

**Diary For 1992**

17-19	January	Scottish Meet - Tyndrum	Alasdair Andrews
29	January	London Lecture	Dr Charles Clarke
7-8	February	Northern Dinner Meet	Patterdale
28-1	Feb/March	Scottish Meet - Kinlochleven	Alasdair Andrews
20-22	March	Scottish Meet - Laggan Bridge	Alasdair Andrews
25	March	London Lecture	George Band
3-5	April	ABMSAC Hut Maintenance Meet	Patterdale
10-12	April	Scottish Meet - Fearnan	Alasdair Andrews
25	April	Bedfordshire Walk	James & Belinda Baldwin
9-15	May	Wester Ross	Ben Suter
10	June	London Buffet Party	Peter Ledebor
12-14	June	Lakes Scrambles/Haweswater	Rudolf Loewy
3-5	July	Snowdonia Scrambles	Ben Suter
5	July	Surrey Hills Walk	Jack Derry
25/15	July/August	Joint ABMSAC/AC/CC Alpine Meet	Mike Pinney
1-15	August	ABMSAC Alpine Meet	Harry Archer
23	September	Alpine Reunion/Slide Show	London
2-4	October	Northern Buffet Party	Marion Porteous
6-8	November	Joint Alpine Reunion	Patterdale
14	November	AGM and Annual Dinner	London
15	November	"Morning After" Walk	Ben Suter

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

**JOURNAL 1992**

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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.

## ZERMATT'S "ALPINE GARDEN" - FLORAL WALKS FOR JUNE VISITORS

By John Byam-Grounds

From Arolla and Zinal to the Simplon the upper valleys and cwms of these Southern Alps provide a rich hunting ground for many of those high alpine which are so excellently and compactly presented in the English version of 'Our Alpine Flora', recently published by the SAC.\*1

Whereas for former generations old age, and indeed childhood too, spelt relegation to the lower woods and meadows, every sort of engineering aid by wire or wheels now lifts the aged or infirm to the turfy alps of Pulsatilla and Soldanella, the screes of the Purple Saxifrage, even to the rocky fastnesses of *Eritrichium nanum* and *Androsace helvetica*.

Thus it was that at June's end last year Radvan Horný \*2 and I spent ten memorable days travelling the traditional high level walks around Zermatt. With frequent deviations from the track and breaks 'to admire the view', we found ourselves identifying and noting the plants which, in my more ignorant and carefree days, had lain unseen in the pre-dawn, sleepy-eyed approach to a peak or, in the exuberance of youth, ignored in the headlong return to the valley floor.

Of many rewarding localities perhaps the most prolific are those above the village of Findelen, towards Fluhalp and the Unter Rothorn and across the moraines and glacial streams of Grünsee. Here high in the crevices of rocky cliffs cling silvery cushions of *Androsace helvetica*, south facing and surely scorching in mid-summer. At first unnoticed on the steep moraines were the small, pale blue lanterns of *Campanula cenisia*, another rarity, and on the level silt beds of the Findelenbach great drifts of creamy white *Dryas octopetala*, as far as the eye could see among the scrub. Above Sunnegga a profusion of alpines - several species of Gentian, *Lloydia* and three species of Pulsatilla with clumps of *Viola calcarat*, cast up into banks by that devil's invention, the bulldozer, excavating a piste.

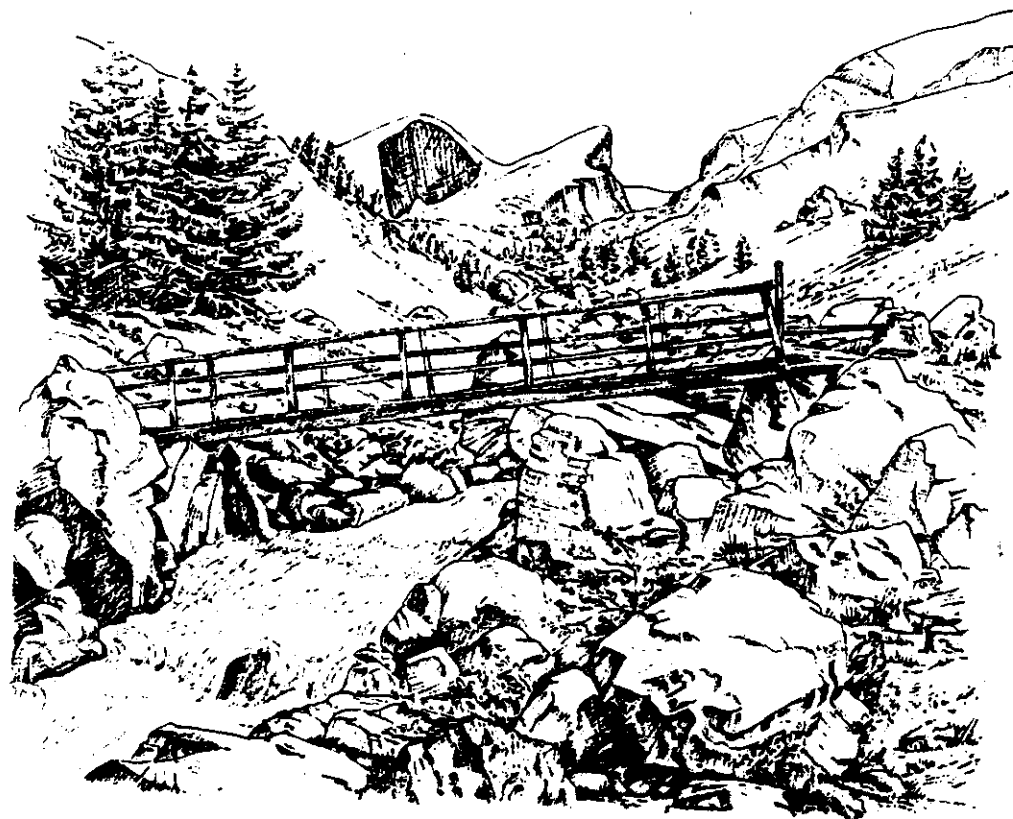
For Horný and me, with our mutual interest in Saxifrages, the highlight after a deep obeisance to Farrer's 'King of the Alps', (not the Matterhorn but *Eritrichium nanum*, sharing rocks below the Hornli with *Androsace helvetica*), was to discover our long-sought *Saxifraga biflora* on the Hirli screes leading downward through retreating snow to the pastures of Staffalp. *S. biflora* and *S. oppositifolia*, appropriately midway between its parents. Here to celebrate we set up our kettle to make tea within arm's reach not only of these three but also *SS. bryoides*, *exarata* and *sequieri* sharing the little North facing bay. From here every step found *S. oppositifolia* more abundant and in every shade of pink and purple. That day alone from Schwarzee to Staffel we noted some fifty six species of alpine.

\*1 'Our Alpine Flora', Landolt and Urbanska, pub. Swiss Alpine Club, from Cordee, 3a De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE2 7HD. To members £10.00

\*2 Director of the National History Museum, Prague. Palaeontologist and noted authority on Saxifrages.

Much depends upon the melting of the winter snows, but probably the time to see the flowers at their best would be early June or, with an early spring, even perhaps the last week in May. In a short holiday between the lower pastures and the snows we noted some 150 species, mostly in flower, and there were still others we did not record or did not see.

To look with eyes aloft to familiar peaks echoing many memories while at one's feet lies a carpet of alpine flowers is an experience not to be missed before, like the climber in the English Church, being 'translated unawares'.



Bridge over Findelbach below Grünsee; Strahlhorn and Adlerhorn.  
Sketch by John Byam-Grounds on Flowerwalk 28th June 1991

by Michael Austin

The sound of a piano and bass playing some cool jazz drifted in through the bathroom window as I lay luxuriating in my first real bath since goodness knows when. It was the last Saturday of the Arolla meet and the bathroom was in the Gai Logis pension in Les Hauderes. My thoughts turned to a conversation of the previous evening, Ben had asked me to write a piece for the newsletter on our climb of Mont Blanc de Cheilon. Overhearing his request Harry had remarked that reports of climbs which went well were "boring". This was obviously a challenge, as our day on Mont Blanc de Cheilon had gone perfectly and almost without incident, unlike my descent from the Pointes de Mourti. On the latter occasion I found myself abseiling off the top to the accompaniment of rumbling thunder with a lightning conductor running between my legs, and the subsequent descent via the Col des Rosses, recommended as benign by the guidebook, also turned into an abseiling epic. On arrival back at the Moiry hut discussion with the guardian revealed that the Col des Rosses is no longer an accepted route to or from the ridge. However, back to the Mont Blanc de Cheilon.

The party was John Chapman, Penny and myself; we were woken in the Dix hut at 4.00 a.m. to find a clear sky and a temperature low enough to ensure good crisp snow. As we covered the first two kilometres of moraine the sky behind glowed with a magnificent rosy dawn above the Pas de Chevres and Arolla, hidden in the valley below. Arriving at the snowslope leading to the Col de Cheilon we roped up but, with the ridge to follow shortly, decided not to put on crampons; in one or two places I was glad that a party ahead had cut a few steps. The lower part of the west ridge can be by-passed to the right on snow but the rock looked much more interesting and we climbed the whole way on the crest until it met the ice of the upper glacier. The first and steepest section was hard ice but the higher slopes were snow covered and the bergschrund was well bridged. This took us up to the saddle on the south-west ridge where we left our sacks before the final scramble to the summit. Just below the summit we met a descending party of British climbers who stopped for a brief chat. The leader subsequently reported seeing us and that we "appeared to be enjoying the climb". The summit was reached in just over four hours, only a little more than the guidebook time.

The descent more or less reversed the climb, except for a different track on the icy section of glacier and a descent to the snow from the middle of the west ridge. The latter was in order to save time, as we were finding three on a rope very slow on the trickier sections of rock. Arriving at the dry Cheilon Glacier John unroped to take the moraine path back to the hut whilst Penny and I continued down the glacier with the intention of finding a short cut to the Pas de Chevres. Of course, we merely ended by proving that paths always take the best routes, as we were forced back onto the moraine by enormous crevasses at the head of the relatively gentle icefall. However, we avoided the climb up to the hut and were rewarded by a profusion of the rare and beautiful Mont Cenis bellflowers amongst the moraine. John rejoined us at the top of the Pas de Chevres ladders and we made a rapid descent for a well earned drink at the Centre Alpin. It had been a typical boring day in the Alps.

by Graham Daniels

"The bald fella has only one Munro left now" said John to an equally wet climber in the bar of the Inchnadamph Hotel. "We have spent a few days picking off odd hills - first, tops on Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan at the head of Affric, and today, Conival and Ben More Assynt. Super views from the ridge but what a cold wind! All that remains is the Forcan ridge on the Saddle for a top before all his mates come to join him on his final hill - Meall nan Tarmachan above Killin. Then he'll have done all the Munros and all the tops."

So a well ordered plan was being followed to round off my pilgrimage. Two good friends who had shared many other tops generously set aside a week to knock off the odd hills and pave the way for the celebratory ascent with 24 others, - family to be flown up from London, climbing friends coming from Hertfordshire and Dorset, Newcastle and Edinburgh. But the way was not to be easy and young men in the bar clamoured to hear the high points of the road leading to Meall nan Tarmachan.

Unwillingly at first but then more readily as I warmed to the interest, I answered the inevitable questions:

How long did it take? Too long - I climbed Ben Lomond in '53 but I have always lived in the south of England and getting to Scotland is often harder than climbing the hills.

Many winter hills? Oh, yes. I recall we did all the Mamores in a Christmas break at Ballachulish; and Ben More and Stobinian on another New Year's Day were desperately cold. In the early days ('64) we were marooned in Derry Lodge by the snow and made Carn a' Mhaim into a desperate ascent, - although somehow the Cairngorm Club chaps were able to get right over to Cairntoul in the same time that we took!

Skye? What a super place - my favourite day was by boat from Glen Brittle to Coruisk and then up the Dubh ridge over the Thearlich Dubh gap and on to the top of Alasdair in the sunset and down the Stone Shute in the darkness. I could never see why people make a fuss of the Inaccessible Pinnacle, - we found the short edge very easy, - easier than the long ridge where the wind blew the rope and our shouts to each other over towards Coruisk. I did have rather a disaster on the Camasunary Bad Step when I dropped my rucksack into the sea after a liquid lunch at Sligachan caused a late start. Our problems that day multiplied when we couldn't cross the river in spate to get to the Coruisk hut and two of us bivouaced in one polybag and the incessant rain proved I needed a new cagoule.

The wettest hill? For a while Gulvain above Glen Finnan was the worst but that seemed a dry day when we went up Ben More on Mull. The path up was breached by so many flooded burns that we decided to come back directly and the whole hill was covered with standing water 6 inches deep.

Why do the tops as well? I think it rather superficial to do half the job and it gives a wrong impression only to do the Munros. I recall

Ben Wyvis, which we climbed in cloud and rain to the summit. All the others went down but Alison and I struggled out to the far eastern top where the clouds lifted and we had superb views over the Dornoch Firth. We think Wyvis is a super hill but John doesn't,

Doing the tops can be hazardous. I remember leaving Alison shortly after we married on a top of Beinn a'Bhuird. I went off to Stob an t-Sluichd before we were to meet again on the summit. Somehow it didn't work out and many shouts and tears were spent before we met again.

Any advice? Yes, always try to keep your maps dry and don't be slow to look at a friend's map when it's raining.

The bar shut as Scottish bars are prone to do and we drove to Dornie to sleep on the floor of a friend's hired cottage. A convivial night and then to the Forcan ridge. Suddenly winter was upon us and the ridge, which should have been a scramble, was remarkably tricky with a lot of new snow and we were committed half way up the ridge without a rope. We made it to the top though. And how exhilarating it was to run down the snow all the way from Sgurr na Creige to the col.

And so to Fearnan. Like so many in the ABMSAC we relied on Alistair Andrews to fix it and the plan was to assemble in the Ben Lawers car park and then follow the track to the westerly top before traversing the ridge to the top of Meall nan Tarmachan. Afterwards all were to reassemble in the Fortingall Hotel for a celebratory meal. Instead of this, it became a wake as Colin Armstrong's epic now reveals.....

**The Ballad of Meall Nan Tarmachan**  
or  
**Graham's Last Munro - (Well Almost)**

*Penned by the poet McColingall*

'Twas in the year of 1991 and on the 6th day of April,  
That Mr Graham Daniels of Welwyn Garden City started for the hill,  
The occasion being the ascent of Graham's last Munro.  
"I'm quietly confident of success" he had been heard to crow.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - I'll not need climb up you again!

The party had assembled, some twenty five in all,  
From places all around the realm, to meet at Fortingall.  
They none of them, not any, would have missed this celebration,  
For after 37 years of toil, it was a grand occasion.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - There'll not be a day like this again!

The great day dawned - well almost - with a touch of watery sun,  
But all agreed come rain or shine it would not spoil the fun.  
All dressed in their waterproofs they posed in fine array,  
For photographs to make a record of this famous day.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - Ye'll not see such a crowd again!

Shortly after 10.00 a.m. they started on their way,  
With rucksacks filled with bottles to celebrate the day.  
Three separate parties started out, each on a different route,  
But vowed to meet upon the top before the day was out.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - What a party we'll have when we meet again.

Because he is a purist of a very firm turn of mind,  
Graham was not content to be a Munroist of the ordinary kind  
And insisted in climbing not just Munros - to boot,  
But also climbed each minor top of 3000 foot.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - You'll never see his like again!

Within an hour of starting the temperature began to sink,  
And swirling sleet and snow poured down from clouds as black as ink.  
Strong winds whipped round the climbers, testing their ability,  
The spin drift roared and howled, creating zero visibility.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - Such storms ye'll ne'r produce again!

Before they reached the third subsidiary mound,  
They could not see their feet upon the ground,  
And navigation on the ridge became a hazard,  
Because of the foul and unrelenting blizzard.

O Meall nan Tarmachan - I might just have to come and try again!

The devastating truth at last became quite clear,  
They would not reach the top that day, however near,  
Descent was called for, through the frost and rime,  
Or else they would not reach the pub by dinner time!

O Meall nan Tarmachan - I'll kick your cairn when next I pass this way again!

To his credit, Mr Daniels was very philosophical,  
And took this unbelievable repulse in a manner so convivial,  
That everyone agreed that it indeed would be a crime,  
Not to turn up yet again and join him the next time!

O Meall nan Tarmachan - We'll all be back for sure again!

Return to Tarmachan

All of us on Meall nan Tarmachan in April 1991 knew that the white out conditions fully justified coming off the hill without reaching the summit. Since then I have met general incredulity that the little hill above Killin should have repelled someone who had successfully climbed every other Munro and subsidiary top in Scotland.

So as time passed the need to finish off the list increased and once again Alasdair Andrews allowed my interests to hijack the April 1992 meet at Fearnan. Many old friends came for another dose and two dozen again followed the track beneath the hill to the western end of the ridge so we could go over the tops to finish on the Munro. The clouds stopped any views but we were able to identify the point where we dropped off the ridge in 1991 and we all agreed the craggy top ridge would have been very nasty in the blizzard, had we made it that far last year.

Champagne and Scotch enlived the summit and the event provided an excuse for another great evening at the Fortingall Hotel - so, thanks to everyone who came to this and any of the other Munros. I think I will try to go up Meall nan Tarmachan on a sunny day to see the hill - but if I try to go up every hill I haven't seen because of the clouds I might as well start the list all over again!



Early Days: Grahams Daniels on the Inaccessible Pinnacle of Scurr Dearg on the Cuillin Ridge, Skye

### THREE PERFECT DAYS

By David Thistlethwaite

As my Alpine holiday in summer 1991 coincided with the ABMSAC meet at Arolla I was able to enjoy the comforts of the Alpine Centre and the company of fellow members, but my quest for 4000m peaks kept drawing me away. Something easy to start turned out to be the Strahlhorn from the Britannica Hut. A long acclimatisation plod of 5 hours saw us sharing the summit in perfect weather with a very large Lancastrian party from the Rucksack Club. A perfect day!

Two days rest at Arrolla, then over to Grindelwald where Roland\* and I had designs on the Schreckhorn. So the beautiful walk up to the Schreckhorn Hut, and next day we depart into a perfect morning at 2.15, almost dazzled by the stars. By first light we are crossing the Schreckhorn towards the very conspicuous ramp, a snow/ice couloir, ice for the early morning ascent, soft snow for the noon descent. We reach the top of the ramp at 6.30 and in full warm sunshine start up the magnificent red gneiss of the south west ridge. Every move was a joy. I have never enjoyed climbing more and the summit came too soon! - instead of the usual desperate relief. 8.00 a.m. and unbelievable views to almost every peak in the Alps. We had the summit to ourselves for nearly an hour of blissful sunbathing. Other parties began to arrive, including a 15 year old Swiss boy leading his father. We all congratulated each other and then started down, enjoying every minute of it, getting to the hut at 2.00 p.m. After lots of liquid refreshment we descended to Grindelwald for 7.00 p.m. Another perfect day.

Next the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey. Weather and conditions on the mountain would never be better and I was going well - we had climbed and descended the Schreckhorn in less than guide-book times. If I was ever to manage all the 4000ers I had to climb this one now. I met Roland at Martigny and drove to Italy and a very crowded Val Veni; it seemed all Italy was there. Eventually we found a parking place and walked up to Monzino where we spent the night in a hot stuffy dormitory.

At 6.45 a leisurely departure for the Bivouac Eccles. At the start of the Brouillard Glacier we met a St. Gervais guide descending with his client who informed us the Bivouac was full, but we continued up through the crevasses to Col Freney with marvellous views across the Freney Glacier to the Aiguille Blanche. Then up the final snow and onto the lower rocks of Pic Eccles, and so up to the Bivvy. A scene of indescribable squalor met us and the smell! Fortunately less so inside, and only two occupants.

We cleaned up a bit and brewed and ate and slept the afternoon away, listening to the rock falls from Col Emile Rey and the Brouillard face of Mont Blanc amidst the grandest mountain cirque I have ever been so close to. I couldn't get over the views and kept wandering outside onto the tiny balcony to watch the changing views of the Brouillard pillars, especially the Red Pillar, as the clouds blew over. We were level with the summit of the Aig Noire du Peuterey at 3800m.

An early supper and bed at 7.30. I slept like a top. The alarm heralded 3.00 a.m., a quick breakfast and we prepare for our big day putting on everything except the crampons inside the very confined space of the hut. Outside a beautiful starry night and we move a few metres up and round the corner into the ice couloir which will lead up in about two hours to Col Eccles. Using two axes we ascend by the light of our head torches from ice screw to ice screw; just about the most serious ice climbing I have done.

The sky lightened and we arrived on the Col at the same time as the blazing red sunrise. Fantastic views; into the light of Col Peuterey, the Aiguille Blanche and the Upper Freney Glacier, the Freney Pillars and all the huge face of Mont Blanc. A solo British climber arrived on the col having made a very early start from Monzino and had come up via Col Freney.

The couloir down which we had to abseil to get to the Upper Freney Glacier was swept by stones unavoidably knocked down by three on the Innominata and we had to wait until they moved higher before we could proceed safely. I tentatively started my abseil, very concerned about the stones and the looseness of everything. I certainly fully understood the seriousness of this side of Mont Blanc now. Down we go over more looseness to the snow which we have to descend, then over a rimaye until we get to the level at which we can traverse to Col Peuterey over various avalanche debris. Already the sun is getting hot and I think we may be in for it on our return.

At Col Peuterey we walk up to the rimaye below the Aiguille Blanche North face and now in shadow, on ice, Roland climbs the vertical wall of the rimaye fitting a screw into the top lip. He continues up the quite steep ice to the bottom of the rocks, finds a belay, and I join him. Roland then displayed great mountain ability in finding a very climbable line up this face which is nowhere easy.

A little short of four full 45m rope-lengths and we are on the summit of the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey. It is 10.30, I can hardly believe it. The view of the summit ridge is stupendous, with two alpinists on the south summit. I take some photos, we share an apple, some biscuits, some chocolate and then begin the abseils down our ascent route using our climbing rope and an abseil line tied together. Our descent is remarkably quick even though we had to free the line after it jammed and we had to cut ten metres off. Speed was now of the essence. We descend two more abseils to the snow and then the last one to just under the rimaye. Now onto Col Peuterey and into the sun, it is very hot, the Freney cliffs - 500m high - are bombarding the route we must take. Not nice. One terrifying crash above us as we cross the worst part of avalanche debris; Roland is shouting "Run, Run" - with lungs bursting, this fifty-five year old is sprinting with large rucksack and in full climbing gear through very soft snow at 13,000ft! Rocks whirr past. Glancing up I see a large lump of snow or ice bouncing almost slowly straight at Roland and running hard it hit him on his right hip, knocking him down. Thank God he's up in a flash; "are you all right". "Run, run" he yells. We scramble on through the deep soft snow as fast as we can. Eventually we have to re-ascend over the rimaye to regain the couloir up to Col Eccles. Everything is very soft but the mountain seems to have relented a little. There is less danger here but this snow is very nerve-wracking and the odd snow debris still falls until we reach the rocks and are out of the field of fire. Roland leads the couloir, I follow - the last pitch here is the hardest of the day.

We are safely on Col Eccles; more photos - chocolate, biscuits, drink and we continue over Pic Eccles to descend the rock ridge to the Bivvy (not down the ice couloir). What a surprise - no easy descent this! Great care and some tricky climbing and even trickier route finding. We eventually get back to Eccles Biv and then carefully, very aware of the soft state of the snow and all the crevasses, begin the descent of the Brouillard Glacier to reach Monzino at 6.00 p.m. Drinks, beer, tea and more tea, and we descend to the valley arriving at 8.00 p.m. and drive down to Entreves. We begin to unwind with a superb meal.

We drive back to Switzerland amazingly slowly. Roland leaves me at Martigny and I crawl quietly into the Arrolla Alpin Centre and my bed at 12.30 a.m. - Phew.

A third perfect day, by the skin of our teeth!

\**Roland Garin, guide from Les Diablerets, with whom David Thistlethwaite has climbed for more than 20 years. "When I climb with Roland I am climbing with an almost life-long friend, and when I don't stay with the Alpine Meet, I stay with Roland" says David.*

## CLIMB OF THE AIGUILLE DE LA TSA, AROLLA 91

David Jones

Organised by Harry, our party of eleven stood on the tiny summit of the Aig. de la Tsa on the 29th July. The amazing climax of our expedition.

We had set out the previous day, ferried in cars up the Val d' Arolla, - which not only alleviated the tedium of a long road walk, but also reduced the effort in carrying our equipment to the Bertol Hut.

The renewed acquaintance of Harry and the Guardian (30 years at the Bertol) smoothed the way to a good supper, a pleasant evening and a dortoir nearly to ourselves, where we settled down to await the 5.30 am call.

A leisurely breakfast meant that it was 7.00 a.m. before all were ready for the off. Then the steep sided slopes of the shrunken glacier gave a roundabout route to the base of the Tsa, which took two hours to reach from the Bertol Col. Not so, however, for the fast moving rope of David B, Mark and Andy, who were already half up the spine when we arrived. Galvanised by their example, the rest of us quickly re-arranged the climbing teams, to be led off by the rope of Matthew, Sally and George; Don and myself took Judith into our care; Simon and Harry followed.

The climb began in a vertical groove with thin holds, then zig-zagged across the face, from one belay point to the next, to arrive at the left hand edge beneath a smooth vertical block. Impasse! This is where the climb really became interesting, (and where peering over the edge produced a startling view of Arolla some 5000 feet below). It was the crux of the climb, you had to straddle up the edge until stopped by the block, then swing out onto the face to make use of a crack splitting its base. The jamming which followed produced a wonderful sense of exposure, but also, the instant call for self-preservation, edging

carefully to the good holds above. The pitch evinced contrasting comments from an exhilarating yodel on successful conclusion, to "I daren't look down"!

Eleven could not possibly be at the top at one time, so the first party to the summit came off and set up the abseil for all to use on the descent. The actual point - not easy to find - was shown us by Harry, having had to use it many years previously after an ascent of the Tsa with the fifteen year old Matthew. But eight of us stood, sat and huddled on the small summit beaming with delight. Alas, with all movement restricted in every direction, efforts to photograph the scene were frustrated.

Then we climbed down to the waiting Andy who belayed us down to David B, hanging in his harness alongside the abseil point. Giving all a final safety check he despatched us down the 150 foot double rope to where Mark unzipped each in turn. Threading the two 11mm ropes through a figure of eight required quite an effort. The weight of the free hanging ropes at this length being surprisingly heavy. The speedy abseil off the Tsa gave time for a lunch-break before setting off across the softening snows of the Glacier to the Bertol Col.

Later all celebrated a happy and successful climb on the sunny terrace of the Hotel de la Pigne. Consuming a variety of exotic ice-creams and large quantities of beer; a nutritious mixture which must have surprised many a stomach! But the exercise certainly excused a general air of joie de vivre!

### TEA & BISCUITS ON TOP OF THE EIGER

By Rebecca Stephens \*1

Snowfall on canvas. I heard this sound as I awoke slowly to the daunting reality that I was one of three sandwiched in a two-man tent, perched precariously on the summit of the Eiger.

Eight of us were camped on a ridge about four feet wide with a sheer drop on one side and a snow cornice rising like a wave behind us. We were wrapped in impenetrable cloud. "Could be here a while," said a companion. How long that while might last, we did not know.

The helicopter which was due to lift us off could only fly if it was clear. Thoughts turned to the Eiger's history of deaths and made the events of the previous day all the more remarkable.

Last Saturday no fewer than 43 climbers - able and disabled, young and old, black, white and yellow - converged on the minuscule summit from the four points of the compass, all in the name of charity. Huddled in an unstable human mass, the cautious clipped safety harnesses securely to a rope; others, less cautious, or less aware, did not. A single slip would have resulted in certain death. But all, except an enthusiastic few who preferred to climb down, were lifted to safety next day. A veteran Alpinist said: "The Eiger's never seen anything like it."

The ascent was the culmination of three years work by one of Britain's more visionary climbers, 47-year-old Edwin Drummond, a writer and poet. In Drummond's words, it was a "social climb of conscience" intended to benefit the environment, human rights and the Third World.

This four-sided ascent of the Eiger was the most ambitious of wide range of projects organised by Drummond's group, "Climb for the World."

Over the same weekend some 50,000 participants walked, climbed and scrambled up more modest peaks in the British Isles to raise money donated, via the UK United Nations Association, to projects in the developing world. \*2

But in Switzerland that weekend our minds were concentrated on safety first. The Eiger is loose at the best of times, but the weather recently had been warm and the mountain a pile of rubble. Already, Silvia Fitzpatrik, a 27-year-old Argentinian, had been struck in the face by a rock fall on the notorious North Face. Her bloody nose was firmly pictured in my mind as I set off to climb the more benign western flank, a route labelled, rather irritatingly, by accomplished climbers, "the way down." Still, we had to take care. There were ten of us on this route - including a teenage Nepalese and a blind man - at times, one vertically in line above another. A single misplaced foot caused the breath to be held as rocks tumbled on those below.

Day one took us across an icefield and over a mass of crumbling grey rock to half-way camp pitched on a tiny ledge of levelled scree. In mountaineering the limited tent space invariably means one is sardined nose to toe with a bunch of complete strangers. I ended up with a doctor, and John Dove, the blind man.

"How on earth do you manage? I asked. "I train in the gym," he said. "No, how do you see? How do you know where you're going?" It seemed it was a matter of remembering where his hands had been to know where to place his feet. "I know a slip could be serious," he said, "but I just put it to the back of my mind." John was tidier, more able to manage in the confined space of a tent than anyone I knew. He snored sweetly that night, while I didn't sleep a wink, disturbed by the incessant wind.

It took just four hours the second day; a rewarding four hours along the crest of the North Face to the summit. The view was beyond comparison, over the knife-edge summit to empty glacial valleys of the purest white. We scraped ice from the summit crest and put on a brew in the tent pitched on the ledge, our home for the night. Tea all round and chocolate - first for our western flank team, then Doug Scott - the famous British mountaineer, who today acted as guide for a small Tibetan boy on the Eiger's Mittellegi Ridge. Then for the Russians and the Czechs who took the long approach from the south. Within an hour the summit was packed; and then almost empty, as the last helicopter ferried all but nine of the climbers home.

Those of us who stayed, took a risk camping on the summit that night. The weather report was only fair, but the temptation of a long evening on a clear and beautiful Alpine peak was irresistible. Morning came and our worst fears were realised. The weather had turned.

We were lucky, though. That afternoon, the cloud blew away just long enough for a helicopter to fly in and take us home.

\* 1 Reproduced with permission from the Financial Times and from the author.

\* 2 Reported briefly in the January Newsletter.



## DANGER! RESCUERS APPROACHING

By Harry Archer

It was a long day which started badly; but once on the climb both of us put such matters aside. The climb was strenuous but relaxed with plenty of stops for food and drink and for the view. There were equipment problems; they were surmounted by one means or another, but delays and diversions, often on to more difficult ground, took up time. One piton could not be removed and a karabiner and an Isotonic water bottle disappeared in the direction of the valley. No problem; there was another water bottle, and a "friend", two slings and two karabiners were recovered, with some difficulty, from a deep crack. Then there was the descent: the cloud came down and made route-finding difficult. We went too low on the traverse and got into a greasy couloir; then it started to rain; but no problem! Out of the murk a large rock passed us and broke up below giving up the sulphur smell. Then a small rock passed between us to disappear in the mist! Missed. No problem! We plodded on to reach the hut before dark.

A 'phone call to base to say that all was well, then a good supper and afterwards off down the path to the village, some 1½ hours away. There was no moon and with the cloud cover it was inky black but with headlight and a new battery, and another small flashlight the path could be followed without difficulty. It started to rain heavily and the small flashlight became erratic. The pace slowed as it became necessary to move down and then turn around to light up the ground behind and repeat. Soon the street lights could be seen in detail and it was only 15 or so minutes to the river and then a few more to the tarmac. It had been a long day but with never a slip and no serious problems and we were nearly home and dry and not especially tired. Then voices ahead and, suddenly, bright halogen bulbed headlamps on new Duracell batteries and familiar voices. Good friends had seen our lights and had come to meet us.

There was hot coffee, - or was it tea - but the spout of the flask had been left behind as had the cups and we got soaked trying to drink it. Refreshed, we set off again; blinded by the bright lights, my companion slipped and twisted his ankle and I skidded on a rock, fell and rolled down the slope, hitting my head on another rock. Battered and bleeding and wet we plodded on.

Many thanks to GW and DB but .....

BEWARE RESCUERS BEARING GIFTS

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir, - I fear Wing Commander Archer may have misinformed himself. There is incontrovertible evidence that the beverage in question was neither tea nor coffee, but cocoa. Some authorities recommend that in order to discriminate satisfactorily between flavours one should preferably direct fluids into the mouth rather than down the inside of the anorak.

Yours truly!  
George Watkins

## ALPINE CLIMBING WITH A GUIDE

Three members tell what it was like. See also the article "Three Perfect Days" in which a further member gives a vivid account of what it is like today.

Paul French

There was a time, in the earlier meets, when we regularly had a guide with us, often for the whole fortnight, and I am bidden to say something about those days.

The first Alpine Meet after the war, in 1947, was held at Arolla, and between then and 1954 there were seven meets, with George Starkey at the reins, the first three with Franz Biner of St. Niklaus (a pre-war friend) as guide - his nephew Rudolf Biner helping, at Maloja. Then three meets in Austria, with Austrian guides (three guides in 1951). Then, after 1954, the meets lapsed until the Jubilee in 1959 at Saas, when guides were not arranged.

That was my first ABM meet. I had already been a member for twelve years, but did not know most of the clubbists. And as a new participant, I was disappointed to find that members made their own arrangements for guides with little regard for newcomers; consequently my friend and I were generally left behind. I would not like to tell you what I put in my diary at the time. As I got to know everyone better I felt that a pre-arranged programme in which everyone could take part would be helpful.

Enter Otto Stoller of Schwarenbach who then came with us for many years. Otto is a guide of the grand old school, infinitely patient, competent, solicitous for and observant of every member of the party, and above all, willing and able to take with him a mixed string of raggle-taggle enthusiasts such as ourselves. Perhaps his experience as a mountaineering instructor to the Swiss Army helped in this. We owe him a great deal and were delighted when he accepted honorary membership of the club.

I will not pursue the controversy over guided or guideless climbing; this has long been settled in favour of guideless climbing. You may spot my preference here and there in this note but how we got on in the ABMSAC the following incidents will show.

I usually arranged matters so that we did two climbs each week, not strenuous the first week, something a little more exciting at the end. When we were not far from Schwarenbach Otto could sleep at home - Kandersteg, Fafleralp, Fischbiel - but he would stay with us in Zermatt, Pontresina, etc. In Austria Hans Gamper took us up the north east face of the Weisskugel, a steepish snow slope, and we had with us his avalanche rescue dog "Ilya". Ilya did the mountain three or four times, commuting from front to back of the ropes, encouraging the stragglers, very friendly to all that day in his role as the shepherd, but surprisingly hostile the next day when we visited Hans, having changed his role to that of guard dog. And the Weisskugel is also memorable for one rope, that of James Bogle. It was at the time when the Italians were still awkward about the frontier, and for a short



distance the route crosses the border. James's rope were intercepted by a patrol and marched off down to the nearest Italian village to be interviewed by an officer, later to be released to climb back to Austria with a good story to tell. Hans also broke the record for the number on one rope. He coupled us together on the Similaun to make a rope of 16 (we were only 9 with Henri Salamin on the Bieshorn); sixteen, dreadful! but you can't fall far into a crevasse with a rope of 16.

Andre Pont was with us at Arolla (the author of the Valais section of "Ski-Alpin"). When he felt we lagged a little he would produce his mouth-organ. In a white-out with snow falling his message was "just follow the music" - our Pied Piper! (How good Harold Flook is at this kind of thing with his fabulous memory for nonsense rhymes, so refreshing to the flagging spirit. Good for you Harold).

On the Fafleralp Meet we were at the Jungfrauoch for the Jungfrau. The weather was hopeless through the night; no good getting up at the usual starting time, but at 6.15 it seemed to be clearing and we set off, taking a route rather south of the usual slope as easier to the Rottal Sattel that year. A pleasant straightforward ascent, using ice pitons on the top exposed section. Now, late in the day, where to go? Otto decided to cross the Kranzbergfirn directly towards the Löttsental rather than making towards Concordia, (the approach route of the Meyers on the first ascent of the Jungfrau in 1811), and a masterly piece of guiding brought us through the crevasse field. Some wanted to stop at the Hollandia, but there was a moon and we forged on to Fafleralp with the lights twinkling below; a 16 hour day. A fine supper awaited us, but we were too tired to eat it.

One word more: the Bietschhorn, Monarch of the Löttsental.... "Here springs the great Horn ... among the few really great separate mountains of the Alps." \* Those who were there will certainly remember the day. It was an epic.

We were really too large a mixed party for the Bietschhorn in its rather icy conditions: four ropes, all too slow moving, all holding each other up. Off in good time, about 2 hours up the Schafberg to the foot of the West Ridge; a short wait for sufficient light to start the ridge; a beautiful dawn; the last stop and the last food before the summit at 3.30 p.m! Virginia and I shall not again forget George Roger's dictum "Never get separated from the food" - she was on the third rope, ahead of me on the fourth rope, but the food in my sac. Five seconds on top, names in the book, then off down the North Ridge. Much care needed. One member of the party was ill and having to be looked after, but in any case movement slow and careful on rotten rock. Then, finally, the interminable nocturnal abseil over the bergschrund, each one in turn, a full two-ropes length, from an ice bollard. Strenuous - that amount of rope is very heavy. The invalid has to be evacuated by helicopter, and we see another dawn. Back to the hut after more than 26 hours. Quite a day, and night; but by no means unprecedented on the Bietschhorn.

\* Lord Schuster, President A.C. 1938-41, in "Peaks and Pleasant Pastures", 1911, a "must" for glorious Alpine reading.

So, - guided or guideless climbing - finance has something to do with it of course. When I first went to Switzerland the Franc was 25 to the £1 - now it is less than 2½. I remember Shipton saying that the first time he went to La Berarde his guide cost five shillings per day. But it is very much more than a matter of money. There is a modern tendency to put achievement before enjoyment. As foreigners we come and go to the Alps without contact with the country and the people. The guide, with his mountain lore, local customs, life and philosophy - he is the man of the mountain; we eat bread with the essence and spirit of the mountains, the companion of the world of effort and labour, sharing tradition and vision. He has the local knowledge too, he lives in the Alps whereas we are transient visitors; he knows them in all their phases, in all seasons, knows snow conditions the whole year round, understands when a couloir has sound snow, when safe from stonefall.

With due diffidence I mention some occasions when I found a guide more than useful.... Recently two of our prodigious members, whose abilities outclass ours as a diligence outclasses a perambulator, were 17 hours on the Zmutt Ridge. Yet I, with Gottlieb Perren, was back in the Hörnli before mid day. He knew every hand-hold, every foothold. We had perfect conditions (I had waited 10 years for them) and could trot about "no hands" on the smooth Gallerie Carrel. "Too easy" you will say: but I shall still argue that it gave me more time to enjoy and to relax and to absorb the greater prospect. Theirs was the greater glory. We enjoyed our day. And on another far off day we partook of an early lunch in Zermatt after doing the Hörnli Ridge. Again: on the Rothorngrat, it was no trouble to pass amateur parties - they would take the left side of the ridge - we knew it was to the right.

Longer climbs, for us weaklings, would have been impossible without a high bivouac. We were 8½ hours on the Aiguilles Rouges with Adolphe Sierroz, and 8 hours on the Gitzigrat of the Balmhorn from the Löttschenpass, with Otto. This is why, with the difficulty of finding the way down, British parties without a guide are not infrequently benighted on the Aiguilles Rouges.

Another memory of Otto, displaying what to us was nothing less than 'genius'. We left Chanrion in a thick fog - could not see a yard - for the Vignettes Hut. It is a long way up the Otemma Glacier, - hours - yet Otto turned left at the one possible spot, and there was the hut, with us nearly on top of it.

Now hear Leslie Stephen, Lord Schuster, and Geoffrey Winthrop Young:

"I utterly repudiate the doctrine that Alpine travellers are or ought to be the heroes of Alpine adventures. The true way to describe all my Alpine ascents is that Michel or Anderegg or Lauener succeeded in performing a feat requiring skill, strength, and courage, the difficulty of which was much increased by the difficulty of taking with him his knapsack and his employer."  
Leslie Stephen.\*

\* AC President 1866/68, in "The Playground of Europe" 1871, one of the first narrative books to acquire (and read) for any Alpine Library.

"Let us not forget that the guideless climber, however great his gain, has also great losses.... Furthermore, the early climbers and their successors took a genuine pleasure in the company of their guides. To associate with such men as Melchior Anderegg or Christian Almer was an education in itself. Auguste Balmat must have been a delightful companion, and it was a privilege to see Jean-Antoine Carrel in action, or Michel Croz, or Ferdinand Imsegg or either of the Laueners or Jakob Anderegg or J.J. Maquignaz"  
Lord Schuster

"Our eagerness to get the best out of our mountain holiday does not grow less as the time allowed for them by a profession grows shorter. The arrival of friends is usually as uncertain as the weather; their condition is likely to be as unreliable at the start as our own. It was reassuring for me to be able to count upon finding my good comrade in the craft, Josef Knubel, waiting round the home-coming bend of the Rhone Valley, trained and punctual to be off and doing."

Geoffrey Winthrop Young

#### Harold Flook

My introduction to Swiss guides was through being taken in 1933 along the Aletsch glacier to Concordia with a school friend and his sister and one recalls the guide holding her as she slipped on the lip of a crevasse, clawing at the ice, - but for which aid Australia might have been the poorer as the girl became Dame Margaret Van Praagh, renowned and honoured there for introducing ballet.

With the National Union of Students, before the war, our party was housed at Gornergrat and Findelen. Student guides showed us on the Gorner Glacier how to negotiate and cut steps in ice and I was introduced to a climbing rope for ascending the Riffelhorn, and later, after a very crowded night at the Gandegg hut, ascended the Breithorn - one's first taste of 4,000 metres - and without present day cheating lifts!

After the war, in 1947, our party of three had a week at Kandersteg with Fritz Oggi, the chief guide and a delightful companion. He took us up interesting routes like an airy ridge from Gfellaalp directly to the Hockenhorn, several on the Tschingellochtighorn, and the Gspaltrenhorn with fancy bits thrown in, "or" - Fritz said - "we should have found it was too easy".

In 1950 four of us had Gottlieb Perren - Swiss ski champion and an excellent young guide - for a fortnight. We practised climbing and abseiling and abseiling on seracs, we lowered each other into the murky depths of a crevasse while others jeered from above. We also ascended the Wellenkoppe, the Riffelhorn from the glacier side and did other routes - the Theodulehorn and ridge, the Rimpfischhorn and the Matterhorn. Paul French, I discovered some years later, had done a similar course another year.

One's first experience after joining the ABMSAC was at the Jubilee Meet in 1959 when a large guided party climbed the Allalinhorn from the Britannia Hut via the Allalin glacier and pass; the visibility at the summit being about 25 yards. Then three of us and a guide did the Nadelhorn and later with Maurice Bennett, the Weissmies, where on descending the snow the advice came - which I still remember on local hills - "be the old man", i.e. in leaning forward.

At the Kandersteg Meet of 1961 a party with two guides climbed the Weiss Frau and on the way the body of Maurice Bennett disappeared down a hole while his voice continued as cheerful as ever. Wonderful to see, our two guides sprang to help and up popped Maurice like a cork from a bottle - one doubts if unaided our party could have been so efficient.

At Arolla in 1966 we were taken up the Pique and Mont Blanc de Cheillon by a schoolmaster guide from the valley who, as one might expect, not only kept movements well under control, but entertained us with tunes played on his whistle, a light touch somewhat similar to another guide's remark to young beginners that after the climb there would be a knee inspection; or another guide who assured us with a straight face that the fore legs of mountain cattle were shorter than the hind legs through constantly facing uphill!

Swiss guides have sometimes been criticised for spoiling the enjoyment of a climb by rushing their less experienced clients. This certainly happened to me on one occasion when tackling, with John Byam-Grounds, the traverse of the Zinal Rothorn by the magnificent, if for me somewhat demanding, Rothorn Grat, with the guide remarking at the summit that our time was an hour less than the usual. But this has rarely happened with ABMSAC parties and one retains many happy memories of their aid and companionship.

John Byam-Grounds

#### **Guides of the Valais**

"Stand up! STAND UP! You're well held... No! don't use your hands... on your feet, John.... Feel the rock with your feet, through your boots... beneath your toes!" The year 1934, the place a narrow mantel on the Leiterspitz between two rickety gendarmes. I was sixteen, Emil twenty-five; tutor, friend, taskmaster and guide. We descend a few feet to reach its tottering base. "Down you go, face outward... not to the rock, it's not as hard as all that. Face out and see where you are going... and use your feet, not your hands!"

How much there was to learn. On cutting steps down steep ice, glissading roped, loose rock and self preservation, especially for the second man, the Stellihorn above St. Niklaus unsurpassed for such instruction! Snowcraft... fresh on old... and snow on ice; crampons... when safe or an added danger and, not least, their use on the intervening rock pitches. These were the heavy, hand forged iron ten pointers - no front-pointing then, - and secured by webbing, the very devil to undo or tie once wet or frozen. Boots mainly clinker-nailed, sometimes tricouni heeled, but those were expensive, and slippery on hard rock. Weather-watching and route-finding went without saying... temperature and sky most significant here. On

snowfield the divining of the concealed crevasse. Above all, the safety in speed coupled with an alertness which obviated a formal belay except at the most difficult or dangerous passage. Thus was one privileged in youth between the wars and fortunate to finding a willing teacher.

In those days opposite Whympers plaque on the Monte Rosa Hotel were two long seats and here of a Saturday evening, or if weather prevented climbing or a client sought, was the meeting place of guide and client. Here might be found Alexander Pollinger, with his long moustachios, kindly eyes in a deeply tanned, weather-beaten face, his soft English speech derived from working in London in his youth. Alexander was from St. Niklaus down the valley. He epitomised the guides of an earlier generation, had led my grandfather up the Wellenkuppe, would take me at fourteen up the Unter Cabelhorn. Here too, more often than not, you'd find jovial and all-too-rotund Josef Biner, resigned now (was it his heart?) to slower, easier courses or taking parties on the glacier. Joseph Kronig, too, will be there, father of Theodore and David, from whom they inherit twinkling eyes and a puckish humour. Much in demand, Emil Perren, my hardest taskmaster, tall, powerful, fast, sometimes moody, is more elusive. Later, but much later after the war, Gottlieb and Bernard Perren, perfect companions on rock and on ice however steep.

No guide I knew matched Emil in his care of and watchful eye on the rope, the correct handling of which, coil in hand, the paying out or in, at least on the ascent, falls to the second man whether in motion or not. Woe betide me if the rope was too slack or snagged! In those days it was Manila, sometimes Italian, hemp and hardened to steel cable if allowed to trail in the mid-day melting snow. Only twice did Homer nod. The first occasion under a blistering sun, traversing the Grenzzipfel and Zumsteinspitz to the Cabane Margherita, when we were both overcome by humidity and heat in the depression below the Signalkuppe and lurched upward side by side knee deep in soft snow with the rope describing a wide arc behind us. Years later traversing the Zinal Rothorn from the Trift Inn to Mountet, the day still young, we decided to return over the Trifthorn. Once more I have the vision of two figures ascending that last snow slope trailing their long loop of sodden rope.

It is the choice of guide, temperament as well as competence, which makes or mars an expedition. Without a common language an excursion becomes a chore, difficulties doubled, safety greatly diminished. For some the summit is all, the guide only the means of achieving it. Showell Styles quotes from Count Henry Russell "To climb with a friend is a pleasure; to climb alone is an education!" I would add "To climb with a guide can be both".

In the thirties few amateurs could match the standards of a good guide, especially in snow and ice-craft. Equipment was still simple and clothing to withstand cold and wet, even a blizzard, little more than what would be worn on a day's grouse shooting or stalking on a Scottish moor. Hence an emphasis on speed, good route-finding and getting off the mountain safely. As a young engineer my annual holiday was short, two or three weeks at most. A spell of bad weather could lose valuable climbing days, a mistake in route-finding jeopardise success. On the mountain the penalty of error or even minor accident could be an expensive search party of willing guides. Personal insurance did not exist. For the dead or dying on the mountain there

was no helicopter or four-wheel drive truck; at best a mule, at worst hours of man-handling by stretcher to the valley floor. A search party had none of the equipment of modern rescue teams.

For a guide it was a hard life and if the season was short it was imperative to obtain as many engagements as possible, even if it meant doing a climb in the morning, racing home to a bath and change of clothing, to set off with provisions to meet another client before nightfall. In winter the arduous sledging down of timber for heating; for some, ski instruction but due to frequent interruption of access through avalanche or snowfall winter visitors were few. There would be work on local construction projects but often it would be earning a winter living away from the valley. Some, like Leo Gentinetta, who became the village doctor, financed their studies for a professional qualification by their summer guiding.

There are still guides to be found in the valley, but while Whympers continues to gaze sternly from his corner of the Monte Rosa Hotel the guides' seats opposite have gone. Most of those I knew so well among their Valais peaks now sleep peacefully beside the village church in the shadow of their beloved Matterhorn. Alexander, Emil, Theodore and David, Alois and Berni. You lie among famous forbears - Pollingers and Perrens, Kronigs and Zum Taugwalds.

You upheld all the best traditions of the Swiss guides of the past and I, and all who had the privilege of climbing with you, salute you.

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#### Editorial Comments

Harold Flook's remark that he was first taught mountain-craft by student guides between the wars refers to a scheme that was the fruit of a remarkable initiative by an Austrian university professor, Professor Rudolf Jonas. After the Great War Austria, stripped of its empire by the Versailles Treaty, had become an impoverished land and when British students - a much smaller band, of course, than now, learnt of the plight of Austrian students, they sent generous financial help to their fellow students; this was not just a gesture but real help to many students eking out a scant living on a pittance. And they were embarrassed and frustrated at being unable to do anything in return. Professor Jonas hit on the idea of offering to give British students out-door holidays in Austria, walking, climbing, skiing, camping, canoeing, etc., led by students who were experienced in these activities. Professor Jonas thus set up the Amt Fdr Studenten Wanderungen. (He described its origins and activities in his autobiography "Die Schöne, Weite Welt", published in the 70s). On the British side, the National Union of Students created a Travel Department which, by the 30s, was producing an annual holiday catalogue "Student Travel", as big as a telephone directory, with student-guided trips all over the world. There will certainly be other ABMSAC people still active who learnt from student guides on NUS tours in the 30s.

In the course of correspondence about his article, John Byam-Grounds writes below about the Young Ridge of the Breithorn, its first ascent by Winthrop Young and his own ascent thirty years later (and its first

*descent!*), all of which makes interesting reading and gives one further insight into guided climbing.

We climbed in two ropes of two; Harold Tuke, a climbing friend then, and Theodore Kronig; Alois Zum Taugwald and I. Half-way up the ridge, on a small breakfast ledge, Alois, hawk-eyed, lean and short, with a kind but sardonic humour, handed me his flask of Cognac, "A celebration" he said. "Whatever for?" I asked. "A first, for both of us" he confided, with a wicked grin. And since Theodore had not done it before either, this added to the interest of the climb.

We took it in turns to do the leading as conditions were not good and there was much step cutting. We reached the summit ridge at 4.00 p.m., 14 hours from the Gandegg hut. Two thirds of the way up we had an interesting encounter with Alfred Zurcher, a famous Swiss mountaineer from St. Gallen, whom we used to meet regularly at the Monte Rosa in those days before and after the war. (He always climbed with two guides). He was making the first-ever descent in a party of five on one rope, - two clients and three guides - one of whom, Joseph Knubel, had been with G. Winthrop Young on the first ascent thirty years earlier. That ascent was made on 18th August 1906. It was not attempted again until 1928, when, I remember as a boy, four French climbers (guideless) were killed. They had been about 200ft. from the summit and had to cross a wide ice couloir and fell the whole face. Later that year it was once more climbed successfully.

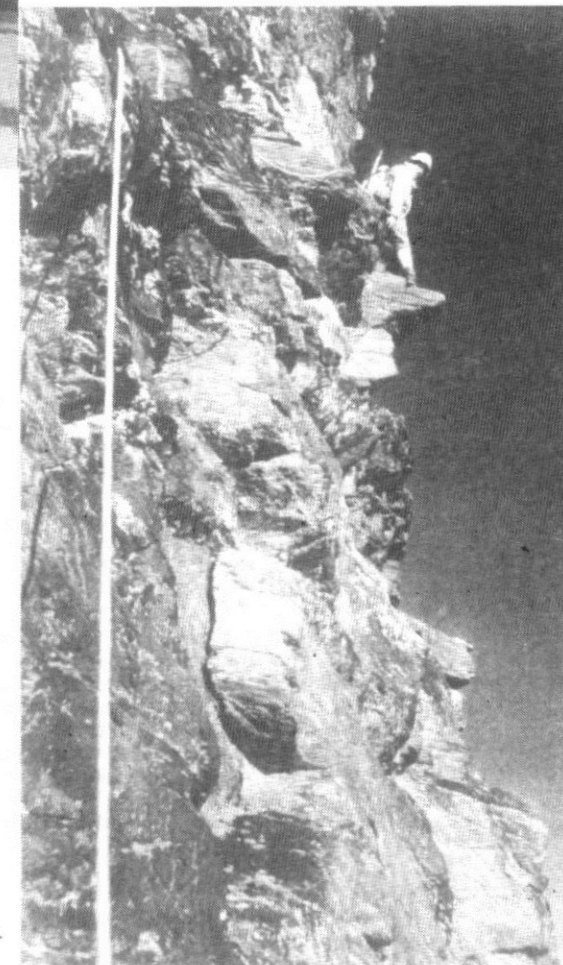
*An aspect of guided climbing that is implicit in these articles but not specifically mentioned, is the assurance of greater safety with a guide. This is why David Thistlethwaite (article "Three Perfect Days"), with a compelling urge to take up serious climbing again at 30, but mindful that his young wife and three small children would be anxious about his safety, undertook to climb only with a guide. The reassurance that this gave him and his wife bore other fruit too, - the growth of a warm friendship with his guide and companion over the years.*

*All in all, these experiences it seems, show that a climbing friendship with a guide can give a deeper character to the annual Swiss holiday than many of us come to know.*



Otto Stoller and Paul French at the ABMSAC 75th Anniversary Celebrations at Saas-Fee 1984

Berni Perren on the hard pitch above the shoulder on the formidable Furggen ridge of the Matterhorn



Left; Bernard Biner memorial. Paula Biner and John Hunt at the Bahnhof Hotel Zermatt 1986, on the occasion of the unveiling of the plaque which "says it all"



## MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST YEAR

Mike Goodyer

This year (1991) the sporting activities were restricted to some winter climbing and some fell running. During the early part of the year there was excellent ice in the Lakes - many routes were done with the ice falls above Angle Tarn and soloing Carttley Spout (Howgills) being the highlights. Early March saw ten members of the Harrogate Mountain Club driving to Chamonix for a week's skiing. Clear blue skies, sun and good snow conditions gave us all an enjoyable time. The climax of the week was the Vallee Blanche run. The weather had turned and the first part of the descent was done in a whiteout and a snow storm, this kept the crowds away.

In May the Rock and Run Mountain Marathon on Skye was cancelled at short notice. Terry Trundly, my running partner, and I had been training throughout the winter and spring. We decided to tackle the 14 peaks of Snowdonia. The weather was hot and sunny - too hot in fact. The lack of water on the route meant we should have carried some with us. The tea shack at Ogwen was most welcome. The traverse was completed in 10 hours. We were happy with completing the route on our first attempt.

The Spring Bank Holiday was spent in Keswick with the family. We enjoyed some low level walks around Derwentwater, Windermere and Tarn Hows.

In July the Robert Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon was held in Grasmere. We were competing in the 'A' class, which took us to Glenridding via Helvellyn, Stybarrow Dod and Sheffield Pike. The second day started at Patterdale and went over Place Fell, High Street, Stony Cove Pike to Kirtkstone Pass and then up over Fairfield, finishing back in Grasmere via Alcock Tarn. The run was held in unusual conditions - hot sun!

The family summer holiday in August found us in a Hotel in Grindelwald. We were blessed with clear sunny weather for almost every day. We enjoyed day trips into the mountains, taking trains or cable cars up to the passes and tops and then walking along the good paths. Robert (3 years old) can walk around 4 miles a day, but not uphill yet. We also took in the usual tourist trips on the lakes of Interlaken - I think Robert enjoyed these trips the most. Other day trips included mountain biking, running for Wilderswil via the Faulhorn and orienteering on the two alpine courses above Grindelwald. An excellent break, and Grindelwald is still quiet if you keep away from the station platforms.

In October Terry and I were up in Scotland, just north of Loch Lomond running in the Karrimore International Mountain Marathon. The weather was perfect for the organisers - rain and mist down to 2,000 feet. Most of the 'B' class check points were above 2,000 feet. Navigating in the mist gave us a slow start in the day until we had warmed up both physically and mentally. We were glad to finish in the early afternoon of the second day, after being wet both days. All the times were slower than normal because of the long courses, terrain and poor visibility. We were well satisfied with our place in the first 100.

The end of the year saw the Harrogate club back in Torver for the Annual Dinner. This year a slide show of the year's activities preceeded the dinner. It was a good weekend of mountain walking and meeting some old friends who have left the area.

After Christmas the time was right for an early winter trip to Ben Nevis. We stayed at the Achintee bunkhouse. The valley temperatures were 9 to 10°C and there was no snow below about 3,000 feet. Six of us traversed the Asnath Eogach Ridge in clear weather and dry rock - almost summer conditions. The next day Chris Pugh, my frequent climbing partner and I sweated our way up to the CIC hut. The whole of the North facing cliffs were covered in mist. We scrambled up Observatory Gully on the screes, until just below Tower Scoop. Here the snow started. The Scoop itself was plastered in thick ice. It gave 2 pitches of good ice climbing and we finished up Tower Gully. We followed the tourist path back to Achintee and drove back to Harrogate for the New Year. A good trip.

Next year (1992) I hope to fit in more weekends ice climbing and also to get back into rock climbing, as well as building up the fell running. Terry and I have already entered the Elite class in the Lakeland Mountain Marathon.

Barry Pennett

On February 16th I made my first venture of the year to the Lake District; a short stroll up Orrest Head, my wife and I visited Grasmere and walked in the area, taking in Alcock Tarn. Cold but sunny and most enjoyable. Then on Good Friday we walked from Arncliffe in Upper Wharfedale to Malham Tarn (12 miles). In April a walk in the Gargrave area; on May 6th, after drinks at the Tennant's Arms at Kilnsey, we walked along Mastiles Lane and over Kilnsey Moor.

We spent a very wet week in June walking from Ravenglass to Appleby (80 miles). Despite the poor weather, it proved to be a delightful walk and took in some of the finest Lakeland scenery. A highlight was the walk up Wasdale to Mosedale and over Black Sail Pass; hailstones at the top, but never mind! After a short stay at the hut (outside), we continued over Scarth Gap and down to Buttermere. Next day, in heavy rain, we walked to Keswick by Rigg Pass. On the morrow on to Castlehead and then to the Castlerigg Stone Circle, Naddle Bridge, Tewitt Tarn, St. John's in the Vale of Dockray. Next day Eamont Bridge, and on the final day through delightful scenery to Appleby where we had a superb meal at the Royal Oak Inn.

On August 14th we walked to the monuments of Earl Crag - Lund's Tower and Wainman's Pinnacle - from Ickornshaw. Two days later we climbed Moughton (1402ft) from Wharfe, a tiny hamlet in the Yorkshire Dales. In September we enjoyed walks in Wharfedale, the Craven Dales, Nidderdale and on the Yorkshire Moors.

Not an exacting year but nevertheless very enjoyable.

In 1991 I took over from Ernst Sondheimer the editorship of the Alpine Journal. Although this is a very time consuming job, Ernst never let it interfere with his excursions into the hills - and I intend to follow his example.

In May I returned to Fjaerland in Norway in order to ski the enormous Jostedal glacier - the largest in mainland Europe. It all started last summer when I spent a few days at the old-established Hotel Mundal at Fjaerland, where W.C. Slingsby used to stay in the 1890s. During this previous summer trip I met a local farmer, Sverre Mundal, who mentioned the possibility of skiing the glacier and I promised to return in the spring. In the meantime I made some enquiries and found out the names of two local guides who arrange ski tours of the glacier. We went in a group of about 12 people with two guides. Most of the others were young Norwegians in their 20s and 30s and very fit. Sverre carried the tent and cooking gear but I still had a very heavy pack containing sleeping bag, Karimat, harness, skins, warm clothing and some of the food. We had to carry provisions for at least four days.

After travelling up the Sognefjord from Bergen, I stayed overnight at Fjaerland and then, with Sverre, went round by ferry and bus to Sogndal and Gjerde. The next day we were taken by minibus to the foot of the F<sup>o</sup>bergst/Isbreen. Initially we had to rope up and use skins on our skis, as it was quite steep. Later we unroped and removed the skins, relying on wax to make a height gain of nearly 1800m over about 10km to our first camp near the highest peak on the glacier - the Lodalskapa at 2083m. The weather had been brilliant. The next day we decided not to climb the latter (which would have taken an extra five hours). Instead we climbed the Kjenndalsdruna (1830m) and enjoyed glorious views from the summit. After that it was a long slog up to the highest point on the glacier (not counting summits) - H<sup>o</sup>gste at 1957m. By this time some of us were absolutely exhausted. Snow was sticking to the bottom of my skis and I was making very slow progress. It would have taken another three hours to reach our next campsite. So, instead, three of us and a guide skied down to the Steinmannen hut - a small emergency hut only an hour away. The guide had the key. I felt very relieved to reach it. The rest of the group, including Sverre, who was thoroughly enjoying the trip, went on to Fjaerland which was much further. The next morning there was a complete white-out and our Norwegian guide, who was charming and highly competent, had to rely on his compass to get us down. Lower down visibility improved but the terrain became much steeper and the snow was deep and soft and very hard to ski. It took us a further six hours to reach Haugen and Gjerde, finally carrying our skis on our packs.

I thoroughly enjoyed the trip even though it was really too much for me. It was certainly the toughest trip I have ever tackled on Nordic skis, or ever likely to! In July, by contrast, I spent 10 days in the Picos de Europa, where the approaches to the peaks were through meadows knee-deep in flowers - quite a contrast after the snowy wastes of the Jostedalbreen!

A fortnight in France in May/June included visits to two places in that large, and by mountaineer neglected area, the Massif Centrale.

Valgorge in the Cevennes seemed rather run down, with ancient stone walls, concealed in the undergrowth, running down from the forested slopes; evidence of de-population. There seemed little of the prosperity which one sees in similar-sized villages in the Alps. Said to be good walking country, we found the forests restricting. One foray to the local peak - about 1400 metres - came to an abrupt halt when two dogs rushed from a peasant's smallholding and the smaller drew blood from my leg; rabid traumas may have distorted my judgement of the place! The gorges of the Baume, tributary of the better-known Ardeche, were exciting, and the hotel was good.

150 miles to the North East, the peaks of the Cantal, Parc du Volcans, provided a contrast. The summits were higher, up to 1800 metres, the country more open and the valleys a brilliant green. Clad in cows, they seemed to suggest a gentle prosperity and climate, not unlike the Lake District. The Pas de Peyrol, through the main range, was open to cars but snow still lay in places. Salers was an interesting hill town with wide-stretching views. In St Martin-Valmerouse an enterprising fete included the Parish Council in Cowboy Hats and a Judo team led by the local Black Belt.

July brought the Alpine Meet; with the Autoroute now stretching from Calais Docks to Strasbourg, an early morning start from the former brought me to Faflerap by evening and to Arolla, loaded with expedition supplies, the following day. Arolla is happily still in a time-warp, the only significant sign of development an extension of the ski-lift system behind Mount Dolin; less happily the glaciers have gone back since 1986.

Three visits to the Lake District brought contrasting results; a wet, - as usual, - Norther Dinner Meet; a repeat of the Heads of the Valley Walk in June; and a scramble over Crinkle Crag at Marion Porteous' Buffet Party Meet in October.

Peter Ledboer

Inspired by our Annapurna Sanctuary trek 2 years previously, Dick Norton and I decided that it was time for another modest trek in Nepal. It was to be the Langtang on the basis of being supposedly less crowded and noted for its flora. Accordingly we made up our own party of a "mature" 6 from mutual friends (including one from Vancouver) under the aegis of Mountain Travel with the same excellent sirdar as before.

Departing at Easter on the Royal Nepal Airlines direct flight to Kathmandu, we arrived in a spectacular tropical storm. However, all cleared up in time for our 6 hour minibus journey to Dhunche roadhead as first camp, where we collected an array of porters (including women). The route is steep up the Langtang valley for some days with fine views of Ganesh Himal and the Langtang peaks on the Tibetan frontier, eventually arriving at the highest camp of Kyangjin Gompa. A



rather desolate spot in the cold wind, but it did have a tiny cheese factory set up by the Swiss. 2 days here exploring, with impressive views of Langshisha and meeting many yaks, - one of which drove one of us up a tree!

We had to retrace our route partially to get round and up to the holy lake at Gosainkund, a place for pilgrims. It was completely frozen. Nevertheless, despite recent snowfall we cross the main 5000 metre pass in perfect conditions on a very long day down to the Helambu area with clear views of Dorje Lapka in the Jugal Himal. The Helambu is picturesque with forest and cultivation, and we were rewarded with masses of flora in bloom - rhododendrons, pink daphne, primulae and orchids. It is a long descent to Kathmandu, on the last day we were allowed into a service at a major monastery, where both male and female lamas were chanting with trumpet accompaniment. With a day to spare at the end we could not resist a trip to see the sunrise over Everest.

A splendid trek - quite hard going and quite busy after the end of the Gulf war. By the way, I can recommend the refuelling stop at Dubai with its magnificent and remarkably cheap duty free shop - it even had a scarlet Rolls Royce on display!

#### David Thislethwaite

Starting 1991 with a New Year's Day walk round Ingleton Falls along with 20 or so friends on a typical cold grey damp mid-winter day, it was good to look forward to 16 January when my wife Arline and I would depart for Australia and New Zealand. The Gulf War hostilities had commenced and we flew south via Bangkok to Northern Queensland and our first taste of the tropics. We liked them. We loved Australia, and then it was New Zealand where I had hopes of climbing Mt. Cook. However, poor weather - even for the New Zealand Alps - ruled out any serious mountaineering and I consoled myself with doing the Routeburn Tramp. The whole of South Island's wilderness area, Fiordland, Westland and the whole length of the Alps is covered with a network of trails (tramps) and trampers' huts with some very exacting walking and mountain adventures possible. The country is a walkers paradise. On the clearest day for three months (so our pilot told us) we flew to Milford Sound, South Island's tourist mecca. Such beauty and grandeur on the flight between and "just over" mountain ranges! As far as the eye can see untracked valleys densely forested, even on the almost vertical slopes of steep and deep "U" shaped valleys: huge turquoise lakes, mountain tarns and lochans and truly stupendous waterfalls like Sutherland falls, said to be the highest in the southern hemisphere, and then you arrive at Milford and it is everything you expected. Yes I have fallen in love with New Zealand.

In May I stole a week away to Switzerland. Arriving in bad weather, we decided to take our skis to the Grand Paradis. Entering the St Bernard tunnel from fog, sleet and cold, we emerged in Italy to blue sky and sunshine. We drove down the Val Savaranche in hot sunshine and sweated under our loads as we skinned up to the Victor Emmanuel tin shed. How dare I call their hut a shed! In perfect weather next day we climbed La Trsenta, 3609m, and I was relieved that Diamox were substituting natural acclimatisation. An early start for the Grande Paradiso and after six hours of hard skinning I stood for the second time being photographed with the summit Madonna. This considerable effort was rewarded with the most superlative ski run of approximately

2200 metres of vertical descent from the summit right down to the river in the valley and our car. Even the fact that it had been broken into and the radio stolen could not spoil our day.

Back in Switzerland after a day spent resting whilst the car was repaired, we departed to the Oberland and Jungfrauoch; our itinerary, an Oberland Ski tour combined with ascent of the Hinter Fiescherhorn and Gross Grünhorn, two 4000m peaks still on my wanted list. A latish 6.45 a.m. start from the Ober Monchjoch hut (a large comfortable modern construction of hotel standard) was unusual in that we descended the upper Ewigschneefeld glacier at high speed on the very icy early morning freeze before starting the climb up to the Fieschersattel and onto the Hinter Fiescherhorn some 4 hours later. Then a very fine and very rapid ski descent down the glacier, through the ice fall without problem and down to Concordia, to climb the enormous iron staircase up to the hut:- battered on this by a bitter gale-force wind which had got up, my concern about the Gross Grünhorn on the morrow increased. The friendly atmosphere in a well filled Concordia Hut and a supper of almost gourmet standard was not quite the preparation for a 5.30 a.m. start into the howling gale, but the effort of skinning back up the Ewigschneefeld restored the blood in our alcohol systems. We seemed to lose the wind as we ascended through the seracs and zig-zagging upwards with the steep kick turns (which I absolutely hate as my legs refuse to twist sufficiently for easy execution of the dreaded manoeuvre). Leaving skis very high on the west face we cramponed up the south west ridge to the summit. It was nearly noon and I had found it a hard ascent so it was particularly good to have the descent on skis so quick and easy. We returned to Concordia for 2.00 p.m. and a siesta.

We concluded our tour by ascending to the Löttschenlueke, passing the magnificent northern profile of the Aletschhorn. Whilst standing on the col removing the skins from our skis three Chamois ascended from the Löttschenal and seeing us, unexpectedly proceeded to bound up the north face of the Sattelhorn, giving the most amazing display of precision, agility and power. I don't think I exaggerate when I say that we estimated they climbed 400 metres in less than 10 minutes over what we would describe as very difficult terrain.

The wonderful run down to Fafleralp was a fitting end to our Oberland Tour in four days of perfect weather. Three 4000m peaks in a week was O.K. by me. I gave myself a pat on the back as I flew home.



## ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

### THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Royal Entomological Society, Queens Gate, London on 27th November 1991 at 7.00 p.m.

The President was in the Chair, with 21 members present.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Bertha Bennett, Kay Cohen, Spencer Copeland, Heather and Mark Eddowes, Maurice Freeman, Ben Howe, Rudolf Loewy, Mike Pinney, Barbara Rees and George Watkins.
2. The Minutes of the 1990 AGM, as published in the Journal, were accepted. Proposed: H. Sales. Seconded: Mrs Baldwin. Passed unanimously.  
There were no matters arising.
3. Alterations to the Rules of the Association.  
The post of Honorary Registrar was approved unanimously. Proposed: H.D. Archer. Seconded: Dr Coates.
4. Election of Officers and Committee.  
Vice President Wendell Jones and Committee members Mrs. H. Eddowes, A. Lock and B. Dolling retire in rotation. R. Hunter has retired from the Committee due to business commitments and Rudolf Loewy has decided to relinquish the post of Hon. Editor after the issue of the 1992 Journal.

The Committee's recommendations were elected unanimously:

Vice President:	Major (Ret) F.B. Suter
Honorary Registrar:	Mrs H. Eddowes
Honorary Auditor:	Mr D. Bennett
Committee Members:	Mr M.J. Goodyer Mr N.J. Legg

Proposed: H. Sales	Seconded: Mrs Baldwin
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The following nominations were also elected unanimously:

Committee Member:	Mr A.I. Andrews
Proposed: C. Armstrong	Seconded: Miss Porteous
Honorary Editor:	Mrs B. Baldwin
Proposed: R. Loewy	Seconded: The President

The new Committee will be:

Mr T.F. McManus	Miss L. Gollancz
Mr J.W.S. Dempster	Dr J.M. Scarr
Mr A.I. Andrews	Mr M.J. Goodyer
Miss M. Engler (co-opted)	Mr N.J. Legg

5. The Accounts.  
Mr Wendell Jones presented the accounts on behalf of the Hon. Treasurer.  
Subscription income had increased by £561.  
Expenditure was up for both the Newsletter and Journal due to exceptional items in the former and improved quality in the latter, but this was partly offset by reduced costs of the London activities.

The increased BMC subscription includes third party insurance, resulting in a reduction in separate insurance premiums.  
An excess of £993 of income over expenditure resulted for the year.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by H. Archer, seconded by Mrs Baldwin and passed unanimously.

6. Subscriptions.  
The Committee's recommendations for subscription rates for 1992 were:

Single members (ordinary, affiliate or retired)	- £14
Joint Members	- £21
Junior Members	- £5

After some discussion on the reduction of affiliate members' subscriptions from the year before, the adoption of the Committee's recommendations was proposed by H. Archer and seconded by Mrs Baldwin. The proposal was carried by fifteen members voting for it, with none against.

The SAC subscription rates for 1992, which are fixed by the Committee, were explained. These will be based on the 1991 subscriptions of the actual Sections to which individual members belong, (converted at SF 2.5/£), except for a flat rate of £40 in the first year of joining to cover both the joining fee and first year's subscription.

7. President's Report.  
"In reviewing our year, I have to report that the Association is in good heart, the finances are satisfactory, and there has been a slight increase in membership, in spite of a number of losses. We are glad to be able to welcome a number of new members this year. New members are always welcome, of course, and I hope that more of those affiliate members who attend the Alpine meets will transfer to full SAC membership.  
Sadly we have lost a number of distinguished members through death: David Riddell, a member since 1947, whose choice of birthday formed an excuse for a party during many Alpine meets; Robin McCall, another old friend of the Association; Professor Bill Houston, who last took part in the 1986 Arolla meet, and Dugald MacPherson whose death at 90 robs us of another link with the past. He had been a member of the SAC for over 50 years.  
Some of us have attended memorial services for these members. There will be one for the life and work of Robin McCall at Winchester Cathedral on 3rd Decmber at 12.15.

During the year there have been 2 Swiss meets, 18 U.K. meets and several walks. There were two maintenance meets at which a great deal of hard work was done at the George Starkey hut.

The Northern Dinner organised by Arlene and Brooke Midgeley, and the Norther Buffet, organised by Marion Porteous were, as usual, of a very high standard and as popular as ever. We owe them and their helpers a great debt of gratitude for these excellent functions. The fact that the Buffet was attended by two from the north of Scotland as well as two from the south of England shows how popular the event continues to be.

The speakers at the Annual Dinner were: Lord Hunt, H.E. Franz Muheim the Swiss Ambassador, and Walter Keller, a Vice-President of the SAC who came specially from Switzerland for the occasion, and presented us with a splendid box of chocolates. He has since written to say how much he enjoyed meeting us and that he was pleased to show off his new Association tie at the SAC Annual Assembly. Knowing what a busy programme the Ambassador has, we are greatly honoured that he should find time to attend and speak at our Annual Dinner.

The lectures in London have been well attended and are continuing for the foreseeable future at the Royal Entomological Society, the next one, on 29th January, being a talk by the Vice-President of the Alpine Club, Dr Charles Clarke, on the subject of "Men at High Altitude - a Savage Arena". We also hope to have George Band on 25th March on his recent visit to Bhutan.

In connection with the 700th Anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederacy, we were invited to the Swiss Embassy to a lecture by Andre Roch. He gave a fascinating talk and it was interesting to note that there were a number of Everest climbers present.

Last year, John Whyte mentioned the need for training, and you will have been interested to read in the Newsletter the account which Mike and Penny Austin gave of their experiences on BMC courses. I hope that others may be encouraged to take part in courses. You will find a list of those in the U.K. and in the Alps run by a past member, Peter Cliff, a qualified mountain guide, in a future newsletter.

You will recall that we have been interested in the purchase of the freehold of the George Starkey hut for a number of years. That interest remains, but all I can say at the moment is that negotiations are continuing but the outlook in the short term is not hopeful.

Trevor Bent, who is the president of a sub-section of the Diablerets Section, and who has been of great assistance to us on our Swiss meets, is planning to bring a group of up to 20 SAC members to the UK in the second half of August 1992. Although some of us will be in Zermatt at that time, I very much hope that some of our members will be able to welcome our Swiss friends in the Lake District and in Scotland.

Sheila and I have attended a number of activities, and have been greatly encouraged by seeing for ourselves the immense amount of work that members of the Association devote to the organisation of climbing meets, lectures and social events.

In addition to those I have already mentioned, I would like to put on record our thanks to the following:  
George Watkins and Wendell Jones for their willing assistance and advice.

Mike Pinney, Harry Archer, George Watkins and Trevor Bent for the Swiss meets. Margaret Atree and her team (Leslie, Michelle and Louis, not forgetting little Andrew) for the Swiss catering, often in difficult circumstances. (I shall not easily forget the tortured cry from Margaret of "my God, they're back!". Some 16 people had been despatched in the general direction of the Vignettes hut but because of a heavy fall of snow had suddenly returned just in time for supper).

Ben Suter, Alisdair Andrews and their helpers for organising the UK meets and walks. I am glad to welcome Alisdair back on the committee. We are also grateful that Ben has taken over the Newsletter.

Rudolf Loewy for editing the Journal, and Hugh Romer for his secretarial help.

Peter Ledebor for taking over as Social Secretary and for organising the Annual Dinner and attending the SAC annual assembly on our behalf.

Joan Whyte and her team for organising the refreshments at the London meetings.

Mike Pinney for his work as Treasurer and David Bennett as auditor.

Don Hodge and his band of helpers for his work in keeping the hut habitable.

Ben Howe for keeping the membership happy.

Heather Eddowes for acting as Registrar, and Mark and Mike for organising the computerisation of the records.

Stuart Beare for taking over as Hon. Solicitor.

You will note that it has been a year of change in many of the officers of the Association. I should like to say how much I appreciate that there have been so many who have been willing to step into the shoes of those who have already done, often many, years of service to the Association.

May I also ask you to give a special vote of thanks to Ms. Marianne Engler and the Swiss Embassy for their very generous gift of wine and cheese for this meeting."

8. Any Other Business.

Peter Ledebor gave a report on the SAC Annual Assembly which he attended on the Association's behalf. The President during the 700th year of the Swiss Confederacy is being replaced by a member from the French speaking community, for a period of 4 years instead of the previous 3 year term. The statutes of the SAC are being up-dated and will be published in due course. A special offer for the SAC book on Alpine Flora will be circulated in the next Newsletter.

The President wished the members a very happy Christmas and a Good New Year, and declared the meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

## SPEECH BY LORD HUNT AT THE ANNUAL DINNER

I am honoured to have been invited to speak for our Association when we pay tribute, your Excellency, on the occasion of your country's 700th anniversary. This is a special occasion for ourselves, for we form a part of the Swiss Alpine Club. And it is for this reason that we are delighted to share this occasion with our guests, both those who represent kindred clubs and societies, and those who are personal guests of members. We welcome you all.

Your Excellency, last June you did me the great honour of asking me to respond, as a spokesman of our Parliament, to the speech of Bundesrat Adolf Ogi at the premier event to mark the anniversary. Herr Ogi made a very long speech, and the longer he went on, the better I was pleased. Not only because it enabled me to make a very short speech, but because I was enjoying looking at the very large, and good looking audience, (some 8,000). Many of them, by their bright smiles and charm, were obviously Swiss 'Au Pair' girls.

At Battersea Park I quoted some lines from our poet Byron's "Childe Harold", with his memoir of an evening on Lake Geneva, which has had a special appeal for me since I spent my first summer holiday above the lake at the age of 10. Your anniversary brochure makes much of our 18th and 19th century poets and painters, who were inspired by the Swiss landscapes. But earlier travellers, from our country to yours, were not so enthusiastic. In 1188 A.D. a monk from Canterbury, one John de Bremble, scribbled a prayer, with some difficulty, during a crossing of the Alps (with some difficulty because his fingers were frozen, and so was the ink), "Lord", he wrote, "restore me to my brethren, that I may tell them that they come not to this place of torment". Admittedly that was 100 years before the Confederation was founded, but things were not much better three centuries later. One of our most revered national figures, Sir Thomas More, wrote in his famous "Utopia", in the year 1517 when describing the Helvetian tribes: "this people is 500 miles from Utopia (and I fancy he emphasised the distance with a sigh of relief), "they be hideous, savage and fierce, dwelling in wild woods and high mountains. For the most part, their living is by stealing".

Well, perspectives and points of view about Switzerland, and the Swiss, have long since changed for the better. For at least the past 150 years your country has been a source of enchantment, not only to my countrymen, but to people from all over the world. Speaking for myself, I have been in love with Switzerland - well, not for the past 150 years - (appearances may be deceptive, but I'm not all that old), but for the past 70 years, since that school holiday in 1921.

But I'm sorry to say that our young people today are sometimes less euphoric, more interested in the gastronomic attractions of Switzerland. I came across this excerpt from an English schoolboy, who was told to write his first impressions after a coach tour in the Bernese Oberland. He said this: "We went up a mountain called the Eiger, in a train which went right inside the mountain. At the top we had cakes and coke in a caff", and he continued. "Eiger is famous because so many people get killed trying to climb it. I'm glad we went by train". So much for the spirit of adventure: and so much for that grand panorama of the Ober-Aletsch glacier and its surrounding peaks.



Obit. David Riddell: At the Aiguilles Rouges Hut, Arolla 1986. (MT. Collon and l'Evêque)

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES



Johanna Merz: Our camp on the Jostedals Glacier



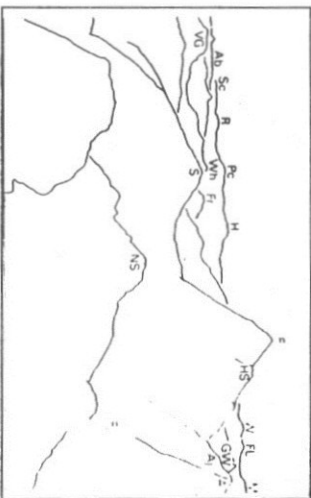
Peter Ledebor: Looking back at the High Pass crossed, S. of Lake Goshaikund

- A Agassizhorn
- Hs Hugisattel
- Fj Finsteraarjoch
- S Studerhorn
- H Helsenhorn
- PC P. Cervandone
- Wh Wasenhorn
- W Weissnies
- M Mischabel
- VG Vorder Galmlithorn
- Sc Schinhorn
- Ab Albrunhorn
- R Rothorn



Will Mclewin, Book Review: Finsteraarhorn, seen from summit of Lauteraarhorn

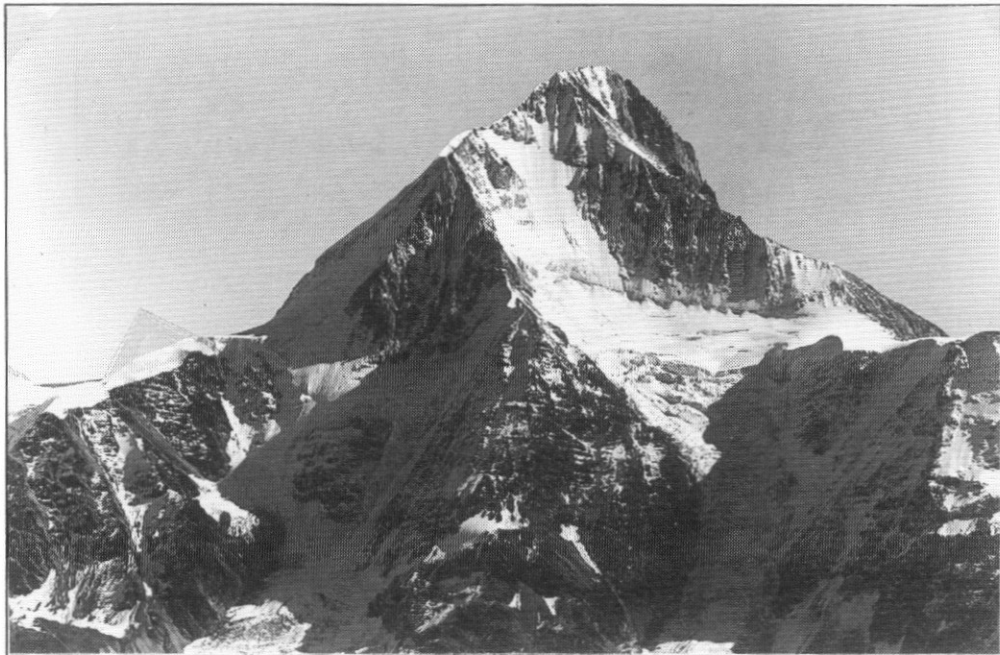
- F Finsteraarhorn
- GW Gross Wannenhorn
- NS Nasses Strallegg
- Fr Finsteraarhorn
- FL Fetschhorn and Lagginhe





Paul French: Alpine climbing with guides.

Bietschhorn from Hockenhorn ("Here springs the Great Horn", Lord Schuster.)



Les Swindin: Aletschorn N. Flank, from Gross Grünhorn



Mr President, in anticipation of this important occasion, it occurred to your predecessor in office, John Whyte, and myself that it would be appropriate to pay a visit - with our wives - to the village of Burglen in the Canton of Uri, the supposed birthplace of Wilhelm Tell, on our return from a holiday in Glarnerland last July. You might call it a pilgrimage. Our visit to the Museum at Burglen stirred my childhood hero worship of Tell and the interest I had acquired in the story from reading Schiller's play, while reading modern languages at school.

And speaking of Museums, your Excellency, our two countries have many links, they are brilliantly recorded in your festival brochure. I will refer to two of them tonight. One is personal to myself, through my regiment, the Royal Greenjackets. It was raised in the backwoods of North America, by Swiss officers in the service of our King George III in the 18th century. We acknowledge as our founder one Colonel Henri Bouquet, who raised a regiment then styled as "The Royal Americans". It would seem that our soldiers of fortune were not bothered about what wars they got involved in, so long as they were fighting someone; in this case, it was the French. (Far cry from Swiss reputation today.) It occurred to me, when visiting the Museum at Burglen, that you might care to pay a visit to our Museum at Winchester, where the Swiss and British feats of arms are given great prominence. So I am delighted to learn from our Honorary Colonel, Field Marshal Lord Bramall, that you have accepted an invitation early next year.

The other link is that which provides the theme for this dinner. It was collaboration between Swiss and British Mountaineers which created "Alpinism" some 150 years ago. We introduced "Winter Sports" and later, thanks to that great lover of your country, Arnold Lunn, downhill competitive skiing. With hindsight, I think of the first ascent of Everest as a joint achievement of ourselves and your climbers from Geneva. The years 1952 and 1956, when the Swiss were on that mountain, are inseparable from our special year - 1953. Your men, Chevallet, Dittert, Lambert, were the "Avante Premiers". We followed their route up the Lhotse face to the South Col, and onwards up the South East ridge.

I have to say that they did leave traces of their climb: there was quite a lot of litter on the South Col, but then it didn't seem to matter at that time. Indeed, we were most grateful for some of the things we came across, including some tasty little "extras".

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, 700 years ago representatives of the three original States of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden resolved to make common cause against despotic foreign rulers. That small beginning grew and has endured ever since. Today, when 'Confederation' may be the answer to the problems of other, disunited states in Europe, it is surely a matter of pride for Switzerland that the seed was sown on the shore of the Vierwaldstättersee seven centuries ago. On the field of Rütli in 1291, the pact (Rütli Schwur) between those three states concluded with the words (translated), "to last, if God will, for ever".

I invite you, members and guests, to rise and drink to the past, the present and the future of the Confederation of Switzerland. May it last for ever.

ES LEBE DIE SCHWEIZ : VIVE LA SUISSE : VIVA LA SVIZZERA

## THE HUT WARDEN

*Don Hodge, our representative on the Hut Management Committee of the ABMSAC Ltd., and its Secretary, has, at my request sent me the following note about the work and responsibilities of the Hut Warden, - from which it seems to me that he is, if not our unsung hero, certainly our unsung guardian. This regular and conscientious work merits our recognition and gratitude.*  
Ed.

The role of the Hut Warden, and the accepted procedure, is as follows:-

To act as a local person who can keep an eye on the hut.

He (or she) is responsible for emptying the safe and slot meters; to provide clean tea towels, also to keep a watchful eye over parties using the hut and so be able to report any leaving an untidy hut.

He is expected to check the state of hut and arrange for immediate repair if it is an emergency, otherwise he would pass the information to the Secretary, Chairman or Treasurer of ABMSAC Ltd. Being a local man he usually knows whom to contact for carrying out planned or emergency jobs. He gets in touch with these people when estimates are required, or to discuss the problem with them.

He is not expected to clean the hut, since this is explicitly the responsibility of hut users, but if he found perishable food left in the hut, he would be expected to dispose of it.

He will arrange for supplies of coal or gas to be delivered if the normal routine cannot cope.

The Hut Warden receives quite a lot of queries each year regarding lost property which he deals with as necessary. These include some quite extraordinary items, as well as serviceable clothing, which are never claimed and must be disposed of, or the hut could be crammed full.

The present Hut Warden and his wife also, twice yearly, wash all the mattress covers.

For carrying out these duties, he is paid a small retainer by the Company. As far as I know, none of his duties are written down but are the accepted procedures.

There have been at least 4 wardens so far, in the life of the Hut, all people living in the lakes. The present Hut Warden, Ray Griffiths, has moved twice since becoming warden, and now lives in Penruddock. He is a school teacher and an active member of the Patterdale mountain rescue team, (so active, it seems, that last year when he was invited to the TCC Dinner, minutes before coming he was called out with the team on a rescue and so missed the dinner).

His address is:

'Rivendell',  
Penruddock,  
Nr Penrith,  
Cumbria CA11 0RS.  
Tel: 07684 83489.

## THE HUT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This is another facet of the Association's activities which is little known and merits recognition. Perusal of the Minutes of this Committee shows with what conscientiousness its members fulfill their responsibilities.

Those responsibilities cover not only the oversight and decision-making about everything that appertains to the hut, maintenance of the building and its equipment and furnishing, letting of the hut to scores of clubs throughout the year, but also carrying out of many of the chores such as inspections, supply, and minor repairs and decoration.

The meetings are held at the hut - the last one in April, when 8 members attended, 5 ABMSAC and 5 TCC, (apparent discrepancy arises because two of the members belong to both clubs.)

As usual the meeting dealt with a long and varied list of items: slot meters (including new coins), electricity usage, insulation of pipes, toilet cistern in Ladies, hut notices, ridge tiles, ash pan, forward booking programme, hut rules, smoke detectors, hut income, hut charges, septic tank repairs, painting of kitchen ceiling, first aid kit, car park gravel, chairs, entrance doors, siocidal wash to combat fungus growth, pillows, mattress covers, cutlery, hut keys, operation of fire place, car park sign replacement (volunteer wanted - offers to Don Hodge!).

At the time of the meeting the hut was booked for every week-end (except August) and for many weeks until the end of the year, as shown on the following extract:

<u>"Week-end</u>	<u>Week</u>	<u>Booking</u>	<u>Places</u>
24/25 April 92		Plessey Caswell Walking Club	20
	27/4/92	RAF Lyneham (28-30 April)	8
1/4 May 92		May Day Week-end - Clubs	
	4/5/92		
8/9 May 92		Red Rope Merseyside	20
	11/5/92	RAF Marham	16
15/16 May 92		Derby MTG Club	20
	18/5/92	RAF Marham	14
22/24 May 92		Spring Bank Holiday - Clubs	
	25/5/92		
29/30 May 92		Exiles MTG Club	20
	1/6/92		
5/6 June 92		Leeds NC	20
	8/6/92		
12/13 June 92		ABM Lakes Scrambles Meet.	
	15/6/92	RAF Lyneham (16-18 June)	8
19/20 June 92		TCC	
	22/6/92		
26/27 June 92		Middleton Ramblers	20

## OBITUARIES

### David Riddell, 1902 - 1991

It is usual to end an obituary by saying how much we shall miss the deceased. In David's case I am going to open with that remark: if there was ever anyone who will be missed by us all it is David Riddell, a constant attender at our Meets at home and abroad for approaching half a century.

We both joined the ABMSAC in 1946 but, I think, were first together on a Meet in 1959, the Jubilee Meet at Saas Fee under the Presidency of George Starkey, and from thenceforward were reunited continuously year after year, his last being Zermatt in 1990. I had the privilege for some years of arranging what we used, grandly, to call "Approach Marches" to the Meets, i.e. minor "walk-ins" for acclimatisation. David was always there. He was elected to the Alpine Club in 1952.

He was an addition to any party, especially a travelling party, with his tremendous enthusiasm for trains, and an unbounded interest in everything: gloriously argumentative, with plenty of humour; a connoisseur of food and wine but fully able to 'rough-it' where necessary. He always carried too much, but was incorrigible in this, a strong and energetic go-er and powerful climber, indefatigable until over 80.

He had exasperating habits, like unpacking the whole of his rucksack every time we stopped: he would fail to notice which way the others went so that extemporary search parties were deployed all over the mountain: he was more than expert at losing things, so that the whole party must disperse in the recovery of his possessions. But, I must say, in this a special providence protected him: things had a habit of returning to the fold out of the blue, even from as far away as Basel station (left on the train), or Bel Alp (left at the Hotel), but somehow these little foibles only endeared him to us the more. He kept us on our toes: excellent company on the mountain, at the dinners, and at everyday meetings.

He kept extensive diaries and, of course, through long experience, knew Sqitzerland well (not to mention the hill parts of Britain) and his list of peaks all over the Alps was long and varied. His first visit to the Alps (1924) was, I believe, two years before mine (1926). He enjoyed a Himalayan Trek in his eighties.

David's birthday, in August, usually fell during the Meet, and this was made a festive occasion for the party - a few cigars perhaps, a bottle of "Bouvier" for him - and the Hotel usually responded with some special birthday cake. David (and the rest of us) enjoyed it, and he was expected to respond with an appreciative little speech.

He did not lack confidence in his own opinions, and a spare hour in the hut might be enlivened by his vehement proclamations, deliberately, perhaps, encouraged by our provocations, and his vigorous blows on the table might alarm not only ourselves, but other interested spectators. Good old David!

Yes: We shall miss him.

F.P.F.

### Professor William John Ballantyne Houston

Trevor Bent, President of a sub-section of the Diablerets Section of the SAC, has kindly let us have the following account:

Unbeknown to us in Arolla, precisely during the Summer Meet, Bill Houston's drama was being played on the Gumfluh, between Chateau d'Dex and Rougemont.

He had come over early to climb the Grand Fouche with French friends at the beginning of August but this fell through at the last minute, so he went off to nearer pastures. It was only when his Norwegian wife arrived on 12th August that she discovered Bill was missing and the search was set in motion.

Effectively, they had spoken on the phone on 3rd August and Bill then told his wife he was going to undertake a long excursion the next day. Accustomed to this sort of expedition, William, 53 years old, a member of the Diablerets Section of the SAC, was a fervent climber. He often left by car, continued his route on a mountain bike and finished the rest of the itinerary on foot, so it is not surprising that his car was found at Gerignoz and his bike a mile up the hill from there. Search parties, including Vaudnis police with helicopter and dogs in support, secured the countryside in vain for four days. Then, on Saturday, 17th August at around 15h15 he was found dead at Tsay-Bots, commune of Rougemont, by the Rescue Party. This spot is particularly precipitous and hence not easily accessible.

Bill was an experienced climber and knew the Fridboug/Vaudois mountains very well indeed, having scrambled over many of them.

The President of the Diablerets Section of the SAC and I (representing the ABMSAC) attended a Thanksgiving Service at St. Laurent's Church, at Charmey, on Wednesday 21st August 1991. There were present a number of personalities from the Embassy in Bern, as well as authorities of the European Orthodontic Society and ERASMUS.

It was said on more than one occasion amongst his colleagues how fortunate it was that a man of such enormous talents should have chosen an academic career in orthodontics. He was a man of many parts and even those who knew him were frequently astonished to discover yet another facet of his interests. He was a very private person who had many friends but few would have regarded themselves close to a man who had the energy and abilities to excel in such diverse fields. He was widely read, aided by the ability to manage on four or five hours sleep nightly, and applied himself to his recreation and leisure with the same enthusiasm and vigour as he did to his work. He loved open-air activities: orienteering, sailing, hill-walking and climbing and it was here in the Alps that he met his untimely death.

He is survived by his Norwegian wife Turid Boe, his son Erik, and his daughter Geraldine, to whom we extend our warmest sympathy.

Ross Cameron



## Robin Home McCall CBE

Robin McCall was born in 1912 and died in November 1991. I have known him for over half of the 79 years of his life. At first I knew him only as an extremely keen Town Clerk of Winchester: later, as I got to know him better and better, I substituted in my mind the word enthusiastic for the word keen. All that he did he did with enthusiasm. His enthusiasm for the necessary reform of local government led him to become the Secretary of the A.M.C., then the National Association of city and borough authorities and later the A.M.A., but it is his enthusiasm for the mountains with which we are concerned in this Journal.

But I must first go back to local government to discover his other qualities. As the Town Clerk of Winchester he worked in a period before the central government had deprived local government of its vitality. When in 1973 Winchester conferred on him the Freedom of the City, in an inspired address, he described the vital factors in local government as courage, imagination, determination and integrity: at the Memorial Service for him and his wife, Joan, at Winchester Cathedral, Professor Martin Biddle said that there was no better statement of the qualities which distinguished their own joint lives. I would add to this the qualities of complete honesty, straightforwardness and unflinching generosity.

This combination of qualities is useful on the mountains, particularly when a person is not either a natural climber nor one having the facility to spend each weekend in North Wales or the Lakes. Robin's only qualification was his love of the mountains. Indeed, before he climbed with me I gathered all his Alpine climbing had been with guides. This accounts for his one failing, his insistence on keeping his ice axe in his right hand whatever the angle of the slope. When I protested about this and pointed to the danger he was exposing himself and me to, he retorted that guides always let him keep his ice axe in the one hand. I patiently explained the difference between myself and guides.

But that is not bad, is it? One failing, and one that one I think I managed to persuade him that the weakness in his left arm had to be overcome for our joint protection.

My memories of him in the Alps centre around particular periods; trudging up from the Windjoch to the Nadelhorn; traversing some icy slope when somebody slipped but was saved; and saying farewell to him and his son on the top of the Allalinhorn when they returned to Saas-Fee and I went on to Zermatt. But always he was a good companion.

Robin also climbed with Harry Archer and his family in the Loetschental: Harry tells me one story to demonstrate the energy which Robin displayed at a reasonably good age: apparently he lost a crampon near the top of the Wilerhorn but next day shot up again hoping to find it and, being the person he was, he found it.

Robin's children have inherited their father's enthusiasm for the mountains: his son Christopher, now like his father a member of the Alpine Club, is a regular visitor of the Alps as is Elizabeth a member of this Club. He has also passed many of his characteristics to them, perhaps the best gift to one's children if one's characteristics are like Robin's. Harry Sales

*(Largely based on the author's obituary for the Alpine Journal, whose editor is happy for us to use it in our journal).*

## BOOK REVIEW

In Monte Viso's Horizon; climbing all the Alpine 4000 metre peaks.

Author:	Will McLewin
Hardback:	244 x 175mm
	256 pages. 97 colour photographs with line drawings. 15 maps.
Publisher:	The Ernest Press 1991
ISBN Reference:	0-948153-09-1
Price:	£16.95

This book has been awaited eagerly by a number of ABM members. Those with longer memories will be familiar with the unusual McLewin method from a memorable lecture and several articles in past Journals. The present reviewer read these articles with particular attention in the course of his duties as editor.

The method was largely influenced by the need to fit the climbs into brief vacations over the period 1966 to 1988. The time available was substantially increased, by staying high for as long as possible, making extensive use of bivouacs so as to be able to start at any time of day or night, and climbing solo, or with at most one companion. This was less austere than it sounds, as McLewin went to pains to make comfortable sites, in ways which he explains. He also insisted on proper cooked meals with meat and fresh vegetables and appropriate drinks. To be largely independent of huts, and to enjoy a civilised way of life, involved carrying a heavy rucksack, a price which he accepted.

The main body of the book, both text and illustrations, covers the ground implied by the title. This is not a mere technical catalogue of routes to tick off summits. The author takes out time to enjoy being one with the earth, observing the sunset and sunrise, the flowers, and all the manifestations of nature around him. The chapters on various climbing areas are interspersed with brief dissertations on topics that come to mind during the climbing. These are entitled:

Bivouacs; Food; Equipment; Soloing and safety; Snow technique; Bad rock (which he rather liked); Approach walks and Alpine plants; Sierre and the Sierre-Zinal race; Guides (which he rather disliked); and Eustace Thomas.

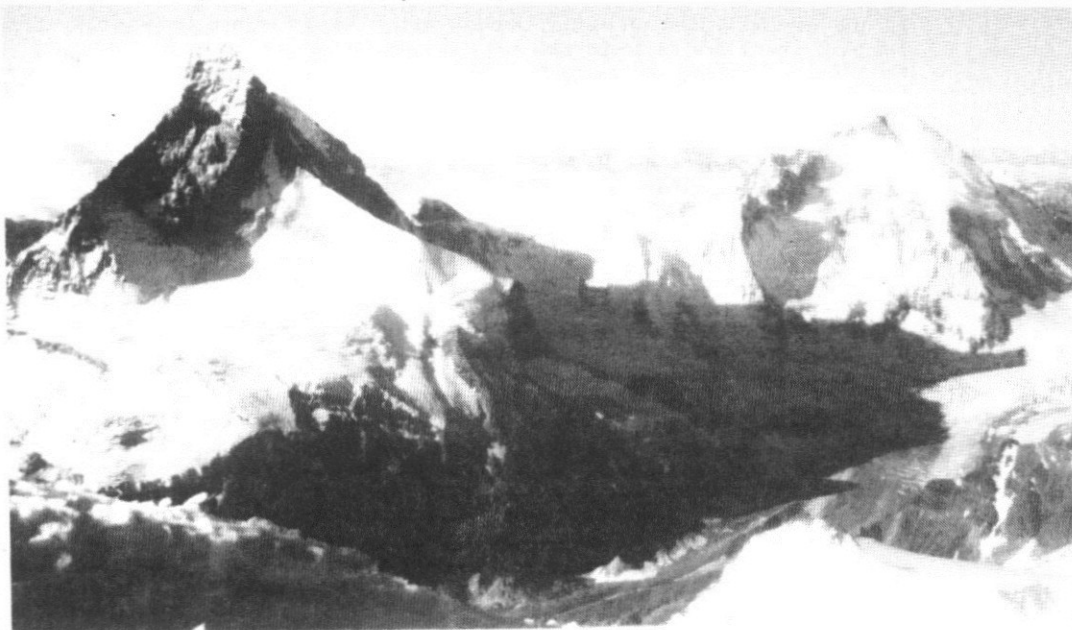
Introductory and concluding chapters set out the author's philosophy and technical approach. The former is evidently based on a readiness to pause and enjoy all the aspects of mountain activity, through the senses of one who appears as a modern man for all seasons. The technique recommended is distinctive, aiming particularly at fluent movement, especially on insecure ground.

The climbing is covered in 12 sections, each accompanied by photographs (the majority by the author) of all the mountains climbed, accompanied by line drawings which locate the peaks and other features. Each region has one or more hatched and coloured maps on a scale of about 1 : 90,000, showing peaks, huts and routes in distinctive red. These were drawn by Jeremy Ashcroft. Maps of the whole area are shown on the inside covers.

The book makes engrossing reading and brings back memories to the armchair reader whose climbing career may be past. The project could not have been carried out without some days of danger or hardships, and others of farce, as for instance in the case of the guide who fell into a crevasse. These events are related with humour and modesty. It is, however, to younger people who may not yet fully know their way around the Alps that such a comprehensive book should be most useful. The author states that it is in no sense a climbing guide, but it does provide a description of one man's experiences, in mind and body, whilst climbing at least one route up each of the 4000m peaks. The reader is guided as to where each mountain is in relation to others, how to approach it, what its particular attractions are, how difficult it is, and all that goes to make it an individual. The author asserts that all the climbs are within the capacity of the ordinary competent alpinist. That is as may be, and may well depend on one's own idea of what constitutes ordinary competence. The effect on the reader is of wonder and respect at the successful completion of such a venture. To the best of the belief of the author and this reviewer, the only Britisher to complete all the 400's before McLewin was Eustace Thomas, and the author was the first to do so unguided. As happens in the affairs of life and sport, other ABM members completed their rounds soon afterwards. One likes to think that McLewin's example led them on their way.

He is to be congratulated on a pioneering feat of substantial stature. Everyone interested in Alpinism should buy the book and sit down to enjoy a splendid read.  
S.M.F.

Matterhorn                      Monte Viso on Horizon                      Dent d' Herens  
|                      |                      |  
Testa del Leone                      Gran Paradiso



Taken from the top Obergabelhorn