IN MEMORIAM

THE ALPINE CLUB OBITUARY	*Year of Election*
Noelting, F. A. M.	1909
Oulton, E. V.	1926
Brettell, F. G.	1933
Donkin, Bryan	1936
Balston, F. W.	1937
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord Malcolm	1938
Abraham, G. D. (Honorary Member)	1954
Cornish, C. C.	1962

FRANCIS WILLIAM BALSTON

1880–1965

FRANK BALSTON was born in 1880, the eleventh child of a large family. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he rowed for Third Trinity. In 1906 he joined the family business of W. and R. Balston (now over two hundred years old) as Engineering Director, and succeeded his brother as Chairman in 1957, retiring only in 1962. His greatest interest lay in the mill and the people who worked there. He introduced many improvements and helped in the years between the wars to convert the hand-made paper process into one employing modern machinery. In 1909 he married Miss Kate Trousdell, herself a direct descendant of that James Whatman to whom his great-grandfather had been apprenticed.

In his religion he found comfort and strength. As a churchwarden of St. Paul's, Maidstone (built by his forbears in 1859), he was justifiably proud of having welcomed four archbishops during his twenty-five years of office.

Frank's first climbing holiday, spent with me around Grindelwald, included ascents of the Mönch and Eiger, and from 1897 onwards mountaineering became his principal interest outside the mill. With his favourite guide, Peter Inäbnit, he climbed nearly all the greater peaks of the Oberland; with other guides he was in the Valais, and he once visited (and toiled up alone) the Peak of Teneriffe.



Photo: B. R. Goodfellow, 1955]

THREE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE ALPINE CLUB. LEFT TO RIGHT: B. R. GOODFELLOW (1950–54), E. S. HERBERT (1935–40), BRYAN DONKIN (1941–47),

(No. 49)

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1901 was a particularly good season during which he made several climbs unguided, including the Mittelhorn by the North-east arête with Walter Weston. At Rosenlaui that year we met Miss Gertrude Bell, who, finding one day that we were all making for the Simelistock, invited us to join her. The climb was rather marred by the three guides, her two, and our Peter. Getting together, the professionals quickly overcame the difficulties, which we too were hoping to enjoy, and frustrated our efforts by maintaining a well-meant stranglehold on the rope. Six were too many around the summit. Ruffled feelings, however, were presently subdued by the astonishing view and Miss Bell's gaiety. In the afternoon it was a pleasure to watch her smoothly descending the difficult rock wall like a squirrel.

Frank's best climb was with Peter Inäbnit and Fritz Steuri in 1908, when he made an ascent of the Jungfrau from the Güggi hut via the Jungfraujoch and the Rottalsattel (*A.J. 24.* 363). On reaching the ice-wall by which Leslie Stephen had made the first passage, they preferred instead to attack the second ice-fall, and reached the summit of the Jungfrau in ten hours, the shortest route from the Kleine Scheidegg—unless one should prefer the train.

After his marriage Frank did little serious climbing, but loved to spend his holidays among the hills, often visiting old haunts. He was a good photographer and would try to share the pleasure he had found in climbing, with friends and others (including the inmates of Maidstone Prison) through talks illustrated by his slides. He was proposed for the Alpine Club by Walter Weston and elected a member in 1937.

To Frank I owe my life at least once. I was leading the descent of the rotten cliffs of the Dents des Bouquetins above Arolla, when a crag, on which I had paused and over which we had all clambered earlier in the day, suddenly collapsed and thundered down to the snow-field far below, leaving me pendulous on the rope. Frank, above and out of sight, held firm till I had regained a footing. I like to think that perhaps one day he will save me from an even greater Abyss, holding me from Heaven's ramparts and waiting with his welcoming smile to show me round.

T. A. RUMBOLD.

BRYAN DONKIN

1903–1964

BRYAN DONKIN, who died last October after a grievous illness, was one of the small band of members whose names are assured of an honoured place in the annals of the Alpine Club. As well as being a thoroughly

accomplished mountaineer, he gave immensely of his time, energy and counsel to the service of the Club. Much of this help was, characteristically, unobtrusive and many members are probably unaware of the extent of the Club's indebtedness to him.

Educated at Gresham's School, and subsequently at Pembroke College, Cambridge, he followed in the footsteps of his father, S. B. Donkin, and entered the engineering world, eventually becoming the senior partner of the consulting firm of Kennedy & Donkin. He was a notable figure in the field of electrical engineering, especially perhaps as regards the large scale problems of electricity supply and developments such as hydroelectric schemes. He held many high positions, and at the time of his death was Vice-President (and President-elect) of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. He was equally respected abroad and was for many years a prominent figure at the International Electrotechnical Commission and other important international bodies. It was typical of his tireless energy that, only a few months before his death, and when hardly able to get about unaided, he attended the I.E.C. meeting in Aix-les-Bains, and even undertook chairmanship duties.

Donkin was elected to the Alpine Club in 1936 with a qualification covering ascents in many mountain districts, from Norway to the Dolomites and from Eastern Tyrol to the Western Alps. He had no pretensions to being a 'tiger', however; neither was he a specialist, although I suspect his preference was for rock and he was much attracted by the Dolomites.

He became Honorary Secretary of the Alpine Club in 1940, a position he held for some seven years, including the difficult years of the war. This was a hard assignment and it was at this time above all that he and those working closely with him did so much to keep the affairs of the Club on an even keel and to prepare for the part it should play in the mountaineering scene of the post-war period. Towards the end of the war he was largely responsible for organising a number of climbing meets in Britain, at one of which, at Pen-y-Pass, I first climbed with him. Immediately following the war, he played a considerable part in the endeavour to rebuild and foster good relations with climbers abroad. In 1947 he took a small party to the Tatra mountains to join in expeditions with representative Czechoslovak mountaineers, some of whom he subsequently invited to this country. Again, in 1950, when we joined forces in the Dauphiné, he, with John Hunt, linked up with members of the G.H.M. with, I believe, the primary object of achieving a Franco-British traverse of the Meije. The weather decided otherwise, however, and honour had to be satisfied with a turbulent crossing of the Râteau under conditions which should have appealed to any high-voltage engineer. In his climbing activities, as in his professional work and private friendships, he brought to bear a charm of manner which endeared him to all he

met. He was also prominently connected with the Climbers' Club, of which he was to become President.

From 1949 onwards, I was privileged to go to the Alps and other mountains with Bryan on more than a dozen occasions. My principal recollections of him as a climber are of his great steadiness on all types of ground, his careful planning and his penetrating judgments on mountain conditions. He was a tower of strength on any rope and over the whole period of our acquaintance I cannot remember a single instance of an unsafe move, or any occasion where his quiet resourcefulness was not equal to the demands of the moment. Our first major climb together, with Wilberforce Smith, was a traverse of the Grand Cornier from the Moiry hut to the Mountet; shortly afterwards he traversed the Ober Gabelhorn. In 1950, after a stormy start in the Dauphiné with Herbert Roberts, we joined forces with Charles Warren and Henry Booth in the Mont Blanc area. In 1952 I persuaded Bryan to take a trip to the Pyrenees, a range I knew well from pre-war visits. We climbed a number of peaks, including the Munia, Pic d'Enfer, Perdighero and Biciberri, mixed up with a good deal of pass crossing, and I think he thoroughly enjoyed this first visit to unfamilar territory, being especially impressed by the unusual scenery on the Spanish side of the range. We went there again in 1959.

In 1955 we had a delightful stay, in company with Charles and Dorothy Warren, in the Julian Alps, ascending Triglav and returning via the Dolomites and Rosenlaui. Our last trip together, in 1963, was to Corsica. This had been planned for some while past, but alas, when the time came, Bryan was suffering badly from pain in one leg, and mountaineering, or even walking, was out of the question. He was able to swim, however, and we spent much time on the beaches, and exploring the island by car, in superb weather.

Bryan's interests in sport were by no means confined to mountaineering. For many years he was a keen yachtsman and shared a boat with his friend, A. A. Pereira. He was also a devotee of the hunting field and rode regularly to hounds in the region of Winterfold, his home in the Surrey hills. Despite his many responsibilities in the world of engineering, he found time to interest himself in a great variety of subjects. He was very interested in music and the arts, and in all country pursuits, as well as in matters of industry and commerce, his knowledge being not only extensive, but balanced by his taste and discrimination. His intellectual grasp was, in fact, remarkable both in its breadth and power of penetration. It was not easy, however, to get him to talk about his interests, and his reserve could on occasion be quite baffling. Foremost in all his personal relationships were his consideration for others, his kindness and charm in all dealings, and a masterly sense of the occasion.

By his death, the Club has lost one of its staunchest friends, and his

fellow mountaineers a companion almost beyond compare. He is survived by his sister Mary and his two brothers, John and William, of whom the latter returned from India to look after him during the last few weeks of his life. Our sympathy goes out to them in their great loss.

R. S. DADSON.

DR. C. B. M. WARREN writes:

Although contemporary with Bryan Donkin at Cambridge, it happened that I had no personal contact with him until we met some years later at committee meetings when he was Honorary Secretary of the Club during the war years and thereafter. He was indeed a most efficient secretary, as I had occasion to discover when, in 1947, I had to take over his duties at short notice while he was away from this country on business.

These were difficult times for the Club, and it should not be forgotten what an unselfish, hard working and competent custodian of our affairs Bryan Donkin was. One of the things that amazed me during the war was the way the Club kept going. At times attendances at meetings became thin; but members within reach of London, or on leave at the time, never failed to turn up. If in our various crises, both financial and otherwise, I may at times have had doubts about the viability of the A.C. as an institution, I had none at all after we had weathered the war years. It was not the numbers at these meetings that mattered, it was the fact that people continued to come. Mountaineering, like other disciplines, has its devotees, and the Alpine Club, for all its faults, provided the necessary sanctuary for the faithful during a disruptive period. It was largely due to the self-effacing work of Bryan Donkin at this time that the Club not only survived but was positively active.

It should be recalled that it was during his term of office that the British Mountaineering Council came into being under the sponsorship of Winthrop Young, our President at that time. It should also be remembered that it was under his guidance that we had those wonderfully successful meets in Wales, the Lake District and Scotland which, incidentally, I have always hoped to see revived. It was he too who organised the meets in the Alps which did so much to help the post-war generation of young climbers to get started again in the alpine tradition when all sorts of restrictions made it difficult for them to do so. These were events of considerable importance in the life of the Club, and on each occasion it was Bryan Donkin who was the organiser and thoughtful host.

Before he became ill, Bryan was a remarkably strong walker and a thoroughly sound climber. Above all he was a competent mountaineer; a man who could be relied upon as a sound companion for any classic alpine route. I have climbed with him in the Oberland, the Bernina and

in the French and Julian Alps. Perhaps an expedition in the Bernina group remains in my memory as one of the best outings I had with him.

Efficient by nature and strong in limb at that time, Bryan was apt to take the bit between his teeth and set out for an objective at a great pace and with considerable élan. I recall one occasion when we were together in the Julian Alps. It had been decided that we should climb Triglav and we set out to do so. With magnificent self-assurance he set our course and made the pace. At the end of the first hour he was almost out of sight. The slower members of the party, having more time for contemplation, had gradually become aware that the mountain they were to climb seemed always to be behind them. When eventually they caught up with him, because he had thoughtfully waited for them to do so, it was tactfully suggested that the map should be consulted and this confirmed us in our misgivings. Unabashed, our dashing leader altered course. But it was a tired and anxious party who eventually found the hut as darkness overtook them. In spite of this misadventure, the summit of Triglav was eventually attained.

For all his efficiency and social charm, Bryan Donkin did not relax easily in company. But when one had him to oneself in the mountains, and when he joined the family circle, he could laugh at nonsense with the rest of us. It was then that he could come out with an amusing turn of phrase, as for example, when he referred to a Camembert cheese as having 'an amiable flavour of drains'. I cannot claim that I knew Donkin really well; but then who could? He was really something of an enigma. But I think I knew him pretty well, and perhaps rather better than he realised. So for me, and I would guess for a good many other people too, life can never be quite the same without him. His fate was a cruel one, for he had cancer. But the courage with which he faced his end was a fine example for all of us.

ERNEST VIVIAN OULTON

1881–1964

E. V. Oulton, who died last November, aged eighty-three, was an ophthalmic surgeon by profession. He was educated at the Leys School, Cambridge, and Christ's College, whence he qualified at Barts Hospital, London. Of fine physique and good at games, he won his Blue in the Cambridge Rugby football side (1901) and scored a try in the 'Varsity match.

He was Ophthalmic House Surgeon at Barts, and House Physician at the West London Hospital, before going out to Egypt in 1910 as Inspector and Surgeon at the Egyptian Government Ophthalmic Hospital. He

served during the first world war in the R.A.M.C., being mentioned in despatches, and receiving the Order of the Nile.

At the turn of the century, a chance meeting of Cambridge men at Wastdale Head led to friendships which lasted a lifetime and every Easter and autumn a party of intimates arranged to meet for a few days' climbing in the British hills, particularly in the English Lake District and North Wales.

In the Alps, too, Oulton climbed extensively. I recall a successful guideless tour with him in 1904 through the Graians, a district then little visited, and interesting ascents of the Grand Paradis and several neighbouring peaks; also a long ascent of the Aiguille Verte by the Moine arête and the traverse of the Grands Charmoz, the last two under professional guidance. The following year found him in the central Swiss Alps and in these early years he visited and climbed from most of the Alpine centres.

Then he accepted an official appointment as ophthalmic surgeon under the British administration in Egypt. Here he met the English lady whom he married and on returning home at the end of the appointment settled in private practice in Hove. He served with the rank of Major in the R.A.M.C. for the duration of both world wars.

At our friendly climbing reunions he was a frequent attendant, both in the British hills and in Switzerland, and his genial, kindly temperament made him welcome everywhere. On the mountains which he loved so well he was first-class, always climbing safely and within his powers, a completely dependable companion.

Unfortunately of recent years he had become crippled with arthritis and all movement became restricted and painful, so that he was unable to attend the Club functions. To his family and his widow, who nursed him so devotedly, we tender our sympathy.

J. OSBORNE WALKER.

WALTER FOX WATSON

1920–1964

WALTER FOX WATSON, who was announced to be missing, presumed lost, on the Weisshorn early last September, was born at Windermere in 1920 and spent his early life in the Lake District. He was thus bred to the mountains, and moreover from boyhood showed a natural ability for many sides of sport and athletics. His talent for cricket even tempted him, on leaving school, to take it up professionally, but eventually he took his degree in Physical Education at Loughborough College before

joining the R.A.F., in which he spent the war years. Since 1948 he was sports master at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury.

Alpine mountaineering only became the great hobby of his life some years after the war. His first visit to Switzerland was with a Holiday Fellowship walking party, but he soon found his natural sphere among the high peaks. 'I started by paying a guide to take me up the Hörnli ridge', he used to say. Thereafter, he was in the Alps every summer, serving his apprenticeship in mountain craft with his great friends Adolf Schaller and Bernard Biner, to whom he always paid tribute as the finest of teachers and advisers.

Soon he started guideless climbing, and during the last decade achieved an annual programme of routes and ascents of all kinds, as the leader of large and small parties, the extent of which it is impossible to indicate in the available space. His most important climbs are in the files of the Alpine Club.

Chamonix, Zermatt and Arolla were his favourite centres. He made full use of his school holidays, spending several weeks taking courses for the Mountaineering Association, giving unstintedly of his energy and experience to his pupils and friends. The last fortnight he usually devoted to cherished plans of his own.

Walter Watson brought to mountaineering a formidable combination of qualities: great ingenuity for adapting new devices to the technical problems of mountain craft; exceptional physical strength; invincible resolution and the eagerness to accept a challenge.

A middle-weight Hercules, he carried physical training to the highest pitch, towards both endurance and gymnastic attainments. He took a boyish delight in discovering that he was able to increase his total of consecutive pull-ups from 33 at the age of forty-one to 95 at the age of forty-four. He once confessed that portaging nearly 120 lb. of kit (including ironmongery and tinned food) across Paris exacted all his training.

His pertinacity is shown by the following events. In 1955 he had a very bad fall in Borrowdale (he always avowed that he could not remember the moment preceding his fall). Laid up for weeks in hospital, he decided to take the examination for professional guides set by the British Mountaineering Council. 'I felt it was a kind of challenge', he would explain apologetically. He recovered completely, both physically and psychologically, from his injuries and got his guide's certificate.

He was elected to the Alpine Club in 1959 and in 1961 he was elected first President of the Wessex Mountaineering Club.

'A Solo Traverse of the Matterhorn', which is to be found in the *Alpine Journal* for 1962, well illustrates his method of careful preparation as well as his endurance. We shall probably never know what mishap cost him

his life on the relatively easy East ridge of the Weisshorn (where he was last seen), but one can be sure that the reason was not lack of forethought.

Since I met him in 1960 at Argentière I had the great good fortune, living fairly near to him, to climb with him frequently in Britain, and the honour, as I shall always remember it, to follow him on some fine routes in the Alps. I often used to think that, as a mountaineer, he resembled his hero, A. F. Mummery. Watson had the same originality of approach to problems and the daring to put his ideas to the test. To see him tackle a heavily-crevassed snow-field was a lesson in confidence and initiative.

Watson was an excellent photographer, a diligent student and analyst of mountaineering practice and history, a dedicated teacher in his chosen field of physical education. At one time he was a tutor to an Outward Bound Centre. As a sports master he raised the standard of a large school. He was a wide and eager reader.

His outstanding characteristics were enthusiasm, single-mindedness, loyalty and humour. I recall a delightful instance of the latter when we were ascending the steep valley that leads from Les Haudères to the Dent Blanche hut, whence we were to do the Ferpècle ridge. Heavily-loaded and drenched with perspiration, we halted by a delightful stream at Bricolla. From the road nearby two tourists, a man in silk shirt and daks and an extremely personable blonde in bathing attire, approached the stream to find two middle-aged mountaineers, equipment cast aside, laving their heads and chests. The blonde beamed prolonged approval as she and her companion passed on.

Walter was shaking with laughter. 'I couldn't help contrasting,' he said, 'the look of smiling approval on *her* face with that of utter misery on *his*!'

Watson, on his more serious side, had a deep faith in God. He believed that Providence was a reality in spite of evil and vicissitude.

To his friends the news of his disappearance brought a shock of incredulity that has become a growing sense of loss. He was a fine and generous personality.

P. H. W. WALLACE.