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Alpine Club Notes



'Alphubel, Täschhorn and Fee Glacier from the alp below the Längfluh',
Hilda Hechle, watercolour, 38cm x 53cm. (*Alpine Club Collection*)

Jan Morris (1926 - 2020)

Many of my generation, but very few who are younger, will remember 2 June 1953 for watching the Coronation on an impossibly small black-and-white television screen, in a room crowded by many others. I recall little of the ceremonies; indeed was rather bored by the pomp and circumstance, but I clearly remember the excitement generated by the newspaper announcement in the morning that Everest had been climbed. That it had been climbed on 29 May and here we were reading the news in Britain was remarkable given the slow communications of the time. And for many of us, that news was the catalyst that started our own mountaineering.

We owed the breaking of this momentous news to James Morris, assigned to the expedition by *The Times*. On 30 May, after hugging Hillary and Tenzing in congratulation at 6,700m in the Western Cwm, he made a tiring descent in fading light to base camp, shepherded by Mike Westmacott. From there runners were dispatched to Namche Bazaar and the news was radioed to Kathmandu, in code.

Snow conditions bad stop advanced base abandoned yesterday stop awaiting improvement.

This, as he explained in *Coronation Everest* (1958) translated as: 'Hillary and Tenzing reached the summit, all are well.'

Jan Morris, born James on 2 October 1926, died aged 94 on 20 November 2020, the last of the western team of 1953 to pass away.¹ Before Everest his career is summarised as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral School, Oxford, Lancing College, a soldier in the Queen's Royal Lancers, then a return to Oxford as a mature undergraduate, before starting his working life on *The Times*.

In the years that followed what was often called the scoop of the century, Morris had a remarkable life, not in mountaineering, but as a journalist and author. Working for the *Manchester Guardian*, he uncovered proof of collusion between France and Israel in the invasion of Egypt. In 1961, he reported on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, memorably echoing Hannah Arendt's phrase 'the banality of evil'.

With his hands in his lap, blinking frequently and moving his lips, Eichmann reminded me irresistibly of some elderly pinched housewife in a flowered pinafore, leaning back on her antimacassar and shifting her false teeth, as she listened to the railing gossip of a neighbour.

Perhaps the most remarkable event of her long life was the long process of transitioning from man to woman, one that began in publicly in 1964 and led to gender reassignment surgery in 1972 in Morocco, candidly

1. At the time of writing, Kanchha Sherpa, one of the expedition porters, is still alive. In 1952, aged 19, he ran away to Darjeeling where he worked for Tenzing Norgay's family and won himself a place on the team of porters for 1953. See kanchhafoundation.org.



Jan Morris says something funny to Charles Wylie during the Everest 40th anniversary celebrations at Pen y Gwryd. (Ed Douglas)

described in *Conundrum* (1974). As one of the first public figures to talk and write freely about this, and the various legal complexities she faced, Jan Morris was more than courageous.

Many will regard her *Pax Britannica* trilogy as her finest work. *Heaven's Command*, *Pax Britannica* and *Farewell the Trumpets* tell of the rise, climax and decline of the British empire.

Mine is an aesthetic view of Empire, and there is no denying that as the flare of the imperial idea faded, and the nation lost interest, so its beauty faded too. It had not always been a pleasant kind of beauty, but it had been full of splendour and vitality, and when the Empire lost its overweening confidence, its providential virtue, its forms became less striking and its outlines less distinct. My book [Farewell the Trumpets, 1998], therefore, is sad without being regretful. It was time the Empire went, but it was sad to see it go.

There are so many other books, *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere* (2001), *Venice* (1960), *Hong Kong* (1988), *Oxford* (1965) are just four examples, all held in high regard. *Ariel, A Literary Life of Jan Morris*, Derek Johns (Faber & Faber, 2016) will prove a useful guide.

Her writing is so good one often re-reads a sentence several times, savouring the words like fine wine. She's not to be rushed. In interviews towards the end of her life, she repeated her desire that, above all else, kindness might characterise our interactions with others. May it be so.

Roderick A Smith

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An advertisement for John Buckingham from Whymper's 1897 guidebooks.

Goodbye Arthur Beale

It supplied ice axes to Ernest Shackleton, the flag-pole for Buckingham Palace and rigging for escapologists but the closure in June of Arthur Beale's on Shaftesbury Avenue, with its teal shop front and gold lettering, had a particular resonance for

members of the Alpine Club. The company could stretch its origins back to the 16th century and the sign outside its premises proudly announced 'Yacht Chandler, Established Four Centuries'. The Alpine Club knew it first as Messrs Buckingham and Sons, before Arthur Beale took it over. The closure of such high-profile premises, because of Covid-19, would inevitably not go unremarked and as it happens the offices of literary journal the London Review of Books is not far, and contributing editor Jeremy Harding took the opportunity² to dwell on the shop's unique appeal, including the role played in its success by the birth of alpinism and the need for reliable equipment.

Rope was central to the company's success. In the 1860s, the Alpine Club decided to investigate 'what kinds of ROPES, AXES and ALPENSTOCKS will be found most safe and useful for mountain work'. The Alpine Journal reported in 1867 that ropes were the object of 'a large number of experiments' by the club to find out whether they could withstand a weight of twelve stone dropped and checked at five feet. Most of the braided samples and 'many most carefully made twisted ropes gave way in such a manner as was very startling to some of our number, who had been in the habit of using these treacherous cords with perfect and most unfounded confidence.' Only four passed the test, 'all made by Messrs Buckingham and Sons'.

Three Buckingham ropes survived more arduous tests and it was with pleasure – even a touch of relief – that the report's authors went on to list the merits of the winners, 'which are now made by Messrs Buckingham expressly for the Club' and identified by 'a red worsted thread twisted in with the strands'. 'Expressly' didn't mean 'solely', of course: Buckingham and Sons weren't about to keep this success to themselves. Advertisements in the newspapers promptly announced the company as 'the only maker of the celebrated Alpine Club Rope, which is almost exclusively employed by the leading mountaineers of the time ... Beware of fraudulent imitations.'

Happily Arthur Beale continues online and options for new premises or a pop-up Christmas shop are being considered.

2. J Harding, 'Short Cuts: Nautical Dramas', London Review of Books, vol 43, No14, 15 July 2021.

Forza Italia

What are the ties that bind the Alpine Club with the Italian Alpine Club (CAI)? First, a common interest in mountains and the desire to protect their environment. Second, as the world's first mountaineering club, the AC inspired the founding of the CAI. Quintino Sella from Biella led the first ascent of Monviso, a group composed exclusively of Italians, on 12 August 1863. On his return to Verzuolo, their departure point, he told his fellow climbers about his desire to create an Italian Alpine Club. They were: the brothers Paolo and Giacinto Ballada of Saint Robert, Giovan Battista Abbà of Verzuolo, Giovanni Barracco of Crotone, and Raimondo Gertoux and Giuseppe Bodoino of Casteldelfino. This ambition was reiterated three days later in his official report of the climb, published in *L'Opinione*:



Elia Watson's painting of Monviso.
(Alpine Club)

In London an Alpine Club was founded, that is, of people who spend a few weeks a year climbing the Alps, our Alps! There you have all the desirable books and memories. There you can read the descriptions of each climb: without Mathews' accurate description I do not know if we would have been able to climb Monviso. In Vienna, too, an Alpenverein was founded. Could nothing like this be done by us? I believe so.

On 23 October 1863, in the Castello del Valentino in Turin, Quintino Sella founded the Italian Alpine Club aiming to 'promote mountaineering in all its manifestations, knowledge and study of the mountains – especially those of the territory where the social activity takes place – and the protection of their natural environment.'

English interest in Monviso, or Monte Viso, dates back at least six centuries. The writer and poet Geoffrey Chaucer (1342–1400) set a famous tale in *The Canterbury Tales* in the Mount Vesulus area and the Po valley. At that time Monviso was the only mountain in the Alps to be identified by its own name ('Vesulus', meaning, 'mountain that can be seen from afar'); this was a name used by Virgil in *Aeneid* at the time of emperor Octavian and mentioned by other writers of the time.

British interest in the mountain itself started in the 1800s. In 1839 the Scotsman James Forbes explored the lower reaches and first described the round trip of the mountain. Further information was provided from climbs made in 1854 by A P Whately and H T Jenkinson. John Ball, in 1860,



Left: Quintino Sella, founder of the Italian Alpine Club, in 1883. (*Museo Nazionale della Montagna, CAI Torino*)

studied possible routes of ascent and identified as easier the climb on the south face. In the same and following year Edward Whymper, future conqueror of the Matterhorn, tried in vain to reach the summit.

The first ascent to the summit of Monviso was made in 1861 by Englishmen William Mathews and Frederick William Jacomb with guides with guides and brothers Jean-Baptiste and Michel Croz, using information from Forbes and the Irishman John Ball, a founder of the Alpine Club. The second expedition to Monviso was again English, led by Francis Fox Tuckett in 1862. In 1882 W A B Coolidge made daring climbs on various faces of the mountain and did the first ascent of the north face in 1882, starting from the glacier that now bears his name.

King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy, struck by these English mountaineering efforts, awarded the title of Knight of Saints Maurice and Lazarus, prestigious honours from the Crusades, to William Mathews, Francis Fox Tuckett and John Ball in 1865, and to Edward Whymper in 1872. English women were equally

enchanted by Monviso. At a time when women mountaineers were rare, the English Isabella Straton and Emmeline Lewis-Lloyd made the second female climb of Monviso in 1871: the first women to climb to the top were the Italians Alessandra Boarelli of Verzuolo and Cecilia Fillia of Martini-ana in 1864.

Over the years, the AC and the CAI have taken different paths: the first has maintained a selective character and has a membership of around 1,500. The CAI welcomes all mountaineers who apply for membership, without special requirements, united by an interest in the mountains and protection of the environment. The association currently has 322,000 members in 509 sections. Members are mostly Italian. The Saluzzo section of the CAI, founded on 15 July 1905, is called 'Monviso' in honour of the mountain that was fundamental in the constitution of the national CAI and currently has about 1,300 members.

Despite the different characteristics of the two associations, links between the Alpine Club and the CAI have been consolidated since 2011, when John Town and Adèle Long, representing the Alpine Club, participated in commemorations for the 150th anniversary of the first British ascent. The subsequent joint Italian-British climb to Monviso was the first of similar initiatives that have continued in subsequent years, with climbs and explorations carried out in friendship both in summer and winter, at Monviso and the surrounding mountains, in the Varaita, Maira, Grana and Gesso valleys.





Above: The combined AC and CAI team at the Sella hut. (*Phil Jardine*)

Left: Adèle Long and Rick Allen at the Sella hut. (*Phil Jardine*)

The chief link between the two clubs was Adèle Long, editor of the Club's newsletter for several years, who has a passion for Monviso; in 2014, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the first women's ascent, she represented Britain on the climb to the summit, with her companions Amanda Graham, Caroline Phelan and Rya Tibawi. Among the climbers from the Saluzzo section of the CAI were Laura Maero and Laura Borello.

During 2020, a week of joint climbs was planned in the Monte Rosa group, under the official patronage of the of the national CAI. The original programme provided that the CAI of Saluzzo would welcome the British by carrying out with them the annual group climb, this year organized with the aim of Castor, on 25 and 26 July. During the week, small groups of members of the CAI of Saluzzo would be joined by the English, in further climbs on Monte Rosa. The Covid pandemic led to a reduction of available

places and the need for distancing in huts, reducing the participation of Italians, but did not stop participation. On 24 July, at Gressoney La Trinité, 12 Italians met with as many Britons.

The members of the CAI of Saluzzo were part of the Italian group: Carlo Gagliardone, Silvia Perona, Paolo Allemano, Livio and Elena Perotti, Claudio Rinaudo, Norma Martina, Loris and Paola Civalleri; also the members of the CAI of Cuneo: Sebastiano Cagnassi, Francesco Panzone and the guide Michele Perotti. Alpine Club members were: organisers Malcom Townsley and Adèle Long, Derek Buckle, Nick King, Nick Simons, Andy Wigley, Jon Halliday, Phil Jardine, Lili Mulvany, Gordon Chisholm and Rick Allen, the latter awarded the Piolets d'Or for the first ascent of the Mazeno ridge of Nanga Parbat in 2013.

In the evening there were presentations, informal speeches, a nice exchange of tributes (the Italian ones offered by Peirano Sport and Alp) and a dinner, offered to the English by the president of Saluzzo Franco Galliano. The Italian-English group next day went up to the Sella hut, and the following day climbed Castor in glorious weather. Later the climbers divided: while the Italians descended to the valley, some English continued to the Ayas hut, others to the Rossi and Volante bivouac to do the traverse of the Breithorns. Others descended to Gressoney, to go back to the Gnifetti. On the remaining days of the week, the British climbed many peaks of the Monte Rosa group and climbed the walls of Arnad.

Livio Perotti

Alpine Club Library

The year had barely begun when the Covid-19 pandemic struck the UK. Government regulations meant that, like every other library, we were forced to close our doors to personal visits by both AC members and the general public from March. Nevertheless, we put protocols in place so that our librarian, honorary librarian and keepers could continue to come into Charlotte Road on a part-time and Covid-safe basis to provide as good a service as possible under the circumstances. Telephone and email enquiries continued to be dealt with and postal book requests and returns continued to be processed, albeit at a somewhat slower pace than normal. So, I think it is fair to say that while Covid-19 significantly affected our year it did not dominate it. I would therefore like to express my sincere thanks and those of all the Library trustees to everyone concerned for all their efforts to keep things going during this difficult period.

Also early in the year, Neil Cox gave us notice that he wished to step down as our treasurer and as a trustee after three years in those roles. However, before stepping down Neil was instrumental in securing a £25,000 grant from Hackney Council in June 2020, as part the coronavirus small business and retail, leisure and hospitality grant fund. Again, on behalf of all the trustees, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Neil for all his work, not only for securing this very welcome grant but also for simplifying our accounts, generally putting our financial house in order over the past



Barbara Grigor-Taylor, the honorary librarian, Beth Hodgett the AC's new librarian (centre) and Philip Meredith, chair of the ACL Council.

few years and in mentoring his successor up to the end of the year.

Knowing in the spring that Neil would be stepping down in the autumn allowed us to seek a new treasurer from amongst the AC membership over the summer. We received a number of expressions of interest, but we were very pleased to be able to appoint Alan Henderson to the position with effect from the ACL AGM in October. Alan has a degree in accounting and finance from the University of Glasgow and 15 years experience in banking and commercial finance. Just as importantly, Alan is also a very active climber. He is clearly on the ball, because almost his first act after appointment was to jet off to New Zealand for three months of travelling and climbing before the second lockdown restricted international travel. Since his return, Alan has overseen our annual accounts and return to Companies House for 2020, as well as applying for additional coronavirus support grants for the ACL and AC, pertaining to the Nov-Dec 2020 lockdown period, in collaboration with the AC hon treasurer.

They say that bad news comes in threes, and in the autumn Nigel Buckley told us that he was resigning as ACL librarian to take up a position in the library at Balliol College, Oxford. This was a real blow, because I think it is no exaggeration to say that Nigel has transformed the efficient working and support for members by the Library since his appointment, as well as cementing a seamless working relationship between the Library and the AC Office. Nigel has been a delight to work with during his time with us and it is a genuine pleasure to thank him for all his work on our behalf. The good news is that Nigel is not being completely lost to either the ACL or the AC; he is remaining in post both as secretary to the ACL Council and as the keeper of artefacts. So we look forward to continuing to work with him for many years to come.

In November 2020, we set about the daunting task of finding a replacement librarian. We received a total of 27 applications, which we whittled down to a longlist of seven, all of whom were interviewed online. This was reduced to a shortlist of three who were invited to visit Charlotte Road to be shown around and interviewed face to face. We were unanimous in agreeing to offer the position to Beth Hodgett. Beth has an MSc in visual, material and museum anthropology from Oxford and is currently pursuing a PhD, based between Birkbeck College, London and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, researching the photographic archive of the archaeologist

O G S Crawford. As well as a number of academic publications, she also has experience of organising exhibitions and conferences, and of public engagement and outreach. Beth commenced the role on a part-time basis in April 2021 and full time in September, when she has completed and submitted her PhD thesis. Almost from her first day, Beth had to set about the task of organising the phased re-opening of the library following an internal review, establishing a click-and-collect service so members can order books in advance and collect them contact-free, as well as the option to book in-person library visits on two days per week, with Covid protocols in place.

After a relatively quiet year during which the number of enquiries was well down on previous years, presumably due to both national and international travel restrictions, activity is now starting to pick up. So, we are all looking forward to fully re-opening the Library in September 2021, after our annual summer closure when Beth will start working on a full-time basis.

AC Collections Database

I would like to remind readers that the library is much more than just books. We use the term as a catch-all, since the Alpine Club Library actually houses and takes responsibility for all the Club's 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 mountaineering artefacts. Most of these items are now listed on our Koha cataloguing system. This enables cross-referencing between all items in the database and thus allows for a simple and user-friendly search facility that can be accessed via the library page of the Club's website at www.alpine-club.org.uk/ac2/ac-media/library.

Visitors

Not surprisingly, visitor numbers were much reduced over the year because we were unable to host any after mid March 2020. Nevertheless, in January Nigel and Barbara arranged an exhibition on Leadership, Resilience and Overcoming Obstacles for a group of boys from Hoe Bridge School, Woking, with Victor Saunders giving a lecture on the same topic. In early March, Nigel arranged an exhibition and lecture on the history of the AC for the Rockhoppers Mountaineering Club.

AC ClubCasts

After March 2020, it was no longer possible to hold the normal bi-weekly AC lectures in the Lecture Hall at Charlotte Road. As a result, Nicholas Hurndall Smith, Nigel Buckley, Sherry Macliver and Michael de la Rue initiated the Alpine ClubCast series: short lectures and presentations shared on the Zoom platform. These proved to be extremely popular, often with around 150 members from all across the UK and abroad logging on to view them. Even larger numbers of the general public logged on to view them on Facebook. Importantly, a library archive of all the past lectures, now



'The Matterhorn' with dramatic sunset colouring, from the exhibition 'Alpine Nunataks'. (*Fi Bunn*)

more than 20, has been produced, with each presentation edited and made available on YouTube.

Exhibitions

Sadly, we were only able to mount a single art exhibition in the lecture hall at Charlotte Road during the first few months of 2020 before the first lockdown. This was a visually outstanding exhibition of photographs by Fi Bunn entitled 'Alpine Nunataks', featuring the glacial islands of the Valais region. All the other art exhibitions planned for 2020 by Simon Piere, keeper of pictures, had to be postponed because we were unable to admit visitors to the Clubhouse. Simon now hopes to mount these exhibitions during 2022.

In spite of this hiatus, we were not idle and have great plans for exhibitions during 2021. An exhibition of books, maps and documents on pre-1921 surveying of routes to the Himalayan peaks through Sikkim was displayed in the theatre in March 2020 to coincide with a lecture on climbing in Sikkim. This led to plans being formulated by Barbara for a major exhibition in 2021 to commemorate the 1921 Everest reconnaissance expedition and the 1922 and 1924 climbing expeditions. Barbara has spent a huge amount of time throughout the year researching and identifying original pre-1925 Everest material in the AC Collections for the exhibition, and writing an accompanying catalogue.

The result of these endeavours is 'Everest: By Those Who Were There'. This amazing exhibition celebrates the centennial of the 1921 reconnaissance of Mount Everest and the first attempts to reach the summit in 1922 and 1924. It uses the words of the expedition members themselves to tell the story, from the first suggestions to tackle the mountain made in the 19th

century to the successes and failures of the first expeditions and final tragedy of 1924. Through the climbers' diaries, journals and letters, through their artworks and photographs, and from their clothing and equipment, visitors to the exhibition gain new insight into how these men thought and what they accomplished. Barbara was ably assisted in putting this exhibition together by Nigel Buckley, keeper of artefacts, Bernie Ingrams, keeper of photographs, and Glyn Hughes, honorary archivist. Much of the material in the exhibition has either not been shown before or will be shown for the first time in a century. The exhibition opened on 27 July until October 2021. We hope that Club members and the public will take advantage of this rare opportunity to experience 'Everest: By Those Who Were There'. It provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the work of the Alpine Club and the Alpine Club Library in preserving and curating climbing history, and the Club's key role in the first expeditions to Mount Everest. The Everest centennial exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue reproducing every item shown, a compelling publication and already a collector's item in its own right.

The year 2021 also marks the centenary of the Pinnacle Club. With the benefit of a Heritage Lottery Grant, the club has been able to preserve its heritage through digitising and cataloguing its photograph and film collection, and creating an oral history. Celebratory events are planned throughout 2021, including a joint Alpine Club-Pinnacle Club exhibition to be held at Charlotte Road in November and December.

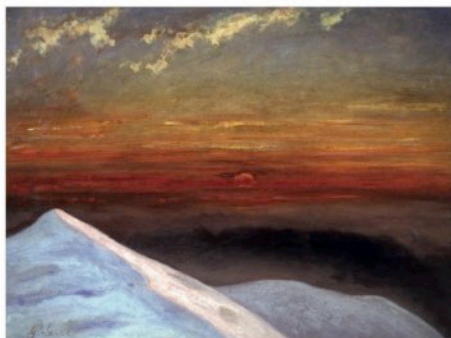
Art UK

Art UK is a cultural education charity that enables online access to UK art collections that are not normally on public view. The ACL has now been a member for two years. Initially we put 70 of the best pictures from the AC Collection online through Art UK. Janet Johnson has now selected more of our best pictures so we have increased that number to 99: the limit for our current category of membership. As well as viewing the pictures, AC members and the public can purchase prints in a range of sizes from the Art UK shop. This not only provides a resource for members but also a valuable source of income for the Library to use for restoration purposes. If our involvement continues to be successful and income from sales increases then we will consider upping our membership category to the next level, which will allow us to display up to 299 pictures, close to half of the total AC collection.

Please visit: artuk.org for more details, to view the pictures and to purchase prints.

Books

Because the ACL is an active library, we continually enhance the collection by attempting to obtain all interesting new books published on climbing and mountaineering. Success requires considerable effort, and involves negotiating with publishers to obtain either complimentary or heavily discounted



Above: 'Sunset from Mont Blanc' (1873) by Gabriel Loppé, the last oil painting to be added to the AC collection on the Art UK database.

copies of newly published books. Occasionally we have to pay the full price. Luckily, the year saw strong sales of duplicate books from the regular lists produced by Barbara.

The income from this not only helps to fund the purchase of new books but also the funding of substantial conservation and restoration projects for books, photo albums and archives. So, the duplicate book lists provide AC members with a great opportunity to buy historical (and sometimes rare) mountaineering literature at very favourable prices while simultaneously helping to enhance and preserve the collection.

Pictures

Throughout the year, Simon Pierse, keeper of pictures, has been working with The Watercolour World (TWW) to digitise works on paper from the Club's picture collection. TWW should not be confused with Art UK, although the two online databases are, in fact, the brainchild of the same person: Fred Hohler. The aim of TWW is to create a searchable database of topographical watercolours that depict locations around the world. The focus is on paintings made before 1900 when photography became the major documentary tool. The idea is to show how watercolours contributed to recording the changing world in which we live.

In February 2020, using a state-of-the-art portable scanner, Simon worked with Ambrose Robertson and a volunteer from TWW to scan around half of the Club's works on paper. Some of these images are in sketchbooks and have rarely, if ever, been seen outside the collections before. Since the

Below 'Monte Viso' by Elijah Walton, among the images from The Watercolour World database of the AC collection.





Craftsmen making boots for the 1953 Everest Expedition at Robert Lawrie's, from the recently acquired Lawrie Archive.

scanner can handle work behind glass, it was also possible to scan some of the largest framed watercolours in our collection and to tile them together into a single image. This work is of immense importance to the Club. So many of our previous digital images were taken from slides and have a colour cast. Of particular value are the many sketches and watercolours of glaciers in the collection. In the context of global warming, they bear testimony to the speed of climate change over the past 150 or more years. Unlike Art UK, TWW does not sell images and the images on their website are not downloadable. However, TWW has provided the Club with full, high-resolution images that we can use and sell to generate much-needed income for the maintenance and conservation of our painting collection. We had hoped to scan the remaining watercolours by early 2021 but this has had to be postponed until after the Library fully re-opens.

Images of all pictures from the collection that have been digitised to date can be viewed at watercolourworld.org/collection/alpine-club.

Photographs

As for other parts of the Collections, the coronavirus lockdown meant that physical presence in the AC Photo Library was suspended from mid March 2020. Nevertheless, we were able to respond to email enquiries where requested images were already scanned or held in our database.

The list of archived films was revised and updated. Climbing films by Leo Dickinson and Eric Jones have been donated and added to the archive. A list of potential photographs for the forthcoming AC Everest centennial exhibition was produced. Additionally, we have provided images for an article on the Duke of Abruzzi in the *Himalayan Journal*. Sue Hare has been working with Thames & Hudson on a book and exhibition project on mountain photography. She also expects to provide material for the Alpine component of non-profit Macromicro's project 'On the Trail of the Glaciers', once it is able to restart.

Scanning of the Frank Smythe slide collection presented by his son and of the Mike Westmacott slide collection has been completed thanks to the efforts of Peter Payne. Jeremy Whitehead's extensive photo collection has been delivered to Charlotte Road, and Loreto Bonington has kindly donated Ian McNaught-Davis' mountaineering slides that relate to the British Soviet Pamirs Expedition in 1962.

Artefacts

We had planned to complete the task of photographing the entire Artefact Collection during 2020 but Covid-19 lockdowns put paid to that aspiration. We aim to complete that task when it becomes possible to allocate space to lay out material and allow a photographer to work in the Clubhouse. That task has now become a little larger because we have had new artefacts donated to the collection during the year. Robert Lawrie, the famous maker of mountaineering and climbing boots, donated an archive of photographs and examples of their products, the first of its kind in the AC Artefacts Collection.

It is also worth noting that our keeper of artefacts felt compelled to contact National Geographic when he saw that they were using an image of the wrong ice axe in an article featuring Sandy Irvine. The original and correct Irvine ice axe is held in the AC Collection.

Archives

For obvious reasons, there have been far fewer visitors during the past year than in normal years but the level of enquiries has held up. Without access to the physical archive our ability to respond promptly has been affected.

Accessions have also been fewer than normal but include letters written home from the Alps after an early ascent of the Jungfrau and a diary from Bill Tilman's expedition to the Langtang Himal in 1949. This was one of the earliest expeditions to the Himalaya after the Second World War and the diary was from Peter Lloyd, president of the Alpine Club. Since Tilman's own diaries ended up in a library in the US Midwest, material from other members of this expedition is of particular interest.

Among the Club's own records is a complete collection of newsletters and circulars sent to members since the foundation of the Club to the present time. The items issued up to 1967 were bound into three massive volumes each weighing several kilograms. Although the contents were well



The sorry state of the Mathews Monument in its current location outside the old Hotel Couffet in Chamonix.

preserved, the bindings had deteriorated badly due to the weight of the contents. We therefore commissioned our excellent conservator, Cyril Titus, to rebind the first volume and make a strong storage box to conserve it. This work has been a great success, and Cyril is now working on rebinding and conserving the other two volumes.

Monuments

Like other areas of work, the Covid-19 pandemic had a frustrating impact on efforts to identify and conserve the monuments of the Alpine Club in all but one area. There is a growing enthusiasm amongst members to ensure the objects representing our heritage that lie dotted around the Alps are not forgotten or allowed to fall into disrepair.

Bill Roberts contacted us to ensure that the grave of John Emery did not fall into obscurity. Emery died on the Weisshorn and is buried in Zermatt not far from the grave of the unknown mountaineer. He participated in the ill-fated Oxford University expedition to Haramosh in 1957 and was gravely injured by frostbite. Nevertheless, he continued climbing until his death in an accident in 1963.

Raymond Peto is buried somewhere in Interlaken according to William Newsom. Peto was a very significant member of the Club in the inter-war years. The location of his grave and the manner of his death are currently a mystery yet to be solved. John Allen wrote to Charlie Burbridge, the keeper of monuments concerning the grave of Richard Harris, a member of the ACG who succumbed to hypothermia near the summit of Mont Blanc in 1966. He is buried in Chamonix and his grave will be visited once the pandemic allows.

The grand project at present remains the movement and conservation of the Mathews monument in Chamonix. It is fitting that the monument should be moved to the Parc Couffet on the other side of the terminal moraine on which the old observatory stands because progress has been unavoidably glacial. The mayor of Chamonix is a strong supporter of the project and the opportunity it presents to reinforce the connection between the town, the Alpine Club and British alpinists more generally. Hope remains it will be in its new setting by the summer of 2021. The picture of the monument illustrates the current setting that this monument endures.

Mathews was an important and humble figure in the Club. His contribution was recognised by members not only with the construction of this lasting memorial but by the fact it was the bishop of Bristol who wrote the inscription, making subtle reference to the way in which Mathews supported his brother who became a founding member of the AC. Later he went on

to write what was then the definitive history of Mont Blanc.

The keeper is not just interested in past monuments but future ones too. Doug Scott made an unparalleled contribution to British mountaineering and it is fitting that some lasting memorial be established which will join the long list of great lines he pioneered. Peter Holden has suggested a memorial in Doug's hometown of Nottingham; another option is something in the Lake District, possibly at Doug's local pub, The Old Crown. It may be fitting to achieve both to recognise the contribution Doug made to the nation and the contribution he made to the AC.

The keeper is very grateful indeed for the enthusiasm with which so many members regard the monuments. It has certainly helped to sustain him during this great incarceration and he hopes very much to be able to continue his work in visiting and conserving the last resting place of members throughout the Alps in due course.

Philip Meredith

Boardman Tasker Award 2020

The award attracted 22 entries in 2020 from five countries including the UK, the USA, Ireland, Canada and New Zealand. This was the first time in six years that entries fell below 30 but the complexities of Covid-19 made publishing unusually challenging in 2020. The judges were Katie Ives (chair), David Canning and Michael Kosterlitz and they selected five books for the shortlist:

Patrick Baker for *The Unremembered Places: Exploring Scotland's Wild Histories* (Birlinn), a lyrical exploration of Scotland's regions of 'rumour and folklore' that makes for a compelling argument for a greater examination of 'wild histories' beyond the most well-trodden narratives of adventure;

Emily Chappell for *Where There's a Will: Hope, Grief and Endurance in a Cycle Race across a Continent* (Profile), a book that transcends the genre of sports memoirs with prose that deftly captures the physical and psychological intensity of ultra-distance cycling;

Peter Foster for *The Uncrowned King of Mont Blanc: The Life of T Graham Brown, Physiologist and Mountaineer* (Bâton Wicks), an intricately researched biography of a Scottish mountaineer whose contributions to climbing history on Mont Blanc and other mountains have long deserved a close look;

Peter Goulding for *Slatehead: The Ascent of Britain's Slate-Climbing Scene* (New Welsh Rarebyte), an in-depth history of the climbs and characters of British slate that is also a meditation on the nature of obsession and on the persistence of wildness the post-industrial world;

Jessica J Lee for *Two Trees Make a Forest: On Memory, Migration and Taiwan* (Little, Brown), a poetic and deeply moving account of Taiwan's mountains, waters and forests that interweaves the author's experiences of hiking with recollections of political, cultural and family histories.

With Covid-19 making a live event impossible, the award ceremony moved online with an excellent virtual author's event conducted once again

by Stephen Venables. The winner was then announced as Jessica Lee for *Two Trees Make a Forest*. Commenting on the winning book, chair of judges Katie Ives said:

Lee's book is one that expands the topography of adventure, pushing at the very limits of storytelling. Her journey takes place through overlapping landscapes of summits, mountain legends, political conflict, exile, natural disasters, memories, imagination, immigration and longing-like multiple interwoven paths in a forest and like the numerous possible futures for mountain literature itself.

Back in 1987, during an international festival for mountaineering literature, the climbing writer Dave Cook had pointed out the need to make room for more varied voices, including those of women and people of colour. He'd also urged adventure writers to seek sources of inspiration beyond the narrow formulas of escapist tales, to acknowledge the 'interconnections' between experiences in the mountains and the rest of life, and to reassert 'some of the values of humanity and fellowship against the imperial colonisation of the hills.'

*Today, despite all the challenges of pursuing writing in our era, emerging authors from many diverse backgrounds are increasingly producing narratives that help mountain writing grow in creative and original shapes – beyond what Cook might have imagined possible. Among such books, *Two Trees Make a Forest* represents a work of both literary merit and bold vision. Lee's story, David Canning explains, is 'Beautifully written, and it successfully progresses the genre of exploration writing into new territory.'*

Katie Ives' full speech is available at www.boardmantasker.com.

Ed Douglas