

AGAINST ALLODDS

A photographic collection from the age of modern explorers reveals some gripping tales and extraordinary people

Portraits: Joanna Vestey

IMAGINE IF CAPTAIN

Cook had never set sail on his voyages of discovery, Dr David Livingstone hadn't mapped the heart of Africa, or Jacques Cousteau never dived into the deep blue sea. How different would our world be now?

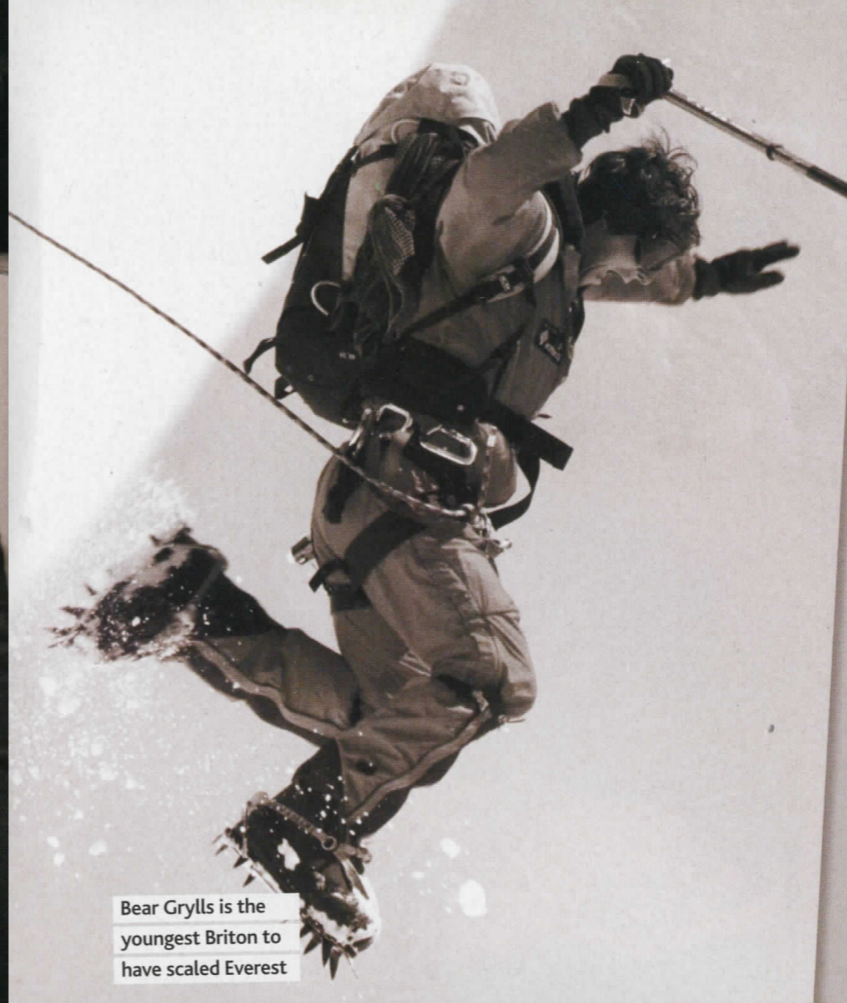


Those who set forth in the name of exploration and discovery have brought the world closer to us. And, of course, they have inspired generations with their strength and daring. After centuries of exploration, however, it seems hard to imagine that there is anything left to discover. But even now there are people heading out on extraordinary adventures.

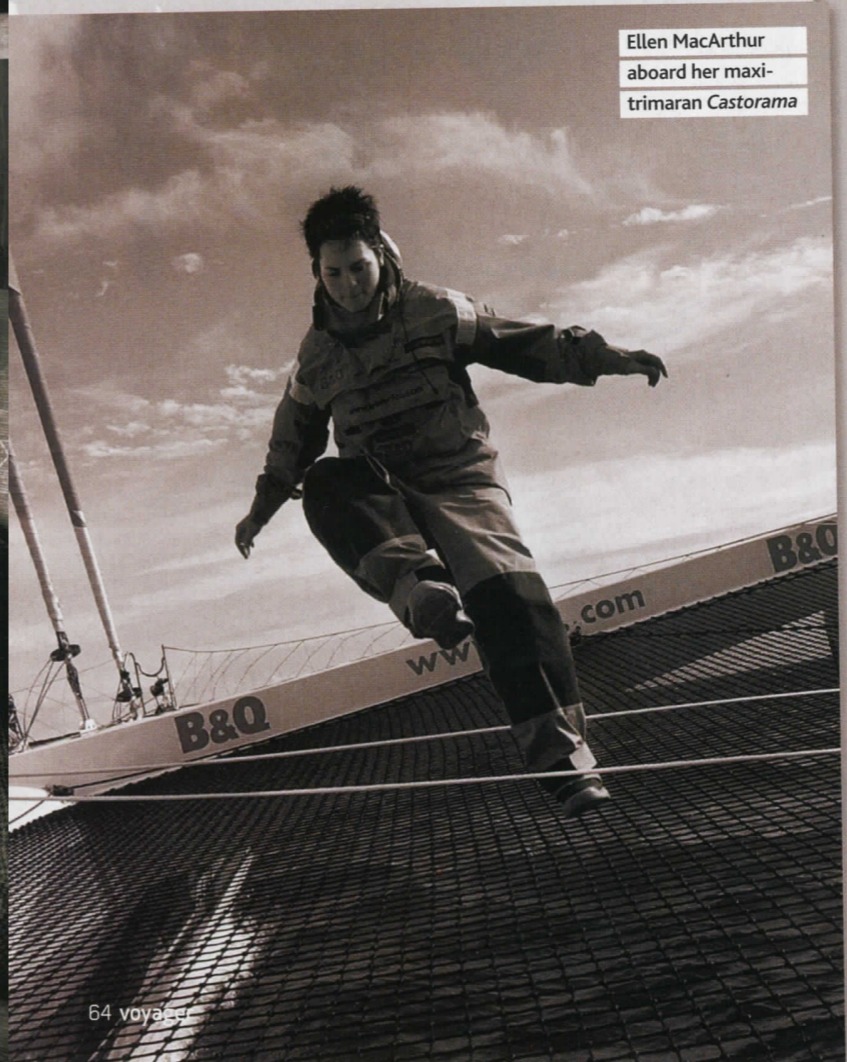
Reportage photographer Joanna Vestey went on a mission to champion these people. An adventurer herself – she spent her honeymoon piloting a helicopter from Alaska to Chile – Vestey often met explorers through meetings at The Royal Geographical Society or Explorers Club. Inspired by their endeavours, she set off on a three-year journey to photograph the faces of modern exploration. "I was always touched by how like your friends these people were when you met them out of context and this was the way to capture that intimacy," she says.

Vestey flew all over the world to photograph her subjects. She even made time on the morning of her wedding to photograph Sir Wilfred Thesiger, and eventually assembled over 50 portraits. Vestey said she had never met such "driven and passionate people" who were as committed as Captain Cook to "their scientific discoveries and physical explorations". Not that it always has to be such highbrow intentions, though. Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the polar and desert explorer, revealed that he undertook his gruelling adventures just "to pay the gas bill". **Emma Juhász** ▶

Faces of Exploration by Joanne Vestey and Justin Marozzi, Carlton Books (£20)



Bear Grylls is the youngest Briton to have scaled Everest



Ellen MacArthur aboard her maxi-trimaran Castorama



BEAR GRYLLS

At 23, Bear Grylls entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the youngest Briton to have climbed Mount Everest and survived.

Three years earlier, in 1995, it had been an unimaginable dream; he had been lying in hospital with his back broken in three places from a free-fall parachuting accident. In 2000, he circumnavigated the UK on a jet ski. Two years later, he led an expedition across the North Atlantic Ocean on a rigid inflatable boat.



DAME ELLEN MACARTHUR DBE

In 2001 Dame Ellen MacArthur became the youngest person and fastest woman to sail around the world on her own. She was 24. Only

four years later, she became a Dame. At 5'2", she is undaunted by ferocious seas and lives by the expression "Go for it!".

In February 2005, she set the new round-the-world record, smashing 32 hours off the previous one. The Queen sent her a message saying, "the world is impressed by your courage, skill and stamina... a remarkable and historic achievement".



BUZZ ALDRIN

On 20 July 1969, two men took a "giant leap for mankind". Watched by the largest television audience ever, these celebrated words of Neil Armstrong were followed by extraordinary images of Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon. It was a pivotal moment in both history and exploration.

Born in New Jersey in 1930, Aldrin excelled as a student. He flew for the USA Air Force, fighting in the Korean War, and then in 1963, he joined NASA's elite band of astronauts. In 1969 he earned the Presidential Medal for Freedom. At 76, he remains a leading figure in the American aerospace industry. ▶