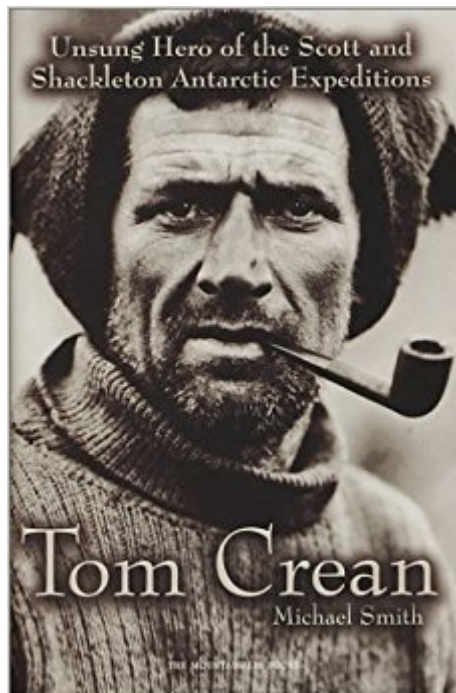




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Tom Crean: Unsung Hero Of The Scott And Shackleton Antarctic Expeditions



Synopsis

Tom Crean was a key figure and colorful member of three of the most famous polar expeditions and has had a glacier and a peak named after him.
 Will appeal to Shackleton buffs and fans of historical explorations
 Great for armchair adventurers who enjoy a ripping good yarn
 Popularity of this subject will stay fueled by media attention to big-budget television mini-series (A&E) and big- screen movie (Columbia Pictures) currently in the works After this engaging, well-written biography sold more than 18,000 copies in Ireland in its first year, The Mountaineers Books jumped on the U.S. rights for its customers. Tom Crean was with Ernest Shackleton on the famous Endurance trip-and was one of the survivors of that phenomenal tale of, well, endurance. He was also on Robert Scott's two earlier polar explorations and he was key to the survival of his fellow explorers each time out. What is engaging about Crean--and this book--was that he was not unmoved by the hard decisions and hardships he and the rest of the crew faced, nor did he blindly follow orders, but he did what had to be done, and was loyal to his captains and his crewmates in the process. The story of all three adventures of incredible courage and survival are told in this one 352-page volume.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Tom Crean was the difference between life and death" for two members of Robert F. Scott's 1910-13 Terra Nova expedition. With this statement, British journalist Smith demands that history revisit the heroic age of polar exploration, focusing on one of the lesser-known heroes. Tom Crean went to Antarctica with Scott's Discovery (1901-04) and Terra Nova (1910-13) expeditions, as well

as with Ernest Shackleton's Endurance (1914-16) expedition. Some of his courageous accomplishments include ice-floe hopping and climbing the Barrier to affect a rescue, traveling 35 miles in 18 hours with minimal rations to get help for others, and the infamous crossing of the southern ocean to South Georgia Island with Shackleton. Crean was awarded many medals, including the Albert Medal, the highest recognition for gallantry. But Smith argues that because of politics and the class prejudices of the day (Crean was a poor Irishman), he did not receive the recognition he was due. Crean was not a diarist, so Smith relied on interviews, letters, the diaries of Crean's contemporaries, and previously published works for this captivating account of one man's often overlooked contributions. Recommended for polar and exploration collections and larger public libraries. Margaret Atwater-Singer, Univ. of Evansville, IN Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Tom Crean survived three expeditions to the Antarctic. The first was with Robert Scott aboard the Discovery (1901-1904), the second with Scott aboard the Terra Nova (1910-1913), and the third with Ernest Shackleton aboard the Endurance (1914-1916). Crean's exploits are almost unbelievable, for along with Shackleton and Frank Worsley, he made the first crossing of South Georgia to save their comrades stranded on Elephant Island. In researching this engaging work, which is deliciously full of other such daring feats by this unassuming man, Smith interviewed Crean's two daughters and two grandsons. Additional sources include a number of archives in England, Ireland, and New Zealand; newspapers and periodicals, unpublished diaries, journals, and records; ships' logs; letters, and Crean's service documents. The result is an absorbing, meticulously researched biography of a genuine hero. George Cohen Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

great read well written held your attention start to finish

I've read almost every book I can find on Antarctic exploration and without a doubt, this is one of the finest. Tom Crean is always mentioned in books about early Antarctic epics but we've never really got to know him and what kind of a man he was. Michael Smith has done a fine job in tracing Crean's life from his early days in the Navy, his subsequent trips with Scott and Shackleton right up to his final days as a Pub owner in his home in Ireland. This is the kind of man you'd want whatever your expedition might be. He was brave, strong, honest, trustworthy and humorous, no matter what the circumstances. A great story about a real hero!

Any reader of the many books written on the Heroic Age of Polar explorations will very much enjoy this well presented biographical history of a tough Irishman who accompanied Shackleton on two Antarctic voyages (including the ill fated Endurance trip) and Scott on the ill fated trek to the South Pole. Wonderfully presented, this book was fascinating to read and will be most treasured in my collection of polar exploration books. Do not hesitate to select this book if you enjoy nonfiction adventure.

One night last week I watched "Scott of the Antarctic." Being very impressed with the realistic nature of this 1960 production and, always impressed with the stalwart, intrepid, and frankly at times, insane daring of the British Explorers, I picked up this volume from my shelf and read the whole thing in a single night!! It had actually been given to me by an Irish friend about two years ago. I am grateful to that friend. Here in one book is more adventure than several explorers can pack into many lives - all accomplished by a single man - Tom Crean -- backbone of the Expedition: stalwart working-class hero and embodiment of everything that made both Ireland and Britain great nations. Tom was the non-com backbone of the operation. Someone capable with his hands, able, trustworthy and dependable in the extreme, men like Crean built the Empire and made feats of arctic exploration possible. From an adventure reader's point of view Crean was part of the last accompanying party with Scott, before Scott's choice to proceed onwards with 5 men deemed fittest. Of course Capt. Scott assured his posterity by dying along with 4 of his men. What I did not really know was the epic adventure Crean and his remaining companions endured in their eventual return. I will spare the details, but this book is packed with non-stop action (one thing that sticks out in my mind is the wild and very imprudent sled ride down the glacier -- it has to be read to be believed -- especially by anyone with actual glacier travel experience). Crean's last solitary walk of 32 kilometres to gain help for his starving and badly scurried companions is at once a stroke of genius, courage and luck -- he would not have survived if he had arrived 30 minutes later, by that time a wild storm pummelled the camp and Crean would have died if he had not made the hut). Crean also was a part of the Shackleton expedition and was again selected as one of the most dependable, and physically strong people to undertake the long journey to South Georgia and the also epic traverse of South Georgia (a 34 mile trek across an island mountain range that had never been explored before). The adventure is unrelenting -- even the last kilometre before reaching the Whaling Station involves them on an abseil down a 20 metre waterfall. This book should be read for the sheer joy of understanding what gives all people strength when all else seems lost... it would

have been easy to give up, but Tom Crean and his ilk never did. There is one point I should raise with this book that is a little annoying. It is the predilection to interpret people as the embodiment of their race and nationality. Of course the Irish do this much more and perhaps better than most... but the idea that figures such as Crean are some sort of Zeitgeist representative of their country is misleading and wholly beside the point. There are points in the narrative where the author postulates what would have happened had Crean be chosen to accompany Scott...there is also the attempt to make the obligatory genuflections to Irish Nationalism -- how does one square the circle of him being the right hand of Empire but at the same time significantly nationalist enough for the Irish (as if loyalty to the British made a person any less Irish). In simple terms Tom has little time for politics -- he evaluated people individually. It wasn't like him to judge. He was in many ways the strong and silent type. As such he offers us a template for a very fulfilled, dependable and just human being. This is the story of this remarkable man.

Tom Crean is a true hero of the age of exploration. He was a man of great courage, strength and conviction. He was a member of two South Pole voyages with Scott and one with Shackleton. One could argue that had Scott chosen Crean over P.O. Evans to represent the "lower decks" on the last push to the pole, Scott may have survived to tell the tale. As it was, Crean is credited with saving the life of Lt. Evans as they struggled back after being the last support group to leave Scott and his party of five on the polar plateau and thus were the last to see them alive. Additionally, Shackleton credits Crean with, if not saving his life, being integral to the success of the Endurance expedition by playing a central role in Shackleton's escape from Elephant Island and hike to eventual safety. Michael Smith tells an exciting, compelling story of the stark realities of the age of exploration in the early 1900's. This book is a factual story, expertly told about the "follower" Crean, a quiet man with strength and character that are so remarkable it is difficult to comprehend. Everyone of us can learn something from his example. This is a story about human endurance and will.

The tantalizingly brief references to Crean in books by Caroline Alexander, Ernest Shackleton, and Frank Worsley will make you hunger for a fully fleshed-out story of the man. I idolize Crean the way so many others do, for his remarkable combination of bravery, stoicism, and lightheartedness. Yet I didn't quite find the tale I was looking for here. There were a few memorable passages, best of all the one describing his puddle-jumping dash for safety while a school of killer whales surfaced willy-nilly all around him. That attempt at a rescue of his fellow voyager has to be one of the greatest rescue stories of all time. But generally the narrative lacked sophistication and depth of detail.

Sometimes it seemed to lack objectivity as well, as the author would bend over backwards to praise his hero for the most trivial accomplishments. I think we're all doomed never quite to know all we want to know about Tom Crean.

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