The Origins and Development of Mountaineering and Rock Climbing Tourism in the Lake District, c.1800-1914.
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The Lake District has played a central role in the development of the sport of rock climbing in the British Isles, the late Nineteenth Century witnessing increasingly athletic and gymnastic approaches to the crags and fells of the Lake District. Climbing as we know it today emerged as a sub-cultural development, gradually establishing the legitimacy of an increasingly sporting approach to mountains, changing as it did so the accepted notions of what it meant to be a mountaineer. Despite the accumulated Romantic and literary reputations of the Lake District landscape, mountaineering in the Lake District was slow to emerge, the cultural significance of the Lake District landscape to mountaineers remaining for most of the Nineteenth Century, if not entirely negligible, then certainly subordinate. Why this should be so forms the basis of the first part of this chapter, focussing on the cultural significance of mountains in a European context and the pre-eminence of Alpine mountain landscapes as tourist destinations amongst the bourgeoisie. The élite tourist focus on “being elsewhere”¹, on social distancing, exclusive locations and internalized notions of Romantic individualism and self-cultivation meant that Alpine mountain landscapes emerged as the locus of the British middle classes fascination with mountaineering in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. The second half of this chapter examines the emergence of the Lake District as a tourist destination for British mountaineers and rock climbers in the 1880s and 1890s as the regional middle classes sought to exploit the recreational hinterlands of the industrial cities of the North of England by adapting élite cultural approaches to mountain landscapes and applying them to regional upland landscapes. Part of a drive to express regional self-identity and exceptionalism, the cultural meaning of the Lake District landscape to mountaineers and climbers, always multi-layered, became enmeshed in new recreational paradigms, gradually differentiating itself from the Alpine mountaineering tradition that had gone before.

Historians seeking to explain the origins of mountaineering and rock climbing in the British Isles have struggled to present a coherent account of how, but more importantly why, mountaineering as a leisure and sporting activity emerged in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Historians of sport have found it particularly difficult to categorize, for if it contained ‘sporting’ elements and motivations, it reached its apotheosis in the middle of the Nineteenth Century as a leisure activity amongst upper-middle class British tourists whilst on vacation in the Alps. Unlike the dominant British sporting paradigm, the team-sports model, British mountaineers seemed reluctant to form clubs, or indeed any form of institutional voluntary association that would celebrate and facilitate

recreational approaches to native mountains. It presented the peculiar spectacle of a major British sporting and recreational pastime that took place entirely on the Continent. The second half of the Nineteenth Century saw the slow transformation of mountaineering from a social field dominated by notions of romantic individualism and cultivated excursionism, where external aesthetic, literary, cultural and scientific criteria valorized behaviour, to a social field where internal and sub-cultural criteria increasingly determined value. The growth of elements of sporting culture, with an emphasis on rock climbing in the British Isles, was the result of widening class participation in the 1880s and 1890s. This was not always welcomed or encouraged by the Alpine mountaineering establishment.

We cannot begin to understand the emergence of rock climbing and mountaineering in the Lake District without an analysis of class. Alpine mountaineering was a form of cultural capital that required time, money, motivation and cultivation to acquire. To be a mountaineer in Britain for most of the Nineteenth Century meant to climb in the Alps, Europe or the Greater Ranges. The Alpine Club, founded in 1857 by the pioneers of British mountaineering, was based in London. Its members were mainly upper middle class professionals, and ‘more likely to be Liberal Dissenters than Tory Anglicans’. The club resembled other élite gentlemen’s clubs, providing space and opportunity for expressions of shared interests, offering select conviviality, fellowship and exclusivity. The goal of the Alpine Club was not to establish a national mountaineering movement with local representation and regional affiliates with local mountain affinities, or to encourage mass tourism, healthy lifestyles or lower-middle class and working class participation. It existed to celebrate its members’ achievements and maintain its exclusivity. Membership required Alpine climbing experience ‘or evidence of literary or artistic accomplishments related to mountains’. Alpine mountaineering had high barriers to entry in terms of the costs of an Alpine holiday and this exclusivity was cultivated and reinforced by devotees of mountaineering when they met in London. What constituted the correct approach to mountaineering and mountain landscapes was maintained by cultural arbiters in the Alpine Club, prospective members having to negotiate the usual clubland paraphernalia of proposal, election and exclusion.

A de facto social qualification also contributed to the genteel identity of the Alpine Club as “a club for gentlemen who also climb.” These policies ensured that the social profile of the Alpine Club remained

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somewhat higher, and the number of its members much lower, than the mountaineering clubs founded throughout Europe in the 1860s and 1870s.\(^7\)

The focus on Alpine landscapes as the premier tourist destination for British mountaineers coloured impressions of upland Britain. For most of the Nineteenth Century the mountains of the Lake District were understood in comparison to the Alps. This paradox was a commonplace of aestheticized approaches to mountain landscapes. What was true of the picturesque tourist in the Eighteenth Century was true of the mountaineering tourist in the Nineteenth Century: ‘Educated awareness of what constitutes and ideal landscape’ meant that ‘the tourist travelling through the Lakes and North Wales will loudly acclaim the native beauties of British landscape by invoking idealized foreign models.’\(^8\) As the hills of the Lake District offered no Alpine scale challenges, or unclimbed summits, they received relatively little systematic attention from mountaineers affiliated with the Alpine Club in the first two decades of the club’s existence and a good deal of condescension. Ironically perhaps, it was the voluminous popular literature produced by Alpine mountaineers, where Alpine landscapes were idealized, aestheticized and dramatized that provided many people’s first encounter with the Alps and with mountaineers’ cultural approaches to mountains. ‘Landscapes’, as Simon Schama has reminded us, ‘are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination’.\(^9\) For the majority of tourists and mountaineers, the mountains and fells of the Lake District were experienced as ideas before they were ever experienced in reality, ideas formulated and articulated by a particular class at a particular time. We cannot understand the cultural meaning of the mountains of the Lake District to mountaineers and rock climbers without a wider understanding of cultural approaches to mountains amongst the European bourgeoisie that had cohered by the middle decades of the Nineteenth Century.

Undoubtedly tectonic upheavals in human intellectual perception across Europe in the Eighteenth Century shaped attitudes to mountain landscapes. The Enlightenment reversed the polarities of aesthetic perceptions, theories of the sublime inserting themselves between nature and the human soul, expressed as a desire for a new ‘sensation of wonder mixed with fear, a pleasurable encounter with forbidding landscape or the darker passions’.\(^10\) Natural philosophers, natural historians and scientists began to seek evidence for Gods’ handiwork in the natural world. In seeking evidence of design they stumbled upon facts that altered their notions of chronology and man’s place in the universe. Geologists and glaciologists found in the mountains evidence of deep-time, recalibrating our notions of the scale of evolutionary forces, relegateing notions of Gods agency to an ever more remote singularity. With the 1779 publication of *Voyage dans les Alpes* by de Saussure, Professor of Natural Philosophy at the Geneva Academy, the

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\(^7\) Hansen, P. H. ‘Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 34, July 1995, pp.300-324, at 310.


notion of climbing a mountain for scientific purposes was firmly established. As notions of God’s agency and immanency began their long recessional, Enlightenment *philosophes* celebrated the perfectibility of mankind, of man in a state of nature, exemplifying the nobility of peasant communities in mountain regions, of mountain landscapes as the very “Seat of Virtue”. Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1760) ‘was chiefly responsible for focusing changing perspectives on the Alps’. Mountain worship was a feature of the German *Sturm and Drang* movement in literature, where sublimity and subjective experience formed a literary topos as jagged and extreme as the mountain landscapes in which they were set. German Idealist thought found in the struggle to climb a mountain and attain a summit the perfect metaphor for the dialectical method and the teleological drive towards the Ideal, exemplified in Goethe’s *Faust*. This reverence for mountain landscapes and their symbolic importance was further reinforced in German culture by romantic nationalism. Since the publication of Tieck’s novel *The Wandering of Franz Sternbald* (1798) ‘the walking and sketching tour became an essential part of young Germans’ self-discovery, and their interest focussed increasingly on the beauties of their homeland’. Tieck, echoing Schellings *Naturephilosophie* in his novels, did much to romanticize the ‘wild call of the mountains’. It was further expressed by the Turner movements’ devotion to physical renewal in an outdoor context as a way of rebuilding the individual and society.

These currents in European thought profoundly influenced English Romanticism and the Lakeland poets perception of the Lake District landscape, none more so than Coleridge. Before Coleridge had even set eyes on the Lake District he had attended the

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University of Göttingen and climbed the Brocken in the Hartz mountains.\textsuperscript{19} A significant
translator and interpreter of German Idealist thought and literature, he had also imbibed
the German cultural reverence for mountain landscapes. In August 1802 he set off on a
nine day tour from Keswick to St. Bees on the Cumberland coast and back over the
central fells of the Lake District, maintaining a letter journal which his biographer
describes as forming ‘the first literary description of the peculiarly English sport of fell-
walking. Coleridge was in effect inventing a new kind of Romantic tourism, abandoning
the coach and the high-road for the hill, the flask and the knapsack.’\textsuperscript{20} He also largely
abandoned guide books which ‘tended to provide travellers with fixed itineraries around a
series of principle sights.’\textsuperscript{21} He took a sketch map in his pocket book, ‘a chart of the
mountainous, craggy countryside over which he planned to wander.’\textsuperscript{22} On the 5 August
on the summit of Seafell Coleridge penned a letter describing what he saw and how he
felt:

\begin{quote}
O my God! What enourmous Mountains these are close to me…the
Clouds are hast’ning hither from the Sea – and the whole air seaward
has a lurid Look – and we shall certainly have Thunder.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

He then began to descend Broad Stand, today considered to be a Moderate grade rock
climb. Lowering himself over edges he soon found he could not go back. His own
account of the descent ‘shows Coleridge at his finest pitch: a comic hero beset by tragic
visions, spiritual, intelligent, and supremely self-aware of his own psychological drama’,
the exertion ‘making his muscles tremble with exhaustion and vertigo’, his mind exulting,
producing an ‘effect of almost religious intensity’.\textsuperscript{24} Coleridge’s descent of Broad Stand
to Mickeldore has been appropriated as foundational by British mountaineering historians
searching for antecedents.\textsuperscript{25} Whilst Coleridge, the ‘Metaphysical Mountaineer’\textsuperscript{26} was
also an inadvertent one, this climbing interlude and the wider mountain tour of which it
was part represents a significant cultural shift in attitudes to mountains, unleashing the
intellectual forces that would shape mountaineering in the nineteenth century.

Since at least the 1770s the Lakeland scenery of Lancashire, Cumberland and
Westmorland had been ‘a serious challenge to the aesthetic supremacy of the European
Grand Tour’\textsuperscript{27}, the tour to the Lakes a necessary component of élite tourist itineraries.
The Picturesque tourist appropriation of landscape was, however, essentially passive and
contemplative, effected by means of seeing and hearing. Whilst Gray’s \textit{Journal of the
Lakes} (1769) had transposed the sublime’s ‘vocabulary of “horrid beauty”’ from the Alps

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\item \textsuperscript{21} Hewitt, R. \textit{Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey}. (London: Granta, 2010), p.209.
\end{itemize}
to the Lakes, establishing the Lake District as the definitively sublime English landscape’\textsuperscript{28}, it took the Romantic sensibility to accelerate beyond this, touching, feeling and experiencing landscape in ways that were often visceral, ludic and pantheistic. Above all, Romanticism stressed the primacy of the individual. It valorized the subjective experience of landscape and mythologized what we might call a wilder tourism, at the heart of which was the notion of the solitary wanderer, the romantic individual. Romanticized individualism and aestheticized approaches to landscape was a feature of pan-European bourgeois notions of Bildung

which stressed inner growth, the development of the whole personality and the elevation and transformation of the individual through contact with classic works of civilization and sublime natural landmarks….Visual connoisseurship over “nature” – its study, its appreciation, its proper care – provided the educated middle class with an index of good breeding, a seemingly irrefutable ground from which to lay claim to social and cultural leadership’.\textsuperscript{29}

Mountaineering, a largely upper-middle class pursuit of the professional classes, was not immune from these class-based assumptions. Mountaineers, exemplifying the educated bourgeoisie, conceived of themselves as travellers (as opposed to tourists) satisfying wider aesthetic, cultural and scientific criteria. The end of the Napoleonic Wars saw a boom in British tourists reacquainting themselves with the Alps.\textsuperscript{30} Romantic exiles like Shelley and Byron eulogized Swiss democracy, Rousseuvian simplicity and the ‘cold sublimity’ of the Alps: ‘to me’, said Lord Byron ‘High mountains are a feeling’.\textsuperscript{31}

Increasingly the Romantic desire to experience and not just contemplate mountains was fused with a desire to understand their origins. British scientists like Forbes and Tyndall popularized the Alps with their writings.\textsuperscript{32} As tourist infrastructure developed in the 1840s and as Switzerland settled down after the Sonderbundskrieg of 1847 there was a huge influx of British tourists in the Alps. The railways reached Basel and Geneva and ‘Switzerland came to be hardly more than a day’s journey from London and the fare less than ten pounds.’\textsuperscript{33} The 1850s and 1860s were to see a huge explosion in British mountaineering in Alps. British mountaineering historians have characterized this as the “Golden Age” of Mountaineering. Between Alfred Wills ascent of the Wetterhorn from Grindlewald in September 1854 and Whymper’s ascent (and subsequent disaster) on the

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Matterhorn in 1865, a huge number of unclimbed Alpine peaks were climbed. ‘Of forty-three first ascents in 1864 and 1865, for example, only five had been made by continental climbers.’34 It was not just the fact of these achievements but their representation in print that made these mountaineering endeavours celebrated and familiar, drawing further tourists to the Alps in search of adventure. Wills ascent of the Wetterhorn was not a first ascent but the fifth or sixth; ‘it was not even the first ascent made by an amateur, for Agassiz had been up the mountain ten years earlier. But it was the first ascent to inspire a well-written narrative.’35 The Alpine Club anthology Peaks, Passes and Glaciers was a great publishing success in 1859 and Whymper, capitalising on his notoriety after acres of newspaper coverage of the Matterhorn disaster, produced Scrambles Amongst the Alps (1871), deemed by many of his contemporaries to be the ultimate expression of Alpinism.

Historians seeking to understand this new British tourist imperium in the Alps and explain why people began to climb mountains for recreational purposes have outlined new historical forces at work. Dominant cultural discourses within British imperialism that stressed manliness and athleticism saw a growth of middle-class interest in sport and body cultivation. The British public schools promoted new chivalric codes that stressed stoicism and endurance, shaping perceptions of how to behave. From the peripheries of empire came tales of adventure and exploration that stimulated the desire to emulate and embody imperial vigour. If, as one commentator has noted, achievement was the ‘essence of mountaineering’ then ‘climbing gives, to those who need it, the reassurance that they are men – men still capable of defeating the tyranny of life.’36 In the minds of many tourists, the Alps became a second Pole, the one month holiday in the Alps an opportunity to enact a type of imperial manliness.37 Thus the specificity of the British bourgeoisie experience added new strata of meaning to the experience of mountain landscapes. To visual, aesthetic and cultural connoisseurship over nature the upper-middle class mountaineering tourist added notions of exploration and conquest. The impulse to dominate the Alps, evidenced by the first ascents of unclimbed peaks, suggests not only a desire to overcome nature but to establish primacy, a form of territoriality often at odds with the nationalist objectives of Alpine nations themselves.

But the bourgeoisie was by its nature cosmopolitan, subject to wider intellectual forces beyond the imperial domain. The professional and intellectual classes, struggling with the crises of faith, the question of what it means to be human and to lead the good life, found in mountains the space for inner exploration, spiritual solace and teleological hopes. The scale of Alpine mountains inspired awe, the evidence of geological time became ‘akin to time travel: a way to access the perspectives of the planet, if not the

37 This discourse of conquest is perhaps most clearly articulated in the work of Peter H. Hansen. See for instance Hansen, P. H., ‘Modern Mountains: The Performative Consciousness of Modernity in Britain, 1870-1940’, in Daunton, M. J. & Bernhard, R. (eds), Meaning and Modernity: Britain in the Age of Imperialism and World Wars, (Oxford: Berg, 2001) pp.185-202, at 187. Robertson, D. ‘Mid-Victorians amongst the Alps’ p. 133 was of the opinion that the language of conquest was rarely employed by writers in the pages of the Alpine Journal.
universe’.

This Copernican moment opened up new prospects to the Victorian upper-middle class mountaineer: ‘the endless space of our interior self’. Alpine mysticism re-enchantted the inner lives of Victorian doubters, sceptics and rationalists, recovering in mountain landscapes ‘that “soul of loveliness” which the universe appeared to have lost’.

Leslie Stephen, author of *An Agnostic’s Apology*, ruminated that if he were to invent a new idolatry ‘I should prostrate myself, not before beast, or ocean, or sun, but before one of those gigantic masses, to which, in spite of all reason, it is impossible not to attribute some shadowy personality’. For Victorian intellectuals, the Alps took on aspects of the deity. The valetudinarian John Addington Symonds declared: ‘As I am prostrated and rendered vacant by scepticism, the Alps are my God. I can rest there and feel, if not God, at least greatness – greatness prior, and posterior to man in time, beyond his thoughts, not of his creation, independent, palpable, immovable, proved.’

Mountaineering, as Noel Annan has noted, had a peculiar hold over intellectuals:

> Mountaineering makes it possible for the intellectual to experience things which would otherwise be impossible: danger, intense comradeship, manliness, physical pain in pursuit of tangible objective, and a sensation of being at one with Nature. Psychologically, the intellectual is always conscious of his own isolation. He is not at one with the human race’.

These class-based attitudes coloured mountaineers’ notions of how you should see, appreciate and experience mountains. The upper-middle class professionals that comprised the Alpine Club’s members considered themselves a ‘natural aristocracy….that turned its back on the industrial world of gutta-percha shoddiness.’ To a self-consciously intellectual aristocracy, Alpine mysticism offered expiatory ‘Selbst-tödtung, a total surrender to larger energies…here the end is not connection with

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humanity but a transcendence of it.'46 This resonated with those seeking distance from society.47 Stefan Collini has noted what he terms a ‘Muscular Liberalism’ as a defining characteristic of mid-Victorian Liberal intellectual elites, exhibiting and valuing stoicism and strenuousness, alive to the ‘ennobling compulsion of struggle’,48 where a largely secular ethos of manliness was synonymous with individualism and ‘weakness of will…could be walked or climbed out of the system.’49

Given this emphasis on individualism, exclusivity and intellectualism, bourgeois-romantic anti-tourism was never far below the surface in Alpine mountaineering circles, critical of the spread of mass tourism to the lower-middle classes and the working classes, always ready to assert aesthetic and cultural superiority.50 Alpine mountaineers’ self-definition was constructed in contradistinction to mass tourism and class-based snobberies were commonly expressed.51 In Britain, social stratification meant that mountaineering remained the preserve of an élite. Liberal individualism was hostile to the notion of mass participation. Elite tourist destinations emerged in the Alps, trying to keep one step ahead of Cook’s tourists. The British rentier class de-camped to Switzerland in search of a healthier lifestyle, cheap accommodation, mountain scenery and cures for tuberculosis. Winter sports emerged which were socially selective from their inception. The aspirations and affinities of the bourgeoisie, often trans-national in composition, meant that “being elsewhere” was always an option. The “compensatory domains” carved out by elite tourists represented jealously guarded freedom for the privileged few:

Temporarily removing one from domestic society, the tour abroad presents an image in high relief of culture’s potential function in modern industrial democracies: the cultural is conceived of as “outside” ordinary social life, comprising a compensatory domain of autonomy and creativity to which utilitarian capitalist social

arrangements pay no heed. Travel, like culture, offers an imaginative freedom not as a rule available in modern social life.\textsuperscript{52}

For the upper middle class British mountaineer, the Alpine mountaineering holiday offered freedom, a liminal space outside of economy and society, where liberal individualism and personal liberty were maximised, small group fellowship was forged and exclusivity maintained. The persistence of notions of romantic individualism and bildung meant that those elements of the British middle classes that could have demonstrated social leadership within the wider outdoor movement were reluctant to participate in voluntary associations that would widen participation. In Britain this delayed the development of mountaineering and climbing clubs with cross-class appeal. In the European Alpine nations in the 1860s and 1870s, national mountaineering clubs emerged with regional branches. Class-based exclusivity was to some extent mitigated by shared nationalist aspirations and shared affinities for local mountain landscapes. They frequently catered for and in some ways sought to unify different expressions of the outdoor movement, with differing class components and affiliations, such as hiking, mountaineering and skiing.\textsuperscript{53}

Whilst valuing exclusivity, British Alpine mountaineers also helped to construct a new cultural approach to mountain landscapes. They approached mountain terrain and created imaginary territories, aestheticized and intellectualized places, with the Alps at the apex of an idealized taxonomy of landscapes. ‘The construction of a category “mountain” is thus social…the product of collective imaginations.’\textsuperscript{54} For most of the Nineteenth Century, the mountains and fells of the Lake District were understood by British mountaineers in comparison with the Alps, lesser Forms of the Ideal conception of mountains perhaps, but also as part of a typology of mountain landscapes where pre-existing recreational and touristic paradigms could be adopted and adapted. The emergence of rock climbing in the Lake District in the 1880s and 1890s represented a repurposing of élite cultural models by the regional middle classes, hungry to develop the recreational opportunities of the upland hinterlands that the expanding railway network and increasing leisure time brought within reach of the industrial cities of the North. Whilst the Alpine holiday remained an elite preserve, mountaineers could not help but write about their experiences in the middle-class quarterlies, newspapers, journals and books. New recreational paradigms became available to the regional and local middle classes, mediated through print, illustration and later photographs. In the industrial cities of the North, mountaineering began to be cultivated amongst prosperous industrialists.


and the professional and commercial classes. Whilst the Alpine vacation retained its currency as cultural capital, the regional middle classes began to celebrate the recreational potential of hills closer to home. ‘Culture’ it has been noted, ‘proceeds incrementally, building on whatever was available before, sometimes using a well-tried and established formula, other times innovating radically.’55 In the Lake District in the 1880s and 1890s the conditions emerged that fostered radical innovation. The athletics boom in the public schools and the growth of the gymnastics, body cultivation and physical fitness movements empowered new approaches to the physical challenge of mountaineering. Widening class participation began to undermine the gentlemanly codes that governed mountaineering. Pressure began to build for voluntary associations that would better represent the aspirations of the regional outdoor movement. Rock climbing gradually developed as a distinctive approach to the mountains and crags of Britain and the Lake District landscape played a central role shaping in this emergent new recreational paradigm.

The growing popularity of mountaineering literature and imagery fostered localized approaches to the regional mountains of the British Isles. In the Nineteenth Century vigorous walking and scrambling on the Lakeland fells developed as a leisure pursuit amongst the middle classes in Cumberland and Westmorland, with its own cultural traditions and equipment. To walk in the fells and explore your native county was a celebration of regional distinctiveness. To be a good fellsmen or fellswoman was a form of territoriality that expressed local exceptionalism and celebrated regional identity. This was framed within wider historical self-conceptions of distinctiveness: individual autonomy, personal liberty, nobility and a love of freedom were said to be in part racially defined, the Scandinavian origins of the Cumbrian yeoman and statesman being much discussed regional characteristics. Gradually, as Alpine mountaineers began to explore the recreational possibilities of Britain’s upland landscapes, visiting the Lake District first on family vacations, then as training for the Alps, they increasingly came into contact with local fellsmen; important climbing partnerships emerged. Thus the Penrith based corn dealer George Seatree, and the Lorton based land agent and farmer, J. W. Robinson played critical roles as mentors, climbing partners and friends to early rock climbers.56 This “fellowship of the hills” and the liminality of mountaineering culture did much to engender a new kind of freedom: a temporary release from the suffocating restrictions and limitations of the class system. The discourse around the nobility of the Cumbrian statesman in many ways echoed Rousseau’s idealization of mountain virtue, satisfying an upper-middle class desire for völkisch authenticity. Against a backdrop of increasing concern over racial degeneration, this racially inflected idealization of the vitality and nobility of mountain stock is clearly seen in the eulogies for J. W. Robinson. Delivering an address on the occasion of a dedication of a memorial to Robinson on Pillar Rock on the 13 June 1908, the Yorkshire solicitor Cecil Slingsby noted:

Our dear old friend possessed in a high degree all the best characteristics of the north country yeoman, the back-bone of our race. In many cases, and most certainly in that of Robinson, these northern yeomen are the descendants of the Norse “bonder”. John Robinson was essentially of Scandinavian ancestry, and I have often called him a British Norseman. If I could have paid him a higher compliment I would have done so.57

George Seatree, writing Robinson’s obituary in the first volume of the *Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journal* delivered his own perception of Robinson, less insistent on racial lineage but still focussed on regional exceptionalism and local identity, mentioning Robinson’s lifelong adherence to the Society of Friends and the Pardshaw Meeting, and his family roots as freeholders.58 Gradually these interlocking senses of identity, articulated within the wider outdoor movement, shaped the cultural landscape of the Lake District. The middle class Liberal concern for individual liberty found its physical embodiment in the idealized Cumberland statesman. This was reinforced by wider regional affiliations. As the old county boundary of Lancashire went up to the Three Shire Stone on Wrynose Pass, the Coniston fells and the southern Lakes were Lancastrian. Far from being “other” or distant, the fierce county loyalties of mountaineers from the industrial cites of Lancashire saw the southern Lake District as “our” hills. County loyalty and pride was a major component of regional self-identity. When W.G. Collingwood wrote his influential 1902 guide to the region he called it *The Lake Counties*, not “The Lake District”. With the growth of the industrial centre of Barrow-in-Furness, this would reinforce the growing sense of entitlement and legitimacy amongst lower-middle class and working class climbers like George Basterfield and A. H. Griffin after the First World War. This developing sense of regional identity, of the uniqueness of the industrial cites of the north and their relationship to their upland hinterlands, did much to break down class barriers. Specific county identities were also understood in the wider context of Northerness. Slingsby emphasises the ‘north country yeoman’, his cultural reference point being further north still, in Scandinavia. Slingsby, described by British mountaineering historians as “the father of Norwegian mountaineering”, had climbed in Norway since 1872 and did much to popularize it to mountaineers as a “northern playground” to rival the Alps.59 Directly influenced by Ambleside resident Harriet Martineau’s writings on Norway, Slingsby was undoubtedly also influenced by W. G. Collingwood’s scholarly, popular and fictional explorations of the Lake District’s Scandinavian heritage.60 Teutonic and Norse legend, literature and

culture were becoming increasingly important to the regional middle classes in the North of England. Offering cultural reference points that were cosmopolitan and international, they bypassed national and imperial discourses on identity and enabled the construction of a regional sense of exceptionalism and a localised sense of Englishness.61

Changing recreational attitudes to the mountains, fells and crags of the Lake District were slow to emerge however. A writer in the *Penny Magazine* of 1837 could not persuade his Wasdale-based walking guide to take him up Broad Stand and this attitude remained typical of the Dalesmen who guided tourists over mountain paths.62 The first professional climbing guide was only employed in 1901 by the new proprietor of the Wastwater Hotel in Wasdale, J. Ritson Whiting, in an attempt to maintain his climbing clientele. His choice of guide, Joseph Gaspard from the Dauphiné, suggests an effort to emulate the Alpine mountaineering tourist experience but also a lack of indigenous candidates who would be willing to trade amateur status as mountaineers for the indignities of oiling and nailing their clients' boots.63 Gaspard spent the lucrative summer months of June, July and August back in his native Dauphiné.64 Exploration was generally sporadic and casual, with some notable exceptions. Broad Stand was ascended by the Swiss born Lake District resident C. A. O. Baumgartner in 1850. He also climbed in Snowdonia and was ‘one of the first Alpine climbers who deliberately sought out and climbed the individual rock features of the British hills – not the hills themselves, but the individual ridges, buttresses, crags, and other rock features.’65 Broad Stand was ascended again in 1857 by Prof. Jon Tyndall, the pioneer of rock climbing in the Alps, who described it as ‘a pleasant bit of mountain practice and nothing more’.66 Drawn to vacation in the Lake District by its Romantic and literary associations, Alpine mountaineers began to concede that vigorous walking and scrambling up rocks and gullies might offer some ‘pleasant relaxation which had a direct bearing on their activities in the greater mountains of the world’.67 For a while in mid-century Pillar Rock in

61 Westaway, J, ‘The German Community in Manchester, Middle-Class Culture and the Development of Mountaineering in Britain, c.1850-1914’ *English Historical Review*, 164 (508) June 2009, 571-604. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cep144](http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cep144)
Ennerdale became the focus of attention as its summit was only attainable by moderate scrambling and rock climbing, Leslie Stephen ascending it in 1865 and again in 1872.\textsuperscript{68}

Gradually more organized approaches to the mountains of England and Wales began to emerge from within the Alpine Club. C. E. Matthews of Birmingham, an original member of the Alpine Club, visited Pen-y-Gwryd in Snowdonia in January 1870: ""At that time of year", wrote Matthews, "we were quite certain of having the inn to ourselves; we almost always found snow on the hills"\textsuperscript{69} an important consideration for those wanting to practice their mountaineering craft in preparation for the Alps. Matthews went on to form his small group of friends into the Society of Welsh Rabbits, dedicated to spending annual meets around Christmas time at the Pen-y-Gwryd and climbing throughout the British Isles. Perhaps the individual who did the most to reposition the Alpine Club’s attitude to the mountains of Britain was the Manchester merchant Eustace Hulton. Between 1875 and 1883 he organized the annual Alpine Club Dinner and Meet each spring, in either the Lake District or North Wales. These events usually involved strenuous walking and scrambling, with an eye for mountaineering challenges, particularly if there was snow on the ground. Cecil Slingsby, delivering a paper to the Alpine Club in April 1886 exhorted its members to ‘not neglect the Lake District, Wales and Scotland, whilst we are conquerors abroad.’\textsuperscript{70} Even so, as late as 1894, according to Prof. Norman Collie, the bulk of the Alpine Club membership remained in ignorance of the mountaineering and climbing potential of the Lake District and dismissive of the emerging sport of rock climbing.\textsuperscript{71} Hulton’s biggest influence was to encourage the mountaineering aspirations of a number of Lancashire industrialist families in the 1870s and 1880s, notably the Pendlebury’s of Liverpool and the Pilkingtons and Hopkinsons of Alderley Edge. Keen Alpinists, they were pioneers of climbing in the Lake District and were seminal in supporting the nascent outdoor movement in the North-West of England. Charles Pilkington’s presidency of the Alpine Club 1896-8 and his tireless lecturing on mountaineering to rambling groups and climbing clubs did much to narrow the social distance between élite clubs like the Alpine Club and the new regional clubs.

By the 1880s we can identify the emergence of a highly innovative mountaineering and climbing culture in and around Wasdale Head in the Lake District. Centred on the Wastwater Hotel and the guest house at Row Head, the isolation, difficulty of access and the lack of accommodation in the valley had the effect of concentrating tourist provision for visiting mountaineers, climbers and walkers. As late as the early Twentieth Century the western Lakes were indeed ‘unique in their continuing isolation from the main tourist centres’, ‘beyond the reach of the day excursion from Keswick, except for the most

determined.’\textsuperscript{72} Most visitors came from the West Cumberland seaside resorts, arriving by train and travelling along the carriage roads to Wasdale Head. For visitors intent on climbing, the main mode of access to Wasdale was walking. Vigorous pedestrians like Leslie Stephen, enjoying a short break in the Lakes, could take the train from Waterloo on a Saturday in April 1875 and arrived at Furness Abbey at teatime. On Sunday he proceeded to Foxfield Junction, embarking on the Coniston Railway to Coniston, arriving at about midday and setting off to walk to Wasdale Head: ‘Thence we had to walk here crossing three ridges on the way. We managed the first two pretty well but J. W. became uncommonly tired over the last & I had enough of it – my knapsack being very heavy & nearly cutting my shoulder in two’.\textsuperscript{73} The following Wednesday he walked back to Coniston to catch the train home. Wasdale was ‘assuredly the core of the mountains’ according to the actress Nancy Price. Arriving there on foot in 1914 she noted:

I think one should always enter Wasdale as daylight fades. I know that I felt everything to be essentially right as we scrunched down the Sty Head Pass in the gathering dusk towards the Inn – I beg its pardon, “The Wasdale Head Hotel”.

This hotel had been established at Wasdale Head by William Ritson, who had inherited the farm at Row Foot from his grandfather Bill Ritson. In 1856 ‘in response to the increasing number of visitors to the valley, he applied for a licence to sell alcohol’ and at the southern end of the farmhouse ‘added a small wing to provide accommodation’ which became known as the Huntsman’s Inn. Ritson would ‘occasionally act as a mountain guide for visitors, but had no interest in rock climbing and usually tried to dissuade tourists from attempting it.’\textsuperscript{75} In the 1870s Tom and Anne Tyson established a teetotal guesthouse in the adjacent farm at Row Head which established a ‘reputation for good home cooking’.\textsuperscript{76} In 1868 William Ritson’s farmhouse at Wasdale Head was said to offer ‘“clean and comfortable” lodgings at Wasdale Head for ten or twelve people at a time’\textsuperscript{77} but it had a reputation for being ‘raucous and unpredictable’. Ritson himself was something of a Cumberland celebrity: a ‘keen foxhunter, champion wrestler, excellent storyteller and shrewd businessman’.\textsuperscript{78} In 1875 Leslie Stephen described Ritson’s as ‘the queerest of little places…The Ritsons [the landlords] sit in the kitchen all day & callers walk in & out. The roof is timber & hung with flitches of bacon & guns [?]; & I knock

\textsuperscript{76} Cocker, M., \textit{Wasdale Climbing Book; A History of Early Rock Climbing in the Lake District based on contemporary accounts from the Wastwater Hotel, 1863-1919}. (Ernest Press, 2006), p. 22.
\textsuperscript{77} Marshall, Walton, 190.
my head against the beams in the passages if ever I don’t look out’. In 1879 ‘Will Ritson and his wife Dinah retired from the Huntsman’s Inn and Daniel Tyson, involved in running the Row Head guesthouse, took over the lease changing the name to the Wastwater Hotel. Slightly higher up the valley, the farm at Burnthwaite also took in guests. In 1935 Dorothy Pilley recalled her first visit to Wasdale c. 1910-20 and the changes that had come over Burnthwaite:

> Baths and modernity have come to it. Then, one sat in a dark, cosy little room and ate in a narrow whitewashed cell, which I believe had once been a dairy. If you were much favoured, old Mrs. Wilson would let you sit and gossip in the kitchen.

A visitors’ book was kept at the Huntsman’s Inn from 1863 and early records of mountaineering exploits were transcribed from this to the Wastwater Hotel. Along with the visitors’ book kept by the Tysons at Row Head, from which extensive accounts have been published for the years 1876-1886, they form an invaluable historical record of early mountaineering and rock climbing in the valley. Catering for tourists, walkers, mountaineers and climbers, these visitors’ books provide evidence of visits by the professional classes from northern industrial towns but also indicate a high proportion of scholars, academics and dons from the public schools and universities, corroborating Noel Annan’s statement about the attraction of mountains and mountaineering to intellectuals. Wasdale Head seems to have been a popular destination for academic reading weeks, offering cheap accommodation, inspirational landscapes, vigorous exercise and few distractions. Sufficiently off the beaten track to deter the trippers that were clogging up Bowness and Keswick and mountainous enough to satisfy aesthetic and athletic requirements, Wasdale combined rustic authenticity and a degree of remoteness and exclusivity. Lehmann Oppenheimer, writing in the Climbers’ Club Journal of 1899 in an article entitled ‘Wastdale Head at Easter’ could write:

> there are few spots of equal beauty so undisturbed by traffic, noise, and other accompaniments of a civilization to which too many holiday resorts have fallen victims. As yet no signboards point the way to the best scenery, the waterfalls are unenclosed, and the mountain sides undecorated by railways.

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John Stogden, a Harrow Schoolmaster and one of the pioneers of guideless climbing in the Alps was a regular guest at the Wasdale Head Hotel, the first record of him visiting being in January 1870. He was ‘one of the first to draw the attention of his fellow-Alpinists to the opportunities offered by hills nearer home.’ 85 His account in the Alpine Club’s *Alpine Journal* of the winter ascent of South Gully on Bowfell was ‘the first time the journal had published anything relating to climbing in Britain’, this a full thirteen years after the founding of the Alpine Club. 86 The Row Head guesthouse was also a popular destination for university reading parties. Charles Cannan, the Dean of Trinity College, Oxford, introduced the likes of C. E. Montague, A.E. W. Mason and Arthur Quiller Couch to the delights of Mrs Tyson’s ‘sweet mountain of mutton and Mr. Pendlebury’s pudding…a delicious compound of farm milk, tapioca and raisins.’ 87

Reading parties taken at Easter or Whitsun or between academic terms remained short but could be prolonged in the summer vacation. In 1881 the twenty–two year old Walter Parry Haskett Smith spent two months in Wasdale as part of a university reading party, staying at Row Head for the first month. He was back in 1882 with his brother Edmund for nine weeks. 88

For the mountaineering tourist, particularly those with limited vacation time and on a budget, Cumberland offered a cost effective and time effective alternative to Switzerland. Writing c. 1898-99, the London school teacher O. G. Jones noted:

> We cannot conveniently reach Switzerland at every season of the year. At Christmas and Easter it is entirely barred to most people. The expense of foreign travel is a consideration, and the question of length of holiday is rarely negligible. Cumberland can be reached in a night from London; the district is an inexpensive one for tourists….Personally I should always go to the high Alps when the chance offered itself, but Cumberland serves remarkably well to allay the desire for mountain air and vigorous exercise when Switzerland is out of the question.89

The intensity of mountaineering exploration in the Lake District began to pick up in the 1880s and news of this began to be reported in popular periodicals. After spending mid-August 1884 at Row Head, climbing with large parties that included J. W. Robinson, the London journalist C. N. Williamson was able to publish what is arguably the first climbing guide to the region, as an article entitled ‘The Climbs of the English Lake

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District’ in the Magazine All The Year Round. It is perhaps instructive that Williamson’s piece did not find its way into the quarterlies like the Cornhill or the Nineteenth Century, where so many Alpine Club members chose to publish Alpine accounts alongside the higher journalism, but in a middlebrow publication, edited by Charles Dickens Jnr, aimed at popular audiences. Williamson’s article presaged the explosion of mountaineering articles and stories that appeared in the 1890s that would appear in popular monthlies like George Newnes Strand and Wide World Magazine, appealing to a wider class of readership.

The event that did the most to publicize climbing in Wasdale however, occurred in June 1886, when W. P. Haskett Smith was to establish an epochal climb that most mountaineering historians use as their datum for the birth of rock climbing in the British Isles, climbing the Wasdale Crack on Napes Needle. The climb, described by Alan Hankinson as ‘arguably the most significant short climb ever made’ represented a new level of technical difficulty on steep open rock, requiring gymnastic ability and athletic conditioning, and was a celebration of the kinaesthetic joy of climbing and a youthful statement of indifference towards much that the mountaineering establishment held dear. It is clear evidence of the culture of mountaineering beginning to hybridize, with new sub-cultures emerging. News of the ascent and the iconic image of the Needle shaped perceptions of the emerging sport of rock climbing, being reported in the Pall Mall Budget of 1890. In the early 1890s the sight of Professor H. Dixon’s photograph of climbers on Napes Needle ‘in a shop window in the Strand’ inspired O. G. Jones to start climbing in the Lake District. The Abraham Brothers of Keswick, photographic entrepreneurs and mountaineers, sold photos of Napes Needle to tourists. Being the first to introduce the scenic picture postcard to Britain, having seen them on sale in Zermatt in 1898, the trade in cheap images of the Lake District landscape and of climbing and mountaineering became a core part of their business. On a subsequent trip to the Haute Savoie, George Abraham ‘was amused to discover one of their views of climbers on Napes Needle on sale in the shops of Chamonix, masquerading as an Alpine pinnacle called the “Aiguille de la Nuque”.’ By 1902 W. G. Collingwood could state that Napes

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Needle ‘is pictured on all the posters of Lake District attractions’\textsuperscript{95} part of the distinctive landscape repertoire of images that the tourist industry sought to promote. The Abrahams filmed an ascent of Napes Needle, possibly as early as 1913 and in the early 1920s produced a ‘short travelogue-type film – a Pathé Review with printed captions’ showing George Abraham leading the Arête route on Napes Needle.\textsuperscript{96}

What emerged in the decades up to the First World War at Wasdale was a highly distinctive climbing and mountaineering milieu that was recognized as such by contemporaries.\textsuperscript{97} Wasdale Head cultivated the new sport and became a forcing ground for harder rock routes as well as winter mountaineering routes.\textsuperscript{98} The shortage of accommodation in the valley led to intense overcrowding, particularly at Easter and Whitsun, W. G. Collingwood noting in 1902 that ‘to enjoy this neighbourhood you must go there out of season; that is to say, any time except Easter and summer vacations’.\textsuperscript{99} Class distinctions based on hotel status or room tariffs became impossible to maintain. There was simply no choice and more than a touch of the ‘take-it-or leave-it’ approach that Marshall noted marked out the Cumbrian innkeeper, ‘a man of considerable independence of attitude and outlook…prone to think that others should enjoy without complaint the food and linen to which he himself was accustomed.’\textsuperscript{100} As the mountaineers virtually took over the hotel at certain times of year a highly playful and anarchic culture descended. Oppenheimer’s essay ‘Wastdale Head at Easter’ describes catching the night train from Manchester and walking the twelve miles from the coast to Wasdale Head. Enquiring of Mr. Tyson about a room he is told that ‘every room in the house was taken two or three weeks ago; there’s some folks sleepin’ I’t the smoke-room and some I’t the barn – not abed to spare nowhere, and they are full up at Burnthwaite too.’\textsuperscript{101} Far from being trippers from Barrow and Whitehaven, Tyson informed him that few were ‘fro these parts: mostly they’re from all over England – London and Oxford, Yorkshire and Manchester’.\textsuperscript{102} Professors, poets, bohemians, undergraduates, solicitors, the crowd Oppenheimer describes is cultivated, well travelled and not unfamiliar with the

\textsuperscript{96} Hankinson, \textit{Camera on the Crags}, p.27.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria/content/articles/2008/10/13/abraham_bros_io_feature.shtml [Accessed 7 June 2001]
http://manage.hotsoc.net/customer_images/FA00F036-E183-44C7-A38C-40C3F0D4FE18/archive%20articles/winter%20climbing%20history.pdf [Accessed 2 June 2011]
There is undoubtedly a preponderance of “higher professionals” in Oppenheimer’s account. But we know that regional industrialists and businessmen were not underrepresented and that many of the academics from the regional and red brick universities were chemists and engineers with strong links to industry. Further down the social scale this milieu was open to tradesmen like the Abrahams of Keswick (photographers), Oppenheimer (mosaic flooring) and the lower-middle class teachers like O. G. Jones. Contemporary mountaineers remarked on the democratic nature of these gatherings, where class distinctions were discounted. Describing her first night at the Wastwater Hotel, Nancy Price, having overcome the embarrassment of being the only woman there and having the whole room stand when she came in to dinner, described the conviviality:

Everybody talked to everybody else – and what talk! I fancied myself at Zermatt. Ropes and axes, couloirs, arêtes, chimneys…That first night at Wasdale there sat down to dinner, two clerks from Barrow, an Oxford undergraduate…two keen young Americans…a well known author, and a gentleman who regaled us with tales of the good old days.

In this almost entirely male atmosphere, the ludic nature of recreation came to the fore. Training games like the Billiard Room Traverse, and the Barn Door Traverse and upside-down bouldering on the Y boulder in Mosedale demonstrated the intense physicality of this new culture, its inventiveness and playfulness, sub-cultural innovations that prefigure today’s climbing walls and bouldering scene. The climbing culture at Wasdale witnessed the sportization of mountaineering, the gradual working out of rules and codes of behaviour very different from what had gone before, less governed by external literary, aesthetic and scientific criteria, more concerned with things of interest to a small coterie within the sport: issues of what constituted acceptable and unacceptable climbing ethics, techniques and equipment. And this was reinforced through the development of club rituals, songs and the climbing club journals that were starting to emerge. If ‘one of the most important characteristics of play was its spatial separation from ordinary life’ then the remoteness and spatial separation of Wasdale did much to foster this playful innovation. Many climbers were conscious that travel began the process of separation, often meditating on the transition from the smogs of industrial Britain to the clean air and renewed clarity of the fells. In the night journeys by train, or huddled around the fire in the early hours of the morning at Penrith station, they began to put on new selves. Geoffrey Winthrop Young noted that the journey served to:

cover a similar change in myself; from an evening self laboriously constructed under a thousand pressures to do a hundred civilized

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tricks, to a spontaneous self that came of itself, with the winds and
the height and the rapture of morning and movement. I was not
introspective as a boy, but I must quickly have recognized that some
sort of transition would take place; for I used to wait to change into
mountain clothes until I was on the neutral territory of the train, so
that the pleasanter self which waited for me somewhere about the
thousand-foot level might not return to life in inappropriate
trousers.106

The democratic culture on display at Wasdale and the ‘return to life’ that mountaineering
tourism offered led many contemporary commentators and social theorists to place great
hope in the outdoor movement. C. E. Montague, chief leader writer at the *Manchester
Guardian*, heavily promoted the outdoor movement and mountaineering in particular
between 1890 and 1926, incorporating it into a critique of society based on New Liberal
social theory. He saw it as a panacea for the ills of industrial society, a new space where
class based politics would be replaced by rational, classless recreation, which celebrated
regional identity and reunited socialist and liberal elements in the progressive movement.
He appealed to the regional middle classes to take a more active role in the social
leadership of the outdoor movement. Gradually, clubs that focussed on mountaineering
and climbing in the British Isles emerged. In England the first to be established were
clustered around the Pennines and in industrial Lancashire: The Yorkshire Ramblers Club
(f. 1892), The Kyndwr Club (f. 1895), The Manchester based Rucksack Club (f.1902),
the Derbyshire Pennine Club (f. 1906), and the Liverpool-based Wayfarers Club
(f.1906).107 The Climbers’ Club was founded in London in December 1897 to bring
together those interested in ‘mountaineering in England, Ireland and Wales’, evidence, its
founders suggested of something ‘hitherto only half suspected – of a large body of British
climbers ready for an association from which the organisation and development of their
sport might be looked for’.108 At its inception the Climbers’ Club was careful to position
itself, stating ‘the Club will be in no sense antagonistic to any existing institution’,
respecting the territorial sensibilities of the Scottish clubs but also ongoing accusations of
vulgarization from the Alpine Club.109 The Lake District itself was among the last in this
movement to establish regional mountaineering clubs, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club
being formed 1907. Whilst its committee members were all resident in and around the
Lake District it sought to boost its social and sporting legitimacy by inviting noted
Alpinists from the region who also had strong Lake District climbing credentials, like
Slingsby, Collie, Geoffrey Hastings and Charles Pilkington, to be honorary members.

107 Smith, F. D, *A Brief History/Introduction to the Yorkshire Ramblers’ Club*, 2011
pp. 33-34, 178. Fyles, K., and Stroude, B., (Eds), *100 Years of Wayfaring, 1906- 2006*, (Liverpool: The
Wayfarer’s Club, 2006).
1898, pp.1-9, at 4.
1898, pp.1-9 at p.4. Oppenheimer, L. J., ‘Correspondence, Manchester, March 16th 1901’, *Climbers’ Club
Perhaps the most striking thing of all about the climbing culture that emerged in the period in the Lake District was its informality, emerging largely without formal voluntary associational structures. Even after the foundation of the regional clubs, bourgeois-romantic individualism remained in tension with further institutionalization, deeply ambivalent towards the mass appropriation of the hills that would be such a feature of the post-war period. The production of guidebooks was left to private individuals, and the First Series of F.R.C.C. guidebooks only began to appear under R.S.T. Chorley’s editorship, G. S. Bower’s Doe Crag appearing in 1922.110 Whilst the Rucksack Club had opened its first hut at Cwm Eigau in North Wales in 1912, followed by the Climbers’ Club hut at Helyg in Ogwen in 1925 and the Rucksack Club’s Tal-y-Braich Uchaf, Ogwen 1927, the first climbing club hut in the Lake District did not open until the Wayfarers’ Club opened the Robertson Lamb Hut in Langdale in 1930. The Coniston Tigers assembled their own hut (an old garage) behind Coniston Old Hall in 1931.111 The F.R.C.C. opened its Brackenclose hut in Wasdale in 1937.112 Before the inception of dedicated climbing club huts the location, provision and nature of tourist accommodation proved hugely influential in shaping the emerging sport, its rituals and traditions.

Mountaineers and climbers in the pre-war period often had multiple club affiliations, expressing different localized identities, but the new regional clubs remained firmly middle-class voluntary associations, often negotiating private access agreements with landowners in the Pennines in a mutually beneficial compact that kept access to Pennine grouse moors tightly restricted. Whilst the mountains of Snowdonia and North Wales witnessed similar developments in the sportization of mountaineering, their cultural importance to recrudescent Welsh nationalist identity complicated attempts to appropriate them as cultural landscapes and tourist destinations. By 1914 by the preponderance of climbers and mountaineers from England looked towards the Lake District as the culturally most significant British mountain landscape, an evaluation reinforced by its Romantic and literary association as well as its relative accessibility. Its cultural significance as the “birthplace of rock climbing” was already firmly established. Its increasing accessibility meant that climbers from the industrial cities of the north could apply climbing techniques honed on the gritstone edges of the Pennines to mountain crags, leading to acceleration in the severity of climbs undertaken. The pre-war high watermark in terms of difficulty was reached in April, 1914 with Siegfried Herford’s, George Sansom’s and C. F. Holland’s ascent of Central Buttress on Scafell. In choosing to find a suitable way to memorialize Herford and other mountaineers who had died in the Great War, in 1919 the F.R.C.C. effected to purchase Great Gable, eventually

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112 I am indebted to Douglas Hope for this information on club huts, forming part of his Ph. D. research at the University of Cumbria. Hope, D. H., The Changing Role and Influence of the Organisations that Pioneered the Provision of Recreational and Educational Holidays for Working People in the English Lake District, c.1930-2004’, forthcoming.
unveiling a bronze memorial plaque on its summit in 1924.¹¹³ No better cenotaph than the mountain itself was required to express the complete self-identification shared by English mountaineers with the Lake District landscape. Sacralizing the landscape added to the cultural valency of the Lake District landscape. The commonality of sacrifice in the Great War had reinvigorated arguments for the restorative nature of upland landscapes and renewed arguments for access to mountains. In donating the land to the National Trust the F.R.C.C. looked to the future of widened and more democratic access that was to be such a feature of the outdoor movement in the 1920s and 1930s. At the dedication ceremony on 8 June 1924, Geoffrey Winthrop Young provided a poetic distillation of all the many meanings that mountains signified to mountaineers and climbers: ‘Upon this mountain we are met today to dedicate this space of hills to freedom.’¹¹⁴

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As rock climbing matured, a variety of grading systems were created in order to more accurately compare relative difficulties of climbs. Over the years both climbing techniques and the equipment climbers use to advance the sport have evolved in a steady fashion. Some historical benchmarks. Pretty much the origin of big wall climbing and techniques. He uses them to good purpose with an ascent of the 26 pitch, 4000 foot Northwest Face of the Civetta.[5]. 1934: Pierre Allain champions bouldering at Fontainebleau; climbs L'Angle Allain (V2). "Rock Climbing in the English Lake District", G. P. Abraham & Sons, Keswick. ^ a b "Bergakrobaten: Die Dolomiten und die Erfindung des Kletterns", CittÀ di Bolzano, Bolzano 2006. ^ Hankinson, Alan (1972).