

## BOOK REVIEW

David M. Harland, *Exploring the Moon – The Apollo Expeditions*, Springer – Praxis, 1999.

This contribution to the Apollo 30th Anniversary Moon literature bids to change our understanding of what the astronauts achieved working on the Moon. David Harland's highly original book "Exploring the Moon – The Apollo Expeditions" some 400 pages long, is well presented and illustrated. It also contains a comprehensive chronological bibliography. While this is useful as a guide to related books and publications it lacks any connection to the relevant subjects in the main text and it is therefore far less useful to the serious reader than a conventional list of text related references. This absence of references seems to have been a late editorial decision as in his short *Foreword* Patrick Moore remarks on the value of "the extensive references". I have encountered this late deletion of references in at least one other book from this publisher and it is a practice to be greatly deprecated.

The book concentrates specifically on the final three Apollo landings 15, 16 and 17, each of which used a Lunar Rover and spent three days on the surface. Together they accounted for 75% of all the science done on the Moon. To quote the author "This book is about what the astronauts did while on the lunar surface" and so saying he sets out to give his readers the feeling that they are part of a series of geological field trips to the lunar surface. To achieve this he quotes extensively dialogue obtained from the actual tape transcripts made during the missions. At times I found this style of reportage inappropriate. It often lengthens the text unnecessarily and dilutes the content far enough to impede concentration. That is not to say I am totally against the use of transcript dialogue but I can well manage without such informative Sunday supplement gems of conversation such as "Lets go photograph the Sun side" or "Absolutely incredible" that puncture the otherwise clearly written text. This being said, it may be a matter of personal preference, a criticism of the chosen style that others may not share, for indeed the author does succeed in conveying a sense of urgency and stress as well as some of the often overlooked aspects of working under such stringent conditions on the surface of the Moon. The book concludes with a clear and well judged summary "Apollo in Context" and closes with a brief look at the current revival of interest in the remote unmanned study of the Moon.



Once you have read this book your appreciation of what was done and of the men who did it may be transformed completely. Some of us at least may come to see that, although conceived for the wrong and purely political reasons, the Apollo programme was, or at least came close to being, the high point of 20th Century endeavor on the scientific, technical and human frontiers. David Harland shows very clearly how rapidly our capabilities and understanding progress when research is driven by difficult circumstances and conditions. Indeed we can see that it is often the challenge of the task that makes success possible.

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