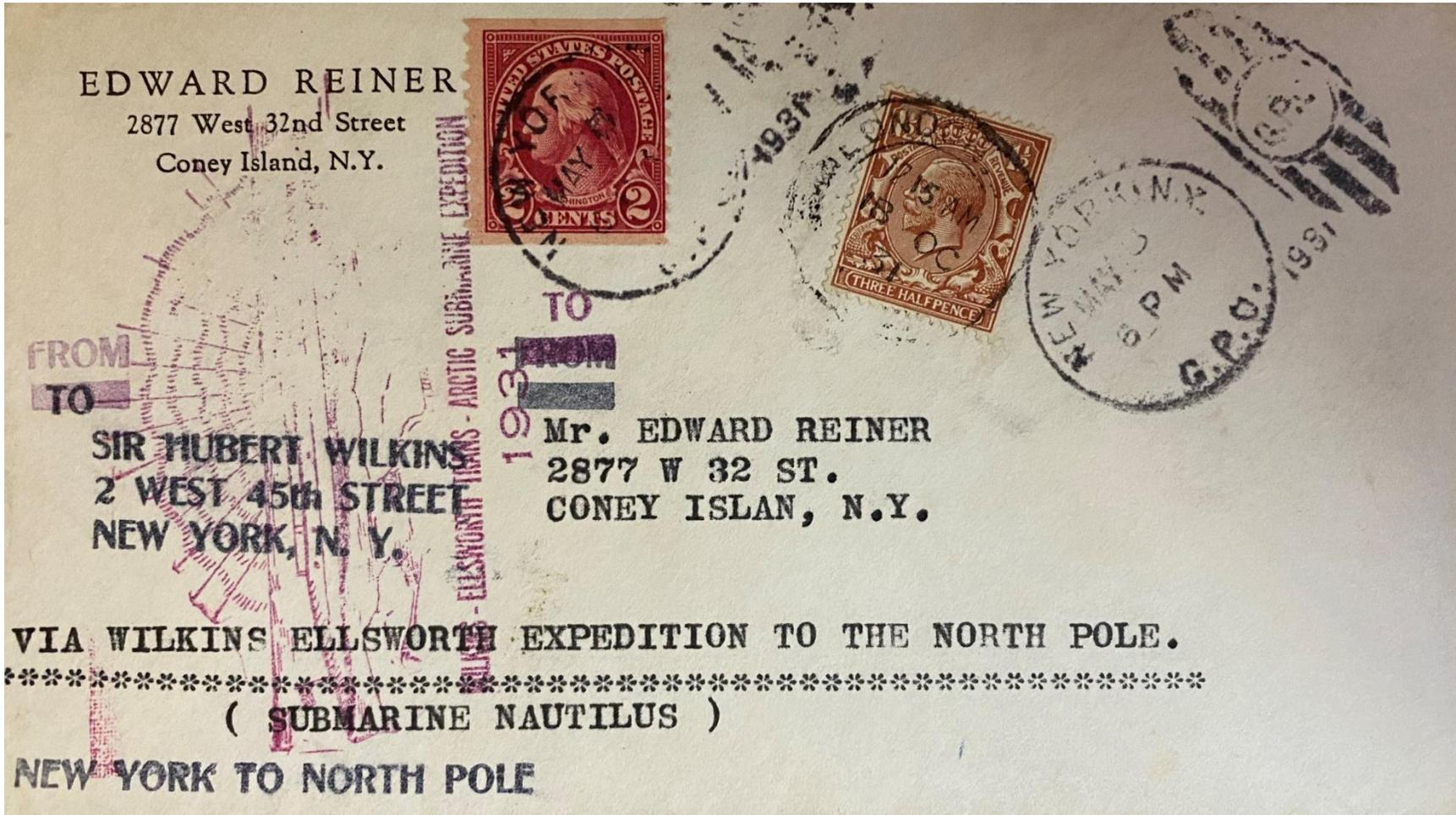
- **Aug 5<sup>th</sup> Bergen to Arctic. More delays with storms & mechanical problems.**
- **August 22<sup>nd</sup> preparing to dive. Find diving rudders missing: Sabotage?**
- **Sept 8<sup>th</sup> back in Bergen and set out to England. Worst storm of expedition. Hull damage and engine failure. Towed back to Bergen**
- **Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> finally towed to Norwegian Fjord and sunk.**

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**On March 17<sup>th</sup> 1959 the USS Skate surfaced at  
the North Pole and scattered Sir Hubert Wilkins'  
ashes over the Arctic ice.**



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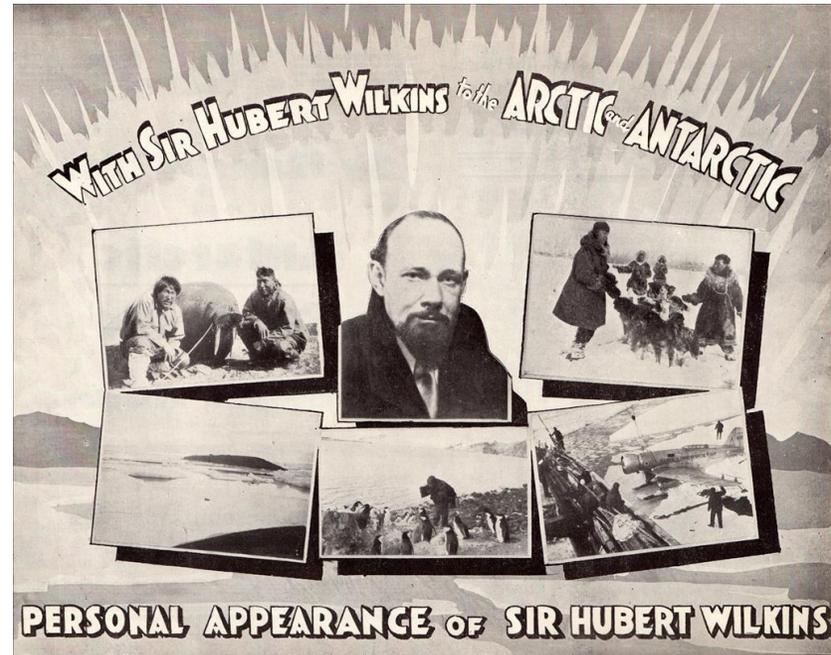


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**CREDITS**

- 1. American Philosophical Society Library (© 2000) - The Low Road to the Pole by J. J. Ahern'**
- 2. Wikipedia on Hubert Wilkins and Lincoln Ellsworth**
- 3. Frozen North - Sir Hubert's Forgotten Submarine Expedition – KBPS**
- 4. The Fram Museum – Polar Explorers – Lincoln Ellsworth**

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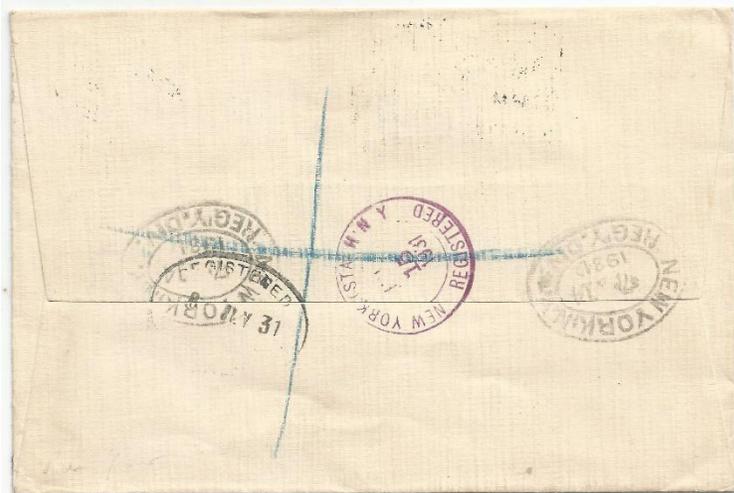


**WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931  
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**THE FOLLOWING SLIDES CONTAIN SCANS OF OTHER WILKINS-ELLSWORTH  
TRANS-ARCTIC SUBMARINE EXPEDITION COVERS SHARES AND THEN  
SSUBMITTED BY MEETING ATTENDEES AFTER THE PRESENTATION**

**IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE DIFFERENT DATE STAMPS  
OF THE COVERS IN RELATION TO THE  
EXPEDITION TIMELINE ITSELF**

**WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931  
ILL-FATED EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE  
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**This Cover was submitted by Dave Silcox a member if the RSCC and PSLC.**

**It was mailed back to the United States on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1931 by Registered mail hence addition GB postage of three pence.**

**This was the time Wilkins was in England having the Nautilus repaired before setting off to Bern Norway and then the Polar ice caps.**

**It therefore did not travel on the Nautilus to the North Pole but still has the Purple Polar Expedition Stamp.**

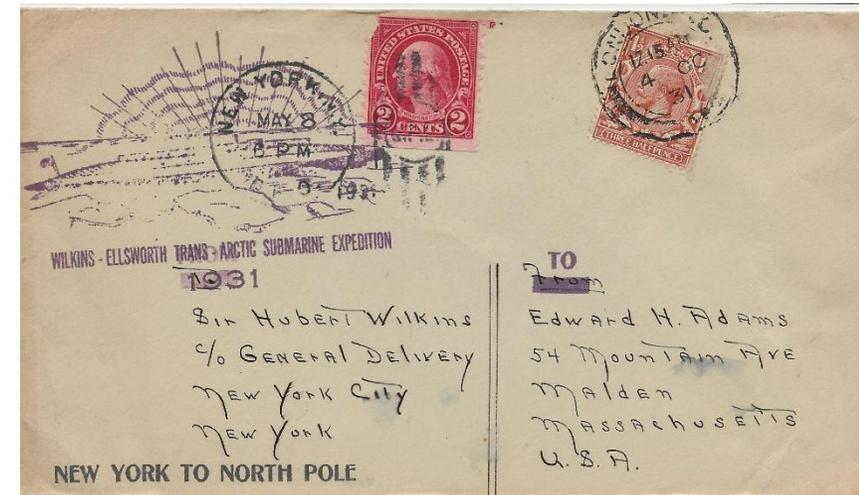
# WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931 ILL-FATED EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE BY SUBMARINE NAUTILUS



**These Covers were submitted courtesy of Mark Jardel  
a member of the PSLC.**

**To the left is a cover mailed from New York on May 8th  
and back to Cicero Illinois USA from Norway  
on August 18<sup>th</sup> 1931. This happened to be the day  
before the Nautilus reached the Polar Ice cap. Curious  
question; Was there communication back to Norway  
from the Nautilus notifying them of the pending  
arrival at the ice cap.**

**To the right is a cover mailed from England to  
Malden Massachusetts USA on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1931  
two weeks earlier than the cover in the main  
presentation which was October 18th  
Was Wilkins back in England at this time?**



**WILKINS - ELLSWORTH 1931  
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**The next three covers were submitted by Tony Shields from Melbourne Australia who attended the presentation and participated in the post presentation discussion.**

The cover to the left is intriguing as the original stamp and postmark dated October 29 1928 is from Port Stanley Falkland Islands. The airmail cover itself has a circular imprint with the inscription Wilkins Expedition – Deception Island South Shetlands flown over the Antarctic and is signed by the pilot Carl. B Eilson.

This is ten addressed to the Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Submarine expedition. It is mailed in New York with date stamp Jun 1<sup>st</sup> 19631. Finally it has a GB London date stamp of Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1931

**More importantly it has the Trans-Arctic Expedition Purple cancel with Hubert Wilkins autograph.**

**This is a very special cover with references to both Antarctic and Arctic Expeditions.**



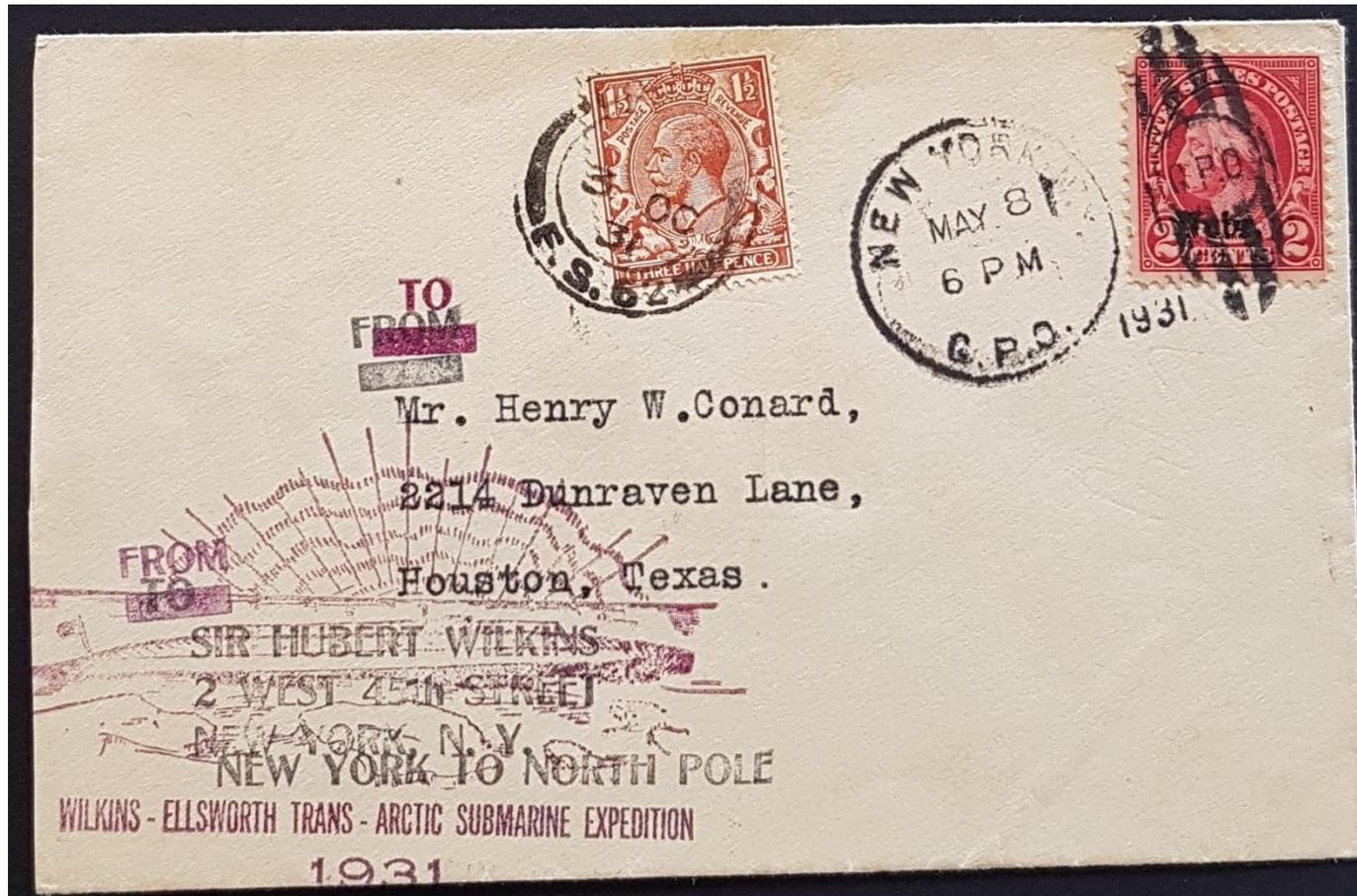
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**Tony's second cover is an official Wilkins- Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Submarine Expedition Cover.**

**This is also mailed from New York on May 8<sup>th</sup> per the first cover from Mark Jarrel and the return to New York was registered on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1931.**

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**Tony's third Wilkins -  
Ellsworth Trans-Arctic  
Submarine Expedition  
Cover is a regular  
envelope**

**This is also mailed from  
New York on May 8<sup>th</sup> per  
the other covers from  
Mark and Tony and the  
return was Houston,  
Texas dated October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
1931.**

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The post presentation discussion also referred to the fact that Wilkins did many speaking engagements after this expedition, maybe to recoup some of the funds he had to spend.

It seems that he would speak anywhere as this advertisement for an engagement at the Plymouth Girls Club in Plymouth Kansas illustrates.

Note that it refers to him as Captain. This was the rank he attained during WWI in the Royal Australian Army.

**Plymouth Girls' Club**  
Presents  
**CAPT. SIR HUBERT**  
**WILKINS**

Telling the story of one of the most thrilling adventures of the age.

*"By Submarine to the  
Polar Regions"*

Illustrated With Motion Pictures

**PLYMOUTH CHURCH**

Sixth and University

Tuesday, Jan. 26, 8:15 P. M.

**Prices \$1.00, 75c, 50c**

No Reserved Seats  
Tickets Now on Sale, Sherman, Clay Co.