more cheaply without detracting from its usefulness, but recognise that many factors enter into decisions about expense versus quality.

MICHAEL HOBSLEY

Topics in Gastroenterology, 7 Edited by S C Truelove and C P Willoughby. (Pp 345. Illustrated. £18.50.) Blackwell Scientific Publications: Oxford. 1979.

This is the seventh book in the series, each of which is the written version of an annual symposium in gastroenterology that is held in Oxford and planned and presided over by Dr Sidney Truelove with his characteristic blend of dry wit and erudition.

This volume consists of nine chapters reviewing various aspects of peptic ulcer disease and nine relating immunology to the alimentary tract, both served up with six contributions on metabolism and recent advances in cellular chemistry.

It must be admitted that the clinical chapters—inevitably superficial, as that happens to be the state of the art—mostly contain very familiar statements but they are, after all, reviews in the main. That on the epidemiology of peptic ulcer is, however, the best short account of the subject I have read, and the chapters on the relation between gastric blood flow and acid secretory capacity and the well-illustrated account of the microcirculation of the stomach and duodenum are interesting and stimulating. The reviews of the pathogenesis of duodenal ulcer and of hormonal influences are pedestrian, and an otherwise pithy evaluation of ulcer surgery was somewhat marred by the inappropriate certainty of the view that the failure of gastric ulcer to heal in six weeks represents a *sine qua non* for surgery. Curiously, the author of the section on the long-term course of ulcer hedges his bets by making a similar statement in the middle of his contribution and retracting it in the final paragraph.

Of course for most audiences a general account of immunology must precede more specialised statements and consequently one sees charts and diagrams, some of which are renewals of old acquaintances, but, in spite of that, this section splendidly maintains the relationship to the alimentary tract and is as readable as it is informative.

The point of publishing symposia proceedings is often questioned, and most

often rightly so, but in books such as this the justification lies in the simple fact that the reader is obtaining for £18.50 the information that would have cost him very much more to obtain at the source, with the advantage of distillation and editing. As it is available within 12 months of the proceedings, it is as up to date as matters.

Viewed this way this book represents value for money and with only four undistinguished chapters out of 24 is very good reading and will be a useful reference source for the next few years.

It can be recommended to all those who are interested in updates in gastroenterology, whatever their branch of our discipline, but I suspect that if the price could have been halved it would have more than doubled the number of purchasers.

W SIRCUS

Scientific Foundations of Gastroenterology By W Sircus and A N Smith. (Pp 641. Illustrated. £42.00.) William Heinemann: London. 1980.

The first third of this book is entitled 'General aspects', the remaining two-thirds being organ-based.

I suspect that the editors found difficulty in selecting a general heading for the first part, which is a mixture including basic science, epidemiology, and descriptions of practical procedures such as gastrointestinal endoscopy. This is a very useful section, covering some topics in a way seldom found in other books.

The second, organ-based, portion of the book is partly devoted to scientific foundations of gastroenterology and partly clinically orientated, with, for example, sections on the evaluation of surgical procedures. Thus the title of the book could be thought to be more restricted than its content, which strays more towards the clinical than, for example, *Scientific Basis of Gastroenterology* by Duthie and Wormsley.

This is clearly not a book which should be read from cover to cover. As a volume to dip into for information or understanding it is, in general, most rewarding: some sections are excellent, such as that on water and salt metabolism in the small intestine; others are less satisfactory—for example, the concepts involved in computerised tomographic scanning might be easier to understand if illustrated. However, any reviewer will be

dissatisfied with some things in a book of this size.

Overall, a reader of this book will stand a very good chance of finding a helpful discussion and a balanced view of a problem in gastroenterology. Inevitably such a big book with so many authors represents a triumph of diplomacy by the editors and thus is already out of date. Nevertheless, I am pleased to have it on my shelves and it will be well used.

M S LOSOWSKY

Biopsy Pathology of the Small Intestine By F O Lee and P G Toner. (Pp 188. Illustrated. £12.) Chapman and Hall: London. 1980.

This book has two parts. The first includes useful chapters on biopsy handling, normal appearances, and the assessment of abnormalities. In the second there are good descriptions of the findings in the mucosal biopsies from patients with the conditions, common and uncommon, which give rise to these abnormalities. The emphasis is on histology, but transmission and scanning electron microscopy are used where appropriate, especially in the first part. The illustrations are profuse, clear, and relevant. The references follow each chapter and the four-page index covers all the essentials.

The sketchiness of the history is not important, but it is more surprising that such scant attention is paid to measurements of enterocyte height in coeliac disease, a remarkably reproducible feature which is particularly useful in assessing early response to gluten withdrawal or challenge. This relative omission limits the value of the brief section on normal epithelial morphology and highlights the more important absence of any detailed account of mucosal response to treatment and gluten challenge in coeliac disease, a condition still defined in terms of response to treatment.

Nevertheless, this book is highly readable and has several special merits, such as the sections on radiation enteritis and on duodenitis, and a fine sense of proportion in dealing with a wide variety of conditions. This produces a balanced presentation of the mucosal lesions which any reader of *Gut* is likely to find in his biopsy capsule. The book will be at least as valuable to the clinician as to the histopathologist.

J S STEWART