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# Obituaries

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Capt C J Reid (?1875-1915), Royal Warwickshire Regiment,  
killed in a Turkish counterattack at Gallipoli.

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# In Memoriam

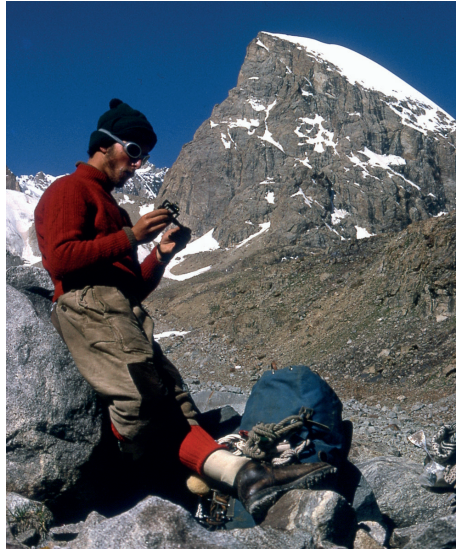
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<b>The Alpine Club Obituary</b>	<b>Year of Election (including to ACG)</b>
Bob Allen	1975
John Ashburner	1967
Fred Beckey	Hon 2013
Adrian Clifford	Asp 2000, 2005
Nicholas Dixon	1961
Richard Gilbert	1975
Livia Gollancz	LAC 1962
Simon Hall	2008
Elizabeth Hawley	Hon 2013
Norman Hardie	1958, Hon 2000
Ian McMorrin	1968
John Monks	2007
Elisabeth Parry	LAC 1961
Royal Robbins	1975
Allan Stuart	1977
Walt Unsworth	1968
Mark Vallance	2005
Teddy Faure Walker	1995

As usual, the editor will be pleased to receive obituaries for any of those above not included in the following pages.

## John Ashburner 1944 - 2017

John Edward Ashburner, who died on 5 May 2017 at the age of 73 after a five-year battle with cancer, was born in Hest Bank, Lancashire and raised in Chellaston, Derby. John had the good fortune to attend Derby School when it was run by Leslie Bradley, a disciple of Kurt Hahn. The school maintained a strong emphasis on both academic and outdoor pursuits, and John's vintage entry year of 1955 included two other boys, Rod Gallagher and Brian Chase (*AJ* 1988-9, pp322-3), who with John were destined to become excellent mountaineers at a young age.



John Ashburner in the Hindu Kush in 1966.

Their early forays occurred under the auspices of the Duke of Edinburgh's (DoE) Award scheme and the Combined Cadet Force, but it was a young master at the school, Bob Pettigrew, who would prove transformational. Bob became their mentor, instilling in the boys self-reliance and the unspoken rule to leave no one behind. Trips to the mountains followed and excursions included classics such as Striding Edge, Crib Goch and Scafell. They began rock climbing on Tryfan's Milestone Buttress and on gritstone outcrops closer to home, such as Black Rocks at Cromford. By the summer of 1960, aged 16, John was leading Very Severe rock climbs, and the group had climbed in winter on snow and ice in Scotland as well as Wales and the Lakes. They climbed with Doug Scott who was a couple of years older and who had also been a pupil of Bob Pettigrew. Meanwhile they all completed the DoE gold award, receiving their awards from Prince Philip himself at St James' Palace.

Thus, when they entered the sixth form they were already thinking beyond the UK for their next adventures. Bob Pettigrew packed them off to Saas Fee for a first Alpine season in 1961, unaccompanied, guideless and all aged just 17. Their preparations included walking the fourteen 3,000ers in Snowdonia in about 18 hours. Also, that summer half term, John led *Longland's* on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu on sight, without any of the modern aids and few of the old ones. His run-out took almost all their available rope and he wore ordinary climbing boots.

The choice of Saas Fee could not have been better. They enjoyed perfect weather and moved from hut to hut taking in more than a dozen peaks.

John, Rod and Brian's second alpine season the following year was divided between Zermatt, Zinal and Arolla before a move to Chamonix in deteriorating weather. They realised the key to the Hörnli ridge of the Matterhorn was simply to go up ahead of the crowd and after that they went on to climb Dom, Zinalrothorn and the Obergabelhorn traverse, Täschhorn, Weisshorn, Breithorn and Dent d'Hérens, Mont Collon, Besso, Aiguille de la Tsa and Mont Blanc de Cheilon.

Thus John Ashburner and Brian Chase, two very different characters, were already both fine rock climbers and experienced young mountaineers when they went up to Cambridge, King's and Christ's Colleges, to read engineering and natural sciences respectively. On arrival, both were accepted into the inner circle of the CUMC, and in due course John became secretary the year Brian was president (1965–6). During his first long vacation in 1964, he climbed in the Dauphiné and in Chamonix with D L Bevan climbing the Mer de Glace face of the Aiguille du Grépon.

Early in our second year John told me that he needed somewhere wilder, more uncertain and more distant than the Alps, though preferably with better weather, and to that end jumped at my proposed expedition to climb in the Ala Dağ range in southern Turkey in the summer of 1965. I already knew John as the friendliest and most modest of the CUMC rock stars and was thrilled to have him on board as the lead climber. Our party of six drove out to Turkey in an overloaded Bedford minibus, but we didn't pick John up until we reached the Dolomites. There we found him being discharged from hospital in Cortina following an epic ascent with Bob Keates of the north face of the Cima Ovest di Lavaredo, which he described in *Cambridge Mountaineering* (1966) in an article entitled 'Un Bruta Aventura' ('Quite a little adventure ...'). A combination of severe weather with serious route-finding difficulties had led to multiple bivouacs, and their route ultimately combined pieces of both the *Swiss-Italian* and *Cassin* routes.

Moving on towards Istanbul, the team paid a visit to Sidney Nowill, AC member and Turkish mountaineering expert, at his home there for last-minute advice. Then it was across the Bosphorus, most of us for the first time. We left our minibus in Çamardı at the foot of the Ala Dağ and used donkeys to set up base camp in the Kara Yalak gorge. During a month and a half of settled weather, we clocked up more than 20 peaks, including several first British ascents and traverses, one on the highest peak, Demirkazık (3756 m). While many of our routes were relatively easy, John led several hard lines, including a new route on the north wall of Direktaş (Yedi Göl area). John's climbing report in the form of a 'Brief Guide' (*Cambridge Mountaineering*, 1966) became a key source for future climbers.

During the next long vacation, John teamed up with Henry Edmundson who had been climbing in Kishtwar with Charlie Clarke's expedition the previous summer. I was delighted to be invited, and we settled on the Afghan Hindu Kush, driving there in a second-hand Land Rover. Research led us to the Darrah-e-Abi ('Blue Valley') leading up from the village of Iskasr, just above the confluence of the Anjuman and Munjan rivers. The

approach march up the Panjshir valley and over the Anjuman pass took two weeks with horses and then donkeys. We made first ascents of six peaks including Rast Darrah (5959m), the highest in the Darrah-e-Abi, according to an old aeroplane altimeter. Leaving, we crossed a difficult pass into Nuristan before returning to the road after almost seven weeks on the march. The expedition ticked almost every box (*AJ* 1967, pp65-75).

After Cambridge, John obtained a VSO posting in Allahabad, India, a springboard for little-visited parts of the Himalaya. In 1967 he joined an expedition led by Bob Pettigrew to attempt the first ascent of Papsura (6451m) in Kullu. Disaster struck when Bob and two other expedition members slid 2,000ft down a 70° slope in a couloir avalanche. Bob sustained a dislocated hip whilst the others were badly shaken but uninjured. John rushed to the scene and immediately improvised a stretcher from an air mattress, skis and aluminium pickets, lashed together with a climbing rope. With the Sherpa Pasang Lhakpa he then made a series of double marches, over heavily crevassed glaciers and steep rock spurs, to reach the Kullu valley and raise the alarm. Without resting, he recruited a rescue team of hill men and returned at once to supervise Bob's evacuation to hospital in Manali. During their absence, teammates Geoffrey Hill and Colin Pritchard climbed the mountain (*AJ* 1968, pp158-66). Hill tragically died on Mukar Beh (6070m), also in Kullu, later that year. Word of that accident reached Pettigrew who was still bed-bound with his dislocated hip. He cabled Ashburner in Allahabad, who travelled back to Kullu to organise a search party in Manali and succeeded in recovering the bodies of Hill and his three companions. John's most notable Himalayan climb was on that same peak, Mukar Beh, the following year (*AJ* 1969, pp58-66). With Sonam Wangyal, a Ladakhi high-altitude porter, John made a long and intricate first ascent traversing several subsidiary peaks en route. By now he had been elected to AC membership, serving on the AC Committee in 1972.

At the Allahabad Agricultural Institute John worked on agricultural machinery development, an area he continued to pursue on returning to the UK. In 1968, he took an appointment as lecturer at the National College of Agricultural Engineering (later Silsoe College) in Bedfordshire, while completing a PhD on tractor safety. There was time in 1969 to join a University of London Graduate Mountaineering Club expedition to the Kristians glacier area of East Greenland (*AJ* 1970, pp240-2). Thereafter a long and distinguished career as an agricultural engineer specialising in rural development overseas began in earnest, initially on British aid projects in Chile and Ecuador, and then, from 1981, in Algeria and Niger for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

From 1989 he became an independent consultant working worldwide, based in Ecuador where he met his wife Patty (née San Martín), where they built their family home at 3,000m on the slopes of the Rucu Pichincha volcano overlooking Quito. The family moved to the UK in 1997, and in 2000 John returned to the FAO as senior agricultural engineer in its regional office for Africa, based in Accra, Ghana. John worked for the

FAO until his retirement in 2006 and promptly resumed his consultancy. From his early days as an expert on the engineering of animal traction through to his return to the Panjshir valley decades after the Hindu Kush expedition to assess the mineral resources offered by derelict Russian tanks and other military hardware, to his final years as a prominent advocate of 'conservation agriculture' as a means to promote enhanced food security, John made his mark. His CV included eight books and more than 100 other publications and reports in English, French and Spanish.

John's youthful mountaineering publications appear in the *AJ* and elsewhere. Recently, after celebrating the life of fellow climber Dick Isherwood at a memorial weekend in Cumbria in 2013, it was John who undertook to compile an anthology of Dick's writings and published *Dick Isherwood: Mountaineer* in 2014.

John's last five years were hard, cancer of the larynx robbing him of his voice. But he remained courageous and good-humoured to the last – and Patty and their daughters Wendy and Jenny never ceased to be cheerful and effective interpreters. John lived to see the 50th anniversaries of his Cambridge expeditions and to celebrate in fine style. Torn from us slowly and painfully, all of us who had the privilege of sharing his life will remember the man with immense gratitude and affection.

John's own writing gives a flavour of what mountains meant to him. Here he is, writing about a first trip to Snowdon: 'Although agony at the time, I still remember the beautiful sight in the valley once day had broken. The colours, the surrounding cliffs and the general magic of the surroundings ... Progress was slow and tiring ... It seemed strange that anyone could think of taking pleasure from such an excursion. The summit was reached, but I felt none of the sense of achievement one reads about. The air was bitterly cold, and I was exhausted. We proceeded down the Crib Goch ridge. It narrowed, and momentarily the mist parted to reveal sheer drops on either side. Something stirred within me, and it was not fear. It was perhaps my first experience of the indescribable sensation which affects climbers at odd times and in odd places, and draws us back to the hills time and again.'

*Paul Newby et al*

### **Fred Beckey 1923 - 2017**

There are so many superlatives in modern climbing that it's often difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff. But when the name Fred Beckey comes up, there's no question of his place in mountaineering history: he was simply the greatest American climber of the 20th century. Physically, his climbs stretched from Alaska to Mexico and were crafted on all manner of mountain terrain, from the loosest desert sandstone to iron-like Bugaboo granite; mentally, his climbs clobbered the imagination, a perfect realisation of those oft-sought aesthetics of line, location and movement.



Fred Beckey with his friend Megan Bond, author of a forthcoming biography of America's most prolific climber. (Cameron Burns)



Fred Beckey's passion for exploration kept him climbing for eight decades. (Cameron Burns)

Wolfgang Paul Gottfried Beckey was born on 14 January 1923 in Zulpich, near Düsseldorf, during the years after the First World War when the country was reeling economically from the Treaty of Versailles. Young Fred moved with his family, father Klaus, a physician, mother Marta Maria, an opera singer, and newly born brother Helmut or 'Helmy', to Seattle in 1925.

Fred's parents liked car-camping trips and growing up Fred and Helmy were exposed to the rivers, lakes, and valleys of north Washington's majestic mountains. It didn't take Fred long before the mountains themselves became the goal. On an early trip to Olympic Hot Springs, 13-year-old Fred saw and decided to climb Boulder Peak, a 5,672ft mountain in the Olympics – alone.

'The story of these early years is one of self-doubt and self-reliance, the excitement and ecstasy of every moment of fresh adventure and chance for bravery,' Fred wrote in *Challenge of the North Cascades*. His concerned parents enrolled him in the scouts – Fred was assigned to 'Comet Patrol' – and under the tutelage of Leon Allers, Fred and his newfound friends hiked extensively in the mountains. In 1937, Fred joined a scout trip that covered 75 miles in the Olympics, climbing The Brothers and other peaks between the Hamma Hamma and Dosewallips rivers. Additional scout trips followed, including multiday cross-country ski trips, which culminated in a 1938 ascent of Mount Olympus.

'Scouting had its alpine limitations, of course, and through the suggestion of scout leaders ... I joined the Mountaineers in the fall of 1938 as a junior member,' Fred wrote. 'In spring 1939, I took the climbing course.' With like-minded climbers Bob Craig, Jim Crooks, Ed Kennedy, Bob Lee, Wayne Swift, Lloyd Anderson, founder of REI, and others, Fred reached 35 summits during the summer of 1939, including the first ascent of Mount Despair, a 7,296ft peak in the North Cascades. That number astonished the local hard men, for whom a summer that included 20 successful summits was a banner season. He and brother Helmy also got as far as the Tetons and climbed 'all of the main peaks,' including the Grand.

By 1940, Fred was immersed in Cascades exploration and experimenting with aid climbing. During the summers of 1940 and 1941, the number of summits Fred & Co reached was, at 50, smaller, but the quality of the climbing had risen to a level Cascade climbers had never seen. Of those 50 ascents, half were firsts, and included peaks like Forbidden, Gunsight, Fisher, Inspiration, Crooked Thumb, Phantom, Twin Spires and Cloudcap. By then, 17-year-old Fred Beckey was considered the leading explorer of the continent's most significant alpine range south of the 49th parallel.

The following year, 1942, was the most important of Beckey's early climbing life. Aged 19, and with his younger brother Helmy, he made the second ascent of Mount Waddington (4019m) in British Columbia. Waddington's first ascent had come after 16 attempts spread across two decades. Fritz Wiessner, who nearly made the first ascent of K2 in 1939, and partner Bill House conquered the 'mystery peak' in 1936. So the second ascent was a huge prize for the Beckey brothers. Waddington was also the early culmination of a dual-pronged philosophy the Beckeys adopted during their extensive 1939–41 Cascades period: first, *really* exploring, seeing mountains and walls other people wouldn't really know about until decades later; second, and perhaps explaining why Beckey would remain such a force in the climbing world, is that the brothers were delving into the limits of physical endurance, traveling huge distances through impossible scrub and across maddening mountain terrain to apply their advanced climbing skills on outlandish-looking peaks no one had ever heard of.

By the mid-1940s, Helmy had 'retired' from mountaineering, but Fred was just starting: the next stage of his career involved much bigger trips, striking out for climbing objectives that were often hundreds, even thousands of miles away. In 1946, he made his second expedition to Alaska and climbed Kates Needle and the Devils Thumb, both firsts. The late 1940s and 1950s saw Beckey continue on a heavy diet of alpine goals, mostly in Alaska and Canada, where he made first ascents of peaks like Hunter and Deborah, and climbed the huge *North-west Buttress* of Denali, the third route on the peak.

In the mid-1950s, Beckey tried his hand at the expedition game when he was invited to join an international team attempting Lhotse. High on the mountain, a storm turned Beckey and his Swiss climbing partner, Bruno Spirig, around. Beckey reportedly left Spirig, who was sick and suffering hallucinations, and descended. Stories circulated, including unfounded rumours, and Beckey was less than enamoured by the expedition experience. It was one reason Beckey's climbing never again strayed far from the metrics he'd established in adolescence: a small team, reliable people, hard objective, fight like hell. It was also the reason a climber of his calibre was overlooked for the American 1963 Everest expedition.

Those metrics also matched Beckey's development as a climber. By the early 1960s, his sheer technical ability on both rock and ice put him in a realm that included only a handful of American climbers and arguably fewer European climbers, most of whom were either vastly experienced

rock technicians, like Yosemite's hard men, or talented alpinists, such as the Teton climbers of the day, but not both. Few other contemporaries were as well rounded as Beckey.

Then there were the road trips. Early in his career, Beckey began to think little of the vast distances that separated him and the climbs he wanted to do. He would regularly drive a thousand miles to attempt something. If thwarted by unmanageable personalities, the weather, or just a bug up his ass, he might then turn around and drive a thousand miles to another objective. He was always on the move, always reaching for the next great climb, always searching for the next horizon.

As he moved beyond the Cascades, and Alaska, and Canada, all of which he returned to sporadically anyway, his first ascents began to include towers in the deserts of the South-west, walls in the Wind Rivers, clean white Sierra Nevada faces, and facets of just about every other mountain range in the Lower 48. His name can be found hundreds of times in guidebooks of all persuasion, mostly attached to now-classic climbs.

Early on, Beckey's keen intelligence prompted a literary career that, like his climbing, would span generations. His publishing activities started nearly 70 years ago when he wrote a *Climber's Guide to the Cascades and Olympics of Washington* for the American Alpine Club (1949). His iconic, three-volume *Cascade Alpine Guide* has been in print for decades, and his other books, ranging from coffee-table fantasies like *The Mountains of North America* and *Mount McKinley: Icy Crown of North America* to the dizzyingly researched 527-page *Range of Glaciers* about the history of the North Cascades, are masterworks. Starting in 1942, Beckey wrote 22 feature articles and hundreds of reports for the *American Alpine Journal*. As *AAJ* editor Dougald MacDonald noted in 2014: 'No climber in the 88-year history of the *AAJ* has written more reports or had more climbs cited in these pages than Fred Beckey.'

He never sought recognition for his climbs. In a 1994 interview, Don Liska, Beckey's late, legendary climbing partner, told me he'd written a letter to Jimmy Carter in an attempt to get Beckey a medal or some sort of presidential decree. When I told Beckey about it, his reaction was: 'But who cares about that stuff?'

In his later decades, he struggled to keep up with his own desire for more rock, new places and vivid experiences, and although the 1970s and 1980s were reasonable in terms of his new-route output and travel, by the 1990s he was starting to slow down. Climbing with Beckey, as I did between 1991 and 2000, you could see the frustration on his face. Still, it was also obvious that he enjoyed living out of his car, not washing for days or weeks, and stealing Fed-Ex envelopes to use as a makeshift filing cabinet along with condiments from fast-food restaurants. As he always had, he still loved living without rules.

In the 2000s, he continued making trips across the globe, notably several to China, but his aging body couldn't do what his brain was anticipating, and most of the time he came away empty-handed. Beckey also enjoyed

shocking his climbing partners with bursts of profanity, and comments with the sort of prejudice that these days can prompt a social media storm. Yet, although he presented himself at times as something of a base and foul character, he had a keen intellect. In 1997, during a 10-day stay at my home, he grunted out a command that: 'I need to send an email to Lindsay Griffin.' I set him up with my computer, and after an hour and a half, came back into my office to read some of the most commanding and absorbing language ever written about mountains and geology. It was, literally, unbelievable. 'Send it, will ya?' he grunted. 'I'm hungry.'

In a decade of occasional adventures, I never felt like I was Fred's friend. He never asked for anything, except perhaps the rack, as he'd sized up whatever we were doing long before we got there and knew the plot, page by page. He was, in short, a climbing machine. A lot of climbers seem to feel the same way; I hear them calling themselves 'former Beckey partners' and such, but no one, as far as I can tell, was ever Fred's friend. I don't think anyone was ever really close to Fred, except perhaps Megan Bond, who became Fred's best friend in the mid-1990s, and eventually his biographer in the mid-2000s. Her biography is due out in 2020.

Perhaps it will reveal more about the astonishing drive that kept Beckey going for so long. Climbing partners and friends have often wondered about this perfect storm of motivation: his drive, his upbringing, his route tally, his gear, his next goal, his 'secret sauce,' and even if the bonks he suffered on his head over the years affected his judgment. But one outcome is undeniable: Fred Beckey's mountaineering career has never and will never be surpassed by any American mountaineer.

*Cameron M Burns*

*John Porter writes:* Back in the 1960s, when I was a student at the University of Oregon and not too far away from Washington, we all idolised Fred. But our paths didn't cross until I had the pleasure of editing his interview for *Mountain* magazine in 1975. The last time I saw him was at the Old Crown in Heskett Newmarket where he gave a talk to the Heskett Spiders in 2013. As AC vice president, I had the pleasure of introducing Fred and announcing to everyone that he had just been made an honorary member of the Alpine Club. With a wide grin, he stood up and shook my hand: 'Well that's really swell. I'll put that straight on my CV.' It was quite the CV. Fred was undoubtedly North America's most prolific alpinist with too many routes to remember. His was a life lived in and for the mountains.

*Stephen Venables writes:* In November 1996 I was speaking at the annual gathering of the American Alpine Club in New York. At midday I escaped the conference room to find some food, and found myself in a Manhattan sandwich bar chatting with another speaker at the conference: a grizzled, wiry, septuagenarian with a stubby face as deeply furrowed as the canyons of the wild west. Dreaming aloud in a gravelly croak, he reeled off names of all the Himalayan mountains and valleys he still hoped to visit. Then,

pulling out a wad of grubby greenbacks, he paid for my lunch and beer. It was only afterwards that it dawned on me just how privileged I had been. This was the man who never had any money: the original climbing bum, the mountain tramp who had spent 70 years on the road, scrounging and making do, living out of the back of cars, stashing odds and ends at friends' houses all over the USA. This was also the man who had made more first ascents than anyone else in America. In fact he had probably made more first ascents, than anyone, anywhere in the world. And he had bought me lunch.

### Adrian Clifford 1955 - 2017

Adrian Clifford, a well-known and respected GP in Keswick, died suddenly and unexpectedly at home on 8 September 2017. He became a GP in Keswick in 2001, was a member of the Keswick Mountain Rescue Team, and although retired as a GP in 2013, he qualified as a holder of the UK UIAA/ICAR/ISMM diploma of mountain medicine just six months before his death.

He was born in 1955, and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh where he was an active member of the mountaineering club. It was as a junior hospital doctor, on a EUMC meet, that he introduced Joe Simpson to snow and ice climbing in the winter of 1980. Memories differ, Simpson recalls in his *Game of Ghosts* that the climb was *Red Gully*, Clifford remembers it as *Spiral Gully*, in Coire an t-Sneachda. The climb was nearly finished when the pair witnessed the abrupt, spectacular and uncontrolled descent of Nick Rossiter from the adjacent *Rundle*, fortunately without consequent injury.

When Adrian applied for full membership of the Club in 2005, he had amassed considerable experience on classic mixed routes in the Alps, and many snow and ice routes, which he preferred to rock, and made a number of first ascents in the Lake District, including several on Black Crag in Ennerdale. He was the doctor and support climber for two expeditions to the Himalaya led by Mal Duff. In 1981 to Nuptse and in 1984 to the Muztagh Tower, described in Andrew Greig's lively account, *Summit Fever*. 'Medicine



Adrian Clifford on *Thomsons Route* (IV), Ben Nevis, in March 2009.

is the first thing in his life and he takes his role as expedition doctor very seriously. He doesn't like or approve of risk, yet courts it.'

His professional career as an RAF doctor took him to Germany and the Falkland Islands. Later he was a GP in Lincolnshire, before he returned to the mountains he loved around Keswick. He had many climbing friends in the Fylde Mountaineering Club of which he was a long-term member. He is remembered with great affection in the spring 2018 edition of the *Fylde Mountaineering Club Magazine*.

His interest in the great outdoors was wide ranging, extending from climbing to running, swimming, scuba diving, skiing, sky diving and flying micro-lights. He was fortunate to be able to continue to enjoy all these activities until his end.

*Roderick Smith*

*Sandy Allan writes:* I first met Adrian when he came to Muztagh Tower in Pakistan for our 1984 expedition when he was invited by Mal Duff to be the doctor for our expedition. He was an incredibly nice man and excellent doctor. He was rather shy about his climbing abilities but turned out to be a very competent mountaineer. I last saw Adrian climbing on Ben Nevis the winter season before his surprising untimely death and he was overflowing with enthusiasm for climbing and always keen to share tales. He was indeed a very active climber and is sorely missed.

*Andrew Greig writes:* I got to know Adrian on our Muztagh Tower expedition in 1984. I loved his sense of mischief and enthusiasm that sat alongside serious dedication to his role of team medic as well as support climber. Both came into play when in Askole. He was asked to treat a sick yak that had been badly scarred by a snow leopard. He estimated its bodyweight and injected it with a large part of the expedition's antibiotics. On his way back from the hill, the yak had recovered, and he was fêted as a star in Askole. Adrian was an orderly person who rather enjoyed disorder, and as such was an excellent friend and apt member of our team. We miss and mourn him.

### **Nicholas Scarth Dixon 1930 - 2017**

Nicholas Scarth Dixon, my maternal uncle, was born on 13 January 1930, in Rugby, third and youngest child of Mr and Mrs William Scarth Dixon, his father being an AC member and headmaster of a prep school, Hillbrow, which Nick attended. Hillbrow was evacuated to Featherstone Castle in Northumberland in 1940 when its building in Rugby, Overslade, was damaged by bombs. All the windows were blown out on the night of the biggest German bombing raid on Coventry. From the age of 10 therefore Nick was brought up in the wilds of Northumberland in accommodation not dissimilar to a mountain hut, the 13th century castle affording rather basic facilities.

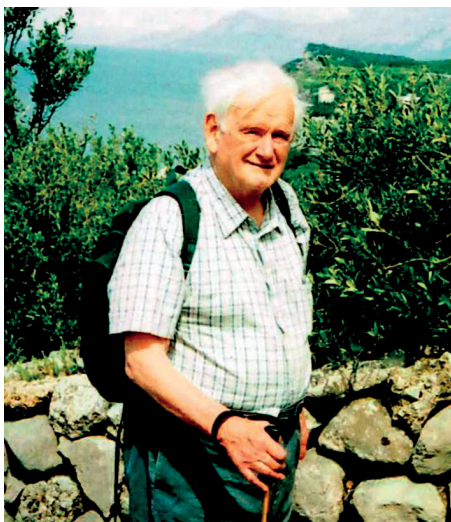
His father's enthusiasm for mountaineering meant Nick was surrounded with pictures of mountains on the school walls and the proximity of the Lake District provided the opportunity to venture out on the fells. It was not only a love of the mountains that Nick inherited from his father but also strong links to Switzerland, his father, together with J A B Bruce, having helped form the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club (ABMSAC) and funded the Britannia hut at whose opening in 1912 he and Bruce were present.

After leaving Hillbrow, Nick continued his education at Oundle School and from 1951 Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he studied history and theology and won his oars in the college first boat. After a year at Westcott House Anglican Theological College in Cambridge he was ordained deacon in 1956 at Carlisle Cathedral. His ministry thereafter was largely in Cumbria, near his beloved Lake District with spells away in Aden, where he was chaplain to the forces in 1959-62, and Norfolk, as rector at Blofield in the Diocese of Norwich 1970-77. He enjoyed getting out into the mountains in Aden, although an occasion when he was nearly shot at discouraged further explorations; in Norfolk he found the country a bit flat, although it was a comfort that he was less likely to be shot at, unless, of course, it was for a disagreement with an 'over-zealous evangelical'.

He did his national service in Gibraltar and Wales before going up to Caius. History doesn't relate whether he climbed on the rock of Gibraltar. However, back home a story is told that he took a group of boys to Snowdonia and is remembered for leaving them to tackle the tricky mountain ridges on their own and then meeting them with an elaborate tea after their exploits. At this time, he climbed numerous routes in the Lakes and in Scotland, Skye being a favourite haunt.

At Cambridge he joined the University Mountaineering Club and with them in 1953 went to the Pennine Alps where, blessed with good weather, he completed nine major routes including a traverse of the Matterhorn via the Hörnli and Italian ridges. Nick was known for his absentmindedness, his mind being 'on a higher plane', his family said, and so it was not entirely out of character that on arrival at the Italian border post Nick found he had left his passport at the Hörnli hut and had to return via the Theodul pass to collect it.

Nick had further Alpine seasons in 1956, 1958 and 1960, mainly in the



Nicholas Dixon

Zermatt area, before being accepted for membership of the Alpine Club in 1961, proposed by Christopher Simpson and supported by his father and Johnny Walker, another schoolmaster. The 1958 season was an exception, Nick taking a youth group from his parish in Walney Island to the Austrian Alps. All his Alpine climbing was guideless, save for the Austrian visit when two guides were hired and undertaken with Cambridge or family climbing partners. Looking at his AC application I note with interest the familiarity of the peaks climbed, the same ones I have climbed, not knowing I was following in family footsteps, some of which his father had also climbed before him: Dom, Matterhorn, Allalinhorn, Weissmies, Portjengrat, Nadelhorn, Mont Blanc de Cheilon, Pigne d'Arolla and many others. I note also a familiar lack of concern about climbing the same routes more than once.

After becoming a member of the Alpine Club, Nick climbed in the Dolomites, where he did the Third Sella Tower, and in the Bernina Alps, but Saas Grund was his favourite, taking his young family there on holiday: he was married in 1968. Although having a family slowed his climbing down a little, for Nick his mountaineering was no passing interest, no hobby. As his son, John, memorably said, in Nick's mind going to the mountains 'was somehow IMPORTANT.' Whether it was an outing with the mountain rescue team or a family picnic perched atop a rocky knoll in pouring rain, he was never happier than when in the mountains. Until his health no longer permitted it he climbed Scafell Pike in the Lakes every year.

Nick inherited a good sense of humour from his father, about whom it was said 'his wit was often too subtle for the solemn,' but in Nick's case the humour was quirky. He chuckled at human foibles and had a keen eye for life's absurdities. I remember him telling stories to myself and my brothers when we were young, stories told with great inventiveness and innocent mischief. He was, apparently, a believer in the existence of antlered aquatic creatures in the waters of the Lake District. He had his likes and dislikes, however, about which he was capable of making his feelings known unambiguously. Nick died on 26 February 2017 and is survived by his widow, Gillian, two sons and four grandchildren: all potential Alpine Club members. He left his collection of mountaineering books to the Alpine Club Library.

*Danny Clark-Lowes*

### **Richard F Gilbert 1937 - 2018**

Richard was born on 17 November 1937 in Lancaster. He was educated at St George's School in Harpenden and at Worcester College, Oxford, where he read chemistry. In between school and university, Richard did national service, commissioned into the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. De-mobbed in 1958, he celebrated by hitchhiking to Skye with his brother Oliver to climb in the Cuillin. In later life he gleefully remembered that



Ken Wilson and, right, Richard Gilbert, a formidable partnership on several important hill walking books. (*Ken Wilson Archive*)

their lift from Glen Garry to Sligachan was with Dame Flora MacLeod of MacLeod, 28th chief of Clan MacLeod, in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce.

He married Trisha Roberts on 1 September 1962, raising a family of four children: Tim, Emily, Lucy and William. They lived in the village of Crayke in North Yorkshire. Richard's professional career was as a chemistry teacher at the Benedictine Ampleforth College in North Yorkshire over some three decades, despite being an atheist and a member of the York branch of the British Humanist Association. By all accounts he was a popular and excellent teacher, with pupils in his classes frequently attaining examination grades far above expectation.

His other great claim to fame as a schoolmaster was his love of climbing and mountaineering and in taking charge of the Ampleforth College Mountaineering Club, among the first to embark on overseas expeditions. He taught the boys to rock climb on local crags, one of the early participants being Joe Simpson of *Touching the Void* fame, and led groups on frequent trips to Scotland, enjoying back-packing and camping adventures in the Cairngorms and up challenging peaks, often in winter conditions in March and April. These Scottish adventures prepared him and the boys for five overseas trips: to the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap in south-east Iceland in 1968; the High Atlas of Morocco in 1970; the Tröllaskagi of northern Iceland in 1972; the Lyngen peninsula of Arctic Norway in 1974; and, finally, Kolahoi in the Indian Himalaya in 1977, for which Richard was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship. The story of these expeditions have been preserved for posterity in his book *Young Explorers* (1979) and the Kolohoi

expedition, reputedly the first climbing expedition by a group of British schoolboys to the Himalaya, which concluded in the successful ascent of the 5,456m peak, is recounted in an article by Richard in the *Alpine Journal* (AJ 1978, pp174-7).

While Richard was fairly bitter about the fact that the Young Explorers' Trust (YET) in those days did not support his school expeditions financially, on the grounds that they lacked scientific fieldwork, his plans did gain the coveted 'approval', and in later life his vast experience as a mountaineer and as a schoolmaster engaged in outdoor activities made him an extremely valuable member of the YET expedition vetting panel for many a year, when he cheerfully 'got his own back' by strongly supporting purely activity-based plans. He understood the need that school governors and headmasters (even headmistresses) had for reassurance that the plans of their enthusiastic members of staff were sensible and within the capacity of the young students involved but he remained excited at all times by those plans that broke away from the norm and went a little 'out on a limb', as had his own ground-breaking Kolohoi expedition.

As soon as he left school he and two friends attempted the Three Peaks Challenge, Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours, with a Renault 4 Chevaux support vehicle, but they ascended the Ben too quickly (2h 35m from Glen Nevis) and burnt out in the Lakes.

At Oxford he had joined the OUMC, of which he was eventually president. Most term weekends were spent rock climbing in north Wales or Derbyshire with vacations in the Lake District and Skye and winter climbing in Scotland. He remembers that his hardest climbs were probably *Diagonal* and *Central Buttress* on Scafell and a full winter ascent of the *North-East Buttress* on Ben Nevis, and one of his most memorable was the whole Cuillin Ridge on Skye in a summer's day. Summer vacations were spent climbing in the Alps with OUMC friends such as Nigel Rogers, Colin Taylor, Alan Wedgewood, and his own brother Christopher.

Richard was quick thinking. On a ridge on the Allalinhorn with Alan and Janet Wedgewood, Richard was roped to a less experienced person who slipped and fell. So he leapt off the other side to arrest the fall. Other memorable Alpine days while a student included the ascents of the Matterhorn and the Dent d'Hérens. He pretty much gave up pushing hard on technical rock climbs after a fall off *Agrippa* on Craig yr Ysfa in the 1960s. While he was leading, a hold came free in his hand and he took a massive fall, stopped by a single runner and left hanging upside-down, his head an inch from the ground. This took away his enthusiasm for hard rock.

Even so, Richard was elected a member of the Alpine Club and was also a member of the Oxford University Alpine Club, perhaps for their excellent reunion dinners. His love of the Scottish hills, especially in winter or spring conditions, helped divert his interests away from rock climbing and onto hill walking, concentrating on the Munros and non-technical Alpine ascents, as well as mountaineering in Norway, Iceland, Atlas, the Rockies and similar. In 1971 he completed all the Munros, ascending Bidean nam

Bian on 12 June, becoming the 101st Munroist, recounted in his book *Memorable Munros* (1976).

Richard and Trisha had frequent family holidays in the Austrian Tyrol, hut-to-hutting and ascending peaks, often with their children. These family climbs began in 1982 as soon as the children were deemed old enough, when Tim was 16 and Lucy was 11 years old; too small to wear crampons, they ascended, amongst others, the Zuckerhütl (3505m), highest peak in the Stubai. Most other family holidays were based on hill walking and camping on islands and remote areas of north-west Scotland where Richard bought a plot of land on the Braes above Ullapool and had a small house built in 1970, looking over Loch Broom.

Often with Trisha, he undertook several long-distance walks, such as the Welsh three-thousanders, the Lakeland three-thousanders, the Lyke Wake Walk, Marsden to Edale, the Yorkshire Three Peaks, and several mountain marathon events. There were trips to the Wind Rivers in Wyoming, climbing the highest peak in the range, and a traverse of the Karakoram, up the Biafo glacier to Snow Lake and down the Hispar glacier to Hunza. In 1990 they joined a Karakoram Experience expedition to climb Mount Elbruz (5642m), highest peak in Europe. Due to the cold war, this was the first formal expedition from the UK to visit the range since John Hunt's expedition in 1958 (*AJ* 1992-3, pp137-43).

Richard was a prolific writer. As well as articles for the *AJ*, he wrote a column for *High* magazine, 'Richard Gilbert's Walking World', where he defended the UK's wild spaces from assault. He wrote several mountaineering and hillwalking books, particularly for Ken Wilson's bestselling coffee-table series: *The Big Walks* (1980), *Classic Walks* (1982), and *Wild Walks* (1988). A 1980s Channel 4 TV series 'Great Walks' was based on these books, two of which featured Richard (Malham, with his brother Oliver, and Cape Wrath to Sandwood Bay with Trisha and younger children, Lucy and William). His other great success was *Exploring the Far North-West of Scotland* (1994).

Richard was an active campaigner for outdoor access, for the natural environment and particularly Scotland's wild spaces and was a long-term member and supporter of the John Muir Trust and the Scottish Wild Land Group. What he termed 'vandalism' of wild places, such as hydroelectric schemes and pylons marching across wilderness, angered him immensely and he was at the forefront of many campaigns to preserve wild spaces. Fittingly, he had a deep love of music, Mozart and Haydn particularly, and was a friend of the Ryedale Festival and a frequent attendee at its concerts. As a nature lover he simply could not stand cruelty to animals, especially hunting with dogs, and could not understand the passion for shooting. He was a great cricket and rugby fan, playing cricket at school and university, and enjoyed accompanying friends to Test matches in Lancashire, Yorkshire and even as far north as Durham.

As known to many but not all his friends, Richard suffered from polycystic kidneys, a hereditary disease where kidney function progressively worsens.

He had to start dialysis in 1998 and nine years later received a kidney transplant. Before that, however, he needed open-heart surgery for a mitral valve replacement to make him fit enough for the transplant operation. He suffered a major stroke in 2014 that partially paralysed his left arm and left leg, but he maintained his positive attitude and outward spirit by acquiring an automatic car with steering wheel gadgetry that enabled him to drive to the Lakes, the Dales and even, in 2017, to Ullapool and Scotland's north-west.

Richard's was a full life of eight decades, even latterly when he defeated his illness on many occasions, built around his professional career, where his teaching went so far beyond the classroom, his family, in whose many successes he rejoiced, and the hills, where he went to repair his spirit. He leaves behind his wife and children, of course, but also his books and so very many friends and colleagues around the outdoor world, all mourning his passing but celebrating his friendship.

*Brian Needham*

### **Livia Gollancz 1920 - 2018**

Livia Gollancz, who died on 29 March 2018, was born into a well-to-do London Jewish family on 25 May 1920. She was the eldest of the five daughters of Ruth and Victor Gollancz, who at that time was just beginning his career in publishing. The success of Victor Gollancz Ltd allowed her parents to buy a large country house in Brimpton, Berkshire, where Ruth instilled a love of gardening and the outdoors in all her daughters. However, when Livia visited Austria with her parents in 1934 it was to attend the Salzburg Festival, not to climb in the Alps.

Music was Livia's passion from an early age. She went to the opera alone as a schoolgirl, sitting high up in the gods at the Royal Opera House. Her principal instrument was the violin, but she bought herself a French horn too with her pocket money, and after studying at the Royal College of Music it was this instrument she played professionally. The Second World War created opportunities for women musicians, and her professional career took her to Glasgow and Manchester, with the Hallé, back to London and then again to Glasgow, where she went with friends to the Highlands for the first time, and discovered her other passion in life.

She soon went further afield, visiting the Alps both in summer and winter. Though she tried skiing she did not persist with it, but returned to climb and walk the Alps again and again. Her career as a professional musician was cut short by problems with her teeth, and she started working at her father's publishing house. Through the 1950s and 1960s she spent much of her spare time walking and climbing. She completed her circuit of the Munros, and at weekends might be climbing in north Wales, or walking the North Downs. She joined many climbing clubs: the Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club, the Pinnacle Club, the Ladies' Alpine Club and the Fell



Livia Gollancz in the Dolomites c1960.



Livia in conversation with the feminist rock climber Jill Lawrence, left, in the 1990s. (*Ed Douglas*)

and Rock. Her finest achievement was to ascend the Matterhorn in 1964.

By then she was the second-in-command at Victor Gollancz, her father still firmly in control. She started editing and publishing mountaineering books at this time, a list which was to grow much further following Victor's death in 1967, when she took over as head of the company. Chris Bonington, Joe Brown, Dennis Gray and Tom Patey were amongst the mountaineers whose books she published.

She had always maintained a life in music, through singing with a variety of choral and opera societies – combining both music and mountains memorably according to the Pinnacle Club history by keeping a railway compartment from Bozen uncrowded for her climbing companions by a judicious selection of operatic arias.

With increased age, she ceased to climb, but carried on walking for as long as possible. After Christmas with family in London, she would head north to spend Hogmanay in a Scottish bothy. It was not until 1988, at the age of 68, when she accompanied Hamish Brown on a two-week coast-to-coast walk, that she realised her body might not be up such exertions, although that might have been as much due to Hamish's relentless pace as age.

Livia retired in 1990, and though no longer carrying a full pack, joined commercial treks around the world, including trips to Bhutan and Nepal to see the rhododendrons and azaleas in flower. As well as her garden at her home in Highgate, she cultivated an allotment into her 90s. She had been a vegetarian since the war, qualifying for the extra cheese ration by first saving sufficient meat ration tokens to prove her credentials, and grew much of her own food.

Although no longer going for long walks, her social activity was still hectic. Her singing voice having aged, she returned to the violin, and played string quartets multiple evenings every week. She was also an active member of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution and other local societies. Never happy to accept the infirmities of age, she still enjoyed hearing about the mountain experiences of her friends and relatives up until the end.

*Benjamin Jeffries*

*Hamish Brown writes:* A look at any bookshop in the 1970s showed Victor Gollancz as the publisher of mountaineering accounts and biographies (Joe Brown, Tom Patey et al) so I contacted them about publishing my book on doing the Munros in a single walk. In the event I dropped off the manuscript in London while driving out to Morocco and on reaching Marrakech found a postcard from Livia accepting the book. Typical, efficient Livia.

She saw all the mountain-y titles through from start to finish, was always accessible, stern and friendly, a joy to work with. When she read and edited my book (a chapter a night after supper) I received it next day and had to return it pronto. Miss a day and Livia would be on the phone. 'Where's my manuscript?'

She lived across the road from Ernst Sondheimer, one-time editor of the *Alpine Journal*, who had climbed with me in Skye, Alps, Corsica and Atlas so on my infrequent visits to London there were pilgrimages to Highgate. Ernst was a keen alpine gardener, Livia tended her allotment to a ripe old age and made music to the end, both were cultivated, full of life characters who would come to know some of the cruelties of being old. Livia would rather have been a professional musician but, as the only remaining Gollancz, gave her loyalty to the family firm.

In 1988 I persuaded Livia and another friend to join me on that year's Ultimate Challenge (now TGO Challenge) to walk across Scotland from Loch Duich to Arbroath. Livia had not had such a physical demand in years and found it hard graft. Most of the Mamores were bagged then the following day we started off from Mamore Lodge (Kinlochleven), passed the Blackwater dam, took in Beinn a' Chrulaiste and, finally, crossed Rannoch Moor to Rannoch Station. I'd gone on ahead to ensure supper was available and was sitting with a bowl of venison broth when *forfochan* Livia (a vegetarian) arrived, grabbed my bowl and drank it off. 'I needed that.' Working visits to Victor Gollancz in Henrietta Street inevitably took in lively lunches in London's best veggie curry houses. I've an image of Livia, near the end of that Ultimate Challenge crossing, *crawling* up the stairs to bed in Kirkmichael: 'I can't limp on both feet simultaneously!' The crossing however would spur Livia on for several years of trekking in mountain regions worldwide, including Bhutan.

Livia, the last Gollancz, eventually had to retire. Gollancz was sold with a proviso that mountaineering publications would continue but that went when it was sold on again into the conglomerate mess of publishing we see today. Mountaineering lost a very good friend.

### **Norman Hardie 1924 - 2017**

I first met Norman Hardie in May 1983 in his hometown of Christchurch outside my favourite old bookshop in New Regent Street. At the time I was field operations officer for the New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme



Above: Norman Hardie with Susan Band, who died in 2018. Right: Norman Hardie



so I introduced myself and asked Norman if he fancied a 5-month stint as leader of Scott Base. I knew that Norman had been to Antarctica before as a survival instructor in the early 1960s and, in 1967, as a surveyor with Sir Edmund Hillary's New Zealand expedition that went on to make the first ascent of the elegant Mt Herschel in North Victoria Land.

I felt sure that Norman's prestige as an internationally recognised mountaineer and his reputation as a skilled, no-nonsense civil engineer would be the perfect skillset to take charge of not only the Scott Base staff but to solve the complex logistic puzzle that is New Zealand's summer science programme. Sure enough, a few weeks later, Norman sat beside me to start his indoctrination into how some 300 people would meld together into a cohesive team. A friendship started here at my desk and carried on during that summer at Scott Base endured and deepened over the years.

Norman David Hardie was born in Timaru on 28 December 1924, one of three sons and five daughters of George and Mabel Hardie. He was educated at Timaru Boys' High School then at the University of Otago and the University of Canterbury, graduating in civil engineering. His first job, in 1948, was with the ministry of works at Lake Pukaki. In 1950 he moved to the Wellington Hydro office. By 1951 Norman was in London and for the next four years worked for a consulting engineering company on structural and water scheme designs. While there, in 1951, Norman married University of Canterbury friend Enid Hurst, daughter of Colonel H C Hurst.

After his first expedition to Nepal in 1954 Norman returned to Christchurch to work for E G S Powell as a consulting engineer. From 1958 to 1963 Norman was a partner in Stock & Hardie consulting engineers, then Hardie & Anderson, structural engineering consultants (1963-83). Norman was a site engineer for Baigent's timber mill (1984-85) before retiring to

work as a private consultant working from homes in Halswell and Cashmere. He was chair of the Canterbury branch of the Institution of Engineers (1969-71) and a director of Farrier Waimak Ltd. Norman was also made a distinguished fellow of the Institution of Professional Engineers.

His mountain life started during the late 1930s as a government deer culler mainly in the Canterbury high country, work he continued during his years at university. On one hunting venture, after cycling from Timaru to Bealey, he shot four deer in the Waimakariri river basin. Tired out, he broke into Cora Lyn farmhouse to sleep the night, leaving a note about his actions upon leaving in the morning. Twenty-four years later, he and Enid bought that house, owning it for 22 happy years.

During his final university years Norman's interest in hunting led him to join the Canterbury University Tramping Club and this soon fostered a desire to take up mountaineering. Climbs at the head of the Rakaia followed in 1946, as did ventures into the Landsborough river catchment, a region that held a lifelong fascination. Here he completed numerous new routes on peaks such as Decken, Strauchon, Fettes and Elliot. During Norman's time at university he fostered enduring friendships with climbers Jim McFarlane, Bill Beaven, Bill Packard and Earle Riddiford who all went on to join the New Zealand Alpine Club. As fresh graduates bound for employment at the end of the 1947 summer, Bill, Earle, Jim and Norman completed the first ascent of the still rarely climbed south ridge of Sefton, approaching it from Fyfe Pass, the Landsborough and Harper's Rock.

Based at Pukaki in 1948 as an engineer Norman was awakened one night by Bill Beaven to tell him he was needed to help rescue Ruth Adams who lay badly injured close to the summit of La Perouse. Adams had fallen during a climb with Ed Hillary and guides Mick Sullivan and Harry Ayres. Ruth's subsequent lower down the West Ridge of La Perouse and epic stretcher-carry down the Cook river to Fox has entered New Zealand mountain folklore, with Norman's role being written up in his autobiography *On My Own Two Feet* (2006). Norman told me in recent years that he felt the rescue became a pivotal point in New Zealand mountaineering whereby amateur climbers like Ed Hillary who had always climbed with a guide saw what other amateur climbers were capable of. In turn, the amateurs learned much from the professionals. The bushmen who cut the track up the Cook river taught much also. Norman and his mates realised that the time was right for them to tackle bigger objectives, with luck overseas. As one, their dreams turned to climbing in the Himalaya.

Engineering work and marriage in London followed, interspersed with climbs in the European Alps. While in England he befriended famous English climbers Eric Shipton, Bill Tilman, Charles Evans and John Hunt. Lacking Himalayan expedition experience, his application to join John Hunt's 1953 Everest team was turned down. However, as a mountaineer based in London, he was asked by John Hunt to volunteer his time and expertise to co-facilitate the groundwork for the 1953 Everest expedition.

Norman finally got his break to climb in the Nepal Himalaya by sailing

out to Bombay to join the 1954 New Zealand Alpine Club Barun valley expedition led by Ed Hillary. Some 20 new climbs were completed in what is now the Makalu-Barun National Park, including the 7000 metre plum Baruntse. I always envied Norman's first ascent of Pethangtse, an elegant outlier of Lhotse that straddles the Nepal-Tibet border. He used the summit as a survey station as part of his expedition-mapping programme. Charles Evans was invited on this highly mobile Kiwi trip, in part as repayment for New Zealanders being invited on British expeditions starting with Dan Bryant in 1935.

Norman's friendship with Charles Evans deepened and this led to him being asked to be deputy leader of the 1955 British expedition to Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain. Norman helped to refine the oxygen equipment for this venture that was ostensibly a reconnaissance though it quickly turned into a full-blown assault on the summit. Joe Brown and George Band reached the summit first with Norman and Tony Streater following the next day; all four climbers avoided treading on the actual summit in deference to local beliefs. I always liked Norman's tale from base camp of Evans asking him to take two of the climbers who eventually summited aside to teach them how to use crampons.

After the Kangchenjunga climb Norman and some Sherpas set out to walk all the way to Khumbu where he met Enid. This journey forms the basis of Norman's first book *In Highest Nepal* (1957) that was later translated into German and Japanese. Following Norman's participation in Ed Hillary's 1960-61 Himalayan Scientific and Mountaineering Expedition that wintered under Ama Dablam, the Khumbu became central to Norman's life for several decades. In 1963 he developed and constructed an improved water supply from a spring above Khumjung village. He played a key role in the functioning of the Himalayan Trust, remaining on its board from 1966-88. During this period Norman and Enid made 14 visits to Nepal for school building, national park work and re-forestation programmes. In 1986, sponsored by the New Zealand government, Norman went to Khumbu to report on the state of their forests and to make recommendations for their future care, which led to the establishment of the Sagarmatha National Park.

Norman served for 21 years on various New Zealand Alpine Club committees and was president from 1973-75. He also served on the Arthur's Pass National Park Board from 1967-79 and on the Craigieburn Forest Park Committee 1980-87, being chairman for two years. He was a member of the Christchurch Civic Trust Board 1988-92 and The College House Board 1971-97. In 1992, Norman was awarded the Queen's Service Order for services to mountaineering and conservation. He was an honorary member of the Alpine Club, the Himalayan Club, the New Zealand Antarctic Society and the New Zealand Alpine Club.

Norman retained a deep interest in engineering and mountaineering throughout his life, attending and giving lectures and offering advice to younger climbers who found their way to his door. He helped innumerable

authors get Nepali facts straight as well as offering editorial advice to draft manuscripts and journal articles. Many of New Zealand's top climbers owe a debt of gratitude to Norman's mentoring and instruction during their formative years.

While living in a semi-rural property in Halswell, Norman and his 'Last of the Summer Wine' enthusiasts bottled their own vintage. It's time to raise a glass to Norman Hardie, one of New Zealand's outstanding mountaineers.

Norman died 30 October 2017 and is survived by his wife Enid and daughters Sarah Jane Hardie and Ruth Wells and grandchildren Henry, Tamar and Roslyn Wells and David Turton.

*Colin Monteath*

### **Elizabeth Hawley 1923 - 2018**



Liz Hawley. (*Ed Douglas*)

Born on 9 November 1923 in Chicago, Elizabeth Ann Hawley became famous in the mountaineering world as 'the keeper of the mountains', the title of Alison Otto's documentary film as well as Bernadette McDonald's biography about the American journalist who settled in Nepal in 1960 and never left. 'I guess inertia has kept me here,' was her rhetorical answer to those wondering why she never went back to her native

America, although inertia is not a term I would have associated with Miss Hawley. For five decades she hunted down mountaineers all over Kathmandu in her 1964 baby-blue VW Beetle, often ringing them in their hotel just as they put down their bags to summon them for interrogation about what they were up to, tireless in her quest to find every single mountaineer intending to climb an expedition peak in Nepal and grill them about it, something I witnessed for myself as her assistant for 14 years.

This astonishing era ended in spring 2016, when Miss Hawley was 92 and suddenly decided to give up her career as an archivist. It happened after she had interviewed a North American team who were attempting an unclimbed peak in the Everest region. 'When in the middle of the interview my mind went blank, I knew it was time to stop.' And so she did, and never once looked back. There were no hard feelings, no regrets: complete pragmatism was simply Miss Hawley's style. 'Why would I be upset about it? I started it, I finished it and now it's your job to continue,' she said when I asked her whether it was hard to stop doing something she was so passionate about. The question about passion actually came as a surprise

to her. 'Passionate about my archives?' she responded. 'How can you possibly be passionate about a database? I have never been passionate about anything,' was her retort.

Maybe passion is not the right word to describe Miss Hawley's tenacity and devotion for the things she cared for such as her favourite writer, the English crime author and poet Dorothy L Sayers. Whenever I entered her dimly lit flat in the Kathmandu district of Dilli Bazaar over the past two years for my daily visits, Miss Hawley would sit at her sturdy oak table hunched over one of Sayers' books which she had already read countless times. 'The people in these books are my friends,' she would reply to my question why she was ignoring all the other books sitting on her table. 'Why would I read a book with people I don't know and I don't like,' she would say, often giving me instructions to re-adjust the big pile of paperbacks that were given to her by friends and acquaintances, but would never be read.

Reading had always been high on Miss Hawley's list of things to do. In previous years, when she was still interviewing expeditions, she would start her day avidly scouring the *New York Times* followed by a Nepali paper, and once a week *Time* magazine. Having read it daily since she was 12 years old, the *New York Times* was certainly her first choice and she often talked about the day when one of her stories made it to the front page. On 21 July 1982, she had found herself on the same flight from Bangkok to Kathmandu as the ailing prime minister B P Koirala, the great Nepali politician of the post-war generation, who was returning home after medical treatment in Thailand. 'They had taken out the seats in the front row and laid him down there. It was immediately clear to me that he was being flown home to die,' she recalled of this last encounter with a man she deeply respected. 'I spent the entire flight writing the story and kept checking with B P to make sure I got all my facts right.' Later that evening, just as she was sending her story to Reuters via telex, she received a phone call informing her that the prime minister had died. 'It was a sad moment as he was one of the few remarkable men we had in Nepal and a political leader who stuck to his beliefs.' She did not spend long pondering it, quickly changing the ending of the story and landing a scoop. 'I felt very proud,' she told me.

Miss Hawley's father was an accountant, her mother a labour relations professional for the League of Women Voters. She majored in history at the University of Michigan and then moved to New York where she landed a job as researcher for *Fortune* magazine. In 1946, when she started work, being a writer was an exclusively male preserve. She had taken a keen interest in world politics at university and afterwards began to travel, often alone, first in post-war Europe and then much further afield. She summarised these journeys as her favourite verandahs: Karen Blixen's in the Ngong hills outside Nairobi, the St George Hotel's verandah in Beirut, where she met Kim Philby, and one in Khartoum, where she drank whisky with a cultured administrator called Mamoun El Amin, whom she met on a Nile riverboat.

She arrived in Kathmandu in February 1959, having quit her job at *Fortune* in 1957 to travel. The refusal to promote women had turned her

career into a dead-end. It was only a short visit, but Hawley fell in love with the city, which wasn't anything like the sprawling and polluted chaos it is today, and she returned for good in September 1960. She worked part-time as a journalist, first as an accredited correspondent for *Time*, then Reuters, but in 1985 her factually correct report of a bomb exploding by the royal palace gates cost her official recognition for three years. In 1990, she was appointed as a paid honorary consul for New Zealand, perhaps surprising for an American, but Miss Hawley was a longstanding friend of Ed Hillary and served as executive officer for the Himalayan Trust, managing the finances and using her local contacts to smooth the way for new schools and health posts. It was Miss Hawley who flew to where Ed Hillary was working in the field to break the news that his wife and daughter Belinda had been killed in an air-crash taking off from Kathmandu's airport. Until her last days, rumours persisted that they had had an affair, rumours she patiently denied. 'Ed was one of the finest people I ever met, but I never had an affair with him,' she told me in what I considered to be complete honesty. 'I have actually never had an affair in my life,' she said, looking sheepish.

Where Miss Hawley made her greatest mark was with her impressive archive of interviews with mountaineering expeditions in the Nepal Himalaya, an archive that later became known as the Himalayan Database, released into the world in 2004 with the help of American climber and data analyst Richard Salisbury. Her modest and austere apartment, where she lived from 1963 until her very last days, was lined with bookshelves and filing cabinets containing handwritten accounts of thousands of expeditions. The mothballed papers were all neatly arranged and put together with high-quality paperclips. 'I don't like Nepali paperclips, they get rusty,' she said when she asked me to bring some from Europe. 'But don't dare buy the cheap plastic ones either.' Over the years, I must have taken about a thousand high-quality German paperclips to Kathmandu.

For more than half a century, Miss Elizabeth Hawley collected forms, notes, newspaper clippings and scrap papers, which were all held together by sturdy German paper clips, from her interviews with expedition leaders. She would grill mountaineers about their expedition details, their own personal data as well as the exact origins and personal data of their Sherpas, which was extremely important to her. 'Some people don't even know the names of their Sherpas,' she would angrily comment. 'And if they do, they often don't know how to spell their names properly.' Spelling was something Elizabeth Hawley was incredibly fastidious about. She would immediately spot a spelling mistake by just glancing at one of the handwritten forms I used to hand to her. I later found out why. 'I see my vowels in different colours and I immediately notice when a particular shade is missing.' In this case, there was a lack of yellow. I had obviously spelt the name wrongly.

Elizabeth Hawley met many well-known mountaineers and became close to a few of them, apart from Ed Hillary. One mountaineer she thought very highly of was the Italian Reinhold Messner. She met him in the 1970s when he came to Nepal for the first time. 'He was young and inexperienced

and it was interesting to see him develop over the years.' The respect was mutual and in a recorded voice message for her 90th birthday, Reinhold Messner returned the compliment: 'I met many climbers over the last 40 years, but nobody is as strong in my memory as you, Liz. You understand the climbers and know how they tackle the big mountains. You are the Himalayan spirit.'

Miss Hawley's spirit will certainly live on in Nepal's climbing community. She was well respected and even though feared by some, she became a true icon of the Himalayan mountaineering scene, known for making some big mountaineers look small in the interviews. During the last two years of her life, she spent most of her time in her first-floor flat: moving up and down the stairs had simply become too difficult for her. She did not mind. She actually enjoyed finally having the time to sit and read all day long and whenever she was asked out for lunch, she would decline. 'I am happy where I am, I don't want to go out,' she would say.

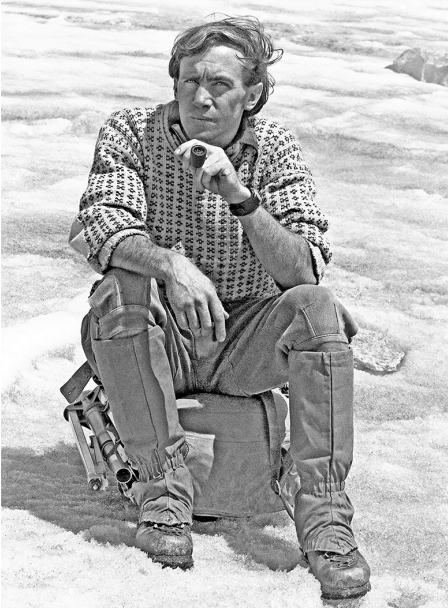
She was hardly ever alone though. Her two nurses Dawa Sherpa and Rista Rai lived with her full time for the last five years of her life, and her long-time cook Man Bahadur served her lunch at 10.30am and dinner at 4pm. She adopted these early eating times when her 88-year-old mother came to live with her. Then there were the many visitors eager to meet the *grande dame* of the Himalaya and have their photo taken with her. She was always happy to receive strangers in her home and have chats with them, although sometimes not without a cheeky comment after they had left: 'They were on a sightseeing tour of Kathmandu, and I think I was one of the sights.'

*Billi Bierling*

### **Iain McMorris 1938-2017**

It was a Tuesday evening in 1960 at South Audley Street and an interesting lecture was scheduled. In those days, however, young unknown alpinists not yet members were largely ignored by the City-suited AC regulars, thus Tony Smythe and I soon found ourselves in conversation with another young unknown with an unusual accent. Iain McMorris, newly arrived from Southern Rhodesia, and a climber of course, happened to be looking for digs and Smythe and I had a spare floor. Iain proved a congenial flat-mate and in the Avon Gorge the following weekend proved no slouch on rock. Within the month we were pioneering new routes together at Swanage.

Forward 38 years. By the time he retired as director of Oxford's Woodlands Outdoor Centre, he'd become a leading specialist in the field of outdoor education. Among many appropriate advisory and committee appointments, he'd chaired the BMC Access and Conservation Committee and the Mountain Leader Training Board, sat on the Duke of Edinburgh Expedition Panel and the Health and Safety Executive, and campaigned



Left: Iain McMorrin  
Above: Iain McMorrin and Cadi exploring the Pembrokeshire coast.

vigorously on rights of way and access in Wales. He'd even seen his name given to an Antarctic glacier.

Hailing from Salisbury, now Harare, where his parents were in business, Iain enjoyed an outdoor

childhood and learnt to climb with the Rhodesian Schools Exploration Society, and by the time he left school he was making first ascents on the big crags of the Chimanimani and Inyanga mountains near the Mozambique border, earning the sobriquet 'Steaming Jim'. He trained as a cartographer with the Rio Tinto Corporation and on an expedition to Kenya, among other climbs, reached the summit of Batian via the south-east face of Nelion. But dispirited by the looming political situation, Iain eventually booked a passage to Britain. On the day of departure from Cape Town, he set off to Table Mountain with Rusty Baillie to do a final climb, which they were still struggling to complete when the Union Castle liner in the docks below started blowing its siren to signal final embarkation for Southampton. Then one of them took a short fall. Two pegs came out and both climbers found themselves swinging on a single bent piton high over Table Bay. Needless to say, Iain caught the boat, but only just.

After sitting various exams in London Iain applied to join the British Antarctic Survey – or the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) as it then was – and in 1961 he was posted to the Stonington Island base on the west coast of mountainous Graham Land as a surveyor-mountaineer. Here he befriended Johnny Cunningham, another Stonington resident. Over the course of three seasons Iain learnt to ski and became enamored with the ethos and techniques of dog sledding. Besides making frequent multi-day journeys and climbing several virgin peaks, he completed a notable and particularly gruelling expedition mapping the coast of the Larsen Ice Shelf on the eastern side of the peninsula, travelling 900 miles over 115 days by dog sled. Subsequently the Directorate of Overseas Surveys named

the McMorris glacier on the northern arm of Marguerite Bay. Not surprisingly his sojourn down south had a profound effect on his life thereafter.

Back in Britain Iain took a teaching qualification at St Luke's College in Exeter, where with Peter Biven he made first ascents on the limestone at Chudleigh and Torbay, before moving on to teach at Lindesfarne College near Llangollen. Earlier, at the AC, he had met Wilf Noyce, who was then starting work with publishers Thomas Nelson on what was to become the *World Atlas of Mountaineering*. Wilf consulted Iain on his embryo African chapters. He'd expected that once he'd returned to Britain, Iain would contribute the Antarctic material for the book, but in 1962 Wilf had been killed in the Pamirs and Nelson commissioned Iain to complete the book. The task occupied his spare time for several years but when finally published in 1969 the book was well received and was the only authoritative reference volume of its kind. He then went back to Rhodesia for nine months working with the Rhodesian Broadcasting News Division and he got involved in subversive activities against the rightwing forces of Ian Smith's government, passing documents on to the Central Africa Party.

An incident occurred in the Alps on which Iain dined out for many years. It was 1967 and Iain, Peter Biven and I happened to be descending, at speed, what was essentially steep névé on the Envers du Plan glacier. Out in front Iain was actually running. Suddenly a rogue crevasse appeared. Attempting to stop he snagged a crampon right on the lip. He leapt into the air, described a perfect somersault and landed safely on his feet on the far side. He continued running, much to the incredulity of a guided French party who were standing debating exactly how best to cross the crevasse. Later, he and I enjoyed the north face of the Chardonnet before going off with Bev Clark, Mick Burke and Mike Kosterlitz to shoot a movie on the Aiguille Brenva. Proposed by Fred Dangar, deputy editor of the *Alpine Journal*, Iain was elected to the AC in 1968.

While spending several months in 1970 plotting the results of his Antarctic work at the DOS, Iain became a prime mover in planning an Anglo-American expedition to the Sentinel Range, where at the time only the highest peaks had been climbed. When this fell through he started organising an expedition to untrodden Smith Island in the South Orkneys – Tilman's objective when he disappeared in 1977 – where FIDS was keen to plant a navigation beacon. Surrounded by imposing ice cliffs, this tiny island rises to Mount Foster (2105m), a worthy prize. But after overspending its 'exploration' budget on a failed northern polar junket, the BBC withdrew its backing, while navigational developments made the beacon redundant. Iain was bitterly disappointed and Mount Foster was left to a Bulgarian expedition 30 years later.

That same year he married Gaynor, a talented young artist, at Gresford, not far from Llangollen, and I was best man. Iain was anxious to bid a fitting farewell to bachelordom, so on the morning of the wedding he insisted we should repeat one of his own routes on a steep limestone crag in the Dee valley. High on the wall, spread-eagled at the crux with minimal gear,

he discovered that the vital aid peg he'd left on the first ascent had since been chopped. He unroped, I climbed down and finding my way to the cliff-top dropped him a rope. We eventually arrived at the ceremony, flustered, sweaty and rather late. He remained happily married for 47 years.

When Iain took an advanced teaching diploma at Oxford, his tutor and soon to be close friend was the educationalist Robin Hodgkin, the well-known AC member who had been on Masherbrum in 1938. Impressed with Iain's ideas on the value of outdoor education and adventure in the shaping of young minds along with his strong sense of fair play, Robin pressured him to apply for the directorship of Woodlands, the Oxfordshire Outdoor Education Centre at Glasbury-On-Wye, where Colin Mortlock was about to retire. Iain was appointed and ran the centre for the next 28 years, teaching youngsters to live together and appreciate the environment through the gaining of outdoor skills – climbing, canoeing, caving, gorge walking and other adventurous activities – while supervising a busy staff. Unflappable, dependable and yet always up for a personal challenge, he and Gaynor bought a Macwester 27 sailing boat in Aberystwyth, sailed it to Fishguard and then crossed to Ireland and back without serious incident despite never having sailed.

When at last he and Gaynor, she still a working artist, retired to their cottage in north Pembrokeshire, Iain maintained his links with outdoor education by setting up a charity, the Oxford Outdoor Learning Trust. Involvement with committee work and consultancies continued but he still found time to enjoy steep rock, while taking a special pleasure in exploring the wild Pembrokeshire coast in his sea kayak, often with his Jack Russell terrier, Cadi, complete with little life jacket, riding pillion. A highly cultured man and an excellent photographer, he travelled widely with Gaynor investigating the art of India, Ladakh, Japan and Mexico. As his health deteriorated in later years he enjoyed his writing, his music, his poetry and his books while delighting in living so close to the sea. He was naturally proud of his two daughters, one a successful marine consultant, the other MP for Cardiff North, elected during the last months of his life. Iain died, peacefully, in Withybush hospital, Haverfordwest on 22 October 2017.

*John Cleare*

### **John Sylvester Monks 1940-2017**

I first met John in September 1962 when he was just 21. He had been offered his first job in Oldham but unsurprisingly turned it down when he was offered the modern languages post at Monte Rosa College in Montreux, Switzerland. We both started teaching at this co-ed boarding school offering O and A-levels with skiing for four half days a week. The teachers were nearly all under 30 and we slotted in very easily.

My earliest memories of John were of him holding forth in one

of the local smoke-filled cafés, a cigarette in one hand and a pint in the other. We did not seem to have much in common as he was an Anglo-Irish Catholic from north Wales and I had been brought up an abstemious Methodist in the flat lands of eastern England. But we were brought together by our love of the ski and mountaineering possibilities that our new environment offered.

One of our first adventures was to build an igloo on Rochers de Naye (2042m), which rose up steeply behind the school. John assumed the role of foreman and at the end of two or three hours we had a respectable snow house. The students returned to school and we spent the night in the igloo. We were cold and unprepared but got up early the next day and with skis and *peaux de phoques* (seal skins) set off for Chateau d'Oex. So started John's *randonnée* adventures, which remained his preferred Alpine activity.

For 55 years until his death in August 2017 John lived around the shores of Lake Geneva teaching French and German to International Baccalaureate level. He was over 30 years at the International School of Geneva where he was head of modern languages. Apart from a three-year stint in the personnel department of Nestlé in Vevey, John remained a teacher for over 40 years. This gave him the opportunity to climb a number of Alpine peaks both on foot and on skis in the Alps. He was also able to climb mountains further afield such as in the Jotunheim in southern Norway, Mt Athabasca in Canada and two peaks of 5,800m in Ladakh.

My most memorable Alpine trip with John was when we crossed the Bernese Oberland on skis from the Jungfrauoch to the Grimsel pass on the 1 to 3 June 1974. On day three we left the Oberaarjochhütte (3258m) very early. It had snowed in the night leaving fresh powder. John was in his element and left an immaculate signature in the snow as we descended to the Grimsel.

We went twice to the Andes together. In 1971 we joined a London University graduate group for six weeks of exploratory mountaineering in the Cordillera Urubamba of Peru. John loved travelling with the pack animals and did many negotiations in Spanish as we sought to acquire



John Monks in Ladakh at 5,800m in 1977.

animals. Several virgin peaks were climbed and John completed one of them, which we called Naranja, about 4,600m. (The rock was orange.)

In 1969 with a group of friends we went to Ecuador where John made several attempts on some of the world's highest volcanoes including Chimborazo and Cotopaxi. If we were not always successful we had a lot of fun, deepened friendships, and learned more about the Andes and its people. John was tough and was not badly affected by altitude and in later years reached 5,600m in Nepal aged 66.

John loved conversation, had a sharp wit and a gift for repartee and one-liners. He loved to argue and I believe sometimes so for the sake of it. In another life he might have been a lawyer. After teaching for a year in Vienna I asked him how my German was, hoping for some encouragement. As quick as a flash John replied, 'Tony, my boy, you speak fluent bad German!' Coming from John I took his remark as a compliment but with the passage of time he was probably being too generous.

John organised and led numerous student ski weeks and was heavily involved with field trips to many European locations. In retirement he became director of academic studies for several years at Le Rosey International Summer School as well as working as a translator for various commercial enterprises. He also wrote a children's book, *A Tale of Tea* (Pegasus, 2017), which was beautifully illustrated by his daughter Rosie.

He is survived by his daughter and son and by their mother Alison.

*Tony Welling*

### **Elisabeth Parry 1921 - 2017**

Only one member of the Alpine Club, past or present, has sung as a soloist at Glyndebourne; been a Middle East Forces Sweetheart during the Second World War; collaborated closely with Benjamin Britten and founded her own opera company. Elisabeth Parry did all these things before taking up serious mountaineering in early middle age and embarking on a wide range of ambitious climbs including the *Innominata* and *Peuterey Ridges* and the Weisshorn traverse.

Elisabeth was born in Aberdeen. Her mother Mhari Forbes was Scottish with a trace of French, her father, Arthur Haydn Parry, was Welsh. Music was in the blood. Not only was her father a talented pianist, her grandfather Joseph Parry was the composer of the famous hymn 'Aberystwyth', the tune popularly associated with Wesley's hymn 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul', and the first opera in the Welsh language. Although he was once described as Wales' greatest composer Elisabeth only discovered her Welsh musical heritage late in life. She adored her father, an outstanding scholar and musician at Cambridge, who after being seriously wounded in the First World War became a junior permanent secretary to Churchill. After the war, his career as a City stockbroker prospered and enabled the family

to enjoy a leisured life in Kensington with holidays in Scotland and skiing in the Alps. This charmed life changed abruptly in 1929 when the stock-market crash ended both Arthur Parry's career and his marriage.

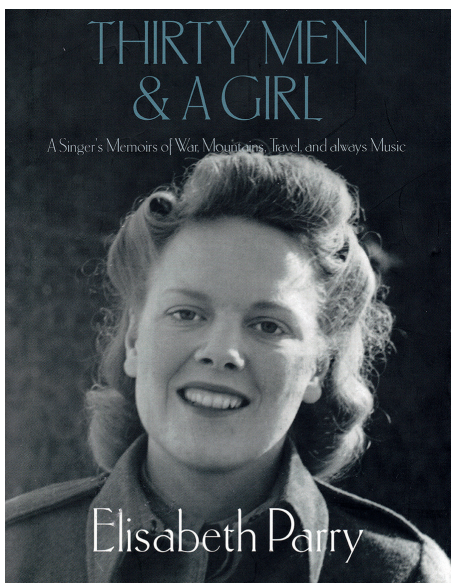
When her mother subsequently remarried her childhood sweetheart, Elisabeth's life resumed a semblance of normality. Her English boarding school education was polished at an avant-garde Paris finishing school, which closed its term with a visit to the Folies Bergère. Elisabeth's musical and academic talents, already evident at school, helped her secure a place at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford to read French and German literature. However, when her 18th birthday coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War on

3 September 1939, she had no hesitation in forsaking academe's ivory towers to join the Red Cross as an ambulance driver instead.

In the autumn of 1940 she successfully auditioned for the Staff Band of the Royal Army Medical Corps as a soprano soloist and for the next three years gave musical shows and broadcasts for Forces programmes and the BBC's *Workers' Playtime*, interspersed with professional singing lessons. In November 1943, she was invited to join the Staff Band's tour of the Middle East as its sole female singer and for the next hectic year entertained British forces in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Persia, Syria and the Canal Zone. The tour involved 20,000 miles of travel, rough living and 200 official performances. At the end of it all, Elisabeth was voted British Forces' Sweetheart in the Middle East. She recorded this epic of wartime service and adventure in her autobiography *Thirty Men and a Girl* (Allegra, 2010) earning plaudits from Dame Vera Lynn and a host of other admirers.

After the war, Elisabeth launched herself into a full-time singing career with a classical repertoire that ranged from Mozart, Verdi and Rossini to Britten. Recitals at the Wigmore Hall led to engagements at Glyndebourne and a close involvement with Britten's newly formed English Opera Group where she sang the title role in his *Rape of Lucretia* and toured Britain with artists such as Kathleen Ferrier, Joan Cross and Peter Pears.

In 1950, Elisabeth established her own opera company, the London Opera Players, which, for the next 56 years, became the mainspring of her professional, artistic and social life both as its director and regular performer. The LOP was to stage 3,585 touring performances of 39 different operas employing 360 soloists, 13 conductors and a supporting staff of



Elisabeth Parry

well over a hundred to bring the best of live opera to many thousands in Britain who would otherwise never have heard a note of it. The LPO was undoubtedly Elisabeth's greatest achievement and the Parry Trust, which she established to promote young singers and which is now administered by the Welsh National Opera, remains a lasting legacy.

Mountains had played an important part in Elisabeth's life from the time when she became the youngest member of the Ski Club of Great Britain. For many years she accompanied her mother and stepfather on successive family summer holidays to Zermatt, where they invariably stayed at the Monte Rosa Hotel when it was de rigueur to change for dinner. She had been captivated by the Pyrenees during a pre-war visit, but it was at Zermatt in 1950 that she met a young English mountaineer, Sidney Nowill, who encouraged her to climb and give free rein to her mountaineering imagination.

After Sidney's introduction to some easy routes on the Riffelhorn and Trifhorn, Elisabeth joined the Mountaineering Association in London for weekend excursions to North Wales and the Lakes. Back in Zermatt she engaged Willi Truffer as her guide to realise a long ambition not simply to climb the Matterhorn by the normal route but complete the traverse to Italy, yet be back in time for dinner at the Monte Rosa the following night. Another favourite guide was Celso Degasper with whom she did several Dolomite classics.

In 1961, her 40th year, Elisabeth engaged as her guide Gilles Josserand, a sophisticated Parisian who later became a top instructor at the École Nationale in Chamonix and a lifelong friend. On the Aiguille de l'M, Gilles lost patience with a slow-moving party in front of them, deliberately went off-route and then came off when a handhold broke. Elisabeth managed to check what would otherwise have been a fatal fall. The following year, she joined Sidney Nowill in the Bernina and after surviving an avalanche on the Piz Roseg went on to tackle Piz Palü before moving on to Chamonix for the *Rochefort Ridge*, the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, the Chardonnet and the Purtscheller.

In 1963, Elisabeth was a member of Sidney Nowill's month-long expedition to the Turkish Ala Dağ where, during a 30-hour epic on its highest peak, the Demirkazık, she led the ice-encrusted crux in the *Hodgkin-Peck* couloir to make theirs the mountain's second British ascent. Driving back to England in her beat-up Morris Minor, Elisabeth and Nigella Blandy (Hall) stopped off at Chamonix to pick up Gilles and finish that summer with an ascent of the Grépon, a crossing of the col de Dolent into Italy and a traverse of Mont Blanc by the *Innominata Ridge*.

If 1963 had been a vintage year, 1966 was Elisabeth's most outstanding. During another of Sidney Nowill's pioneering Turkish expeditions to Hakkari, and despite being robbed by armed Kurdish bandits, they still managed to climb Hendevede (3725m), the highest peak in the Sat range and several others. On returning to Europe, Elisabeth joined Sidney, Dorothea Gravina and Sylvia Yates and, with three guides led by Michel Vaucher and Gilles Josserand, embarked on a traverse of Mont Blanc by the *Peuterey*

*Ridge.* After an uncomfortable bivouac below the Aiguille Blanche, Vaucher took a chance on the weather, which deteriorated progressively the higher they climbed. In storm and whiteout, they unknowingly passed two climbers who had died in their tracks. Vaucher later described a seemingly endless ice pitch as longer and more difficult than anything on the Eigerwand. At the close of their third day, they staggered into the Vallot just as it got dark. Elisabeth had completed the traverse despite having her period and suffering from diarrhoea throughout. As a finale to their season, Elisabeth and Dorothea Gravina traversed the Weisshorn by the *Schalligrat* and north ridge, supported by Willi Truffer and his son Bernard.

This tempo had slackened somewhat by the 1970s, but Elisabeth managed to fit in a couple of Pyrenean seasons with Dorothea Gravina as well as joining Sidney Nowill for one of his three visits to Turkey's Kaçkar mountains where bad weather frustrated their attempts to climb Kaçkar Dağı (3937m) itself. In 1983, her last serious expedition was an incident-packed, month-long journey through Zanskar. Even so, her zest for adventure remained unquenchable with subsequent treks in Iceland and Svalbard, a journey along the Silk Road when she was 84 and a trip to Patagonia when aged 86.

Elisabeth Parry's was an exceptional life of service to her country, her muse and the opera company she created to inspire and nurture six generations of young singers. Her charm and the warmth of her personality made her friendships life-long and unforgettable. In the epitaph she dedicated to Sidney Nowill she wrote: 'My dream of perfect dying is at the foot of some great mountain ... to step fearless and joyful into the Unknown'.

*J G R Harding*

## **Royal Robbins** **1935 - 2017**

'Rock-climbing is a man's sport in England, somewhat like bullfighting.' So wrote Royal Robbins after his first visit to Britain in 1966. It was intended as a compliment for he had been climbing with the likes of Brown, Whillans and Patey and had taken part in the BBC TV live climbing 'spectacular' – teamed with Patey – from South Stack at Holyhead; thus the British climbing public first met the already famous Californian whose unforgettable name was already synonymous with the legendary Yosemite Valley.

At the time Royal was working at the American School in Leysin, mostly ski instructing but finding time to climb out of season. The previous year he'd put up the impressive *American Direct* on the Dru's west face in five days with fellow countryman John Harlin, subsequently killed so tragically on the *Eiger Direct*. During his first Alpine foray in 1962, despite feeling rather overawed by the unfamiliar objective dangers, he'd climbed several first-rate rock routes including a new west face variation on the Dru with his old acquaintance Gary Hemming, and the Grand Capucin with Bev Clark, climbs that marked the start of a period of serious Alpine achievements by visiting



Left: Royal Robbins, exhausted after the arduous eight-day first ascent of Tis-sa-ack in October 1969, rests during the descent from Half Dome. (Glen Denny)

Above: Royal Robbins with his daughter Tamara in the Lake District in 1976. (John Cleare)

Americans. Hemming advised him to visit Britain to sharpen up his free climbing.

It was in Chamonix in 1963 that I first met Royal, sitting with the 'Blonde God' Harlin in the Bar Le National. Later at his Leysin base I was struck by his cool, calm demeanour, measured speech and an

apparent straight-faced seriousness that concealed wry stabs of humour when his horn-rimmed spectacles set off an occasional disarming smile. I might have described him as a gentle, if athletic, academic.

The following spring, while planning the BBC's South Stack 'circus', I suggested that repartee, acting even, might be as important as climbing ability, and that Royal would make a perfect foil for the ebullient irreverence of Tom Patey. Keen on any export dimension, the BBC readily agreed, and I invited Mr Robbins to join us. The sequel has passed into folklore: the final pitch on Red Wall involved aid climbing and Royal had swung up through the overhangs with his usual effortless ease, where Tom, a brilliant ice climber but not enamoured with 'mere gadgets', had followed, fought and suffered. As Tom emerged on the cliff-top, Royal glanced at his raw and bleeding hands.

'Back home in the Valley,' he observed, 'they say you can tell a good aid-man by his hands.'

'Lots of scars?' Tom said hopefully. Royal shook his head sadly.

'No scars.'

Robbins hailed from West Virginia where Royal had been his father's first name, but after two divorces and a rather traumatic childhood, by the time he was 10 he was living with his devoted mother Beulah in fairly restrained circumstances in the Los Angeles area. Independent and self-sufficient from the start and uninterested in conventional sports, he loved classical music and books and, inspired by James Ramsey Ullman's *High Conquest*, yearned to be a professional adventurer. It was with the Boy Scouts that young Royal discovered rock, mountains and Yosemite and first became conscious of the physical delight he found in overcoming a difficult move on a boulder or outcrop.

Leaving school at 16 he found a winter job at a ski area in the nearby San Gabriel mountains, retrospectively a wise move for skiing was to play an important part in his life. Co-ordination, control and determination he had in abundance, and by his second winter he was representing California in the Junior National Ski Championships. Nevertheless, a proper job eventually became imperative and he joined the Union Bank in Los Angeles as a bookkeeper. But he also started to climb seriously on nearby Tahquitz Rock, where encouraged by experienced local climbers he soon discovered his natural ability; indeed, within two years he had put up America's first 5.9 route on the 'Rock', eschewing any form of direct aid, which was the norm in those days. It proved a psychological breakthrough in American climbing.

He was just 22 when together with Jerry Gallwas and Mike Sherrick, he climbed the imposing, virgin and plumb vertical 2,000ft north-west face of Half Dome, which dominates the head of the Yosemite Valley. It took five days and was the first Grade VI route in America and now a world classic on anyone's tick list. Suddenly Royal Robbins was famous.

In 1958 the US Army caught up with Royal and he found himself posted as a clerk to Fort Bliss in Texas. Here he was able to forge weekend passes and beg frequent Friday night rides on military aircraft to California to climb at Tahquitz or even Yosemite, before hitchhiking the 800 miles back to camp. Needless to say there were several close shaves with AWOL charges. On demob in 1960 Royal returned to the Union Bank, this time in Berkeley, but his ideas had crystallised in the army and he knew that banking would not further his ambitions; after six months he quit to commence a hand-to-mouth existence as a winter ski instructor and summer climbing bum. As his fame spread, he found himself delivering lectures, running climbing clinics and operating a seasonal climbing school; for several years he part-timed as climbing editor of *Summit*, the first US climbing magazine. In 1971 and 1973 respectively, his two *Rockcraft* how-to-do-it volumes were published and become international bestsellers. In time he matured into a fine writer, well known for his philosophical and wry observations on climbers and climbing.

It's unnecessary to list here all Royal Robbins great climbs and myriad first ascents. Suffice to say that on his election in 1974 to the Club, he listed just fifteen of what he considered his most significant climbs up to 1969. Starting with the Half Dome route of 1957, it continues with his nine-day

first ascent of El Capitan's south-west face in 1962, the second ascent of Yosemite's Leaning Tower, a four-day solo effort in 1964, and in 1968 the second ascent of *Muir Wall* on El Cap, once again soloed, in 10 epic days. Not to be dismissed as a mere Yosemite rock-jock, Royal also included, besides his Chamonix exploits, several mountaineering routes: a four-day first ascent on Mount Proboscis in Canada's Logans, the four-day first ascent of Mount Hooker's north face in the Wind Rivers, and in the Canadian Rockies the three-day first ascent of the north face of Mount Geikie and the third ascent, but first solo, of Mount Edith Cavell's daunting north face. In Alaska he bagged a clutch of new summits among Alaska's fabled Kichatna Spires. The form leaves so much unlisted and 50 years on it is still a formidable list by any standard.

Style for Robbins merged with ethics in the planning and execution of his great climbs; 'clean climbing' involved using only the reasonable minimum of rope, gear, food, water and time. There was little chance of retreat and none of rescue on many of these serious routes. 'What was the point,' he asked, 'in sieging a new route via a bolt ladder? What fun is there is a game when the odds are 100 to 1 in your favour?' His ethos did arouse controversy; he was accused of self-righteousness and seen as a bolt-chopper – which was true, although he later apologised, admitting that a minimum of bolts were sometime necessary in Yosemite.

As a brilliant technician and master of aid climbing, he especially admired the unwritten rules of climbing practised in Britain, and was the first exponent in the USA to advocate, import and popularise the use of nuts, for many years distrusted by peg-happy American pundits. Introspective, always self-trusting and hating rules, Royal even disabled the seat-belt warning in his car, refusing to allow a machine to dictate his personal safety. Thus it is not surprising that he enjoyed solo climbing and developed efficient safety systems to do so. 'A solo climb is like a big mirror,' he wrote. 'You're looking at yourself all the way up,' but added pointedly: 'the fullest expression of the climbing egoist.'

By 1963 Royal was established enough to get married and in due course set up home with Liz in Modesto, where her family owned a business, within easy reach of Yosemite. While working in Europe he'd designed a specialist rock boot for Galibier, the highly successful blue suede 'RR', which he distributed himself in America. Other outdoor lines followed and in 1970 they opened a retail store called Mountain Paraphernalia in Modesto, and later a second store in Fresno, both beautifully designed and tastefully fitted-out by Liz. Though successful, the firm was eventually sued by a client who had suffered an accident while using gear it had sold; it was not the first such incident in US climbing history, Chouinard having suffered badly in a similar case. Though finally emerging unscathed, they warily dropped the equipment business and decided to concentrate on clothing under the name Royal Robbins. Liz proved a talented, innovative and very successful designer. Many of her knitwear creations were made in the Lake District and the business is still going strong, though now under different ownership. Indeed,

over the years Royal and Liz made frequent visits to Britain for both pleasure and later for business; they had many British friends and Royal always made the excuse that he had come over 'to recharge his batteries.'

Now a well-to-do businessman, Royal was only 43 when severe arthritis struck; frequently completely incapacitated, it spelt the end of his big wall climbing, although when in remission he could manage short, straight-forward routes. However, he'd always been attracted to kayaking and now he took it up seriously. There were excellent white water rivers nearby and with Liz and friends old and new, Royal set out to make expeditionary first descents of many of the difficult wild rivers not only in the US but also as far afield as Chile and Siberia.

Tragically, some thirty years later, other symptoms gradually appeared and no longer in control of the situation, Royal was diagnosed with progressive supranuclear palsy, a rare degenerative neurological disorder with no known cure. Wheelchair bound and needing full-time care, his physical capacities gradually slipped away and he died on 1 March 2017. He left his devoted Liz and their now adult children, Tamara and Damon, both deeply committed to the wild country adventures with which they were brought up. As the master of big-wall climbing, the legacy of Royal Robbins is not only his bold routes but also his influence on the philosophy of American – and perhaps even world mountaineering. He wrote: 'Good things don't necessarily lead to a positive attitude. But a positive attitude leads to good things.'

*John Cleare*

### **Allan Stuart 1923 - 2018**

Not many climbers, on their first visit to the Alps, manage to get up five big mountains – the Aiguille de la Tsa, Tête Blanche, Dent Blanche, Matterhorn and Zinal Rothorn – all in a two-week holiday. Of those energetic characters who have done so, I suspect that even fewer will have spent their summer holiday fortnights for the next 33 years trying to better, in terms of quantity or quality, that very good score.

Yet that was the annual routine of Allan Stuart, who died in April at the age of 95. The Alps were, for Allan, the ultimate in climbing enjoyment. Opportunities to climb in the greater ranges came his way but he always took the view that the ratio of time likely to be engaged in actual climbing, as opposed to travelling, trudging or waiting for the weather, was ridiculously small. The Alps, by contrast, were just the right size to provide as much challenge as anyone could wish and they came already supplied with a network of huts, which solved all possible problems of logistics.

Of course, that routine still left the remaining 50 weeks of each year to be filled but Allan was no slouch at domestic climbing either. As a Liverpudlian by adoption – he trained in structural engineering there and worked for the city council for 40 years – he joined the senior local club, the Wayfarers',

in 1953 and soon became one of that club's leading lights. He was a very versatile climber, enjoying the challenge of a Diff in the rain as much as a VS or HVS on dry rock, and was particularly attracted by Scottish winter climbing. So it was that during the 1950, 1960s and 1970s he accumulated an extraordinary success list, including all the classic rock routes on Cloggy and Scafell and all the best classic ridges and gullies of Glen Coe and Ben Nevis. He was president of the Wayfarers' during 1970-1 and a key member of the team which organised the extension of Robertson Lamb hut in Langdale, as a memorial to the custodian for 40 years, Harry Spilsbury.

Most of us know that it is not always easy to find just the right climbing partner available at the right time, especially when planning for the Alps. When Allan occasionally ran out of partners he would go anyway and either solo the easier routes or find someone in a hut. In that way in 1960 he met Kate Woods, an adventurous climber from what was then Rhodesia. They shared a further four Alpine holidays together and Allan was clearly smitten. But as she would not settle in England and he would not go to Africa the romance came to nought and Allan remained a bachelor.

In such a long climbing career it would be tedious to list all Allan's successes and all his many friends but fellow AC companions were Oliver Turnbull, George Lee, George Bintley and Ben Stroude. In various combinations, though always with Allan, they traversed the Weisshorn, Matterhorn, the Meije, the Drus, the Charmoz-Grépon and got up the north ridge of the Peigne and the north face of the Obergabelhorn, among many other good routes.

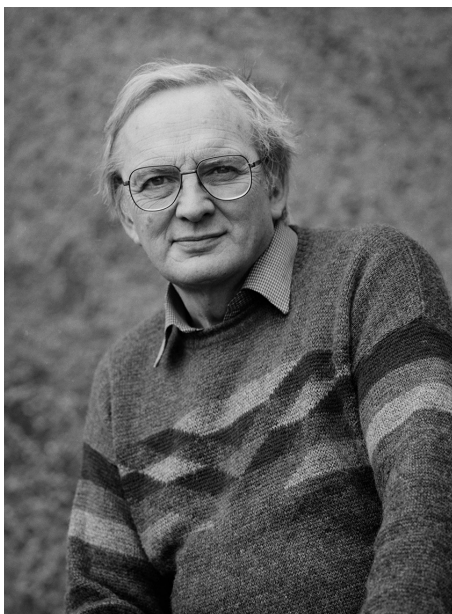
On retirement Allan moved to a bungalow on the edge of Keswick and continued climbing, mostly with another Lakeland retiree, John Ramsden, but also alone on a formidable selection of party pieces in Borrowdale. He was, in addition, introduced by a neighbour, Dennis Evans, to downhill skiing: an unlikely pursuit for one who had previously scorned skiers as the 'peacock parade of plankers'. But so enthusiastic did Allan become that he spent three or four ski holidays each winter from the age of 60 until he reached 80, when insurance became difficult. He continued walking on the local fells until his late eighties and to the Keswick shops and back until his nineties.

To this writer and to many others Allan was a wonderful companion and mentor on the hills, and a loyal friend anywhere. He will be greatly missed.

*Ben Stroude*

### **Walt Unsworth 1928 - 2017**

Walter Unsworth first came to the attention of the climbing public in 1964 with *The English Outcrops*, published by Gollancz at 30/-, or £1.50 in today's money. This was a narrative compendium, illustrated with photographs and sketch maps, broken down by rock-type and pointing climbers at crags



Walt Unsworth in 1976 in the Dolomites. Walt Unsworth in 1990.

and quarries from the Wainstones and Malham to Stanage, Harrison's, Swanage, Bosigran and dozens of so-called outcrops in between. The book had required considerable research and a lot of climbing, arriving at the right moment in history. As Jack Longland wrote in his introduction: 'This is a very useful book.'

Walt was a Manchester schoolmaster who had started hill walking in his teens, progressing after the Second World War into rock climbing to become one of the weekend denizens at the famous Wall End Barn in Langdale. An early foray in the Jotenheim, some gorge exploration in the Libyan desert during National Service, and a hiking trip in the Maritime Alps had broadened his horizons, but after training in Chester he became a science teacher in Wolverhampton and got married. Though he rock climbed and mountaineered assiduously throughout the British Isles – climbing routes such as *Kaisergebirge Wall* and *Central Buttress* – he didn't revisit the big mountains for some years. However, by the time Chris Bonington proposed him for the Club in 1968, Walt had a further eight alpine seasons under his belt. He'd climbed in both the Eastern and Western Alps and led ascents of many of the classic peaks including the Matterhorn, the Zinal Rothorn and the Grand Charmoz. In due course he became head of physics at a large Manchester school where he encouraged pupils to hill walk and climb and introduced one of the earliest Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.

But Walt had always aspired to write full time, and encouraged by selling a story to *Girl* comic in 1961, he wrote climbing guides to two crags where he'd been closely involved in the development: Anglezarke Quarry and

Pontesford Rocks. *The English Outcrops* followed to considerable acclaim, so the next year, more ambitiously, he published a biography of Whympster – *Matterhorn Man* – and then in 1967 *Tiger in the Snow*, a biography of Mummery. It was a time when public interest in the outdoors, in hill walking, climbing and mountaineering, was expanding rapidly, and in partnership with Brian Evans, a leading if rather younger Lancashire climber who was a professional artist and book designer, Walt set up Cicerone Press, initially to publish independent climbing guides to the Lakes for which there was, they thought, a gap in the market. The business soon took off, talented authors were located, encouraged and contracted, and Cicerone expanded into a whole library of hiking, cycling and climbing guides to Britain, to Europe and eventually to more distant places as diverse as Jordan and the Himalaya.

In the 1960s there was only one, hardly authoritative, monthly magazine devoted to mountain and hill-walking interests, and when the editor retired, the publishers invited Walt to replace him, and the re-hung publication, entitled *Climber & Rambler*, went from strength to strength under his knowledgeable and energetic editorship. It catered for the softer end of the outdoor market that the newly emergent and elitist *Mountain* failed to cover, and soon achieved a large circulation. In due course as editorial adviser to the publishers, Holmes McDougall, he launched the dedicated hill walking magazine *The Great Outdoors*, still publishing as *TGO*.

By now Walt had abandoned the world of chalk and blackboards in favour of the pen, quietly working away in his garage office in suburban Worsley. His three historical novels for teenagers became recommended reading for the national curriculum and a regular output of outdoor-oriented books followed, eventually totalling over 30 titles. Particularly highly acclaimed was *Everest: The Mountaineering History*, first published in 1981 and updated regularly thereafter, which won the first prize for mountain literature at the 1992 Trento Festival. Among other well-known titles are the useful *Encyclopaedia of Mountaineering* (1975) and *Hold the Heights: The Foundations of Mountaineering* (1993) while *Peaks, Passes & Glaciers* (1981) is a wide-ranging anthology of articles from the *Alpine Journal*.

Meanwhile he was masterminding, with Brian Evans, the ever-expanding Cicerone publishing empire. Soon proper premises were needed, there was warehousing to consider and staff to employ. Cicerone moved to the Old Police Station in Milnthorpe on the southern outskirts of the Lake District, and the Unsworth family, his wife Dorothy and two children, did likewise, into an old Georgian sea captain's house close by.

From the beginning Walt was always supportive of young or aspiring writers, giving many their first break into print. His kindly, avuncular encouragement started several now well-known guidebook writers and magazine journalists on their careers, and it is entirely fitting that he has been dubbed the 'father' of outdoor writing. Indeed in 1980 Walt was a founder member and first president of the nascent Outdoor Writers Guild (OWG), originally a small group of outdoor media professionals who came

together at the annual outdoor and mountain equipment trade fair at Harrogate. The OWG soon expanded to encompass photographers, filmmakers, broadcasters, publishers, designers and public relations folk, all experts in outdoor and wilderness activities, several other AC members among them. Walt proved an excellent and resourceful president and by the time he retired from the post in 2001 the OWG was recognised through the national and international media and membership had reached over 200; it is now the Outdoor Writers & Photographers Guild.

Although he had given up serious technical climbing, Walt never lost his enthusiasm for the mountains and wild places. Once time and circumstances permitted, he trekked and travelled widely, often on journalistic assignments for the national media, and visited mountain areas all over the world, from New Zealand to Patagonia, from Canada to China, where he was often able to make ascents of such important non-technical peaks as Kilimanjaro and Kinabalu.

Cicerone Press was sold as a going concern in 1999 on Walt's retirement from business, and now, 18 years later, continues to thrive with a list of over 250 titles 'for walkers and climbers, written and produced by walkers and climbers.' It is a worthy legacy. There will be few Alpine Club members without at least one of Walt's titles, or at least one Cicerone guide in their bookcase.

*John Cleare*

*Kev Reynolds writes:* In the mid-1970s Walt Unsworth changed my life with a phone call during which he invited me to write a guide to the Pyrenees for his newly-founded Cicerone Press, then just five or six years old. I'd never even looked at a guidebook before, but Walt's call polished my ego and I said yes.

Forty years on, *Walks & Climbs in the Pyrenees* has been joined by dozens of other titles for Cicerone, most of them inspired and mentored by Walt, who took me under his wing and nurtured my career by sending me off to explore distant mountain regions and report back with a manuscript of routes, a clutch of maps and scores of photographs to be transformed into another of his pocket-sized guides.

Knowing how difficult it is to make a living from such a precarious occupation, in the early days he'd set me a challenge by saying he had a gap in his production schedules, and could I let him have my next project six months (or so) before the contract deadline. That way he kept me on my toes and increased my workload. For a time I was producing two and sometimes three books a year for him, and he even gave me the freedom to develop a series of guides under the Cicerone imprint that enriched my career.

He was a generous man. If he had a compilation to write for a different publisher, he'd draw me in to contribute a chapter or two for him. And he would introduce me to rival publishers and magazine editors if he thought I'd benefit.

Walt's mountain knowledge was encyclopaedic, and planning new projects

with him was always a joy. One day his by now instantly recognised voice came over the phone. 'Do you know Hubert Walker's *Walking in the Alps*? It's long out of date and we'd like to publish an updated version with greater coverage. We'd like you to do it.'

Of course, I knew Walker's book. Published in 1951 it had become my Alpine bible. But it only covered eight districts in the Alps. Walt wanted more. We haggled. He won, the result being that I embarked on a four-year crusade to cover the whole Alpine range in 19 chapters. Our version of *Walking in the Alps* appeared in 1998, 20 years after that first Pyrenean guide came into print. It was to be the last of my books that Walt published, for the following year he retired and sold Cicerone Press to Jonathan and Lesley Williams who share both Walt's vision and his love of mountains.

To my regret, I never had a single day on the hill with him. All our meetings were in Harrogate, Milnthorpe or at the London Book Fair, where we'd chew the cud, discuss mountains and mountaineering and, inevitably, signs contracts for yet another guide. With his death I've lost a mentor and a friend, whose phone call four decades ago, changed my life for the better. Of that there is no doubt.

### Mark Vallance 1944 - 2018



Mark Vallance on top of the *Nose*.

Mark Vallance died on 19 April at the age of 73. He had been suffering from the progressively debilitating Parkinson's disease for 19 years. His many climbing achievements and contributions to the sport are well documented in his autobiography *Wild Country* (Vertebrate, 2016) but he will always be remembered first and foremost as the maker of 'Friends'. In view of his book, what

follows is more a record based on our friendship.

Mark arrived at Abbotsholme School in Derbyshire aged 14 a year before me. We were in the same class and soon discovered a mutual interest in climbing. As well as from my father, encouragement came from the headmaster, Robin Hodgkin, a respected rock climber and mountaineer. One of our early objectives was the breaking of the school rule that said: 'Thou shall not lead anything above V Diff.' And were we keen! Even the school buildings were fair game, the most alarming route being the outside traverse of a high chapel window, on 45° sloping footholds and pinch grips for hands. On a Duke of Edinburgh Award 30-mile hike over two days in North Wales we unofficially included three routes on Bochlwyd Buttress, *Munich Climb* on Tryfan, *Flying Buttress* with a new variation final pitch, *Main Wall* on

Cyrn Las and *Lockwood's Chimney*. We were in fact given a lot of freedom and both living within cycling distance of the grit edges of Birchen, Gardoms and Froggatt we began a long and steady apprenticeship on rock. It took us two years before we were comfortable on VS. We progressed more rapidly thereafter and remarkably our climbing standard remained the same. We were competitive but not fiercely so and we both wanted to lead everything. If Mark did a notable route I would repeat it within, at most, a few weeks, and vice versa, though I remember being somewhat daunted when Mark, then 16, reported that he had just soloed *Brown's Eliminate* in gym shoes. A year later we both managed to lead *Cenotaph Corner* the same day. Back in Bakewell my father treated us to a celebratory drink in his local pub causing a few of his bemused friends to think Mark and I had been vandalising a monument in Whitehall.

After leaving school we went our separate ways, Mark to study physical education at Goldsmiths College. We did meet up for a trip to the Alps in 1965, borrowing Mark's father's Mini for the six-week holiday. The car was grossly overloaded with Mark's brother Steven, Rick Johnson and me, plus all our gear. Unsurprisingly the suspension gave way in Italy. This was after Mark had a narrow squeak on the traverse of the Piz Palü. Crossing a steep snow slope to avoid a cornice a foothold broke beneath his rope-mate, who began to slide towards the abyss. A shout alerted Mark who was in front and he was able to turn and brace himself against the only knob of rock poking through the snow and hold the fall. It was a chastened but wiser team that returned to the hut. The car's broken suspension eventually severed the brake cable and we ended up in someone's garden near Bolzano with a stove-in headlight: my fault as I, as front seat passenger, was in charge of the handbrake. After makeshift repairs, and good climbing in the Dolomites, the car finally gave up 10 miles from home in Matlock. Mark's father was remarkably sanguine about his wrecked vehicle.

After Goldsmiths, Mark joined the British Antarctic Survey as a general dogsbody mountaineer based at Halley Bay. He became base commander in his second year and on his return married Jan whom he had met whilst at college and who was then teaching in the Falkland Islands. They returned via the US where Mark met Ray Jardine, the inventor of Friends for the first time and climbed in Yosemite. Mark loved the Valley granite and returned years later to climb The Nose on El Cap with Hugh Banner. Back in the UK he got a job with the Peak District National Park Authority and it was whilst working as volunteers officer that Ray asked him if he would consider manufacturing and marketing Friends in the UK. Mark, having climbed with Ray previously and been shown the secret prototypes in action immediately realised their potential and despite having no engineering or business background seized his chance and, on a very steep learning curve, set up Wild Country. Any climber who saw Mark on the TV programme *Tomorrow's World* taking a leader fall onto a Friend from *Dexterity*, a crack climb at Millstone Edge, must have realised that here was a seriously effective piece of climbing protection. As well as opening up the possibility of giving some

protection on routes deemed too bold to be justifiable it enabled many of the more timid of us to try climbs we had only dreamt about. Friends could be used on almost any climb of any grade that had a crack.

The business thrived but Mark was essentially an ideas man with, more significantly, the ability and impetus to transform his ideas into products. 'Rocks' followed Friends and were entirely his own invention. I still have a bunch of weird and wonderfully shaped prototypes he gave me to try out. Later, when president of the BMC, he designed and launched the plastic tear-proof and waterproof British Mountain Maps. Unable to persuade a recalcitrant Ordnance Survey to take any interest they were eventually produced by Harvey Maps with great success. He also knew a good idea of someone else's when he saw it. He negotiated with Boreal to market the sticky rubber-soled Firé rock boots and brought Dick Turnbull's 'Quasar' tent design under the Wild Country flag.

Mark's next project was inspired by a visit to an outdoor retailer in New England called L L Bean. He wanted to create something similar in the UK and 'Outside' was the result with its large retail space mini climbing wall and inside upstairs eating area. Mark knew I was interested in catering; we had had memorable meals in the Auberge de Loube near Buoux and at Philippos in Courmayeur and had noted the ease with which French cafés added a check tablecloth and morphed into a restaurant for the evenings. Mark wanted to try the same idea at Outside and asked if I would run it as an independent concern. He very generously provided all the capital, as I had none, and after a sticky patch early on, the café side, if not the restaurant, worked well.

We climbed a lot together in the mid 1980s with several trips to the Alps. He dragged me, an ice-climbing novice with gear borrowed from him, up the *Swiss Route* on Les Courtes. On another occasion after a trade show in Munich where our mettle was tested by our German hosts with a spell of bridge jumping on climbing ropes beneath an autobahn viaduct, we climbed *Bavarian Dream* on the Schusselkarspitze in the Wetterstein: a long hard climb by our standards but what impressed me most, descending in pitch darkness without a torch, was Mark's uncanny ability to see in the dark. I would have sat the night out but he was able to spot traces of the path and guide us down as it wound tortuously on through the woods.

Mark became president of the Climbers' Club shortly before its centenary. I once had a slide taken on a timer setting showing four grinning teenagers sitting on top of the Hound's Head Pinnacle at Tremadog. The pinnacle was dynamited a few years later. Of the four of us, one served as CC secretary, one on the committee and one, Mark, became its president. Ideal, I thought, for inclusion in the centenary journal though maybe I should have a copy made first in case it went astray. It did. I received a slide and a print back from Kodak showing the Taj Mahal and when I complained, the offer of a free film!

In 1990 Mark fulfilled an ambition to climb an 8,000er. Having had his first taste of high altitude on Himalchuli a year earlier, he ascended

Shishapangma. In 2002 he became a reforming president of the BMC pushing through a future policy review, updating the articles of association and persuading the BMC to abolish the club block vote.

My last climb with Mark was, in 2006, the Old Man of Hoy. By then he had coped with Parkinson's Disease for eight years and its effects were becoming more pronounced. He could no longer trust his feet on footholds through lack of sensation and his balance was not as good. He found the wide crack pitch on the original route strenuous but managed it fine. After a pill break we pushed on to the top from where it was decided that Mark, being the most experienced of us, would take charge and get us safely down the abseils, especially the diagonal one back to the first stance. He had brought a long length of tape to back up some dubious abseil tat for just such a purpose.

Remarkably for such an active person I never once heard Mark complain about his ill luck in contracting the disease and his sense of humour never deserted him. Before I saw him for the last time at his care home, where he was, at best, able to shuffle along using a Zimmer frame and, at worst, needed help to put a pill in his mouth, I phoned to see if a visit was possible. 'Yes' he replied, 'I'm not planning to go to the gym this morning.'

For a time Mark had a sticker on his car saying 'Just Do It'. This was his philosophy, right to the end.

*Nick Longland*

### **Joe Walmsley 1924 - 2017**

Joe Walmsley, who passed away on 1 February 2017, was one of a group of very active climbers in the YMCA Mountaineering Club with Ted Courtenay, Dave Briggs, Ken Davidson and my dad Alex Ferguson, who all became lifelong members of the Rucksack Club. Joe was just 22 when he joined in March 1947 and the comprehensive record in his application is very impressive: a list of 'notable' climbs such as *Deer Field Crack* in the Lakes, climbs on Skye and many long walks. My dad proposed Joe for membership and in his letter to the president mentions Joe's enthusiasm: carrying a full hemp rope on a YMCA Marsden to Hayfield walk just in case there was time for a quick route on Laddow. 'Joe's interests in the hills will last throughout his life I feel sure, but perhaps one of his strongest references for membership of the club is his own good nature.' How true on both counts.

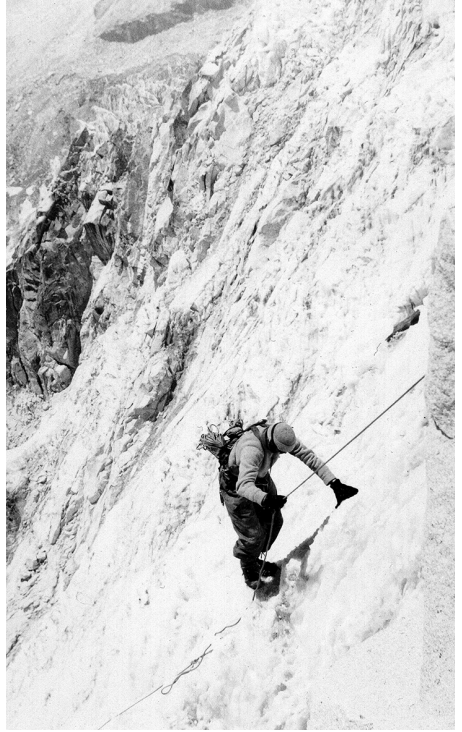
In the post-war years travel was limited so there was a focus on climbing in Wales and the Lakes. Langdale was a favourite with the hub being the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel (ODG), run for many years by well-known climbers and good friends of the Rucksack Club, Sid and Jammy Cross. Joe met Maureen his wife-to-be during a meet at the ODG at Christmas 1957. Maureen was working there over the holiday and says: 'Where else



Above: Joe Walmsley, pictured left, in Kathmandu ahead of the expedition he led to Nuptse that made the first ascent in 1961. Jim Lovelock, base camp manager, is standing next to him, then Trevor Jones, John Streetly and behind him Les Brown.

(Chris Bonington Photo Library)

Right: Joe Walmsley climbing on Nuptse. The route can be considered the first high-altitude wall climbed in the Himalaya, a precursor to the immense achievement of the south face of Annapurna in 1970.



would a mountaineer expect to meet his wife.' They had two daughters, Joanna and Susan.

Joe's considerable mountaineering ability was evident at home and in the Alps and it led to him being at the forefront of Himalayan climbing in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1957 Joe was the leader of the Masherbrum expedition when along with Ted Dance and Geoff Smith had to survive some appalling weather conditions. The expedition was struck by tragedy with the sad death of Bob Downes through illness. Joe, with a youthful Don Whillans, reached the high point on Masherbrum a few hundred feet below the summit only to be forced back by difficult conditions. In Joe's words, 'we suffered discomforts and hardships but there was always the one purpose in mind – to climb the mountain.' In 1961 Joe led the team that made the first ascent of Nuptse (7864m), a major achievement in the history of mountaineering. These were both ground-breaking and demanding expeditions: the time away from home and family for many months; the long overland journey through countries it is now difficult to visit; the exploratory nature of the expeditions to very remote areas; the adverse weather conditions and the hard nature of the climbing.

The 1963 *Rucksack Club Journal* has two enthralling articles on the Nuptse expedition by James Lovelock and Dennis Davis. The overland journey to Kathmandu in two Vanguard estate cars was an epic in itself. An official



The team photographed walking out from base camp. Left to right: Trevor Jones, Les Brown, Jim Swallow, Joe Walmsley, Jim Lovelock, Chris Bonington, Prabhakar Shamsheer Rana (?), Tashi Sherpa, Dennis Davis. (*Betty Milledge/Chris Bonington Photo Library*)

send off by the mayor of Manchester then on through Europe into Turkey and through Iran. High passes, mechanical problems, running off the road and freezing weather conditions were all part of a journey navigated using an AA route map. In those days, you could ring the AA and ask for a route map from say Stockport to Fort William, or in this case, Manchester to Kathmandu. The map that arrived in the post was, I suppose, the forerunner of today's sat nav. James Lovelock remembered: 'It was a proud moment when the two battered cars crested the Tribhuvan Rajpath at 8,162ft and started the twisting, winding run down to Kathmandu. The overland party of the Nuptse expedition arrived there, exactly five weeks after leaving Britain having covered 8,336 miles from Manchester Town Hall.'

The climbing on Nuptse was technically difficult and extremely challenging and the route they took is considered to be one of the first technical 'big walls' in the Himalaya. It was a classic siege, following a tricky rightward slanting central ridge on the south face to a large snow field, then a long leftward traverse along these snow slopes and over a difficult rock barrier to reach a couloir breaking through to the summit arête. After establishing eight camps Dennis Davis and Tashi Sherpa reached the summit, followed a day later by Chris Bonington, Les Brown, Jim Swallow and Pemba Sherpa.

Their accounts capture the extreme nature of living and climbing on the Nuptse face: 'one final section of the hardest ice yet at 70 degrees barred our way. Cautiously we moved up it, balancing on tiny footholds and chipping out handholds.' This was in an era long before modern gear: 'we had worn our vests, shirts, pullovers, two pairs of long underpants, down trousers and jackets, gloves and down booties in our double sleeping bags.

Over all of this we pulled our windproof suits. Our boots had as usual frozen up overnight.'

What is apparent from speaking with Joe's contemporaries is that without his drive, determination and sometimes much-needed calm temperament, the Nuptse expedition would not have enjoyed the success it did. The Masherbrum and Nuptse expeditions were the true forerunners of the great Himalayan expeditions of the 1970s.

Joe was born and grew up in Salford. He worked at Metro Vickers, later AEI, where he qualified as a member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Then in 1968, Joe and Maureen and their family moved to New Zealand for three years where he worked on the Manapouri Hydro Electric Power station on South Island. Joe embraced the climbing community down under, joining the New Zealand Alpine Club and serving as treasurer and then warden of the NZAC hut at the bottom of South Island. When they came home in 1970, Joe joined National Nuclear Power and worked for them until he retired in 1989.

He remained throughout his life a dedicated servant of the Rucksack Club. John Allen fondly recalls Joe's Easter meets in the early 1960s, camping below Wallabarrow crag in the Duddon valley. These meets led to the discovery and purchase of High Moss, the club's hut nearby. Among the many posts he filled for the club, he served as president from 1966. Joe was closely involved in the early days of the British Mountaineering Council, making an invaluable contribution to its Technical Committee and holding the office of president in 1979-82. He was also the Mountain Rescue Committee's equipment officer for 18 years.

I have very fond memories of Joe. I remember when I was a young teenager being somewhat in awe of his Himalayan achievements, and then over the years, getting to know him on meets such as the famous High Moss family meets or at our home, and seeing for myself that friendly and good nature to which my dad referred.

*Rob Ferguson*

*A longer version of this obituary first appeared in the Rucksack Club Journal and is reproduced here with kind permission.*

