
Book Reviews

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

Spirits of the Air

Kurt Diemberger

Translated from the German by Audrey Salkeld

Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp304, £17.99

After his evocative book *Summits and Secrets* (1971), which has inspired many fledgling climbers, and *The Endless Knot* (1991), his poignant account of the K2 tragedy, Kurt Diemberger has presented us with another autobiographical volume (the title is taken from an Eskimo proverb), celebrating his life as mountaineer, cameraman and supreme gangrel. His technique is to give memory free rein to conjure up episodes from his past: the result is an exuberant kaleidoscope of events and adventures, in no chronological order and almost bewildering in its variety, descriptions of landscape and friends all over the world, intermixed with musings on the meaning of it all. (There is a useful chronology of his main climbs and expeditions at the end of the book, but no index.) Diemberger's flamboyant style is well maintained in Audrey Salkeld's translation and keeps the reader constantly entertained. He is adept at painting landscapes in words, and on the whole he avoids the dangers of travel-writer's hype.

It is not all mountaineering, by any means. He can be very amusing, for example in describing a 'romantic' adventure in Atlanta, where the Peachtree Plaza Hotel reminds him of the Guglia di Brenta, and there is plenty of excitement, in episodes such as a flight over the Austrian Alps, in a small plane when the engine has failed, or filming a wrestle with Friendly Margherita, the boa constrictor. Indeed Diemberger, the fortunate hedonist, claims that he has himself the stomach, and the eating habits, of the big snake – and, of course, his predilection for attractive female company is evident throughout.

The allure of Diemberger's narrative may not work for everyone, but there will be few able to resist the arch-romantic's spell entirely. For me the most appealing aspects of the book included Diemberger's love for plants and animals and all aspects of the natural world – his thrill at witnessing fiery eruptions of the volcano Stromboli, the green flash observed on Mauna Loa in Hawaii – and his feeling for mountain history. Thus, the chapter on Greenland not only brings out well the special fascination of climbing in that beautiful land, but presents a moving account of the last tragic expedition in 1930 of Alfred Wegener, the scientist and explorer best known as

the originator of the theory of Continental Drift; this is a drama fully comparable to that of Scott of the Antarctic, yet one with which few British readers will be familiar.

These are old-fashioned interests and attitudes, no doubt, in a mountaineer of such accomplishments. And for many attention will focus primarily on Kurt's doings on the highest mountains of the world: exploration in the Hindu Kush, in *'Westalpenstil'* of course; the attempt on the Lhotse Ridge in 1974 which led to the first ascent of Shartse, an epic if ever there was one; the return to the eight-thousanders, with the ascents of Makalu, Everest and Gasherbrum II, after an interval of 18 years; filming and climbing with Julie Tullis (recounted much more fully in *The Endless Knot*); and finally, his current love-affair, movingly described, with the mysterious Shaksgam region and the hidden side of Broad Peak.

Kurt Diemberger returned to the highest mountains in 1978 against the advice of climbing friends and doctors. It is a strange form of hedonism which drives a man in middle age to abandon the pleasures of ordinary mortals, which he evidently enjoys so much, in order to brave high-altitude cough, sleepless nights in rattling tents and struggles with malfunctioning oxygen sets, in his renewed quest for extreme adventure on hard and dangerous 8000m peaks. In the last resort this remarkable man remains an enigma. But who can fathom the Spirits of the Air?

Ernst Sondheimer

Hypoxia and Molecular Medicine

Ed John R Sutton, Charles S Houston, Geoffrey Coates
Queen City Printer Inc, Burlington, Vermont, USA. 1993

Oxygen is essential to man's existence. That is why the study of the fit man at altitude – who acts as a model for those at sea-level with chronic lung and heart conditions – is so important. It was also the reason why the eighth biennial Hypoxia symposium, held at Château Lake Louise, Canada, from 8 to 13 February 1993, was attended by scientists and mountaineers from all over the world. The meeting coincided with the 40th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest; it was therefore dedicated to our Honorary Member Dr Griffith Pugh who, by his work at the Medical Research Council in London and in the field in 1951 and 1952, was responsible, more than any other single individual, for this landmark achievement in both mountaineering and medicine.

In *Hypoxia and Molecular Medicine*, which is based on the proceedings at the eighth Hypoxia symposium, there are five articles from contributors from three continents describing Pugh's work on cold, altitude and exercise, and man's ability to adapt and counter the hostile environment of the high mountains. An article by J S Milledge covers Griffith Pugh's career, emphasising, in particular, two innovative aspects of his style of research: first, the importance that he placed on getting out into the field to comple-

ment the more controlled studies of the laboratory and environmental chamber; secondly, his belief that the best way to study the physiology of extreme environments was to take extreme examples. Thus Pugh studied the effects of altitude at 5-6000m rather than 2-4000m and for months rather than days. He also used 'Olympic' athletes, rather than those of 'club' standard. Milledge also emphasises that, although Pugh's work was always meticulously planned and organised, he could also seize opportunities when they arose. One such occasion was his study of a Nepalese pilgrim who had, over many years, developed an extraordinary tolerance to cold and who visited our camp on the Silver Hut expedition in the winter of 1960-61. This resulted in a unique paper and the first scientific investigation of a phenomenon which had previously been dismissed as an old wives' tale; Pugh showed it to be a reality. Milledge also lists over 90 papers that Pugh published.

There are sections on the autonomic nervous system and oxygen lack, as well as one on the effects of oxygen lack on the genes responsible for cell function. There are also sections on muscle function and fatigue, together with various aspects of mountain medicine.

Forty years ago, in 1953, a major discovery in genetics, the double helix, was made at Cambridge University, equal to that of Darwin's great theory of natural selection. This was the starting point of the present explosion in knowledge which has led to genetic fingerprinting and the emergence of molecular medicine. Alfred Tissiere, another Alpine Club member, was involved in this work at Cambridge University – so involved that, despite being invited, he was unable to join the 1951 Reconnaissance Expedition to Everest.

Because of our increased understanding of biological principles, the last 40 years have seen unprecedented advances in both mountaineering and medicine. In 1953 these two great human endeavours were creatively linked by the encouragement and financial backing they received from the Medical Research Council of the UK. For this, both mountaineers and medical scientists should be profoundly grateful.

Michael Ward

High Altitude Medicine and Physiology

Michael P Ward, James S Milledge, John B West
Chapman & Hall Medical, 2nd edition, 1995, pp618, £69.00

What is mountain sickness? How do we acclimatise? Why can't I sleep at altitude? What limits exercise performance at altitude? How was Messner able to reach the summit of Everest without supplementary oxygen? How much higher than Everest could a man climb without supplementary oxygen (if there were higher mountains!)? What is high altitude pulmonary edema? How should frostbite be treated? Should the oral contraceptive be used at altitude? Do extreme altitude climbers suffer brain damage?

The second edition of this magnificent, comprehensive textbook gives all the known answers to questions about what happens to man at altitude and sensible advice about the prevention and treatment of altitude-related illness. From historical literary references about mountain sickness to general anaesthesia at 4000m, from the hypoxic ventilatory response to sunburn, it is hard to think of a topic omitted. These three wise men of mountain medicine and physiology – Michael Ward, James Milledge and John West – have been gathering knowledge for their book since long before I was born. They have climbed and studied climbers for over a century between them and made a major contribution to the research which is the basis of current understanding and of their textbook. During the 1990s they have written learned papers on altitude-related topics, and have talked at international scientific meetings on the medicine and physiology of ascent to altitude. All three have managed to combine their high altitude medical expertise with distinguished low altitude careers as doctors both in research and healing.

High Altitude Medicine and Physiology is the leading textbook on the subject and is necessarily written in the rather specialised language used by high altitude physiologists and doctors. Some of the technical information is therefore inaccessible to the ordinary climber, since much of the immense detail presupposes a considerable background knowledge of physiology. However, there is so much in this book that all those interested in high altitude will find some useful information and should have access to it as the definitive reference text. I have referred several science students, general practitioners and expedition doctors to the first edition (1989) and all have found it helpful, whether they were doing a project for a psychology degree, planning a field study for an expedition or advising a patient with epilepsy about going on a trekking holiday. It is a reference book best dipped into. A cover-to-cover read, which the authors do not expect of their readers, has been quite an undertaking for the reviewer!

The authors begin with a fascinating chapter on the history of high altitude medicine and physiology which must have taken many hours of research in the Alpine Club Library archives and other sources. There is then a key chapter about the atmosphere and barometric pressure which sets the scene for a tour around the effects of ascent to altitude on ventilation, the cardiovascular system, the blood, the transport of blood gases, and peripheral tissues. Exercise, performance limitation, and sleep at altitude are covered before a return to the systematic review with chapters on the gut, endocrine system, renal and central nervous system. A series of chapters covers altitude-related illness including clinical symptoms and signs, prevention and treatment. The next section details the effects of cold at altitude before two new practical chapters which discuss skiing and mountaineering accidents and injuries and the effects of solar radiation. A chapter on medical conditions at altitude is important as a reference for general practitioners whose patients, for example, might ask advice about diabetes

and ascent to altitude. The book concludes with the lessons that altitude research teaches the sea-level doctor, including those treating patients with bronchitis and emphysema. The final chapter is an appendix for the would-be field researcher.

The second edition includes an update of relevant work published since the first edition. It cannot have been an easy task because, as the authors note in the preface, there were 1369 articles written about high altitude in the medical press between 1987 and 1993. Indeed, there is an increasing interest in high altitude medicine and a third edition by the turn of the century must be inevitable. The preface to the first edition, sadly omitted from the 1995 version, clearly explained the need for this textbook with the increasing interest in travel to high altitude and expressed the authors' hope that '... this book will make the high places of the world safer and thereby increase the pleasure to be gained for those who visit these regions of outstanding natural beauty.' Ward, Milledge and West have produced an updated text which will be used by doctors, climbers and their medical advisors everywhere and must go some way towards making the high mountains safer.

Andrew J Pollard

Yankee Rock & Ice
A History of Climbing in the Northeastern United States

Guy and Laura Waterman

Stackpole Books, 1993, pp334, US\$19.95

Americans, generally speaking, came late to climbing. Until the turn of the century, 'the frontier' provided the challenges missing from civilized life. Most of the few American alpinists at that time had European connections and climbed over here or in the US West, paying little attention to the hills of the northeast. Like our mid-Victorian mountaineers they treated their home crags as no more than an amusing diversion, which could possibly keep one fit for more serious ventures. How different now. Home-grown American rock and ice climbers have for years been among the world's best, and American enthusiasm has animated both development of new equipment and the contrary movement towards clean climbing.

For anyone interested in these developments, or involved in climbing in the US Northeast, this book is absorbing. I must confess that my heart sank at the prospect of reading what promised to be a whole book of 'Area Notes', but the sinking feeling was quickly dissipated. Open it where you will, it is well written and interesting. It is more than a record of events; it puts the climbs and the climbers into perspective and identifies the main phases of development. It is particularly fascinating to anyone who knows the characters involved and recognises the styles and codes of behaviour described. No doubt there is room for disagreement with some of the analysis of events, but I found it convincing.

The accounts of the achievements of each generation are interleaved with anecdotes, thumb-nail sketches of character, observations on equipment and ethics, and brief interludes of personal experiences of the authors. This varied presentation masks the enormous labour, lasting ten years, and the scholarship needed for this admirable history, making it very enjoyable reading.

Michael Westmacott

Hold the Heights. The Foundations of Mountaineering

Walt Unsworth

Hodder & Stoughton, 1993, pp432, £19.99

Hold the Heights is a broad history of mountaineering from the pen of the prolific and well-known mountaineering author Walt Unsworth. However, the book is much more than a mere historical sequence, because Unsworth also attempts to set the mountaineers and climbers in their social contexts. Historical texts can be dull but this extremely well-researched book holds one's interest from beginning to end.

The compass of the book is wide – both temporally and geographically. It commences in 1492, with Antoine de Ville's ascent of Mont Aiguille in the Vercors, and it describes many of the most important ascents up to that of Everest in 1953. In geographical terms the book ranges all over the globe, from the Old World to the Americas, from Norway to New Zealand. In his preface, Unsworth describes the technique he has employed: 'It was plain from the start that a totally comprehensive coverage, even of the major personalities and events, would need several volumes, so I have adopted instead a concentric plan similar to the effect obtained by dropping a pebble in a pond. The tightest ripples are those rings nearest the centre; then, as they spread out, they get wider but less well defined ... as the nineteenth century advances and spills into the twentieth, the circle widens and becomes more selective.'

Unsworth shows that the birth of mountaineering really took place in the second half of the 18th century and, for the next 100 years or so, largely involved the Alps. However, as the 19th century progressed, both explorers and mountaineers were active much further afield, and Unsworth demonstrates how mountaineering spread from Europe to the far corners of the world. Sometimes this involved Europeans, such as Edward Whymper, who in 1880 made the ascent of Chimborazo and other volcanoes in Ecuador, and Norman Collie, who climbed in the Rockies at the turn of the century. Sometimes it involved indigenous climbers such as T C Fyfe, whose team of New Zealanders made the first undisputed ascent of Mount Cook in 1894. Unsworth describes ascents, and the character of the mountaineers making them, in many of the major ranges including the Caucasus, Himalaya and Karakoram, as well as the Alps.

There are many interesting facts in the book; for example, I now know how the Viereselgrat ('Four Asses Ridge') on the Dent Blanche acquired its name. Although I enjoyed the whole book, the two chapters I found most interesting were 'Fine Opportunity for Breaking One's Neck', in which Unsworth discusses climbing in Britain in the 19th century, and 'Nordwand', in which the philosophy and spectacular north face climbs of the 1930's Munich School are described. The many references provided are laudable – many a PhD thesis is not so well-endowed – and the book has a good index.

I did have several niggles. As a geographer, I like to see scales on maps, and two of the maps (Himalaya and Yosemite) were without them; moreover, the quality of the map of Canada and North America leaves something to be desired. All 24 pages of photographs are in black and white; a few in colour would have been an attractive addition. But it would be quite wrong to let a few minor imperfections deter one from reading such an excellent treatise.

Writing this book has obviously involved a mammoth amount of work and must have been a real labour of love. There is now potential for a second volume documenting the latter half of the 20th century. I wonder whether Walt Unsworth is considering this? I certainly hope so.

Nigel Gates

The Great Himalayan Traverse – Kanchendzonga to Karakoram

S P Chamoli

Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1993, pp267, 395 Rupees

As I first turned the pages of this book, the story seemed vaguely familiar. Then I realised it was another account of the nine month journey made by the New Zealanders Graeme Dingle and Peter Hillary in 1981. In their book *First Across the Roof of the World*, published in New Zealand in 1982, they described this journey as 'The First-Ever Traverse of the Himalayas – 5,000km from Sikkim to Pakistan'. Although conceived by the New Zealanders, it became in fact a joint Indo-New Zealand expedition sponsored by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation under the patronage of its president Shri Harish Sarin and Sir Edmund Hillary. Three Indians and five New Zealanders were involved, divided into a traverse team and a support team. The traverse team was usually the trio of Dingle, Hillary and Chewang Tashi, a tough 42-year-old instructor from the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. An excellent linguist, Tashi was born in Kathmandu of Tibetan parents.

The Indians were recruited at very short notice; the author S P Chamoli was from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and was the nominal leader of the expedition, although mainly in the support team. He has subsequently participated in various rafting expeditions, including the Tsangpo gorge of

the Brahmaputra, and is currently serving as Deputy Inspector General on deputation to the Sikkim Police. The two books therefore make an interesting contrast in content and style between the forthright New Zealanders and the sensitive devout Hindu; neither is of great literary merit. In fact, Chamoli's book, published in New Delhi, is sadly marred by poor proof-reading, eg 'the famous mountaineer Long Staff'.

With a motto of 'Move fast, eat little, sleep rough and think big', the traverse was almost as much a political triumph as a physical one. The role of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation was essential in obtaining the necessary permits to enter the Inner Line areas. At the country borders, it was not possible to follow the aesthetic mountain line – for example, across the Singalila ridge from Sikkim into Nepal, or across the so-called 'cease-fire line' in Kashmir from India to Pakistan. In the latter case, after jointly reaching Leh, the New Zealanders crossed at Amritsar, flew to Skardu and made the traditional trek up to Concordia and the foot of K2. The three Indians, unable to enter Pakistan, set their goal as the Karakoram Pass, 5575m, on the Chinese border, following a variant of the old Silk Route from Leh to Yarkand.

From Kangchenjunga to the Karakoram Pass in 250 days from 17 February to 25 October, they had trekked over 5000km, crossed three passes over 7000m, 38 between 4600m and 7000m, and about 60 between 3000m and 4500m. Whether on the traverse or in the support party, their achievement was magnificent:

'Days of early spring in Sikkim, cool and comfortable summer in central Nepal and days of monsoon rains and low mists in Himachal and Kumaon. Then the blue sky with cold winds of Karakoram.'

I wish I could have been with them.

George Band

Mountain Environments and Geographic Information Systems

Edited by Martin F Price and D Ian Heywood

Taylor & Francis, 1994, pp309, £55.00

The editors hope that this book will prove useful and interesting to the many people who live and work in mountain environments. However, its subject matter is difficult and sophisticated and, realistically, the book will probably only be useful to those with decision-making or research interests in those areas. The expression 'Geographic Information System' (GIS) is now commonly used; it describes a computer system and software on which stored spatial information can be manipulated and/or utilised for a variety of purposes. The editors believe that this book is the first to consider explicitly the use of GIS in mountain environments.

The first chapter is the most readable; it describes the special characteristics and complexity of mountain areas and how GIS can be used in such

areas. Mountains, as the editors point out, are distributed across every continent and include a great diversity of environments, from the wettest to the driest, from hot to cold, and from sea level to the summit of Everest. Mountains and uplands comprise about one-fifth of the world's terrestrial surface. They are home to about one-tenth of the world's population and are directly or indirectly important for more than half. They supply natural resources – food, wood and minerals – to an even greater proportion. Moreover, they are at the upper end of most of the world's river catchments, providing water, nutrients and energy to those living both nearby and at distant locations downstream. Furthermore, they provide environments for recreation and tourism, together with centres of biodiversity and refugia for relict species and communities. They are of great spiritual and aesthetic significance to many people. The value of using GIS to model these complex mountain environments is discussed, together with its limitations.

The physical characteristic that best defines mountains is its three-dimensionality and this (as mountaineers know) produces contrasting environments at different elevations. However, superimposed on this altitudinal zonation are variations that derive from the aspect, slope and topography of a particular mountain or region. Therefore, the GIS used in these regions usually incorporate digital terrain models which permit the representation of their three-dimensional nature. This is essential because the local and micro-climatic variations strongly influence the biophysical components (air, water, soils, vegetation and fauna) of mountain environments and also influence patterns of housing, agriculture and recreation. It is also important that GIS should be able to identify areas likely to be affected by hazards such as avalanches, rockfalls, floods and forest fires, the distribution of which is affected by the complex interaction of local climates and human activities with soil, bedrock and vegetation characteristics. GIS must be capable of predicting how, when and where such events are likely to occur.

Used carefully, GIS can be a valuable technological tool for descriptive, analytical and evaluative purposes and can assist policy makers, planners and environmentalists at local, regional and national levels to develop strategies for the economic and ecological management of mountain environments.

The second chapter of the book considers terrain modelling for mountains and the remaining thirteen chapters are divided into four sections: 'Regional Resource Inventory and Planning' (five chapters), 'Evaluation of Natural Hazards' (two chapters), 'Research and Resource Management In and Around Protected Areas' (four chapters) and 'Simulation and Prediction, Vegetation and Climatic Change' (two chapters). These thirteen chapters describe case studies from five continents and consider topics from the traditional concerns of mountain scientists and resource managers to the increasingly critical issue of global climate change.

There are 39 contributors from many countries including Australia, Canada, Russia, Switzerland, UK and USA. However, with chapter titles like 'Form and Pattern in the Alpine Environment: an Integrated Approach to Spatial Analysis and Modelling in Glacier National Park, USA' (Chapter 10), many people may be put off. This is a pity because the book is an erudite and scholarly collection of papers. Without doubt, similar books will follow. Although the subject is complex, let's hope that they are more readable and have a more general application.

Nigel Gates

At the Rising of the Moon

Dermot Somers

Bâton-Wicks / Collins Press, 1994, pp208, £8.99

Mountains and Other Ghosts, Dermot Somers' first collection of short stories, was well received in the climbing press. It also won some recognition from the wider reading public, which is unusual for a writer whose principal themes are mountains and mountaineering. His second volume, *At the Rising of the Moon*, has received an even warmer welcome from the climbing world, winning outright the 1994 Boardman Tasker Memorial Award. It is too early to say how it will fare in the real world.

The stories in the new volume are broader in scope and more ambitious than the earlier ones – partly, it seems, because Somers is trying to escape the tight categorisation of a 'mountaineering writer', and partly because he is experimenting both formally and linguistically. Some of the pieces are long and relatively complex in their structure, falling midway between short stories and novellas. The subject matter varies from tensions between a husband and wife expeditioning together in Nepal ('Lightning in the Dark'), to the final hours of a (presumably Republican) fugitive on a hill in Wicklow in 'The Fox'. Locations range from an unspecified Eastern European mountain area in 'Johann' to a remote island off Ireland's Atlantic coast.

In some of these stories, however, Somers shows a tendency to introduce levels of thematic complexity and symbolism which he is not capable of keeping under control. This is particularly so in 'Johann' which tries to deal simultaneously with the themes of devotion to political struggle, cowardice in the mountains, possessive love, betrayal (both sexual and political), the appeal of Fascistic nationalism, and so on. This is more than 38 pages can bear and makes for a rather exhausting and unsatisfying read. The most successful stories in this collection, like 'The Fox', are the simplest ones.

The greatness of the great short story writers, from Anton Chekhov to Raymond Carver, lies in their capacity for suggestion, for evoking the richness of lives and their interaction with a few strokes of the brush. The imagination of the reader is what does the work, filling the gaps between salient details. In much of this book, however, Somers goes in the opposite

direction. He tends to over-analyse his characters, explaining exactly what motivates them and what their deepest beliefs are. The intention is to add psychological depth, but the result is the opposite. Characters who are made too transparent end up being flat and boring.

Certainly, there are places where Somers shows himself to be a skilful writer. The description in 'The Singer' of how Síle Connery's husband was killed is a case in point. The work is done indirectly, in a brief paragraph with a minimum of adjectives, and the effect is powerful. Comparable passages appear at intervals in the book. Unfortunately they are often submerged in prose that fails to convince through trying too hard to convince.

It will be interesting to see in what direction Somers moves after *At the Rising of the Moon*. At times it seems as if he would be happier writing novels. Certainly his short stories cannot keep on expanding, and in that sense a novel would be the logical next step. But in many ways I feel he would serve his talents better by trimming down rather than expanding, developing a leaner style with less explicit description and fewer adjectives. As Hemingway put it, 'The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water'. In both this and his earlier collection there are signs that Somers has the eye for a revealing situation and the sharpness of intellect to make a good short story writer, but he must resist the temptation to over-write.

José Luis Bermúdez

**Montañas del Sol: Guía de Ascensiones a las
Montañas del Ecuador**

Freddy Landázuri, Iván Rojas and Marcos Serrano
Campo Abierto, Quito, Ecuador, 1994, pp148, in Spanish

Cotopaxi: la Montaña de Luz/the Mountain of Light

Freddy Landázuri
Campo Abierto, Quito, Ecuador, 1994, pp191, in Spanish and English

Pioneros y Precursores del Andinismo Ecuatoriano

Abya Yala and Nuevos Horizontes, editors
Abya Yala, Quito, Ecuador, 1994, pp282, in Spanish

En los Altos Andes del Ecuador

Hans Meyer
Abya Yala, Quito, Ecuador, 1993, pp750, in Spanish

Each of these four books deals with a different aspect of Ecuadorian mountains and mountaineering. *Montañas del Sol* is a guidebook, compiled by the editors of the local mountain journal *Campo Abierto*. The book provides a great amount of information about the Ecuadorian highlands in general,

history of climbing, mountain weather and advice on medical matters. Its main part is a methodical description of the 40 major peaks of the country, ranging from Chimborazo to Reventador (3567m). For each mountain there appears location, climbing history, access, normal route and other routes. Illustrations, all in black and white, are complemented by line drawings showing routes and position of huts, where available. This is an efficient updated guidebook that will render good service.

The Cotopaxi work is a bilingual monograph of the favourite mountain of the Ecuadorians and describes everything that is known about the 5897m ice volcano. The book has illustrations on almost every other page. Sections on history of climbing and surveys of past eruptions are particularly interesting. After covering all main ascents and routes, the book comes to an end with a description of the perilous descent into the bottom pit of the active crater, done in 1979 by three local climbers.

The third work is a homage to Nicolás Martínez (1874-1934), the true pioneer of South American sportive climbing. He exhibited a climbing career that lasted 32 years; he made, among other important ascents, the third of Chimborazo (1911), the first of Illiniza Norte and a new route on Cotopaxi. It was he who coined the term *andinismo*, so widely used nowadays. Furthermore, he published four books dealing exclusively with climbs in Ecuador and this 1994 volume contains ten chapters excerpted from those four books, a total of 268 pages. Illustrations, all historical, were reproduced from Martínez's own collection. Good as this book is, one can only hope that Ecuadorian institutions will eventually reprint in full every one of Martínez's books.

The German explorer Hans Meyer (1858-1929) is well known for his first ascent of Kilimanjaro in 1889 (see *AJ94*, 170-174, 1989/90), but little is known about his glaciological and climbing activities in Ecuador in 1903. The fourth book listed above is the Spanish version of his *In den Hochanden von Ecuador* (Berlin, 1907). It includes all the illustrations of the German original, although reproductions are often quite weak. Meyer was an amazingly methodical and accurate writer, who spared no effort to record a tremendous amount of information, which he poured into his usually massive books. In Ecuador he was not so fortunate as in Africa, having ascended only Cotopaxi, but his descriptions of the Ecuadorian heights are the most exact to be found, in this respect surpassing even another methodical man, Edward Whymper himself.

These four books offer much useful information about the mountains and mountaineering of a country that is at present a favourite of climbers, trekkers and ecologists. Quantity-wise, these works also confirm the lead that Ecuadorian mountain writers have been keeping in South America for the last two decades.

Evelio Echevarría

In Search of Limits

Mark Bles

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp272, £17.99***Alps 4000**

Martin Moran

David & Charles, 1994, pp288, £17.99

Before the summer of 1993 there had been several highly motivated attempts to climb all the 4000m peaks of the Alps in one season. Some had opted for a continuous traverse with minimal outside help, others had taken advantage of every facility available. While any of these might have succeeded given enough fine weather, all had failed.

In good conditions, climbing a four-thousander generally requires mountaineering judgement and fitness rather than great technical ability, so the project had attracted competent, middle-grade mountaineers with a certain amount of time on their hands. It appeared that something more 'professional' was required. Apart from other considerations, a high degree of organisation, plus some strong support, seemed mandatory. Just the sort of exercise, you might say, that would appeal to the military's Adventure Training network. No surprise then to find that by April 1993 Mark Bles, an ex-SAS officer, was preparing to lead a party of young, enthusiastic, though not necessarily experienced, climbers from the Scots Guards and SAS Reserve in Operation ALP 4000.

Based in a well-appointed Swiss Army Headquarters in Brig and with a variety of transport plus other amenities to hand, the team hoped to pick off the four-thousanders at will, choosing their objective to match prevailing conditions and then nipping quickly back to Brig for women and boozing, army style. Starting with the easy Allalinhorn on 3 May, Bles, already an established author, recounts their adventures in a flowing, humorous style. There are plenty of anecdotes, written with the usual army-speak plus its associated collection of expletives, yet now and again we are introduced to a little philosophy or some harsh criticism. Bles is certainly not reticent in speaking his mind and although not totally removed from military life, he has long been out of the 'system' and is able to stand back and laugh at its idiosyncrasies.

In a style that has rather unfairly been associated with military groups, the Guards seemed to drop a lot of gear, took some potentially serious falls and relied almost entirely on 15 to 20-year-old guidebooks but generally managed to muddle through, growing in confidence as their fitness and ability improved. The main reason for defeat was the unusually poor weather throughout the summer. Unable to maintain a suitable schedule, the season ended with 'only' 48 summits climbed and 'the weather closed in for ever'. The lads may not have completed their target but you certainly get the impression that they thoroughly enjoyed their attempt. On 20 September,

when Bles finally threw in the towel, he was 'certain that all the Alpine four-thousanders could be climbed by ordinary climbers in one year'. Little did he realise that just over a month earlier two British guides had completed the first non-stop traverse of 75 four-thousanders in just 52 days, scorning all motorised forms of transport and linking individual ascents by simply skiing, walking or cycling.

In common with the Scots Guards, Simon Jenkins and Martin Moran took the opportunity of using their project to raise money for charity. Here the similarity ends. While the soldiers indulged in a peak-bagging exercise, and there is certainly nothing wrong in that, Jenkins and Moran's dream was set on a much higher plane – an Alpine *super-enchaînement*.

Both were required to commit all their savings, plus substantial peak season loss of revenue, into this expensive project. However, in purely mountaineering terms, the end result, it could be argued, was extremely cost effective, the pair notching up more four-thousanders in one season than many Alpinists accomplish in a lifetime of visits.

How they achieved this considerable feat is told in *Alps 4000*. Superb organisation and very strong back-up was certainly present, and the project would have quickly floundered without it, but in the end this pair succeeded because a combined wealth of experience in the Alps and Himalaya allowed them to continue their programme in all but the most diabolical of conditions. Their technical competence and previous first-hand knowledge of a vast number of four-thousanders allowed many of the *Voie Normales* on the great Valaisannes peaks to be tackled in very taxing conditions. Non-standard routes occasionally provided a viable option when alternatives were judged impossibly time-consuming or dangerous.

The pair also developed the endurance to pedal continuously over long, steep road passes or, towards the completion of their odyssey, to link eleven Mont Blanc four-thousanders in a continuous 33-hour push from the Col du Géant to the Eccles Bivouac Huts. A loss of momentum might also have precipitated a loss of motivation and, perhaps inevitably, there were one or two occasions when the boat was pushed out hard, such as during the panic-stricken, hail-swept rush to the summit of the Dent du Géant whilst thunder reverberated across the Vallée Blanche.

Constant involvement with support parties, plus regular radio calls to family and friends in the valley, ensured that, despite the lack of other parties on the hill through periods of adverse weather, this was certainly not a lonely journey. Moran uses frequent diary extracts from his wife Joy (who monitors his progress from the family's motor-home in the valley), Jenkins and several others who played crucial roles in *Alps 4000* to complement his own honestly written narrative. Thus we are privy to the feelings of all the main characters, their frustration, anger, emotional strain and personal failings, as well as the triumphs and tribulations of a two-man partnership trying single-mindedly to achieve a dream, yet plagued by doubts as progress continues to drop further behind schedule in the abysmally poor weather.

There are occasions when the writing becomes a little melodramatic but *Alps 4000* is overall a well-crafted book and was a worthy nomination for last year's Boardman-Tasker Award. It is also a useful reference source, containing a host of informative mountain shots and a series of excellent sketch-maps that are essential if we are to make true sense of the journey. (*In Search of Limits* runs to a very small selection of photos, sandwiched in the centre pages, and no maps – all for the same price.)

While *In Search of Limits* is a very entertaining read and may for that reason have a greater appeal to the uninformed public, *Alps 4000* is for the mountaineer. The two books, like the two projects, are on different levels. Few Alpinists will wish to repeat the voyage described in *Alps 4000* but most, reading Moran's fascinating account, will find renewed inspiration for Alpine climbing, and many tantalising ideas for much lesser journeys or *enchainements* through our ever-popular European playground.

Lindsay Griffin

Monte Bianco Volume 1

Gino Buscaini

Club Alpino Italiano / Touring Club Italiano, 1994, pp512, c L60,000

The last definitive guide to the western end of the Mont Blanc massif, Lucien Devies's *Volume 1 (Col de la Seigne to the Col du Géant)* of the famous French Vallot series, was already out of date by the time of its publication in the late 1970s. Since then we have witnessed a whole new wave of rock climbing, plus the addition of innumerable and often ephemeral *goulottes*. Today it seems that even the region's most prolific activists are not entirely sure what has or has not been climbed, so the task of writing a complete guide would appear to border on the impossible.

There was probably only one person, with the knowledge and available sources of research material, capable of doing the job, and the well-known Italian author Gino Buscaini spent a full three years producing what amounts to a masterpiece of photo-diagrams, topos, maps and text. OK, there are several errors (there are in any guide) but the wealth of information is staggering and includes a complete history of early repeats, first winter ascents, solos, etc. Grades are an interesting mixture of UIAA and French, a problem that will no doubt resolve itself in time as the more traditional yet rarely repeated hard routes are frequented by modern climbers. The old classics are described with the 'normally accepted' amount of aid after noting an all-free rating in the introduction.

For those requiring up-to-date information on the less frequented climbs, little known alternatives to more popular routes or glimpses of virgin lines still waiting to be explored, this is essential reading and continues the very high standard of production for which both the author and the CAI are justly famous.

Lindsay Griffin

A Hard Day's Summer. Six Classic North Faces Solo

Alison Hargreaves

Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp (x)+158, £16.99

Anyone who attended one of Alison Hargreaves' lectures on her big six Alpine North Face climbs last summer will be aware of the interest they aroused. It was a case of standing room only – and it was easy to see why. Somehow it had seemed almost a foregone conclusion that such hard men as Martin Moran and Simon Jenkins would succeed in their race up and down all the 4000m peaks that same summer, but not quite so probable that Alison Hargreaves, a slim, modest figure, would be successful in her solo exploits on these classic north faces, especially during a summer notorious for bad weather and with her husband and two small children waiting around below the crags for six months. How wrong can you be?

The bad weather put paid to a hoped-for early start and it was June before the big climbs could be attempted. The previous three months were devoted to training climbs in sunny Les Calanques and the Ecrins. All the big climbs were snatched, at great speed, during gaps in the bad weather. Whilst the author is her usual modest self in describing them, they were indeed tremendous achievements and must have seemed incredible to other climbers who had to watch this small figure hurtling upwards past them. For the record, each of the six was, I believe, the first solo ascent by a woman, and the Eiger was a new route adjacent to the original Lauper route. The other routes were the Shroud on the Grandes Jorasses, the Schmid on the Matterhorn, the Cassin on the Badile, the Allain on the Dru, and the Comice on the Cima Grande. The author has, of course, climbed many other north face routes, notably the original route on the Eiger North Face in 1988, and she returned three months after the Cima Grande climb to solo the Croz Spur on the Grandes Jorasses, but that climb is not covered in the book.

As each face fell, it became apparent that it might be possible for her to complete all six faces in under 24 hours' actual climbing time. And so it proved: her times totalled 23½ hours. Hence the title of the book.

As to the book itself, the writing, whilst not a literary treat, flows along well enough, though it needs to be read as a tale of a family summer as well as of great climbing exploits. However, in some ways the book proves to be a disappointment. For £17 you get only 117 pages of text, plus assorted appendices and eight pages of colour photos. Perhaps it is rather unfair to compare this with Martin Moran's book on the 4000m summits, but you do get a lot more for your money with that one! One final point – I should think the sponsors must be very happy, as I can't recall seeing so many brand names used in a narrative before.

These small gripes apart, I did enjoy reading this record of a very significant achievement.

Geoffrey Templeman

No Place to Fall
Superalpinism in the High Himalaya

Victor Saunders

Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp176, £16.99

Personal diaries frequently make provocative reading, especially when written expressly for publication. Diary-style is now a standard form of mountaineering literature (along with the expedition book, the autobiography, the scientific study, the guidebook, and the occasional psychological thriller). During intervals between trekking, servicing their bodies, and (occasional) climbing, mountaineers keep their diaries and take photographs. Mostly they write about each other. Fortunately, climbers are a fairly entertaining bunch.

After a motor accident, witnesses only rarely agree over the details. Similarly, the personal realities of these scribbling mountaineers are bound to be rather individual. The 'big questions', however, remain the same: Why do we do it? Which is better, a success on an 'easy' peak, or a near-success (ie, a failure?) on a harder one? And what constitutes success, anyway?

This book is the story of the contemporary Himalayan climber. It is a blend of three Alpine-style but Himalayan-scale expeditions, with a nice balance of success and failure, and washed down with sharp wit in abundance. The after-taste is rich and inspiring. Climbers are rarely considered 'normal' by the population at large, but even on the scale of climbers, the people in these stories appear somewhat mad. But how I yearn to be with them. Readers of this superb book may just for a moment believe that they too can be superhuman.

Saunders and Sustad wanted to traverse Makalu from north to south in 1989, but the local gods thought otherwise. Of the many climbers on Makalu that year, only Pierre Béghin was permitted to reach the summit. After a preliminary excursion with Andy Fanshawe up Yaupa Central (6300m), Saunders and Sustad made the first ascent of the W face of nearby peak Kangchungtse (7640m). The account of the climb is shrouded in a certain disorder, which Saunders appears to believe to be intrinsic to his life in the mountains. They set off for a day in the hills with less equipment and food than some of us would take for a day on Ben Nevis. After some complex route-finding and technical climbing, adverse snow conditions forced them away from the direct route, and they attained a 'South Summit' late in the evening. By then the weather had deteriorated, and they had to sleep in snow holes. They returned to their tent 46 hours after having left it. If only that butterfly had not stolen the compass ...

The Karakoram Highway is five kilometres away from the summit of Ultar (7388m), in both the horizontal and vertical directions. The SE face of Ultar sports a giant Hidden Pillar which was Saunders' major target in 1991. In the classical tradition of high-altitude climbing, it was a problem to get to the bottom of the route. At last, at the end of August, they set out

for a week of night climbing, but in order to avoid avalanches rather than proctors. Overcoming a series of difficulties with determination and courage, they arrived within spitting distance of the summit ridge. 'We felt optimistic about the weather ... and about our chances. But our optimism was horribly misplaced. By 11.00 a.m. the next morning, we knew our climb was over. Not only that, we would be lucky to make it down alive.' An unforeseen circumstance forced an emergency exit, down a line fraught with rock- and water-fall. On this occasion, the climbers survived without major incident. By retreating, they left the virgin summit undefended against a group of multi-roped Japanese climbers led by Tsuneo Hasegawa. Such is the way of the world. Hasegawa and Hoshino died in an avalanche a few weeks later.

Now the joint Indian British Panch Chuli expedition (1992) was quite another thing. Organised by Harish Kapadia and Chris Bonington, and with high-tech support by courtesy of the latter, this trip was doomed to success. Peaks were bagged by Indian and British alike, but at some cost. Saunders and friends spent a whole week on Rajrambha (6537m). Their glorious traverse of the watershed extended for miles of 'silver ridge', with its cornices and 'faithless film of powder'. Meanwhile, Bonington and Little put up a new route on the W ridge of Panch Chuli II, while an Indian team reached the same summit by the SW ridge.

Was it really an afterthought to take a look at the unclimbed Panch Chulis round the corner? Panch Chuli V (6437m) seemed the obvious choice in this seductive set, with her relative availability and easy summit ridge. The truth was otherwise. After two days in the presence of falling blocks of ice, the team arrived at a col at the foot of the South Ridge. Here Bonington stayed while the rest of the party extended itself to the summit, on a journey over steep rock and ice. It was on the descent, early next day, that Venables' abseil peg joined its master prematurely. This was no place to fall. You must read Saunders' moving account of the sequel, accompanied by some of the most compelling photographs in the book.

No Place to Fall is a superb and beautiful account of modern Himalayan climbing, laced with wit and intelligence, and laying bare the exquisite pains and rewards of the 'high life'. In the best diarist tradition of Samuel Pepys and Alan Clark, Victor Saunders is a critical observer of his surroundings and fellows, and thereby of himself. Through his eyes and pen, we travel to magic places, and back again. No, it is not a poem in prose, but rather a travel book, and sometimes even a sitcom. Combining three stories in one set of covers is a threat to continuity, but spares the reader an all-night sitting. Some additional photographs would have helped this reader to follow the routes.

There is more to an expedition than simply climbing. There is also dialogue. One of the morals of this book is: always take at least two mathematicians, one botanist, one geologist, and the tax inspector. Not only is the conversation enriched, but the skills of these individuals can

even be useful. In particular, the mathematicians might disabuse the author of the belief that the outcome of an expedition depends on a strange conjunction of apparently insignificant events. More relevant than the scientific theory of *chaos* (which is often referred to in the book) is the theory of *self-organisation*. Roughly speaking, this theory suggests that individuals as highly motivated and physically capable as Saunders will always create their successes, whatever the intervening difficulties. As predicted by the Darwinian theory of evolution, individuals of this type are a rare breed. Their adventures make thrilling reading.

Geoffrey Grimmett

Hands of a Climber. A Life of Colin Kirkus

Steve Dean

The Ernest Press, 1993, pp (viii)+278, £15.95

The definitive biography of Colin Kirkus (1910-1942) is an intensely researched study by Steve Dean, Derby town planner and rock climber.

To many British rock climbers today, Colin Kirkus is merely a name in the guidebooks, attached to routes characterised by boldness and a fineness of line exemplified by *Kirkus' Route* at Cwm Silin, its character preserved to this day by a scarcity of protection. From 1930 until the outbreak of the Second World War, during which he was killed in a bombing raid over Bremen, Kirkus forged his way to the forefront of British climbing. He wrote one book (*Lets Go Climbing*), several guidebooks, and took part in a single Himalayan trip. He was passed over for several other expeditions, notably both the 1933 and 1936 Everest parties, doubtless because Cald Grammar School and Liverpool College were less acceptable than Eton and Trinity. He was, after all, an insurance clerk, and not a member of the Alpine Club.

Steve Dean has tackled the difficult task of recording the life of a very private man. There are no hitherto unknown revelations here, but the fruits of solid research, aided by the survivors of the era who knew Colin Kirkus well and climbed with him, Jack Longland and A B Hargreaves in particular. It is the meticulous detail of this book which will give it a lasting place in the library of British mountaineering. Kirkus's early life and exploits are followed with precision. There is an almost daily diary of his brief Alpine and Himalayan career (with Charles Warren and Marco Pallis in the Garhwal) and the accident on Ben Nevis in 1934 when Maurice Linnell was killed.

It is, however, this very detail which makes the book more a work of historical reference than a treasured glimpse into a private world. Colin Kirkus is portrayed as the honest, selfless, unassuming man he doubtless was. The skill of his hands is captured here but not, I fear, his soul.

Charles Clarke

We Aspired: The Last Innocent Americans

Pete Sinclair

Utah State University Press, 1993, pp232, £14.95

This is not about an audacious new route on Denali in 1959 forced with the total commitment of youth. It is not about living a sixties' climber's life on the road in and out of the company of Gary Hemming. And it is not about the pride, professionalism and eventual disillusionment of the ranger-in-charge of rescue in Grand Teton National Park during a period when the climbers' campground lost its innocence. Although this remarkable book does tell these stories, with the laconic humour learned of the American oral tradition and Chaucer, Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy, this book is really about integrity. Quietly, or wildly, or pragmatically, it creeps up on the question of doing the right thing by your mates, or your heroes, or the dead, or the rock. It asks the question 'What is self-possession?' I admire the maturity from which it looks back on a Bohemian climbing life – and I want to quote lots.

The young hitch-hiking drop-out-from Ivy League puritanism cannot ask for charity and is, in fact, confronted with the dignity of the poor's generosity. So, too, amongst climbers who feed their partners while one of them has work. So when is clearing the unwanted debris of a fatality 'looting'? So what has happened when the rangers-of-the-road hound out Chouinard from the Tetons for a minor infringement? So what is the future of climbing when the bolt has made all climbs possible? These are the shifts in the culture that this book softly charts and they are not confined to the Tetons. Let me quote only once and for our British rearguard action against the crag-creeping bolt-plague of today:

This is hard to describe in a way that doesn't sound silly, but after you've climbed in one area a lot, you have the feeling that the mountains tell you how they ought to be climbed. You climb in a certain way because of the nature of the rock or terrain, the weather, the history and tradition of the place, and something of your own which asks for something more graceful than just surviving. If it works you have done something beautiful. When you've got that feeling, you've got the right way to do it. You hear the mountain's message by how you feel ... To learn what was right meant that you humbled yourself not before Royal Robbins but before where he had been and how he got there and what he had learned in getting there. These days there is talk of our need for an ethic of place. That is precisely what we were about.

More than once this writer admits that he was wrong. For a lead rescuer that's a little unusual. But this is an unusual book that is an honest, reflective odyssey out of an era of everyone knowing each other *and* the shared codes, into the open recreational context of today, where we know what will be the consequences of our choices with the bolt, the mobile telephone

or the helicopter. As Sinclair puts it, 'Innocence is what you leave in your wake when you know the story.' There's a lot of valuable innocence to be recovered from this one.

Terry Gifford

Whensoever
50 years of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service 1943-1993

Frank Card

The Ernest Press, 1993, pp (xii)+340, £17.95

The Black Cloud

I D S Thomson

The Ernest Press, 1993, pp274, £9.99

Countdown to Rescue

Bob Maslen-Jones

The Ernest Press, 1993, pp221, £9.95

Over the years, there has been a small number of books on mountain rescue, notably by Gwen Moffatt and Hamish MacInnes. Now, within a short space of time, three more have appeared – not, perhaps, so surprising when you consider that Jack Baines of the Ernest Press was himself a member of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service for many years.

In *Whensoever* Frank Card tells the story of the Service from its rather ad hoc beginnings during the Second World War to its present-day efficient organisation, and of how it has changed from its original aims of searching for crashed aircrews, through giving assistance to those of the general public who have come to grief in the mountains, to such tragic modern-day happenings as the Lockerbie disaster. Most of the major call-outs are covered, not only in Wales, Scotland and the Peak District, but also in Cyprus, Turkey and the Far East where the RAFMRS was active. The book is beautifully produced, with numerous photographs, cartoons and maps, and is a worthy record of a magnificent service, which is constantly under threat at the present time.

The Black Cloud is a detailed account of seven Scottish mountain accidents which occurred between 1928 and 1966, four between 1928 and 1934, and the remaining three after 1951. Among the climbing fraternity the best known of these is the accident involving Colin Kirkus and Maurice Linnell on *The Castle* on Ben Nevis at Easter weekend 1934, in which Linnell was killed. The author has used existing newspaper accounts, coupled with interviews with people involved at the time, to bring a fresh look at many of these incidents.

In the final book, *Countdown to Rescue*, Bob Maslen-Jones recounts his personal experiences in mountain rescue work in Snowdonia over the past 15 years or so. Numerous incidents are covered and, in particular, the work of the Search and Rescue Dog Association.

Geoffrey Templeman

Mount Everest Massif. Monograph-guide-chronicle

Jan Kielkowski

Explo, Gliwice, Poland, 1993, pp202, npq

Jan Kielkowski has been issuing guides to Himalayan mountains for some years now, but his latest effort *Mount Everest Massif* has to be the best so far. Packed with information on routes and ascents, with numerous maps, and almost a hundred of the author's own drawings of peaks and faces, it embodies an incredible amount of work. I almost described the drawings as 'topo-diagrams', but that would have been inaccurate for, while clearly showing the lines of all the routes, they are far more than just diagrams. Look at the double-page spreads of the SW face of Everest and the upper part of the S face of Lhotse to see what I mean.

The book covers the complete Mount Everest massif, that is all peaks and passes on the ridges radiating out from Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse. Following a general introduction to the massif, a list of all expeditions to the area from 1921 to 1992 is given, with the nationality, leader and achievement of the team. Each peak or pass then receives a general description, with notes on nomenclature, followed by sections for each face or feature, with route descriptions where applicable and details of all attempts/ascents.

While this is obviously no ordinary guide (you won't roll up at the foot of Lhotse, open it, and say 'Let's try route 72'), it would be invaluable as an accompaniment to any Everest area expedition book you read; or, of course, for showing where the new route gaps are. Unfortunately, although the book is in English, I can't help you as to where you can purchase a copy.

Geoffrey Templeman

Shadows on the Wasteland

Crossing Antarctica with Ranulph Fiennes

Mike Stroud

Jonathan Cape, 1993, pp (x)+182, £14.99

Everyone must know by now the story of the Ran Fiennes/Mike Stroud crossing of Antarctica in 1992/93: 1350 miles, 95 days, completely unsupported, starting off by pulling nearly 500lbs each on sledges, and ending with a pick-up on the Ross ice shelf, when it would have been suicide to continue over the floating ice to the open sea.

This is Stroud's version of that journey, dwelling mainly on the relationship evident in the sub-title. You would, after all, need a pretty vivid imagination to write at great length about the scenery in Antarctica; the weather, the conditions, your health and relationship with your companions are everything. When there are only two of you, the relationship must be even more intense! The Press made a great play of the animosity that developed between the two men, but this book sets the record straight; at least from

Stroud's point of view! The two men were not strangers, either to each other or to harsh conditions, as they had been together in similar-style attempts on the North Pole; but this time irritation between the two was never far away. As far as can be ascertained, Stroud relates this fairly and, in the process, has written a very readable book.

They apparently finished the expedition the best of friends and, although he got rather rattled again by some of the statements Fiennes made in his lectures, Stroud finishes the book by saying: 'If the opportunity were to come again to step out of life and visit other planets, there is no question as to whom I would wish for a companion. I would go with Ran.'

Geoffrey Templeman

The Illustrated Library of the Earth: Mountains

Edited by J D Ives

Rodale Press, Emmaus USA, \$35

Mountains is the second volume in a series of which *Oceans & Islands* has already appeared. A glossy 'coffee-table' book with superb illustrations and an authoritative text, it provides a nice complement to the plainer *State of the World's Mountains* (reviewed in *AJ98*, 297, 1993) with which it shares some of the same distinguished contributors. In contrast to the latter, it is arranged by topics, drawing illustrative examples from different regions of the world. First it describes the tectonic, volcanic and erosional backgrounds to mountain formation and decay, with spectacular photos of volcanoes and glaciation, and clear diagrams of plate tectonics and vulcanism. The special characteristics of mountain weather are described, together with its effects on the surrounding lowlands and the effects of hypoxia on humans. Next are the plants and animals that live in the mountains, naturally picking out and illustrating spectacular examples such as giant lobelias, giant puyas and giant condors.

The last third of the book deals with mountain people and their way of life, emphasising first the extreme upland inhabitants of Tibet and the Andes, then those that gain their livelihood from farming the slopes, together with some of the problems and controversies that have arisen from this. Brief glances at mountains in Greek mythology, Tibetan Buddhism and the yeti are followed by consideration of those outsiders who exploit mountains in various ways, for mining, damming, skiing and climbing, usually damaging the environment in the process. A final chapter summarises in a few pages the essentials of Mountain Agenda's case for conservation and careful development. One very striking full-page photo is wrongly captioned; can you spot it?

Henry Osmaston

(Adapted with the permission of the publishers, Butterworth Heineman Ltd, from a review first published in *Global Environmental Change*.)

Arka Tagh. The Mysterious Mountains

William Holgate

The Ernest Press, 1994, pp (6)+154, £15.95

The Arka Tagh, the mountain range featured in this book, lies on the borders of Tibet and Xinjiang, with the arid Taklamakan Desert to the north and the Tibetan Plateau to the south. The author decided to visit this area, one of the most isolated places on earth, and follow in the footsteps of Dutreuil de Rhins (1893), St George Littledale (1895), and Sven Hedin (1896). It took him ten years (and one unofficial attempt when he was arrested and deported) to obtain Chinese consent and finally to make the journey, travelling with one British companion, Tim Martin, and with Huang Min Min as co-leader. The journey could only be achieved as a joint expedition, as had been the case with the Chinese-American expedition to Ulugh Mustagh, the highest peak in the range, in 1985.

While early explorers had been forced to contend with physical danger from local tribesmen, this trip was bedevilled by the bureaucratic muddle and general inefficiency of Huang, although most of Huang's subordinates did their best to help and seemed to dislike him as much as the author did. Anyway, a small party of eight men, nineteen camels and a dog completed a round trip of over 300 miles, although not all the camels made it to the end.

There are no great mountaineering exploits here, but it is a well-told tale of travel in remote areas, in the Shipton/Tilman tradition. However, trying to follow the route on the *Mountains of Central Asia* map proved to be almost impossible, as none of the names on the map are the same as those in the book.

Geoffrey Templeman

Mountaineering in the Andes. A Sourcebook for Climbers

Jill Neate

Expedition Advisory Centre, RGS, 1994, pp (vi)+256, npq

The last major work completed by Jill Neate before her tragic death in 1993 was this revised edition of her Andean sourcebook, first published in 1987 and now issued in soft cover book form. This is the essential reference work for anyone contemplating climbing in or travelling through the Andean mountains. For each country, region or range there is a general topographical introduction, a summary of climbing history, lists of peaks, and selected references where further studies can be made. Add to this sketch maps of the areas described and details of local journals and organisations, and you get a mine of information, much of it available in English for the first time. When Jill Neate died, the climbing community lost a major historian and bibliographer.

Geoffrey Templeman

Among Mountains

Jim Crumley

Mainstream, 1993, pp160, £14.99

As Jim Crumley says: 'There has always been more to going to the mountains than mere mountaineering.' This book, like the eight others he has written, deals entirely with his native Scottish hills, and is a plea to take the time to pause and take in the whole mountain environment. Not for him the ticking-off of Munros in a group clad in bright-coloured anoraks, their shouts ringing round the hills. His themes are wildlife, the vanished inhabitants of the hills and glens, and conservation. Some of his previous books have been produced in collaboration with photographer Colin Baxter, but this one shows that he is more than competent to illustrate his own writings, and to add to the text with his own poems.

In the Shadow of Denali

Jonathan Waterman

Delta, 1994, pp (x)+246, pb, \$11.95

The author has lived and worked in the shadow of McKinley for many years, as a guide and as a rescue ranger in the Denali Park Service, and was also for a number of years an editor on *Climbing* magazine. He has had numerous articles published in mountaineering and outdoor publications, and brings a fine, polished style to this, his third book. Sub-titled *Life and Death on Alaska's Mt McKinley*, it tells the stories of many of his friends and companions on Alaskan adventures. Most of the American climbers active in the far north get a mention, plus a number of British ones, and the book ends with an appreciation of Mugs Stump. This is a fine piece of mountaineering writing.

Environmental Protection of the Himalaya. A Mountaineers' View

Edited by Aamir Ali

Indus Publishing Co, New Delhi, 1994, pp112, npq

This special publication has been issued in celebration of the 50th volume of the *Himalayan Journal*. A 'postal symposium' was held amongst various members of the Himalayan Club and other authorities, and the book contains their edited replies. Following the editor's own introduction, there are 21 short essays covering many environmental problems: eg waste disposal, deforestation and fuel, tourism, litter, sociological damage, and many other aspects. The problems are well presented for all to see; the answers pose greater difficulties.

Over the Himalaya
Koichiro Ohmori
Diadem, 1994, £25.00

This is the last book to be published under the Diadem imprint and is up to their usual high standard. It consists of 44 double-page aerial photographs of the main mountain groups in Nepal, all of exceptional clarity and mercifully free from the lurid sunrise/sunset effects beloved by so many Japanese photographers. The text is limited to brief topographical details, the author's thoughts on flying over the Himalaya, and photographic notes.

Mountaineering.
Catalogue of the Graham Brown and Lloyd Collections
in the National Library of Scotland
National Library of Scotland, 1994, pp (xviii) + 454, £15.00

Two former prominent members of the Alpine Club donated books to the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. In 1958 R W Lloyd gave over 1650 volumes to the Library, and this was followed in 1965 by Professor T Graham Brown, who donated his entire library of some 20,000 items. This has made the National Library one of the chief centres in Europe for those wishing to study Alpinism and mountaineering in general. This hefty catalogue lists all the items contained in the two collections, but differs from the AC's own Library Catalogue in having its main section listed alphabetically by title, rather than by author. It is also not quite so detailed as the AC volume. Even though a number of the books included have nothing to do with mountaineering, this must still be a useful aid for bibliographical study.

Trekking in Russia & Central Asia. A Traveller's Guide
Frith Maier
Cordee/Mountaineers, 1994, pp370, £12.95

This is a further volume in the series inaugurated by *The Mountaineers*, which has included *Trekking in Nepal* and *Trekking in Tibet*. All have been exemplary in the amount of factual detail provided, and have given excellent in-depth backgrounds to the culture, as well as the geography of the countries concerned. The present volume covers an enormous amount of ground, much of it completely unknown to the average traveller, including parts of the Urals, Pamirs, Caucasus, Siberia, Lake Baikal and the Crimean and Kamchatka Peninsulas.

The author, a native of Alaska, has spent the past ten years in exploratory mountain travel to the remotest parts of the former USSR including

ascents of Peak Communism and Khan Tengri. Whilst the book is mainly concerned with trekking, it does also include guides to the ascents of Pobeda, Lenin and Korzhenevskiy as well as the above, plus opportunities for mountain biking, rafting, etc. One of the features of the book are the maps, drawn by a Russian map-maker and unique to this publication. This is certainly an indispensable guide for anyone contemplating travelling in this vast area, now that such a journey is permitted, if not easy.

The Alpine Club Library also received the following books during 1994:

Exploring the Far North West of Scotland. A Walker's Guide to the Hills, Glens and Coastline of Wester Ross & Sutherland

Richard Gilbert. *Cordee*, 1994, pp144, £12.95

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The following books have been received and will be reviewed in next year's volume: Harish Kapadia, **High Himalaya: Unknown Valleys**; Gordon Stainforth, **The Cuillin**; Terry Gifford, **Orogenic Zones**.