



Who's Who in British Climbing by Colin Wells

Bite-sized biographies of dead climbers - and some that are still alive.

Book Review by Dave Brown

"Who's Who in British Climbing" this veritable opus contains almost 700 accounts of the UK's climbers; including the romantics, eccentrics and the buffoons that have made British Climbing what it is. British Climbing history has had its moments dominated by the

brilliance of the many notorieties included within, however, it has also had its fair share of debauched, immoral and intoxicated celebrities adding their own elements of spice, successes and blunders. The included 'who' form a world class cast that many will recognise. There are many mini biographies included within of climbers that have added to, and contributed to the UK's climbing history that few will have heard of, or certainly not as in so much detail as Colin has gone to the toil of researching with such vigour and passion. Climbers of old, bold, talented, futuristic visionaries, one off wonders, all interspersed with the usual sprinkling of psychotic nut jobs, consummate show-offs and infuriatingly brilliant athletes that have become so famous, are all included. The collection of anecdotal compressed life histories stimulates interest and cross referencing between the 'Who' and becomes almost addictive as many of your own climbing heroes are looked up, only for another to spring to the forefront of your mind, to be looked up next. Colin has mentioned in his own pre-amble that 'the selection of folk gracing the pages has been anything but scientifically objective. The intention has been to include anyone who was born in Britain who happened to do something significant or interesting anywhere, not just in the UK.' This has been achieved through a very novel approach to a deeply historical and complex range of facts. The alphabetical layout of the book does not detract from the readability of the subject, and in fact makes it a very easy to use reference and cover to cover read.

Who's Who in British Climbing is a vast undertaking historical account of monumental proportions that has been graciously fulfilled by such a talented and passionate author. An excellent read for all interested in any aspect of the 'Who' that have made British climbing what it is today; as vastly variable as the characters that have been involved since its conception.

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