BOOK REVIEWS

Marfunin, A.S. (Ed.) *Advanced Mineralogy Volume 1. Composition, Structure, and Properties of Mineral Matter; Volume 2. Methods and Instrumentations*. Berlin, Heidelberg and New York (Springer-Verlag). Vol. 1: 1994, xxvii + 551 pp. Price DM198.00, ISBN 3-540-57254-6. Vol. 2: 1995, xxi + 441 pp. Price DM198.00. ISBN 0-387-57255-4.

I wonder, have you ever, in your wanderings of the local bookshop, seen those tomes which go under titles like 'The bluffer's guide to wine', or 'How to sham your way as an airline pilot' or somesuch? Maybe you've even bought one? They can provide a veneer of knowledge that is, I am led to believe, very useful at cocktail hour. If you have (heaven help you) succumbed to the temptation to purchase one of those books, then maybe this series is just for you. It covers an expanse of Mineral Physics from Al-avoidance to ZAF corrections in a rather unique encyclopaedic manner. Volume 1 is a feat of editorial organisation, containing as it does around 80 short articles on a wide compass of mineralogy by almost 200 individuals, who are almost all leaders in their respective fields. Volume 2 has about half as many authors and focuses on analytical methods. Each article is generally well written, serving as an introduction to the initiate in that topic. But the overall impression is rather strange; the reader is bombarded with a succession of these introductory (and somewhat heterogeneous, by necessity of authorship variations) and inevitably rather shallow contributions. The coverage of mineralogy is rather piecemeal. For example, in Volume 2 no mention is made of Rietveld methods in the section on 'Diffraction and Structure', but one does find a discourse on the development of the Patterson function in the 1930s. A short article on electron diffraction sitting near the beginning of the book is (puzzlingly) separated from a fine review of electron microscopy by almost all of the rest of the contents (including Mössbauer, NMR, XPS, XAS, FTIR, EPR, optical absorption, EMPA and remote sensing techniques).

I have pondered what the market for these volumes might be. I suspect that they do not cover any one of the many subjects that they tackle in sufficient depth for the reader to become an independent user of any one of the techniques. But they may serve to help you begin to appreciate what it is your colleagues and collaborators are really up to. The structure of the books is such that it would be difficult to recommend them to a student; they cannot be intended as text books. On the other hand, many of us will have had the experience of being faced, at the beginning of the academic year, with the prospect of teaching a course that requires some preliminary research into methods which may not be wholly familiar. The short articles of these volumes may be just the place to start, possibly helping form the basis of a lecture programme, and providing references for further reading which would be needed to guard against the questions of the more probing student. Physically, the presentation is generally of the minimalist-traditional school, with a large amount of text, but, as I have intimated, some useful reference lists.

On reflection, maybe this series does indeed fulfil a real need. Progress in sciences is made through specialisation, on the whole, with a few wise individuals who draw disparate specialisms together in evolutionary hybrids. These volumes provide the ground of knowledge that is needed if one is to make those steps and develop as a renaissance (wo-)man of Mineral Science. Or maybe they will just help you bluff your way?

S. A. T. REDFERN

Howells, M. F. and Smith, M. *Geology of the Country around Snowdon*. Memoir for 1:50,000 Geological Sheet 119 (England and Wales). London (British Geological Survey), 1997. x + 104 pp. Price £45.00. ISBN 0-11-884523-3.

Having published the results of their primary one-inch mapping of the Snowdon area in 1851, the Geological Survey then stayed away for more than a century. Replacement of the long since out-of-print mapping presented something of a dilemma when, in 1968, the North Wales unit moved west across the River Conway from sedimentary Silurian to largely volcanic Ordovician. The least expensive way forward would have been to make a compilation of the patchwork of academic mapping published over that past century. Such a venture had already