

DIARY FOR 1988

15-17	January	Fearnan, Loch Tay*	Alasdair Andrews
20	January	London Fondue Party and Lecture	Mary Boulter/ Johanna Merz
5-7	February	Fearnan, Loch Tay*	Alasdair Andrews
26-28	February	Northern Dinner Meet, Patterdale	Brooke Midgley
9	March	London Lecture	Geoffrey Kremer
18-20	March	Spean Bridge, Fort William*	Alasdair Andrews
31 5	March- April	Glen Nevis*	Harry Archer
15-17	April	George Starkey Hut Maintenance Meet	Don Hodge
18	May	London Buffet Party and Lecture	Mary Boulter/ James Bogle
27-31	May	Skye, Glen Brittle	Harry Archer
10-12	June	Welsh Scrambles Meet, Rhyd-Ddu	John Berry
26	June	"Over Surrey Hills" Walk	Jack Derry
15-17	July	Lakes Scrambles Meet, Patterdale	Rudolf Loewy
28	July- 13 Aug.	ABMSAC/CC/AC Joint Alpine Meet, Taesch	Mike Pinney
6 3	August- September	Club Alpine Meet, SAAS-FEE	Harry Archer
28	September	Alpine Meets Reunion and Slide Show	Mary Boulter
30 2	September- October	Buffet Meet, Patterdale	Marion Porteous
8	October	London Dinner and SAC 125th Annual Celebration	Peter Ledeboer
25	October	SAC 125th Anniversary Film (with AC)	Peter Ledeboer
4-6	November	Alps Reunion Meet, Patterdale	Mike Pinney
7	December	Annual General Meeting and Lecture	President/ R. Folkard AC.

* Scottish Winter Meet

For Meets: Book with the person named. For individual bookings at the George Starkey Hut at times when there is no meet, book with John Murray, 4 Sunny Point, Crook, Nr. Kendal LA8 8LP. Tel: 0539 821754.

London Meetings are at the Alpine Club at 7.00 p.m. Refreshments are usually available before and after the Meeting.

THE ASSOCIATION
OF BRITISH MEMBERS
OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB
JOURNAL 1988

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THE PRESIDENT: J.S. WHYTE, CBE

EDITORIAL

In this matter I take my cue from Ernst Sondenheimer. When he became editor of *Alpine Journal* and was urged to write an editorial, his response was: The articles must speak for themselves.

Nevertheless there is one duty which as the new editor I want to fulfil, and that is to express on behalf of all members our appreciation and thanks to Maurice Freeman for the long-sustained and excellent manner in which he has performed the office. It has clearly been a labour of love for him, carrying out all the tasks in the minutest detail.

Also, members may like to see how our membership stands as it is rather a troublesome business to count the numbers on the list, - so I will give the figures. These are 365 members of the Association on this list, 221 full members and 144 affiliated members. The number of new members in the last year (a little more than a year, - November 1986 to February 1988) was 48; 24 full and 24 affiliated members.

The Outgoing President

Harry Archer came to the end of his term of office at the AGM in November 1987. During those three years we have seen a strengthening of the Association's affairs that is very heartening in respect of the number of new members, the number and variety of Meets, and the Association's finances. All these favourable developments owed much to the President's efforts. Anyone who has had to do with Harry in the exercise of his office could not fail to mark the single-minded way in which he went about the Club's affairs. He used to good effect his close links with the AC; he personally recruited many new members; he was active in leading as well as organising many of the Meets at home and in the Alps; he rewarded those who worked hard at Meets with more hard work by putting them on the committee; and he imbued everyone with his enthusiasm for mountains and mountaineering, - whether commending an after-dinner walk (or run!) round the lake, or urging us to try a route which had defeated a strong party despite their skill and effort, with the intriguing comment "give it a go - interesting!". (See "Don't Believe the Guide-book").

The New President

John Whyte, who commenced his period of office as President of the Association on 1st January, started climbing in the U.K. in 1940. After the end of the War he began climbing in the Alps in 1947 and became a member of the SAC and the Association the following year. He is also a long standing member of the Alpine Club and the Rucksack Club.

He has been a regular and enthusiastic supporter of the Association's Alpine Meets for many years. John has also made several visits to the Himalaya, both on climbing and trekking trips. One such trip involved exploring the then little known Hinku area and on another occasion he accompanied a party of botanists.

John is an electrical engineer of distinction. At London University he attained Bachelors and Masters degrees in engineering and he subsequently spent many years with British Telecom where he rose to the position of Managing Director. He was awarded the CBE for services to export. Since retiring from British Telecom John has become Deputy Chairman of Plessey Telecom and amongst other appointments which he holds is that of Deputy Chairman of the National Electronics Council. He has also held office as Vice President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and of the Royal Institution.

Although John generally managed to come on Alpine Meets his professional duties did not allow him much time to attend home-based Meets. Now that the pressures of work have eased he looks forward to being able to enjoy more of these occasions.

John's wife Joan has also been a loyal supporter of the Association. Along with Mary Boulter she has played a major part in organising the refreshments at the London Lecture and Buffet meetings.

DON'T BELIEVE THE GUIDE BOOK

Harry Archer

"Ascend the Mont Dolent glacier keeping close to the East Ridge" - thus said the Guide Book. Quite impossible; it was necessary to wander all over the place to find a route, and there was no choice.

"Reach the ridge near to point 3188 metres using a rocky rib just left of the snowfield coming down from this gap". What about the crevasses and where was the snowfield?

"It is also possible to reach the ridge from the glacier a little below point 3079 metres". No way.

"Follow the snowy ridge to the summit". What about the grotty rocks in huge unstable piles; the snow aretes, and the steep slope of hard ice with an ice cliff at the top; and where was the snowy ridge? Just the last 100 metres or so?

Clearly the Guide Book deserved to be humiliated by being left behind in favour of notes on a small piece of paper. The Guide Book's inadequacy led us into further problems - no short axes, only three ice screws, and then the oldest member of the party lost two screws on the ascent and had a crampon fall apart! Thus the mountain appeared to have won before we had got very far.

Nonetheless, I must recommend the East Ridge of Mont Dolent as a "good" climb. First there is a hard grind up to the Hut, which is good for the soul, - or something: consistently steep, with the quota of chains typical of Val Ferret hut walks. It is a relief to reach the space capsule bivouac hut. Then there is further hard work to carry water containers up from the glacier to the Hut. The climbers' load had been lightened by the employment of "white sherpani" porters, who, however, carried miniscule loads compared with the porters of Nepal, but they had picked up some of the tricks; long rests accompanied by claims for higher wages at higher altitudes and for going back down to the village to get a box of matches! We settled for ice cream money.

Unexpectedly, there were late arrivals; ten out of the twelve places were filled. The top bunks were found to be suitable only for anorexic midgets, but it was a better night's sleep than most. The other party being up very early, it was still possible to leave in good time in spite of crampon trouble, - which led to two of the party having to abandon the climb. Now reduced to a convenient rope of three, we tackled the glacier. It was impossible to keep close to the rocks, as per Guide Book, and we moved out left, nearer to the centre of the glacier following a complex route with poor snow bridges and some steep, front-pointing sections. It was not going to be easy in descent. Eventually an ice tongue led off right to the rocks of the East Ridge. Huge piles of large and small unstable rocks led up delicately and anxiously, on to the ridge. Then, after traversing on the A.Neuve side on desperately loose rock, we ascended to the ridge and followed a snow/ice arete amidst the rocks, eventually reaching the base of a steep ice slope directly below the summit rocks. This slope was hard ice some three inches thick and brittle, being formed by melted water from the rocks above. Our axes and crampons made little impression and only half of the solitary ice screw could be screwed into the ice. Though ill equipped, we started up the ice slope until the combined problems of safeguarding three people on a single ice screw, the danger of the collapse of a temporarily repaired crampon and the length of the traverse to, it was hoped, better ground made return inevitable.

Comparing notes afterwards, we realised that even if we had got up, it would have been impossible to return and would have meant Chamonix for the night, joining the party which had started one hour or more earlier and were still battling with the icy section. So it was turn-around with the prospect of an awkward descent.

The snow aretes were now fragile and the lead man kept breaking through the crust, - very unsettling. A route strictly along the crest seemed better until the descent into the gap leading to the glacier. Here all rocks large and small were loose, but mercifully, stayed in place long enough for us to pass. On the glacier all tracks had disappeared and the ice walls hid the slopes below. The surface was now slush on ice and distinctly unpleasant. During some to-ing and fro-ing and some back up, round and down again and repeat, it seemed possible that the next night was to be spent in a bivouac on the glacier, but finally steep descent led to easier ground and the way to the Hut.

Altogether a harder climb than expected and one that required a full range of ice-climbing equipment and a delicate touch in climbing rotten rocks. Route finding on the glacier was exacting in ascent and difficult in descent. This route might be much easier earlier in the season with more snow, but that ice slope is, I expect, always a problem. The Guide Book description and the grade (AD) seem inappropriate to the route as found.

The Hut Book had very few entries relating to climbs and no comments whatsoever on the route. We got the impression that no one went up and came back! We added some notes which we would have found helpful. It was the sort of route on which it is easy to forget lunch and on which few photographs are taken. Curiously enough a route with little sense of exposure. Give it a go, - interesting!

A DAY ON THE MEIJE

Marian Elmes

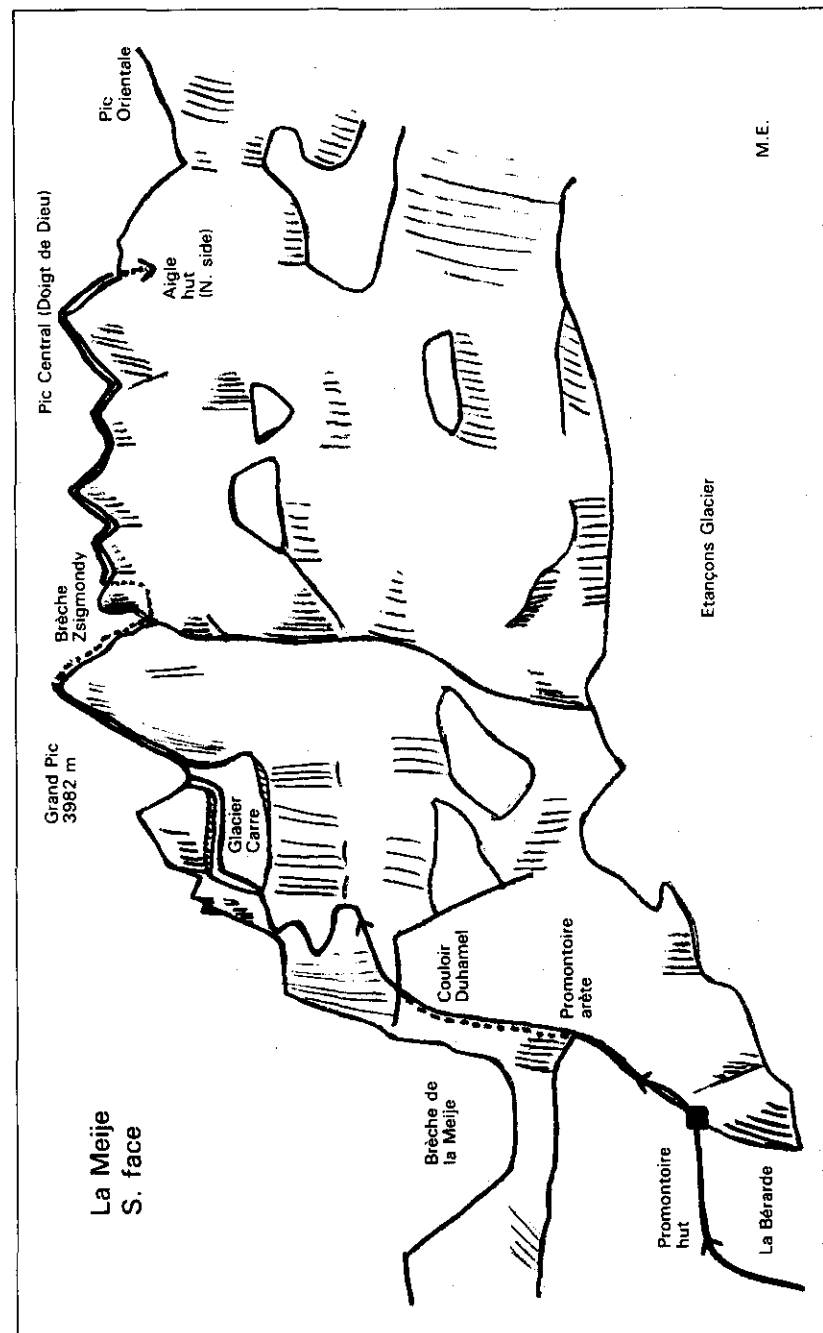
I felt really rough. Having suffered a tummy upset in the night, I hadn't been able to eat any breakfast and waves of nausea made me quite woozy. It was daylight and everyone else was already well ahead by the time I felt up to leaving the friendly warmth of the Promontoire Hut and setting off up the first steep spur of the Meije. A pointless caper, I thought, feeling sorry for Mike Pinney who deserved a much fitter partner than I was. Still, we could have a look at it, and maybe tomorrow.....

A tempting little fixed cable led us round to the right across a big wall, and dumped us off at the foot of some loose cracks. We'd scouted this section the previous night and knew it was all easy enough, so on we went, testing holds carefully (there were many rejects) until the cracks brought us out at the top of the buttress, curiously named "Le Crapaud", - (a toad, actually)! The rock was knobby and cold but pleasantly angled now, as we scrambled together up more cracks and slabs. Mike had kindly pushed me in front so I wouldn't feel too rushed in my wobbly state. A steep chimney landed us on a sort of subsidiary fin overlooking the great Couloir Duhamel, with its fine yellow-clad gendarme just opposite.

The rock scenery was stunning, (though not literally, we hoped) as we stepped gingerly down into the depths of the long, loose, chilly couloir. Above and around were towering pinnacles and walls, ridges and spurs, all glowing a rich orange in the morning sunshine. We ourselves were confined in the shadowy depths as we tiptoed delicately up the unstable stuff in the gully bottom until finally breaking out into the sun on the rather awkward slabs above. Struggling up the last smooth slab in our clumsy big boots, we actually caught up with a French team and some more British. This was where the real climbing began - after four hundred metres of Diff. scrambling and I felt some energy returning now that we'd really got to grips with the mountain. But five hundred metres remained to the first summit, the Grand Pic, - and now we would have to queue! It was nine o'clock. We had to make the Grand Pic by 1.30 to be sure of the traverse of the whole ridge, - assuming the weather held. It looked brilliant.

While waiting I took the opportunity to swallow a handful of stomach pills with a little water. Then we descended to the right from the terrace at the top of the slabs to find the easiest start up the enormous face that forms the first serious barrier on this climb. Here we had to start pitching our climb and go zig-zagging right, then left on perfect juggy rock that need only be V. Diff. - unless you get lost! Certain friends of ours had just endured a three-day epic here, due to finding a "more interesting line"!

Hours later, on reaching the only little glacier on the route, the Glacier Carre, after being held up on every stance, we came upon the French team struggling with their crampons - one of them at least had hardly set foot on a mountain before. Here was our chance to spring past; my skinny physique was beginning to scream for some food but the French were moving fast now on the easy snow, and as we panted up to the top of the glacier and along the little rimaye-path at the top their leader, an attractive and competent lass in her late twenties, was hot on my heels.



Turning the corner of the buttress and gasping up the final steep glassy ice-slope to the col at the foot of the final rock pyramid, I was being hauled at top speed by a determined Mike. Such was my exhaustion that instead of front-pointing neatly, I was slapping as many crampon points as possible into the ice, in a kind of vertical duck-waddle, my calves having long since collapsed. My rival decided I needed some instruction, and was administering this in perfect English whilst demonstrating stylishly alongside me, when much to her surprise, she fell off. Her braking ability wasn't quite as good as the rest of her climbing, but after a ten metre slide towards the great overhanging ice-cliffs beneath us she finally forced her pick to bite. I had actually tried to grab her rope, but was too slow, - which was probably just as well since neither Mike nor I were being securely placed. I waddled on to the top, knees stuck out but confidence returned.

The race was far from over yet, though, as on the final pyramid of the Grand Pic, it is vital to keep left up rather unpleasantly loose grooves and cracks. Climbing together, just putting in a "joke" nut here and there, progress was fast until a line of pegs up a big brown wall on much sounder rock tempted us to stray rightwards. We were finally stopped by a roof on a pitch that tended towards the very severe. Looking down, we discerned the other climbers still holding to the groove system near the edge of the face, and fast approaching a little step in the edge with a red slab below it. Since there are red slabs all over the place this feature is easy to miss, but it is the key to the final steepening - the so-called Cheval Rouge. Escaping on a devious traverse line with aid from the odd peg, we were just in time to witness the girl leading the slab-corner and reaching the famous stance where one sits "a cheval" with left leg dangling in space over La Grave, many thousands of feet below. She was applauded. Fortunately for us, she then got lost in the awkward overhangs above. Mike decided I had to show what English girls could do, so I duly did my feminine lead bit. Then we found the correct line round the overhang, gaining the summit before the others had found the last pitch. Phew!

2.30 p.m., an hour behind time. Conversation earlier on with the French had shown that of the four, two had hardly climbed before, and certainly didn't know how to abseil. Their girl leader was determined to get them all across the traverse of the Meije, come what may, but if we got stuck behind them on the abseils between the summits we would be in for a long wait.

A rapid descent was thought needed now, - roping down to the Breche Zsigmondy, a great gap in the teeth of the ridge. The traverse of the next bit of knife-edged ridge was accomplished partly "a cheval", to a stance or, rather, "sitz", in like fashion at the foot of a mighty rearing overhang. Fortunately one isn't expected to climb this forbidding obstacle, but instead a cable traverses round the foot of it across the icy gloom of the North Face. A long and strenuous ice-climb was now necessary, to regain the crest of the ridge. This arduous section was accomplished with the aid of the steel cable which dangles several hundred feet down an ice couloir; one can attach oneself to this as if on a Via Ferrata. I very cleverly linked myself to a double bit of wire, then got firmly wedged in a chimney, - crampons flailing uselessly, - due to one strand of the wire wrapping itself around my rucksack. I was shattered by the time I'd pulled up to the top. Time was ticking away, but the major obstacles were behind us now that we had successfully bypassed the Pic Zsigmondy.

We romped over the next couple of teeth (there are three on the way to the Pic Central, the last summit on the traverse) and I soon got my breath back. These intermediate tops look terrifying when viewed from the first summit, as the whole ridge leans over at an unlikely angle, and is snow-covered of course on its northern face. But the only tricky bit for us that day was where some thin hard ice over smooth slabs necessitated a few metres of precarious descent onto the impressive North Face ice-slopes. My rather straight ice-pick didn't handle this very well, and I was wishing I'd brought my Curver.

At about 7.00 p.m. we sat gratefully down on the very finger-tip of the "Doigt de Dieu". God's finger indeed. What a position! The great needle on which we perched, pointed menacingly out over the Etancons glacier thousands of feet below. Despite the uncomfortably insecure feeling (we had heard some big rockfalls from somewhere near here earlier on), we indulged in our first snack of the day - a chocolate bourbon biscuit. What bliss! To the north, the Romanche Valley was in gloom, with villages showing up only as little twinkling clusters. An hour of daylight remained - and where were the others? Glancing back along the rearing fins of the ridge crest, we could just make them out, back towards the Zsigmondy. The other English party was there too. They were still pushing on, but the weather was fast deteriorating now.

The abseils off the Pic Central (Doigt de Dieu) were easy at first until at the col below, we were faced with a choice of a further direct abseil, which looked as though it would dump us unkindly on the very steepest part of the glacier just above a huge crevasse, or scouting along the next bit of easy ridge for a better line. Choosing the latter option, we climbed up and along a bit until reaching slings above a much more feasible-looking descent line. Abseiling down to a further selection of tatty slings on the last snowy boulder above the glacier, we could see that it was still going to be touch and go as to whether our two ropes tied together would take us over the enormous bergschrund.

Dropping over the upper lip of this monster crevasse, in the last glimmers of daylight, was a somewhat unnerving experience and discovering that the ends of the rope didn't quite reach the bottom lip unless one bounced around as best one could whilst hanging free in order to stretch the ropes a bit more, was quite exciting too. Avoiding the jaws of this beast by a strange backwards-and-upwards cramponing act, still on the rope, proved a relief in the end, and we were able to get the torches out and relax, knowing that a pleasant and problem-free half-hour stroll down easy glaciers to the Aigle Hut was all that remained. But an hour later saw us still stumbling round, jumping crevasses in the pitch dark, having lost the way due to previous parties spreading out all over the place and thus leaving no clear trail to follow. In fact, we might well have missed the hut entirely, as it was showing no lights and looked just like a large boulder. Luckily the conscientious wardens had been looking out for us and emerged with a torch at the right moment, to guide us to the door.

We ate a delicious supper, cooked by candlelight in the tiny cabin. All round us, sleeping bodies heaved and snuffled, under tables and on benches, but there still remained a little space on the floor for us, and the friendly French wardens did their best to make us comfortable with mattresses and blankets. It was fast developing into a wild and stormy night outside though, and we were awoken at dawn by the arrival of

the other parties from the Meije. They had spent a difficult night indeed, struggling along in the wind and snow. The other Brits had had to help them on every abseil. They'd earned their breakfast, which they shared with those departing that morning for various other summits as the weather picked up a bit.

The descent to La Grave has seen a few serious accidents and isn't always easy to follow, but we took our time and enjoyed the views of the Aiguilles d'Arves and the Romanche Valley. Lower down there were masses of edelweiss beside the path, as well as Martagon lilies and all sorts of other colourful flowers. Apollo and Swallowtail butterflies settled on our rucksacks every time we stopped for a rest. We were satisfied - though the toes had had enough by the time we reached La Grave.

The final challenge of the day was yet to come - finding the right buses to get back round to La Berarde. We could have traversed across from the Aigle hut to the Breche de la Meije and back down to the Promontoire, from where good paths go all the way down to La Berrarde, but a recce from the hut that morning with a few others had shown the bergschrund on the Breche to be impassable that season. Anyway, waiting for buses was not a waste of time - every bus stop had a handy bar!

This vivid account of a climb on the 1986 Joint Alpine Meet missed last year's Journal and members will be glad to have it, though a year late.
Editor.

ONE MAN'S CLIMBS ON THE JOINT ABMSAC/CC/AC ALPINE MEET

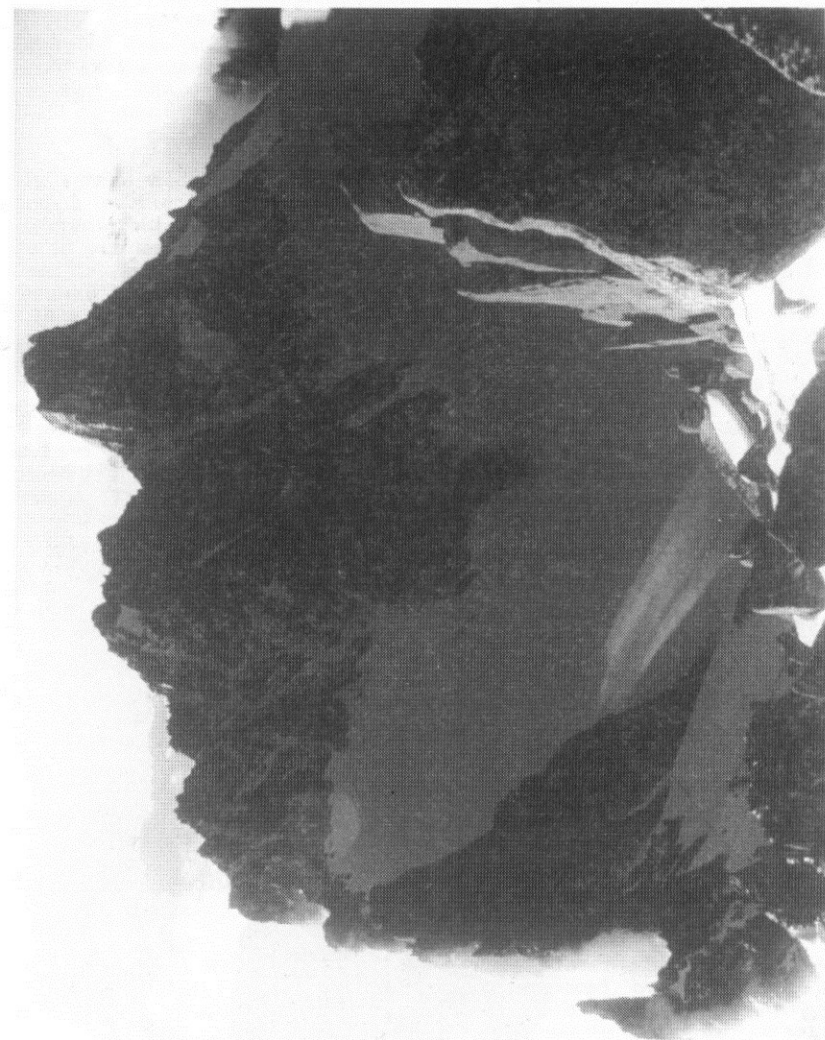
Dick Murton

On arrival at the camp-site this year, the usual ambitious first expedition was planned, even though the sun was also taking a holiday. Our party set off for the Argentiere Hut with plans for the Tour Noir, Argentiere, Courtes and Droites. Deep, fresh snow on the glacier gave food for thought.

Les Swindin and I set off to traverse the Tour Noir. We crossed the glacier on crusted, new snow, avoided the gully proper and took to the snow covered rocks to the left. From there the easy rock route to the summit was like a delicate Scottish winter route. On the descent, we floundered in deep snow in a futile search for the route to complete the traverse. Eventually we returned by the north ridge, often using only ice bound rocks for abseil points.

The following morning found Les and I on the glacier again. Some easy crampon work took us to the East S.E. ridge of the Argentiere. This superb mixed ridge led to the summit, offering an entertaining combination of route-finding, delicate exposed traverses on rotten snow, VS rock-climbing in crampons, and hard ice slopes, but with some broken crampons. Bitter cold made us abandon the magnificent views on the summit for a prompt descent to the hut, the whole within guide-book time to the top. (! Ed.)

After a couple of days rock-climbing, rest and rain we were off again; target the Aiguille de Bionnassay. Seven and a half hours of purgatory across bogs, streams, glaciers and a snow covered slag heap



ON ESE RIDGE OF ARGENTIERE, LOOKING TO CUL DE TOUR NOIR



REMAINS OF SNOW-HOLE NEXT DAY. WITH VALLOT HUT IN MID-DISTANCE (c.1 km) AND THE BOSSES RIDGE LEADING AWAY BEYOND

led to the Durier hut, already occupied by three Frenchmen. We woke to high winds, which kept us in the hut until 6.00 a.m. Thick cloud forced us to settle for a plod across the Domes de Miage while the French scuttled down to Italy.

On Sunday Pete Hammond and I took the third cable car to the Midi, for the classic traverse route to the Aiguille du Plan. This consisted mainly of easy snow and rock, interspersed with mad rushes to avoid abseil bottle-necks; for once a traffic warden would have been welcome! The Plan was in cloud but we descended into sunshine, plodding down the glacier and jumping crevasses to join the masses at Monterevers.

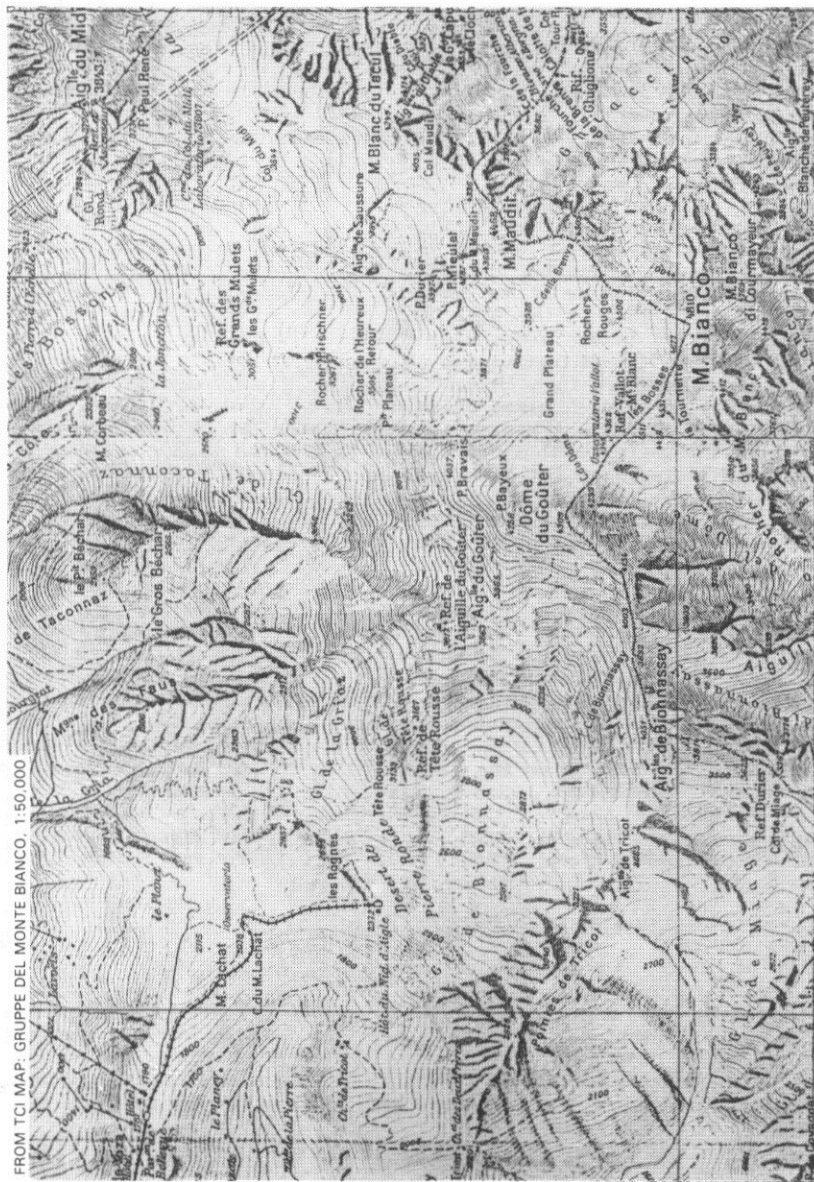
The second Wednesday found a much depleted Meet and I was unable to find a partner for my second attempt on the Bionnassay, - by a different route. Studying the N.W. face from the half way station led me to wonder whether it had been climbed that season. Confirmation from the guardian at the Tete Rousse that it had not been climbed resulted in my taking a direct approach to Mont Blanc. I set out at 1.30 a.m. and I took the ridge too soon, nearly missing the safety wire across the couloir; then an easy scramble up snow-covered rocks led to the Gouter hut. I moved on easily to the Vallot, overtaking a long crocodile of climbers, and decided to wait there for daybreak. I spent an hour huddled in a thin blanket listening as the wind picked up and the snow battered on the metal walls. On emerging I found a blizzard and so joined a group of four beginning the descent. A compass bearing took us across the Dome du Gouter, where we floundered around looking for the route. The group consisted of a guide, his two clients and another solo climber. Eventually the guide insisted on returning to the Vallot. By now our tracks were being obliterated almost as we made them. We retraced our compass-bearing, struggling through knee deep snow. Soon two of the party were totally exhausted and progress was minute. The rapidly deteriorating weather conditions began to feature thunder and lightning so we stopped and decided to snow-hole, despite the flat terrain. Four hours digging in hard snow and ice resulted in a reasonable trench with an undercut for the legs. Preparations to enter were halted by a break in the cloud sufficient to take a hurried bearing on the Vallot. An hour later we forced our way into the hut which bore a strong resemblance to a sardine tin.

The following morning I climbed Mont Blanc to find myself in brilliant sunshine above a great sea of cloud. A superb end to an Alpine holiday.

HEAVY WEATHER ON THE VOIE NORMALE

Harry Archer

It was the last week of the Alpine Meet and the weather outlook was dismal. An ascent of Mont Blanc had been proposed, but any chance of this seemed remote. However, the "this weather can't last forever" party prevailed and we set off through the gloom to Chamonix, or more precisely the Hotel Bellevue, above Les Houches, for an en-route night stop.



Driving over the passes it got worse. At Les Houches it was bucketing down and the mountain was shrouded in dense cloud. By a miracle of timing all the party arrived at the teleferique station at the same time. Two of the party had decided to stay the night in Chamonix and come up early the next morning. Had John L. and David W. been forewarned of the horrors of the Bellevue?

As the car ascended the rain cascaded off the cable. At the top we walked through the gloom to the ancient Hotel Bellevue to be greeted most amicably by the proprietress. The pungent odour from the drains luckily did not extend to the dining room nor did the unbelievably decrepit electric wiring, beds, furniture etc. John C. was moved to say "I suppose that it is left in this state so that climbers can say that nothing has changed in twenty years". Nonetheless the food was good, the roof did not leak, and though the beds were grotty we slept, though suffering a bit from "culture shock".

Next morning the weather was still foul, but the party complete, it was "press on to catch the only morning bad weather train on the Tramway". At the "station", an amazing coincidence: there was the taciturn guide whom we had met at the Mont Dolent bivouac, with brother(?) and two clients. At the Nid d'Aigle the "tourists" very sensibly headed for the restaurant, the view being restricted to twenty yards, while the "climbers" set out for the huts above. Joining the queue was a French party of eight who were to be our companions for the next 3 days. The snow was low down and deep on the Tete Rousse Glacier.

At the hut a cup of tea and a rest. A Guide approached. "Have you a Doctor in your party?" he asked. "Yes" replied HDA. "We have four". "Are they for men or animals?" asked the Guide. He was assured that they were "for men". The two hospital doctors and the Medical School lecturer decided that the practising GP should attend the climber with a badly broken leg. Rauf went to work, gaining the confidence of the casualty and on the radio-phone persuading the Doctor down in Chamonix that without a helicopter the injured chap could not be got down. Within an hour the weather lifted just enough to allow a chopper in.

By then we had set out for the Gouter Hut somewhat chastened by this accident and its consequence, as it had taken from 3.00 p.m. the previous afternoon to 2.00 a.m. that morning to move the injured climber from the scene of the accident on the Gouter ridge to the Tete Rousse Hut, and this with the expert assistance of a Guide. Several parties went no further, only the French party of eight and ours of seven were now going up. The gully and the ridge ahead were plastered with fresh snow and as it seemed unlikely that we would complete the climb the next day, John C. had to go back to make an appointment at the Neuve Hut in 48 hours time: we waited to see him safely back at the Tete Rousse Hut. Who said that on the Voie Normale you needed only a pair of knickerbockers, a walking stick and a reservation at the Gouter Hut?

There then began a hard grind in what were winter conditions rather than summer. The snow was deep, it was bitterly cold and very windy. The leader of the French party was a stocky, strong chap with big feet who ploughed a good trail, so we deferentially held back from the lead because he was doing such a good job! Was he tired that night and bit weary the next day! In contrast to the French we

thought that it was safer in the circumstances to climb without crampons and unroped, except on an awkward section near the top, when tiredness made things seem more difficult - it took a wearisome three hours to climb the ridge, normally an easy one and a half hour scramble.

Supper was already being prepared for us and we settled down to enjoy a good night's rest, 14 people in a hut designed for 60, (which would, however, the next night uncomfortably have to accommodate more than 120).

The forecast for the next day was hopeful, clearing skies but windy; the weather window we had expected. That night it blew a full gale and at get-up time there was thick cloud, snow and high wind. At 7.00 a.m. it started to clear. A quick breakfast and to the surprise of the Guardian both parties were away a little after 8.00 a.m.; back in 8 hours was the prediction, time enough before the next lot of weather and well before dark.

The French lingered long enough to ensure that Les Anglais took the lead. The sky was clear but it was already very windy, the forecast being for 100kph at altitude, putting a question-mark against the top section of the Bosses ridge. The deep snow sometimes crusty, sometimes powdery, made progress hard work, but we kept more or less to Guide Book times. A rest on the Dome du Gouter, until the French took the lead on the downhill stretch towards the Vallot Hut. After a prolonged rest (lunch?) by the French, inside the Hut, the English sitting outside in the freezing wind were persuaded into the lead again. The wind, the snow and the altitude made progress slow and tiring as we climbed the Bosses. Above, a few clouds raced across the summit, a line of cornices glistened in the sun and gusts whipped up clouds of snow. A helicopter flew by a couple of times taking photographs; (later we heard that the police in Chamonix had seen us by telescope). However, in spite of this publicity we came to realise that the wind would preclude the crossing of the summit ridge and that it would be foolish to venture higher. With some 200 metres to go, we turned, and later so did the French, who had been moving up very slowly.

Signs of the approaching Warm Front were plain to the north west as we descended: time enough to reach the Gouter Hut but predicting a rough night and a stormy tomorrow. A short stop at the Vallot Hut and a chat with a Frenchman who had decided not to go further up. Then down, swimming through deep powder snow to the ridge leading to the Hut. The wind was now so strong that it was necessary to crawl for a part of the way and to re-rope for safety. But a big shock was yet to come for on arrival at the Hut we were astounded to see the ridge below swarming with climbers coming up. With a threatening sky and a forecast of bad weather here were more than a hundred people coming up to the Hut, most heavily laden as if for a long trek, yet the previous day only fourteen came up on a hopeful forecast: it seemed crazy. Soon the hut was packed with damp, tired and cold would-be climbers of Mont Blanc, some exhausted. Our GP administered to one near-hypothermic woman: many were in no condition to go further.

The hut staff fed us and found us bunks even though not booked in for a second night. It was a rough night in more ways than one. Outside it blew a gale, thick cloud enveloped the Hut and ridge and, early in the morning, it started to snow. Inside crammed in like sardines it was difficult to rest, let alone sleep. With six in spaces for

four, we should have topped and tailed. No one got up early to climb the mountain.

Daylight found 120 people wondering what to do. Eventually the great descent started. The ridge was covered in deep powder snow flowing down like water. Some parties were moving extremely slowly in the difficult conditions. The wind was strong and gusty, blowing clouds of spindrift across the ridge. We waited nearly an hour on the topmost section, an Italian party behind us complaining continuously. This spurred John L. to some deft ropework which gave us a good lead and the opportunity to pass several other parties and get away from the crowd. At last, when all but the last man was across the gully, the mountain had the last word by sending down a snow slide to envelope him as he clung to the safety cable: it was lovely light, fluffy snow - no problem.

Now down, to the Tete Rousse Hut; no tea, the Guardian was having his lunch; to the Tramway, a train was waiting; to the teleferique and an ancient solo-climbing New Zealander who talked so much he left his kit at the top; to the car and notes to lead us to Rauf's Passport under the bonnet.

Not quite the normal trade route and not to the top, but three good days of mountaineering, more like winter than summer.

A pity about the helicopter ride but the cheap way down (FF600-) advocated by our French friends, required that one or more were injured, or worse, in advance: there were no volunteers. For fit persons the commercial rate was some FF7500-. For £700 - we would put up with a lot of grotty snow and weather.

A happy party, hardly any harsh words even some compliments, e.g. "with a few improvements even the Bellevue could have an old world charm". Participants were John Loy, David Watts, Rauf Kukawadia, Harry Archer, John Lawton, David Irwin and John Chapman.

HENRI DUFOUR: THE "GENTLE" GENERAL

Much as we like looking through Les Alpes or Die Alpen, for many of us our limited French or German makes it too much of an effort to read the articles; thus we doubtless miss some first class contributions.

The August issue had just such a piece on Henri Dufour, a name that is probably associated in the minds of most of us only with the Monte Rosa "Spitze". The article does indeed make it clear why the highest point in Switzerland was named the Dufourspitze, but it also describes Henry Dufour's many and varied, and significant, contributions to his country during the 88 years of his life, and altogether adds to our understanding of Switzerland and its history. Hence this English version of the article.

Editor

Henri Dufour was born 200 years ago. Switzerland is greatly indebted to him, - as General in the Civil War of 1847 who brought the conflict to an end with the minimum casualties, - as engineer who built bridges, roads and, most important, produced the first comprehensive cartography of the country, - and as humanitarian, who was also co-founder, with Henri Dunant, of the Red Cross.

He was born in 1787 in the south German town of Constance, his father a political refugee from Geneva. Two years later the family returned to Geneva where Henri later attended the High School ("Gymnasium"). It was a time of wars and turmoil all over Europe and in 1798 the French occupied Geneva, and during his time the young Dufour took an avid interest in every aspect of a soldier's life. He became adept in the use of firearms and also showed great talent in developing battle strategies which proved highly successful in the frequent street skirmishes between the students and the town youths.

Later he learnt something of the bloody reality of war. Napoleon's troops were marching from battle to battle across Europe and in 1804 the young Dufour served for a year tending the wounded in the Geneva hospital. This experience left its mark on Dufour, not only in respect of the suffering he saw, but also the waste. He wrote at the time: "If one could use all these resources and money on constructive goals, on building roads, canals, mines.....", words of the coming engineer.

In 1807 he went to Paris and qualified as an engineer and then joined the French army as an officer in the Corps of Engineers, serving four years in Corfu. There he was badly wounded when the British shelled Corfu. He suffered long and severely, but he pulled through and returned to Geneva, and in 1815 Geneva joined the Swiss Confederation. Dufour then put his military experience at the disposal of the Swiss Army, becoming Director of the new Central Military Academy in Thun.

In his subsequent civilian role, Henri Dufour was the Engineer for the Canton Geneva - a very demanding role at a time when industrialisation was under way and the population expanding. Thus he had the old fortifications pulled down and the moats filled so that the town could expand. He made a special study of suspension bridges on which he worked with great enthusiasm. In Switzerland, and also abroad, many bridges were built based on his calculations for the cables, some of which continued in service well into the present century. Above all Dufour involved himself energetically in the task of improving communications; he initiated the building of the first steamship in Geneva, the rail connection between Geneva and Lyons, and he planned the famous Axenstrasse on Lake Luzern.

In 1832, as Quartermaster General of the Army, Dufour was made responsible for an accurate survey of the whole of Switzerland, for the absence of maps meant that there were many mountain areas of the country about which little was known. This triangulation finally became the basis of a cartographic masterpiece, to a scale of 1:100,000. But the task was immense and arduous in the extreme. The heavy instruments had to be hauled to the top of each summit and there were of course no huts, necessitating tents, or other bivouacs. The illustration on page 324 of *Die Alpen* 8/87 gives a vivid impression of what was entailed, showing Henri Dufour, in his late 70's, with other engineers on an exposed mountainside in atrocious weather. The task thus took till 1864, - 32 years. It is in recognition of this cartographic achievement that the highest point in Switzerland (4634m) was named the Dufourspitze.

Civil War broke out in Switzerland in 1847 when Cantons of Luzern, Swyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Freiburg and the Valais insisted on maintaining their own separate confederation. Dufour was named as the General to command the troops that were to be despatched to

recalcitrant Cantons. It was due to his appointment that what would otherwise have become a cruel and bloody confrontation with a bitter legacy of hatred lasted just 25 days, with the loss of only 115 lives.

Dufour's "gentle" conduct of the war paid rich dividends. The parties were soon reconciled and in 1848 the Modern Swiss Federal State was founded. To mark the reconciliation the General himself contributed 4,000 Fr. - then a significant sum - for the benefit of the wounded on both sides. The deeply humanitarian character of the General is shown in his Order of the Day for 5th November 1847. "To all soldiers; you must emerge from this battle not only victorious, but also blameless. One should say of you afterwards: 'They were courageous men, but they were also noble and magnanimous' Anyone who lays a hand on a defenceless person dishonours himself and shames the flag. Prisoners and the wounded especially deserve your compassion as they are your misguided brothers".

In succeeding years there were several grave threats from disturbances, revolutions and wars in neighbouring countries and in 1849, Swiss soldiers were standing shoulder to shoulder on the northern frontiers only two years after they had been shooting each other. There followed other crises on the southern, and then again on the northern frontiers, and in each case the rapid mobilisation of the army, under the command of Dufour, gave the enemy to pause and retreat, and at the age of 72 the General relinquished his command.

It was in those last years, during the bloody battles in northern Italy, where Henri Dunant had witnessed the appalling lack of medical succour at Solferino, that Henry Dufour, at Dunant's instigation, convened an international conference at Geneva, and as chairman of the conference Dufour suggested that the newly created humanitarian organisation should adopt as its emblem the Swiss flag with reversed colours. It was no coincidence that the "gentle General" became the co-founder of the Red Cross. Professor Hans Rudolf Kurz, the Swiss Military Historian writes: "It is after all in the humanitarian field that Dufour fulfilled his highest vocation".

Adapted from the article by Franz Auf der Maur, by courtesy of the editor of Die Alpen.

ON FIRST VISITING THE ALPS

Maurice Freeman

With the onset of the years men's thoughts turn to memoirs, and that is the excuse for this piece.

My first visit to the Swiss Alps was in the 1930's. As a young climber I had some experience of British hills and I was anxious at least to see something bigger. In those days we were constrained both by time and money to a degree that young people today will find hard to credit. I found that my friend Harold shared my ambition and moreover had a plan to overcome the foregoing constraints: We should add a week of our limited free holiday allowance to the public holiday, which was at Whitsuntide in Manchester, and make the trip by bicycle, a journey for which the two weeks should suffice.

Harold undertook to attend to the most important of the preparations, which was to design and make a tandem bicycle specially suited to the steep and perhaps rough terrain which we expected to meet. He was a keen cyclist, best known for his success in the somewhat esoteric sport of tricycle racing. Let not the reader scoff at this: the racing tricycle is a wilful machine which presents a formidable problem to the youngest and hardest. Harold had a standing challenge to any bicyclist to ride a three wheeler round a tight course without falling off. No-one to my knowledge ever managed it first time, though strangely the feat can be performed by someone who has never ridden a bicycle.

Harold's racing success no doubt sprang in part from strength and skill, but a further factor was the differential axle to whose design he contributed. He displayed similar ingenuity in equipping the tandem bicycle for hill climbing. The machine was completed in time for the journey, but not in time for preliminary trials on hills at home, an omission which we were to regret.

Another embarrassment arose on the administrative side. Cyclists required a licence in France. All formalities can be dealt with by the C.T.C., of which one of us was a member. Unfortunately the required documents had not arrived by the due date, so we decided to set off from Manchester without them. The ride down the A1 at night brought us nearer to fear than did any subsequent adventures in the hills. A kindly lorry driver stopped and insisted on giving us a lift, arguing that he felt we were not safe in such circumstances, and that he would not forgive himself if he heard later of the death of two tandem cyclists. His delicate feelings, however, did not stop him from taking part in the lorrymen's sport, which was to overtake without lights, cut in and try to put the other man in the ditch. We played the part of overtakers and overtaken several times, and each time wished we were on two wheels. We thus cheated inadvertently as regards relying on our own power, and to our shame we cheated again deliberately. We had to take a boat across the channel, and we found that it was economically sound to use the train as well, from London to Paris. This interlude gave us time for various things, including sorting our belongings. Harold delved into the depths of his pockets, and found his letter to the C.T.C., which he had omitted to post. On reaching Paris we found that the bicycle had been impounded, and could not be released because it did not carry a plaque to show that the owner was duly licensed. Here we had a stroke of good fortune. We met a Frenchman who was at the time living in Bramhall, the village next to my Cheadle Hulme home. He was fluently bi-lingual and understood French ways. He explained that we could buy a licence at any tobacconist's shop simply by representing ourselves as French citizens. This task necessarily fell to me; Harold was the mechanic and I had to be the linguist. (This was wise as well as just. Harold had left school in Oldham at the age of 14, and the establishment he had attended was not strong on languages: indeed his use of his native tongue had a touch of the provincial. Lest this should appear disparaging, I should add that he overcame his possibly disadvantageous start to an extent that most people would consider tolerable, and eventually acquired a D.Sc.)

The way we decided to tackle the problem was that I should suffer from a dreadful cold, which forced me to splutter behind a handkerchief.

The first tobacconist we tried was only too happy to get me out of his shop as quickly as possible, complete with plaque. We were let into the customs pound, only to meet a further problem. The bicycle number had to be entered on the plaque. Commercially built machines have a number, but Harold had not thought of this detail when he made his tandem. Happily we had a stout screwdriver, and we found a big stone to use as a hammer. We thus managed to christen the bicycle No. 11,111 and we emerged triumphantly re-united.

We had another trifling adventure at the Youth Hostel in Paris. It should be clear enough to the reader that Harold was not the sort of softie who would use a safety razor. His precious strop had disappeared. It so happened that there was a bully-ragging fellow staying in the hostel, a representative of an aggressive youth movement from a neighbouring country, who lorded it over the other hostellers. Circumstantial evidence pointed to his connection with the loss of the strop. By good fortune the River Seine runs alongside the hostel grounds. We indicated by signs to the young man that it would give us pleasure if he would join us in a stroll to the river bank. When we extended our friendly overtures by standing him on the bank and each taking him by the arm, he appreciated the choices which lay before him, and Harold and his strop were reunited.

We got away from Paris successfully despite my drawing the short straw and being given the pilot's seat. In those days traffic in the Place de la Concorde was controlled by a military looking man on an elevated platform. There were many streams of traffic entering and leaving the Place. All were held at rest like sprinters in their blocks until the officer blew his whistle, whereupon all shot off at once; at least that appeared to be the system. This is more difficult with a tandem than with a solo, so we sat out a round or two before shooting off. The aim seemed to be to cross first, so that the crash was behind one. We survived.

We rode across France, stopping from time to time at Youth Hostels. We learnt a lot about French culinary ways, to our enjoyment and advantage. We had to learn about rustic arrangements concerning other bodily needs, but those experiences, though still vivid in the memory, are not suited to the eyes of ABMSAC members. In due course we crossed the Jura by the Col de St. Cerque. We had not yet seen any snowy mountains, though we thought we should have seen the Mt. Blanc massif. There may have been too much haze; it was very hot indeed. We learnt to stop at intervals going downhill for the purpose of immersing the wheels in a stream whenever the drum brakes faded.

Bright sun followed us up the Rhone valley, and it became hotter, so that we were glad to be wearing shorts and light shoes.

As we approached the Furka pass clouds formed ahead, but we pushed on until increasing steepness gave us an opportunity to test the special features of the bicycle. Harold had found a way of fitting a lower bottom gear than had ever been used before to his knowledge. As a transmission system it was completely successful, but he had not considered the dynamics of a tandem bicycle adequately. These machines are difficult to balance, and a certain minimum road speed is necessary to provide the gyroscopic action required to keep upright. We were unable to attain this speed, so had to use a higher gear. Our next gear was rather higher than bottom gear on a more conventional

machine, so we were worse off than we might have been. Nevertheless we continued with a little extra effort until further problems faced us.

We ran into a white-out, and there was snow on the road, although the month of May was well advanced. There was indeed a great deal of snow, which was not in the best of condition for carrying so awkward a load as a tandem bicycle. We had counted on reaching Andermatt for dinner, and had brought no provisions. We also began to wonder whether the shorts and light shoes, which had served us so well in the Rhone Valley, were the best equipment in the changed situation.

There were, however, encouraging factors. The depth of snow was sufficient to obliterate the course of the road, so there was little to prevent us from following a general ENE beeline. Moreover, we were proceeding in a trough, and there seemed no imminent danger of falling over the edge of anything. Even the onset of darkness was not as trying as it might have been in other circumstances, as it hardly made our task any harder. Despite these comforting thoughts, we were in truth tired, cold and hungry when we came across a hut or bothy, and we decided to make use of it. We foolishly secured the door, and in due course were awakened by a great hammering. We had locked out the men who had planned to use the hut. Whether they were workmen, hunters or bandits we did not discover; we may have been on the fringe of some hamlet for all we knew, but we had seen nothing but this hut to break the expanse of snow. The men were well refreshed but not in the best of temper, and the situation might have been embarrassing, but to their credit good nature prevailed, and we all bedded down together. Providence, after all, proverbially looks after two categories. We continued at first light, worked our way through the remaining snowfields, and eventually succeeded in mounting the bicycle. On our way down to Andermatt we met a Swiss cyclist who was engaged in a tour. His local knowledge had allowed him to avoid the snow. He spoke German but had some French, so we could communicate to some extent. He was willing to stay with us and act as interpreter. I have forgotten his name, so he will be referred to as Karl.

We were no longer cold or tired, but we were hungry, so we sought out somewhere to eat in Andermatt, which would give us an opportunity to try out our interpreting system. We were disappointed: somehow we could not communicate with the waitress. Disappointment was increased by the circumstance that we had worked hard without food for 24 hours. Harold, to his shame, became impatient and said something like "we shall never make the silly bitch understand". She asked, very sweetly, "had you considered speaking in English?" This turned out to be her native tongue, and she provided the first instance we had come across of an English girl working for her holiday abroad. Red faces did not spoil our appetite.

We were later gratified to learn that our tandem was the first vehicle that year to cross the Furka pass, or perhaps any other high Alpine pass.

We had lost time on our route, and there seemed little chance of the weather clearing to allow us views of high peaks from where we were. Karl suggested that we accompany him to his native Emmental, whence we would have a fine panoramic view of the Oberland peaks. We had an exhilarating run down the Reuss valley. The fine road which can be followed today had not been built then, and the route across the

Devil's Bridge was sporting, as we had learnt by then to let the tandem go at its own pace, to avoid overheating the brakes. We duly reached somewhere near Langnau. Karl had not exaggerated. We saw the whole extent of the cloud cover from end to end of the range, but we did not see any peaks. Once again we were fortunate: we had made the correct decision to descend.

Our journey homewards was uneventful until we reached the French frontier. The guard was puzzled by the combination of British passports and a French licence plaque.

He spoke the classic phrase "on ne passe pas" to which we replied in our worst French "merci beaucoup". The situation had so changed that it was now best to leave the talking to Harold. Before we had gone very far we were stopped by armed men, who turned us back and handed the problem to the corporal. Once again we were blessed by good fortune. It was raining very hard, the post was at the summit of the col, and there was a bend in the road not far below. Few vehicles are faster off the mark than a racing tandem facing downhill. At each attempt we got a little further before we were turned back. As we worked up through the military ranks we became more proficient and the officers became more reluctant to stand out in the increasingly heavy rain. By the time we reached the commissioned ranks we had gained sufficient advantage to reach the corner and proceed homewards. There were no further troubles of the same kind in France, only the sort of things which befall ignorant and impecunious young men.

I am proud to write that I acquitted myself sufficiently well for Harold to invite me to join him in pursuing a cherished ambition, an attempt at the Land's End to John O'Groats tandem record, which he considered somewhat "soft" at the time. He had worked out that if we used up all our leave allowance we could just do it. If we failed to break the record we should be late reporting back for work. In those days there were neither sponsorship nor charity stunts, jobs were scarce and employers were unsympathetic.

I was too cautious and timid, and this chance, like so many others, slipped away from me.

Writers of expedition accounts are often asked about the cost. We travelled modestly, staying at Youth Hostels and such places, and managed the trip starting and finishing at Manchester for £19 each. With better planning we could have saved the price of a French bicycle licence and further economies could be made by starting from a more southerly point. Anyone contemplating a similar journey should make some allowance for inflation, and should note that the cost of the bicycle was not included. There might indeed be difficulties about procuring a hand-made tandem, and it is hardly likely that the readers of this Journal would be satisfied with a mass-produced machine. Difficulties are made to be overcome, and two solo machines could be used, though they would be slower and less companionable. The trip could be made easier at least to the point of avoiding the problems we experienced on the Furka pass by a change either of itinerary or date.

Our trip was clearly memorable, as this article shows. We saw few high mountains but we learned some geography and became acquainted with some facts of life. If any readers are interested in a similar journey; Bon Voyage.

THE YEAR'S MOUNTAIN

The editor recalls another Mountain holiday accomplished by bicycle, as related to him in the Silvretta Hut in the fifties. A middle aged Swiss was preparing to go down to Klosters, having that morning achieved his aim, to climb Piz Buin. He said he worked in an engineering factory in Basle and every year when, as he put it, he was freed for a space from the tyranny of the alarm clock, he cycled to a mountain he had chosen, and climbed it. The previous day, having got to Klosters the evening before, he had walked up to the hut and then prospected the way up the mountain, as was his wont. Today he had climbed it, and tomorrow he would begin to cycle home content. A modest and satisfying philosophy.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES DURING 1987

L.A. Ellwood

Leslie Ellwood's special Alpine Season this year - the 80th anniversary of his first Alpine expedition, with his parents, and the 40th anniversary of a memorable climbing season with his wife, was reported in the January Newsletter. In 1986 he had celebrated 50 years of membership of the S.A.C. by going up to the Perrenoud Hut with the President of his section, Neuchatel.

Peter Farrington

A quiet year starting with a winter week based in Kintail. Good conditions on the South Glen Shiel Ridge, Beinn Fhada, Sgurr MhicBharraich and Sgurr an Fhuairail. Not so good on Beinn Sgritheall and bad enough on the West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean to force a retreat.

Returned to the Cuillin in late August after being rained off Garbh Bheinn of Ardgour. Arrived in time to enjoy a fine sunset from the Cloch, then persistent rain and high winds limited us to walks over Sgurr Dearg, Sgurr na Stri, Sgurr na Hain and Druim Hain. Accompanied throughout by Tony Perrons.

The usual stravaiging around Islay and Jura filled in other weekends as well as several new routes with visiting friends on the sea cliffs.

Wendell Jones

1987 brought three trips to the Lake District, staying either at the Hut or Glenridding Hotel. Each visit included an ascent of Helvellyn - viewed in retrospect this seems somewhat unimaginative!

I made about half a dozen visits to the Brecon Beacons, big rolling hills with the occasional steep escarpment. (Perhaps their chief merit lies in being the only high mountains within the compass of a day's trip from Oxford). It is extraordinary how lonely these hills become once one is west of the Cardiff Brecon main road.

I also ventured to the Long Mynd (Shropshire) and Edale, the latter journey occasioned by my elder son's visit to Sheffield Polytechnic. Since he has now settled for Bradford University 1988 may see some more northerly Pennines.

The high point of the year was the Champex Meet. My younger son, Michael, made a last minute decision to join in. On the first day a small misunderstanding about paths left us two hours out and only 100 feet above Champex. "Are there any snakes in the Alps?", he asked. "No, I have never seen one". My reputation for veracity descended to the level of my map reading when I almost fell over an adder coming down the Bonhomme ridge. Fortunately the snake was even more alarmed!

Ascents were rather limited. Aiguille du Tour in a thick mist, and Pic d'Orny in a short solo sally from the Hut were my only peaks over 3000 metres. Bad weather and ill fitting crampons prevented us getting much above the Saleina and Dolent Huts. We ascended three cols and no one but me was fool enough to spend four days on the Catogne. (Main Summits twice, Bonhomme once).

F.A. Mason-Hornby

I went out to Chamonix in late July, stayed a few nights in Argentiere camp site. On the one good day I did the Aig. d'Argentiere by the ordinary west flank route. Up to the Hut in the afternoon; awake at 3.30, on summit to crisp sun 7.30; back at Hut at 9.30 a.m.

Weather continued to be bad so off to Grindewald; weather worse there, then off to Pyrenees where I had a successful ten days; climbed the Pico Posets, Pico Anetton and the Maladetta, all in Spain. Then the classic Pic Mide d'Ossau in France. Good hot weather but poor guide books and maps and very dangerous loose rocks on less popular routes.

Well worth a visit if weather in the Alps is bad.

G.B. Fennett

The past year has been quite a busy one with numerous scrambles and walks in the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales. During 1987 my wife and I have done many walks on Ilkley Moor, Baldon Moor, Burley Moor, Barden Pasture, Emsay Moor, the Chevin above Otley and on the hills around Bolton Abbey.

Early in January we did a superb walk from Grassington, which included Linto Fells and Threshfield. In February and March we walked on the moors and then on April 17th we walked from Linton to Thorpe Fell top and back. On April 18th we did another superb seven miles walk from Grassington. April 24th saw us in Penygent Gyll. This was indeed a good ten miles walk with superb views all round. A thirteen miles walk from Buckden (North Yorkshire) on May 4th proved to be an absolute delight. We took in Horse Head Pass and summit (1985 ft.), Kirk Gill Moor, Birks Fells (2001 ft.) and Firth Fell (1991 ft.). We finished the walk with a welcome pint and meal at the Buck Inn at Buckden.

MOUNTAINEERS RESTING!



P.M. HAMMOND ON MIDI-PLAN TRAVERSE,
(WITH VIEW OF GR. JORASSES RIDGE AND
DENT DU GEANT ON R.)



J. LAWTON (GUEST), G.W., D.W. AND E.S.
ON SUMMIT OF MT. VELAN (ABMSAC ALPINE MEET).

Later in the month we did a lengthy walk in the Lindley Reservoir area. Another enjoyable walk was from Gonistone (Yorkshire) taking in Capplestone Gate and Conistone Pie. Walks in September were to Brimham Rocks, Baildon Moor, Embsay Crag (1100 ft.).

October saw us in the Lake District. We stayed at a farm at Watendlath. Unfortunately the weather was poor - rain every day - but we managed to do a number of "wet" walks up Whinlatter Fell, Ling Fell, Catbells and Ullock Pike. The latter walk was extremely good but thick mist on the summit spoiled the views. A walk from Beverley to Yorke'd Folly along Guise Cliffe and beyond was enjoyed on November 14th. On a cold frosty day (November 28th) we walked from Dick Hudson's (pub) to the summit of Ilkley Moor. This was not a particularly difficult walk but one which is quite exhilarating with fine views, particularly over Ilkley.

Wednesday December 9th was a particularly cold day so we did a walk from Flasby, near Skipton, which turned out to be excellent and suitably planned so we could take refreshment at the Angel Inn at Hetton.

We missed out on Scotland this year but walks in Wharfedale, Nidderdale, Craven and the Lake District more than compensated.

Ernst Sondheimer

Quite an action-packed year for somebody enjoying what the Germans call 'Ruhestand'. On top of the Editorship of the AJ, and two bits of 'servicing' in hospital (with grateful thanks to a distinguished former President of the ABMSAC), I managed to fit in two of Hamish Brown's recommendations in 'The Great Walking Adventure' - Morocco and St. Kilda - three trips to Scotland and one to the Bavarian Alps. Once again the year started at Suardalan, with good friends, but not so friendly weather, and the place has become too popular with gangs who prefer drinking to climbing. Later in January, two pleasant days were spent with Alasdair Andrews & Co. on Ben Chonzie - not as dull a hill as is generally believed - and over the Carn Mairg round - well, part of it. Long earnest discussions ensued as to whether we had actually reached the top of Meall Garbh in the mist - I shall never know. Finally, a May weekend at Fersit, Nancy Smith's unique hostelry, with a couple of Loch Treig Munros. Again, no one would call Chno Dearg exciting, but no hill is dull for those who have eyes to see; on this one the boggy slopes were bright with masses of yellow marsh marigolds.

For Morocco we had the benefit of Hamish in person to guide us. It needs a separate article. Some highlights: sleeping under the stars on the terrace of a Berber house above Imllil, enjoying the traditional cous-cous meal with the Berber family, the marvellous three day trek (Imllil - Tachddirt - Oukaïmeden - Asni) described in Hamish's book, the youth hostel at Asni in its setting of brilliant white irises, with the view across the river to the High Atlas, the ascent of Ras n'Ouanoukrim (4083m), third-highest in the Atlas - and of course Marrakech, most intoxicating of cities, with hours spent in the souks, gazing, goggling, jostling, bargaining, a visit to the Majorelle Garden, with palms, giant cactuses, brilliant bougainvillea and yellow water-lilies on the blue-tiled ponds - and, finally, from a terrace overlooking the huge square, watching the lights go on one by one as the daylight faded over the magic city.

In the Allgau at the end of June the weather had turned hot after seven bad weeks, the high ridges were buried under deep snow, the waterfalls were in full thunderous spate, and ladies' slipper orchids were in flower in the forest.

And then St. Kilda... fabulous, stupendous St. Kilda. Go and experience it for yourself - if you can find out how to get there.

Les Swindin

With Barbara unable to participate because of a persistent shoulder injury and Peter Fleming absent from the Alps this year I checked in on the club meet at Argentiere in the hope of finding a climbing companion. In indifferent conditions a largish party went up to the Argentiere hut and, by a process of selection by speed, Dick Murton and I teamed up for the climbs we did from there. For the first of these, the Tour Noir, it was snowing as we left the Hut and remained overcast all the way to the summit. We'd wanted to traverse the peak but were unable to locate the ledges on the E. face in the mist and snow. The only solution was to reverse the N. ridge which was done, most prudently, by abseil.

The next day was the one good one of my stay on the meet. Dick and I did the SSE ridge of the Aig. d'Argentiere - a most enjoyable climb and highly recommended. This route was once popular but for some unaccountable reason is not much frequented today, consequently we had the route to ourselves which added to the enjoyment.

Chamonix meteo bulletins, as usual, kept predicting a better spell of weather and as Dick wanted to traverse the Aig. de Bionnassay and Mont Blanc we toiled up to the Durier hut. I think this is the most exhausting hut walk that I've ever done. It turned out to be pointless toil, for after a night of the hut being buffeted by the wind, I looked out at 2.00 a.m. to find cloud down to a few feet above hut level and the wind still blowing hard. We returned to the valley by way of the Domes de Miage as compensation but had little in the way of the panoramic views for which the mountain is renowned.

At this point I quit and spent a few days in the south of France, but didn't neglect mountaineering entirely, since with Barbara I walked up Montayne St. Victoire and traversed its long summit crest. The day before we made this traverse we were warned off going on the mountain because of fire risk - what an excuse for not going up the "hill". It hasn't happened very often in Wales this summer.

I finished my tour of Europe with a visit to the Dolomites, my first visit. My purpose was to take some photos for the new guide-book being prepared by the A.C. We had some tough walks and came away very impressed by the region but also disappointed in that the weather could have been a good deal kinder to us.

At Whitsun Barbara had arranged a business trip to Annecy so we took the opportunity to combine this with a visit to some friends living in Geneva. The plan would allow me to attempt the Argentine Miroir. No such luck. Apart from the inclement weather, even the Jura still carried vast quantities of snow and there was not even a chance of getting to the foot of the climb. I contented myself with a few gentle walks.

Easter was completely different. My ski-touring party was whittled down to two so it seems appropriate that we should tour in a fairly popular area. My companion, Al Brindley, had not skied the High Level Route so we set this as our objective. Everything was perfect; we had brilliant weather, good and plentiful snow which meant good skiing with no carrying and little in the way of crevasse danger; added to this was the good company we met on route, the not too crowded huts, the fact that we were both fit and the fabulous scenery, so it is easy to appreciate what a wonderful tour we had. We took in ascents of the Pigne d'Arolla, which is a must for anyone doing the HLR, the Tete de Valpelline to photograph the NNE face of the Dent d'Herens and the Strahlhorn before reaching Sass Fee. The only disappointment was that one day of snow and fog prevented us from climbing the Allalinhorn. Still we didn't waste the day, we drove to Chamonix, first to ski the Vallee Blanche but mainly for the "cream on the cake", to climb Mont Blanc on skis. This had long been one of my skiing objectives and really was worth the long wait. I've had to be in the right place at the right time. The day was beyond reproach and we had the fairly rare experience of climbing the Bosses ridge in windless conditions. To be first on the summit made us feel good and the ski down to the Grands Mulets was magic, the day will long remain in my memory.

Apart from these activities on the continent I've enjoyed some good days on British hills throughout the rest of the year. The poor winter meant I did little in the way of good ice-climbing and nor have I managed to get in many rock routes in the mountains, although nearer home - Avon and Wye valley - I've had a good season.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

There were 14 outdoor meets in 1987: six in Scotland, including the week-long spring Bank Holiday meet in Wester Ross; five at Patterdale, including the Northern Dinner and the Buffet meets, and the Hut Maintenance meet; one meet in North Wales, and the two Alpine meets, - the Club meet at Champex and the joint ABM/CC/AC meet at Argentiere. Accounts of these meets appeared in the Quarterly Newsletters.

There were 5 evening meetings in London, four lecture and social meetings, including the Fondue evening and the Buffet party at the Alpine Club and the annual London dinner at the Rubens Hotel.

The Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Rubens Hotel, London, at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday, 21st November 1987.

The President, Wing Commander H.D. Archer, was in the Chair. Thirty members were present.

1. The minutes of the 1986 A.G.M. as published in the Journal, were adopted.

2. Matters Arising: The Working Party on the Rules had issued a report, for which they were thanked. Their proposal for a reduced rate for junior full members has been put into effect. Their work has brought to light anomalies outside their original brief, and The Committee has asked them to remain in being to examine the rules more broadly.

3. Election of Officers and Committee: The Committee's nominations for vacancies, as published in the Agenda notice, were accepted. No further nominations were received and the nominees were elected. The changes in Officers were:

President - J.S. Whyte in place of H.D. Archer, who retires in rotation.

Vice President - C.G. Armstrong in place of A.I. Andrews, who retires in rotation.

All other officers were re-elected.

The new Committee will be:

G. Attridge
Mrs B Baldwin
Mrs G Bull
J.W. Chapman
D.F. Penlington
A.S. Strawther
F.B. Suter
G.G. Watkins

R.A. Cameron and Dr. N.F.D. Cooper retire in rotation.

4. The President reported as follows:

"After many years in which I spent many happy times in the Alps with good companions, my main hope has been that the decline in the fortunes of the ABMSAC should be arrested. I hope I have done something towards this aim. As ever, membership is a vital matter. Ben Howe has done an excellent job in persuading applicants to join, but without the help of members in recruiting, he has an impossible task. The decline in membership has been halted and indeed reversed: there has been an increase in Affiliate members and, even more gratifying, in Full membership of the SAC. The £5. reduced ABMSAC subscription should help to encourage the younger members to join the SAC. It is hoped that all will come to look on Affiliate membership as a step to Full membership.

"The level of activities has increased. The London meetings are all well attended, the Alpine meet more popular than ever before, the joint AC., CC., ABMSAC. Alpine meet has attracted increased interest, the Northern Dinner and the Buffet Party are as popular as ever, and the Summer Scrambles meets and the Scottish meets have become established events. Meet leaders are always in demand to ensure that these occasions can include the best combinations of walking, climbing and socialising.

In all these activities we try to include those which remind us of the Swiss connection. Next year is the 125th anniversary of the SAC and an occasion for a special programme. The President of the SAC has accepted an invitation to visit us in the U.K. and details will emerge.

The Association's finances are in good order and our assets have increased. It is now possible to consider, in concert with the TCC, the purchase of the freehold of the Patterdale Hut.

I wish my successor every success".

5. The Hon. Treasurer spoke briefly about the accounts, which had been circulated, and which show a very healthy position. Expenditure has been reduced, especially in connection with the Journal, the London activities and the Library. Substantial money has been produced by the sale of books, and a bequest was received from the late Mrs. Cicely Williams.

6. Subscriptions: The following were agreed:

SAC	£25 unchanged
ABM	£10 unchanged
Joint ABM membership	£14 unchanged
Junior ABM membership for members of the SAC	£ 5 (a new rate)

7. The Editor announced that members had expressed satisfaction with the new arrangements for the Newsletter. The 1988 Journal will be published in the usual format.

8. Any Other Business: Mr. Ledebøer reported back from the SAC Annual Assembly. The 125th anniversary in 1988 will be marked by appropriate celebrations. We shall hold our Annual Dinner on Saturday 26th November to fit in with the engagements of the President of the SAC. The Vice President of the SAC is making a film, with a version in English. This will be shown on 25th October 1988 at a joint AC, ABM meeting.

9. The meeting proposed and carried unanimously a vote of thanks to the outgoing officers, mentioning the President in particular.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ZERMATT

At the 1986 London Dinner, the AC guest, Mike Baker, had urged the club to do something to commemorate Cicely Williams, our distinguished late member. The Association took up this suggestion and in March 1987 appealed to members to support a Cicely Williams Memorial Fund. The purpose of this fund being to help keep the English Church in Zermatt, - considered an appropriate way of commemorating Cicely Williams' great contribution to Anglo-Swiss relations, especially in Zermatt, and what she would have liked.

The appeal was well supported, also by AC members, and raised £500, since then members of the Anglo-Swiss Society have contributed a further £100. On 19th August the proceeds were handed over to the Church-warden of St. Peter's, after the dedication of a plaque to Ronald and Cicely Williams. This occasion was a notable event for the church and the small British community now resident in Zermatt. The Bishop of Dunwich, Eric Devenport, paid a moving tribute to the lives of Cicely and Ronald and drew some significant lessons from their enduring love of mountains and from the mutual respect and trust that a climbing companionship engenders and which Cicely Williams described so well in her books.

Many members on the Club meet at Champex came over for the event. Other friends of Cicely and Ronald Williams, both British and Swiss, were present, as well as the Biner family, Mr William Hofstetter, President of the Zermatt section of the SAC, the mayor of Zermatt, Mr Amade Perrig, director of the Zermatt Tourist Office. Mr Potter, vice-chairman of the Intercontinental Church Society, which had donated the plaque, and the Archdeacon in Switzerland were also present and took part in the service.



' O Lord our Heavenly Father, send down Thy
blessing upon this house — among the mountains —
Here may the weary find rest, and the tempted
find power; here may the doubtful find faith,
and the lonely find friends; here may the
fearful find courage, and the sinful find God;
here may Thy great light shine and Thy people
be uplifted in worship to the gates of Heaven;
until in Thy presence we find the fulness of joy
and life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

!CICELY WILLIAMS

SWISS ALPINE CLUBE — 125 YEARS

It is with pride that we salute our parent Club's 125th anniversary in 1988 - a notable achievement, for its formation came only a few years after the Alpine Club itself. Since none of us has succeeded in achieving such a lifespan of longevity, it seems timely to remind ourselves of the club's historical progress.

The Beginning

The foundation dates from the Golden Age of mountaineering, when many of the first ascents of Alpine peaks were made by British climbers. A Dr Theodor Simmler of Berne, conscious of these activities of the Alpine Club suggested the formation of a Swiss Alpine Club to a number of his mountaineering friends. This took place in the Buffet de la Gare at Olten on 19th April 1863, when 35 people came together to promote mountaineering as a means of developing scientific knowledge and a wider understanding of mountain life. There were eight founder Sections:

AARAU	LES DIABLERETS	TODI
BASEL	RHATIA	UTO
BERNE	ST. GALLEN	

Most of these Sections are organising local celebrations this year, and there is a general competition of a ski ascent of 125 summits in one day.

Growth

Until the end of the 19th century membership grew comparatively slowly, due to limited transport and huts. Today's weekend meets required at least a week's expedition at that time. However, from 1900 onwards growth developed, as shown by SAC statistics.

	<u>Members</u>	<u>Sections</u>
1900	6,000	
1913	13,700	58
1938	31,200	84
1963	44,600	92
1988	75,700	107

The important influences in this growth were:

- the popularisation of mountaineering after both wars.
- the advent of winter mountaineering.
- the amalgamation with the active Ladies' Swiss Alpine Club in 1980.
- the growth of the Youth Organisation open to both sexes aged 15 to 22.

The Huts

These are in many ways the shop window of the Club. In the early days they tended to be built of wood, sleeping an average of 13 people. However, from 1920 onwards these were replaced with stone buildings as new and larger huts were built. By 1952 there were already 144 huts - almost saturation, as only 10 new huts have been built since then. The real modern development has been on the basis of architect-planned enlargement with the introduction of facilities such as telephones and solar panels, not to mention supplies by helicopter. It is good to think that we provided funds to build the Britannia Hut in 1912, for today the high standard of SAC huts is only maintained by an annual expenditure of some 2 million Swiss francs.

Other Activities

We may take for granted nowadays the core activities of regular training courses for members and guides, and the certification of guides, but the long-standing nature of some others deserves mention:

Mountain Rescue:

There were already 2 rescue posts in 1903 and the number has now grown to 95 (excluding the cantonal posts in the Valais). Today the Club works closely with the rescue organisation REGA, which has access to helicopters, rescue parties and 300 avalanche dogs.

Cultural:

The extensive range of some 50 guidebooks is regularly updated, quite apart from special publications, such as that on Alpine flora. The bulletin "Les Alpes" dates from 1925 and now stands visual comparison with any other journal. The Club Library, attached to the Zurich Central Library since 1890, contains some 20,000 historical volumes and is planning to publish its catalogue. The Alpine Museum in Berne, founded in 1905 by the Berne Section, is still partially funded by the Club and its important collection is shortly to be re-housed.

The Environment:

Right from 1907 the Club has contested despoliation, most notably opposing plans for a cable car to the top of the Matterhorn and of a railway to the top of the Jungfrau. Today it has a specialist adviser to this end on the Secretariat.

This all adds up to an impressive record. The SAC has achieved the status of a national institution by its own efforts. With our historic links we must all wish that this may long continue.

Part of circular sent out by Dr Simmler in October 1962, which resulted in the setting up of a (Swiss) Alpine Club.
(Reproduced by courtesy of the CAS/SAC).

Adressschreiben

an die Fd. Bergsteiger und Alpenfreunde der Schweiz.

Gedachte Herren!

*Seit einigen Jahren werden die Gletscher im Hochgebirge
sowen immer häufiger so es scheint in dieser Hinsicht ein wahrer
Waldsterben namentlich auch unsere schweizerischen Touristen zu be-
trüben. Es ist Ihnen nicht unbekannt, daß der „englische Alpenclub“
in Folge seiner Organisation von schweizerischen Touristen stark Con-
currenz macht, so ist nicht bald dahin kommen, daß wenn das Publi-
cum in der Schweiz über die Regionen des ewigen Schnees so Ertes,
über die Zugänglichkeith der Gletscher so der Felsengipfel sich auf-
klären will, es zu den Beschränkungen des englischen Alpenclubs ge-
müß. Eine solche Sachlage schien uns benachteiligt, ja sogar beschä-
mend.*

Circular

To mountaineers and all who love the Alps in Switzerland.

Gentlemen,

For some years now expeditions in the glacier and higher mountain regions have been ever more eagerly undertaken by our own Nationals. You will not be unaware of the formation of the English Alpine Club. This now constitutes a very strong rivalry for Swiss Mountaineers and a situation could soon arise where the general public in Switzerland will have to turn to the publications of the English Alpine Club for information about their own regions of ice and eternal snows and the access to glaciers and peaks. Such a case would be shameful.

OBITUARIES

Dr. H.H. Mills

I first met Dr. Mills in Saas Fee during the Association's 50th Jubilee Meet in 1959. He was not on that Meet but in doing the circuit of the Alphubel and the Allalinhorn I met a party from Sedbergh School who had ascended the Allalinhorn from the Britannia Hut. The party was in the charge of Dr. Mills and we stopped and had a chat just below the summit. We had further contact later at the Langefluh. I remember being very impressed at the way the party was being led, being well organised and happy.

At that time Dr. Mills and Canon Boggis, the Chaplain at Sedbergh, regularly took boys at the School climbing in the Alps. Both Dr. Mills and Canon Boggis attended the Association's Alpine Meets at Zinal in 1963 and at Arolla in 1966.

Dr. Mills left Sedbergh in 1962 on his appointment as Rector of Edinburgh Academy, a post which he held until his retirement in 1977.

He was a member of the S.A.C. and of the Association from 1958 to 1985 and became a member of the Alpine Club in 1964.

Although very modest and quiet in his bearing, Bertie Mills was very much a man of action. He served in the Parachute Regiment during the war and on D-Day took part in the capture of the Pegasus Bridge at Ranville on the left flank of the Allied beaches in Normandy. He was awarded the M.C. for his part in the operation. He went to Cambridge after the war and gained Rugby blues in 1947 and 1948.

Those who came into contact with Bertie Mills will remember with pleasure his quiet charm and dry sense of humour. M.B.

This last is illustrated in the following note from:

Maurice Freeman

Bertie Mills came to several ABM Alpine Meets a few years ago. He was a competent alpinist who tended to make up his own rope in the days when we employed a guide for the party, so we did not always see a lot of him - though I do remember once sharing a rope with him. His extremely fluent command of modern languages was very helpful abroad: his knowledge of French literature appeared to exceed that of most natives. I recall an incident he related following a traverse of the Petit Dent de Velsivi. This is straightforward from south to north, but tricky the other way. Bertie and party were proceeding in the usual direction when they were surprised to see a solitary climber approaching from the other end. Unsurprisingly they found him stuck at the mauvais pas. Bertie, who it must be added was looking extremely weather beaten, gave him a top rope and was rewarded with a two franc tip. He said he might have refused it either on the grounds that it was unseemly if he was taken to be the Rector of Edinburgh Academy, or meagre if he was taken to be a guide. Having to make an instant decision, he reflected that 2 S.F. is 2 S.F. after all and pocketed it.



Noel Odell, Mountaineer

The July 1987 Newsletter contained, by permission, the fine obituary of Noel Odell which John Hunt had written for the Royal Geographical Society. The editor of the Climbers Club Journal, Ian Smith, has now given us permission to publish in our journal extracts from an obituary by Geoff Milburn. This gives accounts of Odell's remarkable mountaineering exploits which Milburn has culled from a variety of sources.

Editor

....."He took to the hills at quite an early age and after exploring the Lake District spread farther afield to the Alps. By the first World War he was already in his twenties and served with the Royal Engineers. After the war he returned to the hills and soon made a remarkable first ascent on the Idwal Slabs. His route, Tennis Shoe, was bold for its time (1919) and nearly twenty years later J.M.Edwards graded it as Severe and very exposed, commenting "It maintained its rubber reputation for about ten years"....

...."1920 saw Odell in Scotland with a small party. Herbert Carr wrote of North Buttress on Buchaille Etive: 'Delightful rock work took us onward, Odell doing an 80-foot pitch of face-work which was certainly Severe. I turned it by an easy chimney on the left'.....

...."This however was merely a foretaste of what was to come. During the summer season Odell failed on the North East Face of the Aiguille Verte but was successful on the Grepon and other peaks."....

...."In 1922 he was invited to join the Merton College Arctic Expedition.... With Irvine, Odell explored a peak which he described as 3,000 feet or more of magnificent climbing reminiscent of the Tower Ridge of Ben Nevis but on a larger scale.

While Odell was in the Arctic a battle was taking place on Everest and after a brief respite the forces were marshalled for the 1924 attempt. Odell joined the expedition from the Persian oil fields. During the expedition Odell's character was succinctly summed up by Norton:

'Odell had a record second to none for toughness and endurance.....
Odell and Irvine, "The Old Firm", spent over a week at the North Col in support. No members of the climbing party pulled more weight in the team than these two by their unostentatious, unselfish gruelling work'

It was however Odell's own words which were to capture the imagination of future generations. Odell and Irvine were the third assault party chosen to go for the summit but events dictated otherwise. The disappearance of Mallory and Irvine high on the mountain attracted a great amount of attention in later years and Odell's words have been constantly dissected in an effort to shed further light on the mystery.

'At about 26,000 feet I climbed a little crag... I saw the whole summit ridge and final peak of Everest unveiled. I noticed far away on a snow-slope leading up to the last step but one from the base of the final pyramid a tiny object moving... A second object followed. As I stood intently watching this dramatic appearance the scene became enveloped in cloud, and I could not actually be certain that I saw the second figure join the first.'

The next day, after failing to find the missing pair of climbers Odell was very much alone:

'I glanced up at the mighty summit above me. It seemed to look down with cold indifference on me, mere puny man, and howl derision in wind-gusts at my petition to yield up its secret, this mystery of my friends. If it were indeed the sacred ground of Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the Mountains, had we violated it? ---- was I now violating it? And yet, as I gazed again,

there seemed to be something alluring in that towering presence. I was almost fascinated. I realised that no mere mountaineer alone could be but fascinated; that he who approaches close must ever be led on and, oblivious of all obstacles, seek to reach that most sacred and highest place of all. It seemed that my friends must have been enchanted also...'

In his final analysis of the situation Odell was quite clear when he stated, "I think there is a strong probability that Mallory and Irvine succeeded. At that I must leave it".....

....In 1936 instead of being on Everest Odell went to Nanda Devi with H.W. Tilman who had also been left out of the Everest team, Tilman was in no doubt that Odell was going well and had the bit between his teeth:

'On the way up the glacier Odell, either through excess of zeal or insufficiency of load, had led the field at a rare pace and the field had got rather strung out'

Odell, who was supposed to be stopping at a scree slope, was probably hunting for rocks with his head down and must have got rather carried away:

'He steamed past the scree and disappeared... We wrote Odell off for that day at least. Next day he carried two loads'.

Higher up the mountain Odell was going even better according to Tilman: 'Odell led over this ridge at a good pace...' 'There was a difficult piece of rock to climb; Odell led this and appeared to find it stimulating, but it provoked me to exclaim loudly upon its thinness.' 'The summit was duly reached and Tilman later wrote:

'In 1936 he climbed Nanda Devi (25,660 ft) when he seemed so much fitter than the rest of us that I considered his age (47) to be immaterial.'

Nanda Devi was the highest mountain climbed until 1950 when Annapurna was conquered by the French. At every stage Odell had proved that he was tough and resilient and in many respects when one considers his overall achievements he was at least equal of any other mountaineer of his day. Even his modesty was reflected by T.G. Longstaff who received a laconic telegram on Shetland from the Nanda Devi team: 'two reached the top August 29'. As Longstaff related ...' no names. They had deserved the honour: here was humility not pride, and gratitude for a permitted experience.'....

....In the post-war period Odell was professor of several universities round the world but his mountaineering interests continued unabated. While in British Columbia Odell teamed up with Smythe to explore the Lloyd George Mountains and later in 1947 Smythe commented that "Odell and I would have made a fast pair" (What price Everest? ... yet by then Odell was 57 years old!). On Mount Louis a storm blew up and led Smythe to comment:

'I for one had had enough of it. Odell was still on the actual summit, and I a few yards below, when he suddenly exclaimed, "I've had an electric shock!"'

On the descent with darkness threatening the situation got even more serious:

'I shouted to Odell to come across. He did so and there was no assistance I could give him on the rope, but he climbed across with all his surefootedness and steadiness ... It was now or never, for we were soaked by the rain, and a night out in such a condition and such a situation would be a horrible experience.'

Even on the lower stretches of the mountain when Smythe was ready to bivouac Odell was ready to navigate his way through the bush:

'He did it, both by his knowledge of the topography and by some unerring instinct. From grumbling at first I became interested ... In the end I became enthusiastic and very grateful to Odell for this extremely able and accurate course through a pitch-black night.'

On another descent Smythe was in no doubt about Odell's fitness when he recorded:

'Down we went, Odell bounding far ahead like a chamois, and a few minutes later we were in the forest, our high-pitched calls announcing to the cook our immediate arrival.'

In 1949 Odell was back in Alaska with W. Hainsworth, R. McCarter and Bruce-Robertson, and he made the first ascent of Mount Vancouver (15,825 feet) in the St. Elias Mountains. This was Odell, not far off 60 years of age and still going strong, probably better than any other man of his age - with another 38 years still to go!.....

BOOK REVIEWS

On and Off the Rocks by Jim Perrin
Victor Colling Ltd, September 1986
192 pp. 191 photographs, £10.95.

This is a book worth reading - and re-reading; some of the articles for the sheer pleasure they give (e.g. The Land that Time Forgot), some because they are strong and hard, like the experiences they describe, and it is only on re-reading, perhaps more than once, that one can understand and come to sympathise with what is written, (e.g. Street Illegal).

The introduction has the evocative title "The Ramparts of Paradise", and the quotation from Robert Roberts' "A Ragged Schooling" which aptly mirrors Jim Perrin's youthful experience when he would look with wonder and longing at the distant skyline of the Pennines over the rooftops of Northern Manchester. And the articles in the first part of the book "The Gilded Calamity" continue to mirror the author's thoughts, experiences and moods on the hills; some happy and exuberant, some sombre and foreboding, even frightened as Jim Perrin, a son of Wales, contemplates sorrowfully all her loss and prospect of further loss. In happier vein, an article on Tryfan, "A small, Gothic Cathedral of a Mountain" is written with affection and knowledge so that even if Tryfan is your No. 1 mountain and you think you know it well, you are shown new vistas and given enthusiastic advice that excites your interest anew. Also "Up Here, Down There" tells of the escape from tension, anguish and frustration in a sudden sortie, just before dusk, joyfully to engage with wind and weather on the hills at night.

The second part, "On the Rocks", is about "hard" climbs, beginning with Right Unconquerable on Stanage Edge, Peak District, which the young Joe Brown did in 1947, initiating thereby the new attitude to hard climbs. Other articles describe the ensuing world of extreme climbing and what it entails of skill, physical effort and mental strain, but also triumph. "Street Illegal" tells of a great and terrible feat, "Taxation No Tyranny" of the duplicity of fear and the perfection of a fast, hardest climb; "Gate of Horn" shows us Jim Perrin the poet in the raw, -daring, fearful, exultant, even if we cannot fully comprehend the rock-climbing jargon and idioms. Finally there is "Fictive Heroes", an arresting piece of fiction that adds imagination and fantasy to experience, and could perhaps be declaimed or recited. In the middle of this hard section there is also a gentler, pastoral passage, - "The Land That Time Forgot" to delight all who know the Ogwen valley.

Part three, "The Human Factor" is a series of eight brief biographies, starting with H.W. Tilman and John Hoyland to Jill Lawrence and Chris Bonnington; all excellent. It is surprising how much of the person and of his or her attitude to mountains and of the individual styles of climbing these articles impart.

The articles in the last part of the book, "The Nature of the Beast", cover various topics, from the camaraderie among climbers in the early post-war years, to blood sports, urging the outdoor movement to support efforts to bring down the barriers of law against them. It also includes another fine article on Ogwen, historical and re-visited, which is very readable and enjoyable and also revealing for those who started climbing there before the war and have only occasionally returned to Ogwen since to climb. There is a remarkable end-piece, "A

Valediction", - remarkable in that it was written at the age of 25, in which the young J. Perrin pays tribute to all that climbing has given him, but declares it is not worth the cost and says goodbye to it. Yet nine years later, in the moving last article "For Arnold Pines", he embraces it all again, even accidental death, which he writes: "is adventitious, we have no risk-free role and there is nothing so terrible about death".

M.R.L.

ON HIGH LAKELAND FELS

Bob Allen, PIC Publications, 1987, 190 pages hard-back £9.95

Lovers of the hills can applaud the initiative of Messrs. Milburn and Jones in establishing PIC publishers and in selecting Lakeland and Bob Allen as subject and author of their first venture. No matter how many books on the Lakes may already be in one's collection, this new volume is worth adding thereto.

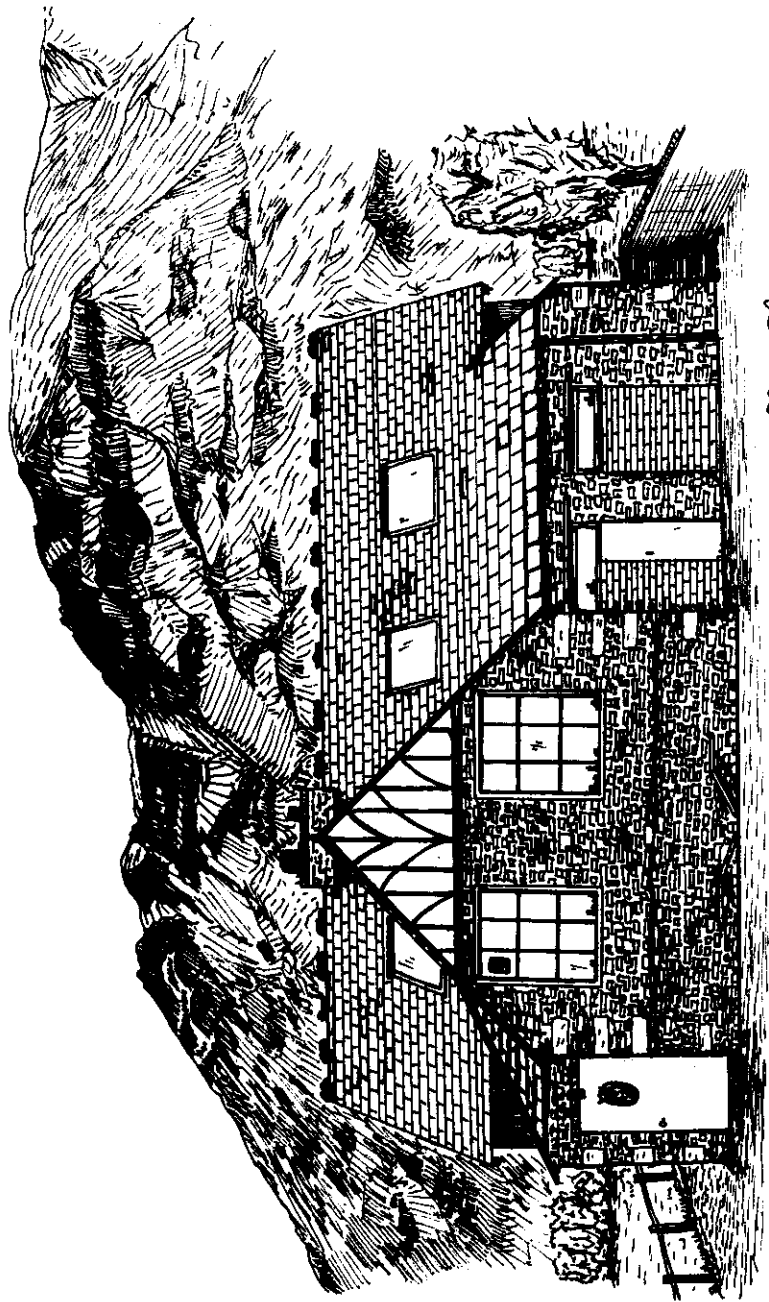
British hills are much more difficult to photograph satisfactorily than The Alps due to the inescapable facts of geology, glaciation, climate and latitude. The resulting predominantly rounded hills and north facing, "cirque" crags do not offer the photographer the sharp contrasts of light, shade and colour which are essential for the best mountain pictures. Even W.A. Poucher, the doyen of Lakeland photography, has not been able fully to overcome this problem. Bob Allen, using colour brilliantly, shows how even his many best photos lack Alpine impressiveness while his poorer examples do not arouse much interest. Perhaps Mr. Allen could consider making a 360° aerial panorama from or above some central peak similar to those now available elsewhere.

Route descriptions are most painstakingly and humourously detailed to enable walkers to find their way even in the dirtiest weather - not that this will ever be quite as reassuring in such circumstances as the red and white paint which Frank Smythe execrated over 50 years ago. The detail would indicate that the author has himself traversed all the 100 routes - which would surely entitle him to a Guinness Book of Records reference.

The individual area maps are not readily related to the key map because their rectangular boundaries are quite different from the irregular shapes of the areas on the key map.

Perhaps the most troubling feature of the book is its format, too small for the best "coffee-table-quality" photographs, but too big (and sharp cornered, hardback) for an easily accessible guide book in pocket or rucksack.

E. Loewy



Pikka Mallis..
1988.

THE GEORGE STARKEY HUT. A NEW SKETCH