
C A RUSSELL

One Hundred Years Ago

The early months of 1920 were notable for a number of major winter expeditions by the Swiss topographer Marcel Kurz. Accompanied by the guide Josef Knubel and with the aid of ski he completed the first winter ascents of the Obergabelhorn, Schalihorn and Täschhorn. Kurz and Knubel also climbed the north-east, Hörnli ridge of the Matterhorn intending to descend the north-west, Zmutt ridge to complete a winter traverse of the peak. On reaching the summit a violent wind forced a retreat to the Solvay hut where they were thankful to shelter before continuing the descent. In May Arnold Lunn and Knubel climbed the Weisshorn using ski to the foot of the rocks below the east ridge.

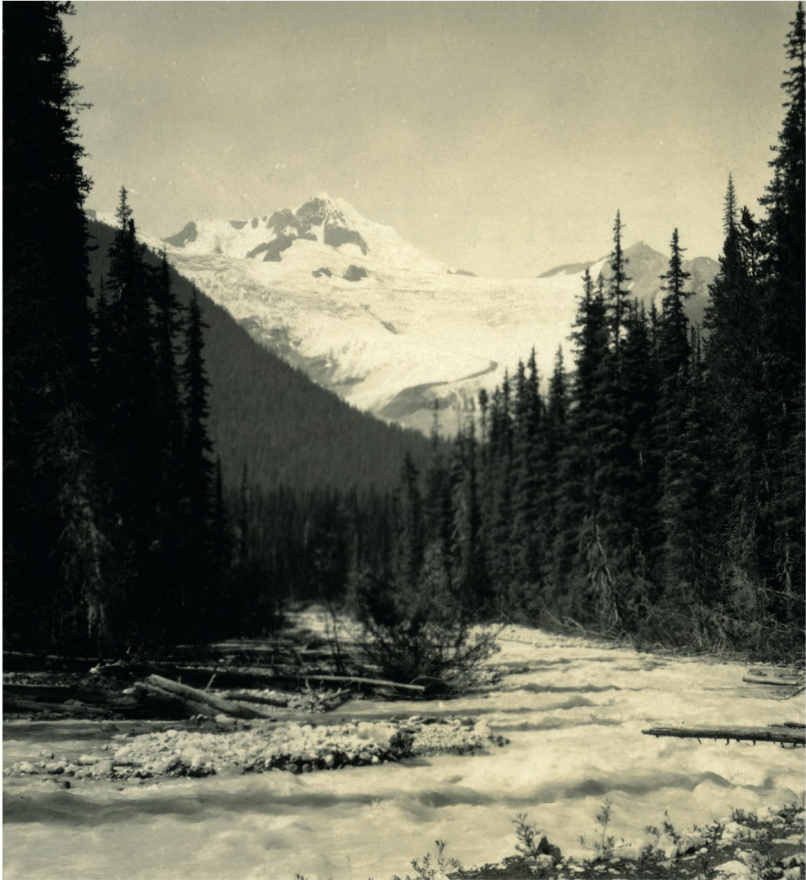
Conditions during the climbing season were unsettled with severe storms experienced in all the principal regions. Following a week of heavy rain in September a section of the Mer de Glace collapsed causing serious damage and flooding in the Chamonix valley. Several guideless Alpine Club parties were in action during intermittent spells of fine weather: Raymond Bicknell, Harold Porter and Leslie Shadbolt completed a number of successful expeditions including traverses of the Meije and the Col des Grandes Jorasses; and a group with Noel Odell climbed the Aiguille du Grépon and other peaks while based at the Montenvers hotel.

In the Zermatt district O K Williamson with Heinrich and Albert Fux traversed the Täschhorn by way of the south-east and north ridges intending to continue to the Dom. This plan was abandoned in deteriorating weather and the party descended the very steep west slopes of the Domjoch to reach the Kin glacier and Randa late in the day. To the east in the Dolomites the guideless climbers Gunther Langes and Erwin Merlet opened two fine routes: the north-west ridge of Cima della Madonna and the south-west pillar – the *Gran Pilastro* – of Pala di San Martino.

During the summer Alexander Kellas returned to Garhwal to resume his scientific work in connection with the use of oxygen at high altitude and to continue his exploration of Kamet (7756m). Accompanied on this occasion by Henry Morshead, an army officer attached to the Survey of India, Kellas established a series of camps on the East Kamet glacier reaching a height of some 7,190m before being forced to retreat.

In South Africa members of the Mountain Club continued to pioneer new routes on Table Mountain (1087m). George Londt and other leading climbers completed *Ascension Buttress Direct*, *Connaught Face* and *Silverstream Corner*, all very severe routes for the period.

In the Southern Alps of New Zealand Samuel Turner paid a second visit to the Fiordland region where he hoped to make the first ascent of Mount



Serenity Mountain, Canadian Rockies. (*Allen Carpe, Alpine Club Photo Library*)

Tutoko (2746m), the highest peak in the Darran range. Accompanied by Alfred Cowling, a guide at the Hermitage hotel, and Jack Cowan as porter Turner continued to explore the approaches to the peak before being obliged to retreat due to lack of provisions and the rugged nature of the terrain.

In the Canadian Rockies a party led by W W Foster made the first ascent of Mount Sturdee (3155m) in the Assiniboine district. Further north Allen Carpe and Howard Palmer reached the summit of the unclimbed Serenity Mountain (3223m), one of the major peaks in the Whirlpool group.

At home the revival of mountaineering after the war was continued by outstanding climbers in the Lake District including G S Bower and H M Kelly. *North Wall Climb* on Dow Crag, *Upper Deep Ghyll Buttress* on Scafell and numerous other severe or very severe routes were completed during the year.

In November a note in the *Alpine Journal* referred to the Groupe de Haute Montagne, which had been formed by Jacques de Lépinye and other active

members of the French Alpine Club. Many famous climbers including Lucien Devies and Maurice Herzog have belonged to the ranks of the GHM.

An event of considerable interest in October was the publication of *Mountain Craft*, edited by Geoffrey Winthrop Young. The work was reviewed in the *Alpine Journal* where it was described as a 'great storehouse of accumulated wisdom.' Other books published during the year included *The Life of Horace-Bénédict de Saussure* by D W Freshfield with the collaboration of H F Montagnier and *Mountain Memories* by Sir Martin Conway.

In February the death occurred of Hermann Woolley, a former president of the Alpine Club who had made numerous ascents in the Alps, Norway, the Caucasus and the Canadian Rockies during a long and successful climbing career.

This account is concluded with a recollection of Alexander Seiler, the head of the Seiler hotels in the Zermatt valley, whose death was announced in March and who is remembered for his generous offer of hospitality to Alpine Club members during the war. Writing in the *Alpine Journal* Capt Percy Farrar paid tribute to a great personality, adding that Zermatt would not be quite the same without Alexander Seiler, the friend of every English mountaineer.