

"On March 10th, 1922, Mr. Wallace May addressed a letter to the local members of the Rucksack Club, suggesting a meeting to discuss the possibilities of arrangements being made for occasional meetings of local mountaineers. The suggestion having been favourably received, a notice was sent to 24 local climbers, calling a meeting to consider the proposal at the Chamber of Commerce on March 24th, 1922."

Thus read the first minutes of the Association; and thus, modestly though a trifle stiffly, the M.A.M. came into being, largely as the result of the enthusiasm of Wallace May, who represents with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wallbank the only survivors of the original membership. The early records show this meeting to have been attended by nine Founding Fathers; as well as Messrs. May and Wallbank, there were present G. E. Goode, W. G. Gregory, E. W. Steeple, Guy Barlow, R. E. W. Pritchard (who became the first librarian), J. Charlton and W. Benwell, all members of the Rucksack Club or kindred clubs. Indeed, without the Rucksack Club, where would we be? Mr. May was a member of the R.C. and the notice of the preliminary meeting was headed "Rucksack Club". From its inception Mr. May was careful to emphasise that his proposals were not made for the purpose of setting up a body in opposition to existing clubs, but as a social provision for Midlanders cut off from the northern centres of climbing activity. This principle dominated the policy of the early executive; the earliest activities were indoor meets, with lectures and social gatherings, and outdoor meets came later. This idea has actually survived the creation of an independent body known as the Midland Association of Mountaineers, and in some guises is with us to this day; it determines, for instance, the present reasonable policy on elections to membership which declines to make climbing ability the sole *entrée* to the handbook.

Mr. Steeple became Chairman, and Mr. May Secretary; together with Messrs. Wallbank and Pritchard, they formed the first official body, the General Purposes Sub-committee. Thereafter all present got down to the laying of the foundations with commendable despatch; the sub-committee settled down to the drafting of rules, and the title of the Association was proposed by Mr. Benwell and seconded by Mr. Charlton. Though at the time the "Midland Association of Mountaineers" was nothing more than a prosaic definition of the constitution of the emergent body, today the wisdom of such a choice strikes keenly. The First General Meeting was arranged and invitations to it were widely broadcast; repre-

representatives were sought from the Alpine Club, the Rucksack Club, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, the Scottish Mountaineering Club, the Pennine Club, the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club, the Pinnacle Club, the Wayfarers and the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club. We were certainly far from being the first in our particular field.

Indoor meets, as we have seen, came first. The first was at Queens College on May 26th, 1922, and was given by Mr. A. E. Barker, who had been elected the first President and whose subject was "Experiences in the Swiss Alps". A handbook was issued and the yearly subscription fixed at 7/6d. with a 2/6d. entrance fee.

The expansion of the Association was relatively rapid. By the next meeting the roll stood at forty-three, of whom twenty were inaugurators. These forty-three were the Original Members, possessing a subtle distinction over those who joined later on in the year of foundation. By the year end there were sixty-five, and the hundred mark was reached in November of the following year. No. 76 was The Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, M.P. The Treasurer spent one pound, sixteen shillings and ninepence.

The M.A.M. was quick to be recognised by other clubs. Invitations were received to the dinners of the A.B.M.S.A.C. and the Rucksack Club, and the relics of the latter suggest a memorable occasion. Mutton (we had that at the last M.A.M. dinner) formed the crux, as it were, of a six-course meal, and G. H. Leigh-Mallory and Wallace May responded to toasts. The menu card is of interest; it has a picture of an idealised damsel complete with tiger-lily, laurel wreath and dove, while the younger generation, scantily clad, play at her feet with ice axe and rope.

The first climbing meet was held at Cromford and Brassington, followed by a meet at Cratcliff. These meets were led by Frank Wallbank, who for his energy was made the first meets organiser, in June 1924. However, by that date the M.A.M. had already "arrived"; on April 26th, 1923, a *conversazione* had been staged, consisting of an exhibition of photographs, paintings, geological and botanical specimens, supported by a musical offering from "The Lickey Quartette". It is a pity that no one made a tape recording.

A measure of the extent to which the Association was feeling its feet is indicated by its entry into public life with support for the Access To Mountains Bill, and Members of Parliament were duly lobbied.

The possibility of producing a *Journal* was first mooted in May, 1923, but was postponed, and it was not until 1933 that the *Bulletin*

appeared. This proved to be a thirty-four page journal, the front cover displaying an alpine scene complete with dark-bearded mountaineer, reminiscent of the modern scene—the work of Kim Beck. Under the editorship of Bill Duncan and E. W. Steeple, it was produced thenceforth each year except 1936 until the war put a stop to it. When the time came to resume the series, the *Bulletin* had become the *Journal* and its Editor was Showell Styles.

The first *Journal* contained an account of the acquisition and opening of Glan Dena in 1945. This brings us into the realms of modern history and little can be told that is not already known, but the unanimity and despatch with which the arrangements were concluded, and the generosity of the membership of the time, was certainly most creditable. The hut, formerly Milestone Cottage and now Glan Dena, was made ready for opening on 22nd September, 1945. Mr. Grosvenor performed the opening ceremony, and the first to step inside was Wallace May. Considering that his was the inspiration that formed the M.A.M. and his the constant work that contributed in such good measure to the expansion of the M.A.M., no gesture could have been more appropriate.

This article was never intended as a comprehensive history of the M.A.M. but a brief account of its beginnings. Since the Association has enjoyed only forty years of life, and those placid and uneventful, a more comprehensive account would be difficult to sustain. For our Association is just not the sort to provide the stuff of history, despite the ingenuity of Cambridge-type historians, and is perhaps best left to pursue the moderate course it prefers, with sufficient vitality to maintain its existence and yet still to be a stumbling-block to pressurised mountaineering.