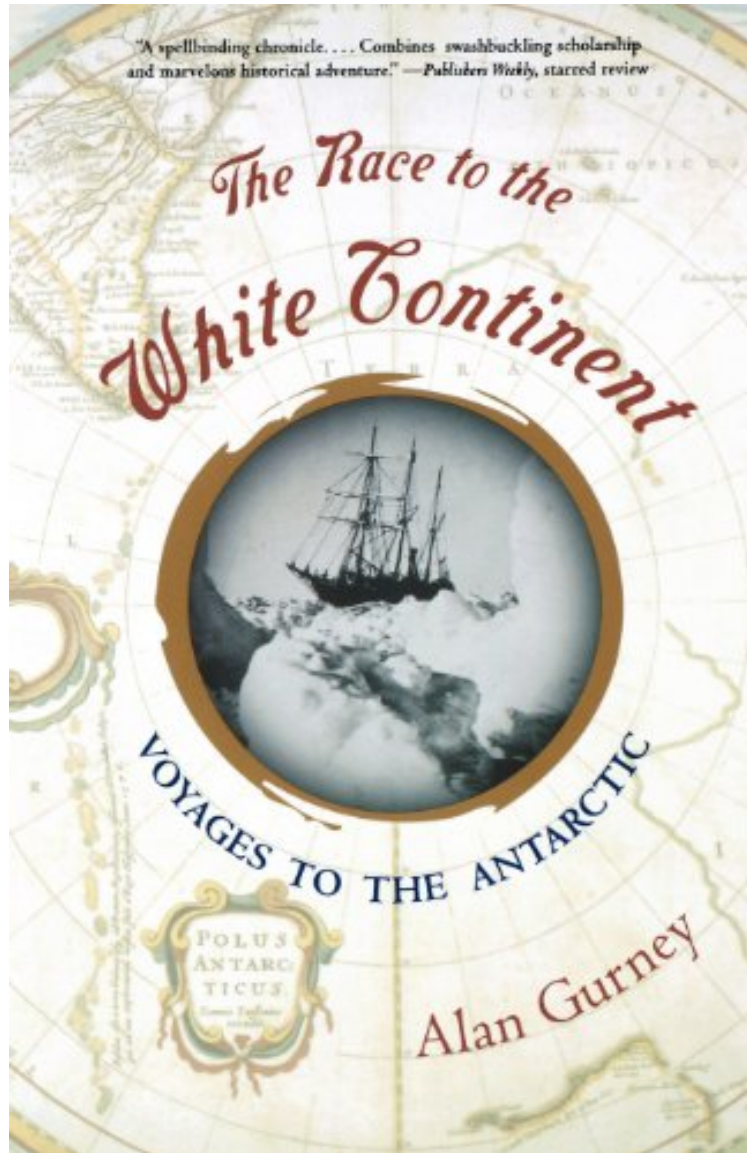


(Mobile library) The Race to the White Continent: Voyages to the Antarctic

The Race to the White Continent: Voyages to the Antarctic

Alan Gurney

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#3362349 in Books Alan Gurney 2002-06-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.30 x .80 x 5.50l, .81 #File Name: 0393323218336 pagesThe Race to the White Continent Voyages to the Antarctic | File size: 29.Mb

Alan Gurney : The Race to the White Continent: Voyages to the Antarctic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Race to the White Continent: Voyages to the Antarctic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Richard P PurintonEntertain gas well as a great resource on maritime activity in southern latitudes.16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Two great expeditions and one laughable oneBy Susan PaxtonThis is Alan Gurney's second book on Antarctic exploration. His first, "Below the Convergence," covered the early era of Antarctic voyaging, up to the beginning of the 19th century.

This book starts with a look at Pacific and Australian explorations to set the scene and bridge the gap, then pulls in to focus on two great Antarctic expeditions of the 1840s, and a third that was less impressive. The great expeditions were the French Navy expedition led by Dumont d'Urville in the *Astrolabe* and *Zelee* and the classic Royal Navy explorations of James Clark Ross with *HMS Erebus* and *HMS Terror*. These two men and their crews of seamen and scientists were the first to begin to make Antarctica a real place, rather than a realm of conjecture, and the names of the ships, the men, and their families remain scattered around the Antarctic to this day, fastened to their discoveries - Adelie Land, the Ross Ice Shelf, Mt. Erebus, McMurdo Sound, to name only a few. Gurney ably tells the tales of these expeditions, from their inception to their return, and the sad fate of their leaders - d'Urville killed in a railway wreck with his wife and son, Ross dead before his time, probably of drink, after the early death of his wife and his unsuccessful search for the lost Franklin expedition in the Arctic. The third expedition is the US Navy expedition led by Lt. Charles Wilkes in *USS Vincennes*, and if anything Gurney is too kind to this somewhat fraught endeavor. Wilkes, who promptly promoted himself commodore and hoisted a distinguishing pennant as soon as he was out of reach of US Navy authority, treated both his officers and the scientists assigned to the expedition like dirt, discovered a vast amount of entirely imaginary territory, and was courtmartialled on his return (but unfortunately remained in the Navy to commit numerous stupidities during the Civil War). All in all, good reading for anyone interested in Antarctic exploration, and one wonders if Gurney will go for a trilogy with a third book about the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. MORE A RAMBLE THAN A RACE

By A Customer. The last few years has seen a spotlight put on Antarctica. We've had the success of all the recent Shackleton books, TV shows and IMAX films on the Frozen South. My own fascination in all matters Antarctic stems from a boyhood spent in Hobart Tasmania. It was from this port that many ships head south - to south of the Circle. I grew up with tales of Cook, Scott, and Mawson and their Antarctic adventures. I bought Gurney's book on the strength of the title and the publisher's blurb. The author acknowledges in his "Introduction" it was the marketing and publicity department of his publisher, who rejected his suggestion and gave the book its "racy" title. The title is quite misleading. We have to get through 100 pages of pre-ambles before we get to the real subject of his book. Does detail on the circumnavigation of Australia by Matthew Flinders in 1802 belong here? This story is better covered elsewhere. The first crossing of Australia on foot by John Eyre is another strange addition particularly when coupled with a parenthetical (and absurd) observation that modern travellers face certain death in this hostile environment if they get off their train in the middle of the Nullarbor Plain. However, we do get the benefit of Gurney's encyclopedic knowledge, in all matters maritime. We learn that sailors called the weevils in their biscuits, bargemen. We get familiar with all the arcane terminology from the age of sailing ships. His use of extracts from the 1867 "Sailor's Word-Book" at the head of each chapter is a neat touch. The notes at the end of each chapter add very little that could not otherwise be included in the text. More bluntly, they look like off-cuts from the editor's desk. They give a pseudo-academic flavor, which is not warranted. Editing of the book is very sloppy, with many typos creeping through. Structurally the text contains frequent convoluted passages and at times, repetitious detail. Particularly annoying is Gurney's tendency to refer to his characters' ages in many passages. Yet often we are not given the year in which he's talking about and it's impossible to work this out from the context. On page 206 we have "... the sixty-two-year-old Humboldt who stood like a colossus ..." No year is specified. This is very confusing. When dealing with historical subjects, dates are the key references for the reader trying to follow the author's story. His emphasis on the farcical Wilkes' expedition would have been better downplayed with more detail on the efforts of Ross and D'Urville. At no times does the sense of a "Race" really come through. Examining the timing and context of the voyages, it was coincidence that the English, French and Americans were on government expeditions at the same time. No evidence is provided by Gurney that the 3 countries were in a race, as the title of the book boldly purports. By most people's reckoning, the most exciting phase of Antarctic exploration would have to be the real race, the one to the South Pole that took place in the early years of the 20th Century. Gurney's book serves really only as a preliminary "background" for readers who wish to understand these later events. The most accessible and delightful encapsulation of Antarctic exploration is found in the 1940-1950's era "The Children's Encyclopedia" edited by Arthur Mee. It's worth digging out Volume 9 and reading "The South Pole Men." Gurney's book would be a useful addition to the shelves of readers who like histories of scientific and naval exploration. However, many more authoritative and entertaining books on this subject are around. As a footnote, the book's cover illustration shows Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship "Endurance" locked in the ice in 1914. His incredible story is not covered in this book, nor is credit given to the photographer of this well-known image, the famous Frank Hurley.

A fascinating account of the early days of Antarctic exploration from an expert storyteller. In the 1830s, the forbidding Antarctic region represented the ultimate mystery. The prospect of discovering a lucrative whaling ground made this uncharted and untapped region especially enticing. Three expeditions to the pole were launched simultaneously by the United States, France, and Britain, each vying to be the first to venture farther south than any vessel had ever sailed before. These expeditions paved the way for the explorers, traders, and whalers of what was to become known as the "Heroic Age" of Antarctic exploration. The Race to the White Continent is a captivating account of their adventures.

From Library Journal Many sailing voyages preceded the great expeditions to Antarctica at the beginning of the 20th century. Gurney (*Below the Convergence: Voyages to Antarctica, 1699-1839*) recounts many of them in this popular account, beginning with the New England whalers early in the 19th century, followed by the explorations of d'Urville for France, Ross for Great Britain, and Wilkes for the United States. These stories largely concern politics, egos, and turf battles. The author obviously has command of the material, telling the reader perhaps more than is wanted. Explanations of technical terms are generally good, but the usual scholarly documentation is lacking. This will make a convenient introduction to the topic but cannot take the place of the primary accounts. For public libraries with adequate budgets. DEdward Gibson, Lincoln Univ. Lib., PA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Gurney combines a true love of the subject with the ability to weave history into a rousing story. He begins with Cook's explorations skirting Antarctica, and meanders through almost two centuries of southern exploration. The work concentrates on the voyages of the British, American, and the French. The author proves himself a great storyteller by taking his time to delve into the personalities and strange events behind some of the most daring ocean explorations. These range from the quirky, such as America's inspiration to explore Antarctica, which originated with John Symmes, who in 1818 theorized that the earth was hollow and that entrances could be found to the inner world through large holes at either pole, to the more practical scientific and exploitative excursions of the British and French. This historical romance of the sea is enthralling enough to make the most steadfastly land-loving reader want to set sail through arduous conditions to uncharted lands. Highly recommended. Eric Robbins Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Enthralling enough to make the most steadfastly land-loving reader want to set sail through arduous conditions to uncharted lands. Highly recommended. -- Booklist [Gurney] is obviously at home with sailing ships.... Consequently, there is a refreshing gusto to this book. -- Roland Huntford, New York Times Book