

In Memoriam

Geoffrey Templeman

Introduction

In the year since the last Journal the Club has been notified of the deaths of a further 13 members, the list being as follows: Harold William Tilman (Honorary Member); Harold Benjamin Louis Levy; Lord Chorley; Count Guido Alberto Rivetti; Mary Merrick; Count Ugo di Vallepianta; Nick Estcourt; Colonel Mohammed Ata-Ullah; Alistair D. McKeith; Mrs Freda V. Kemsley; John L. Taylor; Alison Chadwick-Onyszkiewicz; Ronald Dalle Nogare.

In addition, the death of Joyce Dunsheath was inadvertently missed from the last Journal, but I am pleased to be able to include a tribute this year, as I am also for Sir Ralph Ismay Metcalfe, whose death was only noted in *AJ* 83.

Whilst it is always invidious to single out individual names from the list, perhaps this may be excused in two cases. The loss of Nick Estcourt on K2 was a great tragedy for British Mountaineering and I am grateful to Chris Bonington and *Mountain* for the full tribute that appears here. The disappearance of Bill Tilman at sea means the loss of one of the world's great adventurers. As the year wore on, hope that the boat and its crew would be found grew less, and while one contributor was sure that the 'Skipper' would love to read his own obituary, he was hesitant at being the person who wrote it prematurely. Unhappily, there is now little likelihood of that being the case; the tribute is in the main part of the Journal.

Many of those listed above have full obituaries in the pages that follow, and I wish to thank all those who contributed so readily when requested and, especially, those who wrote in without being asked at all—happily an increasing number. Of the remainder, either time was too short or other circumstances have prevented willing friends from contributing and the following brief notes must suffice for this year, although I hope members will be able to contribute something more full for *AJ* 85.

Count Guido Alberto Rivetti (1892–1976) was elected to the Club in 1929, being proposed by Vittorio Sella and seconded by Guido Rey. His list of expeditions, commencing in 1911, was an impressive one, containing many first ascents including that of the Hirondelles Ridge on the Grandes Jorasses.

Col. Mohammed Ata-Ullah (1903–1977) acted as Transport Officer to both the American and Italian K2 expeditions in the 1950s and had also been to the Alps climbing with the Italian friends he had made. He was active in the mountaineering world in his own country and had been a good friend to British climbers in Pakistan.

'**Bugs**' **McKeith** died whilst descending Mount Assiniboine in a storm, at the age of 33. He was one of the leading lights on the Scottish climbing scene in his youth and, after spending some time in Antarctica, emigrated to Canada in the early '70s. He made many important ascents in North America both on rock and snow/ice. A full obituary appeared in *Climber and Rambler* in September 1978.

John L. Taylor, elected to the ACG in 1976, was killed whilst climbing in Borrowdale. He was 32 and one of Britain's foremost solo climbers.

R. Dalle Nogare was elected to the Club in 1976 after having good seasons in the Alps every year since 1963, plus visits to Corsica and Ruwenzori.

Lord Chorley (1895–1978)

Theo Chorley's love of mountains was a much wider thing than his personal enjoyment of them. He fought tenaciously for the rights of others to share this enjoyment and it was part of his life's task to make and keep our mountains, hills and indeed our whole countryside accessible to his fellow men. He was an officer of almost all the organizations for the preservation of natural beauty and President of many of them. Even this was only part of his broad sense of human justice. One has only to look at the long list of appointments which he held in areas ranging from penal reform to banking and insurance law to realize the width and distinction of this modest man's mind. His marriage to Katharine Hopkinson in 1925 laid a firm foundation for his unshakable devotion to the preservation of our countryside. No one who visited their home in Hampstead or later at Stanmore could fail to feel the deep-seated love of beauty and justice for which they stood.

Born in Kendal, Theo went to school there and thence to Queens College Oxford where he read history. He was called to the Bar in 1920 and was for many years Cassel Professor of Commercial Law in the University of London. From 1942 to 1944 he was Deputy Regional

Commissioner for Civil Defence for the NW Region. Under the Attlee Government he became a Lord-in-Waiting and from 1944 to 1968 was Chairman of Westmorland Quarter Sessions. For 35 years he was editor, some would say founder, of the *Modern Law Review*. In 1961 he was made a QC. He was Deputy Chairman of the National Trust and a member of the Hobbouse Committee whose work for our National Parks owed much to the clarity of his mind. He was also Hon Secretary of the CPRE and President of the Friends of the Lake District.

He was elected to the AC in 1938 and was its Vice-President from 1956 to 1958. He had been President of the Fell and Rock Club from 1935 to 1937 having joined that Club in 1916 and edited its Journal for 10 years before handing over this task to his wife Katharine, herself a keen climber. From 1950 to 1953 he was President of the British Mountaineering Council.

The first time I met Theo was in the summer of 1922 when he and R. B. Graham invited me to join them for my first season in the Alps. This was the first time I had been abroad and Theo looked after me on that magical journey in a kind and fatherly way, being 6 years my senior. He had been to the Alps the previous year and this of course made him an authority in my eyes. After a few guideless ascents from Arolla (including a search party which took us nearly to the top of the Petite Dent de Vevisi by moonlight) we engaged Josef Georges le Skieur for a week's tour which included a traverse of the Dent d'Hérens from the Rifugio d'Aosta to Breuil (Cervinia) taking the calculated risk of crossing the ice-slope of the Mount Tabel glacier after midday, then, after a severe storm, a traverse of the Matterhorn from Breuil to Zermatt, mostly in crampons, followed by a traverse of the Dent Blanche by the Viesesgrat.¹ On the Mount Tabel ice-slope we were assailed by large stones whirring over the rope between us. (Forty years later Theo recalled this moment in a television programme in which we were both involved. My memory made the stones about the size of a large footstool, his made them the size of a grand piano. I do not know who was right.) The following year, 1923, the same party, after a guideless week in the Oberland which included the first complete traverse of the Fiescherhorn-Grünhorn-Grüneckhorn ridge from the Bergli hut to the Concordia, met Josef Georges once more, this time for an attempt on the then unclimbed N ridge of the Dent Blanche; but this had to be abandoned at the last moment owing to a complete break in the weather.

My 2 companions were very different. Graham, schoolmaster and all-round mountaineer, took the lead in planning our expeditions; Chorley, the finer rock-climber, was always the quiet friend and observer with a kind but incisive sense of humour which never left him in the most uncomfortable moments.

In 1924 he was with George Bower and A. W. Wakefield at Chamonix for an attempt on the Aiguille Sans Nom from which they were driven back by bad weather. He climbed in the Alps most seasons until the war except for one holiday in Norway (Horungtinder and Romsdal) and 2 or 3 devoted to spring ski-ing. During these years he was sometimes with Katharine and in 1926 with Everisto Croux of Courmayeur when among other ascents they traversed the Grand Charmoz and, with the addition of C. G. Markbrieter and W. B. Carslake did the Aiguille Verte by the Whymper Couloir and the traverse of the Mont Mallet and Les Arêtes de Rochefort. He also climbed guideless with Beetham, Pryor and Meldrum and with Speaker in the Engelhörner. At home we should not forget his first ascent of Eliminate 'C' on Dow Crags and also his loyal maintenance for many years of the tradition of ascending Pillar Rock on New Year's Day.

The latter part of his life will be better known to other members of the Club, for I was out of touch for many years. But his quiet friendliness was always there and his mind remained alert as ever in spite of failing sight and diminishing bodily strength.

We can be grateful for his noble spirit and his devotion to the welfare of his fellow men.

Michael Wilson

Mrs Joyce Dunsheath (1902-76)

Mrs Joyce Dunsheath, née Cissie Providence Houchen, who died on 30 July 1976 aged 74, became a member of the Ladies Alpine Club in 1951 and subsequently of the Alpine Club. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1956 and served on its Council from 1965 to 1968 as well as on others of its committees. She represented the Society on the Alpine Club Library Council for several years until she had to resign for domestic reasons. She took a degree in Modern Languages at Bedford College, University of London in 1924 and a BSc degree when in her 60s as well as 'A' level Russian.

¹ See *AJ* 225 Nov 1922, also Theo's article 'Eight Days' in the *FRCC journal* for 1922.

In 1938 she married as his second wife Dr Percy Dunsheath with whom she shared a love of travel and mountaineering. She always, when accompanying him to international technological congresses abroad or when at her own specialized meetings, took the opportunity of seeing the surrounding country and if possible its mountains. Thus for example, as a result of a meeting of the International Electrotechnical Commission in Moscow, she was able to climb Mt Elbruz in the Caucasus and when as President of the British Federation of University Women she attended a meeting of the international body in Tokyo she visited the Japanese Alps.

Most continents are represented in the list of her climbs in various numbers of the LAC journal. The Canadian Rockies, the Himalayas, Iran, Peru, East Africa and Romania are among the many areas in which she climbed. In 1956 she organized an expedition to explore the Bara-Shigri glacier in the Kulu, Lahul-Spiti district of the Himalaya with Hilda Reid, Eileen Gregory and Frances Delany, driving from this country to India, and in 1961 she went with Eleanor Baillie to Afghanistan via Iran where they climbed Demavend. In 1964 she led the first Indian Women's Himalayan Expedition to Mrigthuni in the Garwhal region. She began her mountaineering career in the Lake District.

Joyce Dunsheath's love of mountains and long association with the Girl Guide movement were brought together in the camp she arranged in the French Alps in 1962 to encourage the young to adventure in the hills. This camp was the pattern of many such projects which owe their origin to her.

Besides her other activities she played the bassoon and the flute with the local orchestra. She was a generous and kindly person, always willing to help when help was needed, and an enthusiastic gardener.

She wrote 3 books—*Mountains and Memahibs* 1956 with the other members of the expedition to the Bara-Shigri glacier, *Guest of the Soviets* 1959 and *Afghan Quest* 1961 and a number of articles in the LAC journal.

Joyce Lancaster-Jones

Nick Estcourt (1943–1978)

Nick Estcourt died on 12 June, caught and swept away by a windslab avalanche on the W ridge of K2 at a height of around 6500m. With his death Britain has lost one of her most outstanding expedition climbers, and his fellow mountaineers, a loyal, warm hearted friend.

His upbringing and introduction to the mountains were almost in the tradition of the Victorian and Edwardian pioneers, giving a clue perhaps to the foundation of his quality as a team member, though his manner and approach to life were very much in key to our own time.

He was introduced to the mountains at an early age by his parents who were keen walkers and adventurous scramblers. They started with walking holidays in the Lake District, and then, at the age of 10, in 1953, he was taken on a family walking holiday in the Savoy Alps. Its climax was a guided ascent of the Aiguille de Polset. From that moment he was hooked on climbing. These trips to the Alps became an annual fixture throughout his childhood and youth, with guided climbs on progressively more difficult routes. Back in England, he went to Eastbourne College, joined school climbing parties to North Wales, grabbed illicit climbs on Beachy Head, and whenever he could escape, cycled for the day to Harrisons Rocks, 60 miles there and back.

By the time he went up to Cambridge he was a competent rock-climber and sound Alpinist. In his 3 years at university he built up on this foundation, became president of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club and went on his first expedition, to the Stauning Alps in Greenland when he completed several first ascents.

On leaving Cambridge, he undertook voluntary service overseas, spending a year in Sierra Leone. On his return to England, he went into civil engineering, but soon changed to computers and moved up to Manchester, to be closer to climbing. He was one of the few outstanding expedition climbers of his generation who succeeded in following a career as well as climb to the full, with a major expedition almost every other year. It was a mark of the breadth of his interests and intellect as well as his capacity for hard work that he managed to combine the two. It was in this period that he met Carolyn, getting married in 1966. They had 3 children.

The sixties were filled with Alpine climbs. He joined John Harlin in 1964 in one of his early attempts on the W face direct on the Dru, made a very fast ascent of the Walker Spur in 1965 and in 1967, with Martin Boysen, as British representatives to the International

Rassemblement in Chamonix, made the second ascent of the S face of the Fou and a new route up the NW face of the Pic Sans Nom. During this period he was also secretary of the ACG.

But it was in the seventies, as an expedition member, that Nick contributed so much to British mountaineering. He had the comparatively rare quality amongst good climbers of being a first class organizer and having a strong social conscience. If you ever asked Nick to do anything, whether it was an organizational job, running out a stretch of the route or ferrying a load, you could always rely on it being done to perfection.

It was Nick and Martin Boysen who forced the hardest piece of ice-climbing on the S face of Annapurna and then exhausted themselves in support of others, carrying loads up to Camp 5, and then 6. It was Dave Bathgate and Nick who pushed the route out below the Rock Band on Everest in 1972, accepting a role that greatly reduced their chances of making a summit bid. In the event they got the best climbing of anyone, since we failed to force the route beyond their highpoint.

Then in 1975 it was Tut Braithwaite and Nick who forced the Rock Band. John Hunt summed up their achievement in the foreword to *Everest the Hard Way*: 'I think that all members of the party would concede (with the exception of the person that I allude to) that the supreme example of climbing technique applied with exceptional determination, was Nick Estcourt's superb lead, without the normal safeguards or oxygen at 27,000 feet, up the rickety, outward leaning ramp of snow covered rubble which led from the gully in the Rock Band up to the upper snow field. This must be one of the greatest leads in climbing history. . . .'

On the Ogre, last year, it was Nick who stayed behind, organized the evacuation and did all the thankless, messy work of cleaning up after the epic that Doug Scott and myself had on the mountain. But most of all I should like to remember the really great days' climbing that I and others had with him; our ascent of Brammah, a beautiful virgin peak of 6415m in the Kishtwar Himalaya, our Alpine style push on the Ogre, which took us to the W summit, or many delightful days of climbing in this country. Nick always had a tremendous enthusiasm for climbing and had completed most of the modern hard routes in Wales. He always spoke with special enthusiasm of his trip to Yosemite in the summer of 1976, when he climbed the Nose of El Capitan and the Salathé Wall, with cassette player blaring on the stances and a bottle of scotch for the bivouacs. This was very much Nick's style of climbing.

It was his capacity for enjoyment as well as work, the parties, the booze-ups, impassioned arguments about politics or almost anything else, the fun of climbing with him, combined with an exceptional sense of loyalty and integrity that his friends will miss.

Chris Bonington

Freda Kemsley (1920–1978)

Freda Kemsley, who with her husband was killed on the Dent d'Hérens in late August, was elected a member of the Ladies' Alpine Club in 1962, with a record which showed an equal love of mountain travel as of mountain climbing. With John Kemsley—they always climbed as a very self-sufficient pair—she had been all over the Alps, from Monte Viso, to the Tyrol. Typical of their holidays was their 1966 journey from near the St Gotthard to Täsch, described in a lively article for the LAC Journal for 1967, 'Another Haute Route'. On this trip they climbed Monte Leone, the Alphubel and the Allalinhorn; when next year they traversed the Oberland from the Grimsel to the Jungfrauoch they climbed the Oberaarhorn, Finsteraarhorn, Jungfrau and Mönch. Freda's pleasure in peaks was matched by her pleasure in passes, expressed here in her own words; 'It is this longing for the unfamiliar, that glimpse of the unknown on the other side of the pass, that urges us each year to traverse the mountains instead of working from a centre. For the Eric Shiptons of this world, adventure lurks in far-flung and unexplored corners of the earth. For us, the middle-aged commuter and his helpmate, the yearning for it can be satisfied only by drawing a line with a finger across a map in the winter and following it across the hills in boots in the summer, *ripae ulterioris amore*.'

Janet Carleton

H. B. L. Levy (1897–1977)

Harry Levy was an outstanding example of the man who takes up climbing in middle age and then exhibits, more strongly than many a young 'tiger', a youthful enthusiasm for all aspects of mountaineering, continuing in his case until his last years. It was in 1936 that he found the interest in the hills which gave him so much satisfaction, whether climbing the Northumbrian rocks near his home in Sunderland, tackling the Lake District or Scottish mountains and easier rock-climbs in summer and winter or completing some of the classic or, more

frequently, the less well-known routes, in the Alps. His alpine expeditions, starting in 1950 with a guided ascent of the Portiengrat, covered a period of some 10 years but most of the later peaks he turned to such as the Mutthorn and Tschingelhorn, were ascended guideless in company with such friends as Frank Oakes Smith and Jimmy Dawson of the Gritstone Club. Those 3 climbed frequently together too in Britain and Harry, who himself was a member of the Gritstone Club, always spoke with great affection and respect of Frank and Jimmy with whom he had clearly shared so many memorable days.

Harry was in no sense a distinguished rock-climber or alpinist but he was physically strong and added to simple competence a thoroughness of preparation and an infectious enthusiasm which made him first class mountaineering company. He was perhaps most at home on his local hills and crags and he was responsible for the production of a useful guide *Some Northumbrian Rock Climbs*. He introduced many younger people to the hills and crags and enjoyed their pleasure at the discoveries they made.

He was very much aware of the post-war initiative by education authorities and voluntary organizations to provide opportunities for mountain experience and training for young people and he talked with knowledge and understanding of the developments which seemed to many of us to be so desirable.

It was natural that he should take up ski-ing at an age when most would have thought it prudent to go back to climbing or even walking boots. He looked forward to weekends ski touring in Glenshee with the Gritstone Club and preparing for winter holidays at Bivio with the same regular companions.

Like his great friend, Jimmy Dawson, Harry was a consultant surgeon, a non-specialist as he was in his climbing. He was part of the Sunderland and North East scene for a life-time, a family man known and liked by generations of Tyne and Wear folk. He asked very little from the hills but he seemed privileged to enjoy their secrets more than most. He became a member of the Alpine Club in 1957.

John Cook

Edward Pyatt writes:

I have particularly happy recollections of meeting H. B. L. Levy on his home ground in Northumberland. We had corresponded about his local outcrops and a family holiday in the county enabled him to show us, both adults and children, round some of the sites. His enthusiasm for the task was obvious and infectious and it was easy to appreciate what a source of inspiration he was in the local climbing world.

Miss Mary H. Merrick (1894–1978)

'Polly', who died early this year aged 84, joined the Ladies' Alpine Club in 1937. She had 4 seasons in the Alps from 1934 to 1937 doing a number of the classic climbs in the Oberland, Valais and Chamonix areas. She was also a member of the American Alpine Club, and during the last war and the 1950s climbed in the Teton range, accomplishing some first and second ascents, and also with the Canadian Alpine Club, camping and climbing in the Rockies, based on Banff and Lake Louise. There are some attractive and characteristically humorous accounts of these expeditions in the LAC Journals of the time including one, in 1950, entitled 'Half Way Up Popocatepetl' which indicates her endearing ability to extract pleasure from almost any mountain or travel situation. 1952 found her in Peru, 1959 in Colorado Springs. In her late seventies she *walked* from Zermatt to the Hornli Hut!

Except for the war years Polly was able to visit Europe during the summer vacation most years. She was a school-teacher near Philadelphia, and lived in a happily converted stable among the gorgeous trees of Pennsylvania. Apart from climbing she was a good walker and an enterprising cyclist, much to the amazement of her American friends. Those who were fortunate enough to be invited to the enchanting family villa near Pistoia, will remember a gracious lady framed by the Tuscan Hills, never too far away from her beloved mountains.

Polly was always so much alive, so real and ageless, her multitudinous friends find it hard to believe that she has gone. Of all my mountaineering companions she was always among those it was most good to be with.

Marjorie Milsom

Sir Ralph Ismay Metcalfe (1896–1977)

Ralph Metcalfe was educated at King Edward School, Southampton, where he was an outstanding all-round athlete. After a brief spell in the civil service he joined the Royal Flying Corps, with whom, and its successor RAF, he served with distinction. After that war, he joined William Cory, bunker and coal merchants, of which he early became a director. His main

work was concerned with ancillary craft engaged in port work and with building up for his firm a position in oil bunkering comparable to that they held in coal bunkering. In 1939 he was summoned to the Ministry of Shipping (later War Transport) where he was head of Tanker Division before becoming, in 1942, Director of Sea Transport, the division responsible for providing shipping for the fighting services. In this post he was directly concerned in the planning and execution of amphibious operations, particularly the cross-channel invasion of June 1944. He was knighted in 1943 and also received American, Belgian, Dutch, French and Norwegian decorations.

Apart from winter ski-ing expeditions, he made his first visit to the summer Alps in 1950, and he made his first climbs that year: Aiguille du Tour and Wellenkuppe–Gabelhorn–Arbengrat. David Brown was with us on both occasions and John Watson joined us for the latter. In later years we crossed the Theodule and Beich Passes together and did a number of scrambles around Belalp and the Oberaletsch Hut, also an ascent of the Schwarzmiess in pouring rain. Each year he climbed with guides, generally with André Pont, with whom he became close friends. Among his ascents were the Zermatt Breithorn, Alphubel, Matterhorn, Zinal Rothorn, Cima del Largo, Piz Cengalo, Piz Badile and the Dent Blanche, the last made when he was 65. He was elected to the Club in 1962.

After he gave up climbing he still visited the Alps regularly until his health gave out. From that first year, in 1950, until his death, the Alps remained the greatest joy and inspiration both for him and his wife.

Francis Keenlyside

W. David Brown writes:

Ralph Metcalfe was laid low some years ago by a series of amputations that left him progressively more disabled. With a courage and determination that were an inspiration to his friends he made the utmost of a life thus painfully circumscribed.

Of the many joys that his disablement cut short none was more keenly felt than having to forego the companionship on the hills of his fellow mountaineers. I remember vividly how after his first severe and complicated amputation, from which for long his recovery was in doubt, he turned avidly to a re-reading of *Mountains with a Difference* determined if at all possible to emulate the example of Geoffrey Winthrop Young. It was only when a cruel fate demanded the amputation of the second leg that Ralph accepted that he would never again walk the heights of his beloved haunts in Belalp and Zermatt.

Ralph came to climbing only relatively late in life under the inspiration and guidance of Francis Keenlyside. With a fine record as an athlete earlier in life and an immediate love for the high mountain scene he overcame the handicap of middle age and rapidly acquired the technique to accomplish much in the classic routes of the Valais. I was privileged to enjoy companionship with him and Francis in many of his earlier climbs among which the memory of a traverse of the Obergabelhorn and the Arbengrat is outstanding as a triumph over adversity.

His later seasons before the series of amputations confined him to his home in West Mersea were spent mainly in the mutually congenial company of Alfred Zucher, Artur and Hermann Lochmatter and André Pont in and around Zermatt where no less than here he has left many friends to mourn his loss.

Count Ugo di Vallepiana (1890–1978)

Count Ugo di Vallepiana was born in Florence in 1890 and studied first in Milan and then in München where he met the outstanding Bavarian climbers of the day. His subsequent alpine career was both brilliant and sustained and summarized in his application of 1930 to join the Alpine Club as ‘most of the chief summits of the Alps, both in summer and winter’. He omitted to mention his several first ascents of outstanding alpine routes. (Col Strutt endorsed his application form ‘This candidate has done all the 4,000 m peaks’.) He had published 4 books—a manual of ski-ing, *Le Dolomiti di Cortina d’Ampezzo*, and 2 guide-books. An officer in the Alpini with a particularly distinguished record in the First World War, his loyalty to his country compelled him to resign his membership of the Club in 1940, but his Jewish ancestry led him to seek refuge in Switzerland in 1943 and in 1949 he applied for re-election to membership of the Club, giving a list of over 90 different Alpine ascents, all guideless, ‘since my first election to the Club in 1930’.

He had a life-long respect and affection for British climbers and held his membership of the Alpine Club in high regard. When, some years ago, a dispute arose between certain of the European clubs concerning reciprocal rights in their respective alpine huts he initiated a

unique and unilateral offer of privileges in huts of the CAI to the members of the Alpine Club so that they should not suffer from the dispute—privileges which we still enjoy. For many years he was the outspoken and effective delegate of the CAI to the UIAA, bringing a rare and welcome commonsense to bear on the deliberations of its Executive and Annual Assemblies.

Frank Solari

Alison Chadwick-Onyszkiewicz (1942–1978)

Alison was born in Birmingham but grew up and spent her formative years in Cornwall. She started to climb in 1960 while studying at the Slade College of Fine Arts in London and joined a coach of post-graduate students for a climbing weekend in North Wales. From there on she climbed whenever and wherever she could.

I first met her climbing in Devon with Pete Biven about 10 years ago. She was then lecturing in Lithography at Exeter Art College and was already an accomplished climber. She struck me as a shy girl but I soon found her to be intelligent with an agile sense of humour. Full of common sense, she added a welcome touch of sanity to the South West climbing scene. Together with Peter Biven, John Cleare, myself and a few others she climbed regularly on the accepted crags of the South West and spent many memorable days exploring the Devon and Cornish coasts in all weathers, often involving hard climbing over rough winter seas. Alison proved herself to be at least the equal of the male members of the party in both ability and endurance, never shirking the inevitable freezing swim.

At this stage she climbed extensively in North Wales and the Lakes and made her first visits to the Alps. Her cool temperament and exceptional stamina were well suited to the larger mountains and it soon became apparent that she was at heart a mountaineer rather than a rock-climber.

In 1971 she married Janusz, an internationally known Polish climber and caver with whom she made many fine alpine ascents including the N pillar of Palu, the N face of the Triolet and the Swiss Route on the N face of Les Courtes. However, living as she was in Poland, her climbing naturally gravitated eastwards. She climbed extensively with Janusz in the Tatra including many hard routes such as the E face of Mnich, the N face of Kazalnica and winter ascents of the N faces of Nizne Rysy and Miegnszowiecki Middle, the last being a first winter ascent.

In 1972 as a member of a Polish expedition to the Hindu Kush she climbed Asp-e-Safed (6608m) and Noshaq (7492m). As a result of these and her Tatra climbs she was selected for the 1974 Polish Alpine Club expedition to Peak Communism in the Soviet Pamir but was unfortunately refused a visa. However she was included in the Polish Expedition to Gasherbrum II and III. She and Janusz were 2 of 4 members of the expedition who made the first ascent of Gasherbrum III (7952m). This was at the time the highest unclimbed summit in the world and will remain for all time the highest mountain whose first ascent included women. As a member of that party Alison holds the British Ladies Altitude Record and she was awarded a gold medal by the Polish Government for 'outstanding sporting achievement'.

Alison's climbing ethics were always of the highest standard and on high mountains she wished to compete with men on equal terms with the minimum of oxygen and Sherpa assistance. Perhaps it was for this reason that she chose to accept an invitation to join the 1978 American Ladies Expedition to Annapurna rather than accept a place on the more glamorous Franco/Austrian Expedition to Everest. On the Annapurna expedition Alison's contribution was crucial, leading the ice-arête between camps II and III which proved to be the crux of the route. After the summit had been reached on 15 October, Alison and Vera Watson were killed in a fall while making a second summit bid.

Janusz and I were 40 miles away at the time on the E ridge of Himalchuli but the news of the accident took nearly 2 weeks to reach him. Words cannot describe the sympathy that I and the rest of the expedition felt for Janusz and Alison's family. We had lost a constant and trusted friend. Britain had undoubtedly lost her outstanding lady mountaineer. For me personally it was the loss of one of the few remaining of a small group of companions with whom I have had some of the happiest and most memorable days of my life.

John Fowler