Annapurna South Face, Chris Bonington, £0.75
Everest South-West Face, Chris Bonington, £1.00
The Hard Years, Joe Brown, £0.80
Climb to the Lost World, Hamish McInnes, £0.90
The Space Beneath My Feet, Gwen Moffat, £0.90
Portrait of a Mountaineer, Don Whillans, £0.85
Arrow: *I Chose to Climb,* Chris Bonington, £1.25
Next Horizon, Chris Bonington, £1.25

Matterhorn North Face Leo Dickinson's award-winning film was shown on ITV television on 24/8/76, and also rated a 4-page spread in the TV Times. After a 10 minute introductory re-creation of Whymper's ascent, the film showed a first unsuccessful attempt, and then a successful ascent of the North Face. Some of the scenes filmed in blizzard conditions were gripping to watch seated in an armchair, let alone having to operate a camera on the face.

Morte d'un Guide (an award winning French film shown on BBC2 television channel on 14/1/76) This was gripping television entertainment with excellent photography of scenery and of climbers in action, played by actors who, because they were natural and convincing, contrasted sharply with the paste-board creations of American mountain soap-opera. As for so many other portrayals of mountaineering by the various 'entertainment' media, it is once again necessary to point out that mountaineering is not all accidents, rescues, cutting the rope and the howling of the wind machine. Cannot it be shown sometimes as a source of lasting joy and contentment, which is what it is after all to most of its followers?

In Memoriam

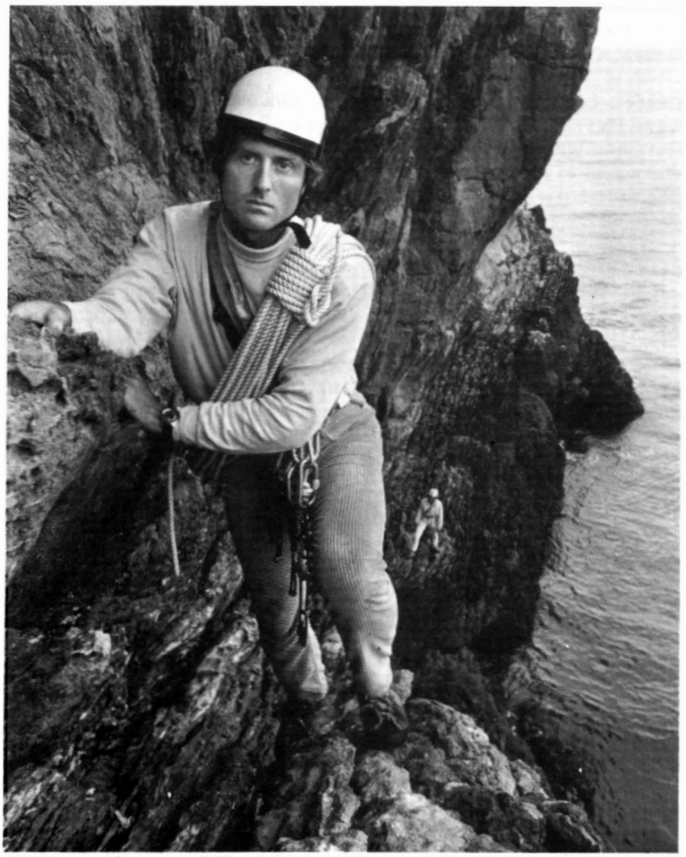
Introduction **Kevin FitzGerald**

This has been the most difficult of my 4 years as collector of obituary notices, but there has been an 'editorial reprieve' on the subject of extended memorials for this year at least, and that gladdens my heart.

As I type this Introduction (on Boxing Day, 1976), I am aware that the section closes for Press on 3 January 1977. This means that important recollections of recently deceased members may not appear until the summer of 1978. I have particularly in mind the recent death of T. S. Blakeney, a man and a name known to every member of this Club, and about whom it has proved impossible at such short notice to arrange a suitably extended account. To set against that it will be seen that we have overtaken the calendar in respect of our distinguished Honorary Member, Armand Charlet, and that we can now include tributes to Dick Carpendale. Both these splendid men were included by name last year but there was no time for the preparation of memorials. In this connection another name should be mentioned. Mr. Fedden did not intend that his brief note about Charles Meade should stand alone as a tribute to that great man and great mountaineer. There must be at least one member of this Club prepared to research and write an extended account of so important a climbing life.

The list which now follows is as usual in no order of merit even though it begins with the name of a woman considered by Armand Charlet to be perhaps the greatest of all women climbers, and continues with a name of a man whose climbing career ended before most of our present members were born. All mountaineers should be regarded as equals and non 'more equal than others'. Here is the list, transcribed from my notes: Miriam O'Brien Underhill; Derrick Ellis (non-member contributor); Arthur Willoughby Barton; Colin Fforde Wyatt (twice elected); Edward Fielden Pilkington; Peter Harvey Biven; John Marsden Neye; Kenneth Mason; Richard Carpendale (named last year); Armand Charlet (named last year); Brian Dickson; George Miles; John Weston Healey; Neaburn Tatham; Romilley Holdsworth; T. S. Blakeney; James Butler; Stephan von Kuffner; Dougal Haston.

In the Alpine Club we are all a little diminished by the death of a fellow member, however humble or uneventful his life may have appeared to others: He was one of us. As I pin together the following pages there comes into my mind the very last line written by the poet David Jones in the week of October 1974 in which he died. 'Sirs, you are set for sorrow'.



110 Peter Biven on cliffs of Torbay (Photo: John Cleare)

Peter Biven (1935–1976)

'Biven & Peck'. I first heard the names in Cornwall, in '57 or '58 I suppose. We had just made the acquaintance of that beautiful granite face at Bosigran and discovered that it was laced with their fine and formidable lines. We supposed them to be a pair of mystery 'hard-men', southern counterparts of 'Brown & Whillans' perhaps—but who were they? and where were they from? Two or 3 years later I learnt. Already, knowledgeable gritstone climbers had written off 'Biven & Peck' into an early retirement. I discovered they were not 2 but 3: the Biven Brothers, Peter and Barrie, were in their early twenties, while Trevor Peck was already a dynamic 50-year-old. Indeed, they had been—and still were—one of the most prolific partnerships in British rock-climbing history.

Peter, the elder brother, was perhaps the dominant member of the trio. He was 41 when he died in June 1976 on an easy climb in the Avon Gorge—an accident on a belay ledge caused by knot failure. He had been creating new climbs, hundreds of them, for 25 years. He was a particularly versatile climber. His first important new climb when he was 18, was Original Route on High Tor at Matlock, then over the next 3 years he established himself as one of the great gritstone pioneers with a superb series of now-classic routes. *Congo Corner* and *Ferryboat Highway* on Stanage are among Peter's

climbs as also are that brilliant trilogy at Gardoms Edge—*Eye of Faith, Hearse Arête* and *Moyers Buttress.* His on-sight lead of the last named inspired Eric Byne to write '. . . one of the boldest feats of cragmanship that this era has seen . . .'. The trio became excellent aid-climbers too: they were experimenters and developed—under Peck's guidance—an innovative range of specialist hardwear. Peter led a fine series of aid routes on High Tor and on Millstone Edge. One of the motives for this form of exercise was preparation for major Alpine rock routes.

But Peter's name will for ever be linked with West-Country sea-cliffs. 'Biven & Peck' first came to Cornwall in 1955 and for the next decade they dominated Cornish climbing, where the surroundings exactly suited his style and temperament. In those 10 years Peter put up more than 30 of the finest climbs around Bosigran. *Suicide Wall* was the first with its bold hand-traverse—and there was *Anvil Chorus, Paragon, Thin-Wall Special, Ghost, Phantom, Beowulf, The West Face, Diamond Tiara . . .* you have only to name a classic and Peter created it. Typical of his exploratory zeal was Peter's second Cornish visit in the autumn of '55. Doing his national service in Northumberland, he secured a 48 hour leave-pass and hitch-hiked 200 miles to his home at Leicester. Barrie was waiting with his motor-bike and they rode 300 miles through the night into the W. By dawn and in a semi-trance they were already working upwards on a major virgin section of the Bosigran Face. The crux, at over 200ft, seemed impossible until Peter's questing hand slotted into a hidden hold. *Little Brown Jug* is a superb climb by any standard. Even after 1965 Peter remained the presiding genius at Bosigran. He was then 30 and he continued to make new climbs, often in the company of the new hard-men of a younger generation, for another decade.

Meanwhile, in 1961, he had moved to the SW and from a base in Exeter he roved the 500 mile coast-line of Devon and Cornwall discovering new cliffs and revelling in—as he wrote—'. . . the rising and falling of the tides and the ever-changing background of the sea . . . the myriad distractions of the shore—the caverns, creeks and crystals, the flotsam and the strangely-formed, sea and time-worn rocks . . .'. Peter was instrumental in the development of the Torbay limestone as a climbing area and he made some of the best climbs on Lundy. Notable is the Devil's Lime Kiln, an improbable 450 foot upward journey from darkness into the sun through a gigantic blowhole in the cliffs. He was especially delighted by the concept of the 'sea-cliff traverse'—the linking of one easy descent to the sea with another via a section of inescapable cliff—and where the apparent easy escape, a swim, may well leave the climber in deeper water than he bargained for! He developed new techniques for the game, traversed virtually the complete S coast of Devon in weekend instalments and considered its potential seriousness closely akin to that of a major Alpine traverse. 'Escape is either onward or backward. . .' he would point out. Even cliffs of the most horrible consistency yielded superb expeditions with Peter in the lead.

Peter made a fair success of his Alpine climbing but he always found it a bit of an effort and he was slow to acclimatize. Trevor Peck had a specially built motor-car and from this mobile base the Biven Brothers and Peck concentrated on Alpine rock in the mid and late fifties. In the Kaisergebirge they made 6 important first-British ascents and a new route—a Bivenweg—on the Predigstuhl Westwand. They managed much in the Dolomites while in the Vanoise, a favourite area, they made the first ascent of the Valette N face. Peter was elected to the ACG in '58. But his delight was in effortless unencumbered movement and, although their aesthetic charms appealed to him, he was never quite at home on the bigger mountains. I think he resented the touch of masochism which is unavoidably linked to big climbs on snowy peaks. In recent years nevertheless he climbed such routes as the Bumilergrat on Palu's N face, the Blumlisalp traverse, Disgrazia by the Corda Molla and the Badile Nordkante, often leading less-experienced parties. Typically they are all routes whose aesthetic appeal made the gruelling slogs seem worthwhile. Perhaps his best Alpine climb was in the autumn of 1970 when, with Ian Howell, he made the first British ascent of the virtually unknown NW Face of Piz Ligoncio in the Italian Bergell. It is a route comparable to, if harder and longer than, the famous Cassin Route on the Badile a few miles to the N. He was very excited by it, the empty granite, the deserted valleys and the autumn sunsets.

Peter lectured to clubs and ran beginners climbing courses for the local authority. In later years he was an Educational Adviser for Devon County. His charm and his particularly understanding and tolerant attitude to people's problems made him a wise magistrate—

he sat on the Exeter Bench. He served on the Climbers' Club Committee and, briefly, on that of the Alpine Club. He wrote widely too. It was a medium in which he was especially fluent and in which he was well able to express his romantic feelings. His guide-book work is among the best and his historical introduction to the CC '68 Cornwall Guide is a masterpiece. Peter was no believer in terse and 'computerized' guide-books, they made no contribution to the mountain literature that he loved and collected. He gathered too some fine mountain and sea-cliff paintings: there were some stunning Fishwicks in his living room, a room which echoed to Beethoven and Bob Dylan. Music was important to him and this apparent dichotomy betrayed his romantic nature.

But rock was his medium. On it he was superb. He was tall and slim with powerful arms and steel fingers and he moved over it with the ease and grace of an elongated leopard—never have I seen him awkward or harassed on even the most uncompromising climb. Whatever move he made it was photogenic. Bubbling with enthusiasm and assurance one could want no better companion on the rope and he was the safest climber with whom I have shared it. His death is such an ironic tragedy.

John Cleare

Sir James Butler (1889–1975)

Jim Butler was elected to the Club in 1927, proposed by Claude Elliott and seconded by Captain Farrar, on the strength of three good Alpine seasons: classic routes in Oberland and Valais, a few with a guide, the rest—including Wetterhorn, Schreckhorn, Grands Charmoz, Mont Blanc by the Aiguille du Gouter—guideless, with friends. Among these companions were Raymond Bicknell, David Pye, Harold Porter and Claude Elliott, who remained Jim's most constant Alpine partner. They were both in the Oberland with Geoffrey Young on his first return to climbing in 1927, and again in 1929. Hans Brantschen (who guided Geoffrey on his peg-leg up the Matterhorn) was of these parties, and later guided Jim up several of the Zermatt routes, including the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn.

Jim's mother was a Ramsay of Bamff in Perthshire (her father J. H. Ramsay pioneered the route up Mont Blanc by the Tacul and Mont Maudit in 1855), and from boyhood Jim had known the hills of Scotland. There, his most faithful companion was his brother Nevile, with whom he must have walked up every peak, and crossed every pass, from Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath. The West Highlands were his great love; but a perfect April in the Cairngorms in 1926 reminded him that the East could delight too. I was of that party and well remember Jim's high spirits and tireless, springy step—the spring that he kept to the very end of his life.

By birth and career he belonged to Cambridge: son of a Master of Trinity, then undergraduate, Fellow, Tutor, Vice-Master of the college, Regius Professor of Modern History, living most of his life in the turret of Trinity Great Court next door to the Lodge where he had been born. This is not the place to detail his public life and honours; but when his work as a historian, particularly on the Official War History, was honoured in 1958, by happy chance he was knighted on the same day as Claude Elliott. Friends suggested that they should approach their Sovereign roped, as on so many other joint expeditions. Only a few years ago the two old Alpine partners, now active octogenarians, *did* put on the rope again for a climb in Birkness Combe.

Climbing for Jim was simply the best and surest of pleasures, the natural way to act in the mountains which, along with Trinity, were his true home.

Janet Carleton

R. D. S. Carpendale (1908–1975)

Dick Carpendale was the only son of Admiral Sir Charles Carpendale; before the war he worked with the BBC, served throughout the war with the RAF and thereafter farmed in Essex before settling in Somerset. Latterly the life of a country gentleman and his duties as hunt Secretary gradually superseded his climbing activity.

He was an all-round sportsman and an excellent golfer who took to climbing in the '30s, frequently joining parties to Wales and the Lakes organized by Brian Dickson, who was in the course of writing an In Memoriam notice of Dick when he, too, died. It was

on one of these parties, in fact my first rock-climbing expedition, that I met him in 1939. I can still see his figure silhouetted against the sky as he led Avalanche on one of those May evenings. Up to 1954 I can count 11 other forays in British hills that I shared with him, sometimes at Helyg, sometimes with Brian Dickson's larger parties. One way and another, he must have made several visits a year to British mountains for 20 years or so. Particular memories stand out; as of February 1944 when he and I were all but benighted in the North Gully of Tryfan (this struggle later became a cautionary tale in a broadcast); the next day we joined Nully Kretschmer and Alan Pullinger in skiing with improvised bindings on the slopes above Tal y Braich. There was a perfect week at Buttermere in October 1945, clattering home by moonlight after perfect days. Two years later at Helyg, with Peter Nock and his wife, we all did some probably new climbs on Craig Caerau and Peter led us up Curving Crack.

Dick's first season in the Alps was at Grindelwald in 1939 where, with Adolf Rubi and some friends he climbed the Wetterhorn, Klein Schreckhorn, Gspaltenhorn, Jungfrau and Mönch by the Nollen route. He was at Arolla in 1947 where, with Pierre Maurice and others he climbed the Petite Dent de Veisivi, Aiguille de la Tsa, l'Evêque, Dent Blanche, Dent Centrale des Bouquetins and traversed Mont Blanc de Seilon. In 1950, again with Adolf Rubi at Grindelwald, he did the Eiger by the Mittelegi ridge and the Schreckhorn, then came across to Zermatt to join David Brown and me. On the way up Monte Rosa he broke a crampon and sportingly dropped out, shivering in the lee of a rock until we returned. He then did the Allalinhorn with John Watson. In 1953 he and his wife came across from Mürren to join us at Belalp but in the few days he was with us little was accomplished but a crossing of the Beich Pass and an ascent of P3474 of the Unterbächhörner. He was again in Zermatt with David Brown in 1953.

It is 20 years since I climbed with Dick, but neither I nor any of his many climbing friends will ever forget his cheery laugh and friendly smile, his content in a good climb, his imperturbability when things went wrong, his total reliability. He was never defeated; even the day when his crampon broke he would certainly have reached the Dufourspitze but did not wish to delay his friends on a cold climb, preferring to be much colder himself waiting. He never sought the lead on a hard climb, but many a time when the leader was defeated Dick took over and led the climb through successfully. As a leader he was very safe, anywhere else on the rope he was a vast reserve of strength. Few men have left more, or more devoted, friends.

Francis Keenlyside

S. J. **Brown** writes:

R. D. S. (Dick) Carpendale, who died in December after a mercifully short illness, began climbing in the decade before the Second World War and learned his Alpine craft under Adolf Rubi of Grindelwald. He climbed extensively and often in Wales, the Lake District, Scotland and the Alps. Although never a 'tiger' he was a strong, reliable, and imperturbable leader of routes up to Severe, and those who climbed with him valued highly the solidity and calm assurance his presence gave to any party. He was a splendid companion on any climb and in any conditions. To his many friends the realization that he will not again share their days in the hills is indeed sad.

Armand Charlet

Armand Charlet died in December 1975. He had been failing for many months. He was the first guide to be elected to Honorary Membership of the Alpine Club and this was an honour he greatly prized. He rarely wore a tie and once said to me 'I have only two, one black for funerals and municipal or other dutiful occasions; the other to be worn when real mountaineers are present'. In his coffin he was dressed in his old guide's suit and the A.C. tie.

Armand was far from being an easy person to climb or deal with. His aloofness and integrity alienated many in a valley where narrow views and feuds still persist. It was regretted by many in Italy, Switzerland and elsewhere that the GHM and the CAF never accorded him honorary membership, though he was an *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur* and holder of 2 gold medals awarded by the French Government for rescue work under perilous conditions.

I have endeavoured in my book *'Portrait d'un Guide'* to give some account of his career—not merely from my own experience of nearly 50 years, but with the gratefully

received collaboration of many others of different nationalities who climbed with him. Only a brief summary can be permitted here.

Throughout Armand kept meticulous records of times, weather and other conditions in a minute note book; these were amplified as soon as possible on his return home and the results fill 13 thick quarto volumes in manuscript, sometimes containing pungent comments on his companions and sometimes his rare praise. There is also self-criticism—'I was not on form', 'Should have started earlier' and the like. These volumes make up a most valuable commentary of the period of mountaineering, mostly in the Mont Blanc group, in which Armand enjoyed superiority, on his companions and on himself.

In the course of his career Armand made over 3000 climbs (of which he classed 1800 as difficult), with 1200 different employers or friends, of whom about a third were women. His climbs included 100 ascents of the Verte by 14 different routes, of which 7 were new; 72 of the Grépon, 56 of the Chardonnet by seven routes; 39 of Mont Blanc; and 22 of the Drus. In the opinion of Lucien Devies, a severe critic, Armand was for 30 years the leading French mountaineer, with few equals elsewhere in the Alps.

Armand never used artificial aids and at times I thought he was unwise to refuse a piton for security on a stance—not as assistance on the climb. I only once used a piton for security with him, but he did accept it, though the delay involved in hammering it in made him impatient.

Like the rest of us he was little aware at first of the immense advances made by rock climbers in the eastern Alps and Italy, and of technical aids such as karabiners. Most of his outstanding leads were done with nailed boots. Vibram was then unknown. Where he excelled was in brilliant and daring use of primitive (i.e. pre-1914) equipment on rock and, more important, on great mixed ice and rock climbs, all accomplished at the highest speed after meticulous preparation and with a rare sense for weather and other conditions.

A full list of his best or new climbs would occupy pages. A few may be noted here: the first ascent of the Corne Sud de Tanneverge: Col du Tour des Courtes, from the N; Mont Dolent, NW Face; Col est des Pélèrins, from the N; with Robert Underhill and Miriam O'Brien, the first complete traverse of the Aiguilles du Diable including the Isolée, of which the first ascent in nailed boots was a stupendous achievement; several ascents of the Peuterey Ridge, all without bivouac from the Gamba Hut, including one in 10 hours; an elegant direct route on the W Face of the Grépon, with Gisèle de Lonchamp; the Nant Blanc Face of the Aiguille Sans Nom, with Camille Dévouassoux, never repeated and described by Devies as one of the outstanding exploits of all time; the far sounder direct route of the Verte on the Nant Blanc Face, with Dimitri Platonoff; a fine line on the N Face of the Plan, with Dilleman.

Armand never bivouacked. Speed, a careful review of conditions and knowledge of the capacity of his companions were weighed. Then he drew his rope into his own fast tempo, spurring his companions to their best, rarely praising, but always on the alert. Some of his fastest times are worthy of mention: the old Brenva in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the Fourche Hut, with Gourdain; the Grépon traverse Montenvers to Montenvers, in $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours, with Hart; the traverse of the Drus (Armand's first ascent of the peak) in 9 hours from the Charpoua, with Hart and myself; and with Noyce, the Mer de Glace Face of the Grépon from Montenvers in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, descent to Montenvers in 2 hours. In winter he made the first ascents of the Drus, Grépon by C.P., Requin and Bionnassay.

Guiding was not Armand's only activity. Apart from tending devotedly his scattered parcels of land and forest, he was Mayor of Argentière for 20 years, and for a long period he was President of the *Compagnie des Guides* of Chamonix, a previously archaic institution which he activated by shock treatment. During the war, he rendered valuable service by passing people across frontiers, in defiance of the Gestapo. But his most outstanding contribution to public life was made during the 12 years from 1945 during which he was technical director of the *Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme*, at Chamonix, to which candidates from all over France came to obtain the guide's certificate. Over 3000 passed through his hands. Armand accompanied every group, making notes on the performance of the trainees. He was certainly tough, and it is recorded that he said once: 'In this profession you must learn how to suffer'.

As he was the first to admit, Armand, a teetotaller and non-smoker, was austere. Devies wrote of him: 'Withdrawn, modest, sometimes abrasive, he was exacting towards

others, but more so towards himself. Of absolute integrity and loyalty'. He was utterly indifferent to popular clamour or pressure. Yet to those who came to know him he was warmth itself. His striving for perfection, his own great climbs, and his insistence on training the young to move capably and safely in mountains, brought many visitors from many countries to his house.

To those of us who climbed with him he will remain unforgettable for his technical skill, daring and speed. He was no 'ladies guide' in the Swiss tradition. Taciturn and exacting he drew out the best in his companions and raised them not to his own level of skill, but to performance they had never dreamed possible for themselves—all this with the minimum of aid; one was never hauled up on the rope, one simply had to climb a pitch, indeed the whole peak, if necessary under a barrage of comment from above *'Pas comme ca'*. Yet, as Dimitri Platonoff records and as I can also well remember, he could, after a climb that had extended his companion to the limit, nurse him down a long descent with tenderness and vigilance. His standards were of the highest, but he raised yours and afterwards in the hut or at your home or his he would relax and one could exchange views on many subjects. Once the barriers were down you were sure of his friendship which he accorded only to the few who measured up to his own high standards—not necessarily as highly skilled mountaineers, but as individuals of probity who did their best in other fields.

The hospitality he and his wife Andréa gave to British climbers at Trélechamps will be remembered gratefully. The Col Armand Charlet of which he made the first ascent from the N with Dillemann, is an enduring memorial on the map of the Mont Blanc group, which for so many years he made his own. For all his imperiousness he would not have wished for a better epitaph than that inscribed on the grave of Christian Almer *'Der besten Führer, einer'*.

Douglas Busk

Brian T. Dickson (1894–1975)

Brian Dickson took to climbing relatively late but it became and remained very much an integral part of the joyous enthusiasm with which he lived. He was a man of many friends and great kindness with an endearing capacity to bring happiness and affection to those with whom he worked or played. To the many who climbed with him in Scotland, Wales, or the Alps there will remain a wealth of happy memories of a companion firmly competent, and utterly dependable, who whatever the conditions could be relied upon to keep enjoyment and cheerfulness alive. He accomplished many of the classic Alpine routes and when over 60 traversed the Matterhorn over the Zmutt ridge. A cycling accident a few years later curtailed his climbing to less serious routes but he continued his visits to the hills until he was over 80. He was most happy organizing climbing parties of friends of all grades of ability where his genius as a catalyst always ensured a happy party. There can be few men who have brought more pleasure to so many in introducing them to the fellowship and love of the mountains.

S. J. Brown

Derrick Ellis (d. 1976)

We were very sorry indeed to learn of the death of Derrick Ellis in a boating accident off Aberystwyth harbour on 22 February. While not a member of the Club, he was one of the small band of outside contributors to the *Alpine Journal*, on whom it has had increasingly to rely. His 'Equipment and Technique' and 'British Regional' notes and triennial reports were valuable contributions which considerably enhanced our pages.

Edward Pyatt

Lieut-Colonel Kenneth Mason, M.C. (1887–1976)

Kenneth Mason was elected to membership of the Alpine Club in 1914. He was at that time a junior member of the Survey of India, and although his duties had given him unique opportunities to travel in the Himalayas, he was not (as he pointed out in the preface of *Abode of Snow*) an expert climber in the modern sense. Since I, too, was never more than an enthusiastic mountain traveller, I can perhaps better appreciate Mason's contribution to Himalayan exploration than any of the technically highly-qualified younger generation of climbers to whom the Himalayas are a challenge, and nothing else.

At this point I should perhaps mention that I never met Kenneth Mason although it was at his invitation that I became a Founder-Member of the Himalayan Club in 1927 and at one time or another served on various of its several committees. Because of the nature of life in the British India of those days, opportunities to meet one's fellow-members were infrequent and our business had perforce to be conducted by post.

The Times, in its obituary, rightly called attention to the results obtained by Mason as the first honorary secretary of the Himalayan Club, but failed to note that he was in fact its founder. In the first volume of the *Himalayan Journal* Sir Geoffrey Corbet briefly described the foundation. 'We hope great things of it,' he said; 'the geographer that the blank spaces on the map may be filled in; the scientist that our knowledge of the Himalayas, its rocks and glaciers, its animals and plants, its peoples and their way of living, may continually expand . . . . The mountaineer may dream of the first ascent of a thousand unclimbed peaks. My own hope is that it may rear a breed of men in India, hard and self-reliant, who will know how to enjoy life on the high hills.'

The Himalayan Club is now firmly established, and although no one person can claim credit for all that it has achieved, Kenneth Mason's continuous contribution remains immeasurable. He was awarded the Founder's Medal of the RGS in 1927, and upon retiring from the Indian Service in 1932 he became Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford, a chair which he held until 1953. He was a Freeman and very active member of the Court of Drapers' Company, City of London, of which he became Master in 1949. He wrote only one book, *Abode of Snow* (Hart-Davis 1955), a history of Himalayan exploration and mountaineering, still far and away the best book on the subject up to that date, worthy to take a place on the shelf beside *The Playground of Europe.*

It has always seemed odd to me that Mason was never invited to join any of the early Everest Expeditions. On his own admission he was not a skilled climber, but neither were some of those who were selected. But in the early 1920's The Alpine Club was a somewhat exclusive circle of friends and acquaintances, many of whom were accustomed to climb together in the Alps, and although Mason was already a member of the Club, he was absent in India for years at a time and was probably not known to more than a handful of members.

John Morris

George C. Miles

George Miles was known to few British members of the A.C. In his own sphere as numismatist, epigrapher and linguist (Turkish, Arabic, Persian, French, German and Greek) he won international renown. He well merited his obituary in *The Times,* in which his devotion to knowledge and his world-wide travels received appropriate mention, as did his service as Commander in the US Navy during the War. He was elected to the Alpine Club after climbing in the US and Canadian Rockies, in Persia and Turkey and on his own New England mountains, notably the granite faces of Mount Katahdin in Maine, where he first ventured with our late member C. F. Gates (see *AJ 61* 194). Above all he was the best of companions to young or old, on mountains, on the sea or round the hearth.

Douglas Busk

Miriam Underhill (1899–1976)

Miriam was one of those rare great mountaineers whose earliest recollections were of mountains—the northern foothills of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Climbing throughout the year Miriam steadily amassed experience for, during the winter months, conditions there are often almost arctic. In summer, rock-climbing was to be had on the Katahdin Cirques in Maine and on the cliffs of New Hampshire.

I met Miriam during my first season in Chamonix in 1926 when I was climbing with Winifred Marples, a fellow member of the Ladies' Alpine Club. On this occasion Miriam 'lent' us her guide, Alfred Couttet, for the Aiguilles Mummery and Ravanel—the first of many great kindnesses from this most generous of friends. We were staying at the then quiet little Montenvers Hotel and so, too, were Miriam and her brother Lincoln with their mother and Mrs Willard Helburn, already a member of the Ladies' Alpine Club. In 1926 Miriam, with a splendid list of climbs in the Dolomites, Chamonix and Zermatt, joined the LAC.

In 1927 we were once again at the Montenvers. Miriam had come direct from the Dolomites where she and Margaret Helburn had made the first tourist ascent of the 'Via Miriam' on the Torre Grande of the Cinque Torri—still today a classic grade V route—with Angelo and Antonio Dimai and Angelo Dibona. It was this year with Alfred Couttet and Georges Cachat that Miriam made the first ascent of the Aiguille de Roc—Mummery's famous 'Crag on the Grépon'.

A few days later Miriam and Margaret Helburn with Armand Charlet and Alfred Couttet climbed the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon—the first ascent of this route by women. The following year, 1928, Miriam and Robert Underhill with Armand Charlet and Georges Cachat made the magnificent first complete traverse of the Aiguilles du Diable—all 5 over 4000m.

The winter of 1928/29 Miriam spent in Paris ostensibly to study optics. Wealthy, independent, with her own Buick car which she had brought over with her from the States, this brilliant and colourful personality took the Paris members of the GHM completely by storm and many a susceptible Frenchman was utterly bowled over. In 1929 Miriam's partnership with the young Adolf Rubi of Grindelwald began and developed into a lifelong friendship. With him she made the first traverse of the long SE ridge of the Dreieckhorn, much of which she led. In 1930 with Adolf and his brother Fritz as porter Miriam climbed the magnificent NE face of the Finsteraarhorn—scene of Gertrude Bell's historic attempt in 1902 with Ulrich and Heinrich Fuhrer.

At this time Miriam was the chief innovator of feminine guideless parties in the Alps beginning with the ascent of the Peigne with Winifred Marples in 1929; there followed the traverse of the SW ridge of the Mönch with Micheline Morin, the Grépon, Matterhorn and Tour Carré de Roche Méane with Alice Damesme. For practice Miriam also led both the traverse of the Meije and of the Grépon with Georges Cachat—still technically only a porter—as second. In 1932 Miriam and Robert Underhill climbed the Viereselsgrat of the Dent Blanche together, guideless, and back home that autumn they became engaged. It was 18 years before they were to see the Alps again, but Miriam and Robert climbed extensively in the States. Four chapters of Miriam's delightful book *Give me the Hills* are devoted to climbing in these parts.

Throughout the war years Miriam was a splendid and most generous friend to those from this country whom she had met on her visits to Europe. To us all she sent marvellous parcels of food and clothing—and other help beside.

In 1951 Miriam brought her elder son Bobby over with her and Denise and I met them in Paris. To celebrate this first reunion since the war we were invited to a lunch party by Henri and Michelle de Ségogne—champagne and all. Bobby had been brought up strictly teetotal, but on protest from the rest of us was allowed just a sip. After a moment or two he made a wry face and then gave his verdict 'C'est du Perier gâté'! From Paris we went to Grindelwald where we climbed together on the Engelhörner with Adolf Rubi. Bobby did some skiing from Concordia and Denise and I climbed the Jungfrau and the Mönch.

In 1952 and 1953 the whole family came over and toured the Alps and Dolomites. They now always travelled with Adolf who was guide, chauffeur and friend. In 1953 we were all in Zermatt. Adolf was to take Brian, Miriam's younger son, up the Hörnli ridge of the Matterhorn, a climb on which I was planning to take my son Ian, and Adolf at once suggested we should follow him so that he could 'keep an eye' on us.

Musing on her 50th birthday Miriam decided that those first 50 years had made up an outstandingly satisfactory life—and happily it continued so for many years to come. Hers was indeed a splendid life—full of activity and endeavour, happiness and kindness. Wild places, mountains, flowers, were her great joy and her magnificent photography pictured all of these. When she was 6 Miriam went to a fishing camp in the northern foothills of the White Mountains, and remembering wrote: 'How I loved the fragrance of the northern balsam firs, the sight of the deer stepping delicately into the clearing to browse, the sound of the falls as I lay in bed at night. And most particularly the knowledge that for miles and miles in every direction there was nothing but unbroken forest. I got there my first taste of the wild, uncrowded places on the earth . . .'

Nea Morin