

TITLE: THE WILDEST DREAM
OUTLET: THE MAIL ON SUNDAY 2
DATE: OCTOBER 3 2010
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The Wildest Dream explores one of the great mysteries of mountaineering: did George Mallory, who coined the phrase 'because it's there', and Sandy Irvine make it to the summit of Everest in 1924 before being killed – either by an accident or exposure – on the way down?

Directed by Anthony Geffen, the central figure in this lovingly assembled documentary is Conrad Anker, the mountaineer who found Mallory's body on Everest in 1999. Here he returns to the mountain to address two vital questions: was the pair's climbing kit – little more than hobnailed boots and gabardine – up to the task, and were their climbing skills good enough to negotiate the section just below the summit which modern mountaineers can manage only with the help of a fixed ladder?

Mallory fan that he is, Anker is inclined to believe the answer to both is a cautious yes. Having seen his film, however, I came to the opposite view, but that didn't hamper my enjoyment. Modern and archive climbing footage are mixed to powerful effect, the historical detail is fascinating and the sweetly touching letters that the wonderfully English Mallory exchanged with his wife are made all the more poignant by the fact that they are read by Ralph Fiennes and the late Natasha Richardson, who died after a skiing accident last year and whose husband, Liam Neeson, provides the narration.