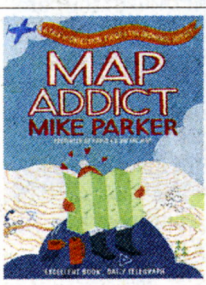


Map Addict: A Tale of Obsession, Fudge and the Ordnance Survey, by Mike Parker (Collins, £7.99)



Mike Parker came early to his addiction. He bought his first Ordnance Survey map aged seven. Living in Kidderminster, he found in the map of Grimsby & Cleethorpes “a glimpse of the exotic”. He admits that since then “maps have punctuated every twist and turn of my life”. A real addict spends longer planning the route on a map than he does on the walk itself, although Parker does concede that “getting lost occasionally is essential for the soul”. The Ordnance Survey’s One Inch map series, and its metric successor the 1:50 000 Landrangers, “have underpinned the explorations of generations of Britons”. Indeed, the Peak District Explorer map (1:25 000 scale) sells an astonishing 40,000 copies a year. In the digital age, the days of the paper map are perhaps numbered, but Parker despises satnavs: they are a “loathsome invention” that he fears will destroy our sense of geography. Although this quirky paean to maps is at times rambling and somewhat self-indulgent, Parker proves a witty and engaging guide.

PD Smith