

A guide to the archives of the Alpine Club

N. R. Rice

(Introduction by T. S. Blakeney)

INTRODUCTION

In June 1966 I read a paper on the AC archives¹ (*AJ* 71 285), and now N. R. Rice has produced a detailed guide to the collections the Club possesses. This is the fruit of much hard work, and our indebtedness to him is great. He has divided the collections into various groups and listed each separately, and anyone who looks at the orderly array of volumes in the Archives Room will soon realize what labour it has incurred. There is none too much space, and I hope it may be a rule that the Librarian has absolute control over the archives and people are not allowed in just to browse. Perhaps a printed slip, bearing the date and the name of the reader, could be used to mark each place where a volume has been taken out, and thus disclose to the Librarian at any moment what is being consulted.

Group A newspaper cuttings. These massive volumes contain a good deal of information of value; for example, A18 and 19 have the various despatches written from the first (1921) Everest expedition that appeared in *The Times*. Although the Everest volumes that were eventually written tell their stories in greater detail, one can often glean sidelights on an expedition from what was written on the spot as compared with the more mature record appearing at a later date. Both World Wars interrupted these newspaper collections, and indeed the outbreak of World War II went far to bringing the series of volumes to a close. After 1940 the harvest of cuttings became meagre.

Group B letters. These include some of the best material in the whole collection; a good deal came via H. F. Montagnier, the correspondent of Farrar and Freshfield. The Whymper collection (B35-37) is disappointing and deals mostly with his Greenland travels. The massive Geoffrey Young collection (B40-48) is the latest acquisition in this class.

Groups C and D Journals and Diaries. These groups overlap to some extent. For the matter of that, Group E, though to a large extent dealing with photographs, connects up with the other two; and Group F, boxes of loose papers, obviously (as the name suggests) is related in the same way. For the study of individual climbers contained in the groups, this is essential material; but in early *AJ* obituaries it was not uncommon to list in detail a member's climbs and some entries are thereby likely to be in print, to say nothing of major climbs being written up for the *AJ* or elsewhere.

¹ The term 'archives' has been used in the fashion common among English writers, and loosely used at that. The strict archives of the Club are Minute Books, Membership forms and the like; collections of correspondence, often fortuitously brought together, are not really archives at all. (*Archives*, Journal of the British Record Assocn., October 1971, p 37.)

Groups K to O guides' books. These include not only an excellent collection of originals, many of which came to the Club by purchase, through the instrumentality of Farrar and Montagnier—Farrar's Correspondence in B12 and 13 often refers to the efforts then being made to salvage old books—but also photographic copies.

The Index shows how rich a holding in all of these basic documents the Club possesses. The concentration is mainly on the older books, and rightly so, since the exhaustion of new routes in the Alps has proceeded apace during the last half century or so, and any outstanding feat is likely to be recorded in one or other of the innumerable climbing journals that exist both at home and abroad.

Quite a number of leading Führerbücher have been, if not printed verbatim, at least studied with thoroughness, as the consolidated indices to the *AJ* (vols. 16–38, 39–58, and 59–73) will show (see under 'Führerbücher', 'Farrar', 'Dangar', and 'Hasler'). The massive volumes in groups M–O, of Italian and Swiss guides' books, are a comparatively recent acquisition, and the Club owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr J. Monroe Thorington for his generous help in assisting to finance the microfilming, enlarging, and binding of these books. Over one hundred guides are here represented, and as I write still more have been acquired from French sources (not yet included in the collection).

To analyse these books in any detail would take up far too much space; as already said, some have been printed and others are to a considerable extent summarised in obituary notices in the *AJ*. Christian Klucker, indeed, wrote his own memoirs, and the book of Christian Almer I was published, though copies had to be withdrawn—fortunately, enough of them survive. Photostats were long ago taken of the books of Alexander Burgener and the first volume of Joseph Knubel: it is matter for regret that the latter's second volume is not also available, being in private hands. In the Club's collection, many familiar guides' names occur, especially in the nineteenth century, but there are also some very eminent men of the twentieth century.

Since a substantial number of the records in Groups K and L have been recorded in print in one way or the other, it may be best to confine attention here to Groups M, N and O, and even so one must, in the interests of space, be selective.

Group M, the Italian books, naturally has a predominant number of entries by Italian climbers, though some British and American names also occur. Claudio Perotti managed in a short time to achieve a good deal; Guido Rey, Evan Mackenzie, M. de Déchy, were among his clients, as well as one or two members of the Wicks-Claude Wilson guideless (usually) group. Guido Rey naturally occurs in several books: Augustin Pelissier, Antoine Maquignaz—the latter had many distinguished clients, such as Kugy, Filippo di Filippi, the Duke of the Abruzzi, Martin Conway, Whymper and others. Of more recent interest is an entry in Giacomo Fiorelli's book, in April 1925, of a climb of Monte Disgrazia, by Eric Shipton: has he ever employed a guide

since? Max Gorret had a good many British clients and Gabriel Meynet a fair number, but no very distinctive climbs.

Augustin Ansermin had a good record, and E. P. Jackson, Vittorio Sella and Guido Rey appear in his pages; but the most striking (and misleading) entry in his book is on 10 July, 1875, claiming a first crossing of the Col du Lion, by G. Corona and Emilio Torri. This was five years before Mummery's crossing of the col and it required a good deal of research in Italy before it was made clear that the pass crossed by the Ansermin party was really the Col Tournanche—and not the first crossing at that.

Group N has two old books, of Ulrich Rubi and Christian Michel and they can exhibit some classic travellers' names, Michel in particular, who shows Leslie Stephen, Hardy, Tuckett, Tyndall and others among his clients. A much later guide was Alexander Taugwalder, who was the subject of a special obituary issue by *Les Alpes*. H. F. von Tschärner pays a tribute to Taugwalder's exceptional routes, such as the s face of the Täscherhorn, the Eiger, and Furggenrat; but the most frequent entries are by Wilson Hey, from 1928 to 1938. The two Kronigs, Frindolin and Alois, cover much the same ground, as they climbed together a great deal. Felix Biner rivals Alexander Taugwalder in the quantity and distinction of his climbs, his book being dominated throughout by the outstanding seasons, from 1923 to 1966, with H. F. von Tschärner, especially notable and interesting during the war years. Carl Josef Biner was often associated with them.

Alfred Aufdenblatten was a very well-known guide; E. G. Oliver was a noteworthy employer and the names of Richard Kay and T. Graham Brown also appear. In Group O, Joseph and Gabriel Taugwalder win good opinions from a number of British climbers, while Joseph Biner formed one of those long-standing associations with a patron that recall the years of the Golden Age: C. H. R. Wollaston and Biner climbed in all parts of the Alps regularly from 1889 to 1913.

Adolph Schaller, father and son, had numerous British clients, as also did Julius and Gabriel zum Taugwald, the latter leaving Owen Glynne Jones's employ just in time to avoid being on the fatal Dent Blanche climb. Johann, Rudolf and Peter Almer were all favourite guides of British climbers; the present senior member of the AC, Sir John Beaumont, engaging the first-named as long ago as 1900. Peter Inabnit was guide to Lord Francis Douglas shortly before the fatal Matterhorn accident of 1865; Fritz Steuri was a favourite guide with Yuko Maki and other Japanese climbers, whose tributes in their own script provide striking, if unreadable, pages in the book. Josef Biner was a man of unusual character, being an ardent botanist and mineralogist, and using spare pages of his book to make jottings, as well as to write poems. Ignaz Biner was employed by Whymper in 1863, obtaining the cryptic entry that he had 'behaved himself as a guide should', on Monte Rosa.

Peter Taugwalder, son, whose first book was analysed in *AJ* 59 436, had a second book, 1883-98, and wins some good opinions; but the last volume in

Group O, comprising Ulrich Almer and Christian II, is the outstanding record among the older guides. Ulrich was the hero of many great climbs and numbered a long list of eminent patrons, with Coolidge and W. E. Davidson topping the lot.

If I have referred particularly to British entries in these old books, they have a special interest for the AC, and in view of the collection of climbing diaries (Groups C–F) it is possible at times to cross-check entries, and this, historically, can be valuable, for it was still the case, a century ago, as shown by the Ansermin book, already noticed, that considerable errors in topography could creep in. Some of such problems have been treated in the past in the *AJ* as with the Wetterhörner (58 496) and the Trifthorn (61 348).

Finally we come to the AC archives proper, in the form of Minute Books, Candidates Books (the latter, of course, continue to the present day, but not all are indicated in Rice's Index, and periodical additions will be made from time to time), and similar records. No Index can entirely free a student from the need to make his own researches, but enough has been suggested to illustrate how valuable a compilation Rice has made for the future researcher.

THE ARCHIVES

The following notes refer to the Archives of the Alpine Club which are housed in the Archives Room in the basement of the Club's premises at 74 South Audley Street.

These Archives are arranged on six open shelves and in three steel cabinets. The shelves are lettered from A to F whilst in the steel cabinets the shelves are lettered G to J, K to O; the third cabinet containing archives concerned with the Club's affairs has its shelves lettered ACTS, AC2S, AC3S, and ACBS. The shelves contain material as follows:

- Shelf A Bound newspaper cuttings from 1891 onwards
- B Correspondence and letters
- C Manuscripts, articles, lectures and journals
- D Diaries
- E Photographs
- F Collections
- G Maps
- H Archivistic records
- I Archivistic material
- J Archivistic material
- K Original Führerbücher
- L Bound Führerbücher
- M Microfilms, and bound guide-books (Italian)
- N Bound guide-books (Swiss)
- O Bound guide-books (Swiss)
- ACTS AC Records—mainly financial

- AC2S (Second shelf) AC Records—Minutes of meetings
 AC3S (Third shelf) AC Records—Circulars, etc.
 ACBS (Bottom shelf) AC Records—Club events

On these shelves material is (as far as possible) arranged and numbered in alphabetical order of the Author of the archive.

The Main (or first) Index to the Archives is a list of the material on each of these shelves, with sub-indices where a number of letters have been bound in a single volume.

The Secondary Index is a correlation of all the sections of the Main Index brought together in alphabetical order together with a second part concerned with guides and their Führerbücher also arranged in alphabetical order.

The Main and Secondary Indices together with an Archive Card Index, which is derived therefrom, are kept in the club office to permit easy reference by members.

Space prohibits the whole of the Secondary Index being published in one volume of the *AJ*, consequently only two sections dealing with correspondence and letters (B) and diaries (D) together with the guide's section (K, L, M, N and O) can be given as appendices to here.

Secondary Index: abridged (correspondence, letters, diaries)

(Cross references in brackets)

- Auldjo, J.: Papers 1825-54, B5
 Balmat, J.: Mt Blanc 1786, D1/93 (C10)
 Beaufoy, Mrs M.: Diary and MS/1787, D1/39 (D2)
 Beaufoy, M.: Journal Chamonix to Mt Blanc D1/39a (C12)
 Bennett, C.: The Golden Age of Mountaineering 1850-70, B6
 Bourrit, M. T.: Correspondence, 1773-87, B7
 Brand, Thos.: Original letters/1780-6, B8
 Carr, Ellis: Mountaineering Record, D1/85 (C/18)
 Coolidge, W. A. B.: Original letters/1880-9, B9
 Davidson, W. E.: Diaries in 20 vols. 1874-1914, D18 (C25-39)
 Edwards, H.: Diaries in 8 vols. 1890-1927, D1/95 (D3-10)
 Farrar, J. P.: Letters in 2 vols. 1912-17, B12-13; Diaries in 18 vols. 1883-1924, D1/21-38; Documents re his article on Finsteraarhorn 1926, B15
 Fellows, Sir C.: Correspondence 1828-42, B16
 Ferrand, H.: Letters in 2 vols, 1911-24, B10-11
 Forbes, J. D.: Correspondence with Alfred Wills 1855-66, B17; Letters to A. Goutier 1842-72, B18
 Freshfield, D. W.: Letters in 5 vols. 1912-23, B19-23
 Girdlestone, A. G.: Letters in 3 vols. 1860-81, B24-26
 Griseckis.: Journal, D1/89 (C44)
 Hudson, Chas.: Journal in 2 vols., D1/86-87 (C50-51)
 Jones, H. O.: Diaries in 4 vols. 1908-10, D11-14; Letters 1908, B54
 Ling, W. N.: Diaries in 21 vols. 1893-1953, D15-35
 Lloyd, R. W.: Diaries 1909-27, D1/104
 Mathews, Wm.: Original letters 1836-57, B27; Diaries in 11 vols 1856-63, D1/56-62d; Diary in 1862, D1/105
 Montagnier, H. F.: Letters in 3 vols. 1908-17, B28-30
 Moore, A. W.: Diaries in 4 vols. 1860-66, D1/81-84 (C65-68); Diary—The Alps 1870-78, D1/88 (C69)

- Morse, Sir G. H.: Diaries in 5 vols. 1884-1927, D36-40
 Mumm, A.: Letters 1920-6, B31; Diaries in 16 vols. 1864-1905, D1/63-78
 Mummery, A. F.: Letter to J. N. Collie 1895, B55
 Parker—: Letters 1860-1865, B32
 Passingham, G. A.: Leaves from his notebook, D1/103 (D41)
 Reade, H. V.: Diaries in 16 vols. 1892-1913, D1/40-55
 Schuster, Claud: Diaries in 11 vols. 1886-1939, D43-52
 Shipton —: Diary of Shipton family 1920-62, D53
 Simond, Josef: Letters, B33
 Slingsby, Wm C.: The Dent Blanche 1890, B34
 Smith, Oswald: Diary 1818, D54
 Smythe, F. S.: Letters re the Matterhorn Accident 1939-57, B53
 Spencer, E. J. Gordon: Memorial to, D55
 Spencer, Sydney: Diary 1887-1928, D1/94
 Weston, Walter: Diary 1894, D1/80
 Whymper, E.: Collection of letters in 3 vols., B35-37; Letters 1867-8, B52
 Wicks, J. H.: Diaries in 3 vols., D1/90-92
 Wills, Sir A.: Correspondence 1852-9, B38
 Wilson, Claude: Epitome of 50 years climbing, B39
 Wilson, Maurice: Diary D56
 Young, G. W.: Correspondence in 9 vols.; B40-48; Original letters in 4 vols., B1-4

Secondary Index: (Führerbücher/guides' books)

- Acetelli, Giovanni: 1886-1928, M16
 Almer, Christian I: 1856-94, L7; Christian II: 1879-98, O11; Johann: 1884-1925, O6; Peter: 1889-1927, O6; Rudolf: 1888-1920, O6; Ulrich: 1870-1913, O11
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 Binli, Bernard: M11
 Blatter, Caspar: 1861-83, K17; Jakob: 1865-77, K18
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 Burgener, Alexander: 1882-1909, K6; photostat, K9; Johann: 1884-1909, O7; Rudolf: 1891-1927, O8
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- Knubel, Josef: 1896-1927, K23;
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- Kronig, Alois: 1886-1912, N3;
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- Weissenfluh, Andreas: 1862-1903, L11
- Zurbriggen, Peter: 1876-1901, K35;
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