BOOK REVIEW

'A Manual of New Mineral Names 1892-1978', edited by P.G. Embrey and J.D. Fuller, 467 + x pp. British Museum Natural History, 1980. Printed by Oxford University Press. £24.00

This excellent book is really an etymological dictionary of those mineral names which have appeared, at the rate of about fifty per year, since 1892, the date of publication of the sixth edition of Dana's comprehensive 'System of Mineralogy'. It has been compiled from thirty 'Lists of New Mineral Names', which were prepared by L.J. Spencer and M.H. Hey and published at the end of each volume of the Mineralogical Magazine. The 'System of Mineralogy' and 'A Manual of New Mineral Names 1892-1978' complement one another and together provide the only complete up-to-date list of mineral names.

Happily Dana, Spencer and Hey, shared and held firmly the view that one purpose of any concern about mineral nomenclature was to avoid confusion of names. Moreover they were also in agreement that the means of avoiding confusion were in the establishment of internationally recognised names based on the Roman alphabet, free from linguistic variants and the "recognition under proper restrictions of the law of priority".

The Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names of the International Mineralogical Association has largely been the instrument whereby new mineral names are approved and most editors of reputable earth-science journals now require the Commission's approval before allowing a new name to be published. In spite of the improving situation there are still many mineral names of doubtful validity in circulation. Embrey and Fuller's manual enables us to assess their status. It contains mineral names spanning the whole range of respectability and significance; valid mineral species; artificial species; inadequately described species; synonyms; errors, variants, mistranslations and mistransliterations; unnecessary and undesirable names for gemstones, rocks and artificial products; improved names and corrected spellings; and other entries. The only exclusions appear to be trade names for artificial species and phonetic back transliterations from the Cyrillic alphabet for names that had Roman originals.

Each entry is concise and informative; each contains reference to the source material and many have instructive comments. For the working mineralogist the manual is indispensible, for the less seriously involved it is stimulating and rewarding. Reading between the lines is great fun, for example, "Goodletite is an unnecessary rock name: the limestone matrix of Burma ruby"; the reference identifies the miscreant who wants to call limestone something else. Let that be a lesson to us all.

The Manual is pleasant to use; the variety of types, the composition of the entries and their spacing make reference easy. Drs. Embrey and Fuller are to be congratulated in providing us with a volume which combines style and taste with scholarship and unquestionable authority.

R. B. Elliott