

The snow on the mountains, glistening in the sun, was occasionally interrupted by exposed dark peaks where the snow had fallen away. Every now and then I heard a distant thud and looking to my right, I witnessed a wall of snow sheer away from the side of the mountain producing a massive white plume.

Avalanches can be unpredictable and deadly and to see them speeding down the mountainside before my eyes was deeply unsettling. I dwelled only briefly on the frightening knowledge that the human body is three times denser than avalanche debris and will sink quickly. Once buried, bodily movement is nearly impossible and you die of suffocation as the snow hardens.

Avalanche after avalanche powering down the mountains throughout the day gnawed into my fears about my safety and the glacier climb ahead. I was determined to reach the base of the glacier before pitching my tent for a second night. I had already cycled thirty-one kilometres and although tired, I was determined to continue and at least tackle the lower section of the climb.

I was travelling in a wonderland. It was overwhelming and surreal and I could hardly comprehend where I was. My perception of distance was confused. The scale, magnificence and emptiness of the mountain range that lay to my right grew closer as I pedalled. I thought about how both Scott and Amundsen would have arrived at its foot over a hundred years ago, and how they would have set about tackling the unknown. The Beardmore glacier that Captain Scott had chosen and the Axel Heiberg glacier that Roald Amundsen had tackled, were steeper but shorter in distance than the Leverett glacier. They would have arrived at the mountain base with dogs and ponies. I was soon to arrive with my unusual looking, untested, Polarcycle.