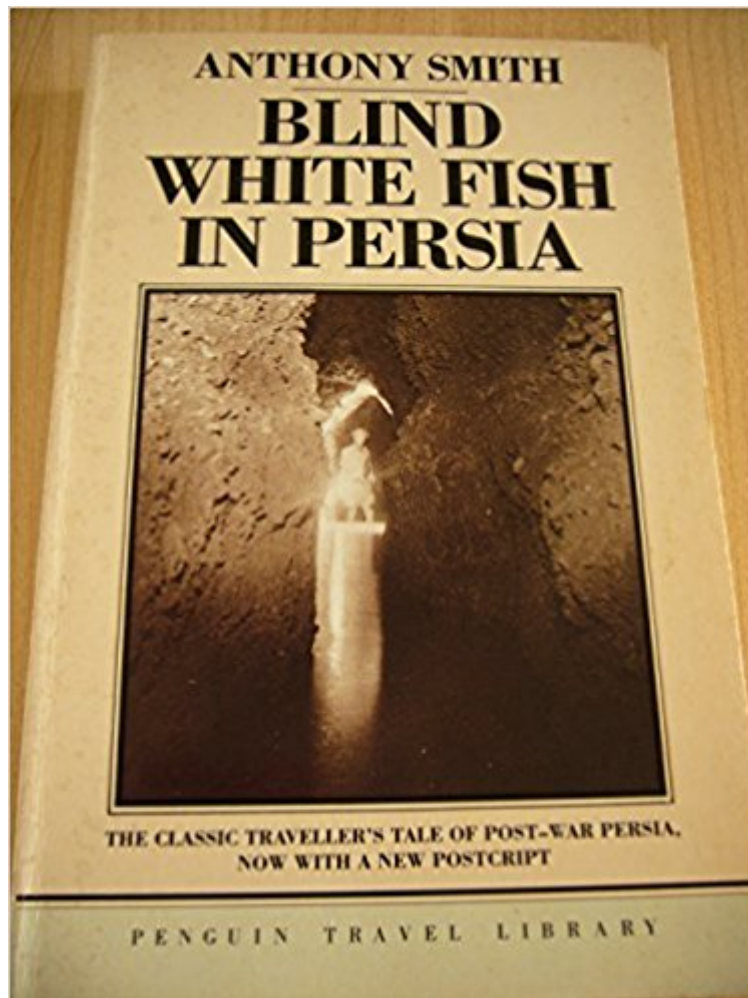




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Blind White Fish In Persia (Penguin Travel Library)



Synopsis

This book gives an account of a small Oxford University expedition to Persia in 1950 to bring back specimens of a fish, allegedly white and sightless, which was said to inhabit the underground water-courses of Iran. Though the four young men that made up the expedition failed in their quest, they discovered rural Persia where villagers still led medieval lives. The story includes an account of the qanats - the underground irrigation and tunnels employing ancient technology which still criss-cross the country making life in the desert possible.

Book Information

Series: Penguin Travel Library

Paperback: 256 pages

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Customer Reviews

This is a wonderful book, well written , beautifully describes the way of life, the geography of the land and the mentality of villagers. The warmth of the people in receiving the foreigners. Anthony Smith description is very real and comprehensive.

Rather boring, I would say!

great

Can you imagine a book title simultaneously so intriguing and off-putting as "Blind White Fish in Persia?" I discovered this book decades ago and just had the pleasure of re-reading it. It's a first-person account of an expedition to Iran by a bunch of wet-behind-the-ears Oxford

undergraduates who, having secured a small grant from the University, set off for Iran in 1950 in search of an animal that might or might not exist. The animal was a blind cave fish. Blind cave fish exist in various parts of the world; what made this one unique--if it existed--was that it was supposedly endemic to an ancient system of subterranean aqueducts called qanats that bring water down from the high mountains to irrigate agriculture in the desert. That would presumably mean it originated within the historic time frame of the qanat system. The kids didn't really know what they were doing, and the narrative is often hilarious. It also gives a vivid portrait of life in the remote hinterlands of Iran as it was in 1950--and is perhaps still today. The author went on to a distinguished career.

I read this book decades ago, it was one of my wonderful finds in a 2nd hand book shop. I loved reading about rural life in Iran, and discovering the story of qanats - those amazing ancient channels built so painstakingly by generations of farmers..... it was inspiring, and a book I have never forgotten. I highly recommend it to all who are interested in Iran, in rural development, in the history of water and agriculture, etc.

"...a stimulating, entertaining record of an expedition...In Anthony Smith, one of the four young men who made the long trek, we have that rare and entrancing combination of scientific knowledge, love of adventure and the power to describe both. The author, a zoologist, was first drawn to the idea of exploring Persia's vast underground water channels by a casual statement in a book, 'Blind, white fish live in the qanats and make for excellent eating.' A challenging and curious remark that cried for verification."

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