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# Book Reviews 1989

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

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Chris Bonington – Mountaineer

Chris Bonington

*Diadem Books, 1989, pp192, £17.95*

*Mountaineer* is not really another book by Chris Bonington. It is Chris Bonington redesigned into a sumptuous Christmas package by his long-time editor at Hodder & Stoughton, Margaret Body, and Hodder's new pictorial collaborator, Ken Wilson of Diadem. For once, as Wilson shouts triumphantly in his introductory note, text is subordinated to pictures; and he has done Bonington proud, with a massive selection of colour photos, many of them not previously published, crisply printed in good deep colour saturation on a large-format double-page layout.

The whole Bonington career, spanning over 30 years, is on display, and the sheer variety and excitement of that career are summed up in the opening shots. For the dust-jacket we have a stunning view past a silhouetted figure on the Ogre, out over the Sim Gang glacier and Snow Lake, to the endless array of Hispar peaks beyond. On the back-cover a series of action portraits shows Bonington at different stages of his career. Inside the covers, the frontispiece is another glorious view from the Ogre. Then, as a backdrop for acknowledgements, comes a double spread of the NE ridge of Everest with the bleak vastness of Tibet beyond. Turn over to the contents page and you find what might be a classic Alpine ridge but is in fact the more esoteric Mt Cook massif in New Zealand. Opposite Wilson's introduction there is a dynamic shot of Haston on a steel-cold winter's day on the Grandes Jorasses; then we are off on the first chapter, 'Foundation', introduced by the soft grey light of a summer's day on the N face of Scafell, with just enough contrast to bring out all the architectural detail.

But what of the words? Each of the eight chapters opens with a general essay, followed by more detailed accounts of specific climbs, adventures and expeditions. The scope of Bonington's career – from self-conscious novice in North Wales to pushy alpinist, determined photo-journalist, big-expedition impresario and ultimately fulfilled Old Man of the Mountains, with all the world's ranges at his fingertips – is intrinsically fascinating, but to my mind this particular summing-up is not nearly as compelling as earlier books like *I Chose to Climb*. This is almost inevitable in a pictorial 'coffee-table' book and I suspect that most readers, like me, will tend to skip the text and concentrate on the picture captions, for this is where the real meat of the information lies. Take as an example the opening of Chapter 7, 'Snatched Opportunities'. There is a

magnificent full-page picture of the E face of the Moose's Tooth in Alaska, supported by an extended caption packed with succinct historical and topographical information; the general blurb, by comparison, is slightly bland.

*Mountaineer* makes no claim to be a literary masterpiece, but it is a visual triumph. All but 80 of the several hundred photos are by Bonington himself and, although he is not quite in the same class as, say, Galen Rowell, he is highly competent. His spell as a professional photo-journalist, covered in one of the book's chapters, clearly taught him the discipline to record everything. On the Ogre he shows just how hard that final summit tower was and, broken ribs notwithstanding, he gets the vital shot of Scott abseiling on his knees through the storm, which is worth 100 beautiful views. Alone on Mt Vinson he managed to get the necessary documentary coverage, and his shots of the summit ridge of Everest are among the finest published.

The sheer bulk of good photographs is a tribute to the success of Bonington's career; but a picture album on this scale requires skilful selection, editing and designing. Few people could have made such a good job of it as Ken Wilson, who uses the double-page layout to build up a picture story, working on the principle that big mountain views merit large reproduction while people and incidents can be fitted into smaller spaces. Thus the terrifying grandeur of the Nuptse-Lhotse wall gets a double-page spread, and a previously unpublished shot of the Dru W face – a unique view in a special light capturing fully the architecture of the face – makes a breathtaking full-page introduction to the Alpine chapter. When Bonington's pictures don't come up to scratch or fresh variety is called for, Wilson uses other people's efforts – for instance Nick Estcourt's unusual shot of the Frêne Pillars.

Wilson knows how to present mountains and climbs at their best; but he has not, thank God, confined us to an endless procession of beautiful mountains. He has often been accused of lacking a sense of humour, but there is nothing humourless about this book for, giving the mountains life and meaning, there are people – people like Tom Patey using his North Wall hammer to test the helmet on the head of a young Sandhurst-fresh Bonington, and Joe Brown grinning in his own ridiculous-looking home-made helmet. There is the classic picture of Jim Fotheringham perched high on Menlungtse with the *Financial Times*, there is Blashford-Snell, pith-helmeted, leading the invasion of the Blue Nile, and a priceless shot of Whillans, *en route* for Patagonia, winning the ship's fancy-dress competition in flamboyant drag.

The humour is sometimes tinged with nostalgia for an earlier, more innocent era. I can't help envying Bonington and Whillans their sparse equipment and comfortably weathered jumpers and breeches on the Central Tower of Paine when I compare them with the grotesque 'designer' gear of today but, as well as nostalgia, there is real sadness for lost friends, particularly Nick Estcourt, whose death in the K2 avalanche is graphically chronicled, and Ian Clough, who died on Annapurna. The photograph of his funeral, with all those blank, shocked faces gathered around the roughly-dug grave, is a stark reminder of the risks of Himalayan climbing. Some people might call it voyeuristic, but I think it was brave of Bonington to include it in a book which really does try to cover the total experience of mountaineering.

My only criticism of Wilson's design is that just occasionally, faced with such a wealth of good material, he clutters the page with too many pictures. He is also, perhaps, over-fond of the inset box. For instance, one magnificent double-page spread of Everest's NE ridge, with the dynamic sweep of the N ridge, North Col and Changtse in the background, is spoiled by an unnecessary inset climbing detail. However, these are minor personal niggles, for Hodder & Stoughton's first venture into the pictorial big-format market is overall an outstanding success. I suspect that the *enfant terrible* from Diadem used a lot of bullying and cajoling to bring about that success, but in the end it is Bonington himself, with a little help from his friends, who provided the raw material. There can be few people in the world who could produce such a wealth and variety of mountaineering photographs. My own favourite section of the book is the description of the Ogre ascent, which epitomizes all that is best in Himalayan climbing, plus the uninvited drama of the accident and the epic descent. But all the chapters are good and I felt at the end that, if I had experienced just a quarter of those climbs and adventures, I would feel very happy.

*Stephen Venables*

### Everest Kangshung Face

Stephen Venables

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, pp236, £14.95*

Today Everest has almost as many routes up it as an Alpine peak, has its own guidebook with grades and marked topos and is attempted by around 20 expeditions a year, almost all of them by the classic, existing routes. This made the achievement of Robert Anderson's small expedition to the Kangshung face all the greater and the more interesting. Tucked away on the E side of Everest, away from the glare of the traverse by the South Col and N ridge routes, televised live by a huge Chinese-Nepalese-Japanese expedition, in effect they had the mountain to themselves with all the challenge, fascination, at times fun, at times terror of making a technically difficult new route up the huge and complex face leading to the South Col. It was a classic, small adventurous expedition in the very best sense.

*Everest, Kangshung Face* is a well-written story of an exceptional mountaineering achievement and yet, in reading it, I was confronted by the problem that faces all expedition books and one which I have grappled with all too often – the unchanging pattern that expeditions follow: the initial concept or invitation, the preparations and approach, the build-up to the climb and then the climb itself. It's difficult to escape this structure; depart from the chronological story and everything tends to become confusing. The variables, of course, are the people concerned, and the strength of their characterization and interaction is what holds the attention.

Venables' portrayal of his fellow climbers is both affectionate and frank. On a surface level he captures the minor but very important irritations of expedition life, his anger at Ed Webster's constant halts to take pictures and the

different styles and backgrounds of the climbers, but he doesn't get into their personalities or feelings. At the end of the book there is a slightly cardboard-cut-out quality to Ed Webster, Robert Anderson and Paul Teare, which is frustrating since they are obviously strong, colourful characters. I longed to know more of just how Paul Teare and the others felt when he was forced to descend from the South Col with suspected altitude sickness before their bid for the summit, more of the feelings of Anderson and Webster on that desperate descent.

It is perhaps that splendid British reticence and self-containment which might have limited his portrayal of the other team members, that helped Stephen rise to the extremes of crisis on his descent from the summit of Everest, firstly to join the others on the South Col and then in reversing their route back to Advanced Base. His description, both factual and on the level of personal feeling, is very revealing. His warmth for his fellow team-members and his honesty about the essential sense of self-preservation that must take over in an extreme crisis, when the human body has been stretched so far that it can only care for itself, come through strongly. There is also that quality which the lay person must find very difficult to understand – of slow-motion lassitude and lack of sense of crisis at altitude in what was obviously an extremely dangerous situation. In the heat of the sun, inside a warm sleeping-bag, it is all too easy to be seduced into prevarication, to snatch that extra minute of rest which so easily slips into hours and perhaps eternity.

The book is superbly illustrated and the pictures, particularly of the lower part of the Kangshung face, capture just how challenging and difficult their route was, all the more remarkable that it was put up by this tiny four-man team. It was, however, probably the necessity of working away at the lower slopes for so long which gave them the high level of acclimatization that enabled Venables to reach the summit, and Anderson and Webster to get so close.

The background history of the mountain is skilfully interwoven into the thread of the story and the appendix, on climbing at extreme altitude without supplementary oxygen, is a gift to any researcher. Apart from the frustrating niggles of wanting to see that little bit more into the minds of the four climbers, this is an excellent account of an outstanding mountain achievement, reminding us yet again how thin is the dividing line between staying alive – in this case at a price of lost toes and fingers – and disaster when going for the world's highest mountains.

*Chris Bonington*

### **Climbers**

M John Harrison

*Gollancz, 1989, pp222, £12.95*

I didn't like the look of this book when I first opened it at random during the prize-presentation ceremony (Boardman-Tasker Award 1989). I imagine that was the first, and last, reaction of many of the hostile reviewers. One climber wrote in a national newspaper that *Climbers* is not about climbing. Well, the



book does break a mould. And it is precisely because it is only 10 per cent about climbing that it is such a good book. This is the first book which really shows *why* people climb, and to do that it has to devote 90 per cent to their backgrounds.

The writing is very good throughout. Urban and natural landscapes merge into one another, as is typical of North England. In a 12-month span (with many flashbacks) we are taken through the lives (and one death) of half a dozen young male misfits in Thatcher's Britain, whose work ranges from porn-shops to steeplejacking. This is not a world of the Alpine Club: there are no Alps, only quarries filled with rubbish and climbing-walls filled with clouds of chalk. The great, filthy British Public is everywhere, as a Greek chorus exuding unlikely bits of dialogue. The relation of the climbers to ordinary life is well-pictured in the funeral scene, where Sankey's ghastly sister and brother-in-law show absolutely no understanding of Sankey's drives, thinking him an idiot when he is merely a misfit.

The book is rather slow at the start, and suffers at times from overwriting (too many similes and adjectives), but soon the story and style become clearer. Harrison is obviously a writer who uses a notebook rather than a word-processor: there are none of those awkward breaks of flow which come from word-processing, and the text is packed with detailed notes on urban and rural living, and vibrates with pop-video humour, convincing rock-sequences and well-researched medical details. The episode of the escaped children who live inside the carcasses of dead sheep rivals Salman Rushdie's prison-hospital scene as a satire of our society. I put down the book knowing more about what makes rock-jocks tick. I found no misprints, and only one factual error: *Samson* was not written by Menlove Edwards but *about* him.

Of course, this is a modern novel by a seasoned author, and some readers will have a little difficulty with its method. The 'plot' is understated, even non-existent. It's not clear, for instance, who is sleeping with whose wife – until you have read the whole book. But there are plenty of shining facets to sustain any reader who may feel deprived of narrative: the recurring dream-weather-mirror images, and the focus on fingers and hands, the touching behaviour of Mick who, though 'he always kept his pans filthy', does the laundry and tidies away the pornographic mags when his friend is killed. There is Normal (Norman to his wife) and his 'rock-garden'. There is gentle satire of us VS oldsters who, concedes the central character, are the backbone of the sport. There is delicious interplay of sunlight and shadow, both of rock-climbs and in the bedroom. There is Mike's wife Pauline with her face like a 'becalmed sail', whom he stands up at a rendezvous in King's Cross after separation. And, overall, there are the moors and dales of a far-away country called the North of England.

Ronnie Wathen

### Scotland's Winter Mountains

Martin Moran

*David and Charles, 1988, pp311, £14.95*

### A Century of Scottish Mountaineering

Ed W D Brooker

*Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1988, ppxii + 372, £15.95*

Scotland has a marvellous wealth of mountaineering adventure available, varying from uncharted summer rock-climbs in remote glens to the thoroughly alpine challenges of the winter season. These two books are a celebration of Scottish mountaineering. *Scotland's Winter Mountains*, by Martin Moran, is an enthusiast's guide to the present and future winter scene; *A Century of Scottish Mountaineering*, edited by Bill Brooker (an anthology of articles taken from the *SMC Journal*), is a homage to the past. Both books are well worth buying; I had purchased both before being asked to review them!

Martin Moran – well known for traversing all the Munro summits during a winter season, while also being an experienced alpinist and Himalayan climber – is now a guide living in Torridon. He is clearly devoted to Scottish winter climbing in all its aspects. This enthusiasm comes over very strongly, perhaps too strongly at times as some of the points are made rather repetitively. The book is essentially a conglomerate of an instruction book, a guidebook, a history, a contemporary commentary and a handbook of Scottish mountain weather. The weather sections are particularly good and, as in all the chapters, are illustrated by short essays describing the reality behind the theory. I liked this personal touch, especially as I share his awe of, and strange attraction to, the worst that a full-blown storm can throw at you. The instructional sections on winter walking, climbing and navigation are admirably clear and full of useful tips. My only complaints are about the dual use of imperial and metric units, which sometimes makes the text unreadable, and his complete underestimation of the usefulness of an altimeter. Properly used – by being re-set at points of known altitude during the day – an altimeter provides the easiest way to navigate in foul conditions and is far more dependable than the suggestion of counting steps. More specialist sections on modern mixed climbing, ski-mountaineering, langlauf skiing and meteorology are contributed by expert guest authors, and the whole is rounded off with appendices on history and much other useful information. This superbly illustrated book is for the committed winter mountaineer, the novice and all those simply interested in modern Scottish winter climbing.

*A Century of Scottish Mountaineering* is a collection of articles taken from the *SMC Journal* since its foundation 100 years ago. They illustrate all the varied aspects of the Scottish scene from the earliest days of the SMC up to recent times. The emphasis is on the earlier years, which perhaps reflects the current reluctance of the SMC to embrace modern trends, or possibly indicates that the dedication required to aspire to contemporary standards diminishes skill with the pen. With sections devoted to winter climbing, rock-climbing, hill-walking and skiing, as well as obituaries, accident reports, accounts from foreigners and of foreign parts, and contemplative and fictional pieces, the book has something for everyone. I particularly liked the early photographs and articles; the energy and enthusiasm of the pioneers are obvious. This anthology ably illustrates (apart from the frequently poor typesetting) a past of which the SMC is justifiably proud.

If there is one criticism of this anthology, it is of the title. The SMC has never had a monopoly of climbing and exploratory activity in Scotland and thus the true history can never be culled only from the pages of its journal. Unless the SMC can attract into membership a higher proportion of the current activists, the next anthology may be more a history of the SMC than of mountaineering in Scotland.

Roger Everett

### Over the Rim of the World. Freya Stark, Selected Letters

Ed Caroline Moorehead

*John Murray/Michael Russell, 1988, pp404, £19.95*

The letters selected by Caroline Moorehead from the eight volumes edited by her mother and herself cover Dame Freya Stark's life from 1914 to 1980 and range from New York to India. Most reflect her as explorer, and Arab protagonist, in the Arab and Persian lands – over the rim of the Mediterranean world. As befits an Honorary Member of our Club, a number of them disclose glimpses of her intense love of mountain country. The high air acted like champagne over her frail and often suffering body. Her doctor described her constitution as 'an insult to the medical profession'!

Her guided ascent, in July 1924, of the Macugnaga face of Monte Rosa by the 'Cannellone' (Marinelli Couloir) route was the second ascent by a woman of this long and dangerous, though not particularly difficult, route (12 hours from the Marinelli hut, overnight at Capanna Margherita, 12 hours down by the Loccie glacier). The enthusiasm, recorded at the time in her letter to Robert Stark, is reflected 40 years later in her contribution to the *Ladies' Alpine Club Journal* of 1964.

Freya Stark's letters from Persia include her exploration of the Valleys of the Assassins in 1931, which involved some rock-work, and a vivid description of camp at 5200m near Takht-i-Suleiman. Though she did not reach the summit, she corrected much of the topography of the area.

In 1956 she was following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, wading round the foot of Mount Climax (between Antalya and Phaselis in SW Turkey) and wandering through the mountains of Lycia. She did not scruple to describe the Bithynian Olympus as the 'dullest mountain I have ever seen', but she must be excused since presumably she did not see the eastern precipices.

A brief visit to Simla in 1943 gave her a first glimpse of the Himalaya, and elicited a statement of her mountain faith: 'No human work ever moves me one fraction so deeply as the sight of nature, but especially of mountains.' She was not to revisit the Himalaya until November 1970 when Jimmy Roberts arranged for her, then aged 77, to ride, much of it up those 2000 steps, 'to the crossing of the Himalayan divide between Annapurna and Daulagiri' (sic) – presumably Ghorapani – where she wrote, 'Nothing that I can ever tell you will describe the awe and majesty of this approach, the last terrestrial footsteps to infinity.' And at the age of 83 this intrepid old lady was rafting down the Euphrates in Turkey.

One cannot but admire Dame Freya's indomitable spirit and her capacity for making friends which carried her through bouts of ill-health in lonely places; and one could wish for more glimpses of her mountain experience.

*Edward Peck*

### **Africa's Mountains of the Moon**

Guy Yeoman

*Elm Tree Books, 1989, pp176, £25*

Any new book on the marvellous mountain ranges of Africa's Western Rift Valley is welcome. A volume so beautifully illustrated is doubly so, even at the price which has risen by £5 between printing and publication.

A couple of chapters are devoted to the Virunga Volcanoes, but the bulk is given over to the author's accounts of his several visits to the Ruwenzori in the past decade. The impression given is of a rather high suffering-to-success ratio, even allowing for the capacity of the Ruwenzori (and Uganda) to impose the former on visitors.

The central theme, however, is ecological rather than alpine. Yeoman has a mission – to obtain the protection of full National Park and World Heritage Site status for the region's exuberant vegetation, and to promote the interests of the Konjo people who are the greatest threat to it.

To advance the former he organized an expedition around the talents of the botanical artist Christabel King. A dozen or so of her superb illustrations grace the book, and the full collection must make an eloquent plea for the preservation of this unique flora.

Yeoman's text does not approach this high standard. It reads easily, but has too much sugar and not enough spice for my taste. I found the use of conversation as a device to introduce aspects of the area's history irritating, especially in the introduction where a conversation of 45 years ago is presented as verbatim. He should also be careful to get his history correct. On p77, his account confuses the two Poles who in 1939 made the first ascent of the E ridge of Margherita with the three Poles who in 1943 discovered and named the Irene Lakes after the wives of two of them and made the first ascent of the Margherita glacier.

Yeoman has a quixotic tendency to invest the ordinary with an heroic character. When, for example, he sends a messenger down the Mobuku valley to Ibanda, he hails him on his return as a young Philippiides. The round trip took about 12 hours. The guidebook gives a time for 'a lightly laden, fit walker' of eleven and a half hours! A good effort by the lad covering in one day what would normally take two, but hardly of epic quality.

There is the same impression of rather tenuous contact with reality in the final chapter. His analysis of the problem is sound if commonplace. There is a population crisis in Africa which will, unchecked, continue to devastate the inhabitable areas of the continent. Overseas aid has increased rather than reduced the problem. His solution is pure Alice in Wonderland – a sort of sexual set-aside scheme backed by an un-family allowance financed by the diversion of

funds from existing aid schemes. There could be some difficulty in persuading the aid-giving governments and agencies to divert funds from Save the Children to Prevent the Children! That, however, will be nothing compared with the difficulties faced in getting it accepted and operating honestly in Africa, where birth control is already regularly denounced and widely believed to be a colonialist, racist plot.

Even if the scheme were in being and effective, demographic momentum will still destroy the Ruwenzori montane forests. As Yeoman's map on p31 shows, much has already gone, destroyed by shifting cultivation on the Uganda side. From the evidence of the map, the strict regime of the National Park in Zaire would seem to be giving some protection. It is here that aid money could be used most effectively. The best that can be hoped for on the Ugandan section of the range is the preservation of the vegetation of the higher zones. Even the low pressure of the present tourist traffic is depleting fuel supplies. It would be an elegant irony, however, if some measure of conservation were to result from the discouragingly high prices charged by Ruwenzori Mountaineering Services – set up on the advice of Guy Yeoman.

It might be possible to finance and administer the protection of a limited area. A single valley, not linked to the present tour circuit, could be established as a human-free sanctuary. The remote Lamy valley would be ideal. All the vegetation zones are represented; Yeoman's account of his descent suggests that there is little if any settlement in the valley itself as yet. It is adjacent to the Zaire Park, so there would be the benefit of adequate space for the wider-ranging animals. It is achievable.

*John Temple*

### Fragile Edge

Maria Coffey

*Chatto & Windus, 1989, pp183, £12.95*

*Fragile Edge* tells the story of Maria Coffey's love affair with Joe Tasker until he died on Everest with Pete Boardman. After the death of the two climbers, Maria and Hilary Boardman make a pilgrimage to Everest Base Camp to mourn and bury their dead loved ones.

The task of burying the dead was in some ways more clear-cut for Hilary Boardman, in the sense that her life with Pete had had the joy of togetherness and mutual respect. Unhappily for Maria, and perhaps unhappily also for the first half of the book, her relationship with Joe had not had a chance to become established before he died. Maria writes somewhat awkwardly about how she comes to realize that she has, in fact, fallen in love with Joe. This makes her feel uncomfortable because she feels herself losing control – a classic response to love and the reason that Joe, like others before him, had not wanted to 'commit' himself. What follows is a touching if wearisome account of the stereotypical situation where she sits at home waiting for him to come back from his all-consuming adventure; what she risks is the memory of his loss; what he risks, but will never know about, is being whisked away in a puff of snow. In her case this was to happen before the romance had had a chance to blossom.

Stories of unrequited love, or love lost, are less satisfying to read because they speak of impasse or distress. For this reason it is, ironically (and respecting the tragedy of Joe and Pete's death), liberating to reach the stage in the book when Hilary and Maria themselves go climbing. One can't help feeling that Maria should have adopted the classic male response to raised emotional levels and displaced them by taking to the hills earlier. Her account of climbing in the Alps with Hilary, as training prior to making the pilgrimage to Everest to pay homage to two great and loved climbers, was the most exhilarating part of the book.

The most moving and courageous part of the story of lost love was the account of the journey to Everest Base Camp. It is well recognized that a necessary part of the grieving process is to be able, if possible, to see the body but, failing that, to know as much as possible about the circumstances surrounding the death. For those who wait on Himalayan climbers, the arena of death is an unknown, unless the non-climbers themselves go there and try to make sense for themselves of what the magic entails. For Maria, this was to enter a terrain which had been placed beyond her reach by Joe's possessiveness and exclusivity. His tendency to mystify the climbing game made it all the harder for her to get to grips with the reality of the situation. Hence she is left doubting her right to be trespassing on his 'sacred' ground.

Hilary and Maria tackle the horrendous task of having to come to terms with the death of their lovers head-on. At Hilary's suggestion they make the same journey to Everest as Joe and Pete had done before them. They climb as far as Camp 3, from where they continue to gaze up at the Pinnacles where Joe and Pete were last seen, trying to accept what had happened and begin the process of letting go.

The moment of peace comes with acceptance. 'Sitting by the cairn I realized that I would indeed have to turn calmly away the next morning. Joe was gone, he was no longer moving about the earth . . . I had come to be close, to make my peace with Everest and with him, and now I had to leave accepting all.'

Most obituaries dwell on the glorious moments of the lives of our heroes. Most men of action rest on uneasy ground when it comes to looking at their relationships with women. A lot of relationships founder on the fields of adventure. For this reason, reading about them brings more bathos than catharsis. But the vicissitudes of love form the sub-plot to the dramas of the adventurers and need to be told, if only to comfort all the future grass-widows of the climbing sisterhood.

*Margaret Urmston and Sheila Harrison*

### At the Sharp End

Paul Nunn

*Unwin Hyman, 1988, ppvi + 202, £14.95*

Paul Nunn is a most diffident rock-writer, with minimum emotion or claptrap. This book is a true record of what it has felt like to have been alive in the link-age between the founding of the Alpine Climbing Group in the postwar period and the more recent split of the mountain world into chalkies and snowgluggers.

The cover-pic portrays an elderly man in red-yellow kids' rompers gingerly eyeing an old-fashioned slab: that is to say, the slab is off-the-vertical, diffident, like the man (Paul Nunn). This is not a book of self-congratulation.

The book's weakness is that it is really only a reprint of articles and reviews. It thus lacks continuity, though he has tried to group subjects chrono/geographically. But the result (no rethinks) means authenticity and honesty.

In a *High* article, November 1987, he recalls the K2 deaths and the ugly literary aftermath:

It is not a pretty literature, and forced me into innovations in method. Each new book was read usually within twenty-four hours of receipt. Post-midnight hours allowed the agonies of the carnage to be tolerated, lubricated by whisky, calibrated in quantities which were intended to anaesthetize. This usually worked – next morning the book was finished, its content assimilated. Feelings took longer, but could at least begin with a new day.

It's a peculiar thing, often noted in recent years, that mountaineering has produced a vast literature out of all apparent proportion to its importance. I have an explanation: the mountains are our country, our home, but we can never possess them. We come down, sit in clubs and stake out our claims in the Kingdom of the Mind. As Nunn says: 'So much time and energy has been expended in such curious ways. Though most things prove senseless at root, a residue of curiosity remains.'

To satisfy our curiosity, Nunn leads us through the years. Yet some things are missing: there is no real account of Don Whillans (Nunn's obituary of Whillans at the time was merely a list of his climbs, and has not been reproduced here), and for a good quote from Joe Brown I had to turn to Peter Gillman's book *In Balance* (Hodder & Stoughton 1989): 'It's not the actual technique – that's easy to keep hold of, though I do get the odd bloody creaking joint. The hard thing is to keep the enthusiasm to drive with. If you get pressure on you it does affect you. But it's not quite as simple as that – you can just go off for no apparent reason at all.'

Yet Nunn's book will be a truer quarry for historians, and there is also some fine avuncular wisdom, as when he castigates 'the use of people's confidences to stab them in the back, and the use of humour without the sympathetic symbiosis, which differentiates it from verbal bullying'.

It remains to be mentioned that the author is an economic historian by trade, and perhaps this explains the book's unusual objectivity.

*Ronnie Wathen*

### High Altitude Medicine and Physiology

Michael Ward, James Milledge and John West  
*Chapman and Hall, London, 1989, pp515, £50.*

Two millennia ago Chinese traders described the Great Headache Mountains as



a formidable obstacle on their route to Europe – arguably the earliest reference to mountain sickness. In high central Asia, Mirza Muhammad Haider lost men and animals to altitude in 1550, and a few decades later Father Jose d'Acosta graphically described his sickness while crossing an Andean pass. But only in the last century – and mostly in the last 30 years – has altitude medicine become a popular and sophisticated discipline to which this book is a major contribution.

The authors 'have been there and done that': all are experienced climbers and scholarly leaders in research. The book is well organized into 31 chapters, the first three of which describe the history, geography and demography of mountainous regions and the physics of the atmosphere. Then follow 16 excellent chapters describing the oxygen transport system from ambient air to lung, to blood, to cell and finally to the mitochondria, with frequent reference to the aberrations caused by oxygen lack. Four excellent chapters deal with the varieties of altitude illness, fleshing out the framework established earlier in the book.

The authors' experience in the real world is evident when they examine disorders due to cold and heat and discuss nutrition, sleep and other problems of the mountain setting. The first chapter deals with the history of man's experience with altitude, and each subsequent section adds important, often amusing accounts of how we have learned what we know today. The whole gamut of human response to lack of oxygen is covered and the synergism of cold and hypoxia is recognized. Unfortunately, injuries due to cold are separated from an excellent discussion of thermal balance and there is little mention of problems due to heat.

An important chapter contrasts man at altitude with man short of oxygen due to illness at sea-level, a fascinating subject suggested by Sir Joseph Barcroft more than 50 years ago which still cries out for more study. A brief chapter outlines problems which should keep one from going to altitude.

The authors also describe what is not known; they recognize issues that are controversial, and though they draw most heavily from their own experience their biases intrude only seldom. Here and there disputed data are advanced as fact, and it is particularly interesting to see how scientists from different countries disagree, mostly in terminology but now and then in fundamentals.

Each chapter is extensively referenced, and the bibliography is generally excellent and up-to-date. Unfortunately the index is totally inadequate.

Despite some minor flaws, this is the definitive and highly readable text about a subject of growing interest and importance.

*Charles Houston*

### **Soldiers and Sherpas. A Taste for Adventure**

Brummie Stokes

*Michael Joseph, 1988, pp250, £14.95*

This book is mainly about soldiers, marginally about Sherpas, and packed with

adventure from beginning to end. It is roughly divided into two halves, the first part dealing with Brummie's boyhood and service in the Greenjackets and SAS, and the second with mountaineering, albeit still mostly in his capacity as a soldier.

We start with Brummie's boyhood and youth as a member of a large and loving family living in humble circumstances in the suburbs of Birmingham. During this period, often as a member of a gang of toughies, Brummie performs many daredevil feats in response to challenges by his companions, is in trouble more than once with the police, and when in a serious fix attempts to commit suicide. He always wants to climb and, inspired by Hillary and Tenzing, soon teaches himself rock-climbing on local rocks. He always has Everest in view as his ultimate goal, and he always wants to be a soldier and to join the SAS but, finding that three years' army service is a prerequisite, he enlists in the Greenjackets at the age of 17½, to qualify for eligibility.

Discovering that all his applications for the SAS are being destroyed at source instead of being forwarded, he deserts from Northern Ireland, is caught, escapes and presents himself at the SAS selection headquarters in Hereford. The SAS are sufficiently discerning to let him go ahead in spite of the Greenjackets' efforts to get him back for punishment. After a setback due to a tiff with a sergeant he is accepted in the SAS, and continues his apprenticeship as a climber in North Wales and the Alps. Then follows service in Borneo, Malaya, Hong Kong and Guyana and finally in Dhofar where, because (as he says) of the incompetence of a young officer, he becomes exposed to the fire of the enemy, gets hit in the leg and suffers the removal of a kneecap and other damage. Enough to end the climbing career of a normal person, you would think – but not so for Brummie. Soon he is in Nepal, a member of an Army Mountaineering Association attempt on Nuptse. Selected with his pal Bronco Lane and two other climbers to attack the summit after the first summit party have fallen to their deaths, he is trapped in his tent at the top camp for two days and buried under snow. After digging their way out Brummie and Bronco descend safely, but the other pair also fall to their deaths.

A few years later, as members of a joint British Army and Royal Nepalese Army expedition, Brummie and Bronco climb Everest, but are benighted at 8500m on the descent and Brummie loses all his toes from frostbite. Curtains to climbing for Brummie?

But no – after painstakingly and painfully rehabilitating himself and participating (still in the SAS) in the Falklands War, this amazing man is back on Everest as leader of a party to climb the N face, having first climbed Mount McKinley, as much to test himself as the rest of the party. An avalanche at their Advanced Base Camp carried them half a mile down the mountain; one of the climbers is killed and three others injured and Brummie has his neck broken (a hairline fracture). Undeterred even by this, he is back on Everest in 1986 to lead a strong team of (mostly) civilians in an attempt on the NE ridge, defeated by high winds. Returning in 1988 with a similarly constituted party, he suffers a series of cerebral oedemas and has to be evacuated to Kathmandu. (The party goes on to surmount all the difficulties of the NE ridge, but is deprived of the summit by the weather.)

And there we leave this indomitable man. The book is written in a down-to-earth straightforward style and the writer emerges as a tough and rough-cut person, full of initiative and obviously a great organizer and leader. There is a touch of self-pride and superiority, wholly justified, and a strong contempt for sham and inefficiency. All in all, this enthralling and unusual book should not be missed.

Ashley Greenwood

### Mein Weg in den Himalaya. Biographie eines Bergsteigers

Karl Herrligkoffer

Pietsch Verlag, Stuttgart, 1989, pp280, npq.

This autobiography by a well-known controversial name in German mountaineering is extensive. Born in 1916 of a family of modest means in Bavaria, he lost both parents at an early age and was brought up by his aunt. At the age of 18 he learnt of the death of his half-brother Willy Merkl, while leading an expedition on Nanga Parbat. This affected him deeply and is the key to his many Himalayan expeditions, which he regarded in the nature of a pilgrimage. He was, incidentally, upset by Eric Roberts' book *Welzenbach's Climbs* (1980), which he felt cast unwarranted aspersions on Willy Merkl's leadership.

He had many years of medical experience, including research in high-altitude medicine, which was to serve him in good stead. His philosophy on mountaineering, described at some length, sets out the importance of extended physical and mental effort to offset the problems of everyday life. *Ich klettere, also lebe ich.*

His series of Himalayan expeditions was beset by financial problems from the start in the 1950s. The Bavarian government and the German Alpine Club were not forthcoming with financial support, and in 1954 he complained of a press campaign against him as not being fit to be a leader. Nevertheless, his Willy Merkl Memorial Expedition to Nanga Parbat did succeed in 1953, with Hermann Buhl soloing to the top. Over the following 30 years he was in some 20 Himalayan expeditions with varying success, the highlights being Nanga Parbat Rupal face in 1970, Everest in 1972, Kangchenjunga in 1980, and K2 in 1986 in his 70th year.

The book has good photographs. The expeditions are not strictly chronological and tend to be somewhat blow-by-blow accounts. The most remarkable thing of all, however, is that there is no mention of the acrimonious dispute in the climbing press which followed the successful ascent of the Rupal face of Nanga Parbat by the brothers Reinhold and Günther Messner on his expedition in 1970 – no mention of the 'misunderstanding' as to whether Reinhold should make the final bid for the summit 'against Herrligkoffer's instructions'. The account only relates to discovery of the Messner brothers after their descent.

Peter Ledeboer

### The Alps

Albrecht von Haller (trans. Stanley Mason)

Walter Amstutz de Clivo Press, 1987, pp84, limited edition

This slim but elegantly produced quarto volume, in its soft covers and protective slip case, comes to us from our revered Honorary Member and Swiss publisher Walter Amstutz, and what a nice addition to the Alpine Club Library it is.

The main purpose of the book is the publication of a modern English translation of Albrecht von Haller's famous poem on 'The Alps'. The translation is printed alongside Haller's German text, and is preceded by an interesting note on the difficulties of the translation by Stanley Mason, the translator.

But not the least interesting contribution to this book is Professor Karl S Guthke's introductory biographical essay on Haller, who was a very remarkable man in his day. A poet in early life, he became famous through his poem *Die Alpen*. But later on he became renowned as a physician, anatomist, botanist and general scientist. It has been claimed that he was perhaps one of the last men of 'universal learning'. He visited England in 1727, where he eventually became so esteemed that both George II and George III tried to persuade him to come and live there.

Haller's poem *Die Alpen* was epoch-making because he was the first Swiss poet to praise the beauties of his native country and to forget about just 'beauty, horror and immensity'. Some years later an English lady, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, did the same thing in a rather more lyrical but much less famous poem, 'The Passage of St Gothard'. At this point, I have to confess that I am not qualified to appreciate *Die Alpen* in German. But Mason's translation, which is the main purpose of this publication, is what I am reviewing and I must say that I read it with considerable pleasure. Haller conjures up some beautiful pastoral images of life in the Alps, but rather spoils this by some boring moralizing about the wickedness of city as opposed to pastoral life. He would have us hark back to the golden age, as Rousseau was to do later. I have to admit that in spite of fine passages in the translation of this poem I am unable to become enthusiastic about it; it appears to me to be somewhat pedestrian. Somehow or other, like much of Pope, it seems to miss out a good deal on the true poetic spark of a Milton, or a Wordsworth, in spite of a superficial resemblance, perhaps, to 'The Prelude'.

Maybe it would not be out of place to compare Haller's poem with the work of one of those many highly competent topographical watercolour artists of the eighteenth century, admirable in their way but lacking the inspiration of a J R Cozens, whom Constable apostrophized as 'all poetry'.

Not the least interesting part of this beautifully produced book is its illustrations, mostly from copper-plate engravings of pictures by Gaspar Wolf, the frontispiece being a particularly impressive painting. But, above all, it is a book to be read for the sake of its introduction to us of a very great man in his day.

Charles Warren

### I A Richards: His Life and Work

John Paul Russo

Routledge, 1989, ppx + 843, £40.00

I A Richards the mountaineer is splendidly delineated in his wife Dorothy Pilley's *Climbing Days*. There we see him pioneering climbs in North Wales during and after the First World War (how pleased he was in his eighties when, most unusually, one of his climbs was *upgraded* in the latest guidebook), and climbing in the Alps with his wife and Joseph Georges, with first ascents of the N ridges of the Grivola and Dent Blanche. Alpine Club members who heard, or read, Ivor Richards' talk in 1975 on 'Mountains and Mountaineering as Symbols' could be in no doubt as to the part mountains and climbing had played in his life.

So it is rather a disappointment to find that, of the 800 pages of John Paul Russo's *I. A. Richards: His Life and Work*, only 18 cover the climbing (in a chapter called 'Mysterious Mountains' which suggests they are more of a mystery to the biographer than to his subject). But early on in the book there is an intriguing revelation. Richards, having failed to find a teaching job in philosophy in Cambridge in 1919, decided to put in time as a professional climbing guide in the Highlands. Among the friends he asked to help him with introductions was Mansfield Forbes – who promptly recruited him into the English faculty.

Those concerned with Richards' academic and intellectual pursuits will find these fully described and discussed: the critical works which deeply affected university teaching of English, the long campaign for Basic English. Richards' career in Cambridge, China, Harvard, return to Cambridge, and the final heroic trip to China when he was 86, on which he was taken mortally ill, is thoroughly covered, though his wife plays a much smaller part in this account than she did in Ivor's life. Whether on the mountains or in either of the Cambridges, their friends remember them as always together, a remarkable pair.

Janet Adam Smith

### K2 Il Nodo Infinito. Sogno e Destino

Kurt Diemberger

dall'Oglio Milan, 1988, pp268, Lire 50,000

This splendid (and expensive) example of book production includes 130 photographs, many of great beauty, mostly taken by the author and Julie Tullis, his assistant and companion. The text is an Italian translation from the German edition (*K2 – Traum und Schicksal*; Bruckmann, München, 1989. An English version will be available from Grafton Books this year). The *Nodo* (knot) in the title, a Buddhist symbol, is applied by the author to the interests and endeavours he shared with Julie. The first third of the book amplifies Kurt's autobiographical article in *AJ*89, 16–20, 1984, and the final two-thirds is a full account of the 1986 tragedies on K2 which were also the subject of notes by Diemberger in *AJ* (Vols 92 and 93). Tables at the end of the book show that of the 66 climbers who have reached the summit, 27 did so in 1986; and of the 26 lives

lost on the mountain so far, 13 (including Julie's) were in that year. The special merit of the book is in its detail – in parts it is almost a step-by-step account of Kurt and Julie's climb, with all its nightmare disasters, and the result is a harrowing and unforgettable experience for the reader.

*Robin Robinson*

**Under Storen**  
**A portrait of Utladalen and Vettisfossen**  
 Jan Schwarzott  
*Sogn og Fjordanes Forlag, 1989*

Utladalen, of which this handsome book of photographs is a portrait, is a deep valley about 40km long which stretches from Årdal at the head of Sognefjord into the heart of Jotunheimen. The text, which covers both the topography of the area and its history, is in Nynorsk (New Norwegian) which is rather difficult to understand even for those who can speak Norwegian, but there are both English and German translations at the end of the book.

The area, in which there are more than 50 peaks of over 2000m, is dominated by Storen, as Store Skagastölstind is known locally. Owing to difficulties of access the area was virtually unknown even to Norwegians until the latter half of the last century; it was not until the arrival on the scene of William Cecil Slingsby that it was thoroughly explored and opened up to mountaineers. Storen was first climbed by Slingsby in 1876.

The photographs are impressive if somewhat sombre. It would have been helpful, particularly to English and German readers, if they had carried individual captions.

*V S Risoe*

**Thin Air. Encounters in the Himalayas**  
 Greg Child  
*Patrick Stephens, 1988, pp192, £12.95*

Straightforward 'expedition books' tend to be rather boring, even if well written, if only for the fact that one has read so many over the years. This is why so many authors turn to the 'warts and all' style, hoping that the foibles and idiosyncrasies of their companions will create interest. Greg Child has taken a different tack. He waited until he had three expeditions under his belt before starting his book: Shivling 1981; Lobsang Spire and Broad Peak in 1983; and Gasherbrum IV in 1986. The variety makes for interest, particularly as the style of writing is excellent, but it is the encounters of the title that really make the book. These are treated with humour and insight and are beautifully done. Fresh anecdotes of Whillans, for instance, are always welcome and there are plenty here. In a different vein, the death of Peter Thexton is very moving. Add to this a selection of photos of peaks in or close to the areas described, each

marked with various routes of ascent, and you have an enjoyable and useful addition to expedition literature.

*Geof Templeman*

**Western Baltoro Mustagh. Vols 1, 2, 3 & 4**

**Northern Baltoro Mustagh. Vol 1**

Jan Kielkowski

*Przewodnik Alpenistyczny, Düsseldorf, 1988/1989, approx pp50, pb, in Polish*

These are further volumes in the series of guides (published in Polish) to selected areas in the Himalaya and Karakoram. They feature excellent drawings of the peaks with route diagrams – which make the descriptive text less essential for non-Polish speakers – and maps and climbing histories. The main groups featured are the Uli Biaho, Trango, Baltoro Cathedral, Lobsang Spires and Muztagh Tower in the first volumes, and K2 in the last.

**Lakeland Panorama**

W A Poucher

*Constable, 1989, pp204, £15.95*

The late Walter Poucher's son has assembled a further collection of photographs not used in the two previous colour books on the Lakes, although many look very familiar and are probably variations of some already published. All one can say is that it is the mixture as before.

**Lottie Dod, Champion of Champions. The Story of an Athlete**

Jeffrey Pearson

*Countywise, 1988, pp96, pb, £2.95*

Lottie Dod was Wimbledon champion, British Ladies' Golf champion, and represented Britain in archery at the 1908 Olympics. She indulged in other sports as well, but this book is chiefly of interest to AC members because of the descriptions of climbs she did in Switzerland and Norway in 1896 and 1897, the latter with Elizabeth Main (Le Blond) and Joseph Imboden, which included the first ladies' ascent of the Vengetind.

**Southwards to Geneva. 200 Years of English Travellers**

Mavis Coulson

*Alan Sutton, 1988, ppixvi + 156*

Between the 1650s and the 1850s, the number of English tourists travelling to Geneva gradually increased, as might be expected. This book selects a few of the more remarkable such as Evelyn, Maria Edgeworth, Byron and Shelley, Francis



Danby and some of the early climbers on Mont Blanc, and puts them into the perspective of the Geneva of the time.

### Classic Walks in the Lake District

Walt Unsworth

*Oxford Illustrated Press, 1988, pp160, £14.95*

Another in the *Classic Walks* series, this is a useful volume to join the mass of other guides to walking in the Lakes. Reasonable descriptions and photographs of 40 walks of all lengths and standard, slightly spoilt by the niggling fact that the numbers of the walks do not correspond with the numbers on the maps.

### Wainwright on the Lakeland Mountain Passes

A Wainwright

*Michael Joseph, 1989, pp224, £14.95*

This is the mixture as before, descriptions by Wainwright and photos by Derry Brabbs, but this time it is of 49 Lakeland passes, alphabetically from Black Sail to Wrynose.

### Alpinism

Ed Chic Scott, Vol 1, 1988

A new journal, edited in Calgary by Chic Scott, which covers not only Canadian but also international mountaineering. Among the contributors are Greg Child, Jim Bridwell and Voytek Kurtyka, so a good standard of writing on interesting climbs is assured.

### Beyond Everest. Quest for the Seven Summits

Patrick Morrow

*Camden House/Cordee, 1986, pp176, pb, £10.95*

It is now rather late for a review of this book, but it deserves a note. Two years ago we had the Bass/Wells book on climbing the seven highest summits on the continents, in which they mentioned their 'competitor'. Now we have that competitor's own story, slightly different in fact as it substitutes Carstensz for Kosciusko, but vastly different in approach. It is actually Morrow's autobiography and contains far, far more than just the seven summits. In fact, the breadth of his climbing and exploration is immense, and expeditions which would provide other authors with a complete book are here given a few paragraphs sandwiched in between other exploits. In addition to now being involved in the travel business, Morrow is a professional photographer and the numerous examples of his work here are excellently reproduced. The style of

writing is good, and it is a book which can be confidently recommended to anyone interested in mountaineering and mountain travel. In addition, there is the bonus of yet another voice added to the tale of the 1982 Canadian Everest expedition!

### Montagne Paradis ou le rêve romantique

Samivel

*Arthaud, 1988, pp208, F 395*

There are none of Samivel's own enchanting pictures in this collection, but he provides an introduction to a selection of alpine prints and pictures, each of which is in colour and accompanied by a relevant contemporary quotation.

### Which is the Highest Mountain in the World?

Report of the expedition Ev-K2-CNR to Mt Everest and K2 1987

*Prof Ardito Desio, 1988, pp36*

When an astronomer from the University of Washington announced in 1987 a revised height for K2 which made it higher than Everest, Prof Desio felt that an expedition should be mounted to take measurements of both mountains under controlled conditions. This gives the findings of that expedition – 8872m for Everest and 8616m for K2. These figures show how accurate the original *Survey of India* heights were – 8848m and 8611m respectively – and how inaccurate was the American figure of 8859m for K2. The report makes fascinating reading, but clearly shows the problems involved in accurate measurement of high mountains.

### Classic Rock Climbs in the Lake District

Bill Birkett

*Oxford Illustrated Press, 1989, pp142, £14.95*

There is already a stream of *Classic Walks . . .* and *Classic Climbs . . .* This volume, apparently the first in a series to cover the five main climbing areas of Britain, is well produced, written and illustrated. Each crag chosen has a brief overall description, then one or two of the classic routes are described and illustrated in detail, often with historical quotations from accounts of the first ascents. If this standard is maintained, it will be a good series.

### The Book of the Climbing Year

Ed Cameron McNeish

*Patrick Stephens, 1988, pp152, £14.95*

12 different months, 12 different climbers each writing of their own experiences

and thoughts in that particular month could be a recipe for nothing more than a collection of magazine articles. However, we have here some of the best writers on the British climbing scene today, and this makes for an interesting compilation.

### Classic Walks in Scotland

Cameron McNeish and Roger Smith

*Oxford Illustrated Press, 1988, pp144, £14.95*

One is getting a little overwhelmed by *Classic Walks* and similar titles with which the public is being bombarded these days. What can one say? Adequate photos and descriptions, minimal maps, and that's about it.

### On Foot in North Wales and the Peak

Patrick Monkhouse

*Diadem Books, 1988, pp256, £11.95*

Two hill-walking classics of the Thirties have here been combined in one volume with numerous new photographs and an excellent introduction by Jim Perrin. Outdoor types of 'a certain age' will have been brought up on these glorious little books and their republication is greatly welcomed.

### In the Throne Room of the Mountain Gods

Galen Rowell

*Sierra Club Books, 1986, pp xviii + 334, pb, \$17.95*

A new edition of the 1977 book with a short 'Afterword' summarizing subsequent events in the K2 area, and containing all the original text and black-and-white photos, but with much fresh material and a new selection of colour plates.

### Trekking. Great Walks of the World

John Cleare

*Unwin Hyman, 1988, pp216, £14.95*

This is definitely one of the better compilations of 'world walks'. The areas covered are the Himalaya/Karakoram – Annapurna circuit, K2 and Hidden Peak, and the source of the Ganges; Africa – the High Atlas and the Ruwenzori; the Americas – Vancouver Island, the Wind River Range, the Darien Gap, the Royal Road of the Incas and the Towers of Paine; Europe – the Pyrenean High Route and the Pindos traverse; and New Zealand's Southern Alps. Each section has a description of the trek, excellent photos (as you would expect) and a two-page fact sheet which, in addition, gives brief details of other treks in the area.

Clare writes three of the sections himself, the others being handled by experts in the particular region.

**Mountain Man. The Story of Belmore Browne**

Robert H Bates

*Amwell Press, 1988, pp xx + 426, \$47.50*

Robert Bates has produced a magnificent monograph on Belmore Browne which, originally published in a limited edition, is now publicly available. The section of most interest to mountaineers is that on the controversy over Dr Cook's claim to have reached the summit of Mt McKinley in 1906, and of the 1910 expedition in which Browne climbed the mountain and unmasked Cook. Several photos of these expeditions are included, plus details of Browne's life. The major part of the book, however, comprises Browne's own articles, some previously unpublished, on hunting, wildlife and exploration in Alaska and the Yukon, and a portfolio of colour reproductions of 33 of Browne's accomplished oil-paintings.

**On the Pennine Way. Poems**

Peter Sansom

*Littlewood Press, 1988, pp48, £3.00*

This slim little book of verse is a poet's reflections on walking half the Pennine Way, from Standedge up to Middleton-in-Teesdale. 28 poems are included, so they are not of great length, yet each one captures perfectly the essence of that particular part of the walk and of the people met on the way, varying from elation at walking the moors in fine weather to the depression of camping in bad weather. Drawings by Anna Karvot enhance a nicely produced little volume which repays dipping into again and again.

**The Trekking Peaks of Nepal**

Bill O'Connor

*Crowood Press, 1989, pp224, £14.95*

This book is a comprehensive guide to the 18 Nepalese peaks which can, at the present time, be climbed with only a standard trekking permit. In addition, the approach routes to the mountains are covered, together with suggestions for additional treks in each area and good general advice on organizing an expedition, whether for climbing or trekking. While one or two of the peaks are comparatively easy, the term 'trekking peak' also covers some of the more fascinating and difficult mountains in Nepal, and the author points out the many opportunities for new routes that still exist. Well written and illustrated, this book is essential reading for anyone intending to venture among these peaks.

**The Peak. A Park for all Seasons**

Brian Redhead

*Constable/Peak Park Planning Board, 1989, pp184, £15.95*

Principally a book of excellent photographs of the Peak Park, Brian Redhead – President of the Council for National Parks – has written an introduction which sums up the Park to perfection. Living a matter of yards outside the boundary, he is well acquainted with both the joys and the problems of the area, the joys being beautifully portrayed in the photographs of the Park in the four seasons.

**The Thunder Dragon Kingdom. A Mountaineering Expedition to Bhutan**

Steven K Berry

*Crowood Press, 1988, pp x + 166, £12.95*

This is the story of the expedition to climb Kankar Pünzum, the highest mountain in Bhutan, in 1986, led by Steven Berry. Anything about Bhutan is bound to be of interest, it being a land which still exudes unknown mystery and Berry, who knows it well, gives a delightful picture of the country they passed through. The climb, the third attempt on the peak and ultimately unsuccessful, was a difficult one – almost as hard as the trek to reach the peak! Finally, though, bureaucratic troubles caught up with them even in Bhutan, and the evacuation brought its own problems.

**Snowdonia to the Gower. A Coast to Coast Walk across Highest Wales**

John Gillham

*Diadem, 1988, pp111, £14.95*

The idea of a north-to-south footpath down the centre of Wales is not new, and has indeed been resisted on occasion. This book does not describe an 'official' walk, however, but suggests an informal itinerary, with alternative high-level options on a number of sections, diverging to a great extent from the originally proposed Cambrian Way. The walk is split into 11 day-sections and each section is quite a demanding walk, especially if the rougher alternatives are chosen; so it is not a book for the casual 'short-walker', although everyone can enjoy the superb colour photos which are excellently reproduced.

**Trekking in Nepal, West Tibet and Bhutan**

Hugh Swift

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, pp xx + 360, pb, £9.95*

This most recent trekker's guide deals with Nepal and general aspects of trekking in a thorough and workmanlike way, but additionally has (necessarily briefer) details on Western Tibet and Bhutan.

### The Crag Guide to England and Wales

David Jones

Crowood Press, 1989, pp224, pb, £9.95

A useful gazetteer to all the crags in England and Wales, with a paragraph on each crag, notes as to its possibilities, directions on how to reach it and an area map showing all crags in the locality. There are some good photographs. This is really an updated version of Ted Pyatt's *Where to Climb in the British Isles* and, to some extent, of Walt Unsworth's *The English Outcrops*, but neither is mentioned nor acknowledged.

### Avonside Explored

Edward H Peck

Privately published, 2nd Edition, 1989, pp64, £3.30

Our member Sir Edward Peck, who is Secretary of the Avonside Conservation Group, has produced this useful guide to Tomintoul and Glenlivet, which traces the Banffshire Avon from its source in Loch Avon under Ben Macdhuì to where it joins the Spey. After describing the lower more populated parts of Strathavon, it gives a series of walks and drives centred on Tomintoul, with notes on history, geology and flora and fauna. Although the author encourages people to visit lesser-known places, he is not over-enthusiastic in directing the hordes to the real wilderness areas, as becomes the secretary of a conservation group! Copies can be obtained from the author at Easter Torrans, Tomintoul, Ballindalloch, Banffshire AB3 9HJ.

### Flowers of the Himalaya, a supplement

Adam Stainton

OUP Delhi, 1988, pp xii + 86 + 128pp plates, £25.00

This book is a supplement to the late Oleg Polunin's and the author's monumental *Flowers of the Himalaya*, published in 1984. It includes some 350 species not originally included, plus colour plates of these species and those not so illustrated in the original work. Both books are therefore needed, and together they form an unrivalled and indispensable guide.

### Anything is Possible

Leo Dickinson

Jonathan Cape, 1989, pp224, £14.95

Many of the photographs in this book, particularly those relating to sky-diving, certainly show that 'anything is possible'. As a follow-up to Dickinson's *Filming the Impossible* it covers still more of the author's adventures, ballooning, sky-diving, cave-diving and filming in the mountains, all accompanied by superb photos. The author does seem to have something of a fixation on falling,

whether controlled as in his incredible sky-diving exploits, or uncontrolled as in the deaths of John Harlin and Toni Kurz on the Eiger, where Dickinson went to incredible lengths to film reconstructions of the events. Apart from a short chapter on Don Whillans, the mountaineering content of the book is about the Eigerwand – Harlin's and Kurz's deaths and the first ascent.

**Frank Kingdon-Ward. The Last of the Great Plant Hunters**

Charles Lyte

*John Murray, 1989, pp xvi + 218, £16.95*

Frank Kingdon-Ward's plant-hunting expeditions, mostly to China, Tibet, Burma and Assam, occupied most years from 1909 up to 1957, and a number of his numerous books on his exploits have become classics of their type. These books are quoted from extensively in Charles Lyte's fascinating life of Kingdon-Ward, a man for whom exploration and plant-collecting went hand in hand. Some of his descriptions reveal a life of hardship and frugality which rivals Tilman's, and at times he must have been a difficult person to get on with, but it is to him that gardeners owe so many of the rhododendrons, lilies, poppies and other glorious Himalayan plants which are comparatively common in our gardens today.

**Alpine Climbing**

John Barry

*Crowood Press, 1988, pp208, £14.95*

Mountaineering instruction books are normally rather 'pedestrian' by the nature of the subject and, provided you have correct information and clear illustrations, you can't ask for more than that. Here, however, you have a bonus in the form of typical Barry asides and reminiscences. An excellent introduction for anyone going on to 'bigger things'.

**Great VS Climbs in the Lake District**

Tim Noble

*David & Charles, 1989, pp160, £16.00*

Another compilation of Lake District climbs, described in the blurb as 'The first comprehensive climbing tour of the Lake District'. While some may carp at this statement, it is quite a useful book with some good illustrations, describing 28 VS climbs district by district. Each section is preceded by a walk-in description and then a personal account of the climb in question. As a personal quibble, citing the names of the climbers in each photo does seem an unnecessarily egotistic exercise, particularly as so many are of the author!



**On The Big Hill. A Non-climber's Everest**

Mark Anderson

*Faber & Faber, 1988, pp xii + 174, £12.95*

This book has been 'panned' by most reviewers in the mountaineering press and, indeed, compared with something like James Morris's *Coronation Everest*, it does come off very much second-best. Having said that, however, taken as a media man's view of what was to him a completely alien exercise, it shows a most interesting view from the other side. You will have a job to follow the course of the expedition from this book and the personnel becomes hopelessly mixed up in the narrative, but the differences between the film-making team and the climbers are well brought out, as is the hardship of camp life to one unaccustomed to it. An interesting read, therefore, but one that – like the TV film series – does not achieve anything like full marks. For Faber to put a 'Major TV Series' sticker on the cover seems to be pushing it a bit!

**Thomas Cook International Top 50 Ski Resorts**

Arnold Wilson

*Webb & Bower/Michael Joseph, 1989, pp200, £15.95*

The author, skiing correspondent of the *Financial Times*, has made a personal choice of 50 resorts which he considers give the best skiing, particularly on virgin powder. The countries covered are Austria, France, Italy, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Argentina and Japan. Each resort has two or three colour photos, a personal assessment and a basic fact sheet.

**The Islands of Scotland including Skye**

D J Fabian, G E Little, D N Williams

*Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1989, pp x + 406, £18.95*

For the past 70 years the SMC has been issuing district guidebooks and, after the first few, the traditional red covers have been instantly recognizable everywhere. Tradition has been broken in this, the first of a new series, as it has a bright blue cover, but there is no fear that any of the previous high standards have been changed. Skye has now been included with all the other islands, and the other change is that many colour photos are now included. This is no doubt reflected in the high price but, as with many recent SMT publications, the result is a book that is excellent both to look at and to use.

**Footloose in the Himalaya**

Mike Harding

*Michael Joseph, 1989, pp xiv + 242, £16.95*

Mike Harding leaves his beloved Dales to head for the Himalaya in his latest book. He describes three treks: the first in India with his wife Pat, from Darsha

over the Shingo La to Padum and Leh; the second from Pokhara around the foothills of the Annapurna range; and the third on the Everest trail to the top of Kala Pattar. As might be expected the writing is witty and humorous but, what may not be expected by those who have not seen his book *Walking the Dales*, the photographs – and there are many of them – are also excellent.

### Canyon Country Climbs

Katy Cassidy and Earl Wiggins

*Pruett, Colorado, 1989, pp xvi + 102, \$34.95*

This large-format book, mainly of superb colour photos but with a reasonable amount of text, covers climbing in the canyon country of south-eastern Utah. In particular it includes Castle Valley, Fisher Towers, Arches National Park, Colorado River Valley, Canyonlands National Park and Indian Creek, with descriptions of first ascents by Layton Kor and other notable desert explorers, including the authors.

### The Way Through the Glens

Hamish MacInnes

*Constable, 1989, pp216, £15.95*

A picture book of 'a pictorial tour of the Highlands', containing not only the expected mountain views but also the usual tourist shots of the Forth Bridge, Iona, Glamis Castle and many others.

### Everest. South-West Face

L H Zamistnin

*1984, pp224, pb, in Russian.*

This account of the 1982 Russian expedition to the SW face of Everest was presented to the Club by Vladimir Balyberdin, one of those who reached the summit. It contains several colour and black-and-white photos, some of which are by Balyberdin.

### Mountains. A Natural History and Hiking Guide

Margaret Fuller

*John Wiley, 1989, pp256, pb, £8.85*

This is an American book, mainly about mountain geology, flora and fauna, and chiefly relating to mountains of the Americas. There is a gazetteer of world mountains at the end, but some of the entries, particularly that on the mountains of Great Britain, show a rather perfunctory knowledge.

**Skye. Walking, Scrambling and Exploring**

Ralph Storer

*David & Charles, 1989, pp224, £12.95*

There are many guides to Skye, but this book is rather refreshing in that it covers the entire island, giving equal status to all parts. While many of the best routes in the Cuillin are described, so are beautiful walks and scrambles in Minginish, Sleat, Trotternish and the other areas of the island, with some of the best photographs of coastal scenery seen for some time. Another plus for the visitor from the south is that every Gaelic name has its phonetic pronunciation.

**Off the Beaten Track. Women Adventurers and Mountaineers  
in Western Canada**

Cyndi Smith

*Coyote Books, Jasper, 1989, pp290, pb*

The author is a park warden at Jasper for the Canadian Parks Service and has a great interest in the history of exploration in Western Canada. In this book she describes 14 women explorers, mountaineers and guides who were active in the region from 1885 until the Second World War.

**The Crystal Horizon**

Reinhold Messner

*Crowood Press, 1989, pp324, £16.95*

This is the first English edition of *Der Gläserne Horizont*, originally published in 1982, and here translated by Jill Neate and Audrey Salkeld. It tells the story of Messner's solo ascent of Everest in 1980, from Tibet and without oxygen. As usual in a Messner book, there are excellent historical chapters on previous ascents from the north, and the book as a whole is excellently produced. The colour photos are few, being limited to a small selection of the author's own at the rear of the book, and some of John Noel's 'semi-colour' ones at the front. There are many other photos in the text, but all are black-and-white and many quite small, some being hardly worth reproducing. The story of Messner's ascent is well known, but this reviewer at least finds the author's style hard to take in large doses, even though the translation is well done.

**Alpine Dictionary**

Rudolf Weiss (B M Byrne)

*Rother, München (Cordee), 1989, pp452, £12.95*

This is a useful dictionary of mountaineering terms in German, English, French and Italian, each language having a separate section with the corresponding terms in the other three languages.

**Lightweight Expeditions**

Rob Collister

*Crowood Press, 1989, pp144, £12.95*

There have been quite a few books recently on how to run lightweight expeditions, but this one must rank among the very best. The author has spent the last 20 years travelling and climbing in many parts of the world, and his experience shows in this work. All expected aspects are thoroughly covered, with especially detailed notes on one of the most hazardous operations – river crossing, all spiced with personal comments. A valuable book for what the author describes as ‘experienced mountaineers who have climbed on both rock and ice in Britain or the United States and have had at least two seasons of alpine climbing’.

The following guides and other books have also been received:

**Safety on Mountains.** An Approach to Mountain Adventure for Beginners. John Barry and Tim Jepson. BMC, 1988, pp38, £1.50

**Rock Climbing Techniques.** Steve Ashton. Crowood Press, 1989, pp128, pb, £6.95

**Climbing Days.** Dorothy Pillely. Hogarth Press, 1989, pp x + 356, pb, £6.95

**Modern Rock and Ice Climbing.** Bill Birkett. A&C Black, 1988, pp192, £12.50

**Guide to Manuscripts.** The Fonds and Collections of the Archives, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies. Banff, Alberta, 1989, pp xvi + 170, npq

**Wild Country Camping.** Kevin Walker. Constable, 1989, pp180, £8.95

**Chamonix Mont Blanc.** A Walking Guide. Martin Collins. Cicerone Press, 1988, pp192, £8.25

**The Jura.** (Two parts.) Walking the Jura High Route. Kev Reynolds. Winter Ski Traverses. R Brian Evans. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp192, £6.50

**The Valais, Switzerland.** A Walking Guide. Kev Reynolds. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp192, £8.25

**Crete Off the Beaten Track.** A Guide to Country Walks and Mountain Hikes. Bruce and Naomi Caughey. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp144, £6.95

**Escalades dans le Massif des Calanques – Devenson, Castelveil, Gard.** Anne-Françoise Raybaud and Alexis Lucchesi. Édisud, 1989, pp166

**Randonnées Pédestres dans le Haut-Var Central et Oriental.** Josianne Alor and Alexis Lucchesi. Édisud, 1989, pp176

**Appennino Centrale.** Vol 1, 2nd Edition. Carlo Landi Vittorj. CAI/TCl, 1989, pp452, L50,000

- Walks and Climbs in the Picos de Europa.** Robin Walker. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp215, £10.95
- Escalades et Randonnées en Corse. Massif de Bavella.** Alexis Lucchesi, Jean-Paul Quilici, Bernard Vaucher. Édisud, 1989, pp204, FF85.00
- Randonnées Pédestres dans les Calanques. Les Isles, Canaille-Soubeyrane, Saint-Cyr – Carpiagne.** Alexis Lucchesi and Josianne Alor. Édisud, 1989, pp160
- Massif des Calanques. Nouvelles Escalades á la Bougie.** Alexis Lucchesi and Bernard Vaucher. Édisud, 1989, pp12
- Góra Zborów. Część Wschodnia.** Jan & Małgorzata Kielkowscy. Przewodnik Wspinaczkowy, Düsseldorf, 1987, pp61
- Tung Lung Island Climbing Guide (Hong Kong).** Chung Kin Man. Nd, pp12
- Rock Climbs in the West Midlands.** Doug Kerr. Cicerone Press, 1988, pp116
- Mid-Wales.** John Sumner. Climbers' Club, 1988, pp232, £9.95
- Moorland Gritstone.** Chew Valley. Ed Geoff Milburn, BMC, 1988, pp304, £9.50
- Staffordshire Gritstone.** Ed Geoff Milburn, Comp Gary Gibson. BMC, 1989, pp312, £9.95
- Stanage.** Ed Geoff Milburn/Graham Hoey. BMC, 1989, pp414, £10.95
- Clogwyn Du'r Arddu.** Paul Williams. Climbers' Club, 1989, pp166, £8.95
- Moorland Challenge.** Tony Wimbush. Ernest Press, 1987, pp96, £4.65
- Arran, Arrochar and The Southern Highlands.** K V Crocket and A Walker. SMC, 1989, pp360
- 100 Classic Climbs. Lake District.** Stephen Reid and Steve Ashton. Crowood Press, 1989, pp240, £9.95
- The Pennine Mountains.** A Walker's Guide to the Cheviot Hills, the Northern Moors, the Howgill Fells, the Yorkshire Dales and the High Peak. Terry Marsh. Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, pp256, £7.95
- North Devon and Cornwall.** Iain Peters. Climbers' Club, 1988, pp326, £9.95
- New Climbs 1988.** Gary Gibson. BMC, 1989, pp252, £5.50
- Rock Climbs, Lancashire and The North West.** Phil Kelly and Dave Cronshaw. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp394, £12.95
- Torridon, A Walker's Guide.** Peter Barton. Cicerone Press, 1989, pp168, £5.95
- Langdale.** D Armstrong, P Rigby and J White. FRCC, 1989, pp264
- Hill Walking in Snowdonia.** Steve Ashton. Cicerone Press, 1988, pp120, £4.50
- Southern Sandstone.** Dave Turner. Climbers' Club, 1989, pp208, £8.95
- Blue Ice and Black Gold.** A Climbers' Guide to the Frozen Waterfalls of Valdez, Alaska. Andrew Embick, 1989, pp130