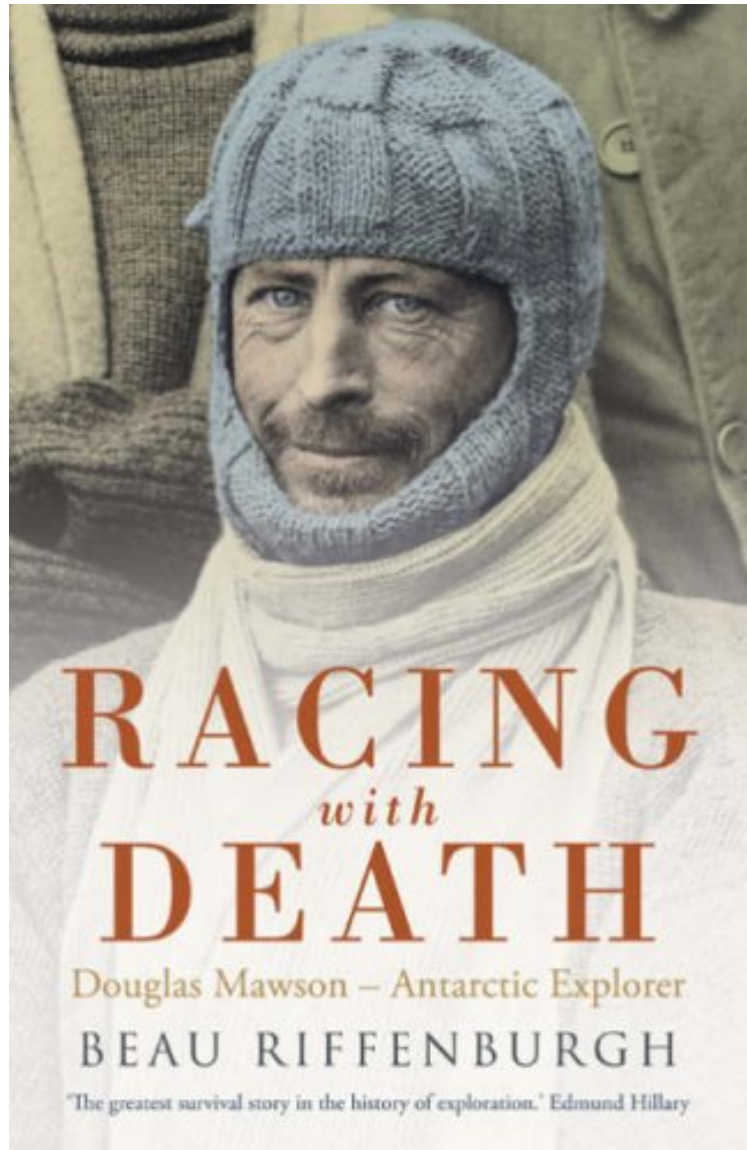


[Free] Racing with Death: Douglas Mawson - Antarctic Explorer

Racing with Death: Douglas Mawson - Antarctic Explorer

Beau Riffenburgh

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Beau Riffenburgh : Racing with Death: Douglas Mawson - Antarctic Explorer before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Racing with Death: Douglas Mawson - Antarctic Explorer:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Unbelievable Combo of Fortitude and Good Luck! By Ronno I am Australian so I have a greater appreciation that his explorations laid rights to a territorial claim of land and water as extensive as the Australian continent itself. Hillary states that his exploration was the most dramatic and harrowing in

history. A fine read. Like many heroes, his later years deteriorated into squabbles about money and bragging rights, but even that was fascinating!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent!By WeezyGreat story of exploration back in a time when exploring was crude and uncomfortable done by brave men. Makes you put yourself there and go through it with them.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. As with so many stories of hardship, it makes you ponderBy Paul LawrenceOne thing a book like this makes you ponder is how your own inner strength would bare up under the pressure of such a survival situation: one party member dead down a crevasse, another died after becoming delirious beside you in the tent you are sharing on an Antarctic glacier after the two of you have had to one by one shoot your own dogs to feed yourselves, finally leaving you alone with days of marching through the white wasteland. Could you do it? Could you make yourself get up and trudge another day pulling a sledge you'd cut down with a pocket tool, walking on crampons you'd fashioned yourself out of nails and screws from whatever you could find? Or would you just curl up in a ball and let nature take its course?Another thing it makes you ponder is just how many skills the men on these expeditions had as opposed to most modern men. I've no desire to eat puppies or learn how to pull a sledge across a glacier, nor how to build a hut (even if it was pre-fabricated prior to the expedition) nor am I fussed on the discerning the finer points of survival biscuits but the general handiness of the men on this expedition, the way they had to be able to do so many physical things such as basic carpentry, how to butcher animals and the like does make one realise how few people nowadays could come close to the level of survival skills displayed by almost all the chaps on these expeditions.And while I'm pondering the (im)ponderables another thing that struck a chord with me in relation to this book was the way there were still so many parts of the world's surface remaining to be explored up until only a century ago. There were still places of such size and untouched wildness that men such as this could still find a way of making a name for themselves. That there were still such untrammelled parts of the world about. The instant temptation is to think that one hundred years or so after these events there are so few such places, and the people who go about in them so often have a film crew with them to document how daring and brave they are.All up Beau Riffenburgh has here compiled a riveting book that gets across the hardships that Sir Douglas Mawson faced on his various Antarctic adventures. He strikes a balance between detail and overview, he has not written a hagiography and the work comes across as balanced, Mawson's faults are not ignored, nor his sometimes fractious relations with his various ship captains. The herculean fortitude he displayed in leading his expeditions, his visionary zeal in terms of scientific enquiry and a desire to not only contribute to his nation's well being but also to the overall body of scientific knowledge is well portrayed. Details are light in regards to his personal life, whether through little being known about it or due to the author's preference for it to be thus.The main issue with this book for those wanting to take it as a biography of Sir Douglas Mawson is that it is scant on details of his part in the 1907-1909 Nimrod expedition. There is of necessity a sketch of his life up until he started his exploring career but the Nimrod expedition is not included, presumably because it would have overlapped with the author's already published work on that expedition. Still, given the way the prose flows nicely in this work it probably just means that the average reader will turn around and purchase that book as well for a more complete picture. But it does mean perhaps that those wanting a single volume overview of the man and his life will have to look elsewhere. Though this book does delve into his fundraising efforts and also does discuss his later years and involvement in matters relating to the Antarctic after his personal involvement was no longer occurring.One boon for this book is the photography a number of pages are given over to photographs of the expedition and they very much add to the whole. Latter day audiences are so used to the seeing Gore-tex clad adventure travellers and their expedition tents and attendant ice breakers and support crews and satellite phones etc etc that to see the way these guys went about their business is humbling.As for the less glamorous bits? Well the typeface is nice, the bibliography is extensive and probably worth a poring over and the index is useful. All up a good read and ideal for those interested in exploration, tales of hardship, the Antarctic or really anyone just wanting an adventurous story.

The early twentieth century was the 'heroic age' of Antarctic exploration - a time when adventurers such as Scott and Shackleton were national icons who personified the contemporary ideal of manly struggle for the good of Empire. But, while these two are world famous to this day, Australian Douglas Mawson, whose Australasian Antarctic Expedition, undertaken in 1911 after Mawson had been a key member of Shackleton's Nimrod expedition, Dr Edmund Hillary described as 'the greatest survival story in the history of exploration', is not. He should be, however.Mawson's expedition, undertaken on a small whaling ship called Aurora, combines several exceptionally exciting elements. Once in the Antarctic, the expedition split up into smaller parties exploring different areas. The two other members of Mawson's party died and Mawson was left to struggle hundreds of miles back to base on his own. Despite incredible odds, he made it, only to find that the rescue ship had sailed away, leaving him to face a year on his own in the Antarctic. Mawson, who had complex relationships with both Scott and Shackleton, was changed utterly by his struggles in the Antarctic and his story is a fascinating insight into the human psyche under extreme stress.

PRAISE FOR 'NIMROD' 'A masterful balance of true drama and first-rate scholarship. The narrative moves with the speed of a novel, while the author's unerring eye for historical detail captures the essence of polar exploration and

explorers and locates Shackleton and his men in the grand scheme of empire.' Sir Ranulph Fiennes 'Beau Riffenburgh brilliantly brings this earlier one into focus in an account so vivid that we can almost feel the freezing temperatures ourselves.' Sunday Telegraph 'Gripping and superbly researched.' Max Jones, author of 'The Last Great Quest' About the Author Beau Riffenburgh is an historian specialising in exploration, particularly that of the Antarctic, Arctic, and Africa. Born in California, he earned his doctorate at Cambridge University, following which he joined the staff at the Scott Polar Research Institute, where he served for 14 years as the editor of Polar Record. He is the author of the highly regarded Nimrod: Ernest Shackleton and the Extraordinary Story of the 1907-09 British Antarctic Expedition and The Myth of the Explorer. He also served as Editor of the Encyclopedia of the Antarctic.