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ROBIN N CAMPBELL  
**Robert Wylie Lloyd**

Mountaineer, Collector and Public Benefactor



Robert Wylie Lloyd stands between Josef Pollinger and Adolf Pollinger. The photograph was reproduced in the *Alpine Journal* in 1943 to accompany obituary notices for Josef. 'With the death of Josef Pollinger,' Lloyd wrote, 'I have lost my greatest friend.'

This year's section frontispieces are drawn from the mountain prints and watercolours bequeathed to the British Museum by Robert Wylie Lloyd (1868-1958) from his collection.

Lloyd's life is well described elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> so I will limit myself to a bare sketch here. He was born in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire into a family engaged in cloth printing. When his parents separated he moved with his Scottish mother Rachel Wylie to Balham, eventually becoming a very successful businessman himself, operating like a one-man private equity concern, acquiring privately-held businesses, mainly in the cloth or paper trades, and managing them into profit. Perhaps his most stunning coup was to become chairman of Christie's auction house and instantly taking it private. As a young man, he collected beetles and butterflies. This took him to the mountains of Norway, which stimulated an interest in mountaineering.

He began his Alpine career in 1896, and joined the Alpine Club in 1901. He seems invariably to have climbed with guides and after engaging Josef Pollinger of St Niklaus in 1904, Lloyd remained with him through 30 seasons until stopped by health difficulties in 1939. Together they made a number of innovations, mostly on the north sides of Valais and Mont Blanc peaks. His business background brought him inevitably into Club posts such as auditor and treasurer, in which post he acquired a reputation for being good at raising money but reluctant to see it spent.

Lloyd never married and after his mother died he occupied rooms in that rich bachelors' lair the Albany, Piccadilly until his death. The Albany was convenient for the Club premises in St Martin's Lane, Savile Row and South Audley Street; one doubts whether he would have favoured Charlotte Road. He also had country residences: at Treago Castle in Herefordshire and latterly a place at Bampton in the Cotswolds. His wealth and absence of family allowed him to give full indulgence to his collecting passions. To the pre-existing insect collections he added old Swiss prints, English watercolours and Alpine books of the rarer sort, as well as Japanese swords and Chinese lacquerware. His print collection ran to five thousand or so. A gift of a Turner watercolour set him on that path and he amassed 60 of Turner's best available works on paper, as well as a considerable collection of watercolours by other English artists.<sup>2</sup> These he preserved most carefully, requiring the art dealer Thomas Agnew's to put each purchase into bespoke frames equipped with blinds to exclude light.

On his death in 1958, Lloyd was buried in his mother's grave at Glasgow Necropolis.<sup>3</sup> His will left his entomological collections and library to Manchester Museum, his print and watercolour collections and Oriental antiques to the British Museum, and his Alpine library (c2,000 items) to the National Library of Scotland. These legacies to public collections invite

1. See *AJ* 63, pp229-40; A Cain, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; L Cook, *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine*, 155, p3-14. The latter is available at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net) and offers a most complete and illuminating account; see also footnote 2.

2. K Sloan, *J M W Turner: Watercolours from the R W Lloyd Bequest to the British Museum*, British Museum Press, London, 1998. Sloan's text includes a well-illustrated account of Lloyd as a collector pp9-35 and an appendix listing other British watercolours Lloyd bequeathed to the British Museum.

3. Although his burial is recorded in the interment register there is no inscription on his mother's gravestone.

comparison with Paul Mellon's extraordinary generosity to American institutions. Perhaps there is a story explaining why he left nothing to the Alpine Club but I have been unable to discover it. After all, he happily funded Ynys Ettws for the Climbers' Club in 1950, although he was not even a member of that club.

In selecting pictures from the vast Lloyd bequest for presentation here as frontispieces I have of course looked for those with mountaineering interest. I have avoided the 60 Turners. In the main they do not feature mountains – there is one of the modest Ben Venue at Loch Katrine, but it is reduced in detail by strong aerial perspective – and they have already been beautifully presented and described by Kim Sloan. I regret not being able to include some fine Swiss artists such as Jean Antoine Linck (1766-1843) and David Alois Schmid (1791-1861). I have listed and commented on the prints and drawings used in rough chronological order.

#### **'Jungfrau from near Unterseen'**

This is a very early depiction of the Jungfrau's north face, and it is remarkable for its very accurate drawing of the mountain. Johann Ludwig Aberli (1723-86) was a well-known Swiss painter and etcher. Born in Winterthur, he moved to Bern in the 1740s. He toured the Bernese Oberland in 1762 but the watercolour on which the present print is based may have been done much earlier. (Biographies in the online *Dictionnaire Historique de la Suisse* and on the British Museum database.)

#### **'Lauterbrunnen Valley and the Staubbach Fall'**

James Tobin, a Bristol sugar merchant put together an album of 20 Swiss drawings by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733-94) after he moved to London in 1770, where he settled and where Lloyd eventually bought this album. The drawings were based on Grimm's own sketches made 10 or more years earlier as print studies for Gottlieb Sigmund Gruner's *Die Eisgebirge des Schweizerlands* (Bern, 1760). The Alpine Club Library holds a copy of this three-volume rarity. Grimm had moved from Bergdorf to Bern in the 1750s to work with Johann Ludwig Aberli (see above). Although his high mountain drawings are poor, with unrecognisable peaks and fantastical glaciers, this valley drawing is exemplary and well composed. Biographies as for Aberli.

#### **'Rhone Glacier with Mont de la Fourche'**

The sharp peak on the right is better known as the Furkahorn, which is connected by the Galengrat to the Galenstock, and of course the Rhone glacier is now much reduced. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this beautiful image of Philip James de Louthembourg's (1740-1812) is faithful to topography. Although the print was not published until late in the century, de Louthembourg's travels in Switzerland date to 1768-71, whereafter he moved to London and settled there. The British Museum's notes also record a later visit to Switzerland in 1787. French by birth, he was made an academician in Paris in 1767, and RA in London in 1781. Although the print is

described as *Peint par* rather than *Dessiné par*, the original was evidently watercolour over pen outlines.

#### **‘A Hilly Landscape with a Winding Road’**

There is no information about this large accomplished drawing in the database and the sheet bears no inscriptions. We do not know what place is depicted, when it was drawn, who owned it before its acquisition by Lloyd, nor how Lloyd came to acquire it. It is not mentioned in the catalogue raisonné of John Robert Cozens’ drawings.<sup>4</sup> The attribution to Cozens is therefore uncertain. It could well depict somewhere in the Alps, where he made many drawings, but it could also be a British subject. The beautifully drawn trees could very well be English trees. I offer the suggestion that there is a very fair match to the Screes Buttresses of Whin Rigg in the Lake District, as viewed from the road to the east of Nether Wasdale, and that this possibility is worth pursuing. Comparison with drawings of these buttresses by Ellis Carr in Haskett-Smith’s *Climbing in the British Isles: England* (Longmans Green, 1894) and by Alfred Wainwright in his *The Southern Fells* (Westmorland Press, 1960) is not at all discouraging.

#### **‘The Glacier of Montanvert, Chamonix’**

Lloyd collected 18 watercolours by John ‘Warwick’ Smith (1749-1831), so he was his second choice after Turner. This large and attractive composition depicts the source of the Arveyron, a popular venue for Chamonix visitors, often painted, and the terminus of the Mer de Glace, then called the Glacier des Bois. That terminus is nowadays somewhere up near the Dent du Requin. We recognise the Aiguille Verte on the left and the Grandes Jorasses in the distance. Although dated 1802, it is no doubt based on sketches made by Smith during his journeys through the Alps with Francis Towne in 1781, or with the Earl of Warwick in 1786.

#### **‘On the Ascent to Snowdon, from Llyn Cywelyn’**

Smith produced many attractive Welsh landscapes at this size, although not many are detailed mountain studies. Lloyd secured this picture along with seven others from Lady Gunning in 1927. If the mount inscription is interpreted correctly, then it shows the route from Llyn Cwellyn via the Snowdon Ranger path, which follows the crest of Clogwyn d’ur Arddu. Certainly the light is in the right place, to the right, but the topography seems rather exaggerated. It would be interesting to know what members think.

#### **‘View of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier, and of the Eiger and the Fischerhörner’**

Like Johann Ludwig Aberli (see p128), Johann Jakob Biedermann (1763-1830) was born in Winterthur and moved in 1778 to Berne, where he worked for Aberli. This is another very attractive and topographically accurate early

4. C Bell & T Girtin, ‘The Drawings and Sketches of John Robert Cozens’, *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, 23, 1934-35.

Oberland print, with both mountains beautifully rendered and coloured. Biographies as for Aberli.

#### **‘Waterfall (at Dawlish, Devon?)’**

There is little information about J S Barth (fl1790-1810) beyond what is inscribed on his pictures. This one is inscribed with ‘J S Barth N 228 High Holborn London/Dawlish in Devon Agt 1810’ on the verso. Despite Barth’s low profile the British Museum has acquired eight of his works, including two bequeathed by Lloyd, and this is a large and impressive watercolour. The question mark in the description is well deserved. There are no large waterfalls in Devon and next to nothing near Dawlish. In fact, ‘Dawlish’ appears in inscriptions on other works of Barth’s which have nothing to do with Devon, and again accompanied by ‘288 High Holborn’, the business address of Cribb, Barth’s print-seller. So Dawlish is surely Barth’s address. The figures in the picture make clear that what is depicted is a very large waterfall, and the two servants with dog positioned on the right wear Welsh hats, so it is probably a waterfall in Wales, possibly Pistyll Rhaeadr in the Berwyns. Again, perhaps members familiar with Wales may be able to provide better information.

#### **‘Gormire Lake, Yorkshire?’**

Lloyd acquired three drawings by John Sell Cotman (1782-1842), the foremost artist of the Norwich School. This one was exhibited by Cotman at the Royal Academy in 1804, then at the Tate Cotman Exhibition in 1922 and several times at the British Museum following Lloyd’s bequest. Although Cotman exhibited a drawing with title Gormire at the RA in 1804 (cat 928), he exhibited several other drawings, including one titled ‘Near Barmouth, North Wales’ (cat 375), now in the Eton College Collection. Kim Sloan’s notes about the drawing (op cit p140) suggested that the present drawing is ‘probably a view of Cader Idris from Barmouth’, but this opinion has now disappeared from her notes in the museum database. However, it is a very good fit for Cader Idris from the sands east of Barmouth and it definitely looks like a high mountain, rather than the Whitestone Cliff which rises only 500 feet over a forested hillside above Gormire Lake. I have discussed the matter with Cotman authority Prof David Hill of Leeds University,<sup>5</sup> and he has agreed, following discussions with Jeremy Yates, an artist and another Cotman expert, that there has been a transposition of titles at some stage in the drawing’s history and that it should be re-titled as a ‘View of Cader Idris from near Barmouth’.

#### **‘La Montant sur la Pitz Val Rhein et Glacier du Rheinwald?’**

As the curator notes on the museum database, this beguiling painting by Johann Ludwig Bleuler (1792-1850) ‘emphasizes the danger of alpine expeditions.’

5. David Hill helped me greatly when presenting the Club’s Ruskins in AJ 2019 and I record my gratitude again. Members with an interest in old watercolour might care to visit his blog site [sublimesites.co](http://sublimesites.co) which reports his journeys ‘following the footsteps’ of Turner and Ruskin in the Alps.



'Gorner Glacier with the Zermatt Breithorn and Klein Matterhorn', Elijah Walton, undated, watercolour touched with white, 35cm x 24.7cm. (*British Museum*)

Indeed, and one might add 'the expense needed for guides and equipment.' The two *Herren* appear to require the support of at least 12 guides and porters. Sorbonne art historian Danijela Bucher has discovered that the mount description was added later and believes that the depicted scene is on the Glacier des Bossons, flowing down from Mont Blanc. Certainly if an ascent of the Rheinwald glacier in 18th century garb is depicted, the painting could

only be a recollection of the famous ascent of the Rheinwaldhorn (3407m) by Fr Placidus à Spescha in 1789, an ascent not repeated until the mid 19th century. However, Coolidge, discussing the monk's considerable achievements, declares that he had a horror of glaciers and would not set foot on them.<sup>6</sup> It is much more likely that Bleuler has painted an early ascent of Mont Blanc via the Bossons Glacier, as Dr Bucher has suggested. It could also be that Bleuler's drawing is merely comedic and fanciful. Biographies as for Aberli.

**'East Side of Monte Rosa, and Jägerhorn' and  
'Moonlit Mountain Landscape'**

These three fine watercolours (the third illustrates this article) by Elijah Walton (1833-80) were not purchased from dealers, and may have been got by Lloyd from other Club members, or bought at Club exhibitions. This is certainly true of the Monte Rosa drawing, which belonged to C E Mathews. I identified the subject of the Breithorn-Klein Matterhorn drawing to the British Museum and Tony Astill suggested the location of the moonlit landscape to it: looking south over the Lauterbrunnen valley from the Mürren Alp. This small drawing has the spooky and romantic quality found in so many of Walton's Alpine pictures, which is absent from the other two. If Tony Astill's identification is correct (and I do not doubt it) then we see a portion of the Jungfrau on the left, and the distant peaks are perhaps the Gletscherhorn and Ebnefluh.

6. W Coolidge, *The Alps in Nature and History*, Edinburgh, 1908, p212.