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# Reviews

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

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**Brotherhood of the Rope**  
**The Biography of Charles Houston**

Bernadette McDonald  
*Bâton Wicks, 2007, pp250, £16.99*

One of my most prized possessions is sitting on the bookcase in front of me. It is a silver tankard, engraved with the unmistakable silhouette of K2 and bears the famous inscription: 'We went to the mountain as strangers and returned as brothers – K2 1953.' Charles Houston sent it to me after his last visit to England in 2004. In the bookcase is another precious memento – a rare first edition of *Five Miles High*, the account of the first serious attempt on K2 in 1938. It follows, therefore, that as a reviewer of this biography of one of the Grand Old Men of American mountaineering, I could be accused of lacking objectivity. I plead guilty.

Since I first met Charlie in 1991 he has become a close and valued friend, and I read the book with a warm feeling of recognition; that it gets right to the heart of a complex, talented and ultimately fulfilled man after a lifetime of incredible highs and lows.

Bernadette McDonald has delved deeply into Charles Houston's astonishingly varied life. Born into a family of East Coast privilege he was easily able to gain admission to Harvard and use his contacts to explore many fields, as doctor, research scientist, mountaineer, Peace Corps worker – almost every chapter reveals another of Houston's multi-talented ventures. It is not, however, a hagiography. Bernadette does not shirk from pointing out Houston's failings, both personal and professional. Prone to deep depressions, he felt that many of his projects either came to nothing (for example, he was one of the first to attempt to construct an artificial heart before transplants were invented) or that he didn't always get the credit he deserved. He described himself as a 'nearly' man – in medicine, science and of course mountaineering... 'Mount Crillon I missed, Nanda Nevi I missed, K2 I missed twice, and Everest I didn't really try.' His books and films were 'good, sometimes quite good, but never really what they could and should have been'.

There seems little doubt that at times Charlie could be hard to work with, abrasive, critical and tactless. But what shines through this book is that adversity is there to be challenged. Almost despite (or possibly because of)

the relentless self-criticism, here is a portrait of a man whose life has been far more than the sum of its parts.

When he came to the International Mountain Literature Festival at Bretton Hall, I introduced him as a man who had probably saved the lives of some of the audience, and if he hadn't already, he probably would do so in the future. For this is Houston's major contribution: Mountain Medicine, in particular his studies of pulmonary and cerebral oedema. I hadn't realised just how much and how long Charlie had experimented in this field, dating back to his wartime service in the Navy where he was one of the first to test, in controlled conditions, pilots' ability to adjust to altitude. Since then, of course, Houston has been at the forefront of most high-altitude research: an interest that seems to have been rekindled by the death on K2 of Art Gilkey in 1953.

Inevitably, I found the mountaineering chapters dealt with all too familiar ground, which is not to say they are any less interesting. Like the Tommy Cooper line, 'I'm only laughing because I know what's coming next.' I know the K2 stories all too well, though a small surprise was the admission by Charlie that Art Gilkey may well have killed himself on the epic attempt to lower him down the Abruzzi Ridge; a selfless sacrifice to save the rest of the hard-pressed rescuers; a question that can never be answered. (By the way, a heart-rending 45min DVD of the two K2 expeditions is tucked into the back-cover of the book.)

But what Bernadette has very well pointed out is that Charlie Houston's contribution to Himalayan history is almost unparalleled both in style and humanity. Even Reinhold Messner describes his expeditions as 'an inspiration for a lifetime'.

Now nearly 94, Charlie has the mind of a man half his age. As ever his critical faculties are still finely honed. These days it is directed at widely different targets: the Bush administration and the folly of Iraq, the dubious ethics (or lack of them) in modern Himalayan climbing and the evils of a materialistic society that he feels has corrupted climbing. Money he says 'is a great big ball of wax that sticks to everything'.

As an honorary member of both the Alpine Club and the Climbers' Club (not the *Welsh* Climbers' Club Bernadette!) 'The Brits' as Charlie calls us, will always hold Charlie as a special friend. The book will enhance what is already a formidable reputation and it is surely well deserved. Charlie has always 'walked to the beat of a different drum'. *The Brotherhood of the Rope* has gone a long way to explain and evaluate Houston's reputation as a man of absolute integrity and honesty.

A story that perhaps sums up his life came with an invitation by a friend to give the graduation address at a Rocky Mountain School.

'Why me?'

'You're ideal Charlie; you've had an interesting and varied life, and tried all sorts of activities. But, most important, you've failed in all of them. I think the graduating class would be inspired by your philosophy.'

Stunned, deflated and bruised, Charlie turned him down... but his words echoed in his head. 'You keep coming back, you keep trying again and you never give up.'

A week later he rang back and said 'yes'.

History will judge Charlie Houston's individual achievements, and perhaps give him more credit than he gives himself. But in his heart of hearts, Charlie must know that in the biggest test of all, he has passed with flying colours.

*Jim Curran*

### **Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit**

Pema Wangchuk and Mita Zulca

*Little Kingdom Pvt Ltd, at Hillside Press Pvt Ltd, Kathmandu, 2007, pp 375, npq*

There is something exciting and rather special about the arrival of a book from India – the slightly exotic smell and texture of the packaging – carrying with it the sense of a long journey made around the world. *Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit* came to me from Sikkim, in the very shadow of the mountain itself. Written and privately published by Pema Wangchuk, Editor of *NOW!* an English daily newspaper published in Gangtok, in collaboration with award winning filmmaker Mita Zulca, this substantial and profusely illustrated book is a significant and welcome addition to our existing literature on the Himalayan peak Kangchenjunga (8586m), third highest mountain in the world. What makes this book different, however, is the perspective of its main author Pema Wangchuk. He is part-Sikkimese, people for whom the mountain is both a powerful spiritual and political symbol. Kangchenjunga is, of course, a source of national pride in the rest of India too, being, after all, India's highest mountain, situated at the north-eastern border of the sub-continent – an obvious but often overlooked fact when authors of a western perspective come to write about it. Over the years, the Indian Government has commemorated Kangchenjunga in a number of ways: with a stamp featuring a painting by Nicholas Roerich (issued in 1988) and currently the mountain appears on the reverse of the 100-rupee note. It was seeing Kangchenjunga featured on India's currency that first gave Wangchuk the idea of writing a book about the mountain. As he puts it: in the small state of Sikkim (an independent country until 1975) – the relationship between people and mountain 'transcends to a different level'. Wangchuk goes on to explain that although the accepted international spelling is 'Kangchenjunga'...this book spells it 'Khangchendzonga' because that is how Sikkim pronounces it locally and has decided to spell it.

It follows, therefore, that the early part of *Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit* deals with the significance of the mountain to the communities of Buddhist, Lepcha and Limboo people that comprise part of the diverse population of Sikkim. Although a vague sense of the mountain as a sacred space, and its

main peak as the abode of a god, pervades the European canon of Kangchenjunga literature from Victorian times to the present day, a clear and comprehensive explanation of its differing religious and ritual significance to the various Sikkimese communities has hitherto only been found in dispersed and fragmentary form, much of it within the realm of academic anthropology. To my knowledge, Wangchuk and Zulca are the first authors to present all this to the general reader in a single book. They explain it all admirably in three chapters that deal in turn with the customs and religious beliefs of Lepcha, Limboo (a religious and culturally distinct group originating in an area of eastern Nepal) and Buddhist Sikkimese. It becomes clear that a certain amount of political manoeuvring and appropriation has occurred over time. It was Buddhism that later adopted Kangchenjunga as *dZonga* – the principle guardian deity of Sikkim – in an attempt either to subsume or annex the older Lepcha *Mun* faith. Today, many of the old stories of Lepcha folklore have been lost whilst Lepcha religious practices hang on precariously in the remote village of Nung within the Lepcha reserve of Dzongu in North Sikkim. There, until recently, a solitary, aged *Khangchendzonga Bongthing* (shaman or priest) offered prayers and made annual sacrifice to the mountain from an ancient open-air altar. Recently, in 2006, these ceremonies were revived by young members of the local Lepcha community – indicative of a widespread resurgence in cultural identity that happily now seems to be spreading throughout Sikkim.

The chapter on Buddhism contains interesting images of the overgrown ruins of what is believed to be the first monastery to be constructed in Sikkim and also some curious 19th century photographs of monks wearing the relics of Lhatsun Chenpo – Sikkim's patron 'saint' and instigator of the annual *Pang Lhabsol* ritual of thanksgiving to Kangchenjunga. This celebration with its *Pangtoed Chaam* dance is currently being revived at Ralang monastery (Karma Kagyu school) in Ravangla in South Sikkim amidst some criticism from purists over variations in the costumes and some rituals. Their arguments may seem esoteric to the western reader, but Wangchuk concludes: in Sikkim even a child knows that Kangchenjunga is to be worshipped ... it inspires awe effortlessly.

This book gives a brief account of how Kangchenjunga was 'discovered' by westerners and how it came to lose 'the battle of the heights' before moving on to a chapter on early explorers. Amongst the most interesting parts of this section is that on Pundits: native explorers and surveyors, recruited and trained by the government of British India to map the areas of the Himalaya beyond their control. Tales of specially marked logs being floated down rivers and of a boarding school opened in Darjeeling by the British as a front for grooming Pundits from an early age all sound like something out of a novel by Rudyard Kipling. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to learn that the school's headmaster was the famous Pundit Sarat Chandra Das – a major player in the *Great Game* and inspiration for Hurree Chunder Mookerjee in Kipling's *Kim*.

It would be wrong to suggest that this is primarily a book for the climbing enthusiast, although Wangchuk and Zulca devote an interesting chapter to Himalayan pioneer Alexander Kellas before navigating their way through the early climbing history of Kangchenjunga in a compact 50 pages. However, they manage to bring the climbing stories to life with some well-researched photographs of Crowley, Tombazi and others in Sikkim and press cuttings of the period. One of these newspaper articles, published in the *New York Times* in 1930, at a time when there had been a number of tragic and unsuccessful attempts on the mountain, reports Buddhist priests maintaining that there were in fact 'five easy paths' to the top of Kangchenjunga, each of them accessible by a stone gate with a key, hidden nearby.

In 2005 there were celebrations at the Alpine Club to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascents of Kangchenjunga by Band, Brown, Hardie and Streater in a compact expedition team of nine men, launched by the Alpine Club and led by Sir Charles Evans. Arguably, the second most important achievement of this expedition, after conquering the mountain in May 1955, was to leave the sacred summit unviolated, as a mark of respect to the Sikkimese people. This decision has become a historic moment in mountaineering history and Wangchuk and Zulca assert that it has made Kangchenjunga 'the most special mountain in the Himalaya'. Undoubtedly, it continues to be of utmost importance to the Sikkimese: when in September 2005 George Band and Norman Hardie were invited by the state government of Sikkim to a special function to mark the 50th anniversary of the expedition, it was to give thanks for the resolution to 'leave the last six feet un-done' rather than to commemorate the climbing of the mountain. 'It was an emotional moment', writes Wangchuk, and the event is commemorated in this book with many photographs of the felicitations featuring George Band, Norman Hardie and Col Narinder 'Bull' Kumar, who led the Indian Army expedition to climb the north-east route in 1977 that placed the Indian Tricolour six feet below the summit.

*Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit* is a comprehensive book that gives a new perspective both to some of the established climbing stories and to recent mountaineering history. An interesting chapter is *Lady Killer*, which brings together the exploits of women mountaineers and their attempts on Kangchenjunga. Austrian born Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, who climbed Kangchenjunga in May 2006, followed Ginette Harrison and became only the second woman to succeed in doing so. *Lady Killers* contains some of the most tragic stories in the whole book. *Tigers on the Mountain* traces the role of the Sherpas in the climbing expeditions to Kangchenjunga and gives special credit to the key role of Chettan, who accompanied all three early Everest expeditions and was one of the porters selected by Paul Bauer for the 1929 German expedition to Kangchenjunga. He returned to the mountain again in 1930 on the Dyhrenfurth expedition and met his death in an avalanche accident. Frank Smythe wrote of losing 'a valued friend ... one whom members of several Himalayan expeditions will mourn'.

Chettan's obituary, written by Tom Longstaff for the *Himalayan Journal*, is reproduced here in full.

Further chapters on the art and literature of Kangchenjunga discuss not only well-known works by Edward Lear and Nicholas Roerich but also Hiroshi Yoshida, a Japanese artist who was active in the 1930s, creating woodblock prints that are testimony to the deep beauty that the artist perceived in mountain subjects. There is even a photograph – first reproduced in *National Geographic* magazine – of Sikkimese ruler Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal painting a canvas of Khangchendzonga – the sky full of painted symbols that express his inward vision. *'K' and the Written Word*, brings together Mark Twain, Cale Young Rice, the Trappist monk Thomas Merton and many others besides. This chapter is something of a potpourri and I would have welcomed a much more comprehensive bibliography to support it. However, an important inclusion is Satyajit Ray's 1962 film *Kanchenjunga*, where the illusive mountain is used in an oblique and symbolic way to reflect on family and personal relationships amongst a group of Bengalis on holiday in Darjeeling. Even Arthur Ransome's classic *Swallows and Amazons* gets a mention because the Lakeland fell Coniston Old Man is imaginatively dubbed Kangchenjunga by the children in the story. Inclusions of this kind – also perhaps Raymond Benson's *A High Time to Kill* (1996) which sees James Bond grappling for a microdot on the icy slopes of Kangchenjunga, may seem peripheral but they serve to demonstrate the deep roots that the mountain has in our (western) cultural history and collective imagination. Arguably, though, the most fascinating parts of this book are those that reveal Sikkim's very deep and special relationship with Kangchenjunga. These make *Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit* essential reading for anyone contemplating a visit to Sikkim. The book is available directly from Pema Wangchuk (pamdorjee@gmail.com) or from *Les Alpes Livres* (www.les-alpes-livres.com).

Simon Pierce

### The Climbing Essays

Jim Perrin

*The In Pinn*, 2006, pp320, £18

Jim Perrin has said that this is the nearest thing we shall get autobiography from him. To this end he has added a series of brief autobiographical sketches to this collection of climbing-related articles for magazines and journals, the earliest of which, from the 1970s, were written for the *Climbers' Club Journal*. So there is an invitation to read this book as the whole story, from the unhappy, attention-seeking angst of those early pieces to the mellow, often mawkish, prose of the later monthly magazine columns. But Perrin's future biographer will find that, for all the elegant manipulation of the prose here, the author perhaps gives away more than he realises.

From the beginning, Perrin's writing could capture the search, the momentum, the intensity of reading rock and being alert to the physicality of place. 'Fictive Heroes', written for *Crags* in 1981, does this with a coolness of focus that becomes the survival mechanism for a climber whose partner must be left for dead at the bottom of a sea cliff. After many days the narrator is still, he says, 'Climbing. Climbing up the walls of my mind. Trying to get out.' The titles of those early essays, 'Hubris' (1971), 'A Valediction' (1973) and the drug-heightened confusion of 'Street Illegal' (1977) anticipate the preoccupation with Primo Levi in 'Eating Bear Meat' (1992) and 'In Dreams Begins Responsibility' (1993). The appeal of Perrin's climbing writing has always derived from his willingness to partially reveal the way his highs are inextricably linked to his lows, as when, alluding to Primo Levi, he empathises with 'a man who desires to survive the concentration camp of his own nature'.

Perrin is always on the side of 'adventure' rather than 'sport', of 'dreams' rather than 'responsibilities' and of subversion rather than the establishment. In a public interview with Ed Douglas at the last Boardman Tasker Award Perrin characterised his approach as one of playful subversion, which he feared may have upset a few people. 'Well, I'm sure you'll be forgiven', suggested Ed Douglas generously. So here is Jim Perrin in 'Trains, Cafes, Conversations' (1981) regretting that 'our clubs are not the same': 'We are not entrained together in humour, good fellowship, and joint purpose'. If this does not seem to be entirely right, that's the point: provocation. Like threatening to take your own club to court because they had not asked permission to republish 'Street Illegal' in their *Centenary Journal* and had omitted the pompous 'Note' (included here) that the original editor had foolishly demanded. This 'good fellowship' cost the Climbers' Club £3000 and I, as voluntary editor of that celebratory journal, really appreciated the humour and joint purpose of our then club member. 'I am not hubristic,' writes Perrin, and Robert Macfarlane in his Introduction abandons a natural caution to write, 'But with Jim it is true'. Indeed, the most amusing line in this book is Macfarlane's suggestion that 'what has distinguished him perhaps above all is his immense lack of ego'. If one takes the text at face value a generous reader could reasonably come to this conclusion, such are the seductions of Perrin's style.

Robert Macfarlane draws attention to the biblical rhythms, inversions and 'how revelation can be a function of syntax' in Perrin's style, citing Hazlitt, Johnson and Menlove Edwards as clear influences. In my review of Perrin's first collection of these essays, *On and Off The Rocks*, I used the word 'elegant' to represent his argument as well as his style, and I still think this is true for the best of the work here. But with time, it seems to me now that these mannerisms will come to be seen as rather arch and affected. Quite the opposite of Menlove Edwards' struggle to find a plain language adequate to his insights. 'And I, I wanted the heights ...' – where's the lack of ego in this affectation? However, 'It was so beautiful, I was lost', is a

stunned, and in its turn stunning, effect. The call of the golden plover is, indeed, 'of all the sounds of nature, most perfectly of its place'. His truest insights are often his simplest.

On the other hand there are the crass attempts to embarrass, such as the long footnote about a teenage Gill Kent's apparent desire to seduce him. And what is one to make of the references to the physical abuse of women that recur in Perrin's work? These jar with the reader, as does his pride in his son's nearly getting expelled from primary school. The recent double tragedies of his son's suicide and his wife's death are dealt with in this book with a directness that does not flinch from the pain and are part of the whole picture of the climbing life.

Re-reading the range of essays collected here one cannot help but feel a deep ambivalence, which, for a playfully subversive writer, is presumably the necessary, the essential response. As Dr Johnson might have said, complexity demands caution.

*Terry Gifford*

### **Safety, Risk & Adventure in Outdoor Activities**

Bob Barton

*Paul Chapman, 2007, pp 189, £19.99*

This book is not aimed at the individual recreational mountaineer or adventurer. It is a practical handbook for teachers, leaders and instructors who provide outdoor adventure activities for others, especially for groups of children and young people.

Following a number of high-profile tragic accidents such as at Lyme Bay, Stainforth Beck, Glenridding Beck and Manchester Hole, there has been much media concern in recent years about the safety of school trips. The reality is that such activities are very safe. On average there have been three deaths of pupils per year on school trips, most of which are due to road traffic accidents. In contrast, every year over 30,000 people die from obesity and unfitness and over 100 under-19s commit suicide. The proven benefits to health and mental health of involvement in positive outdoor activities mean that it is vital we do not allow the moral panic around the rare accidents to reduce opportunities and to frighten teachers and others into lack of involvement.

Much work has been done to identify and spread good practice in the management of risk in outdoor activities, while still maintaining the essential elements of challenge and adventure. Bob Barton's book goes a long way towards describing best practice.

Bob, an AC member, has vast experience in the management of adventure activities provision. He is a UIAGM mountain guide, Director of the European Avalanche School, former Principal of Outward Bound Eskdale, and advises Outward Bound and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award on safety.

The book is very clearly written and presented, and it demystifies the process of risk assessment and risk management – so much so that it all seems like common sense (which of course it is, but informed by years of experience and clarity of thought).

The author rightly rejects a simple mechanistic view of risk management and focuses instead on the human factors involved. While recognising the importance of technical skills, he emphasises the importance of leadership qualities such as judgement empathy and issues such as fatigue. He analyses the cultural aspects of risk management within organisations and identifies key aspects of an effective safety culture. He also describes psychological traps for leaders, including: failing to see the whole picture; trying to please other people; perceived time pressure; being blinded by the prize; false assumptions; the myth of instructor invulnerability.

There is a brief overview of child protection, protection of leaders against false allegations, and the importance of attention to the health and safety of leaders themselves. A welcome emphasis is given to the process of authorisation of prospective leaders to lead activities.

Bob Barton's book should become an essential text for instructors, outdoor centre managers and outdoor education advisors.

*Steve Lenartowicz*

### **The Artists of the Alpine Club: A Biographical Dictionary**

Peter Mallalieu

*The Alpine Club and The Ernest Press, 2007, pp 219, £20*

Peter Mallalieu is to be applauded for having produced an impressive volume that brings together the range of artists whose work is in the Alpine Club's considerable art collection, or who have been associated with the Club. It therefore documents not only an historically and internationally important art collection but also reflects the admirable way that from its earliest days the Club has opened its doors not only to those actively climbing in the Alps and Greater Ranges, but also to those whose literary, scientific or artistic endeavours have furthered an understanding of the mountain scene. Under this rubric the Club has offered membership to artists as varied as John Ruskin and Hamish Fulton; major figures deeply and intimately engaged with exploring the meaning and value of mountains and mountain activity, but not climbers or mountaineers per se. And it is this inclusivity that has in turn produced an extraordinary collection reflecting the variety of the visual culture of mountains and mountaineering.

Peter has selected 100 artists and provides a brief biography and (in most cases) illustrates at least one work by each. Being a biographical dictionary, his text focuses on the facts and dates of his subjects' lives, although he also includes some wonderful and evocative little character sketches. For example, I'm intrigued to know more of J F Cheetham (1835-1916), who

in 1859 travelled from Simla to Srinigar via Leh, fuelled by breakfasts of opium pills that gave him 'wonderful powers of endurance'. I like the sound of Arthur Cust (1842-1911), who was 'devoted to sketching in watercolour and pencil, and never liked to leave a peak or pass without a record. As a consequence, he was often benighted....' How different from today, when one merely points a camera, takes a picture and then moves on.

Of course, the advent of photography has changed everything (of which more later). To make paintings in a high mountain environment is a challenge of a different order to that of taking striking photographs. Consider Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913) whose *View from Mont Blanc Summit, sunrise*, 1869 is one of the highlights of the collection. He endured long painting sessions on the summit of Mont Blanc and apparently climbed the mountain 40 times. 'Several times he concentrated for so long that, as Freshfield recalled, his turn-ups became frozen and had to be freed using an ice axe.'

The book then, is a valuable resource for researchers and those with a general interest in the subject. But what of the art? Here we are on curious ground. A number of those whose biographies are recorded here are important artists in their own right; for example Loppé or Edward Theodore Compton (1849-1921). These professional painters would hold their own in any gathering of landscape artists of the 19th century. However, also represented are climbers who made sketches or paintings on their mountain journeys, amateur artists whose images gain currency through their association with important ascents. Some of their work is of questionable artistic value, but undoubtedly of historic importance. For example, many of Howard Somervell's (1880-1975) works are technically unsophisticated. However, the paintings made on the 1922 Everest expedition in particular have a wonderful evocative power and resonance, which is perhaps in part due to the context in which they were made, with which we are so familiar.

This unique mixture of professionals and amateurs is the most beguiling aspect of the AC collection and is well represented in Peter's book. There are many delights. George Baxter's (1804-1867) fantastic early aquatints of Mont Blanc are more akin to the kind of landscapes Jules Verne imagined on the moon than to anything one might find in the Alps. Arthur Croft's (1828-1902) *Monte Rosa, Lyskamm, Castor and Pollux*, 1871, is an extraordinary painting, in which hallucinatory precision creates a kind of surrealism. It is a phenomenon I have noticed in real life – the crystal clarity of the air in the high mountains, the piercing light which renders the world strange, everything present and seemingly close to – and Croft's painting captures it perfectly, in a way no photograph could. At the other end of the spectrum William Mathews' (1828-1901) sketch of the Pelvoux group is not much more than hasty notation, but incredibly evocative nonetheless.

Peter devotes 12 pages to John Ruskin (1819-1900), and illustrates seven works by him. They are all wonderful and one – *Grutli, Uri Rostock from Lake Lucerne* – is unquestionably a masterpiece. One could make a fascinating study of Ruskin's strange relationship with mountaineering yet

whatever his misgivings about the morals of actually climbing mountains he was a great painter of their forms.

And while topography is the dominant mode it is good to see other kinds of artistic responses to mountains being developed and included here, for example in the work of Julian Cooper (born 1947), John Dugger (born 1948) and Hamish Fulton (born 1946). In this respect the collection is moving and developing with the times.

This then is certainly an important book. It is well designed and on the whole the quality of reproductions is very good. I regret that there is no listing of works in the collection by each artist but this is a small and very particular complaint. What I feel is problematic – and unremarked upon here – is the status of photography, which is not included. Undoubtedly most of the iconic mountain images of the last 60 years are photographic and the AC has important holdings. Perhaps these will be included in volume two?

Peter Mallalieu has been an exemplary curator of the Alpine Club collection and has made an important contribution to the literature of mountaineering history and culture. This book makes apparent the breadth, richness and importance of the Alpine Club's collection (as well as its quiriness) and makes me think that it would be wonderful to see a major exhibition, carefully selected, at an important venue such as Tate Britain or the Royal Academy. It would be wonderful if such treasures and the fascinating artistic heritage of the Club could be seen and enjoyed by a very wide audience.

*Ben Tufnell*

**'Art at the Rockface: The Fascination of Stone'**

Exhibition at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery and  
Millennium Galleries Sheffield 2006

Catalogue edited by Andrew Moore and Nigel Larkin

*Philip Wilson Publishers, 2006, npq*

A new house for me means a new local crag, and the discovery that to start one route at Harborough Rocks there is a step up from a fossil, half polished away, but half still staring back from the Pleistocene in the dolomitic limestone. The older you get, the more you find to appreciate in the rock itself. This remarkably rich exhibition reveals the range of artists' uses of rock, from subject matter in Ruskin's intense study *In The Pass of Killiecrankie* (1857), to material in which the gods found their mythic forms in Thomas Banks' sculpture titled *Falling Titan* (1786), to raw beautiful matter to be celebrated in the modern settings of the rings made by Desmond Clen-Murphy (1963), to the found forms developed into bas-relief like the Ibis made by the inhabitants of Creswell Caves in Derbyshire, not far from Harborough Rocks, 12,000 years ago.

Throughout the exhibition are invitations to feel flint, granite, gritstone, as though we city dwellers (and indoor wall-climbers) need reminding of our tactile relationship with the earth and our lost bed-rock knowledge. Also placed throughout the exhibition are jars of pigment beside the rocks from which they are made, a reminder that for 77,000 years the earth has been a palette, a canvas and a mysterious subject that it has been important to try to get to know. That is the implicit project in all the varied forms of artworks in this exhibition.

What can we learn of our relationship with stone from Neolithic cup marks found in Scotland or the concentric rings in twinkling Northumberland sandstone? The stone seems to give as much as the marks themselves to the mystery of their meaning. What can we learn from land in David Bomberg's search for 'the spirit in the mass' when painting the fiery reds and yellows of Spanish stone in *Ronda, Summer* (1954)? What cosmic understanding is suggested by Emily Young's placing a light behind a six foot diameter disc of chalcedony in *Solar Disc I* (2005)? What irony, given the current acceleration in the collapse of the Matterhorn, might we find in Ruskin's 1849 attempt to paint its 'calm' and 'the absence of all aspect of convulsion'. Why does Henry Moore's *Mother and Child* (1936) in Ancaster stone still have something to teach us from its association with pebble, egg, persistence and amelioration? Is a *Standing Stone* (2006) of golden Kinder grit actually added to when Gary Breeze carves in it the words 'A Stone stood up to free the Soul'? And what are we forced to confront by AC member Julian Cooper's huge canvas *Eiger Face* (2005) in which the recognisable places our climbing culture has named are washed over with a thin film that leaves us facing, as if for the first time, raw energies at work in ice and rock?

How amazing that this exhibition conceives of itself as 'ground-breaking'.

Terry Gifford

### **'The Mountaineer and the Artist'**

The Alpine Club of Canada Centennial Exhibition, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, 2006

A century ago the founders of the Canadian Alpine Club had an amazingly broad and ambitious sense of what an alpine club might do beyond simply climb the peaks. Their first three objectives were: the promotion of scientific study and exploration of the Canadian alpine and glacial regions, the cultivation of art in relationship to mountain scenery, and the education of Canadians to an appreciation of their mountain heritage.

This is not about what a club can do for its members, but about what an alpine club might contribute to a national culture. All the verbs are boldly proactive: to promote, cultivate and educate. And in 1906 it was possible

to see science, exploration, heritage and art as closely related activities, although not necessarily undertaken by the same individuals. Although this exhibition, which pairs a mountaineer with an artist, was funded by the ACC's Centennial Committee, the ACC's Vice-President for Mountain Culture chairs a committee that funds the annual journal, special publications, and photography and painting workshops. I mention these details in the belief that there might be something to learn from other models.

Artists were matched with mountaineers taking into account proximity to each other, hiking abilities and appropriateness of the artist's medium to the location of special significance chosen by the mountaineer that they visited together. So the resulting 13 art works in paints, pencil, ceramics, glass, stone, wood and textiles form the exhibition. The catalogue, which has a page from each participant, is greatly enhanced by the offer from Craig Richards to make portraits of the pairs. Then unexpectedly (does this only happen in Canada?) Joseph Potts offered to make video interviews with the artists in their studios, so a DVD is also on sale alongside the splendid catalogue (at [www.AlpineClubofCanada.ca](http://www.AlpineClubofCanada.ca)).

The viewer of the exhibition might find the results rather variable in quality, but the range of media and the range in age of the mountaineers are particularly striking. So are some of the images. Among my favourites were Brent Laycock's freely painted atmospherics of Barry Blanchard's Yamnuska, the amazingly varied effects achieved by Barbara West's embroidery portrait of an elderly Marjorie Hind with pack and ice axe at Lake O'Hara, the clever combination of Ed Bamiling's photography echoed by his ceramics catching facets of Chic Scott's Mount Assiniboine, the exquisitely made rope wound around a lump of quartz represented in glass by Susan Gottselig after visiting Jim Tarrant's Mount Sir Donald. Most striking, moving and superbly crafted was a small cabinet in the shape of Mount Lorette by Mary Lynne McCutcheon that is in two irregular halves sliding along a shelf supported by ice axes. It represents the relationship of Richard and Louise Guy who met 68 years ago, but it might also represent the creativity released by the pairings of this brilliantly conceived exhibition.

*Terry Gifford*

### **The Boys of Everest**

Clint Willis

*Robson Books, 2006, pp535, £16.99*

The knife-edges of extremes sharpen understanding of the human condition. Clint Willis's lengthy foray into the world of high-altitude mountaineering takes both protagonist and reader to the alluring intersection of fear and desire. It is an attempt to 'leave behind the tether of a single mind...and deviate into the minds and bodies of others.' Willis's

choice of this quotation from Virginia Woolf encapsulates his task as he sets out to produce both a chronological account of British post-war mountaineering achievement and an imaginative exploration of climbers' thoughts and feelings.

Although Willis's writing is informed by what was clearly lengthy and meticulous research, his forays into existentialism sometimes form an uncomfortable alliance with the minute detail and painstaking chronology of the climbs that form the body of the book. It is too obviously Willis's voice that re-creates these moments and this authorial intrusion unpicks the sense of character instilled earlier in the narrative. The moments before Mick Burke's death on Everest in 1975 are described in jarringly poetic terms: 'And this mist is merely a curtain; he can lift it to peek at infinity, and what a joy it is – what fun – to know that this invisible blue is the blue of God.' This of a man earlier described as 'steady and cheerful...the kind who could be trusted to speak his mind...'

Elsewhere and often the rhythms of the prose work well, to produce memorable and evocative snapshots of mountain scenery: 'the mountains looked...like black velvet cut-outs against the starlit sky' or illuminating comments on a climber's state of mind, as here capturing perfectly the relative inexperience of the 23-year old Bonington on the Bonatti Pillar: 'He was again aware of the exposure; it gave him to understand that he was stuck in a universe that operated by implacable laws, that circumstances and outcomes did not reflect his wishes, that he was alone and mortal.'

Proposing improvements to the text of an experienced writer can be frustrating, but *The Boys of Everest* would have benefited from a stronger editorial hand. Although the minutiae of the technical aspects of climbing are invariably fascinating to the committed climber, the armchair adventurer does not enjoy such relentless and often unintelligible detail. Willis's scrupulous pitch-by-pitch record of every ascent erodes the reader's tolerance and a more careful balance between informing and educating might have been achieved with judicious editing.

Willis combines introspection and analysis with a wider anthropological view, chronicling the history of British climbing from 1958 to 1985 and setting it in the context of changing social attitudes and class. These parameters bound Chris Bonington's climbing career up to and including his ascent of Everest and the careers of two generations of mountaineers who accompanied him on seminal climbs. Willis has done his research well and has listened carefully to both survivors and the family and friends of those who perished and the result is an informative and often gripping panorama of achievement and endurance. Death is ceaselessly interesting to us: all these climbs contain the elements of tragedy and the inevitable examination of the motives of those who attempt such high-risk activities.

On the subject of motivation the book is less successful. There can, of course, be no definitive answers and the usual suspects are aired again: once away from the world climbers feel their own humanity more intensely;

after such remote and challenging experiences the 'real' world seems less meaningful, less important, a place to be escaped from; challenge defines personality...

Willis offers us no personal perspective here other than his desire to 'work through my own sense of not having taken certain chances, done certain things that I was, on one level, drawn to do'. This blurring of personal and universal detracts from the incisiveness of the narrative, leaving readers to come to their own conclusions without sufficient and substantial debate. Willis, an outsider to the world of British climbing, leaves us, too, on the edge of an often impenetrable but compelling world – anxious to know more but not always certain how to proceed.

*Val Randall*

### **Jean & Pierre Ravier: 60 ans de Pyrénéisme**

Jean-François Labourie & Rainier Munsch  
Éditions Pin à Crochets, Pau, 2006, pp370, €67

Had they concentrated their efforts on the Alps, instead of the Pyrenees, Jean and Pierre Ravier would be better-known across the climbing world, for their achievements throughout the second half of the 20th century kept them in the top rank of French mountaineers. But for 60 years their passion has been for that less-glamorous southern range, whose summits have always been overshadowed by those of the Alpine chain.

With refreshing modesty and a catalogue of top-grade climbs, the Ravier twins earned the respect and admiration of all with an interest in their mountains, and in *60 ans de Pyrénéisme* their devotion to the range is given due prominence.

It's a book of two halves. In the first part, Jean-François Labourie relates the brothers' biography from their birth in Paris in 1933, through childhood in a foothill village, to discovery of mountains and their meteoric rise to become the greatest climbers ever to concentrate on the Pyrenees.

The early years make for interesting reading, but as climbing dominated their teens, it's not long before the story becomes a series of vertical highlights. In this Labourie is fortunate to have a vast archive of information to draw on, for in their  *carnets de course*  Jean and Pierre kept detailed notes of every climb and expedition made in 60 years of activity.

This biographical half of the book is written in unconventional style, being broken into sub-chapters that read like magazine articles or short stories. The family business in Bordeaux, for example. Opened in 1930 as an auto-spairs retailer by their father, when the brothers took charge it became an unofficial annexe of the CAF's South-West Section, where customers would come as much to discuss mountains as to collect spare parts for their cars. Bosses and employees worked for more or less the same salary, and in winter the premises also provided a refuge for the city's down-and-outs.

Though Jean was passed unfit for military service through a foot injury sustained four years earlier, it did nothing to diminish his climbing abilities, for in addition to a rash of new routes in the Pyrenees, he went to the Caucasus in 1959, and in 1962 was a member of Lionel Terray's team that made the first ascent of Jannu in the Himalaya.

But the most moving story concerns the accident in 2001 on l'Arbizon, which they were climbing with younger brother Paul when the arête they were on collapsed, killing Paul instantly. Though they'd taken part in rescues in the past, in six decades of top-grade climbing, this was the first fatality on their rope.

The second half of the book is a retelling and evaluation of their major climbs by Rainier Munsch – another high-performance climber who sadly died in an accident on the Pène Médaa above Gourette just a few months before the book was published.

After a brief run-down of the brothers' mountaineering career and their influence on today's Pyrénéistes, he journeys across the range from one massif to the next, looking at the most important *voies Ravier* created in each one. This is fascinating stuff, for we not only have Munsch's assessment of their climbs, but quotations from the  *carnets de course*  written at the time and, in several cases, a contemporary article on specific climbs produced by either Jean or Pierre. For the uninitiated, this part of the book serves as an invaluable lesson in what to climb and where.

*60 ans de Pyrénéisme* is handsomely produced by Éditions Pin à Crochets in Pau. Sturdily bound, and weighing almost 1800 grams, it's illustrated with some 450 photographs.

Now, if only there were a publisher out there who would produce an English-language edition....

*Kev Reynolds*

**High Infatuation**  
**A Climber's Guide to Love and Gravity**

Steph Davis

*The Mountaineers Books, 2006, US\$16.95*

Within the Alpine Club we all, to a greater or lesser degree, share something of an infatuation with the high places of our world. So, I think all of us will find nuggets of truth and wisdom within the pages of this new book by Steph Davis.

Davis is one of the most accomplished North American women climbers and has an impressive list of achievements including first ascents in Pakistan, Patagonia, Baffin Island and Krygyzstan. She was the first American woman to summit Fitz Roy in Patagonia, and has set high standards in big-wall, solo, free and alpine style climbing. Her role as an ambassador for Patagonia, a company that is setting the standard for environmental

responsibility, reflects her enthusiasm for the natural environment. It is, however, her honesty and sheer love of climbing that shines through this collection of essays.

Some of the essays are presented here for the first time, while others have been previously published in a range of magazines. As such they are not a coherent collection, and some are better written than others. However, they all present an enjoyable insight into a climb or an adventure, and there are some real gems where Steph shares her feelings and thoughts about climbing and life. In some of these pieces she reveals her soul, her motivations and the inner conflicts. It is easy to empathise; the joy and wonder of mountain and climbing adventures must always be balanced with the costs and sacrifices.

The essays are accompanied by a very stimulating collection of quotes that give us an insight into the philosophy with which Steph lives both her climbing and her life. Throughout the book Steph's perseverance, enthusiasm and joy are a source of inspiration and encouragement.

*Lizzy Hawker*

### **Himalaya: Personal Stories of Grandeur, Challenge, and Hope**

Edited by Richard C Blum, Erica Stone, and Broughton Coburn  
*National Geographic Society*

*and the American Himalayan Foundation, 2006, pp 255, US\$35*

From time to time one runs across a book that sparkles like a precious stone, which draws the eye and captures the mind. *Himalaya: Personal Stories of Grandeur, Challenge, and Hope* is just such a book. The essays in this collection cover a variety of mountain related topics with their focus on the Himalaya, yet the messages transcend any specific geographical setting and apply to and call for reverence, respect and protection of all earth's wild places.

The forward by His Holiness The Dalai Lama invests a religio-cultural history of the peoples of the Himalaya with this insight: 'I am very wary of idealizing old ways of living, because there is much that is commendable in the modern world. However, the clear challenge that faces us, whether we live in the developed or developing world, is to discover how we can enjoy the same degree of harmony and tranquility that we find in traditional communities, while benefiting fully from modern material developments.' This passage pretty much sets the theme for this anthology, which helps point the way for sustainability in a global sense. All the essays are strong and insightful. The reader is treated to many divergent points of view covering a variety of topics that work to pull the reader to an active participation with the writer and the text. One can not help but be inspired by the accounts of great mountaineer/explorers like Charles Houston, Jim Whittaker, Brent Bishop, Conrad Anker, Maurice Herzog and most certainly Sir Edmund Hillary. The voices of Himalayan natives like Chokyi Nyima

Rinpoche, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari, Norbu Tenzing, and Ang Rita Sherpa offer the western world an understanding of what it is to exist on a daily basis at the foot of the world's highest and most dangerous landscape.

While life may be difficult for people who are born and raised in the Himalaya, another strength to this collection is to have their native perspective juxtaposed with insights of western visitors, many of whom have chosen to spend a good part of their lives in and around the Himalaya like Broughton Coburn, Peter Hillary, George Schaller, and Stan Armington. It is through their writing and photographs that the peace and harmony, as well as the difficulty and sorrow, of this isolated part of the world is presented to many who will never actually see it first hand.

The epilogue is, fittingly, by Sir Edmund Hillary who has dedicated his life to making life better for the peoples of the Himalaya through the building of schools and clinics. While reaching the top of the world was a milestone in his life, it is not the 'high point'. 'I have been fortunate enough to be involved in many exciting adventures,' writes Sir Edmund. 'But when I look back over my life, I have little doubt that the most worthwhile things I have done have not been standing on the summits of mountains or at the North and South Poles, great experiences though they were. My most important projects have been the building and maintaining of schools and medical clinics for my good friends in the Himalaya...These are things I will always remember.'

To everyone who opens *Himalaya: Personal Stories of Grandeur, Challenge, and Hope* it is a call to action, for personal involvement in worthy causes that will lead to making the world a place of harmony and peace.

*Mikel Vause*

### **The Mountaineer's Pontiff**

William Lowell Putnam

*Authorhouse, 2006, pp485*

Mountaineers may sense a spiritual benefit from being among mountains but only one true mountaineer was ever ordained Pope. History records numerous men of the cloth who have lifted their eyes to the hills and recognised an eternity beyond, a few early Popes pottered among the Alps, but none had a record to equal that of Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, the poet, scholar and alpinist who became Pope Pius XI.

He led the Roman Catholic Church in the critical years leading to the Second World War when religious faith came under siege from the growing fascism of Germany and Italy with the dark shadow of communism looming in the east. Steering such an ancient, unwieldy and controversial vessel as the Roman Catholic Church through the prevailing dangerous political waters of Europe took courage and tactical skill, qualities Achille Ratti had doubtless honed among the ice slopes and summits of the Alps.

But *The Mountaineer's Pontiff*, by William Lowell Putnam, covers a wider canvas than the story of one man and delves into the fascinatingly dark and troubled history of Holy Roman Church, from the medieval era when banishment, imprisonment, poison and even strangulation were thought to have been among Papal resorts, to more contemporary times when the Church stood accused of maintaining a lofty silence on such temporal issues as the Holocaust.

Pius XI was elected Pope in 1922 and held the office until his death in 1939 at the age of 81, long after the time when his love of being among mountains could be turned into a passion for climbing them. Born at Desio in northern Italy in 1857, Achille Ratti entered the priesthood when he was aged 22 and his career as mountaineer ran in parallel with his scholarly progress through the archives of the Church, as assistant director and then director of the Ambrosian Library and later Prefect of the Vatican Library. A sturdy, reddish-haired man of middling height, his climbing gear consisted of high gaiters, reaching to his knickerbockers, and a coat of military cut, but always with the usual clerical collar. He wore the biretta and never failed to carry his cassock in his knapsack along with his prayer-book from which he would occasionally read a few sentences when resting.

His most spectacular achievement was in 1889 when with one companion and two Courmayeur guides he completed an early ascent of the Marinelli route on Monte Rosa followed by the first traverse of the mountain by an Italian party, during which they were twice benighted and obliged to shiver on a ledge. Two days later Ratti set off from Zermatt without his companions and climbed the Matterhorn on which he was once again forced to spend the night in the open. As the *Tablet* reported at the time: 'Msgr Ratti has a special weakness as an alpine climber. He loves to pass the night in the open in the midst of the great rocks.'

The following year he climbed Mont Blanc, adding to a long series of notable climbs, a record which would still, more than a century later, as Putnam says, reflect a vigorous and determined spirit. The following year Ratti was back in Courmayeur and made a swift ascent of Mont Blanc in perfect conditions.

The Great War, advancing years and the press of clerical duties combined to curtail his climbing activities. He railed against the growth of Nazism which he saw emerging from the humiliation Germany suffered after the Treaty of Versailles. He thundered, in the Delphic manner of Popes, against the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini. Hitler attempted unsuccessfully to ban his encyclical to the faithful in Germany, composed in the German vernacular and making clear the Papacy's attitude towards the 'master race' philosophy. Gestapo agents snatched the document from the hands of priests as it was read from their pulpits on Passion Sunday.

Pope Pius XI emerges from this portrait a gentle, scholarly man who in his time was a formidable mountaineer with always the influence and authority of the Roman Catholic Church looming powerfully in his

experience. His climbing record won him an invitation to become an honorary member of the Alpine Club which he courteously declined 'for reasons of policy', but his legacy remains in the climbing club and the huts in Wales and the Lake District that bear his name.

*Ronnie Faux*

**Wasdale Climbing Book**  
**A History of Early Climbing in the Lake District**

Michael Cocker

*The Ernest Press, 2006, pp 240, OP*

The climbing of a new route is usually a thrill, that moment when the crux is done, when the route is in the bag, that secret line, that plum of a route, that load of choss to have a second ascent by the next guidebook writer! Pressure off, memories for the future. What about a name? And how should it be recorded? Nowadays, new routes can be recorded on the internet. However, traditional new route books are still in use in places such as Pete's Eats in Llanberis and Amandiers Hotel in Tafraoute, Morocco.

In the past there were new route books at the Lamplighter Café and Packhorse Inn, both in Keswick. But the grandfather of them all was the Wasdale Climbing Book. This was kept at the Wasdale Hotel and detailed a golden age of climbing in the Lake District, starting in 1863 through to 1919, and then a second volume covering 1920 to 1939. Many early members of the Alpine Club visited Wasdale Head during this period to use up their surplus energies and then set their pens to record their activities. An article about the Napes Pinnacle (Napes Needle), in 1890 in the *Pall Mall Budget* raised the national profile of Wasdale. There are also many routes recorded by early members of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, formed in 1906.

Many important climbs were recorded in the Wasdale book, including *The Needle* (1886), *Eagle's Nest Ridge Direct* (1892), *Botterill's Slab* (1903) and *Central Buttress* (1914) as well as the exploits of the likes of J W Robinson, Geoffrey Hastings, Haskett Smith, the Pilkingtons and Hopkinsons, Archer Thomson, Norman Collie, Cecil Slingsby, Godfrey Solly, George Mallory, O G Jones and so many more.

What a place the hotel must have been to reflect on the activities on the crags, and no doubt the conversations ranged widely over other topics.

In 1922 the secretary of the FRCC arranged for a typed copy of the original volume to be made and kept in the club library. Now, to coincide with the centenary of the FRCC, a facsimile edition has been produced. It has been painstakingly put together by Mike Cocker as writer and editor together with an eminent group of helpers and published in a volume that is a credit to the specialist skills of Peter Hodgkiss at The Ernest Press. (Unfortunately the book is now out of print and will not be reissued.)

Following a foreword by Lord Chorley (who seems to be related to most of the main players), an introduction tells the story of the original Wasdale Climbing Book. This leads into a very detailed but concise history of climbing around Wasdale Head from 1800 to 1920 that sets the stage for the record of the action in the original book. The centrepiece of Cocker's book is the reproduction of the pages, showing the original scripts on buff-coloured paper.

Reading the descriptions of those early climbs you almost feel you are reading the original in the hotel all those years ago. Guidebooks still describe these same climbs, however seeing the original detail adds a new awareness of the time and the first encounters with the route. Next comes a commentary on each of the routes detailed, giving a flavour of the background to the climbs, and finally there is a list of first ascents and various appendices.

The *Wasdale Climbing Book* opens a window on a world when climbing was young. After a day having done *Napes Needle* and *Eagle's Nest Direct* my son Michael (16) was enthralled to see the original detail of the *Direct* written up by Solly. For those interested in the formative years of British rock climbing this finely produced volume is a must.

Ron Kenyon

### **The Avalanche Handbook**

David McClung and Peter Schaerer

*The Mountaineers Books, pp344, US\$19.95*

January 2007 saw the death of Ed LaChapelle, the grand old man of avalanche research in the USA. LaChapelle once rejected the tag of expert with the rejoinder that 'the experts are all dead'. Maybe that means we can now call LaChapelle an expert too, though the implication of his riposte was that to really qualify as an expert on avalanches one had to have been interred in one. And that was not his fate. In fact for the skier, snow addict and mountaineer that he was, LaChapelle could hardly have scripted a better departure. Aged 80, he died of a heart attack while skiing knee-high powder snow with his partner Meg Hunt and friends at Monarch Mountain, Colorado.

In his final months, LaChapelle also had the satisfaction of seeing publication of this third edition of *The Avalanche Handbook*, which in various guises has been a hefty bible on avalanches and snow safety for more than half a century. LaChapelle authored the important 1961 update and wrote the foreword to this latest edition, which embodies much of his earlier work on evaluating snow slope stability (or instability.)

That anyone who skis away from the piste should know this stuff goes without saying. As David McClung – joint author, with Peter Schaerer, of this latest edition – observes, most avalanche victims in North America and Europe triggered the slides that caused their own deaths. 'Clearly their

perceptions about the state of instability did not match reality.' McClung is leader of the avalanche research group at the University of British Columbia where for 15 years he has taught about the human factor in natural hazards, an area he feels has had insufficient attention in avalanche forecasting. He corrects this omission in a completely new chapter on forecasting, including fascinating work on risk propensity and personality traits. Depending on age, family, skill, confidence and so on, we set our risk thermostats at different levels.

There is a suggestion here that the wearing of avalanche transceivers might lead ski-tourers to take risks on potentially unstable slopes that, without the reassurance of the transceiver, they would steer clear of. This picks up on the studies of the Canadian psychologist Gerald Wilde who coined the term *risk homeostasis*, meaning that when safety devices are used, people modify their behaviour to maintain the same level of risk as before.

'For example,' say the authors, 'avalanche transceivers provide a greater level of safety, pushing people toward more thrilling experiences than without. The same applies to mountaineering: climbing with and without a rope implies different human behaviour. The concept from the perspective of human perception is then that the reward is greater when a safety device is used, with no apparent increase in the level of risk.'

However McClung and Schaerer draw back from the extension of this logic to any suggestion that safety devices don't have much effect on saving lives. And I for one will not be casting aside the avalanche transceiver.

With hundreds of photographs and diagrams, up-dated sections on the character and effects of avalanches, snow formation, on current search and rescue techniques, forecasting and decision-making, this third edition further enhances the authority of the *The Avalanche Handbook*. When he wrote the foreword to the 1993 edition (also a McClung Schaerer production), LaChapelle wondered whether he would be around to see the next one. He was, just, and rightly judged it a 'worthy successor' to the long tradition.

*Stephen Goodwin*

### **An Afterclap of Fate**

Charles Lind

*The Ernest Press, 2006, pp 126, £15*

Subtitled *Mallory on Everest*, this book was the surprise winner of the Boardman Tasker Award in 2006, and the focus is indeed upon the perennially fascinating George Mallory, intensely so. Lind takes us on an excursion into Mallory's mind as the great climber makes his fateful last attempt on Everest in the company of Sandy Irvine. In doing so Lind advances a thoroughly researched interpretation of the most recent evidence to construct a persuasive scenario for the pair's last day on the mountain seen through Mallory's eyes.

But the book is much more than just another piece of Mallory myth-making. For a start there is its challenging structure written in spaced paragraphs, or perhaps that should be stanzas, divided into 38 sections. The story seems to share characteristics of the novel and one might expect a treatment drawing on the tradition of the 'stream of consciousness' explored by Joyce and Woolf. In many places one feels the authentic rhythm of reflective thought:

This is what one hungers for... what the spirit needs, in the face of modern life, is the sense of freedom...and that is the essence of the mountains... the natural solace of the hills coming with their inspirational air and the promise of the heights. And the quickening joy you experience in the feeling of something vast and infinitely serene... that mysteriously uplifts the heart and mind...and sometimes quietly leads you to an open, very tranquil space...beyond the borders of within and without.

Elsewhere – 'I'm lowering myself down now to Sandy' – there is a literalness that owes more to the need to ravel out events than any debt to Mallory's thinking. Lind has described the work as a prose-poem, and as such it dramatises Mallory's situation in a way that reminds one more of Browning's 'dramatis personae' delivering their monologues or the strange shifting narrators of Eliot's *Wasteland*, emblematic of states of mind... which brings me to the Notes.

There are 71 pages of prose-poem and 40 pages of notes; quite an apparatus! So what is going on here? Lind gives us a clue when quoting Wittgenstein in the introduction to the five-page glossary that follows the notes: " 'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.' Sometimes it is necessary to push at those limits." And in his acceptance speech at the Boardman Tasker Awards ceremony he referred to the notes as filling gaps in the knowledge of many modern readers. Undoubtedly he is right. Few people today have a familiarity with Winthrop Young, Whymper, Mummery, or for that matter, Milton, Shelley and Blake who stride with equal presence through Lind's notes and Mallory's mind.

I would suggest that what we have in the structure of the book is a Brechtian type of alienation device that forces us to recognise the essential otherness of George Mallory.

There is a disturbing modern tendency to see others as reflections of ourselves, to select the most sympathetic characteristics and ignore those others that we struggle to understand, to recast historical figures as naive moderns, whereas in reality they have an idiosyncratic context that would repay recognition and reflection. It is the reverse of empathy; a kind of sympathetic fallacy that assumes 'everyone thinks like me'. No wonder it has been described as a culture of narcissism.

And it's there in the climbing world. When an ambitious couple declared their intention to race my team for the summit of an unclimbed peak, we

decided not to jeopardise our safety by adding the pressure of competition to what would be a difficult enough climb, so pulled out. They simply could not understand why we didn't want to share our base camp with them.

That's where *An Afterclap of Fate* succeeds, and where it will fail for those most determinedly tied to their blinkered views, because the book asserts Mallory's values in language that challenges and extends one's thinking in its interpretation of his experiences. And those are values that challenge the public face of the climbing world today with its assiduous self-promotion and scrambling after sponsorship. Instead, Mallory thinks of 'annihilating self'.

Cherry-Garrard, after meeting Mallory, described him as 'burning with a kind of fire, an ardent impatient soul, winding himself up to a passion the higher he got'. And in his acknowledged masterpiece on Scott's last expedition, *The Worst Journey in the World*, Cherry-Garrard refers repeatedly to the unselfishness of men like Wilson and Bowers as the core of their strength.

Lind quotes Winthrop Young's warning against 'the fatal crowd infection of judging results above the spirit and manner of the doing'. *An Afterclap of Fate* is a timely reminder of such values that is well worth reading and rereading for its imaginative voyage into another mind, another era.

Dave Wynne-Jones

### **Reconnecting with John Muir. Essays in post-pastoral practice**

Terry Gifford

*The University of Georgia Press, 2006, pp201, US\$ 39.95*

Terry Gifford is John Muir's doughty champion. The two omnibus editions of Muir's work that Terry edited in the 1990s\* brought together the books, letters and other writings of the great naturalist-mountaineer and founder of the national park movement in the US. Now, with *Reconnecting with John Muir*, he uses Muir as an exemplar of integrated, environmental conscious knowing and writing. The key, and often quoted lesson that makes Muir sound every bit the 21st century holistic Greenie, is of course: 'When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.'

The sub-title, *Essays in post-pastoral practice*, signals that this is an academic book addressed primarily to Terry's fellow professionals in literary studies and eco-criticism. But that does not mean that his observations will necessarily be lost on the less cerebral of us, his fellow climbers and members of the Alpine Club. Indeed, if that were so Terry would have failed in his aim

\* John Muir: *The Eight Wilderness-Discovery Books*, 1992, Diadem (Bâton Wicks) and *John Muir, His Life and Letters and Other Writings*, 1996, Bâton Wicks.

of creating an accessible narrative that weaves together critical writing, teaching environmental awareness, and mountaineering and its literature – all suffused with the philosophy of Muir.

It is a bold project, the more so for interspersing the chapters with his own poems, each one addressed to John Muir as Terry visits the 'noble landscapes' that Muir eulogised and helped conserve. Terry is practising what he preaches, through Muir, and hitching everything to everything else, breaking down our modern tendency to compartmentalise.

Muir used the term 'mountaineer' in a broader sense than it has come to be understood today, and there may still be those of a narrower, hardcore mentality who would not think of him as mountaineer at all. He most certainly was, though the notion of mountaineering as a 'sport' never appeared in his vocabulary.

As Terry puts it, 'For Muir the exhilaration of reading rock in order to climb it, or reading the skies to make crucial judgements, of taking in what a summit has to offer are not the activities of a sport, but of a deeper reconnection with nature...' So it must have been on his first ascents of Mount Ritter and Cathedral Peak; Terry noting in an aside born of following in his subject's footsteps, that Muir could not have avoided using a hand jam as he climbed to the Cathedral's topmost spire.

Terry is pushing at boundaries and the adventurous approach of this book may well surprise those steeped in more conventional forms of literary criticism. Poetry and the 'self-expanding act of climbing' are recruited in support of academic argument, all marshalled in the wider ecological cause. He wants us to rediscover what it meant to John Muir to be 'hopelessly and forever a mountaineer'.

*Stephen Goodwin*

### **Hostile Habitats**

#### **Scotland's Mountain Environment**

Editors Nick Kempe & Mark Wrightham

*Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 2006, pp 257, £16*

A stonechat most likely. A bright morning and this little black-capped chap is proclaiming his territory with a ratchet call from a stem of marsh grass as I head up Mouthwaite Comb, bound for Sharp Edge. Or one day last winter, walking up by the Dee on the Mar Lodge estate and wondering at the past lives of the settlements that today are just a ground plan of old stone and turf walls. It was too windy to go higher and even the birds and beasts were keeping a low profile, save for a water vole busy foraging beneath the sheltering supports of White Bridge.

A lot of our time in the mountains is spent not in narrow focus for the next handhold or axe placement but on long approaches or ambling returns across moorland or through forest. I've never set out to look for an eagle, but over the years I've seen dozens. One might set out as a climber but if you've any sense

of curiosity at all you become an amateur naturalist along the way, and the usefulness of a rudimentary grasp of geology goes without saying.

*Hostile Habitats* (the choice of title is about my only complaint) is a multi-subject reference book that informs and enriches one's observations in the Scottish hills with sound scholarship on climate, geology, vegetation, wild life and the traces and impact of human beings. It is not likely you would take it on the hill in your rucksack, but if you're heading for the Highlands it is worth having along in the car to mull over in the evening.

After that day on the Dee, I read up on the former sheiling settlements, relics of transhumance when cattle and other livestock were moved to higher pastures in the summer. Other important activities were carried out at the sheilings, such as cheese making and weaving, and there is the reminder of another on the Mar Lodge estate with the remains of an illicit whisky still discreetly set amongst the ruins. I love this kind of detail, filling out the picture of the land I've travelled through.

And yes, the noisy bird was a stonechat. There is a well-illustrated section on mountain birds, with others on invertebrates, mammals, vegetation and so on. The fact this particular stonechat wasn't in Scotland at all but in the English Lake District makes a small point about the versatility of the book, mountain environments thankfully extend well south of Hadrian's Wall.

Each of the nine in-depth chapters is written by a different specialist but in an easily accessible style. The joint editors are Nick Kempe, a former president of the MCofS and a board member of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) from 2003 to 2006, and Mark Wrightham, an upland vegetation ecologist with SNH. This is an inspired piece of publishing by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust – but I wish they'd chosen a title that didn't sound more appropriate to central Carlisle on a Saturday night.

*Stephen Goodwin*

**Scottish Hill Names  
Their origin and meaning**

Peter Drummond

*Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 2007, pp240, £15*

The excellent Scottish Mountaineering Trust publishers seem intent on turning us into Renaissance mountaineers, well rounded in not just the climbs and trails of the Scottish hills but in their natural and cultural history. Close on the heels of *Hostile Habitats* comes this completely revised edition of *Scottish Hill Names*, a mine of serendipitous inquiry if ever there was one. The product of years of painstaking work by Peter Drummond, it is both an informative work of reference and, for those with any sense of curiosity, an enriching enhancement to the day's outing.

Let's take a well-known hill – Buachaille Eite (Etive) Mòr, the big herdsman at the junctions of Glens Coe and Etive. How often have you

heard it referred to as the great shepherd? But as Drummond points out in a chapter on the characters immortalised in hill names – cobblers, witches, warriors and so on - only in the Biblical sense of a shepherd watching over the glens is this likely to be true. ‘Given Gaeldom’s reaction to the hated Clearances that introduced the cheviot sheep – “Woe to thee O land, for the Great Sheep is coming.” – shepherd seems less likely than herdsman.’

Most of the hill names in Scotland are in one of four languages, the oldest being Cumbric, spoken by the Britons, and then Old Norse, mainly in the islands, followed by Scots, related to English, and finally the dominant Gaelic. But apart from in the Western Isles, where Gaelic is still in daily use, these are languages which are either dead or on life-support systems. Hence the case for this fascinating book.

It had never struck me before, but although mountain names in the Alps sound ‘foreign’ to me, and hence their meaning is often puzzling, they are in the everyday tongue of the locals, so no ‘Hill Names’ book is necessary. Scotland, as ever, is in an incomprehensibility class of its own. However, while grasping the origin of a name becomes a pleasure with Drummond’s guidance, it will take a lot of tent-bound days and practice before I can do other than mangle the pronunciation. SG

**Northern Highlands South  
SMC Climbers’ Guide**

Andy Nisbet and Noel Williams

*Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 2007, pp396, £23*

If there is any time left after studying your chosen mountain’s wildlife and the origins of its name (see above), why not try a bit of climbing? And as this offering drives home, there is just so much to do. The third of three volumes to the Northern Highlands, it details the area from glorious Torridon south to Applecross, Glen Carron, Glen Shiel and Knoydart. The sandstone crags of Torridon and the coast around Diabaig have seen much new activity since the area was incorporated in the 1993 guide, while winters have produced new routes across the board. And if this makes it sound a little busy for what once was regarded as a virtual wilderness destination, Knoydart remains as remote as ever, perfect for the committed optimist. SG

**A History of the Association of British Members of the  
Swiss Alpine Club**

James Bogle

*Hatcham Press, 2005, pp (4)+98, npq*

James Bogle has done an excellent job of writing a history of the ABMSAC in its first almost-century – ‘almost’ because that event doesn’t occur until

2009. James has obviously decided to get in first. Original overtures made to the SAC in 1908 for the formation of a London Section were refused, as their statutes did not allow sections outside Switzerland. However, persistence paid off, and the next year an Association was agreed to (subtle difference) under the presidency of Clinton Dent.

The club went from strength to strength over the years, and in 1912 achieved the second of their original objectives – to build a hut in Switzerland. On 17 August the inauguration of the Britannia Hut took place on the Kleine Allalinhorn, in the presence of a great crowd. An al fresco lunch was served, one of the first to eat being the young Noel Odell. History repeated itself 63 years later when another opening ceremony took place, that of the George Starkey Hut in Patterdale.

The Association has changed over the years, from a social and dining club for gentlemen climbers who were members of the SAC, to today's club of about 250 climbers and hillwalkers whose activities take them all over the world, including two or three meets in the Alps each year. We wish them success in the future.

GT

### **And Nobody Woke up the Dead**

#### **The Life & Times of Mabel Barker – Climber & Educational Pioneer**

Jan Levi

*The Ernest Press, 2006, pp264, £16*

This is an intriguing story of a quite remarkable woman who deserves our attention and our respect.

But is it mere fantasy to feel that something of us remains in Staffa and Iona, as in all places of the earth that one has loved and touched and slept upon? At least it is true that something of them goes with us, entering into our very being and forming part of us through life; so that whether we ever return to them or not, we shall never say farewell to the waves beating on the Herds-man, the cry of the sea-birds, and the songs of the people of the Isles.

I'm sure that each and every one of us can identify with the feelings Mabel expresses in the paragraph I have quoted above, though not all of us can hope to capture it in words so eloquently. Once we have made the mountains and wild places our own, they are always part of us.

Jan Levi has won a number of awards for her short stories, including the International Festival of Mountaineering Literature Writing Competition. She is also a founding member of the group *Women, Words and Mountains*. Having now turned her hand to biography she has penned a very well researched and engaging account of the life of Mabel Barker, a pioneer

amongst British women climbers. Threaded through the book are numerous excerpts from Mabel's diaries, together with many historical photographs. These writings give an intriguing insight into her personal thoughts and feelings, and amongst them are some delightful passages.

Born in the 1880s, Mabel lived during an era when women were not generally expected to hold a passion for the hills. Despite this, Mabel managed to become a highly talented rock climber who held her own amongst the best of the day. Amongst her numerous and varied achievements were the first female traverse of the Cuillin Ridge and the first female lead of the Great Flake on Central Buttress. To Mabel climbing was the physical expression of her love of nature and the outdoors which included cycling, fell-walking and all manner of wild camping.

Her chosen profession was that of teacher. This suited her desire to share her love and knowledge of the environment. Between the First and Second World Wars (during both of which she volunteered her services) she founded a school at Friar's Row in Caldbeck. It was here that she was able to put into practice the thoughts and ideas that she had developed, making nature and the environment the central part of her young pupils' lives.

Mabel lived her life to the full, a pioneering woman in both her work and her play, and we can learn much from both her climbing and educational adventures. She provides an inspiration to us all, having had the courage to stand up for her convictions and to fight for what she believed in. We must thank Jan Levi for opening our eyes to the fascinating life of an incredible woman.

*Lizzy Hawker*

### **The Eiger Obsession** **Facing the Mountain That Killed My Father**

John Harlin III

*Simon & Schuster, 2007, pp 285, US\$26*

A key to this absorbing tale lies in that curious Americanism that John Harlin attaches to his own name – the Roman figure III. It is a story of a man overly conscious of his father's shadow, haunted by the belief – quite erroneous – that he isn't big enough to fill his father's boots. Appending the 'III' surely only underlines the fact that one is part of a dynasty and invites comparisons.

John Harlin II needs little introduction to this readership. The 'blond god' fell to his death in 1966 when a fixed rope broke during the first ascent of the Eiger Direct. Harlin II, founder of the International School of Mountaineering at Leysin, had become obsessed with forcing a *dirrettissima* up the north face and the route, completed by Dougal Haston and four Germans, bears his name.

There is a perceptive quote from Ted Wilson, Harlin II's friend and Leysin colleague, in which he refers to a 'certain Hemingway type fatalism'

persisting in the mountaineering world of the 1960s and its effect on Harlin, Gary Hemming and many others. 'Like Hemingway, they lived large, took life by storm, and were willing to die young if necessary. They truly were a committed generation,' Wilson wrote.

Young Johnny was nine at the time of the accident, and within the family they referred to Dad being 'away on expedition'. In *The Eiger Obsession*, Harlin III is frank about the toll on their lives, dreams of Dad showing up, silent, at dinner, and the tantrums of Harlin II's daughter Andrea, eight at the time, who turned the anger of loss on her mother.

The emotional story, coupled with Harlin III's own suppressed ambitions as an alpinist, make this as close to being a 'page turner' as any climbing-related book I've read since *Touching the Void*. Tragedy aside, thank goodness, I suppose the fact that Harlin juggles mountaineering and family with editing the *American Alpine Journal*, gives me added identity with the author, but his turmoil over the potential destructiveness of climbing is common enough.

That Harlin III is in turn drawn to the north face of the Eiger comes as no surprise. The actual manner, however, was not initially of his choosing. John had hoped to climb the face away from the limelight and only tell his Eiger widow mother about it afterwards. In fact, in 2005, he climbs for the movie cameras – following the Heckmair route with Robert and Daniela Jasper.

The result, and the spur for this fascinating autobiography, is *The Alps*, a MacGillvray Freeman film for IMAX theatres – perhaps the only format that can do the *Nordwand* a degree of boot-shaking justice. (AC president Stephen Venables had a hand in the script, suggesting to the film's Swiss backers that the Harlin story would make a good vehicle for conveying the beauty and drama of the Alps to potential tourists.) The film is certainly a visual treat, but it is no substitute for the real life story told here by John Harlin – no Roman numeral necessary.

*Stephen Goodwin*

### **El Macizo del San Lorenzo**

Silvia Metzeltin Buscaini

*Fondazione Giovanni Angelini, Belluno, 2005, 80pp, npr*

Compressed into the 80 pages of this work is an efficient biography of Patagonia's second major massif. Besides its straightforward and descriptive text, readers will find 24 black & white and four colour illustrations, 10 detailed photo-diagrams of routes on major peaks, nine maps and two line-drawings. 41 named peaks and passes are included in this survey. The orography of the massif of Cerro San Lorenzo (3706m) is surveyed first. Following are sections on history, geology, glaciology and mountaineering. The history of the San Lorenzo district is told by describing actual climbs.

It begins with the discovery of Cerro San Lorenzo by Chilean surveyors (1896-1898) and we are brought to 2004, the year of the first winter ascent of San Lorenzo. Pages 33 to 54 are devoted to the mountain itself. The other six main chains or ridges are reviewed next. To summarize, instead of the usual book on a Patagonian vertical wall, we have here a whole area rich in rock and ice peaks, briefly but effectively portrayed. And no other author-climber would have been better qualified for the task than AC member Silvia Metzeltin Buscaini, herself the winner of 68 Patagonian summits, among which are the three culminating points of San Lorenzo.

*Evelio Echevarría*

### **Travels in Far-Off Places**

Michael Clarke

*Classic Day Publishing, 2006, ppx+210, npq*

Michael Clarke's book is a mini-autobiography, with the broad details of his life summarized in the first seven pages, and the remaining 19 chapters devoted to the bulk of his travels between 1968 and 2001. As might be expected, his early years saw the most successes, from summiting Trisul in 1975, Nanda Devi in '78 and Denali in '83, to a near miss on Gasherbrum II in '82. The rest of the book covers travels ranging from Peru to Bhutan, Africa to Tierra del Fuego, and Tibet to New Zealand and Antarctica. Sadly, his more strenuous ventures came to an end with a heart attack in 1999, but he still manages to get about quite a bit, and this book is a fitting tribute to a life of travel. *GT*

### **Guide to the Rwenzori. Mountains of the Moon**

Henry Osmaston

*The Rwenzori Trust, 2006, pp288, npq*

The first edition of this guide appeared in 1972, written by Henry Osmaston and David Pasteur, but conditions in the country since that time meant that the Rwenzori received few visitors, and there was little call for a revised edition. The fact that the situation in the area has now improved markedly, plus the fact that climatic conditions have changed the face of many mountains, made a second edition desirable. Sadly, David Pasteur died in 2005, but Henry Osmaston did a magnificent job in producing this nearly-300-page revision, complete with numerous black & white and colour photographs and diagrams. He was for many years a District Forest Officer in the region, and last visited the Rwenzori Mountains National Park, of which he was an honorary warden, in 2005. Shortly after delivering a copy of his guide to the AC Library, it was learnt that Henry had died suddenly (obituary, page 389). *GT*

**Exploring the Highlands of Himalaya**

Harish Kapadia

*Indus, 2006, pp248, Rs 650*

The review of M S Kohli's book (above) mentions that it is his twentieth book. Indian mountaineer authors are certainly prolific, as this is Harish's fifteenth book. Such industry is remarkable. The present work is split into nine main chapters, one for each area of the Indian Himalaya, stretching from Arunachal Pradesh in the far east of the country to the Siachen glacier. Each chapter has a general description of the area and its mountaineering history, mini-biographies of some of the explorers of the area, and extracts from relevant books. The remaining chapters give useful general information on the Indian Himalaya, covering the rules for climbing and trekking, geology, rivers, pilgrimages and the recent wars in the area. It forms a good, well-illustrated guide to the whole Indian Himalaya. *GT*

**The Alps. A Cultural History**

Andrew Beattie

*Signal Books, 2006, ppxiv+246, pb. £12.00*

The first thing that confronts you when you open this volume in the 'Landscapes of the Imagination' series, is a small colour photo of Julie Andrews dancing across a Swiss hillside in true *Sound of Music* fashion, which doesn't exactly encourage you to delve deeper. This would be a pity as you would miss a good general introduction to the Alps. The book is in four parts: 'Landscape', which is self-explanatory, 'History', covering everything from the Romans to the Nazis, 'Imagination', ranging from Rousseau and Mary Shelley through to the afore-mentioned *Sound of Music*, and 'Visitors', which covers Thomas Cook and the coming of the mountaineers. The background information in this book is well set out and likely to contain something you didn't know. *GT*

**The Last Blue Mountain**

Ralph Barker

*Rippng Yarns, 2006, pp216, pb, £15.95*

Ripping Yarns has been doing the climbing public a service by reprinting classics of mountaineering literature. *The Last Blue Mountain* is considerably more recent than the others and, they say, will be the last in the series. It is a facsimile reprint of the original 1959 edition and tells the well-known story of the ill-fated 1957 expedition to Haramosh in the Karakoram range, from which two members failed to return. *GT*

**Into the Untravelled Himalaya. Travels, Treks and Climbs**

Harish Kapadia

*Pp256, Rs 400***Touching Upon the Himalaya. Excursions and Enquiries**

Bill Aitken

*Pp 168, Rs 150***Adventure Travels in the Himalaya**

John Angelo Jackson

*Pp 256, Rs 400**Indus Pub. Co, New Delhi, 2004/5*

These three paperbacks, between them, cover almost every aspect of travelling and climbing in the Himalaya.

The book by our Honorary Member Harish Kapadia describes travels in Tibet, explorations in Arunachal Pradesh, journeying in Bhutan, the history of Kangchenjunga and of Nanda Devi, treks in Himachal Pradesh and East Karakoram and, finally, thoughts on mountaineering and war around the Siachen glacier.

Bill Aitken is a Scottish-born naturalised Indian who was Hon Librarian of the Himalayan Club for many years and has written articles for the *AJ*. *Touching Upon the Himalaya* is a collection of his articles first published in the 2004 volume of the *Himalayan Journal* which celebrated 60 years of the Club's existence. These range from 'Gorging in Zaskar' to 'An Enquiry into the Real Name of Mount Everest'.

The late John Jackson was principally known for taking part in the successful Kangchenjunga expedition in 1955, and later as director of Plas y Brenin from 1960 to 1976. But, as this book shows, much of his life was spent travelling, often with his wife Eileen, in the Himalaya, and it covers a period of 60 years of his adventures.

Kapadia's and Jackson's books have excellent photos, and all three books are enhanced by sketches by Geeta Kapadia. GT

**Mountain Area Research and Management****Integrated Approaches**

Edited by Martin F Price

*Earthscan, 2007, pp272, £49.95*

In this academic work, our member Martin Price, professor of mountain studies at the University of the Highlands and Islands, has brought together

scientists and practitioners from six continents intent on improving our understanding and informed management of mountain areas. Its publication comes shortly before the AC's 'Summits of Learning' seminar in December 2007 that Martin has organised and at which Professor Bruno Messerli, our new honorary member and an important contributor to this book, is due to take part.

No one who climbs or ski-tours in glaciated regions will need much convincing that climate change is particularly apparent in the high mountains. Even so, the statistics given here from research in US national parks are staggering. Take Glacier National Park in Montana: only 27 glaciers remain of the original 150 that existed when the park was founded in 1910; the park area covered by ice and permanent snow has shrunk from 99sq km to just 17sq km in 1998. That this will have consequences for vegetation, wildlife and human beings downstream should be self-evident. And global warming is only one of the forces of change at work in the mountains, though perhaps the most pervasive – deforestation, tourism, migration, war...it's a long list.

*Integrated Approaches* is, in a way, the scientist's equivalent of Terry Gifford's *Reconnecting with John Muir*. The message is strikingly similar – Muir's dictum that everything in the universe is hitched to everything else, and in Price's case that research and management must be all embracing. Thus scientist, farmer, forester, economist, shaman and politician must all be involved, understanding change and devising sustainable policies specific to the particular mountain community.

*Note:* More detail on the contents of the book and its case studies can be found at [www.earthscan.co.uk](http://www.earthscan.co.uk) SG

**Kilimanjaro & East Africa**  
**A Climbing and Trekking Guide (2nd Edition)**

Cameron M Burns

*The Mountaineers Books, 2006, pp240, US\$19.95*

An updated and expanded edition of Burns's 1998 guide. New content includes a chapter on the three highest summits of the Rwenzoris, Uganda. Altogether more than 50 routes from summit walk-ups to serious technical climbs (though not the 1964 Edwards Thompson route up the east face of Mawenzi, the first ascent of which features, belatedly, in this *AJ*). Packed with useful info' on how to plan a safe and, all being well, successful trip; website listings, glossary of several languages. I was particularly taken by the pages of endnotes in which Burns passes on informal tips gained from his East African journeys, including his valid doubts about the efficacy of Diamox on Kili'. SG

### **Meetings with Mountain**

Stephen Venables

*Cassell, 2006, pp192, £25*

There has been a number of books collecting together various mountaineering escapades but this latest large-format one by Stephen Venables is a particularly good, well-illustrated example. Thirty-five adventures are included, ranging from Gertrude Bell on the Finsteraarhorn in 1902, to the Arrans on Autana in 2002 and John Harlin III on the Eiger in 2005. All the continents are covered, with exploits both well-known and not so well-known. Amongst the former would have to be Everest '53, and amongst the latter the expedition to Mt Huiten on the Mongolian border, made in 1992 by Lindsay Griffin, Julian Freeman-Attwood and Ed Webster, which so nearly ended in tragedy. Also included is that lovely shot of Lindsay chatting to a Bactrian camel. *GT*

### **Fontainebleau. Bouldering "Off-Piste" at Grade 6 and above**

Jo and Françoise Montchausee & Jacky Godoffe

*Bâton Wicks, 2006, pp288, £18.99*

Following Bâton Wicks' earlier guide *Fontainebleau Climbs*, this new guide is a boulderer's dream. More than 3000 individual problems at the harder grades, 6a-8b, are illustrated with colour photos, general location maps and detailed boulder layouts. *GT*

### **Walks and Scrambles in Norway**

Anthony Dyer, John Baddeley and Ian H Robertson

*Ripping Yarns.com, 2006, ppviii+304, £24.95*

Ripping Yarns has moved on from reprinting classic mountaineering books in paperback format to the present major hardback guide to the mountains of Norway. More than 180 colour photos illustrate 53 routes in mountain groups stretching from Telemark in the south to the Lofoten Islands and Lyngen Peninsula in the north. This is an essential guide for anyone considering walking or climbing in the Norwegian mountains. *GT*

### **One More Step**

M S Kohli

*Penguin Viking, 2005, pp22+322, Rs 495*

Manmohan Singh Kohli has written a considerable number of books, starting with *Last of the Annapurnas* in 1962, proceeding to *Nine Atop Everest* in 1969 and culminating in the present volume, his twentieth. He had four books published in 2003 alone. This is all the more remarkable when you consider what else he has packed into his 75 years. He has, in effect, had four careers – in the Indian Navy, in Air-India, in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and in adventure tourism.

M S Kohli is best known for his leadership of the 1965 Indian Everest expedition which, after two early attempts, succeeded in putting nine members on top, but here his story starts with his childhood flight from Haripur, which is now in Pakistan, to Amritsar in India in 1947 at the time of partition, during which he witnessed horrific scenes of killing. Other expeditions described in the book include Annapurna III, the ‘Ocean to Sky’ Ganges trip with Sir Edmund Hillary, and the notorious attempt to place surveillance equipment on top of Nanda Devi. In all of this, Kohli, as the blurb says, ‘conveys an amazing zest for life’. *GT*

### **Climb Every Mountain**

**A Journey to the Earth’s most spectacular High Altitude Locations**

Colin Monteath

*Frances Lincoln, 2006, pp232, £25*

Colin Monteath is one of New Zealand’s best-known photographers, running a photographic library with his wife Betty and supplying mountain and polar-related material to publishers around the world. He has spent 26 seasons working in Antarctica for the New Zealand government, and for 35 years has been an active mountaineer in all parts of the world.

You would expect, then, a superbly illustrated book, and this large-format volume does not disappoint. As well as New Zealand it covers Greenland, Tibet, the Karakoram, Bhutan, Mongolia, South Georgia, Alaska, Nepal and Patagonia. This is a book that would grace the coffee table of any lover of the outdoors. *GT*

**Holding On. A Story of Love and Survival**

Jo Gambi

*Portrait, 2006, ppixvi+302, £17.99*

This is an account of how two people – Jo and Rob Gambi – climbed all ‘Seven Summits’ – eight, actually, because they included both Kosciusko and Carstenz – and trekked to the South and North Poles. Now they can boast that Rob is the first Australian to do this and that they are the first married couple ditto, that Jo is the woman with the fastest time to do the seven summits and the only English woman alive to have climbed Everest’s north ridge, and so on. What makes it even more remarkable is that, after they married in 1996, Rob was diagnosed with cancer for the second time. After 18 months of illness and treatment, they set out and achieved all their objectives, and even fitted in some other climbs, such as Cho Oyu and Ama Dablam for good measure. A stirring tale. *GT*