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# Book Reviews

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

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## **Geoffrey Winthrop Young: Poet, educator, mountaineer**

Alan Hankinson

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp365, £18.99*

If but the kindly years may grant us still  
To track the lonely valley to its end ...

In the kindly years of the 1930s Geoffrey Winthrop Young was not lonely. He had many friends, especially among the younger generation, and these increased every year. We twenty-year-olds managed to combine reverence and irreverence and we basked, not always in Geoffrey's approval, for he could be sharply critical, but in something more enduring – his belief in us, and the feeling that we were being affirmed as members of the same 'guild'. So we learnt the hard and happy lessons of trying to be responsible craftsmen of the hills; with people like him or Jack Longland as role models.

Alan Hankinson's biography, which won the Boardman Tasker Memorial Award for 1995, is a fine and many-layered narrative about a very great mountaineer. Hankinson does not overlook Geoffrey's profound and complex faults and the quotation on the following page illustrates his open-eyed approach to Geoffrey's vanity and to his ambiguous sexuality. But if the reader is to understand the story with sympathy, he needs to view these matters against the ethos of the time and to sense the deeper, hidden tension which many great craftsmen-philosophers of the nineteenth century were grappling with – Coleridge, Ruskin, William Morris: how to redeem or transcend or escape from the tightening clutch of industrial technology? Mountaineers discovered a marvellous, salutary, life-enhancing mode of escape. Geoffrey practised and perfected this mode of art or craft during a uniquely propitious ten-year spell. Two further contrasting influences also shaped him: his deep bond with simple men – Josef Knubel and his other guides; and a headier, sophisticated brew. During the decade before the First World War Geoffrey was much influenced by the aesthetic and moral climate of what might be termed 'Oxbridge-Bloomsbury' – E M Forster, Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey and many others. They were a gifted and attractive bunch. Then, after years of horror, of Ypres, and Caporetto, with Geoffrey being almost killed and then maimed, the heroine of this story appeared – Len Slingsby – and she managed, somehow, to complete a healing process which the high hills had begun.

A crucial passage in Hankinson's story is the chapter entitled 'The Troubled Years' when he faces up to Geoffrey's personal weaknesses and trouble spots, his vanity, his occasional dual personality and (closely connected) his homosexual inclination. I think Hankinson handles these difficult issues with great discernment and without prurience. He quotes a telling and almost unbelievable passage from Geoffrey's private Journal, written, no doubt, during a euphoric mood swing. George Trevelyan had long been one of Geoffrey's truest friends. He had just been reading and praising the draft of the new (1914) book of poems. Trevelyan clearly overdid the praise; for what Geoffrey then wrote in his diary left him wide open to Hankinson's swingeing and justified critique:

'I *can* write lyrics. I can write them more musically than any man now living. I can write more honest stuff than any poet since the Greeks ... I have a better ear and I have, now, learned the craft better than any contemporary.' These are very high claims indeed, and the test of time has not vindicated them.

His second slim volume of verse, *Freedom*, was published that summer. It begins with a tribute to G. M. Trevelyan and their Trinity-based friendship ... [Then follow] nearly fifty poems, most of them short, proclaiming his faith in life and nature and liberty, his love of childhood and graceful movement and mountains, in the same high-toned, aspirational vein as suffused his first volume. There is no hint here of the personal anguish that he reveals in the Journal – at the deaths of his climbing friends, at the still-raging conflict between his homosexual inclination and the demands of conventional society.

Strong criticism; but surely merited when one thinks of Eliot and Auden or, for that matter, of Michael Roberts: all just over the horizon.

After what must have been a happy and successful four years teaching at Eton (1901-1905), Geoffrey was sacked – eased out – presumably for indulging, in some way, his 'inclination'. In his Journal there is a touch of bravado when he reflects on this disaster: 'So stand clear to life: free of false shams, free of old chains ... I believe in vitality first of all, and truth.' One may feel that the Eton authorities were right in what they did but it was certainly a bitter blow for Geoffrey. He became one of His Majesty's Inspectors and was probably extremely good at it but the dark professional shadow never entirely left him. I remember Len talking about this side of Geoffrey in the 1970s as we drove to Helyg once. 'Yes,' she said, 'it has sometimes been tough but people like that are rarely easy. Very creative people do, sometimes, fly to extremes which others will find hard to comprehend.' Geoffrey's occasional recourse to the deviant low life of Berlin or Soho, like that extraordinary self-assessment of his own poems, seems to be part of a strange and manic world.

But fate was to hammer him very hard and the story of his life on the battlefields and afterwards is especially moving, just because that vaunted

vitality wasn't quenched. Hankinson tells it very well. The mountain magic never fades. Then the love story with Len Slingsby catches fire and his new, wounded life is subtly redeemed. Healing, too, were the incredibly vivid memories of mountains which lived with him: their architecture, the feel of the rock and the storm and the companionship. All these surface again and again in *On High Hills*. (As a teenager I doted on it; as a twenty-year-old puppy I suggested to Geoffrey that it was a shade too purple and got a flea in my ear.) The biography gives the great Täschorh story in full. I would have welcomed excerpts from one or two others.

One of the sad things about Geoffrey's life was that his deep understanding of educational issues never bore full fruit. Hankinson quotes a significant passage from the Inspector's pen: on the importance of a teacher being able to act and play different roles – as critic, friend, guru, for example. His later joint adventures with Kurt Hahn – helping to get him away from Nazi Germany and to start Gordonstoun – are fascinating and now part of history. But neither he nor Hahn ever adequately articulated the philosophy of what they knew so deeply in their bones about service, challenge, facing the elements and competing with yourself. The maxims were fine but they were never sufficiently rooted in a philosophy of action or in an adequate understanding of adolescent development.

This is not a complaint; there is so much here already. If you want to know what Collie really thought of Mummery, or what Keynes really thought about mountaineering (Lytton Strachey's version so different from Geoffrey's); or how the non-Quaker ambulance team regarded the real Quakers or what went on at Pen-y-Pass in its hey day; or if you simply want a convincing and kindly portrait of a great mountaineer who spanned climbing history from Cecil Slingsby to Joe Brown and was made happy by the mountains – get Alan Hankinson's book.

*Robin A Hodgkin*

### **Vertical Pleasure**

Mick Fowler

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp224, £17.99*

Maggie Body's departure from Hodder & Stoughton will have a significant impact on these and other book review pages in the future. Her contribution to climbing writing over the years has been necessarily understated – who beyond *cognoscenti* remember editors? – but she once again deserves praise for adding Mick Fowler to the prestigious list of writers she has edited over the years and persuading Mick to consolidate two decades of achievement into a readable and engaging book.

Most of us make compromises between hearth and mountain, career and exploration. A handful achieve security and continue with their passion, albeit in an exploitative way. Fowler has eschewed such shilly-shallying by

having it all and in doing so bringing a fresh amateurism to a depth and range of activity that embarrasses most so-called professionals.

It requires the kind of organisation normally associated with running governments; if the Inland Revenue, Fowler's employer for most of his adult climbing career, was to be run as efficiently as Mick's life it would result in savings for all.

That is not to say that Fowler removes all the fun of it by planning so carefully. More that he makes things propitious for a successful outcome in the limited time available for him. As this book regularly observes, things do not always work out. Defeat on Bojohagur at the hands of a Japanese walking club is one such example but regularly driving to Scotland for a weekend of disappointment is almost as impressive.

Fowler tells his story with his usual blend of understatement and wry humour but there are some gentle observations about his father George – a widower and soon after unemployed when Mick was only three – which illustrate the son's affection and gratitude. Indeed, the recollection of his early life and career proves the most successful part of the book in many ways.

There is much of the amused exasperation that has characterised Fowler's magazine writing, and his partners spring to slightly exaggerated life with all their idiosyncrasies. He also gives amusing and disturbingly familiar vignettes of grappling with Third-World bureaucracy and other such complications in the expeditioner's life.

The beef of the book, if you're asking where it is, remains his string of successes on hard alpine-style routes. Taulliraju, Spantik, Cerro Kishtwar and now Taweche; the eccentricities of Dover chalk and obscure sea stacks are a welcome aside but these mountains are something else again. In a period of Himalayan climbing that fanfares mediocrity on well-trodden ground, Fowler remains the man in the pub ordering pints of cheapest and running his finger up the next impossible line.

*Ed Douglas*

### **High Altitude Medicine and Pathology**

Donald Heath and David Williams

*4th Edition. Oxford Medical Publications. 1995*

This is the fourth edition of a work that was initially published in 1977, with the title *Man at High Altitude*. I always look forward to reading this work, and this edition is no exception.

It is a classic work and should certainly be in the libraries of all medical schools and all organisations which deal with those who go to altitude for whatever reason. The fit mountaineer at altitude is an excellent model for medical scientists who deal with patients suffering from chronic lack of oxygen occurring in lung and heart disease.

Unlike the majority of medical books on the effects of the mountain environment on man, which are usually written by clinicians and physiologists, this one is by two pathologists, both of whom work at Liverpool University. They are particularly noted for their work on the lungs and carotid body, which senses oxygen in the main artery to the brain. Much of their work in the field has been carried out on the indigenous highland populations of South America, and this edition has a section on cancer occurring in Andean people.

The book is well produced, with a number of excellent illustrations, particularly of the microscopic changes occurring at high altitude in the lungs, and it is also much better written than many textbooks.

*Michael Ward*

### **K2 The Story of The Savage Mountain**

Jim Curran

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp271, colour and monochrome photos, £17.99*

Jim Curran's excellent new history of K2 deserves the indulgence of a lavish 'coffee table' production, but his publishers decided to play safe with a limited selection of maps and photographs. That is a shame but it doesn't matter for, in an age obsessed increasingly with surface glitter, Curran has produced that rare treat – a thoroughly *readable* climbing book.

Jim Curran was climbing cameraman on the British expedition to K2 in 1986. At the end of that long terrible summer he was one of the few people left at Base Camp to witness the final tragedy when five climbers, including his friend Alan Rouse, perished in a storm high on the Abruzzi Ridge. By his own admission, Curran is not in the first league of Himalayan climbers, but by limiting his ambitions below 7000 metres, he has an objectivity perhaps lacking in the top performers playing for big stakes in the rarefied air above 8000 metres. He certainly writes better than most of them, fulfilling my theory that literary skill is usually inversely proportionate to climbing ability. And he has been on enough Himalayan expeditions to know exactly what he is talking about. Like any good historian, he has the ability to sift through a mass of intensively researched detail and select the big themes. As his introduction promises, he is 'more interested in reliving the highlights and exploring the shadows of the stories than recording every fact'.

This history is popular in the best sense of the word. The author sits us down by the fire, puts a large whisky in our hand and proceeds to tell us a story – a story of epic proportions, encompassing the whole range of human experience. Human fallibility is writ large and Curran has no compunction in exposing it. One of the most celebrated nineteenth century explorers (and former presidents of our club) has a chapter dedicated 'Conway – Connoisseur or Con Man?' Another pioneer – Aleister Crowley, the notorious diabolist involved in a futuristic attempt on the NE ridge in 1902

– is praised for his obvious climbing talent, but after K2 his life, according to Curran, ‘degenerated into the self-indulgent, self-deluding shambles that lasted until his death in 1947’.

That summary judgement is typical. The author is not afraid to express opinions. He allows his own personality to enliven the narrative and, amidst scenes of grim disaster, he provides comic relief like this comment on the morale breakdown on Fritz Wiessner’s 1939 expedition: ‘There does seem to be a sea change on every expedition when the dominant mood swings from “thinking up” to “thinking down”. Ideally this should only occur when the summit is reached.’ Unfortunately the immensely talented Wiessner was still ‘thinking up’ when most of his inadequate team was ‘thinking down’ and after a complete breakdown in leadership and communication the expedition ended in tragedy.

Discussing the subsequent recriminations, Curran writes, ‘Time and time again, the same potent brew would surface over accidents on K2, producing long-running sagas in which the original, often complex, circumstances were buried under huge volumes of half-truths and prejudice.’ He digs deep to get at the truth, but often has to resort simply to presenting us with different versions of the same events. This is the case with the 1986 disaster. Only two people came down alive from that final terrible storm – Kurt Diemberger and Willi Bauer – each blaming the other for the overcrowding in the top camp that had led indirectly to disaster. Now, for the first time, Curran has analysed their conflicting accounts, pointing out major discrepancies of detail and concluding that *everyone* made mistakes.

1986 was one of the critical years in K2’s climbing history. Another was 1978, when Jim Wickwire, Lou Reichardt, John Roskelley and Rick Ridgeway made the third ascent of the mountain. Having recently got to know two of the summit climbers, and heard firsthand about some of the conflicts, I was interested to read Curran’s version of the expedition, which confirms much of what they said and reads like a high-altitude soap opera. The summit finale is a brilliant, heroic effort by the four strongest climbers, but it only happens after they have finally shaken themselves clear of a prolonged struggle between disparate personalities, squabbling and bickering their way up the spectacular knife-edge of the NE ridge. Big mountains, it would seem, attract big egos.

Curran’s accounts of both the 1978 and the 1975 expeditions present an unflattering view of American teamwork. I have to say that my own personal experience of American expeditions is completely different. Mountains can bring out the best in people and Curran acknowledges this in his glowing account of Charles Houston’s expeditions of 1938 and 1953. He observes that, in terms of team size and route preparation, Houston’s 1938 team employed precisely the same tactics as Messner was to do on his self-proclaimed ‘first alpine-style ascent’ 41 years later. And in 1938, Houston’s team had the added challenge of pioneering what was then the first proper attempt on the notoriously difficult Abruzzi Spur. By any

standards it was a remarkable piece of climbing, carried out by a small, close-knit team working in harmony. The same spirit pervaded the 1953 attempt which culminated in the heroic attempt to evacuate Art Gilkey, paralysed by an embolism, from a storm at 8000 metres. The 1953 American K2 expedition, concludes Curran, 'became a symbol of all that is best in mountaineering'.

Last year, when history again repeated itself and seven people died in a freak storm on K2, the world's media responded with a frenzied blast of ill-informed hot air. All those journalists, failing so dismally to understand the nature of climbing on the world's second highest mountain, would have benefited from a quick reading of Jim Curran's new book, for *K2 – The Story of The Savage Mountain* will appeal equally to Himalayan expert and layman. The maps and diagrams are excellent. The photos, within economic limits, are well selected and intelligently captioned. The text, apart from minor slips (12-point crampons *had* been invented by the late 'thirties – Wiessner just didn't have a pair) is meticulously researched and authoritative. More important, it is a lucid, humorous, compassionate account of man's compulsive obsession with 'The Mountain of Mountains'.

*Stephen Venables*

### **The Cuillin: Great Mountain Ridge of Skye**

Gordon Stainforth

Constable, £19.95, pp176, 1994

Gordon Stainforth's third book of mountain portraits is a masterpiece. The happy collaboration between Constable and one of our most gifted mountain photographers – and something of a writer too – has produced a succession of volumes, each unique in its approach. For although superficially they appear very similar, sharing the same format and the same superb quality of reproduction, Stainforth's treatment of each has been subtly different. Whereas *Eyes to the Hills* ranged far and wide over mountain Britain, and *Lakeland* embraced the whole of its eponymous fells, this latest volume focuses sharply on one cirque of craggy peaks: at once the most glorious, the most challenging, but perhaps the least visited by an ever-growing number of British climbers and hill walkers. The relative remoteness of Skye has protected the Cuillin from too intense an invasion and I doubt if the bridge-building at Kyle will much alter that; but Stainforth surely will!

I have read his book several times now, and each time I find some new gem to suit my mood. Memories flood in from 38 years ago when, with two others, I made the famous traverse of the ridge – the whole ridge, albeit in two parts. These outstanding pictures are so evocative that our long-ago trip could have been yesterday. Gordon Stainforth is a craftsman with words too and takes his readers through a number of concise but still lucid introductory pieces, each with a touch that is as light as it is deft. 'First

Impressions' deals with geology, plants, history, weather (inevitably) and even, briefly, language in relation to the origins of the 'Cuillin'. Each of these items is well described and illuminated by photography in a class of its own.

But it is the next section, 'The British Alps', which bursts on us with a crescendo of picture after picture, with hardly a printed word other than the individual captions. The effect of page after page, often double-pages, of summits plastered with spring snow is quite stunning. Then the pictures give way to a lively and well-researched piece, 'The Alpinists arrive', resonant with famous names and further illustrated not only by Stainforth's camera but also by aptly-chosen quotations from many a poet and climbing writer. 'Getting the wobblies' is a frank exploration of Stainforth's own personal approach to these mountains, illustrated with more than a few dramatic action shots. And then comes 'A Way of Life' in which Stainforth the philosopher takes centre stage. He is a man of many parts and reading his work is like getting to know someone – sometimes surprising, always honest. Here you will find many truths which evoke echoes from your own experience. Here, too, is a delightful little piece about some of the climbing characters whose names are linked indelibly with these unique mountains.

And so to 'The Great Traverse'. At this point I think I have to admit that I simply do not have the command of language to do this fourth and final section justice. But, if I say nothing else about this extraordinarily varied and beautiful chapter (as varied and beautiful as the ridge itself), I feel I must comment on the inspired closing passage under 'The Magic of Long Days', itself a phrase borrowed from Geoffrey Winthrop Young. In two succinct paragraphs Gordon Stainforth manages to encapsulate exactly what I have grown to love about being in mountains. That I can share that feeling with such a skilled craftsman is reason for pleasure; that he can put it into words for me is cause for humble gratitude.

Although *The Cuillin* is not just a picture book, it is indeed the astonishing quality of Stainforth's photography which puts this work in a class of its own. Anyone who was fortunate enough to hear him talk about his first book at the Alpine Club will know that, projected on a big screen, many of his pictures are literally breathtaking. You could hear it! And I would go further; there is something about many of his landscapes which leaves one uplifted in spirit. How does he achieve this level of perfection? In purely technical terms, his use of medium-format cameras, hitherto almost exclusively, explains the clarity and sharpness which characterises all his work. Allied to this is the excellent standard of colour printing achieved in Hong Kong. The two technologies complement each other. In *The Cuillin*, for the first time – and for logistic reasons only – Stainforth has also used a 35mm camera but you are hard pressed to detect any difference in quality, at least on the printed page. It has been said that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains and Stainforth exemplifies this as much as any



artist. His use of light, his choice of time of day and carefully selected viewpoint, his use of filters (never extreme), even of type of film for each exposure, coupled with a gifted eye and extraordinary qualities of perseverance and patience, separates his work and doubtless protects him from all but the most determined competition.

For amateur and expert alike there are two useful appendices: 'A note on the photography' with some interesting and amusing statistics, together with detailed technical photographic notes about each of the 154 plates. Stainforth also includes a useful bibliography but the final facet of this jewel of a book is the appendix containing 'the most detailed guide to the traverse of the Main Ridge ever published' and a 'provocative graded list of the main routes to the summits'.

It is more than 40 years since I first visited the Cuillin (and failed with others on an attempted second ascent of Goff Francis' and McNaught-Davis's Cioch Grooves) and 20 years since I last followed the road to Skye – so I am not really qualified to comment on either of these appendices, though they certainly add to the value. Be that as it may, *The Cuillin* has already given me more pleasure than any other book in a long time. The price is, frankly, irrelevant; the sheer enjoyment the book affords is all.

John Peacock

### **The Love of Mountains is Best Climbs and Travels from K2 to Kathmandu**

Robert H Bates

*Peter E Randall (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), 1994, ppxviii+494, npq*

This record of 70 years travelling and climbing around the world makes fascinating reading. Although the author stresses that it is not an autobiography, it covers most of his life so far as mountains are concerned, including 'three visits to K2 (two of them serious attempts to make the first ascent); winter exploration by dog team of the Saint Elias Mountains in Yukon Territory for the National Geographic Society; the third ascent of Denali (Mt McKinley) for the US Army; testing army clothing and equipment during combat at Anzio in World War II; directing the first Peace Corps group in Nepal; and travelling to the mysterious Great Ice Mountain on the Xinjiang-Tibetan border as part of the first China-US mountaineering expedition.' In fact, it contains considerably more than that, and it almost seems as if the author, in his long life, has visited every country in the world. Certainly a great many are covered in this book.

In addition to a number of ascents by the author in Alaska and the Yukon, the main mountaineering expeditions described here are those to K2 in 1938, which was the subject of his earlier book *Five Miles High*; the epic struggle also on K2 in 1953 (described in *K2 – The Savage Mountain*); and the Chinese-American expedition to the Ulugh Muztagh in 1985 – a classic

tale of bureaucratic muddle. On all his many expeditions, the author, who is Honorary President of the American Alpine Club, was accompanied by a cast list which, over the years, included virtually every well-known member of that Club, and they are all portrayed here.

*Geoffrey Templeman*

### **Chamonix Cragging – Valley Rock Climbs Around the Area**

Nigel Shepherd

*Cordee, 1995, pp144, £9.95*

You're in Chamonix and the weather's not great. Or maybe you are resting after a mountain route. Bored? Well, this guide will help you while away the valley hours on mainly bolted routes without having to buy all the local guidebooks. The crags included are all within an hour's drive of Chamonix, with routes in a range of grades, mostly above French 6. To help decide if a certain crag is for you, pictographs summarise details such as driving and walking times needed to reach it, the number of pitches it contains, the amount of sun it receives, and even the chance of being bitten by a snake. Most routes are either described as topos or are marked on photos, making them easy to locate and follow.

There is a good map for each individual area but, on the downside, the map in the front of the guide is not sufficiently detailed to show how the various climbing areas relate to each other. The only way you can find this out is by flicking through from one area to another. A map and summary page, containing all the pictographs of the crags and the range of routes covered would have been a worthwhile addition. Another drawback is that the guide is not weatherproof and won't stand up to much tent and heavy rucksack use.

Despite these reservations, this is a much-needed guidebook that any climber visiting Chamonix should possess. It presents all you need to know about the routes around Chamonix and will lead you to some great areas that you never knew existed.

*Phil Wickens*

### **Everest Calling. Ascent of the Dark Side:**

**The Mallory-Irvine Ridge**

Lorna Siggins

*Mainstream, 1994, pp190, £14.99*

Lorna Siggins is a journalist on the *Irish Times* who accompanied the 1993 Irish Everest Expedition. She reached Advanced Base Camp in order to report for her paper, in much the same way as James Morris did for *The Times* forty years earlier. In addition to her newspaper reports, though, she also wrote this book, which is the official record of the expedition.

There were eight climbers led by Dawson Stelfox and Frank Nugent, a support team of five, three film crew and a total of some forty trekkers. There had been three previous Irish Himalayan expeditions; to Rakaposhi in 1964, to Changtse in 1987 and to Manaslu in 1991. None were successful, but the Manaslu team contained the nucleus of those who made up the team for Everest in 1993. The objective was the North Ridge via the North Col, and Stelfox and Nugent were the final summit pair. Nugent had to give up not far below the top, but Dawson Stelfox went on to reach the summit alone, an ascent which he described in detail in last year's *Alpine Journal*.

*Everest Calling* is what, I suppose, one would call a standard expedition-type book, but enlivened by diary extracts from Dermot Somers and Dawson Stelfox. The photographs are generally excellent, particularly some showing the true nature of the North Col, and there is added interest in the descriptions of the enthusiasm shown about the expedition on both sides of the Irish border.

Geoffrey Templeman

### Chile Andinista: Su Historia

Evelio Echevarría

*El Mercurio, 1995, pp279, npq*

This book is clearly a labour of love. Evelio Echevarría has set out to convey his vast knowledge of and enthusiasm for the mountains of Chile and the 'andinists' who have climbed there. The book is written not just for a specialist climbing public but also in the hope that those who live in Chile will come to appreciate some of the history that lies behind the mountains that are all around them. As the publisher's introduction puts it, the book fulfils a 'cultural and geographic obligation' – a phrase that seems less far-fetched when one remembers that the Andes are the backbone of this long and narrow country.

European mountaineers conventionally date the beginning of mountaineering history to the ascent of Mont Aiguille in 1492. One of the interesting facts to emerge from *Chile Andinista* is that the Indian population of South America were climbing peaks far higher than Mont Blanc (let alone Mont Aiguille) as early as the fifteenth century. Echevarría gives a table of South American peaks which he is reasonably confident had a native ascent. The highest of them is Lullaillaco in Chile at a staggering 6739m – an altitude that was reached by Western mountaineers only with the Schlagintweit brothers in Central Asia in 1855. Indian activity on the high mountains came to light only with the start of recreational mountaineering. Mountaineers, convinced that they were making first ascents, found on the summits unmistakable traces of activity that were centuries old, including platforms, stone walls and even mummies.

The first expeditions that explored and mapped Chile were, of course, foreign. They were largely ignorant of the indigenous mountaineering legacy, but (and less excusably) they rode roughshod over the local names for many of the peaks. Echevarría has particularly harsh words for Robert Fitzroy, captain of Charles Darwin's ship *The Beagle*, who left an unforgettable mark on the mountains of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego – not least in giving the new name Cerro Fitz Roy to Chaltén, a mountain that had a perfectly good name already. But the British were not the only ones to leave their mark. The Italian priest De Agostino, known as the father of Patagonia, who left a wonderful photographic legacy of his twenty or so expeditions between 1910 and 1945, also had a rather insensitive approach to nomenclature. He managed to give the name *Spegazzini* to a mountain, a fjord and a glacier, and was only prevented from baptising a mountain *Benito Mussolini* by the Instituto Geográfico Militar in Buenos Aires.

The long-established and sizeable German community in Chile gave an initial impetus to domestic mountaineering and were responsible for the first mountaineering clubs in the country. But the principal ascents before the Second World War were all carried out by foreign expeditions, many of which featured star alpinists, like Giusto Gervasutti who came with Bonacossa on the CAI trip of 1934. In 1952 the great prize of Cerro Fitz Roy fell to Lionel Terray and Guido Magnone. Chilean mountaineering proper took off after the war with small teams of climbers (including the author) making 'campaigns' in the country's many mountain ranges. But it was not until 1961 that the first *grande course* was climbed, when Juan Tangol and César Vásquez climbed the magnificent-looking South Face of Cerro Morado – a route which waited twenty years for a second ascent.

By 1968 almost all the summits in the central area of Chile had been climbed, although there still remain some 2500 unclimbed peaks in the country as a whole (more than any country except Nepal and the Sino-Pakistan frontier). Cerro Fitz Roy still awaited a Chilean ascent (not forthcoming until 1980 when Gino Casassa reached the summit with the Austrian Walter Bertsch), but the leading Chilean activists were starting to look abroad. The Himalaya were of course the great attraction. In 1979 Gastón Oyarzún and Claudio Lucero reached the summit of Gasherbrum II, although the ascent was controversial and doubted by many influential figures including Reinhold Messner. A failed Everest trip in 1983 allowed Gino Casassa to make an illegal first solo ascent of Changtse (7553m), while Cho Oyu was climbed in 1987 (by the Tichy route), Gasherbrum II (again, perhaps) in 1990, and Shisha Pangma in 1991. But for Chileans the climax came on 15 May 1992 when two expeditions reached the summit of Everest from opposite sides – one team via the Kangshung face, repeating the 1988 Anglo-American route, and another team on the South Col route.

Evelio Echevarría has produced an absorbing history of Chilean mountaineering that extends both to foreigners in Chile and to Chileans abroad. His sympathies are clearly with the mountains of Chile, whoever happens

to be climbing on them, and this book should certainly be read by anyone planning a visit to Chile. I very much hope that he will produce an English translation, with a few maps to complement the numerous photographs.

*José Luis Bermúdez*

### **Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer**

Patrick French

*Harper Collins, 1994, pp xxii+440, £20.00*

At the beginning of August 1914, after a tour of America lecturing on his Tibetan adventures, Francis Younghusband found himself wondering where his life was heading. He hoped that if war broke out there would be useful employment available for men of his calibre and experience. But his reputation had been severely damaged by the Tibet Mission of 1904 when, encouraged by Curzon's unfounded fear of Russian influence, he had succeeded in converting a small diplomatic mission into a full-scale invasion of Tibet. Since then, the publication of his book *Within*, with its promotion of free love and mysticism, had ensured that he would be regarded with suspicion by the British Establishment. As a result, when Kitchener was made Secretary of State for War, Younghusband, who wished to replace him as British Agent and Consul General in Egypt, was passed over; nor was there anything available for him at the War Office. In the end he spent most of the war organising a public relations campaign known as the 'Fight for Right', which aimed to arouse men and women to enthusiastic war service. It was in connection with this crusade that Sir Hubert Parry wrote his setting of William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem', subsequently to become almost a second National Anthem.

Younghusband's activities during the First World War were a far cry from the bold adventures of his youth when he had pioneered a new route from China to India and made the first crossing of the Mustagh Pass, or even from those heady days when he had led the invasion of one of the last unexplored countries in the world. So in June 1919, when he was offered the Presidency of the Royal Geographical Society, he grasped the opportunity offered by a position, as Patrick French describes it in this fascinating biography, of 'substantial public clout'.

In 1920, Captain John Noel lectured at the RGS about his experiences in the Everest region, and some influential people including Freshfield and Farrar began advocating the idea that Everest should be climbed. Younghusband seized on the suggestion with enthusiasm, making the prospect of an ascent of the mountain the main feature of his Presidency. A Mount Everest Committee was formed under his chairmanship and the Everest story began to unfold. Mallory wrote to a friend: 'The Everest expedition has become a sort of religious pilgrimage in his eyes.' Through Younghusband's influence, Everest came to be regarded as a metaphor for

the highest aspirations of the mountaineering community, which has persisted to this day.

In the course of his life Younghusband followed many different paths: as explorer, public servant, prolific writer and philosopher. In this well-researched and highly readable biography Patrick French throws new light on all of them. He tells the story with humour, sensitivity and skill, weaving into it amusing accounts of his own adventures following in Younghusband's footsteps, including determined battles with Indian, and British, bureaucracy. Moreover, he has taken infinite pains to uncover every last detail of Younghusband's life, even managing to track down the Buddha which had been presented to him, by the Ganden Tripa, on his last day in Lhasa. After a lengthy search, it was finally located in a Peak Frean's biscuit tin in the basement of the Royal Geographical Society.

More seriously, French tells how, after much sleuthing, he ran to earth a cache of letters, 'the missing pieces in the jigsaw', which Younghusband had written to Madeline, Lady Lees, whom he met at a Conference to promote World Peace. Notwithstanding the fact that Madeline had a husband and seven children and that he himself had an ailing wife, Younghusband embarked in his seventies on what was to be the grand passion of his life. For two years during the Second World War he wrote to Lady Lees every day. For French, the letters were a revelation: '... Everything I had always known about Younghusband but been unable to prove was here before me.' Younghusband and Lady Lees seem to have had much in common. She believed, among other things, in a worldwide religious revival and the overthrow of 'the present Economic and Financial System of Usury'. At last Younghusband had found a soul mate. Remarkably, his relations with Sir John Lees, Madeline's husband, seem to have remained cordial throughout this episode which, though circumscribed by the war, continued until Younghusband's death. His wife, Helen, seems to have been too old and ill to care. Not surprisingly, however, Eileen, his daughter, felt that her father's new relationship was 'humiliating and ludicrous'.

The sub-title of this book describes Younghusband as 'The Last Great Imperial Adventurer'. Yet by the end of his life, and several years ahead of most of his contemporaries, he was actively promoting a post-war world 'in which the peoples of the Empire would be permitted to take control of their own destiny'. Moreover, as President of the World Congress of Faiths, and encouraged by Lady Lees, he became deeply involved in the religions and philosophies of the East. When he died in her arms on 31 July 1942, tributes poured in praising him as a mystic and a visionary.

In a convincingly-argued Epilogue to this brilliant new biography, French comments: 'Younghusband's life was shaped by his willingness to change his opinions ... It was this capacity to evolve that gave his life an epic quality, a kind of representative greatness that mirrored the era through which he lived.'

*Johanna Merz*

## Landscape and Memory

Simon Schama

Harper Collins, 1995, pp652, £30.00

*Landscape and Memory* is a richly evocative book. Schama's theme is the interaction between the landscape and human action and understanding. Though the book is long, it is easy to read. His style is attractively discursive and suggestive, at times even humorous. The reader is encouraged to saunter through a vast range of material. Inevitably and rightly as an historian, Schama treats of politics but he does not suppose they necessarily have the last word, and he takes seriously myth and even metaphysics.

While the book deserves to be read as a whole, of the three main parts, 'Wood', 'Water' and 'Rock', the third will be of greatest interest to members of the Alpine Club. The section begins with an account of the monumental sculpting of the heads of four American presidents from the rock of Mount Rushmore. Schama shows that the apparent idealism was in fact deeply flawed by sexism and racism. The triumphalist dream of sculpting a mountain has a long history, as far back as Alexander the Great's contemporary Dinocrates. It was a dream that continued to catch the imagination in both west and east, a dream in contrast to the airy flight of the disembodied shaman of Chinese mountain art, which is here treated rather whimsically.

What was to be found in the mountains? Dragons? A paradise garden? A vision (Whymper's crosses)? With the rise of humanism, fear and fable gave way to common sense; the sixteenth century naturalist Conrad Gesner boldly climbed Mount Pilatus to lay the ghost of Pilate in the lake once and for all. Even at that time, travellers were moving freely in the Alps and making the occasional ascent. It was the writers of the eighteenth century who actually took pleasure in the perils and horror of the mountains, though even that had its limits – see the sad tale of Horace Walpole's dog. This was the cult of the sublime and it found its expression in both literature and art. Schama treats of Salvator Rosa, at one time greatly esteemed, and of Alexander and John Robert Cozens. John Robert in particular receives a very welcome discussion.

The beginnings of mountain journeying in Scotland, Wales and the Lakes are better known, although here, as elsewhere, Schama's attention to detail reveals interesting curiosities. Familiar, too, will be the account of de Saussure's triumph on Mont Blanc in 1787. The women of Mont Blanc, Maria Paradis and Henriette d'Angeville, have their history too.

The final section of 'Rock' directly concerns the Victorian Alpine Club and draws freely on the writings of Leslie Stephen and John Ruskin. Schama also depends considerably on the research on the early Alpine Club carried out by Peter Hansen. It is a pity that Ruskin's famous 'soaped poles' passage is quoted uncritically, for there is a good deal to be instanced on the other side, not least the fact that Ruskin was happy to remain a member of the

Club for years afterwards until his illness made it pointless to continue. 'For myself mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery,' declared Ruskin; Schama seems sympathetic, for he quotes Ruskin with marked appreciation. Indeed, for me (and I admit to bias) this section forms the climax of the book.

*Landscape and Memory* is a complex tapestry of learning, anecdote, exemplar and appraisal. Anyone who reads it will realise both the intricacy of the human interaction with the landscape and the strength of its appeal.

The engraving reproduced on page 503 should properly be ascribed to Gustave Doré, although it is likely that it owes something to a sketch by Edward Whymper. That on page 513 is of Mont Blanc with the Aiguilles from above Les Tines, from Ruskin's *Modern Painters Vol II*.

The book is beautifully produced and generously illustrated in both black and white and colour.

James Bogle

### **The Sierra Nevada de Mérida**

Carlos Chalbaud Zerpa

*Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela, 1994, pp512, npq*

The Sierra Nevada de Mérida, the mountain range featured in this book, lies in NW Venezuela, with the Gulf of Maracaibo to the north and the Orinoco plains and jungles to the SE. Surgeon Carlos Chalbaud Zerpa began climbing in this range in 1949 and issued a first book about it in 1959. A tireless researcher, with an uncanny ability to obtain historical photographs and original records from any place on this planet, he achieved with this 1994 work the culmination of his efforts. His book is actually a biography of the entire Venezuelan Andes, since it also covers the other two Andean ranges of that country, Santo Domingo and Culata. It contains geographical, touristic and anthropological background chapters, but its greater emphasis by far is on history. From the mountaineering viewpoint, the book starts in 1844 with the early surveys by Juan B Codazzi and is brought to the 1990s with wall climbing. Thus, 150 years of Venezuelan mountaineering are methodically reviewed, step by step, and illustration by illustration, since there are 522 of the latter, all in black and white. Members of the Alpine Club will be particularly pleased to learn that several fellow members of note are prominently shown in both text and photos: Alfred Gunther (who climbed in Venezuela between 1938 and 1940), Douglas Busk, George Band and others (1962-63). The accomplishments of both Venezuelan and foreign mountaineers are efficiently reviewed in the 40 chapters that compose this large book, quarto size. There is also a 'Bibliografía' with 185 entries. This work is in its content and its extraordinary collection of historical pictures a model of what a mountaineering biography of a high range should be.

Evelio Echevarria



### **Montañas del Mundo. Trekking y Ascensiones**

José Martínez Hernández

*Ediciones Desnivel, Madrid, 1994, pp231, npq*

Pictorial books featuring the world's high mountain ranges sell well in our Age of Adventure Travel. They seem to have been published in most languages pertaining to the Western world. The work reviewed here, written wholly in Spanish, is in my opinion different from sister books in any language, for two reasons: it includes several mountain ranges and individual peaks seldom found in similar works, and its text was written from the purely personal viewpoint of an adventurous mountaineer and not that of a trekking guide. In addition to the ranges and peaks that are customary for trekkers today, Martínez features areas probably new to most readers: the lesser Mexican volcanoes, the Mérida peaks of Venezuela, the misty Llanganatis in Eastern Ecuador and the volcanoes of northern and southern Chile. Each mountain or mountain area receives an introduction that is actually a full expedition report, well illustrated by colour and black-and-white photos. There follows a summary of useful data covering approaches, routes, necessary equipment and historical background. An appealing characteristic of this book is that it focuses as much on mountain people and valleys as it does on the mountains themselves.

*Evelio Echevarría*

### **Orogenic Zones. The First Five Years of the International Festival of Mountaineering Literature**

Compiled by Terry Gifford & Rosie Smith

*Bretton Hall, 1994, ppxxxvii+246, npq*

Ever since the first International Festival of Mountaineering Literature in 1987, I have been promising myself a visit. I haven't made it yet and this book shows what I have been missing. These are the collected stories, essays and poems, without, of course, all the heady atmosphere of actually taking part. There is quite a lot of meaty stuff here: Dave Cook on the current state of climbing writing; Jill Lawrence on 'Women and Climbing Writing', Audrey Salkeld and Rosie Smith on climbing fiction; Waclaw Sonelski on 'Climbing under Communism'; Harold Drasdo 'On Falling Off'; Anne Sauvy on French climbing literature; and Paul Nunn on 'Climbers, their Writing and History'. These are all thoughtful essays, worth reading several times. The mixture is leavened by excellent short stories by Geoff Dutton, Dermot Somers and Dave Gregory, several poems, and even a quiz which, with many shorter varied articles, make an excellent compendium of recent mountain writing. There is everything here except the standard expedition article! Maybe, however, a better title can be found for the book of the next five years.

### **Blessed Everest**

Brian Blessed

*Salamander Books, 1995, pp160, £16.99*

This coffee-table sized volume is sub-titled, 'Climb to the summit of Mount Everest with BRIAN BLESSED, Britain's own actor/adventurer.' Blessed hasn't actually done that yet, of course, although he has had two exceptionally good tries so far, and is hoping for 'third time lucky' in 1996. In the first half of this book, which has been published after a series of lectures, the author provides a history of the mountain and then takes the reader through the various stages of the climb via the North Ridge to the summit. The leader of this 'expedition', as in 1993, is Steve Bell, and summit photos by both Bell and Jon Tinker are included. It makes a neat way to tell an Everest story, and it unfolds in exactly the way Brian Blessed hopes it will happen this year.

### **Over 4000 Metres**

Enrico Martinet. Photographs: Davide Camisasca

*Musumeci Editore (Aosta), 1993, pp184, npq (In English),*

This luxurious production profiles 36 of the 4000-metre peaks in the Alps. The method for each is the same. On the first page there is a quotation from a relevant publication and a reproduction of a woodcut by Edward Whymper; on the second page, a full-page photo of the mountain, followed by a two-page essay with further photos and, occasionally, a double-page photo spread. The essays are mainly historical, with a smattering of pure description and personal reminiscence thrown in. But it is the standard of production that really strikes one, with high quality art paper and excellent reproduction.

### **Mountaineering Women. Stories by Early Climbers**

Edited by David Mayel

*Texas A & M University Press, 1994, ppix + 184, npq*

After an Introduction giving a general history of women and climbing, the editor has selected sixteen women mountaineers, ranging from Mrs Cole in 1850 to Elizabeth Stark in 1955, and gives us excerpts from their writings. Whilst the expected 'stars', such as Meta Brevoort, Fanny Bullock Workman and Dorothy Pilley, are represented, the selection also includes lesser-known names, including Mrs E P Jackson, Lily Bristow and Gwen Moffat. The book makes very pleasant reading and it is good to be reminded again of these writings, many of which are scattered in obscure publications. There is a good selected bibliography.

**Walking and Climbing in the Alps. A Guide to the Finest Routes**

Stefano Ardito

*Swan Hill Press, 1995, pp176, £16.95*

This is the English translation of the book originally published in Italy in 1994. It is quite a lavish production, featuring eighteen multi-day walks through Alpine regions from the Vercors to the Carnic Alps, but it should be stressed that these are walks. Whilst it is mentioned that you can, for instance, climb the Gran Paradiso as an 'extra' on one walk, the book is not really about climbing as such. Well-established excursions, such as the Tour de Mont Blanc, are here, but so also are many lesser-known walks such as that from Salzburg to the Wilder Kaiser. Each walk has a general description, with a map and a day-by-day itinerary, and all are illustrated with numerous excellent photographs.

**Trekking in the Himalayas. A Guide to the Finest Routes**

Stefano Ardito

*Swan Hill Press, 1995, pp168, £16.95*

This is the partner to Stefan Ardito's book on walking in the Alps. It is produced to the same high standard, with excellent photographs. Fifteen treks in the Himalaya are detailed and, whilst many are well known (like the treks to the Annapurna Sanctuary and the Langtang valley), others, such as those around Nanga Parbat or to the base of Chomolhari, will be fresh to many. This is a book to help you plan fresh ventures, or dream of past successes.

**A Necklace of Slings**

Dave Gregory, with illustrations by Malc Baxter

*The Ernest Press, 1995, ppx+182, £15.00*

Dave Gregory has been climbing and writing for over 40 years, many of his stories having appeared in club journals and climbing magazines. This is a collection of 38 of his short stories, ranging from factual accounts of days on the hills to ghost stories, comic stories and tales of vengeance. There have been a number of compilations of climbing stories published in recent years, and this one can be ranked among the best. The drawings by Malc Baxter add greatly to the book.

**Fear and Fascination. The 100 Best Rock Climbs  
in England and Wales**

Geoffrey Odds

*The Crowood Press, 1994, pp160, £18.95*

The cover note states that this is 'a rock-climbing book with a difference', but in fact it is similar to many others, with roughly a page of general description to a climb and rather flat black and white photographs. Although the selection is interesting and idiosyncratic, it is annoying that all the other information about the climbs, including where they are located, is relegated to the end of the book.

**Wolfgang Güllich. Life in the Vertical**

Tileman Hepp

*Boulder On the Edge, 1994, pp144, £29*

This is a large-format memorial volume to Wolfgang Güllich, the outstanding German climber, who was killed in a car accident in 1992. This English edition has been edited by Ed Douglas in a sumptuous production, with many photographs of the subject in incredible situations. A 'must' for aficionados of hard rock climbing.

**Forbidden Mountains:**

**The Most Beautiful Mountains in Russia and Central Asia**

Paola Pozzolini Sicouri and Vladimir Kopylov

*Indutech spa, Via Camperio 9, Milan, Italy, 1995*

This is an excellent new book on climbing in Russia and Central Asia. It has sections on all the main climbing areas in the former Soviet Union, with route descriptions of classic routes and some useful topos. It is highly recommended.

The Alpine Club Library also received the following books during 1995:

**Everest. A Trekkers' Guide** Kev Reynolds.

*Cicerone Press, 1995, pp176, £8.99*

**Aconcagua. A Climbing Guide.** R J Secor

*The Mountaineers/Cordee, 1994, pp140, \$15.95*

**L'Alpinisme: Un Jeu? Les Notions de Jeu, de Libre et de Nature  
dans le Discours de l'Alpinisme** David Belden.

*L'Harmattan, 1994, pp126, npq*

**The Central Highlands** Peter Hodgkiss. *SMC, 1994, pp x+210, £17.95*

**Climbs of the Cordillera Blanca of Peru** David Sharman. *Whizzo Climbs, 1995, pp124, £14.99*

**Rock Climbs in Majorca, Ibiza & Tenerife** Chris Craggs.  
*Cicerone Press, 1995, pp232, £10.99*

**The Climbing Guide to Scotland** Tom Prentice.  
*Crowood Press, 1995, pp206, £14.99*

**Swanage and Portland** Nigel Coe.  
*Climbers' Club, 1995, pp220+308, £14.95*

**Winter Climbs. Ben Nevis & Glencoe** Alan Kimber.  
*Cicerone, 1994, pp224, £14.99*

**One Foot in the Pennines. 38 walks in the Peak, Yorkshire Dales, North & South Pennines & Northumberland** Roland Smith  
*David & Charles, 1994, pp160, £14.95*

**Lorenzino Cosson – I Colori Del Monte Bianco.** Monograph No 100 of the Museo Nazionale della Montagna 'Duca degli Abruzzi'.  
*CAI (Torino), 1995, pp70*

**A Guide to Rock Climbing in Hong Kong** B J Heard.  
*Cicerone, 1995, pp128, £12.99*

**6194, Denali Solo** Ed Davack.  
*Ed Davack Photography, 1995, pp168, \$12.00 (£7.95)*

**Peaks. Seeking High Ground Across the Continents** Richard Bangs.  
Photos: Pamela Roberson. *Taylor Publishing Co, Dallas / Gazelle Book Services, Lancaster, 1994, pp xvi+182, £30.99*

**Walk Guide Southwest of Ireland** Seán Ó Súilleabhain.  
*Gill & Macmillan, 1995, pp iv+161, £5.99 (3rd edition)*

**The Crag Guide to England & Wales** (Revised edition) David Jones.  
*Crowood, 1995, pp240, £12.99*

**Zermatt. A Portrait Series guide to Zermatt and its Culture**  
*E Upton-Eichenberger, 1995, pp206, £12.99*

**South Devon & Dartmoor** Nick White. *Cordee, 1995, pp382, £12.95*

**The Grand Tour of Monte Rosa. A Circuit of the Pennine Alps, Vols I & II** C J Wright. *Cicerone Press, 1995, pp208 & 216, £14.99 each*

**Walking in the Central Italian Alps. Vinschgau, Ortler, Adamello and their Parks** Gillian Price. *Cicerone Press, 1995, pp218, £10.99*

**The Boardman Tasker Omnibus** (Joe Tasker, *Savage Arena* and *Everest the Cruel Way*; Peter Boardman, *The Shining Mountain* and *Sacred Summits*) Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp c900, £14.99

**Walking in the Tarentaise & Beaufortain Alps** J W Akitt. *Cicerone Press, 1995, pp208, £9.99*

**The Mountains of Bulgaria. A Walker's Companion** Julian Perry *Cordee, 1995, pp xii+144, £9.95*

**Bibliografia di Speleologia e Carsismo del Trentino – Alto Adige** Paolo Zambotto. *Biblioteca della Montagna, 1995, pp176, npq*

**Writings on Rock** Kym Martindale. *Private pamphlet, 50p*

**Mountain Weather. A Guide for Skiers and Hillwalkers** William Burroughs. *Crowood Press, 1995, pp112, £10.99*

**On Top of Africa. The Climbing of Kilimanjaro and Mt Kenya** Neville Shulman. *Element, 1995, ppx+98, £7.99*

**Mountain Tables. Tables of the mountain and hill summits of England and Wales** Michael Dewey. *Constable, 1995, pp396, £12.95*

**Widow's Peak.** Gillian Linscott  
*Little, Brown & Co, 1994, viii + 210, £14.99* A novel