

REVIEWS

Cave Minerals of the World, Second edition. by Carol Hill and Paolo Forti. 1997 National Speleological Society, Hunstville, Alabama. HB 463pp Price £44 ISBN 1-879961-07-5

The first edition (actually the second, because Carol Hill published a more modest volume, *Cave Minerals*, in 1976; but I don't want to confuse you) was published in 1986 and reviewed in these Proceedings (vol. 18. 1, 1987). This new edition is similar in size and weight but actually much longer and rather different.

The Historical Introduction by T. R. Shaw is the same as before. There follows a classification and description of speleothems into 38 different types, as against 25 kinds recognised in the previous edition. This forms about one-third of the main text of the book and is worth studying. Speleothems have received little serious study in Britain and their form and mineralogy deserve more attention than they have received on this side of the Atlantic.

This discussion of speleothem types will be the most useful part of the book for the average caver (if there is such a being). The next section describes cave minerals, 255 species being recognised. The majority of these are classified as "rare", and many as present in "small" or "microscopic" crystals. Most require sophisticated laboratory equipment to identify; identification is not covered in this book, except rather briefly in three pages on laboratory techniques. The book concludes with treatment of 19 Special Topics by various authors, accounts of the "Top ten caves" (none of them British), glossary, bibliography and index.

The previous edition had a section of colour illustrations. The present one is illustrated in colour throughout. There are 333 illustrations, most of them colour photos of high quality. Many of these have no indication of scale, a serious deficiency in an otherwise scholarly book.

The book has twice as many pages as the previous edition, and is printed in smaller type, in three columns instead of two. The total number of words must therefore have been more than doubled. Literature references occupy 70 pages of small type, and exhaustive references lists are given for many speleothem types (e.g. about 180 references for cave pearls).

It may seem unkind to criticise such an exhaustive and carefully compiled book, but if one speculates on other ways in which the material could have been organised, one might conceive of a book dealing with classification, description and mode of origin of speleothems – the latter here partly included in special topics. Such a book would be handier for the "average caver" who will never see more than a few of the minerals here described. The mineralogy after all is to be found in standard works, to which the authors could reply that descriptions of cave occurrences would not be found there. How about putting it in an on-line archive?

To finish on a positive note, Carol Hill is to be congratulated on her work and on this book.

Desmond Donovan

Images Below. by Chris Howes, 1997. Wild Places Publishing. 268pp. Price £22.50. ISBN 0 9526701 1 9.

In 1987 Chris wrote *Cave Photography, A Practical Guide*. This book in itself was an invaluable guide to getting started and continuing to taking underground photographs. *Images Below* is its improved successor and not only gets you started but elaborates on many types of

equipment and techniques. It gives sound advice on choices of cameras, flash guns and the full range accessories and consumables, some of which may be a bit esoteric and elaborate for the majority of underground photographers. Details of working with electronic flashes and bulbs to the best effect are well explained and the lavish underground photographs are complimented with good explanations. One of the most useful additions to this book is the bookmark. It helps on every page by giving a quick reference to the way that Chris identifies his flash positioning in the familiar E1, B4 system (describing electronic or bulb flashes and their position relative to the person carrying the flash). A system easier but not necessarily better than the meticulous way in which Françoise-Marie and Yan Callot detail every photograph with distance, type of flash, film and exposure in *Photographie Sous Terre*. The advanced photography is complimented by even the most basic systems such as automatic cameras. These are well explored, giving the advantages (and many disadvantages) of using automatic cameras but are nevertheless still worth a try if you have nothing else and you can get some good results.

The only thing this book wants for is more colour. Most of the exhibitions and slides shows seen these days are composed mainly, if not solely of colour photographs. The few colour shots are only used for specific reference to certain items and in that respect are not as well composed as those in the rest of the book. It is also worth mentioning some of the other chapters, such as macro photography, alternative lighting (flash powders, carbide, etc.), multiple flash work and composition. All of these are well illustrated and show that sometimes practice, trial and error are what will give the best results. Even bad photographs are used to good effect in the book by analysing them and telling others of mistakes made, to improve their pictures, in the assessing your work section.

Unless you are very good at French, when this book's small amount of information about colour photography can be enlarged by reading *Photographie Sous Terre*, it is without a doubt a must for the new, the keen and the experienced underground photographer.

REF: CALLOT F-M. and CALLOT Y. 1994. *Photographie Sous Terre*. Paris. VM Editions.

Steve Cottle

The Mendip Hills. Nature in Avon by A. F. Hollowell (editor). *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society*, vol. 55, Special Issue No. 4, pp. 1-158. Published November, 1997. Obtainable from BNS, 52 Kewstoke Rd., Stoke Bishop, BS9 1HF, £7.00 including postage.

This is a collection of 13 articles by various authors, the majority devoted to botany and zoology. I will mention only five. The article on "Ancient ponds and farm water supplies on Mendip" by our hon. member, William Stanton, is an excellent examples of this author's careful observation and recording. He shows in detail how water supplies were obtained and conserved by farmers on the generally waterless limestone plateau of Mendip. It should be read by everyone interested in the history of the area.

"Recent vegetation history of Black Down, Mendip", by Keith Crabtree, describes the lithological and pollen profiles of a trial pit (or boring?), 1.35 m deep to bedrock, made in 1980 'at the site of a former spring head in the catchment of the East Twin'. The location is not more precisely stated. Radiocarbon dating of the basal deposit gives a slightly surprising age of only 370 yrs BP. Samples were taken at 5 cm intervals and a detailed pollen profile is given and discussed.