Book Reviews 1991

COMPILED BY GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

The Endless Knot – K2,
Mountain of Dreams and Destiny
Kurt Diemberger
Translated from the German by Audrey Salkeld
Grafton, pp308, 48pp colour and b&w photos, £25

The Endless Knot is a beautiful, moving, intensely subjective account of the tragic events that unfolded on K2 during the summer of 1986. Kurt Diemberger's meticulous research, maps and tables, his evocative writing and photographs, assembled with a loving care all too rare in climbing books, all add up to a fine memorial; but in a sense the dust jacket photograph says it all.

A figure – Julie Tullis – stands silhouetted on top of Broad Peak at dusk. She is looking across to the summit pyramid of K2 a few miles away, where the Shoulder rises up into the final awesome steepening of the Abruzzi Ridge. Clouds boil up from the valley, catching the last rays of the sun as they swirl around the ridges; higher up in the sky ominous bands of high cirrus streak across what is left of the azure.

My first reaction to this picture was, 'How beautiful! What a brilliant photograph!' But then I looked again at the cloud, so Wagnerian, so pregnant with melodrama as the night closes in at 8000m, and I thought, 'What the hell are they doing up there?'

That photo was taken by Diemberger in 1984, when he and Julie Tullis snatched Broad Peak in a bold alpine-style push, reaching the summit late in the day and only regaining their tent after dark. The weather broke that night at their top camp and they were both avalanched the next morning. Nevertheless they managed, drawing on tremendous reserves of willpower and experience, to descend the mountain to safety. Two years later they returned to the Baltoro. On K2 they pushed to the top in similarly deteriorating conditions and Julie Tullis became the tenth of thirteen people to die on the mountain that summer.

This is not to criticise: we who were not there cannot judge; and many of us, if we had been there, might also have pushed on in just the same way. I find the events of the book all too comprehensible and in any case I must admit to being something of a Diemberger fan. His first book appeared in English as *Summits and Secrets* just as I was starting to climb and its youthful exuberance, evoking a magical mountain world where dreams could be fulfilled, was a great inspiration. *The Endless Knot* is older, wiser and sadder, but it has much of the same romanticism, the same naive imagery and the same freedom from laborious narrative.

Diemberger approaches his subject obliquely. First he gives us a glimpse of the fatal summit afternoon on K2. Then he whisks us back 30 years to the first ascent of Broad Peak with Buhl, when five men had the entire Baltoro glacier to themselves. Then we are taken to sea in a sailing yacht, as the compulsive adventurer begins to woo Julie Tullis off the shores of her island. From the waves of the North Sea he cuts suddenly to the floodwaters of Shaksgam, terrifying as an avalanche, on the 1983 expedition to the N ridge of K2. Diemberger and Tullis almost reach the summit. A year later they try again on the Abruzzi and as a consolation prize they make their ascent of Broad Peak. The Shaksgam metaphor is reversed as an avalanche engulfs them like a rushing wave.

The oblique approach works. It builds a picture, verging perhaps on idolisation, of Julie Tullis. It explains the growing obsession with K2, 'our mountain', like a 'magic crystal'. And it gives Diemberger, veteran mountaineer, romantic and supreme egotist, a chance to introduce himself. Like any good storyteller, he manipulates his audience, gently manoeuvring them into a position of empathy.

Three things in particular struck a chord with me. First, the rather old-fashioned notion of 'living with the mountain', contrasted sharply with the modern philistinism of racing up and down. Second, the brief description of a particular moment, after failing on Makalu at the age of 46, when Diemberger found the peace and composure to 'renounce' mountain ambitions; it was only after that renunciation that luck or fate allowed his second phenomenal spate of 8000m successes. Third, the man's ebullient hedonism, revelling in Bresaola and pasta, Austrian coffee and pastry, great barrels of home-brew beer at Base Camp and a secret stash of 'non-ethnological' goodies at the Tibetan village where his rather earnest anthropological daughter lives off tsampa and salt tea.

The filming at the Tibetan village, Tashigang, is a final interlude of peace for Diemberger and Tullis, before they are drawn inexorably into the disastrous summer on K2. We know the final outcome and the author, like the chorus of a Greek tragedy, keeps reminding us of that outcome, presenting us right from the beginning with the ingredients of disaster.

There are hints of potential enmity between Diemberger and his fellow Austrians. There is a chillingly succinct analysis of the medical dangers of high altitude by Franz Bechtold. There is the repeated explanation that if only Diemberger and Tullis can climb K2 this time, 'the mountain won't block our future any longer'. Then, with the great avalanche that wipes out most of the camps before the final mass assault on the Abruzzi, Diemberger gives us a detailed presentation of his crucial thesis: that the deaths of Rouse, Tullis, Immitzer, Wieser and Wolf, are directly attributable to that single avalanche and the Austrians' failure to carry up a spare tent to replace lost equipment. The result was chaos, overcrowding and critical delays culminating in disaster.

Of course Diemberger is right, but the tent is just one factor in a complex tangle of human error, his own included. Far more pertinent is his own observation, when he arrives at Base Camp, that the huge medley of people, loosely collected in many different 'expeditions', present a serious threat to

safety. When the remnants congregate for the last attempt on the Abruzzi they do not amount to a team. The storm which traps them on the Shoulder is obviously ferocious, but one is tempted inevitably to draw comparisons with the Americans' gallant descent in 1938 and the safe evacuation of Renshaw, Boardman and Tasker in 1980 from *above* the Shoulder. In both cases the team had the mountain completely to itself.

The Endless Knot is highly subjective, but it will also endure as a fine reference book. Diemberger has done his research carefully, overseen every detail of the photographs and assembled invaluable historical tables. For the English translation he spent several all-night sessions working with Audrey Salkeld. The result seems occasionally verbose, but for most of the time the writing is powerful. The first-hand account of Goretta Casarotto's final radio conversation with her husband, dying in a crevasse, is almost unbearably moving. Tullis' agonies of indecision before finally agreeing on one final attempt are recorded with poignancy.

When it comes to the final days at 8000m on the Abruzzi, the writing moves into a new dimension. Jim Curran has already given us a lucid, compassionate account of those events, but Diemberger's own version inevitably has the edge because he was actually there in the thick of it. He captures all the elation of those magical hours on the summit pyramid and the underlying sense of menace. He records in graphic detail the terror of the fall, the unplanned bivouac on the Balcony, the days of claustrophobic captivity on the Shoulder, the strange quietness of Tullis' death, Rouse's sudden hopeless deterioration, Wieser's and Immitzer's collapse in the snow, followed by Diemberger's own flight, down, down, down, away from death and back to life. I defy anyone to read it and remain unmoved.

Diemberger had to write this book as an act of therapy and self-defence against criticisms, many of them ill-informed, which were flying around at the end of 1986. There are, no doubt, discrepancies between his and Willi Bauer's accounts and there are flaws in the logic of Diemberger's thesis, but at 8000m the dividing line between fact and fantasy, reality and imagination, is very thin. This is a monumental book where slight flaws are irrelevant; what shines through is the utterly convincing account of the final horror on the Shoulder, the aching sense of loss, and above all a spirit of generosity and compassion towards all the other victims and survivors of that terrible summer on K2.

Stephen Venables

In Monte Viso's Horizon
Climbing all the Alpine 4000m Peaks
Will McLewin
Ernest Press, 1992, pp256, £16.95

Although the author says that this is a book to be dipped into, I could hardly put it down. It is not a guidebook in the sense of giving detailed route descriptions, but it is a superb one in every other sense I can think of. It is most handsomely produced: 256 pages with an index, 92 splendid colour photographs (from the collections of various other climbers as well as the author himself) of which 23

are full-page or double-page. They are all good and the best are superb, with little line drawings echoing the photographs to show the line of the route taken. The maps are the best I have ever seen. At £16.95 it's worth every penny.

Climbing 'all the 4000m Alpine peaks' is a bit like doing the Scottish Munros in that there is no absolute agreement as to how many there are, or which they are. The incredible Eustace Thomas, who did not start any of his mountain activities until in his fifties (and about whom Will McLewin writes a fascinating short chapter in the book) was apparently the first British alpinist to do them 'all' which, in 1900, was a total of 57 peaks. Will McLewin's list was decided for him by what is surely an admirable criterion: that each should give 'a worthy expedition in its own right'. He finished up with 53 mountains plus 38 'secondary summit spot heights'.

Most of the routes are in the easy or medium grades; his focus is not, as that of so many British alpinists has tended to be in the recent past, simply on long technical routes climbed in pitches and mostly on rock, but on the mountain itself. As he says about the Lagginhorn 'A lot of climbing in the Alps is like this. There is no great drama, no heroics, nobody conquers anything. Just simple, uneventful, priceless days with the mountains, which become not so much memories as part of your life.' Do not let that delude you into thinking that they were all 'uneventful'. McLewin's own memories are remarkably clear and his accounts of these days are full of little telling details. He had his fair share of minor epics, including rescuing a guide from a crevasse and, while soloing, rescuing himself from a 6m fall down one also.

The chapters between the accounts of the actual routes are fascinating for their solid commonsense based on real and undeniably extensive experience. He was fairly quickly put off staying in Alpine huts for the usual reasons of overcrowding, poor sleep and communication problems and so took up bivouacking wherever feasible; in consequence 'Climbing became mountaineering, something done with the Earth instead of just on it.' I'm sure he's right. He soloed many of his routes and rightly points out that soloing on easy and medium-grade Alpine routes is generally safer, as the rope is a distraction and has to be managed; it is often only of psychological importance – to reduce fear. To avoid the potentially worse consequences of an accident whilst soloing, he carries a spare ice-axe, 36m of 6mm rope and is particularly careful about crevassed glaciers. I found myself in complete sympathy with his ideas on food, the result of many years of experimentation. Tinned stewed steak, tinned new potatoes and some fresh vegetables are his proven choice for dinner, while breakfast is a large mug of tea and a large helping of muesli with dried milk-powder mixed with hot water. He is even prepared (and fit enough!) to carry half a litre of wine for the first evening meal and (what a splendid chap!) reckons that during the day the most effective drink is Scotch and water in a one-to-five ratio. I haven't tried that yet. On snow technique: 'In essence moving on rock is about not falling, whereas moving on snow is about stopping if you do.' On Bad Rock: which can 'turn resourceful cragsmen into neurotic ditherers', the moaner is usually 'a rock-climber who has yet to become a mountaineer'. On Equipment he has many wry observations about the latest ice-axes in the hands

of climbers who never go near a steep gully. On Guides – well, I'd better skip his observations on those, particularly in relation to the Matterhorn.

I've only one final observation: I wish I could have written it. Don't miss it.

Bob Allen

Free Spirit
Reinhold Messner
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, (transl Jill Neate), pp250, £16.95

Messner's definitive autobiography published last year is subtitled *A Climber's Life*. This is a considerably more accurate intimation of what is to be found between the covers than the slightly fluffy option chosen. There is little freedom here. From the second page onwards Messner starts climbing, and with hardly a second glance he continues to do so until even he finally gets bored with it and packs in going up mountains for going across Antarctica.

There is no bigger 'ticker' than Reinhold – that is the initial message here. Wife, friends, family, all seem to get lost in the bow-wave of the ultimate mountain odyssey, not only in the execution but also in the contemplation. Consider this photo caption which appears next to a picture of Reinhold on Dhaulagiri, concerning brother Siegfried who perished in a thunderstorm on the Stabeler Tower in the Dolomites. 'Life in the mountains is incalculable.' Quite so. Does the main text elucidate this incident any further? 'Life in the mountains was not "hard but fair", it was above all incalculable.' And that's it. I suppose something could have been lost in the translation, although the translation seems pretty good to me, but the phrase hardly examines the depths of a brother's feeling on his sibling's death.

Similarly, on one single page (229), Reinhold climbs Makalu and Lhotse, moves into Schloss Juval, sells his shop and climbing school, has one other unsuccessful expedition, and then his father dies. Excuse me if you find this a perfectly normal approach to autobiography, but to my mind it is somewhat miserly. It comes down to a mixture of the 'and then I did this' school of literature and a sort of diffidence, as though tomorrow is considerably more interesting than yesterday. Which is probably the case, but professing it in your life-story tends to put the punters off.

Of course, you may be a student of history. If so, there is plenty of raw material here to keep you going. There will not be many more people who will bother to climb the fourteen 8K peaks *and* the seven highest continental peaks. Certainly, the details from his childhood and early adulthood portray a fuller, rounder character than appears later, as though rediscovering the child was of more interest to him than once again describing his more celebrated ascents. But don't look for an explanation of what it feels like to have your wife leave you because you spend too much time on the hill, because it isn't here. I have no idea whether these notions simply don't occur to Messner or whether he sees no point in putting them on paper, but it doesn't help to make an interesting read.

Hodder & Stoughton have packaged the book lavishly. The historical photographs give an authority and quality the writing lacks. I especially enjoyed the one of Reinhold standing next to Clint Eastwood during the filming of *The*

Eiger Sanction. Considering how sizeable the former mayor of Carmel is, Messner looks quite tall in comparison to his current stature. Perhaps altitude makes you shrink?

But you can't escape the intensity. The final irony is in the last sentence: 'I venture to maintain that Tomo Cesen is currently the best climber in the world.' This is the least definite statement in the whole book, and probably the truest. Only a man like Cesen can truly understand what goes on in Messner's mind. You won't find it in *Free Spirit*.

Ed Douglas

Hautes Altitudes – Voyage dans l'Oxygen Rare
Pierre Beghin
Didier & Richard, Grenoble, 1991, pp160, FF265

For one who has not adopted climbing as a profession, Pierre Beghin has accumulated during the past ten years a very remarkable record of climbs. An engineer by profession, he is currently attached to the Civil Research Institute in Grenoble with special resposibility for snow and avalanche research. This is his third book, and it deals exclusively with high Asia – the lives and customs of high mountain dwellers, the remoteness of the oxygen-depleted zones, avalanches, the impact upon climbers of major Himalayan mountains. The message is conveyed essentially in pictures, and each section is preceded by a few pages of concise text which includes episodes from a few of his own and others' climbs. With typical modesty he does not include all of his best ascents (Dhaulagiri, Manaslu, Kangchenjunga, Makalu). A feature of all Pierre Beghin's climbs has been the insistence on lightness, fair methods, and lack of ballyhoo. The last chapter, devoted to his two-man ascent of K2 (NW ridge/N face) with Christophe Profit, is a model of restrained descriptive writing. This distinguished climb was achieved in October 1991, barely two months prior to the appearance of this book.

A final postscript, implicit in his personal creed, is a plea for a halt to the degradation of the Himalayan environment, and the need to safeguard what is left.

The descriptive and technical quality of the 150 colour photographs leaves little to be desired, and some are quite exceptional. The book is handsomely produced and seems good value at the price. One hopes that an English edition might be published before long.

Trevor Braham

Suspended Sentences
from the life of a climbing cameraman
Jim Curran
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, pp191, £14.95

Jim Curran has been around for a long time, in reality almost exactly as long as I have. He has made himself an exciting life, if not always an easy or even a happy one. Like anyone who sticks his head above the parapet, there is always the risk

of having it shot off; though from other scribblers the greatest risk is a stab in the back – from black bile, envy, or confused notions about authenticity.

One thing is clear: only a few people in Britain have done as much climbing filming as Jim, and written, and gone to work sometimes and spent years on the M5. He loves climbing with a passion as powerful as anyone I know. Others may pull off higher level technical performances on steeper crags, but JC fulfils the most important of Robin Campbell's basic ethical rules for mountaineers: 'Love the mountains'. This has enabled him to survive many personal losses, and to gain in the fraternity of his friends.

Jim's books, films and lectures have brought him prominence which is deserved because few who have not tried them realise how nerve-racking such activities can be. Higher standard climbers may think this inappropriate, but every activity has and seems to need impresarios. They explain the mysteries to the uninitiated, renew the enthusiasm of the active, and at best regenerate the spirit of the game by fuelling it with humour and a sense of tradition. The straight-laced may think of such folk as charlatans and fakirs, but many of the greatest climbers have performed to an audience as well, whether on TV or film, in articles and books, in lectures or in the great training school of bullshit, the pub. Unlike some impresarios, Jim Curran is a climber first, and retains that commitment, which makes all the difference.

Suspended Sentences, like any autobiographical book, excises more than it includes. As in most lives, many raw edges are seamed up between the lines. It is none the worse for that. Many of these stories are a part of the texture of climbing lives during the last two decades, told in an accessible and realistic way, shaped a little to sharpen their point, and driven along by surges of intense experience. Jim Curran is a strong story-teller, a persistent joker and amusing anecdotalist, who understands timing. If the self-deprecatory style of his writing acts as a smokescreen, who doesn't need defences with a rip-off lurking round every corner?

There may be those who see Jim as the chronicler of a formidable era, bridging from Joe Brown to the young Himalayan generation of the 1970s and '80s, so many of whom died. They are right to see a sort of modern Boswell, caught up in the swirl of climbing and verbal talent from a clutch of Johnsons, each preoccupied, as climbers so often are, by the power of their own demands upon themselves. Taking the book more at face value, it explains a good deal about a particular climber's transition into an awesome but also magically seductive world, entered only by capacity for enjoyment, suffering and toleration of uncertainty. Yet, paradoxically, Jim records a life of remaking experience and of building an ark of friendship and broader acquaintance through it. Once built, it carries him from one project to another, with always a new horizon, and a good dose of luck as well as misfortune on the way.

There will be those who might question the probity of reviewing a book by a friend. As I have long believed that every finished book deserves at least one truly sympathetic reading, to give due regard to the effort that went into it, so let this be it. Objective such a review cannot be, and I trust that JC and the rest of us will have many an adventure yet, and that at least two-thirds of them will remain within that Rabelaisian oral tradition which rarely slips the censor's

leash, and of which Mo Anthoine and Whillans were two of the greatest exponents. At least then the miserable sods will know that whatever their cavortings they can never win, especially in so beautifully absurd an activity as ours.

Paul Nunn

Island at the Edge of the World: A South Georgian Odyssey
Stephen Venables
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, pp177, £16.99

This is the story of a three-month climbing expedition to South Georgia. Although written by an eminent mountaineer, the book is not primarily about mountaineering – the appalling South Georgian weather saw to that. The story of the expedition's activities is interspersed with glimpses of the island's history, its discovery by Captain Cook, the sealers, the whalers, the explorers. The author tells how, as an impressionable 15-year-old, his imagination was stirred by Shackleton's book *South*, and indeed his respect and admiration for Shackleton's achievements reappear at intervals throughout the book. It was good to be reminded of the expeditions led by Duncan Carse, a name I had almost forgotten – and I had completely forgotten that my friend Stan Paterson had been a member of Carse's third expedition. The island's history is brought up to date with the landings by Argentinian forces in 1982 and Operation Paraquat by which the island was retaken by British forces. It makes fascinating reading.

These interludes almost enable the reader to ignore the terrible weather, a misconception which is supported by the excellent colour photographs, all but one of which were taken when the sun was shining. The expedition established itself in a large snow cave on Ross Pass, a notorious wind funnel, where they spent 23 days with only occasional excursions outside. From this base they were able to climb some local peaks, including Vogel Peak (1352m) and Mt Kling (1847m). Right at the end of their stay the author and Brian Davison made a bold ascent of Mt Carse (2331m), the highest unclimbed mountain on the island, and the expedition's main objective. Of the three previous parties that had been to the foot of Mt Carse, two had been pinned down for days by blizzards. More than ever, speed spelled safety in order to make the ascent and return before the weather broke. Without any support, as the other members of the expedition went down that afternoon after climbing Mt Kling, they skied 20km in the morning, and climbed the peak as the sun was setting and snow hardening from the evening frost. After a few hours' sleep, they started again early next morning and regained their snow-cave at 2.30pm, 31½ hours after setting out.

For one who visited the Falkland Islands and South Georgia over 40 years ago this book revived fond nostalgic memories, only saddened by the author's reports of thoughtless previous visitors who apparently had not heard the adage:

Leave nothing but footprints
Take nothing but photographs.

Richard Brooke

People in High Places. Approaches to Tibet
Audrey Salkeld
Jonathan Cape, 1991, pp256, £15.99

The author is the first to admit in this book that, although a well-known AC member and writer in mountaineering journals, she is no great mountaineer herself. She is, however, a good writer, and has produced an absorbing book, writing about what she knows best – people in high places. The book is divided almost exactly into two halves. The first is a story that has been told before – that of the controversial expedition to Everest to look for the remains of Mallory and Irvine. Salkeld tells it from her own viewpoint, bringing out the characters of the people involved – Holzel the leader, the TV film crew, the American women hoping to be first on top – whilst at the same time registering her own delight as a first-time traveller in the Himalaya.

The second half of the book was, to me, the more interesting, describing a journey into Mustang. Elaine Brook and her husband Lhakpa had managed to obtain a permit to attempt Bhrikuti, and were putting together an exploratory trek into this 'forbidden' region. Audrey Salkeld eagerly accepted the invitation. In this part of the book the emphasis is, rightly, more on the landscapes, history and people of the area, most of the others in the party remaining rather shadowy. The author found some of it hard going; a dry dusty region with many high passes, where she could be found well to the back of the party, but both her delights and her sufferings are well described. As an account of this region in its present closed state, the book serves both a useful and an entertaining purpose.

Throughout the book there is a constant vein of history, from the early explorers, through the Everest attempts and wanderings of Tilman and others, to the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the unrest in Nepal today. The colour photos, particularly of the Mustang region, are excellent.

Geof Templeman

Mountains. An Anthology
Anthony Kenny
John Murray, 1991, pp357, £20

The President of the British Academy is well known for distinguished accomplishments in many fields: it is perhaps not so well known that these include mountaineering. In this anthology of mountain poetry and prose, Dr Kenny has distilled for us a splendid brew from his wide reading and deep learning. The arrangement is roughly chronological, with groups of extracts, each group introduced briefly by the compiler, under headings such as 'Philosophers and Volcanoes', 'People of the Valleys', and 'Falls and Fatalities'. The selection is admittedly Europe-centred, even when it follows explorers to Asia and the New World, and the story ends with the arrival of Hillary and Tenzing on the summit of Everest in 1953, described by Dr Kenny as 'the high point in history of the response of frail humans to the challenge of the everlasting hills'. It would be churlish to complain that there is nothing in the book on the new world of mountaineering opened up by that event: the restriction to earlier periods at least allows nostalgia to be given full rein. Many

classic passages are deservedly included, such as the extract from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* with the reference to 'soaped poles in a bear-garden', and Hilaire Belloc's description, in *The Path to Rome*, of the Alps seen from the heights of the Jura; but Dr Kenny has also unearthed many lesser-known delights, ranging from the nun Egeria's ascent of Mount Sinai in the fourth century, via Arthur Hugh Clough's description of a Scottish reading party in his verse-novel *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, to a Thomas Hardy poem commemorating the conquest of the Matterhorn. It was a good idea, also, to reproduce some of the advertisements from Whymper's *Guide to Zermatt and the Matterhorn* – including offers of bottled volcanic dust from the Great Andes of the Equator. Everyone, of course, has his own favourite nominations for such a collection: I myself was especially happy to see Bill Murray's description of the Perfect Rock Climb, and Freya Stark's poem *W.P.K.* which must move anyone who has read and admired Janet Adam Smith's *Mountain Holidays*, and I was sorry to see nothing from the pen of the incomparable Julius Kugy. But these are personal whims, and there is enough here to satisfy all tastes.

Paul Kershaw's excellent wood engravings enhance the attraction of this book. It makes the ideal present for mountain addicts of every kind – but beware, if you go to buy it for a friend, you will undoubtedly end by giving it to yourself.

Ernst Sondheimer

Hypoxia: The Adaptations
John R Sutton, Geoffrey Coates, John E Remmers
B C Decker Inc, 1990, Toronto, Philadelphia

The Proceedings of the 6th International Hypoxia Symposium held at Château Lake Louise in 1989 are very properly dedicated to Professor Charles S Houston, an Honorary Member of the Alpine Club and the main inspiration behind these meetings.

The idea came originally from two gatherings in the UK, in 1973 and 1975. The first was a small affair in London, when a few interested British mountaineers and medical scientists met with Houston to discuss survival at altitude. The second, organised by the Alpine Club at Plas y Brenin in N Wales, was on mountain medicine and was attended by mountaineers and scientists, including Houston, Tilman and Odell, each a member of the successful expedition in 1936 that made the first ascent of Nanda Devi. The chairman was Sir Jack Longland, President of the Alpine Club. This meeting was followed in October–November 1975 by the first Hypoxia Meeting, at the Yosemite Institute, organised by Houston. These conferences have burgeoned over the years and have been held every second year, first at Banff and now at Château Lake Louise in Canada.

The Alpine Club meetings in the UK have followed a different path; the subjects discussed have been avalanches, lightweight expeditions in the Great Ranges, and climbing in the mountains of Central Asia and the Himalaya.

The Proceedings of the 1989 Hypoxia Meeting start appropriately with a biography of Houston which emphasises his contribution to our understanding

of altitude and his main goal in medicine, namely to disseminate information gained from research to clinicians and others, worldwide. The recent (1990) publication of the first *Journal of Wilderness Medicine*, of which Houston is an Editorial Board member, is another example of Houston's drive and interests.

These hypoxia symposia are now regarded as the premier international meetings on all aspects of oxygen lack in man and animals, and the present volume is essentially for medical scientists. It has sections on avian cardio-respiratory physiology, on high altitude populations, on the brain, heart and lung at altitude, as well as on the basic physiology of gas exchange under extreme conditions and peripheral chemoreceptors.

However, in the abstracts at the end of this volume there are two reports, both of which will interest mountaineers. These are descriptions of the portable hyperbaric chamber developed by Geer and Gamow of Colorado, which has been used successfully in the field in potentially lethal cases of high-altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE) and other forms of altitude illness. Houston was the first to give a modern clinical description of HAPE, and this volume is a fitting tribute to his lifelong interest in the mountains, as a scientist, mountaineer and teacher.

Michael Ward

Mountain Lover
Dennis Gray
Crowood Press, 1990, pp216, £14.95

There has been a 20-year gap between *Rope Boy*, Dennis Gray's first autobiographical book, and *Mountain Lover*, but the latter doesn't follow on as a straight sequence. Rather, the present book is a reassessed précis of the years described in the earlier volume, with the later threads picked up in the various chapters, each chapter, roughly speaking, describing a particular mountain area. Gray's involvement with the British Mountaineering Council started just as *Rope Boy* had been published and therefore features strongly in this book, but anyone hoping for major character assassinations of fellow members will be disappointed. The one thing that stands out from this book is the incredible extent of the author's travels. One expects the usual Alps, Himalaya, North and South America and so on; but Morocco, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, Israel, Poland, Sweden – the list is endless and fascinating. Now that the BMC years have ended, it will probably grow even longer.

Geof Templeman

A Talent for Adventure
Andrew Croft
The SPA Ltd/Andrew Croft, 1991, pp286, £14.95

Col Andrew Croft has led a life that has been more adventurous than most. A winter in Greenland in 1933 started his fascination with the Arctic, and the following year, on the British Trans-Greenland Expedition, he undertook the longest self-supporting dog-sledge journey at that date. Further expeditions

followed, to North-East Land, Swedish Lapland and Arctic Canada, interspersed with such exotic items as a trip to India to secure the accession of the young Maharajah of Cooch Behar. In the Second World War Croft served in the Russo-Finnish War and in Norway, led operations in Corsica, Italy and France, and worked with the French resistance behind enemy lines. In later years his interests have been primarily with the young; as Commandant of the Army Apprentices' School in Harrogate, and as founder of the Metropolitan Police Cadet Corps, where he remained for 11 years. Andrew Croft appears to have met most of the leading personalities in his fields of interest, and their names appear throughout the book, but there is no sense of 'name-dropping'. Rather, they are there purely to add interest to a life story which is told modestly and well.

Geof Templeman

Towards the Unknown Mountains
Rob Wood
Ptarmigan Press, 1991, pp135, £19.95
(Obtainable from Cordee)

Rob Wood originally started life in Yorkshire, mixing climbing all over Britain and the Alps with architectural college in London. One of his greatest exploits in the 1960s was an ascent of the Nose of El Capitan with Mick Burke, and he loved the free and easy lifestyle of the Valley and the wilderness scenery of the West – so much so that, after returning to complete his studies, he was drawn back to Yosemite. The 1960s had passed, though. The hippy lifestylers had dispersed, and the Rangers were in control, so Rob Wood headed for the Canadian West Coast with Bugs McKeith. And there he stayed.

In the middle of Vancouver Island lies Strathcona Park, and the author lives there with his wife and daughter on a partially self-sufficient homestead, countinuing a small design practice, but also teaching mountaineering at Strathcona Park Lodge Outdoor Education Centre. The book describes the park and its environmental work, but also has chapters on climbs the author has achieved; these include an eight-man expedition to Baffin Island, a winter ascent of Mt Waddington with Doug Scott, and the Grand Central Couloir on Colonel Foster with Scott and Greg Child.

Geof Templeman

Eyes to the Hills. The Mountain Landscape of Britain
Gordon Stainforth
Constable, 1991, pp208, £19.95

This book is quite a revelation! 200 pages of exquisite photographs of the British hills, all in colour, large format, some double page, beautifully reproduced, and all for under £20. Leaving aside the value, however, it is the quality that counts. Gordon Stainforth is a professional photographer who set out to take most of the pictures over a 16-month period in 1989–90:

> Altogether, 151 days were spent on location, of which 73 were 'under canvas'; many of the shots entailed high camps or bivouacs on the mountain. All in all, 79 mountains were climbed, and a further uncounted number ascended part-way to reach a viewpoint. The camera gear was carried in a specially modified rucksack, which in winter weighed 18kgs, and on some high camping trips as much as 30kgs. At the end of it all I was fitter than I have ever been in my life, Alpine seasons included!

An enthusiast indeed! And it shows. Many of the 149 pictures are of Scottish hills, which is numerically fair and, whilst at first I thought I would tire of semi-silhouettes of the Basteir Tooth and Suilven, the overall impression is superb. Most are pure landscapes, but those that include climbers set them in their cliff surroundings as part of that landscape. Here are none (or only one!) of those gymnastic exhibitionist photos beloved of the magazines. It is also a far cry from the sun-always-shining school of photography, as every trick of mountain weather is seen here, often to startling effect. It is impossible to choose favourites, as the range is from the magnificent bulk of Liathach to a clump of moss in a stream. There is text to the book, loosely related to the adjacent photographs, but it is the pictures that matter. Complete photographic information is included as an appendix.

I can only urge you to buy this book for yourself.

Geof Templeman

Yes, To Dance. Essays from Outside the Stockade
Jim Perrin
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1990, pp196, £14.95

This is the sequel to *On and Off the Rocks*, different publisher but almost identical format, with climber on the front cover a couple of moves further up his route. Many of these articles, and there are over 50 of them, you will have read before, as they come from *Mountain*, *High* and *Climber and Hill Walker*, or you will have seen them as reviews or obituaries in your daily paper, but quite a few will be new, the circulation of such publications as *Planet*, or *North Wales Lifestyle*, being smaller. Some have not been published before.

All the essays, however, are well worth reading or rereading. The environmental articles merit serious consideration for the picture they give of the plight of the countryside today, and the portraits of climbers and other hill-lovers offer amusing, affectionate and penetrating character studies in some of the best mountain writing being penned today. There is no great splash of colour photographs here, but the black-and-white ones that dot the text enhance it and are generally well reproduced.

Geof Templeman

Running High. The First Continuous Traverse of the 303 Mountains of Britain and Ireland
Hugh Symonds
Lochar Publishing, 1991, pp256, £14.99

Hugh Symonds's original idea was to run over all 277 Munros, including all the spaces in between. He then extended this to include the 3000ft summits in England and Wales as well, hoping to achieve it in 100 days. When, in fact, he managed it in 83 days, he decided to include Ireland as well and finished the grand total of 303 in 97 days. The only parts he didn't run were across the sea! This book describes his amazing trip, his highs and lows, not only from his own point of view, but also from that of his wife and children who came along in support.

Geof Templeman

La Ténèbre et l'Azur
Anne Sauvy
Arthaud, 1991, pp233, npq

Anne Sauvy's first collection of short stories, *Les Flammes de Pierre*, was reviewed in *AJ88*, 1983; an English version of this book appeared at the beginning of the year. A second volume of stories was published in 1985, and now we have a further collection of 16 tales from this Scheherazade of the mountain world. Her inventiveness is undiminished. The supernatural – and is there any mountaineer who has never felt close to it? – is much in evidence. Be sure, whenever an old hag begs a lift in your car, to accede to the request – she may well be a good fairy whose services will stand you in good stead in your next mountain predicament. And we all know that the falling climber, hurtling to his death, sees all of his past life pass before his eyes; but might he not see his *future* instead? Why is *La Sentinelle Rouge*, that famous climb on Mont Blanc, so called? Anne Sauvy tells us in a historical tale, complete with notes, set in the time of the French Revolution. Nearly all the stories are set in the Alps, but just occasionally they stray further afield: 'Le Secret' gives a surprising new twist to the tale of Mallory and Irvine, and 'Expéditionnite' recounts the perverse joys of an expedition to a mountain called Gramaslu, in the country of Lénap. Anne Sauvy uses the medium of her stories to make, with mordant wit and well-directed aim, comments on the issues that threaten our mountain environment and tend to destroy the former attractions of our sport. The volume, which was awarded the *Grand Prix du Salon du Livre de Montagne* in 1991, is convincing proof – if proof were needed – that mountain fiction, far from being a dead art, is alive and doing very well.

Ernst Sondheimer

A View from the Ridge
Dave Brown and Ian Mitchell
The Ernest Press, 1991, pp185, £6.50

A View from the Ridge is the sequel to an earlier Scots success by the same pair,

Mountain Days and Bothy Nights. I had not read this earlier book until recently but, when I did, I fell out of bed laughing.

> The journey to the Caves after nightfall was, at one time, made very hazardous by the existence of a very old and obnoxious forestry horse, whose idea of a good time was to gallop at unwary travellers as they crossed his field. This only happened at night, and many a hiker was frightened out of his wits as he heard the thundering hooves approaching from an indeterminate direction through the blackness of a moonless night.
>
> On one such night a small band of climbers were making their way across this particular field with the aid of a torch so useless that it gave about as much light as a red-hot nail, when suddenly the surrounding silence was destroyed by the approach of this demented nag. The panic and confusion of this torch-holder was not helped when one of his companions asked for the torch. Thinking that his friend was going to save them by doing something fabulous and brave, like flashing the torch in the eyes of the malevolent creature, he handed it over gladly. The trust of this optimistic fellow was not rewarded, for as soon as his friend had the torch, he disappeared into the darkness, leaving the others to scatter in blind panic, hopefully out of the way of the approaching disaster.

The style of this (crusty, Scots) gets improved a little in the new book, and we have more about the bothies and the folks that drank and slept in them, way back there about 30 years ago. But the territory now includes an Outward Bound course in North America. The theme is still basically nostalgia – 'Nostalgia ain't what it used to be!' as they say in New York – but in their case the nostalgia is legitimate, capturing an authentic slice of subliminal mountaineering. One of the facets of both these books, probably working more for them than for us, is that the co-authors split their materials, so that each writes about events at which the other wasn't present. Variety is shown by chapter-titles: 'Sex and the Single Bothier', 'The Sound of Knuckles on Flesh', and (whence comes my closing quote) 'Big, Black-hairtet River'.

> A big river ran atween us an wir mountain but the path was on this side o' the river. So we crossed wi the brig and did athoot the path. Fower oors oot, fower oors back. Deep heather, saft snaw, dubs; it wis murder. Mac tried tae droon himsel a couple o' times on the wye oot, in the side burns but didnae manage. On the wye back somebody had deepened the burns, dug up the grun and streetched the path oot. Mac accused me o' tryin tae kill him. But aifter a couple o' pints he forgave me. I took him haim. He tried tae donate me his anarchist library . . .

That's the kind of stuff that sets the spelling-bell ringing in outrage on my computer. But it's only one chapter, so don't be frightened.

The reason we twinned this book with Alison Fell's *Mer de Glace* for the 1991 Boardman Tasker Award was *not* of course because it says on page 6: 'I'll tell ye wan thing. It'll no win the Tasker-Boardman Memorial Prize'! But I'm glad our three co-winning authors are Scots (though that wasn't our intention).

Ronnie Wathen

Mer de Glace
Alison Fell
Methuen, 1991, pp249, £13.99

> . . . the voice becomes manic, boasting. When I get frightened, it says, then I get this rush of adrenalin and when I get the adrenalin my mind takes absolute control of my body and I know I can't make a mistake.

I don't want to persuade you that this book is climbing fiction and therefore every mountaineer ought to read it. I would rather say that it is a serious book that isn't over after one reading, and has far more to say than whether or not they got to the top of something. It's about panic and elation, omnipotence and powerlessness, safety and risk, the narrative and the myth. And it's concerned not only with climbing, but with all the rest of life as well. Here the mountains aren't a backdrop for adventure; the adventure is in each one of us.

There is, inevitably, a story – the old one of a love triangle. Kathleen, whose 'achievements' lie with writing, meets Will in the creative writing class she teaches. He is younger, married, and a mountaineer. They fall in love, and the can of worms is opened. But maybe it doesn't matter what really happened – the trajectory of the love story is irresistible.

Which brings us to the structure. Kathleen is writing a book about the affair, and playing with various outcomes. She is also remembering, dreaming, talking to her analyst (or the analytical part of her mind) and using the evidence of Will's notebooks and letters. All this of course is a fiction, written by Alison Fell. This has been called confusing, but the structure is not some post-modern accident; there is no other truthful way for the authors (Alison Fell and Kathleen) to tell this story.

Throughout, there are images that bounce you backwards and forwards to different parts of the book: the whiteness of ice, swaddling bands, shawls, thin smiles; the redness of bleeding, heat, the trappings of the seductress; mothers (and mountains) as limits, all-forgiving, casting off. And the language is never sloppy. Each word is placed and used with as much attention as in a poem. This is Kathleen when she is first in the mountains:

> . . . but now, staring up and up, I saw nothing that was benign. Saw instead a snow land where air and all that falls from it was in the ascendancy. Saw white slopes wind-moulded to bird shapes, blue wings of ice-ridges, folded overhangs insubstantial as cloud banks.

and a possible dream of a possible Will:

> . . . It's a broken room, roofless: snow shrouding the mantelpiece, the clock, snow quilting the double bed. Gilded by the sun. There's a small boy sitting up, rubbing his eyes. Grinning. You can see the energy crackling in him, the rosy health of it; in a moment, you know, he will hurl on his clothes and snatch up his fishing rod and race downstairs to bellow for his breakfast.

And yet more mountains:

> Transparent, fluted ice-falls like whole sentences frozen in the uttering, whole poems.

Three times now I've read this book, and each time I have found in it more and more that matters. It couldn't have happened any other way. It couldn't have been written any other way. If you want a book that you can never get to the end of, this is it: one of the best books I have read about climbing, and about everything else.

Sheila Harrison

Gabe's Fall
Peter Lars Sandberg
Hodder & Stoughton/Diadem, 1990, pp156, £12.95 (pb £7.95)

This is a collection of stories previously published individually in *Playboy* and other American magazines for the general public, in the 1960s and 70s. The tales cover such themes as youth and age, competing, danger, marriage, non-marriage – in fact all human life is here. The writing is mostly smooth and competent, and sometimes gripping. The climbing sequences are very well done, and the reader experiences every move as it happens on the page. In particular, the first story, 'Gabe's Fall', can be lived every step of the way. And it's not all action: fear, regret, compassion, ruthlessness are well expressed in the character. But . . .

It's a shame the author had to be modern (it is the 1960s and 70s) and needed to introduce women into the stories. He knows how he feels about climbing and competition, but not how he feels about women. Confused, I suppose is the answer. He believes they can climb as well as men, and hold their own in conversation if given the chance. But how on earth can one understand them when they're not climbing or competing? This obviously worries him and he tries hard to be fair. But they are still foreign bodies to be handled at arm's length, and his male characters spend a lot of time rearranging their own reactions and missing the obvious. All this means that the women don't always come over as human, and I found myself distracted from the flow of the stories while I spluttered in impatience and skipped a page to get back to the climbing.

I would very much like to see some of his more recent fiction, because Peter Lars Sandberg is certainly a good story-teller. He notices details of the natural world and writes them down simply and effectively. He is interested in how minds and bodies deal with action, and how people deal with each other. And perhaps by now, after a lot of thought, he knows where he is with women.

Sheila Harrison

Outcrops
Terry Gifford
Littlewood, 1991, pp60, £5.95

Terry Gifford's latest offering consists of almost 50 poems, the majority, as expected, having mountain themes or being about the wildlife that inhabits the

wilder areas of these islands. Littlewood Press were the publishers of Gifford's previous volume *The Stone Spiral* and, being also responsible for such delightful collections as Peter Sansom's poems *On The Pennine Way*, are to be congratulated on bringing such excellent offerings before the discerning climber/reader.

Geof Templeman

Monte Rosa
Gino Buscaini
CAI and TCI, 1991, pp688, npq

Those of you who, like myself, were under the impression that major new lines were a thing of the past in this region will be in for a shock. On both rock and ice the last decade has seen a mass of significant additions which have all been documented in this superb and scholarly work. This is the first truly definitive guide to the Breithorn-Monte Rosa massif for 30 years and has been produced in the usual house style. It also includes a section on the Mischabel chain but, in order to avoid treading on the toes of the CAS, describes only the main arteries to the principal peaks.

This is a well illustrated book. Black-and-white reproduction is an undeniable *bête noire* for most guidebook writers, yet the 72 prints (all taken by the author) are quite serviceable. However, more detail can be found in Buscaini's excellent *schizzi* which frequently punctuate the text and are a well-known and much praised feature of his previous works. From time to time there are informative sketch maps, detailed enough, I think, to allow you to complete most expeditions without the need to carry a 1:50,000.

We are given a comprehensive introduction including an historical section, valley walks, huts (more delightful sketches) and a list of recommended climbs – a useful inclusion in a definitive work and something that appears unique to CAI guides. So it is not until page 147 that we come to the route descriptions and begin to learn something of the high-quality climbs in an area not noted for its high-quality rock: the E faces of Jazzi and Fillar (the E pillar of the Piccolo Fillar is the classic VI in this area); the Rocca de Verra; the two superb routes of the 1980s on the precipitous Pilastro Vincent, and many worthy middle-grade routes on those enigmatic peaks S of the watershed. However, although a number of rock routes are labelled *molto bella* or *splendido*, there is much that obviously isn't!

For most visitors it is the big mixed faces that capture the imagination and, on these, Gabarrou and the late Giancarlo Grassi, amongst others, have added many superb lines. They are, invariably, hard and nowadays best attempted outside of the summer months. Indeed, most of the mouth-watering *cascate* only form in the winter/spring and have rarely been repeated. The average reader will be far more interested in the revised gradings, which reflect the modern trend in alpinism where long routes of a serious nature have become 'unfashionable'. For example, the Younggrat and Triftjigrat now rate as D, despite moderate technical difficulty; and the Marinelli couloir on the E face of Monte Rosa – a face of truly Himalayan proportions – is elevated to D+.

However, it is slightly surprising to see the Cresta di Santa Caterina uplifted to TD+ while the NE couloir on the Breithorn (No 99 in *The Hundred Best . . .*) drops to D+!

The book ends with a section on the enormous ski mountaineering potential; a résumé of the worthwhile cragging to be found in the southern valleys, notably Gressoney and the Val d'Aosta, and the winter equivalent – waterfall climbing. For the latter, Gressoney again appears to hold the best and most accessible titbits.

So is this a book to inspire? Despite my poor Italian I could easily see that the routes are described in a very formalised and factual manner. Whilst the book will be very useful to those familiar with Italian, I suspect that for the English reader the main stimulus must come from the photographs and the excellent mountain diagrams which, I am reluctant to add, reveal several worthwhile 'gaps' still waiting to be filled!

Lindsay Griffin

Patagonia
Terra magica per alpinisti e viaggiatore
Gino Buscaini and Silvia Metzeltin
Pub dall' Oglio 1987, pp272, L50,000
including 48 pages of coloured illustrations

This magnificent volume in the Italian series of mountain 'Exploits' is well worth perusing (even by those whose knowledge of Italian is negligible), if only for the superb colour photographs. The most spectacular of these cover Fitzroy, the Torres of the Paine massif, San Lorenzo and the Cerro Torre. The general area covered by the writers extends over the whole of the Patagonian Andes, on both sides of the Chilean-Argentinian border, from Lago Buenos Aires southwards to the straits of Magellan, but not to Tierra del Fuego or the islands. In addition there are introductory chapters on the environment, natural and human, including a very relevant note on the 'implacable climate of the winds'. Other chapters deal with the early explorers of these mountains – Friedrich Reichert, Alberto Agostini, Casimiro Ferrari and José Luis Fonrouge, as well as with the mystery of Toni Egger's death on the Cerro Torre and Cesare Maestri's desecration of that peak.

Of special interest to mountaineers are the concluding 87 pages giving detailed descriptions of 22 distinct mountain ranges, of which 18 are directly connected to the South Patagonian ice-cap. These descriptions are accompanied by clear sketch maps, numerous black-and-white pictures, sundry sketched panoramas and detailed route topos of the extremely severe but now established climbs on Fitzroy and its satellites and on the Torres del Paine. The first and subsequent major ascents of each important peak are carefully recorded with names, dates and nationality. In addition to the standard bibliography, there is a helpful list of cinematograph references. The only substantial criticism one can make of this beautifully produced book is that the separate binding of the colour plates in 6 fascicules of 8 full plates each has resulted in a separate index for each fascicule being placed at an arbitrarily

chosen point. There is, moreover, no consolidated index of plates, which themselves have no serial numbers. Identification of individual colour plates thus involves a tantalising but fascinating chase.

These mountains are not the Himalaya: the highest, Monte San Valentin, barely tops 4000m and the remainder are between 2000m and 3500m; but for dramatic scenery, remoteness and ferocity of climate, they offer plenty of scope to enterprising mountaineers aiming for ranges still not fully explored.

The collaboration of Gino Buscaini, climber and mountain guide, who is responsible for the photographs and the topos, with Silvia Metzeltin, geologist and writer, has produced a magnificent addition to the mountain literature of this little-known region.

Edward Peck

Early Lithographed Books
Michael Twyman
Farrand Press & Private Libraries Association

This sumptuously produced book, given to the AC Library by the author in gratitude for the help he was given there, is a monumental treatise on lithographic printing. At a casual glance it seems to be a book on a somewhat esoteric subject, but closer study reveals it to be of unusual interest to book collectors specialising in mountaineering literature. This is perhaps best exemplified by the inclusion of a two-page spread taken from one of Wainwright's Lake District guides as an illustration of what the author charmingly describes as an 'improper' book; that is to say, a book produced by non-traditional methods. The ancestry of the Wainwright guides can be traced to the early 19th century, and in particular to the work of the Swiss artist and writer Rodolphe Töpffer, known to alpine book connoisseurs for his descriptions of journeys in the Alps with illustrations integrated with the text.

But this book, though of exceptional value to scholars of printing, will mainly be of interest to AC readers because of chapter 9 which is devoted to a delightful account of the lithographic history of Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire's edition of her lifelong friend Georgiana's poem 'The Passage of the Mountain of St Gothard' (see *AJ89*, 141–144, 1984).

In conclusion: this is a fascinating and scholarly book on the history and technique of lithographic book production. It is truly a *tour de force*, with its concluding catalogue of all the known books in Europe printed by this 'improper' method, until the practice became commonplace with the introduction of modern lithographic techniques. It is superbly produced and printed by one of the most distinguished printers today.

Oliver Turnbull and Charles Warren

Nepal. The Mountains of Heaven
David Paterson
Hamish Hamilton, 1990, pp176, £30

This is one of those ultimate large coffee-table books – a few pages of large type

on coloured paper sandwiched between sections of sumptuous photographs. Nothing wrong with that, especially when the pictures are as good as these. The sections feature six treks, mostly well known, undertaken in the past 10 years or so – Everest, the Annapurna Sanctuary and circuit, Makalu, the Rolwaling and, less well known, the Ganesh Himal, plus a chapter on the Kathmandu valley. The photographs, many of which are large double-page spreads, really are excellent, and this is a book to dip into and relive, or kindle, dreams.

Geof Templeman

On the Road to Janaidar
A Tale of Adventure to the Roof of the World
Michael Jardine
I Will Not Complain Press, Tokyo, 1990, pp128, npq

After reading an article in the *National Geographic* about a ski ascent of Muztagh Ata, the author decided he would have a go too. Lightning strikes, oedema and, maybe, inexperience ended that trip at just over 6000m. But, as they say in all the best books, 'I vowed to myself that I would return'. He put together a team of nine from six countries, all of whom had had some climbing experience, and which included members such as Dick Renshaw and Wilmer Perez, with considerably more. This book tells how, after an abortive attempt on the N summit of Muztagh Ata, they finally made the main summit in one push and skied back down. Michael Jardine writes naturally and well, although I would have thought it unnecessary, even in a book for the general reader, to include a glossary for words such as 'scree' and 'bivouac'. His real forte, however, is as a photographer, and the book contains numerous superb shots. (See also *AJ92*, 117–121, 1987 and *AJ93*, 84–87, 1988–89.)

Geof Templeman

Artists in Snowdonia
James Bogle
Y Lolfa, 1990, pp88, pb, £4.95

Our member James Bogle has produced a very attractive little book of paintings of Snowdonia. 30 paintings are reproduced in colour, with a note opposite each about the artist and his work, together with advice on how you can reach the same viewpoint today. Whilst many of the paintings are familiar, such as the Turners and Richard Wilson's 'Llyn y Cau', examples such as Walter Crane's 'Lly Elsie' and James Walker's 'The Old Road to Bangor' are less well known. The majority range from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century, with a sprinkling of later ones. The one minor error that I can find is that I am fairly sure that Thomas Girtin painted 'Near Beddgelert' from a point above the A498 to the south of Beddgelert, near Bryn Felin farm, and not a little way up the Gwynant valley as stated. Dinas Emrys is not visible from this point, and therefore the artist's 'freedom' is not as great as the author thinks. A small point, but at least it shows I studied the book!

Geof Templeman

Der Wahrheit Näher
Hannes Taugwalder und Martin Jaggi
Glendyn Verlag, Aarau, 1990, pp215, illustrations, pb, npb

The publication of this erratic book, with its over-optimistic title ('Nearer to the Truth'), coincided with the 125th anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. It deals primarily with events leading up to the accident and also with its aftermath. It may well give the general reader a misleading impression and will certainly disappoint the alpine historian. Even the revised second edition seems at times to read more like a tabloid newpaper article or historical novel than the objective result of scholarly research.

The two elderly authors claim to have considered everything mountain literature has to offer on the first ascent of the Matterhorn, weighing up history against comment in their search to get nearer the truth. Most of the research seems to have been carried out by M Jaggi, who died some two years prior to the publication of the book which H Taugwalder pieced together with comment, reminiscences and often irrelevant trivialities, such as a recipe for mulled wine. He gives the impression that he is not familiar with many of the literary sources, nor the use to which Jaggi had intended to put them. This would account for taking quotations out of context and also for seeming to ignore altogether a number of important books and articles on the subject. But it does not explain the absence of a single reference to anything published since the Matterhorn Centenary in 1965.

The basic theme throughout the book is Taugwalder versus Whymper, with rather too much credit claimed for the former and too much adverse and sometimes inaccurate criticism of the latter. Most of the abundant authorities quoted in the text fail to reach the half-page bibliography at the end of the book, giving the reader little chance of resolving the confusion arising from more than 40 incomplete, inaccurate or otherwise defective bibliographical references in the text. Even the authors' potential ally, Arnold Lunn, seems to have confused them. They refer to a non-existent book, *Taugwalder and the Matterhorn*, when they must surely mean the seven-page article, *AJ55*, 290–296, 1945–46, and in a preface Jaggi's daughter refers to Lunn wanting, in the 1950s, to show the history of the first ascent in a different light. But, she says, fate decreed otherwise and he died all too soon (but not in fact till 1974). Some of the many illustrations suffer in similar ways.

The authors attach particular importance to the seemingly never to be completely forgotten report by Meissner, published in a Vienna newspaper on 4 August 1865, containing the absurd accusation that Whymper cut the rope. They seek to make much of the fact that Whymper never challenged Meissner, but surely his mischievous suggestion is no more worthy of serious consideration by mountaineers today than it was when Whymper decided in August 1865 to ignore it. They say that Whymper must certainly have come across the accusation in Guido Rey's book *The Matterhorn* (first English edition 1907), and they quote four lines from Rey regarding the accusation that he cut the rope between Old Peter and Douglas to save his own life. But they omit to quote what Rey wrote a few lines later: 'Whymper had then to answer grave charges of

responsibility and the aforesaid absurd accusation of having betrayed his companion . . . Whymper cleared himself by the simple narrative of his misfortune.' Why is Rey's conclusion not good enough for them? A few pages later they come up with: 'Nobody from the circle of honourable gentlemen in the Alpine Club ventured to mention even a word of Meissner's report, because they were afraid of invoking the wrath of the mountain gods . . .' Yet later on, in a different part of the book, they appear to acknowledge the absurdity of Meissner's accusation.

Another document they highlight is, however, of considerable historical interest and supports the contention that one cannot say there is nothing new to be found about the Matterhorn accident. It is a letter of 18 August 1865 from Whymper to the Rev R Glover, the main body of which was quoted in the September 1989 catalogue of a specialist London bookseller. The letter reveals Whymper's feelings and provides further confirmation of the fact that he had intended to try the Hörnli ridge in 1864. It also provides an answer to the question, posed by Frank Smythe in his book *Edward Whymper* on p215, 'Did he feel in any way to blame for the accident?' The authors implicitly criticise Whymper by suggesting that the sentence in question is hard to understand. Yet it is only the German translation that is hard to understand. Whymper's original English is perfectly clear.

The many inaccuracies in the book are not confined to errors in translation and omissions resulting from inadvertence or ignorance. In an appendix the authors claim to set out in German 'the exact wording' of part of the Official Inquiry Report, taken from the original French, in *AJ*33, 235–250, 1920. But the wording has been altered, particularly at Questions 26, 30–32, 36 and 64 and the evidence at 34 has been grossly distorted. Whatever the outcome of M Jaggi's extensive research might have been had he lived to complete it and write his own book, the present one cannot be regarded as a serious scholarly work.

Alan Lyall

Trevor Braham writes:

. . . The controversy and exhaustive inquiry that took place soon after the 1865 ascent pretty well laid the ghosts and established the truth. Adequate records exist to render futile any attempt to reassess the verdict of history in this particular case. You merely need search *AJ*, Vols 33, 61, 70, 71. Why should ignorance or prejudice be allowed to attempt a retrial of Edward Whymper?

De Freyr à l'Himalaya
Les Grandes Heures de l'alpinisme belge
Jacques Borlée
Didier Hatier, 1987, pp256

For a country without mountains, Belgium has played quite a large part in climbing history. The Club Alpin Belge was founded in 1883, coming close on the heels of the major European alpine clubs, and has therefore been in continuous active existence for more than 100 years. In that time it has mounted numerous expeditions to the Himalaya and other greater mountain ranges, as

well as providing a local playground in the limestone cliffs of the Freyr. Amongst its members, the Club has numbered Ernest Solvay, who founded the eponymous hut on the Hörnli ridge; Claude Barbier; and, of course, King Albert I and King Leopold III. This book tells the story, not only of the Club, but of climbing in Belgium over the past 100 years.

Les Nostres Muntanyes. Catalunya Pirinenca
Josep Barberà i Suqué
Secretaria General de l'Esport, 1990, pp452

This is an enormous 'coffee table' guidebook to the hills and mountains of northern Catalonia. It is split into 17 regions, each with a detailed map, and every individual hill has a description, even if some are only 100–200m high. Many, though, like Pedraforca and Els Encantats, are magnificent mountains, and most are illustrated. The book is not a specific climbing guide, but more an excellent general introduction to the area. It does not include Andorra.

A Guide to the Birds of Nepal
Carol & Tim Inskipp
Christopher Helm/A & C Black, 1991, pp400, £35.00

This is the revised second edition of the book originally published in 1985. It is not possible to cover this work in detail for the *Alpine Journal*, but it can be said that all 836 species of bird in Nepal are covered, with information for each on breeding, habitat, behaviour and range within the Indian subcontinent. Distribution maps are included for all but the rarest species. It is therefore indispensable for anyone visiting Nepal who has an interest in birds, but it will need to be left in camp, as it would only just go in a day sack, let alone a pocket.

Iceland. The Traveller's Guide
Tony Escritt
Iceland Information Centre, 1990, ppxvi + 420, pb, npq

One might expect a guide published by a country's information centre to be an attractive, but slim, volume, mostly adverts and photos. Not so for Iceland: this one has nearly 450 pages packed full of information and with a good map thrown in as well. Apart from the detailed chapters on the regions of the island and copious 'practical information' data, the chapters of most interest to members will be those on 'Movement in the Mountains and Interior', 'Mountaineering in Iceland' by Roger Smith, and 'Vatnajökull' by Dr I Y Ashwell. An absolute 'must' for anyone intending a visit.

Peaks and Passes of the Garhwal Himalaya
Jan Babicz
Alpinisbyczny Klub Eksploracyjny, Sopot/Cordee, 1990, pp248, pb, £8.95

Guidebooks to the Himalaya are really coming of age. This one, 'for climbers

and cross-country alpinists', is described as a first step in preparing a detailed guide to all this part of the Himalaya, and includes all the 7000m peaks in the region in detail, as well as the western part of the Gangotri group and high trekking routes in the area. If you look at the entry on Dunagiri, for example, you will find a brief description of the mountain, details of the first ascent, and a history of exploration. Then follow descriptions of six major expeditions to the mountain, culled from various sources, accompanied by a map and three pages of photo-diagrams of various faces and routes. This format applies, to a lesser or greater degree, to all the peaks covered. The book is in English.

The Alps
Stephen Lee
Batsford, 1991, pp142, £14.95

Batsford are apparently starting a series on mountain ranges of the world, this one, the Himalaya and the Pyrenees being the first three. For people who have no knowledge of the Alps at all, I suppose it forms a useful introduction, with chapters on almost anything you can think of about alpine countries – history, bicycling, food, people, railways, ballooning and so on – and some walking, climbing and skiing as well.

Glencoe. The Changing Moods
Alan Thomson
Lochar Publishing, 1990, pp120, £14.95

Alan Thomson's book celebrates Glencoe in all its moods. A 'photo-feature writer' now living in the glen, he has an unrivalled opportunity to capture these moods on film, and to describe the landscape, climbs, characters and wildlife that exist there. The result is a book that is pleasant and informative to read, with some superb illustrations.

Richard Gilbert's 200 Challenging Walks in Britain and Ireland
Diadem, 1990, pp224, £14.95

As its sub-title states, this is a companion field guide to *The Big Walks*, *Classic Walks* and *Wild Walks*. All the walks contained in the original large volumes are included here, in an abbreviated form, with four additions to round up the numbers, Gilbert having written all the descriptions himself, dispensing with 'guest authors'. The Cuillin Traverse, with its 'Greater' extension, is added as a final titbit. The photos, though fewer than usual in a Diadem book, are uniformly excellent.

Classic Rock Climbs in Southern England
Bill Birkett
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1991, pp136, £22.95

The latest in the series of 'Classic Climbs' covers the whole of southern England,

the greatest amount of space naturally being given to Cornwall, but with a sprinkling throughout the area. As a total of only 45 climbs are described, and 19 of those are in Cornwall, the sprinkling is rather sparse – one at Swanage, one at Avon Gorge, but two at Bowles Rocks? – one can argue the merits of the selection indefinitely. But the routes are well described, with not only a general introduction and summary of the route, but also a description which is more in the nature of an essay on an ascent of the route. Where applicable, first ascent descriptions are given by Mick Fowler, Rowland and Mark Edwards, and Pat Littlejohn. The photos, in both colour and black-and-white, are good – but £22.95?!

Limestone. 100 Best Limestone Climbs in Britain
Chris Craggs
Cicerone Press, 1991, pp160, £19.95

There is not a lot to say about these '100 Best' books, unless one is in a position to quibble with the choice from a practical point of view. Otherwise, each has a guidebook-type description, approaches are described, with a personal view and photo to finish off. Climbs are described in ascending order of difficulty, and all photos are in colour, the best of a good bunch in my view being of Colin Binks on Trevallen Pillar at St Govan's – atmospheric, marvellous rock texture, with the climber in just the right position.

Classic Walks in the Alps
Ed Kev Reynolds
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1991, pp128, £22.99

Classic Walks in the Peak District
Martin Collins
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1991, pp136, £19.99

These are the two latest in the *Classic Walks* series, which now runs to 14 volumes. Each one is good in its way, with a varied choice, especially wide in the case of the Alps, where the 'walks' range from mere 11km strolls to the 600km plus of the GR5. Naturally, the Peak District volume has a more even selection, but the going can be just as tough! The production is excellent, but one wonders if £23 isn't getting a little steep for a walking guide?

The Backpacker's Handbook
Chris Townsend
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1991, pp192, pb, £12.99

The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Walking & Backpacking
Hugh Westacott
Oxford Illustrated Press, 1991, pp174, £17.95

At first sight, the Oxford Illustrated Press has produced two very similar books

at the same time, but closer inspection reveals otherwise. Without going into great detail, Townsend's book is 192 pages packed with just about every bit of practical information you could want to know about setting out on a backpacking trip, with very few illustrations. There is some solid stuff here. Westacott's book, on the other hand, is, as it says, an encyclopaedia. Starting with A for Access, you go right through to – no, not Z – but Y for YHA, with some pretty esoteric information in between. The Alps, for instance, have only a slightly longer entry than Anglesey which, in turn, has slightly more than the well-known walker Austen (Jane). There are some interesting titbits here, but one wonders whom they are aimed at.

Long Distance Walks in the Pyrenees
Chris Townsend
Crowood Press, 1991, pp128, £12.99

Long Distance Walks in Scotland
Arthur Stewart
Crowood Press, 1991, pp128, £12.99

These are the first two in a series of paperback mountain walking guides edited by John Cleare. They are attractively produced, with varied selections of walks, good maps and excellent colour photographs.

The Best Hill Walking in Scotland
Cameron McNeish
Lochar Publishing, 1991, pp160, £14.95

The Munro Almanac
Cameron McNeish
Lochar Publishing, 1991, pp144, £6.99

Two Scottish hill-walking books from the editor of *The Great Outdoors* magazine. The first takes six areas – Ben Lomond, Glencoe, Lochaber, Torridon, Ullapool and Badenoch – and, after a general description of each area, details the most notable ascents and walks which could be undertaken in a week's stay. The photographs are of average quality, but the maps might just as well have been omitted. The second is a pocket-size guide to ascending all the Munros.

Scottish Hill and Mountain Names
Peter Drummond
Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1991, pp224, £9.95

This latest volume from the SMT makes fascinating reading. When someone from south of the border spends time amongst the Highlands, or Lowlands for that matter, two thoughts often come to mind. Firstly, how do you pronounce the name of the hill you are climbing and, secondly, what does the name mean?

This book answers both questions. The main text concentrates on the meaning, including many of the legends that lie behind the names, but these are not written up geographically. Rather, they are contained in chapters which group names together – colour in names, flora and fauna in names, the 20 highest summits, and so on. Wherever a Gaelic mountain name is used, a footnote gives a phonetic pronunciation. This is fine, but you need to persevere. It's only slightly harder to pronounce A'Mhinchoiseachd than 'a vee: Nchoshochk'!

Climber's and Hiker's Guide to the World's Mountains
(3rd edition)
Michael R Kelsey
Kelsey Publishing, 1990, pp928, pb, £22

This third edition has expanded into a weighty tome, the format being that each large mountain, or smaller range, has a half-page of text, photograph, and whole-page map. It is quite useful if the particular area you want is covered in detail, but there is a quirky imbalance. The mountains of India, for example, have two entries, Pakistan five and Nepal nine. The mountains of North America, however, have 115. The author is American.

Mountaineering and Mountain Club Serials:
A Guide to English Language Titles
Virginia Seiser & Robert Lockerby
Scarecrow Press/Shelwing, 1991, ppxxii + 180, £18.75

Written by two American librarians, this book is an attempt to list all the mountain-related periodicals, club journals and similar publications issued in the English language. It is an excellent effort, as the amount of research needed must have been formidable. The fact that stands out is the incredible number of American publications that exist, or existed, especially those with names such as *Redwood Chips*, *Rock Runes*, *Flail & Scrabble*, and *Pike Speak*(!) As is only to be expected, the authors – operating from the libraries of the far-off universities of New Mexico and Portland, Oregon – are incomplete in their British listings, although very good on the whole, and I am sure that the BMC will be surprised to learn that they issued the *Mountaineering Journal* between 1932 and 1938.

Mountains of Heaven. Travels in the Tian Shan Mountains, 1913
Charles Howard-Bury, Ed Marian Keaney
Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, pp176, £12.95

Howard-Bury is best known to mountaineers as the person who persuaded the Dalai Lama to agree to the first British Everest expedition in 1921, and was then appointed the leader for what turned out to be a very successful reconnaissance. But he had already travelled widely and, in 1913, gave up his army career for an extensive tour of Tien Shan, the subject of this book. The book is in diary form, covering the six months of his travels, but Howard-Bury was no mountaineer,

and much of the writing concerns hunting, either for plants or animals. As stated in the foreword, he was 'one of that strange breed who can follow an animal for hours, while admiring its grace . . . as a preliminary to shooting it dead . . .' One of the cover photos shows him beside a slaughtered ibex, looking every inch a beturbanned native, except for the shorts and knee socks. He didn't shoot everything, however, as the last picture of him is on his way back to Europe with Agu, the little brown bear he had befriended.

Everest Reconnaissance
Charles Howard-Bury & George Leigh Mallory. Ed Marian Keaney
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, pp254, £16.95

The original account of the first (1921) Everest expedition was published in 1922 and, although not difficult to find today, commands quite a high price in book-dealers' catalogues. In this book Ms Keaney, who lives and works close to the Howard-Burys' home in Ireland, has reprinted the meat of the original, leaving out the original Preface and Introduction and some of the Appendices, and shortening some of the chapters. In their place she gives us her own Introduction, which takes the form of a brief biography of Howard-Bury, and adds extracts from his diary for 1920. These are exceptionally interesting, showing the initial moves to obtain the Dalai Lama's consent, with Howard-Bury's negotiations with Sir Charles Bell, the British Agent in Gangtok, and his travels through the area. Whilst this book cannot make up for the sumptuousness of the original, it is a useful addition to mountaineering literature, even for those who have the earlier work.

The First Ascent of Mount Kenya
H J Mackinder, Ed K Michael Barbour
Hurst, 1991, pp298, £25

Halford John Mackinder was the first person to climb Mt Kenya, in 1899. He had entered into a contract to publish a book on the climb in 1900, and appears to have contemplated doing so again in 1929, but this is the first time the book has appeared in print. The publication is due to the efforts of Michael Barbour who contributes a 25-page introduction on the author and his achievements. Mackinder was a geographer, one of the fathers of 'modern' geography, with a brilliant academic record, being appointed Reader in Geography at Oxford University at 26. It was some years after this that he decided to prove himself as a traditional 'open air' geographer by leading an expedition to Mt Kenya. The book is in journal form and, like all travel writing of the period, abounds in descriptions of the natural wonders and anthropology of the region and the difficulties experienced on the journey. The two attempts on the mountain are well described, and the book as a whole is a delightful period piece on early African mountaineering. (Mackinder's account 'The Ascent of Mount Kenya' is in *AJ20*, 102–10, 1900.)

Quest for Adventure
Chris Bonington
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991, pp352, pb, £10.95

Paperback reprint from 1981, with updated chronology (see review in *AJ87*, 247–48, 1982).

The following guides and other books have also been received:

Two publications from Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya, Sabadell, Spain:

1 **Catáleg del Fons de Documentacio del Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya.** 1990, pp56

2 **Karakorum Graphic Index of Mountaineering Maps.** Prepared by Joan Hugas, drafting by Xavi Llongueras, 1991

Rock Climbs in the Pyrenees. Derek L Walker. Cicerone Press, 1990, pp136, £9.95

Best Walks in Northumberland. Frank Duerden. Constable, 1990, pp330, £9.95

Cordillera Huayhuash, Part 1. From Cacananpunta to Mituraju, Cadena Norte. Jan Kielkowski. Düsseldorf, 1990, in Polish

Museo Nazionale della Montagna 'Duca degli Abruzzi'. Museum guide, English edition. Aldo Audisio. CAI, 1991, pp48

Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. 25 Years. 1990, pp80. Publication celebrating the first 25 years of the NIM at Uttarkashi.

Long Distance Walker's Handbook, 4th edition. Long Distance Walker's Association. A & C Black, 1990, pp240, £7.95

Glacier Travel and Crevasse Rescue. Andy Selters. Diadem, 1990, pp160, £8.95

Winter Climbs. Ben Nevis & Glencoe. Alan Kimber. Cicerone Press, 1991, pp160, £9.95

The Mountains of England and Wales. Vol 2: England. John & Anne Nuttall. Cicerone Press, 1990, pp320, £11.95

Gîtes, Refuges. France et Frontières. Annick & Serge Mouraret. La Cadole, 1990, pp404, FF100

Yorkshire and the Peak District. 100 Classic Climbs. Limestone. Chris Jackson. Crowood Press, 1991, pp256, £11.99

The Rock Climbing Guide to Europe. David Jones. Crowood Press, 1991, pp256, pb, £12.95

South West Climbs – rock climbs from Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset & Jersey. Pat Littlejohn. Diadem, 1991, pp288, £14.99

Ski Touring in Scotland. Angela Oakley. Cicerone Press, 1991, pp208, £6.95

Peak & Pennine Country. W A Poucher. Constable, 1991, pp202, £16.95

The Cairngorms. Rock & Ice Climbs. Allen Fyffe & Andrew Nisbet. SMC, Reprint with addendum. 1990, pp402

Chamonix to Zermatt. The Walker's Haute Route. Kev Reynolds. Cicerone Press, 1991, pp168, £6.95

Eastern Baltoro Mustagh. Jan Kielkowski. Przewodnik Alpinistyczny, 1990, pp50, npq

Pathmaster Guides. 30 Circular Walks from Regional Centres. Crowood Press, 1991:

Dauphiné. Ilona Bellos & Hugh Morison. pp160, £9.99
Stubai. John White. pp144, £9.99

Walking the Summits of Somerset & Avon. A newly charted walk from Minehead to Chepstow. Hamish Brown, Patrick Stephens, 1991, pp176, £7.99

Rock Climbing Guide to Dalkey. Ed Howard Hebblethwaite & Colm O'Cofaigh. MCI, 1991, pp126, npq

New Irish Walk Guides: General Ed Joss Lynam. Gill & Macmillan, 1991:

West and North. Tony Whilde & Patrick Simms. pp168, npq
East and South. David Herman & Miriam McCarthy. pp170, npq
Southwest. Seán O'Suilleabháin. pp162, npq

125 Ans Pour la Montagne. 1866–1991. Regione Autonoma Valle d'Aosta/ CAI, 1991, pp88
Celebrating 125 years of the Val d'Aosta section of the CAI

Alpinismo Italiano in Karakorum. Museo Nazionale della Montagna 'Duca degli Abruzzi'/CAI, 1991, pp132
Monograph No 78, in Italian and English, cataloguing the photographic exhibition held 1991–92, with a history of Italians in the Karakoram.

The Alpine 4000m Peaks, by the Classic Routes. Richard Goedeke. Hodder & Stoughton/Diadem, 1991, pp240, £12.99