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# Book Reviews 1993

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

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## Everest

### The Best Writing and Pictures

Edited by Peter Gillman

Foreword by Sir Edmund Hillary, Picture Research by Audrey Salkeld

*Little Brown 1993, pp208, £25*

This is a superb, monumental and lavishly illustrated book. As a Russian courier, I played a tiny part in securing some of the material before the publisher's deadline. When, in return, I received and opened an early complimentary copy, I was totally absorbed for two hours, oblivious of my bedtime. So I was happy to be invited to review this book for the *Alpine Journal*.

Publication was timed to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the first ascent. It's all there, from Claude White's photograph taken from Khamba Dzong during the British Mission to Tibet in 1903-4, to the novelty stunts of the last five years: Boivin's parapente descent of 8000ft in 11 minutes to the Western Cwm; Batard's round trip from Base in 22½ hours; the 1991 hot-air balloon flights; and Tardivel's ski descent from the South Summit in September 1992. 'I am thankful,' says Sir Edmund Hillary in his Foreword, 'that I climbed Everest in the days of innocence, when everything was new and a constant challenge, and for me at least publicity was a bit of a laugh.' Now it's serious business!

The editor, journalist Peter Gillman, relates how he first fell under Everest's spell when, as a boy of eleven, he was taken to the film of the 1953 ascent and was transfixed by cameraman Tom Stobart's epic pan, seeming to last several minutes, from the snow-covered floor of the Western Cwm to the corniced crest of the Summit Ridge. That shot often returned to Gillman as he sifted through the hundreds of extracts, articles and photographs which he and Audrey Salkeld had gathered. In the end he resolved on a mix of old and new, of familiar icons and unpublished material with which to convey the awe he first felt 40 years before.

He has divided the material into four periods with appropriate captions: 'The finest cenotaph in the world' (Somervell) covering the British attempts before the Second World War; 'Ed, my boy, this is Everest' (Hillary's self-encouragement on the Summit Ridge) for the 1950s and 60s; 'All the world lay before us' (Scott), for the 1970s; and finally 'A dream-like sense of disbelief' (Venables) from 1980 to the end of 1992.

The book ends with an incredible eleven pages of statistics, listing 485 ascents by 428 people over 13 different routes – over half the ascents having

been made in the last five years. It classifies with Wisden-like accuracy and detail the 115 deaths, the 51 ascents without artificial oxygen (including an astonishing 7 by Sherpa Ang Rita), the 16 by women, the youngest person at 17, the oldest at 55, the 32 in a day on 12 May 1992. But the circus rolls on, as the number of ascents seems to rise exponentially. On 10 May 1993 there were 38 on top.

What can we learn from all this frenzied activity? I have an increasing respect for the scientific intellect of George Finch who, in addition to his well-known strong advocacy of supplementary oxygen, rejected the traditional Alpine clothing recommended for 1922 in favour of a quilted eiderdown jacket of his own design – an early duvet. On his high-altitude attempt he also had the good sense to take his boots to bed with him, unlike his companions who had to spend a further hour thawing them out over lighted candles. At 26,500ft he then watched carefully to see how his partner Geoffrey Bruce (the General's nephew) coped with the slippery sloping slabs on the N face on 'his first mountaineering expedition'. The fact that such indifferently chosen teams could get so high so early, surely contributed to the long delay in climbing Everest? It took the spur of international competition, the scientific deductions concerning oxygen rates, dehydration and acclimatisation, clearly reported by Dr Griffith Pugh in 1952, and the outstanding planning and leadership of a well-knit team by John Hunt, for Hillary and Tenzing to achieve ultimate success in 1953.

It is a sad reflection that, despite these basic lessons, so many parties still push on regardless for their moment of glory, and return by the slimmest of margins or suffer severe frostbite or death from exhaustion on the descent.

After 1953 there was a gap of 25 years before Everest was climbed without supplementary oxygen by Messner and Habeler in 1975. Since then the proliferating climbing population has produced a significant number of mortals of Olympian physique and fitness capable of this feat. But the number of successful ascents seems unlikely to continue at the recent rate. In the autumn of 1993 the Nepalese government increased the peak fee substantially to \$10,000 per climber passing through the Khumbu icefall. This should reduce the number of expeditions sharply – a measure which I fully support, particularly if some of the income is ploughed back to improve the lot of the Sherpas and other hill people and to conserve the fragile Himalayan environment.

In conclusion, Peter Gillman and Audrey Salkeld are to be congratulated on their series of partial glimpses which together interpret the whole. Mallory's first awesome view of Everest on 13 June 1921: 'Gradually, very gradually, we saw the great mountainsides and glaciers and arêtes, now one fragment now another through the floating rifts, until far higher than imagination had dared to suggest the whole summit of Everest appeared. And in this series of partial glimpses we had seen a whole: we were able to piece together the fragments, to interpret the dream.'

*George Band*

**The High Mountains of the Alps**  
**Volume 1: The Four-Thousand-Metre Peaks**

Helmut Dumler and Willi P Burkhardt

*Diadem Books/The Mountaineers, 1993, pp224, £30.00*

Once again, Ken Wilson has given great service to mountaineering by having the vision to introduce Dumler and Burkhardt's sumptuous publication to the English-speaking Alpinist. The collection of giants by their standard routes, whether it be 8000m Himalayan mountains, the highest points on the seven continents, or the 4000m peaks of the Alps, is becoming an increasingly popular, and many would argue a rather unimaginative, part of our sport.

Karl Blodig is generally accepted as the first person to have climbed all the Alpine 4000m peaks, and in the early part of this century he wrote a guide to these ascents – *Die Viertausender der Alpen* – which listed the 57 summits he had climbed. In 1932 Eustace Thomas became the first British climber to complete Blodig's original list (though by this stage Blodig himself had completed 76 summits), and as the years progressed even more 'tops' were added.

Not surprisingly, there are now a number of lists of 4000ers in existence, from as few as 52 (the total number of completely separate mountains) to around 150 peaks and tops (Goedeke). When Martin Moran and Simon Jenkins made their continuous traverse in 1993, the criterion was to include summits that had a height separation of 35m or more. This gave a total of 75. A couple of years ago a French guide listed 108 'summits', based on the number of individually named points with a height of 4000m or above. Recently, in an attempt to put an end to the endless arguments, a UIAA/CAI initiative came up with a list of 82, including the Grand Pilier d'Angle, and this may well be used as the bench-mark in the future.

The second edition of Blodig's original work was republished in 1968 with a considerable amount of revision. The new material was added by Helmut Dumler – one-time deputy editor of the famous German publication *Alpinismus* – who had himself just completed all the 4000ers. In 1989 Dumler co-opted the talents of Swiss photographer Willi Burkhardt, and between them they produced a new edition which formed the basis for Ken Wilson's translation. The recent version highlights 61 main peaks; yet to me it always seems dubious to draw up a list that includes all ten tops of Monte Rosa, yet only Pointe Walker on the Grandes Jorasses or just the Grafeniere on the Grand Combin. You see: the arguments are endless!

The majority of chapters are dedicated to a single 4000er and include mouthwatering plates which flatter its magnificent architecture, often from several different viewpoints. These are complemented by action photographs, taken most frequently, but by no means exclusively, on the normal route of ascent. In addition, there are many small topographical drawings detailing the various features and established routes that are visible in the main photographs, while Don Sargeant's excellent sketch-maps of the three main massifs form an essential aid to the geography.

The accompanying text neatly summarises the historic exploration that took place on the more obvious lines of weakness and then notes some of the more important subsequent climbs. Into this Wilson has subtly blended further information and anecdotal material extracted from reference sources of the period, notably early volumes of the *Alpine Journal*.

Valuable practical information is boxed at the end of each chapter in the form of a brief summary of the relevant valley bases, huts, routes, maps and guidebooks. Okay, we all have different opinions on gradings, and many of the route times seem a little generous, which is no bad thing, but the only real error, and one that occurs on many occasions throughout the book, is the misprint which reverses the Roman numeral IV. The middle-grade climber looking for slightly more ambitious ways up these noble mountains, will initially be horrified to find that many of his desired classics now contain rock pitches of VI or even VI+.

All this aside, the overwhelming impact must be the sheer magnificence of Burkhardt's photography. In this he has excellent subject material, for a high proportion of the 4000ers would probably be included in any list of the Alps' most beautiful mountains. However, he also has some material advantages: large and medium format cameras – many of the full-page plates are reproductions from original 10" x 8" transparencies – and a son with his own light aircraft, resulting in a number of original and interesting aerial views of the mountains cloaked in heavy winter snow. The shadows of a winter evening across the NW face of the Mönch, the dramatic double-page spread of the N face of the Breithorn and, possibly my favourite, an ethereal view of the shapely Brunegghorn, Bishorn and Weisshorn rising above a forested alp to the north, are just three of many technical masterpieces.

To these Wilson has added 150 photographs from various sources, and although some of these would appear outstanding in a different context, they inevitably take second place beside Burkhardt's pin-sharp, full page panoramas. Even so, Jim Teesdale's shot of the Nadelgrat at dawn, John Allen's crisp reproductions of the Rochefort Arête (the only monochrome print in the book), Teesdale's informative collection depicting the ascent of the Zinalrothorn, or some of O'Connor's and David Wynne-Jones's Matterhorn and Mont Blanc shots, certainly capture the essence of the climb in question.

*The High Mountains of the Alps* is thus a book primarily for the holiday Alpinist (and ski-mountaineer), who wishes to climb the traditional routes on the 4000ers. However, the middle-grade Alpinist will also find considerable inspiration, for who could not be moved by the fabulous panorama of the Paradiso range from Mont Blanc, or plates that include the delectable Weisshorn or Obergabelhorn? The more ambitious will, after a little research, be able to study in detail some of the modern technical offerings on the various faces, and the innovator, with a copy of the most recent definitive guidebook in hand, will be able to expose a few of the remaining secrets. In the case of one peak even this study is unnecessary, as two major unclimbed lines are duly noted in the text.

This is the first of a proposed two-part series, with the second volume looking at the best of the 3000m peaks. The potential for a work of even greater interest and significance to the Alpine mountaineer is staggering. I can hardly wait for its publication.

Lindsay Griffin

### **The Climbers. A History of Mountaineering**

Chris Bonington

BBC Books and Hodder & Stoughton, 1992, pp288, £16.95

When Chris Bonington visited Bombay in May 1992 he carried a copy of *The Climbers*, his 12th book. When he returned in September 1992, he brought his 13th book: *Sea, Ice and Rock*. Not many writers, especially mountaineers, can boast of such prolific writing achievements. *The Climbers* deals with 'A History of Mountaineering'. There have been a few books in this genre, starting with the most celebrated of them all, Kenneth Mason's *Abode of Snow*. Mason's book covered the period from the earliest time till the first ascent of Everest in 1953. He covered only the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan ranges. Chris has a different line-up. He covers both the Alps and the Himalaya from 1881 to 1990, while Audrey Salkeld adds A Brief History of Mountaineering from 218 BC, ensuring a complete record of adventure.

If Mason's book is a thorough experience, like a symphony playing, with all the pieces, Bonington's book is to be read in an armchair with a cup of tea and a violin concerto playing lively tunes. The difference is obvious, but what is lost by way of complete coverage, Bonington makes up by way of extremely good reading and fun. He himself is part of the history, and he knows it:

It is difficult for me to be completely objective since I have been closely and directly involved with the development of climbing in the last forty years. It has filled my life, given me that combination of joy, excitement, wonder and inevitably sorrow at the loss of all too many friends, but I hope that this has enabled me to empathise all the better with those early climbers who first explored the mysteries of the Alps and trace the course of this serpentine river of ours.

So, turning familiarity to an advantage, Bonington writes about the climbers (not explorers). For the younger generation, particularly, the first 200 pages tell all the well-known stories and weave different patterns. This is enjoyable and exciting with the right mix of events and stories.

The latter pages consider the last 37 years, a long period. The chapters present three main issues, leaving behind attempts to be exhaustive. The major climbs and development of climbing the mountains the 'hard way up' are considered. In the chapter entitled 'The Art of Suffering', extreme climbing is taken up. Exploits of Messner, Kurtyka and Kukuczka and

the deaths of Boardman, Tasker and MacIntyre are covered in detail. But the last chapter is a stealer: 'Always a Little Further'. Here Bonington considers the major developments, which may affect the future attitudes. Sponsorship, commercial climbs, sport climbing and various developments in rock-climbing advancements are touched upon. We are left with a vision of the future.

In his opening sentence, Bonington declares the scope of the book: 'In writing a one-volume history of mountaineering I have had no choice but to be selective.' It is here that some can have a grouse against this book. To a lay reader it may appear that mountaineering is still a British preserve, or that only Americans and Europeans indulge in the sport. Not enough mention is made about the Japanese climbers or of climbers from many countries such as South Korea, India and others. This has led to specific achievements of these nationalities being ignored. For example, the traverse of the Nanda Devi peaks by the Indo-Japanese team; and climbs of many high peaks in the East Karakoram by the Japanese in the 1970s are not mentioned. They marched for weeks to reach the base camps over high passes and climbed giants like Singhi Kangri, Teram Kangri and others. One may not like the fixed-ropes but they are there, even as a style.

The personal selection necessarily misses out on some areas. Thus Paul Bauer's attempts on Kangchenjunga from Sikkim by the NE spur are taken up, but not the completion of the route in 1977 by the Indians. The 1979 British route by the N face also gets a mention.

The development of alpine-style climbing and the achievements of small teams and smaller, independent climbs, deserved a passing mention at least. Small expeditions like those of Shipton and Tilman still attract many. Stephen Venables' climb of Kishtwar-Shivling with Dick Renshaw, and even Bonington's own ascent with Jim Fotheringham of Shivling West, were trend-setters, and this brand of climbing should be emphasised. That would be really looking into the future.

But these are only small personal observations and do not detract from the merit and enjoyment of the book. To write *the* history of mountaineering someone would have to fill half a dozen volumes and the author would still not be able to include everything.

Bonington, even at his age and with his experience, refuses to be 'sidelined' and looks forward to the future with an open mind and welcomes change. I am sure readers will look forward to many more books from Bonington in future.

*Harish Kapadia*

*(This review first appeared in the Himalayan Journal in 1993 and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor/author.)*

**The Ascent**  
**Ten Men and Two Women on the Brink of an Abyss**

Jeff Long

*Headline Features*, 1993, pp370, pb, £4.99

When I am away on expeditions, I often read exciting thriller type novels. They are escapist and quite often a bit far-fetched, but enjoyable. I have not read many mountaineering novels and eagerly looked forward to getting stuck into this book which won the Boardman Tasker Memorial Award.

Objectively, I can see that Jeff Long has put a lot of thought and effort into the book, and perhaps an inner meaning – not that I found it. *The Ascent* tells the story of an attempt to climb the 'Kore Wall route' on the North Face of Mount Everest – an imaginary 'last great problem', loosely based on the West Face of Makalu. Fair enough so far; and changing the geography of a couple of passes on the north side of Everest is OK too – this is a novel. But, for me, the expedition described is massively unrealistic and the story corny and predictable, yet slightly baffling.

An opening sequence in the USA involves an accident and mountain rescue. The so-called MRT walks away and leaves a woman trapped in a crevasse! They do not even try to get her out. Where are the helicopters and media that would be involved?

The story then moves on to the nineties and reminds me of the film *K2*, which was pure 'corn'. It is peppered with military images, perhaps to make the action seem more sensational. After all, where is the fast-moving action in planning and preparing an expedition, plodding into Base Camp and setting up higher camps? At Base Camp 'JJ ... reached deep into the pile and extracted a 300 foot coil of orange rope and held it over his head, whooping, "Firepower!"' I am surprised his team did not include Clint, Sly and Arnie, replete with helicopter gunships!

Later, when a camp is set up inside a cave on the mountain, the whole story loses any credibility I was trying to give it or, indeed, any enjoyment I was trying to get out of it. I have never seen or heard of a large cave, big enough for a camp, high up on a mountain. If such a cave existed, it would certainly not be calm inside. Spindrift would pour in and fill it up with snow!

The story then degenerates into a supposedly reader-gripping account of avalanches, retreat, a gory description of a leg amputation and inner meanings about the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Maybe I was missing some 'inner message', but *The Ascent* did not thrill me. It irritated me with its military comparisons, technical inaccuracies and American expressions. What, for example, is 'goosing'? One of the climbers '*was goosing his harness good and snug around his loins!*'

It has been reported that one reason Long wrote *The Ascent* was so that 'we not forget Tibet' and the genocide its people have suffered at the hands of the Chinese. 'I don't think climbers should climb in Tibet,' Long said at

the annual meeting of the American Alpine Club (as reported in the American magazine *Climbing*). 'I've done it myself, but I won't be going again.' The genocide is undoubtedly true, but the western world has left its action a bit late; apparently more Chinese 'settlers' now live in Tibet than Tibetans. I first went to Tibet and Lhasa in 1984 and over the years I have been back several times and to Lhasa again in 1991. The changes and the Chinese development and building programme were marked. But by staying away from Tibet, climbers would only help to isolate the country and enable the Chinese to continue any oppression unseen. Visiting Tibet surely helps to mix our cultures and values, perhaps creating more understanding and openness. 'Sanctioning' Tibet would seem to serve no constructive purpose.

Perhaps non-mountaineers will love *The Ascent*, find it gripping and thrilling and think it shows Himalayan mountaineering as it is. It is not.

Alan Hinkes

**This Game of Ghosts**  
**The sequel to *Touching the Void***

Joe Simpson

*Jonathan Cape, 1993, pp320, £16.99*

A boyish face grins out from several of the illustrations in this book; it is frank, open, relaxed, engaging. Yet I found the impressions conveyed by the author's text often at variance with that image. Like anyone else enthralled by *Touching the Void* I was keen to know more about this apparently remarkable man, a survivor extraordinary, but Joe Simpson's third book left me faintly dissatisfied, even disappointed.

It begins with a flashback to the immediate aftermath of the traumatic events in the Peruvian Andes. However, although described as 'the sequel', it is much more an autobiographical account of his whole approach to mountaineering, and very readable too. Early chapters cover boyhood adventures when his dare-devil character emerges, clearly etched against a comfortable background of army family life, much of it in the Far East. Boarding school at Ampleforth merits scant mention except that there he discovers climbing before embarking on an honours degree course in English literature, at Edinburgh University. Once introduced to the University Mountaineering Club his life takes a new turn but later, within six months of his finals, he undergoes what he describes as a catharsis, drops out of his studies and takes himself off to Chamonix.

Much of what follows is gripping, hand-sweating stuff as Simpson survives a series of spectacular incidents, far more than his share to be still alive. Avalanched near the start of his descent of the NE face of Les Courtes, he is swept 2000ft, almost down to the Argentière glacier ... and limps back to the hut. A spine-chilling rockfall removes both boots and bivouac site high on the Bonatti Pillar of the Dru; the incredible series of events on Siula Grande, described so vividly in his first book; and yet

more dramas in the Himalaya, including a long fall after a successful assault on Parchamo; not to mention a car crash and a singularly nasty incident with a Sheffield psychopath. Simpson emerges from all these if not unmarked at least undaunted, more or less. Yet one is bound to wonder why he continued, on the Courtes descent, when every nerve was screaming a warning and, occasionally, he does throw a reflective and more mature glance over these escapades.

Avoiding a repeat description of his ill-fated Peruvian expedition he gives us an absorbing account of the long road to recovery, first in a Lima hospital and later at home, with a sympathetic portrait of his surgeon with whom he slowly developed an unusually special relationship. Indeed, this is one of the best parts of the book. Similarly, he holds his reader's attention totally with the tingling suspense of the drama on the Dru: twelve hours dangling from a dodgy peg. Even so, the effect is somewhat spoiled by his technique of describing some of the scenes as seen through the eyes of other players, in this case the rescuer, a device he used to infinitely better effect in *Touching the Void*. Here it just seems artificial. Once or twice the English leaves something to be desired, perhaps more the result of hasty editing than sloppy construction; but his frequent use of simulative adjectives is as irritating as they are inaccurate. Whoever heard of "sodium yellow" torchlight? This and other tricks have the effect of lending some passages the style of a Jeffrey Archer novel – and Joe Simpson can do better than that.

Just how much better is clear from those pages in which he goes some way towards analysing his own attitude to climbing, to fear and, most importantly, the management of fear. He admits that not all his thoughts are original but the analysis is none the worse for that. Indeed, this part of the book is good stuff by any standard and will appeal to many a climbing reader. The introspection crops up elsewhere: his Roman Catholic upbringing and subsequent rejection of that faith, his dropping out of a privileged education and, albeit with tantalisingly little of his own views, his espousal of the Greenpeace cause. Perhaps he felt he should spare us the politics. His sheer boldness enables him to bivouac atop tall chimneys, abseil off bridges and even fly banners from Nelson on his column, all to publicise the cause. But, if there is little about the reason why, there is even less about the climbing techniques involved. Maybe they are a trade secret.

I find it all too easy to write about the man rather than the book and impossible to divorce one from the other entirely. With considerable skill Simpson portrays a maturing individual slowly coming to terms with himself, with his chosen pastime and with its unique demands, particularly the appalling attrition: so many of his friends have died within only a few recent years. Climbing accidents, stonefall, altitude sickness, even the Kathmandu air crash, all take an intensely personal toll. Hence the book's title, borrowed from one of Sassoon's war poems. Mountaineering is not war; but to Joe Simpson it must, at times, seem only too like it.

John Peacock

## The Undiscovered Country

Phil Bartlett

*The Ernest Press, 1993, pp183, £15.95*

Why do we climb? In *The Undiscovered Country*, which reached the short-list for the 1993 Boardman Tasker Memorial Award, Phil Bartlett has had the courage to seek a definitive answer to that question, or as near to a definitive answer as it is possible to get. In attempting this task, Bartlett has not only drawn upon his own considerable mountaineering experience but has also spent ten years researching the entire range of mountain literature, from the pioneers of the Golden Age to the many contemporary mountaineers who have tried to define the motivation which impels them towards this magnetic activity.

But in spite of his wide reading Bartlett readily admits the impossibility of making an objective assessment of other people's experiences. He quotes Fred Hoyle who, 20 years ago, addressed the Alpine Club thus: 'Mountaineers are always being asked why they climb mountains and I am always surprised when they allow themselves to be trapped into offering reasons. The truth of the matter is surely this. Any purpose that can be precisely explained is always temporary ... It is a curious paradox of human existence that purposes which can be clearly defined and explained have a limited life-span. And conversely, the things in life that last indefinitely cannot be explained and defined.' Bartlett comments: 'This makes perfect sense. One of the reasons for thinking mountaineering a noble pursuit is that it defies our attempts to categorise it and explain it away.'

Nevertheless, Bartlett does make an in-depth attempt to arrive at a distillation of his own philosophical thought as it has developed through his wide reading but also, of equal importance, through the companionship of his climbing friends. He tells us that his experiences 'have been crucially moulded by all those with whom I have shared days on the hill'. In this book he seeks to define the attraction of that experience, 'to find not a single motive but a single underlying source of contentment which remains unchanged and unchangeable'.

Bartlett approaches his goal from a variety of directions. Broadly, the book is divided into eight chapters each dealing with a different aspect. For example, one chapter, entitled 'Ranges Beyond and Yet Beyond', describes how mountains offer 'a new perspective on life, a refreshed sense of its vitality and exhilaration'. Another chapter deals with the 'Return to the Primitive', and Bartlett uses the word in no derogatory sense: 'Primitive peoples may or may not be visionaries, but they are invariably less cluttered, both materially and mentally, than ourselves.' In 'Conditioning in Time' Bartlett demonstrates how the visual impression produced by a mountain is psychological and subjective rather than purely objective. In 'The Religious Symbol' he shows how 'mountains suggest the soaring of the human spirit and its expansion into new worlds'.

But Bartlett is also aware of the darker side of mountaineering, of writers who have turned away from the earlier idealism to deny both impersonal

motives and even the existence of friendship and camaraderie in the mountains. In common with many of us, he fears that mountaineering may be reduced to its lowest common denominator – an Olympic sport, competition, glory, money – with the result that it will become ‘a much lesser thing than Mummery, Shipton, Boardman and so many others have made it’.

Bartlett's wide reading enables him to come up with exactly the right quotations to illuminate his ideas and to set them in an historical context. Moreover, he reveals a talent for pinning down thoughts and feelings that have long hovered on the surface of one's mind without emerging as articulated concepts. I found that the further I delved into this book the more involved I became with Bartlett's way of looking at things. This is certainly not a book to rush through without thought. It demands an effort, but one that is amply repaid.

I have just two small reservations: occasionally I found Phil's train of thought a little hard to follow; possibly some discreet editing might have helped. Secondly, the unique set of carefully captioned photographs have been reproduced, probably for reasons of economy, on matt paper, which does not show them at their best. However, these are minor criticisms in the context of a book which provides a life-enhancing experience and the privilege of sharing the mind of a profound thinker.

People have tried before to get to grips with the motivation behind mountaineering but never, to my knowledge, with the insight and integrity that Bartlett has brought to this book. It is an outstanding achievement which deserves to become a classic of mountain literature.

Johanna Merz

**Peaks of Glory**  
**Climbing the World's Highest Mountains**

Edited by Stefano Ardito

*Italy: Edizioni White Star. UK: Swann Hill Press. £19.95*

At first sight this is a lavish book, at second sight a most impressive book, but at third sight it's a bit ... well ... dare I say voyeuristic? ‘*Share the great climbers' passion for life at the borders of human daring,*’ trumpets the jacket blurb. Sadly, this is the flavour of the book and my natural reaction is to run the other way.

Originating in Italy but obviously intended for multi-lingual, multi-national publication, this large-format volume (35mm x 25mm) contains 144 pages and no less than 121 decently reproduced colour photographs, 18 of them double-spreads and 53 at full page. The appearance is luxurious and the layout is excellent. Unusually, and to be welcomed in such a production, the captions are printed alongside the plates rather than gathered into an appendix. For what you actually get, this book is surely a bargain at today's prices.

After the main introduction, the book is divided into five territorial sections each with a short introductory essay: ‘Himalayas and Karakoram’,

'The Alps and Ranges of Europe' (which includes Ben Nevis), 'The High Peaks of Africa', 'From Alaska to Tierra del Fuego' and 'Oceania and Antarctica'. Nevertheless the actual coverage – both in words and pictures – is extremely shallow. One could be excused for thinking that the Himalaya consists of only Everest, Annapurna and Nanga Parbat, the Karakoram of K2 and something called Trango, while East Africa, despite stirring words, is represented by a snowy abseil off ... is it Glyder Fach? The chapter title notwithstanding, Tierra del Fuego figures not at all.

Despite the flavour and the purple prose that goes with it, most of the other sentiments and the historical coverage are acceptable, as one might expect from Stefano Ardito, who is a well-known Italian mountaineering journalist. But as a professional he should check his facts. For instance 79 separate summits in the Alps top 13,000ft, not 65. There are 277 Munros in Scotland, not 543. Norman Collie did not initiate winter climbing on the Ben around 1800. Tower Ridge was first climbed in 1894 not '92. Coolidge and the Dévouassouds had already bagged the Badile 51 years before 1918. And Harold Raeburn ('... a name never heard in the Alps') was in fact a distinguished alpinist who made, among other fine climbs, the first solo traverse of the formidable Meije in 1919. And so on and so on. Such errors challenge credibility.

I have worked with Stefano and he has previously written books in English, but this text has been translated by one Anthony Shugar who is obviously unfamiliar with mountains and mountaineering terminology. One assumes *glacier climbers* are what we would know as *ice climbers*, while surely *North Slope* is where BP found oil rather than a shadowed mountain face? With more in the same vein, credibility is still further eroded. An excellent feature, however, is the use of many apposite quotes in the page margins. Often quite lengthy, they range from writers as diverse as Whymper and Messner, Bonington and Cassin, to Rébuffat, Greg Child and Pat Morrow – genuine aesthetics at last!

But essentially this is a picture book. It could have been the ultimate coffee-table book of mountaineering, but it isn't. The success of such a volume depends on the folio of images being worth more than the sum total of the individual illustrations. And this folio has as little to do with real mountaineering as has a TV spectacular of an assault on the Old Man of Hoy. *C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas l'alpinism*.

Indeed, the title sums it all up: 'Glory'. Not the nothing-to-prove, primal glory of the mountains themselves, though to be fair that does shine through in the occasional picture, but the very different kind of personal glory with which the captions typically invest the climbers portrayed. Most of these photographs are about apparently *glorious people* rather than *glorious peaks*. They show rarely-recognisable climbers going about their chosen business/pleasure in spectacular situations. Individually almost every image is a dramatic one but the drama is repetitive, theatrical and sadly unevocative. The reader remains uninvolved and becomes a mere voyeur.

The 45 photographers represented – I must admit to being one of them – are all either professional mountain photographers or well-known climbers with an eye of sorts. Most hail from the Alpine countries. Art and creativity are irrelevant in the situations portrayed here: situations where *any* photograph will be spectacular but where driving the camera *at all* is a tour de force. Not the peaks, not the climbers, but the photographers – in this book I reckon theirs is the real *glory*.

This book is such a paradox that I can only wonder at whom it is aimed. All praise nevertheless to the small imprint of Swan-Hill (Airlife Publishing) for breaking into the mountain genre with such an attractive and striking publication. Mountaineering, however, is a highly specialist subject and the employment of a draconian editor who really knew the game would have resulted in a far more credible – and a far better – book.

John Cleare

### **On the Edge of Europe. Mountaineering in the Caucasus**

Audrey Salkeld and José Luis Bermúdez

Hodder & Stoughton, 1993, pp260, £18.99

It is curious how infrequently Europe's highest mountains, the Caucasus, have been visited by British climbers in recent times. It was not always so. In the heyday of the Alpine Club, Victorian mountaineers positively monopolised the early exploration of the range. This surge petered out at the end of the 19th century, since when there have been only sporadic visits, notably the Hunt expedition in 1958 and MacInnes in 1970.

Up-to-date literature on the subject has been sparse in comparison to that on the Alps or Himalaya. *On the Edge of Europe* therefore fills a vacant niche and is much to be welcomed. Here we have a well-researched climbing history of the region together with such useful addenda as a definitive bibliography and a concise, tabulated list of ascents.

After an introduction which sets the scene, the main bulk of the book is devoted to selected extracts covering the whole panorama of climbing in the Caucasus. This is where Salkeld's intimate historical knowledge pays off. Preceding each extract, the author and his achievement are placed precisely in context.

First we have a good helping of vintage Victorian fare: great names such as Freshfield, Mummery and Dent, with Longstaff just overlapping into the 20th century. Then the Germans and Austrians took over the initiative. The period of bagging virgin peaks ended at about the time of the Russian Revolution. Access by foreigners was not easy and from then onwards Russian climbers dominated the scene, adding scores of routes and demonstrating their taste for institutionalised climbing. There were no Western expeditions between 1937 and 1948. From Hunt's landmark expedition in 1958, the range was open to Western climbers but somehow the rush never took place. At about that time Western climbers were too preoccupied in polishing off the post-Everest virgin summits of the

Himalaya. Despite the fact that since the turn of the century the activity has been predominantly non-British, the extracts are all from British books. In this respect there is a lack of balance.

While reading the Longstaff extract I became somewhat baffled when I got to the foot of page 118. Some detective work with Longstaff's *This My Voyage* revealed that a whole page had been omitted. There must be egg on the proof reader's face!

Now, with the Berlin Wall long down, we should all be rushing to the Caucasus. Instead we see only a trickle. Admittedly post-Soviet turbulence on our TV screens largely concerns the periphery of the Caucasus – regions such as Georgia, Abkhazia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although things look a bit tricky at the moment, the time must come when, if for no other reason than the need for foreign exchange, we will see climbing and trekking made so easy that it will be little more hassle than going to the Alps. And before you go, *On the Edge of Europe* will be essential reading.

Mike Banks

### My Vertical World

Jerzy Kukuczka

Hodder & Stoughton, 1992, 189pp, £16.99

Leaning on the bar at the Alpine Club, I overheard the following exchange: 'It's good, isn't it?' ... 'But it's not exactly literature, is it?'

I won't describe the speakers, it's not important. The point is: what exactly *is* mountain literature? Did the second speaker mean that, even in mountaineering, literature remains the province of those pursuing a hidden agenda? Did he understand by literature an intellectual game of semiotics accessible only to those sufficiently educated and willing to play? If so, I could not agree with the premise. If, on the other hand, literature means the use of words to convey the procession of emotions and the sense of place to enthrall and pull the reader convincingly into the story – the use of language that compels one to believe in a different reality for a while – then the second speaker was quite simply wrong. The book under discussion *was* literature.

They were talking about *My Vertical World* in which Kukuczka adopts a conversational style. He is, after all, only trying to tell a story. Andrew Wielochowski, a pretty useful mountaineer himself, has provided an admirable and seamless translation. From the first paragraph the writing is simple, honest and engaging: 'I touched rock for the first time on Saturday afternoon, 4th September in 1965. From that moment nothing else mattered ...' His description of the discovery will ring echoes with all climbers. The first climb is as memorable as the loss of virginity. Yet, while he was undoubtedly addicted to climbing, there would always be the conflicting pull of the mountains against that of family. He turned down the first winter ascent of Everest to be with his wife for the birth of their son. He always recognised that there were '... more important things than climbing. The most important things'.

Kukuczka's story is set against the background of a crumbling dynasty. The expedition to his first 8000m peak, Lhotse, coincided with the rising of Solidarity in that famous summer of 1980, when the name Lech Walesa first gained international recognition. Throughout the next nine years, the Polish expeditions struggled to raise money from their own democracy. Towards the end of the decade there were also sadder homecomings. But all is not dour; like a loose thread in the pattern is Kukuczka's extremely understated sense of humour. Not many people have served both Messner and Doug Scott 'mountaineer's tea, slightly fortified with alcohol from the medicine box'. And introducing the great Wojciech Kurtyka, he asks: 'Who is Wojciech? Well, it is really hard not to know him ...'

It was really hard to know Kukuczka. He was quiet and did not interview well. This volume goes a long way to explain things he never seemed able to say. It gives an insight to the logic he adopted for his climbs and the reasoning that enabled him to become, along with Messner, the pre-eminent super-alpinist of his time. He does this in simple language because he has a story to tell. It works; the book is a communication.

Perhaps his death was inevitable; whereas Messner had promised his mother not to set foot on another 8000m peak after the collected set, Kukuczka said he had no choice but to continue climbing. In an interview for *On the Edge* in 1988, he said: 'I see a mountain, I see a route, I know that I must go there.' The following year he fell from the top of his new route on Lhotse South Face.

*My Vertical World* has a faded photograph for a cover and, like so many of my favourite volumes, the jacket does insufficient justice to the contents. But there are too few photographs inside and those that do appear only serve to tantalise. What other shots of MacIntyre did Kukuczka take? Where are the photos of that headwall pitch on Makalu West Wall? I do not criticise – the Kukuczka archives probably do not have the same photographic quality that Doug Scott's do. All that Polish film, and cheap East European cameras too. But do not be fooled by the presentation. Do read the book; you won't be disappointed.

Victor Saunders

### In the High Mountains

Emil Zsigmondy

*The Ernest Press, 1992, pp378, £125*

We have had to wait over a century for this first English edition of Emil Zsigmondy's excursions *In the High Mountains*, but what we have now got is very much more than a good translation. Julius Kugy, who climbed with Zsigmondy for several years until he finally told him that he was too imprudent and that he was not going to climb with him any more, is said to have described the original German edition *Im Hochgebirge*, published in 1889 some four years after Zsigmondy's death, as one of the most beautiful books on mountains ever published.

Zsigmondy started climbing in his native Austria in 1874 at the age of 13 with his brother Otto and they were soon making notable ascents, mainly without guides. By 1884 he had progressed to some of the major routes in the Valais and the following year he climbed the Meije; but less than a fortnight later he was attempting a new route on its south face when he fell some 200ft before the rope broke and he then plunged another 2000ft to his death. Many of his climbs are described in this book, which includes additional material relating to his death, as well as John Stogdon's original review in the *Alpine Journal* of 1891. Much controversy surrounded the circumstances of Zsigmondy's death and indeed his whole approach to climbing, as Volume XII of the *Journal* testifies, not just on account of such contentious issues of the day as the use of crampons and the justification for guideless climbing, but his willingness to run risks of a much greater magnitude than his contemporaries. He was not only ahead of his time but also ahead of the improvements in technique and in equipment. It is therefore hardly surprising that there may have been insufficient demand to warrant an English edition in the 1890s, despite a favourable review by Stogdon.

The major part of the value of this new edition lies in its illustrations. These include some 190 vignettes above, below or embedded in the text, the great majority of which bear the monogram of E T Compton. No effort has been spared in seeking to reproduce them as closely as possible to the original and this has been achieved with remarkable success, the clarity and dramatic effect being wholly unimpaired.

The sixteen full-page paintings by Compton, copied from the original photogravures, must represent the most readily available collection of works by this leading English climber and artist of his day, quite apart from the vignettes. They include the Meije, Matterhorn, Bietschhorn and 'The Ortler from the Hochspitze', which Stogdon suggested was the best of them all. In the original edition two of the plates including the Meije were printed in grey-blue ink, the Bietschhorn in grey-brown and all the rest were in dull brown tones, but although the reproduction is once again of the highest quality the plates are now all printed in black. It is a pity that some of them lack the finer subtlety of shade apparent in the original.

The text sometimes retains German words unnecessarily, owing perhaps to the translator's unfamiliarity with the subject matter. Thus several English, French and American climbers still bear the title 'Herr', which would certainly have upset 'Herr Coolidge' had it been published a century sooner, particularly as his Alpine pioneering aunt suffers from the same complaint, with the title 'Fräulein Brevoort'. Another problem arises when Zsigmondy quotes from the German translation of an English book, and we are given an English translation of the German translation instead of the original English wording. It may mean almost the same, but when Whymper's drawing in *Scrambles* of his fall in 1862 is captioned 'As I was trying ...' instead of the original caption 'In attempting to pass the corner I slipped and fell', there may be unnecessary confusion. These may seem somewhat minor faults, but they do stand out in marked contrast to the

meticulous attention to detail apparent in the layout of the text and in the illustrations.

As for the unusual price, this limited edition of 300 copies is essentially a collector's item and there can be little doubt that had it been published a century ago a nice second-hand copy would have been likely to command even more today.

*Alan Lyall*

### **Personal Growth Through Adventure**

David Hopkins and Roger Putnam

*David Fulton Publishers, London, 1993, ppx+241, pb, £14.99*

In the past three decades one of the unsung success stories in British education has been the widespread imaginative development of 'open country' or 'adventure' education for young adults. Many of the best initiatives have been by local authorities. This success story should be promoted by every political party. Yet it could quite easily be pruned to death by penny-pinching policies. The seed was planted and watered by Kurt Hahn, Geoffrey Young and Jack Longland. It has grown, often in the face of prejudice and difficulty, so that now, each year, many thousands of children get some first-hand experience of the challenges and beauty and the tempo of life which wild country can offer. This book gives a fine, concentrated account of the story, of the ideas behind it and of its present, rich expression.

About a third of the book comprises case histories which exemplify the impressive sweep of what is being done: expeditions for young people suffering from diabetes, spinal injury or epilepsy; special courses for ICI managers or for young delinquents. Of course there have been occasional sad failures. But what shines through this book is the number and dedication and imaginative competence of the many lovers of wild places who sustain this movement. What was, perhaps, the most impressive tale is that of the Toxteth Community College (Comprehensive) which has for 20 years built up a tradition of expeditions to the Atlas, Sahara and Hoggar – two weeks, ex-army trucks, careful budgeting, and no volunteer turned down on grounds of 'behaviour' at school!

The title of the book is slightly clumsy. It would not be worth a comment, except that it also indicates a significant, contemporary limitation on current views about adventure in education. I refer to the over-emphasis on 'personal growth' and personal autonomy. They are important but, if made a central aim, they can lead to a kind of macho individualism. Other, greater questions need to be at the centre: what is 'adventure' contributing to the community, to an enduring well-rooted culture, to the survival of the planet's rich endowment? Such questions are hinted at in several quotations from Hahn, Schumacher and others; and notably in a fine peroration by Tom Price. This is an excellent book. It will help that often endangered species which *must* survive: *good education*.

*Robin A Hodgkin*

**Pakistan Trekking Guide**

Isobel Shaw and Ben Shaw

*Odyssey Hongkong, 1993, pp420, sketch-maps, pb, npq*

This well-researched guide is the product of five years of travel across the mountain regions of Pakistan. Isobel Shaw has written two other guides to Pakistan, and she and her son's wide background knowledge has been gained by previous residence in the country. Beginning with an introduction to Pakistan's history, people, religions, languages, climate, flora and fauna, economy and politics, it goes on to inform potential travellers what to expect when they get there, from the authorities, from the local populations, and how to avoid the obvious and the less obvious pitfalls. Three principal trekking regions – Skardu, Gilgit and Chitral – are dealt with and journeys radiating in all directions from each are described in detail.

Practically all the treks mentioned are based upon personal journeys; otherwise, the information source is quoted. A great asset to these descriptions is the provision of adequate sketch-maps. There is not a route of the hundred or so described that cannot be found on one of them. The Guide scores full marks for this. The picture given of the current scene emphasises how far the country has moved ahead to meet the growing demands of modern tourism.

There is such a wide range of subjects covered that a few slips are inevitable. The Tibetan plateau, not the Deosai, is surely the world's largest. The Gilgit Scouts were raised in 1913. The nine small feudal states in the Gilgit region were merged into the Republic of Pakistan (some not without resistance) in February 1970. I do not believe that the existence of the Indus river prior to that of the mountains through which it flows has been sufficiently proved. A F Mummery was not killed on the Diamir face of Nanga Parbat, but in attempting to reach the north side of the mountain across the Diamir gap.

As well as an index and bibliography there are several useful appendices, including glossaries for four of the main local languages. Where better than in a work such as this to preach the need for good trekking practices and environmental awareness? The sense of urgency in the message does not seem to me to be quite strong enough. However, the many virtues of this handbook and its immense practical value far outweigh any minor shortcomings. It is a comprehensive information source for anyone contemplating a visit to Pakistan as a tourist, trekker or first-time climber. If it should help to swell the volume of trekkers visiting the country, turning the flow into a flood similar to that sweeping through Nepal, then it will bring great satisfaction to the Pakistan Tourism Ministry and to the proliferating numbers of trekking agencies. However, unless the changes that tourist growth may bequeath are wisely managed, the inheritance might turn into a mixed blessing for the mountain regions and the people who dwell there.

*Trevor Braham*

## **Ballooning Over Everest**

Leo Dickinson

*Jonathan Cape, 1993, pp160, £14.99*

Although this book came out at the same time as several other anniversary Everest books, it celebrates a quite different achievement: the flight of two balloons over Everest in 1991, years after planes first flew over the mountain. It was an incredible adventure, and Dickinson tells the story well in a book that, as one would expect, is superbly illustrated.

The early part of the book recalls the tribulations of getting the expedition off the ground at all. The first attempt resulted in the balloon spending most of its time in Nepalese customs, being inflated in a field in Kathmandu, and then being packed away again, the pilot abandoning the project. Names such as Per Lindstrand, Richard Branson and Chris Bonington were involved at this stage. Later, a two-balloon attempt was agreed on by the sponsors, with one balloon filming the other. Chris Dewhurst and Andy Elson were the pilots, with Dickinson and Eric Jones filming.

The author had disagreements with most of the major participants at some time or other which, of course, makes for absorbing reading. But there were many lighter moments, as when one of the team dressed up as a yeti, apparently fooling both the other team members and the Sherpas.

Whilst the expedition was an undoubted success from the point of view of flying over Everest, it was very much less so from the author's filming hopes. The attempt was sabotaged at the start by Leo's pilot who jumped the gun and started ahead of the other balloon, thus eliminating at one stroke any chance of photographing it in flight. The author obviously never forgave him!

Both balloons had a somewhat traumatic flight. Dewhurst and Dickinson sailed high and swiftly, passing very close to the summit, but used a lot of fuel and came down fast, crashing onto the Tibetan plateau. Elson and Jones had burner trouble; they came down low and almost crashed into the SW face, burning through a quarter of their wire basket supports, but they gained height again and made a perfect landing.

This is a fascinating book with superb photographs. But the photos are not all that they seem. Three of the best double-page spreads show the second balloon sailing over Everest, and you wonder how they were taken since the two balloons were eight miles apart at the time. I was quite prepared to believe that Leo, with his usual inventiveness, had trained a vulture to fly alongside with a camera strapped to its back.

A fourth photo, which is also used for the dust jacket, is a close-up of the second balloon over Everest, with flames roaring from the burner and the basket at a crazy angle as if nearly all the wires had snapped. Fortunately this never happened. All four photos are the product of photographic trickery and computer graphics. But is such manipulation justified? Whatever you feel about the pictures, buy the book as an entertaining account of a great venture.

*Geof Templeman*

## The Ala Dag, Climbs and Treks in Turkey's Crimson Mountains

Ö B Tüzel

*Cicerone Press, 1993, pp280, £14.99*

This carefully researched guidebook by Ömer Tüzel, a member of the Turkish diplomatic service and an experienced mountaineer, is a much expanded and very worthy successor to Haldun Aydingün's *Ala Daglar – An Introduction* (Redhouse, 1988).

Tüzel devotes his first 75 pages to the practicalities of access to the Ala Dag, its nomenclature, its geology and, in particular, to the history of climbing in this range. He pays generous tribute to the British mountaineering effort (pioneering and later) and allots one appendix to British first ascents and another to a chronology of British expeditions from 1943 to 1991. Turkish alpinism was slow to develop: at first an unimaginative group activity, organised nationally, it only took off as an individual sport in the mid-1970s under the impetus of Yalçın Koç and other hard climbers including, though he is too modest to admit it, Ömer Tüzel himself.

A useful vocabulary of Turkish mountain terms and peak names tidies up a confusion of local and foreign contributions to the nomenclature of the range. 'Ala Dag' itself is a bit of a puzzle since 'ala' can mean 'darkish' – scarcely applicable to these grey-white partly dolomitic limestone peaks rising out of the Anatolian plateau. Another, if rather dull, interpretation of 'ala' is 'high', but there can be no doubt that, on seeing the great wall light up as the sun sets, 'crimson' of the title is absolutely right, as testified by some of the colour plates.

Tüzel divides the climbers' Ala Dag into four sectors, each with ridge maps, topos, and detailed route descriptions. The northern sector lists 35 routes, one third on the highest and most prominent peak – Demirkazik ('Iron Stake'), 3756m. (The formidable N wall – Grade VI – was first climbed by an Australian/New Zealand pair in 1972.) The central – or Yedi Göl – sector has 32 routes centring on the monolith Direk Tas ('Upright Rock'). The southern sector, with 38 routes, covers the less prominent second highest peak – Kaldi Dag, 3736m – and includes the spectacular 120m high pinnacle Parmakkaya ('Finger Rock') – taking 7 hours of Grade V/VI on the first ascent in 1971. Finally, there is the remote south-eastern or 'Torasan' sector, a group seen from afar by British pioneers who called its highest summit 'Mystery Peak'. Originally only accessible across the main range from the west, access from the east is now somewhat easier. It offers 17 routes including the exacting N wall of Vay Vay, 3600m. All the climbing routes described are supplemented by trekking routes across the range, mainly from west to east.

The Ala Dag range has been thoroughly explored since Robin Hodgkin and myself were there in 1943/44, but the mountains have not, it seems, been spoilt. Tüzel is critical of the Demirkazik Mountaineering Centre – a mountain hut/hotel located too low on the western slopes to allow effective tackling of the high peaks in a single day. It is still a pleasant necessity to camp at one of the alps where the infrequent springs emerge from the

foot of the high peaks, or else in the basin of the Yedi Göl ('Seven Tarns', but only two have water in high summer). Tüzel earnestly hopes that no hut or shelter will be built to spoil this fine, remote corrie. Indeed, modest as the Ala Dag is by Himalayan or even Alpine standards, a climbing holiday among the Crimson Peaks has the added attraction of constituting a small expedition.

*Edward Peck*

### **Beyond Risk: Conversations with Climbers**

Nicholas O'Connell

*Diadem, 1993, pp300, £15.99*

Climbing is a totally daft activity, if you look at it honestly. It follows that we climbers inevitably have a decidedly dotty side to our nature which we are only too eager to explain. The most famous explainer was Mallory with his 'Because it's there'. But he also made a more profound statement when he said: 'If you ask the question, there can be no answer.'

Despite this, *Beyond Risk* devotes 300 pages in trying to utter the unutterable, it being a well-known fact that the superstars of mountaineering are more than willing to bare their souls at the drop of a cheque. Nicholas O'Connell interviews 17 of the most famous contemporary climbers including our own Chris Bonington and Doug Scott. Most of the predictable names are there: Cassin, Hillary, Diemberger, Messner, Destivelle, Cesen. The question and answer interview technique employed is not my favourite format but here O'Connell has gone far to overcome my reservations by starting each interview with a concise biography which clearly identifies the particular contribution the interviewee has made to the progress of mountaineering. I found this most elucidating. For instance I now understand exactly the roles played by Royal Robbins and Warren Harding in the development of Yosemite climbing; or what precisely Cassin and Bonatti each contributed to Alpine climbing. The author being American, American climbers are particularly well represented.

The deeper I got into this book, the more I enjoyed it. The successive developments in the history of mountaineering were obviously not achieved because the particular exponent had superior muscles. It mostly happens in the mind. This aspect is cleverly probed by O'Connell with his very accurately aimed questions, calculated to reveal the essence of the matter. In their responses the great climbers disclose their philosophy and their techniques, their dreams and sometimes their conceits. It all adds up to a fascinating testimony of the progression of mountaineering in our time.

The photographs are printed very flatly in black and white. No doubt this keeps the price down but it gives the book a dull feel which it does not deserve.

*Mike Banks*

### **The Mountains of Wales**

Ioan Bowen Rees

*University of Wales Press, 1992, pp299, pb £10.95, hb £25.00*

This is a revision and considerable expansion of a book, a very beautiful one, first published by the Gregynog Press in 1987. It is an anthology of prose and verse, English and Welsh, on the mountains of Wales. Most of the Welsh is accompanied by translations; those verses which are not have explanatory notes.

The book is cast into sections related to the people who have come to the mountains of Wales. An introductory section sets the scene; it is followed by Heroes, from legendary ages to the time of Glyndwr, whose exploit in climbing the chimney on Moel Hebog to escape his pursuers is recounted. Discoverers takes us from the earliest days of tourism into the full flood of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The Romantics take the experience seriously (rightly enough) while the native Welsh like Talhaiarn can afford to be more lighthearted. In Mountaineers readers will find themselves in company with J M Archer Thompson, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Arnold Lunn, Dorothy Pilley, Gwen Moffat and Joe Brown, among many others. Neighbours, on those who live in the mountains, is especially appealing; we see them not as visitors, but from the inside. The warmth and security of Margaret Roberts' mountain farm, while outside a blizzard rages, are almost tangible. A section on Artists celebrates the extraordinary range of poets and draughtsmen who have worked in Wales and found unexpected beauty. T H Parry Williams, who was born and grew up right among the mountains at Rhyd Ddu, beautifully redeems what most take to be blots on the landscape: the slate tips. The final section, Pilgrims, is meditative, and touches on the exaltation of the spirit to which the mountains have led not a few writers.

Readers who have Welsh will be even more rewarded. That the rocky solidity of the Moelwyns should be no more than tissue paper stuck against the sky is a delightful conceit; while Nesta Wyn Jones on her farm combines description of fire, storm and mist with her own feeling superbly.

If you climb in Wales, and want your appreciation of both the mountains themselves and the people who live there greatly and very pleasurably enhanced, read *The Mountains of Wales*.

*James Bogle*

### **Look Back in Happiness**

Michael Harmer

*Cygnnet Press, pp152, £12.95*

Introducing this book to the *Alpine Journal* requires a short backward delve into Club history, when the author was a member of the Committee shortly before the Second World War. He was appointed spokesman for the group of members, known as the 'Young Shavers', who wished to modernise

the Club at South Audley Street. This was opposed by the President, Col Strutt, but supported by Geoffrey Winthrop Young. Harmer, my friend from student days at Barts and on the hills, says that he told the Committee it was 'no longer possible for younger members to belong to the Carlton for its politics, the Reform for its cutlets and soup, the Ski Club for winter exercise and the Alpine Club for its snob-value'. He then proceeded with the Young Shavers' recommendations which were: 'Sell South Audley Street; buy premises near an Underground station in Paddington or the Borough and provide facilities to include sleeping accommodation even if of the simplest kind.' *Plus ça change ...!* It is said that the day after hearing this General Bruce had a stroke and Col Strutt had Harmer sacked from the Committee.

Harmer's story, the memoir of a London surgeon, covers much else beside mountains and derives its own pleasure and charm from a pen which the author tells us he has 'dip't in honey'. The chapter 'Of Men and Mountains' gives us vivid thumb-nail sketches of his expeditions (he narrowly missed Wiessner's disastrous 1939 attempt on K2) and of his companions - from Professor Pigou who proposed him for the Club and whose AC tie, invariably worn for all occasions, had been reduced to a green bootlace, to climbers of the calibre of Wilfrid Noyce and James Joyce and the famous Zermatt guide Xavier Lochmatter. He tells us something of the difficulties and frustrations of a busy surgeon's life, but has far more to say about its rewards. He traces for us the National Health Service, which he thoroughly supported, from its inception under Nye Bevan to present times.

There is much debunking, for the most part gentle. *Bêtes noires* include contemporary art and, more regrettably and less convincingly to this reviewer, Christianity. Nor do the endless bureaucracies which impede progress in medicine and surgery escape castigation, especially in the field (now so topical) of cancer-classification. The family motto, 'Always contradict; it gives you time to think', remains in play throughout the book. But I would be prepared to offer a money-back guarantee to any reader who will not admit to having enjoyed it. On the title-page of my copy Michael has written '*Auf dem Bergen ist Freiheit*', and I recommend all mountaineers and other people to share the happiness of his pilgrimage.

Edward Smyth

### Vascos en el Himalaya

Edited by Antonio Ortega

*Pyrenaica, Bilbao, 1992, pp264, 5000 pesetas*

The main thing that will strike readers will be the quantity and quality of the colour pictures contained in this massive book. It is actually a chronicle of the Basque achievements (and failures) in the high mountains of Asia. Areas visited have been the Himalaya, Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Pamir. The chronicle covers a total of 136 Basque expeditions that were fielded between 1974 (an attempt on Everest and an ascent of Shakhaur, 7084m)

and the year of 1992, when Everest was ascended four times and Cho Oyu three times. The book closes with statistics of different kinds. And while it is true, as editor Ortega recognises, that Basques have preferred to head for the greater mountains only, thus disregarding exploratory work, it is also true that their activity in high Asia has been remarkable.

The book is in Spanish, with very short sections in Basque (a strange language unrelated to Spanish and a distant relative of the Finno-Ugric stock). Several climbers are interviewed and we thus receive an insight into their attitudes toward expeditionary climbing and ecology. But above all, attention should be drawn to the illustrations of this work; their quantity, quality and variety would alone justify its acquisition.

*Evelio Echevarría*

### **On the Edge of Silence: A Mountain Anthology**

Compiled by Mary-Jane Selwood

*Springbank Press, 1993, pp80, £8.95*

Dr Mark Selwood worked in Pokhara in Nepal in 1986, and had a great desire to help the people of Nepal by improving health facilities. Tragically, he was killed in a climbing accident in the Cairngorms at the age of 27. A memorial fund was set up in his name and, in July 1993, the Mark Selwood Training Centre was opened in Pokhara.

A second project, to fund health education in remote areas, is now under way, and to help this Mark's mother has published this delightful anthology of prose and poetry. Only one or two of the pieces chosen are 'regulars', such as Winthrop Young's 'The Cragman', the remainder ranging widely from Po Chu-i to Philip Larkin, and Emily Brontë to Louis MacNeice. The whole is enlivened by charming illustrations.

All proceeds from sales go to the Mark Selwood Memorial Fund, and copies can be obtained from the Fund, at 75 James Street, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, G84 8XH. (£8.95 + £1 p&p)

### **Tight Rope. The Fun of Climbing**

Dennis Gray

*The Ernest Press, 1993, ppvi+184, pb, £9.95*

Dennis Gray was at his most active during one of rock-climbing's golden periods: that of the Rock and Ice, Creag Dhu and other star names of the fifties and sixties. He has already portrayed much of this in his two autobiographies. The present book covers the same ground but in a more anecdotal way, consisting of a string of stories about Brown, Whillans, Patey, et al. It is stories such as these that fill in the background to the whole era, so that the book becomes almost an historical document. It is also highly enjoyable reading.

### **The Reverend A E Robertson: His Life, Munros and Photographs**

Peter Drummond & Ian Mitchell

*The Ernest Press, 1993, ppx+133, £13.95*

Now that Munro-bagging has become a national pastime, it is good to have a book that goes right back to the beginnings. Robertson was the first man to complete the list although there is some doubt as to whether he actually reached every top, one description in particular being rather ambiguous. Robertson's first Munro was climbed in 1889 and he made slow but steady progress over the next nine years, attaining about 100 summits. But he accelerated the programme in 1898 and 1899, adding another 150 in two long walking tours.

The authors split the book between them, Drummond dealing with *The Man* and Mitchell with *The Background*, which naturally includes much about early climbers of the time and the SMC. The two final sections of the book contain Robertson's own account of ancient tracks across the NW Highlands, with observations on access problems, a subject which occupied a lot of his time in later years. There is also a portfolio of his photographs.

### **Climbing Mount Everest. The Bibliography**

Audrey Salkeld & John Boyle

*Sixways Publishing, 1993, pp120, £15*

This bibliography will be very useful to those interested in Mount Everest itself and also mountain literature in general. It is an obvious labour of love by the authors, carrying on the tradition of the late Jill Neate. There are 587 individual entries, each sub-divided into different issues and editions; for instance, John Hunt's *The Ascent of Everest* has 15 entries of editions in English, plus a staggering 43 further listings for those in foreign languages. It is in the complete listings of East European, Japanese and other less well-known Everest books that much of the importance of this bibliography lies but, whilst many of the books listed are old favourites, some eyebrows may be raised at the inclusion of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* as an Everest book!

In addition to the main bibliography, there is a useful selective listing of magazine and journal articles, plus a chronological list of expeditions to Everest with their principal sources of reference.

### **Nothing So Simple as Climbing**

G J F Dutton

*Diadem, 1993, pp160, pb, £8.99*

Another collection of 21 stories of the Doctor, the Apprentice and the Narrator, and their adventures in the Highlands. Some have appeared previously in the SMCJ and other publications, but the majority appear here for the first time and continue the tradition started by *The Ridiculous*

*Mountains.* Readers of that first volume will know what to expect: witty, humorous stories, beautifully written, of just the right length to keep by the bedside and dip into before dozing off. This latest volume includes what the blurb describes as 'a bizarre spectrum of contemporary mountain obstacles and activities' – they are all here: paragliding, sponsored walks, access, witches, mountain biking, and so on. Read them and have a good laugh.

### **Breaking Loose**

Dave Cook

*The Ernest Press, 1993, ppx+202, pb £9.50*

Dave Cook was well known as a climber and communist, but not, until recently, as a cyclist. This changed after his decision to 'get away from it all' by cycling to Australia, climbing whatever turned up in his path. Setting out from Brixton in the rain in 1989, he met up with friends in Verdon, Orco, Mello and other rock-climbing shrines before finally feeling free, as he crossed the Bosphorus, to continue his journey. From then on, the story is obviously much more about the people he met and the social injustices he encountered. The long, long cycling stages were interspersed with train and air travel, either because of difficulty in obtaining visas, clashes with Saddam Hussein's police, or the sheer impracticability of travel by bicycle. A persistent thread is his love/hate relationship with the juggernaut drivers. He comments at one stage that you can get injected against everything except being run down by a lorry driver – a sad prediction for his Mediterranean trip in 1993. Whilst containing comparatively little climbing, this is a fascinating memoir by one of the sport's great characters.

### **The Best of Ascent**

#### **Twenty-five Years of the Mountaineering Experience**

Ed. Steve Roper & Allen Steck

*Diadem, 1993, ppxiv+384, £16.99*

The publication *Ascent* has so far run to twelve issues in the past 25 years, changing after the first nine, in 1975, from the annual mountaineering journal of the Sierra Club to an infrequent publication in book form. In that time, it has ensured for itself a unique niche in mountaineering literature, not least in promoting climbing fiction.

For their 25th anniversary, the editors decided to reprint a selection of their favourite articles, mainly from the earlier out-of-print issues. Financial constraints resulted in a smaller book format and few photos, but the delight is in the writing. All the old favourites are here: Harding, Tejada-Flores, David Roberts, Jeff Long and the editors themselves. In addition, eight new articles have been commissioned to round off the anthology. There are nearly 400 pages of pure pleasure here.

The following books have also been received by the Alpine Club Library during 1993:

**Encyclopaedia of Mountaineering** Walt Unsworth. *Hodder & Stoughton*, 1992, pp384, pb, £16.99. Second enlarged and updated edition.

**On Peak Rock. A guide to selected rock climbs on 100 Peak District outcrops** Ed. Carl Dawson. *BMC*, 1993, pp436, £15.95

**Walks in the Julian Alps** Simon Brown. *Cicerone*, 1993, pp176, £8.99

**Race Against Time. British North Geomagnetic Pole Expedition 1992** David Hempleman-Adams. *The Self Publishing Association Ltd/Hempleman-Adams*, 1993, pp222, £14.95

**The Karakoram. Mountains of Pakistan. Shiro Shirahata**  
*Cloud Cap, Seattle*, 1990, pp192, \$75

**Avalanche Safety for Skiers & Climbers** Tony Daffern. *Diadem*, 1992, pp192, pb, £11.99. Second edition.

**Bibliography of Colorado Mountain Ascents. 1977-1990**  
Joseph D Kramarsac. *Privately published*, 1992, ppix+122, npq  
Follow-up to the author's volume for 1863-1976.

**Medicine for Mountaineering & Other Wilderness Activities**  
Ed. James Wilkerson. *The Mountaineers*, 1992, pp416, \$16.95. 4th edition

**The High Mountains of Britain and Ireland. A guide for mountain walkers. Vol I. The Munros and Tops and other 3000ft Peaks**  
*Irvine Butterfield. Diadem*, 1993, pp320, £18.99. Revised & updated.

**Speak to the Hills** Ed. Hamish Brown & Martyn Barry.  
*Aberdeen University/Mercat Press*, 1985 (1993), pp528, pb, £9.95.  
An anthology of poetry.

**Andalusian Rock Climbs, including Tenerife** Chris Craggs.  
*Cicerone*, 1992, pp160, £6.99

**Northern Highlands. Rock & Ice Climbs** Ed. Roger Everett, *SMC*, 1993  
Vol. 1 **Knoydart to An Teallach** ppix+372, £13.95  
Vol. 2 **Strathfarrar to Shetland** ppxiv+400, £14.95

**The Cairngorms, Lochnagar and The Mounth** Adam Watson.  
*SMT*, 1992, ppix+262, £17.95

**Die Alpenvereinshutten** *DAV/OeAV/AUS. Rother*, 1991, pp720, npq

**Ogwen and Carneddau** Iwan Arfon Jones.*Climbers' Club*, 1993, pp418, £13.95**Chair Ladder and the South Coast** Des Hannigan.*Climbers' Club*, 1992, pp308, npq**The Mountains of Ireland** Paddy Dillon.*Cicerone*, 1992, pp220, £9.99**Hut-to-Hut in the Stubai Alps** Allan Hartley.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp120, £6.99**The Mountains of Greece. A Walkers' Guide** Tim Salmon.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp176, £9.99**Classic Tramps in New Zealand** Constance Roos.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp208, £14.99**Annapurna. A Trekker's Guide** Kev Reynolds.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp176, £8.99**Central Switzerland. A Walker's Guide** Kev Reynolds.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp208, £10.99**The Haute Route. Chamonix-Zermatt. A guide for skiers & mountain walkers** Peter Cliff. *Cordee*, 1993, ppvi+122, £10.95**Selected Climbs in Adrspach and Teplice** Pavel Lisák.*JUKO*, 1993, pp108, npq**Jersey Rock** Kevin Eloury.*Jersey Rock Climbing Club*, 1993, pp136, npq**Southern Chalk** Chris Mellor. *ITI Guides*, 1993, pp50, £3.25**Clwyd Rock** Gary Dickinson.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp220, £14.99**Mexico's Volcanoes. A Climbing Guide** R J Secor.*The Mountaineers*, 1993, pp139, \$14.95**French Rock** Bill Birkett.*Cicerone*, 1993, pp304, £14.99**Zen in the Art of Climbing Mountains** Neville Shulman.*Element Books*, 1992, ppix+118, pb, £6.99