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75th anniversary of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club



A classical picture à la 1912. Left to right: Eileen Holman, Swiss National Tourist Office; Mr and Mrs A. Robinson, Managing Director Daily Mail; Sir David and Lady English, Editor in Chief Daily Mail.

La Fraternité des Sommets

This headline in *Le Matin Dimanche* symbolised the spirit of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club's 75th anniversary celebrations in Saas-Fee in August.

Over 100 British mountaineers gathered to embark on a unique programme organised with the magnificent collaboration of the Swiss National Tourist Office and the Saas-Fee Tourist Office.

As an *hors d'œuvre* there was a ceremonial visit to Zermatt with its special historical associations for the British. About half the party crossed the Allalin Pass in

Celebrations a reminder of the 'solid foundation'

perfect conditions to join the remainder for a commemorative service in the English church there by the Bishop of Dunwich.

This was followed by an official reception by the mayor

and dinner at the Hotel Mont Cervin.

The main ceremonies in Saas-Fee were based in the Britannia Hut, for which British members subscribed the total cost within three years

of their foundation and presented it to the Swiss Alpine Club at the official opening on August 17 1912.

Our member Noel Odell

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75th anniversary of the Association of

was at the opening in 1912 and now aged 94 was happily present on this occasion.

There was an overnight snowfall, but with the hut full to bursting point a convivial candlelight dinner was held with the exact 1912 menu – perfectly palatable.

Long before dawn, ropes of climbers set forth for the Allalinhorn, attired à la 1912 with the ladies in long skirts and broad hats and guided by candle lit lanterns. There was much soft snow and so time did not permit all to reach the summit in time to return for the midday ceremonies at the hut.

Undeterred by cold and cloud, a great gathering of 1912 style mountaineers and journalists witnessed an address by Hans Wyer, President of the Canton du Valais; a religious service conducted by the Bishop of St. Albans and the Vicar General of Sion with the accompaniment of a yodelling choir; the sealing of symbolic British and Swiss gifts in a cairn; the unveiling of a plaque by Hermann Milz, central president Swiss Alpine Club and Walter Leu, director general Swiss National Tourist Office; and a presentation of a painting of the English Lake District by Peter Ledeboer, president of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club to be displayed in the hut.

A stirring occasion was completed that evening by a procession through the streets of Saas-Fee and an excellent entertainment in the Gemeindesaal, in which the whole



town took us to their hearts.

We were honoured to have some very distinguished guests, including the Swiss Ambassador in London and the British Ambassador in Berne with their wives, the central president of the SAC, the presidents of several SAC sections, Lord Hunt of Everest fame and many others.

The celebrations were a

happy reminder of the continuing cordial relations between Britain and Switzerland, symbolised particularly in mountaineering.

As I said at our banquet, the words of our first president at the time of the opening of the Britannia Hut in 1912 are true today:

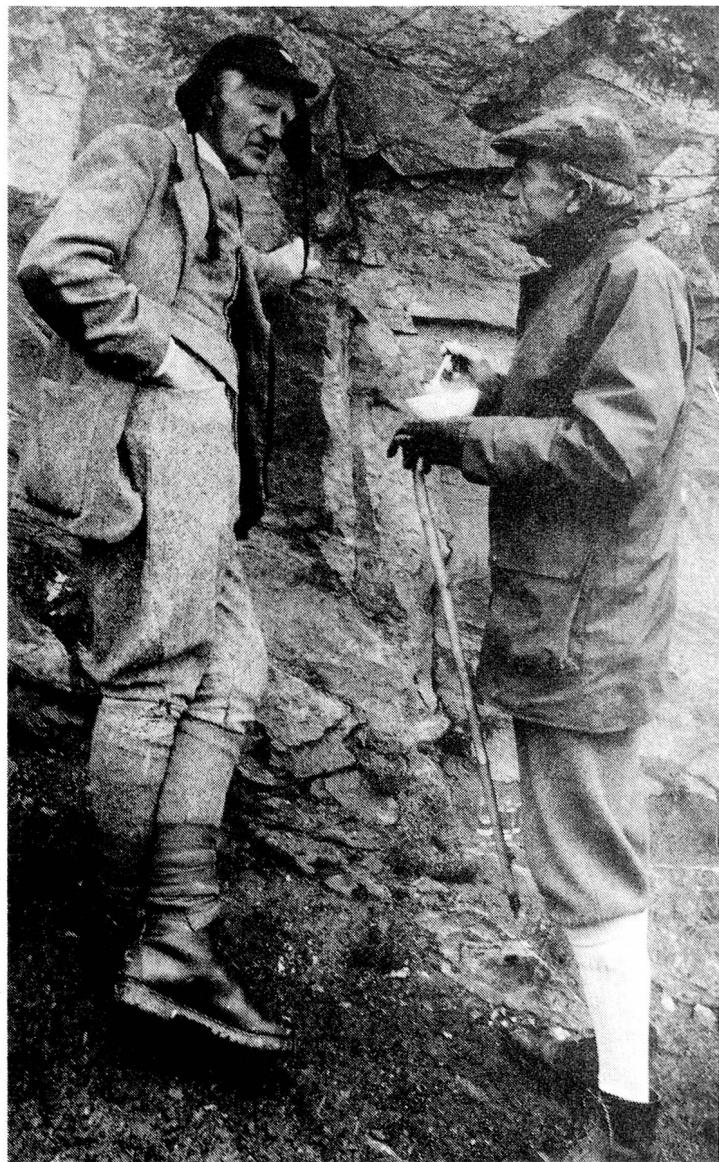
"The hut appears to be well and truly built and to stand on

a solid foundation. And so I hope, does the good feeling between the English speaking and all other members of the SAC".

Peter Ledeboer
president
ABMSAC

Photographs courtesy
of the Daily Mail and
Barbara Alridge.

British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club



Above, Lord Hunt in earnest conversation with the British Ambassador in Switzerland, Mr Powell-Jones, and below, an open-air mass near Britannia Hut on August 25. The Bishop of St. Albans preaching and the Vicar General of Sion reading Holy Mass

All participants built a 'Steinmannli' (cairn) in which a treasure chest was placed with the following objects. From Great Britain: photograph of H.M. The Queen, ABMSAC Journal 1984, ABMSAC tie, rock from the top of Helvellyn – one of the highest peaks in England, set of 1984 coins, set of special issue stamps 1984, silver medallion struck for opening of Thames Barrage by H.M. The Queen 1984, paperweight replica of the City of London coat of arms, paperweight with insignia of the National Trust and a tin of Earl Grey tea. From Switzerland: panorama summer 1984, bank account book with deposit of Sfr. 20, – for ABMSAC, small bottle of Fendant wine, recording of Saas-Fee folklore, chronicle of Saas Book, old boot, one franc piece, brochure of Saas-Fee, signature book of participants at 75 years celebration, commemorative medal 75 years ABMSAC and a celebration programme.

