

## A HISTORY OF ABMSAC ALPINE SUMMER MEETS: 1947 – 2024

After the foundation of the ABMSAC in 1909, members continued to make frequent climbing trips to the Alps, especially to Switzerland. However, it was not until 1947, two years after the end of the Second World War, that the club's first official Alpine Meet was held, in the Hotel Mont Collon at Arolla in the Val d'Hérens. As was the custom in those days, guides were hired to accompany members, and ascents were made of Mont Collon, Mont Blanc de Cheilon and the Dent Blanche. The following year there was a Meet at the Hotel Diablons in Zinal in the Val d'Anniviers, with ascents of Besso, Zinal Rothorn and Pointe de Zinal. Even more members turned up for the Meet in 1949 at Maloja in the Engadine, when twenty peaks in the Bernina and Bregaglia groups were climbed. These early members felt that they had learned a lot from climbing with guides, and special mention should be made of Otto Stoller, who led ropes on many of the Meets.

For the next three years, 1950, 1951 and 1952, Meets were held in Austria, in the Otztal, Silvretta and Stubaital, but after that few Meets were held outside Switzerland until the turn of the century. Saas-Fee was a favourite venue so as to visit the Britannia Hut, the club's gift to the Swiss Alpine Club in 1912 and one of the major reasons for its foundation. In 1959, the 50th anniversary of the club, an ascent was made of the Allalinhorn, and this became a regular event on future anniversary Meets.

From 1963 Meets fell into a regular yearly pattern, held most frequently in the Valais, the Engadine and the Bernese Oberland. They proved so popular that in 1971 the first Meets Secretary was appointed to facilitate their organisation. Members gradually realised that camping was a cheaper option, and the first camping Meet took place in 1973 at Saas-Grund so that members could climb with those staying on the hotel Meet in Saas-Almagell. From then on these became an annual fixture, sometimes in France or Italy as well as Switzerland, often in the same valley as the hotel Meet. The organisation of these was taken on in 1981 by Mike Pinney, who used the campsites as a base for climbing all the 4000 metre peaks in the Alps. Mike continued to organise the camping Meets until his untimely death in 2015.

By 1975 hotels were becoming prohibitively expensive, so Harry Archer organised the first of his chalet-based Meets, at Saas-Fee. Harry's wife and later a team of chalet girls did the catering, one of these in 1985 being Rosemary Westermeyer, who is still a regular attendee on the hotel Meets. Harry organised 20 chalet Meets in total, often at Fieschspiel in the Lötschental, but also at Morgenrot above Zermatt, another popular venue. For several years Paul French led "walk-ins" across various Alpine passes to the Meet venue.

The 75th anniversary of the ABMSAC was celebrated in 1984 with a Meet in Saas-Fee that August, and the Britannia Hut once again provided the focal point for the festivities. A large group of members assembled there for a candle-lit dinner, with the same menu as that of the inaugural banquet at the hut in 1912. All wore the climbing outfits of those times, the ladies in long woollen skirts. An ascent of the Allalinhorn was made the following morning, but the weather was so bad that only eight members reached the summit. The only ABMSAC member to be present both on this occasion and at the hut's inauguration in 1912 was 93-year-old Noel Odell of Everest fame.

In the next few years Meets were mostly held in Switzerland, at Klosters, Zermatt, Champex and Saas-Fee, with a few camping Meets in France or Italy. By this time climbs were generally made without guides as members became more proficient: for example, at the 1986 Meet in Arolla, 80 members made 130 guideless ascents. The meet at Saas-Fee in 1988 was another great success, with ascents of the Dom, Weissmies, Nadelhorn, Lagginhorn and Alphubel by a group which included Hugh Romer and Bill Westermeyer. Meanwhile, at the camping meet at Täsch, Mike Pinney and Marian Elmes (Parsons) climbed ten 4000 metre peaks, including the Monte Rosa-Breithorn traverse, Castor and Pollux. Camping Meets were now joined by Alpine Club and Climbing Club members, and it was these groups which made the more serious ascents, though a few members of hotel Meets continued to climb high.

1995 marked the first annual trek, which gradually began to resemble Paul French's earlier "walk-ins" to the venue of the hotel Meet. In 1999 the Tour of Monte Rosa, organised by Alasdair Andrews, ended at Saas-Grund for the 90th anniversary celebrations of the club, and from then on Alasdair took over the organisation of all future hotel Meets, generally preceded by a trek.

After a trek in the Val Bregaglia and a Meet at the Hotel Engadinerhof in Pontresina in 2000, mountain areas in other countries were explored. The first of these was in 2001 to Madonna di Campiglio in the Brenta Dolomites where several *via ferrata* routes were explored. This was preceded by a trek round the Rosengarten Dolomites and a longer camping Meet in nearby Pinzolo.

In 2002 the first two-centre hotel Meet was held in the Vanoise, the first week at Lanslebourg and the second at Pralognan. The highest peak climbed was the Grand Bec, by John Edwards and David Watts. The following year another two-centre Meet was held in Austria, at Mayrhofen in the Zillertal and Obergurgl in the Otztal when several groups climbed the Wildspitze and Similaun. The third and last two-centre Meet was in 2008, at Neustift in the Stubaital and Mandarfen in the Pitztal. Other new venues for the club were the 2005 hotel Meet at Cauterets in the French Pyrenees and the 2006 Meet to Santa Caterina in the Italian Ortler.

Back in Switzerland, Zermatt in 2004 proved a popular centre from where a large group climbed the Breithorn, and Mark Davison and Tony Arkley climbed Castor. Fiesch in the Upper Valais was the base for the 2007 Meet, and for the club's centenary in 2009 the Saastal was chosen again, this time Saas-Almagell, with the camping Meet at Saas-Grund. This was preceded by the Haute Route, a high-level trek from Argentière to the Britannia Hut, led by Ed Bramley. The highlight for all was the Anniversary lunch at the hut, attended by 62 members together with representatives of the Geneva Section of the SAC. Ascents were made of several high peaks, including the Allalinhorn, Weissmies and Alphubel.

Treks in other countries also proved popular, with two treks in the Himalayas organised by Pamela Harris, first to the Everest and Gokyo region of Nepal in 2007, and then to Bhutan in 2011. In addition, Ed Bramley organised three treks in Morocco.

Alasdair's last hotel Meet was at Fiesch in 2011, after which the organisation passed to Pamela Harris. The Meets were gradually reduced from two weeks to one, the attendees now mainly hikers rather than climbers. During the following years four Meets were held in Italy - at Gressoney in the Val d'Aosta in 2012, at Madonna di Campiglio in the Brenta Dolomites in 2015, at Cogne in the Val d'Aosta in 2016, and Selva Gardena in the Dolomites in 2017 - and one in Austria, at Mayrhofen in 2018.

The last big hotel Meet was in 2019 at Klosters in the Engadine, with more than 40 attendees. One of those present was Heather Eddowes, who had also been present on the previous Meet to Klosters in 1989. Many high-level walks were made, and the highest peak climbed was the Flüela Schwarzhorn. A celebratory dinner was held in the hotel, with guests from the Geneva Section of the SAC.

Three hotel Meets have been held since then, at Kandersteg, Saas-Almagell and most recently, at Grimentz in the Val d'Anniviers. The group of members who have been regular attendees at these meets since 2000 are now getting noticeably older, so this is perhaps the end of an era.

*A complete list of Alpine Meets from 1947 to 2024 is attached. Treks outside Europe are in red. Accounts of the meets can be found in the Journal archive on the [website](#)*

Editor's note: Compiled by Pamela Harris, who has organised many Trek and Hotel meets since 2007 and organised her last Meet this summer in Grimentz.

**ABMSAC ALPINE SUMMER MEETS : 1947-2024**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>HOTEL</b>	<b>CAMPING</b>	<b>TREK</b>
1947	Arolla		
1948	Zinal		
1949	Maloja, Engadine		
1950	Vent, Otztal		
1951	Gaschurn, Vorarlberg		
1952	Neustift		
1953	(no meet)		
1954	Saas-Fee		
1955-58	(no meets)		
<b>1959</b>	Saas-Fee <b>50th Anni.</b>		
1960,62	(no meets)		
1961	Kandersteg		
1963	Zinal		
1964	Sils Maria, Engadine		
1965	Grindelwald		
1966	Arolla		
1967	Fafleralp, Lötschental		Lötschental
1968	Obergurgl		
1969	Kandersteg		
1970	Trient		
1971	Täsch		
1972	Pontresina, Engadine		
1973	Saas-Almagell	Saas-Grund	
1974	Meiringen	Arolla	
1975	Saas-Fee		Gressoney – Saas-Fee
1976	Fieschbiel, Lötschental		Kandersteg –Lötschental
1977	Kandersteg	Kandersteg	Grindelwald - Kandersteg
1978	Zermatt	Täsch	Saas-Fee – Zermatt
1979	Courmayeur	Courmayeur	
1980	Bivio	Grindelwald	
1981	Arolla	Täsch	
1982	Kandersteg	Argentièrè	
1983	Bivio	Silvaplana, Engadine	Val Bregaglia
<b>1984</b>	Saas-Fee <b>75th Anni.</b>	Täsch	Zermatt – Saas-Fee
1985	Fieschbiel, Lötschental	Grindelwald	
1986	Arolla	La Bélarde, Ecrins	
1987	Champex	Argentièrè, Courmayeur	
1988	Saas-Fee	Täsch	
1989	Klosters	Courmayeur	

<b>1990</b>	Zermatt	Täsch	
<b>1991</b>	Arolla	Arolla	
<b>1992</b>	Zermatt	Argentière	
<b>1993</b>	Fieschbiel, Lötschental	Grindelwald	Crete
<b>1994</b>	Saas-Fee	Ailefroide	
<b>1995</b>	Kranjska Gora	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Pyrenees
<b>1996</b>	Vorarlberg, Tirol	Argentière	Vorarlberg
<b>1997</b>	Derby, Val d'Aosta	Randa	Glockner
<b>1998</b>	(no meet)	Lauterbrunnen	Tirol
<b>1999</b>	Saas-Grund <b>90th Anni.</b>	La Bérarde, Ecrins	Tour of Monte Rosa
<b>2000</b>	Pontresina	Canazei, Dolomites	Val Bregaglia
<b>2001</b>	Madonna di Campiglio	Pinzolo, Dol	Rosengarten, Dolomites
<b>2002</b>	Vanoise	Servoz, Chamonix	Muverans Tour
<b>2003</b>	Mayrhofen, Obergurgl	Val Ferret	Tour de Trient
<b>2004</b>	Zermatt	Innertkirchen	Maritime Alps
<b>2005</b>	Cauterets	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Oberland Pass Route
<b>2006</b>	Santa Caterina, Ortler	Täsch + Cortina	Gardena Dolomites
<b>2007</b>	Fiesch	Val Ferret, Cortina, Dolomites	Valais + Stubaital <b>Nepal: Everest and Gokyo</b>
<b>2008</b>	Stubaital, Pitztal	Corvara, Dolomites	Julian Alps
<b>2009</b>	Saas-Almagell <b>Centenary</b>	Saas-Grund	Haute Route
<b>2010</b>	Pitztal, Stubaital	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	<b>Morocco: High Atlas</b>
<b>2011</b>	Fiesch	Ailefroide, Ecrins	Pyrenees, <b>Bhutan</b>
<b>2012</b>	Gressoney	Innertkirchen	Karwendel
<b>2013</b>	Saas-Almagell	Randa + Solden	
<b>2014</b>	Pontresina	Cogne + Cortina	<b>Morocco: Edge of Sahara</b>
<b>2015</b>	Madonna di Campiglio	Argentière	Mattertal
<b>2016</b>	Cogne	Ailefroide	Tatras
<b>2017</b>	Selva Gardena, Dol.	Vicosoprano, Bregaglia	Pirin Mtns
<b>2018</b>	Mayrhofen	Randa	Catalonia
<b>2019</b>	Klosters <b>110th Anni.</b>	Pyrenees	<b>Morocco: Land of Berbers</b>
<b>2020-21</b>	meets cancelled	- Covid lock down	
<b>2022</b>	Kandersteg	Argentière	Picos d'Europa
<b>2023</b>	Saas-Almagell	Val Veni + Val Ferret	Tour de Mont Blanc
<b>2024</b>	Grimenz	Ailefroide	Tatras

Details and photos of the meets are in the relevant [Journal](#)