On arrival, we checked the axe, which proved to be very large and heavy, with the letters 'B V' under the pick, as mentioned above by Michel. It appeared to us most likely to be the axe left by Mummery.

Olivier Dunod explained that the axe had been kept in the Dunod family and had been handed down from father to son. Following its retrieval from the museum in Saint Christophe, he had no particular reason to part with the axe, unless he was made 'an interesting proposal'. He was thus waiting to hear what we had to say.

In response, I made him a dual proposal. First, he would be appointed a life member of the Alpine Club, without any subscription fee, and that the transfer of the axe would be covered in articles with photos in the next *Alpine Journal*. Second, we would pay him the discounted present value of the money his ancestor did not receive and round it up. He immediately turned down the first proposal, as of no interest to him. After a look at official statistics of conversions of francs in euros that I had brought with me, even rounded up, he rejected the second proposal. Dunod said that his bottom price was 10,000 euros. I advised him that this was way beyond what we could envisage and that I would revert to the Alpine Club.

Michel and I agreed that the price was very high: 10,000 euros is a large amount of money, from any point of view. I tried to contact Jerry on the phone to ask him the sort of money the Club could afford to pay but I failed to get hold of him. My friend, who had observed the conversation between Dunod and me, told me that Dunod was only interested in money, that the negotiation was closed in advance and that Dunod would not lower his price. I regarded this axe as an extremely rare relic of the great period of British Alpinism and that it had to be at the Alpine Club. This opportunity to acquire it being the first in 125 years, I felt that I should not miss it for a matter of money. It also occurred to me that the Alpine Club was probably short of cash and that I should provide the necessary financial assistance, bear the cost of the axe and donate it to the club.

The same afternoon, we went back to Dunod, worrying that he might change his mind. I gave him a 10,000 euros cheque from one of my personal accounts. He delivered me a receipt 'du cheque de 10,000 euros en paiment du piolet de Mummery'. However, he said he was not prepared to hand over the axe to me until his bank account had been credited. I thus requested he hand it over personally to me in Serre Chevalier.

On each of the following mornings, I had a look at my bank account on my computer. When my account was debited, I phoned Dunod. He answered he was not available for the next few days. I did not care for that very much, so we went immediately to La Bérarde and I took possession of the axe.

Not long after, on 9 November, I visited the Alpine Club and had the pleasure of presenting the axe to the president, the keeper of the artefacts and the committee. After its four years on the summit of the Grépon, and 125 years in a chalet in the Oisans, this important artefact has now finally found its true home in the clubhouse of the AC in London.

ALPINE CLUB LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT 2009 – 2010

Hywel Lloyd, chairman of the Council of Trustees of the Alpine Club Library writes: One of the key achievements has been the improved library operation which all visitors compliment. The organisation and work by Jerry Lovatt, our hon librarian, and our new librarian, Tadeusz Hudowski, exudes capability and shine; gone are some of the old dreary approaches. New computing equipment has appeared in the library reading area to give better, digital access to several collections (and this access will continue to increase in scope); special thanks are due to John Town for this installation.

Finances have been difficult but we believe we are through the worst due to careful money management. Thus our hon treasurer, Richard Coatsworth, has been able to decide to retire, after 10 years in post. Special thanks to Richard for such splendid work. So we are seeking a new treasurer – is there a volunteer out there? John Mellor has looked after our investments and the change to new fund managers; John has also now decided to retire. So, thanks to John for many years service, and a welcome to Kimball Morrison in this role.

On a sadder note, I record that Mike Hewson died after a short but sharp fight against cancer in the summer of 2010. Many readers will know Mike because he ran the operation to sell books that had been donated to the library but which were triplicates or quadruplicates of books already held; this service helps members find the book they want and gains a steady and important income for the library. Mike was also the company secretary of the Library Charity and looked after the essential paperwork. He is very much missed by us all. Barbara Grigor-Taylor and Jerry have taken over the task of cataloguing books for sale, taking orders and posting out books sold.

The work of the hon archivist, Glyn Hughes, continues unabated and we have received several important donations of diaries and papers. The Himalayan Index also gains entries through the careful compilations by Sally Russell.

The photo library is still the Herculean task facing us. Anna Lawford's work has piloted a comprehensive cataloguing system. A book is easier to catalogue because it has a title and, usually, an author. A photograph might be by an unknown photographer and of persons unknown; although we can probably recognise any mountain. So, cataloguing is taking a tremendous amount of time. However, with trained volunteers from NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies), previously Philip Pepper and now Harry Melville, Anna has supervised a large amount of conservation work on the historic glass slides and albums of prints in the photo collections. Anna will be retiring from the keeper of the photographs role in March 2011; meanwhile, Sue Hare continues to run the operation of sales of photo reproductions; another steady and important income for the library.

Peter Berg, previously our hon archivist, has written and published a book about Whymper's Lantern Slide Show of around 140 years ago. Peter Mallalieu has published a second, enlarged edition of *The Artists of the Alpine Club*. These, and several other publications due out soon, contain many photographs from the collections of the Alpine Club.

As I write this in spring 2011 we are welcoming Roland Jackson as the new library hon secretary and Peter Roland to the task of being curator for the photographs. They will have plenty to do because nothing stands still in the library work.

I conclude by quoting Mike Westmacott, a previous chairman of the library, who wrote in 1989: 'We have the duty ... of keeping faith with the many people who have generously contributed to the library, making it the important collection we have today.' Since then, many new donations of collections, money and time have made his words even more true. We can be proud that the library team of splendid volunteers are doing this.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mick Fowler was elected President of the Alpine Club on 4 December 2010 following what is thought to be the first contested election to the prestigious post in the Club's 153-year history. Mick pledged to devote his three years as president to attracting more active alpinists into the AC.

Though AC rules provide for ballots to office holders, traditionally that of president has been passed on by invitation rather than contested election. During 2010 the Club committee discussed potential candidates and unanimously concluded that Mick be asked to stand as successor to Paul Braithwaite.

When a challenger emerged in the form of Henry Day, the committee and wider membership was faced with something of a dilemma. Mick exemplifies the style of exploratory mountaineering championed by the AC, and it was thought that having as its public face a climber still pushing the boat out on big mountain routes could only be of benefit to the club's image. However Henry, climbing leader of the Army Mountaineering Association team that made the second ascent of Annapurna (8091m) in 1970, is also a popular figure in the AC, having served the club in several roles, including vice-president (1986-87).

Under the club's antiquated rules (now changed) only members who actually attended the AGM would be able to vote in the Fowler-Day contest. But annual meetings are often thinly attended and the AC membership is scattered worldwide. The committee therefore decided to conduct a consultative poll among the club's 1200 members. It was to be non-binding but would clearly be difficult to ignore.

Come the day, members filled the AC's clubroom in Shoreditch for a hustings session with the two candidates followed by a secret ballot. Despite much prior uncertainty, in the end the result was clear-cut – Fowler 59 votes, Day 21 votes. The poll was even more emphatic – Fowler 241, Day 60. If the turnout does not look too impressive, bear in mind two things – nobody loves AGMs, and it was a weekend when winter climbing conditions in the UK have seldom been better. From now on, the AGM decided, postal and proxy votes will be provided for in club elections. ***SG***

NEW HONORARY MEMBERS

Since publication of the 2009 *Alpine Journal*, the following have been appointed:

Peter Habeler, Austrian guide, best known for his partnership with Reinhold Messner on fast climbs of the Eiger and Matterhorn north faces, an alpine-style ascent of Gasherbrum I (8086m) and their groundbreaking ascent of Everest in 1978 without the aid of bottled oxygen.

Tom Hornbein, American doctor who in 1963, with Willi Unsoeld, made the first ascent of Everest's west ridge and then descended by the south ridge, thus completing the first traverse of the mountain.

Silvo Karo, Slovenian alpinist and filmmaker, best known for his first ascents of the south face of Cerro Torre in 1987 and the west face of Bhagirathi III in 1990 – both routes with the late Janez Jeglic. Karo's 16mm film of the Cerro Torre climb won first prize at the Trento Mountain Film Festival.

Erhard Loretan – deceased. See his obituary, page 436.

Jeff Lowe, American alpinist with more than a 1000 first ascents to his name. Best known for introducing modern European ice climbing to the USA, for his attempt on the north ridge of Latok I with Jim Donini, Michael Kennedy and George Lowe in 1978, and for the first ascent of the north face of Kwangde Ri, Nepal, with David Breashears in 1982.