In Memoriam

George Ingle Finch 1888–1970

Professor G. I. Finch, who died in November 1970, will be remembered as the first exponent of oxygen on Everest, where he was a member of the 1922 expedition, and where he reached a then record height of 27,300 ft [8321 m].

He was born in New South Wales and was educated first at Wolaroi College and later at the Ecole de Médicine, Paris, with the idea of becoming a doctor. He changed over, however, to the study of the physical sciences and went to the Swiss Federal High School at Zürich, and later to Geneva University. In 1912 he was appointed research chemist at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, but left to join Imperial College the following year. He served throughout the First World War in France, Egypt and Salonika, being awarded the M.B.E. in 1917. He returned to Imperial College after the War, and was to hold the Chair of Applied Physical Chemistry there from 1936 to 1952.

He started mountaineering at Zürich, with climbs he later described in his book *The Making of a Mountaineer* (1924). In 1909 he accomplished a first ascent of Castor by the North face; in 1911, with his brother Max, he made the first ascent of the South South-west ridge of the Aiguille du Midi, and in 1913 the Bifertenstock by the West ridge, with his friend Smith-Barry. These and other climbs were significant in that they attracted the notice of J. P. Farrar, President of the A.C., when the first feelers were being put out for an expedition to Mount Everest. As early as March 1919 Farrar had earmarked Finch as a potential Everest climber, and he was picked to go in 1921. As a notable iceman, Finch was a supplement to Mallory's rock-climbing abilities, as well as being able to handle the oxygen problem.

As is well known, Finch was rejected by the doctors in 1921, and a replacement had to be found at short notice. A part cause of his unfitness may have been the after-effects of a drastic cure he had undergone in France for the malaria he had contracted during the war. In the light of the two doctors' reports, Wollaston, the M.O. of the expedition, had little option but to recommend a substitute. It was galling, but Finch had a notable season in the Alps that year and was passed fit for the 1922 Everest party, when he proved the value of oxygen on his great attempt on the summit with Geoffrey Bruce.[1] The party's experiences at their highest camp (7772 m) were severe, and they made their final climb (to quote Finch's words) 'having had practically no rest for two nights and a day, half starved and suffering acutely from hunger'. Despite this, they reached a point some 100 m higher than that reached by the first assault party, and were able to descend 6000 ft to Camp 3 the same day.

[1] The oxygen apparatus was primitive, and Finch showed great skill and ingenuity in overcoming defects.

104 *G. I. Finch—Everest, 1922.* Photo: Family collection

Finch was much exhausted by the effort, and joined a party going home early. His relations with the Everest Committee later became strained, and he was not invited on future expeditions, and did not, in fact, climb in the Himalaya again. In his book (though not in the *A.J.*) he was critical of the route chosen via the North Col, and claimed that Raeburn in 1921 had been right in stating that the North-east ridge from the Rapiu La was the correct one.[2] The 1935 Reconnaissance party examined this, and turned it down decisively.

[2] Raeburn had based his opinion on a print he had seen, showing the North-east ridge and the North Col as viewed from the Lhakpa La (see *A.J. 34* 210), but *printed the wrong way round.* As a result, Raeburn's left-hand ridge that he favoured was really that from the North Col, in reverse; and he could not be convinced otherwise. His failure to grasp this was one of the reasons why the late G. H. Bullock concluded that Raeburn's mind was weakening. Finch's opinion on the matter is curious.

Finch made other notable ascents in the Alps than those already mentioned, in 1921 re-opening the Eccles route on Mont Blanc from the Frêney glacier, and in 1923 making the ascent of the North face of the Dent d'Hérens.

In 1931, during an ascent of the Jungfrau from the Rottal side, one of Finch's companions, R. H. K. Peto, fell to his death (*A.J. 43* 409); thereafter Finch seems almost to have dropped climbing and taken to sailing. But he played an active part in the discussions in the A.C. in 1936 over the reconstitution of the Mount Everest Committee. In *A.J. 39* 292 he contributed an article on ascents in Corsica in 1909. He maintained his interest in oxygen, and in June 1952 he lectured to the Royal Institution on *Man at High Altitudes*, emphasising his points with his 1922 apparatus. His ideas on oxygen were in advance of his time in 1922, being an advocate of its use at a relatively low altitude to prevent deterioration, rather than as a stimulant when deterioration had set in.

Though always accessible to new ideas, Finch was in the main a fine exponent of the old-fashioned type of icemanship, relying on expert use of an ice-axe, and he had reservations on the employment of crampons. He had been a keen ski-mountaineer in the pioneer phase. In his book he underrated the value of climbing on British hills, as he himself freely admitted in his Valedictory Address to the Club (*A.J. 67* 7).

He was elected to the A.C. in November 1922: he served on the Committee in 1940–2, was Vice-President from 1949 to 1950 and President 1959-61. He was also Chairman of the Mount Everest Foundation from 1959 to 1961. He founded the Imperial College Mountaineering Club, one of the first university climbing clubs. His distinguished scientific career is interestingly summarised in his obituary notice in *The Times* of 24 November 1970. He was elected F.R.S. in 1938; on retiring from Imperial College, he was appointed Director of the National Chemical Laboratory of India from 1952 to 1957.

Finch married in 1921, and our member R. Scott Russell is his son-in-law. To his widow and family the Alpine Club expresses their sense of the great loss they have sustained by the death of this notable mountaineer.

T. S. Blakeney

T. A. H. Peacocke writes:

As I have known George Finch for over forty years, I would like to add a small tribute to his memory. My first real contact with him was in 1929 when he came, with several of his friends to help the O.U.M.C. on our summer meet in the Bregaglia and Engadine. I was privileged to be on his rope on two occasions, both simple ascents, but I was able to watch his beautiful rhythmic movements on both snow and rock, and I learnt a lot on those two days. He joined us again in 1930 in the Tödi group, when we had a combined meet with the Imperial College Mountaineering Club. Once again his presence was a real asset as he knew the district like 'the back of his hand'.

His book, *The Making of a Mountaineer*, was my guide to technique from my earliest days and largely influenced me in favour of snow and ice ascents rather than rock. I always remembered and used his directions on the art of step-cutting in ice, involving direct rather than diagonal ascent, and economy of effort. This technique helped me on many occasions involving steep ice ascents, in time, effort and safety. These were before the days of ice-pitons.

George Finch was a great force in the mountaineering world and always defended passionately what he believed to be right. I shall never forget the first meeting which I attended at the A.C. when the oxygen controversy was at its height, and George made a characteristically vigorous defence of the use of oxygen for the forthcoming 1933 Everest venture.

Though rather a stern figure in his middle years, he mellowed with age and I shall always remember him with deep affection coupled with the greatest respect, for I owe him much.

B. R. Goodfellow writes:

Those who came to know George Finch only in his later life soon realised that the fire of his character, of which one had long been aware from familiarity with his writings was, if mellowed, far from extinct.

It was indeed a privilege, for mountaineers especially, to stay at his flat above the National Chemical Laboratory of India outside Poona. There by day one saw what a great service he was performing in the training of Indian scientists. It was something novel, for some of them at least, to be subjected to the towering personality of such a man; to his iron discipline and his absolute insistence on integrity in research. By evening there was all the world of mountains to discuss.

Back in England his home in North Oxfordshire was again a delight to visit; the walls lined with his superlative Everest photographs, his workshop a substitute for his old laboratory, and his garden a model of scientific application.

He attended A.C. meetings frequently, and long after his term as President. He thought nothing of driving back to his home late on winter nights when well into his seventies. He will be remembered for his comments after lectures on the Himalaya, when invariably he insisted on the importance of oxygen. To those of less experience he may have seemed obsessed. But surely he has been proved right. It was bad luck that on Everest 1922 shortage of oxygen frustrated the trials he had planned. Yet its indispensibility was surely proved by Finch's sensational revival of Geoffrey Bruce by oxygen when close to total exhaustion at 27,000 ft, of which Percy Farrar wrote 'Finch's party added a page to the history of Everest that need fear no comparison'.

It must be remembered too how much Finch contributed to the 1953 Everest success.

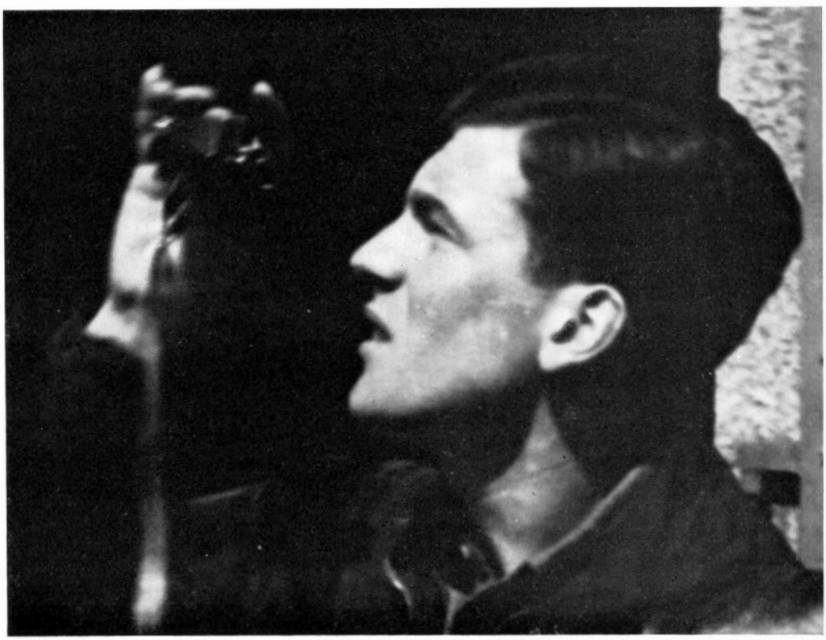
Frederick Spencer Chapman 1907–71

Of Freddy Chapman's many qualities, that for which he will be remembered was his extraordinary power of endurance. In the practice of his professed belief that determined singleness of purpose could master all weakness, he not only achieved remarkable feats on the mountains but overcame hardships which no lesser man could have survived.

His early life was a lonely one, for he was orphaned as a child. His love of the countryside and of its natural history owed much to understanding masters at Sedbergh, who allowed him to run loose over the fells instead of conscripting him into the organised games. There, and in the school holidays, much of which he spent with his guardians in the Lake District, he developed the skills of travelling fast and far over the hills. And especially he widened his appreciation of wild life and natural beauties which so enriched his subsequent writings.

At Cambridge he found kindred spirits in the C.U.M.C., and Sunday evening soirées at the shrine of Geoffrey Young opened his eyes to the wider opportunities of mountaineering. With Cambridge friends he had the conventional initiation into British rock-climbing. But for Chapman, rock-climbing was not an end in itself, but a means of improving technique for mountaineering on greater ranges. After a short season in the Dauphiné in 1928 he turned to ski-ing, in which he soon became proficient.

By 1931 Freddy had reached an age when his mentor, Arthur Wakefield, considered him mature enough to tackle the round of Lakeland summits of which he, Wakefield, had been the pioneer. In spite of bad weather and a



105 *F. Spencer Chapman—Lognon, 1934.* Photo: B. R. Goodfellow

stumble in the dark which cost him a broken compass, he achieved the round of 130 miles and 33,000 ft of up and down. But he took twenty-five hours, so failed to qualify for the record, This astounding achievement matches even the great 'Beardie' nearly forty years later (see *A.J.* 75 340).

Once Chapman had met Gino Watkins he was committed to Greenland. first with the British Arctic Air Route party of 1930–1, the purpose of which was to locate suitable staging posts for transatlantic aircraft. He was in Greenland again the following year with the similar Pan-American Expedition. during which Watkins was so tragically lost. His two books, *Northern Lights* and *Watkins' Last Expedition* describe these two seasons. In 1934 he was in Greenland a third time, making preparations for a British Graham Land party. But the time had come for him to consider his future. He settled for teaching, and started as a master at Aysgarth School.

However, after two years an invitation to join Marco Pallis in Sikkim was irresistible. He stayed on with Harrison's party to climb the 23,000-ft Fluted Peak. Back in Gangtok after his famous marathon run of the four stages from Lachen in one day, he had the great fortune to be invited by Basil Gould, the Political Agent, to accompany him as secretary on a six months' mission to Lhasa. He told of this in his beautifully illustrated book *Lhasa the Holy City*.

Like every traveller before him, whether to Lhasa or by the old route to Everest from the north, Chapman was fascinated by Chomolhari, the 24,000-ft peak which rises 10,000 ft above the Phari plain. Shortly after his return he organised a small party of Charles Crawford and three Sherpas for the ascent. His achievement in reaching the summit, with Pasang Dawa Lama then with little climbing experience, and in barely a week out from Phari, with the minimum of equipment, and without time for prior reconnaissance, will rank for all time as a mountaineering epic. They suffered grievously on the descent—a long fall from the summit ridge, then storms, a crevasse accident, and days of endurance without fuel or food.

Return to school, now at Gordonstoun, did not last for long. With the war, Freddy was commissioned in the Seaforth Highlanders and was attached to the Ski Battalion of the Scots Guards. This led to training at Chamonix. After a spell as instructor at the S.O.E. training centre at Arisaig he was posted to a Commando School in Australia, then in 1941 to Singapore.

He arrived in August 1941, and when the Japanese invaded Malaya all special operations were concentrated on putting trained parties into the jungle to harry the enemies' communications. The story of Chapman's almost single-handed achievements, and of his survival in the jungles of Malaya for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years after the operation for his recovery had failed, of his escape after capture, of his enduring infinite hardship, starvation and disease, have been vividly described in his best-selling book *The Jungle is Neutral*. He was awarded the D.S.O. when he was safely brought out by submarine, and later a bar to his D.S.O. for his subsequent activities after he had parachuted into Japanese-held Malaya.

His return to headquarters in Ceylon led to his romantic marriage to Faith Townson, who had been at the receiving end of the signals he had sent out of Malaya.

In addition to his war decorations, Spencer Chapman was much honoured by Geographical Societies. The white ribbon of his Polar Medal was a rare sight in the tropics.

After the war he was appointed the first organising secretary of the Outward Bound Trust, and in these days he became widely known as a lecturer and broadcaster on 'living dangerously'. His sixth book bore this title. Then he returned to his old career, first as headmaster of the newly established King Alfred School near Kiel, then, after a year back in England, he was off again on an extensive tour of Africa by caravan sponsored by Outward Bound. He took his wife and their three young sons, the youngest aged two, on this 17,000-mile journey lasting a year. Again, he wrote a typically charming book, *Lightest Africa*.

In 1956 he was in Africa again as headmaster of St Andrew's College, Grahamstown, where he introduced many new outdoor activities, and set up the South African version of Outward Bound.

When he returned to England he spent some time as warden of the Pestalozzi Children's village, then finally became warden of Wantage Hall at Reading University.

Freddy Spencer Chapman will be long remembered by his writings, which reveal not only the details of his phenomenal achievements but also of his character. His style is intensely personal and refreshingly uninhibited and he always recorded his close observation of everything around him: the landscape, the birds, the flowers and the stars. Indeed, he knew the stars so well that he could tell his direction and the hour of the night when only the smallest segment of the heavens might be visible. Are not these the qualities of the Complete Traveller and the Complete Mountaineer?

He had other interests. He was a keen gardener and an understanding lover of paintings. He achieved a high degree of proficiency and artistry in photography both with a ciné camera and with still pictures.

Of all men, one thought Freddy Spencer Chapman the most indestructible. His sudden and premature end was a great shock to his many friends and a sad loss to us all.

B. R. Goodfellow

Harold Williams 1897–1971

Lt-Gen. Sir Harold Williams, known as Bill Williams to all his many friends, died at Mussoorie, India on 17 October 1971. He joined the Indian Army in 1915 and served with King George's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners of which

he was Adjutant from 1929 to 1933. He remained with the Bengal Sappers until the Second World War, when he moved to Delhi as Brigadier Engineer Staff A.H.Q. India. He held a number of senior appointments, and shortly after independence was appointed Engineer-in-Chief of the Indian Army, a post which he held until he retired in 1955. Among his many outdoor interests mountaineering took pride of place, and he often went to the Himalaya to climb, trek or shoot. He was also the mainstay of the bird-watching society in Delhi.

Bill Williams joined the Alpine Club in 1953. He had been on a number of minor Himalayan expeditions including Trisul and Bandarpunch. In 1952, when he was over fifty-five, he was joint leader with Gurdial Singh of a Bengal Sappers' expedition to Kamet and climbed to Camp 5 at 7000 m. He was for many years the guiding light of the Indian Army Mountaineering Association. He was President of the Himalayan Club from 1960 to 1963, during which time he was responsible for important liaison between the Club and semi-Government bodies such as the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

After retiring from the Army, Bill Williams was appointed Director of the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee; later he became Adviser to the Council of Scientific and Technical Research.

He came back to England in 1968 with a view to settling in this country, but the call of India, where he had lived and worked for over fifty years, proved too strong and he kept on returning there. I think he would have wished to die, as he did, in the foothills of the Himalaya. **V. S. Risoe**

A. W. Bridge 1902–1971

When I first met 'Alf' his serious climbing days were over, and he had already outlived that part of his legend which placed him with the 'hard men' of his day. Even the more rumbustious of his quarrels, resignations, and campaigns against 'The Mandarins' had taken on the pink glow of old, forgotten, far-off things. I made a friend that night and we never had a word of disagreement between us. Now he is dead and the whole climbing world is poorer by the loss of so truculent and altogether delightful a figure. A commonplace obituary notice setting out the virtues of the deceased would not do for Alf. His prickly controversial existence was the essential man. It is true that he could not tell a lie, had never told one in his whole life. It is true that he would not sit in a room, or bar, and hear a friend disparaged, particularly a friend with whom at that moment he was not on speaking terms. But it is also true that he found it almost impossible to agree with anyone about anything, was certain that the world was full of persons having educational or family advantages which they were employing to weaken the steel bonds which hold climbers together, and thought that nothing would ever be again as it was in that Golden Age when he climbed with Kirkus, Hargreaves and Longland, thought nothing of a cycle ride from Manchester or Sheffield to Helyg, and preferred a walk over the tops from Aber to the sinful luxury of trains to nearer stations.

The Alf legends were founded on fact, but he liked to correct the more bizarre of them. It was true, he said, that he had witnessed, had indeed helped, a man to propel a bicycle round the parapet, 8 ft across, of a 200-ft chimney-stack, but he was not that man himself. It was true that he had climbed on Lliwedd in a (borrowed) bowler hat, but this was not through fear of falling stones or other natural hazards, but a dislike of having oranges dropped upon him by tourists.

'Watch the Mandarins', he would say whenever we met. These were the men who required a climbing standard in a climbing club, or ventured to say that X (disliked by Bridge), was a better man for an expedition than Y, the Bridge nominee of the moment. It was 'The Mandarins' who drove him to resign from the Alpine, Climbers' and Rucksack Clubs. They could not see that as far as Alf was concerned they were completely in the wrong. For Alf there were never two points of view, and it was this unyielding tenacity which endeared him to his friends, nearly every one of them a 'Mandarin'.

Bridge was no Alpinist, but his mind and heart were in the high places and he knew himself to be of that great company bound together by success or failure on the ultimate peaks. He was tireless in the background preparations of many expeditions, notably of those to Everest and Kangchenjunga, and for the last thirty years every mountaineer capable of going high counted Alf among his friends. His ashes have been scattered near the summits of the Glyders, but Alf himself will live on in every one of those conversations between climbers which, sustained in acrimony, make no breach in the indissoluble friendships of a shared obsession.

Kevin Fitzgerald

Ian Stewart Clough (1937–70)

I would like to add a note to the obituary notice of Ian Clough in the last *Alpine Journal*. Naturally, being a generation older, I never climbed with him, but met him through the Mount Everest Foundation. He struck me as the most attractive of all the young 'Tigers' of his day. I suppose 'young' is a relative term, but Clough, with his rather untidy mop of hair and his boyish appearance, always looked younger than his age. I recall, when I first met him, being reminded of Hermann Buhl when he came over to address the A.C. on Nanga Parbat; there, too, youthfulness appeared the dominant characteristic.

I think it may be useful if a few of Ian's climbs are mentioned. He went first to the Alps in 1953, with a party of Boy Scouts; the Wildstrubel, his main peak, was a mild beginning indeed for one who was to become an outstanding performer. It was not till 1958 that he was again in the Alps, at Chamonix, and he was very faithful to the latter district, going again in 1959 and 1960 (during which an attempt was made on the Aiguille de la République) and succeeding years. Of his 1961 season he has written in the *A.J.* 67 60; it included the Cima Ovest, Marmolada, Piz Badile, Central Pillar of Frêney (first ascent) and a traverse of the Chamonix Aiguilles.

In 1962 (the year of Ian's election to the A.C.) the Eigerwand, with Bonington (first British ascent) overshadowed all else; and in 1963 he went further afield, being one of the trio who made the first ascent of the Central Tower of Paine in Patagonia. 1964 saw the attempt on Gauri Shankar, described by him in *A.J.* 70 96. He returned, in 1967–8, to Patagonia, as leader of the successful expedition that climbed the Fortress, though he himself was not in the summit party; many of us will recall his address to the A.C. on this extremely difficult ascent, carried out in extremely bad weather. August 1968 saw him in the High Tatra (*A.J.* 74 95), and in 1969 he was back in the Alps, with an ascent (amongst others) of the Grand Dru by the South Pillar.

Clough wrote excellently and his contributions to the *Alpine Journal* were free from over-much tedious, blow-by-blow detail, and spiced with good humour. It is needless to stress his contributions to the Annapurna triumph. As is well known, Don Whillans had gone out to meet the ship with the main expedition stores at Bombay; delays to the boat led to Whillans going ahead to reconnoitre the approach to Annapurna, and Clough came out later to meet and take charge of the baggage. I am indebted to Niki Clough for being allowed to read some of his letters to her, describing his work in getting the stores to Nepal. He had immediately made friends with Indian climbers in Bombay, and had been on trips with them before making his journey on top of a lorry load of baggage across India. Anyone reading the letters will feel, as I think one did when meeting Clough, that his was a naturally happy disposition; he entered thoroughly into the ideas and thoughts of his Indian companions, and, despite the discomforts of the journey, he enjoyed it all. It is entirely understandable how the Sherpas, on his death, insisted on his being brought down and buried at the foot of the rock where he had given them training in artificial climbing; on the expedition, as in Bombay, his natural friendliness seems to have made itself felt immediately, and it is easy to comprehend Bonington's tribute to him as being one of the kindest and least selfish people he had ever met.

T. S. Blakeney

Shortage of space has led to the holding over of in memoriam notices for T. A. H. Medlycott, 1909–70 (by H. R. Herbert); Cyril Montague Sleeman, 1883–1971 (by A. M. Binnie); and Edward E. T. Taylor, 1910–71 (by D. G. Lambley). It is hoped to be able to reproduce these in a later issue.

Anthony Medlycott, an architect, was a notable British rock-climber, who had also done a wide range of general Alpine climbing.

Cyril Sleeman, Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, had climbed extensively in little-known mountain ranges in Europe (contributing several papers to the *Alpine Journal*), as well as having a fine record in the Alps and in British hills. He played a big part in the continuity of the Cambridge U.M.C. in the period between the wars.

Edward Taylor, a Northampton surgeon, had a distinguished medical career. He had climbed a great deal in the Alps and in Britain, and was a keen fell-walker.

We also note with regret the deaths of Grace Hoeman, the noted Alaskan mountaineer, in an avalanche accident on the Eklutna glacier near Anchorage, and of Emil Steuri (age 83), the leading Oberland guide of the 20s.

Postscript
Apollo 15—1971

106 *Unclimbed mountains on the Moon—The Apennine Front on the left reaches over 4500 m. Hadley Delta is on the right.* Photo: United States Embassy Press Office