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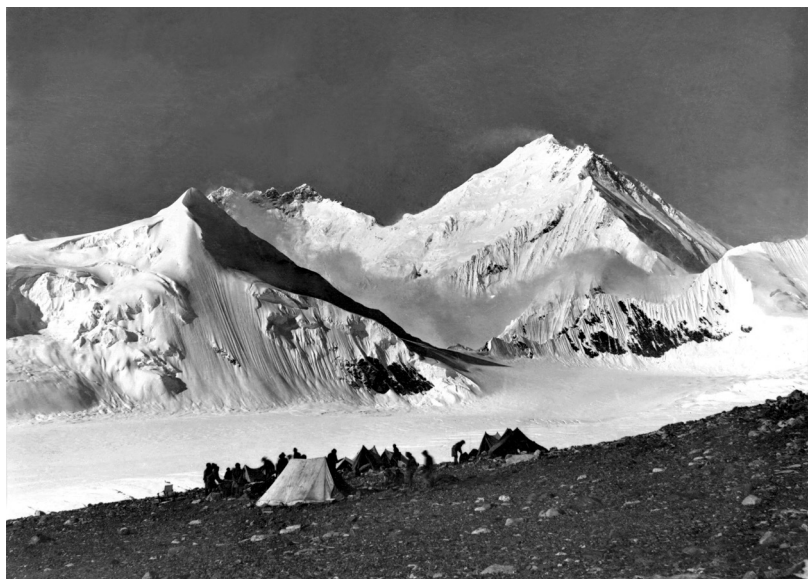
ALPINE CLIMBING GROUP

PRESIDENT	<i>Tom Livingstone</i>
HONORARY SECRETARY	<i>Tim Elson</i>
COMMITTEE	<i>Ian Parnell, Paul Ramsden</i>

Alpine Club Notes



'The Burning of Tynboche [Tengpoche] Monastery', Rob Fairley, watercolour, 115cm x 180cm, 1998. (Lester and Christie Gray Collection)

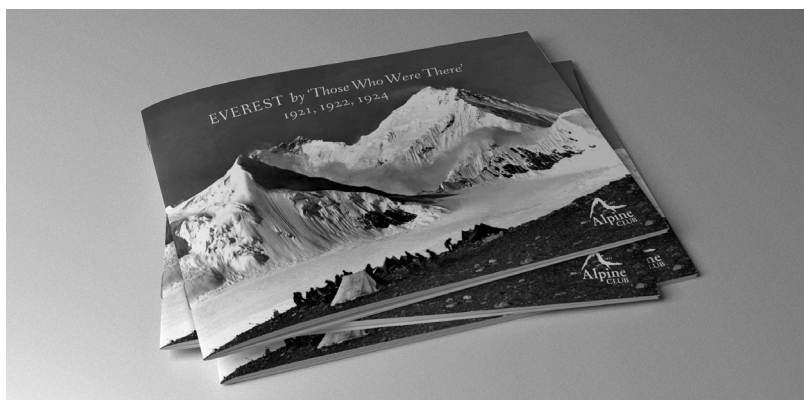


Everest seen from the 20,000ft camp on the last day of the 1921 expedition.
(George Mallory)

Revisiting Everest

One of the highlights of the Alpine Club's year was the opening, albeit delayed by Covid-19 restrictions, of 'Everest: By Those Who Were There' in June. The curator of this landmark exhibition was our honorary librarian **Barbara Grigor-Taylor**, ably assisted by **Nigel Buckley** (keeper of artefacts), **Bernie Ingrams** (keeper of photographs), **Glyn Hughes** (honorary archivist), **Peter Gillman** and **Stuart Leggatt**. It commemorated the centenary of the first, reconnaissance expedition to Mount Everest in 1921 and the 1922 and 1924 climbing expeditions, exploring the experiences of expedition members as told in their own words and through their artefacts, correspondence and artworks. The exhibition drew together material from across the Alpine Club's collections, showcasing notable artefacts such as Sandy Irvine's ice axe, the last letters home written by **George Mallory** from camps V and VI, alongside archival documents relating to the planning of each expedition. The official opening of the exhibition was marked by a special lecture from our former president **Stephen Venables**: 'Everest: East Side Story'. During the questions afterwards, Chris Bonington remarked it was the best mountaineering lecture he had ever attended – praise indeed.

The exhibition was a great success, with many AC members and members of the public taking the opportunity to celebrate both the work of the Alpine Club and the Alpine Club Library in preserving and curating climbing history, and the Club's key role in the first expeditions to the world's highest mountain. Due to the high level of visitor demand, we ran a weekend opening in October, an event which also doubled up as the premiere of



The exhibition catalogue is now in its second impression after selling out.

the film of the same name produced by **John Porter**. This 35-minute film has been doing the rounds of the mountain film festivals in the UK, Europe and further afield, and has been very well received.

The comprehensive catalogue produced by Barbara Grigor-Taylor to accompany the exhibition reproduces every item from the exhibition, and is a compelling publication in its own right. It has proved to be a bestseller, with the original print run of 300 copies completely sold out. A second impression was therefore ordered and can still be purchased online via the Alpine Club Shop or by calling the office on **020 7613 0755**. Finally, many of the resources produced as part of the exhibition have been archived and can be found on the Alpine Club website: www.alpine-club.org.uk/news/everest-centenary.

THE PINNACLE CLUB
for women climbers

100 YEARS
1921 - 2021

Alpine CLUB

Women with Altitude:
100 Years of Female Alpinism in the
Pinnacle Club and Alpine Club

8 NOVEMBER 2021 to 8 JANUARY 2022
55 Charlotte Road, London, EC2A 3GF

FREE DROP-IN EXHIBITION
MONDAY - FRIDAY 10AM - 5PM

Opening extended until 9PM on THURSDAYS
Exhibition Closed 9 Nov, 14 Dec & 20 Dec - 5 Jan
For group visits (8 or more) please book ahead by contacting:
admin@alpine-club.org.uk

in partnership with

HERITAGE FUND

Women with Altitude

Our second showstopper exhibition in 2021 was 'Women with Altitude: 100 Years of Female Alpinism in the Pinnacle Club and the Alpine Club'. This was organised and run jointly with the Pinnacle Club to coincide with its centenary, and was curated by **Adele Long, Suzanne Strawther and Rosemary Scott**. The exhibition was organised as a series of panels celebrating the lives and climbing careers of 12 pioneering women climbers who were members of the

'Women with Altitude' proved a popular success.

Pinnacle Club and the Ladies' Alpine Club, including famous exponents such as **Dorothy Pilley** and **Eileen Healey**. One particularly innovative element of the exhibition was the inclusion of QR codes on each panel so that visitors could listen to each of the climbers describe their experiences of alpinism in their own words.

For those who are interested, the full transcription of Eileen Healey's climbing diaries, held in the Alpine Club Archives, can be accessed online at: www.alpine-club.org.uk/EH_diaries/Contents.html.

'Women with Altitude' was primarily funded by a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, but special thanks must also go to ACL treasurer **Alan Henderson** for successfully securing an additional grant of £5,000 from Hackney Council's Hello Again, Hackney fund. This enabled the development of an accompanying series of resources for local schools. Archived versions of much of the exhibition material can also be found online at: www.alpine-club.org.uk/events/past-future-exhibitions/907-women-with-altitude.

Books

As previously reported, the ACL is an active library rather than a book museum. Hence, we aim to continually keep the collection up to date by obtaining as many new books published on climbing and mountaineering as possible. This requires considerable effort and significant funding. Luckily, we continued to see strong income from the sale of duplicate books from the regular lists produced by our honorary librarian. In particular, we were delighted to have the entire book collection of **John Peacock** donated to the Library by his wife Sheila, who was formerly the private secretary of **John Hunt**. We are very grateful to our former chair, **Hywel Lloyd**, for not only collecting the books from Devon but for also storing them until the lifting of Covid restrictions enabled him to deliver them to Charlotte Road. Thanks also to Library volunteer **Gordon Turner** who is overseeing a review of our guidebook collection with the aim of updating our holdings and making space for new acquisitions.

We're also pleased to report the successful outcome of some bookish detective work. In October, Gordon Turner spotted a rare book long missing from its usual place on the Library shelves for sale in an online auction catalogue: Douglas Freshfield's *Across Country from Thonon to Trent*, his first and rarest book, and published in 1865. Barbara commenced a detailed exchange with the auction house, providing the history of our missing copy and images of our bookplate in the front of the book but was unable to prevent it being sold to a bidder at a hammer price of £4,000. However, Barbara managed to trace the booksellers who had bought and sold the book since its disappearance from the Library, so after many more phone calls and emails, the sale was eventually cancelled. Finally, the volume was collected from the auctioneer's safe in mid November and restored to its rightful place on the reserve shelves of the Library, where it is now once more available for perusal. Well done, Barbara.



William Frederick Donkin's photograph of the Dent du Géant, on show again at the Alpine Club.

Photographs

The Photo Library received approximately 5,000 of Ian McNaught-Davis' slides, photos and films by kind donation from **Loreto Bonington**. This includes a film of the 1962 British-Soviet Pamirs expedition and slides of the first ascent of the Muztagh Tower. The collection continues to be sorted and archived by **Bernie Ingrams** and **Peter Payne**. Peter has also been digitising a collection of Edward Whymper's lanternslides, a donation from former archivist Peter Berg.

A fine collection of very large 19th and early 20th century photographs in their original Alpine Club carved oak frames, including works by **William Frederick Donkin**, **Edward Whymper** and **Fanny Bullock Workman**, has been stored in the Charlotte Road basement for many years. This has proved to be a less than ideal home; the large, heavy frames clutter up the space and some have become damaged when they have needed to be moved to enable access to other parts of the collections. The decision has therefore been taken to restore and renovate these stunning images. Once restored, they will be displayed as one of the planned 2022 exhibitions in the Lecture Hall before finding a permanent home hanging above the stairs between the ground and first floors.

Pictures

For many years, picture exhibitions at Charlotte Road have been run on a relatively ad hoc basis organised and curated by the keeper of pictures. More recently, the AC Committee established an exhibitions working group with the aim of taking a longer term and more structured approach to exhibitions. This has now been formalised as a standing sub-committee of the Club with former president **John Porter** as the current chair. So, a key project for our keeper of pictures this year has been the establishment of a detailed three-year exhibition schedule in concert with the Exhibitions Sub-Committee. (Two new glass exhibition cases have been purchased and installed in the Lecture Room, which enables us to showcase a far greater range of exhibition-related heritage material than has been the case hitherto.)

A full schedule for 2022 has been established with plans emerging for 2023 and 2024. The year 2022 will commence with an exhibition on 'Glaciers', curated by **Janet Johnson** and drawing on heritage material from the AC Collections. This will be followed during May to September by the exhibition of the large, restored photographs mentioned above: 'Large-scale Photographic Treasures of the Alpine Club'. From September to November, **Polly Townsend** will be organising an exhibition of contemporary paintings by a group of women mountain artists entitled 'A Wider Landscape'. The year will end with an exhibition of paintings of the Cuillin of Skye by **Helen Forde**.

This year has seen the first full year of our partnerships with ArtUK and The Watercolour World. Both are acting as showcases for much of the Club's artworks to both the membership and the wider public. Sales of images via ArtUK is now providing an income stream that is being utilised for conservation of the art collection.

A special thank you must be given to the AC honorary secretary Sherry Macliver, who worked tirelessly to arrange copyright permission for the Club's 2021 Christmas card: a stunning watercolour by T H Somervell, 'Everest from Pang La, 45 miles away', from the 1922 Everest expedition (Alpine Club Collection NA099P).



It was a relatively quiet year for artefacts. Two ice axes belonging to **Ian McNaught-Davis** and used on the first ascent of the Muztagh Tower were donated by **Chris Bonington**. These will make a fine addition to our ever-burgeoning historical ice-axe collection.

Archives

After a long hiatus, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Archives re-opened for business in October and **Glyn Hughes** has been busy catching up on backdated enquiries. We have had a steady stream of research enquiries, including a visit from the BBC in relation to a proposed documentary on the life of **Eileen Healey**. A set of letters written by **James Surtees Phillpotts** following an ascent of the Jungfrau in 1862 was donated by his grandson, Roger Gwyn. Phillpotts, a notable headmaster of Bedford School, accompanied Whymper in the search for bodies following the Matterhorn accident. Other acquisitions included letters relating to the first ascent of Monte Rosa written by Smyth, Kennedy and Wethered, donated by Jerry Lovat after finding them inside a book in his own collection. Adam Lloyd, son of **Peter Lloyd**, has donated his father's diary from the 1949 Nepal expedition. Adam has now also discovered transcripts of Peter's 1936 Nanda Devi and 1938 Everest diaries and has promised to supply us with copies.

Conservation work has continued, with restoration of one of the classic works of early Alpine climbing, *A Narrative of an Ascent to the Summit of Mont Blanc*, by **Charles Fellows**, published in 1827. No serious collection of books

on this subject should be without a copy and, in addition to the copies held in the Library, the Archives have Fellows' own annotated proofs. Although the documents themselves are in good condition, the file in which they are kept has deteriorated badly. We have therefore commissioned our conservator, **Cyril Titus**, to make new, archive quality files to ensure the future of this important item.

Now that Cyril has completed the restoration of the three massive volumes of Alpine Club circulars (see the 2020 annual report for details), work has begun on the binding of membership applications and past committee minutes.

Monuments

Since the monuments are all in fixed locations, travel restrictions have made 2021 another frustrating year for the keeper, **Charlie Burbridge**. Luckily, access was still possible to the great Victorian cemeteries of London. Since many AC members were once London based, or at least London deceased, many a happy hour can be spent trawling through the well-organised boulevards of London's necropoli checking the state of repair of members' memorials.

The Mathews monument remains steadfastly in its location in the grounds of the Couttet Hotel. Various attempts to have it lifted over the terminal moraine into the Parc Couttet have come to nought, likely because the monument is estimated to weigh over 10 tonnes. Lifting the monument will therefore require a large crane. It is hoped that this will become available during the hotel refurbishment, but no start date for that has yet been agreed. The good news is that the Chamonix authorities have agreed its final resting place in the Parc Couttet.

The plaque to **Maurice Simond** has not been cleaned since the start of the pandemic, nor has the Hinchcliff memorial been checked over, nor the Tyndall memorial. However, a telephone conversation with the staff of the Britannia hut has confirmed that the plaque to Clinton Dent has survived another winter. High hopes exist for travel and monument checking in 2022.

Alpine Club Library

After closures and severely reduced capacity throughout 2020, Library services gradually started to open up more during 2021. Nevertheless, visitor numbers remain low by historical standards and it seems that many folk have become used to online searches and email enquiries. It remains to be seen if this tendency towards remote access continues into the future. After more than three decades of service to the Library, including many years as our honorary librarian, **Jerry Lovatt** stepped down as a trustee at the 2021 AGM. I would like to express our deepest thanks to Jerry, on behalf of the trustees, all the Library team and the whole AC membership, for his outstanding contribution over so many years. Jerry has also been a generous donor to the Library during that period and I am delighted that he will retain his association by remaining as a Library member. Also at the AGM we confirmed **Stephen Venables** as the new Club-nominated trustee, bringing us back up to our full complement of seven. The appointment and reappointment of trustees is



Jerry Lovatt, stepping down after long service as honorary librarian with old friend and honorary archivist Glyn Hughes. (*Ed Douglas*)

governed by article 45 of the ACL's articles of association. This is a cumbersome rule that has a number of unfortunate drawbacks: trustees serving for different length terms; and some trustees being required to retire while others of equal seniority are not. After considerable discussion within both the ACL and the AC, we therefore voted unanimously at the 2021 AGM to amend article 45 so that all trustees will in future serve for a fixed term of three years (renewable through re-election).

Halfway through 2021, our treasurer, **Alan Henderson**, was headhunted by the AC Committee to replace **Trevor Campbell Davis** as AC honorary treasurer at the end of his term of office. Luckily for us Alan has only been headhunted rather than poached, since he has agreed to remain as ACL treasurer and to take on both roles. I am not sure whether to congratulate him or commiserate with him. Many thanks are due to **David Lund** who arranged for an ICT upgrade in the library, updating our decades old PCs in the Archives, Photo Library and main Library with new generation Dells. The Library is also actively participating in the AC-wide review that aims to update, streamline and integrate our collective ICT systems. In the initial stage of this, we have already cleared out some obsolete hardware that has enabled the creation of some much-needed extra space in the Library reading room.

One truism apparent to anyone involved with the Library is that collections always seem to get bigger (except for the odd stolen book). This not only puts continual pressure on space, but also on the manual work that needs to be done. We are therefore always looking for volunteers to help out

with the Collections. If you are at all interested in helping out or would like more information about volunteering opportunities then please contact me at: p.meredith@ucl.ac.uk or any of the keepers. While volunteering does involve work, it is also fun and it gives you access to a truly wondrous world of mountaineering heritage.

Public Engagement and Outreach

This year was a busy one for spreading the word about our collections and activities. In May, Beth gave a presentation about the 1921 Everest Reconnaissance expedition as part of a broader programme of Everest centenary events organised by Mountaineering Ireland. Then in September Philip and Beth prepared a history of the Alpine Club that was presented to a joint meeting of the Birmingham Medical Research Expeditionary Society (BMRES) and the British Mountain Medicine Society (BMMS). September also saw Beth and Adam Butterworth running a live-stream tour of 'Everest: By Those Who Were There', which was followed up in December with a video tour of 'Women with Altitude'. Both of these tours can be found and viewed on the Alpine Club YouTube channel.

Acknowledgments

As always, I end this report by expressing my deep gratitude to everyone in the Library team, librarian, trustees, keepers, members and volunteers, who again gave their time so generously and ungrudgingly throughout the year. Thanks also to everyone who supplied me with the material necessary to compile this report, and especially to Beth Hodgett. Without all your efforts the ACL simply could not function. Thank you all.

Philip Meredith

Doré's Matterhorn Sketches

An exhibition of drawings from the Musée d'Orsay opened in Evian-les-Bains in July, including two by Gustave Doré, the 'Conquest of the Matterhorn' and the 'Catastrophe on the Matterhorn', done in August 1865 in pen and ink. You can view them in detail (but not download them) at the Musée d'Orsay website. In 1995 Alan Lyall wrote an article in the *Alpine Journal* (*AJ* 1995 215-221) entitled 'The Matterhorn Lithographs of 1865: Gustave Doré and his links with Edward Whymper' about the two subsequent lithographs, which are related to the drawings and how Doré must have consulted Whymper to get details so authentic. How sad then that Alan wrote: 'It is doubtful whether Doré's original drawings had very much in common with the published prints ... and if they are still in existence they may be hardly recognisable for what they are.' I'm sure he would love to have seen them if he had known they existed and he would have discussed them in his article. Yes they exist, yes they are recognised for what they are, and yes one of them bears a close resemblance to the subsequent lithograph. (Alan was the author of *The First Descent of the Matterhorn* (1997); his obituary appeared in *AJ* 2017 pp401-05.) The exhibition is entitled



Gustave Doré's drawings of the Matterhorn tragedy, now unearthed and on display. (Mark Boxer)

'Les Arpenteurs de rêves; Dessins du Musée d'Orsay' and was at the Palais Lumière Evian-les-Bains from 2 July to 1 November 2022. It transfers to the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Quimper on 15 December 2022 and closes on 13 March 2023.

Mark Boxer

Boardman Tasker Award 2021

After a year with fewer entries, there was a marked recovery in 2020, with more than 40 entries from around the world. The judges were David Canning, who was chair, UKClimbing editor Natalie Berry and Canadian author Marni Jackson. They chose six books for the shortlist, with a number of strong contenders missing out, evidence of the depth of quality in the field. The shortlisted titles were:

Ed Caesar for *The Moth and the Mountain* (Viking). Caesar's account of Maurice Wilson's attempt to fly to and climb Everest is an often tragic and pathetic story but never judgmental. Wilson could be the woefully unprepared climber we'd all like to despise but Caesar helps us to develop a warm attachment to him. Wilson deserved better in death and this book is a fitting tribute to his amazing journey.

Ed Douglas for *Himalaya: A Human History* (Bodley Head). An extensively researched book exploring the human histories of the Himalaya and how the mountains and their geological and imagined boundaries have shaped people and place. Douglas breaks down the romanticised Western stereotypes of Sherpas and other native peoples in the region and the exchanges, exploits and exploitations that have occurred on the 'roof of the world'.

Stephen Fabes for *Signs of Life: To the Ends of the World with a Doctor* (Pursuit). Engaging, heart-warming and often very funny, Fabes' accounts of his journeys around the world on a bicycle, and the people he meets along the way, are culturally sympathetic, mature, and poignant.

Helen Mort for *Never Leave the Dog Behind* (Vertebrate Publishing). Explores the deep bond that exists between people, their dogs and the mountains with delightful prose and poetry. The dogs featured are often the main characters in Mort's storytelling, but she also manages to expertly weave in personal elements too.

Élisabeth Revol for *To Live: Fighting for Life on the Killer Mountain* (Vertebrate Publishing). This compelling account of Revol's survival on Nanga Parbat in winter is a story of survivor's guilt and her need to tell her story as an act of healing. The writing is visceral and honest, and Revol speaks a universal truth about mountaineering that needs to be heard.

David Smart for *Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites* (RMB). A very impressive biography, well written and researched, of one of Italy's foremost climbers, who put up some of the first big wall climbs and developed new climbing style and techniques.

Once again, because of Covid-19 restrictions, a live award event was deemed impossible and so once again it was done online and chaired as usual by Stephen Venables. The winner was announced as David Smart for *Emilio Comici*. Commenting on the winning book, David Canning said:

This is an important chapter in the history of climbing, it deals sensitively and sympathetically with the contradictions in the character of Comici; rehabilitating in a way without revisionism, and it delves into the detail of the complex international politics of the time, the roots of Italian fascism and how this affected Italian climbing. It is a history that, as ever, is never as simple as we might first wish it to appear and we need to appreciate the historical context in which Comici and his contemporaries lived. The patriotic nationalism, at first an idealistic movement to achieve liberation from oppressive empires, might resonate with our current social and political contexts, but it soon took on the ugly face of extremism, and then of anti-Semitism. It remains a warning from history and Smart reminds us how sport is often appropriated for political ends, how individuals are never the heroes that folk memory would wish them to be and that, as with British climbing and its imperial and colonial ambitions, climbing has skeletons in its closet.

David Canning's full speech is available at www.boardmantasker.com.

Ed Douglas