

# 75 years of devotion

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*Britannia Hut, above Saas Fee*

# 75 years of devotion

ON April 19 1863, the Swiss Alpine Club was formed by 35 men assembled in the Buffet de la Gare in Olten. Today, membership is in scores of thousands, and a very important part of it is the "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club", numbering already more than 700 members.

The Association was founded in 1909, and within three years of its foundation, it had collected enough funds to build the Britannia Hut at 3,837m up above Saas-Fee. It was inaugurated on August 17 1912 and presented to the Swiss Alpine Club.

Mountaineering attire at that time was vastly different from today's. For the ladies, the prescription was "long woollen skirt, twill blouse and woollen jacket, a hat, woollen stockings and black mountaineering boots".

The outfit for men was more specific: "woollen jacket and long woollen trousers or plus fours, pattern of material: herring-bone or diagonal stripes, colour grey or

brown, plain colour cotton shirt and tie, long woollen socks in grey, black or brown and old black mountaineering boots".

This will be the attire for the jubilee celebrations in August, when all participants will wear early century dress – even journalists and reporters.

The Alpine Meet and 75th Anniversary Celebrations will be held from August 18 to September 2.

The Meet is an annual event of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club" and will this year be staged to include the anniversary celebrations.

It is hoped that some 75 British members will attend; the event has aroused great interest not only in Switzerland, but also in the surrounding Alpine countries.

On August 21, there will be a Commemorative Church Service at which the Rt Rev the Bishop of Dunwich will officiate.

Other ceremonial events will also be held that day, but the actual Anniversary Evening will

take place at the Britannia Hut on August 24 – really "going back to 1912".

The "Dinner by Candlelight" will have the same menu as on August 17 1912.

The following day – again in 1912 apparel – participants will climb the Allalin. There will be a visit to the summit of the Métro Alpin (11,483ft), the highest funicular in the world which is under construction. It will be opened at Christmas.

The programme also includes a demonstration of skiing techniques 1949-1984. Conny Kissling, world champion and acrobat skier will take part.

Federal Councillor Aubert and other personalities will address the participants, and musical entertainment will be in the old style and in traditional costume.

At 12.30pm an open-air Holy Mass will be celebrated by the Vicar General of Sion, and the sermon will be given by the Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of St Albans. A commemorative plaque will be

unveiled.

In the evening, there will be a Grand Cortège on the theme of Saas-Fee's development as a mountaineering and skiing paradise since 1849. A popular mountaineering festival will be held in the village hall.

An ABMSAC banquet will be held at the Glacier Hotel in Saas-Fee, which will be a private event for members and invited guests.

It is expected that personalities like Lord Hunt of Everest fame will take part as well as a number of Swiss dignitaries.

The Alpine Festival weeks are organised by the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Any readers interested in taking part in a one or two weeks' climbing, or hiking or leisure holiday in Saas-Fee, including participation in the celebrations and at favourable prices, can obtain detailed information from the Swiss National Tourist Office, 1 New Coventry Street, London W1V 8EE, telephone 01-734 1921.

**Mariann Meier**