

**THE ASSOCIATION
OF BRITISH MEMBERS
OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB**

JOURNAL 1991

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DIARY FOR 1991

11-13	January	Glencoe	Alasdair Andrews
23	January	London Lecture	John Whyte
1- 2	February	Perthshire	Alasdair Andrews
22-24	February	Northern Dinner Meet	Glenridding/Patterdale
14	March	Invitation meeting in celebration of the 700th Anniversary of the Swiss Confederation.	Andre Roch Swiss Embassy
15-17	March	Braemar	Alasdair Andrews
13-14	April	ABMSAC Hut Maintenance Meet	Patterdale
20	April	Surrey Walk	Ben Suter
5	May	Celebratory Walk Up Snowdon (250th Anniversary of first recorded ascent)	James Bogle
17-19	May	Snowdonia Scrambles	John Berry/Ben Suter
22	May	London Lecture	John Chapman
1- 8	June	Isle of Skye	Ben Suter
15-16	June	Peak District Scrambles	John Chapman
23	June	Surrey Hills Walk	Jack Derry
28-30	June	Lakes Scrambles and Patterdale Peaks	Rudolf Loewy
5- 7	July	More Snowdonia Scrambles (MAM hut)	Ben Suter
27	July-17	August	Joint ABMSAC/AC/CC Alpine Meet Mike Pinney
3-17	August	ABMSAC Alpine Meet	Harry Archer
3-17	August	Family weeks at Patterdale	John Murray
30-Aug - 1	Sept.	North Yorkshire Moors Meet	Brooke Midgley
25	September	Alpine Reunion and Slide Show	London
29	September	Bedfordshire Walk	James Baldwin
4- 6	October	Buffet Party Meet, Patterdale	Marion Porteous
19	October	Club Annual Dinner, London	Peter Ledebor
20	October	"After Dinner" Walk	Ben Suter
1- 3	November	Joint Alpine Meet Reunion	Mike Pinney
27	November	Annual General Meeting, London	The President

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 Royal Entomological Society, 41 Queens Gate, South Kensington, London at 7.00 p.m. Refreshments are usually available before and after the Meeting.

THE NEW PRESIDENT

Allan Ross Cameron F.Eng.

Ross was introduced to climbing by F.R.G. Chrew and F. Spencer Chapman when at Gordonstoun in the 30s, only a few years after its foundation. Chew was later to become headmaster of Gordonstoun, and the great Geoffrey Winthrop Young was a governor. Chapman had returned to do some teaching after his ascent of Chomolhari (24,000 ft.) in 1937 and had previously been on the Gino Watkins Expedition and with the British Diplomatic Mission to Tibet. Naturally, his experiences were of great interest and an inspiration to the boys. A school expedition to the Alps was planned for September of 1939, which unfortunately was not an auspicious date and the plan was shelved.

Most of the war years were spent on the development of gunnery radar for the navy. It was during this time that he met John Coales (SAC Veteran), who was later to encourage him to join ABMSAC.

After the war, Ross returned to Aberdeen University to study for an engineering degree. During that time he joined the Cairngorm Club, one of the oldest climbing clubs in Britain; he was also in the University mountain rescue team. Climbing continued in Scotland, Wales and the Lake District. He met his wife, Sheila, in the Cairngorms, the scene of many family holidays.

After completion of his degree, engineering of one sort or another dominated his life, first in radar, computers and ground to air radar trials. There was then a change to nuclear power. This was to last for two decades until he joined a firm of engineering and scientific consultants and was involved in the analysis of safety aspects of nuclear power, oil and gas installations, both onshore and offshore. After formal retirement, he continued with consultancy and was seconded for two years to Transmanche-Link, the Channel Tunnel designers and constructors. He was elected a Fellow of the Fellowship of Engineering in 1989.

In 1983 John Coales suggested that he and Sheila should be his guests at the ABMSAC meet at Bivio in order to get fit for Alf Gregory's Everest trek which was planned for the same year. This was a rather belated entry to the Alpine scene. Since then, Sheila and he have been on all except one of the ABMSAC Alpine meets.

TWO TRIPS TO THE ROOF OF SWITZERLAND

By the New Boys (Keith Dillon)

I felt a light nudge on my shoulder; "Hey, it's 1.30." I had been awake for some time (does anybody actually sleep in a hut?) waiting expectantly for the 1.30 call. The call never came and we arose ahead of the normal rush.

The day before had seen a leisurely walk with my two companions, Paul Irvén and Paul Owens, to the Monte Rosa hut and having taken the mountain railway to Rotenboden meant that a large part of this was downhill. We would surely pay for this on our return. Today's objective was a little more strenuous! - an ascent of the Dufourspitze, at 4634m Switzerland's highest (and Europe's second highest) mountain. Serious stuff perhaps, but in comparison to many lesser mountains (lesser in altitude that is) by no means difficult. We had also benefited from the advice given by members of earlier expeditions on this mountain.

As we set out from the hut, the light of the almost full moon enabled us to see quite clearly the snow capped peaks all around us, set against a star-studded sky. Torches were almost completely redundant and the cold clear sky promised that conditions would be good on the glacier.

The first obstacle to be tackled was a moraine field and this gave us a tough start, with no proper path to follow, but having checked this out the previous evening we felt quite confident we were on the right track. Unfortunately the same could not be said when we started out on the glacier, searching for the well-defined route which would eventually lead us right to the summit - very easy to follow once you're on it. At one point we waited for a party to pass us, in order to ask their advice on direction.

A long trudge in the snow followed, ever upwards, and with more peaks coming into view as we gained altitude and the sun began to rise. The prospects were looking good.

Ahead of us now was a steep snow slope, narrowing to a rocky ridge which led to the summit. The summit was clearly not far from us, less than half a mile, but we had been warned it would take some hours to reach from this point. Progress along the ridge was slow, partly due to our inexperience and partly to the number of people being passed in some very confined spaces - no, on second thoughts they weren't confined spaces at all, there was really far too much space around us for such games! Suddenly we heard the clatter of an ice axe falling against the rocks. Looking down, we watched as it seemed to take ages to disappear from view. Shortly after, the Dutch party behind us (whose axe it was) decided to retreat.

At the end of the ridge, we removed our sacks to climb the chimney immediately below the summit. And at last we were in the sun! Although it was a bright sunny day, climbing the west spur of the mountain we were in shade for almost the whole ascent. It was strange to feel such cold air in the middle of the day in mid-summer, and with a clear sun above us. At least the air was quite still - it could have been a whole lot worse. The recently fallen snow on the surrounding slopes testified to this.

The previous day, on the way to the hut, there had been the usual discussion as to why we climbed. My answer, with more truth in it than anyone believed, was to see the views from the top. With such an objective, the attractions of climbing the highest mountain in the area are obvious; after all, surely the higher you go the further you should see. But so often one fails to be rewarded for all the hard work involved in attaining the summit, due to the notorious unpredictability of the weather in the mountains. Well, on this occasion we were not to be disappointed and I still find it an incredible coincidence that we chose to climb the Dufourspitze on the same day that the skies were completely clear above us and around us, with only some low level cloud below over Italy to add interest. Fifty miles to the west the huge massif of Mont Blanc could be seen quite clearly.

A short rest on the summit and the descent began. This was largely uneventful and as we neared the hut it became clear that we would be too late to continue on to Rotenboden station to catch the last train down into Zermatt. So another night at the hut awaited us, another sleepless night. But this time it was to be different - the tiredness and the early start ensured a night of almost unbroken sleep.

Back at the hut, the two members of the Dutch party we had passed several times on the ascent were waiting for us, and Paul's kindness in lending one of them his ski sticks was well repaid as they took orders for beers.

In truth we were on the mountain far longer than we should have been, for a variety of reasons - the time taken to rope up, initial route - finding difficulty on the glacier, slow progress along the ridge - but I am sure the lessons learned will be invaluable. And having climbed the biggest (but otherwise also one of the easier peaks) that Switzerland has to offer, I have no doubt that for the future, quality rather than quantity will become of prime importance for us.

By the Old Hands (David Wagstaff)

In a year when the disappearance of permanent snow had changed some routes dramatically, Monte Rosa seemed to promise that the guidebook description would at least be recognisable. So three of us, Bill Westermeyer, my wife Elizabeth and myself set off to climb the Dufourspitze on the 31st July.

Wisely indulging in the luxury of an early train to Rotenboden, we arrived at the hut early enough to make an extensive reconnaissance to the top of the moraine and beyond. We were taken aback. The snow had all disappeared below the glacier ice; and there was the early morning prospect - after the path up the moraine had ended - of an hour and a half of boulder-hopping up inconsequential paths in the dark. It was impossible to plan a route in detail; but knowing what was involved, we would at least not be tempted in the dark to think we had lost our way. As they say in the army - time spent on reconnaissance is seldom if ever wasted.

We set off about 12.30 am and got to the dry glacier about 4.30 am. The route then unavoidably traversed a heavily crevassed bit of glacier, and after crossing big crevasses on diminished snow bridges in the dark, it was with relief that we found, by chance, the trodden path in the snow.

The next section is a snow plod, following the least crevassed way up the slope. But after the Sattel, which we reached well after dawn, the snow steepens considerably; then there is a short section of easy rock ridge before the second snow slope. We were naive enough to think the final ridge would be similar to the first section. It was not. It went on and on, not gaining much in height, and with just enough snow and ice on it to warrant crampons. Indeed we saw no one climbing without them. The rock itself was easy, but the exposure, the cold, the necessity for crampons, and, most of all, the need to pass other parties both ahead of us and behind all called for care. We spent no time on the top, and were tired when we got back to the snow, and there had our only long halt. However, we got back to the hut pretty well in guidebook time, having taken 7 hours 40 minutes up.

After some brief refreshment, we set off again to catch the last train down from Rotenboden. The only actual mistake we made all day was to believe the published timetable, which indicated that the last train went at 6.30 pm, whereas in fact it went at 7.25 pm.

It was quite late when we sat down to dinner at the Hotel Blauherd!

CLIMBING THE WRONG PEAK IN NEPAL

Ashley Greenwood

I went trekking in Nepal in November 1990 with Rosemary, Stanley Thomas (Climbers Club) and Jane Gamble (formerly a member).

The Rolwaling Area had been reopened to trekkers and climbers in 1989 after being closed for 11 years. We planned to trek up the Rolwaling Valley and turn off southward to climb the Trekking peak Randung Co, 5,930m.

Starting from Barabise we crossed the Tinsang La, 3,319m on the second day and arrived at the deserted summer village of Na, 4,183m in the Rolwaling valley on November 15th. Here we spent two nights acclimatising before parting company temporarily with Jane Gamble, who wanted more time to acclimatise, but owing to a misunderstanding failed to rejoin us till after the climb. Meanwhile a walk to the Tsho Rolpa Lake, 4,561m provided further acclimatisation before we remaining three moved up to our base camp in the Yalung valley at 5,010m.

Next day we found an excursion to the Yalung La, 5,310m much more tiring than we expected owing to the large amount of boulder hopping involved. The final slope to the col is steep and by no means easy. To get laden porters across would probably require fixed ropes. The trip there and back took us six hours. After a day's rest we moved up to our high camp via the Yalung glacier, an easier ascent than via the Yalung La as described on pages 88 and 89 of Bill O'Connor's book "The Trekking Peaks of Nepal", but still a tiring one (for the not-so-young at least), owing to the long stretch of boulder hopping and the descent before reaching the Yalung glacier.

Next morning, still in the brilliant but exceedingly cold weather (about minus 25° in camp) which we had enjoyed all the time, Stanley and I set out at 7.00 am with the Sherpas Ang Temba and Passang Nioru for a sharp snow and rock peak on the west of the Randung glacier.

This was the mountain which had been reconnoitred the previous year by the Managing Director of Tiger Mountain Nepal who had sent us a photograph of it with a fairly detailed description of the route. Our two Sherpas had tried it twice in October 1990 but had had to turn back because of deep snow and the altitude sickness of their clients. In these circumstances it would have been difficult to challenge the identify of the peak we were bound for, although if we had been unguided I am fairly confident that by reference to the map and Bill O'Connor's book we would have aimed at an obvious snow dome rising from the glacier further to the south.

There were faint tracks across the glacier, but when they turned southwards our Sherpas left them and turned towards a steep slope of snow and ice which led up to the south west ridge of our mountain. This was about 70m high and of about 50° inclination and was the only technical part of the ascent.

Here the Sherpas fixed a rope, which expedited our descent, but was useless to us on the way up as we had neither jumars nor prusiks; a second short iceaxe or terradactyl would have helped a lot. This slope led to the south west ridge, which we followed up easy snow and then rock scrambling to the top - a narrow ledge four feet below an even narrower one with a cairn on it. It had taken us three hours. There was a stunning view all round of 6,000 and 7,000 metre peaks, including Gaurishanker and Menlungtse.

We got back to high camp at midday, but unwilling to face the bouldering and short re-ascent on to the lateral moraine that afternoon, we chose to spend another night at high camp before clattering down the 1,800m to Beding next day.

On our return trek we followed the Bhote Kosi and Tamba Kosi all the way till the final 1,000m ascent to Charikot. On the way we diverged to visit the hot springs marked in square 23/75 on the Schneider "Rowaling Himal" 1/50,000 map. These are on the opposite side of the river from where they are shown on this map, and require a diversion of three hours or so there and back from the bridge at Manthale. They are seldom, if ever, visited by trekkers, so we were told.

Early in January this year I received a letter from the Managing Director of Tiger Mountain Nepal, saying that now it seemed that they had sorted out the wrong Randung Go and that the proper one was climbed by their next party.

After reference to our photos, the map and Bill O'Connor's book, we have established that what we climbed was the point marked 5,733m on the Schneider map, a little north east of the snow peak of Randung Go - a more interesting mountain than the latter appeared to us to be, but not the one we veterans, Stanley (aged 76) and I (aged 78) expected to climb. But we hope for better luck next time - though not in Nepal I think!

The maps on pp 13 and 14 of the report on the 1990 Nepal Meet will help members to follow the itinerary of Ashley Greenwood's party. Ed.

THE PINDOS AND MOUNT OLYMPUS

By John Burrows

Walking in a remote corner of Greece and an ascent of Mount Olympus was the lure which attracted my wife and I to join an Explore of Aldershot walking party in September. The trip was a great success and we met up with congenial companions and were led by an energetic and highly competent tour leader.

We spent a day at Delphi, where we visited the sanctuary and embarked upon a short walk up the hill behind the stadium, which is the start of the long distance route over the Pindos Mountains to Albania and which was first walked as a continuous expedition by John Hunt's party in 1963. The following day we made the long bus journey to Lamia and across the Karditsa plain. The Katara Pass (1,600m) has snow from December to May and the road is marked by snow posts. From here it is a short journey down to Metsovo - which was once remote and isolated. Now, snow ploughs keep the road open in winter and the pretty Alpine-style village suffers the price of progress, with heavy lorries driving up and down the main street. A new road tunnel under construction will herald even more changes. We stayed at the Egnatia Hotel, which in appearance is not unlike many an Austrian hostel, and we drank Hemo, the locally made fresh wine sold by the kilo. It can be drinkable, or decidedly rough. Cheese pies and crispy bread were another delight; also a local smoked cheese made from cow's milk.

From Metsovo we walked through the pine forests up onto the open grassland of the Pindos Mountains. The valleys are steep-sided and the descent from the main town, Pronilio (in the sun) and up to Anifio (away from the sun) takes the best part of an hour. Alas, the steep donkey tracks, which used to be well paved, are falling into disrepair and the peasant farmer of old now has a pick-up truck which he drives along the newly made, but longer, jeep tracks. Elsewhere, we found newly constructed rough jeep tracks and occasionally these would have donkey paving along the centre, giving the impression that they had followed a section of old Roman road.

There are brown bears in the mountains but we only saw the glossy black squirrels. We stopped from time to time to eat sweet wild plums. Up on the high grassland, scattered with colchicums at this time of year, the going is easy and there are many fine peaks and ridge walks. But steer clear of sheep dogs. There are likely to be four or five with any one flock and they appear more ferocious than any wolf, which is their reason for being around. We made an ascent of Mount Pergos in the Peristeri range, a respectable peak of over 2,000m with some summit rock scrambling.

After four nights at Metsovo, we made the short journey to Meteora. Visually an exciting place, we wondered at the sheer ingenuity of the 15th century monks who chose to live there, and visited four of the seven now inhabited monasteries. Climbing is not encouraged on the inhabited rocks, but apparently takes place on the others.

Finally to Mount Olympus. We stayed on the coast at Plaka in a comfortable but seemingly empty hotel. Lithoro was close by, but first we visited the Roman excavations at Dion. This was once a large town and sea port and there is a fine museum housing the excavated finds.

From Litothoro, it is possible to take a taxi almost half way up Mount Olympus to the car park and taverna at Prionia (1,110m), but everyone doing so would lose out on the very real pleasure of walking up the gorge (5 hours). Here there are rock cliffs and beechwoods, where in September the ground is covered with cyclamen. Rock pools and a mountain stream beckon the summer walker. On into the pine woods and after welcome refreshment at the taverna, a further 3 hours walking brings you to the substantial Greek Alpin Club refuge, with log fires and good food provided by the guardian. Going by the crowds descending from here on Sunday, the mountain would seem to be very popular at weekends and it is probably advisable to give the area a miss at that time.

The following morning, it takes nearly two hours from the refuge to reach the minor summit of Scala, which is as far as many of the tourists get and from where they can take their photographs of the main summit of Mitikas (2,917m). Then there is another 30 or 40 minutes of scrambling, requiring rudimentary climbing skills. Beyond these is another respectable rock peak, Stefani. One then back-tracks to Scala in order to complete the easy circuit of minor grass covered summits, taking care again to avoid any surly looking sheep dogs on the way. After completing the circuit, we made a fast descent to the mountain refuge, which we reached seven hours after departure.

ATLAS INVESTMENT

By Hamish M. Brown

Llacem was holding forth about the new cafe he would build alongside his "Shopping Centre" at Imlil. Hassan, a young relative, aged about ten, suddenly grinned at me, pointed at Llacem and said "He is capitalist". Out of the mouths of babes.....

I've now had 25 years of visiting Imlil in the High Atlas Mountains. On my first visit there was a mountain refuge (hut) and car park, marking the end of the road from Marrakech and Asni, and nothing else. Now there is a thriving town, only half jokingly referred to as "the Chamonix of Morocco", serving as base for trekking and climbing among the highest peaks in North Africa - the attraction that took us there in the first place and an attraction that has beguiled me back year after year. I've been part of its capitalist development I suppose. It has been a remarkable one.

Llacem and his contemporaries have the flair of all entrepreneurs. As toddlers they were "children of the dust", many were shepherding a few sheep and goats on the barren slopes above cultivation level; now they are businessmen with investments in stores, transport, catering; they are guiding tourists, organising treks and think nothing of telexing Europe or flying off to the desert extremities of their kaleidoscopic country.

Mountain "sport" (rock climbing, snow and ice climbing, trekking, skiing, bird-watching, botanising - and now paraponting) have had a chequered history in Morocco. Only a handful of explorers penetrated the ranges before the French "Protectorate", but that brief 40 year period saw considerable activity: huts were built in key spots and a guide book was published to the Toubkal area. Then came the war and

it took a while for the visitors to return. And then there was the struggle leading up to Independence. When some friends and I twice wintered in the Atlas in the mid sixties we saw few other Europeans. At best the locals were useful muleteers. But their children are trained guides and men of the world. Chamonix, or Zermatt, had their development a century earlier. Imlil is only twenty five years old.

Jbel Toubkal, 4,167m being the highest peak, is naturally a lure and the "Toubkal Trail" is a standard joke among the locals (and the less frantic visitors). People yo-yo up and down from Marrakech to Imlil to Toubkal, bringing an urban urgency to a relaxing game, instead of relishing each stage. Imlil itself is a magical place to "do nothing and then rest afterwards". Sure there is bustle when a busload of opulent tourists roll in. Visitors are vital income for the muleteers, guides, storemen, etc., in a country where a labourer earns only 25p an hour and unemployment is 40% in places. Everyone grabs every chance. They are the capitalists of necessity. But Imlil soon returns to "Sleepy Hollow", - the climbers have moved on, the snowy peaks glitter in the sun and the fruit blossom lays a colourful cumulus among the vivid green terraced fields. Here is beauty beyond the singing of it.

Years ago some Americans came down from a walk and we sat on the roof of a friend's house which looked over this view of views. As we sipped the refreshing mint tea I was asked, "Say Hamish, do you think they understand views? Do they appreciate scenery?" My reply was barbed, "Oh yes, they were appreciating it all a thousand years before America was discovered". I am eternally grateful to Morocco for making me see the arrogant nonsense of so much of our materialistic western ways. ("The weeviled bread of western culture.") The mountain Berbers may not have much in the way of wealth but they are rich in traditions and culture, in strong family life, loyalty and all manner of ideals we have thrown out. Life is hard but both input and output balance. One hears much singing and laughter in the Atlas. That is my measure of civilisation.

There have been great changes in the quarter century I've known Imlil. I'm also slightly astonished that so little has changed. We always stay at the house of Alt Idir Mohammed, in one of the villages that ring Imlil itself. Villages were built above the cultivation level, land being precious and, as usual, the valley is dominated by a fortified granary, an agadir. Mohammed's village has largely been rebuilt over the years. Concrete mingles with the mud bricks. Mohammed now has a proper toilet, a clean water supply is piped in for all and his wives cook on a proper gas cooker instead of eye-damaging scrub fires. Our "rent", we feel, is well spent.

But the women still make the traditional cous cous and endless tagines, they keep to their own life apart from the men's (separate, not inferior), life is still dominated by seed-time and harvest. Mohammed is Mohammed Beri (Mohammed the sheep) to differentiate him from the thousand other Mohammeds. Old Donald the Fish from Scourie would recognise many familiarities with the way of life of his Highland childhood, but in the Atlas they are still carving out new terraces and taming new acres of waste lands. To mark the king's 60th birthday last year 60 million trees are being planted. Only faith plants trees for the years unborn.

If I picture a society and a setting almost too good to be true, that is how I see it. There are plenty of problems in the urban sphere, for there always are; in our country as much as any other, (I see more beggars in London than I do in Marrakech), but that is not the world of the Berbers living in the mountains. The delight of Imlil and elsewhere is the dichotomy of a society unaltered in a thousand years being perched above a teeming modern city in a go-ahead, industrialised country. And it is so near to our geriatric civilisation!

I took a long time to break out of the Toubkal trap but from every summit climbed there were horizons of new peaks in view. Slowly I've been exploring them too: the M'Goun massif above the lost world of the Bou Goumez valley and the gorges of the Oued Tessaout, the cedar forests of the Middle Atlas, the stark towers of the Jbel Sahro on the edge of the desert country, the isolated uplift of volcanic Siroua, the drama of the Tichka Plateau above the walled city of Taroudant, the granite sculpting of the Jbel el Kest in the Anti Atlas. The variety is staggering. The scale is huge.

More and more, though, it is the people who have been the best reward. They are marvellously friendly and hospitable. More and more I have left much of our trekking practicalities in their hands. (We live in local houses and eat the tasty local food.) In most areas now there are competent locals who can organise trips for visitors. Several are linked to UK-based companies. And now is the time to make use of this opportunity, while the enthusiasm is there and the historic values still stand firm.

Whatever one's hill interest there are great untapped resources. This year we bivouaced, in March, on the Tichka Plateau and climbed the highest peak in the area, a grand "Alpine" day of crampon work and rock scrambling. From the summit we saw scores of good peaks over 3,000 metres and miles of untouched rock faces and soaring arettes. This was at a time when the UK was having the endless storms of a miserable winter. Imlil is only half a day from London.

In summer the plains and the south are desert hot (the mountains are more temperate) but February-June are the months for Morocco. Tafraoute in the Anti Atlas has its Almond Festival in mid February and the walnuts burst out at Imlil in May. That spring exuberance disappears with the snow and the hills become piles of toilsome rubble. Bird-watching "peaks" in March-April, the alpine flora is at its best in April-May, ski-touring is good, usually, from February to April, one can rock climb any time, and the same goes for trekking. Why not invest in an Atlas visit then? My original commitment 25 years ago has been paying a handsome dividend ever since!

Hamish writes that he is happy to put small groups in touch with Moroccans who can help organise private trips for any of the mountain activities mentioned, as well as UK companies which offer a range of trekking tours. He himself is always ready to share his wide knowledge of this part of the world with fellow members; - if required, also to lead a party.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST YEAR

David Thistlewaite

I have always "intended to" contribute to Members' Climbs in the journal and meeting Rudy Loewy at Zermatt I was even more determined to make the effort. My mountain year started in a ferocious storm force wind on Skiddaw, followed on 17th December with a magnificent shirt sleeves day above Hawes Water. A new Years Day Ingleton Falls Walk was followed by Sundays on Lakelands Central fells above Watendath and a circ from Dockray on the Dodds, both in "worse than poor weather".

Skiing in three valleys in brilliant sunshine became a search for snow but was a beautiful way to escape our grey Northern winter. A second week, at Les Diablerets, started with no snow but within hours of arriving the 'magic white stuff' started falling and just continued giving perfect powder. Unfortunately after two days the snow turned to rain and continued unabated for five days, just like a Manchester Test Match.

Sundays continued in Lakeland with a superb day on Saddleback, ascending and descending direct from Scales Tarn in good snow conditions, followed by a white-out walk, Dow Crag to Swirl How, then a short walk on High Street to keep the old legs moving before a week of perfect skiing in Verbier.

A minor knee operation put me out of action for three weeks and then back to beloved Lakeland and a series of great Sundays; - Pinnacle Ridge on St Sunday Crag, C buttress on Dow Crag, Corvus on Raven Crag, Lorton Gully on Grasmoor, failure on Westmorelands Route - incredibly damp and slippery, Bow Fell buttress (it does seem to get harder; must be getting older) Scafell from Duddon via upper Eskdale and a final training session over the Langdale Pikes before the Alpine Meet.

Enjoying the luxury of the Hotel Blauherd and the "meet's" perfect weather, we drove round to Val Moiry and leaving the cabane at 3.45 and making the trail we enjoyed a beautiful but uneventful ascent of Grand Cornier (summit at 9.00 am). On our return to the hut we learned that one member of a party following had an involuntary visit to the depths of a crevasse.

The continuing perfect weather enticed my wife, Arline, and friends Henry and Margaret to persuade me to take them up the Breithorn; so they all now proudly claim one 4000 metre peak. The Taschhorn has been high on my list for many years and with conditions so perfect the journey was made to Sass Fee. Leaving the Langfluh after midday to traverse the Alphubel caused some funny looks from parties descending the trade route. We toiled up in the afternoon sun but it was good to be on the summit at 5.00 pm and then descend to the Mischabeljoch bivouac. Hoping to be the only occupants we ended up lucky to get the last two bunk spaces, two very late arrivals having to sleep very rough. A magnificent sun rise saw us well into the day's itinerary and at 8.00 am we were on the summit, three hours for the Taschhorn; I couldn't believe it. Even so the altitude was beginning to affect me so

instead of traversing to the Dom we descended the Kin face. Definitely the most exciting part of the day was fitting crampons in a little vertical chimney choked with ice. "Don't drop the rucksack!" "Don't drop a crampon!" "DON'T FALL OFF!!" Taking extreme care, crampons fitted at last, get off the rock onto the ice face. What a wonderful place to visit once! Down into the Kin glacier basin and find the way over the Festi-Kin-Lucke and abseil over the rimaye onto the Festi Glacier and so the Dom hut. Randa was reached 8 hours after leaving the summit. It's a big mountain.

Dreams of the Weisshorn turned to reality when after three days rest Arline accompanied us up from Randa on that interminable walk up to Arline Hut. After a picnic at the halfway halt Arline returned to the comfort of Hotel Blauherd and we plodded on up to the hut. A short stroll in the gathering dusk to check on the way in the morning was rewarded with a meeting with a small herd of six or seven Bouquetin who posed for photos with no fear at all. Not at all like timid Chamois.

Departing from the hut at 2.45 with all the mountains of the Valais illuminated by a dazzling full moon we crossed the glacier, climbed the rock band to the higher level and climbed to the base of the point 3915. A short struggle with an icy chimney/gully and an interminable struggle to keep to the correct route led us eventually to the top of point 3915 in just 3 hours. As we moved along the rocky ridge we experienced another memorable alpine sunrise with the Weisshorn snows a beautiful rosy pink. Breakfast was taken coldly and quickly admiring the view. Then came the meet of the day's adventure. Tour Lockmatter delayed us momentarily (thank God for the big ring on the top), but we seemed to arrive at the start of the snow ridge very quickly. Though very narrow at first the snow ridge becomes wider and crossing two small rimayes, on up to the steeper top section and arriving on the summit just six hours after leaving the hut at exactly 8.45 am. Fantastic views from Mt Blanc to the Oberland and all the ranges in the east to th Bernina. The descent was uneventful arriving at the hut at 1.30, and as we continued down to Randa we discussed our next adventure. What about the Dent d'Herens? Enquiries about the Aosta Hut gave very vague answers. Trying to contact a guardian proved impossible but as I had been there five years ago we determined to try. Parking the car at the Prarayer Dam a notice informed us the Aosta Hut was ruined (in three languages). A new plan was devised, we would go to the new Prarayer Hotel/Refuge (five star place) and make a very early start. After superb food and bed we crept out into the night, no stars showed, slightly despondent we continued. After one hour light rain began to fall intermittently, and gradually as we reached the Aosta Hut heavier rain started. We entered the deserted hut at 6.30 approximately, it was still pitch black. The hut was just as I remembered it, roof in reasonable order and okay for a night. Outside the weather deteriorated and without provisions for a stay we descended. We had reconnoitred the route from the Valpeline to our satisfaction; we'll return and use the hut.

Back home, Sundays in the Lakes made good use of the early September weather. A good scramble on the Mosedale Face of Pillar was followed by a slippery struggle with a damp New West Climb on "the rock", a beautiful day on Dow, then Fairfield Horseshoe; an interesting Sunday in poor weather on the far Northern Fells at the back of

Skiddaw. High Street via Riggindale Ridge, returning over Kidsty Pike, Langdale Pikes, Pavey, High Raise and Sergeants Man on a beautiful 4th November, followed by Armistice Sunday on Gable, an annual pilgrimage. A full years' activities recorded.

Off to New Zealand in the early New Year, I wonder what Mr Cook will be like? - HARD! - Like they all are.

Les Swindin

Unusually for me I made three climbing trips to the Alps during the year. The extra trip I suppose could be considered compensation for not getting a skiing trip in at the New Year. Looking back, each visit might be considered to have been successful in terms of the climbing accomplished, but the summer holiday very nearly ended in disaster.

At Easter we had planned to visit the Bernese Oberland with the main objective of our attention being the Jungfrau, one of the six 4000ers that Barbara had still to climb. Well the goal was not achieved, although we might have been lucky if we had used the train to reach the Jungfrauoch. The problem was the unsettled weather. We had planned to climb the Lotschental to reach Konkordia after doing a couple of easy climbs from the Gemmi Pass. The climbs we did, but then the weather deteriorated and it was far too bad to climb to the Hollandia hut. As an alternative we used the lifts to get to the Britannia hut and had two good days climbing the Allalinhorn and the Strahlhorn before crossing the Adler Pass to Zermatt. We did finally get to Hollandia but all we were able to do from there was ski down the Aletsch glacier, ? Wade down!

We returned to the Alps at Whit - to climb the Jungfrau and to do some guidebook work. This time we did use the train, opting to travel up and climb the mountain the same day just in case the weather broke. We thought that we would have some residual acclimatisation from Easter but making the rapid increase in altitude by train was almost too much, Barbara particularly finding the going rough as we neared the summit. Nevertheless we made it, but at the expense of a torn calf muscle for Barbara which prevented her climbing for a while.

Summer was for more guidebook work and more 4000ers. The Schreckhorn and Lauteraarhorn were ticked off in two long days out from the Aar bivouac, - after a couple of training routes from the Oberaarjoch hut. We then joined the FRCC meet at Randa to be in place for the Lenzspitz. This we did from the Dom hut. Whilst Barbara had a rest from her exertions (and celebration of climbing all the Swiss 4000ers) I went off with Peter Fleming to climb the Kanzelgrat on the Zinal Rothorn - well worth climbing.

Peter also joined us in our ascent of the Droite and it was here that the disaster almost befell us. We had climbed the peak and were descending down the south flank in fairly soft snow. We were well down the mountain and had started moving a bit faster when something made me turn round and look uphill. I saw an enormous block of rock tumbling from the upper face and exploding into a massive fusilade of smaller boulders as it hit the snow. Peter, in front, had time to reach the safe harbour of a most conveniently placed large boulder, whilst

Barbara managed to crouch beside it and obtain some protection. I was stranded and exposed and could only try to dodge anything that came my way. I was fortunate, I suppose, that we were so far down the slope that I was able to determine the trajectory of each boulder coming in my direction and to take evasive action. Amazingly none of us was touched and even the rope escaped damage, but we were very relieved to get safely off that slope. This finally persuaded us that there was no future in attempting the Aig. Blanche de Peuterey that summer; it will have to wait another year. Peter and I did do one more climb, the Forbes ridge, in quite difficult conditions.

The rest of the year was much as normal. Some good rock climbing, even two visits to Cloggy, and the addition of a couple more routes from the Hard Rock list (one list I won't complete).

Peter Farrington

After a very active previous year, 1990 was rather an anti-climax. A wet and windy winter produced only a couple of mainland walks - Beinn a Chochuill from Loch Awe and a failed attempt at Beinn Fhionnlaidh from Glen Creran.

In May weather of the other extreme forced me to drop out two thirds of the way through the Bens of Jura fell race with heat exhaustion. However, it proved good training for a descent of Crete's Samaria Gorge with my son Simon, aged 16, a few weeks later - an impressive walk despite the crowds. More arduous was a 50 mile mountain bike journey which took us from the north coast, via Arkadi, over the 3000 ft. foothills of the Ida Mountains to the head of the Amari Valley. From there we continued over hill tracks to Spili before returning to the coast over the Prassies Pass.

In a similar vein in August we pedalled (and took two ferries) to Lochranza on Arran. A practice run up Glen Catacol preceded the next day's trip up Glen Sannox to the Cir Mhor - N. Goatfell saddle where we left the bikes whilst climbing Cir Mhor. After descending Glen Rosa we carried on home to Islay. An interesting exercise which proved to be a lot more strenuous and not much faster than walking the two glens.

In September I made a more orthodox five day mountain traverse with Tony Perrons, an old climbing friend whom I will have to get into the ABM, starting at Montana. From the Violettes hut we took the circuitous route via the Wildstrübel to the Wildstrübel hut and continued the following day over the Rawilpass and Schnidejoch to the Wildhorn hut. A traverse of the Wildhorn took us to the Gelten hut. Our intention was then to cross the Rossgabenldcke to the Col de Sanetsch. Sadly some incompetent route finding and a lack of persistence on my part caused us to retreat from only a few hundred feet above the col. So instead of tramping down to Deborence we spent a lazy afternoon amongst the eidelweiss and other alpine plants on the Augsmatte. Not wishing to retrace our steps we used our last day descending to Gsteig via the Launensee and over Wispele Alp. Apart from some afternoon mist whilst crossing the Plaine Morte and Chilchli glaciers the weather was perfect throughout.

The usual hill and coastal walks on Islay and Jura occupied other free time but for reasons unknown I didn't set foot on rock all year.

David Jones

On reflection it was quite bizarre; the number of torrential downpours which I tramped through during what surely must have been one of the driest of summers.

The first storm we walked into was on the Brecon Beacons in February, when the ferocious winds hammered the rain into us horizontally, giving all a singular problem on how to remain upright and attached to the ground and eventually also a good soaking into the bargain.

Two more excursions in the same region in April and June gave much more pleasurable outings taken in the dry and sunny weather. As was also a trip in early May to the Forest of Dean when on a glorious spring day, we walked a section of the Offa's Dyke Path, following the wooded ridge above Tintern Abbey. However, it was back into a rain storm a week later, when caught out on the Mendip Hills going over to Burrington Combe after scrambling the cliffs out of the Cheddar Gorge.

Next came the ABM Meet at Patterdale during the May Bank Holiday. The large gathering certainly made the most of the prolonged fine weather, to scramble Jack's Rake on Pavey Ark; trek up onto Scafell Pike from Wasdale and finally a day on Gillercombe Crag in Borrowdale.

It was torrential rain once more as we drove into North Wales for the ABM Scrambles Meet at Rhydd-Ddu. "Gone to Pub for Supper", said the note pinned to the door of the Oread hut. So it was there that we joined the rest of the party and a cheery welcome which dispelled our prevailing sense of gloom.

In Snowdonia one can still experience a wet day although it is not actually raining. We had this experience as we slithered over the greasy rocks leading up onto Carnedd Dafydd in thick low lying, cloying cloud. Next morning the cloud lifted and the sun shone through as we walked over to Mynydd-Mawr where we enjoyed a climb on one of the many ridges straddling the face of Craig-y-Bera, and as an added bonus, we had the mountain to ourselves.

The highlight of the climbing season was of course the ABM Alpine holiday at Zermatt. Our situation at the Ferienhaus Morgenrat, the whole month of total sunshine, a host of climbing friends coupled with all those beautiful mountains around, all made for nonstop action and a most memorable holiday.

At the beginning of October came another visit to Patterdale and the ABM Buffet Party Meet. My intention was to have a two-day trek (taking in a "Bivi") before joining up with the meet. It all began well enough from Grasmere but by Grisedale Tarn we all arrived together - the rain - the night - and myself. Lower in the valley a sheltered spot was found to settle down for the night with no idea that I had walked into a two-day deluge.

Rather damp I met up with the club at the hut on the Friday afternoon. By Saturday the storm showed no sign of letting up, when our small

party splashed our way up from Kentmere to the Nanfield Pass and then on up to Harter Fells, still in the most atrocious of conditions. We returned in good time to take part in the Buffet Party, a social occasion much enjoyed by the forty or so members.

Finally the last outing in the mountains for the year came next day when our party took the circuit of Helvellyn by the Striding and Swirral edges over which the North wind blew with a decidedly winter chill.

Wendell Jones

The decade started with a round of the Brecon Beacons, followed by a trip to the Northern Dinner Meet to sample the Waters.

At the end of March, Jenny and I visited the extraordinary Italianate village of Portmeirion, all domes, cupolas and turrets, set sharp against the Snowdon coast. I balanced off these cultural benefits with a walk up Snowdon by the Watkyn path with snow above 2000 feet, my first venture from the Beddgelert flank, with unusual views of the mountain.

My younger son Michael's studies in Glasgow had been interrupted by bouts of glandular fever. We celebrated his recovery and a fine Spring by traversing the range of the Black Mountain, Fforest Fawr and Brecon Beacons from Landeusan Hostel to Talybont. The first afternoon was spent exploring the upper waters of the Mellte as it rushes south through limestone defiles, caves and a mass of waterfalls. We felt it well worth the visit. The following morning we left the car at the remote Llandeusan Hostel. By the afternoon of the following day we reached Talybont, with 28 thirsty miles and some 8000 feet of ascent behind us.

At the end of May, Jenny, Michael and I flew, ferried and bussed to Parga, a pleasant little resort set beneath an old Venetian castle - the Adriatic on one side and olive groves on the other. This small enclave had once briefly ranked as an outpost of the Empire until some politician, seeing little advantage in our having a toehold on Mainland Greece, sold it for a small sum to Ali Tebelen, Pasha of Janina, an Albanian of unpleasant habits. The locals, seeing Ali's cavalry coming down the hills, dug up and burnt the bones of their ancestors, placed the ashes in their boats and embarked for Corfu, also British owned. 1990 still proclaimed warnings against approaching the Albanian frontier; cautionary tales retailed the fate of those who had chosen to disregard such advice. This may have explained why adequate maps of the area round Parga, 40 miles south of the frontier, are impossible to find; the best had one spot height (928m) but no contours for the whole coastal range. The next and perhaps related problem was that of the olive groves. It sounds the easiest thing in the world to walk up a hilly orchard; but when the ground is strewn with hundreds of acres of netting one is left only with the little tracks between, used by the grape pickers, and these invariably run out.

My assault on Point 928m started with three miles of road, slanting up into the hill villages, and circumventing the olive groves. Olives themselves one could not avoid, as their factories - full of dirty oil drums and Heath Robinson machinery which burped out the husks into

deep-brown pyramids - lined the routes. Along this came little three wheeled mobile trailers, loaded with sacks, and ancient lorries similarly burdened. I dropped down into a dried up gully and followed upwards whatever passed as a path, to avoid the mixture of spiky maquis and broken limestone, the hallmark of these hills. From the sun there was no escape, and 85 in the shade remains a misnomer if there isn't any.

After four hours I staggered on to the ridge (800m?), not much faster than those early climbers above the North Col on Everest. 20 minutes nearer to heatstroke, I arrived at the conclusion that the cupful of water remaining might not take me to the summit and back; I contoured off to the nearest village.

In Parga the waiters spoke English or at the worst German. With the last of the water gone I tottered into Agia's busmen's depot and peasant canteen, and got my drinks by sign language. The locals stared as though I had dropped in from Outer Space or had arrived at the Saloon in Bad-Man's Gulch. I had met no one in their hills.

Cooler weather in the second week of the holiday, and the discovery of an excellent track (which led unerringly to the corporation rubbish tip) combined to defeat the olives. A subsequent trackless ascent through the usual terrain was not quite effortless but took me to the southern nameless and heightless top(900m?). This provided good all round views of the coastal foothills and the Pindos outliers beyond; opposite was a sharp drop down to the sea and across the bay to Hades, visited the previous week.

We had approached the latter up the river Styx, now a jungle of reeds and dragonflies, without a ferryman to be seen. "Hades" said the guidebook "looks a little like a Public Loo". Climbing down the metal steps into candle lit depths we had to agree. Unlike Eurydice we were not tempted to look back and were rewarded with an exciting return trip across the now choppy bay, with the Captain doing a hornpipe on the bowsprit and his 16 year old mate plying the ouzo round enthusiastically, and only occasionally placing one hand on the wheel. The Dead Hand of Brussels has yet to reach Epirus!

The tour minibus took us to the spectacular Vikos gorges, the ancient amphitheatre in the mountains of Janina, and once again to the headwaters of the Acheron (Styx) plunging out of a deep defile in the Souliot mountains. Neaby is a monument to the Souliot women who, trapped by Ali Pasha at the end of a long campaign, threw themselves over a cliff - clearly not a nice man, notwithstanding that Dumas had him father the heroine in the Count of Monte Cristo.

A contrast to Greece came with Zermatt and the mattresses of Morgenrot. My climbing achievements were modest - the Breithorn - surely no longer eligible for viertausender status when you need only ascend 400 of them. As for that most civilised mountain, the Klein Matterhorn, it is the only 3800m peak in the Alps which it is possible to ascend without actually touching it, indeed our Swiss friends discourage any alternative to the final metal staircase. The Mettelhorn, though lower, at least gave a 6000 feet ascent and a summit where it was barely possible to move without dislodging a fellow member of the ABMSAC.

October brought a repeat performance of that happy occasion the Buffet Party Meet. Drought or not in the south, the Pattersdale weather was just as I had left it in February. Coerced by Harry Archer we reached the Nan Bield Pass and discovered that the easiest way of proceeding up Harter Fell was to raise both arms to the horizontal and go; it is a falsehood that we had to fill David Jones' rucksack with stones to keep him attached to the mountain. We returned to the hut to hear that the causeway to Side Farm, shin deep in February, was now thigh deep. So things had changed. Sunday relented and that time-honoured walk up Helvellyn by Striding Edge and down by Swirral Edge rounded off the weekend.

Peter Ledeboer (Venture into Romania)

In August I had the opportunity of joining the first exploratory trek in the Carpathians since the Revolution in Romania - too good a chance to miss. There were twelve of us as an organised party, since we were necessarily still in the hands of the state tourist organisation for reasons of accommodation, food and transport. With an interpreter guide we spent one week each in the western and eastern parts of the range.

The first week was spent in the small Transylvanian ski resort of Paltinis. The simple hotel as our base was badly in need of renovation after 40 years, (take a bath plug). The food was adequate, but drinks were scarce and in a cold spell we could have done with some heating. The lower hill slopes were great forests with deep ravines above which were vast rolling hills with herds of sheep. This gave long walking days with fine vistas and we made the main top, Cindrel, 2230m in an 11-hour day.

For our second week we transferred by train (double decker coaches) to Busteni, a more developed ski resort near the second city of Brasov. This is a quite different landscape with great limestone cliffs, mountain refuges and caves, one of which was nearly 20 miles long. There would seem to be much climbing potential with long hard routes. Above them is a plateau, offering long hard days and we made the main peak, Omu, 2500m.

A day in Bucharest at the end - somewhat reminiscent of Paris with its tree lined boulevards. We saw of course the monster Ceasescu palace, but more interesting was the sight of the badly damaged buildings where the Securitate and the Army fought it out. The people we met were open, friendly and interested, with quite a bit of English spoken. All in all, quite a novel venture.

Incidentally, I should mention that we simply had to go on a visit to Count Dracula's castle - a most formidable building!

Joanna Merz

Christmas was spent in Chamonix at Nigel Shepherd's* chalet where there was an enormous houseparty and exciting skiing, both on and off piste. Again with Nigel, I attempted the High Level Route (on skis) in

May, getting as far as the Dix hut from Chamonix in perfect weather, before reluctantly having to admit defeat by blisters. In August I visited Cecil Slingsby's favourite climbing centre at Fjaerland in Norway, where we crossed the Jostedal glacier and climbed two peaks, as well as exploring many beautiful and deserted side valleys running down from the glacier. In October I returned to scenes of my childhood - Kasauli, a hill station in the Simla hills - before going on a trek through the Outer Saraj and over the remote Bashleo pass. Another exciting year.

* *Nigel Shepherd will doubtless be known to some members from the days when he was a guide at Plas y Brenin.*

Ken Baldry

The winter of poor snow did provide adequate fun in the Kitzbühel area but the return to Kirchberg in the evening tested one's ice skiing excessively.

In the summer I went for a stroll I had long promised myself. After a saga of late planes and trains, I hitched a lift to St Gallenkirch and walked up to Gargellen. From there, it is only an hour and half to the Schlappinerjoch and Switzerland. Eventually, I staggered into the Schweizerhof in Davos where, bless the Swiss, they remembered me from skiing 7 years before.

The next day I reached my target, Arosa. As the first place my parents holidayed in 1938 and my wife skied with her school in 1950, I had been curious to see it. A charming place, it deserves bigger mountains round it. I did all the local walks and eventually walked out to Chur.

After all the foregoing great adventures by others, thank you, Ken, for giving us an inkling of what a summer stroll can mean. Ed.

G. B. Pennett

The highlight of my year was the coast to coast walk from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire by Wainwright's route. The walk, over 190 miles, was done in superb weather in June. It covered delightful Lakeland, Dales and moorland scenery and is thoroughly recommended for those who enjoy a good walk. It also affords the chance to spend a night at the George Starkey hut in Patterdale, with drinks at the White Lion Inn.

Generally it has been a quiet year for walking and scrambling in the Yorkshire Dales. On a cool yet sunny Good Friday we climbed Norber from Austwick. Another interesting outing was a short climb up Penhill in Wensleydale in November.

Hamish Brown

A bit of an annus mirabilis in Morocco in 1990 with successful visits to the Anti Atlas, and far west, the Tichka Plateau, Tigerwent (the peak north of Taroudant), Ibel Siroua, Igdat and Erdouz, the highest west of Toubkal and the best of it. Details are in the AJ for 91/92 or SMCJ 1992.

I can also let members have fact sheets to some of these remote areas.

ZERMATT; -- Some strange tales ...

By Harry Archer

The Perfect Logo

From the terrace of Morgenrot the evening sky was an ever darkening grey blue behind the black silhouette of the Matterhorn. Not unusual for Zermatt you might say, but then a purple halo lit up around the silhouette like a Brocken Spectre. A warning of disaster? Mercifully we had none on the Meet. So it was just another demonstration of the perfect Logo, the gold idol which has transformed the fortunes of Zermatt. The bottom end of the Logo market must be a Matterhorn in a plastic bubble which you shake to get a Matterhorn in snow. C. and M. went to buy D. one for a birthday present, he said that he liked it.

From Akropolis

The city lay below with its multi-coloured lights, maroons exploded above, rockets flew upwards and along the streets, thousands of pops, crackles, bangs and flashes illuminated the scene. Was it a war? Explosions could be seen above the surrounding mountains and beacons burned on the passes. Was the enemy approaching? The Matterhorn sat brooding above the inferno like some monster awaiting its time. Were the mountains about to fall, the dam to break, the city to burn while its inhabitants fled? Was this the punishment of Zermatt for abandoning its pastoral life for Matterhorn worship and the potage of tourism? Was it a rehearsal for a Cecil B. de Mill epic? No! It was Swiss National Day.

At the Belvedere

It went something like this. "Please move to the next table and join this young man". He looked at us impassively through his rimless glasses; unmistakably he was Son of Flick. Another visitor, later identified as Hungarian, came up. "Will you take me up the Matterhorn? I must go up the Matterhorn" and so. "Sorry we cannot take you; we already have a party of three and only one rope". "But I must go up the Matterhorn..." It was suggested that Son of Flick and the Hungarian should get together. "I have not climbed any big mountains before" said the Hungarian; "I am climbing all the highest peaks solo and every weekend I climb at the sixth grade" said Son of Flick, "and I have not got a rope". "Then why don't you borrow a rope" said a canny member of the party, "go to the SAC Hut and ask

someone". Off they went and returned 15 minutes later. "We have been given a rope". At 0430 hours the situation was as follows: the weather was bad, the Hungarian had decided to stay in bed and Son of Flick stood outside gazing at a Matterhorn shrouded in a storm. When re-telling this bizarre tale, please embellish and add your own finale, for nothing which you may say could be stranger than the original.

On the rocks

Ding, dong, ding, dong - "David! We must be being followed by a cow!" I have read that a cow has been taken up the Matterhorn but now here was an opportunity to see it for ourselves. We paused for a few minutes and then, disappointment; no cow, only a lone climber with an empty metal water bottle with an unusual resonance and hung so that it hit the rocks at almost every step. So he had a swill from my 1½ litre bottle of Henniez and he disappeared, ding, dong, ding, dong, amongst the rocks.

Strange dialogue

On the way down and drawing near to the Schwarzsee Restaurant we encountered a young woman.

"Have you come from the Hornli Hut?"

"Yes"

"Do you know if I can have drinking water there?"

"Not sure but you can buy jugs of tea"

"Good". "But is there a place between Schwarzsee and the Hornli Hut where I can have drinking water?"

"No"

A pause and she turned and walked back to the Schwarzsee Restaurant.

Finally on departure all agreed that it was the best Meet ever.

... and some random thoughts

By David Jones

After a gap of many years, it was back to Zermatt for another Alpine holiday for me. The first impression I used to get on arriving in Zermatt was always of walking into a wild west town. Maybe it was the row of horses tethered to the hitching rail at the Station exit. The horse-drawn carriages used to be the town taxi service. This time the illusion had gone; one can't get romantic over a line of electric box car taxis.

As to Zermatt itself; well there are certainly many newer and glossier hotels, but all the way from the Bahnhof to the Church and into the Old Quarter all remained as remembered. The unexpected was the vast increase in tourists, the incredible number of people crammed into Bahnhofstrasse. Never mind, it was going to be nice to get away from the ever intrusive motor car for a month.

The great mountains around were as beautiful as ever and above the town the area around Morgenrot remained unchanged. The Old Hotel stood out clearly on the hillside, and with a re-paint! It was,

however, still a long walk up from the Station, so it was pleasant to be met and sent up in a shared taxi. Later it was a pleasure to be able to dine together at the Morgenrot to renew old acquaintances and also make new ones. And of course to talk to our hearts' content of mountaineering.

The settled weather enabled one to climb continuously without the worry of approaching storms and this made for enjoyable relaxing days. Not least walking to the many Tea Gardens dotted around the mountainsides; often these were the "promised land" to aim for on coming down from a climb. And it was not the drinks or "Kuchen" we had in mind, but the Ice Cream menu. The exotic choices would be scrutinised, discussed, analysed, ordered and waited for with mouth-watering anticipation; finally to be savoured slowly.

The greatest change to the mountains must be the amazing shrinkage of the glaciers. The fondly remembered routes done over pristine snow conditions existed no more. Not one of the routes re-climbed was recognisable. Bare of ice and snow, erosion was changing the ridges fast. No wonder most of the climbs were taking much longer to do. The descents took even longer, but the problem here was due to being baulked by the queues at tricky points with no chance to by-pass them.

The great peaks of the Weisshorn and Dent Blanche were becoming very un-white. There remained plenty of ice on the Breithorn; the change here was what the Klein Matterhorn Cable Car had done to the mountain. It was the first time I had used this "lift" and we were going up to gain a few hours of altitude training on the Breithorn. This was what the "Poor Old Breithorn" was now relegated to, and to be trampled by the hordes wanting to claim a 4,000m peak by easy access. Judging from the grey grim faces there were a lot of headaches throbbing silently towards the summit. The Breithorn was fighting back!

The superb weather made for long energetic days. How successful my Alpine holiday has been is usually assessed by the degree of tiredness I have reached by the time I arrive home. This year I was in a state of exhaustion.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

The Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the RINA, Upper Belgrave Street, London, on Wednesday 5th December 1990 at 7.00 pm.

The President was in the chair with thirty two members present.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. B. Rees, Mr. B. Dolling, Mr. M. Pinney and Dr. J.M. Scarr.
2. The Minutes of the 1989 AGM, as published in the Journal, were accepted. There were no matters arising.
3. Election of Officers and Committee.
The President, Vice President Mr. Colin Armstrong and Committee members Mrs. B. Baldwin, Mr. J. Chapman and Mr. G. Watkins retire in rotation this year.

The following were elected unanimously:

President	Mr. Ross Cameron
Vice President	Mr. G.C. Watkins
Committee Members	Mr. K.J. Hunter Mr. T.F. McManus Dr. J.M. Scarr

The new Committee will be:

Mr. B.F. Dolling	Miss L. Gollanz
Mrs. H. Eddowes	Mr. J.W.S. Dempster
Miss M. Engler (co-opted)	Mr. R.J. Hunter
Mr. T.F. McManus	Mr. A. Lock Dr. J.M. Scarr

4. The Accounts
The President apologised on behalf of the Hon. Treasurer for the accounts only being available at the meeting, due to bereavements in both the Hon. Treasurer's and Hon. Auditor's families.

Although subscription income increased by £140 this year, expenditure was up to £1,100. This was due to increases in costs of the Journal and Newsletter, and to loss of free services for printing and postage enjoyed before. The hire of premises also cost more following the move from the Alpine Club, although this was offset partly by profits from the Fondue evening and May Buffet.

Investment income had increased due to interest levels, leaving an excess of income over expenditure of £1,030.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Professor Boulter, seconded by Mr. P.J. Bull and passed unanimously.

5. Subscriptions

The loss of £109 of expenditure over subscription income, and an increase to £2 per head in BMC fees lead the Committee to recommend increases of £2 per head, except for Junior members.

Professor Boulter suggested that Affiliate members should pay a larger subscription in view of the benefits received and to induce them to progress towards full membership. A general discussion agreed to this in principle, and Mr. Dempster pointed out that the Committee had already had a proposal to this effect, and had asked for a paper to support it.

The President proposed that the following subscriptions should be fixed:

Ordinary Members (SAC members)		£12
Affiliate Members (not SAC)	£15	
Junior Members	£ 5	

Seconded: Miss L. Gollanz.

An amendment that the two tier subscriptions should be postponed for a year was voted first, and rejected by 20 to 5.

The above subscriptions were accepted by a vote, 21 in favour, none against.

The question of joint membership subscriptions and retired members' subscriptions were, at the Chairman's suggestion, left to the President, Treasurer and Secretary to decide.

The subscription to the SAC, which is set by the Committee, was announced to be £27.50 for the coming year.

6. President's Report

Mr. J.S. Whyte reported that membership of the Association had increased slightly, and that ABMSAC was continuing in a successful manner, but every member should endeavour to be a recruiting agent, especially to attract younger members. Efforts should also be made to remember our title and persuade people to become full members of the SAC.

Meets had flourished during the year - 17 outdoor in the UK, 2 Swiss meets, and the Annual and Northern Dinners were, as ever, popular. An excellent series of lectures had been held at the RINA, but unfortunately we have had yet again to seek new premises. Next year meetings in London will be at the Royal Entomological Society's premises at 41 Queensgate, starting with the meeting on 23rd January 1991.

In 1991 there will be celebrations of the 700th anniversary of the "Ruetlischwur" in the form of a Banquet and Ball held by the City Swiss Club on 9th March.

A new first was the "Himalayan Meet" organised by John Chapman which, thanks to his leadership, climbed Ramdung Go (5390m) and traversed the Trashi Labtsa pass.

During the past year the President had attended the celebrations of the 125th anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn, when a new visitor's book was presented to the English Church in Zermatt. The graves of the victims of the accident after the first ascent have been refurbished and rededicated with funds partly from the ABMSAC and AC. (£1,250 total, £650 of which came from 32 ABMSAC members).

During the tenure of the President, we had said goodbye to M. Pictet, the Swiss Ambassador, and welcomed Herr Muheim. We also welcomed Marianne Engler who has joined our Committee instead of Mr. Welti, who has returned to Switzerland.

The ABMSAC used to be involved in the training of young climbers, as exemplified in a copy of the Mountaineering Handbook published in 1959. A new initiative in this direction has been proposed by Mr. Eddowes who will be presenting his suggestions to the Committee shortly.

Sadly, a number of members had died during the year. The President mentioned Nigel Bruton, who was involved in an accident on Snowdon at New Year, Esme Speakman and Dorothea Gravina who were both among the forefront of lady climbers in their time and will be sadly missed, and Maurice Bennett. Maurice had served the Association for many years as Secretary, President and Hon. Solicitor. Last year's AGM fell on his 75th birthday, so the presentation of a cake and his photo in the Journal was in the nature of a fitting tribute to all his efforts for ABMSAC and as Chairman of ABMSAC Ltd.

The President thanked all those who had helped him in his term of office.

- Maurice Freeman and Hugh Romer as Secretary.
- Rudolf Loewy as Editor.
- Mike Pinney as Treasurer.
- Peter Ledeboer for representing ABMSAC at the Annual Assembly in Switzerland of the S.A.C., and for organising the Dinners.
- Ben Suter as Meets Secretary.
- Harry Archer and Mike Pinney for the Swiss Meets.
- Mary Boulter and her team for organising the London Meets and for the refreshments,
- and Joan for her unfailing support.

7. Any Other Business

The AGM of ABMSAC Ltd could not be held in conjunction with this AGM as had been the practice, due to Maurice Bennett's death. It will be held in Patterdale on the evening of the Northern Dinner.

Mr. M. Freeman asked that Agenda for the AGM and nominations to fill vacancies for officers and committee members should be sent out with the Newsletter preceding the meeting. This will be attempted in future.

Mr. Freeman also asked that the subscription for retired members should be the same as for ordinary members.

Finally, Mr. R. Loewy rose to thank the retiring President for all he had done for the Association in an outstanding term of office. He was sure that he voiced the appreciation of all members for the energetic and dedicated manner in which John had led the Club during the last three years.

Matterhorn 125th Anniversary Celebrations

On July 13-15 1990 the Commune of Zermatt celebrated the 125th anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn. John Whyte, President, represented the ABMSAC. Other British invitees included Lord Hunt, Tony Streater, President of the Alpine Club, the Earl of Limerick, President of the Anglo-Swiss Society, and Steve Venables, representing the BMC, together with Mike Esten and Peter Ledebor. Edward Whymper's grand daughter Nigella Hall was also present with her son, Edward.

The official celebrations started on the Friday afternoon with a speech of welcome to the guests, followed by a response by Tony Streater during which he presented a first edition copy of Whymper's "Scrambles in the Alps" to the Commune of Zermatt as a gift from the Alpine Club. Saturday dawned warm and sunny, and saw a large crowd of official guests and visitors assemble at the little chapel at Schwarzee for Mass celebrated by Msgr. Eichinger, Bishop of Strasbourg. It was in this chapel that Whymper left his tent and equipment the day before starting for the successful ascent, including the subsequently notorious "200 feet of ... stout sash line". Hurrying down from Schwarzee after lunch enabled us to reach the English Chapel in the village for a commemorative service conducted by the Bishop of Dunwich, towards the end of which John Whyte presented the Chapel with a handsome new visitors book from the ABMSAC.

A quick change back into formal suits prepared us for more speeches in front of the Zermatterhof Hotel, during which Herr Lauber, the Major of Zermatt, quoted extensively from Whymper's writings and urged that we should all be careful not to abuse the mountains and to "remember that we do not own them but are only temporary tenants." The formal dinner that evening was punctuated by several more speeches, most of which were repeated in both German and French, and some in Italian and English as well. Perhaps this was a contributory factor to that function continuing until midnight, when some of us were glad to get to bed so as to be ready for Mass on Sunday morning, followed by the rededication of the graves of the Matterhorn victims in the cemetery beside the church. Members will recall that much of the finance for this work was contributed by our members. At the ceremonies the guides of Cervinia (which in Whymper's day had the much more attractive name of Breuil) were represented by their chief guide, J.A. Carrel, grandson of Whymper's rival in the race to the summit. At the dedication ceremony he was accompanied by a dozen of his fellow guides from Cervinia, who were splendidly turned out in their very smart uniforms and with plumes on their hats. It was good also to see the chief guide from Chamonix at the ceremony paying his respects to the memory of Michel Croz who contributed so much to the success on the ascent, but who was amongst those who perished through no fault of his own during the descent.

Sunday afternoon saw a grand procession through the streets of Zermatt with many floats depicting activities of local citizens and groups. A charming gesture by the Swiss was their request that the procession be headed by the British delegation. Our pleasure was enhanced by the fact that the banner preceding the British party was carried by Frau Biner who has been such a good friend to many British climbers over the years, and Frau Perrig, wife of Amadeus Perrig, Zermatt's Director of Tourism.

On Saturday, 14th July, the actual anniversary day, the Matterhorn was "closed" to climbers on the Swiss side, and the Hornli ridge was climbed by several invited parties under the gaze of Swiss television, who broadcast 14 hours live from the mountain!

Those of us who remembered the bitterly cold weather experienced for the ceremonies at the Britannia hut some years ago were delighted to enjoy the contrast of warm sunshine for these ceremonies. The warmth of the summer sunshine in Zermatt that weekend was matched only by the warmth of the welcome offered to the British guests.

JSW

Himalayan Meet

In November John Chapman organised and led the first Club Himalayan meet, when a joint party of ABMSAC and AC members trekked into the recently reopened Rolwaling valley on the Nepal-Tibet border and dominated by Gauri Shankar. They climbed Ramdung Go, 5930m and Yalung Ri, 5630m and crossed the Trashi Labtsa, 5755m to Thame in the Khumbu. This route was first described in Tom Weir's book "East of Kathmandu", published in the early '50s, and this is almost certainly the first time it has been successfully repeated, at all events by a British party.

A detailed account of the meet, giving not only a vivid picture of Himalayan trekking, but also useful guidance for those intending to join such a trek, or plan one, was sent to members as a separate report. Two fine photographs taken by John Chapman appear on the central pages of the Journal.

TOMBA, GIPFELSTÜERMER (Summit stormer)

By Paul French

A few of you may remember my notes, in the 1983 Journal and in the April 1989 Newsletter, about the Berghotel Schwarenbach, the "Mountain Inn" of our Hon. Member and Guide Otto Stoller. Schwarenbach is again in the news, this time because of its super-cat "Tomba". I have taken the liberty of translating from "Les Alpes" the curious history of Tomba, as related by Mme. Sylvia Loretan, Gardienne of the Fründenhütte.

First: a word from the editor of "Les Alpes".

Tomba the mountaineer: At the beginning of August there appeared in the local dailies short and sometimes sensational articles about Tomba, the feline alpinist. Before this wave of publicity Sylvia Loretan, gardienne of the Fründen Hut and authoress of hut reminiscences, had sent us a witty account of this phenomenon, an article which we must no longer withhold from the pleasure of our readers. So:

Tomba

He has already climbed the Rinderhorn five times, and the Balmhorn nine times, has shown his real talent as a climber on the Gälliwändli and is now on his first ski outings.

In these times of extreme alpinism the circumstances would hardly call for mention if it were not for the fact that this is no ordinary alpinist, but a formidable two year old. The phenomenon answers to the name of "Tomba". He celebrated his first birthday in June last year: no special pedigree, like the majority of cats - and humans.

Tomba's mother, arriving from no one knows where, took refuge one fine day at the Hotel Schwarenbach, where she settled herself as though at home. The Stoller family were more than pleased to adopt her as she seemed devoted, amusing and friendly. As for the suitor, it is from Leukerbad that Tomba's father ascended to meet his beloved at Schwarenbach, by way of the Gemmi. Clearly love can lead a cat, if not to lift up mountains, at least to cross them; and so Tomba was born, under an Alpine sky.

Early life

From birth onwards the kitten was a source of trouble. After only a fortnight his mother disappeared, under mysterious circumstances, and Mme. Stoller was afraid Tomba would die, still far too small to feed himself. However, after five days, during which Tomba miraculously survived, the mother cat reappeared, to general astonishment. Mme. Stoller remains convinced that she did not leave the house of her own accord, but was abducted, a circumstance difficult to understand as there are few cats in these surroundings. After this the mother cat never took her eyes off the little one for a moment, and resented the approach of all strangers, a thing she had not done previously. This care, and her capital maternal attention, raised in Tomba a very superior cat.

As soon as it was capable of walking the kitten began to occupy the neighbouring countryside; seen in the Spittalmatte, at the Gemmi, on the Gemmiwand, and even in a cafe in Leukerbad. Mme. Stoller was always worrying where it was, searching in all weathers for the wanderer, until the day she discovered that Tomba had been to the summit of the Rinderhorn. From then on she realised that she had no domestic cat, not even one satisfied with the garden, but a collector of summits. She accepted at the same time that her tom-cat always found its way home.

Tomba en route

Mountaineers accompanied by Tomba had tended to be rather surprised at first but, especially on the ascent of the Balmhorn, have expected him soon to decide to return, or at least he would give up at the Jammertal with its endless moraine, but at the bottom of the moraine the cat shows no sign of fatigue and continues to pad and trot comfortably. "Good", think the mountaineers, "He'll give up soon on the Balmhorn Glacier". But no! Expert mountaineer that he is, he climbs with ease on snow, quite unaffected by altitude; a true "ice-man". Of course, he has permanent in-built retractable crampons!.

We are told, too, how on the summit he waits to be given cheese, or the remains of a sausage, this being followed by a leisurely toilet, finally getting to admire the panorama. And when it comes to the descent, he tackles it with greater sang-froid than anyone.

When Mme. Stoller contemplates the powers of her alpine prodigy she cannot help pondering upon the transmigration of souls: and seeing Tomba in action it is easy to image that some past alpine spirit has chosen to take up residence in the feline skull.

So, dear mountaineers, don't be surprised if one day in these hills you find a cat accompanying you. If, back arched and resolute of aspect, and with a perceptibly impatient miaow it directs its gaze towards the summit, be sure that it is Tomba, the Schwarenbach cat, collector of summits since eternity. Have no anxiety about its safety: it knows the way.

Sylvia Loretan,
Fründenhütte, Kandersteg.

Note: November 1990. Tomba has become even more famous since then, appearing three times on television in Switzerland and Germany, and in newspapers and magazines all over the world. We hope to interview him personally this summer, on the approach to the Arolla Meet. F.P.F.

As well as contributions to "Les Alpes" Mme. Loretan has also published: "Steinreiches Leben - Erlebnisse einer Hüttenwartin" 1981 and "Kleines Dach unter grossem Himmel" 1990.

BOOK REVIEWS

Off the beaten track. Cyndi Smith

Coyote Press. 1989. pp 290. Maps and photos

A good title and a fair description of the book. Cyndi Smith writes with freshness and infectious enjoyment and an appreciation of her "women adventurers and mountaineers" and the country they travelled in.

There are surprises for the ignorant Britisher. Climbing in Canada could not start until 1887 when the Canadian Pacific Railway opened the station and hotel at Glacier House, where there were the "closest glaciers to public transportation in the world." Approach marches were still not easy - 40 km. might take eight days, with grizzlies, forest fires and miles of fallen trees and flooded valleys.

Not all the women in the book were mountaineers. Mary Schaffer Warren was "scared stiff at rocks and precipices. She vowed only to look at mountains from a lower level. The charm of exploring for her was to keep from the beaten path and go where no one has ever been before." Lillian Gest was "a very reluctant climber and did not really enjoy being dangled on a rope." But she changed her mind later and became a competent and tireless mountaineer.

Some of the women who enjoyed exploring rather than climbing became well known for their painting, photography or scientific studies. The seven mountaineers (Gertrude Benham, Henrietta Wilson, Elizabeth MacCarthy, Phyllis Munday, Lillian Gest, Katie Gardiner and Georgia Cromwell) have an astonishing record of first ascents. Perhaps they had as many unclimbed peaks as Alpine climbers in Whymper's day. The wild and empty country between climbers and mountains was another challenge.

Margaret Darvall

The Magnificent Mountain Women

(Adventures in the Colorado Rockies by Jame Robertson)

University of Nebraska Press. 1990.

189 pages. 64 annotated photographs. 2 maps. Hardback

This book is about the exploits of the women who have ventured into the mountains of Colorado, not as wives or daughters but as people wanting to do their own thing. Their exploits are both hair raising and entertaining but their tales so far have been unmentioned in official histories.

The dustcover has a photograph of the ladies of the Colorado Mountain Club on the Narrows of Long Peak in 1914. On opening the book one is confronted with another photographic wonder. This time it is of women wearing large brimmed hats having a snowball fight in the Indian Peaks.

There is a chronology of the Colorado Mountain Women from 1858 until 1988 at the start of the book. At a glance this indicates the great contribution women have made to climbing in this part of the world.

The first chapter has rather tentative ladies being taken into the mountains by men. There is much worry about whether they should wear skirts or breeches. By the second chapter it is 1915 and women are meeting the mountains far more on their own terms. The Appalachian Mountain Club had been formed. It was set up from the beginning for the training of men and women to climb and walk easily distances of a considerable number of miles at a stretch. Other clubs were founded specifically for women and skiing was coming into fashion for both sexes. Skirts ceased to be considered proper dress for mountains and knickerbockers were considered acceptable. This is a chapter about ten splendid outdoor sportswomen.

The following chapters take women into the mountains not necessarily to climb but to find fulfilment, be it to find buried cities and lost homes, to practise medicine, to homestead or to botanise. The botanists were, to quote the author, 'gutsy' and went to extraordinary lengths to collect their data. No hardship or difficulty was too much for them. Single mindedness was the all.

The sixth chapter is about the modern recreationists bringing us up to the present. These people happen to be women and first class climbers as well. As these are mostly living we learn far more about them and their lives leap from the pages.

There is an epilogue giving thumbnail sketches of women who did not make the main chapters of the book and a summing up about what these women add up to. They were white Anglos. This is a land of racism and it is doubtful that a climber could be both a member of a minority group and a woman. All of them came from educated backgrounds, which has been the mainspring of women pioneers.

There is a glossary of mountain terms, a list of sources and notes and an index.

This book would be a delight for anyone familiar with the Colorado Rockies. It is difficult to empathise with the ladies when the scale of these mountains can only be imagined. Nonetheless they were a magnificent bunch.

Belinda Beldwin

FATE OF A SWISS VILLAGE

By Roger A. Redfern

Reprinted with the permission of
The Geographical Magazine, May 1967

The following account of a walk up the Saastal while the great Mattmark Dam was being built will interest members who have followed this track up to the Monte Moro Pass when the Club Alpine Meet has been at Saas Fee, and particularly those who remember the valley in the days when there was no dam. (Ed).

One day last summer while staying at Saas Fee in the Valais district of Switzerland, we decided to go along the Saastal valley and over the Monte Moro Pass into Italy, intending to examine at close quarters the great Mattmark Dam, which is being constructed to produce hydro-electric power and will fill the upper end of the Saastal with water.

The bus heaved its way up the hairpin bends below the new barrage as far as the broad top of the dam wall. From here a mini-bus took us through tunnels in the prohibited area alongside the dam to a point half-way along the new lake's side. We were told that the bus would pick us up there in time to catch the tea-time postal bus at the barrage for the return to Saas Fee.

Looking back, down-valley, it was easy to see that the actual barrage had then reached two-thirds of its final height. It is constructed of lateral-moraine rubble and stones, carried by a convoy of heavy lorries from near the base of the Allalin Glacier to the top of the wall. The man-made lake is slowly filling with grey-green glacier water and here and there debris can be seen floating from the banks as the water rises. The Mattmark scheme was started in 1960 and the barrage should be completed this year, with the reservoir reaching total capacity by 1968.

As we walked along the track high above the water we turned a corner and there, far below us and just above the water's edge, we saw a collection of stone houses - the summer village of Distel, 6975 feet above sea level. For centuries the farmers of Saas-Almagell and Saas-Balen have brought their dairy cattle up to the head of this wild valley to the summer pastures, some members of each family staying the whole summer in the stone dwellings of Distel to milk the herd, make cheese and shepherd the flocks of sheep on the higher slopes. Each autumn, men and animals returned to the shelter of the more hospitable land of the lower valley, where the meadows had yielded their successive crops of hay throughout the summer.

Last summer, however, was a rather special time to come to Distel, for it was the last season that the summer village would be in use. The waters of Mattmark reservoir were less than six feet below the level of the lowest dwelling and soon the stone-slabbed roofs would disappear forever beneath the grey-green waters.

Within living memory, herds of over 140 head of cattle have grazed the summer pastures hereabouts and cheese production was substantial. But we were only able to count twenty cows, their bells ringing across the otherwise empty and silent valley. Over the years fewer and fewer animals have been brought to Distel and less and less cheese has been produced; the village population is dwindling and its average age increasing with each successive season as the younger generation moves away from the mountain valleys.

In the summer village we found that only six of the generously-eaved houses were inhabited, while thirteen others lay in various stages of ruin. The scene, and the situation, reminded me of my visit to the deserted island of St Kilda, the westernmost island of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland (The Geographical Magazine, August 1965, 'St Kilda') - only we were seeing Distel just prior to the final evacuation.

It was early September and already some of the families were preparing to leave; we saw two women climbing the stony slope from the village to the track. Upon the back of the younger woman was a large mattress, while the older one was carrying a roll of bedding on her wicker back-basket. Here was a family leaving their summer home for the last time.

We climbed on, over steepening rocks and the first patches of snow, to the rocky wilderness in curling mists of the Monte Moro Pass, at 9390 feet. Suddenly, through a parting in the clouds, we saw a great, golden figure of the Madonna on the rocks above us. We climbed over to the twenty-foot-high statue set up here in 1965. She looked towards Italy and the gigantic east face of Monte Rosa, across the Valle Anzasca. Her back was to Distel and the valley we had climbed and we wondered if the villagers considered that no coincidence.

REMINISCENCE



Maurice Bennett (right) in animated conversation with Paul French and John Coales at the Civic Reception in The Mount Cervin Hotel garden, Zermatt, on 21st August, 1984.

THE IMMORTAL FIELD

This year is the 700th anniversary of the day, on August 1st 1291, when the Swiss Confederates met in that immortal meadow beneath the Seelisberg at Rutli, on the shores of the Vierwalstaetter See to sign their terms of alliance against the Austrian Hapsburg tyranny.

On this anniversary there is, therefore, something special about Ruskin's wonderful water colour painting of the Uri Rotstock and the Lake of Lucerne, because it is inscribed "Grutli" (Rutli on the maps). By painting such places he hoped that we would have a reverence for their historical importance as well as an appreciation of their natural beauty. Also Sir Walter Scott, in his only novel with an alpine setting, ANNE OF GEIRSTEIN, (1829) makes one of his characters refer to the "immortal field of Rutli..... where our ancestors, the fathers of Swiss independence, met." And before Scott, an English writer of the eighteenth century, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire wrote a poem, (1793) THE PASSAGE OF THE MOUNTAIN OF ST. GOTHARD, praising the Swiss tradition and in two stanzas referring to Rutli.

And hail the chapel! hail the platform wiid!
Where Tell directed the avenging dart,
With well strung bow that first preserved his child,
Then wing'd the arrow to the tyrant's heart.

Across the lake, and deep embow'rd in wood
Behold another hallow'd chapel stand
Where three Swiss heroes, lawless force withstood
And stamp'd the freedom of their native land.

Arnold Lunn has also written impressively about these events in his wonderfully interesting book "The Cradle of Switzerland".

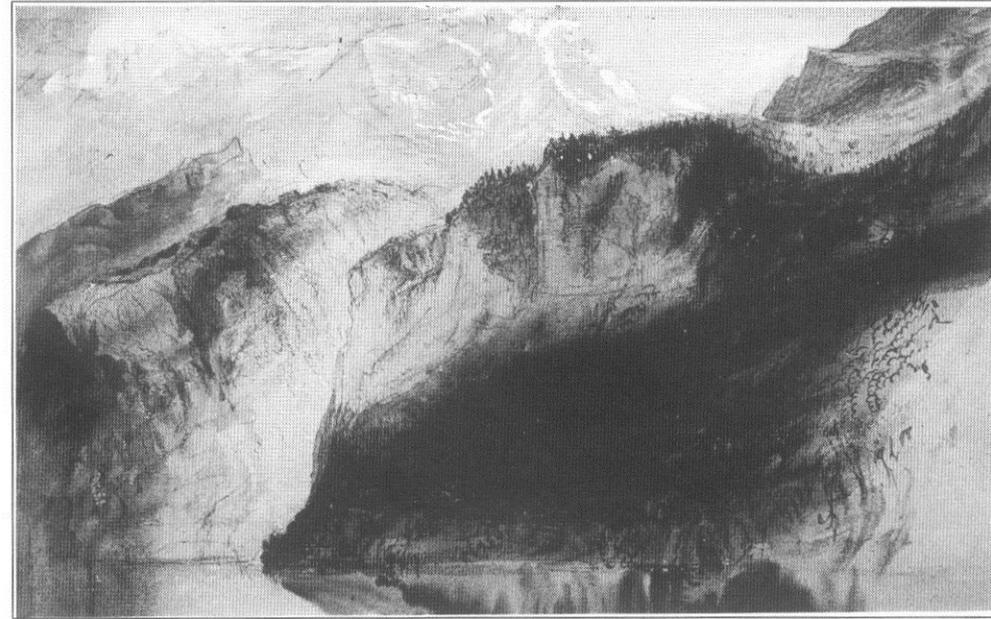
How marvellous those events, which took place in 1291, have turned out to be; not only for Switzerland, but as an example to the rest of the world on how to behave.

Like Arnold Lunn, years ago, I watched with pleasure from the heights of the Seelisberg, a party of school children arrive by boat and debouch upon the sacred field in pilgrimage, a sight which gave joy to my heart.

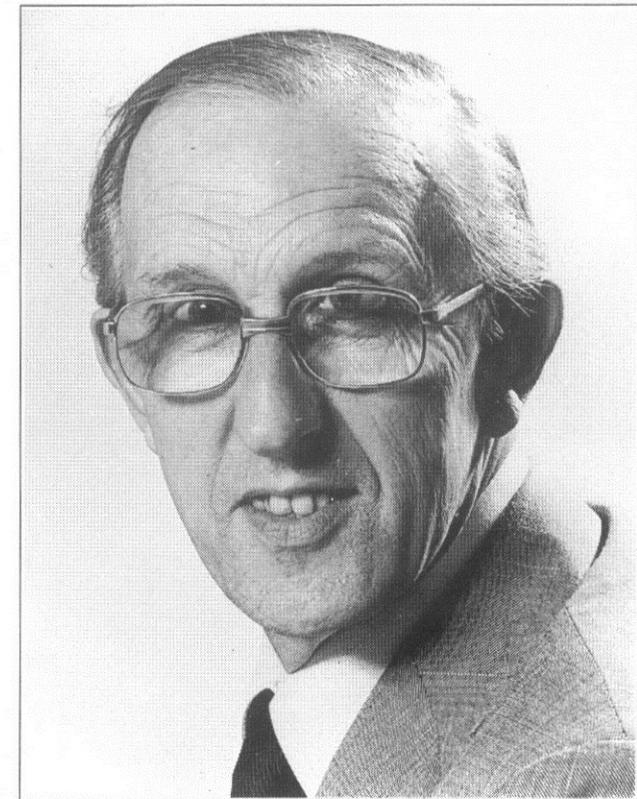
The lovely old William Tell legend may not be entirely true, as Lunn suggests, but basically the traditional story seems to be right, so let us go on enjoying it. What happened in Switzerland 700 years ago was right for the world too. Praise be to the Swiss, and God bless them.

Charles Warren

REF:- Duchess of Devonshire's poem on "THE PASSAGE OF THE MOUNTAIN OF SAINT GOTHARD", see A.J. 1984 p 141.



Photograph of John Ruskin's water-colour painting of the Uri Rotstock and the Lake of Lucerne (in the foreground The Seelisberg and below it the "Immortal Meadow" at the water's edge).
Photo Chas. Warren.



The New President

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES – HIMALAYAN MEET

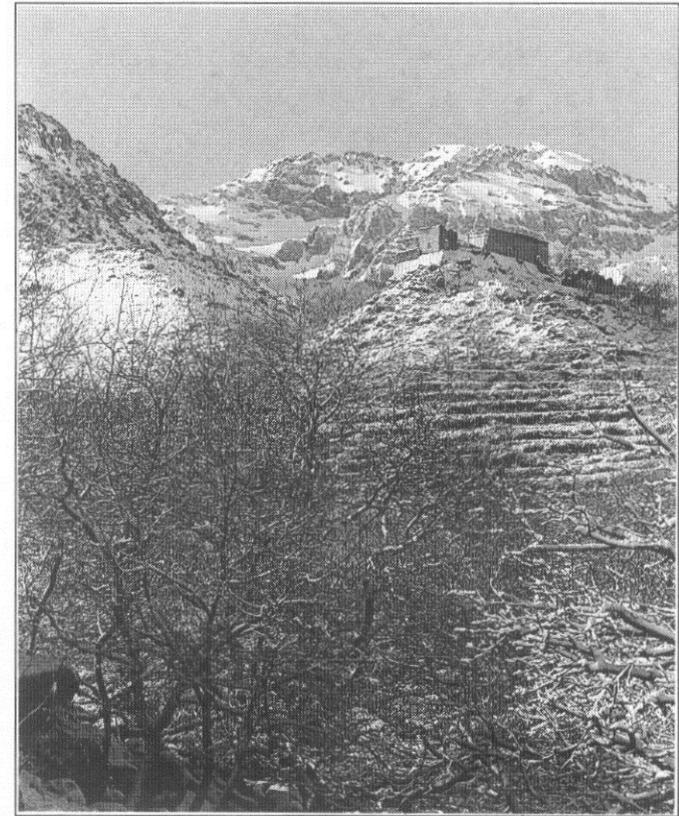


Gauri Shankar (far peak), Yalung Ri (Mid-left peak).



Summit of the Trashi Labtsa and Pachermo.

**ATLAS
INVESTMENT**
Winter snowfall –
Above Imlil in the
High Atlas mountains



*A Festival at Asni in
the High Atlas
(Photo Hamish Brown)*



THE HINCHLIFF MEMORIAL

Thomas Woodbine Hinchliff was the first Honorary Secretary of the Alpine Club and its seventh President. The splendid monument to his memory was erected on a shoulder above the Riffelalp Hotel. The site is grand and well worth a visit, with a round of superb views from the Matterhorn to the Bietschhorn, free of obstructing structures or Luftseilbahnen. By the same token, the site is very exposed and the stonework supporting the obelisk and the decorative guard-chains are showing the effects of a century's winters and summers. Many repeated freezing-thawing-freezing cycles have opened joints in the masonry, most notably on the south and west. The granite itself and the bronze medallion and plaque are untouched by weathering and as clean as new except for some accumulation of lichen, mostly on the north side. The monument appears to be stable but the spreading of the joints must be expected to continue with the prospect of ultimate collapse unless remedial action is taken.

As a result of Paul French's initiative, who many years ago took it upon himself to be its unofficial guardian, the condition of the monument was carefully assessed recently by a civil engineer (a member) with a great deal of experience in such matters, and all the relevant factors are now under consideration by the Alpine Club.

I am indebted to Paul French for introducing me to the monument in 1978 and in leading me back to it in 1990. Future visitors to Zermatt, while enjoying the splendour of a situation so near yet seemingly so far from the madding crowd, could do well by keeping an eye on the developing condition of the masonry.

Frank Solari

The editor adds that this feature came to be included in the Journal because earlier this year he saw a fine sketch of the memorial by John Byan-Grounds who made a welcome return to the Alps last year. John was based lower down in the valley as a precaution but in fact found to his great joy that he was able not only to get up to Zermatt without ill effects and meet other members, but even to do some of the classic walks from there. On one of these he visited the Hinchliff Memorial and made the sketch. The editor hopes to include it in next year's Journal, when he may also be able to set out the Alpine Club's plan of action.



The Hinchliff Memorial and Matterhorn (Photo Frank Solari)

TWO POEMS BY GEORGE WATKINS

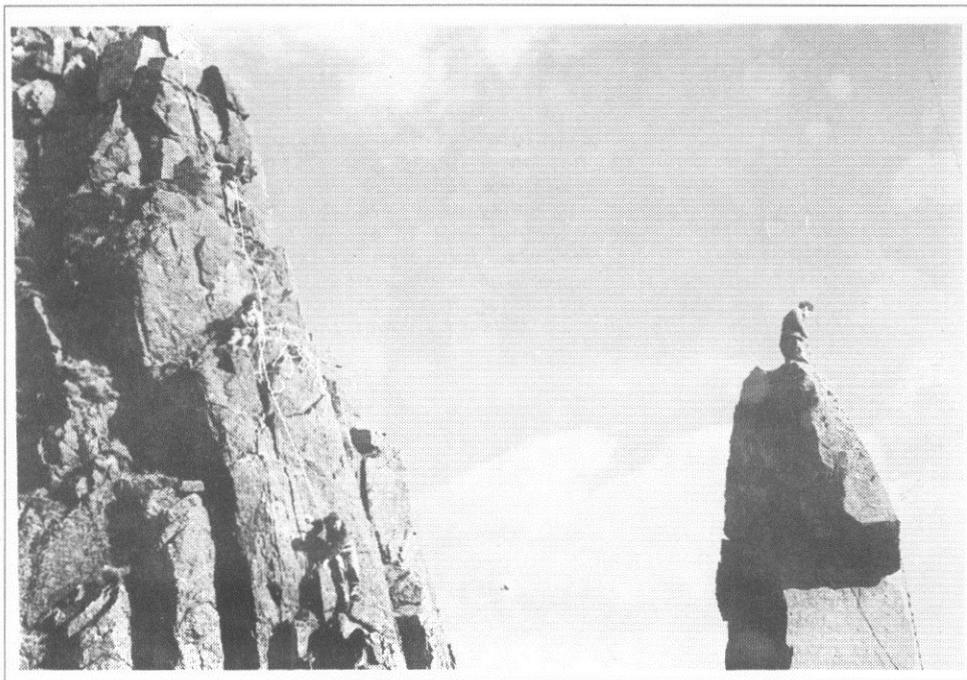
NEEDLE RIDGE

Great Gable
3 August 1965

Gentle day
Mellow grey
Cliff above,
Below. Move
Proves smooth.
Feet lock
Warm rock.
Hold grips
Finger tips.
Body poises
Firmly, neatly.
Viewpoint rises
Surely, sweetly.
Spirit rings
Voice sings:
Could wings
Give such things?

Mind says:
Probably not.

*Climbers: G.G.W., M.T. Steiger
(First published in the Fell
and Rock Journal)*



Vintage Picture: Party descending Needle Ridge – and top of The Needle

NEEDLE RIDGE REVISITED

Great Gable: 24 May 1990

It's five and twenty years since I was moved
To celebrate this climb in lyric verse
Which, folk then said, exuded sensuous warmth
Of summer sun on undemanding rock;
And here we are again. I wonder how
I'll find it now: steeper, for sure, more worn;
Polished, no doubt. I've been on Needle Ridge
Since then, but not for ages, nor on days
Like this. On dank and slippery days, and wet
And windswept ones, and icy once at least;
But never like this, so warm, so dry, so still,
The sky so clear, and not a soul in sight.
We cannot hope to live it all again
Exactly as it was Can we? Ah, well,
A bite, a drink, rope up, and then we'll see
What we can do.

This slab's not bad, you know.
The finger-pull is easier than I'd thought,
So one-two-three and up we go. The holds
Grow big enough to park a bus. The rock
Is Araldite. The stance? Oh, blow the stance.
Just put a runner on for decency
And shamble up the wall and things. Now here's
A place to anchor yaks -- to pasture yaks --
To wait for my mate. "How's that? Quite so. And look
Where someone's left a sling to cover the last
Man down the Needle's crux. Not cheap, but safe.
I'd best get on."

The wall, the rib. A small
Excursion now. Protection first. It's warm
Up here and airy, come to think. Now smoothly
Here, and here, and look at this: a view
Down Wasdale from a platform in the sky.
"Come up and see. Sit there, and be my guest --
There's room for all -- and have a sweet. That blue
Is rare on Wastwater, you know. It glows.
Steel grey's the usual thing."

A clog in here
For comfort, then eigh-up and up, and move
In balance. Now the groove. I don't recall
This passage, but the friction's huge, so what
The hell. And that, I think, is that, except
The easy ridge. And just as well: the rope's
A weight, the heat intense. I want a drink.
I'm tired, and so's my mate, he says. We'll just

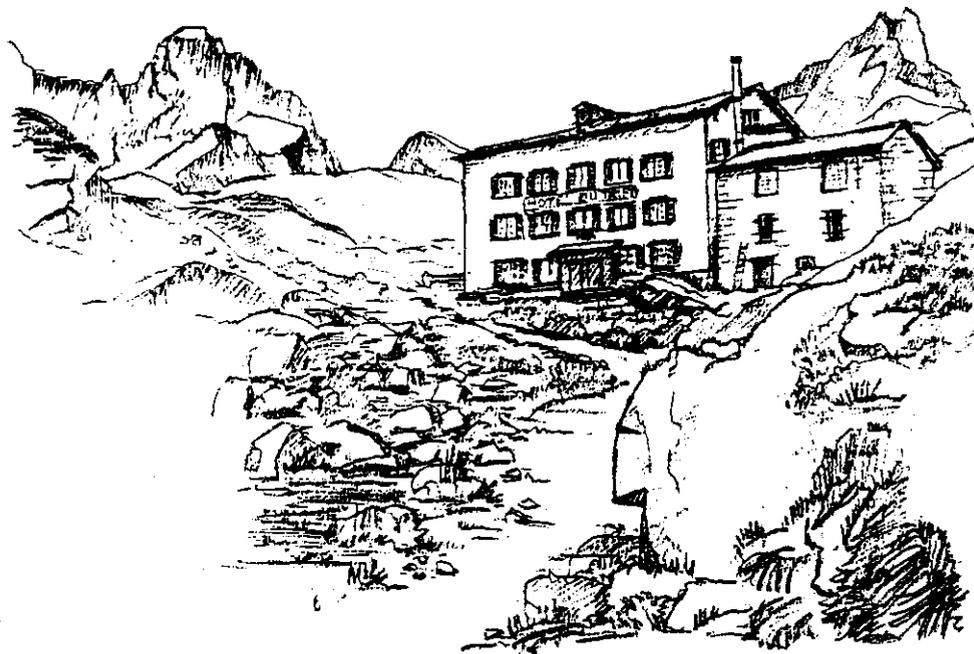
Take care along these rocks: they're very nice,
But if one slips the fall is all the way
To the floor.

"Berg heil, or words to that effect,
As the sergeant said. You liked it? Then I'm glad.
And thank you for your company. We go
Down here. Our sacks are in the shade. The beer
Should be quite cool."

It's been the same, you know,
Today, as five and twenty years ago --
In circumstance, sensation, afterglow --
An unexpected gift; so as we go
Down I'll muse on Cantate Domino.

Climbers: G.G.W., M.R.L.

*Wetter-Kaepfer,
Friedrichson
Trotter sketch -
Z. Lettner*



Quick sketch of this well-known Hostelry above Zermatt made by John Byam-Grounds on one of his walks. See footnote on page 35.

AGONY AND ACRIMONY AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

by Richard Cowper

When Lydia Bradey announced that she had climbed Mount Everest alone and without oxygen by the same route as her compatriot Sir Edmund Hillary 35 years before she could hardly have expected that it would spark one of the more bitter episodes in modern mountaineering.

A highly independent and ambitious 28 year old New Zealand mountaineer, Bradey was last seen on October 14 1988 at 2.30 pm by a group of four Catalan climbers and two Sherpas less than 200m below the summit. But in the quarrelsome aftermath her compatriots all but branded her a liar. She had been on her hands and knees in a "distressed condition" and could never have done it in the time available, they alleged.

Enough doubt was cast on the validity of Bradey's claim to have reached the top to ensure it was never official accepted by any of the world's recognised climbing authorities. But, two years on, new evidence I have collected from four members of the Catalan expedition - and from tapes of walkie-talkie conversations between them and base camp - suggests that she was telling the truth.

At stake is more than a simple statistic recording of yet another ascent of Everest by the so-called "yak route". If her claim were substantiated she would go down in mountaineering history as the ninth woman to have climbed the world's highest mountain, the third New Zealander, and - more remarkably - the first woman to have done it alone without oxygen.

The level of technical climbing on the route is not particularly high, but the enormous willpower needed to keep going alone above 8,000m without oxygen, sometimes in waist-deep snow, is rarely appreciated. Nor are the dangers of storm and frostbite. Just before the summit comes one of the route's biggest challenges: the Hillary step, a steep face normally encrusted in snow and ice. The exposure is extraordinary. If you are alone and unroped, one slip and you could end up falling nearly three thousand metres.

For Bradey the applause was not to be. In the battle for hearts and minds that followed the initial claim and counter claim, Bradey seemed, at first sight, to be her own worst enemy. She had also met her match in Rob Hall, the brash, determined leader of the New Zealand Everest expedition. Deeply angered by her "lack of team spirit" and the "selfishness" of her lone attempt on a route for which the New Zealanders did not have permission, Hall feared the whole team would be banned from climbing in Nepal and he did much to undermine Bradey's credibility. In statements made to the Nepalese authorities and to the New Zealand Press Association he accused her of "irresponsible misconduct" and of making "fictitious claims". In an attempt to ensure that he, Gary Ball and Bill Atkinson escaped penalty for Bradey's action, Hall wrote disassociating the team from her "illegal foray" and alleged that information about her physical condition and the timing of her movements, given by the Spanish climbers on the south col route at the same time, made it clear she could never have reached the top. He also ventured to suggest - with what evidence is not clear - that she may have been hallucinating.

Bradey seemed to do little to substantiate her claim and much to undermine it. She had carried no watch to ascertain the times at which she reached crucial stages of the climb, had no photographic proof of her ascent, and had made enemies in unfortunate places. Least helpful of all, when she got back to Kathmandu she temporarily withdrew her claim to have reached the top. Nevertheless she does have plausible explanations for everything she did. She does not deny that she climbed the mountain illegally, nor does she deny that she was crawling. However, she does reject allegations that she was in a dangerously distressed condition.

"My camera froze up and would not work and I dropped my watch in the snow. In Kathmandu I was led to believe I would be treated more leniently if I withdrew my claim. The big mountains are my life, what I dreaded more than anything was being banned for 10 years", says Bradey. In the event she was banned from climbing in Nepal for three years and the rest of her team were unaffected.

In retrospect the New Zealand expedition seemed to be doomed to end in acrimony long before it reached Nepal. Her relations with her three compatriots had begun to turn sour in August in Pakistan in an attempt on K2. Bradey rarely climbed with them in spite of the fact that the New Zealanders comprised a small Alpine team of two pairs.

When they got to Everest in September Bradey chose to climb with two Czech mountaineers, Peter Bozik and Jaroslav Jasko, who were trying to repeat the awesome Scott/Haston route on the south west face. Tragically, along with two of their team, both were to die in a blizzard on the face on October 17, just a day after Bradey returned to base camp from her summit bid.

The hopes of the three New Zealand men to climb the peak were also thwarted. They were forced to turn back at 8,100m in high winds and deteriorating weather on October 12 after a three-day attempt on the south pillar, a route for which they did not have express permission, but to which the authorities in Kathmandu subsequently appear to have turned a blind eye.

Exhausted and bitterly disappointed they returned to Camp II at 6,400m where they met Bradey who, it quickly became clear, was planning a solo attempt on the south col route - her second illegal attempt in ten days. In vain they reminded her that permission to climb the route had been refused both verbally and in writing and if she went for it they might all be banned from climbing in Nepal. Furious, they descended to base camp and told their liaison officer of the circumstances and said they were expelling her from their team. "It was a pretty selfish action ... the old fashioned idea is that the team is more important than the individual," says Hall.

To make matters worse the New Zealanders then had a bitter quarrel with the Czechs over money and climbing gear and left Everest base camp on October 14 to avoid "a punch-up". Says Robert Hall, leader of the New Zealand team: "It was an all-time low in my mountaineering career."

Meanwhile Bradey, feeling "really strong" and expecting "no super technical sections", had set off at 2am on October 13 on the far easier

1,595m climb via the traditional Hillary route to the south col (7,995m). She arrived there at midday and spent the night in a tattered American tent with Denis Ducroz, a Frenchman. Also on the col were four Catalan climbers, Jeronimo Lopez, Lluís Giner, Nil Bohigas and Sergio Martinez, who planned an attempt on the summit next day. As they slept none were aware that 200m higher up on the mountain two exhausted Sherpas from the French expedition had fallen to their deaths while attempting to descend.

Next morning at 2.30am on October 14 Bradey set off on the 853m climb to the summit following the head-torches of the Catalans. Using oxygen they quickly left her behind. In the dark on the first slope she stumbled across the body of one of the dead Sherpas. "There was nothing I could do so I climbed on," she says.

"I met the Spanish team at about 3pm at the south summit (8,740m) on their way down from the top. One of them was in trouble," says Bradey.

It was an understatement. For the Spaniards and their two Sherpas it was the beginning of a four-day ordeal to save the life of Sergio Martinez. They had left him at the south summit and on their return from the top found him blind, frostbitten and close to death from cerebral oedema (brain damage due to altitude sickness).

In an epic descent they dragged him down to the south col where they spent the night. The next day two Americans, one a doctor, gave up their attempt on the summit to help. Subsequently, in a brilliantly co-ordinated rescue, 22 mountaineers carried the sick Catalan through the complex icefall to base camp from where he was evacuated by helicopter with Lluís Giner, who was badly frostbitten. Martinez lost five toes; Giner lost five fingers.

The Spanish feat was hailed as one of the great successes of mountain rescue. In contrast, their brief meeting with Bradey on or around the south summit was to prove controversial.

The Catalans were reported by the three New Zealanders to have radioed to base camp at 2.30pm on the afternoon of October 14 to let them know they had "met Bradey 100m below the south summit crawling on her hands and knees in distress." Fearing for her life, Ang Rita, a sherpa, who had just made history by ascending Everest for the fifth time, tried on the radio to persuade her to come down but she refused. Bradey's compatriots were told of the contents of the radio call at base camp and chose this point to leave the mountain altogether.

Later the New Zealanders reported the Spanish as saying Bradey had returned to the south col camp at between 6.30pm and 7pm on the evening of October 14. If these statements are correct Bradey could not possibly have climbed the mountain in the time available.

But the Catalans never made a formal statement to the authorities and new evidence gleaned from their diaries, the recorded tapes of conversations between the climbers and base camp and the memories of those on the mountain at the time, shows up startling differences from the New Zealand account.

Jeronimo Lopez, one of the Catalans who climbed to the summit that day and who met Lydia on the descent, has attempted to set the record straight.

"I have talked the issue over in detail with Lluís Giner, who listened to all the tapes again, Sergio Martínez and Josep Casanovas, the deputy leader who was in base camp on October 14 and operated the radio. We now agree that:

- The meeting with Bradey took place on the south summit at around 2.30pm when a radio call was made and not 100m below it. (This 100m is crucial to whether you believe Bradey had enough time to climb Everest, because at that altitude 100m could take two hours to climb.)
- Bradey was in poor condition and Lopez asked her to retreat. We saw her crawling but, in retrospect, this may have been because she was resting. We are adamant she was not in "distress", although we understand that Ang Rita told her she would die if she tried to go to the top.
- Nil Bohigas made a rapid descent in about two hours arriving at the south col at about 5pm, four hours before the rest. (This may account for some confusion in the reports made by the New Zealanders). On the way down Bradey overtook Martínez (the injured Spaniard), Giner and myself at around 8.30pm at 8,200m. We arrived back at the South Col Camp at 9.30 pm, about half an hour after Bradey.

If these times are right (and they come from three out of the four Catalans on the mountain at the time) then Bradey had roughly 6½ hours to climb from the south summit to the top and back down again, not the four hours suggested by the New Zealanders, a feat within the bounds of possibility for a strong climber, though not at all easy without oxygen.

Says Elizabeth Hawley, doyenne of mountaineering in Nepal and someone who has followed the case closely; "She's a very strong climber. She would be physically capable. She is in the Wanda (Wanda Rutkiewicz: the world's top woman mountaineer) class and ten years younger.

Bradey's own version of the crucial stages of the climb now become more likely; "I was not delirious. I wasn't hallucinating. When the Spanish left the south summit I was on my own. I just took it stage by stage. There was some rope on the Hillary step. I used it to help me up. I presume it took me about 1½ hours, maybe 2 hours, to the main summit. I don't really know. I probably got to the top about 5.30pm. I hardly stayed any time at all. Then I was back down at the south col around 8.30pm. Heaps of people climbed Everest that season. It was no big deal. There were large bucket steps for me to follow. There were holes for ice axes. It wasn't like Messner soloing."

Even if the "new" Spanish times are accepted some experts remain uncertain. One authority says: "She appears to have got stronger rather than weaker as she went up. Normally at that altitude you are getting worse. In my book I must place a question mark against her ascent. I don't know whether she herself even knows whether she got to the top. It will probably remain a mystery.

Others give her the benefit of the doubt. Says Doug Scott, Britain's most successful mountaineer: "After communicating with Lydia I am convinced she did it. She's a phenomenal climber. She's a big girl. She's strong. The timing is just possible for someone that good. She strikes me as the sort of person who would not lie about this, I do not think she would risk the damage to her self esteem."

This article by Richard Cowper appeared in The Financial Times in November 1990 and is reproduced here with permission.

Many members will doubtless have been unaware of this remarkable, if controversial ascent and the drama which unfolded on the mountain on that occasion, and will also read with amazement of the traffic that there now is on Everest, once so inaccessible and inviolate. (Ed).

MOUNTAIN GUIDE TELLS THE STORY OF THE GIRLS WHO GOT TO THE TOP

Women mountaineers have never made any secret of their urge to make it to the peak. "They just did it," says Gudrun Weikert, the first German woman to qualify as mountain guide, telling the tale of her illustrious pioneering predecessors.

The first woman to climb the 4,478m (14,693ft) Matterhorn, on 13 September 1867, only two years after the first man climbed it, was an Italian, Felicite Carrel. One hundred metres short of the summit she reached a preliminary peak that has since then been known as Col Felicite. Eleven of the world's 14 peaks more than 8,000m (26,248ft) have been climbed by women.

Two 35-year-old Japanese women, Mayuri Yashuhara and Pumie Kimura, in 1990 climbed Dhaulagiri, 8,167m (26,796ft) in the Himalayas.

Pitixi Equellor Ulzurrun of Spain was one of a team that climbed Cho Oyu, 8,201m (26,907ft). On 26 May 1990 they were joined by Gabriele Hupfauer and Gerhild Kurze, from Bavaria, both without oxygen at - 25°.

Nearly 50 women from 10 countries have now climbed 8,000m Himalayan peaks, according to Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Twelve were Japanese, with Junko Tabei, 51, who climbed Mount Everest in 1976, the most experienced expedition leader. The best woman mountaineer is felt to be Wanda Rutkiewicz from Warsaw, whose feats have included climbing the notorious K2 without oxygen.

Gudrun Weikert is researching the history of women mountaineers and plans to write, with Stefan König, a book about them which is scheduled for publication in autumn 1991.

She has only a handful of fellow women who are qualified mountain guides in Europe, two each in Austria and Switzerland, three in France and one each in Italy and Great Britain.

Frau Weikert, 31, lives in Geretsried, Bavaria. She qualified as the first German woman mountain guide in 1988. In winter she accompanies clients on skiing tours or gives avalanche courses. In summer she works as a guide all over the Alps. Amateurs trust her, she likes her work, but she would prefer not to be seen as a heroine.

Taken from The German Tribune, originally published in the General Anzeiger, Bonn, with permission of the author.

OBITUARIES

Maurice Bennett

Member 1939-1990

We shall all of us admit, I think, that in Maurice Bennett we have lost one of the 'fathers' of the Club: not a 'founding father', no, he was just thirty years after that, but one of the later generation who has been to us all a patriarchal figure, unobtrusive, and a support and buttress to the Club over more than half a century.

Maurice was one of the first persons I got to know upon joining in 1946 and I remember to this day his warm welcome and friendly help over the first year or two until I began to feel I was a 'member'. Many adjectives spring to mind, and none of them will be an exaggeration; his integrity, dependability, good humour, benevolence and generosity, and then on the business side, his ability, attention to detail, and his knowledge of affairs legal and financial. For many years Honorary Solicitor to the Club, he took a prominent part in the negotiations leading to the acquisition of the Patterdale Hut, giving the project his generous support and undertaking the treble role of a director, secretary to the Board of the Association of British Members of the SAC Limited, which managed the hut, and solicitor to the company.

He joined the ABM in 1939, attached to the Diablerets Section, and so reached his fifty years of membership in 1989, being raised to Honorary membership for services rendered in 1984.85. He was honorary secretary with F E Smith 1969-62, and with Peter Ledebor 1963-70: Vice President with David Riddell 1971 and with Rev. F L Jenkins 1972/73: President 1975-77. Not less active too, in our parent the Alpine Club, to which he was elected in 1959, proposed by George Starkey and R C H Fox, and supported by M N Clarke, Dr A W Barton and Roy Crepin, he became a trustee, a member of the House Committee, and representative on the London & SE Area Committee of the BMC.

Maurice shared our Alpine meets regularly for many years, until declining health rendered this more difficult. I have many happy personal recollections of his company, first I think in 1959, the Jubilee Meet (fifty years of the Club) at Saas Fee - George Starkey in the chair. Harold Flook writes:- "Maurice Bennett was a great tower of strength to the Club and one recalls his kindly welcome and fund of stories, also a memorable climb up the Weissmies in '59, and burning the cardboard fuel container at the summit of the Mettelhorn some years later to make the kettle boil!" Sils Maria in 1964 was a good meet, we

did many things together then, Arolla too, 1966, at the Mont Collon, and, at ground level, enthusiastic table-tennis rivalry at the Hotel Schweitzerhof in Kandersteg, 1969, Portresina 1972: how the years have gone by. Although I nominally led some of these meets during his secretaryship, he did all the work behind the scenes: I remember remarking to him in connection with, was it the first Arolla meet, that I had received over twenty letters from him.

And Maurice kept it up to the last; as recently as 1988 he missed the dinner because he was gallivanting across the Rockies. He treated us to a witty and entertaining speech at one of our recent dinners at the Rembrandt Hotel. Maurice was too modest about his climbing achievements and very seldom talked about them, but the list is formidable:-

- Finsteraarhorn
- Schreckhorn traverse
- Lauterbrunnen Breithorn
- Tschingelhorn
- Fletschhorn-Laquinhorn traverse
- Zinal Rothorn
- Rimpfischhorn
- Wetterhorn traverse
- Petite Dent de Veisivi traverse

and many others, his tour de force, perhaps, was the Mittellegi Ridge of the Eiger, a major climb.

He did a great deal of rock climbing in North Wales during the 1930s and 1940s.

An extensive knowledge of the Alps, coupled with an unusual memory, ensured that he generally recognised pictures on the screen before the rest of us!

Maurice Bennett was much loved. We are fortunate that his son David carries on the good work, Honorary Auditor since 1985.

Farewell Maurice: we miss you.

F.P.F.

Dorothea, Countess Gravina

Ivor Richards' lines about the earlier Dorothea give an idea of the qualities they shared - unquenchable enjoyment of mountains and adventurous travel and refusal to be defeated by age:

"The glacier our unmade bed
I hear you through your yawn:
'Leaping crevasses in the dark
That's how to live' you said."

and:

"We have them in our bones:
Ten thousand miles of stones."

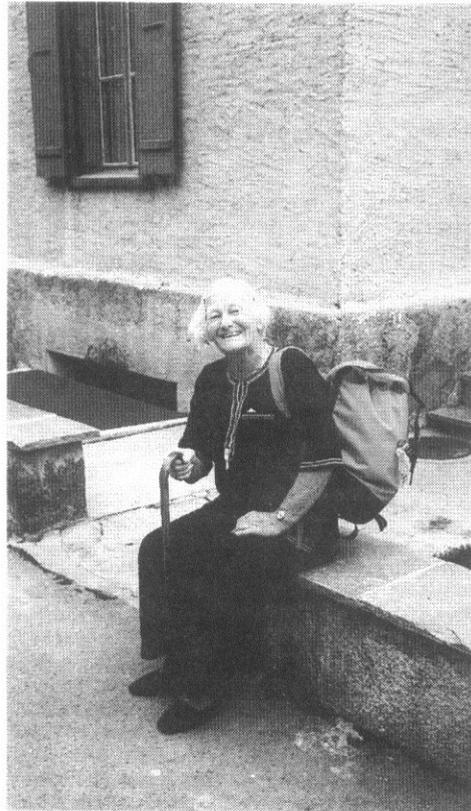
Her climbing started at 4 years old, on the roof of her home in Yorkshire. In the 1920s she travelled in South and East Africa, and climbed Kilimanjaro, possibly the first ascent by a woman. From 1934-1939 she lived in the Italian Tyrol and climbed and skied in the Alps, ski-mountaineering with her uncle Binney, a founder member of the Alpine Ski Club, and with her husband, also a very competent skier.

At 50, in 1955, she joined a beginner's course in rock climbing with Gwen Moffat, who found her the oldest and keenest of the group, and probably the most competent. She joined the Ladies Alpine Club that year and the Pinnacle Club the next. From that time she climbed and travelled compulsively. In 1956 she climbed in the Alps and Britain and did several guideless ascents with her son Chris, including the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa.

In 1959 she joined the Womens' International Cho Oyu Expedition, and took over the leadership after the leader, Claude Kogan, Claudine Van der Straten and two sherpas died in avalanches. She climbed to 24,000 feet on the rescue attempt.

In 1962 she led the Pinnacle Club Jagdula Expedition in West Nepal, which climbed a neighbouring peak of Kanjiroba's of 21,040 feet, as well as Kagmara I, II and III, all first ascents. She was on all the tops except Kanjiroba, which she missed through temporary illness. Dawa Tensing was the Sirdar on this his last expedition. Dorothea contributed generously to the fund set up to help him in illness and old age.

In 1963 she was President of the Pinnacle Club and rode out to the Alps on a moped for a PC/LAC Meet in Zinal. In 1966 some young tigers met her for the first time on an LAC Meet at Saas Fee and were impressed by her fast and competent climbing, particularly her lead on the N. Ridge of the Weissmies where she raced ahead of other parties. The verdict was: "We were very proud of Dorothea". She was unique too in carrying a tent and firewood up to huts and camping outside.



Those who drove with her found her fast driving more frightening than any climb, but it never led to disaster.

1967 was a good year, with a traverse of the Weisshorn by the Schalligrat and the Peuteret with two bivouacs in bad weather.

In 1970 Dorothea travelled to South Africa to visit her Aunt Marjorie, mostly by native bus and lorries. In 1971 she took a bus from Clapham Common to Agra - "so much more amusing than flying" - and across Iran and Afghanistan to Kathmandu. She engaged two sherpas to trek with her to Everest Base Camp. She went on to make a circuit of Annapurna and climb Dambusch Peak - nearly 20,000 feet. She continued to Southern India, mostly by bus, then by cargo boat to Mombasa. She visited Tanzania, Zambia and the Victoria Falls, with some climbing on and around Table Mountain. She was back in Europe for the LAC Dolomite Meet, including the traverse of the Funffingerspitz.

In 1976 she was still climbing and camping at 71. She attended the ABMSAC Meet in 1989, her last Alpine Meet. In 1990 she bullied her doctor into giving her a certificate of fitness for an RGS cruise to the Antarctic. He was wrong - she had not time to make this trip before she died.

Margaret Darvall

This obituary is a transcript of Margaret Darvall's address at the Memorial Service, to be printed in the Alpine Journal, whose editor has kindly given permission for its use here. I, for my part, venture to add that as well as such a full participation in mountaineering, Dorothea Gravina made an equally notable contribution to Guiding and this was described by a second address at the service, given by Mrs Anne Mitchell, Chairman of the "Our Chalet" Ciommittee of the World Association of Girl Guides Chalet at Adelbåeen. The service concluded with a Thanksgiving to which I am sure all members who knew Dorothea will heartily assent. Ed.

We thank you Lord for the privilege of sharing in Dorothea's life.
 We thank you for all she meant as inspiration and friend.
 We thank you for the warmth and joy she brought into so many lives.
 We thank you for the unique talents bestowed on her and the energy with which she used them.

*Opposite: Dorothea Gravina on the steps of the Bahnhof Hotel in 1986, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Bernard Biner plaque.
 Photo: Barbara Attridge.*