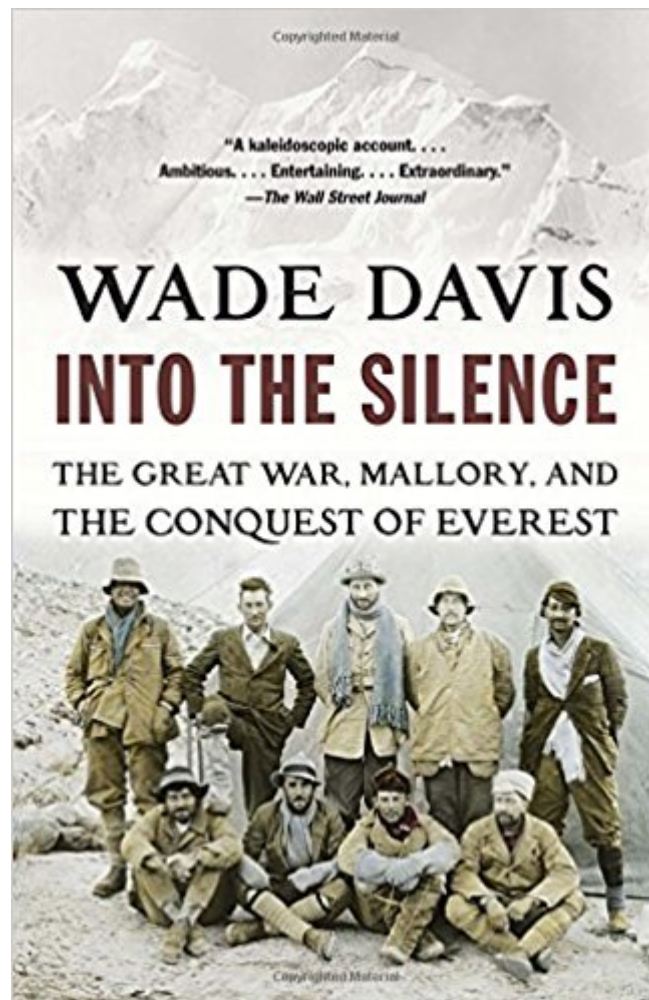




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# Into The Silence: The Great War, Mallory, And The Conquest Of Everest



## Synopsis

The definitive story of the British adventurers who survived the trenches of World War I and went on to risk their lives climbing Mount Everest. On June 6, 1924, two men set out from a camp perched at 23,000 feet on an ice ledge just below the lip of Everest's North Col. George Mallory, thirty-seven, was Britain's finest climber. Sandy Irvine was a twenty-two-year-old Oxford scholar with little previous mountaineering experience. Neither of them returned. Drawing on more than a decade of prodigious research, bestselling author and explorer Wade Davis vividly re-creates the heroic efforts of Mallory and his fellow climbers, setting their significant achievements in sweeping historical context: from Britain's nineteenth-century imperial ambitions to the war that shaped Mallory's generation. Theirs was a country broken, and the Everest expeditions emerged as a powerful symbol of national redemption and hope. In Davis's rich exploration, he creates a timeless portrait of these remarkable men and their extraordinary times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, October 2011: It's tempting to call Wade Davis's magnificent *Into the Silence* an Everest of a book. But that would be misleading. It is more like K2: challenging, technically complex, and hugely rewarding upon completion. The book starts off not with mountaineering, but with vivid, novelistic descriptions of the horrors of the First World War. Years of waste and destruction in the trenches, Davis argues, fueled a desperate nation to embrace the assault on Everest as a gesture of imperial redemption. Those who endured attempts on the summit all bore the scars of the Great War "and they were drawn to the mountain by an almost

contradictory desire for conquest and spiritual ablution. At the center of it all is Mallory, whose eventual disappearance effectively closed that chapter in mountaineering. His utterance "because it's there" became a new war cry, but he climbed for deeper reasons entirely. -- Chris Schluep -- This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Praise for *Into the Silence*: "A kaleidoscopic account. . . . Ambitious. . . . Entertaining. . . . Extraordinary." "The Wall Street Journal" "Brilliantly engrossing. . . . An instant classic of mountaineering literature." "The Guardian" (London) "Magnificent. . . . Davis tells the full story behind this almost mythic story, imbuing it with historic scope and epic sweep." "Los Angeles Times" "A masterpiece standing atop its own world, along with the classic *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer." "Salt Lake City Tribune" *Into the Silence* is quite unlike any other mountaineering book. It not only spins a gripping Boy's Own yarn about the early British expeditions to Everest, but investigates how the carnage of the trenches bled into a desire for redemption at the top of the world. . . . At its heart, *Into the Silence* is an elegy for a lost generation . . . a magnificent, audacious venture." "The Sunday Times (London)" "Magnificent. . . . Impressive. . . . A vivid account." "The Observer (London)" "Utterly compelling. . . . Not only a thorough examination of Mallory's determined advances on Everest, but also insight into the psyche of post-war England. . . . A mesmerizing story of the human spirit." "Pittsburgh Tribune-Review" "Powerful and profound, a moving, epic masterpiece of literature, history and hope." "The Times (London)" "A brilliant book. I can't praise it enough." "Christopher Hitchens" "Davis has produced a magnificent, rigorously researched account of the expeditions that set out to regain glory for an empire in decline but, instead, created some of the most enduring legends of the 20th century." "Financial Times" "A magnificent work of scholarship . . . and narrative drive. . . . [Davis] has written far and away the best account of this seminal chapter in the epic history of mountaineering." "The National" "Davis is a fine storyteller. . . . A deep current of sympathy runs through the book. . . . One comes away with a feeling almost of tenderness for these men, of admiration for their stoicism in the face of extreme suffering, and their willingness to risk everything for a transcendent ideal. . . . The quest, finally, is not for the summit of Everest, or even for the story of how it eluded these men, but rather for a complex and compassionate understanding of the world in which they lived and died." "The Boston Globe" "A gripper of a read . . . *Silence* revives the cliff-edge drama of those Jazz age climbs and drives home the tragedy of Mallory's death." "Outside" "An exceptional book on an extraordinary generation. . . . Monumental in its scope and conception it nevertheless remains hypnotically fascinating throughout." "A wonderful story tinged with sadness." "Joe Simpson,

author of *Touching the Void* "Brilliant. . . . The product of a decade's research, *Into the Silence* has two supreme strengths, the first of which is the emotional, spiritual and historical context it provides against which to understand the central events. The other is the author's effortless knack for sketching character." "The Spectator" "Magnificent. . . . Fascinating. . . . To keep this mass of material from bulging out of the narrative is an impressive feat of literary organization and management." "Geoff Dyer, *The Guardian* (London)" "Combining the pace of a thriller with a degree of detail as nuanced as any academic study, this is an atmospheric and exhilarating book." "Time Out (London)" "Profoundly ambitious. . . . Impressive. . . . Monumental. . . . This is perhaps the first book . . . to survey the matter not as a record of high adventure, exploration, mountaineering technique or political history, but as zeitgeist." "Jan Morris, *The Telegraph* (London)" "As breathtaking and astounding as any previous climbing literature." "Publishers Weekly" "[*Into the Silence*] stands as a near masterpiece." "The Globe and Mail (Toronto)" "Mesmerizing. . . . An epic worthy of its epic." "Caroline Alexander, author of *The Endurance*" "Richly detailed, and often riveting, with vivid portraits of all the players, [Davis's] book juxtaposes human ambition, courage and adaptive capability with the relentless realities of terrain and weather. It will stand as the definitive treatment of this subject." "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette" "A breathtaking triumph. An astonishing piece of research, it is also intensely moving." "William Shawcross, author of *The Queen Mother*" "Davis's lucid and sometimes haunting prose, his masterly handling of a great volume of material, his vivid portraits of the astonishing cast of characters, and of places as diverse as Newfoundland, the trenches of northern France, and the Tibetan plateau, all contribute to this achievement. . . . A world apart from the gimmicks and media stunts that have surrounded the cult of Mallory and Irvine, Davis's book stands as a fitting memorial to a story that is at once poignant and stirring." "The Times Literary Supplement (London)" "Highly absorbing. . . . A heroic attempt to capture the scale of the undertaking to conquer the highest mountain on earth." "The Newark Star-Ledger" "In recreating their astonishing adventure, Wade Davis has given us an elegant meditation on the courage to carry on." "George F. Will

For my money, what makes this book such a terrific read is the way Davis reels the reader in with promises of yet another story about George Mallory, then introduces us to a whole cast of Everest heroes who have largely been forgotten. Mallory was, no doubt, an extremely interesting character, but his star is so bright largely because of the way he disappeared and subsequently rediscovered in 1999. The casts of the '22-'24 expeditions were full of great men. E.F. Norton was a great climber

and leader, and reached the highest point on the mountain until the '52 Swiss attempt. Howard Summervell got almost as high, then spent the rest of his life as a missionary doctor. George Finch, Geoffrey Bruce and a host of others acted equally heroically. Davis does well to recognize these fine men. Despite Noel O'dell's sighting of Mallory and Irvine, I come own firmly in the camp of those who feel Mallory could never have made the summit. All of the pre-war climbers were convinced the second step was insurmountable. Incidentally, if you are looking for a good read to follow up this book, try Hugh Ruttledge's account of the 1933 Everest expedition. It has the advantage of having been written by the expedition leader, and is filled not only interesting facts, but gives a good portrayal of the participants and is damn funny to boot.

I've never read a book by Wade Davis and I am very happy I read this book. Davis is a wonderful writer. His descriptions of the Great War battles involving English and Commonwealth troops convey the hell of trench warfare like more effectively than any I've ever read. Any fan of history knows how horrible the morass of the Western Front was but Davis describes the carnage so vividly and with such emotion I almost felt like he'd experienced the battles firsthand. In addition to describing the battles, Davis provides heartbreaking descriptions of how combatants and their loved ones were damaged and diminished by slaughter. No one touched by the experience escaped unscathed. There are no sacred cows in this narrative. Davis has no misgivings that Douglas Haig and other British "leaders" of the war effort were criminally negligent in sacrificing so many young men and women to strategies that were simply outdated for the weapons and defense systems of the time. And apparently these leaders never considered that their soldiers and their country might have been better served if they'd left their comfortable palaces safely behind the lines to venture somewhere near the front to experience the fruits of their negligence and hubris firsthand. The problem is with the chapters about the attempts at Everest. There were many people involved from many different places in England and its social strata. Davis provides detailed biographies of all of them and some of their acquaintances which is a great deal of data to consume. He is also very granular in describing the treks through Tibet and its many exotic places with names that are very strange to the casual reader. I had difficulty keeping my bearings. To me, all of this minutia detracted from the dramatic events and the superhuman efforts of Mallory and the other members of the expeditions as they struggled through brutal cold, ice and rain and debilitating altitudes to reach Mt. Everest. However, if Mr. Davis ever decides to write histories of the battles Great Britain engaged in during The Great War I will be at the head of the line to buy his books.

First -- the good: The book is really several books in one: 1. A remarkable account of WWI. Some of the most heart wrenching (and graphic) descriptions of the carnage I have ever read. It was shocking and hard to read at times -- and I have read a lot of books about WWI and WWII. 2. A lucid account of "The Great Game." It covered the high points and characters without going into obsessive detail. 3. A history of the major climbers and climbs of the early 20th C., and how this tied in with WWI. The author pays particular attention to how the War affected the psyche of the nation and the climbers. Into this mix he has astonishing and beautiful descriptions of the search for Everest, the people and their customs, and how (surprising to me) difficult it was to find a way to it. Now for the slightly problematic elements; As other reviewers have said, the author does go into astonishing details throughout, and especially so in the search for the mountain itself. Depending upon how much you are interested in this, it is either a strength or a weakness. Also, no matter how interested you are, it is difficult to follow the Tibet/Nepal section without a decent map. The two maps at the back of the book are utterly useless. And that is a damn shame. This is really the only fault, for me. I liked the detail -- but decent maps would have taken the story to another level. That is an unfortunate feature of just about all Kindle books though and not specific to this one. I tried to remedy this with the "magnifying" feature, but it isn't adequately implemented in this or many books to really matter much.

Great addition to the library of early Everest history. Good insights on how the efforts to climb Everest became such a key matter in restoring the British national psyche in the aftermath of WWI. Usual, although also more psychologically insightful, record of the 1921 reconnaissance and the 1922 and 1924 climbing attempts. I originally bought and read this on Kindle, but later bought the hardback edition because it is such a good book. Be prepared, it is quite long - over 570 pages in the primary text (and there is also considerable additional text on the research and method for writing the book).

Fantastic book, setting the stage for one of the most interesting adventures in mountaineering history. Recommend reading with Google Earth, so you can track their route occasionally - it really is an eye opener. The world got a lot smaller after World War II, but in 1924 it was a big place. Great book.

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