**Stephen Venables: Life after Everest Review -** Emma Garland

This talk reflected a different angle to the programme of events at The Riverfront. It really feels as though there is something for everyone at the minute. I spent the whole talk in awe of everything that Stephen has achieved, fascinated by his tales and amazing by the beautiful photographs!

Just in case lockdown has limited a sense of Wonderlust, this talk brought it rushing back. With scenic photos of endless snow-covered ridges, vast open waters and cute penguins, it reminded me of the world that is out there! From Antarctic Islands, to Namib desert to more local pursuits, this talk had everything.

Whilst being the first Briton to climb Everest without supplementary oxygen is a wonderful and significant achievement in itself, the talk by no means stopped there. The audience were treated to a range of anecdotes of various expeditions. Of summits previously not scaled before, of challenges of routes and kit and provisions. Everything was exciting and there is always looking to what the next challenge is!

The talk showed a personal, family side too. Perhaps the life of someone who explores so much sounds so appealing, yet Stephen’s life has not been without trial and tragedies and there were some more emotional moments in the talk where it felt very vulnerable. Such events have a huge effect on a life, and this too played a role in Stephen’s life. It was a very personal touch to hear about Ollie, an obvious moment of so much love from Stephen.

Stephen has had many adventures, then with the ability to talk and write about them. Perhaps it is this which best demonstrates what a life is. It’s a mix of brilliant adventuring, vast expeditions and excitement, then coming home and giving lectures. It’s having multiple homes, and I don’t think a place that has once been home ever loses that place from your heart completely. Stephen has shown throughout his life that his passion for adventure knows no bounds whether climbing, skiing or hiking.

Stephen showed how his achievements were reported, and I found it fascinating how swift connections were made to report on each feat, partly in a time before social media. Stephen is also an accomplished writer who has written many books. To be able to keep going adventuring, the writing and talking about it is a brilliant career I am thoroughly in awe of!

There was such variety in the talk that even though most people in the audience probably weren’t about to embark on ground-breaking climbs of unknown summits, there was something for everyone to connect to. There was a lot of emphasis on the connections Stephen had made throughout his life. To locals who had assisted with transporting kit on the expeditions, to fellow climbers and adventurers, it was obvious that there were some people who Stephen had shared such deep experiences with, that he now holds a very strong connection with. Times of wondrous accomplishment, and times of challenge and trial – sometimes both coming one after the other very swiftly! It showed how special some of these moments were to Stephen, and those who he had met along the way.

The sheer determination Venables has is inspiring. So much of expedition is about being flexible, always looking for opportunity and never giving up. Even when making calls that meant it wouldn’t be possible to achieve the plan, that meant learning for how to do it different and better next time. And that’s something that everyone can apply. Never to stop looking. To look for new summits, new challenges, new routes, new opportunities. It’s a lot of experimenting, a lot of persistence and a lot of patience.

Yet with all this, Stephen still has a sense of humility about him. It’s clear he knows how lucky he was to have had all these brilliant experiences and the audience were kept intrigued from tales of summits, snow, and sea voyages!! I really enjoyed the talk and felt I had gained something. It was a very sincere talk with great moments of humour too.