

BOOK REVIEW

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EXPLORATION 1850 TO 1940: the Oceans, Islands and Polar Regions / Raymond John Howgego. Potts Point, NSW, Hordern House Rare Books, 2006. 724 pages. ISBN 1-875567-41-0. Aust\$245.00

This is volume three of Howgego's comprehensive coverage of the history of exploration, and appears quite soon after volume two, which was reviewed in the November 2005 issue of *Datum*. Whereas volumes one and two covered the whole world (up to 1800, and from 1800 to 1850), volume three covers only the oceans, islands and polar regions, and a further volume, expected to be published in 2008, will cover continental exploration. The original intention was to conclude this series of encyclopedias with a single volume, ending somewhere in the 1920s, but the amount of information to be recorded meant that two volumes are required to record it all. Howgego's problem was how to divide the material so that it was immediately clear to the reader what information would be found in which volume. By looking at this information Howgego determined that most explorers and travelers during this post 1850 period restricted themselves to certain parts of the world, and that those who charted the oceans rarely went inland, while others who explored the interiors of the larger islands rarely penetrated the continental mainland.

For the most part this seems to work, although it does seem a little strange to find the individual islands of Indonesia covered in this book, along with Ceylon (listed under Sri Lanka although it was known as Ceylon during the period covered by this volume). Both Indonesia and Ceylon are closely linked in my mind with Asia, even though they obviously are either islands or archipelagos. Having got my head around this, I then wondered about the northern islands of Canada. A search for a heading that said Canada led me to an entry for Canada's hydrographic surveys 1850-1930, which looked at various surveys around the Canadian coastline as well as on the Great Lakes, but not to any comprehensive coverage for the northern islands. One has to look under the entry for Arctic Exploration to find a see reference to the search expeditions for John Franklin and to a variety of other see references as well.

As with the first two volumes, entries are arranged alphabetically, by the name of the explorer/traveller. Each entry has an entry number, and an indication (in one or two words) of where the traveller was travelling. Brief biographical details follow, along with rather more detailed accounts of the explorations made. Each entry concludes with a bibliography of works by and about the traveller. The locations of manuscript material, and pertinent photographic archives, are often included as well.

This volume includes a number of entries devoted to particular regions or island groups, and thus differs from the first two volumes which were very much strictly biographical in approach. This "geographical" approach works well, and allows for handy overviews of exploration activities by obscure parties which otherwise could easily be overlooked. Also included in this volume are early intercontinental flights, the laying of telegraph cables, and long-distance flights by airships.

There sometimes seems to be a British bias in the amount of coverage given to various travellers/explorers who operated in the same place. If we look at the Antarctic for example, the entries for Roald Amundsen occupy 21 columns, while those for Scott and Shackleton each occupy 34 columns.

There is much New Zealand material in this new volume. There is a section titled “New Zealand: introductory remarks”, and this is followed by a series of regional accounts for different parts of the South Island (Nelson to Canterbury 1850-1855; the interior of Canterbury 1850-1865; Otago and Southland 1850-1858; Otago & Southland, the Lake Country 1859-1864; Otago during the gold rush 1861-1864; Westland 1856-1870; the Southern Alps 1875-1910; Fiordland after 1875; and Stewart Island. In his introductory remarks for New Zealand Howgego argues that “by 1850 much of the geography of the North Island had been established”, and because “so many of the North Island surveyors explored extensively in all regions of the island during their lifetimes...[it was] decided that it would not be particularly helpful to consider North Island exploration on a regional basis”.

Howgego lists a number of men who surveyed/explored in various parts of the North Island – J.C. Crawford, Laurence Cussen, Hochstetter, Rochfort, W.H. Skinner and Percy Smith – and the encyclopedia entries for each of them provide a substantial history of survey work carried out in the North Island.

Beyond the major New Zealand articles there are numerous other entries for people active in New Zealand, such as John H. Baker, Thomas Brodrick, Alphonse Barrington, P.Q. Caples and the like. There are also entries for some botanical explorers, such as Cheeseman and Cockayne, for the photographer Alfred Burton, and the geologist Alexander Mackay. There are gaps in the coverage however. There is no entry for the *Acheron/Pandora* hydrographic survey of 1848-1855, nor for the *Penguin* hydrographic survey of 1896-1905. And there are a substantial number of geologists who explored huge amounts of New Zealand but fail to get an entry in this volume – such as S. Herbert Cox, James Macintosh Bell and James Park, who, while primarily geologists, also contributed substantially to our early topographical knowledge of various parts of New Zealand. Their story remains to be told.

These comments should not be seen as detracting from what is a major reference work in its field, and an amazing contribution from just one person. As with the previous volumes, the standard of production is very high and the outcome is a very handsome book which looks as though it will withstand much handling and use.

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