

IN MEMORIAM

THE ALPINE CLUB OBITUARY:	<i>Year of Election</i>
Western, A. E.	1907
Wheeler, O. E. (Hon. Mem. 1956)	1911
Wordie, J. M.	1923
Smith-Barry, T. G. B. F.	1924
Ruttledge, H.	1927
Lindsay, C. Scott	1928

CHRISTOPHER FRANCIS BENNETT

1881-1960

OUR late member, C. F. Bennett, died on May 15, 1960, and the event was, unfortunately, not noticed at the time. Some delay has occurred, too, in collecting information about him.

Born April 15, 1881, he was educated at The Leys School, Cambridge, and by profession was a timber importer and merchant, at Grimsby. Latterly, from 1913, he also farmed at Brackenborough Hall, Louth. He was a very well-known figure around Louth, being a J.P. for about forty years, a Governor of the local Grammar School, and the holder of several offices in connection with the Methodist Church. In the First World War he was a Lieutenant in the R.A.S.C. from 1914-18, mostly in France and Mesopotamia.

Bennett was elected to the Alpine Club in March, 1909, his proposer being his uncle, Sir John Clapham, and his seconder C. W. Patchell, one of the most notable names in connection with the mountains of Norway. Bennett's first season was in 1898 and much of his climbing was done guideless with J. H. Clapham and C. H. Werner. Although he climbed quite widely in the Alps, and also in this country, particularly in the Lake District, it was in Norway that he found his keenest interest, where he made numerous ascents, especially round Novangsfjord. The records of his climbing seem fairly complete up to 1913, but he married after the war (1920) and it would appear that his active mountaineering may have ceased then, though he never lost his interest in the A.C.

We express to his family our regret at the long delay in commemorating this member of the Club of more than fifty years' standing.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

LAWRENCE WILFRED BIRD

1883-1960

LAWRENCE BIRD'S Alpine career is also the story of the two great Randa guides, Ferdinand and Johann Summermatter. He climbed almost exclusively with these two and, later, with Ferdinand's son, Leo, and a great bond of affection and understanding grew up between them; their association lasted for more than forty years until Johann's death in the late nineteen-fifties, Ferdinand having died a comparatively young man. Bird wrote the obituary notice of Johann Summermatter in *A. J.* 58. 268.

Bird was born at Bookham, in Surrey. From Harrow he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and was afterwards commissioned in the Royal Berkshire Regiment. A large part of his army service was spent in India. In 1915 he commanded the 1st Battalion of the Berkshires in France, where he won the D.S.O. and was twice mentioned in despatches. Later he did sterling work in Ireland during 'the troubles', for which he received a military O.B.E.

He retired soon after the War, with the rank of Major, to a charming house in the Mole valley and sat for twelve years as J.P. for the County of Surrey on the Mickleham bench. He was a great lover of the country, particularly of trees, and for much of his time at Mickleham was Forestry Warden of the Norwood Estate. He was on the board of Frederick Hotels and, between the wars, also found time to run the O.T.C. at Leatherhead School, which he did with much success.

In the 1939-1945 War he came out of retirement and went to the War Office, where he was largely concerned with Officer selection and posting. During this time his first wife died and soon after the war he moved to Little Coggeshall, in Essex, to a house forming part of an old Huguenot silk mill, where, with the countryside around him, he was in his element. He died there quite suddenly in April, 1960.

His first visit to the Alps was as a boy with his father, Arthur Bird, who in due course put him up for the Club, to which he was elected in December, 1914. He started serious climbing in the Alps in 1908 as a subaltern and was tremendously keen. His visits to Switzerland were often brief and made under difficulties, because climbing was not entirely approved by his commanding officer. In 1912, just after Christmas, he turned up at Randa determined upon a winter ascent of the Dom, a not very usual undertaking in those days. Ferdinand and Johann were unenthusiastic but in the end he persuaded them by convincing them (both were incorrigible poachers) that the local chamois were wintering near the top. The party carried rifles, and

hot-water bottles which they claimed they refilled before leaving the hut and took to the summit.

His lifelong aim was to climb all the greater peaks in Switzerland and the Dauphiné and, in the event, he threw in the whole Vispatal circle, great and small. He reached his target—over one hundred major peaks in all—at the age of sixty-five, when, despite a leg broken on the Allalinhorn a few years previously, he did the Strahlhorn with Leo. Like all true mountaineers he preferred to traverse his peak and so had to his credit many fine Alpine courses.

The expedition which he certainly considered his best was the North ridge of the Weisshorn. This proved more a siege than an expedition; it took him three seasons of waiting in and around Zinal for suitable snow and weather and, in the course of his attempts, he climbed the Bieshorn at least seven times.

Bird's parties usually included at least one other amateur and he climbed for some years with H. H. Hardy and, later, with R. P. Verschoyle, who was killed near La Grave in 1933. In addition, many young climbers owe to him their introduction to the Alps. A climbing holiday with him was a delight; his genial disposition and refusal to be put out made all his parties happy parties and his fund of amusing reminiscence and the perpetual banter which passed between him and old Johann made even the hottest hut walk seem short.

The First World War left him with a shattered arm which had to be kept in a splint whilst he was in the mountains. Rock climbing must have been a penance but he overcame the handicap with typical good humour and determination. His tenacity of purpose was, perhaps, his most striking quality, but those of us who were lucky enough to share his climbing will remember him even more for his direct honesty, his easy companionability and, above all, for his kindness.

He is survived by his second wife, whom he married in 1947, and by an only son.

A. A. GALLOWAY.

GIUSEPPE F. GUGLIERMINA

1872-1960

G. F. GUGLIERMINA was born on October 28, 1872, and died May 2, 1960; he was one of the most distinguished Italian climbers of all time. With his not less famous brother, Giov. Battista, he was especially noted for his explorations in the Mont Blanc range and in the Monte Rosa group. The brothers were elected to Honorary Membership of the Alpine Club in 1953.

It is almost impossible to think of the brothers separately; although not in fact twins, it is as twin brethren of the mountains that their names always recur to one. In conjunction especially with G. Lampugnani and F. Ravelli, their names appear frequently in the pre-1914 era, and they had a notable list of 'first' expeditions to their credit.

After some earlier crossings of cols in the Monte Rosa massif, the Gugliermis sprang to fame in 1899 with the first crossing of the Col Emile Rey from the Brouillard glacier to the Mont Blanc glacier. Two years later they made a new route up Mont Blanc, by the Pic Luigi Amedeo and the Brouillard arête, as well as the first crossing of the Col de l'Aiguille Verte from the Argentière glacier to the glacier de Talèfre. In 1904, with Lampugnani and Ettore Canzio, they made a new route on the Aiguille Verte from the Nant Blanc glacier, joining on the upper half the arête des Grands Montets. In 1914, with Ravelli, the brothers made the first ascent of the Pte. Gugliermis.

After the First War, Giuseppe Gugliermis's most notable climbs were the Lyskamm from the south-west (1919) and the second ascent of the Innominata arête of Mont Blanc (1921). But the two brothers remained quite incredibly active and were still finding new routes when they had reached eighty years of age.

The foregoing notice is manifestly inadequate as a record of a climbing career of the highest distinction, but failure to procure a more worthy tribute from Italy makes it necessary to delay no longer in recording in these pages our regret at the loss of this outstanding mountaineer.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

GERALD OSLER HOWARD SMITH

1879-1961

WHEN G. O. Howard Smith died last year he had just completed fifty-three years of membership of the Alpine Club.

He was born on December 4, 1879, and educated at Shrewsbury. His father, starting in practice in 1867, had founded the firm now known as Howard Smith, Thompson & Co., chartered accountants of Birmingham. The son became articled to his father in 1898 and was admitted an Associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1903 and elected to fellowship ten years later. He became a partner in the family firm in 1905 and senior partner in 1919, retaining this position until his retirement in August, 1945. He also served on the Committee of the Birmingham and District Society of Chartered Accountants, being President for three years.

He took considerable part in public work in Birmingham, being President of the Birmingham Students Society; Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham Working Boys' Home from 1904-20, and in a number of capacities he served on the board of the Birmingham Children's Hospital from 1913 to 1945. He was also prominent in local Unitarian circles.

He was elected to the Alpine Club in March 1908 on the proposal of E. B. Moser, seconded by Samuel Aitken, with strong supporting interests from the Midlands. He had been climbing in the Alps every season from 1902 to 1907 and was out again in 1910, but records of his later climbs are lacking. Arolla appears to have been his favourite centre. He was married in 1912 and his wife predeceased him. On his retirement, he went to live near Exeter, where he died on March 24, 1961.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

ALFRED EDWARD WESTERN

1873-1961

NOT many mountaineers today will have commenced climbing in the nineteenth century, but A. E. Western, who died on October 11 last, was of the number, his first Alpine season being in 1895. He was elected a member of the A.C. in February, 1907, and so had almost completed fifty-five years of membership.

He was born on July 9, 1873, and educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge. He obtained a double first in the Mathematical Tripos, was 7th Wrangler and 2nd Smiths' Prizeman (1897). He became a solicitor and was a notable pioneer of Legal Aid, particularly in the sphere of rent control. He was associated throughout his life with various philanthropical interests, not least with the activities of Toynbee Hall.

He maintained his mathematical work alongside his legal duties, and for half a century was a member of the Council of the London Mathematical Society, whose Honorary Treasurer he was from 1913-50. He was an expert mathematician in the field of the Theory of Numbers.

When elected to the Alpine Club he had twelve seasons' work behind him and a list of over eighty expeditions, large and small. Though he had climbed in most regions of the Alps, the Oberland in particular being a favoured area, it was further east, in the smaller valleys such as the Zillertal or Ötztal that he was more often to be found, and the Dolomites stood an easy first in his preferences, especially in the years 1907-14.

He married in 1915 and when he returned to the Alps after the war his wife usually accompanied him on his climbs. Between 1920 and 1930 they were out regularly, keeping to the Tyrol and travelling from one hut to another. He remained all his life a strong walker and his death last October was due to a fall, caused by a dog, whilst out on a walk.

It is likely that in the A.C. he was no longer a familiar figure, for a man in his eighty-ninth year has inevitably outlived most of his contemporaries. But, as a notable tribute in *The Times* of October 21 last year illustrates, his kindly and unselfish nature and his devotion to philanthropy command our respect, and to his family we tender our sympathy in their loss.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

JOSEF KNUBEL

JOSEF KNUBEL, who died in May, 1961, was born at St. Niklaus in 1881. Though famous among British climbers as Geoffrey Young's guide before the 1914 War, and afterwards, their companionship only began in 1905, and Josef had been climbing actively since 1896, the year of the first entry in his Führerbuch. Most of his climbs before 1905, however, had been the usual run of the big peaks round Zermatt and the Valais generally, though there were signs in 1903, in his climbing with Oliver Perry-Smith, of Philadelphia, that he was launching out on to bigger things.

Young, in 1905, took him to Chamonix for the first time and started him on aiguilles, though that season their biggest climbs were in the company of Ryan and the Lochmatters, on the Matterhorn and Weisshorn. 1906 was a vintage year, if ever there was one, although, as regards the *pièce de résistance*, the South face of the Täschhorn, Knubel was at the tail end of the rope and had no share in the management of the ascent, where Ryan's party were in the lead.¹ In the light of his later enthusiastic writing about Josef, it is curious to read these early entries by Young in the Führerbuch, with their almost stereotyped commendations; even in 1907 Josef is said merely to be 'developing all the qualities of an entirely first class guide'. However, by 1909 the applause is louder and Josef by then is also 'as an iceman now first class'.

¹ Full justice has not, perhaps, been done to Josef Lochmatter's part on this climb. The superb feats of Franz at critical points have tended to obscure the fact that Josef Lochmatter was Ryan's first guide, and would appear to have led about three-quarters of the whole route.



JOSEF KNUBEL.—MONTENVERS, 1931.

1911 was Knubel's great year, with the Brouillard arête of Mont Blanc; the whole sky-line of the Grandes Jorasses; and the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon, as the principal events. Other British names than Young's occur, of course, in the book during these and succeeding years; Bartrum, Shadbolt, Todhunter, Arnold Lunn, and winter climbing and ski-ing are often mentioned, whilst Marcel Kurz has a notable trio of first winter ascents in February, 1920. But there was no dearth of continental patrons, and most of Josef's employers come under that head.

In 1923 there is the first entry by Eustace Thomas, when there was 'a total of 24 peaks bagged' in little over a month. In 1924 they did better, 'some 30 peaks in 28 days in spite of much bad weather'. In 1925 they managed 25 peaks over 4,000 metres in six weeks, but in 1926 the weather was too much for them and they did not reach double figures during a six weeks' tour. Later this year, Josef was guide to Prince Chichibu and Yuko Maki.

Eustace Thomas was back again in 1927 and later years, but a new star was rising in Alfred Zürcher, whose many seasons with Knubel call for special treatment that only he can give.

Knubel's climbing career covered half a century, and at its close few would have disputed his claim to be considered the most famous of living guides. Success never spoiled him; though his name is associated with some of the most splendid courses in the Alps, the merest beginner found him as congenial a companion on a small mountain as did his better-known patrons who had been with him year after year. Frequent entries in his Führerbuch testify how warmly he was welcomed as a friend, and all who were at the Club's centenary meet in Zermatt in 1957 will recall with pleasure seeing the old guide there among them. St. Niklaus has been a great home of guiding families, Lochmatters, Pollingers, Knubels; Josef Knubel was in the very front rank of them all.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

SIR ARNOLD LUNN writes:

I first met Joseph Knubel in the summer of 1913 when I joined Geoffrey Young for a few days. After climbing the Mönch from the Bergli, we spent a few days at Bel Alp. J.K. led me on a rock climb and after all these years I still feel that I have never seen any athletic movements more aesthetically satisfying than J.K. on rocks. At that time he had never skied, so I sent him a pair of ski and though entirely self-taught he was fast and steady in most kinds of snow. He was a telemark specialist and would perform this turn on most unsuitable snow; I have seen him telemark even on hard crust. He began to ski

some time before what is known as the golden age of ski-mountaineering came to an end, and no guide had more pioneer ski expeditions to his credit. On many of these, of course, ski were only taken to the foot of the final rock or ice ridges as, for instance, on the Weisshorn. In the appendix to *A History of Ski-ing* I recorded all pioneer ski expeditions known to me, and later expeditions of any importance were recorded in *The Story of Ski-ing* (1953); I am confident that if any guide had had a comparable record of achievement I could not fail to be aware of the fact. Here then is the list of pioneer ski tours in which he took part. Monte Rosa (Nordend) with the Rumanian mountaineer, Mazlam; Gabelhorn and Schallhorn with Marcel Kurz, and the following expeditions with the writer, Trifhorn traverse, Wellenkuppe, Weisshorn and Dom in the Valaisian Alps. In the Bernese Alps, Mitteljoch, between Wetterhorn and Mittelhorn, Ankenbälli, Hühnertäli pass, Bieligerlücke, Agassizhorn, Weissnollen, and after making the second ski ascents of Aletschhorn, Nesthorn and Lötschentaler Breithorn, the first ski crossing from the Ober Aletsch hut to Brigue via the Gredetschjoch. He was my guide on many other expeditions where we were not the first to cut ski tracks.

J.K. was an ideal guide for an amateur who liked to have some say in planning new expeditions. He had a real interest in pioneer tours, unlike so many ski guides who are quite happy to earn their money leading party after party over the hackneyed runs, Lötschenlücke, Galmilücke and the rest. I remember what fun he extracted from a very odd ski tour, the traverse of the Trifhorn from the Mountet hut to Zermatt. The two of us had to lower our ski down the long arête from the Trifhorn to a point near the Triftjoch whence we escaped down to the glacier, still carrying our ski. 'Ich sage Ihnen, Herr Lunn,' said J.K., 'kein einziger Führer wird diese Tour mit ski wiederholen.' Another tour which we both thoroughly enjoyed, but which I do not think has been repeated, was from the Weisshorn hut over a shoulder of the Weisshorn to the Biesjoch and thence to the Turtmantal.

J.K. was a superb tactician. Once he had established contact with snow he could diagnose its texture and its liability, if any, to avalanche with unerring accuracy but he was less accomplished as a strategist. The planning of a time-table in spring ski-ing is important, for the difference of an hour may mean the difference between perfect ski-ing and mediocre ski-ing, and such planning was not J.K.'s strongest point.

It is very difficult to analyse or explain why J.K. was such a perfect companion in the mountains. 'He was reserved', writes Young, 'and aloof as a forest Indian, with a primitive head, thin bleached hair and the eyes of a dreamer.' There was something distinctive even about his dress. Even after a climb he looked *soigné* and I remember one

occasion when he was uneasily aware of the contrast in this respect between his appearance and mine when a four-day glacier expedition in April ended in the Zermatt valley. A thousand feet above the valley J.K. produced a pocket comb and pocket mirror and after completing his *toilette* looked at me thoughtfully. He asked me tactfully whether I would like to put on a collar and I rummaged in my rucksack till I found a detachable collar whose condition clearly did not meet with his approval. He produced a piece of string, took the exact measurement of my neck, darted down to Zermatt, which had not seen a tourist for six months, and just as I reached the village produced a brand new collar of the latest Zermatt cut.

J.K. seemed indifferent to his own reputation. His was a simplicity which might almost be described as *sancta simplicitas*. He knew nothing of the life of cities and his rare contacts with the great world bewildered and sometimes alarmed him. He once spent a few hours in Geneva between trains and described to me an episode which bewildered him. He was apparently very puzzled when a woman approached him because he could not remember ever having met her. He wondered what she wanted. 'You will hardly believe (Sie werden kaum glauben), Mr. Lunn, that she wanted me to go back with her to her rooms.' He so obviously assumed that I would be as startled and bewildered as he had been by this enormity, that I had not the heart to disillusion him. I remember at some luncheon party in the open air at the Riffelalp, in connection either with the centenary of the Monte Rosa or of the Alpine Club, some graceful references were made by the chairman to Knubel, who was present, and J.K. found to his obvious discomfort that he was expected to say a few words. 'I always said my prayers,' said J.K., 'before a climb and I tried to do my duty'.

He did indeed.