

**Here are three separate documents from Robert Arundale compiled into one.**

- Reconstructing HPN's important climbs, especially in the Alps 11/7/24
- Transcription of HPN's 1903 Journal of the family's trip to England, Leaflet #4
- Retracing HPN's family trip over Helvellyn, Sept. 4, 1903.

**Reconstructing HPN's important climbs, especially in the Alps**

11/7/24

Over the past several years I have been reading through the classic accounts of early ascents in the Alps, e.g., Whymper, Rey, etc. I've become interested in identifying HPN's climbs, **and would appreciate help**, especially if anyone knows of HPN journals for his trips. We know from p. 73 in *Victorious Mountaineer* that he climbed the Matterhorn, Breithorn, Jungfrau, Monch, and later Mt. Fox in the Selkirks. We have his certificate for the 1896 Mt. Blanc ascent. And he must have been at Concordia Hutte prior to building Concordia in 1888 (it is in the glacier complex to the southeast of the Jungfrau/Monch—does the photo at Concordia have a date?). And we know that the 1903 trip to England with the family was HPN's fifth trip across the Atlantic. As best I ascertain, then, there are two European trips unaccounted for:

Trip #1: 1878: Age 28. Climbs the Matterhorn, and possibly the Breithorn, since it is relatively nearby. Might he have also climbed Monte Rosa, since it is very close to Zermatt? I've heard that while in Zermatt he encountered the young Teddy Roosevelt, though did not know who he was.

Trip #2 ???? : Possible trip to the Jungfrau/Monch (Bernese Oberland), possibly including a visit to Concordia Hutte?

1883: Age 33. HPN and Alice marry (Maise's *Chronology of Concordia by the Decade* (CCbyD), notes the date as 1881. Are there other records of the date?

1888: Age 38. Concordia is built.

Trip #3 ????.

1893: As per *Victorious Mountaineer*, a trip to the Selkirks, including a climb of Mt. Fox.

Trip #4: 1896: Age 46. Trip to climb Mt. Blanc, and very likely other ascents around Chamonix. His certificate for ascent #1528 is signed by Tirraz, the senior and most famous guide at the time. CCbyD, page 9, notes that this trip included time in England, and Switzerland, with Alice and at least Margaret spending time in Paris in the fall, where Margaret attended classes.

Trip #5: 1903: Age 53. England and the Lake District, as per HPN's journal.

Trip #6: 1908: Age 58. Trip to England. As in CCbyD, p. 21.

Trip #7: 1911: Age 61. CCbyD, p. 26, indicates that four of the family were in Europe this year, when Don meets Beatrice von Bylandt. Sheply and Don ascend the Matterhorn while HPN watches by telescope.

1915: Alice passes.

1919: Age 69. CCbyD, p. 32, notes a trip to the Canadian Rockies.

1930. For his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday: Canadian Rockies, by train, with Joe Dodge, Randy Hubbard (a Hutman), Hawkeye, Donaldson, Margaret, and 2 or 3 others, as per the photographs of the trip. The party climbs Mt. Fox.

1935, September 3: His 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday: Climbs Mt. Washington via Tuckerman Trail, in the company of Joe Dodge, and likely Donaldson, who signed the Concordia guest book on Sept. 2.

Other notable dates:

1902: One of the founders of the American Alpine Club, in NYC

1923-25: President of the AAC, and instrumental in its award of the its annual prize/honorary membership to George Leigh Mallory, recognizing Mallory's past and coming attempts of Mt. Everest.

Robert Arundale

[rbarundale@alaska.edu](mailto:rbarundale@alaska.edu), Cell: 907-750-2443

1465 Blue Sky Circle, Unit 17-207, Erie, CO, 80516



## Transcription of HPN's 1903 Journal of the family's trip to England, Leaflet #4

Robert B. Arundale, Nov. 2024

Background: While at Concordia in August 2023, with Chalmers, we discovered a package, bound in twine, of four, 24 page leaflets comprising HPN's journal of a summer long trip to England in 1903 by the entire family, HPN, Alice, and Margaret, Sheply, and Donaldson. The fourth leaflet is an account of their time in the Lake District, which concludes with an amazing family story focused on Alice, that neither Chalmers nor I had been aware of. In summer 2024 I had the fourth leaflet copied, with the commitment to transcribe it for all. The first three leaflets are worth further examination, as well, as they contain reference to time spent in northern Wales (Denby) with cousins, who may relate to Lydia Ropes, who married Ichabod Nichols in the late 1700s.

A sketch of the first three leaflets:

#1 – June 18-27, 1903, they are on the vessel “Mayflower,” and HPN begins by noting that this is his *fifth* trip across the Atlantic. Beginning June 27 they spend time in northern Wales (Betws-y-Coed) and enjoy the friendly Welsh. From June 30 through July 17 they are in and around Denby, with relatives, including a cousin Arlie Reed, and the children enjoy spending much time (e.g., tennis, golf) with their age-mate cousins Edward, Hubert and Violet Reed, and later go on excursions with them. They visit with an aging Mrs. Ropes, who is 84. Is there a connection here from Lydia Ropes who married Ichabod in Salem on April 12, 1774, not long before he enlisted in 1776 to join Washington, and got read out of the Salem Friends Meeting for doing so?

#2 – July 19-28. The family travels south in Wales and into Devon and Cornwall, enjoying the coast, taking long walks, climbing hills and tors on the coast. They visit Dartmoor and Exmoor. Sheply and Donaldson enjoy exploring sea caves, and HPN and Alice are wary as they stand atop a sea crag. Devon cream is a favorite of all.

#3 – July 29-Aug. 14. Margaret celebrates her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on a drive to top of the Moors and a hike down. More travel in southwest England: e.g., Lynton, Clovelly, Tintagel, Penzance, Wells, the Doone Valley. HPN notes some fatigue, and that we are “not good sightseers,” and his reactions as a Protestant to a cathedral complex he visits. They return to south Wales, and Alice takes the children to Oxford, while HPN climbs in the Brecon Beacons.

#4 – Part 4, The Lake District, Sept, 1903:

Wastwater – Aug. 15-22:

We left the beautiful Lake District for our last quiet English experience. Moreover, exercise was part of our living there, and we were braced for it. To tell the truth, so eager was I for the Lake Region that I went there two days early, while Mother guided her irreconcilable hopefuls around Oxford.

And we began with the wildest, feeling that perhaps that our last week should be milder as a tribute to Neptunes power.

The Lake Country is small. It consists of three or four parallel lake systems running North and South, with great mountains between. We had to transform our notion of the region. My picture was of a mild, peaceful, pastoral, and soft region with grass – green undulating hills. But it is much more rugged and impressive. The mountains throughout running above 3200ft. are many of them bastioned with rock and rise from great moors which are treeless, save here and there a striking group of larches. One side of every mountain is very steep broken shale or scree, and the other, while a grass slope, is also very steep and close fed by sheep. The higher mountains have near their tops in place of the shale, pinnacles and turrets and caps, which are the practice ground of Alpine climbers as I will show you in photographs. The beauty of the region is the exceeding greenness of the grass where grass can find a footing and the beautiful deep lakes caught and hid everywhere.

As I drove from the station of Seascale, whence I had come in eleven hours from Brecon, a two hours ride into the hills, every gully (called in the Lake Country a gill) was running a waterfall, countless reproductions of the slopes of Webster. No part of the Lake Country is more than 25 miles from the sea, either in the south, west or north, so that the mts. rise almost from its level.

Wastwater is the deepest and most somber of the lakes, and a mile beyond it, at the very head of the glen, is the little farmstead of Wasdale Head, with its seven families, its rectory, and tiny church, and its comfortable climber's inn where we had a week.

The inn is very plain, rooms small and unadorned. The table was good, but there was nothing to do but talk pillars and rock cracks, and to go look at them. At noon the place livened up with lunch parties driving from Seascale. Sunshine would have been welcome, but that is a rare article in the Lake Country. The rain fall is 100-150 inches per annum. We have been at this writing 12 days in the Region, and of those only two have been without rain. One gets to count on it, and start out rain or no. Waterproof business must be remunerative. Most of it is showery; an occasional day of uninterrupted pour.

As I neared Wastwater we met a young man running who said one of his walking party had given out by the roadside; could the trap take her back to a village below where she could get transportation to her inn. I told the driver to take her back, and I would walk on. This said, in darkness, and downpour, and tremendous wind, some five miles, arriving at nine o'clock. When the family followed on Monday they had bright weather, and saw the wonderful mountains, looming higher and higher by daylight. Alice enjoyed the drive, and the views when there were any: and lay meantime between the blankets lamenting the perversity of her family and preparing to dry no tear when we came in wet. We did not get her up any of the heights, but brought her reports of the Yarbarrow(?), Kirkfell, Lingwell, Great Gable, Scarfell Pike. This last is the biggest peak in England, and we were on it one of our two fine days. These striking peaks rise from the very door of the inn; and are really so low that the best of them can be taken between lunch and dinner. As dinner hour approaches at 7:30, the climbers stream in (one day we counted 20 on one of the passes) and the evening hears their experiences, in the little hall or the smoke room.

The surroundings of Wastwater are unique for the study of a showery day. No floor of the dale is very level, perhaps 2 miles by 1 mile. It is checkerboarded all over with stone walls, very high and very broad. The enclosed fields as we look at them from a height are of all shapes and sizes, mostly very small and very grotesquely shaped. To climb these walls is a feat of gymnastics Alice wants five minutes for. Their purpose I think is primarily is to gather up the stones, then to form small enclosures for special lambs, then to get a little bit of grass for cutting with perhaps a few potatoes or a turnip. Of course the one industry is sheep farming, and the sheep, a kind peculiar to this Lake Country, roam over all the

mountain ranges. The hardiest sheep are seen at the top of the ridges outlined against the sky: these bring the best prices, are bigger and shear more wool. The lambs are kept in the enclosures till about the first of July so that the grass does not begin to grow for the hay crop till in many other places it has been harvested. Poor farmers! They do have difficulty in drying their hay: it will lie for a week as it has been mown, in pelting rain: then there will come an exceptionally dry day or two and they hustle it in.

The church at Wasdale is perhaps the smallest in the kingdom, and the parish has six families. The congregation numbered 25, but only 3-4 were natives. The dale boasts the smallest church, the highest mountain, the deepest lake, and the biggest bar in the kingdom (this last is our landlord). We five were some of the multitude streamng over the pass on Saturday, Aug. 22. Even Alice toiled up the slopes of Great Gable and past Sty Head tarn and down to rainy Seathwaite with growing enthusiasm. It is a great walk, as fine as any of the great Swiss passes, though so low. The whole day reminded us of the Gemmi trip, pass, peak, rocks, waterfalls, vallies, hotels. We lunched most cleanly and comfortably, on the usual "cold-beef, lamb, chicken & ham, steak & kidney pie, veal & ham pie (with potato), and 'sweets.'"

#### Keswick

Into Keswick we came at 6 PM. Keswick, the big old market town of the Lake Country. We planned to be at the Keswick Hotel for Sunday, and then hunt lodgings. Behold! the big hotel was full, everybody seeking their playground the last week in August. So we took a little old hotel and were very comfortable, going twice to church and getting our bearings.

No lodgings being available till Wednesday we left Donaldson with luggage and golf and went off for Tuesday to Windermere, the land of Wordsworth and Arnold and Coleridge. One night we slept at the Salutation Inn, Ambleside, and one at the Prince of Wales, Grasmere; and it was all a most delightful and memorable experience.

To be sure it rained a miserable drizzle both Monday and Wednesday on each of which we drove 15 miles past [Thirlmere?] and its fine pass. But although we were wet we were cheerful, and everybody was wet too. And Tuesday gave us a glorious day, when we went the length of Windermere in the morning, the largest lake in England, all girt about with mountains, and dotted to the very edge with forests and green grass, a combination of grandness and greenness perhaps nowhere else to be seen. Grasmere has Rydal Mount and Dove Cottage and Wordsworth's [green?] and all the summits and beauty that breathes from his poems. The people seem to have caught the spirit of the poet, and are calm and happy, and above taste and aspiration. Every pain is taken to cherish nature and to keep history and literary association at its best. Alice was as one inspired, and Wordsworth in hand, kept us all up to the pitch. Wordsworth country all seems as it should and as we would remember it.

#### In lodgings at Keswick

We had found quarters at Woodford House, The Heads. Our sitting room looks out on green fields, with Derwentwater Lake beyond, and all the splendid mountains surrounding; with Skiddaw behind us, and Helvellyn just out of sight. It is one of the few most beautiful places in the world. We got in Wednesday afternoon and were glad to be in our own quarters; with our books and writing materials and cards and own table amid the comfortless drizzle. Thursday the skies opened and the rain came down in sheets, driven by howling west winds, a most impressive sight, the river rising to flood its banks, the course stretching out to cover the fields right before our very eyes. Friday a persistent soak with no break at all, our sparse excursions demanding change of clothing and relegation of apparel to the kitchen. On Saturday it began with rain and we gave up again on anything but the shelter of our own fire: by afternoon it had brightened, with scurrying clouds and showers on the mountainside, real hill

weather. We took a boat in the afternoon, and the children rowed us 3 miles to Lodore: they enjoyed it; be we so little, the gusts of wind, the boat shipping seas, no chance to turn and look at the mts. for fear of disturbing the balance, that we walked home by the road. Age has never perhaps an over amount of reasoning discretion. Sunday drizzle, turning to downpour. By the night the wind had freshened, and when we went to bed there was a howling gale beating hour after hour against our windows and shaking our house. The windows of our bedroom are French, opening on a balcony. One we carelessly fastened, and it *blew in* to shatters, probably entailing an expenditure of 2 pounds. It had to be boarded up. It was a night of real terror. I never knew it could blow so on land. Once for all England's climate, for wetness, and for wind leaves America much to be desired. As we reckon and remember, we have been two days only without rain in 4 weeks.

The English folk are used to it. A waterproof is their primary investment, and umbrellas their staple industry. To be sure they prayed for fair weather at church; a prayer unfamiliar, that we might not be left to the misery of all but the eight persons in the time of Noah. The weather does not keep people from the church. Gales and rain find even the old ladies at the place and in the evening service. Two large parish churches, one  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the town, and either of them entirely full with a devout and hearty congregation. What a repeated tale this weather story is. It bulks no larger in my notes than in our summer's experience. It is a constant amazement, to wake, no matter what the promise of sunset, and find a drizzle or a downpour. Disparage American weather as we may, its extremes, it dazzle, how we find our selves longing for settled sunshine and real warmth.

Ullswater.

One of the most beautiful of the lakes is Ullswater. The Lake system may be called three or four parallels. The Ullswater-Haweswater group East, the Windermere-Thirlmere group, the Derwentwater-Bassenthwaite group, the Wastwater-Buttermere-Emmerdale group West. Between are the mountain ranges, form the heads of whose vallies run the cross passes. There is nothing just like it. No such lakes in the White Mts.; no such rugged Alpine passes. It is all a constant surprise. The wild barren rocks, the great stretches of grassy pastureland called "fells," the slopes of scree, the rushing streams, the lakes now peaceful now gust-tossed. Each has its own charm and its revelation.

Our sitting room had to be given up for two days to a bride and groom. So we decided to leave our possessions in our bed rooms and with two bags go over to Ullswater. Going for two days we stayed over three, and we look back upon it as perhaps the happiest and most harmonious bit of our whole happy summer. Alice and I went round by train and coach. The children crossed by the Sticks Pass, the highest pass in the Lake District, 2400 ft. As we drove up the door of the hotel they dropped down from the side of the mountain. Of course it was in a drizzle, but we were all hopeful.

Alice and I had left the R.R. at the little barren mountain station of Troutbeck, whence, after climbing a long fell side to a village 1000-2000ft in air, we dropped and [????] down on to the most beautiful of lakes some seven miles long, and bosomed in woods, bordered by crags, and showing from its shores and centre splendid views of Helvellyn, Place Fell, Sunday Crag, Stybarrow, Fairfield.

The Ullswater Hotel we pronounce on the whole the most attractive at which we have stayed. The prices are not extravagant. The service is excellent, quiet rooms, fine table, considerate and friendly ways. In situation it is perfect, on the lake border, away from people and houses, with its own attractive gardens and boat landings. But of all there is a big hall just as one enters in which is constant a comfortable fire, not like the Crawford House and the dear Concordia Living Room, because not of wood, but cheerful in wet and cold. When you recall that the glass is never above 70 degrees and only a small part of the day above 60 degrees you will realize the solid comfort of a good fire. We shall have a

special reason to remember long the three days in which we sat before it, with other Lake Country guests, passing from it to well-served, appetizing meals, and to our quiet, well ordered bedrooms.

Wednesday Sept. 2 was the rainiest day we have had in rainy England, as steady down pour, with not even the wanted break in the afternoon. Everyone sat in the house reading and writing. Sheply found many entertaining books about. Place Fell, the great mountain just opposite the other side of the lake, normally a wall of granite and heather dry and bare, gushed from hidden fountains a dozen of sparkling streams. Aria Force, the most famous waterfall of the region, is three miles away. In the afternoon I walked to it, risking a drenching, to see and hear it thunder. The heights in the Lake Country are so slight and the regions drained so small, the “forces” are very disappointing save in a wet time. This day it absolutely *frightened* me as I stood before the narrow gorge through which it roared scattering spray all over the platform on which I stood. Such a spot in dark and rain and spray and roar and solitude is rather awful. The next morning I went again with all the family and saw it still tumultuous in glinting sunshine.

This day was my birthday. Each member of the family wrote me a poem. In the afternoon all but Alice went up Place Fell, returning straight down the side through the heather. Here we saw a graceful group of deer, protected I presume, yet creatures of the wild. It was a very happy day to all of us: exercise, beauty, family companionship. Our usual method of climbing a mountain is for me to announce the plan and Margaret at once acquiesce, for Sheply to demur, and Donaldson to say he will meet us on the top. So Margaret and I start out: in half an hour Sheply comes running after us smiling in second thoughts, and we three jog on: part way up the gentle gradient of zigzag by which we plodders mount we descry Donaldson either outlined against the sky on some crag or toiling breathless up well nigh perpendicular heath slopes: we meet at the summit perhaps for sandwiches, and join our dear smiling wife or mother at the hotel again perhaps for afternoon tea.

Friday Sept. 4, 1903 diary entry is below with pictures from 2025 taken by Robert Arundale

#### A personal reflection on HPN’s Lake District Journal

*In the summer of 1972 Wendy and I were able to hike in the Lake District with a US friend then at Cambridge. We did not have the family’s constant rain, but on our last day we hike hiked in dense fog over Great Gable to spend the night at the Wastwater Inn. Even 70 years later the place was much as HPN describes it, quite plain and unadorned, with a big bar for locals and tourists. All around the common rooms were pictures of hearty climbers around the turn of the century. That evening, having looked at the pictures, Wendy and I discovered that we had independently come to the conclusion that “Uncle Harry must have been here.” Imagine my surprise then when I found the first word on the fourth leaflet: “Wastwater”!*

Robert Arundale, 11/2/24

## Retracing HPN's family trip over Helvellyn, Sept. 4, 1903.

This final paragraph of HPN's 1903 journal of the family's summer trip to England relays a story that seems to have been lost from the family's history. It is taken from my transcript of HPN's handwritten, fourth installment of his journal of the trip, stored in Concordia's fireproof file case. In early July 2025, I had the opportunity visit the Lake District, retrace the family's route over Helvellyn, and locate the places named in HPN's account. The accompanying eleven photos suggest what the family found on their journey.

Cousin Robert Arundale

"Friday Sept. 4, 1903, a day ever memorable in the Nichols family, Alice did not remain at home, nor as yet go round to Keswick with the bags as heretofore, but she set her heart on the broad brow of the mighty Helvellyn. Now it is not so mighty, being 3150 feet, nor yet as arduous as some of the other Lake peaks. It is famous in poetry, however, and in fine weather is climbed some time by hundreds (we must have encountered fifty that day). On some sides, those toward Keswick and Grasmere, as is the case with most of the mountains hereabout, the slope is gradual, grass covered, accessible by ponies to the very top, itself a great sedge-covered plateau. But toward the east, the Ullswater side, the drop is perpendicular say a thousand feet to a wild mountain tarn. At either end the precipice bends round into a semicircle enclosing the lake by two steep edges, the famous Striding Edge and Swirrell Edge up those ridges, an arduous and impressive path winds. We left the Hotel in fine spirits about 10:30, zigzagged up through the pastures and fells to the tarn, where the boys chose the more difficult Striding Edge, while Ma, Margaret, and I took the Swirrell. The wind blew as always, and on the knife edges occasional gusts compelled crouching. But Alice mounted finely. Of course the boys on their route were enough ahead to come and meet us down our last and steepest crag, but we were all on the top in the shelter eating our good luncheon by two o'clock. Our route down was by the slopes and was taken most joyously. The gentle valley lay below us. We were making for Kings Head Inn, Thirlspot, whence we could coach home or walk. The inn was in sight, the last ravine had been crossed, Donaldson had sped on far ahead, I was sitting by a little waterfall, and Alice was sauntering down an easy grass slope—there was a cry of terrible agony, Sheply burst into tears, and hurrying down I found Alice on the ground with both bones of her left leg broken below the knee. How just it happened we shall never know. She was not even conscious of falling. Margaret sped down the rocky pasture to the Kings Head, while I held in two hands the limp leg whose every movement was torture. A rough splint was made up. Three farmers and two passing climbers carried her down on a gate. A landau was placed at our disposal to drive 6 miles to Keswick. Fortunately we were in lodging in a beautiful situation and with the kindest of hostesses. Dr. Crawford of Keswick proved not only a skillful surgeon, but the best of men and of friends. He has procured comforts, assisted at deliberations, moved the patient into a big sunny room on a fine mattress, before a window whose outlook is on the glorious mountains. One by one, and with reconsiderations, our plans have taken shape. Mrs. Nichols shows courage, cheerfulness, and hope, Margaret gives without a word a term at Bryn Mawr. I take the boys by the Commonwealth on the 10<sup>th</sup>. I go with a hard heart, but as thankful as can be to think of Alice in the best of homes, with Margaret in loving care, in the hands of a skillful doctor, and with a number of kind friends already made, looking forward hopefully to a reunion at Thanksgiving time. Sept. 8, 1903."

Description of slides:



#1 – Looking east from about a mile up-valley from Glenridding, where the family started, with Ullswater in the background.





#2 – Looking west at the east face of Helvellyn from just below Red Tarn. Swirrell Edge (Harry, Alice, & Margaret's route) is the upper segment of the righthand ridge, and the Striding Edge (Sheply and Donaldson's route) is the upper part of the lefthand ridge.





#3 – Red Tarn from the righthand ridge.





#4 – The east face of Helvellyn, with the Swirrell edge at the upper right. A very pleasant, relatively short scramble.





#5 – The summit of Helvellyn.



#6 - Starting down toward the north from the summit, with Thirlmere in the distance. The family took the track to the right, down into the ravine below.





#7 – View up from ridge from 2-300 yards above Thirlspot and the Kings Head Inn, where the family was headed. The trail comes over the ridge from the right in the middle distance, then follows along the stone wall down toward the gate in the wall.





#8 – A closeup of the track along the stone wall.





#9 – Just at the lower end of the track and the stone wall is this very small, but very noisy little waterfall —almost certainly the one where Harry was sitting when he heard Alice cry out from the field below him.





#10 – A view from the waterfall down into the field below. (The fancy gate is clearly a very recent addition.)





#11 – About halfway down the grass slope from the gate in photo #10 the field become decidedly more rocky. Clearly this is the easy grass slope where Alice fell and broke her leg, and the rocky lower slope is where Margaret “sped down” to the Inn. The white buildings to the right in the picture are the King’s Head Inn—still a very prosperous establishment 122 years later!

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HPN is Harry Peirce Nichols b: 3 Sep 1850 d: 15 Nov 1940.  
Married Alice Martha Shepley b: 1853 d: 28 Feb 1915  
<http://www.hardenbergh.org/people/hpn/>