



Mawson's Will: The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written

Lennard Bickel , Edmund Hillary (Foreword by)

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Mawson's Will is the dramatic story of what Sir Edmund Hillary calls "the most outstanding solo journey ever recorded in Antarctic history." For weeks in Antarctica, Douglas Mawson faced some of the most daunting conditions ever known to man: blistering wind, snow, and cold; loss of his companion, his dogs and supplies, the skin on his hands and the soles of his feet; thirst, starvation, disease, snowblindness - and he survived.

Sir Douglas Mawson is remembered as the young Australian who would not go to the South Pole with Robert Scott in 1911, choosing instead to lead his own expedition on the less glamorous mission of charting nearly 1,500 miles of Antarctic coastline and claiming its resources for the British Crown. His party of three set out through the mountains across glaciers in 60-mile-per-hour winds. Six weeks and 320 miles out, one man fell into a crevasse, along with the tent, most of the equipment, all of the dogs' food, and all except a week's supply of the men's provisions.

Mawson's Will is the unforgettable story of one man's ingenious practicality and unbreakable spirit and how he continued his meticulous scientific observations even in the face of death. When the expedition was over, Mawson had added more territory to the Antarctic map than anyone else of his time. Thanks to Bickel's moving account, Mawson can be remembered for the vision and dedication that make him one of the world's great explorers.

Mawson's Will: The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written Details

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From Reader Review Mawson's Will: The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written for online ebook

Jeannie says

This is absolutely one of the best books I have ever read. I found it in the library by accident several years ago and read it for a home school unit study. Within a few pages my world was all about following this incredible man and his companions through their travels and trials. Home school lessons revolved around Antarctica and Douglas Mawson. This incredible and true story left me breathless and amazed. I remember talking about Mawson to anyone who would listen. If I could meet an historical hero, Mawson just might be my top choice. All these years later I still feel the excitement and passion I felt while reading this book. I would recommend it to anyone who is looking for a great and inspiring adventure story. I'm going to put it on my read-again-in-2012 list.

Skylar Hatfield says

One cannot tell what one can accomplish! After you read this book, it will be impossible to make excuses for yourself ever again.

I read the Kindle version of this book. The last fourth of this edition has a bundle of typos which make reading the text less enjoyable.

Matt Fone says

I'm not sure if its some left over romanticism from the age of explorers but i just love reading about the polar explorers. Mawson heroic struggle against the elements comes alive in this book. Its biggest short coming is that even though its written by an Aussie author about an Aussie explorer, he uses miles. Like come on mate ditch the backwards measurements and use SI units

Hope says

Book Challenge Category: A Book Set More Than 5000 Miles From Your Location

You can't get much farther from sunny Florida than the Antarctic! This book, reminiscent of Jack London's "To Build A Fire" (although with admittedly a happier ending), describes the harrowing survival tale of Mawson's expedition. Historically accurate and engaging for the reader, this is an excellent read-- and also why I like sunny weather! Moral of the story- do not eat the liver of an animal in a survival situation.

Kathleen Walden says

Wow!! What an amazing book!! I had never heard of Dr Mawson 's expeditions to the South Pole. This story is mostly taken from his diaries and it is a page turner. It is very human, its gripping, its scary, and its tragic! During his lifetime he not only charts 1,500 miles of coastline and claims it for the British crown, but discovers the magnetic South Pole--but at what price?? True stories of real heroes--both people and dogs.

Elizabeth says

Such a fascinating story of determination and will power in face of terrible odd and great personal hardship.

Liz says

WOW i am soft

Scott says

Dr Mawson overcame starvation, bitter cold and sickness to survive. He and his fellow explorers (Mertz and Ninnis) ate their husky's livers thinking this was nourishment; but in fact, contained high levels of vitamin A, poison to their starving bodies. I always enjoy true stories involving great people and examples of extraordinary human spirit.

John says

An incredible story. Even knowing all involved were long dead and no longer suffering, I found it incredibly difficult to read this book. Shackleton's Endurance story pales in many ways compared to this. Not for the feint of heart but an amazing tale of survival against all odds if you can stomach all the stress that comes with reading about it.

Thorn says

OH. MY. GOD. !!!!!

i'm drawn to this kind of thing, apparently.

Ingolfurh says

Bókin sjálf er sæmilega skrifuð og inngrip höfundar bæta miklu við frásögnina af seinni tíma ályktunum. En sagan sjálf af þessari ótrúlegu þrekraun er ómissandi fyrir þá sem heillast af miskunnarlausri náttúru og fjallabókmenntum. Þessi mun klárlega sitja í mér lengi.

Ed Smiley says

The "Greatest" in the subtitle seems to be no exaggeration. I give a summary in the spoiler section of what Mawson survived, in case you think I'm kidding. But I think it's best you skip it, and just get the book.

It is an amazing story, and it is one of the best in the genre. I am more or less OK with the fact that the author has detailed what Mawson "thought" and "saw", as Mawson kept fairly meticulous records (except towards the end, in a state of extreme exhaustion), and carefully measured distances. The descriptions of the antarctic are sublime and terrifying. I would have liked to have a few maps with which to track the journey. But these are quibbles.

Many don't know the story, as it happened at the same time as the race to the South Pole, and the reports of Scott's death. Mawson had stubbornly refused the offer of joining the Scott expedition. He was a geologist, and realized that he could make a greater contribution by fanning scientific parties across the continent, with such tasks as locating the magnetic pole, rather than joining in a competition he did not have the resources to win, or be subject to the command of another. One result was that almost all that was known about the Antarctic in the early days was due to his expedition.

Mawson went 600 miles into absolutely unknown territory with two companions with dogs, food and adequate supplies.

However:

(view spoiler)

He returned, alone, barely alive, on foot and with nothing.

Jason says

I've read several stories of early explorers, including Shackleton's memoirs. This story stands on its own two feet up there with the best of them. I've come to believe that not just anyone could survive extreme conditions like this, even if you have the knowledge to do so. It takes a degree of perspicacity and faith in oneself to transcend physical hardships like those presented in this book. And, as you'll see from reading the author's prologue, there was a bit of luck involved as well.

Bickel obviously did his research in preparation for writing this. Excellent recounting of details, engaging character sketches, and awe-inspiring overall. Highly recommended.

Natasha Johnson says

This book has a lot of sentimental value to me. I remember my mom reading this book to me when I was a child living in Alaska and showing me the mechanics of ice bridges by laying a graham cracker across two books. It kindled my spirit of adventure and discovery!

Randolph says

Not nearly as literary as Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World* but still page turning exciting and awe inspiring. Bickel doesn't mention many sources but we have to assume he had Douglas Mawson's own *The Home of the Blizzard Being the Story of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911-1914* to go by and presumably his diaries. Up to a certain point he has Xavier Mertz's diary as well but I'm still not sure how Bickel fills in all the blanks so definitively particularly after Mertz dies. There is a three chapter excerpt from *The Home of the Blizzard Being the Story of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911-1914* in my edition covering the same timeframe as Bickel.

Anyway, another smashing good read about a polar expedition where about everything that could go wrong did, up to a point. Somehow Australian Mawson alone, having lost or left behind most of his food and gear, suffering from starvation, snow blindness, vitamin A poisoning, and scurvy manages to literally crawl and roll downhill a good part of the way back to where he started and survive to boot.

Few know about Mawson due to the fact that his saga was overshadowed by the Scott-Amundsen race to the South Pole and the subsequent disaster that happened to the Scott party on the way back around the same time.
