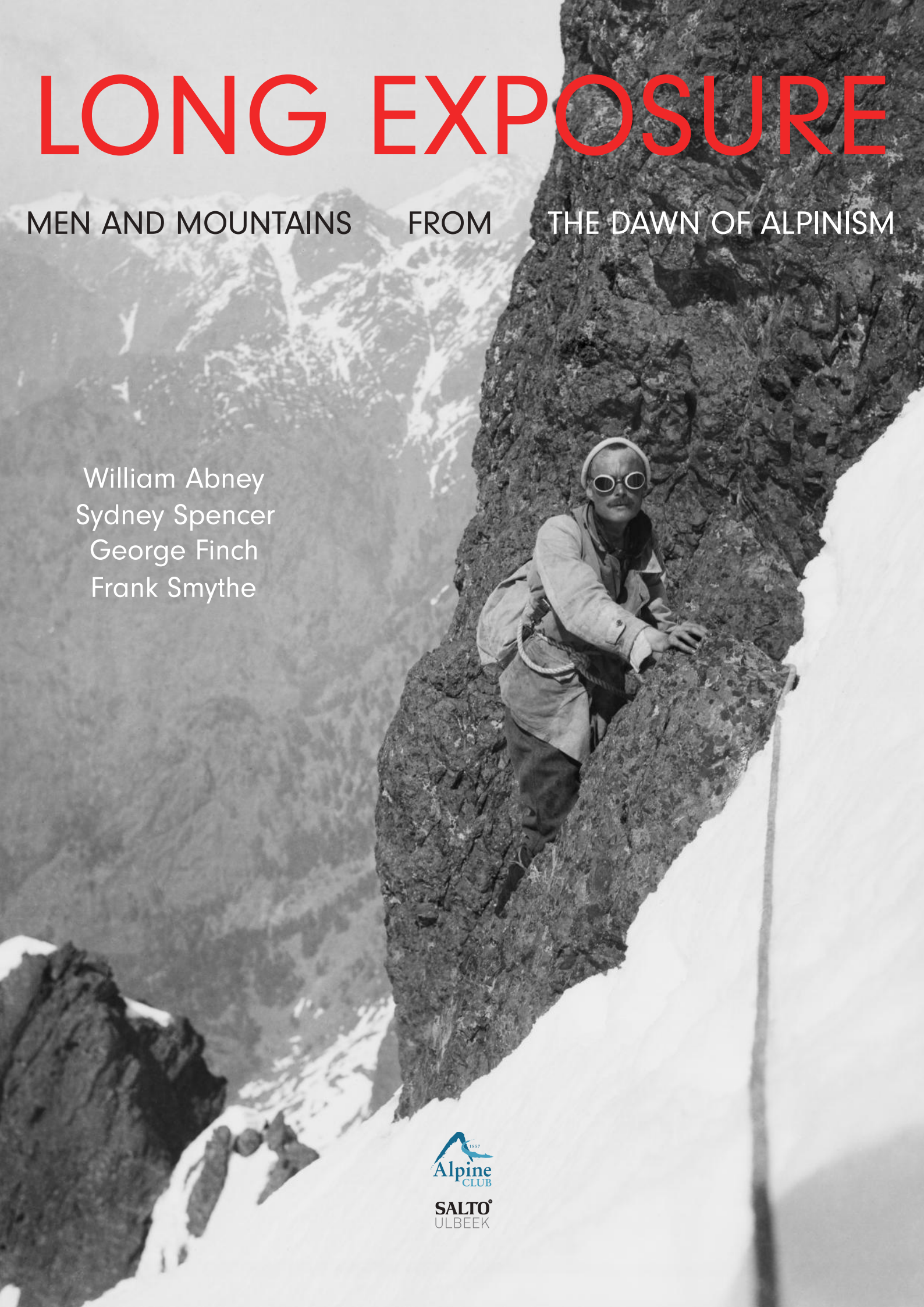
LONG EXPOSURE

MEN AND MOUNTAINS FROM THE DAWN OF ALPINISM



William Abney
Sydney Spencer
George Finch
Frank Smythe

Alpine CLUB 1857
SALTO ULBEEK

LONG EXPOSURE

MEN AND MOUNTAINS FROM THE DAWN OF ALPINISM

The four photographers represented in this project - Sir William Abney, Sydney Spencer, George Finch and Frank Smythe - were among the most remarkable figures in the history of British mountaineering. They were united not only by their love of the mountains, but by an extraordinary richness of talent and achievement. Collectively they were soldiers, scientists, engineers, chemists, authors, explorers, lecturers and administrators whose influence extended far beyond the summits they climbed. Each recognised that photography should be more than an image: it could preserve the character of landscapes, record pioneering ascents, document the people who made them possible and communicate the experience of the mountains to audiences who would never venture there themselves. Their photographs are both historical documents and works of art, recording the formative years of alpinism – and indeed photography - through the eyes of men who helped to shape it.

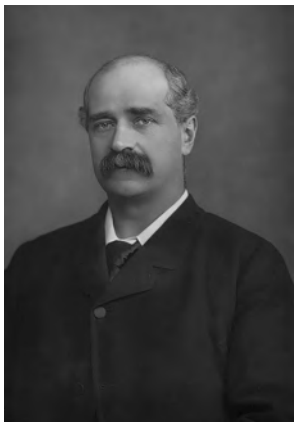
Each individual brings something distinctive to this collection. Abney combined scientific brilliance with pioneering photographic innovation, advancing both photographic technology and its artistic application. Spencer devoted a lifetime to perfecting mountain photography and preserving the visual heritage of the Alpine Club through his writing, exhibitions and editorial work. Finch brought the analytical precision of a physical scientist to high-altitude mountaineering and produced photographs of unusual technical and aesthetic quality. Smythe, perhaps more than any other British climber of his generation, introduced the mountains to a worldwide readership through bestselling books illustrated with his own photographs. Together their work traces the evolution of mountain photography over more than sixty years - from the carefully composed portraits of the pioneers of Alpine guiding to the dramatic action and high-altitude landscapes of the inter-war period - and preserves an unparalleled visual record of mountaineering's golden age and its legacy.

THE ALPINE CLUB AND SALTO ULBEEK

This project is the result of a collaboration between the Alpine Club and Salto Ulbeek to reveal and preserve some of the finest examples of early mountain photography held in the Club's collections. In early 2026, the Club's photographic archive was systematically examined by Salto Ulbeek in search of original glass plate negatives and early celluloid negatives by these four photographer-mountaineers. Pictorial information from selected negatives was optimised and restituted to match their original quality and subtleties. A small number of photographs were then chosen for their historical importance, photographic quality and representative character. Each image has been printed by hand by Salto Ulbeek using the *platinum-palladium* process, a medium renowned for its exceptional tonal range, permanence and subtle rendering of detail. By combining careful archival research with one of photography's most enduring printing techniques, this collaboration seeks both to honour the vision of the original photographers and to ensure that their work can be preserved and appreciated by new generations in a form that reflects the richness and integrity of the original negatives.

WILLIAM ABNEY

1843 - 1920



Born in Derby in 1843, William Abney grew up amidst the burgeoning art of photography. His father, the Rev. Edward Henry Abney was himself an experimenter with this nascent technology and a close friend of the renowned Derbyshire photographer Richard Keene.

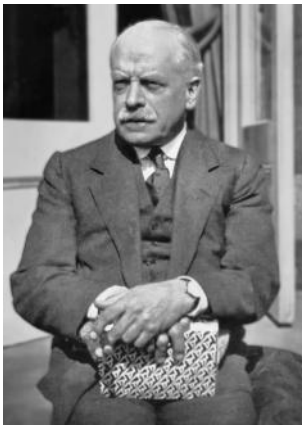
Wherever he found himself in life, Abney brought his photography with him. In the Royal Engineers he used photography as part of his surveying work and later taught the practice to fellow officers at the Chatham School of Military Engineering. He went on to pioneer the technologies that led to a paradigm shift away from wet plate emulsions towards dry techniques, writing the definitive guide to this new process.

Elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1876, Abney's photographic studies continued with great success as he investigated spectroscopy and developed techniques to photograph the infrared spectrum, work for which he received the society's Rumford Medal.

In 1886, in partnership with C D Cunningham, he undertook a tour of the Alps, photographing and profiling the surviving mountain guides who had substantially contributed to the golden age of alpinism, a period during which most of the major Alpine peaks were climbed for the first time. The resulting work, *Pioneers of the Alps*, became as much a set text for mountain historians as Abney's other books were for photographers. His painstaking care in the taking and reproduction of the guides' portraits was the apotheosis of his photographic career as he brought his lifetime's experience to bear in capturing the essence of these mountaineering trailblazers.

SYDNEY SPENCER

1862 - 1950



Sydney Spencer was a leading climber of the Edwardian era. His devotion to the mountains as both climber and photographer spanned more than fifty years.

Trained as a solicitor, he joined his father's rubber engineering firm where he worked until his retirement in 1936. Mountaineering, however, was his true vocation. Over more than two decades he established himself as one of the finest climbers of his generation, climbing almost exclusively with his guide Christian Jossi. His achievements included a first winter ascent of the Dom and ascents of the Petit Dru, the Charmoz and the Grépon at a time when such routes were rarely attempted.

Spencer was equally distinguished as a mountain photographer. He exhibited regularly at the Alpine Club's exhibitions and, from 1899 onward, assumed sole responsibility for their organisation. He also wrote authoritatively on the subject, contributing the photography chapter to a revised edition of Ball's *Alpine Guide*. As editor of the Lonsdale Library volume *Mountaineering* (1934), he further cemented his reputation as both practitioner and custodian of the sport's visual and literary heritage.

A member of the Alpine Club from 1895 until his death, Spencer devoted more than half a century to its service, holding the offices of Honorary Secretary, Librarian, Vice-President and, finally, Honorary Member.

GEORGE FINCH

1888 - 1970



George Finch was, by the standards of his time, something of a maverick figure within the mountaineering firmament; a man with his own mind who held firm to his personal judgement in the face of significant opposition. Having grown up in Australia and studied Chemical Engineering in Zurich, he sat a little outside the normal bounds of the British establishment. Nevertheless, his contributions to mountaineering history would be significant.

In his twenties, Finch, thanks to his impressive list of guideless climbs of major Alpine peaks, came to the attention of the Alpine Club's Percy Farrar. He was recommended for but ultimately rejected from the 1921 Everest Reconnaissance Expedition. He did, however, join the 1922 Everest Expedition, where his iconoclastic embrace of bottled oxygen and a down jacket of his own design saw him set a new altitude record of 27,300 ft.

Finch photographed not only his Alpine adventures, but also his time on Everest. A fierce advocate of using as light and unobtrusive a camera as possible, he felt that his efforts compared favourably with those of the 1922 expedition's official photographer, John Noel.

Following Everest in 1922, Finch's climbing slowed, but his fascination with new technologies continued and in later life he experimented with cinematography, filming a traverse of the Piz Bernina. In a final victory over the mountaineering establishment that had looked upon him with scepticism, Finch became president of the Alpine Club in 1959.

FRANK SMYTHE

1900 - 1949



Frank Smythe fell in love with the hills at the age of 8 when a convalescence trip to Switzerland afforded him the opportunity to climb his first mountain. The joy he felt on that maiden summit never went away and the summer holidays of his teenage years were spent wandering the high paths of Snowdonia, his only companion the box camera gifted to him by an aunt.

He could not have known it at the time, but the young Frank was preparing for his future career. When a stint as an electrical engineer and service in the RAF failed to pan out, Smythe was saved by his mountaineering talent. An annus mirabilis in 1927, during which he made the first ascent of the Brenva face of Mont Blanc with Professor Thomas Graham Brown, propelled him into the public spotlight.

In the years that followed, and to the consternation of some in the mountaineering establishment, Smythe became a true climbing celebrity. His expeditions filled column inches and books, always accompanied by his own stunning, monochrome photographs. He brought the British public closer to the mountains than ever before, his more personal writing style and authentic images opening up the broad sweep of the Alps and the heights of Everest to fascinated readers.

While he died before his time, succumbing to a bout of malaria while returning from an expedition, Smythe left behind an unsurpassed record of British mountaineering between the wars; words and photographs that continue to offer a window onto the most sublime corners of the mountain world.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

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Ulrich Lauener (1821-1900)
Photographer: William Abney
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Reference: AC-Abney-039



Jean-Antoine Carrel (1829–1891)
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Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Reference: AC-Abney-042



Peter Knubel (1833–1919)
Photographer: William Abney
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Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Reference: AC-Abney-036



Josef Imboden (1840–1925)
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In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
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Reference: AC-Abney-037



Alois Pollinger (1844–1910)
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Ulrich Kaufmann (1846 – 1917)
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Francois Couttet (1828–1890)
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Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Reference: AC-Abney-041



Ulrich Almer (1849–1940)
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Dent du Géant
Photographer: Sydney Spencer
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Format: 75 x 102 cm; £3,100
Reference: AC-Spencer-16.5-034



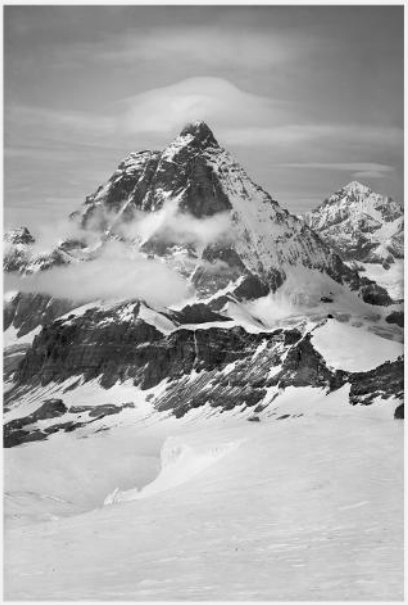
Les Drus from Trélaporte
Photographer: Sydney Spencer
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Format: 75 x 102 cm; £3,100
Reference: AC-Spencer-16.5-035



Mont Blanc from Aiguille du Tacul
Photographer: Sydney Spencer
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Format: 75 x 102 cm; £3,100
Reference: AC-Spencer-19-009



Matterhorn & Riffelsee
Photographer: Sydney Spencer
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Format: 75 x 102 cm; £3,100
Reference: AC-Spencer-19-048



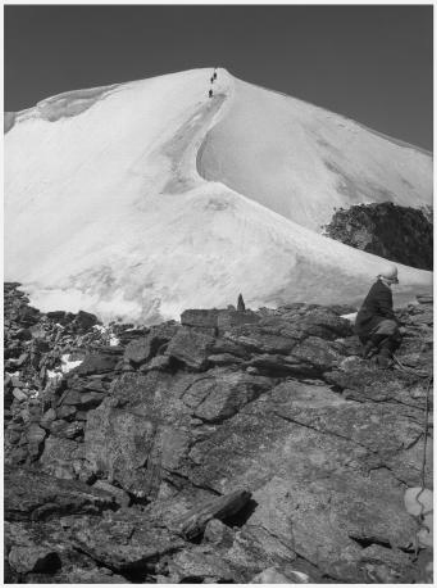
Matterhorn & Dent Blanche from Furggrat
Photographer: Sydney Spencer
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Format: 75 x 102 cm; £3,100
Reference: AC-Spencer-19-059



Untitled
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-033



Vallée Blanche & Dent du Géant
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-007



Untitled
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-005



Wanderer Above a Sea of Snow
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-003



Dent d'Hérens, August 1923
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-009



Amidst the Pennine Alps
Photographer: George Finch
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Finch-006



Moonlight in the High Mountains
Photographer: Frank Smythe
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Smythe-008



Zanskar Range
Photographer: Frank Smythe
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Smythe-010



Harrison and Parry en route to Mont Maudit
Photographer: Frank Smythe
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Smythe-023



"Rest". Self portrait
Photographer: Frank Smythe
In edition of 15 platinum-palladium prints
Format: 37 x 46.25 cm; £1,050
Format: 55 x 70 cm; £2,000
Reference: AC-Smythe-020

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