

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 2022

PRESIDENT .....	<i>Simon Richardson</i>
VICE-PRESIDENTS .....	<i>Adèle Long, Nick Kekus</i>
HONORARY SECRETARY .....	<i>Sherry Macliver</i>
HONORARY TREASURER .....	<i>Alan Henderson</i>
HONORARY EDITOR OF THE ALPINE JOURNAL .....	<i>Ed Douglas</i>
HONORARY LIBRARIAN .....	<i>Barbara Grigor-Taylor</i>

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CLIMBING .....	<i>Nicholas Hurndall Smith</i>
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY .....	<i>Vacant</i>
MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS .....	<i>Ed Douglas</i>
CHAIR OF THE ALPINE CLUB LIBRARY COUNCIL .....	<i>Philip Meredith</i>
COMMITTEE, <i>Elected</i> .....	<i>Richard Nadin, John Porter, Giles Robertson</i>
COMMITTEE, <i>Co-opted</i> .....	<i>Paul Ramsden</i>

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LONDON LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Derek Buckle</i>
SOUTH-WEST LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Tony Westcott, Chris Storie</i>
PEAK LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Martin Wragg</i>
LAKES LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Anna Lawford</i>
EDINBURGH LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Tim Elson, Zoe Strong</i>
NORTH WALES LECTURE ORGANISER .....	<i>Peter Frost</i>
WINTER DINNER CONVENOR .....	<i>William Newsom</i>
CHAIR OF THE CLIMBING FUND SUB-COMMITTEE .....	<i>Paul Ramsden</i>
CHAIR OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE .....	<i>Trevor Campbell Davis</i>
CHAIR OF THE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE .....	<i>Richard Nadin</i>
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CHAIR OF THE EXHIBITIONS SUB-COMMITTEE .....	<i>John Porter</i>
CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PANEL .....	<i>Tito Arosio</i>
UIAA REPRESENTATIVE .....	<i>Richard Nadin</i>
HONORARY ARCHIVIST .....	<i>Glyn Hughes</i>
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S ARTEFACTS .....	<i>Nigel Buckley</i>
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S MONUMENTS .....	<i>Charlie Burbridge</i>
ACTING HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S PAINTINGS .....	<i>William Mitchell</i>
HONORARY KEEPER OF THE CLUB'S PHOTOGRAPHS .....	<i>Bernie Ingrams</i>
ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THE ALPINE JOURNAL (OBITUARIES) .....	<i>Rod Smith</i>
NEWSLETTER EDITOR .....	<i>Office Manager</i>
SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR .....	<i>Adam Butterworth</i>
WEBSITE EDITORS .....	<i>Adam Butterworth, Jeremy Gould, David Lund</i>
IT TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER .....	<i>David Lund</i>
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# Alpine Club Notes

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'East Side of Monte Rosa, and Jägerhorn', Elijah Walton,  
undated, watercolour touched with white,  
24.8cm x 34.9cm. (*British Museum*)

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VICTOR SAUNDERS

## Valedictory Address

Read Before the Alpine Club, 27 November 2022

In 1961 George Finch gave his valedictory address, which began, more or less, thus:

*It is indeed a privilege to address this, the Alpine Club, the first of the many associations of men [and women] drawn together by a love of mountains and mountaineering. How comes this? How find happiness in such lunacy as scrambling about on the most disturbed, inhospitable and dangerous surfaces of the earth's crust? How can men be such fools?*

Before we try to answer this question, which I believe will be best done propping up the bar after this meeting, I will open my remarks on the last three years (my term serving on your Committee) by remembering some of our members who have died. All of them are deserving of mention, but for today I am going to focus, with a couple of digressions, on those who have contributed to the Club.

To begin with, I would like to mention two personal friends of mine, Julian Davey and Neil Sawyer. It was 20 years ago that Julian called to ask if I was free to do some ice climbing in Chamonix and Cogne. I was so slow to answer that by the time I got round to it, I was double booked with Prof Vernon Gayle. The week was such fun that the experience had to be repeated over the following years. Julian was warm-hearted, talkative, oddly addicted to cheese and secretive about his past, leading to a general suspicion that he had a background in espionage. He was important to other presidents too, as chair of the co-op that brewed beer in Hesket Newmarket. This brewery supplied the Old Crown, the local pub for three past presidents Chris Bonington, Doug Scott and John Porter.

Neil Sawyer joined the Club in 2020 in spite of being a near neighbour of mine in Les Houches. Tragically he died a year later, possibly as the result of a heart attack, while cycling between Chamonix and his home. He had



Club members will appreciate the particular place mountaineering and the ascent of Everest had in the late Queen's reign. She is pictured here being shown oxygen equipment by John Hunt at the premiere of *The Conquest of Everest* at the Odeon, Leicester Square, on 21 October 1953. (*Alpine Club Photo Library*)

just completed the last of the Alpine 4,000ers. During the lockdown, Neil and Gus Morton introduced me to the rocks in the woods behind our village and in 2020 we had a delightful summer evading gendarmes while illicitly bouldering in those woods.

We all know that Rick Allen won a prestigious and totally uncontroversial Piolet d'Or with Sandy Allan for the magnificent Mazeno traverse and we all know that he perished on K2 in an avalanche. Perhaps less well known was his generosity of spirit and his deep religious conviction. To my regret I only shared one Alpine outing with him, along with our then librarian Nigel Buckley. He was an alumni of Birmingham University and in that context we have their climbing club here.

At the end of 2020 we lost past president Doug Scott, a giant of Himalayan climbing. In 1988 I was privileged to be with him and Lindsay Griffin (that past president sitting over there) in Bhutan. About Doug, I would say there are three of his dates that were transformative for Himalayan climbing: 1975, 1979 and 1982. The first marks the high point of big team siege-style Himalayan expeditions, the silver age if you like, the golden age being the decade of 8,000m first ascents. The second date marks the beginning of something new: a small team, lightweight, no oxygen, no Sherpas and a difficult new route to extreme altitude. The third date marks the beginning of the new age of pure alpine style new routing at very high altitude. Doug was well known as a complex individual. Lindsay will remember that when he had a chest infection in Bhutan he treated it with homeopathic drugs but both of us couldn't help noticing he was backing that up with amoxycillin. When the infection receded he announced to the world: 'See youth, the homeopathic medicine works every time!' Lindsay and I just said, 'Yes Doug!'

Earlier in 2020, we lost Hamish MacInnes and Joe Brown. It's hard to know where to start with such immense names. But that year we also lost Geoffrey Templeman, who assisted on the *Alpine Journal* in varying roles for 30 years from 1977 to 2006, produced the Club Newsletter and chaired the House Committee during the move from South Audley Street. Here I could do no better than to quote Mike Esten: 'In short, Geoff was the sort of member which every club needs and treasures.'

In 2021 we lost Malcolm Howells who was part of the Trango Tower trip in 1976, probably the hardest rock climb at altitude at the time. Also in 2021, Jim Milledge, who will be remembered for the pioneering medical work during the 1961 Silver Hut expedition under Ama Dablam and his authoritative *Mountain Medicine* which he co-authored with Mike Ward. The same year we lost long-term contributor Evelio Echevarría who wrote the South America notes for as long as anyone can remember. A year later, in 2022, we lost Derek Fordham, the Arctic explorer who contributed to the *Alpine Journal* with many articles and the area notes. That same year we lost John Brailsford, a prominent member of the guiding fraternity who was the most vociferous advocate of the Écrins and inventor of the Moac. Some of us are old enough to remember that, though I didn't know that it was also known as the Great British Nut. He was also an early advocate of the French

prussik, which the French at that time called the 'Johnny knot' after him.

I'll end this list with Trevor Braham who died in 2020. Those of us who are old enough will have been weaned on *Himalayan Odyssey* as well as *When the Alps Cast Their Spell* his 2006 Boardman-Tasker prize-winning book. Braham's numerous travels and explorations in little-known, isolated Himalayan regions included parts of Sikkim that Fowler and I were to visit in 2021 and 2022, meaning we trod in his footsteps, which I rather think would have horrified him. Why would that be I hear you ask? Because on reading in the 1985 *Alpine Journal* Mick's comic description of our antics on Bojohagur the year before, Braham wrote to the future president and multiple Piolets d'Or winner. I think he rather missed the humour of the piece because Braham wrote: 'Mr Fowler, you are a disgrace to British Alpinism.' To Mick's undying regret he didn't keep and frame that letter. We have to thank Richard Nadin as membership secretary for his tireless and successful efforts to replace those who have retired or died with new, young and active members.

Looking over the list of past presidents the list reads like a role call of the great and good of climbing history. Many of them were notable writers, including all the living ones. Most of them had an enviable climbing record. Usually they were highly respectable, although Trevor Braham may have dissented from that view. The early presidents tended to be wealthy and sometimes even aristocrats. Later they were drawn from all walks of life. Even so, I do think I am the first lowly working mountain guide in the role. As a guide I bring many of the overcautious, risk-averse principles of that profession to new projects. Three years ago, faced with the frightening prospect of chairing the Committee, I was strongly reminded of the first rule of mountain first aid: don't make it worse.

The previous Committee had done a solid job of putting the club structures on a firm footing. The club organisation that my Committee inherited was already a well-oiled and functioning machine thanks to John, Lindsay and Mick. This Committee took over from John Porter's on 1 January 2022. Three days later the BBC reported a mystery virus causing pneumonia-like symptoms had broken out in Wuhan with 44 cases reported, of which 11 were already serious. Not to worry though, China was at the other end of the world. Except it wasn't. We didn't know it then, but Covid-19 was going to rule our world for the rest of the year and well into the next year too. We were going to be seriously constrained.

Now I am going to take you on a wee diversion so please bear with me for a minute. On the evening of 24 January 1975, in the German town of Cologne, 17-year-old Vera Brand was in tears. The concert she had organised was due to start and the musician had just told her the piano was unplayable. The concert hall had mixed up their instruments. The piano had jangly high notes, inconsistent bass and dysfunctional pedals and the audience was waiting. Jazz supremo Keith Jarrett was on the point of walking out. The tears of Vera Brand did the trick. He decided to work within the limits of the dilapidated machine and produced music that lasts to this day. Forty-seven years later, the Köln Concert remains Keith Jarrett's solo masterpiece. It has

sold millions and is the biggest-selling solo jazz album in history.

Sometimes constraints help us to break from the tramlines of our past and look at the future in new ways. The lockdowns were the broken piano your Committee faced in 2020. We had to adapt and did so remarkably well. There were the club-casts and the team of Nick, Nigel and Michael to thank for that. That in turn led to the beginning of a digital lecture archive to add to the *Alpine Journal*, which is now digitised for the last one hundred years. If you haven't dipped into that trove of treasure yet you have a wonderful treat waiting for you. The Club lectures are now being recorded for posterity. (Those who have delved into the old journals will know we used to record lectures as papers read before the Club, a practice that will now be revived through the digital archive.) Our website has a much improved interface making it much more user friendly than it was before Covid-19. It is great, at least in my opinion.

Remote meetings were forced on us and they have been a real success. It seems I am not the only person to think that people behave exceptionally well, making fewer unnecessary interruptions on screen than they do across the table. The remote meetings work well when everyone is on their own device, but we found hybrid meetings are a little more difficult to organise, though the last hybrid Committee meeting in October was greatly aided by new technology. Remote meeting has not only saved us a considerable amount of time (with the opportunity cost that entails) but also reduces our carbon footprint in line with the principles of our increasingly important Green Group (thank you Grace Hurford and the team) as well as travel costs which previously came to between £4,000 and £6,000 just for Committee meetings.

The treasurers past and present (thank you Trevor and Alan) managed to see the Club through some trying periods while we were without tenants. Towards the end of the lockdown the Committee set up the AC WhatsApp groups that have turned out to be excellent channels of communication. I use the Haute Savoie group: a real boon to our community. Throughout this period we have our *Alpine Journal*, which excels itself every year.

With the end of the lockdowns there was the Women Rise Up meet to celebrate Lucy Walker and help improve the gender balance in the Club. After all, balance is what climbing is about. In maintaining balance, we have had one man and one woman vice president since 2020 and I hope this will become a tradition. And in this context our guests this year include extraordinary mountaineer and honorary member Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner who will speak at the dinner. We also have dinner guest Masha Gordon, who created the Grit and Rock award to promote women climbing in the Greater Ranges, an immensely important part of sending out the message that alpine climbing is not only for the bearded ones.

Of course we have not achieved all the goals we set out for ourselves. For example, we have been in Hackney 25 years and while it did seem time for a bit of outreach to local schools and community, that was put on hold by the first lockdown. This is work in progress, as is the Himalayan Index project. Adèle Long is working on the evolution of that database.

Things did return towards the new normal a bit after the lockdowns with a superb series of meets, thanks in large part to Nick Hurndall Smith who cannot be here to hear us sing his praises. I understand he is singing somewhere else. There were the excellent exhibitions, including 'Everest by Those Who Were There', thanks largely to the efforts of our hon librarian Barbara Grigor-Taylor. John Porter organised and produced the film of the exhibition, which was shown recently in Slovenia. Looking to the future, your Committee has brought reciprocal rights back the Club and we are now part of the hut exchange scheme officially. Thank you Giles Robertson for your excellent work there. You will see from this that this was a dutiful hard-working committee, to be thanked for their effort over the last few years.

To borrow again from George Finch, whose valedictory speech opened with this truth:

*Let us not delude ourselves; it is the Honorary Secretary who sees to it that your President keeps to the narrow crest and surmounts or steers round the occasional gendarme in the approved manner. So when, with a note of challenge in his voice, he asked if I intended to give the customary valedictory address, he had really left me with no choice, for by then I had learnt my lesson.*

*Plus ça change.* We have all been kept in place by the honorary secretary who has worked tirelessly, *tirelessly* for your benefit. Thank you Sherry Macliver.

The Club consists of three assets: its properties, its collections and its membership. And the greatest of these is the membership. Membership. Community: that most important and intangible asset. I believe the sense of community has been increased by this Committee and I do believe that at the very least, in spite of the difficult years they have had to face, they have, like all good first-aiders, not made it worse.

### **Allen Steck: 1926-2023**

How did they do it, Allen Steck and Steve Roper? How did they get such stunningly original writing out of the climbing community with such regularity in their Sierra Club mountaineering journal *Ascent*? When I asked this question of Steck and Roper over the last lunch I had with them in the tiny kitchen of Steck's shingled house on the hill in Berkeley, Steck gave me an eloquent answer. He disappeared and then produced a wine bottle boasting a label that declared, 'Incubus Hills'. Beside the words was the famous Gustave Doré image of climbers falling to their deaths from the Matterhorn. Being Californians they had their own *Ascent* wine label for their daily lunch editorial meetings in Steck's kitchen. Steck claimed it was their last bottle. They could say no more in answer to my question and seemed as mystified as I was.

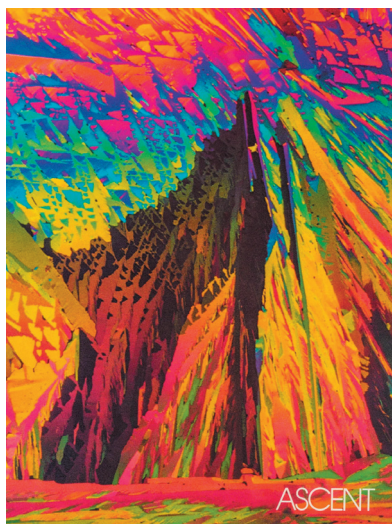
For 14 issues over 25 years they worked hard at editing the work they received and the wine helped lubricate the spirit of fun and wit that characterised their conversations together in that kitchen, at the crag and round the campfire. They were a double act that spurred each other on to ironic invention. Steck was slow and laconic, Roper jumpy with fast-talking nervous



Allen Steck rappelling at Yosemite in the late 1950s. (Courtesy T Adler Books)



Allen Steck (1926–2023) in Peru, 1952. (Allen Steck)



Steck used this image of crystals of chemicals used in mothballs on the cover of one edition of *Ascent*.

energy. Roper was much younger ('Look at that old man climb!' he once said to me at Joshua Tree, where Steck, leading, had forgotten to tie the laces of one shoe. 'El Vago', they called him after he forgot his sleeping bag on a previous early season trip to Joshua Tree.) Roper was shy and reluctant to appear at gatherings. It was Steck who came to speak at the International Festival of Mountaineering Literature at Bretton Hall in 1993. (Jim Curran convinced Steck that it was a religious observance to climb every Sunday, whatever the weather, so that we got pictures of the old Californian Silver Fox brushing snow off the holds whilst climbing at Froggatt.) The 'Slim Fox', as he had originally called himself, had become the 'Silver Fox' when I knew him. He called me 'Fat Badger'. Fair enough. Roper's reply to my recent conciliatory email was, 'As expected. He was 96.' Fair enough.

So I've come to the rather obvious conclusion that the success of *Ascent* ('Ahead of its time,' as John Porter put it to me recently) was built on its success. When they published originality, more originality would follow. They set a challenge to writers by what they published: who could be more imaginatively outrageous than what had gone before? When Ken Wilson was looking for the most interesting climbing writing around as he edited *The Games Climbers Play* (1978) he took his title from an article published in the very first issue of *Ascent* in 1967. With his first two articles Ken set his stall out before beginning the anthology proper. So it is significant

that the second article also came from *Ascent*. Ed Drummond's 'Mirror, Mirror' (1973) was typical of what Steck and Roper sought for *Ascent* and it was probably the only place at the time where such outrageously imaginative writing could have been published in the climbing press. Of course, the wine label bore the title of an article by Drummond, his 'rather bland title' having been replaced by one plucked from the opening sentence by the editors. Ed Drummond was encouraged and supported by Steck and Roper at a personal as well as literary level.

'In 1967 we weren't thinking of nurturing writers', wrote the editors in *The Best of Ascent* (1993), still published by the loyal Sierra Club Books. But, along with Drummond, they gave early breaks to some of the giants of the field: Jeff Long, David Roberts and Galen Rowell. 'We simply wanted to publish dramatic pictures and soulful articles,' they added. But from the beginning they knew that they wanted to publish, again ahead of their time, what they called 'photo essays'. When new magazines arrived in the 1980s, *Ascent* switched its focus to climbing fiction, taking a risk, 'quirky' as ever, the editors admit.

Ken Wilson's *The Games Climbers Play* contains seven *Ascent* essays from writers including Tom Higgins, Chuck Pratt, Chris Jones, Royal Robbins and Yvon Chouinard: pioneering climbers who might not have first thought of themselves as writers of pieces worthy of anthologising. Literary nurturing had taken place. In his autobiography, *A Mountaineer's Life* (2017), Steck has a chapter on *Ascent* in which he characterises the first issue as demonstrating 'our desire for innovation and whimsy'. He admits that one of the long gaps between issues was due to himself and Roper researching and writing *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America* (1979), later referred to in an *Ascent* article titled 'Fifty Crowded Classics'. But he also claims, quite rightly, to have influenced later publications and *Alpinist* is a good example. David Roberts has paid tribute to the 'care and craft' of Steck and Roper at Steck's kitchen table. Now there will be no more kitchen meetings with the Silver Fox and, in Steck's immortal words, 'putting empty wine bottles to rest'.

Terry Gifford

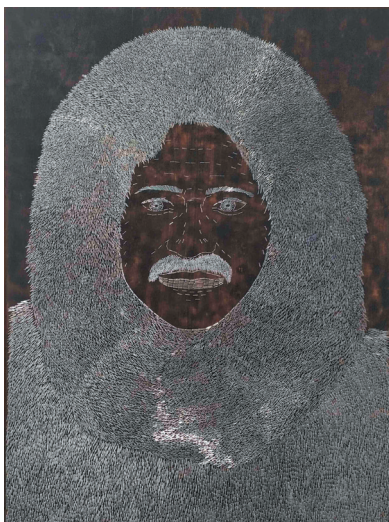
### **Demounting Louis Agassiz**

In early 2023, diversity-championing gallery Autograph (just around the corner from the AC in Rivington Place) staged what amounted to a decadal retrospective of Swiss-Haitian-Finnish artist Sasha Huber. The primary relevance to the Club is her long campaign to have the Agassizhorn (3946m), spanning Valais and Berne cantons, re-named Rentyhorn in honour of the American slave Renty, whose image the 19th century Swiss-American 'scientist' Louis Agassiz had illegally expropriated as 'evidence' of inferior racial characteristics.

It's a thought-provoking proposition and part of Huber's work interrogating how history is imprinted onto landscapes through memorialised placenames and monuments. With the current arguments about statues in the UK (Rhodes and Colston, to name but two), this is a timely reminder to rethink our relationship with the past. Unsurprisingly, responses from the Swiss



Sasha Huber on the summit of the 'Rentyhorn'. (*Autograph*)



Huber's portrait of the African-American Arctic explorer Matthew Henson. (*Autograph*)

authorities ranged from a tactful 'inability to comment' to incredulity at renaming a mountain to suit 'societal trends and fashions'.

The charge sheet is that Louis Agassiz, traditionally known as a pioneering natural scientist in the field of glaciology, geology and palaeontology (some of his books are held by the ACL), was also one of the most influential racists of his era; his ideas helped spawn apartheid. Seven species are named after him. So are 80 landmarks from the little-known Agassiz Rock (a bouldering venue in Edinburgh), a glacier in Aotearoa-New Zealand, to features on the Moon and Mars.

Huber's artworks often focus on physical interventions at sites named after Agassiz, recorded as photographs or film. A powerful video installation at the gallery showed a Maori resetting ceremony or *karakia* at the Agassiz glacier, Aotearoa. Also on show were striking portraits, part of the 'Tailoring Freedom' series, based on Agassiz's commissioned slave daguerreotypes but then embellished by metal staples to add back garments (the original pictures were nude or semi-nude). A further portrait in this series shown at *Autograph* that called attention to historically under-represented figures was of Matthew Henson, the African-American explorer and companion of Peary, whose claim to be the first to reach the North Pole has long been subject to debate and whose treatment of the Inughuit was at times exploitative.

Although the exhibition has now moved to Turku Art Museum, Finland, an excellent catalogue is available: *Sasha Huber: You Name It*. Whilst not suggesting culture wars need be declared at Charlotte Road, the issues Huber covers are now at the forefront of modern museum practice and perhaps need to be considered in relation to the AC's collections.

*Andy Tickle*

## Alpine Club Library



New librarian Emma McDonald. (*Adam Butterworth*)

### People and Events

Following the easing of Covid-related closures and restrictions, the demand for in-person library services started to increase during 2021 but never recovered to pre-Covid levels. The same has been true for 2022, with visitor numbers remaining low relative to historical levels. It is also interesting to note that visits by non-members are now starting to equal or even exceed visits by AC members. It seems that Club members have become used to accessing material online via the website and via email enquiries. While this is seemingly efficient, I remain convinced that the gleaning of important details often requires a visit and first-hand perusal of relevant documents.

Having only joined us on a part-time basis in April 2021, our librarian, Beth Hodgett, resigned her post in May 2022 in order to pursue a career in academia. This threw us into a bit of a tailspin and I would like to go on record in thanking **Barbara Grigor-Taylor** and **Glyn Hughes** for their efforts in managing the Library for several days each week, dealing with visitors and enquiries, whilst we sought a new librarian. The post was advertised widely on various platforms over the summer and we were pleased to receive a large number of applications from people with a wide range of experience, qualifications and geographical locations. A selection panel agreed on a shortlist and, after a series of face-to-face interviews, the panel was unanimous in offering the position to **Emma McDonald**. Emma graduated with an MA in library and information management from Loughborough University in 2007 and has worked in a variety of public and academic libraries since then. She joins us from the Aldrich Library at the University of Brighton where she supported a wide range of subjects including geography and geology. Emma commenced work in the AC Library in January 2023 and was faced with a daunting backlog of work resulting from our hiatus. This did not seem to faze her at all, and I am pleased to say that her very methodical and professional approach has already got the Library back operating on an even keel.



Newly appointed  
keeper of the pictures,  
William Mitchell.

Also, during most of the year, Janet Johnson and Richard Nadin kindly acted as joint, interim keepers of pictures while a permanent replacement was sought. I am delighted to report that **William Mitchell** enthusiastically agreed to take on that role and was appointed at the end of 2022. William is a third-generation art dealer and a specialist in alpine paintings. Most recently, he co-curated a major exhibition on the life and works of the pioneering *peintre-alpiniste* Gabriel Loppé at the Forte di Bard in the Aosta valley entitled '**Gabriel Loppé, Painter, Climber and Traveller**'.

The exhibition brings together more than 90 of Loppé's paintings drawings and photographs, exhibited alongside a selection of his climbing equipment, and runs until January 2024. Before joining the family business in the late 1990s William worked in the art trade in Paris. This kindled his interest in alpinism and he has returned to climb in the Alps almost every year since. He has a longstanding association with the Club's art collection, having held a major exhibition of Club pictures at his gallery in 2001 and hosted a party to celebrate the AC's 150th anniversary in 2007. William's primary interest centres on the *peintre-alpinistes* who both painted and climbed, such as Loppé and the Comptons and their more recent disciples. Nevertheless, he has promised to raise the profile of some of the more neglected artists represented in the AC Collection. We welcome William and wish him well in this endeavour.

Library trustees now have a fixed term of office of three years, so it is necessary to appoint or re-appoint several trustees each year. At the 2022 AGM, **Robin Ashcroft** was re-appointed as the trustee nominated by the RGS and **Kimball Morrison** was re-appointed as the trustee nominated by the BMC. The Library and the keepers continue their active participation in the AC's wide-ranging and on-going ICT review. Significant progress is being made towards our goal of streamlining and integrating detailed information about all the collections in order to be able to provide a better and more easily accessible service to members. More specifically, the Club's digital and social media officer **Adam Butterworth** has put great effort into developing our social media presence, and the Library pages of the website have been updated and now include a page to highlight newly published books written by AC members. As I have noted previously, collections inevitably increase in size over time. This not only puts continual pressure on space, but also on the work required to organise and manage the holdings. We are therefore always looking for volunteers to help out with the collections. If you are interested in helping out or would like more information about volunteering opportunities, please contact me ([p.meredith@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:p.meredith@ucl.ac.uk)) or any of the keepers. Not only can the work itself be very rewarding, but it also provides access to a truly wondrous world of mountaineering heritage.



'Party Passing a Crevasse'  
by John Auldjo, 1828



'The Dent du Géant and Glacier des Périades from the Aiguille du Tacul',  
by William Frederick Donkin, 1882.

**Exhibitions**

After a period of necessarily reduced activity over the past few years, it was exciting to return to a full schedule of exhibitions in the Lecture Hall for 2022. The year started with the 'Glaciers' exhibition, curated by **Janet Johnson**, our assistant keeper of pictures, which ran from January to March. The exhibition was designed both to showcase rarely seen paintings of glaciers from the Club's

collection and to highlight our relationship with our digital partners **Art UK** and **Watercolour World** that allows us to widen access and thus increase awareness of the breadth of the collection. Due to continuing Covid-19 restrictions during the period leading up to the opening of the exhibition, promotion had been limited and this was reflected in initial visitor numbers. However, it was pleasing to see that visitor numbers picked up as the exhibition period progressed. This may have been helped by a video in which Janet selected a number of images to discuss in detail produced by



# Glaciers

11 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2022

An exhibition showcasing paintings of glaciers from the Alpine Club Collection

Open every Tuesday and Wednesday

Book in advance by  
telephone (0207 613 0755) or  
email (admin@alpine-club.org.uk)

[www.alpine-club.org.uk](http://www.alpine-club.org.uk)

**ON  
NOW!**



François Durafour lands his biplane at the Dôme du Goûter in a Caudron G3 aircraft on 30 July 1921.

Adam Butterworth designed to entice members and outside visitors to come to see the paintings in person. The new glass exhibition cases, purchased the previous year, proved to be a real asset in allowing fragile and delicate supporting material for the exhibition to be displayed. In this case they were used to display the collection of very long unframed watercolour panoramas of glaciers, the work of **Gottlieb Studer**.

The Club owns a fine collection of very large 19th and early 20th century photographs, including works by W F Donkin, Edward Whymper and Fanny Bullock Workman. These had previously been stored for many years in the

Charlotte Road basement where they cluttered up the space and had accumulated damage. It was therefore decided that they should be renovated and eventually displayed on the walls of the Clubhouse. **Richard Nadin** took on this task and did a fantastic job in returning these stunning images to their former glory. We therefore took the opportunity over the summer period to display **'Historic Photographic Treasures of the 19th and Early 20th Century'** in the Lecture Hall, curated by Bernie Ingrams and Richard Nadin, before they were due to be hung in their permanent locations around the Clubhouse.

In the autumn, Polly Townsend, an associate member of the Club, curated **'A Wider Landscape: Examining Mountains through the Female Gaze'**. In addition to displaying paintings by a group of contemporary female artists, Polly and Janet Johnson combed through the AC Collection to find other supporting paintings by earlier female artists. In addition to finding prints by **Una Cameron**, used in past issues of the *Alpine Journal*, that were displayed in the glass cabinets, a framed etching of the 'Bernese Oberland: Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau' by M Dicker was discovered. In a happy coincidence, her daughter, who had previously been in touch with the Library researching artworks by her mother, was able to come and see it on the opening night.

Our final exhibition of the year was **'The British Alps'**, exploring the Cuillin of Skye, which ran from November 2022 to January 2023. The exhibition comprised striking images of experiences on the ridge drawn and painted by **Helen G S Forde** in a variety of media: watercolours, gouaches, charcoal drawings and oil paintings. Again, supporting images and entries from the Club journal that matched some of Helen's artwork and graphics were found and displayed to enhance the exhibition.

The Everest centenary exhibition **'Everest By Those Who Were There: 1921, 1922 and 1924'**, which was mounted at Charlotte Road in 2021, continues to generate interest. Facsimiles of items from the exhibition were displayed at the Planinski Muzej In Slovenia from October 2022. The British ambassador opened the exhibition and the embassy provided support for honorary secretary **Sherry Macliver** to attend and represent the Club. Following the opening ceremony, a day of activities was arranged, including a mountain with Slovenian climbing legends **Andrej** and **Marija Štremfelj**, the ambassador, embassy and museum staff, and Sherry.

### Collections

A Swiss friend of the Library, **Marcel Fischli**, kindly donated a copy of the *Alpine Club Register of Members 1857-1890*, published in three volumes between 1923 and 1928 and providing an invaluable and detailed record of each member's climbs. Marcel also donated a copy of his own publication *Himalayan Pioneers in Zermatt* describing ascents in the Himalaya by climbers from Zermatt in the Himalaya in the 19th century.



'Save the Day' (Oil on Panel) by Polly Townsend.



Left to right: British ambassador to Slovenia Tiffany Sadler, Marija Štremfeljs, Sherry Macliver and Andrej Štremfeljs. (Tina Horvat)

Eagle-eyed Richard Nadin spotted a large album of previously unknown watercolours by one of the AC's original members, Frederic Elliott Blackstone, for sale at auction. While the Club does not normally purchase items to enhance the AC Collections, the history and provenance of this album was deemed an exception and it was purchased. The album contains 70 highly accomplished paintings of the English Lake District and the Italian Alps. Although Blackstone's climbs are fully recorded in *Mumm's Register*, his talents as an artist are not mentioned, and his paintings have not been found in other UK collections.

The book collection of **J H Emlyn Jones** (AC president 1979-82) was donated to the Library by his widow Louise. It includes a first French edition of John Hunt's *Ascent of Everest* signed by all members of the 1953 team, along with Hunt's handwritten notes on finding the route to the

summit of Kangchenjunga in 1954 while he was chair of the Kangchenjunga Committee. The collection also included a group of finely bound first editions of mountaineering classics from the library of **Humphrey Owen Jones** (AC 1910). The entire Emlyn Jones collection will feature under his name in the online Library catalogue.

While identifying books requiring repair and conservation a surprising discovery was made on the basement bookshelves by Barbara: a folio volume labelled *Sketches of Switzerland 1929-1930* by *F.R.B.* This turned out to be a series of original pen and pencil sketches, mostly of scenery, towns and peaks viewed from the north shore of Lake Geneva. After removing a shabby, torn cloth covering the original binding, a finely executed watercolour panorama was found folded and tucked inside the cloth; possibly the first time it had been revealed in a century or more. The panorama is presented in six panels totalling 219cm in length and shows peaks and ranges from Mont Tendre, past Lausanne and the Diablerets to Mont Jaman.

AC member **Peter Berg** has kindly donated a set glass lantern slides by **Edward Whymper**. These have all been scanned at high resolution and most have been retouched using Photoshop. AC member **Roy Lindsay** has been bequeathed all of the mountaineering photos of the late **Rick Allen**. Roy has loaned these to the AC for copying before they are eventually deposited into the archives of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and the Scottish National Library. So far, the lecture slides from six carousels have been scanned by Bernie Ingrams and **Peter Payne**, who are also going through boxes of other slides and multiple USB sticks to identify images that are worth archiving.

Photographic images from the AC Collection have been provided for the *Histoire de l'Alpinisme* from French publisher Glénat. Photographs have also been provided for window and shop-floor displays at The North Face and Peak Performance in Covent Garden and Stockholm respectively. Projected images of **A F Mummery** and **Isabella Charlet-Stratton** from the AC Collection have been used to illuminate the English Church in Chamonix.



Admirers of Jan Morris (1926-2020), whose coverage in *The Times* of the first ascent of Everest in 1953 was a world exclusive, may be interested in the first biography of the admired author of *Venice* and *Pax Britannica* written by Paul Clements and published by Scribe. This portrait of Jan, titled 'Jan Adre/Jan At Home', was painted by Annie Morgan-Suganami and featured in an exhibition curated by Welsh artist Iwan Bala to celebrate Jan's 90th birthday.

Interest in the pictures from the AC Collection displayed on Art UK continues to increase. Images by John Ruskin, Gabriel Loppé and A Gos continue to be the most popular. A recently uploaded painting of Everest Base Camp by **Philippa Stephenson** (1858-1941) was selected for the feature on 1000 Women Artists by Art UK. Our presence there now provides a small but steady income stream that is used to pay for conservation of the picture collection. We have therefore upped our participation level allowing us to display up to 250 images rather than the previous 100. Janet Johnson has been engaged in selection the extra images to display. We also now have 617 images from the collection scanned and uploaded onto the website of Watercolour World. This includes all the watercolours from the recently purchased Blackstone album described above.

There have been some notable acquisitions to the Archives during the year. These include: the transcripts of **Peter Lloyd's** diaries from the 1936 and 1938 Nanda Devi expeditions; letters sent home by **Peter Oliver** from Everest in 1936; Emlyn Jones' diaries from the Annapurna Himalaya expedition in 1950 and the Ama Dablam expedition in 1959; and copies and transcripts of letters sent to **Douglas Freshfield** by the guide Devouassoud. Research visits and email enquiries to the Archives are increasing, but remain below pre-Covid levels. The most popular topics for study remain Mallory and Irvine, and women climbers. The most studied women climbers include Katharine Richardson, Emmeline Lewis Lloyd and Victoria Maude Biddlecombe; all little known names but with strong climbing records. Conservation work is continuing on archive material; and in particular, a further tranche of AC membership application has been bound, bringing us up to 2020.

Thanks to the prolonged efforts and diplomatic skills of **Charlie Burbridge** and **Victor Saunders** there has been some progress at last on the movement of the Mathews Monument in Chamonix. Charlie reports that the Chamonix authorities have approved a site in the Parc Couttet and also agreed to fund its removal from outside the old Couttet Hotel and to lift it over the moraine ridge into the park by crane. In response, the Club has offered to pay for its cleaning and restoration of the inscription. It is anticipated that the monument will be installed in its new home by summer 2023.

### **Endnote**

As always, I end this report by expressing my deep gratitude to everyone in the Library team, librarian, trustees, keepers, members and volunteers, who again gave their time so generously and ungrudgingly throughout the year. Thanks also to everyone who supplied we with the details of activities needed to compile this report.

*Philip Meredith*

### Boardman Tasker Prize 2022

Last year's recovery in submissions continued with 40 books entered from around the world. The depth was also maintained with several notable books not making the short list, including Hamish MacInnes' well published *The Fox of Glenceoe*, Jonathan Howland's widely praised novel *Native Air* and former *Alpinist* editor Katie Ives' *Imaginary Peaks*. Canadian author and editor Marni Jackson was chair of judges and delivered her speech from Toronto. Her co-judges were UKClimbing editor Natalie Berry and Matt Fry, director of international sales at Quarto Books. Part of Joe Tasker's extended family, Fry grew up with a passion for mountaineering literature and attended Boardman-Tasker award ceremonies as a child. The short-listed titles, with comments from Jackson's awards speech, are as follows:

**Kieran Cunningham** for *Climbing the Walls*, 'a highly engaging account of how he spent the pandemic in the Italian Alps, in lockdown, forbidden to climb his favourite peaks and what that did to his mental health. *Climbing the Walls* is a reminder of the healing power of mountains and why they matter.'

**Robert Charles Lee** for *Through Dangerous Doors*. Lee, a retired risk scientist who went from adventuring with psychedelics to climbing on rock and ice, often with his equally adventurous partner Linda, Lee has written 'an unfiltered, unpredictable memoir that's a pleasure to read.'

**Anna Fleming** for *Time on Rock*. This book 'captures the intimate relationship between climber and rock, whether it's the gritstone of the Peak District or the granite of the Cairngorms. Her elegant, muscular writing puts us right there on the route with her, creating a peripatetic meditation on how "we shape the rock and the rock shapes us".'

**Paul Pritchard** for *The Mountain Path*. A previous Boardman Tasker winner, Pritchard 'has gone even deeper into the spiritual rewards of a life in the mountains. *The Mountain Path* is a devastatingly honest and inspirational account of choosing to live. It's also great fun to read.'

**Helen Mort** for *A Line Above the Sky*. Poet Helen Mort 'draws a line between the risks and terrors of new motherhood and a more untethered life in the mountains. Shadowing the story of Alison Hargreaves, who refused to give up alpinism when she became a mother, Helen brilliantly captures the soul-forging power of two extreme experiences: climbing mountains and giving birth.'

**Brian Hall** for *High Risk*. Hall grew up 'with the radical climbers who would come to define a wild and glorious chapter of mountaineering in the 1970s and 1980s. He partied with them, climbed with them and grieved them. Full of humour, affection and respect, *High Risk* takes the reader to the heart and soul of the golden age of UK climbing.'

In a unanimous decision, the jury also took a risk and drew a line. The 2022 Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature was shared between Brian Hall for *High Risk* and to Helen Mort for *A Line Above The Sky*. More details on the Boardman Tasker Award at [www.boardmantasker.com](http://www.boardmantasker.com)

Ed Douglas



Peter Hillary and Jamling Norgay speak under an image of their fathers.

### **Everest at 70**

Celebrations for the first ascent of Everest were held worldwide in remembrance of the achievement itself as well as a remarkable and enduring legacy that is still very much alive and kicking.

In London, two charities that sprang directly from the 1953 expedition – the Mount Everest Foundation and the Himalayan Trust UK – came together to organise a celebration at the Royal Geographical Society on Tuesday 13 June. The only living member of the 1953 expedition, Kanchha Sherpa, was sadly unable to attend but the next generation were there in full force. Some 35 members of Hillary and Tenzing's family travelled from around the world to attend the event, including Ed Hillary's son, Peter, and Tenzing Norgay's son, Jamling, who spoke alongside Col John Hunt's daughter, Sue Leyden, Stephen Venables, Kenton Cool and, just back from Everest, Hari Budha Magar: the first double above-the-knee amputee to climb to the summit.

In the afternoon, an event to inspire young people to 'go out and explore' included bushcraft legend Ray Mears, Everest climber and physicist Melanie Windridge, high-altitude mountaineer and endurance athlete Adriana Brownlee and world-class rock climber and mountaineer Leo Houlding, all bringing their magic to what was a remarkable and memorable day.