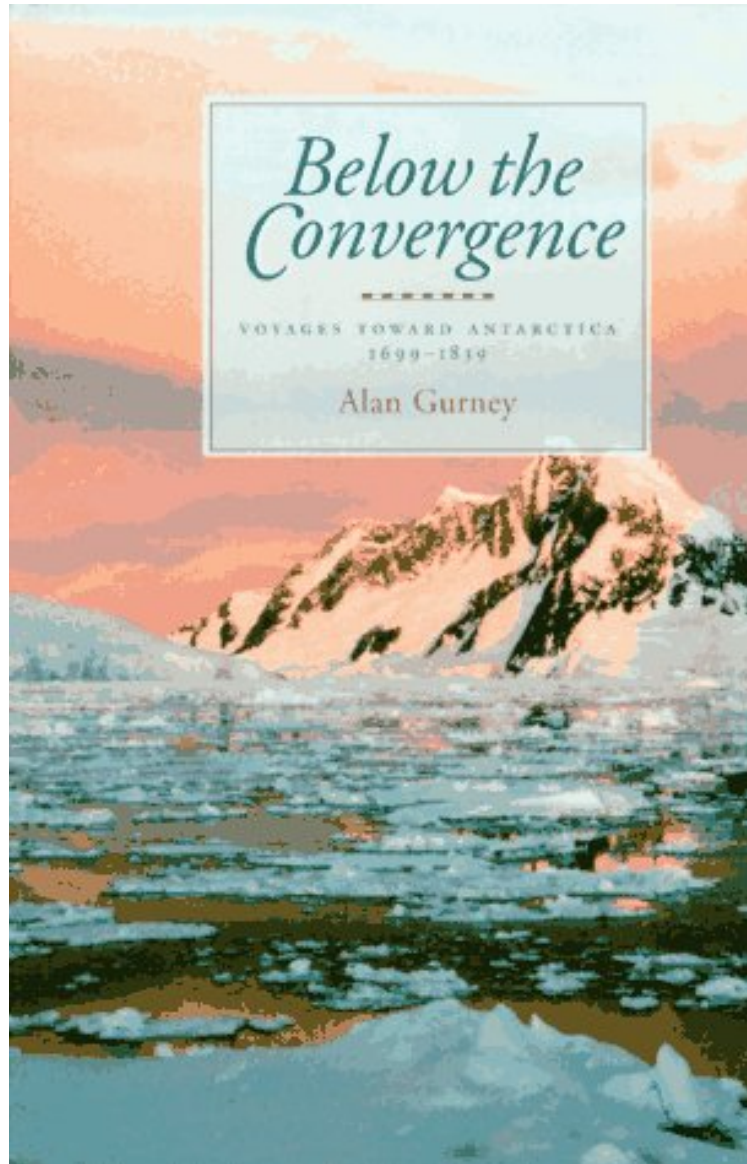


[PDF] Below the Convergence: Voyages Towards Antarctica, 1699-1839

## Below the Convergence: Voyages Towards Antarctica, 1699-1839

Alan Gurney

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**Alan Gurney : Below the Convergence: Voyages Towards Antarctica, 1699-1839** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Below the Convergence: Voyages Towards Antarctica, 1699-1839:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. RIP the PolymathBy Christopher TwelvetreesAs a longtime fan of Polar exploration history, I eagerly bit into Alan Gurney's books, only to have a sour taste. He begins badly, by misrepresenting and misconstruing medieval history. One would have thought the explosion of the myth of the flat

earth (or in this case, disk shaped) would even have reached his ears. And while he's quick to thank Islam for preserving classical knowledge, he totally dismisses the libraries and Scriptoria of the Christian west--possibly because in his ignorance he has not heard of them, but more likely because he seems to have it in for religion. His mostly secondary source bibliography lists no works in his first chapter by Christian medieval sources. He seems totally ignorant of Scholasticism or any medieval sciences, though he's quick to quote the anti-Christian Gibbon. I'm surprised he didn't totally reject Isaac Newton, as a devout Christian. And his kowtowing to Islam is a common trope these days even though the Christian west absorbed knowledge and advanced while the Islamic east remained stuck in the eighth century. It's a common problem these days. Knowledge is broad and therefore highly specialized, and folks like Gurney and his ilk think anything outside of their field not worth studying. It's only in the first chapter, but if he can be so careless and shoddy with his reasoning and more especially his research in one section, it does not bode well for the rest of the book. (FYI my own studies are in medieval history though I have dipped extensively into the Scholastics.) Normally, this sort of ignorance and bigotry can be excused as the rest of the book is worth reading. And certainly Gurney gives a lot of information on an important topic. But Mr. Gurney is an execrable writer. Though I am no speed reader and enjoy reading books word for word, I wound up skimming most of this one, getting the gist of his unwieldy paragraphs. His entire study of the problem of longitude should have been bypassed by saying to read Dava Sobel's book on the subject and to get on with his own. By and large, pretty dull stuff on an exciting subject. The material covered is extremely important but this presentation of it is missable. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Exploring the South Atlantic before Shackleton, Scott and Amundsen By Thomas Erickson After reading about the Antarctic explorers Shackleton, Scott, and Amundsen (5 star books), I wanted more information about previous Antarctic and deep South Atlantic Ocean explorers. Below the Convergence by Alan Gurney is a fascinating read. For me a real page burner. Lots of interesting material. My favorite chapter was about Captain James Cook. Here was a really great nautical man, highly intelligent and thoughtful for his men's safety. Back in the late 1700s the English Royal Navy still used some brutal methods for crew compliance. Also the dreaded "plague of the seas" scurvy was not understood. Even though the need for Vitamin C (Ascorbic acid) was not known, Captain Cook realized eating fresh greens, lemon juice and certain plants and fresh meats helped keep scurvy away. Eating sour kraut and lime juice too (not as good against scurvy as lemon juice). He was proud that none of the men on his ship Resolution developed scurvy after eating a diet rich in then unknown vitamin C. Captain Cook becomes a hero of the Royal navy with his explorations. He seems to be on the fast track to becoming an Admiral but is horribly hacked to pieces during an attack by natives on his third circumnavigation. One of the greatest explorers and British Royal Navy heroes. We see explorers like Edmond Halley (astronomer too.. Halley's comet) and his Paramore ship. Also Weddell and Brisbane and John Biscoe, Kemp, Balleny and Ross as well as a Russian explorer. Many were sealers and whalers who went deep south for the riches of seal furs, and oil. Millions of seals killed with no conservation of a limited resource. Some seals hunted almost to extinction. A fascinating account of seal, penguin and whale slaughter. The animals were needed for furs and oil but absolutely no conservation. Horrible vast indiscriminate slaughter. There was reference to Charles Darwin and the Voyage of the Beagle. Interesting, so I bought that book on also. Reading it now. The big hold back on accurate long distance sea navigation for centuries was getting the right longitude. Money prizes were given out for developing accurate methods. Both lunar methods and chronograph watches developed. We see the eventual improvements of being able to find different islands and better charts with improved longitude readings. Alan Gurney did a great job of giving a history of exploration south of the convergence zone from 1699-1839. Anyone interested in Antarctic exploration, and the different animals encountered in the deep southern Atlantic Ocean will like this book. Some great maps showing the routes the various explorers/sealers/Royal Navy// merchant marine members went as well as some interesting b/w pictures. A great book. 5 stars 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. BELOW THE CONVERGENCE : VOYAGE TOWARDS ANTARTICA 1699-1839 By ALBERTO NAVARRO THIS BOOK COVERS A PERIOD OF 140 YEARS OF VOYAGES TO THE FAR SOUTH, BETWEEN 1699 BY THE ASTRONOMER EDMOND HALLEY IN THE PARAMOUNT AND 1839 BY JOHN BALLENY IN THE ELIZA SCOTT. THE CONVERGENCE IS A MARITIME BORDER LOCATED BETWEEN THE PARALLELS 50 AND 60 OF SOUTH LATITUDE, IN WHICH THE RELATIVELY TEMPERATE SUBANTARTIC WATERS GAVE WAY TO THE FROZEN ANTARTIC WATERS, ALSO KNOWN AS THE SOUTHERN OCEAN, IN WHICH THE TEMPERATURE DROPPED SHARPLY. THE FIRST EXPLORER TO CROSS THE ANTARTIC CIRCLE WAS THE GLORIOUS BRITISH EXPLORER JAMES COOK, IN 1773, IN THE RESOLUTION.

The image of a huge southern continent has haunted the imaginations of geographers throughout history. Not until the second of his great voyages in 1773 did Captain James Cook lay the theory to rest. This book tells the story of British, American and Russian expeditions, from the astronomer Edmond Halley's voyage in the "Paramore" in 1699 to the sealer John Balleny's 1839 voyage in the "Eliza Scott", in search of land, fur and elephant seals. These voyages were taken for science, profit and national prestige. Life was incredibly harsh, and often the seamen had to make their own charts as they navigated the stormy waters below the Convergence. The book describes their attempts to discover and exploit the new continent, which was not the verdant land imagined, but an inhospitable expanse of rock and ice,

ringed by pack ice and icebergs - the land of Antarctica.

.com Today, scientists regularly bivouac for months on end in the vast frozen wastes of Antarctica, and adventurous travelers can even find tours to take them to the bottom of the world. But it was not so long ago that a voyage to the South Pole was a perilous undertaking, one that required tremendous courage, stamina, and skill. Long before explorers actually saw this frozen continent, its existence was posited by geographers, though 18th-century seafarers ventured no further than the ring of cold air and icy water, the Antarctic Convergence, which surrounded it. The discovery and exploitation of Antarctica is the subject of Alan Gurney's book, *Below the Convergence*. In addition to chronicling the voyages and adventures of some of history's most colorful explorers, including Captain James Cook, Gurney provides a wealth of information. He details the average sailor's life on-board, the rivalry between seal hunters, and the ingenious solutions that resourceful voyagers devised for knotty problems like shipwreck, scurvy, and even lovesickness. Fascinating, exciting, at times lyrical, Gurney's literary journey is a trip worth taking. From Publishers Weekly Long before Admiral Byrd's well-publicized expeditions and the race to the South Pole by Scott and Amundsen, other, now long-forgotten explorers, adventurers and ordinary seal hunters made or tried to make their way to Antarctica. Gurney, a Scots yacht designer and photographer, tells the story of some dozen of those men, beginning with the astronomer Halley (of comet fame) in 1699 and finishes with an 1839 whaling/sealing ship-the Eliza Scott-whose crew discovered boulders imbedded in Antarctic ice, a geological mystery that caught Darwin's interest. But to mention only the detailed accounts of these voyages-and they are very detailed-fails to give a sense of the treasure-trove quality of this unusual book. Along the way are interesting discussions of the history of astronomy, geography, navigation (especially the problems of working out correct longitude), cartography and ornithology (how the penguin got its name), diet (the problem of scurvy) and the economics of the whale-oil trade. And how many of us have seriously considered the question "Is there indeed a 'Southern Ocean' below the Pacific?"? Gurney's somewhat dogged interest in describing exactly which routes various ships took to get from here to there is more than made up for by his curiosity about what they encountered along the way. This book, written for serious sailors, should entertain anyone curious about history's backwater. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal The author, a yacht designer, photographer, and lecturer, presents an engaging and detailed history of the explorations and discoveries of the Antarctic seas up to the mid-19th century, the era of the sailing ships before steam took over. Gurney takes us aboard the ships of James Cook and less prominent explorers who preceded and followed him. They were amazing seafarers who sailed to explore, with government assistance, or for profit, with venture capital provided by sealers and whalers seeking the oil needed for industrial England and America. Gurney makes the reader wonder how captains and crew endured the freezing cold, uncharted waters, hurricane winds, icebergs, scurvy, and other diseases. As a sailor, he is well versed in the lore of the sea and its ships. His fascinating account should appeal to all readers. Highly recommended.?George M. Jenks, Bucknell Univ., Lewisburg, Pa. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.