have not obviously the same comfort in a snow ascent as in a full rock ascent as is the case of Saraghrar SW buttress. However, bad weather and the end of available time finally caused the climb to be abandoned.

The second attempt took place in 1977. The team consisted of 12 members, one of them a doctor as well as a climber. The team reached the highest point of 1975 and continued along a very severe section to the point where the buttress looks to be less steep. During the following weeks Camps 5 and 6 were placed after overcoming new difficulties.

At an altitude of 6350m the leading party found that the buttress was cut off by a gap from the upper wall of Saraghrar. The difficulties of this second part of the wall appeared to be great, since in the absence of flat ledges new high camps would have to be hung with ropes while a new supply of food, ropes and tents would have to be brought from the foot of the wall. The climb was therefore abandoned. This confirms that the SW wall of Saraghrar Peak is at the moment one of the highest and most difficult rock walls in the world.

The party reached Base Camp at Totiraz Noku (4160m) on 24 June and left it on 2 August.

The members of the team were: Ramón Brámona (leader); Jordi Pons (deputy leader); Jaime Altadill; José Manuel Anglada; Joan Cerdá; Joan Claramunt; Jordi Colomer; Joan Massons; José Luis Perez; Anton Rañe (doctor); Genis Roca and Francisco Sabat.

One hundred years ago

(with extracts from the *Alpine Journal*)

C. A. Russell

After the indeterminate conditions which had persisted throughout much of the previous year it was hoped that the climbing season of 1878 would be more settled. By the end of April, however, this pleasant prospect was already receding, with icy winds persisting in many areas to delay the advent of spring.

Among the first plans to be implemented during the year were those of F. F. Tuckett, who with F. E. Blackstone made a number of mountain excursions in May, while travelling in Greece. After visiting various places of interest and climbing Mt Delphi (Dhirfis, 1745m) in Euboea by way of a path which passed through 'a noble forest of gigantic old chestnuts', the party started in brilliant moonlight on 16 May 'for the ascent of Mt Lykeri,[1] the highest point of Parnassus, accompanied by a shepherd as guide. The pace having been very leisurely, and some step-cutting having been necessary, or at least desirable, the actual summit was not reached till

[1] 2459m.

10.20. Ten minutes previously, whilst halting on a rock in the snow, a rather smart earthquake shock was felt, a novel experience in mountaineering, and one which in the Alps would be a fresh source of danger, the more serious as its occurrence could never be foreseen and provided against, and the avalanches of ice, snow and rock which it would probably occasion might take place when the position of the climber rendered retreat or shelter impossible. One and ¾ hours were spent on the summit in making observations and studying the wonderful view, which is not only of great beauty and grandeur but, in the historic interest of its details, certainly unsurpassed by any in the world. To the south Taygetus[2] was clearly distinguished, and reared itself up most grandly, whilst due north and south respectively the Maliac (Gulf of Lamia) and Corinthian Gulfs were conspicuous and beautiful features. Euboea was obscure, but some of the islands beyond it could be made out and Olympus, or a lofty snow mountain apparently in its exact position, was also visible.'

In the Alps hopes of a long and settled summer were finally dashed when the cold weather continued throughout the month of June; the season was, in fact, one of the worst on record. Nevertheless an important climb was achieved in the Dolomites on 23 June when Julius Meurer and the Marchese Alfred di Pallavicini, with Santo Siorpaes and Arcangelo Dimaj as guides and Michele Bettega as porter, made the first ascent of the formidable Pala di San Martino. After 4 hours they 'were pretty high up on the ice which lies in the recess between the Pala and the Cima della Rosetta.' The ascent was continued with considerable difficulty until 'all

[2] 2409m, above Sparta. Climbed by Tuckett a year earlier.

87 Pala di San Martino (This and next three photos: C. Douglas Milner)

at once the party stood before a perpendicular wall, which evidently had to be scaled. This proved to be, not so much in ascending, but especially in the descent, the most perilous part of the expedition. Above this wall the party climbed laterally through crumbling rocks.' After further difficulties had been surmounted a dangerous place was passed where Dimaj was struck by a falling stone. 'A further way was now found, and although very steep, still not quite as dangerous. An ice-field having been at last reached, in another quarter of an hour the summit of the Pala was conquered.

The Pala di S. Martino consists of three peaks, which are only separated from each other by small depressions. The SW peak is the lowest of the three, although the difference in height between the peaks consists of a few metres only. The declivity of the precipices on all sides of the Pala is frightfully rapid.' Clouds prevented a clear view from the summit and a heavy storm which set in made the descent of the rock walls even more difficult.

The weather did not improve and J. Oakley Maund noted that 'for mountaineering purposes July, 1878, was one of the worst months in the memory of man. Scorching heat on one day was followed by thunderstorm and rain on the next; there was snow knee-deep wherever it had no business to be; rock mountains were sheathed with ice, and avalanches were tumbling about in every probable and improbable place.' W. A. B. Coolidge, who arrived in the Dauphiné at the end of June determined to reach the summit of the Meije, was compelled to wait for over a week owing to the great quantity of snow on the mountain. Finally on 10 July, one of the few good days in the month, Coolidge, with Christian Almer and his second son Christian, made the second ascent of the Grand Pic. Addressing the Alpine Club later in the year Coolidge recalled that 'it was a moment of my life which I can never forget. Yet my feelings were very mixed. The pleasure of having attained a long wished-for goal was very great, but at the same time my thoughts recurred involuntarily to my companion on many expeditions in Dauphiné, one of whose most cherished wishes it had been to stand on this lofty pinnacle, a wish which was doomed to remain forever unsatisfied.'[3]

Also in the Dauphiné Coolidge, with the two Almers, made the first ascent of Les Bans on 14 July, while Henri Duhamel, with Pierre Gaspard and his son and Christophe Roderon, reached the summit of the unclimbed Pic Gaspard on 6 July. Later in the season, on 20 August Duhamel, with Giraud-Lézin and Florimond Gonet, made the first ascent of the Pic Oriental of the Meije. Another event of note was the arrival of Charles and Lawrence Pilkington and Frederick Gardiner, who spent a month climbing in the region without guides. Starting with an ascent of Monte Viso, the party completed a number of fine climbs, including the first guideless ascent of the Barre des Écrins.

Other peaks ascended for the first time were the Mittaghorn in the Bernese Oberland, by C. Montandon, A. Ringier and A. Rubin, on 19 July and the Aiguille des Glaciers in the Mont Blanc range on 2 August by E. del Carretto and F. Gonella, with Laurent Proment and G. and A. Henry. In the Bernina Alps on 12 August Paul Güssfeldt, with Hans Grass and Johann Gross, made the first complete ascent of the N ridge of Piz Bernina; better known as the Biancograt, this is the classic ridge of the mountain and constitutes one of the best expeditions of its standard in the Alps.

[3] Coolidge's aunt, Miss Meta Brevoort, had died in December 1876.

88 The Charpoua glacier face of the Drus

Owing to the bad weather it was not until September that C. T. Dent was able to complete what was undoubtedly the principal achievement of the season, the first ascent of the Grand Dru. Addressing the Alpine Club in the following February Dent recalled the many attempts to reach the summit made by himself and others over a period of 5 years and went on to ridicule one particular claim of a more dubious nature. 'Some may perhaps be astonished on learning that the highest point had apparently been reached before we climbed it. Astonishment will give way to admiration when I mention that this successful ascent was effected by a single individual.

Starting with no other companions than a trusty rope and an equally reliable axe, our hero ascended by that part of the Glacier de Charpoua which is the most unfavourable, on account of multitudinous intersecting crevasses. It seems that after a time this second Jacques Balmat left the glacier, got on to the rocks at an impossible spot, and climbed them by an impracticable route. Overcoming astounding obstacles he attained (in about half a page) a point whence, he tells us, further ascent was impossible. A vertical wall of rock arrested further progress. But I feel sure that this is only the author's delicate way of putting it. Further ascent was impossible, simply because he was, as shown by the illustration accompanying his description, on the summit. To remove any doubt on the subject, he planted a stick and a flag. Incredulity at Chamonix was crushed. "There", he said on his return, "look at my mark, there, on the little step just to the right of the summit". They gazed through the telescope, and were convinced. Only one, an incredulous artist, of some Alpine repute and experience, stared, like the little child at the Emperor's

new clothes, and saw nothing save a dark line of rock and a patch of snow some 20ft square.'

Dent had returned to England early in September in low spirits, but hurried back to Chamonix 2 days later 'on receiving by telegraph the welcome intimation that the weather at last looked promising.' On 8 September he and J. W. Hartley with Alexander Burgener made a final reconnaissance, climbing above the Col du Dru on to the SE face. This expedition was not helped by the presence of a fourth man who stated at the start that he had been drunk the night before and whose main contribution to the proceedings was to fall into 2 crevasses and to crouch for 7 hours under a little rock with much of the party's rope encircling his person, not daring to move up or down.

On 12 September Dent and Hartley, accompanied by Burgener and Kaspar Maurer set out at 4am from a bivouac near the base of the Charpoua Glacier. 'Our position now was this. By our exploration of September 8 we knew that from the col it was possible to ascend to a considerable height on the main mass. Again, from telescopic observations and the slope of the rocks we were certain that the final arête was easy. Immediately above the col the only choice was to cross over rather on to the SE face while ascending. A projecting buttress of rock, some two or three hundred feet in height, cuts off the view on to the face from the col. We hoped by turning straight up behind this to hit off the arête just above the point where it merges into the precipitous NE wall. The rocks behind this buttress are visible only from near the head of the Charpoua Glacier, but we had never properly examined them.

We followed the couloir running up from the head of the glacier, keeping well to the left to a little below the col. At this point it became necessary to cross the couloir, and for that purpose we employed the long ladder, which we had placed in position the day before. Right glad were we to see the ricketty old structure, albeit it creaked and groaned dismally under our weight, and ran its splinters into our persons at all points of contact. Yet there was a certain companionship about this same weather-beaten ladder, and I felt as if it was almost a hardship that it could not share more in our promising success. Next we fastened a double rope, about 20ft in length, and swung ourselves down a rough cleft as if we were barrels of split peas going into a ship's hold. Up again, and the excitement waxed stronger as we neared the doubtful part. What next? An eager look up, and part of the doubt was solved. There was a way—but such a way. A narrow flat couloir, its angle plastered with ice from top to bottom, invited, or forbade, further progress. Above, a pendulous mass of great icicles, black and long like a bunch of elephants' trunks, crowned the gully. We tucked ourselves away on one side, and the guides performed the best feat of rock climbing I can imagine possible. Unroped they worked up, hacking out the ice, their backs and elbows against one sloping wall and their feet against the other.'

A nasty moment occurred in the couloir when a mass of ice gave way under Maurer's feet and he was prevented from falling by Burgener, who pinned him to the rock with one hand. Then 'of a sudden the mountain seemed to change its form. For hours we had been climbing the hard dry rocks. Now these appeared to vanish, and—blessed sight—snow lay thick, half hiding, half revealing the last slope of the arête. A glance showed that we had not misjudged. A short troublesome bit of snow-work followed, where the heaped-up cornice had fallen back from the final rock. Then Hartley courteously allowed me to unrope and pass him,

89 Col Dolent

90 Mont Maudit

and in a second I clutched at the last broken rocks, and hauled myself up on to the flat sloping summit. There for a moment I stood alone, gazing down on Chamonix. The dream of five years was accomplished. The Dru was climbed.'

The conquest of the Grand Dru was a remarkable achievement for the period and on returning to Chamonix the party was welcomed at Couttet's Hotel where, Dent was under the impression, 'a good many bottles were uncorked.'

Another fine exploit in the Mont Blanc range was the first traverse of the Col du Dolent from the French, or Argentière, side to Italy by W. E. Davidson and J. W. Hartley, with Johann Jaun and Laurent Lanier, on 2 September. The previous day in the Pennine Alps P. W. Thomas, with J. Imboden and J. Langen, reached the E summit of the Lyskamm by way of the unclimbed S ridge. On 12 September, while Dent and his party were climbing the Grand Dru, another first ascent was recorded not far away when Davidson and H. Seymour Hoare, with Jaun and Johann von Bergen reached the summit of Mont Maudit.

The bad weather continued and D. W. Freshfield, who had been driven out of the Dauphiné by a snow-storm, arrived 'shivering under plaids' in the Maritime Alps at the end of September. On 27 September Freshfield, with François Devouassoud, made the first ascent of the Cima di Nasta (3108m) on the mistaken assumption that it was the Punta dell' Argentera,[4] the highest point of the range. After climbing the steep face of the Nasta they reached the summit, 'a narrow ridge beautifully mantled with piles of pure fresh snow', where the mistake became apparent. 'A mile perhaps to the north a great rock rose several hundred feet above our heads. Hitherto it had been concealed by an intervening buttress. But there was no doubt that this was the true Argentera.' There was, however, ample compensation. Seated on the highest boulder 'we feasted our eyes on a view of the most wonderful beauty. The main chain had altogether sunk, except where Mont Clapier on our left showed sharp rocks above broad snows. There was nothing to hide the beautiful coast-lands of France, from the double top of the Berceau above Mentone to—it was difficult to say what—westwards. Distance beyond distance, glowing in afternoon sunshine, and robed in the most delicate colours, stretched the familiar hills of Provence: Cheiron, Estérels, Montagnes des Maures. The Var shone in the lowlands; a pale smoke showed the train approaching Nice. Out at sea, the Corsican mountains hung midway between heaven and earth, no longer white with winter snows, but blue and purple, and canopied, as at all times, by a luminous cloud suspended high above their crests.'

An interesting expedition during July and August was that of James Eccles, who while in America was able to visit the Wind River range in the Rockies. Eccles and his party, consisting of Michel Payot of Chamonix, a packer and a cook, received an invitation from Dr Hayden, the Government Surveyor, to join one of his parties working in the region. Starting from Cheyenne on the Union Pacific Railway Eccles explored a large part of the range, climbing Wind River Peak (4031m) and Fremont's Peak (4185m) with Payot and various members of the survey. After moving across country to the base of the Teton range Eccles' plans to climb the Grand Teton were thwarted by uncertain weather and, on one occasion, by two of his pack mules demonstrating an annoying nocturnal habit of straying back along the trail to previous camps.

[4] 3297m.

It is appropriate that the conclusion to this summary of the events of one hundred years ago should be provided by Dent, whose name will always be associated with the Dru. 'The days grow shorter apace; the sun has barely time to make the ice-fields glisten ere the cold shadows creep over again. Snow lies thick on ledge and cranny, and only the steepest mountain faces show dark through the powdery veil. Bleak night winds whistle around the crags, and whirl and chevy the wreathing snow-clouds, making weird music in these desolate fastnesses. The clear satiating air, the delicate purity of the Alpine tints, have given way to fog, mist, slush, and smoke-laden atmosphere. Would you recall these mountain pictures? Draw close the curtains, stir the coals into an indignant crackling blaze, and fashion in the rising smoke the mountain vista. How these scenes crowd back into the mind, with a revivability proportionate to the impression originally made! What keener charm than to pass in review the memories of these simple, wholesome pleasures; to see again, as clear as in the reality, every ledge, every hand and foot hold; to feel the fingers tingle and the muscles instinctively contract at the recollection of some tough scramble on rock or glacier?'

Sentiments with which neither the present writer nor those of his readers who have known the joy of climbing in high places would disagree.

Events and trends 1970 – 6 Nepal Himalaya

Mike Cheney

Foreign, mainly Western, involvement in the Nepal Himalaya divides into 2 distinct eras. The period 1950 to 1965 was followed by a second period from 1969–70 to 1976, with a clean break between of 3 years from 1966 to 1968 when no expeditions were allowed in the Nepal Himalaya by the Government of Nepal.

The first period has been described by Col Jimmy Roberts as the 'Golden Age' of Himalayan exploration; few will quarrel with this, although those that are 'past it' usually consider their own prime time as 'Golden'. It was primarily an era of exploration, chiefly by mountaineers who had gained their reputations in the Indian Himalaya in the days of British rule.

Although this was a period of exploration all the major peaks were climbed or attempted, as soon as the explorers found the routes to the mountains through the foothills. Maurice Herzog's expedition of 1950 opened the era of big expeditions to big peaks with the first ascent of Annapurna I (8091m); thereafter all the major peaks were attempted and many climbed to the summit.

H. S. Muller, in the preface to *Mountain World 1960–61*, wrote that the Swiss ascent of Dhaulagiri I (8167m) ended an era in the history of mountaineering. In retrospect this is hardly so, since this 'Golden Age' really ended as an indirect result of the political upheaval that took place in Tibet in the late 1950s and the subsequent clashes between China and India across the whole length of the Himalaya in the early 1960s. It closed abruptly in 1965 with the successful Indian Everest Expedition in the spring of that year and, shortly afterwards, the closing of the