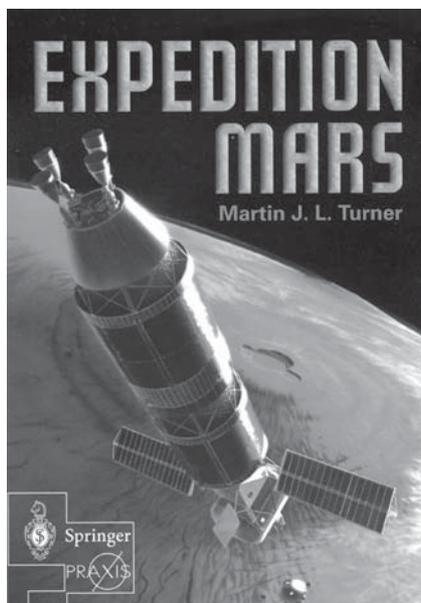


## Expedition Mars

by Martin J. L. Turner

Springer/Praxis, 2004. ISBN 1-85233-735-4. Pp xxi + 321 (pbk), £24.50.



In 1971, as a young boy excited by space travel, I collected a set of picture cards distributed by the Brooke Bond tea company. At the time the *Apollo* missions were in full swing and it seemed like manned space exploration was here to stay. One of the last cards in the album depicted a manned mission to Mars. The predicted launch date for that mission was 1981.

In 2004 the idea that we could have sent men to Mars in 1981 seems fanciful. At the time it seemed perfectly reasonable. America had landed a man on the Moon only eight years after the first manned spaceflight and it seemed that progress would continue at the same rapid pace. Unfortunately the political will was lost with the first Moon landing and many of the capabilities we had

at the time are now gone. In 1969 the massive Saturn V booster could put 120 tonnes into low Earth orbit. In 2005, when the Space Shuttle returns to space, its largest payload will be around 23 tonnes. It seems that manned spaceflight is stuck in a rut with large amounts of money being spent to send men to Earth orbit for no particular reason.

Martin Turner is a scientist at Leicester University and, unlike most scientists, he argues that exclusively unmanned space exploration ultimately leads to a dead end. In this book he makes a powerful case for an early manned expedition to Mars, and he argues that most of the basic technology is available now, if only we had the political will. There are many arguments for a manned expedition but one of the best is the effect it would have on the perception of science and engineering. As an engineer myself I know how difficult it is to get children interested in engineering at school when Media or Business Studies beckon. Turner argues that a manned mission to Mars would provide the necessary impetus.

This book is quite technical and contains a number of (relatively simple) equations. The author justifies this by noting that an understanding of the basic principles is required if the reader is to grasp many important aspects of his argument. Apart from a few typos the book is well presented and most of the figures reproduce well. It provides an excellent introduction to the techniques and technologies involved in a human mission to Mars and I thoroughly recommend it.

Even though Turner makes a powerful case I suspect it will fall on deaf ears. Modern governments have far too many other ways to spend our money and I doubt if I will see men on Mars in my lifetime. That Brooke Bond card from three decades ago will probably be the nearest I get.

### Nick James

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