

decisions for his or her own life. Coupled with tips for would-be conservation volunteers peppered throughout the stories and an honest representation of the sometimes-harsh realities of under-funded short-term projects, Mosen provides useful takeaways for anyone with a similar interest

Mosen achieves the three goals he sets out in the introduction – to provide information on conservation projects, to equip those wanting to get involved, and to share bite-sized stories of interest that keep you coming back for more. I found the book really picked up for me around half-way through and I looked forward to turning the page and finding out what happened next. *Ajax's Sidekick* is truly an armchair adventure and I became fascinated by many of the species Mosen describes and the places he lived and worked. I looked quite a few things up, especially the curious critters of Western Australia.

In his conservation career so far, Mosen has worked with potoroos, red tailed phascogales, yellow-shouldered parrots, numbats, cape buffaloes, owls, kiwi, kea, leatherback sea turtles and so many more. Wildlife, conservation, and adventure are woven together in every page and make up a trifecta for interesting storytelling. Mosen is just as happy to share the scientific name of each species he mentions as he is to recount a perilous journey across the open ocean in a banana boat, or the time he thought for sure he was a goner in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Mosen explains many conservation techniques with just the right level of detail to appeal to a fairly wide audience. He drops nuggets of knowledge while providing rich, descriptive detail about the tricky and exciting situations he has found himself in. On pages 94 – 95 he describes his first adventure with Ajax in Kahurangi National Park, at one point lowering Ajax by rope down a moss-covered cliff and later being 'suspended with my feet floating above the sandy shingle river bottom' in a deep pool. I often felt the wonder of nature seeping from

the pages and enjoyed Mosen's descriptions of wildlife encounters and brilliant far-flung landscapes.

Ajax's Sidekick is brimming with Kiwi ingenuity, jam-packed with adventure, image rich, and humble enough to pick up and read anytime. There are a few editing errors but these only slightly detract from the overall work. I'd recommend *Ajax's Sidekick* to anyone up for good stories with good roots.

BUSHLINE A memoir

By Robbie Burton, Potton & Burton September 2022, hard cover, 260 pages, \$39.99. Reviewed by Peter Laurenson, New Zealand Alpine Club.

Robbie Burton, one of New Zealand's leading publishers in recent decades, has swapped roles to author his own book, *Bushline: a memoir*. At first glance some might dismiss this as just another 'sixty-something' writing about their life in order to leave a family record; or to make sense of their own personal journey. But *Bushline* is much more than that.

The early chapters describe the foundations that explain how Burton came to be not only a publisher, but also a keen outdoorsman, conservationist, community and family man. Prior to stepping in to the role of publisher, he describes a young life grounded by a loving family, led by his mum Molly. Though clearly intelligent, his secondary schooling and tertiary studies achieved patchy results, due in parts to self doubt and an infatuation with skiing. An early irony emerges with his professed dislike of school leading to a love of books and reading as a youngster. Later, while avoiding study, he hitched to the Hermitage to become a night porter. Then there were seasons as a ski bum in the USA and Queenstown. He did admin work for the Native Forest Action Council. His first fulltime job was in community arts.

Burton's fulltime publishing career began in managing Craig Potton Publishing. This enabled Potton to focus on his own photography and writing. Only much later

did Burton's name become part of Potton & Burton Publishing. Perhaps this was due partly to Burton's self-effacing and at times ruthlessly self-critical approach. There is no hint of boasting or pride as he describes various notable achievements. With Potton and two others he traversed the Southern Alps, climbed Aoraki Mount Cook, mastered skiing sufficiently to become an instructor. As the story unfolds, Burton's publishing skills are recognised by various book prizes, culminating in Potton & Burton being awarded Publisher of the Year in 2015.

If you're an author, or aspire to be one, then *Bushline* is a must read. Throughout the latter chapters, one acclaimed non-fiction natural history title after another emerges – *Shelter from the Storm*, *Classic Tramping in New Zealand*, *Tramping: A New Zealand History*, *Mountain Solitudes: Solo Journeys in the Southern Alps*, *Himalayan Hospitals*, *Edmund Hillary: A life ...* The list grows as one renowned New Zealand author after another is introduced – Craig Potton, Shaun Barnett, Rob Brown, Aat Vervoorn, Geoff Spearpoint, Chris Maclean, Mike Gill, Hugh Logan, Graeme Dingle, Pat Deavoll, Les Molloy ... It becomes apparent how Burton's publishing skills gave voice to all these and other talented writers and photographers in print. Burton did not avoid controversy either, publishing highly successful titles by the likes of Nicky Hager and Dave Hansford. Potton & Burton has also published numerous arts and children's titles.

But there is more to *Bushline* than books and authors. From the first chapter, where he introduces his family in which he is the second youngest of six children, Burton writes openly, honestly and eloquently. Losing his 53-year-old father Fred to cancer, he writes 'There was Fred's war memorabilia, the occasional stories or anecdotes from my mother, the sympathy of strangers when they realised who I was, but growing up I felt no palpable loss, no gap, no sense that my life was incomplete or had been touched by tragedy'. He explores the

traumatic breakdown of his first marriage, and the love story of his second to Susannah, then the subsequent arrival and developing relationships with his two sons, Will and Ed. Also his close relationship with mum Molly, all the way to its conclusion at her recent

death from a brain tumour. I'm sure that the loving, accepting unity Molly cultivated within the Burton whānau helps to explain how Burton writes the way he does.

Bushline deftly blends parallel journeys about growing up and ultimately becoming inextricably anchored to the Nelson region; about love of New Zealand's hill country and nature, and the associated need to explore and conserve it; about charting, initially unprepared, a highly challenging course through the world of publishing, ultimately into the digital era; about family, friends, love, loss, personal values and reflections. In the final chapter Burton's love of the 'character of Aotearoa's landforms' leads him to conclude that 'I am inhabited by this land as much as I inhabit it.' For me *Bushline* came together as a story compelling me to reflect on my own life in Aotearoa and beyond. It had me thinking 'wow ... impressive ... fascinating ... I never knew that.'

THE COLD INSIDE A story about mountains, friendship, and doubt

By Paul Hersey, Di Angelo Publications July 2022, soft cover, 272 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by Peter Laurenson, New Zealand Alpine Club.

THE COLD INSIDE A story about mountains, friendship, and doubt is a fair summation of what Paul Hersey's latest book is about. For much of his life Hersey has invested much in both serious mountaineering and thoughtful writing. *The Cold Inside* is his expression, through his craft as a writer, to reconcile all the good and bad experiences he has had in

