

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1921)
Heft: 21

Artikel: Bronze memorial plate fixed to Britannia
Autor: Dimier, Georges
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690730>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Bronze Memorial Plate fixed to Britannia Hut on the Hinter Allalin above Saas Fee, Valais.

We are indebted to our compatriot, Mr. GEORGES DIMIER, for the following interesting and minute report of the unveiling ceremony of the Mountain Memorial, erected at an altitude of 10,000 feet, as a Swiss tribute to the British who fell in the Great War.

Mr. Dimier writes:—

On Wednesday, 17th of August, 1921, members of the "Alpine Club," the "Swiss Alpine Club" and the "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club" assembled to attend the ceremony of dedication of a bronze memorial plate bearing the following inscription:—

À LA MÉMOIRE

DES MEMBRES BRITANNIQUES DU C.A.S.

TOMBÉS AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR

1914—1918

PRÉSENTÉ PAR LA SECTION DE GENÈVE

DU

CLUB ALPINE SUISSE

AOÛT 1921.

On Tuesday, the 16th instant, 15 Genevese members of the C.A.S. started from Saas Fee for the Britannia Hut (built in 1912 and presented to the Geneva Section on August 17th, 1912, by the "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club") for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements for the ceremony of the day following.

At 6 a.m. Wednesday morning some seventy alpinists, accompanied by 30 guides, set out from Saas Fee to climb up to the Britannia Hut, a journey of between four or five hours, necessitating the traversing of glaciers and snow fields where the assistance of the guides and their ropes was badly needed and welcome.

Although the weather was beautiful in Saas Fee, by the time the eternal snow region was reached we were enveloped by a mist which made the atmospheric conditions quite cold and chilly. However, by 11.30 a.m. over a hundred ladies and gentlemen had reached the Hut without any mishap, and a hot cup of tea soon stimulated appetite for a well-earned and splendidly served cold luncheon, which, in conjunction with 'Fendant du Valais,' quickly raised the bodily temperature.

The firing of a gun at 12.30 intimated to the assembly that the unveiling ceremony demanded their exit from the Hut, and out we stepped into the cold and inhospitable fog, perhaps an appropriate—if not congenial—atmospheric condition, recalling to the mind those dark days of which, alas, our present meeting was the consequence.

Among those who were present at the Consecration Ceremony at the Britannia Hut were:—

General the Hon. C. G. Bruce, C.B., M.V.O. (A.C., S.A.C.)
The Rev. G. H. Lancaster, S.A.C.
Egmond d'Arcis, C.A.S., Geneva, Hon. Member B.A.M.
S.A.C.

F. Beck, S.A.C.
Ch. Boveyron, S.A.C.
W. M. Brooke, S.A.C.
J. A. B. Bruce, A.C., C.A.S.
J. D. Cargill, S.A.C.
Georges Dimier, C.A.S., C.A.L., A.C.
P. M. Dixon
Dr. T. B. Dixon.
E. J. S. Donner.
Euen Drew.
Dr. L. Dübi, C.A.S., Hon. Member A.C.
Leon Dufour, S.A.C.
Em. A. Dunaud, C.A.S.
D. McAdam Eccles.
J. Eggermann, C.A.S.
Madame N. Eggermann, Member of Central Committee
"Club Suisse de Femmes Alpinistes."
Francis N. Ellis, A.C., C.A.S.
Alice Ellwood.
L. A. Ellwood, C.A.F.
T. A. Ellwood.

Kate E. Fanner.
Margaret Fechteler.
E. Fiala, C.A.S.
F. Fiala.
H. Gallay, S.A.C.
Emile Geneux, C.A.S.
Adeline E. Godfrey.
F. N. Goggs.
F. S. Goggs, A.C., S.M.C.
John Graff, S.A.C., A.A.C.F.
Reginald Graham, A.C., S.A.C.
R. B. Graham.
E. Impfeng.
R. V. Johnson.
Charles Lamb, S.A.C.
Dora J. K. Lancaster.
Hylida M. Lancaster.
Margarite King Stephens.
May Konody.
O. Konody, S.A.C.
J. S. Maclay.
André Monod.
Cécile Morin.
M. J. Mounsey.
W. A. Mounsey, A.C., S.M.C.
A. L. Mumm, Vice-President A.C.
H. E. Newton, A.C., S.A.C.
B. F. K. O'Malley, A.C., S.A.C.
L. W. Paul, S.A.C.
Alfred Pestalozzi.
H. S. Rawson.
J. L. Renaud, C.A.S.
J. P. Thomson, C.A.S.
P. J. H. Unna, S.A.C., A.C., S.M.C.
Alph. Vaucher, C.A.S.
May G. Woolrych.
A. C. Woolrych.
S. H. C. Woolrych.
Ch. Ybloux, C.A.S.

M. EGMOND D'ARCIS, a former President of the Geneva Section of the "Club Alpine Suisse," then opened the dedication ceremony with the following speech:—

"I have been entrusted by the Geneva Section of the S.A.C. not only with the great honour of acting as its representative, but also with that of unveiling in its name the commemoration tablet by which we pay our tribute of respect to the memory of our British Members fallen during the Great War.

I must first of all convey to you the greetings and good wishes of Dr. Doret, President of the Geneva Section, and Dr. Tschopp, Central President, who are both, unfortunately, prevented by their duties from being present at this ceremony; both have asked me to express their regret at their enforced absence.

It was at the beginning of the War, in the autumn of 1914, that the idea originated in Geneva of expressing in a tangible form the friendship and the admiration that we felt for the chivalrous attitude of Great Britain in entering the War, so as to loyally uphold her obligation to Belgium, like our own, a neutral country, and the sad fate of which could have been ours.

We then realised what the friendship of the English was worth, a friendship which is not readily bestowed, but when once given is staunch and true through fair weather and foul.

Though our political situation has been very difficult in the course of the Great War, and though our neutrality has been misjudged by many, we have nevertheless felt that over there, on the other side of the Channel, friends were watching over us, safeguarding us and also fighting and dying for us.

In the black days of the War, when we felt catastrophe approaching, we have been comforted, encouraged by your strong friendship, and saved more than once from terrible complications by your influence and intervention, and amongst all the English, you, brothers of the S.A.C., of which you are faithful members, have been the truest of our true friends, you have been our most faithful supporters, and that is why we wished to consecrate the memory of these sorrowful hours and to bring to you a token of our friendship and gratitude.

To those survivors of the War, to you, dear brothers, each day we can prove our gratitude in one way or another. You know our great esteem for you, there is no necessity to repeat it, for our friendship is not a thing of to-day, it has grown through centuries since those days long past when England came to the help of Reformed Switzerland and upheld the Swiss Confederation with an admirable disinterestedness when she was menaced by neighbouring powers.

But to-day we wish, without forgetting the living—those who will build the world of to-morrow—to address our homage to the dead, to those who have fallen to save the menaced world of yesterday. It is to those among you who have generously shed their blood for humanity and for liberty that we dedicate to-day, exactly nine years since the inauguration of Britannia here on August 17th, 1912, this modest monument of our gratitude and admiration. Last Thursday, when I went down Whitehall, I saw before the Cenotaph a mixed company of people who, amidst the whirl of London traffic, were silently engrossed in paying their respects to the dead. Before this monument, before the flags floating in the wind, men and women from all quarters of the land stood there motionless, bareheaded, serious, deeply moved; some women deposited a bunch of flowers, sometimes but a single flower, at the foot of the Cenotaph, and this silent homage, great in its simplicity, profoundly impressed me. It was the tribute of a people to its gallant defenders; it was the moving token of the love of relatives and friends for those whom the terrible War has taken from them, and we also, on this day, address our respectful homage to our friends of the S.A.C., to those who have struggled and suffered, to those who have bravely fallen at the call of duty, to those whose sacrifices have been our salvation, to those who have died for a noble ideal, who have perished for that liberty which for centuries has been cultivated by both our nations. Their sacrifice is the much more meritorious because they voluntarily defended their country and the liberty of democracy, not because they were impelled by any law, but because they were constrained by their sentiment of duty and by their love of the ideal of justice.

That they have not voluntarily sacrificed themselves to satisfy the ambitions of a ruler, that they have not fought for conquest or gain, but that they have struggled for the liberation of nations and to ensure the liberty of men as well as the world-peace: this it is which renders their sacrifice so noble.

At times we ask ourselves if the death of all those heroes has not been in vain, if their efforts have not been useless. The peace which everyone has so ardently desired seems so far off. The world has not found its equilibrium; it hesitates, it gropes its way, it is tempest-bound and driven by every adverse wind that blows. But the glorious dead have not perished in vain. They have saved us from disaster; they have shown us the value of sacrifice; they say to us, "We have died for you; we have sacrificed ourselves that you may be able to reconstruct the world on new foundations; it is for you to work now, you, the living, and to struggle that our sacrifice may not be fruitless." Truly, it is for us to remake the world, though, alas, personal interests, ambitions, passions hinder us from accomplishing our task. Nevertheless, we are responsible before posterity, who will demand an account of our stewardship. Let us then show ourselves worthy of the task which we have to accomplish.

It is difficult; it demands from us prodigious energy and sacrifice. We must not fear to devote all our efforts to this aim. We should try also to free ourselves from those narrow limits which make for jealousy, selfishness and over-weening ambition and strive to attain a higher and wider outlook on life, that we may work for the good of humanity, for the ideal of love, justice and liberty which alone can enable the world to readjust itself after this terrific upheaval.

We who love the Alps, where can we be better inspired than in the midst of these magnificent mountains! which teach us in the course of our climbs the need of energy, of patience and the love of our neighbour.

This modest monument could not be better placed, far from the world, far from human passions, where nature herself speaks to our souls, the symbol of the calm of eternity. This monument is suitably placed amid these eternal snows, for those whose memory it recalls, passionately loved the mountains, and their remembrance will always remain associated with these Alps, which like them have in olden times rolled back the invader.

May this tablet remain here as long as the Alps endure, as a monument raised by Friendship to Courage, as an eternal token of Gratitude to Sacrifice.

Glory to the Dead! May their souls rest in peace! May

their memory be honoured for ever by all those who come up here and who, passing before this bronze tablet, will say to themselves: "These are they who sacrificed themselves for their country, for humanity, for their friends. 'Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Honour to them. Truly they were men! Let us follow in their footsteps, struggle ever for good, for justice and for liberty."

General Bruce, I hand you over on behalf of the Section Genèveise du C.A.S. this tablet erected to the memory and glory of the British members fallen during the Great War, and I pray you, General, to consider it a tribute of gratitude and admiration from your Swiss friends."

The speech of M. d'Arcis was responded to by General the Hon. C. G. BRUCE, C.B., M.V.O., who said:—

"Mr. D'Arcis and our esteemed colleagues of the Geneva Section of the S.A.C.

I thank you on behalf of the British Members of the S.A.C. for this beautiful testimony of your appreciation of the British Members fallen during the late War.

But it is only another expression of Swiss sentiment.

Much as we value this beautiful memorial which commemorates how our members did their duty, we value infinitely more the kindly sentiments which prompted its execution, another proof, if any were needed, of the deep affection which joins not only the members of our Club together, but our two peoples.

It must not be forgotten that this is not the only proof.

No one can forget the hospitality offered by Switzerland to our British Prisoners of War, certainly not myself, for the life of one of my oldest friends was thus saved entirely by this generosity.

That I should have been chosen to represent the British Members on this occasion is a source of the deepest gratification. I am one of many who might have been of the number of those whom this tablet commemorates, and I can imagine no greater pleasure, shared, let us hope, by those who are gone, than to feel that at any rate there is for us still a little niche with a remembrance among the glorious mountains which we all love and which have formed for so many years the chief inspiration of our lives.

In the name of the British Members, let me again assure you how very deeply we appreciate your gift, and let me express a hope that the bond of our friendship thus further cemented may be as lasting as the great mountains themselves."

The English Chaplain, the Rev. G. H. LANCASTER, S.A.C., wearing his robes of office, then proceeded to consecrate the Memorial Tablet, which had been unveiled by M. d'Arcis after further gun shots had rung out into the sublime silence.

Conditions being none too comfortable in the open, the Britannia Hut was re-entered by the gathering, who, after partaking of some further slight refreshment, started on the descent to Saas Fee.

At 8 p.m. all the guests re-assembled for the Dinner at the Saas Fee Grand Hotel, the arrangements for which were in the able hands of Mr. Reginald Graham, who was assisted by Mr. J. A. B. Bruce, both members of the "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club," to whom great thanks are due for their untiring efforts, which were crowned with complete success.

About 80 ladies and gentlemen sat down for this dinner-function, General the Hon. C. G. BRUCE presiding as chairman.

His first toast was in honour of the President of the Swiss Confederation, followed by the toast of "The King," both toasts being received with great acclamation. Further proposing the health of the "Swiss Alpine Club," General Bruce proceeded to address the assembly as follows:—

"I felt a very great diffidence when Mr. Graham, the organiser of this meeting, invited me to take the chair. I accepted with fear and trembling owing to the fact that though I have been a British Member of the S.A.C. for some years, I have never had the pleasure of meeting my fellow Members before. Though I have begun late, still I have begun, and in proposing the health of the S.A.C., I also fervently hope that my own health may remain such that I may continue for many years the acquaintance so auspiciously begun. For up to now my visits to Switzerland have been spread, very much spread, over many years and have nearly all occurred during my different periods at home on leave from India. Not that I have neglected the mountains, as for more than thirty years in the course of my calling I was located in the North

West of India. In my lighter moments I wandered, explored, climbed and shot through the Hindu Koosh and Himalaya ranges, but wherever I found myself, the standard of comparison has always been the Swiss Alps. I am sure that my old friends here present to-night, Col. Gurdon, Mr. Mumm and Mr. Montagnier, will bear me out on this and our combined experiences cover a wide range.

Further, I am in the peculiarly happy condition that after many years spent in the mountains I can return to my first love and find her as young as ever! She was always white on top when I first knew her. The idea that the Alps are hackneyed, played out or stale is to me an absurd notion. This is but my second visit to Saas Fee, the first being 22 years ago. I feel I can still look forward to a good many years of wandering, and this pleasant outlook is due to the fact that the heroic period when men climbed the Matterhorn direct from Zermatt is no more.

Elderly men can now hope to ascend the great mountains and snowfields and mightily prolong their strength and enjoyment of life in doing so without over-exertion, and all this is due to the enterprise of the S.A.C.

This no doubt is a hackneyed subject, but a very blessed one.

The S.A.C. have conferred a real blessing on humanity; may their shadow never grow less, coupled with the fervent hope that my own speedily will.

Before I sit down I cannot help saying what a pleasure it has been to me to make the acquaintance of Dr. Dübi, a man well known and highly honoured throughout the British mountaineering world, and if I may be allowed, I would like to couple his name with the toast of the S.A.C., and I give you therefore the toast of the S.A.C. coupled with the name of Dr. Dübi."

The rapturous applause having subsided, M. J. L. RENAUD, of the Geneva Section of the C.A.S., responded in these terms:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I should like to thank you for the very courteous invitation extended to our Section to be represented at your monthly Dinner. It gives me great pleasure to have been chosen from amongst our Club to welcome you in one of our most beautiful valleys and to convey to you here the salutations of our Geneva Section.

Allow me, gentlemen, to offer our fair and charming guests, the ladies, a special and most cordial welcome.

We feel highly flattered by your presence and most thoroughly appreciate your assistance. You make the Dinner brilliant and change the monotony of black coats into a cheerful assembly of gay colours. You enchant our valley!

Ladies and Gentlemen, all of us have left behind under the smoky clouds of our cities the cares and worries of the troublous times we are passing through. Our everyday life, overshadowed by commercial, industrial and financial disputes, is no more for a few weeks.

You from the far-away Island have lifted up your eyes to the mountains and have come to us.

My friends, Mr. d'Arcis, your Honorary Member, and the delegates of our Committee des Cabanes, Messrs. Dunaud, Eggermann, Fiala, Graff and Vaucher, are here to prove by our presence how sincerely and most thoroughly we appreciate all you have done for our Genevese Section of the S.A.C.

I personally and all of us are admirers of British energy, British efficiency and British fairness. Your country is a beautiful land in which many of us Swiss have passed some of our most happy and useful years, and it is a great satisfaction for us to realise that amidst all the difficulties of the present situation the long and traditional friendship between Switzerland and Great Britain is to-day even more firmly established than ever.

Our two countries, so widely separated as they are from each other and differing so completely in geographical situation, seem to have been united by a real community of ideas for the last 500 years or more.

You have the same liberal high ideals as we have.

During the last World War, when civilization seemed to be in danger of being washed away in both our countries, men have arisen up with courage to canalize the torrent. They worked like our rough mountaineers when wild waters, rushing down from the heights, try to sweep away everything in their peaceful valleys.

Who were they, these men?

They were accustomed to lift up their hearts as well as their eyes high above the low horizon of material life, those

who loved to lift up their eyes towards the mountains, those who knew the way to the heights! Like the climber they did not mind the hard, rough rockwork. Let us do as they did, raise ourselves up to the summit.

I have said that we were admirers of British fairness. We are not a world power, and there is no rivalry between your country and ours.

We desire, like you, a fair field and no favour, and we have again and again seen that England has given us fair play always.

In our absolute faith in British fairness I see the chief reasons for the friendly feelings entertained throughout all Switzerland towards your country. Mountaineering is above all the school for energy and fair play. The conditions and the reward are the same for everyone.

When we approach the lofty mountains and penetrate into one of the most brilliant parts of the Empire of our great God, we feel ourselves raised up high above the multitude of petty preoccupations and worldly cares.

But to get up to the top all our energies combined must work together, enroped in the same caravan. We must go on helping each other to the last. When with throbbing hearts we reach the summit and delightedly look round over the vast horizon, life seems more simple, though how much more lofty; our two countries are roped up in the same caravan and work together for the benefit of mankind. Let us in our Swiss Alpine Club do the same to the utmost of our power.

Like our forefathers, when they thrilled the world with their cry of "Liberty" from the heights of our mountains, let us repeat our Swiss Motto: "Un pour tous, tous pour un," lifting up our glasses to England and Switzerland united."

This speech also received the appreciation of the gathering, and Prof. ROGET, also a member of the Geneva Section, then proposed the health of the "Alpine Club London," explaining that the London Alpine Club was the first of its kind to be founded, and that its origin dated from the Shakespearean period. He further explained to our British friends Switzerland's extremely difficult position during the War and assured them of the sincere sympathies of the Swiss nation for the British nation, words which were warmly received and responded to by Mr. A. L. MUMM, the Vice-President of the Alpine Club, coupled with the expression of deepfelt thanks to the members of the Geneva Section of the C.A.S., and to Messrs. Graham and Bruce for the pains they had taken in successfully arranging the splendid gathering.

After the replies of Messrs. GRAHAM and BRUCE, Messrs. JOHN GRAFF and GEORGES DIMIER, respectively in French and English, proposed the health of the ladies present, concluding with the characteristic Swiss Bans: Cantonaux, Fédéraux and de Coeur, and the singing of "Qu'elles vivent," which customs greatly impressed and delighted the whole assembly.

The health of the Chairman, General the Hon. C. G. Bruce, was next proposed by Dr. DUEBI, member of the Bernese Section of the S.A.C. and Hon. Member of the British Association of the S.A.C., who expressed great admiration for the cheerful disposition and vivacity of the Chairman, thanking him for having accepted the duty on this occasion.

Midnight was approaching when the function came to an end, and I feel convinced that the day will never be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to be present.

The members of the British Colony present at Saas Fee have complimented Messrs. Graham and Bruce and expressed their gratitude to the members of the Geneva Section who arranged the luncheon at the Britannia Hut, and to the donors of the Memorial Tablet: Mr. and Mrs. Eggermann, Messrs. E. d'Arcis, Ch. Boveyron, Em. A. Dunaud, E. Fiala, F. Fiala fils, H. Gallay, Emile Geneux, John Graff, J. L. Renaud, J. P. Thomson, Chs. Ybloux.

I also wish to mention that the proprietors of the Saas Fee Hotels, the Family Lager, excelled themselves in providing for the comforts and the catering for the gathering, which was a great credit to them, pleasing all the participants.

GEORGES DIMIER.

EGLISE SUISSE.

79, Endell Street, W.C.2.

Dimanche, 28 Août, 11h.—M. Boissonnas.

Dimanche, 4 Septembre, 11h.—M. Boissonnas.

MARIAGE.

HENRI SUTER, d'Affoltern sur l'Albis, et GERTRUDE LILLEY STEINKE, de Londres—le 22 Août.