

Mixed non-fiction

WITH ANY non-fiction book, the effort and time required to read and absorb is greater than for fiction.

And for me at least, it needs to be a book on a subject which is relevant to me, or interesting.

I find it easy to be critical of books which do not involve me in the subject matter from an early stage! I review these four adult non-fiction books today, because undoubtedly, everyone does not share my taste - and one of these may suit you.

Gentle John, My Love My Loss, by Helene Chung Martin, paperback, Hill of Content

This is the narrative of the three last weeks the author spent with her husband, who was dying of cancer.

The author is a journalist, and initially the book was written to help her cope with her grief. It was intended as a personal memoir only - as a form of catharsis. It is extremely sad, but throughout it, the

strength of the love shared by the couple shines through.

For the author, it undoubtedly helped her to cope.

One is moved to empathise with the author - and in so doing, to share her grief. Not a book to my liking, but perhaps one for people who are grieving and wish to read of the experience of others.

Much more to my liking is **Where the Indus is Young**, by Dervla Murphy, paperback, Flamingo

This book is an account of a winter trip along the Indus River in the Karakoram mountains of northern Pakistan.

For the author, who enjoys travelling in remote areas, this is just about the ultimate.

And she made the trip accompanied by her six-year-old daughter! And a purchased ex-polo pony named Hallam. Only the English could even contem-

plate such an undertaking ... so we read, and share the author's enthusiasms for tracks which crumble over bottomless gorges, as the six-year-old walks along them, and of the experiences with the people of Baltisan and their food and lifestyle.

Great fun to read, from the comfort of the Guyra countryside, and even to wish it could be in my memories, rather than reading of it all.

I cannot be as complimentary about another travelogue **Dining with Princes: Traveller's tales of Rome, Greece and India**, by John Sligo, paperback, Angus and Robertson

The content is anecdotal - mostly concerning people whom the author met, or knew.

Often it is written in the present tense, which does not appeal, but it is the triviality of the content, and sleazy sex and language, which make it one not to recommend.



Brought to Book
by Janet Croft

Bitter Winds, by Harry Wu, paperback, John Wiley and Sons

This is the auto-biographical story of a Chinese who was arrested in 1960 by the Chinese authorities and imprisoned without trial for 19 years.

It is a story of life in prison camps, of survival when it would appear impossible.

I have read many such stories - of man's inhumanity to man. This is well-written, and quite moving.

It is also written fairly dispassionately, without apparent bitterness, which seems to make it more attractive to the reader. If such stories of endurance in the face of oppression appeal, then this is worth trying.