
In the spring of 1986 an exhibition was mounted in Vadso, northern Norway, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Roald Amundsen's flight in the airship Norge from Vadso, via Kongsfjorden in Svalbard across the Pole to Teller, Alaska, the first flight across the Arctic Ocean. In their search for Amundsen memorabilia the organizers of the exhibition approached Mrs. Alda Amundsen, widow of Roald Amundsen's nephew Gustav. Searching the attic of her apartment in Oslo, Mrs. Amundsen produced a wooden box labelled "Horlick's Malted Milk" and assumed that it contained supplies left over from one of Amundsen's polar expeditions. But when it was opened in Vadso it was found to contain over 200 of Amundsen's original glass-mounted lantern slides.

It was known that Amundsen had had several sets of lantern slides that he used on the lecture circuit, but when his aircraft disappeared while heading north to help in the search for Umberto Nobile and the other survivors of the crash of the airship Italia in 1928, his affairs and his belongings were left in a state of confusion, and the various sets of lantern slides were assumed to have somehow gone missing. The set in the box found in 1986 was thus the first more or less complete set ever found.

Roland Huntford, who recently published a dual biography of Scott and Amundsen (Huntford, 1979), has made a selection of over 150 of the slides discovered in Vadso. They pertain to three of Amundsen's major expeditions: his voyage through the Northwest Passage in Gjøa in 1903-07; his journey to the South Pole in 1910-12; and his voyage through the Northwest Passage in Maud in 1918-20. Many of the slides have been hand tinted with greater or less success; in some cases the results are quite crude and garish. Not a few show signs of the wear and tear resulting from hundreds or even thousands of projections during Amundsen's lecture tours; for example, the famous view of the South Pole party saluting the Norwegian flag flying atop the tent pitched at the South Pole is badly cracked. Others appear badly faded as compared to the illustrations printed from the same photographs used in Amundsen's own accounts of his expeditions. Since the pictures taken on the South Pole trip were taken by Olav Bjaaland using a folding Kodak camera (Amundsen's own, more sophisticated camera having malfunctioned), many of them leave much to be desired in terms of exposure, focus and composition. As Huntford remarks, however, "The outcome is a poignant blend of immediacy, artlessness and authority." The best of the photos, on the other hand, are first-class.

Huntford's general introduction, which includes a condensed biography of Amundsen, placing the three major expeditions and hence the photographs into perspective, and his introduction to each of the expeditions in turn are informative and more than adequate. The same holds true for most of the extended captions to each of the photographs. One specific criticism, however, is that on three separate occasions Huntford commits a gaffe that casts serious doubt on the breadth of his archival research and at handling the techniques of referencing, and this makes the omission of a bibliography all the more puzzling. Whoever is responsible for the omission has drastically reduced the value of the book to the serious reader. That having been said, we are enormously indebted to Huntford and his publisher for making available a remarkable pictorial record of three great polar journeys by arguably the greatest polar traveller of them all.

REFERENCES


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Antarctica is probably the only region of the world for which a review of scientific progress could be so collectively integrated. The book's coverage is strongly international and interdisciplinary, making it (no doubt) the best single statement about the frozen continent and the quest to uncover its secrets. More than being a statement that traverses biological, earth and atmospheric sciences, politics, history and exploration, and current issues besides, it also captures the esprit de corps of the human endeavour. Nowhere else (unless in space travel) have communities of scientists been more aware of the roles of history, exploration, politics and logistical support in the conduct of their research.

The book's objectives are twofold: 1) to put Antarctic science in a general perspective; and 2) to assess scientific progress to date and to point to future research directions (being also mindful of the review of the Antarctic Treaty in 1991). Both objectives are well fulfilled.

The format is in 5 sections and 18 chapters, opening with "Geography, Politics and Science." Three chapters in this section deal mainly with history, the fourth with politics. There are many more detailed and scholarly histories of Antarctica, but this account is history from the view of the scientist, history as it influenced the development of Antarctic science. The organizing of chapters within a section to conclude with a current perspective (here political) is followed throughout the book. Thus the biological section draws the discussion of aquatic and terrestrial biogeography and of adaptations and ecological food webs into questions of managing living resources, with the emphasis on marine fisheries. In similar manner the earth sciences section traces the dynamics of Antarctic ice and rock from local scales to global and concludes by relating tectonic industry to former life and current resources. The atmospheric sciences expand the climate dimension and then extend this to geospace and the developments now arising from the research cooperation established by the International Geophysical Year. The final section poses questions of scientific direction and of the Antarctic Treaty and the future — will it be cooperation or confrontation?