

Book Reviews

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EXPLORATION 1850 TO 1940: THE OCEANS, ISLANDS AND POLAR REGIONS. Raymond John Howgego. 2006. Sydney: Hordern House. x + 724 p, hard cover. ISBN 1-875567-41-0. \$Aus245.00.
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Those with serious interests in the history of exploration beyond just that of the polar regions will undoubtedly be familiar with Raymond John Howgego's two magisterial encyclopedias that came to be considered virtual classic works immediately upon publication (Howgego 2003, 2004). These books are, simply put, the most valuable reference sources available regarding the broad expanse of exploration, and are a rare combination of introductory background for the general reader and exacting detail for the specialist. With well over 2300 primary entries covering expeditions and voyages world-wide, from those of the ancient Egyptians to the start of the nineteenth century, the initial volume successfully achieves what many said was impossibly ambitious — to produce in one book by one author an overview of all known expeditions, voyages, and travels to unknown or little-known lands, as well as the people who made them. The second volume, covering the period 1800 to 1850, has far fewer entries (as would be expected from such a shorter time period), but gives considerably more detail about most of the expeditions from a period that just brimmed with efforts to illuminate the 'unknown' regions of the world. As travel for personal enjoyment or knowledge had become a much more common event by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the second volume uses more discriminating criteria for inclusion, with serious geographical and scientific expeditions receiving more in-depth treatment than voyages or expeditions going to less remote and regularly visited locales for purely commercial or personal purposes.

The current volume is the third of a projected four in this series. Running from 1850 through the 'Heroic Age' of exploration and on to the beginning of the Second World War, it covers the exploration of the world's oceans, islands, and polar regions, as well as long-distance voyages and flights. It thus leaves the exploration of and travel in the temperate continental mainlands to the final part.

The organisation of this volume of *Encyclopedia of exploration* is like that of the previous ones. Entries are listed by leaders of expeditions rather than by the expeditions themselves, although if an explorer led more than one major expedition, the efforts are included as separate

entries under the explorer's name. Major members of expeditions are given supplementary biographies rather than individual entries, in order to avoid repetition. These are, it is stated, placed within the entry for the expedition 'in which the name first comes to light' (page vii). Therefore, Frank Wild's biographical details are recorded in a section at the end of the first entry for Ernest Shackleton, that is, about the British Antarctic Expedition. Although mentioned in the discussion of the British National Antarctic Expedition (BNAE) and at relevant points in the Douglas Mawson entry for the Australasian Antarctic Expedition and the later Shackleton expeditions, Wild's background and personal information are not repeated there. This policy is not carried out with total consistency, however, as Edward Wilson's biography appears not as part of the BNAE, where he first became noted within the Antarctic community, but in the Scott entry relating to his final expedition.

From the standpoint of a serious researcher, the bibliography following each entry is as significant as the account of the expedition. Each bibliography is divided into two sections, the first listing original diaries, logs, and field notes as well as primary narratives, including later editions and edited reprints. The second comprises a selection of biographies and other general works that provide useful background. Although some bibliographies are by necessity brief, others, such as that of the *Belgica* expedition, total well over three full pages.

Unlike the first two volumes, this one includes numerous articles about particular regions, islands, or archipelagos. These not only give a history of the exploration of a specific area and a detailed bibliography, but allow mention of expeditions or explorers who might not otherwise have been included due to the progressively more stringent inclusion criteria. Other important parts of the book are the indices of individuals mentioned in the entries, of the regional entries, and of ships, boats, and airplanes on expeditions.

This book has many extremely estimable features. It is rare in an encyclopedic reference work that one finds energy, wit, and entertainment in addition to serious scholarship. But they all sit together well in this work, as in its two predecessors. Moreover, from a publishing standpoint, it is a first-class production, as would be expected from Hordern House, which through the years has published exploration accounts of the finest quality. The editing and cross-referencing is thorough, the printing excellent, and the binding and dust jacket superior, even including the series' trademark three page ribbons.

Most importantly to readers of *Polar Record*, however, it is a major contribution to *polar* scholarship. A similar attempt, except that it concentrated solely on the polar regions, was made several years ago with the publication of William Mills' two-volume encyclopedia (2003). Unfortunately, the author's failing health made him unable to oversee an inclusive fact-checking of the work, which therefore took to press errors that have perhaps made it a less reliable work than it would otherwise have been.

Regarding specifically Arctic reference works, for nearly three decades the publications of Clive Holland (Cooke and Holland 1978; Holland 1994) have set the standard. *Encyclopedia of exploration* is the first time that any other similar effort has approached their significance. There are, of course, differences. Whereas the current work is organised by expedition leader, 'Cooke and Holland' — as the first book is known in the community of polar scholars — was organised chronologically by individual expedition. Holland's masterful next encyclopedia followed this pattern while extending accounts of the exploration of northern Canada to the entire Arctic. Since Holland made an attempt to write about every expedition to the Arctic, he included expeditions or voyages that did not meet the criteria for inclusion in Howgego's book, thereby throwing doubt on the current author's claim that 'with respect to the Arctic, little or nothing is missing' (page viii). This is not to belittle the third volume of *Encyclopedia of exploration* in any sense, because it offers much new, including more biographical information about major participants, increased bibliographical references, and an additional 25 years of exploration, as Holland died before completing the next installment of his work, which would have taken the listing of expeditions to the same time period Howgego reaches. The key point is that this new volume is not a one-stop replacement for Holland's books, but rather an extremely valuable complement to them.

Conversely, for Antarctic exploration, the third volume of *Encyclopedia of Exploration* is clearly a breath-taking addition to the literature. There has never been an Antarctic equivalent to Holland's compendiums, with the closest, Robert Headland's *Chronological list of Antarctic expeditions* (Headland 1989), being simply what it claimed: a list without detailed accounts about expeditions, biographical information about the participants, extensive bibliographical details, or scholarly interpretation. These are all now provided for the first time in Howgego's usual compelling manner. The extensive scope of the accounts is indicated by Douglas Mawson's expeditions and his men's biographies receiving more than 11 pages, a huge volume for a quarto format book.

All of this is not to say that the book does not have weaknesses. Most importantly for a work of this kind, there are no maps. Whereas it clearly would be a huge — and expensive — task to produce detailed maps of both polar regions and all the Earth's islands and oceans, a volume that records thousands of place-names should give

the reader at least a basic understanding of where the expeditions went, without requiring the purchase of a copy of an atlas too. This is something that the volumes by Mills and Holland produced in extensive and very beneficial detail.

There are also, to my mind, some minor faults. Howgego equates Spitsbergen and Svalbard, rather than indicating that Spitsbergen is an island in the Svalbard archipelago. And the book's criteria for entries dictates that several major figures receive virtually no attention. For example, Joseph Wiggins, who with more than 10 voyages probably did more than any other individual to open up trade between Western Europe and the Yenisey River, is limited to two sentences in an entry for Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, although the sentences are later repeated in another entry. In addition, less attention is paid than is deserved to some of the key figures in *sponsoring* polar exploration, men and women without whose efforts some major expeditions would never have taken place, such as Lady Franklin, Oscar Dickson, and Sir Roderick Murchison, although Clements Markham does receive his own entry. And finally, other important individuals in the history of Arctic exploration are left for inclusion in the fourth volume because their expeditions took place mainly in continental areas. Most notable of these is Frederick Schwatka, and although it is difficult to fault Howgego's logic for doing so, I know that most Arctic historians would consider Schwatka's Franklin search and several expeditions to Alaska to qualify him first and foremost as an *Arctic* explorer.

But such quibbles should not detract from the fact that this book is still an impressive achievement and a major contribution to the history of the polar regions (as well as the oceans and islands of the world). Howgego's first two volumes are unrivalled guides to the incredibly broad history of exploration and its wide-ranging mass of bibliographic materials. This third book further enhances the author's considerable contributions. (Beau Riffenburgh, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB1 1ER.)

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