

Review

Mountaineering – The essential skills for Mountain Walkers and Climbers

By Alun Richardson, Illustrated by George Manley

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Alun is to be congratulated for this *tour de force*, a veritable encyclopaedia of mountain knowledge. This book will prove a valuable reference for a wide range of hill walkers and climbers covering as it does day walking in the UK to major expeditions to the world's high peaks and the Polar Regions. I particularly liked the later section on expeditions to remote areas, as much of the information here has previously only been available scattered in a number of books, or residing in individuals' heads and brought out at chance meetings.

Passing on hard won experience is not easily done in print but Alun manages this very well. Inevitably, in trying to cover such a broad topic in one volume, Alun has at times had to compromise on the detail, leaving the reader to seek out specialisation on some individual topics. As much of this information is difficult to access elsewhere, the book provides valuable pointers to websites and further help. There is also very effective use of the sidebar for top tips from the author and other experts. It is often these little things that make life easier in the hills. It is refreshing that *Mountaineering* tries to instil a sense of personal responsibility and decision making, factors that can be all too frequently overlooked.

The illustrations and photography are well chosen and inspiring. One disappointment is that a number of the captions are either incorrect or have typographic errors, which detracts from the overall excellent quality. The many diagrams of rope systems in the rock climbing chapter show the detail very well but some could perhaps have been a little larger.

At times Alun shows his prejudice towards Guides, which is only to be expected, but it would have been nice to see reference to BAIML and AMI, if only for completeness. Whilst difficult, it would have been good to see some explanation of the build up of experience and awards in the MTUK (sic) system. To state that an SPA holder has a "low level award" and that a summer ML holder is "highly competent" may be overstating it and some SPA holders may have their noses put out of joint. However, this is not the main purpose of this book. Perhaps Alun should have avoided straying into this particular minefield.

However, overall, I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It will join my "must haves", which started in the 1960s with Alan Blackshaw's book, and my bookshelf will now expand a little more.

Doug Jones, MIC, LPIOL