

BASE CAMP

YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS HERE...

THE MOUNTAIN BOOKSHELF



Trail finds a summer snow bed high on Cairn Toul in the Cairngorms.

TIM BAILEY



AMONG THE SUMMER SNOWS

Christopher Nicholson

September Publishing

You could, were you of the mind, attach all manner of significance to the disappearance of the snow from the mountains with the shift of the seasons. Fragility, loss, the search for something rare and unusual – in this case ‘snow beds’, tucked in the rafters of the highest mountains of Scotland. Christopher Nicholson is a novelist, and this adventurous departure indulges a long-held fascination. It’s a great subject, in the right hands a medium for all kinds of symbolism, analogy, poetic reference and personal exploration. And Nicholson runs with it all, also adding a thorough dollop of good old-fashioned mountain adventure.

It’s beautifully written, but if the language stirs it’s the imagery that really lingers. The book features dozens of photos of the snow beds Nicholson encounters, each unique, messily-edged, melting into the shape of the mountainside. You see all kinds of things in them – the elegance of a sleeping unicorn, the ruins of a collapsed building, the twisted bodies of climbers on some Himalayan peak.

Nicholson sort of offers a few half-hearted justifications for his quest. One, as a sort of simplicity of escape – “the latest on the US election, the implications of Brexit, the threat of ISIS, terrorism in France. Dear God. The World’s woes” – another the idea that his fascination with the white of snow mirrors his life as a novelist, “the pale screen of a laptop, the white of paper, a sheet of snow on which I make certain marks.” You get the sense though that the simplicity and atmosphere of the destinations just grab him, and there’s a lot here occupying the non-rational motivations of hillwalking that we can all identify with.

Strange, beautiful, eerie and unique, this is the best mountain book I’ve read in years – despite it being not about the mountains themselves but something hidden in them. A mountain treasure hunt wrapped in a eulogy for the fleeting seasons, as a whole it’s a thing of strange beauty. Less a book, more an immersion, as a literary curiosity it deserves all the praise likely to avalanche upon it.

Review by Simon Ingram

OUTDOORS INDOORS



SAVE THE HILLS... SHOP FOR GEAR

Is it just us, or in all the doom and gloom of the nine o’clock news is there a tangible movement of goodwill flooding from outdoor brands at the moment? The latest is Montane, which has announced it will donate 1% of all its web sales to the BMC’s Mend our Mountains campaign. So now you can help protect fragile mountain environments simply by buying gear! We’re loving all this peace and love, man!

SEE HOW www.montane.co.uk/mend-our-mountains-1689



TERESA BISHOP/AM

GET INVOLVED... IN A MOUNTAIN MOVIE

Mountain film maker Terry Abraham is embarking on the finale to his *Life of a Mountain* trilogy. Following on from the beautiful footage celebrating Scafell Pike and Blencathra, Terry has his sights on Helvellyn. But he needs your help for it to happen! A crowdfunding campaign means you could share in the creation of a celebrated mountain movie.

DONATE AT www.indiegogo.com/projects/life-of-a-mountain-helvellyn#/

BOOK FOR... KENDAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL ON TOUR

Missed the Kendal Festival last November? Head to the Rheidol Centre on 18 May and you can catch an evening of award-winning mountain films and first-hand accounts from Scottish mountaineer Greg Bowell and female Mountain Bike Champion Lee Craigie. Book your place for an evening celebrating the exploration of some of the wildest places on earth.

BOOK AT www.rheidol.com/event/kendal-mountain-festival-tour/