

EARLY EXPEDITIONS FROM BEL ALP

BY D. F. O. DANGAR

THE construction of the Bel Alp hotel was commenced in 1858 by Leopold Bürcher-Anderledy and two years later the hotel was opened to visitors. The following year, Gervas Klingele, grandfather of the present proprietor, obtained an interest in the concern and in 1866 he became the sole proprietor, since when the hotel has remained in the hands of the Klingele family.

The great days of Bel Alp were during the period 1870-1890. Mountaineering was becoming more and more popular, and the Swiss hotels at the higher resorts could scarcely accommodate all the visitors. Numbers of *chaises à porteurs* and mules were always available at Brigue to convey travellers and their luggage up to Bel Alp; the charge for the former was Fr. 24, and for a mule Fr. 15.

At one time, Alexander Seiler planned to extend his activities to Bel Alp, but prolonged proceedings, and a vote of the commune settled the matter in favour of M. Klingele who was granted for a fixed period the sole right of keeping an hotel there.¹

By 1912, plans for a mountain railway from Brigue to the Aletsch glacier had been completed, but the outbreak of the First World War caused the abandonment of the project. (See *A. J.* 27. 239.)

The earliest visitors' book dates from 1861, the first British entry being J. C. Harkness, July 29, 1861. Some extracts from this book may be of interest.

August 13, 1861. F. VAUGHAN HAWKINS. To Saas and Gressoney. Much pleased with this hotel. The view from the Sparrenhorn (2 hrs.) is well worth seeing.

August 13, 1861. JOHN TYNDALL. Extremely well satisfied with this hotel. Those who admire alpine wildness will find it in the gorge in which the Aletsch glacier ends.

Tyndall was on his way from the Eggishorn to Randa. He left Bel Alp on August 16 and three days later made the first ascent of the Weisshorn.

August —, 1861. W. E. HALL and J. A. HUDSON.

August 16, 1861. ARTHUR G. WATSON. Probably to Leukerbad and England. This little hotel is excellent. At the Aeggischhorn some of the charges are exorbitant, *e.g.*, we had to pay a guide ten francs for bringing an ordinary knapsack here from there, and the service is bad, but the landlord is very obliging.

¹ For these historical details, I am indebted to M. Klingele, the present proprietor.

Another hand has added : ‘ (*N.B.*, only to members of the Alpine Club, but certainly not to general travellers ! !).’

August 1–20, 1861. F. VAUGHAN HAWKINS. The Ober Aletsch glacier is well worth visiting from here ; it may be traversed in all directions without difficulty. The point at the junction of the Ober Aletsch and Jägi glaciers may be reached in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours from here ; by the left hand, or Jägi glacier, there is an easy pass to Kippel. In returning, it is possible to get off the Ober Aletsch glacier on the opposite side from this place, and return by the main Aletsch glacier and rocks.

July 4, 1862. THOS. S. KENNEDY. From the Aeggischhorn to Visp.

July 22, 1862. EDMUND VON FELLEBERG. Yesterday, the 21 July, I ascended the Aletschhorn. I left the Bel Alp at 3 o'clock A.M., reached the summit at 11 and enjoyed the most magnificent view till 1.15 P.M. and after a very difficult descent reached the hotel at 8 P.M. in the evening. Thus it was proved that the Aletschhorn may be ascended in one day (17 hrs.) from the Bel Alp and that the ascent is much shorter and not more difficult than from the Eggishorn. I invite the Alpine Club to try this ascent. The names of my guides you will find in the German notice.

According to the German account the guides were Anton Eggel and Moritz Jossen. Porter, Clemenz Esen (Egen ?). Fellenberg's was the fifth ascent of the Aletschhorn—not the fourth, as stated in Mumm's *A.C. Register*, vol. 1, p. 98—and the second from Bel Alp, the first having been made six days previously by Emmanuel Ruppen, Moritz Jossen and Anton Eggel. For details of previous ascents of the Aletschhorn, see *A.J.* 32. 231–235 and Studer, *Über Eis und Schnee*, vol. 1, p. 126.

July 28, 1862. W. J. THOMASON, COUTTS TROTTER, W. TROTTER.

Accompanied by Peter Bohren they were en route from the Eggishorn to Saas, whence with H. B. George they made the first crossing of the Mischabeljoch on July 30.

August 8, 1862. ROBERT SPENCE WATSON, England. Much pleased with the attention we met with here under damping circumstances.

August 9, 1862. K. E. DIGBY, W. F. DIGBY. To Aeggischhorn.

July —, 1863. Rev. W. F. SHORT, A.C., F. MORSHEAD, A.C., W. AWDRY, Rev. A. SHORT, A.C.

Probably about July 7 or 8. Morshead had ascended the Jungfrau on July 6 and made the first crossing of the Matterjoch on the 10th. Guides, Peter Perren and Moritz Andermatten. (*A.J.* 32. 226 and 63.)

July 25, 1863. J. BIRKBECK, jun., GEO. C. HODGKINSON. From Saas to Aeggischhorn.

August 14–September 14, 1863. F. J. A. HORT.

September 13, 1863. J. F. HARDY. From Aeggischhorn to Chamonix.

September 25–30, 1863. A. P. WHATELY.

July 8, 1864. F. F. TUCKETT, Bristol. From Platten in the Lötsch Thal by the Distel Glacier, Birch Grat (or Aletsch Pass) and Jägi and Ober Aletsch glaciers, $7\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. easy walking without reckoning halts. The pass is one of the most beautiful I ever made and by no means difficult, though after fresh snow or when the slopes are converted into ice, some care is required on the N. side. I can heartily recommend Johann Rubin, of Ried (Lötsch Thal) who accompanied us to the summit of the pass and may also add that Lehner will feed and lodge travellers at Platten which is, of course, a much better starting point for either the Aletsch Pass or Lötschen Lücke than Kippel, from its great proximity to both. To Grindelwald by the Mönch Joch.

This was the first crossing of the Beich Pass by an English traveller. Tuckett's guides were Christian and Peter Michel. (*A.J.* 1. 378.)

——. A. W. MOORE, A.C., London. From Zermatt in a day. Not too long, starting early. Hope to ascend the Aletschhorn tomorrow and descend to the Lötsch Thal by the Birch Grat. Everything here very good.

No date is given in the book. Moore arrived at Bel Alp on the evening of July 19, and on the 21st carried out his intention of ascending the Aletschhorn and crossing the Beich Pass. Guides, Christian Almer and Anton Eggel. (*The Alps in 1864*, 283–303.)

July 30, 1864. THOMAS WHITWELL, A.C., Stockton-on-Tees. From Lauterbrunnen Thal to Bel Alp in two days. Left Steinberg Alp at 6.30 A.M., July 29, ascending the glacier to the Wetterlücke, a new pass made last week by A. W. Moore, Esq., A.C. The glacier was for one hour mostly green ice with thin snow at an inclination of 35 degrees, rendering extreme care necessary. It is divided by a large bergschrund over which is one bridge which may melt any day, in which case the glacier would be impassable. The pass, with above exception, has not been made during the present century. We arrived at the top at 11.45, elevation . . . (not given), and descended in heavy rain to the Gletschestaffel Alp where we got accommodation for the night at the highest chalet in the place; very clean, obliging and no *fleas*. Time on pass, exclusive of stoppages, seven hours. It is much the shortest route between the Lötsch Thal and Lauterbrunnen Thal, but the ice is so bad as to be hardly recommendable. This morning, left our quarters and got to the top of the Aletsch Pass, or Birch Fluh or Birch Grat, in $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours, thence over the Jägi glacier to this hotel without difficulty in 4 hours, exclusive of stoppages. The

latter pass ² is quite new, having only been made by F. F. Tuckett, A.C., A. W. Moore, A.C., and ourselves. It is a fine pass amidst splendid scenery. Guide, Peter Michel. Porter, Peter Bernet, both of Grindelwald.

August 3-8, 1864. C. G. HEATHCOTE, A.C., Emmanuel College, Cambridge. From Brigue to the Aeggischhorn. Rev. JAMES ROBERTSON, A. C., Rugby.

On August 5 we ascended the Aletschhorn (in company with Mr. Bull of Marlborough). Our guides were Ruppen, Josen and a man from Kandersteg, Fritz Ogi—all three indifferent, the last the most helpful. Ruppen seemed neither strong, cheerful, nor decided enough for a leader, but something of this may be due to his evident want of condition. The start should be made very early and an absurd tariff proposed—of 50 fr. per guide—treated as it deserves. We gave our two (*sic*) men 35 fr. and 30 fr.

August 11, 1864. F. C. GROVE, R. S. MACDONALD, LESLIE STEPHEN. From Aeggischhorn to Kippel.

They had made the first ascent of the Jungfrau from the Rottal with Melchior and Jakob Anderegg and the porter Bischoff on August 9, descending to the Eggishorn. (*A. J.* 1. 434.) From Bel Alp they ascended the Aletschhorn.

August 12, 1864. J. J. HORNBY, T. H. PHILPOTT. From Randa to Aeggischhorn.

Next day they ascended the Aletschhorn with Christian Almer and Christian Lauener, making the first traverse from Bel Alp to the Eggishorn. (*A. J.* 1. 434, and 32. 235.)

August 17, 1864. J. G. SMYTH. Aeggischhorn to Zermatt.

September 9, 1864. R. N. HAYWARD, THOMAS BROOKSBANK, A. C., London. From Kippel by the Aletsch Pass to this inn. From Kippel (where the Pfarrer, Herr Holzen, lodged us most comfortably in a new and perfectly clean house at a moderate charge) by the Aletsch Pass, taking a somewhat new course by quitting the valley of Lötsch at Kuhmatten, 2 hours above Kippel, making for the left moraine of the Distel glacier, crossing the ice and then ascending by the right bank and snow slopes to the summit. The ascent occupied 6 hours and the walk thence to this place $4\frac{1}{4}$. Mr. Tuckett's praise of the beauty of the pass at a previous page is not over-praise and the Jägi glacier is more like a *sea* of ice (or lake) than any of the meers or . . . (?) commonly called so, as it has breadth as well as length and evenness of surface.

On the 8 September we crossed the Faldern Pass ³ from Leukerbad to

² Over the initials L.S. has been added : " This is a mistake. The pass had certainly been made before 1857."

³ Another hand has added : ' Faldum on Gen. Dufour's map, which places the col between the Laucher Spitz, N., and the Faldum Rothorn, S.'

Ferden, a walk of 4 easy hours from the summit of the Torrenthorn, whence you descend by the path to Leukerbad for some 10 minutes and then go down steep debris near a stream, circling the sheer red cliffs of the Torrenthorn on the left hand. The walk is quite easy, though there are 5 beds of gerölle to cross. From the col, there is a beautiful view of the whole Lötschen Thal to the Lücke at the E. end and soon after quitting the col a path is found on the left bank of the stream leading to the Faldern Alp.

This was the first passage of the Faldum Pass. Guides, Franz Andermatten and Kaspar Blatter. (*A. J.* 1. 434.)

July 13, 1865. A. G. PULLER, A.C., J. H. KITSON. From Aeggischhorn via Aletschhorn. Left the Aeggischhorn at 1.15 A.M. and owing to very deep fresh snow did not reach the summit till 1 P.M. Descended this side and being lost on the way had to wait for the moon's rising, arriving here at 10.45 P.M.

July 14, 1865. ROBT. SPENCE WATSON, A.C. Ascended the Aletschhorn from this hotel with Joseph Marie Claretz, Chamonix, and Anton Eggel of Blatten as guides. Leaving this house at 2.15 A.M. we reached the summit at 10.20 and (after an hour's enjoyment of a perfectly cloudless and glorious view from the summit) returned to the inn at 6.10 P.M.

July 18, 1865. G. S. MATHEWS, HORACE WALKER, A. W. MOORE. From Kippel, by the Birch Fluh or Aletsch Pass.

From Chamonix, after making the first ascent of Mont Blanc from the Brenva Glacier on July 15.

August 4-7, 1865. CHARLES S. PARKER, T. SANDBACH PARKER, ALFRED T. PARKER. From Zermatt to Aeggischhorn.

From the Eggishorn they made the first guideless ascent of the Finsteraarhorn on August 10. (*A. J.* 30. 162.)

August 12-15, 1865. H. B. GEORGE, A. MORTIMER, S. H. MORLEY, H. MORLEY. From Zermatt to Kippel and Aeggischhorn. Extremely well pleased with everything.

August 26-29, 1865. JOHN BALL. The excursion to the Jägi glacier is strongly to be recommended. It is quite within the reach of most ladies. They should go as far as the junction of the branches from the Aletschhorn and the Gross Nesthorn.

Ball went up the Sparrhorn on August 27, and on leaving Bel Alp crossed the Simplon to Cadenabbia. (Mumm, *A.C. Register*, 1. 22.)

September 6-11, 1865. The Misses PIGEON, London. From Chalet Villard to Aeggischhorn.

The Misses Anna and Ellen Pigeon, best known for having made in August 1869 the first descent of the Italian side of the Sesiajoch. (*A. J.* 5. 367-371.)

September 8, 1865. DAVID JAMES ABERCROMBY. Yesterday I ascended the Aletschhorn with Mr. T. Murray Browne and Mr. Walter R. Browne. My guides, Anton Eggel of Blatten and Edouard Cupelin of Chamonix.

On the 2nd, crossed the Col d'Argentière to Orsières.

On the 4th, ascended the Grand Combin. Today, en route for the Aeggischhorn.

September 10, 1865. H. B. GEORGE, A.C., ALEX. MORTIMER. Made the first ascent of the Gross Nesthorn. The upper level of the Ober Aletsch glacier is bounded on the S.W. side by a steep wall of séracs extending from the Nesthorn to the Birch Grat (the peak so called on the Federal map) through which project four or five patches of rock. Between the two patches nearest the Nesthorn is a very steep slope by which we ascended to the ridge at the head of the Gredetsch Thal very near to a sharp rocky peak at the head of the ridge dividing the Gredetsch Thal from the Baltschieder Thal. Turning to the left we ascended with perfect ease, chiefly along the rocks overhanging the head of the Gredetsch Thal, first to the summit of a minor peak which masks the real peak and thence to the Nesthorn itself. The view was most marvellous, superior in Almer's opinion to that from the Aletschhorn. It comprised everything between the Bernina and Mont Blanc and several summits E. of the Bernina, besides a great part of N.W. Switzerland and many of the Italian ranges, including one peak of the Graians, I believe the Grivola. Time of actual walking to the foot of the wall, 3 h. 10 m. : up the wall, 1 h. 50 m. : thence to the summit, 1 hr. 25 m. Descent, 4 h. 10 m. Tolerably fast walking throughout. Guide, Christian Almer : his son,⁴ aged 16, also accompanied us.

June 19, 1866. FRANK WALKER, Miss WALKER, HORACE WALKER.

July —, 1866. A. G. GIRDLESTONE, J. TYNDALL.

On July 31, they made an unsuccessful guideless attempt on the Aletschhorn, and after a visit to the Italian lakes, returned to Bel Alp, but the weather being bad could do no more than ascend the Sparrhorn. *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (Silver Library Edition), 260-264.

—, 1866. J. J. HORNBY, F. MORSHEAD, T. H. PHILPOTT. From Aeggischhorn to Kippel.

They reached the Eggishorn on July 31, after making the first crossing of the Ebnefluhjoch ; to Bel Alp, August 1 ; crossed the Beich Pass to the Guggistaffel chalets, August 2. Guides, Christian Almer, Christian Lauener, and Jakob Anderegg. (*A. J.* 3. 88.)

⁴ Ulrich.

August —, 1866, J. TYNDALL to England. A. G. GIRDLESTONE, to Engstlen Alp, after much endurance of abominable weather.

July 9, 1867. W. C. SIDGWICK, W. ESSON, J. R. THURSFIELD. Ascended Nesthorn with Almer and Anderegg.

June 14, 1868. A. T. MALKIN, R. F. MARTINEAU. Evolena-Kippel by Beich Grat.

From Kippel, they made, with Melchior Anderegg, the first recorded passage of the Alte Gemmi. (*A. J.* 4. 153.)

July 22, 1868. Miss BREVOORT, ascended the Nesthorn. W. COOLIDGE, ascended the Nesthorn and Aletschhorn.

Almer was engaged by Miss Brevoort and Coolidge for the first time in July 1868, owing to the absence in the Caucasus of Francois Dévouassoud. (*A. J.* 38. 281.) Coolidge ascended the Aletschhorn on July 23, his aunt going up the Sparrhorn. On July 25, they both ascended the Nesthorn (3rd ascent). The dog, Tschingel, took part in both these expeditions, the Aletschhorn being her third major ascent. (*Alpine Studies*, 171.)

August 7, 1868. JOHN THOM, Liverpool. August 2, ascended the Wetterhorn with Christian Almer and Peter Bohren. August 4, Scheckhorn with same guides.

Another hand has added : 'The writer of the above, one of the most hardy and daring Alpine climbers, was killed by falling over a precipice in the Isle of Skye about two years after the excursions he has here described.'

Thom reached Bel Alp on August 7, and leaving at 1 A.M. next day, reached the summit of the Aletschhorn at 9.30 ('no snow en route, all being ice, and consequently very difficult.')

The same day he crossed the Beich Pass to the Lötschental. (Almer's *Führerbuch*, 139.)

For further references to John Thom, see *A. J.* 32. 217 and 273.

August 1–September 2, 1869. Miss BREVOORT and TSCHINGEL, W. A. B. COOLIDGE.

August 11, 1869. ARTHUR FAIRBANKS.

August 21, 1869. A. A. REILLY, C. E. MATHEWS. Ascended the Aletschhorn. Guides, Melchior Anderegg and Michel du Croz. Owing to the fresh snow on the arête, the excursion was unusually long, taking 17 hours. But the views and weather were superb.

This ascent was made on August 20. On the 22nd they ascended the Finsteraarhorn and next day the Mönch, going that same evening to the Hotel Nesthorn at Ried.

These were probably Reilly's last big expeditions. He had ascended Mont Blanc on August 18, and soon afterwards 'had an accident at Geneva and injured his knee so seriously that he was incapable of further hard climbing.' (Mumm, *A.C. Register*, I. 271.)

See also *A.J.* 49. 279 and *A.J.* 55. 262, where the year is given, apparently incorrectly, as 1870.

August 20-24, 1871. WM. MATHEWS, A. A. REILLY. From Zermatt to Kandersteg.

August 17, 1874. F. E. MARSHALL, J. A. GARTH MARSHALL. Johann Fischer of Meiringen with Ulrich Almer of Grindelwald took us up the Aletschhorn by the arête lying immediately N. of the top (time from the Faulberg to the top, 6 hours—snow in rather bad condition) and down to this place by the arête running S.W. from the top, which divides the head of the Ober Aletsch Gletscher. (Time to Bel Alp, 5 hours.)

J. A. G. Marshall and Johann Fischer were killed on the Brouillard Glacier fifteen days later.

August 7, 1875. WILLIAM DAVIDSON, W. E. DAVIDSON, LAURENT LANIER. From Aeggischhorn.

AN EXPEDITION TO THE LLOYD GEORGE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH-EAST BRITISH COLUMBIA

By F. S. SMYTHE

Read before the Alpine Club, March 2, 1948

THE Canadian Rockies S. of Mt. Robson, 12,972 ft., have been largely explored and mapped and the principal summits ascended.

Northwards of Mt. Robson where the Rockies extend for some 500 miles to the Liard river much less is known. One expedition to the Sir Alexander range climbed some of its higher peaks, but in the 25,000 square miles N. of the Peace river and between it and the Liard river not a single major mountain had been climbed before 1947 and the country was mostly unmapped and unexplored.

It was along the Peace river, and its main tributary the Finlay river, that the original pioneers travelled in their canoes to make contact with the local Indians and establish their fur trading posts. Today the country is little if any more populated than it was 100 years ago, for it is a country as savage and as remote as any in North America, one incapable of development except perhaps for minerals.