

---

# Alpine Club Notes

---



Plate 7. *'Bheem ke Udar'*

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 2020

PRESIDENT .....	Victor Saunders
VICE-PRESIDENTS .....	Richard Nadin, Melanie Windridge
HONORARY SECRETARY .....	Sherry Macliver
HONORARY TREASURER .....	Trevor Campbell Davis
HONORARY EDITOR OF THE <i>ALPINE JOURNAL</i> .....	Ed Douglas
HONORARY LIBRARIAN .....	Barbara Grigor-Taylor
CHAIRS OF SUB-COMMITTEES:	
CLIMBING & EVENTS .....	Nicholas Hurndall Smith
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY .....	Mike Fletcher <sup>1</sup>
MARKETING, MEMBERSHIP & RECRUITMENT .....	Melanie Windridge
CHAIR OF THE ALPINE CLUB LIBRARY COUNCIL .....	Philip Meredith
COMMITTEE, <i>elected</i> .....	Jim Fotheringham, Tom Livingstone, Chris Martin, Marjan Schoeke
COMMITTEE, <i>co-opted</i> .....	John Porter

## OFFICE BEARERS

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY .....	Sherry Macliver
LONDON LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Derek Buckle
SOUTH-WEST LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Tony Westcott, Chris Storie
PEAK LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Martin Wragg
LAKES LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Anna Lawford
EDINBURGH LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Tim Elson, Zoe Strong
NORTH WALES LECTURE ORGANISER .....	Peter Frost
WINTER DINNER CONVENOR .....	William Newsom
CHAIR OF THE CLIMBING FUND SUB-COMMITTEE .....	Malcolm Bass
CHAIR OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE .....	John Dempster
CHAIR OF THE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE ..	Richard Nadin
CHAIR OF THE PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE .....	Victor Saunders
STUDENT LIAISON OFFICER .....	Richard Ive
UIAA REPRESENTATIVE .....	Steve Goodwin
CIRCULATION MANAGER OF THE ENVIRONMENT PANEL .....	Ed Douglas
HONORARY LIBRARIAN EMERITUS .....	Jerry Lovatt
HONORARY ARCHIVIST .....	Glyn Hughes
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S ARTEFACTS .....	Nigel Buckley
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S MONUMENTS .....	Charlie Burbridge
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S PAINTINGS .....	Simon Piers
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S PHOTOGRAPHS .....	Bernie Ingrams
ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THE ALPINE JOURNAL (OBITUARIES) .....	Rod Smith
NEWSLETTER EDITOR .....	Adele Long
WEBSITE EDITORS .....	Jeremy Gould, David Lund
WIRED GUIDEBOOKS REPRESENTATIVE .....	Mike Mortimer
OFFICE MANAGER .....	Stephen Grey
LIBRARIAN .....	Nigel Buckley

## ALPINE CLIMBING GROUP

PRESIDENT .....	Tom Livingstone
HONORARY SECRETARY .....	Tim Elson
COMMITTEE .....	Ian Parnell, Paul Ramsden

1. Stepped down from post during year

---

JOHN PORTER

## President's Valedictory Address

Read before the Alpine Club on 30 November, 2019

In the autumn of 2016, Lindsay Griffin phoned to ask if I wanted to be the next president of the Alpine Club. It was one of those 'what me?' moments. I thought about it for a few days. I had my doubts if I was the right person. If even a quarter of my generation had survived our Himalayan exploits, the question would never have come my way. So many talented and able friends back in the 1970s and 1980s were lost, and lost to the Alpine Club: Pete, Paul, Alison, Alex, Roger, Joe, Julie, Pete again, Alan. I do not need to add the surnames. They are remembered.

I say this not for any sentimental reasons, but to remind us that what we 'have' is not our only heritage. What we don't have, yet is well remembered is equally important. In an age of the 'perpetual present' driven by social media, one of the AC's challenges is to provide a filter on what might be important in the future to our members. We could easily lose what we don't have by not making the effort now to record the present. I'll come back to that later.

After the dinner three years ago, my wife Rose happened to be standing with a small group of members when someone asked her: 'do you have any idea who John Porter is?' Had she known then what was to follow, she should have replied: 'I have no idea. But whoever he is, he must be mad to take on this job.'

Yet being the president of the Alpine Club has been an honour, and doubly so since I am the first American in the job. It reminds me that I have been President Porter once before, of the climbing club at the University of Oregon in 1967. The vice president's surname was Coolie. Porter and Coolie, a hardworking pair, like Stupart and Porter over these past three years. Now, many decades later, I find myself on the last stage of a much more complex and important portering role, carrying the ethos and well-being of the world's first and most prestigious climbing club from one point in time to another: from the AGM three years ago to this moment, now.

Stephen Venables warned me that the three-year term falls into three distinct periods: the first year enthusiastically scoping out where the club is at and what is needed; the second year working to put new ideas and plans in place; and the third despairing when all the good intentions seem to lead to nothing. My experience has been a mirror image of Stephen's and a rather dark mirror at times: from despair in the first year to increasingly constructive and positive current happenings and future plans.

Most of my first year was occupied in trying to avoid the club imploding over the BMC question, trying to find a consensus on the role of the Alpine Club. Do we in the 2010s have any responsibility for the direction and management of the BMC, and if so, what is it since the BMC is a wholly separate company with its own objectives? Is the BMC even relevant to the future of the Club and alpinism?

These questions occupied an inordinate amount of my time and that of the AC Committee in meeting after meeting. They were the result of a Motion of No Confidence in the BMC's management lodged by a vociferous group, which included a number of AC members including two ex-presidents. Most AC members stayed neutral and gentlemanly in discussion with the rebels but there was also much emotional debate and the club's image was badly damaged by a few social media trolls. Ignoring valid concerns about the BMC structure and management, many shared internally by the BMC, the trolls described the MONC as an attempted takeover by group of old elitist and colonialist AC members. Some of that stuck and more than a score of members resigned. They were mainly active BMC volunteers who felt the BMC was doing well enough and it was no business of the Alpine Club. At the same time, some senior AC members who had signed the MONC became the target of scurrilous attacks for their views. It was not a happy time.

Endless discussions brought home to me that the clearest message from our members and the AC Committee was that the Club is about climbing, not politics, and that we should focus on what we do best. Regardless of what direction the BMC took, the Alpine Club will still be here in a hundred years' time with a healthy ethos of adventure alpinism. This was confirmed first at an Extraordinary General Meeting in April 2017 at the Club HQ. Increasingly, I was encouraged to take a measured approach in discussions with Club members and yet be proactive in discussions with the BMC on issues of common concern. But the atmosphere remained toxic on social media throughout the year. I found myself embroiled in endless emails and on-line debates that exhibited the same entrenched and ill-informed views that characterised the Brexit debate.

Behind the surface turmoil, senior officers in the Club became critical friends to the BMC. We shared too many common interests not to do so. AC members took part in the BMC's organisational review, providing both welcome and unwelcome analysis and suggestions leading to the proposal for a Tier 1 not Tier 3 affiliation with Sport England. The work of Crag Jones, John Booth and Jonathan White was critical in supporting the importance of members' views. The fact that Jonathan is now a BMC director shows that his work was valued.

Enough said: the BMC review is on going and fraught with uncertainty and knotty issues. The reality is we need the BMC to be our representative body. The wider world of mountain activities is tarnished by competitions, commercial and commodified interests, but that is the world that we as well as the BMC live in. Their priorities inevitably are different from the AC's.

Alpinism is of interest to a tiny percentage of BMC members. Few BMC members have the skills or inclination for alpine adventures. Some even believe adventures can be bought and sold. But all AC members know that the joy of alpinism is taking personal responsibility for the risks that come when playing on rock and ice high up in the sky.

Behind all the BMC hoo-ha, there was much else going on in year one. We recruited our excellent office manager Stephen Grey. His expertise meant that running and managing of our primary asset – Charlotte Road – became much easier. The BMC Young Alpinist Group initiative led by Tom Livingstone and Ian Parnell took root, and discussions began of how we could create pathways to offer wider experience through the AC. Malcolm Bass, Paul Ramsden and Nick Colton were also heavily involved, and during my second year, the Alpine Climbing Group was re-invigorated as one of those pathways. At the same time Nick Smith and his meets team ensured that the aspirant route into the AC, with meets designed to gain skills to become full members, remained the welcoming cornerstone of the Club's attraction for new young members. By my third year the ACG and the mainstream membership approached full integration with some meets between AC and YAG shared.

The most important event during my second year was the strategic weekend held at the Blencathra Centre in November 2018. The impetus for this gathering was in part Mick Fowler's comment in his 2013 valedictory speech: 'the Alpine Club has a habit of re-inventing itself.' To avoid this, the Committee set its sights on preparing the Club for what would be needed when it is 175 years old in 2032. Clearly the issue of climate change will be much more prominent then. Over 80 AC members took part and many others unable to attend contributed their thoughts before and after. We discussed the forward plan for the Club's members' services, Charlotte Road and the operational requirements of the Club and the Alpine Club Library. Building on the achievements of the most recent Committees under Mick and Lindsay Griffin, we felt a written forward plan would help prevent re-invention. This plan will be presented in draft at the January AC Committee in 2020 and distributed for member consideration later that year.

The new structure of the Club approved at the 2019 AGM will help us deliver a wide range of member services including many more meets, better use of the Club's amazing collection both through exhibitions and online, improved communications and access to the wealth of information held by the club. With Nigel Buckley joining the ACL as Librarian, we now have someone as important to the future of the AC Collections as Stephen is to the smooth running of the AC Office.

Some things that have rolled out from Blencathra are already being reported in the newsletters, website and on social media. A new Environmental Panel was set up by Rob Collister and advises and proposes means to minimise our environmental impact. The Montane AC grants panel (along with the MEF and BMC) will be considering how some conditions attached to grants can help expeditions monitor and reduce their environmental and cultural impact.

As we entered 2019, the work of our large and enthusiastic group of volunteers from all age groups and from all parts of the country became more evident in the quality of everything the Club does, from international meets to the expanded regional lectures. Without all the volunteers there would be no activities.

The international activities of the Club have also become more evident. Last year, we held meets with the Poles and the French and in the coming year we have another meet planned with the Marseille section of CAF, the Italian Alpine Club, and the Lecco Spiders with plans for exchanges with the American Alpine Club, other sections of CAI and the Kenyan Mountain Club being discussed. We are supporting the International Scottish Winter meet in February 2020, as we supported the international Rendez-vous Hautes Montagnes in Langdale last summer. While working in India and Korea earlier this year, I met with the Himalayan Club, the Maharashtra Association of Clubs and the Korean Alpine Club. Potential collaborative projects on climbing exchanges, publishing and work with the UIAA are underway. Our presence at the Piolets d'Or continues year on year as climbers and organisers. In 2018, the AC Spirit of Mountaineering panel recognised Polish climbers for their role in the winter rescue of Elizabeth Revol, and the pilots of the Pakistani Fearless 5 Squadron for their part not only for the Nanga Parbat rescue but in several other dramatic rescues in the past two years, four involving AC members.

Now back to the future: Mt Everest. Our honorary secretary Charles says the Club's international esteem allows us 'to punch above our weight.' Here is an example. Over the past few years the office received an increasing number of questions from the media regarding accidents on Everest. They assumed that the AC would be involved or provide an answer. We had a stock statement to the effect: 'not me guv'. But that is not good enough given the Club's long association with Everest and Nepal.

To answer the question 'What is happening?' and propose solutions, we first had to recognise all the underlying causes. Doug Scott led the way with his statement in Kathmandu in June. Building on that, Ed Douglas and I gathered in opinions from many climbers and organisations that know Nepal well and understand the interlocking complexity of the situation. We have written a set of proposals based on a sense of a duty of care both to the legacy of Everest and to Nepal as a whole. Now completed, it covers a range of things that need to be addressed: from workers' rights to helicopter scams, from guiding standards to freedom of access, and a need to deal with some clear examples of corruption.

Fortunately, the BMC supported the proposals through their International Committee and helped gain the support of the UIAA and in turn the IFMGA. Even the Nepal Mountaineering Association voted in favour of the proposals at the UIAA Congress at the beginning of November 2019. With the BMC and with the signatures of the UIAA and IFMGA, the proposals were lodged with the Nepal Ministry of Tourism. It was heartening to receive votes of thanks to the AC from clubs and federations from around

the world. The proposals will need to be resourced and agencies will have to come on side to agree standards of safety and management. We expect it will take a generation for results. Time is always on the AC's side.

And what is the ethos of the AC? For me it is quite simple. It is the knowledge gained through the exploration of high places and the connections that can be made with people, places and the unknown, both within and without during our short existence. How we share this becomes our heritage, reflected in the writing, paintings, philosophical musings and photographs of our members from 1857 until this moment. But how do we filter what is important for the future from the thousands of weekly instagrams and tweets, and chaotic commercial mountain festivals like Kendal? We have to take part, and that is what our younger members in particular are doing well.

Mountain adventure is being squeezed at both ends of our commodified sport, at one end by gymnastic competitions, now in the Olympics, and at the other, by the equivalent of a Bob Graham Round of the 8,000ers completed by Nims in just 190 days a few weeks ago. We recognise the incredible athleticism and stamina involved in these activities, but I'd like to think that alpinism is more than just a sport, and that climbing an 8,000er is more than an ultra-marathon or a high-hazard industry, which is what Everest tourism has become. Within the mountain world, there are physically still more unclimbed 6,000m peaks than those that have been climbed, and for those taking part, many more adventures taking place than we know about.

Coming together as members, to climb together and share stories, we are part of the filter that adds value to an activity that many might say is useless or of value only on a resumé. As Paul Nunn once said, 'the most important aspect of climbing is taking responsibility for putting one foot in front of another for as long as you are able knowing that you will still be responsible for each step when and if you return.' And as a goal for 2032, I quote another old friend Roger Baxter Jones who advised us all to 'a: come back, b: come back friends, and c: get to the top, in that order.' Perhaps now we should add one thing more: 'give something back.'

I started by saying that as a porter I had a load to carry but during my stint as president I have been one of many in a long line who contributed to the wellbeing of the Club over the last three years. In particular, I thank Charles Stupart our honorary secretary for his incredible work to ensure we are compliant with regulations, from databases to meets guidelines, and to Sherry MacIver his deputy who takes over in the New Year. Rob Collier steps down as vice president this year but will remain active on the Environment Panel. Richard Nadin takes his place. Richard also heads the panel that vets new members. I am pleased to say that despite those resignations I mentioned as a result of the BMC feud, and the inevitable loss of members to time, we have a small net gain in member numbers over the past three years. I have already mentioned Nick Smith, but if you have been on the meets, you will know what a great job Kate Ross, Tim Elson, Giles Roberson, Paul MacWhinney and the other meet co-ordinators have done.

Philip Meredith and the other ACL trustees, whose excellent annual reports today illustrates how the ACL and AC objectives have come together over the past two years, has been ably assisted by Barbara Grigor-Taylor. Thanks to the contributions from the rest of the Committee, to Melanie Windridge, Marjan Schoeke and Ed Douglas for their social media development. And finally, to the finance team, to John Dempster as chair of the Finance Subcommittee and to our honorary treasurer Trevor Campbell Davis for very sage advice over the past three years, and for keeping us financially in a strong position. And now we welcome Victor Saunders as our new president, who not only is a brilliant climber and the Club's first British mountain guide president, but who also knows what it means to carry heavy loads over long distances. You have a great team to work with on the route forward.

### **The Rendez-vous Hautes Montagne Visits Langdale**

In 1967, Baroness Felicitas von Reznicek's book *Von der Krinoline zum sechsten Grad* ('From the Crinoline to the 6th Grade') was published. In it she describes the history of female mountaineering. A year later, in May 1968 the baroness decided to organize a unique women's mountaineering meeting at Engelberg, Switzerland for the purpose of 'mutual learning'. It was a success, with seventy mountaineers and climbers from different countries climbing together for a week. At this meet the Rendez-Vous Hautes Montagnes was born and since then women mountaineers and climbers from many countries have met at least once a year in different mountain places to share friendship, enthusiasm and climbing together. The 61st Meet of the Rendez-vous Hautes Montagnes (RHM) was held in Great Langdale from 13 to 21 July 2019.

One of the purposes of the meets was, through official invitations, to allow female climbers from eastern bloc countries to make trips to the west, something they may not otherwise have been allowed to do at that time. Each participating country had a representative, whose task was to pass the word around about forthcoming meets. In the eastern bloc, the representative sometimes had the job of selecting the climbers to come on the meet. The RHM then and now has never been a club but rather a network of female climbers with representatives helping to spread the word about the opportunity to join up with other women climbers.

I first heard about the RHM in 1979 when a friend showed me a small entry in an Alpine Club newsletter. It invited women climbers who led grade IV to join other female alpinists at the 11th meet of the RHM held that year at Serre Chevalier, France. My first climbing trip to the Alps had been just the year before and having led IV+ I hoped to meet the standard required. I wrote to the French organiser, Mirielle Marks, to ask if I might come along. I received a warm reply in which she said I was the first British girl to be going for a long time and that Baroness Felicitas, now the president of the RHM, would be pleased about that.

I was privileged to meet well-known French climbers like Loulou Boulaz, Jeanne Franco, Suzy Peguy, Christine de Colombel and Simone Badier, and also Wanda Rutkiewicz from Poland, the first woman to climb K2. This meet had taken Mireille Marks a whole year to organise and involved all sorts of grand receptions, a final banquet and lots of climbing on the mountain peaks of the Dauphiné.

I've attended many RHM meets since then: several in Switzerland at Handegg, Meiringen, Goschenen, Melchsee; in former Yugoslavia at Paklenica; in the Tatra mountains of Slovakia; two in the Czech Republic; and in Sardinia, to name a few. The ranks of Britons attending grew year on year and we were able to host a successful meet in north Wales in 1989. Since then there have been three more summer RHMs in the UK, including the 2019 Langdale meet. There are now also annual ice-climbing and ski-mountaineering meets in other parts of Europe. The summer meets are now often in sport-climbing venues, although the Langdale meet was, of course, traditional.



Charlotte Steinmeier (Germany) topping out on Raven Crag, Langdale.  
(Cathy Woodhead)

There are other changes. The pomp and ceremony of the early meets has gone to a large extent, the Internet has made communication far easier for everyone, the English language has also become much more widespread and there is no longer a problem for climbers from the old eastern bloc to visit western Europe. But its essence, of women mountaineers and climbers of many countries meeting in different mountain places to share friendship and enthusiasm climbing together, continues unabated.

The 61st meeting was based at the National Trust campsite in Great Langdale and the meet was a huge success, thanks to the hard work of organisers Stella Adams, Jo Barnes, Fiona Sanders and Rya Tibawi, and many others. The week started officially with a welcome reception. Information was provided on the main climbing areas, and thanks to the FRCC, guidebooks were available to buy at a discounted price. Along with other clubs the Alpine Club had kindly donated money towards the costs of the meet, which included the hire of a marquee, the purchase of special t-shirts (this year red with the RHM logo with the place and year of the meet) and food and drinks for the reception. Anna Lawford of the AC, Lynn Robinson, president of the BMC, Vic Odell, president of the CC and Nina Stirrup of FRCC all attended the reception as representatives. The Pinnacle Club, which was also a sponsor, was well represented amongst the UK women present.

About 70 women attended all or part of the meet with the youngest participant being only four months and the oldest aged 92. There were women from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic



RHM participants on the final evening at Sticklebarn, Langdale. (Keith Sanders)

and over 40 attending from all over the UK. Regulars from other countries exhorted all these new attendees to make the effort to travel to future RHM meets outside the UK promising the same warm welcome they themselves received in Langdale. Climbing partnerships were made daily. Crags climbed on during the week included Gimmer, Pavey Ark, Dow, Bowfell, Raven, Kettle, and Long Scar. For many attendees it was their first experience of traditional climbing. The weather was typical of the Lakes with good weather for the first four and a half days followed by lengthy downpours of rain during which we explored Cathedral Cavern in Little Langdale, went to Kendal Climbing Wall, or travelled out of the Lakes to find dry climbing opportunities. Even when it rained spirits were high and Mandy Glanvill introduced our visitors to the delights of scrambling up greasy, mossy, water courses: a great hit. Anne Salisbury did some belaying instruction, which was very helpful for those who were not confident about climbing purely on trad gear.

There was a buzz, energy, enthusiasm and a sense of fun throughout the meet and the final evening was no exception as we gathered for a final dinner at the Sticklebarn, where the venue for next year's meet was announced. It will be in Slovenia in July 2020 and, of course, all women climbers will be welcome. See <https://www.rhm-climbing.net/> for more information.

Cathy Woodhead

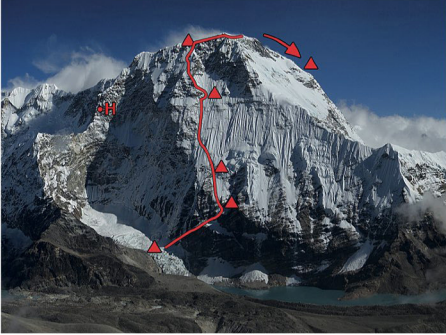


Catherine Destivelle, awarded the 12th lifetime achievement award from the Piolets d'Or, on Shishapangma in 1994. (*Érik Decamp*)

### **Piolets d'Or 2020**

Once again made at the Ladek Mountain Festival in Poland, this year celebrating its 25th anniversary, four outstanding ascents from 2019 were awarded a Piolet d'Or. The year 2019 turned out to be a very rich one, with a substantial number of significant first ascents from all over the globe. The protagonists were alpinists of wide diversity. There were notable ascents by the 'old guard' of highly experienced high-altitude climbers, but also fine achievements by a promising new generation of 'young guns'. The eight-member international technical jury had the difficult task of making a choice, the intention being not to discard any remarkable climbs, but to choose a few significant ascents as emblematic of modern, alpine-style mountaineering. In the end the jury chose what they believed to be a consistent selection of four climbs.

The four ascents comprise two from Nepal and two from Pakistan. Most had seen previous attempts and were on the radar of number of strong parties. All climbed to rarely visited, or in one case virgin summits. They include, in no particular order, the north-west face and traverse of Chamlang (7321m), climbed between 17 and 23 May by Marek Holeček and Zdeněk Háek from the Czech Republic. When Holeček and Zdeněk Háek arrived in Nepal, it was obvious the face had little snow and a lot of hard water ice. Outflanking objective dangers in the lower section would prove to be one of the keys. From a bivouac at 5,300m on the glacier below the face the two Czechs headed up more or less directly below the summit. On the fourth day they reached the upper east ridge and bivouacked 80m below the top. On 21 May they crossed the summit and spent the rest of the day trying to navigate the original *Japanese* route on the south ridge. This proved more



The Czech route *UFO* on the north-west face of Chamlang.

difficult than expected. Two more bivouacs without food and difficult down climbing and rappelling in often poor visibility were needed to reach the valley. The route was named *UFO* (2,000m, WI5, M6) as a tribute to Reinhold Messner and Doug Scott, who in 1981, with Sherpas Ang Dorje and Pasang, were the

first to climb on the north side of the Chamlang massif to reach one of the middle summits. The pair was puzzled to see a box-like object hovering above them and shining in the midday sun.

Alan Rousseau and Tino Villanueva climbed the west face of Tengi Ragi Tau (6938m), starting from a glacier camp below the face on 13 October and returning on 17 October. In 2012, on their first expedition to the Himalaya, Rousseau and Villanueva made the first ascent of Langmoche Ri on the north ridge of Tengi Ragi Tau in Nepal's Rolwaling. Walking below the west face of Tengi Ragi Tau they were mesmerised by its sheer magnitude and fine ice runnels through beautiful granite. They returned in 2014 to attempt a direct line, climbing to around 6,500m in less than ideal weather before retreating. Five years on and the face had attracted the attention of several strong parties. After crossing the Tashi Lapsa pass and camping on the Drolambo glacier, the two Americans climbed the initial dry-tooling pitches to access the snowy face and then made three bivouacs before reaching the summit. A tricky rappel descent was made down the line of ascent. With a multi-pitch ice crux high on the route, followed by steep flutings of unprotectable snow, this technical and elegant line on one of the most outstanding unclimbed faces of the Rolwaling was just reward for the perseverance of these two experienced alpine guides. They called their route *Release the Kraken* (1,600m, AI5 M5+). Their ascent was only the second of this difficult mountain and the first in alpine style.

Another American team comprising Mark Richey, Steven Swenson, Chris Wright and Graham Zimmerman made the first ascent of Link Sar (7041m) in east Pakistan, another much coveted objective and reported on at length elsewhere in this edition of the *Alpine Journal*. Finally, the Japanese team of Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima climbed the south face and south-east ridge of Rakaposhi (7788m), more than 4,000m from base camp, starting on 27 June and returning on 3 July. Whilst the south side of the mountain, leading to the crest of the great south-east ridge, had been reconnoitred in the past, it remained untouched with climbers unable to find a feasible route. An ascent from this less visible side of the mountain would be highly exploratory. From a 3,660m base camp at the snout of the glacier, and in generally unstable weather, Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima climbed



The Japanese route on Rakaposhi.

the south face to 6,100m, both to acclimatise and confirm that their chosen line would go. On their second outing they took three days, strenuously climbing through often deep soft snow, to reach a camp at 6,800m on the south-east ridge, where they were forced to wait two days in bad weather. After this they climbed to the summit and back in a single long day, and on the following reversed their line of ascent all the way down to base camp. Although the route does not feature the high technical difficulties of the three other awarded ascents, its huge length, and the commitment and style of Hiraide and Nakajima's determined ascent on a rarely climbed mountain, makes it of equal merit for a 2020 Piolet d'Or.

Announcing this year's Piolets d'Or, the organisers took the opportunity to acknowledge the passing of Jan Kiełkowski, one of the world's great chroniclers of alpinism, and author of many guidebooks to the Greater Ranges. His death on 5 April 2020 was a shock to the Polish mountaineering community but poorly publicised outside his home country. Born in 1943, Kiełkowski was a talented alpinist, with many new lines in the Polish Tatras. He created six new routes on Kazalnica, the highest wall of the Tatras, more than any other individual climber. He also climbed in the Cordillera Huayhuash, Caucasus, Pamir, Hindu Kush and Himalaya. But his biggest contribution to world climbing was his documentary work. Starting with *Mount Everest Massif* in 1985, he published over 20 guidebooks for alpinists on areas of the Himalaya, Karakoram and Andes, including 11 volumes of the well-known 'Mountaineering Series' between 1995 and 2015.

Together with his wife Małgorzata he was the main editor and co-author of seven volumes of *Wielka Encyklopedia Gór i Alpinizmu* (Great Encyclopaedia of Mountains and Alpinism), published from 2013 to 2017. This

work, currently only available in Polish, is the world's biggest resource of its type.

The 12th Walter Bonatti Piolets d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Catherine Destivelle. Destivelle started making a name for herself in the climbing world during the 1980s, at a time when sport climbing was exploding in popularity and grades were rising rapidly. Shortly after discovering climbing at Fontainebleau at the age of 12, Destivelle was tackling big routes in the Mont Blanc massif. However, by the mid 1980s she was participating in sport-climbing competitions and her success in these, and the fact she became the first woman to redpoint 8a, turned her into a rock-climbing star. Few people knew that as a teenager she climbed some of the biggest routes in the Alps. In 1990, the rock star made her mountain comeback with an impressive solo ascent of the *Bonatti* on the Petit Dru. This finally gained her recognition as an alpinist. She went on to put up her own new route on the west face of the Petit Dru over 11 days, before completing a solo winter trilogy: the north face of the Eiger in 1992, the Walker spur on the north face of the Grandes Jorasses in 1993, and the *Bonatti* route on the north face of the Matterhorn in 1994. The latter is still rarely climbed today. It was her second big Bonatti route and the first time a woman had climbed at such a high standard in the Alps. Catherine didn't just want to be known as an accomplished female climber, she wanted her performances to be measured against those of any alpinist, no matter their gender.

### **Alpine Club Library Report 2019**

Hywel Lloyd retired as chair of the Library Council and as a Library trustee at the 2018 AGM after 13 years at the helm. The volunteers' party last December provided a fitting opportunity to celebrate Hywel's outstanding work for the Library and the Club over many years. Vice president Steve Goodwin presented Hywel with an engraved plaque on behalf of the AC, while Philip Meredith presented him with a framed and inscribed print on behalf of the ACL. This is therefore my first annual report. Happily, there are plenty of positive activities to report and there have been plenty of positive folk to help out.

Because I was elected as new chair of Council to replace Hywel, we needed a new ACL Council secretary, and I am delighted to report that Nigel Buckley, our professional librarian, was appointed to that role at the beginning of the year. Since Nigel is also the new keeper of artefacts he is going to be kept very busy. Peter Rowland stepped down as keeper of photographs in the spring after eight years in that post. We thank Peter for all his efforts in improving and enhancing the photograph collection, photographing much of the artefact collection and for driving forward the digitisation programme. Peter is ably succeeded as keeper by Bernie Ingrams. Bernie has been involved with the photograph collection for many years, and especially with the digitisation programme, so I am sure we can look forward to continuity and a smooth transition.

In this year of change, John Fairley also stepped down as keeper of pictures, again after eight years in charge. John transformed the storage of the picture collection, completely replaced the hanging system in the lecture room to a modern and adaptable system, and oversaw the selection and conservation of the more than 80 pictures loaned to Chamonix for the fantastically successful exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the 'Golden Age of Alpinism' in 2015. We are delighted that the AC has appointed Simon Pierse as the new keeper of pictures; Simon is an acclaimed artist and senior lecturer emeritus in fine art at Aberystwyth University. He is a member and former vice-president of the Royal Watercolour Society and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Notable amongst his many publications is *Kangchenjunga: Imaging a Himalayan Mountain*, jointly published by the Alpine Club and with a foreword by George Band. I think it is fair to say that responsibility for the picture collection will remain in safe hands for the foreseeable future. In a further enhancement to the custodianship of the pictures, the Club has appointed Janet Johnson as assistant keeper of pictures. Janet is also a well-known artist, and she has already taken on responsibility for the hanging of all exhibitions in the Clubhouse lecture room and for liaison with Art UK, more of which later. We warmly welcome Janet to the team.

As part of the ACL's regulations, we have to rotate three trustees off the Council each year although they are eligible for re-appointment. We are pleased to record that Jerry Lovatt and Philip Meredith have been re-appointed as trustees by the AC, and that Kimball Morrison has been re-appointed by the BMC as its trustee.

Last year we reported on a major step forward in updating the Library structure to meet the original intention when it was established in its present form in 1971, by the appointment of ACL members. In addition to all the keepers, assistant keepers and the honorary archivist, the AC Committee has also nominated Sue Hare, Hywel Lloyd, John Porter and Peter Payne as members, and these have all been ratified by the ACL Council. The Library very much welcomes this development and the new members. Now that all AC keepers are also all ACL members, we can look forward to an age of smooth and seamless custodianship of the Club's heritage collections.

### **The New Alpine Club Library Catalogue**

Not everyone is aware that the Library is much more than books. Library is used as a catch-all, since the Library actually houses and takes responsibility for all the AC and ACL collections, comprising over 30,000 books, magazines, journals and expedition reports, 40,000 photographs and slides, around 700 paintings, prints and drawings, the Alpine Club document archive and the collection of around 300 historical artefacts. Highlights include Maurice Wilson's diary, George Band's 1953 Everest diaries, Michel Paccard's notebook, and much more. There are 1,500 Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) reports on the database; most are currently available to download, and the remaining few will be added shortly. *Alpine Journals* from 1930-2018 can now also be accessed online.

Over the past year, Nigel Buckley has been working tirelessly to implement the Koha cataloguing system to replace our obsolescent AdLib cataloguing software. Koha provides a fully integrated system that can incorporate images in each library record. It enables cross-referencing between all items in the database and thus allows a much simpler and user-friendly search facility. The first implementation of the system is now live, and you can search it all in the new library catalogue available on the Library page of the Club's website at: <http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/ac2/ac-media/library>.

### **Pre-Meet Planning**

Nigel Buckley has started a new section of our guidebook collection in the Library specifically targeted to support the club's climbing meets. These will be available to borrow and use as regular ACL loans. If any member wants to use the Library and its resources to organise a pre-meet planning session, please feel free to contact Nigel, who will make relevant maps, guidebooks and reports available .

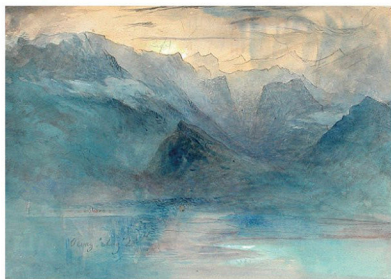
### **Art UK**

The AC is now a member of Art UK, a cultural education charity that allows online access to virtually every public art collection in the UK. These artworks are housed in museums, universities, town halls, hospitals and other civic buildings across the country, and over 80% are not normally on public view. As an initial step, the ACL has put 70 of the finest pictures from the AC collection online through Art UK, with more to follow. In addition to viewing the pictures, with their associated metadata, prints can be purchased in a range of sizes and for modest prices from the Art UK shop. This will not only provide a resource for members but also a source of income for the ACL to use for restoration purposes. Visit <https://artuk.org> for more details, to view the pictures and to purchase prints.

### **Fundraising Strategy**

The ACL relies greatly on financial donations and legacies, as well as gifts of books, photographs, pictures and artefacts. The honorary librarian, Barbara Grigor-Taylor, issues lists of donated duplicate books for sale to members, raising a significant annual sum to help support Library activities. Additionally, the Library is always seeking to identify possible external sources of funding to support its work and activities in an increasing competitive world. This activity has been significantly enhanced through a very generous, anonymous donation from a senior AC member that has allowed us to increase Nigel's hours to five days per week, with the extra day focussed on increasing external support.

A fundraising strategy has been developed and approved by the Library Council, and there have already been some successes. In August, the Library won a TownsWeb Archiving Digitisation Grant (£3,000 worth of services) for a project to digitise important archival collections, including: Alpine Club Committee minutes (1857 onwards); Alpine Club qualification papers;



Ruskin's watercolour 'Vevey, Sunrise', part of the highly successful exhibition 'John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing'.



The art of Riccarda de Eccher.



From the Simon Pierse exhibition. Pierse is the Club's new keeper of pictures.

Alpine Climbing Group qualification papers; Ladies' Alpine Club minutes (1907-75); and Ladies' Alpine Club membership records. This material is unique to our collection, and not available elsewhere. We propose both to digitise the material and to catalogue it at a granular level, making these historic papers much more accessible. The official papers of the Alpine Club receive a lot of demand for use, and this project will allow digital facsimiles to be made available online via our recently launched public catalogue. Earlier in the year, we also made a successful application to the Sporting Heritage and Armed Forces Digitisation Project to scan and catalogue our Everest archives. In this bid, we highlighted both the extent of our material and the high number of Everest team members from 1921-53 who had served in the armed forces.

### Visitors and Enquiries

It has been another busy year for visitors and enquiries, with 209 people visiting the Library and 205 research enquiries received and answered via email. Highlights included a visit by Lynn Robinson, BMC president and an exhibition and talk by Nigel and Barbara to sixth form students studying German at St Paul's Girls' School reading Harrer's *Die Weisse Spinne*. An exhibition of documents and artefacts on mountain medicine covering mountain sickness (Longstaff, 1906), nutrition on Everest (Warren, Humphreys, 1933-6) and oxygen on Everest and Kangchenjunga (Pugh, Ward, 1936-55) was received with amazement by a group of visitors from the Royal College of Nursing. Nigel had a surprise visit in November by designers from Adidas, whose design team was in London and interested in old mountain clothing: how it was designed and made, if it was effective, and if Adidas could learn from

that and inform their future designs for its clothing range. The item most inspired them was Frank Smythe's cotton cagoule used on Everest in 1936. After showing them other clothing from our collection, Nigel gave them a tour and showed some highlights from the rest of the collections.

### Exhibitions

A highlight of the year was the exhibition 'John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing', held at Two Temple Place in London from January to April to mark the bicentenary of the birth of John Ruskin in 1819. Four of Ruskin's paintings from the AC and ACL collections were exhibited, including the watercolour 'Vevey, Sunrise', which was also selected as the image for the 2019 AC Christmas card. The exhibition received rave reviews, and subsequently moved to the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield as 'John Ruskin: Art & Wonder', from May to September. I am happy to report that all our Ruskin paintings have now been safely returned to Charlotte Road.

During the year, John Fairley and Janet Johnson organized a number of exhibitions in the lecture room. These included 'Montagna: the Art of Riccarda de Eccher', an exhibition by Simon Pierse, our new keeper of pictures, entitled 'Icebergs & Northern Lights', and an exhibition of acrylic and mixed media paintings and charcoal drawings, 'Amongst the 4000ers', by Barbara Swindin, author of *All But One*, her memoir about her quest to climb the 52 highest mountains in the Alps.

Nigel also curated an exhibition of library and archive material in the lecture room related to the Victorian scientist, mountaineer and intellectual John Tyndall, to coincide with Roland Jackson's lecture, based on his biography *The Ascent of John Tyndall*, published in 2018.

### Collections

The ACL is an active library and not a book museum, so we aim to enhance the collection with all interesting new books on climbing and mountaineering. Nigel has made an outstanding effort with publishers to obtain complimentary copies of most newly published books, and has also worked successfully to upgrade the guidebooks section. All of this requires extra space. So, a major effort has therefore been made during the year, led by Barbara and Nigel, to dispose of unwanted material (mostly old magazines and old furniture) to tidy up the basement and create more and better storage space. Barbara has overseen the use of the Chorley bequest to repair and conserve a number of valuable books, archive material and unframed artwork. She and Richard Nadin completed the first comprehensive valuation of all AC Collections and, with volunteers, Barbara has also undertaken a total inventory of all books in the Library, recording donors' names and authors' inscriptions, which are being recorded in the Library catalogue.

### Pictures

In addition to the exhibitions listed above, John Fairley organised an exhibition of material from our own collections in Spring 2019, entitled 'Alpine Club



The meeting at the Gorphwysfa Hotel at Pen-y-Pass in 1913 from the Club's newly conserved scrapbooks.



The plaque to Maurice Simond outside the Bar National.

Collection: Paintings and Artefacts from the Golden Age of Alpinism'. A major activity during the year has been selecting the initial 70 pictures to be put online through Art UK, and ensuring that we had high-resolution digital images to make available through the Art UK shop. In this initial phase, we selected only pictures by artists who have been deceased for over 70 years so that all the images are out of copyright.

The new keeper of pictures is in the process of listing his picture conservation priorities for the coming year. Repair of around 60 damaged frames will be started, and improvements to the storage of the paintings will be made so that they are less prone to damage in the future.

## Photographs

Sally Westmacott has donated four boxes of Mike Westmacott's lecture slides of the following expeditions: 1953 Everest; 1956 Huaguruncho, Peru; 1964 Arrigetch in the Brooks Range, Alaska; and 1968 Hindu Kush. Peter Payne has finished scanning the best of Frank Smythe's 35mm slides: a quite daunting task.

After a lot of work, a large number of images from the photo collection are now available to members. Notable amongst these are: the Harish Kapadia collection, comprising 1,700 images and a catalogue; the Tom Nakamura 'Himalayan Flight' collection of 78 images with a catalogue; and the Sella portfolio of 50 images and a catalogue. The first two collections will be particularly interesting to members who are planning climbs in the Himalaya, as well as researchers. The Sella collection includes images rarely seen before, and shows the Alps and alpinism as it was in the 1890s.

## Artefacts

We expect to complete the task of photographing the entire artefact collection during the coming year. Over the summer, Nigel made a great effort to improve the storage of the club's artefacts. Archival storage boxes have been bought for clothing and ropes, and a new ice axe storage rack has been built to provide better storage for the historical ice-axe collection; each axe now has a permanent storage location and they are all catalogued. This also makes retrieval much easier.

### Archives

Alfred Wills' diaries and letters have been given into our care, comprising some 28 volumes of unique and historically important material. Not surprisingly, these have attracted much attention, not least from members of the Wills and Norton families, and from Roland Jackson, the biographer of John Tyndall, who is interested in correspondence between Tyndall and Wills.

During the year, we purchased Simon Pierre Benoit's guide carnet of 1863-74. Many of Benoit's clients were members of the AC. We now have 50 original guides carnets, but this is the first addition to that collection since 1950. This purchase has made us more aware of the value of carnets as primary sources of information on early Alpine climbing. They are already listed in the online catalogue, but that only records the guides' names and dates of ascents. There is no information on the clients and the routes that they climbed. Honorary archivist Glyn Hughes has therefore made a start on extending the catalogue to include this extra information.

Unusually, we own two copies of the scrapbooks that record the gatherings organised by Geoffrey Winthrop Young at the Gorphwysfa Hotel, Pen-y-Pass, between 1896 and 1947, but they were in poor condition. We have therefore commissioned Museum Conservation Services of Duxford to clean and flatten one set using their humidification chamber. They also photographed all the individual sheets and provided us with digital copies. Our binder, Cyril Titus, has now been asked to make a set of special conservation-grade storage boxes to hold them and keep them flat.

### Monuments

Charlie Burbridge, keeper of monuments, visited the Hinchcliffe memorial on Riffelalp whilst attending the aspirants meet in August and reports that it is in good condition but no longer enjoys a commanding view of the Matterhorn because it is now obscured by trees. An attempt will be made to see if these trees can be removed. He also visited the plaque to Clinton Dent on the wall of the Britannia hut. This is not an official AC monument, but the AC contributed to the cost of the construction of the Britannia hut along with the LAC and the ABMSAC, hence the name of the hut. The existence of the plaque is not common knowledge and the hut staff needed an extensive search to find it, but it is in good condition.

Finally, Charlie also arranged for the Maurice Simond memorial plaque on the outside wall of the Bar National in Chamonix to be cleaned. This is also not an official AC monument, but its erection was arranged by former AC president Tut Braithwaite. Furthermore, since the AC is the main body that represents British alpinism, it was felt that we should contribute to its upkeep. This amounts simply to elbow grease and Brasso.

Finally, I cannot end this report without expressing gratitude to everyone in the Library team and to all the volunteers who gave their time so ungrudgingly throughout the year. Without your efforts the ACL could not function. Thank you.

*Philip Meredith*

**Boardman Tasker Award 2019**

This year the award resulted in 32 entries from five countries: the UK, USA, Canada, Italy and New Zealand. Continuing the high number of submissions, this is the fifth year in a row we have had more than 30 entries. The 2019 Judges were Roger Hubank, Katie Ives and Tony Shaw. They produced a shortlist of six authors: Mick Fowler for *No Easy Way* (Vertebrate Publishing); Kate Harris for *Lands of Lost Borders* (Dey Street Books); Geoff Powter for *Inner Ranges* (Rocky Mountain Books); David Smart for *Paul Preuss* (Rocky Mountain Books); Jeff Smoot for *Hangdog Days* (Mountaineers Books); David Wilson for *The Equilibrium Line* (The Poetry Business).

The Award was presented at the Kendal Mountain Festival with Stephen Venables interviewing all the authors. Readings were taken from all six books and were warmly received by a large audience. The chair of judges Roger Hubank gave an extensive speech outlining the merits of the shortlisted books and then announced 2019's winner as Kate Harris for *Lands of Lost Borders*, a gripping account of an epic journey made by the writer and her partner following the Silk Road through many different countries. Hubank said:

*Readers of mountain books of my generation were brought up on the great epics: the Germans and Austrians on Nanga Parbat, the French on Annapurna, the Americans on K2, the Brits on Everest. Lands of Lost Borders, which has nothing to do with the 8,000m peaks, nevertheless reads like an expedition epic. It offers a gripping account of a challenging journey, fraught with many difficulties and dangers, following the old Silk Road. Each day a plunge into the unknown. As one of my fellow judges said, 'The writing is suffused throughout with a sense of exuberance and joy in the present moment, and illuminated with such keen-eyed observations that its images linger long in the readers imagination.'*

*I myself was put in mind again and again, of the question put by the great 19th century explorer Sir Martin Conway: 'What truth is it lies behind those mountain walls that is a lie here in the world beyond?' Certainly Land of Lost Borders might very well, in the words of the rubric, 'Challenge and inspire readers to look at the world in a different way.' It is truly a life-affirming book.*

Full details of all submissions, the shortlist and of the event including film of Roger Hubank's speech are available at [www.boardmantasker.com](http://www.boardmantasker.com).

Steve Dean