
C A RUSSELL

One Hundred Years Ago (with extracts from the *Alpine Journal*)

(Plates 56–60)

The weather during the early part of the winter had been unusually bad – thoroughly unsettled, in fact – and numerous heavy snowfalls had made it look as though any expedition would be out of the question.

However, about the middle of January a break came. The sky cleared, the wind dropped, and the glass began to rise.

The improvement in the weather experienced in many Alpine regions during the opening weeks of 1903 was recorded by C M Murray who completed a winter ascent of the Jungfrau on 18 January, accompanied by Christian Jossi junior and Peter Bernet.

The views were superb. The keen frosty air was clear right to the horizon, and all the principal mountains in Switzerland seemed spread out close before us. We could see the Bernina group, Monte Rosa, the Dom, and Matterhorn, standing up clear in the distance.

On the following day Murray and his guides reached the summit of the Mönch where the views ‘were even better than those from the Jungfrau on the previous morning’.

Two months later an outstanding expedition was completed by Gustav Hasler and his guide Christian Jossi senior who on 15 March made the first winter ascent of the Aiguille Verte. After reaching the summit by way of the Whymper Couloir and descending by the same route Hasler and Jossi enjoyed hot tea provided by their porter, Henri Devouassoud, before continuing the descent to Chamonix in bitterly cold conditions.

An important event in the development of ski mountaineering was the first attempt to complete the high-level route – the Haute Route – from Chamonix to Zermatt. Leaving Chamonix on 16 January Dr Payot, Joseph Couttet, Alfred Simond and Joseph Ravanel¹ crossed the Col du Chardonnet and the Fenêtre de Saleina to the Val de Bagnes, reached the Chanrion hut and ascended the Otemma glacier before bad weather forced a retreat to the valley. Resuming the expedition further along the chain the party crossed the Col d’Hérens before descending to Zermatt. In the following month a notable expedition on ski in the Pennine Alps was undertaken by Robert Helbling and Friedrich Reichert who reached Arolla from the Val de Bagnes

by way of the Col de Cheilon and other passes. On 13 February Helbling and his companion continued to Zermatt, crossing the Col d'Hérens and making the first ski ascent² of the Tête de Valpelline. Another successful tour, in the Bernese Alps, was completed by Henry Hoek and W Schiller who on 26 January, accompanied by Alexander Tännler and K Moor, made the first ski ascent of the Wetterhorn.

A period of high temperatures during May and June was followed by cold and unsettled weather which persisted for much of the climbing season. Although conditions were, in the main, unfavourable in the principal regions many expeditions were undertaken and a number of new routes was completed. During the season Victor de Cessole continued his exploration of the Maritime Alps where on 22 August, accompanied by Jean Plent and André Ghigo, he made the first ascent of the Corno Stella, the famous rock peak to the north of the Punta dell' Argentera.

In the Mont Blanc range Emile Fontaine completed several new routes with Joseph Ravel and Léon Tournier, making the first ascent, on 16 July, of the Aiguille Mummery above the Col des Cristaux and on 8 September, from the Col des Droites, reaching the summit of the unclimbed Tour des Courtes by way of the SW face. On 9 August a classic route was followed by Karl Blodig and Max Horten who completed the first traverse,³ in ascent, of the W ridge of the Aiguille de Rochefort – the western end of the Rochefort Ridge – and the first ascent of the SW ridge of the Dôme de Rochefort. Another fine route was established on 6 September when Etienne Giraud with Joseph Ravel and Armand Comte made the first unaided traverse from the Petit to the Grand Dru.

In the Pennine Alps on 28 August E A Broome accompanied by the brothers Alois junior and Heinrich Pollinger made the first recorded ascent⁴ of the N ridge of the Schalihorn. A week later, on 5 September, Miss Grace Filder with the guides G B Pellisier and Antonio Curta reached the E, higher summit of the Liskamm after following a new line on the SE face.

In the Bernese Alps on 14 July O K Williamson with Jean Maître and Raphael Lochmatter forced a route up the steep N face of the Tschingelhorn. On 31 August Fräulein Helene Kuntze and Gustav Hasler accompanied by Johann von Allmen made the first ascent of the long ENE ridge of the Morgenhorn in the Blümlisalp group. On 2 September a notable expedition was completed by C F Meade and the brothers Ulrich and Heinrich Fuhrer who made the first descent of the NE ridge of the Jungfrau – a ridge which at that time was still unclimbed.

To the east in the Bernina Alps on 8 September P J H Unna with Martin Schocher made the first complete ascent of the difficult SSE ridge of Piz Morteratsch. In the Dolomites on 10 August the Mosca Chimney route on the S face of the Cima Grande di Lavaredo – the Grosse Zinne – was opened by E Stübler with Giovanni Mosca.

On 27 and 28 June ceremonies were held at Samedan to mark the official opening of the Albula Railway, the extension of the Rhaetian Railway from

Thusis to the Engadine. This major engineering project required the construction of numerous viaducts and tunnels including the Albula tunnel, nearly 6km in length, between Preda and Spinas.

During the year many parties were active in other mountain regions. In Norway J N Collie returned to the Lofoten Islands, accompanied on this occasion by W C and W E Slingsby and D Northall-Laurie. Starting on the island of Moskenesøy the party climbed to the summit of Hermandalstind (1034m), the highest point on the island, on 29 July and completed the first ascent of two other peaks: Munken (805m) on 30 July and Ertenhellstind (942m) on 2 August. A week later, on 10 August, Collie and his companions became the first party to reach the W, lower summit (1035m) of Rulthen, the famous peak on the island of Austvågøy. Addressing the Alpine Club later in the year Collie recalled that

Although we had climbed our peak, and although a perfect sunset and a marvellous view was spread out in front of us, yet Rulthen was still unvanquished, for the eastern peak, some third of a mile away, was evidently about 20ft. to 30ft. higher; also, to our disgust, the connecting ridge between the two was quite hopeless.

After further investigation the party with the addition of H S Mundahl succeeded, on 18 August, in making the first ascent of the E, higher peak (1062m), completing the climb by way of the E ridge and S face.

In the Caucasus, where the weather was exceptionally fine for much of the summer, a large party organised by W R Rickmers spent several weeks in the central region climbing numerous peaks and making a number of outstanding ascents. On 21 July an attempt to scale the unclimbed S, higher peak (4710m) of Ushba by Rickmers, Fräulein Zenzi von Ficker, her brother Heinz, Adolf Schulze and a hunter named Muratbi had to be abandoned when Schulze, the leader, fell and was injured. Five days later Schulze, Robert Helbling, Friedrich Reichert, Oscar Schuster and Albert Weber succeeded in making the first ascent of the S peak, a fine achievement for the period. Other notable expeditions by members of the party included the first ascent of two high peaks: Shkhelda (4320m) by Helbling, Reichert, Schulze and Weber on 1 August; and, on 7 August, the W, higher peak (5051m) of Jangitau, with the addition of a traverse to the E summit (5038m), by the same climbers accompanied by Mito Arkhulian, a local porter.

Another fine expedition was completed by Hans Pfann, Ludwig Distel and Georg Leuchs who made the first traverse of both summits of Ushba. Reaching the N, lower summit (4696m) on 10 August by way of the NE ridge Pfann and his companions were obliged to spend the next three nights without shelter before descending to the Gul valley on the southern side of the peak.

T G Longstaff and L W Rolleston who arrived in the region at the end of July also completed some notable expeditions, reaching the summit of the unclimbed Tikhtengen (4610m) on 5 August and, on 24 August, making the first ascent of the W, lower peak (5057m) of Shkhara.

Earlier in the year, in March, Samuel Turner travelled south from the Trans-Siberian Railway to carry out winter exploration in the Altai mountains. Accompanied by an interpreter and two local hunters, Turner overcame numerous difficulties to reach the Ak-Kem valley below Bielukha (4506m), the highest peak in the region. Although forced to abandon an attempt to scale Bielukha Turner climbed to a height of nearly 4000m during a solo ascent of another peak above the Ak-Kem valley which he named Willer's Peak.⁵

On 14 April, after passing the winter in Kashgar, Gottfried Merzbacher resumed his expedition⁶ to the Tien Shan where he hoped to obtain a comprehensive plan of the higher regions and, in particular, to establish the correct location of Khan Tengri (6995m) which at that time was thought to be the highest peak in the range. Accompanied by the geologist Hans Keidel, the guides Franz Kostner and Sigmund Stockmayer and a number of Cossacks, Merzbacher continued his exploration but was still unable to determine the exact position of Khan Tengri. Finally, after Keidel had left the expedition on 7 August, Merzbacher and the guides obtained a complete view of the peak from a point on the snowfield of the southern branch of the Inylchek glacier.

A fine snowy summit, glittering in the sun, appeared aloft, colossal white marble buttresses projecting from it; a few steps farther, and a huge pyramid stood out freely, its base also soon coming into view. The giant mountain, the monarch of the Tian-Shan, revealed himself to my enraptured gaze in all his naked majesty, from his feet, rooted in the glacier ice, up to his crown, wrapt in sunlit shifting mists.

From his observations Merzbacher was able to establish that Khan Tengri does not form part of the central chain as had been supposed but stands on a ridge to the south-west of the main range.

In the Karakoram Dr William Hunter Workman and his wife Fanny Bullock Workman undertook the fourth of their mountain journeys accompanied on this occasion by B H M Hewett as topographer, the guides Joseph Petigax and Cyprien Savoye and Laurent Petigax junior as porter. As in the previous year the Workmans spent several weeks exploring the Chogo Lungma and other glaciers, climbing on neighbouring peaks and taking a large number of photographs. On 12 August, starting from a high camp above the Chogo Lungma glacier, the party ascended a peak to which they ascribed a height of 6878m.

In the Punjab Himalaya H Sillem and his wife explored the approaches

to the Nun Kun group. On 12 July Sillem and two local men climbed to a height of some 6400m, reaching and photographing the snow plateau between the main peaks.

Later in the year Henry Hoek arrived in Bolivia as a member of a geological expedition. Travelling with G Steinmann and Baron von Bistram, Hoek explored several of the southern ranges and climbed a number of peaks including Cerro Campanario (5050m), ascended on 10 October, and Cerro Liqui (5115m).

In the Canadian Rockies an outstanding climb was completed on 21 July by H C Parker who with Christian and Hans Kaufmann made the first ascent of Mount Hungabee (3493m). On 1 September Parker and his guides, accompanied by August Eggers, reached the summit of the unclimbed Deltaform Mountain (3424m), the highest of the Ten Peaks near Moraine Lake, and two days later the same party made the first ascent of Mount Biddle (3319m). Other notable expeditions included the first ascent, on 16 July, of the S Tower (3562m) of Mount Goodsir by Parker and C E Fay with Christian Häsler and Christian Kaufmann and, in the same month, the first ascent of the NE ridge⁷ of Mount Assiniboine (3618m), by W Douglas with Häsler and Christian Kaufmann.

Another visitor to the Canadian Rockies was Edward Whymper who completed his second expedition on behalf of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Accompanied by a young man named Harry Tattrie, Whymper spent several months travelling on foot and undertaking further exploration in the region.

To the west in the Selkirk range a new route on Mount Sir Donald (3297m) was completed on 3 September by E Tewes who with Eduard Feuz senior and Christian Bohren made the first ascent of the NW ridge.

In Britain many strong parties were in the field and several climbs of note were completed. In Wales on 24 April J M Archer Thomson and Oscar Eckenstein made the first ascent of the *Central Route* or *Route 1* on the E buttress of Lliwedd. In the Lake District on 7 April E Rigby, D Leighton and J Sandison opened the '*A*' *Route* on Gimmer Crag. Two months later on 3 June F W Botterill, leading H Williamson and J E Grant, completed a famous climb: the first ascent of *Botterill's Slab* on Scafell Crag. On 21 September a climb on the Pinnacle Face of Scafell ended in tragedy when R W Broadrick, A E W Garrett, Henry Jupp and Stanley Ridsdale all died after falling from the face during an attempt to reach Hopkinson's Cairn from Lord's Rake. In Scotland Harold Raeburn returned to Ben Nevis where on 29 June, with Dr and Mrs William Inglis Clark, he made the first ascent of the *Original Route* on Number Three Gully Buttress.

A notable event during the year was the foundation of the Ski Club of Great Britain. The idea of forming a club was discussed by W R Rickmers, E C Richardson and other enthusiasts during a dinner held on 6 May at the Café Royal in London.

The meeting was a complete success, and was unanimous in advocating the formation of the club, the objects of which were then set forth as being: The development of the sport in the British Isles; the effecting of improvement in the style of ski-ing amongst members who already had experience; the assistance of novices; and the bringing together of persons interested in the sport.

Another event of note was the publication of *Round Kangchenjunga*,⁸ the account by D W Freshfield of his celebrated Tour of Kangchenjunga four years earlier. This fine work, illustrated principally with photographs by Vittorio Sella, was reviewed in the *Alpine Journal* where it was described as 'a contribution to science, as well as a record of arduous travel, excellently illustrated and admirably written.'

This account is concluded with the following extracts from reports published during the year in connection with proposals for another engineering project in the Alps.

The much talked of railway to the top of Mont Blanc has got as far as the adoption of plans by municipal councils, and work is to be begun immediately. Whether it will ever be finished is another question which, in the absence of any exact precedent, it is difficult to answer. ...

Sentimentalists will hope that the famous mountain may be spared this desecration, and climbers will be equally opposed to the idea. Fancy arriving at the top after risking one's life a hundred times in the perilous ascent, only to find your friend Jones enjoying his lunch and tantalisingly flaunting his return ticket in your face!

REFERENCES

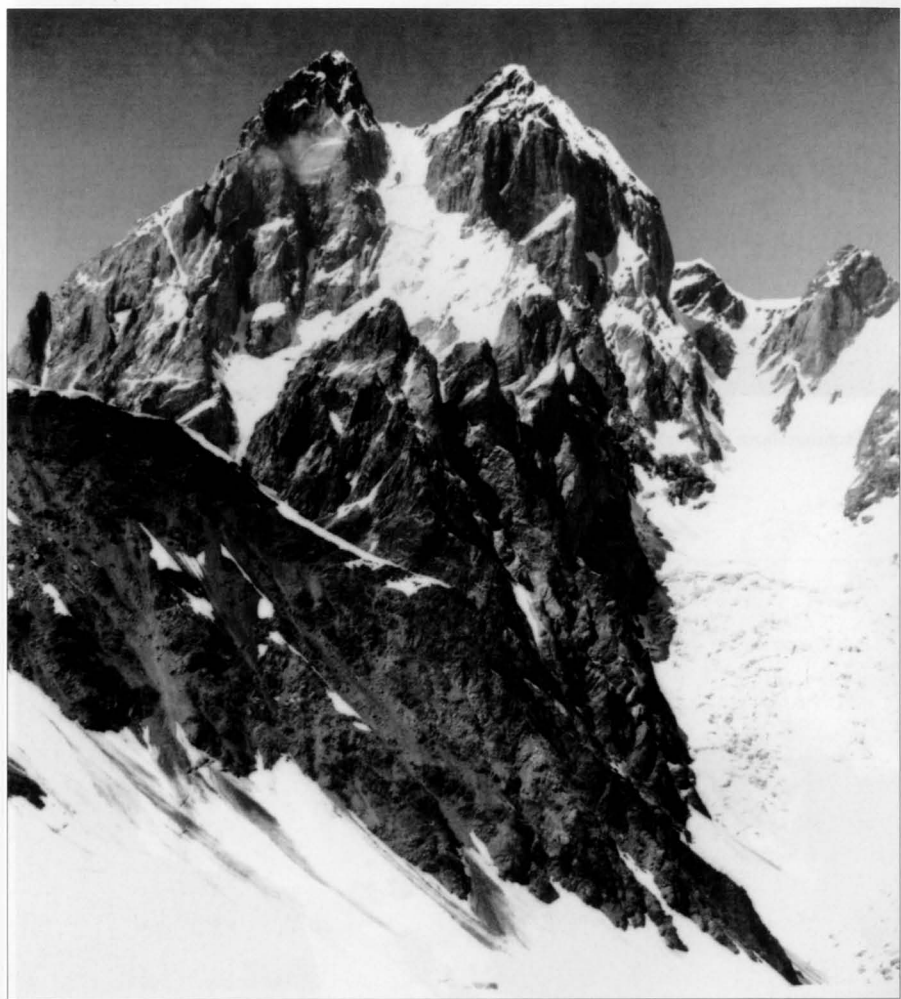
- 1 The famous guide Ravelin, *le Rouge*.
- 2 A ski ascent is defined by Sir Arnold Lunn as 'an expedition on which ski were used until the foot of the final rock or ice ridges.'
- 3 The ridge had been traversed in descent by Ettore Allegra with Laurent Croux, Pierre Dayné and Alexis Brocherel on 18 July 1900.
- 4 The ridge had been descended by W E Davidson with Christian Klucker and Josef Imesch, accompanied by the Hon Gerald FitzGerald with Ulrich Almer and Fritz Boss on 14 August 1900.
- 5 Now known as Ak-Ayuk.
- 6 For further details of this expedition see *AJ 101*, 131-139, 1996.
- 7 Known as the N ridge. The ridge had been descended by the Rev James Outram with Christian Häsler and Christian Bohren on 3 September 1901.
- 8 Douglas W Freshfield, *Round Kangchenjunga; a Narrative of Mountain Travel and Exploration*. London, Edward Arnold, 1903.



56. Tschingelhorn (centre) from the Gamchilücke. (*C M Sleeman*) (p216)



57. Rulten, Austvågøy, Lofoten Islands. (*J N Collie, 1903*) (p216)



58. S (left) and N peaks of Ushba from the south-east. (*W Weckert, 1933*) (p216)



59. Members of Dr and Mrs Workman's party leaving Srinagar, 26 May 1903.
(*Dr and Mrs W H Workman, 1903*) (p216)



60. View from Mount Huber, Canadian Rockies. From left: Deltaform Mountain,
Mount Hungabee and Mount Biddle. (*B Harmon*) (p216)