



Alpine Club newsletter

WINTER ISSUE | TWENTY25

GETTING OFF PISTE

WITH SKI INSTRUCTOR
ALISON THACKER

LEADING THROUGH

THE AC'S PLANS & PRIORITIES
TO 2030

GUT CHECK

ANDY TAYLOR SHARES HIS
EXPERIENCE OF CLIMBING
WITH A STOMA



Message from the President



Simon with the YAG team at the CIC Hut.

It is 24 January, and Storm Eowyn has just blown me down Ben Nevis. I had joined the Young Alpinist Group (YAG) on their CIC Hut meet, where I spent a fantastic evening getting to know the group. What an inspiring bunch of people! Winter had only just returned after a big thaw in early January, but that didn't stop them from ticking off some impressive routes, including *Knuckleduster Direct* and *Apache*, both challenging Grade VIIIs.

What really stood out about the YAG was how cohesive and supportive they are as a group. The Young Alpinist Group is a three-year mentoring program for 10 climbers, led by Tom Livingstone. Supported by the BMC, the MEF, and the Alpine Club, it's designed for young climbers aiming for high-level alpinism. It was wonderful to meet them, and I was thoroughly impressed, not just by their climbing skill, but by their enthusiasm, ambition, and the clear plans they have for the future. They're already highly accomplished, and I have no doubt they will go on to achieve far more.

The YAG meet marks the first of six AC Scottish winter meets this season. Next week, I'll be back in the CIC Hut for a week with the ACG, focusing on mixed climbs, both new and old. In February, we'll host the Aspirants Winter Meet, which includes winter skills training. Following that, we have the ever-popular Scottish Winter Weekend, led by Charles Stupart. In March, we'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of women becoming members of the Alpine Club with a special Anniversary Meet. I'm especially looking forward to this one, as March is a fantastic time to climb in Scotland. Additionally, the International Scottish Winter Meet will run during the first week of March, with 16 of our members attending.

The autumn was a busy time for the Club. One of the key events was the Blencathra Strategy Weekend, where 40 members came together to review the forward strategy for the Alpine Club. The conclusions from this productive and engaging weekend are covered elsewhere in the newsletter, and I encourage any members with further ideas for the Club's direction to contact myself or any other member of the committee.

In November, we held our AGM and Annual Dinner. Many thanks to William Newson and Sherry Macliver for organising this important event. It was a very convivial evening, coinciding with the Kendal Mountain Festival, and we plan to continue this pattern next year.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our retiring officers: **Nick Kekus** (Vice President), **Nick Smith** (Chair of Climbing), and **John Porter** (Chair of Exhibitions).

- **Nick Kekus** has dedicated countless hours of hard work behind the scenes, notably with the Rick Allen Skills Award, Young Members Meet, and the ACG.

- **Nick Smith** has transformed our development programmes, doubled the number of meets, and will now serve as our new Vice President.

- **John Porter** has infused huge energy into our exhibitions programme, producing several films, and has served the committee in various capacities, including President. We thank him for his long service to the Club.

We also say goodbye to **Sherry Macliver**, our retiring Honorary Secretary. Sherry has worn many hats within the Alpine Club, including managing Charlotte Road when we were without an office manager. Her influence on the Club has been far-reaching and profound. I'm happy to report that she will continue in her role as Membership Secretary.

We welcome on to the Committee Charlie Burrbridge (Honorary Secretary), Max Stree-ton (Chair of Climbing) and Suzanne Straw-ther (Chair of Exhibitions). The Alpine Club thrives thanks to its volunteers. Over 80 members contribute to various committees and roles. As we look to the future, we're planning for succession, and to this end, we've co-opted **Ronnie Legg**, **Lina Arthur**, and **Kasia Piatek** onto the committee to give them a taste of what goes on and help us connect with younger members.

I'm also delighted to announce that we have three new honorary members: **Andrej Stremfelj**, **Maria Stremfelj**, and **Eric Jones**.

- **Andrej Stremfelj** is renowned for his ascents of high Himalayan peaks, often via new routes or in alpine style. His route on the South Summit of Kangchenjunga is considered one of the finest alpine-style ascents ever made.

- **Maria Stremfelj** is an inspiring role model. She's summited four 8,000m peaks, including Everest with Andrej. She's also climbed many difficult routes in the Alps, including the *Walker Spur* and the north face of the Matterhorn.

- **Eric Jones's** achievements are legendary within the climbing community. His solo ascent of the North Face of the Eiger and the first ascent of the Central Pillar of Brouillard on Mont Blanc (again solo) have become iconic in British climbing history.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting series of lectures planned for this winter and spring. Thanks to Derek Buckle, the London lecture programme is as full as ever. We also have monthly talks in the Peak District, Edinburgh, Bristol, and the Lake District. I'd like to particularly highlight the talk by the **Saas Aspirant** graduates in Keswick on 13 March, organised by Anna Lawford. The **Saas Aspirants Meet** has become a defining part of the Alpine Club in recent years, and this will be a great opportunity to learn more about the programme. ■

BY **SIMON RICHARDSON**

Club News

NEW CLUB MEMBERS

NEW MEMBER	TYPE	PROPOSED BY	NEW MEMBER	TYPE	PROPOSED BY	NEW MEMBER	TYPE	PROPOSED BY
Fred Lyon	Full & ACG	R Ive & T Elson	Sebastian Parr	Asp-Full	S Fraser & R Nadin	Carla Huynh	Asp	D Balsey & R Nadin
Chris Allan	Full	T Bell & T Elson	Ezra Pierce	Asp-Full	S Higginson & T Yew	Ben Lewis	Asp	R Nadin
Jonty De La Harpe	Full	N Smith & R Nadin	Sara Polverini	Asp-Full	S Poletti & R Nadin	James Martin	Asp	M Broadhead & R Nadin
Michal Dzianach	Full	N Smith & R Nadin	Lizzie Porter	Asp-Full	J Lawson & A Soligo	Dan McCreerie	Asp	P Corrigan
Ian Ferguson	Full	N Smith & R Nadin	Ross Spours	Asp-Full	J Rigby & R Nadin	Harry Moss	Asp	P Cooper
Job Klusener	Full	J Dyer & J Rigby	Urszula Stopka-Farooqui	Asp-Full	T Davis-Merry & C Burbridge	Lucy Robertson	Asp	J Rigby
Julia Lyubova	Full	N Smith & R Nadin	Nia Weinzeig	Asp-Full	N King & R Nadin	Yulia Rowan	Asp	R Nadin
Ian Richardson	Full	J Percival & R Nadin	James Bennett	Asp	J Dallimore	Paolo Scianna	Asp	R Nadin
Micha Rinn	Full	S Richardson & R Nadin	Julian Bromberg	Asp	R Nadin	Poon Srimachand	Asp	S Higginson
Iain Young	Full	S Richardson & S Venables	Steven Capey	Asp	R Nadin	Henry Swandale	Asp	M Bass
Kasia Piatek	UK Asp-Full	R Malczyk & R Nadin	Anna Capey	Asp	R Nadin	Joe Warren	Asp	R Nadin
Lina Arthur	Asp-Full	R Legg & R Nadin	Bee Carol	Asp	R Nadin	Katharine Wood	Asp	R Nadin
Andrew Crawford	Asp-Full	H Wilson & Ali McMaster	Katie Comer	Asp	K Piatek			
Michael Edmondstone	Asp-Full	F D-Jackson & L Kesner	Megan Cumming	Asp	R Nadin			
John Hayes	Asp-Full	S Richardson & R Nadin	Ilham El Mhadder	Asp	N Smith			
Ben Hickey	Asp-Full	D Richards & R Nadin	Nathan Ferron	Asp	S Higginson			
Caitlin McHale	Asp-Full	T Bell & R Linklater	Sam Fitzpatrick	Asp	N Buckley			
Alistair McMaster	Asp-Full	N Smith & R Nadin	Jamie Gibbin	Asp	R Nadin			
Edward Millett	Asp-Full	R Ive & S Higginson	Jenny Graham	Asp	R Legg			
Tom Moses	Asp-Full	P Jardine & T Yew	James Harker	Asp	R Nadin			

AC FILM WINS PRIZE AT KRAKOW

Everest Revisited, 1924–2024, a film produced by former AC president John Porter and filmmaker Dom Bush, won special mention at the 2024 Krakow Mountain Film Festival.

The film reexamines the three pioneering 1920s Everest expeditions and considers their legacy, both good and ill, in the present day; from pioneering science to the tourism industry.

The festival judges praised the film for its authentic storytelling, use of archival material and balance.

The film is available for members to view by logging into the AC website and will be released to all later this year. ■

ENTRIES OPEN FOR 2025 AC PHOTO COMPETITION

The Club is excited to announce a members' photo competition, culminating with a special exhibition of the best submitted works in November–December 2025.

Members can submit up to two images per category across three categories: Alpine Climbing/ Mountaineering, Mountain Landscape and AC Gatherings.

Images that have been entered into other, non-AC competitions will be accepted and any image taken since 1 January 2024 will be eligible for entry.

The closing date for submissions is 30 April 2025, with the winners expected to be announced by the beginning of July 2025.

The Club will reproduce the winning entries as high-quality framed prints for display at a celebratory exhibition. By way of a prize, these prints will subsequently become the property of the winning photographers. A selection of the winning entries will also become part of an AC Calendar for 2026.

A full breakdown of the competition rules and details of how to submit your entries can be found by scanning the QR code opposite. ■



CLUB DEATHS

Richard Gowing
Jon Mellor
Rod Smith



John Porter (far left) receiving the jury's *Special Mention* prize at Krakow Mountain Film Festival.

DONATIONS TO THE AC LIBRARY

In January, the Alpine Club Library received two donations of some wonderful books. The donation from Peter Berg included some interesting items from the late 19th century, including an 1871 first edition of Edward Whymper's *Scrambles* and an inscribed copy of Whymper's early guide, *Chamonix And The Range Of Mont Blanc*. The other donation from Nigel Osmaston, included a copy of Conway's 1881 *Zermatt Pocket Book*; a progenitor of all modern alpine guide books!

Both donations are received with immense gratitude. ■

Leading Through – The Next Six Years

PRIORITIES, PLANS AND PROJECTS FOR THE ALPINE CLUB FOLLOWING BLENCATHRA 2024

In 2018, the Alpine Club, under the leadership of John Porter, began quite an extraordinary process. It dedicated itself to a programme whereby, every six years, it would bring together its members for a large-scale consultation, assessing its organisational health, its relevance and its priorities for the future.

Informed by the feedback from its members following the 2018 event, held at the Blencathra Field Studies Centre in the Lake District, the AC began a journey which, among other developments, has seen the Club rapidly expand its meets programme, provide increasing opportunities for member development and commit itself to growing its digital offering.

When we met for the second ever Blencathra event in November 2024, it was astonishing to consider how much the Club had changed in the preceding six years; cementing significant progress despite the added challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a sense from attendees that the Club was travelling in the right direction and an enthusiasm to build upon the progress that had already been made.

As well as broader discussions about the AC and the mountaineering world at large, the event focused on five major topic areas – Membership, Our Values, Publications, Heritage and The Soul of the Club – with some consistent priorities emerging across these subjects.

The weekend was alive with ideas, as much in the downtime between formal sessions as in the discussions themselves. We have pulled together some of the clearest priorities and most widely-supported ideas below.

MEMBERSHIP

The Club currently has more than 1,500 members and is attracting increasing numbers of women and younger members thanks to a dedicated focus on broadening our appeal. This was felt to be a healthy size for the Club and efforts to widen our membership through Younger Members' Meets, opportunities for development like the Rick Allen Skills Award and the revitalised ACG, were welcomed. The committee are dedicated to working to maintain our numbers, while continuing to increase the diversity of our membership so that it better reflects the mountaineering community at large.

Some newer members expressed how they had initially found the Club to be intimidating as an institution. We have already made some changes to our events at Charlotte Road to reduce these barriers and will be investigating other ways to actively make new and prospective members feel more welcome at their first Club events.

All the AC events discussed at Blencathra are built on an incredible foundation of voluntary effort and there was a real appetite amongst attendees for more opportunities to become involved in the Club. The committee is already considering the creation of a Volunteer Officer to help encourage and support volunteers. Additionally, we are looking at ways to regularly advertise volunteering opportunities.

OUR VALUES

One of the great successes of 2018's Blencathra was the creation of the AC Green Group which has advised the Club on environmental matters and set out Club positions relating to travel and climate change. Sadly, in more recent years, the Green Group has been less active and there was a strong desire among attendees to see it reinvigorated. Happily, volunteers to help make this a reality have already come forward and this process has begun. Watch this space!

There was a general consensus that the Club's mission statement was in need of a small update and the committee will bring this into review. It was also felt that we should continue to make a positive case for the Club's values through our communications and by reviving the Spirit of Mountaineering Award, which recognises those who selflessly come to the aid of others in the mountains.

Lastly, there was an appetite for the Club to function as a hub for 'lessons learned' when accidents or near-misses occur in the mountains. The exact scope of this potential project and how it would interact with existing systems run by other organisations is currently being considered.

PUBLICATIONS

Throughout the weekend there was a real sense of pride in the Club's literary legacy but also a degree of regret that it had not remained active in the guidebooks space. As an immediate priority, the Club will be continuing its work to digitise its existing guidebooks, creating



AC President Simon Richardson introducing the weekend. Photo: Iain Young.



The Blencathra Field Studies Centre. Photo: Iain Young.

an online database which will be made available to members and which can serve as the basis for future progress in this area.

In addition, the work to complete the updated Himalayan Index, a potentially colossal resource for exploratory mountaineers, continues apace, with project lead Lina Arthur recruiting 20 additional volunteers in the period following Blencathra.

The Alpine Journal and Club Newsletter remain valued publications and there was an eagerness from members to suggest potential new areas of focus for future editions. Similarly to the nervousness some members felt when first attending AC events, there was also an occasional reticence from some members to submit to the Journal and Newsletter. We will be working to demystify this process and to consolidate the excellent work done by Ed Douglas in encouraging more women to write for the Journal.

HERITAGE

From those not already involved with the Club's collections, there was tangible excitement in learning about the literature, photographs, artefacts and art which the Club holds. We need to spread this awareness more widely, to the membership and the public at large, by making greater use of digital communications and novel forms of presentation to showcase our collections. This will be a key priority for the Library in the coming years, with the groundwork already laid by our hard-working librarian Emma McDonald.

A perennial problem for our collections is storage. The Club's premises have limited capacity to store and display heritage items, especially when the demands of work and meeting space are factored in. We will examine ways to make better use of our space and to free up storage by loaning out items to other museums and collections. Our incoming Honorary Secretary, Charlie Burbridge, is already investigating one potential avenue for this.

To ensure that challenges like the issue of space are responded to more proactively in the future, it was recommended that the Club seek to establish a Heritage Board to help coordinate the custodianship, development and showcasing of its collections. Discussions about how this Board will work are already underway.

THE SOUL OF THE CLUB

This final topic might initially appear to be the most nebulous of those discussed, but it actually led to a number of extremely practical suggestions.

The annual Aspirants' Meet in Sass Fee was singled out for particular praise for the way in which it fostered a sense of community. To build on the work of Nick Hurdall Smith and his team, it was felt that the Club should seek to find locations throughout the Alps in which to base itself for the summer, creating hubs where AC members know they can find each other during the season. The committee is already discussing what is required to make this a reality.

In recent years, the Club has run a number of symposia. These, it was agreed, are a great way of encouraging networking and promoting a sense of belonging. The committee will continue its support for these events in the coming years and investigate potential new topics such as destination-focused sessions.

The Club's renewed focus on supporting member development was welcomed and the committee will be making available a complete overview of all our development opportunities in the near future so that members at all levels can see how they can access guidance and support.

These, we hope you'll agree, are an incredible range of priorities for the Club to work on over the next six years. There is a huge amount that needs to be done in order to make them a success, but if we can do so, the Club will continue to thrive, serving both its members and the wider mountaineering community.

The Club is the sum total of its membership, and our successes, like those we achieve in the mountains, are the result of our collective endeavour. If you'd like to help us make any of these projects a reality, in however small a way, we'd love to hear from you. You can fill out our new AC Volunteer Form by scanning the QR code below and a member of the AC team will be in touch to find out more about how you'd like to be involved.

Finally, the Club would like to thank Sherry Macliver whose organisational work helped to make Blencathra 2024 a reality and Iain Young, our fantastic facilitator from the Scottish Mountaineering Club, who lent an invaluable outsider's eye to proceedings. ■



Digital Peaks

THE SOCIETY OF FORGOTTEN EXPLORERS

The Explorers Club have recently launched a new initiative to recognise overlooked explorers from history, with a particular focus on women and those from Indigenous backgrounds whose stories are often less well-known. To launch the project, the four Indigenous hunters from Greenland who accompanied Peary and Henson to the North Pole in 1909: Ootah, Egingwah, Seegloo, and Ooqueah, were admitted as charter members.

Inducted members receive a profile in the SFE's online database to which additional information and resources can be added over time. The Explorers Club also plan to structure a series of talks around inducted members. Anyone, both members and non-members of the Explorers Club,



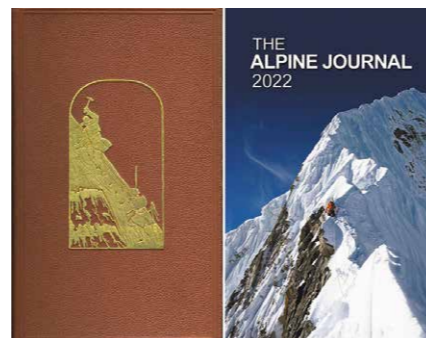
can submit a candidate using the form at the project's homepage. So if you know of a suitable candidate, why not put them forward? www.explorers.org/the-society-of-forgotten-explorers

160 YEARS OF THE ALPINE JOURNAL NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

A near complete run of the Alpine Journal, from the original *Peaks Passes and Glaciers* to the 2022 edition, is now available via the Alpine Journal website.

The Club is deeply indebted to the work of John Town, Peter Foster and the numerous other volunteers who have worked so hard to digitise past copies of the Journal.

The online archive is fully searchable for those conducting research and is also available to be browsed by year. It is free to access and open to all at: www.alpinejournal.org.uk



THE CINEMA OF ATTRACTIONS

In July 2022, Americans Josh Wharton and Vince Anderson made the first complete ascent of *Suerte Integral*, also known as the *Italian Integral*, on Jirishanca (6125m), becoming the first team to take the line all the way to the mountain's summit. Wharton also made the first free ascent of the route, climbing the initial crux pitches clean.

Patagonia have now released a short film of the pair's ascent, which serves not only as a document of the climb, but as a profile of both the hard rocking Anderson and the fastidiously modest Wharton. It's an absorbing and inspiring watch, but perhaps its greatest triumph is its cinematography, with some truly jaw-dropping drone photography of the climbers in action as they pass steep ice roofs and swim up the final snow slopes. As Anderson puts it: 'this isn't tennis'.

The 30-minute film is available to watch for free via Patagonia's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@patagonia



Expedition Reports

THE 2024 PANMAH EXPEDITION

9 SEPTEMBER – 12 OCTOBER 2024

We arrived in Islamabad on 10 September and met Ibrar, a local guide whom Karim, our agent in Pakistan, had arranged to host us for the day. A short drive in an air-conditioned minivan took us to the Pakistan Monument in the western Shikarparian Hills, a striking construction of Indo-Islamic architecture built to represent the strength and unity of the people of a free and independent state. The air was warm and faintly humid, and the forests were rich with wildlife. Below us, spires and minarets from the city's many mosques pierced the golden haze being cast by the late afternoon sun.

After a short internal flight, we landed in Skardu the following day. The road from Skardu to Askole is a cacophony of broken asphalt and dirt tracks. To our great relief, we made it to this little village, the gateway to the deeper Karakoram, unscathed and set up camp for the night.

A six-day approach trek took us northwards up the Panmah Valley before turning east towards the border with China and our objectives on the North Chiring Glacier. We established a base camp at c4,500m and rested for a few days.

On 22 September, Karim and Felix explored to the east of base camp. They sought a route to establish an advanced camp from which we could access our objectives, but found the glaciers almost impermeable via our planned approach. Crossing the North Chiring Glacier, they pitched one of the spare tents on the lateral moraine before crossing a second glacier to reach a small, rocky plateau. However, any further progress by this route was blocked by rearing icefalls, flanked by unstable rock and complex, impassable crevasses. The pair returned to base camp and the realisation settled in that we would not achieve these objectives on this trip. We didn't have the weather window to reconnoitre an alternative approach and it was time to rethink our plan.

After taking a day to rest, Karim and Felix set off again, this time following the right-hand side of the North Chiring Glacier, their eyes

trained on a snowy peak of just under 6,000m. Once again, impenetrable icefalls forced a retreat – the exhausted pair returned to base camp.

Our original objectives had shut us down, but Karim and Felix had identified a smaller peak (around 5700m) opposite our base camp.

We debated whether to stay in Panmah or call the porters early and descend before the next weather front hit. Objectives in Hunza offered an exciting alternative plan and a better chance of more agreeable weather.

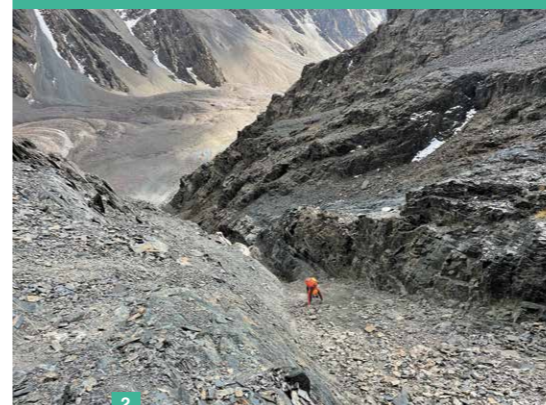
We discussed a possible alpine ridge line on Pk 5650, the smaller peak on the east flank of an unnamed glacier to the north of base camp. Karim, Felix, and I decided to go for it.

At 5.00am on 25 September, we departed base camp and scrambled up a steep field of loose boulders towards a small, isolated glacier which led to a col below the ridge. This superb vantage point commanded a spectacular panorama of our original objectives and their approach options. It was now apparent how difficult these mountains were to reach. The glacier was more akin to an icefall, with millions of tons of twisting, impenetrable ice, huge crevasses, and so much loose rock flanking the glacier that any attempt to circumvent it would have been in vain.

We continued along a mixed ridge of snow and rock from the col. Classic high alpine terrain allowed Karim and Felix to move together as I soloed slightly ahead of them, weaving a line over snow slopes and through granite bands. We summited before midday to much elation, and Karim surprised us both as he pulled a stove from his pack and set about brewing tea. After a few photos, we quickly descended and arrived at base camp in the early afternoon. We named the peak Aesh Sar and recorded a summit height of 5,662m.

By now, the wind had picked up, and dark grey clouds had formed up the valley. We decided that now was the moment to call the porters, return to Skardu, and make our way to Hunza.

A week later, we established our second base camp, this time in the Misgar Valley, on the northern edge of the Hunza District in



1 Karim Hayat and Felix Dowidar-Jackson on the north ridge of Aesh Sar (5662m). 2 Leo in the 'Death Gully'. 3 The view from base camp looking west up the Chiring Glacier towards the Muztagh Pass (5735m). Photos: Tom Davis-Merry.

Meet Reports



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Gilgit- Baltistan. There were rumours of an unclimbed peak of around 6,000m that had relatively easy access and was yet to witness a British attempt. Seeking a more lightweight approach, we opted for two porters and a polo pony to make the one-day trek from our delightful guesthouse in Misgar village. Victor Saunders had kindly sent us a weather update, and we had a window of a few days before another storm was forecast to roll in. We decided to rest the next morning, make a reconnaissance of the glacier in the afternoon, and then make a summit attempt the following day.

On 4 October, the air warmed quickly in the morning sun as Leo and I packed for a bivvy and a summit push. We bid farewell to our team and headed up the valley. Still suffering from stomach ailments, Felix had decided to return to the village with the porters.

After several hours of scrambling up a death gully of loose rock and dust, we built a bivouac at the base of the upper glacier. The following day, we awoke at 2.00am under a clear sky and set off from our bivouac an hour later. Weaving between crevasses on the lower glacier, we gained the face, the rope threading

between strange features of snow and ice, our head torches offering only faint clues as to the way ahead. We moved together on snow slopes linked by sections of a rocky spur. The situation was spectacular, and we rested atop a small buttress to watch the sunrise to the west. Leo led the steeper final pitch of rotten ice, which took us to the crest of a spur that forms the highest point of the southeast face. As we looked towards the summit ridge, a vast serac band reared ahead of us, and the heavily corniced ridge made further progress impossible. We agreed to turn back and made one precarious abseil off the crest to regain the face.

Halfway into the abseil, I shouted for Leo to take cover and sent a sizeable block tumbling down the face, hitting the snow below. It broke into several pieces, one of which smashed into the ropes. On later inspection, we discovered the sheath had been severed, and the core was probably damaged too. Careful to avoid loading the damaged section, we roped up again and began our descent down the face and back across the glacier, collapsing into our bivvy and eating the last of our meagre food supplies.

After another fantastic adventure in the high Karakoram, we packed up and descended Death Gully, kicking down showers of loose rock and dust which funnelled through the narrow rift. Our last-minute dash to Hunza may not have led to a new summit, but exploring this steep, new ground in the Karakoram was the perfect way to round off a successful expedition to Pakistan.

The Alpine Club Panmah Expedition 2024 was made possible by the Mount Everest Foundation, the Alpine Club Climbing Fund, the Austrian Alpine Club (UK), and the Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust. It received support from Mountain Equipment, Precision Fuel & Hydration, MSR, Therm-a-Rest, Platypus Hydration and Expedition Foods.

Participants: Tom Davis-Merry, Leo Kesner and Felix Dowidar-Jackson. ■

BY TOM DAVIS-MERRY

1 The expedition team with Karim Hayat and a cadre of our local support staff. 2 Just before turning back on the unclimbed Misgar valley peak. 3 The realities of expedition life – Felix washes his socks at base camp. Photos: Tom Davis-Merry.



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CORDILLERA REAL GREATER RANGES MEET 2024

1-30 JUNE 2024

Maps, guidebooks, and coffee mugs lay strewn across the table in a small artisanal café located between the historical and administrative centres of La Paz. A blank canvas on which the team could sketch out an itinerary for a month in Bolivia. Tom and Karen had arrived first and were keen to start acclimatising.

For their first venture into the Bolivian Andes, Anna, Karen, and Tom decided on a 4,248m camp at Laguna Liviñosa in the Zongo valley, a less frequented area near the midpoint of the Cordillera Real, in the eastern corner of the Condoriri massif and accessed from the small village of Botijlaca. Three hours from La Paz by 4x4 and only briefly mentioned in Yossi Brian's *Trekking in Bolivia*, it was the perfect place to start the trip. After an early start on 6 June, the trio bumped along dusty tracks and hugged tight switchback bends with precipitous drops to the valley floor below.

As they ascended westward through pines and vibrant flora, they found solitude, save for

the occasional llama herder and the odd building made from stone and earth. Seeking flatter ground, they decided on a lower camp in the valley at 3,923m. The following day, while Anna rested in the tent, Karen and Tom followed a faint and partially eroded path to a high point of 4,792m, tentatively aiming for the 5,200m Condoriri Pass.

After returning to La Paz and keen to continue acclimatising, Karen and Tom looked at the guidebooks for their next outing. They opted for Cerro Jankho Huyo and the Hichukhota Valley, which are three hours away by jeep or truck.

Seeing a small collection of tents at their planned campground, they asked the driver to continue further up the valley to a camp perched on the edge of a pequeño lago not marked on their maps. The lake at 4,888m is nestled half-hidden in a small basin beneath the southwest flank of the 5,244m Cerro Wila Llojeta.

On 11 June, Karan and Tom reconnoitred the start of 5,512m Cerro Jankho Huyo, keen to understand where they must transition from rock to glacier on the imposing southeast ridge. Karen then returned to base camp whilst Tom continued for a quick traverse of

1 Views of Pico Tarija and Pequeno Alpamayo on the approach to Condoriri base camp. 2 Janco Huyo base camp. 3 Base camp under the west face of Sajama.

the rocky summit of Cerro Wila Llojeta, which commands superb views southwards down the Hichukhota Valley. The following day is summit day. The pair enjoyed hiking up the dusty road to Paso Mullu Apacheta at 4,990m before turning west and scrambling over a broken granite ridge in the cool predawn air.

Karen and Tom summit just before 8.30am to a grand panorama of the cordillera; their peak lies in the centre of the Keakeani group, flanked by Cerro Jankho Laya to the north and Cerro Jiskha Pata to the northeast.

On 14 June, after a quick return to La Paz, Karen and Tom departed for a small settlement 4km north of Laguna Tuni and met their mules for the approach to Condoriri base camp by Laguna Khellual Khota. At 5,315m, the rocky Pico Austria made for an enjoyable acclimatisation day on 15 June before they met up with Anna and Shauna, the three Cholitas, and their young translator and fixer Benjamin. →

Meet Reports



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They plan to climb the 5,410m Pequeño Alpmayo the following day. Karen and Tom settle on the 5,320m Pico Tarija.

After an early start on Pico Tarija, Karen and Tom quickly turn around on the summit and descend, retracing their steps down the steep, dry glacier. By 10.00am they are back at their tent with noodles on the go and tea in hand. Anna, Shauna, Benjamin, and the Cholitas arrive slightly later after a superb summit of the classic Pequeño Alpmayo. The team left for La Paz the following day, arranging for the mules to meet them after breakfast the next morning.

With five climbing days remaining, Anna, Shauna, and Tom decide on Bolivia's highest peak, 6,550m Nevado Sajama. They establish a base camp at 4,886m on 24 June on a flat, arid spur beneath the west face of the towering volcano. High camp is then perched on a small col on the spur of Sajama's northwest ridge, with enough space for perhaps four tents. After a midnight alarm, they set off at 1.20am on 26 June. Firm snow slopes of perfect névé and a high alpine ridge on rock of occasionally excellent quality made for a brilliant start to the route.

The ridge leads to a steepening field of nieves penitentes, and a broad snow slope follows – soul destroying in its uniformity and lack of interest. The trio is slightly behind schedule and is a vertical 250m from the summit.

At 7.05am and 6,292m, they turn back and descend to the ridge. They make one exciting abseil from a snow bollard and negotiate several sections of mixed down-climbing. High camp is now busy with other porters and a guided group. The team feel blessed to have had this wild place all to themselves only days earlier. They continue down to base camp. The following day, at 9.00am, the team is picked up by their 4x4 driver, Eliseo. A 30-minute drive and a 45-minute walk later, they are submerged in the natural hot springs just a few kilometres from the mountain. The team then walked back to Sajama village. After soup for lunch, it's a four-hour minibus back to La Paz and the end of quite an adventure.

Attendees: Tom Davis-Merry (organiser), Anna Flemming, Shauna Clarke and Karen Frake. ■

BY TOM DAVIS-MERRY

- 1 Enjoying a cold beverage in Sajama village.
- 2 Anna and Shauna with the cholitas on the return from Condoriri base camp. 3 Tom Davis-Merry and Karen Frake on the summit of Janco Huyo.
- 4 Sunrise from the summit slopes of Pico Tarija.
- 5 Karen Frake on the final summit ridge of Jaco Huyo.



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THE INAUGURAL RICK ALLEN SKILLS AWARD 15-23 JUNE 2024

The inaugural Rick Allen Skills Award was held in Chamonix in June 2024. The meet, funded by a generous legacy left to the Club by our sadly-departed member Rick Allen is designed to help enthusiastic members to progress to more challenging climbs in the Alps and Greater Ranges.

Following a last-minute change in location from Ailefroide to Chamonix, in view of difficult conditions in the Écrins, we had Dai to thank for managing to book us a cosy, central Chamonix Airbnb the day before the Meet commenced. We had all been hoping for more space than camping, and that just about proved to be the case – but only just! One room had space for a bunk bed, while the other room was a twin – although, to our amusement, it was only possible to open the bedroom door by pushing the two single beds together.

The Meet started with a chucklesome case of mistaken identity – Tom Shaw kitted out in his casual red sweater, with white paint liberally splattered across the front and down the sleeves, was mistaken by the Guides for a

local Chamonix painter. Once this case of mistaken identity had been resolved, we set out for the *Traverse of the Perrons*.

The traverse was great fun, and it was the perfect first day. The emphasis was on moving together safely and efficiently. With lots of snow still on the ground in June, we were able to enjoy a long – and occasionally elegant – glissade down from the ridge. Just as we rejoined the road, we nipped past a perfect bivi spot ... which had a waterfall running through the middle of it. I couldn't help but wonder how many stars it would get on Mick Fowler's bivi rating scale.

On Day 2 of the Meet, we climbed the 245m *East Ridge* of the *Pyramide du Tacul*. We accessed the route via the Skyway Monte Bianco and the *Géant Glacier*. For me, it was poignant to be back at the Skyway, having last caught it with Rick in September 2017.

Leaving the Skyway behind, we made our way across to the *Pyramide du Tacul*. Despite having caught the first lift, several teams – who had either come across the *Géant Glacier* from the Midi lift or stayed the night at the *Torino Hut* – were ahead of us. Eventually, Tom and I were presented with an overtaking

opportunity, courtesy of a neglected, wet overhang. At the top of the route, we were treated to staggeringly beautiful, panoramic views.

On Day 3 of the Meet, we climbed a fantastic, 165m rock TD. This was ideal in enabling us to achieve all of our objectives. The emphasis was, again, on leading safely and efficiently. I was first to set off up the first pitch – a steep, technical slab. I had an audience for this lead. The pressure was on. Tom, who was belaying, took delight in heckling me about my (poor) jamming skills and lack of chalk. This proved to be the perfect motivation for upward progress. It was then Tom's turn to tackle the second pitch – a superb, delicate slab – with Kevin Avery, Guy Steven, Dai (showing off his 'bulging guns') and Jeremy following on close behind. After some easier pitches, the difficulties ramped up again. →

1 The *East Ridge* of the *Pyramide du Tacul* with the *Géant Glacier* behind. Photo: Kevin Avery. 2 Jeremy Letwin and Dai Richards climbing the *East Ridge* of the *Pyramid du Tacul*. Photo: Guy Steven. 3 Richard I've setting off on a TD rock route, with the *Mont Blanc* massif behind. Photo: Kevin Avery.

Meet Reports

The final pitch – a steep groove – led us, with interest, to the top.

By this point in the day, the heat was overpowering. Tom and I, while waiting for Kev, Guy, Dai and Jeremy, lay – like lizards – under the shadows of large rocks. Jeremy pulled over the top of the route in some pain. The combination of expanding feet and small shoes had – for poor Jeremy – been excruciating. Jeremy’s solution? To buy some ‘speed shoes/slippers’!

On Day 4 of the Meet, we were treated to a deluge. Unable to climb, we visited the newly restored and rededicated Matthews Monument at the entrance to the Couttet Park.

After our visit to the Monument, we met up with seven other AC members who all happened to be in Chamonix at the same time. The eleven of us enjoyed raising a few pints to the AC. That evening, while admiring the views of the Chamonix Aiguilles from the apartment’s cosy balcony, Tom, Jeremy, Dai and I enjoyed salmon and dry white wine. Brown and Whillans would be turning in their graves ...

The forecast for Day 5 of the Meet was for afternoon rain. To make the most of the dry

weather, we spent the morning at Le Fayet, a local crag, practising crevasse rescue and prussiking. The Guides gave clear crevasse rescue advice: ‘Don’t fall in!’

The forecast for Day 6 of the Meet was also for afternoon rain. To make the most of the last day of the Meet, we caught the first lift to the Brévent. This was to be the first outing for Jeremy’s ‘speed shoes/slippers’ – B3s so light that we wondered if Jeremy was seeking to set the Fastest Known Time on the Chamonix Vertical Kilometre. Jeremy’s yellow ‘speed shoes/slippers’ clashed beautifully with his orange trousers and fashion advice was soon dispensed.

The conversation turned from sartorial choice to the aim for the day. This was to master moving together safely and efficiently. Kev and Jon reminded us that, on alpine routes, you should always be doing something productive and ‘never be just taking in the view’. Kev and Jon encouraged us to embrace an attitude of professionalism and tasked us with pursuing the ultimate alpine objective: ‘flow state’ – the joy of flow.

Tom and I found the joy of flow courtesy of a Micro Traxion. This was the first time

that Tom or I had ever used one of these devices. It was fantastic, enabling us to move together safely. Once we had it on, the teams climbing behind us soon disappeared out of view and into the mist.

In summary, the inaugural Rick Allen Skills Award was brilliant fun. Tom, Jeremy, Dai and I want to thank the Alpine Club for their generosity in offering the award.

Participants: Richard Ive, Tom Shaw, Jeremy Letwin and Dai Richards. ■

BY RICHARD IVE

The Rick Allen Skills Award will run again in 2025. The programme is open to all Full AC members with a suitable climbing resumé. Further details, application forms and a longer version of this report can be found by following the QR code. The closing date for applications is 21 March 2025.



11TH AC SAAS ASPIRANTS’ MEET 24 AUGUST–7 SEPTEMBER 2024

‘Mountain Climbing is an adventure: an adventure upright before our eyes and more or less accessible. There can be no adventure without uncertainty of its result, and in good adventure there is also an element of risk, even of danger to life. In climbing mountains, danger is a constant element, not remote as in other sports: it is always with us behind the veil of pleasant circumstances, and it can be upon us before we are aware.’

Young, Geoffrey Winthrop, *Mountain Craft*, Chapter 1, p. 1 (*Methuen Inc.*, 4th edition, revised, London, 1945).

The words of Geoffrey Winthrop Young still remain a huge part of the learning journey we experience in our climbing apprenticeship in the mountains. The opportunity, kindly provided by the Alpine Club to 26 ‘aspiring’ alpinists during two weeks in late summer 2024 in the Saas Valley, to work together on our skills to become more competent in alpine environments, will forever remain in our hearts as one of our most learned, treasured and important life experiences.

The Saas Meet ‘Class of 2024’ was made up of varying levels of aspirant experience, some with only one or two alpine seasons behind them, others having completed a significant number



1 Jono Walter and Ed Morris approaching the summit of the Dom. 2 Receiving instruction in one of the formal sessions.



3 Linzi Duff and Lucy Gilchrist enjoying the crevasse rescue training. 4 Nic Wilson, Laura Ladusans, Cat Vizor and Rosie Aldridge on the summit of the Weissmies.

of unassisted alpine routes and nearing being able to apply for their Full AC Membership.

The essence of the Meet was to provide an opportunity for Aspirants to pair up and try famous (or infamous!) alpine routes and 4,000m peaks. This was helped a great deal by some more experienced AC Members also being around (the ‘hangers on’) to share their valuable knowledge and experience with the Aspirants. Nightly dinners at Hotel Schönblick would include maps and guidebooks pulled open and wise words dished out on routes and adventures to be had over the coming days. The help of the hangers on was extremely gratefully received, their kindness and time given really adding to the beautiful part of what mountain craft represents. Like a true apprenticeship, handing knowledge down, we thank all of the hangers on (who are listed below).

Additionally, the AC contributed to funding two days (50% funded) of training for each Aspirant, split into three groups over six days. Training guides, superbly led by Owen Samuel, Rocio Siemens, Neil Mackay and Miles Bright, delivered invaluable skills sessions on crevasse rescue and moving together on ridges, amongst other helpful tips. Being thrown into a crevasse was an exciting highlight for many, as the photos show. The getting out of a crevasse perhaps provided fewer smiles, but the seriousness of the experience

really brought home the importance of the training and having this skillset – ensuring that we learnt how to mitigate the risk of falling into one in the first place.

The training sessions also helped to widen the social mingling side of things. We were paired up by the guides, based on previous individual experience, with others they felt would be a good match. From post-meet feedback, nearly everyone decided that the best part of the Aspirants Meet for the Class of 2024 was getting to know other like-minded humans with an adventurous and enthusiastic spirit. We climbed hard, learnt new things, made some great new friends and above all we had tremendous fun and a lot of laughs. Even the storm and heavy rains that caused a landslide towards the end of the meet (cutting off the Saas valley for a week with a road closure, resulting in some folk being marooned in the valley) did not dampen our spirits. During those days we literally had the mountains to ourselves, which was a real gift. As they say: “keep calm and carry on climbing!”

Aspirant Attendees: Lucie Vosicka, Mike Fletcher, Simon Religa, Lucy Gilchrist, Tom Tushaw, James Cleves, Charlene Gibson, James Punnett, Edward Morris, Nicola Wilson, Jonas Stahlbage, Tom Spencer, Alistair McMaster, Cat Vizor, Daniela Balslev, Ian Roberts, Danny

Valentine, William Nash, Adrian Testa, Milan Mikulejsky, Harriet Sharpe, Jonathan Walter, Lloyd Entwistle, Linzi Duff, Nicholas de Silva, Kasia Wolcz, Nia Weinzwieg, Johannes Kübel, Laura Ladusans, Pinar Tunc, Martin Mandel, Nathan Croll Dawes, Tsz Hin Chan, Daniel Ellis, Rosie Aldridge and Harry Eddols.

Special mention thanks to all the hangers on for their great help, guidance and support throughout the Meet: Christopher Brown, Trevor Campbell Davis, Paul Cooper, Andrew Drury, Jacob Dyer, James Fletcher, Roy Harris, Ben Hickey, Annette Jardine, Nicholas King, Paul McWhinney, Ed Millett, Ethan Jenkins, Richard Nadin, James O’Connor, Sebastian Parr, Philip Jardine, Simon Richardson, Ben Richardson, Damian Rose, Devon Russell, Neil Silver, Nicholas Hurndall Smith, Hannah Marsden, Esther Mary Smith, Miriam Jo Smith, Hannah Vickers, Ewan Wright, Szymon Religa, Adam Phoenix, Michael Edmonstone, Malcolm Streeton, Mark Stitson, Charlie Burbridge, Henry Burbridge, Efe Tunc, James Rigby, Freddy Dorling and Paul Winder.

Mountain Guides: Owen Samuel, Rocio Siemens, Neil Mackay and Miles Bright. ■

BY LUCY GILCHRIST, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM TREVOR CAMPBELL DAVIS, CATHERINE MOOREHEAD AND EMMA MCDONALD

Meet Reports

MALLORY MEET 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2024

100 years after Mallory's disappearance on Everest, I decided to bring together a group of AC and FRCC members with the aim of climbing some of his first ascents in the Lake District.

I went a bit method for this one. No, I didn't become a leading light of UK climbing. I just became very forgetful, very reminiscent of Mallory leaving gear behind in his tent. In my defence, we were moving house the morning we drove up to the Lakes, and I seem to have moved the bags I was supposed to keep too ... Anyway, I had surely kept the spices and fixings for the curry I'd promised to put together, right?!

The weather the week before had been awful across the country, leaving Charlie and Henry Burbridge locked down to their street. Knowing Charlie a little I didn't think this would be an issue, and I was heartened by him saying that 'It is going to make conventional travel challenging at best.' Tymothy also had to pull out, but he had already done the Mallory-Porter on the Midi over the summer, so his Mallory duties were complete really – good effort Tym!

On the Friday I drove up through Kendal and round the south Lakes to stop at a supermarket and buy the last things for the curry (or so I thought!) and we arrived at Bracken-close late afternoon to pitch our tent looking out over West Water while enjoying the view. Bracken-close really is an amazing place and the newly refurbished hut is very good, with excellent showers and dorm rooms. Adèle Long and JB Pilon had enjoyed a day of looking for Mallory's routes on the Napes, thinking they had climbed *Abbey Buttress*, possibly *Mallory's Left Hand*, but more likely *Eagle's Nest* – I think I have this right – but I think they concluded that they weren't really sure. Anyway, they had a good time, with decent weather, and they got stuck in attempting a Mallory route. And it sounds as though it felt like they were on new ground, so all very traditional.

The following day was wet but I went for a walk with my family, Pamela and Adèle, which

ended with a cheeky pint in the pub. I then discovered I'd basically cleared all the curry stuff out of my car by mistake so had to go on the hunt for replacements.

Meanwhile, JB and Freddy climbed *Needle Ridge* while Becca and Danny climbed the Needle itself.

My hunt for supplies was successful and I managed to get the curry made and served on time. We all enjoyed the evening and there was even enough food left for the following day.

On Sunday, Becca and Danny climbed *Tophet Wall*, while Adèle, JB and I climbed *Gagarin*, which is a three-pitch route on Witch Buttress. The first pitch is excellent, and the second is pleasant, but the rock petered out at the end of this pitch and we couldn't find anything resembling the third pitch at all. All we could conclude was that we must have already climbed it as part of pitch two.

Uninspired by the conditions, Freddy headed out for a fell run and Pamela went for a walk.

At the end of the day some of us ate the rest of the curry ahead of the long drive back.

All in all, it was a very pleasant weekend and it was great to be back in this part of the Lakes!

Attendees: *Nigel Buckley, Pamela Holt, JB Pilon, Adèle Long, Danny Valentine, Freddy Dorling, Rebecca Smith, Faye Keegan (guest), Sian Keegan (guest), Aoife Keegan-Buckley (guest).* ■

BY **NIGEL BUCKLEY**



Adèle on the 'second' pitch of *Gagarin*
Photo: Nigel Buckley.



JB on a wet *Needle Ridge*. Photo: Freddy Dorling.



Smiling faces despite the cold.
Photo: Rafal Malczyk.



Sitting down to dinner in the George Starkey. Photo: Nick Simons.

MEET COORDINATORS SKILLS WEEKEND 25-27 OCTOBER 2024

For those of you out there who have been harbouring the desire to introduce other Club members to your favourite climbing destination, then tarry ye no more. The benefits of running a meet for the Alpine Club are both rich and manifold as evidenced by the recent Meet Coordinators Skills Weekend. This was an opportunity for those of us who organise and run Club meets to refresh our technical and safety practices in order to ensure we have the necessary skills on hand in case of emergencies.

The great and the good of the Alpine Club, alongside several less illustrious hangers on, gathered on Friday night at the George Starkey hut for a weekend of advanced ropework and alpine skills tuition. The Club provided three instructors for the weekend and we were able to tap into their rich vein of alpine knowledge. The itinerary was decided upon by the attendees, so everyone was able to tailor the weekend to what they were interested in, and all left having refreshed old skills and learnt new techniques.

The weather played along and we had a

wonderful weekend of autumnal Lake District scenery that was breezy but dry, right up until the point that people were leaving. Our thanks must go to Nick Kekus, Robin Beadle and Becky Coles, our inspirational guides for the weekend, who were all approachable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

The weekend also marked the final meet with the Climbing Sub-Committee under the stewardship of Nick Hurdall Smith. It made for a fitting send off for the huge strides that the Club meets calendar has made with his vision and support. He celebrated his new Club role, and the moving on from his old one, by cooking everyone a huge pasta and sauce meal, ably assisted by Andrew and Adèle who provided crumble and custard as a pudding chaser.

The Club relies on the generosity of its volunteer members in putting forward their time and energy to create such an exciting and vibrant meets programme. Subsidising this skills meet to aid coordinators with their own development is just one of the ways that the Club shows its thanks. There is a huge amount of support and experience in the Club and if you are interested in putting a meet together then I urge you to get in touch. You will be fully



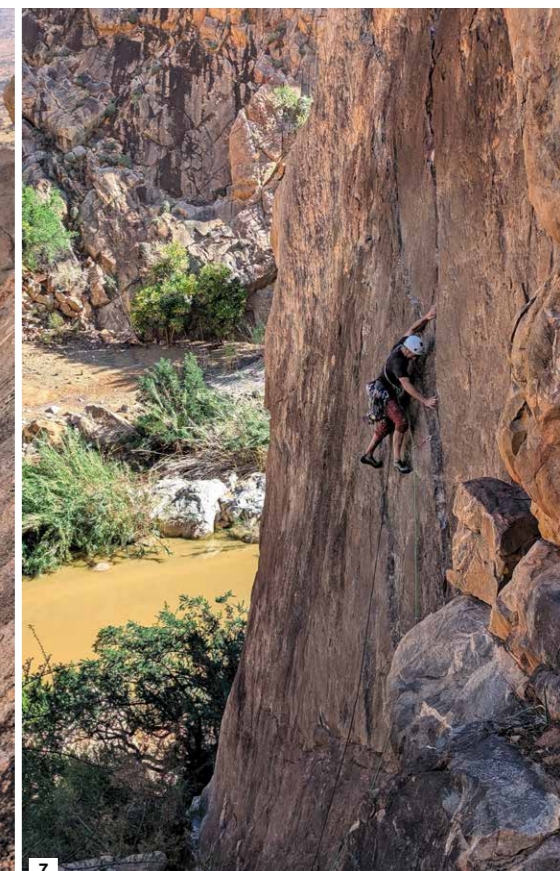
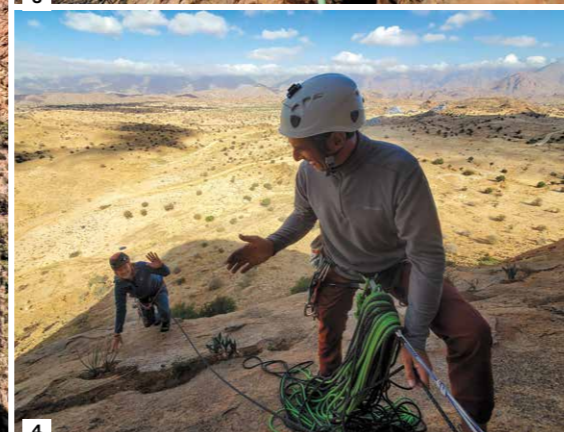
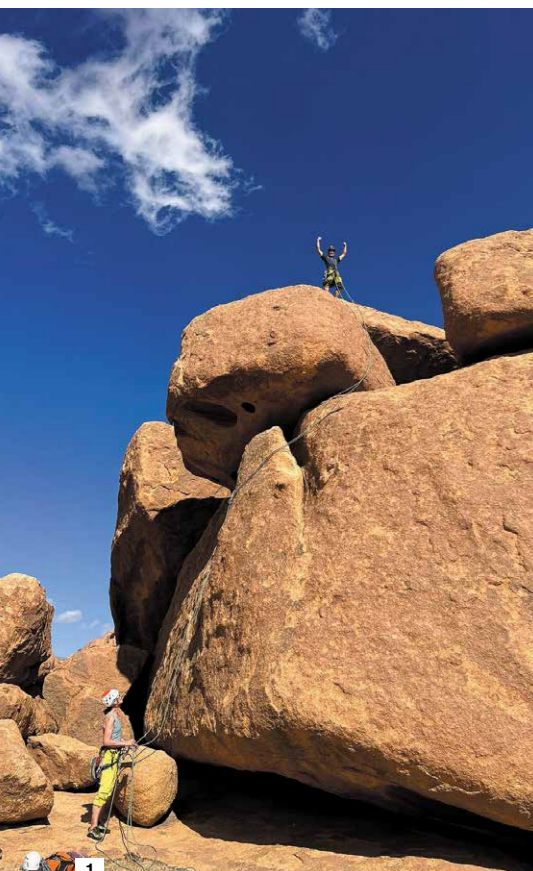
Practicing casualty evacuation. Photo: Mark Stitson.

supported and have the opportunity to help create the varied meets calendar which is the lifeblood of the club.

Attendees: *Meet coordinators – Andrew Drury, Nick Smith, Tom Bell, Efe Tunc, Rafal Malczyk, Mark Stitson, Richard Nadin, Charlene Gibson, Max Streeton, Nick Simons, Adèle Long, Steve Pritchard, Tom Davis-Merry and Andy Stratford Training – Becky Coles, Nick Kekus and Robin Beadle.* ■

BY **TOM BELL**

Meet Reports



1 Dave Palmer atop *High Sierra* with Lins Palmer belaying. Photo: Tess Palmer. 2 Mike Clegg on *Braveheart*, Fig Tree Wall. Photo: Tim Sparrow. 3 Charlene Gibson on *Sun Ribbon Arete*, Robin Hood's Rocks. Photo: Max Streeton. 4 Andy Wigley arriving at Paul Bennett's belay on *Eflodne*. Photo: Tim Sparrow.

5 The unique café at Anergui. Photo: Ann Eden. 6 Oli Birkill, Andy Wigley and Paul Bennett sharing a cosy belay on *Eflodne*. Photo: Tim Sparrow. 7 Paul Bennett on *Oxbow*. Photo: Tim Sparrow.

MOROCCO ANTI-ATLAS MEET 2-16 NOVEMBER 2024

November sees the annual migration of Alpine Clubbers to the sun-kissed quartzite and granite of the Anti-Atlas, keen to escape the dreary UK weather. New guidebooks whetted our appetites as we mustered in the various airports of the UK before arriving in the heat of Agadir. Sun at last. And relax!

Unfortunately, Max and Charlene had to stay in Agadir for several days at the start of the trip to assist in the repatriation of a group member who became ill on arrival in Agadir. The AC emergency team were invaluable in their support, providing a much needed communication bridge between insurance company, medical teams, patient, home contact and meet organiser, to get the member

safely home, where they recovered swiftly. There is a reason behind filling in those essential meet attendance forms!

The well-established schedule of the first week in the Kasbah Tizourgane on the north side of the massif, followed by a second week staying in Tafraout in the Hotel Les Amandiers was again a winning combination. The meet numbers and personnel were more fluid this year, with comers and goers, but the majority enjoyed a full two weeks of climbing in near perfect weather.

The unique Kasbah, a fortified granary now renovated as a hotel, provided its usual welcome, though its unusual timings for food service to hungry guests were not always appreciated. However, we were there for the climbing and what a week we had! Taskra's East Pillars proved popular, though Derek,

Steve, Jon and Ann managed to return to the Kasbah even later than the food after *Pan's Labyrinth*. They later managed a new route on Fever Face in the same area. The White Domes area received plenty of attention, befitting acres of immaculate white quartzite. *The Golden Compass* attracted several teams, while Mike and Tim developed a strange attraction to the wide cracks of *Rock the Kasbah* and *Jaws*. Shepherds Crag was also popular.

For sheer scale and grandeur (and jaw-dropping quantities of rock), the Samazar Valley is hard to beat, so no surprise that many tripped that way. *Scimitar Ridge*, *Brisingr* and *Magnum Force* were highlights. But for sheer dogged persistence, watching Paul Bennett grind his noisy way up the immaculate *Firesword* took some beating. Another fantastic line enjoyed by many was *Braveheart* on Fig

Tree Wall. Its name accurately describes both the climbing and the protection!

And so to bustling and welcoming Tafraout for the second week. Cafés, restaurants, markets, shops, and insistent carpet sellers. Hotel Les Amandiers offers remarkably good value and its welcoming staff, bar, pool, and better-timed food, brought smiles to us all. Perfect. The sun shone most days and the weather was at times cool, so many enjoyed the granite. *Dreamweaver*, *Freeway*, *Arc Royale*, *High Sierra* and *Marble Arch* were all climbed, though we trod carefully after a snake was spotted on a descent route. Robin Hood's Rocks got its usual attention, and *Sun Ribbon Arete* (*Bunny Ears Ridge*) provided entertainment for those true alpinists who don't like the cold. Many enjoyed the enervating drive to Anergui to escape the heat. Upper Eagle,

(but no eagles) and Playground Crag (with its unique café held together by packing tape) entertained most of us.

No Morocco trip is complete without a visit to the Tizgut Gorge, where Oli, Dave and Paul joined in the off-width action with an ascent of the Joe Brown classic *Tizgut Crack*. Derek and Steve endured another long day, struggling to find a suitable descent off the West Wall. And finally, some went exploring out west – Akaltine Edge and Oxbow Walls (with several climbing the immaculate *Oxbow*) and a day seeking out new opportunities in the mighty Amaghouz Gorge ...

The joy of being the only climbers on a huge crag, often alone in a wild valley with only the distant call of a muezzin to remind us of our human connection is one of the unique attractions of climbing here. That and

near perfect weather. No wonder many of us return again and again.

Thanks once again to Marshall Max for organising us all and sorting out any issues that arose.

Attendees: Malcolm 'Max' Streeton (Meet Organiser), Charlene Gibson, Jon Eden, Ann Eden (guest), Dave Palmer, Lins Palmer, Tess Palmer (guest), Oli Birkill, Paul Bennett, Steve Humphries, Luis Puso and Lola (guest), Andy Wigley, Roy Harris, Derek Buckle, Pamela Holt, Ed Norris, Tim Sparrow and Mike Clegg (guest). ■

BY TIM SPARROW

Meet Reports



AGM & ANNUAL DINNER 23-24 NOVEMBER 2024

This year's AGM and Annual Dinner coincided with the Kendal Mountain Festival. With the extremely wet weather which greeted our arrival in Kendal, many members were grateful for the opportunity to wander the festival's 'Base Camp' tent and take in a talk or film ahead of the formal proceedings.

The AGM itself provoked a lively discussion about the incredible diversity of the Club's current programme, developments at the BMC and the ongoing work to update our properties at the George Starkey Hut and Charlotte Road. The AGM was followed by two excellent talks, with Cathy Woodhead discussing the impending release of Denise Evans' autobiography *Reaching Beyond* and Tom Davis-Merry recapping the past two years' Greater Ranges Meets.

The dinner was once again excellently catered by the team at the Castle Green Hotel. The Club was privileged to welcome several guests for the evening, including current president of the Himalayan Club Nandini Purandare, fresh from receiving the Boardman-Tasker Award for her book *Headstrap*, written with Deepa Balsavar.

The Club's principal guest was Tom Livingstone, an AC member and the founder of the Young Alpinist Group. Tom spoke very powerfully about the inspiration he had taken from seeing Wojciech Kurtyka fill the post-dinner slot at a previous AC dinner, before recounting his wildly impressive new route *Edge of Entropy* on the west ridge of Gasherbrum III, which he climbed with Slovenian Aleš Česen. While Tom was typically understated, he did admit that the pair's open bivi at 7,800m was a fairly trying moment in which he and Česen 'fired a few braincells'.

Many thanks to all of the members who attended and made this annual gathering such a special event. The Club is indebted to William Newsom, Sherry Macliver and Ewa Orzechowska for their efforts in putting the weekend together. ■

BY ADAM BUTTERWORTH

1 Tom Livingstone speaking about his first ascent of the west ridge of Gasherbrum III. 2 Sam Poletti, flanked by Victor Saunders and Mick Fowler. 3 Guests from the Young Alpinist Group with AC members Ewan Wright, Tim Yew and Ezra Pierce. 4 AC Treasurer Sam Higginson and Vice-President Tim Elson. 5 Rafal Malczyk and AC Administrator Ewa Orzechowska. 6 Tom Davis-Merry presenting on the AC's Greater Ranges Meet. 7 Retiring Honorary Secretary Sherry Macliver receiving a painting by James Hart Dyke as a thank you for her many years of service. 8 Members old and new. 9 Ronnie Legg, Adele Long and Lina Arthur. 10 Rebecca Stephens (current MEF chair) and her predecessor Duncan Sperry.



Rocky Outcrop Near Manang, Nepal. By Patrick Cullen. Morning Aussois, French Alps. By Peter Brown



Book a visit by scanning this QR code.

CURRENT EXHIBITION: MOUNTAIN PAINTINGS FROM THE NEW ENGLISH ART CLUB

This show will revive a sadly lapsed tradition of the New English Art Club (NEAC) exhibiting at the Alpine Club. Both organisations have a strong mountain art heritage, with travelling and plein air painting forming a major part of the NEAC's activities.

The NEAC's founding members looked across the channel at the French Impressionists and were heavily influenced by their new emphasis on working outdoors, direct from nature. Others looked back a few decades earlier and found inspiration in the travels of their compatriot J M W Turner and especially his pioneering work in the Alps. John Singer Sargent, a founder member, was inspired to travel in Turner's footsteps and painted in Switzerland.

Many other famous members of the NEAC painted mountain scenery, whether or not this was what one most associates them with. These include Duncan Grant, Winifred Nicholson, Paul Nash, Hercules Brabazon Brabazon, Stanley Spencer, Edward Bawden and the late Fred Cumin.

More recently, current member Neil Pittaway has made a number of trips to the Himalaya, as well as to the Atlas Mountains, and some resulting paintings will feature in this exhibition. In 2019

current NEAC President Patrick Cullen travelled to Nepal to complete the Annapurna circuit, painting and sketching as he went. This expedition spawned a number of larger works, some of which will be included in this show. Many other NEAC members will be taking part, including former President Peter Brown, Toby Ward, Jane Corsellis, Ben Hope, Mary Jackson, Julie Jackson, Alex Fowler, Peter Kuhfeld and Julie Held.

Also joining the exhibition will be outstanding mountain artist and Alpine Club member James Hart Dyke, who has agreed to show some work as an honoured guest of the NEAC.

The President of the New English Art Club Patrick Cullen said:

"With the incredible mix of artists taking part, I feel sure this will be a remarkable exhibition and well worth a visit."

'Mountain Paintings from the New English Art Club' will be housed at the Alpine Club's Charlotte Road premises and will run from 20 February to 31 March 2025, with an official opening on the evening of 25 February, which all are welcome to attend.

More generally, the exhibition will be open to visitors from 10:00-16:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as on London lecture evenings.

The Guts to Climb

FROM SINGLE-PITCH CRAGS TO THE PIZ BADILE, ANDREW TAYLOR SHARES HIS JOURNEY OF LEARNING TO CLIMB WITH A STOMA.

We are not very good at talking about toilets and what we do in them. Though we all do the same, some of us do things differently. What follows includes necessary details about what comes out of us, how it comes out of me, and how I manage this in the mountains. Everyone with a stoma is different and has their own experiences. These are mine. I made some mistakes, and I'm sharing so you don't have to make the same.

Rock climbing and mountaineering have been a part of my life since attending Belper High School in Derbyshire in the 1980s. The school produced lots of adventurers and climbers, Alison Hargreaves and Nigel Vardy most famously, but plenty more too. Including me.

Following an accident in the spring of 2011, a series of scans offered an explanation for some long-standing bowel symptoms I'd been dealing with. My bowel was inflamed and scarred and not working as it should. I had surgery to remove the bad bit of bowel, but this led to even more scarring, a total bowel obstruction and unimaginable pain. Further surgery was required, this time to remove the now totally blocked bowel and a 'resection' to staple the good bits together.

I was warned I may need to have a colostomy or ileostomy, often simply called a 'stoma'. I had a vague impression of what this meant. I was terrified of yet further indignity and embarrassment. I Googled, and found a couple of people who were open about their ostomy surgeries, one of whom was a climber. One piece of advice resonated immediately: 'When you go in for surgery, take your climbing harness and ask the surgeon to position your stoma to fit around it.'

The pre-op nurse had never had this request before: 'The surgeon will do what he can. We can't guarantee a stoma will work in that position. Everyone is different on the inside, you know.'

By this time I was feeling very different on the inside.

As it transpired, the surgery did result in an

ileostomy and, luckily, it was placed where we had planned.

The many tears, the pain, discomfort and further indignities of the post-op recovery came and went, along with deep depression around what this change would mean for me. With brilliant support from my partner and wider family, I gradually built up the strength to walk, and to walk further, and then to walk uphill, and then to climb.

Everyone with a stoma is different, but for me, managing a stoma was weird, inconsistent, humiliating. It dominated everything in those first months. I had fixed an embarrassing problem of occasional incontinence by becoming permanently incontinent and constantly, exhaustingly, self-conscious. Dehydration and electrolyte imbalance is a particular problem with an ileostomy. 'Drink plenty and eat crisps' was my doctor's advice.

Climbing regularly with the same partner meant I didn't have to have too many 'I need to tell you something' conversations. On one new route in the Moelwynion, Sam casually shouted up: "Does it matter that your bag fell off?" Looking down I could see it had landed on a ledge just above his head. An unusual kind of 'near miss'. A quick down-climb and my bag was back on. Sam was a few centimetres away from a direct hit to the head with a bag full of shit ...

Somehow Sam kept saying yes to climbing with me and more new routes followed.

Finally fit, I felt ready to get back to the Alps, and to tackle a route that had long been on my wishlist: the Cassin Route on the northeast face of the Piz Badile.

Living now in Scotland, my training involved shunting easy routes at Dumbarton Rock. 30m of easy rock 10 times. Quickly nudging up to 20-30 times a session. I rehydrated with electrolyte solutions and was meticulous in when and what I drank.

August arrived. We drove through France and Switzerland and arrived at the marvellous Camping Acquafreggia. The weather was set fair for 5 days. It was on.

We ate in the hut, but continued on to the bivouac sites below the start of the North Ridge. From here I was managing rehydration with electrolyte / energy gels and water.

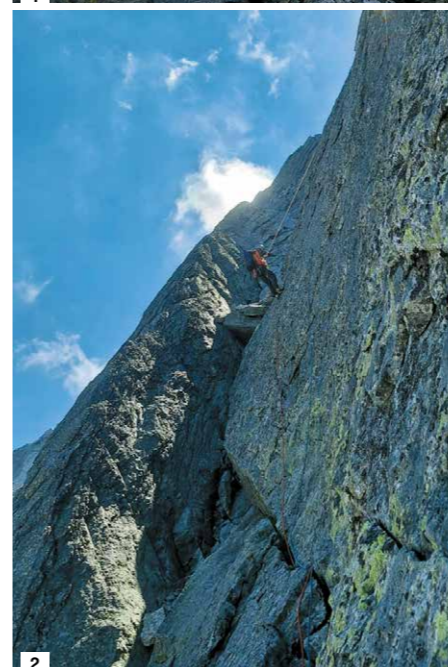
The bivouac proceeded as alpine bivis do. Wake and sleep, wake and sleep. Stars and moon progressing through the sky in snapshots.

4am alarm. Up, and eat – muesli bar, energy gel. We were moving early, but still weren't first on the face. Sam took the first easy rock pitches to below the Diedre Rebuffat and I led the deidre before we switched to simul-climbing for the next 150m or so. Water supply fine, more energy gel.

Sam – the stronger climber – took the three crux pitches above the big ledges. This was feeling hard. I was struggling. Sam pushed through these pitches brilliantly but I was slower again now. Both dehydrated, I led the deep v chimney of the upper crux (It'd be a thrutchy HVS in Wales for the record.) Some fresh graupel in a deep section of chimney filled water bottles and we pushed on. We were both tired and slow now. More water, more energy gel.

More steep, thrutchy stuff followed. Sam led a pitch, I led a pitch, both properly unsure of how we were still moving, but both somehow managing. Some pegs were pulled on. With headtorches back on, I led a final pitch to the ridge. Moving together along the ridge took longer than it should. By the time we reached the highest point on the ridge we realised we weren't going to find the hut and a bivouac spot was picked.

This bivouac did not proceed as bivouacs usually do. We both probably slept a little, but at around 2.30am there was a pop as I shifted positions. The energy gels had done what energy gels do and sped things up. My stoma output had rapidly increased. Pressure had built up. Medical adhesive is brilliant, but it follows the laws of physics. The pressure had released, the bag adhesive had blown and a large portion of the contents of my bag had spurting out. Very liquid, very quick to cover almost everything I was wearing.



1 Andy on the summit after the 'shit' bivy. 2 Andy abseiling the North Ridge without his stoma bag.

3 The well-earned breakfast. Photos: Sam Hawkins.



Andy seconding the first hard pitch. Photo: Sam Hawkins.

'Shit!' Literal and everywhere. Unhealthy ileostomy output, corrupted by energy gels and green with bile, is foul stuff. My training had not included trialling dietary elements. A major oversight. Somehow I cleaned what I could and reapplied the spare stoma bag I had. Daylight came with a sunrise clear and pure. We reached the summit spike and then the hut, where we slept.

We were up by 10.30am, heading back along the ridge. The abseils went very smoothly – the new abseil points are carefully planned, but Sam's attention to detail here was fantastic.

There is a point where the ridge abseil takes you immediately over a large overhang onto the northwest side. Sam went down, clipped the next belay, and I followed. Going over the lip I pivoted sideways, my ileostomy bag caught on the edge and was dislodged. I attempted a quick fix, and continued down. My bag was, by now, properly coming off and my only remaining spares were back at the bivi.

So here we were, Sam and I. Poor Sam. I apologised too many times. Around 500m of abseil remained, only I now had an entirely unprotected ileostomy trickling vile, greenish liquid out into the world, through my shirt and down my leg.

Stoma output is very acidic and soon the unprotected skin around the stoma was beginning to blister. I was so angry with myself – so much training, so much preparation, yet I had neglected something which even in day-to-day life I manage carefully. Big, BIG learning point. Always plan mountain diets, and always test them in advance.

The last few abseils led us down to the start ledge and then to the bivi kit. By now I was streaked with green bile, but I had given up apologising out loud. Sam had managed the abs pretty much single-handedly and had somehow coped with my physical and emotional mess. If you have a stoma and you want to climb, you need a partner like Sam.

I quickly found my spare stoma bags and other kit and got immediate relief. We'd been obsessing about a hut dinner all the way down, but instead we simply lay down and slept.

The stars turned, the moon rose and set, and breakfast time came. Sasc Fura breakfasts? We had two each, with coffee. Heaven.

So why have I shared all this? Essentially, I don't want others in the same situation to feel a stoma is the end of their climbing. I want to demonstrate what is possible, and share some of my stoma-specific learning so others can avoid my mistakes.

Was this the first ileostomy ascent of one of the classic north faces of the Alps? I can't say it was, but I can't find other reports. That's not the point of course. The point is that climbers come in all shapes and sizes, with disabilities and impairments, and with various ways of emptying bowels and bladders.

Since my surgery, Mick Fowler has been public about his colostomy, and is still doing Himalayan first ascents. That's fantastic! There are a handful of other climbers who are public about their ostomies. So part of my purpose is also to try and find others in my position who want a similar challenge in the future.

What's next for me? Rock has always been my thing, not ice. The great north faces of the Alps may be where I look. I'm going back to a list of dream routes I made long before I had a stoma. So – a call out to the stoma climbing community – *Beckey-Chouinard* on the South Howser Spire anyone? Lotus Flower Tower? New routes on the granite of the English Mountains, Labrador?

And look, I promise, this time I won't be taking any energy gels. ■

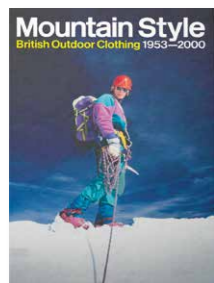
BY ANDREW TAYLOR

Andy is Chair of the Adventurous Activities Advisory Committee and instigated the production of guidance for outdoor instructors on managing toileting in the outdoors. Of course, this includes managing people with ostomies, and will be available in early 2025. He can be contacted at:

andrewtaylor@care4free.net

Mountain Culture

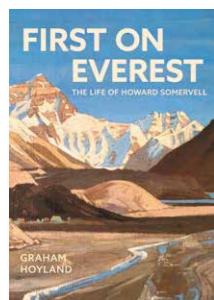
NEW BOOKS



Mountain Style

In this sumptuous coffee table book, AC member Henry Iddon and noted outdoor writer Max Leonard trace the history of British outdoor clothing, examining its explosion following the first ascent of Everest in 1953, the expansion of British companies into global brands and its relationship with rave and sporting sub-cultures.

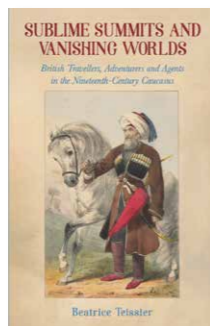
Published by Isola Press, *Mountain Style* is on sale now.



First on Everest

By any standard, Howard Somervell lived a remarkable life. He was not only a surgeon, but an artist, a First World War veteran, gold medal recipient, member of the 1922 and 1924 Mount Everest expeditions and a president of the Alpine Club. These, and his many other achievements, are the focus of a new biography from AC member Graham Hoyland.

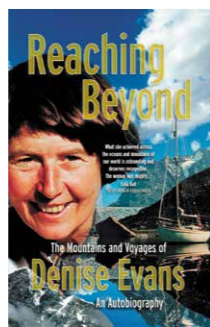
First on Everest is published by The History Press and will be available in hardback and eBook from 22 May 2025.



Sublime Summits and Vanishing Worlds

This new academic work from Beatrice Teissier offers a deep dive into British involvement in the Caucasus during the 19th Century. The text will be of particular interest to those with a passion for the range and features a chapter dedicated to mountaineers.

Sublime Summits and Vanishing Worlds is out now in paperback from Signal Books.



Reaching Beyond

To date, Denise Evans remains the only woman to have served as president of the Alpine Club. Her pioneering life is now finally told on the page with the publication of her autobiography *Reaching Beyond*, which, alongside her personal life, details her exploits as a climber and sailor.

Brought to press by AC member Cathy Woodhead, *Reaching Beyond* is available now.

rock shelf beneath her feet or the underside of a leaf. To express this way of seeing the world, Cousins makes his camera an active participant in the storytelling, the camera's view frequently coming to embody either his perspective or that of an imagined Barns-Graham.

As the story approaches the pivotal moment in Wilhelmina's life when she was 'infected', in the words of the film, by a moment of deep artistic inspiration at the Grindelwald Glacier – the 'sudden glimpse to deeper things' of the title – we are asked to look as though through Barns-Graham's eyes as she ascends the path to the glacier. The camera sways back and forth to the rhythm of her walking, focussed on the earth beneath her feet as the sound design surrounds us with the noise of her breathing, difficult for Wilhelmina from her youth due to a weakness of the lungs.

These moments of immersion in Barns-Graham's perspective are unquestionably the film's creative peak, offering us a sense of the artist beyond what it is possible to understand from the mere facts of a life. Yet it is hard not to feel that Cousins is a little too enamoured of this approach and these

sequences, while effective, also frequently outstay their welcome.

The film as a whole is extremely light on outside contributions. Tilda Swinton provides the occasional diary reading as Barns-Graham and real-life recordings are dusted off at intervals, but the only real talking head is Lynne Green who authored *W. Barns Graham: A Studio Life*, a monograph detailing Wilhelmina's life and work. Green's contributions are, amongst the kaleidoscopic swirls of the first-person camera and Cousins' own wedged-in vignettes, rare islands of connection and insight that break the insularity of much of the film.

It is through Green that we learn of Barns-Graham's synesthesia, a fact that allows Cousins to trace the origins of her style through old grid paper notebooks redolent with the coloured blocks that will define periods of her career.

Yet this conventional examination of the artist's style is uncommon in the film as a whole, despite its complementary impact on the more esoteric segments. One is left to wonder if Cousins is simply committed to

his style or whether he found less to explore than he had hoped and so felt the need to pad the material into a dialogue between himself and Barns-Graham.

This is not to say that the film is without value. Barns-Graham is an important figure and her long periods of glacier-focussed work make her vital for any student of alpine art. It is to be celebrated that a film can put so many of her paintings up on screen for established audiences and new fans alike to discover. That her art is being reappraised and her status elevated from the position of 'also-ran', in which she was placed by her critics and some of her contemporaries, is also very welcome. Yet one cannot help but feel that any reappraisal would be more successful if it took the time to consider not just the artist's eye and that of the filmmaker, but of others who connect with and celebrate the work. ■

FILM REVIEW

A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things (2024)

BFI Player, 88 minutes

Northern Irish filmmaker Mark Cousins has made a career from examining the ways in which creative people perceive the world. His documentaries of filmmakers, artists and the medium of film itself have an obsession with the act of looking. That obsession is frequently reflected in the titles of his films: *The Eyes of Orson Welles*, *The Story of Looking* and his latest work *A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things*.

A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things is ostensibly a profile of British abstractionist Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, but lands somewhere between a conventional documentary, an artistic experiment and Cousins' personal response to her as an artist. The biographical details of Barns-Graham's life are present within the film, but they frequently take a back seat to a more immersive approach to exploring her creative process.

As the film makes clear, Barns-Graham was an individual who saw the world in unusual ways; a reality reflected in both the subjects and style of her work. In a repeated refrain, Cousins notes how she was inclined to 'look down' where other artists would look up, focussing on the structure of the



The Pioneering Pensioners



Yawash Sar

Royal Geographical Society, London
6.30pm - 8.30pm
27 March 2025

Now in their 7th and 8th decades, legendary mountaineers **Mick Fowler** and **Victor Saunders** show no signs of slowing down.

In 2024 they became the first team to summit Yawash Sar, a 6258m peak in Pakistan, in a committing 7-day climb.

On **27 March**, for **one night only**, they will be speaking about the climb, and the more than 40 years they've shared in the mountains, at the **Royal Geographical Society** in London.

Tickets are on sale now via the following QR code:



On the Horizon

UPCOMING MEETS

AC/LAC 50TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND MEET 28–30 March 2025

50 years on from the merger of the Alpine Club and the Ladies' Alpine Club, we are taking the opportunity to celebrate this step forward for inclusivity within the AC with a weekend climbing meet at the Corran Bunkhouse. The meet is being organised by female members of the Club and is open to all members. There will be a celebration to mark the anniversary on the Saturday night.

Adèle Long: adele.long@gmail.com
Linzi Duff: linziduff@hotmail.co.uk

DAV/AC NORTH WALES MEET 5–12 April 2025

After members of the Wetzlar section of the Deutscher Alpenverein (DAV) hosted AC members in the Pfalz in 2023, this meet sees the AC take over hosting duties as we introduce our German guests to the outstanding and diverse climbing of North Wales.

Nick Simons: nickfletcheractor@live.co.uk

RICK ALLEN SKILLS AWARD LAKE DISTRICT TRAINING WEEKEND 2–5 May 2025

This training weekend for recipients of the 2025 Rick Allen Skills Award is also open to members who wish to sit in on the hut-based sessions and undertake their own climbing/walking activities. RASA recipients will receive details of the weekend directly, while others who wish to attend should book using the contact details below.

Tom Davis-Merry:
tom.davis-merry@outlook.com

2025 ALADAĞLAR MEET 3–18 May 2025

Located three hours southeast of Ankara in central Anatolia, the Aladağlar Massif offers alpine climbing up to 3,800m and rock climbing in a unique setting. The Club has had several successful trips to the region in recent years and is returning to Aladağlar Bungalows in Nigde, from where members can choose from a range of climbing options.

Efe Tunc: dr.efetunc@gmail.com

SCOTTISH SPRING MEET 2025 17–31 May 2025

Based in Gairloch, this meet offers easy access to Torridon, as well as other nearby ranges, for climbing, scrambling and walking. Members can join for the full two weeks or pop in for a shorter break.

Malcolm Streeton:
malcolm_streeton@fastmail.fm

UK ALPINE INTRODUCTORY MEET 23–25 May 2025

Based at the Club's George Starkey Hut in Patterdale, this is a skills transfer meet focussing on providing guidance to Aspirant Members who wish to improve their alpine skills and to Full Members in need of a refresher after a break from alpine climbing.

Nigel Buckley: njbuckley5@gmail.com
John Da Silva: john.dasilva3@gmail.com

EARLY SUMMER YOUNGER MEMBERS' MEET 30 May–1 June 2025

The purpose of this meet, based at the George Starkey Hut in Patterdale, is to

provide young members with the opportunity to meet- and climb with – other young members. Therefore this meet is open to all members under the age of 40, whether Aspirants, Full Members, or ACG.

Lina Arthur: lina@localstorm.co.uk
Tom Shaw: tomtomshawshaw@hotmail.co.uk

AC OGWEN VALLEY MEET 6–8 June 2025

An alpine-themed meet based at the MAM hut in the Ogwen valley. There's opportunity for general climbing and scrambling, as well as more ambitious undertakings such as the Welsh 3,000ers.

Andy Stratford: stratfordac@outlook.com

AC SUMMER MEET 2025 21 June–5 July 2025

This year, we will be visiting Vicosoprano in the Bregaglia where members will be able to tackle classic objectives such as the Badile and the Bernina. The meet will be based at Camping Mulina below the Maloja Pass where an area of the site will be allocated to us. Please book directly with the campsite and put in the comments box that you are 'with the British Alpine Club'.

Paul McWhinney:
ac.summer.meet@gmail.com

GRAN SASSO MEET 2025 12–20 July 2025

After a successful 2024 meet, we are returning to this brilliant Italian venue, and its pristine limestone, for more high quality alpine rock routes and even higher quality Italian cooking.

Gordon Chisholm:
gordon.k.chisholm@gmail.com

UPCOMING LECTURES

SEBASTIAN WOLFRUM – MOUNTAINS AND MOUNTAINEERING IN THE PHILIPPINES 11 March 2025

Alpine Club, Charlotte Road, London

Whilst the Philippines are devoid of glaciated ranges or highly technical summits, the archipelago is nonetheless home to hundreds of mountains. Sebastian will present an overview of the mountains of the Philippines, touching on the local mountaineering scene, as well as on the ecological richness of these rainforest-covered peaks.

IAIN YOUNG AND KENNY BROOKMAN – SOUTH GEORGIA: COLD MOUNTAINS, HIGH WINDS AND BIG SEAS 11 March 2025

Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Street, Edinburgh

Iain Young and Kenny Brookman present an account of their recent expedition to South Georgia, or "How to fail early, yet have the best time, in the worst weather, on one of the loneliest islands on the planet".

VERONICA LEGG – AMA DABLAM BY AN AVERAGE JOSEPHINE 12 March 2025

Upper Room of the Nova Scotia pub, Hotwells, Bristol

Ronnie talks about a first-time trip to the Himalaya, and what it takes for a "5'4" female with distinctly average climbing ability" to get up a technical 6,812m peak. Plus lots of photos of arguably the most beautiful mountain in the world!

INSPIRING ASPIRANTS 13 March 2025

Skiddaw Hotel Greta Suite, Main Street, Keswick

For this special event, we are joined by three recent graduates of the AC's Aspirants Meet who will be discussing their experiences of the meet and/or telling us about the places it has led them, from Scottish winter climbs to the Greater Ranges.

BOB BARTON – KALANKA BY THE RISHI GORGE 25 March 2025

Alpine Club, Charlotte Road, London

Bob will describe a 1978 ascent of Kalanka (6997m) in the Garwhal Himalaya made with Allen Fyffe. A classic 'uncertain 'til the last' mountaineering experience which featured a memorable nocturnal encounter with a snow leopard.

NICHOLAS HAVELY – SOME PEAKS AND TROUGHS IN THE TUSCAN APENNINES 8 April 2025

Alpine Club, Charlotte Road, London

In 2001-3, Nick walked about 400km along the route of the 'Grande Escursione Appenninica'. The narrative of his trek forms the frame for stories of many earlier journeys in the range, from medieval to modern times, as he shares how the region has played host to famous poets and unknown soldiers.

ALISON JEAN LESTER – RETURN TO THE SCENE OF THE CLIMB 13 May 2025

Alpine Club, Charlotte Road, London

Novelist Alison Jean Lester, daughter of the late James T. Lester, an American psychologist who accompanied the first American expedition to Mount Everest in 1963, will offer a talk and slideshow about *Return to the Scene of the Climb*, her father's previously unpublished writing and photography about the expedition and the relationships he formed with the team's Sherpa climbers.

TITO AROSIO – PHURBI CHYACHU AND THE UNEXPLORED HEIGHTS OF THE JUGAL HIMAL 27 May 2025

Alpine Club, Charlotte Road, London

Tito will recount his recent climb of Phurbi Chyachu (6637m) in the Jugal Himal, where he ascended the Japanese Spur in alpine style. The lecture will also explore the broader climbing history and untapped potential of this lesser-known Himalayan range.

up close & personal

One of those perfect Scottish days – skiing powder on Ben Hope



1 Demonstrating a jump turn. 2 Instructing in Norway. 3 A young Alison competing in Scotland.

UP CLOSE WITH SKI INSTRUCTOR ALISON THACKER



AC member Alison Thacker is a former ski competitor who works as a ski instructor, splitting her time between Chamonix, Scotland and Norway. We caught up with Alison to find out a little more about her work, her passion for ski mountaineering and her new practical guide to off-piste skiing.

Could you tell readers a little about your early experiences of skiing?

My parents introduced me to skiing when I was aged 2 by taking my sister and I to a small hill on our local golf course which on snowy days would be full of sledgers and winter sports enthusiasts. They then took us to The Lecht, Scotland where I thought the purpose of skiing was to go up the lifts (as I enjoyed this so much) and you only skied down so that you could go up again!

Throughout my school years we would go to The Lecht almost every weekend through winter, which sometimes started in October and would finish in April. During this time, I became involved in ski racing and travelled abroad for training camps and races. My memory is that the conditions in Scotland became more variable through my teenage years, as the certainty of snow was no longer guaranteed.

How did you discover more adventurous ski mountaineering and can you tell us about some of your best mountaineering experiences on skis?

I'm a keen hillwalker and climber so when I became aware of ski mountaineering this seemed a natural progression for me. For my BASI instructional qualification there is a Mountain Safety course to complete which I did in Chamonix in 2001. This was my first introduction to Chamonix and ski touring, and I think I knew following that course that my path in skiing was diverging away from ski racing and would take me into more mountainous terrain and away from the lifts.

Skiing in Norway has always been special to me, providing me with some of my fondest ski experiences. There is a couloir on the Lyngen Peninsula 'The Godmother' which for us entailed a three-hour boulder strewn and boggy walk in, half an hour of skinning, three further hours boot packing in knee-deep powder, for a 10-minute ski before enduring the 3-hour walk out. I thought it was worth it!

Closer to home, any day skiing in Scotland is memorable as rock and heather free descents are becoming increasingly rare. When

conditions in Scotland are good and you can enjoy the view, the ski touring can be world class, as long as you don't mind a walk to get to the snowline. Skiing *Number Two Gully* on Ben Nevis has a similar feeling to skiing a couloir in the Dolomites, only a little shorter.

When you're working with clients what are the things people most want to learn about skiing off-piste?

There are two common scenarios that I come across numerous times every season. The first goes something along the lines of 'I ski fine on-piste but I seem to really struggle off-piste and can't work out the technique for it'. This suggests to me that what they are doing on-piste works, but there are areas for development which will make skiing off-piste less of a struggle. Often, it's a case of developing on-piste skiing skills with a view to deploying them when skiing off-piste.

The other common scenario is clients wanting to learn how to ski in crust. For climbers, this could be likened to saying 'I'd like to climb E9'. Now this may be achievable but it all depends on your starting point. If you are currently climbing VDiff, this is unlikely to be achievable in a week's course. Crust is the most challenging snow type to ski and, in simple terms, the better a skier you become, the easier crust will be. It takes years of refinement, practice,

and both physical and mental preparation to be skilful in crust. If there was one quick fix then we'd all be able to ski it (and I would have less work!). It will be quicker (and often safer) to learn how to recognise and avoid crust, rather than become a master in skiing it.

You've alluded to the changing nature of ski conditions and ski seasons. How do you see our approach to skiing changing in light of the climate crisis? Will we all be joining you in Norway in search of snow?

There's how do I see our approach to skiing changing and how do I think it should change. I find myself morally torn between my love of skiing and the fact that pursuing that love has a significant detrimental impact on the planet. When I look at the current situation, I believe we should focus on pursuing sports and activities that are close to our homes and have less environmental impact. Equally, I am acutely aware that such an approach would exclude many from skiing and I am mindful of the health, social and financial benefits that skiing can bring. I'm not a scientist but I am in no doubt that our approach will have to change, with increasing flexibility on how, when and where we ski and ski opportunities becoming increasingly variable.

Your new book 'Off-Piste Performance' is billed as a practical manual for skiers. Who do you envision

using the book and what do you hope they take away from it?

I hope that the book will appeal to all off-piste skiers, from those who are contemplating venturing into off-piste for the first time, to those that are already experienced off-piste skiers and professionals. There is something in there for everyone.

I have written the book that I wish I'd had 20 years ago, but also a book that I will use myself in the future. I envisage that skiers will use the book in a variety of ways from dipping into it throughout the ski season, reading before or after having some lessons to reinforce learning or when practicing for specific snow conditions. Throughout the book are 'lightbulb moments', which are quotes from skiers who I have had the pleasure to work with. I hope that readers will come away with their own lightbulb moments from the book, helping to take their skiing to the next level.

Guides to practical skills often face the challenge of translating complex physical movements into text and diagrams. How did you find the process of putting practical skills onto the page?

Immensely challenging! This was one of the reasons for resisting suggestions that I should

write a book for so long! Then I found myself using similar books for my other sports – climbing, swimming, mountain biking, and found that they helped me, so my perception about the ability to learn from a book changed.

Taking, sorting and editing photos proved difficult and I was fortunate to work with three very patient photographers. I often say to skiers that photos should rarely be used for analysis as it shows a static skier. Video is a much better tool as it shows the movement. I have thousands of less than ideal photos of me skiing. To get a good one, the angle and timing needs precision. In the book I have sequences of photos which aim to overcome the static problem and show the movement.

When writing, my mantra became 'let the photos do the talking and the words are there to support the images'. I also tried to use the same words and language that I use when I teach, aiming for the book to sound like the coaching that I would deliver on the hill. ■

QUESTIONS BY ADAM BUTTERWORTH
WORDS BY ALISON THACKER

Off Piste Performance: Essential Knowledge for off-piste skiers, published by Pesda Press, is on sale now.



Write!

WRITE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

As well as the latest news about what's going on in the AC, the Club wants the Newsletter to be a way for members to share their stories, knowledge and opinions.

If you'd be interested in writing something for the Newsletter, drop a line to the editor at: media@alpineclub.org

Pieces are generally 800–1,000 words in length and should be accompanied, wherever possible, with relevant images.

Maybe you'd like to shine a spotlight on a region you've visited, recount a particularly memorable experience or share your expertise on a mountain-related topic. Whatever it is, we'd love to hear from you.

We also have several regular segments for which we're always delighted to receive submissions:

Mountain Futures – For features relating to the mountain environment, flora, fauna, climate change, impact reduction, technological developments, ethical positions and conservation.

Back in the Day – Short stories from the past that deserve to be retold or which have lessons for the present day. The sort of tale you'd share over a post-climb pint.

The Bigger Picture – A brief overview of an artistic or photographic work relating to the mountains. Perhaps it's a favourite piece or it tells us something about how we relate to the mountain environment.



Film Reviews – Takes on new releases with a climbing or outdoor focus.

So if you have something you'd like to write, don't hesitate to get in touch. All pitches are gratefully received and will be read and replied to in a timely fashion.



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