

to such lengths to secure the property rights of enemy aliens. Then again, perhaps this emphasis on rights and the rule of law is exactly what the Allied and Indian forces were fighting for. Shipton's Travellers file provides us with a rare glimpse of the British imperial security state at both its most effective and at its most banal and pettifogging. The same imperial security apparatus that maintained such tight control over the trans-Himalaya border regions was also seemingly unable to track down and locate one of its own across all of its various agencies in wartime. Shipton's Travellers file sheds further light about the ways in which he sought to negotiate access to the politically controlled border zone of British India, providing us with many more tantalizing details of his movements and motivations. It reveals, for the first time, his concerted efforts to explore in the remote regions of western Tibet and the power of British India's border cadres to deny access to anyone whose interest did not align directly with those of the Government of India. It somehow seems appropriate then that Shipton's Travellers file ends with the India Office awaiting a reply from Shipton, a reply one suspects that never came. Given to reticence, Shipton in the archive is elusive, always on the move, as befits a traveller. You have to wonder: if the Government of India couldn't find Shipton and get a reply from him, what hope has the modern historian or biographer got of finally tracking him down?

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STEPHEN GOLDING & PETER GILLMAN

## George Mallory and Francis Urquhart: an Academic Friendship



George Mallory was a keen oarsman, here rowing with Balliol College members at Sandford on the Thames, 1 May 1911. From L to R: Alexander Cardew, Arthur Kirby, Mallory, George Randolph.  
(All images from the albums of Francis Urquhart)

On a plateau on the Prarion, one of the western foothills of Mont Blanc, there is a large, traditional wooden chalet set among larch trees, where summer walking and reading parties have been held since 1891. The Chalet des Mélézes, or Chalet des Anglais as it is now invariably known, was built in 1865 by David Urquhart, a self-styled Victorian mover and shaker. Among his eccentricities was his belief that the human brain functioned better at low oxygen pressure, so when he moved to Switzerland in 1864 he resolved to construct a summer home above 5,000ft.

David Urquhart's youngest son, Francis Fortescue Urquhart (known universally as 'Sligger'), was born in St Gervais les Bains, the town in the valley below the chalet in 1868, and spent his childhood summers there. By the time Francis was admitted to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1890, his father



Above: Mallory sporting his pipe.  
From L to R: Kirby, Mallory, Francis  
'Sligger' Urquhart, Randolph.



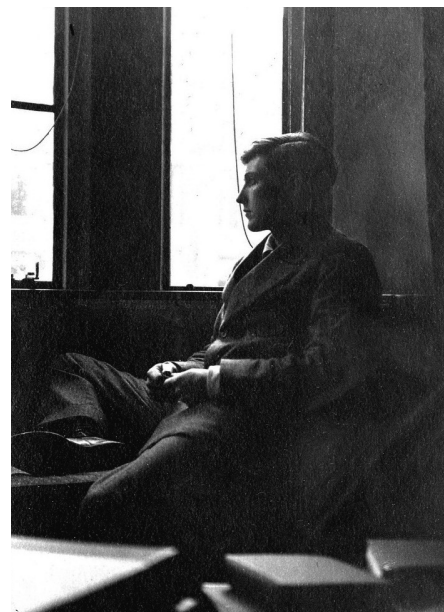
Right: The only photograph of Mallory  
rowing, with Arthur Kirby.

had died and the family were making little use of the chalet. So at the end of his first academic year Francis invited a group of university friends to stay there, beginning the tradition of summer reading parties from Oxford, which has continued to this day, save for the interruption of two world wars.

Sligger was taken on to the staff of Balliol in 1893 and continued to run the Chalet des Anglais parties until shortly before his death in 1934. He was a keen amateur photographer, recording in particular his travels in France and his activities at the chalet. These photographs were preserved chronologically in albums, each carefully labelled with the date and place and usually also identifying the individuals who were shown. They are preserved in the Balliol College archives and study of them has uncovered a close friendship between Sligger and Everest pioneer George Mallory which has not previously been documented.

Mallory's first appearance in Sligger's albums occurs in a set of four photographs taken on May Day 1911 which show Mallory rowing on the Thames with Sligger and three contemporaries from Balliol: see illustrations. Mallory was a keen oarsman, having captained the boat for his Cambridge college, Magdalene, so it was natural that, on what is presumed to have been Mallory's first visit to Oxford, Sligger should give him a taste of rowing there. Three shots show him in a static boat; the last is the only action shot of Mallory rowing that has ever come to light.

In view of Sligger's association with the Alps, it was tempting to believe that this was how his friendship with Mallory developed. Our research has shown that this was almost certainly not the case. In the autumn of 1910, Mallory was appointed a teacher at Charterhouse School, where one of his



George Mallory enjoyed being photographed, here in a wistful and camera-conscious mood at the window of Sligger's room, Balliol College, 1913.

responsibilities was to teach history to boys preparing for scholarships<sup>1</sup>. Sligger was history tutor at Balliol and it is likely Mallory was in contact with him to further his pupils' chances of entering Oxford. An introduction may well have been provided by Mallory's Charterhouse colleague Frank Fletcher, a close friend of Sligger, who went on to become headmaster in 1911<sup>2</sup>.

We know from the 1969 biography by David Robertson, Mallory's son-in-law, that Mallory spent Easter 1911 at Geoffrey Winthrop Young's regular climbing party at Pen y Pass.

He went on to visit his parents at Birkenhead, and then stayed in Oxford with Sligger<sup>3</sup>. By 2 May he was in London where he attended a meeting of the Alpine Club. These photographs, therefore, appear to document this Oxford visit.

Although Mallory had other links with Oxford – he visited the university mountaineering club in 1912 in the company of Geoffrey Winthrop Young, H O Jones and Claude Elliott<sup>4</sup> – his next appearance in Sligger's records is the album entry for 1913, where a single photo shows him sitting in wistful mood in the bay window of Sligger's room in Balliol: see illustration. Among Sligger's shots, this is the strongest suggesting Mallory's fondness for being photographed and his readiness to play to the camera, seen later in photographs taken by his Everest colleagues and – most celebrated of all – in the earlier sequence of nude photographs taken by the Bloomsbury artist Duncan Grant in 1912<sup>5</sup>.

There is confirmation of his visit in David Pye's 1927 memoir of Mallory<sup>6</sup>. Pye records that after two years at Charterhouse, some time in 1913, Mallory wrote to an unidentified recipient reporting that he had recently spent five days in Oxford where Sligger had advised him to consider becoming a don. Sligger told Mallory that vacancies were arising from the departure of other history tutors but Mallory felt his position at

1. D Robertson, *George Mallory*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, 2nd edn, 1999, p63.

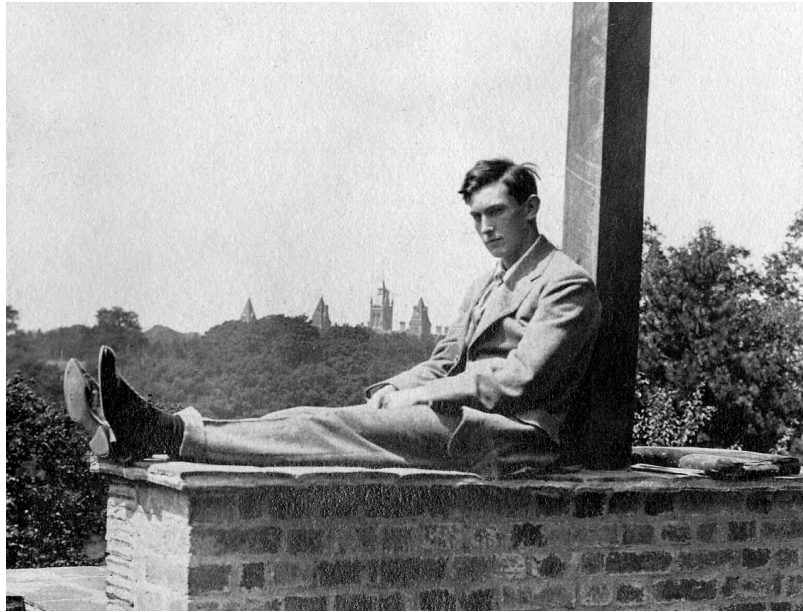
2. D Robertson, *George Mallory*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, 2nd edn, 1999, p78.

3. D Robertson, *George Mallory*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, 2nd edn, 1999, p 71.

4. A Ross, '100 Years of the OUMC', *Alpine Journal*, vol 114, no 358, 2009, pp229-35.

5. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p96.

6. D Pye, *George Leigh Mallory: a memoir*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1927, repub Orchid Press, Bangkok, 2002, p68.



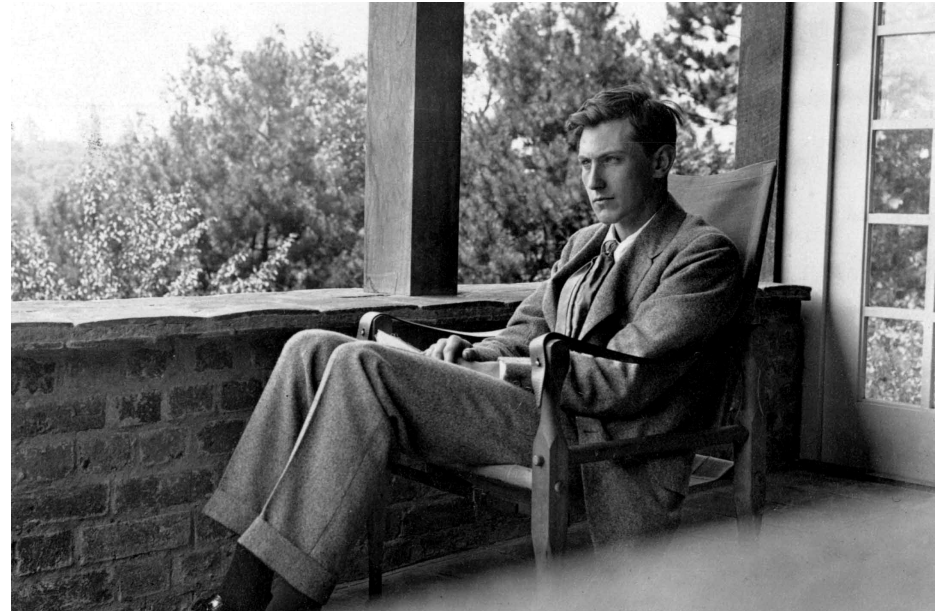
The familiar image of Mallory sitting on the loggia of The Holt, often attributed to Mallory's daughter Clare, but actually photographed by Sligger Urquhart in July 1915.

Charterhouse suited him best. Although Sligger did not for once specify which month his photograph was taken, its position in the album sequence suggests this was around April 1913. As in 1911, Mallory attended Geoffrey Winthrop Young's Pen y Pass party at Easter<sup>7</sup> and the 1913 photograph was probably taken during another visit to Sligger when Mallory passed through Oxford on his journey home.

The final set of Sligger's photographs dates from 1915 and records a visit to George and Ruth Mallory at their home The Holt in Godalming, a mile or so from Charterhouse, between 3 and 5 July. One of these, showing Mallory sitting on the loggia of the house, with the spires of Charterhouse in the background, has been widely published, usually attributed to the Mallorys's daughter Clare or an unidentified source. The sequence in Sligger's album now makes clear that he was the photographer and it appears that he sent a duplicate set of prints to George and Ruth after his visit, preserving the originals in his album.

Another photograph in this set is merely a view of the school from the loggia. A third, showing Mallory in an armchair, presents a very different aspect when compared to the loggia portrait, once again suggesting Mallory's awareness of the camera. There is also a very rare view of George and Ruth together; only one other is known, the familiar image of Mallory

7. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p102.



Mallory, also from 1915, but this time in schoolmaster mode.

in his army uniform in the foreground, a slightly out-of-focus Ruth behind him. The remaining photograph in Sligger's sequence is too faded to reproduce but shows Mallory in a shaded area of the garden in the company of a young man who could be Hugh Heber-Percy, one of his former Charterhouse pupils. Following Sligger's visit, Mallory went climbing in Snowdonia with Heber-Percy<sup>8</sup>. Although Urquhart's photograph shows the young man in profile, a comparison with the frontal image in Heber-Percy's Charterhouse class photograph strongly suggests that it is him, implying that he was either visiting or staying with the Mallorys at the time of Sligger's visit.

The remaining photograph of Mallory in Sligger's possession appears to have been a gift. In a separate album, Sligger preserved portrait photographs of young men of his acquaintance, and these include a signed portrait of Mallory. This is an expanded version of the portrait that appears as the frontispiece to the Robertson biography. A portrait in the same style and with Mallory wearing the same clothes was used as the frontispiece to the 1927 Pye biography and is attributed to Underwood and Underwood of New York. It is dated to 1923, when Mallory was undertaking a financially unrewarding tour of the USA<sup>9</sup>, presenting a lecture about the first two Everest expeditions. That Mallory should have presented Sligger with a signed photograph from that period demonstrates that their friendship was still alive in the year before Mallory died on Everest – and more than ten years from the time when we can assume they first met.

8. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p127.

9. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p230.



The autographed portrait of Mallory in Sligger's collection, 1923.

Such a relationship would have been characteristic of Sligger. Almost certainly a celibate bachelor don, he had a penchant for surrounding himself with good-looking young men who were academically inclined and also skilled sportsmen, as he did at the Chalet des Anglais. George Mallory, whose personality and physique had attracted the homoerotic attention of men like Duncan Grant and Lytton Strachey<sup>10</sup>, was mainstream material for Sligger's choice of companion. In that, Sligger was in good company,

10. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p77.



Although out of focus, this is a rare view of Mallory and his wife Ruth together, on the loggia of The Holt (1915). Only one other is known, the image of Mallory in his army uniform in the foreground.

as Mallory had inspired similar feelings in an impressive number of other older men, including the Winchester master Ronald Irving, who first took him to the Alps; his Cambridge tutor Arthur Benson, who confided his passion for Mallory at great length in a secret diary; and Geoffrey Winthrop Young, who sponsored Mallory's climbing career and recommended him for the 1921 Everest expedition. These relationships were nonetheless also genuine friendships, as was the case with Sligger, who was generous in supporting those who became his friends<sup>11</sup>. He was also an assiduous correspondent and maintained exchanges of letters that in many cases were lifelong and often intimate. The Robertson biography quotes a letter to Sligger from Mallory in March 1914, where Mallory unburdens himself of the emotions he experienced in teaching<sup>12</sup>. Happily for his biographers, Mallory too was a diligent letter-writer, loyally sustaining his relationships in this way.

In fact, there may well be other letters that shed more light on the relationship between Sligger and Mallory. In the source notes for his biography, Robertson referred to further letters from Sligger, which he had found helpful but had not quoted. Sligger directed that at his death all correspondence should be either returned to the writer or destroyed. For

11. C Bailey, *Francis Fortescue Urquhart, a memoir*, Oxford, Macmillan and Co, 1936.

12. D Robertson, *George Mallory*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, 2nd edn, 1999, p 93.

Robertson to refer to Sligger's letters in 1969 implies that when Sligger died in 1934 his correspondence with Mallory was returned to Ruth. If so, this correspondence may survive today in the Mallory family collection, now lodged in New Hampshire.

One conundrum remains. Did Mallory ever visit the Chalet des Anglais? It would be delightful to know that he did, particularly as one of us was an undergraduate at University College, Oxford, one of three colleges which use the chalet, while the other, a fellow at University College, still organises the college's summer chalet parties. We feel we have established that the Sligger-Mallory friendship was based not on their shared interest in mountains but on the practicalities of academic life. Even so, is it not likely that Sligger would have thought to enhance their friendship with an invitation to the chalet, given that Mallory was climbing in the Alps around the time that they first met<sup>13</sup>? Sadly, we have found no evidence this ever took place.

In addition to the record from his photograph albums, so meticulously maintained, Sligger kept a diary at Chalet des Anglais in which each visitor noted the dates when they stayed. Mallory's name does not appear and it is highly unlikely that Sligger would have allowed a distinguished climber to be at the chalet without recording that fact. Whether or not an invitation was ever formally made, it may have been tacitly accepted by one or both of them that the study and hill walking Sligger offered at the chalet would have been too tame an environment for so accomplished a climber.

There is an intriguing footnote to the Sligger-Mallory friendship. On the chalet bookshelves are a number of books belonging to Mallory's Pen y Pass climbing partner Cottie Sanders, later Lady Mary O'Malley and the novelist Ann Bridge. They include *The Climbs on Lliwedd*, the 1909 Climbers' Club guide by J M Archer Thomson and A W Andrews. There is a note by Cottie on page 27 recording that she climbed *Central Route* (also known as *Route One*) with Mallory on 3 January 1911, which accords with the roster of his ascents in the various biographies. So, we speculated, were Cottie's climbing books passed on to Sligger by Mallory when Cottie was obliged to withdraw from the climbing community on the insistence of her husband, Owen O'Malley<sup>14</sup>? This theory does not stand up either, as some of Cottie's books date from after Mallory's death on Everest in 1924. By whatever route this lady climber's books arrived at the Chalet des Anglais, it was not through the agency of the friendship between George Mallory and Francis Urquhart.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the master and fellows of Balliol College for access to their archives and for permission to reproduce the photographs in this paper, and to Catherine Smith, archivist of Charterhouse, for information on Hugh Heber-Percy.

13. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p63.

14. P and L Gillman, *The Wildest Dream: the biography of George Mallory*, London, Headline, 2000, p106.

MICK CONEFREY

## Filming the Summit of K2



Mario Fantin, expedition photographer and cinematographer, wearing an oxygen set at Rawalpindi airport before or after his flight around K2. Apart from summit day, this is one of few times the K2 team used oxygen, because their plane was not pressurised. (All images courtesy of the Italian Alpine Club)

At around 6pm on 31 July 1954, two Italians, Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli arrived at the summit of K2 after a long gruelling day. After shaking hands and taking off their oxygen sets, they set about recording their achievement on film. The results were spectacular but no one realised the strange role the film would play in the many controversies that developed after the expedition.

Almost all the previous K2 expeditions had also taken a film camera: Vittorio Sella in 1909, Charlie Houston in 1938 and 1953 and the hapless Dudley Wolfe in 1939. But in each case, most of the footage was shot on the approach march or low on the mountain. In 1954, the Italians wanted to do it differently. A year earlier, Ed Hillary and Tenzing had reached the summit of Everest, but a last minute packing crisis had forced them to leave their cine-camera on the South Col. All they came back with was a roll of colour stills. If all went well Compagnoni and Lacedelli would be the first to bring back moving images from the summit of an 8,000m peak.

It was never going to be easy though. In the first instance, commercial producers were reluctant to risk their cash on an expedition that had no guarantee of success. And even if the money could be raised, there were significant logistical problems of filming on K2, which everyone knew was going to be a hard climb.

The solution was for the Italian Alpine Club (CAI), the expedition's sponsor, to go into partnership with Marcello Baldi, a documentary maker