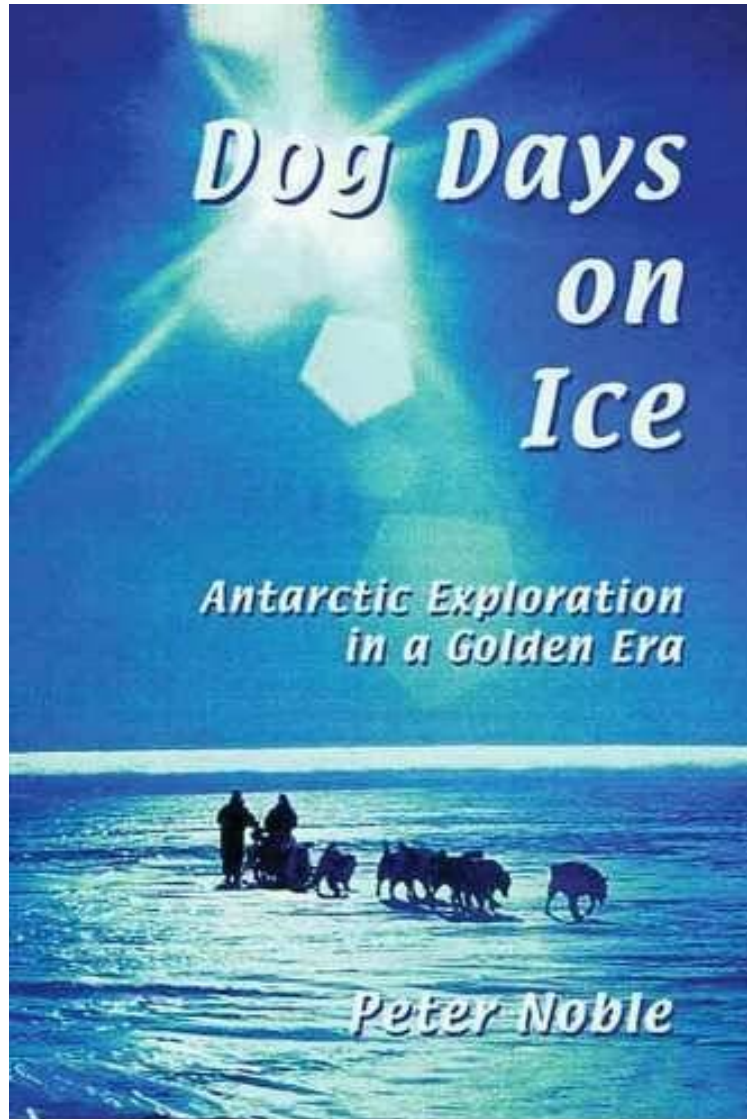


(Download pdf ebook) Dog Days on Ice: Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era

Dog Days on Ice: Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era

Peter Noble

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Peter Noble : Dog Days on Ice: Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dog Days on Ice: Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era:

"Dog Days on ICE Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Age" is written by Peter Noble. It surveyed the grey hair and balding heads, the lined faces, the stooped or halting walk of some, and the old protest song that came to mind: 'Where have all the young men gone?' It was October 2006 and the British Antarctic Survey Club was celebrating fifty years

of 'Halley', the remote research base on the Antarctic continent. Along with four hundred other ex-Halley residents, I went along to the two day bun fight and chin wag noting the somewhat more luxurious accommodation than we had ever experienced 'down south'. It was a wonderful gathering, meeting near forgotten friends, updating about what's happening in the twenty first century (that made us 1960s boys feel old!), but above all the inevitable reminiscences. As I listened and related my own stories, and particularly as I surveyed those ageing friends, I realized that in all too few years, an exciting and fascinating period of British exploration was to be forgotten. True, there is an extensive archive at the British Antarctic Survey offices in Cambridge, but virtually all of this consists of formal reports; little is recorded about day to day living at Halley, of the now extinct experience of working with dogs, of camping on long expeditions, of the cold, of how it all affected the men who lived there. My own time and work at Halley built on the efforts and dedication of those who established and maintained the base in the years before our cohort arrived; and particularly on those who undertook the many early field trips. I was destined and privileged to work with the huskies, those lovely animals that featured prominently in explorations at Halley for scarcely a decade. From the humble beginnings of 'Stumpy', the base pet in 1958, an importing and breeding programme was started in 1962 that produced a peak of 69 animals (adults and pups) in 1968 but by 1972 huskies had been internationally declared an 'alien species' and should be discontinued. I leave it to the reader to imagine what discontinued meant. A couple of dogs, demoted once more to base pet status, managed to survive the decade but the great days of dog travel were over. That other alien species 'man' with his increasingly polluting tractors and aircraft was however deemed essential, but one is left whimsically wondering how many billion husky farts equals one minute of a jet engine exhaust! The use of Dogs in Antarctica were I believe the golden age of exploratory expeditions undertaken by the British Antarctic Survey and this book presents a personal account of an amazing, exciting and life changing experience.

of *Dog Days on Ice: Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era* by Peter Noble. Cheltenham, Reardon Publishing, 2008, 231 pp (paperback). ISBN 1 873877 89 7. Price GBP14.99. Peter Noble was a General Assistant at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) station Halley Bay for the 1968 and 1969 winters. This is his personal story of his time on base and in the field during those two years. The book comprises an introduction, 21 chapters, an Epilogue and six appendices. There are colour maps on the inside front (Weddell Sea region) and back (Coats Land) covers, the latter is also repeated in monochrome in the text, and a map of the Brunt Ice Shelf. Seven line diagrams illustrate topics mentioned in the text and there are numerous small line drawings scattered through the book. These last are not acknowledged so they are presumably by the author. Finally there are two sets of colour photographs, each of eight pages, illustrating various aspects of the book but mainly field activities. The central theme of chapters 2 to 18 is the author's return with Mike Skidmore and the Hairybreeks dog team from Point Touche, their closest approach to the eastern Shackleton Range on the reconnaissance journey to reach the range in the 1967-68 austral summer. On the face of it, this may sound a rather tedious tale but far from it. The author digresses frequently as events and thoughts during the journey are introduced to describe various other aspects and incidents of life at Halley Bay during his two-year stay. Some of these describe the minutiae of life on base or in the field, especially with respect to driving dogs, that are often omitted from other accounts. These provide the flesh to the bones of the story that will prompt memories of similar occasions in every Antarctic reader. Through the book nine of the author's many Poems, rhymes and songs^A have been reproduced to provide a more humorous perspective on some of the events described. Chapters 19 and 20 focus on base life during winter: preparation of Nansen sledges, tents, and general field equipment for the coming field season. They also tell of the frustration felt by the field personnel during the 1968 winter when the Shackleton Range was deemed to be too far to support mountain field parties in the same season and the proposed alternative, geology in Vestfjella, was later cancelled because the Americans had already agreed to fly a Norwegian field party to those mountains. Eventually it all came good. The Americans flew a survey and geological party from Halley Bay into the Shackleton Range while the author led a tractor traverse to the eastern end of the range. The tractor trip, the largest and longest ever undertaken by BAS is described in Chapter 21. Four tractors pulled 12 sledges loaded with up to 29 tonnes, including a living caboose with bunks for all six men. The total return distance travelled was some 1000 miles, although none of the vehicles were driven the full distance; the International Harvester bulldozers were depoted 395 miles from Halley Bay and the Muskeg tractors were carried on sledges behind the Internationals for 340 miles of the return journey. The result of the trip was the laying of an enormous depot in the eastern Shackleton Range that was a vital supply for field parties flown into the western end of the range in subsequent seasons. In addition, the map made of the area and the rock specimens collected provided valuable information for the geologists and surveyors until they could reach the area for themselves. The appendices provide valuable supplementary information to the author's personal story and also to the larger history of dog-sledging from Halley Bay. Appendix 1 lists the Personae Dramatis of the Dog Days (1961-72)^A; Appendix 2 lists Field Expeditions from Halley Bay - 1957 to 1972^A. Appendix 3 Halley Bay Huskies^A, comments on the practices of using dogs, lists all the Halley Bay dogs with a statistical analysis and a note on naming dogs. Appendix 4 Field Rations^A, lists the food box contents and suggested extras while Appendix 5 PO Bag and P Bag^A, includes lists of personal field living equipment and clothing that is normally carried. Appendix 6 is a useful glossary of terms used. An index would have been useful. Describing the period as a

Golden Era" is a touch romantic but no doubt many who experienced it will agree. It was certainly a unique period that formed a link between the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration and the modern era of scientific investigation with its rigid planning, financial constrictions and Health and Safety regulations. Some readers may prefer a stricter chronological account but this is a personal story and the style works well. There are criticisms of BAS but the strongest criticisms are reserved for the dog drivers, including himself, and the general treatment of the dogs. In most cases the latter are fully justified because practices founded largely on ignorance were passed on from year to year; nobody ever attended a training course for sledging with huskies. With hindsight, a school report on most dog drivers might have been marked could have done better". An irritation is the number of names of people and places that are spelled incorrectly. All in all this is a good book that should be eagerly read by all those who were there at the time and by anyone who is looking for a personal account of living and exploring in Antarctica when dog-sledging reigned supreme. Peter Clarkson November 2008 The book will be available from the beginning of December through bookshops, or direct from the publisher at . Book by Nick Webb Dog Days On Ice - Peter Noble I think it was one of Terry Wogan's TOGS who, with heavy irony following James Cracknell's defeat in the South Pole Race, berated the underperforming representatives of Britain's polar aspirations as we again came off second best to those plucky Norwegians from their advantageously ice-capped land. Bridesmaids or not, it is a fact that since the heroic days of Scott and Shackleton, many Brits have punched well above their weight on the polar ice caps. Now working in office or trade or retired are many unsung veterans of Antarctic adventuring and Peter Noble is one. He joined the British Antarctic Survey as a General Assistant (GA) and Mountaineer in 1966 and sailed south for a two year tour of duty at Halley Bay, one of six British survey stations. Peter has now documented his experiences in Dog Days On Ice - Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era". The book comprises an introduction, 21 chapters, an epilogue and six appendices. The central theme is the story of Peter's dog sledge return from Point Touche near the elusive Shackleton Range but it is interspersed with descriptions of a wide variety of elements of life on the ice-cap. Peter's GA versatility is again in evidence as he presents his record in maps, drawings, photographs, charts, poems, songs and well crafted prose where his professionalism, resourcefulness and attention to detail continue to shine through. Writing the book was self evidently a labour of love for a man who clearly treasured the opportunity to be part of such an exciting project. That so much can be gained from such a challenging and remote environment speaks volumes of man's robustness and ingenuity. Whilst contemporary Britain appears to struggle to characterise its national identity, qualities which marked out previous generations abound on these pages. One aspect of Peter's memoir which is quite striking is the quality of the relationships which he was able to maintain with the other parties at the base, both human and husky! As an appointed doggyman" Peter was responsible for the care and well being of the Hairybrecks team which hauled his sledge across thousands of miles of polar ice. During his tour of duty Peter clearly developed a special affinity with these remarkable creatures. His moving description of his farewell to the team illustrates just how special this partnership with man's best friend was. But Peter also rubbed along very well with his two legged colleagues. He attributes this harmonious co-existence to cooperation, consideration and commitment.A" As one of many lessons learnt from his time on the ice, the three C's have subsequently served him well in much milder climes and provide a useful blueprint for us all to reflect on. Whether you are an adventuring type of not, this genuinely human story is highly recommended. South, in the crystal blue, South, where my dreams came true, Though frost may bite and fingers freeze It eases my heart to be, South where my spirit's free. Dog Days on Ice - Antarctic Exploration in a Golden Era by Peter Noble About the Author Peter Noble was born in 1943 in the manufacturing town of Pudsey, Yorkshire. After attending the local grammar school (where his most significant achievement was joining the A"Adventure Club" a year before being eligible) he drifted into Teacher Training College and three years later, back into school. His first year in a London comprehensive convinced him that he was in need of something new, something completely different and preferably something outdoors. Teenage climbing experience on his native Yorkshire crags had led to climbing holidays in many parts of Britain plus Norway and the Alps so he applied for and secured a job with the British Antarctic Survey as a General Assistant/Mountaineer. In 1966 he sailed south for a two year tour of duty at Halley Bay, one of six British survey stations and the only one to be built on floating ice. During the building of a new base at Halley Bay, new skills were added to his repertoire - electrician, plumber, decorator, carpenter, baker - but it was driving dog sledges over the ice cap that fired his imagination. After learning the basic skills he and three colleagues were left several hundred miles from base, with two dog teams, to reconnoitre a route to the remote Shackleton Mountains. The following year Peter was invited to lead a tractor expedition along the reconnoitred route, an expedition that proved to be the longest and heaviest tractor journey ever undertaken by the British Antarctic Survey. On return to England, Peter never did go back to the classroom, at least not the indoor one, preferring to work in outdoor education in the Lake District, Snowdonia and finally heading up a then new Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Derbyshire. On formal retirement he travelled widely - Peru, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Central Australia, Tibet, Namibia - either with his wife Jenny or leading young people's expeditions. Peter and Jenny now live in Marlborough, Wiltshire.