

Kinsey's Southern 'Wonderland of Ice and Snow': New Insights into Early Alpine Photography

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This article offers new insights into New Zealand's early alpine recreation and tourism heritage. It focuses on Joseph James Kinsey (1852–1936), an extraordinary yet typical Victorian gentleman of the day, and his collection of alpine photographs and related ephemera held at Canterbury Museum, which captures the evolutionary moment of the South Island's mountains' transformation into a tourist site. In 1880, Kinsey, his wife Sarah and their daughter May migrated from England to New Zealand. The Kinsey family, like many others at the time, were seeking new opportunities. Kinsey, the entrepreneur, philanthropist, collector, amateur mountaineer, photographer and businessman had boundless enthusiasm for the mountains in the province of Canterbury, a "wonderland of ice and snow." Taken when the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, these photos offer a valuable record of Victorian-era drama, discovery and exploration in the South Island's mountains. Today, as the South Island's glaciers recede at a dramatic rate, this collection has even more significance.

Keywords: Alpine photography, New Zealand mountaineering heritage, Sir Joseph James Kinsey, Victorian era recreation and tourism

Introduction

Canterbury Museum holds an extensive collection of more than 2,500 items collected by Sir Joseph James Kinsey (1852–1936), who arrived in Lyttelton aboard the *Jessie Readman* in 1880 with his wife Sarah and their five-year-old daughter May. Despite modest origins in England, Kinsey rose to wealth, power and respectability in the colony. His services to Antarctic exploration were recognised in 1914 by the Royal Geographic Society and again in 1917 when he received a knighthood. An obituary published in *The Press* soon after his death described him as "a man of many parts" (*The Press*, 6 May 1936: 12). Those words neatly captured his diverse range of pursuits and hint at his extraordinary drive and boundless enthusiasm. He was an entrepreneur, philanthropist, collector, amateur mountaineer,

photographer and businessman, as well as a father and husband. The surviving leather-bound visitor books from the Kinsey homes in Christchurch (Warrimoo) and Sumner (Te Hau o Te Atua) reveal the breadth of his connections. His guests included Antarctic explorers like Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton, and distinguished writers such as Mark Twain, Blanche Baughan, Arthur Conan Doyle and George Bernard Shaw. He was a resourceful and creative networker whose links reached out across the British Empire.

This paper draws on Kinsey's photographic collection to explore his role in alpine photography, interest in mountaineering and enthusiasm in promoting the Southern Alps as a recreational destination. We also examine Kinsey's friendship with New Zealand's early

explorers, amateur climbers and climbers from overseas, and consider his significance as an advocate for his province. Kinsey's photographs also present a documentary record of late nineteenth-century climbers, their equipment and the appropriate apparel and behaviour expected of a Victorian gentleman and a Victorian lady climber. In highlighting themes of gender, respectability and sartorial theatre, we provide windows through which to understand Kinsey's conduct, while our examination of his previously undocumented contribution to the fields of early alpine photography and mountaineering allow us to enrich contemporary commentaries with a new viewpoint.

Contributions to the Historical Records on Climbing

The history of climbing in New Zealand has been well documented by a number of writers and historians. Early publications written by key climbers and members of the New Zealand Alpine Club such as Arthur Harper, George Mannering and Malcolm Ross recorded events as they happened, offered advice on the equipment required for climbing and gave instruction on the use of cameras (Mannering 1891; Ross 1894; Harper 1896). Australian climber Freda du Faur, the first woman to ascend Aoraki/Mount Cook, also contributed to New Zealand's early mountaineering folklore in her notable 1915 publication *The Conquest of Mount Cook and other climbs* (du Faur 1915). Later, authors recorded the histories not only of successful climbs and climbers but also of the pioneer alpine guides and explorers. These people compared the conditions of climbing in Europe to climbing in the New Zealand Alps as access to the latter improved and purpose-made equipment imported from overseas became available. Among important works adding to current historiography are those of John Pascoe (1959, 1983) and Graham Langton (2006). Kinsey's contribution to this literature cannot be denied. Correspondence showcasing

his keen interest in mountaineering along with the photographs and mountaineering paraphernalia, including ice axes, climbing ropes, rocks and plants that he bequeathed to Canterbury Museum, continue to inform work directed towards documenting the history of climbing in New Zealand and Kinsey's role in it.

These archived materials also provide evidence of Kinsey's loyalty to and his promotion (in most cases) of the people he met and admired during his climbing ventures. Letters to and from climbers Arthur Harper (1865–1955), Malcolm Ross (1862–1930), Jack Adamson, Jack Clark (1875–1914), Edward FitzGerald (1871–1931) and Matthias Zurbriggen (1856–1917), dated from 1886 to 1907, describe efforts to explore routes into the Alps from the West Coast and various climbs around the Aoraki/Mount Cook region. Taken together, the letters confirm Kinsey's strong interest in the early exploration of these areas (Kinsey Papers, Canterbury Museum 1947.55.1). His many correspondents, and not just those interested in climbing, frequently asked him for favours and are therefore indicative not only of his influence with his peers and in government matters but also of his acumen for business exchange.

Kinsey's correspondence also contains further evidence of his passion for collecting all manner of items associated with his interests, including of course climbing in the mountains. His collections of alpine photographs, mountaineering equipment and geological specimens, the pleasure he took from these acquisitions, his sense of self in his relationship with them and his determination to achieve a measure of control over the environment give added insight into his activities and behaviours. These collections, and his photographic collection in particular, show the range of his collecting practice and his persistence in acquiring the finest examples.

Canterbury Museum and various individuals benefited in many ways from Kinsey's generosity, but that generosity

was in part indicative of his aspirations for recognition, respect and status. Members of the Antarctic expeditions used his darkroom, and his photography collection includes copies of negatives by Herbert Ponting, Edgar Evans, Frank Hurley and Edward Wilson. Kinsey's taste for adventure, his entrepreneurial inclination, sense of fun and interest in newsworthy events and people of note lay behind his association with mountaineers from overseas. His motives for joining the climbing expeditions he embarked on with overseas climbers Edward FitzGerald, Matthias Zurbriggen and Giuseppe Borsalino, the latter from Italy, were a combination of all the above traits. But most importantly his desire to prove climbing in the Southern Alps of New Zealand equalled the merits of climbing in the European Alps was a motivating factor in his association with overseas visitors. Kinsey's pride in colonial New Zealand was unmistakable to all who met him.

The Beginnings of Kinsey's Alpine Photography

New Zealand's photographic history has been well documented and surveyed by a number of notable experts. Photo-historian Hardwicke Knight (1971), who wrote numerous books on the technical and social history of photography and a collaborative history by William Main and John B Turner (1993), follow the development of the pioneer photographers from the 1840s. Recent work by David Eggleton (2006) builds on the earlier histories, contributing to an ever-growing interest in the visual arts. Chris Brickell (2012) looks closely at men in nineteenth-century New Zealand redefining the accepted notion of masculinity. Athol McCredie (2015), researcher, photographer and curator of photography at The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, explores the reason the images he has chosen for his book were taken and their intended use. McCredie's analysis is valuable as he unravels history from the 1850s to the present. In their important edited collection

Early New Zealand Photography, Images and Essays (2011), Angela Wanhalla and Erika Wolf take a different approach, emphasising the materiality of colonial photographs and the significance of interpreting the photo object. In her essay, 'Chance Residues', historian Bronwyn Dalley (2006) examines the way photographs can be used to investigate social history and to understand the past. These texts are of use in defining Kinsey's role as a photographer, in comparing his photographic practice with those of his contemporaries and the value of his collection.

As is evident from the numerous photographs taken by him in the Canterbury Museum collection, Kinsey was a skilled amateur photographer. Kinsey's photographs captured scenes and people in Christchurch, picnicking in Canterbury, expeditions into the Southern Alps and climbing in the Aoraki/Mt Cook region. His friendship with banker George E Mannering (1862–1947) may have helped spark his interest in both climbing and mountain photography. Mannering was a member of the Alpine Club, London, established in 1857, and a key founding member of the New Zealand Alpine Club, founded in 1871. His ability as an alpine photographer and his contributions to newspapers and booklets were extensive, and his accomplishments in the 1880s and 1890s as one of New Zealand's first amateur climbers were comprehensive and inspiring (Fig. 1) (Mannering 1891). The easy camaraderie between him and Kinsey is clearly visible in photographs taken at Kinsey's home on Papanui Road, where they experimented in the darkroom (Fig. 2).

Kinsey captured mountain scenery on camera using a whole plate model called The Ruby, produced by the Thornton Pickard Company from about 1890 to 1907. The wooden folding field camera could also be used as a hand camera. And because it was durable, light to carry and could produce excellent photographs, Kinsey recommended it to tourists as the most appropriate and convenient camera to take on their journeys (Knight 1971:



Figure 1. Joseph Kinsey with kea. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.230

157). Its resilience was tested on a trip Kinsey took that encompassed Lake Pukaki, the Hermitage at Aoraki/Mount Cook and Ball Hut when the coach Kinsey was travelling in broke down. According to an account by Jack Clark published in *The Press* (21 May 1895: 2) the party travelled on over rough moraine and were fording the Hooker River when one of the horses with its pack attached bolted and fell into the river. Although considered light, the camera without the turntable and shutter still weighed two and three-quarter pounds and a box of one dozen dry plates weighed two and a quarter pounds (Knight 1971: 158). Canterbury Museum's Kinsey holdings include a large number of his glass plates of various sizes, as well as numerous boxes filled with lantern slides, a range of photograph albums (not necessarily compiled by Kinsey), and his family's *Day Book*, spanning 763 pages

and including images of numerous mountain expeditions. Many of the identifiable negatives have been exposed and reside in other files, for example, the Alpine and Antarctic folders where the images have been arranged in subjects and are the collections of not only Kinsey, but of many photographers.

Identifying Kinsey's Images

Some of the photographs Kinsey included in the collections he gave to Canterbury Museum are easy to identify as his because he labelled them. One such is a photograph of the interior of Ball Hut (Fig. 3), taken during the trip just described. Prominent in the centre of the photograph is the bag over which he stencilled "J. J. Kinsey" (6). The reason for this number is unclear. Propped up on the right hand side of the floor is another item with Kinsey's name



Figure 2. Joseph Kinsey and George Mannering in Kinsey's home-based darkroom. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p267

on it. One of the men accompanying Kinsey, alpine guide Jack Clark, described the interior of the hut as presenting:

a better appearance than usual, from the fact that the party had a lady with them, whose womanly instinct introduced order and insisted upon it being observed in the house. The leg of mutton was from a sheep that had been packed up the Tasman some ten days previously, and which had been frozen and stored in one of many of Nature's own 'freezing works' to be found in the locality (The Press, 21 May 1895: 2).

The "lady" Clark referred to was Kinsey's daughter May who, in Clark's opinion, deserved credit for her "pluck and endurance as a climber" (*The Press*, 21 May 1895: 2). In this largely male domain, the jar of Mount

Cook lilies in the bunk room was no doubt considered a feminine touch, although Clark's comments about Miss Kinsey suggests he approved of the orderly influence she brought to the venture.

Ball Hut, a 14 mile walk from the Hermitage, was a small corrugated-iron building divided inside into two sections by a canvas curtain devised to separate the men's quarters from the women's. In the male-dominated sport of climbing, Victorian conventions and ideas of morality dictated that women climbers be accompanied by a chaperon or family member. For May, her father's company overcame any objections to her presence. Ball Hut measured 19 feet long by 12 feet wide. The hut's spartan furnishings included a table, packing cases, a stool, canvas bunks, mattresses or chaff bolsters, pillows, blankets, a box cupboard, enamel plates and mugs. The floor was paved with morainic stones.

Giuseppe Borsalino expressed his disappointment on his arrival at Ball Hut 2 years later with Kinsey and May. He had expected to find a mountain hut similar to those in Switzerland, "with comfortable bunks, seats, a fireplace and chimney" (*The Weekly Press*, 30 October 1897: 11). May agreed that the living there was "a little hard, yet the bunks and bedding are good, and it is an excellent shelter and far in advance of having to live and sleep in tents." An old oil drum outside served as a stove.

Two other images, from 1894 and included in the 30 October 1897 *The Weekly Press* article, present additional examples of Kinsey's stencilled labelling. Captioned *A Welcome Sunbath*, the first photo shows May, Borsalino and Zurbriggen relaxing outside Ball Hut after a snowstorm had kept them inside for several days. The image that appeared in the article appears to have been edited, with the label eliminated, but the second photo (Fig. 4), taken on the same occasion and featuring Kinsey, Borsalino and Zurbriggen, clearly displays the label "J. J. Kinsey, The Hermitage, Mt Cook 2". This photograph would have been set up by



Figure 3. Interior of Ball Hut during Kinsey's stay there in May 1895. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.5309

Kinsey and most likely taken by May.

Another photograph in the Kinsey Collection is labelled as a J J Kinsey photograph and did appear in May Kinsey's contribution (titled *Samples of our Alpine outfit*) in *The Weekly Press's* special Christmas edition of 1897, but it is credited to Jack Adamson, Manager of the Hermitage, in his biography *The Spirit of Mountaineering* (Hobbs 2007: 150) (J J Kinsey Collection, alpine sundry, Folder 11, Negative 6422). The image (Fig. 5) was taken during a visit to the Hermitage when Adamson would have been busy with guests. It's possible that Kinsey and friends arranged the display and that Adamson took the image. Adamson had established a darkroom at the Hermitage, which he generously shared with his visitors, but he claimed that some of his original slides went missing from there and were later printed

in other mountaineering books.

It seems likely that mistakes over identification did occur and continued to occur, with the sharing of negatives contributing to this situation. On one occasion Adamson took a photograph of W A Kennedy and three other cyclists who had ridden to the Hermitage and then sent the plates to Kinsey to be developed. Kinsey may have kept copies of the images, even though in this case it was clear who the photographer was. The collection of mountaineering photographs that comprise the Kinsey Collection therefore includes not only Kinsey's work but also the work of his friends and others whom he admired. The reverse is also evident. The W A Kennedy collection at Canterbury Museum, for example, includes some of Kinsey's images.

A map of Aoraki/Mount Cook was used as



Figure 4. Joseph Kinsey, Signor Giuseppe Borsalino and Matthias Zurbriggen, Ball Hut, 1894. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.5308

a focal point in two further images taken at the Hermitage, but by whom is uncertain. In the first image (Fig. 6), labelled *Studying Mt Cook and its Glaciers*, a person, most likely Kinsey, is shown seated on a chair close to a wall, with his back facing the camera. His raised legs lean against a wall above him as he studies the map between his legs. In another photograph which is simply called *Its Effects* the ice axes replace the splayed legs in the first photo (*The Weekly Press*, 30 October 1897: 11). While Kinsey's wit is easy to detect, it does not necessarily serve as a means of identifying the work as his, and indeed could have been taken by May.

Sharing the Photographs

Evidence of the quality of Kinsey's photography was further confirmed by requests over the years to use his images during lectures or to illustrate articles in prestigious periodicals. In 1894, for example, W Herbert Jones, a visiting lecturer from the Royal Geographical Society of England, London, requested slides of the Southern Alps from Kinsey. Previously, Jones had supported his lectures with slides taken by mountaineer E A FitzGerald, but he considered these images "too dense" and unfocused (*Taranaki Herald*, 23 July 1894: 2). In return for the use of Kinsey's slides, Jones



Figure 5. *Samples of our Alpine outfit, 1895.* Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum, alpine sundry, Folder 11, Negative 6422 1/4, 1940.193.12.



Figure 6. *Studying Mt Cook and its Glaciers.* A gentleman assumed to be Joseph Kinsey sitting in front of a map of Aoraki/Mount Cook. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.235.

promised to give him the best slides he could find of alpine subjects. Another example is that of two of Kinsey's photographs which appeared in "The People's Parks and Playgrounds", an article written by Edith Searle Crossman and published in 1901 in *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* (1901: 386–388). The images featured Broderick's Hut near the head of Talisman and a view of Mount Sefton and the Moorhouse Range.

In 1900, Leonard Cockayne, a botanical research scientist, contributed a chapter to a book written to mark the fiftieth jubilee of Canterbury province. Cockayne titled his chapter 'A Glimpse into the Alps of Canterbury' and illustrated it with five of Kinsey's mountain photographs (Cockayne 1900). He also referred to the article Kinsey had written for the 30 October 1897 edition of *The Weekly Press*, commenting as he did so on the "splendid set of photographs" used to illustrate the "excellent general account". Like Kinsey,

Cockayne believed not only in the protection of New Zealanders' "grand heritage" but also in the value of promoting the Alps as a tourist destination. For Cockayne:

Mountains are the noblest recreation ground, the finest school for physical and moral training, a source of perfect health to those who visit them, and a place of all places for enlarging our minds by the study of nature in Nature's greatest laboratory (Cockayne 1900: 215).

In agreeing to supply photographs for the chapter, Kinsey endorsed Cockayne's views.

Another publication complemented by Kinsey's images was *Snow Kings of the Southern Alps*, written in 1910 by Blanche Baughan, a neighbour of Kinsey's on Clifton Hill from 1910 to 1930. Two years earlier, in 1908, Baughan's essay 'The Finest Walk in the World' had appeared in the *London Spectator* and led



Figure 7. *On the Great Tasman Glacier*, 1910. Kinsey photograph reproduced from Baughan (1910)

to a series of similar essays published in booklet form, one of which was 'Snow Kings'. *On the Great Tasman Glacier* (Fig. 7) from that earlier publication (1908: 47) is a particularly fine example of Kinsey's mountain photography and today provides evidence of the extent to which the glacier has retreated. *The Press* also recognised the booklet's value, describing it as "admirably adapted for sending to friends at a distance as a souvenir of New Zealand" (23 December 1911: 7).

Baughan wrote 11 travel books between 1908 and 1929. Historian Anne Maxwell had this to say of her:

Given her leading role in the 'Māori land' school of writing and her longstanding commitment to forging a distinctive style of literature for the new nation, it is reasonable to suppose she was looking for images that would be constitutive of national identity (Maxwell 2011: 149).

Maxwell also observed that Baughan accorded the photographs she chose to illustrate her books with further national significance by choosing images of well-recognised tourist spots taken by New Zealand photographers (Maxwell 2011: 151). The iconic nature of Kinsey's images made them the perfect choice for such a project. The sense of place portrayed in them showcases his profound connection with and understanding of the Southern Alps, while his willingness to see them published made obvious his sincere desire to promote the area. He took pleasure in sharing his images and would have found the ensuing publicity promoting the Southern Alps gratifying.

Kinsey often shared his passion for the mountains with guests by conducting lantern slide shows that featured his images. He offered his slide shows not only in his home but also in public places. When, for example, the H.I.G.M.S. *Buzzard*, a German warship, visited Lyttelton in March 1895, Kinsey played



Figure 8. *Aoraki/Mount Cook, 1896.* J J Kinsey photograph. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.5307

a part in the crews' entertainment. According to a reporter from *The Press*, his series of alpine slides presented the visitors with "a very good idea of Glacierland" (4 March 1895: 5). For Kinsey the photographer, converting the "wilderness to the scenic" in this way suggests a desire to master the environs of the Alps. In author, mountaineer and photographer John Pascoe's view, "Indifferent technique, ignorance of retouching, and disregard for orthodox composition are less than crimes if the photographer has the imagination to give sincerity to the vitality of the scenes and peoples he records" (Brasch 1947: 302). Although Kinsey was not a professional photographer, he was singularly able to capture and convey to others the atmosphere of the Alps. His energetic approach, feeling for the land and skill in avoiding the "crimes" that Pascoe alluded to combined to produce outstanding images.

Kinsey also communicated his love of the mountains in words. An 1897 article from *The Weekly Press*, for example, vividly expresses his

desire to share his admiration of Aoraki/Mount Cook, which he photographed many times in different light and weather conditions (Fig. 8). It also reveals the way he identified with the mountain's allure when photographing it and the awe he sensed in its presence:

... the monarch of our New Zealand Mountains opens out and Mount Cook with its three peaks and tent shaped sides introduces itself to the impatient and curious traveller. How lovely, how interesting this giant looks! It seems to say, "Here I stand alone, will no one come and admire my incomparable beauties?" (*The Weekly Press*, 30 October 1897: 2).

Involvement with other Mountaineers

Despite his interest in climbing, Kinsey was not a member of the New Zealand Alpine Club established in July 1891. Although he photographed and was photographed with key members of the Club, particularly Harper, Ross and Mannering, and shared common interests and corresponded with them, his name was not on the members list (Mannering 2000: 196). It is his correspondence that verifies his active interest in the affairs of the club. These letters, along with correspondence between other climbers and explorers, give a sense of the issues of the time and the concerns of the men involved. They also reveal a great deal about the personality of the writers and their relationships. The convoluted exchange of opinion in letters to newspaper editors written by some of these men is a case in point.

In the mid-1890s, the Secretary of the New Zealand Alpine Club, Marmaduke Dixon, published articles in the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* and wrote a letter to the editor of *The Press* that caused dissent among some of the club's members.¹ The tenor of Dixon's articles was also evident in the letter, written shortly after three young men (Jack Clark, Tom Fyfe and George Graham) became, on Christmas Day 1894, the first party to successfully summit

Aoraki/Mount Cook:

The very name of Mount Cook is so hackneyed, and it is so shorn of its glories from a climbing point of view by Mr Green, and the ice staircases which exist cut on to the very ice-caps by his followers, that Mr Fitzgerald will regard it only like walking up a high to follow Mr Green's route ... So well known and so simple is Mr Green's route that it is quite possible Mount Cook will be climbed by ladies in the near future (The Press, 28 December 1894: 3).

Dixon also censured the “unsportsmanlike” use of crampons by “foreigners”: “Had we employed these instruments Mt Cook would not have waited until Xmas Day 1894 to be topped.” A reply to Dixon's letter appeared in *The Press* on 21 January 1895. Written by “Mountaineer”, it refuted many of Dixon's assertions and pointed out Dixon's own failure to climb Aoraki/Mount Cook. According to Mountaineer, Dixon's letter was a “case of sour grapes”.

In September 1895, Malcolm Ross sent Kinsey a copy of a letter addressed to the editor of the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* and signed by members of the Alpine Club (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 3/73, Canterbury Museum). The letter criticised Dixon's articles. Dixon's commentary, they said, was contradictory, incorrect and unjust. As Ross stated in his letter to Kinsey, the January 1895 letter to *The Press* signed “Mountaineer” had seen Dixon's statements “literally torn to tatters” and consequently caused speculation about who Mountaineer was. On 7 February 1895, Dixon wrote to Norman K Cox, accusing him of being the author, but Cox denied authorship and also declared that it was not written by Tom Fyfe or George Graham, the conquerors of Aoraki/Mount Cook (Cox correspondence, ARC 1991.72, Folder 1060, Canterbury Museum). Kinsey then became the obvious suspect. Ross, who had obviously seen the letter Dixon wrote to Cox, paraphrased

Dixon's indignation in another letter to Kinsey dated 22 March 1895:

The latest thing is that Mr. Kinsey is the author of the letter signed 'Mountaineer' that appeared some time ago in the Christchurch Press. Mr Kinsey always does make a muddle of things, and it is just like his cheek to poke his nose into matters he doesn't know anything about. It has all come about since the visit of FitzGerald. Mr Kinsey never took any interest in alpine climbing till FitzGerald arrives – but the reason is not far to seek – Mr Kinsey has a marriageable daughter! Thus Mr M. J. Dixon fumed in a letter to Fyfe, of which I have been favoured with a perusal. It is not verbatim et literatum (except the last sentence) but that is the gist of it. Poor Miss Kinsey – I am sorry for her.... This of course is quite confidential (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/49, Canterbury Museum)

While Ross's sympathies appear to have been with Kinsey, there is an underlying feeling that he may have been fuelling the situation further by duplicating parts of Dixon's letter.

Edward FitzGerald's arrival in New Zealand from Britain in 1894 with Swiss guide Matthias Zurbriggen obviously added to the conflicts plaguing the New Zealand Alpine Club between 1894 and 1896. It prompted the local climbers to attempt to summit Aoraki/Mount Cook in December 1894 just before FitzGerald set off from Christchurch for the Hermitage in January 1895. As noted earlier, Tom Fyfe, Jack Clark and George Graham realised that ambition on Christmas Day 1894 and that they did may have been because they and other members of the Alpine Club did not trust FitzGerald's assertion that he would respect the locals' claim to any unclimbed peak. Marmaduke Dixon seemed to be in two minds about FitzGerald's true intentions: “I do not think FitzGerald has any intention towards Cook,” he wrote in a letter. “He has volunteered to respect our claim to any peak or peaks – but I'll not ask him to – I'll just



Figure 9. The FitzGerald party, which included Kinsey and daughter May, on their way to the Hermitage. J J Kinsey photograph. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.227

explain and leave it absolutely to his good taste” (Box 49, Folders 1059–1068, Arc 1991.72, 5, Canterbury Museum).

It seems that FitzGerald did mean what he said. In May 1895, the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* published an article titled ‘Mr. E. A. FitzGerald’s Work in New Zealand’. It was introduced by the journal’s editor, who advised:

Before leaving the colony Mr FitzGerald very kindly placed a copy of his journal at our disposal, and we print in this issue copious extracts describing his ascents ... His journey to the Hermitage was marked by many vexatious delays, owing to the poor arrangements for the conveyance of a large party with heavy impedimenta [Fig. 9]. He was accompanied by his guide, Matthias Zurbriggen, Messrs. Barrow, Ollivier, Kinsey and Miss Kinsey, and was met on arrival at the Hermitage by Mr. G. E. Mannering. Mt Sefton was the first

peak chosen for an assault, and on January 11th, after a week’s bad weather, a start was made (New Zealand Alpine Journal II, 7: 39).

The only other mention of Kinsey and his daughter in the account is the advice that they returned to Christchurch a week on from 11 January, leaving Mannering, Adamson, Ollivier and Zurbriggen as part of FitzGerald’s climbing party. After another bout of bad weather, FitzGerald, Zurbriggen, Barrow and Jack Clark successfully ascended Mount Sefton on 24 January 1895. They returned to the Hermitage and the following day Clark rode 50 miles to send a telegram to Kinsey asking for more supplies (Langton 2011: 46). With his influence and experience in arranging and supplying cargo for shipping, Kinsey was in his element.

FitzGerald, recognising Kinsey’s procurement skills and generosity, readily took advantage of his willingness to assist the visiting climbers. While at the Hermitage, FitzGerald, having encountered a camper who had been holidaying there and was about to return to Christchurch:

... took the opportunity of sending off a batch of mail letters by him and a roll of Eastman films, which I had exposed on Mt Tasman and Haidinger. These last I sent to Mr Kinsey in Christchurch, as he had kindly offered to develop them for me (FitzGerald 1896: 190).

On his return to Christchurch, FitzGerald again called on Kinsey’s friendship:

I remained in Christchurch a few days developing my numerous photographs in Mr Kinsey’s darkroom, which he very kindly placed at my disposition, [sic] with his assistance. It is, in great measure, owing to the skill and care with which he has developed these photographs for me that I have been enabled to bring out such comparatively good results with so small a camera ... As I was stopped one

evening at Mr Kinsey's house, after having developed a number of these photographs, a ring came at the telephone bell and the following message was delivered – 'News just received that Zurbriggen ascended Mt Cook' (FitzGerald 1896: 322).

Fitzgerald's book *Climbs in the New Zealand Alps: Being an Account of Travel and Discovery*, published on his return to Britain, exaggerated his achievements and included descriptions that often proved to be inaccurate (FitzGerald 1896). His writing also echoed his often arrogant treatment of the locals while he was in New Zealand and his disdain of their achievements, which had done little to endear him to New Zealand's mountaineers. A letter that Ross wrote to Kinsey on 12 February 1895 suggested FitzGerald thought of his companions as hangers-on (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/33, Canterbury Museum). He'd apparently referred to Fyfe as a "dammed plumber" and stated that he'd rather the first ascent of Aoraki/Mount Cook had been made by a "gentleman". Further evidence of FitzGerald's disparagement of the New Zealand climbers came in a letter he wrote to Kinsey just a few days after the one Ross had written. In his letter, FitzGerald told Kinsey that "he found Clark useless" (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/36, Canterbury Museum)

Although most of FitzGerald's travelling companions came from a similar social standing, he regarded them as inferior, an attitude he shared with other British climbers. Climbing at that time was an elitist activity and the British climbers saw themselves at its apex. With all the characteristics of a London-based gentlemen's club, the British Alpine Club's register represented mountaineering as a genteel sport with a membership drawn from the professional middle classes. To be eligible for election, prospective members had to possess "experience in climbing in the Alps or evidence of literary or artistic accomplishments related to mountains" (Hansen 1995). But the New Zealand climbing community was not

immune from these attitudes. Despite being the first to reach the summit of Aoraki/Mount Cook in late 1894, Fyfe and Clark were unable to join the New Zealand Alpine Club because they did not qualify as gentlemen climbers. Labourers and part-time paid guides had also been excluded from the club since 1895 (Langton 1996).

FitzGerald considered Aoraki/Mount Cook to be an easier climb than the other peaks he tackled in the Southern Alps. These mountains included Mounts Silberhorn, Sealy, Tasman and Sefton, and he stated that he sought to scale "virgin peaks only" (*The Press*, 15 March 1895: 5). The easy camaraderie and generosity Kinsey displayed towards FitzGerald may have been tainted by the controversy created by the release of FitzGerald's book the following year, but Kinsey's humour regarding FitzGerald is obvious in a telegram he sent to Ross after Zurbriggen reached the summit of Aoraki/Mount Cook on 14 March 1895: "Zurbriggen climbed Cook accompanied part way by Adamson. What will Fitz say – he only tackled virgin peaks. Kinsey" (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/35, Canterbury Museum). Zurbriggen's was the second successful ascent of the mountain and the first solo ascent. A year later, in February 1896, Zurbriggen returned to New Zealand as a guide for Italian climber Signor Giuseppe Borsalino. Kinsey and daughter May accompanied them on their trip south to the Hermitage.

Enticing Tourists

Information on the mountains, climbing and exploration of the Southern Alps was generally published in surveyors' scientific papers or in government records. Tourist publicity was limited. Consequently, in October 1897, when *The Press* advertised that the Christmas issue of *The Weekly Press* would include a comprehensive illustrated article on Aoraki/Mount Cook and its glaciers, the article was enthusiastically anticipated.

A magnificent set of alpine views, from copyright photographs, together with specially written descriptions by Mr and Miss Kinsey of Mount Cook and its Glaciers. By which the Beauties of our Southern Alps in general, and the Monarch of New Zealand mountains in particular, will be pourtrayed [sic] in a manner never previously attempted. The Achievements of Alpinists in New Zealand will be summarised, the Humours of Alpine Travelling illustrated, and all information given that is likely to be useful to tourists, making the Number an Invaluable Guide, whether to New Zealanders or Strangers (The Press, 21 October 1897: 4).

A Christchurch *Press* review of the article on the day it was published in *The Weekly Press* commended the humour, energy and obvious enthusiasm of the photographers Mr and Miss Kinsey (*The Weekly Press*, 30 October 1897: 7). One only has to read the first paragraph of Kinsey's narrative in the article to agree with the reviewer's comments: "Where shall we go for our holiday?", asked Kinsey. "To the Hermitage, Mount Cook? Oh no. It is such an awful place to reach and the Glaciers! They are frightfully dangerous! And the privations one has to suffer! Oh no, let us take a quiet three weeks at Sumner." As an alternative to the dramas described by "alpine heroes", Kinsey set out to encourage the "ordinary holiday maker" to visit the mountain region. His text focused on the history of the region, methods of travel, and accommodation, but his description of crossing the suspension bridge over the Hooker River was more likely to have deterred than encouraged tourists: "when the structure begins to oscillate or undulate ... the person becomes so terror-stricken that he remains stationary in the centre of the span, clutching the life lines lest the next step should precipitate him into the roaring torrent below" (Fig. 10).

Kinsey's description of crossing the Hooker feeds into the impression of alpine travel he berated in his opening paragraph. But he

was being ironic. As he commented, most people who visit the mountains feel obliged to write a book or newspaper article describing "terrifying experiences, hair-breath escapes; roaring torrents, crevasses ... horrifying records to establish themselves for evermore as 'alpine heroes'. ... [S]uch an absurd fallacy," he continued, "should at once be exposed", thus allowing tourists to enjoy a trip to Aoraki/Mount Cook and its glaciers knowing what the "ordinary holiday maker may expect to experience." And if his words still failed to convince, then he could leave it to his photographs to fully express the beauty of the mountain's scenery and entice visitors to them.

May Kinsey was just as keen as her father to promote the mountains as a tourist destination. Her detailed account of the trip she made with her father, Zurbriggen and Borsalino in 1896 published in the special Christmas 1897 edition of the *Weekly News* was one she hoped would persuade readers to consider a holiday in the "wonderland of ice and snow". She supported her article, which followed on from her father's contribution, with 41 photographs from her visits to Aoraki/Mount Cook and its environs. Her humour matched Kinsey's as she described the party's exploits and the images she chose served to illustrate comical happenings. Like her father, she endeavoured to show that while trips into the mountains required some rigour, they also offered fun and adventure. One of her photographs, titled *In Difficulties*, depicts Ollivier carrying FitzGerald ashore from the coach in the Forks Stream. Another photograph shows Ollivier carrying Barrow ashore (Fig. 11).

Several photographs in the article under the banner *Shearing Time* presented a comedic study of hair-cutting both in preparation for and during the Kinseys and their companions' sojourns in the mountains. They also show that travellers to the mountains could maintain appearances while there, as evident in Figure 12, which portrays May cutting her father's hair. This photo was juxtaposed with one showing Kinsey cutting May's hair (Fig. 13), although



Figure 10. *Crossing the Hooker River*, 1890. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.62, p139



Figure 11. Arthur Ollivier ferrying Joseph Kinsey across the Hooker River. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p519



Figure 12. May and Joseph Kinsey. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p533



Figure 13. May's turn to have her hair cut – by her father. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p264



Figure 14. Barber George Mannering and Joseph Kinsey. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p254



Figure 15. Barber Malcolm Ross. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p254

in this case it seems the over-large scissors may have been intended for another purpose such as shearing sheep. Together, the two photos confirm Kinsey's tongue-in-cheek wit.

Hair cutting was a favourite photographic theme for Kinsey and his friends, perhaps not only because of the amusing aspects of cutting and shaving rituals but also because of the serious attention men dedicated to grooming and their noticeable interest in personal appearance. Victorian references to the "beard movement" recognised a striking change in the appearance of men. Writers promoted this new masculine image as a mark of masculine authority and men's superiority over women (Oldstone-Moore 2005). Kinsey often posed, his bald head lathered, with a barber whose scissors were open and ready for action. Figure 14 depicts George Mannering and Kinsey, with the action held steady ready for the photograph to be taken. Figure 15 shows Malcolm Ross as the barber.

Setting the Scene and Social Standing

The alpine photographs in Kinsey's collection are a valuable resource not only because they provide a unique window into the social life of his climbing associates and their adventures but also because they illustrate his determination to promote the Southern Alps to others. Many of his photos therefore have a staged look and that look was deliberate on Kinsey's part. He wanted others to see the mountains as he saw them and to appreciate what he knew they offered visitors and adventurers. Figure 16, for example, taken on an ice face of the Tasman Glacier, depicts a climbing party, ice axes poised, carefully posed on ice steps, probably cut by their guide Jack Clark. The fashionable attire of the climbers and the presence of women in the party readily suggest the accessibility of the glacier.

Careful staging may not always have conveyed the impression Kinsey hoped for. In Figure 17, which depicts the arrival of Kinsey,

his daughter May, Claude Barrow, FitzGerald, Zurbriggen, Clark and Arthur Ollivier at Ball Hutt in 1895, Kinsey has called his actors to centre stage and instructed them on the poses, ones of celebration, he wanted them to present. Undoubtedly, the climbers were exhilarated by the superb views of the Tasman Glacier and the surrounding peaks, but curiously the cast's expressions lack the warmth and enthusiasm Kinsey generally inspired in his leading players.

His desired impression is more successful in Figure 18. Here, the hats raised in greeting emphasise the politeness and formality of social exchange at this time, even when out in the mountains. The staged manners also convey the continuing emphasis in the Alpine Club on mountaineering as essentially a gentleman's pursuit. Camaraderie among mountaineers is evident, too, with Kinsey introducing his guest Signor Borsalino to guide Malcolm Ross. Another feature of the photo is the Victorian gentlemanly attire on display. The three men stand in a surrounding familiar to them. Comfortable and relaxed, they are dressed for leisure in woollen suits, shirt collar and tie, ready to be scrutinised by the photographer. Borsalino's stylish Italian clothes and his elegant dark tweed jacket set him apart. Ross's neat appearance is rendered incongruous by his swag and ice axe. Kinsey has achieved a jaunty look with the addition of a scarf tied around his hat, while Borsalino, hat raised, acknowledges the introduction.

Borsalino was considered a leader in the European fashion industry and was an early wearer of the fedora hat, which originated in France in the early 1880s but was not widely worn by men until the 1920s. Men's hats during these decades were an index of social class as never before or since (Cunnington and Cunnington 1970: 340). Those being photographed generally savoured the opportunity to have their sartorial eccentricities recorded by the camera and were intent on projecting a suitable self-image. The subjects' choice of costume and accessories were an indicator of their occupational class and prosperity, and the qualities that typically

mattered most were dignity, respectability and soundness.

Figure 19, posed against mountain scenery, also has all the hallmarks of tailored Victorian elegance. May's stance exudes confidence and sophistication. Although Kinsey positioned Ross below May, he is undiminished, appearing charming and debonair, cigar in hand. The two reflect their comfortable standing in an age when generally only the well-off could travel to the Hermitage for a holiday in the mountains.

Kinsey's sense of theatre and his need for control of a situation is epitomised in Figures 20 and 21. Kinsey, posed outside the Hermitage, is dressed for the occasion and he owns the space. It suggests he is calling the campers to order in the tradition of the British Army, where daily routines and events were signalled in this way. He has adopted an appropriate hat, although it is more typical of Swiss mountain dwellers. The alpenhorn and the tartan rug hint at clan membership. In her essay in *Early New Zealand Photography*, published in 2011,



Figure 16. Kinsey party, Tasman Glacier, 1895.
Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum
19XX.2.5306



Figure 17. *Arrival at Ball Hut, 1895.* J J Kinsey photograph. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.236

Kerry Hines speculated that “Dressing up for the camera may have provided an opportunity to express something of one’s own identity while simultaneously imaging, presenting and enjoying oneself in different personae” (Hines 2011: 77). Although there is a playful element to many of Kinsey’s photographs, they nevertheless “reflect this authentic involvement in an activity or interest”. As Hines reminds us, “self-portraits of photographers play-acting and in costume date back to the earliest days of photography.”

The participants in these outdoor occasions did not always perceive themselves as appropriately dressed. On the occasion of a tea party at Kea Point in 1896, the retiring Assistant

Surveyor-General John Holland Baker wrote:

Miss Kinsey, my wife, my daughter and I took our tea to Kea Point. Mr Kinsey, Signor Giuseppe, and the two guides who had been out on the Mueller Glacier, joined us there and we had a jolly picnic and were all photographed by Mr Kinsey. This photo [Fig. 22] I still possess and we look the most complete set of ruffians that it is possible to imagine (Baker 1965: 301).

Ill-dressed they may have been, but Baker’s enjoyment of the occasion is evident in his comments.

Figure 23 depicts a hunting party comprised



Figure 18. Joseph Kinsey introducing Giuseppe Borsalino to Malcolm Ross by the great Tasman Glacier. J J Kinsey photograph. W A Kennedy collection, Canterbury Museum 1975.203.12345

of Kinsey, Zurbriggen and George Mannering. The scene is a woolshed, and Kinsey, sitting on a wool bale, is characteristically at the centre of the photograph. With nonchalance, the three men pose for the camera, but none of them gazes at the lens nor are they conversing. Yet the camaraderie between them is unmistakable. Mannering, always the epitome of good taste, is wearing an ammunition belt, but the feathers in his hat and the fob chain still distinguish him as a gentleman concerned with his appearance.

The photograph also provides another indication of the construct of manliness in colonial New Zealand. As Jock Phillips explains, “the Victorian concept of manliness took on a particular twist in New Zealand, becoming associated with pioneering toughness ... the ability to be independent and capable in difficult circumstances” (Phillips 1987: 33–



Figure 19. Malcolm Ross and May Kinsey near Aoraki/Mount Cook. J J Kinsey photograph. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.4158

34). According to Phillips, hunting gave all males of this era the chance to “prove their manhood”, made easier by the fact that hunting was initially not subject to game laws. From 1861, however, both exotic and introduced fauna became progressively protected from hunting under government legislation, with that progression strongly influenced by “game hunters, or sportsmen as they preferred to be known” (Aramakutu 1997: 121–122). Their influence sought the “preservation of sport for the colonial gentry”, but by 1910 “every indigenous bird was protected absolutely in New Zealand unless it was exempted by Order in Council” (Aramakutu 1997: 2). Phillips also stresses the role that “yarning” (telling stories) and singing ballads played in building a “strong male culture” (Perkins and Cushman 1993: 25). The bonhomie between the three men in Figure

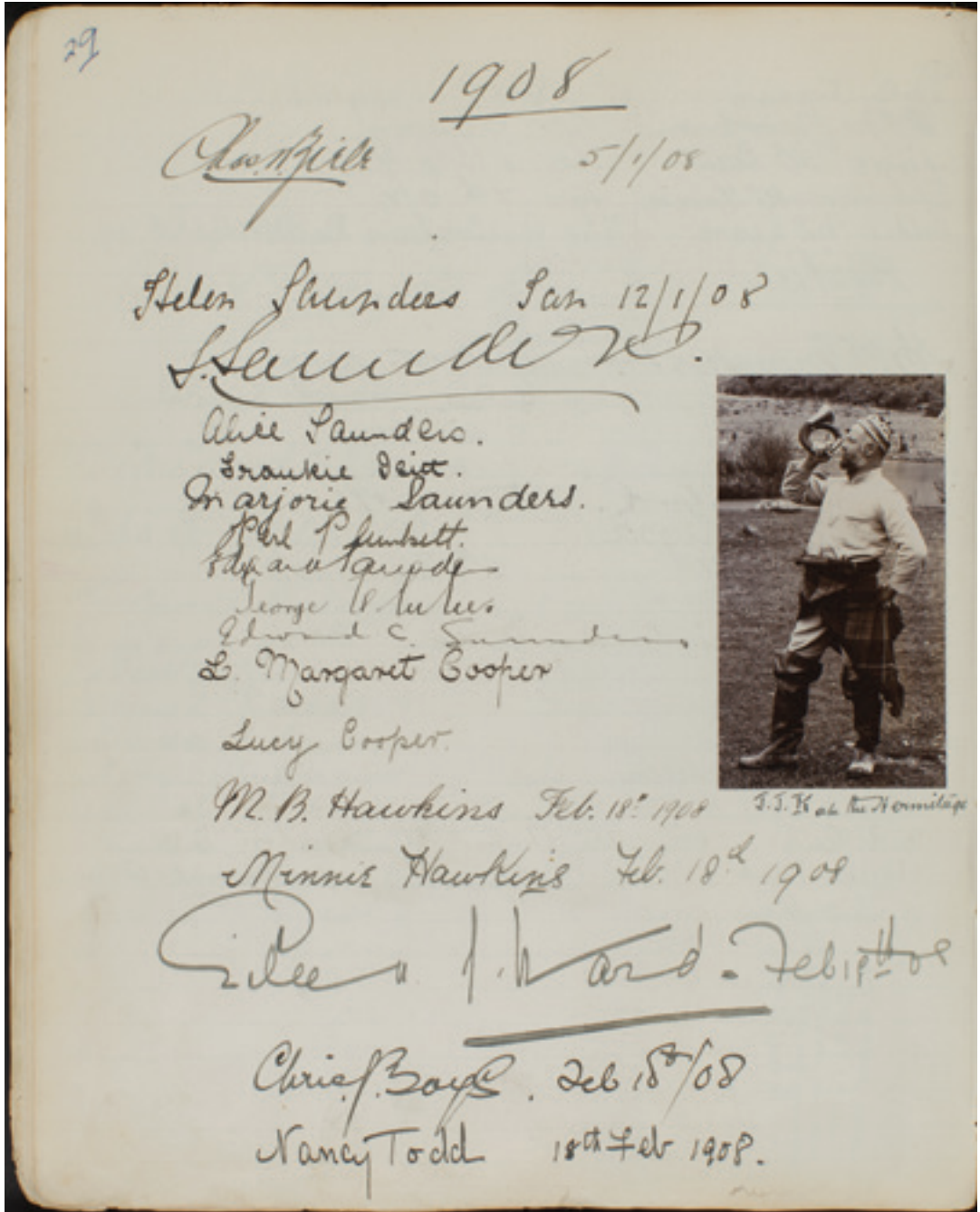


Figure 20. Joseph Kinsey. J J Kinsey photograph. Warrimoo visitors' book 1903–1913, Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.68, p29

23 is clear, and they undoubtedly yarned in the evening over dinner, with Kinsey, as was his habit, producing the vocal entertainment.

The eight triumphant climbers in Figure 24 have just arrived at the summit of Mount Torlesse, generally considered a straightforward climb and therefore a learning ground for amateurs. It was also within easy reach of Christchurch. Arms, poles and ice axes are raised to salute their conquest. Kinsey's exuberance and his position in the forefront of this photo, as well as in many other of his own photographs and those of his friends, portray him as a leader. His presence regularly dominated images. Always comfortable behind the lens, he was equally at ease as the subject of an image.

Some Ongoing Questions of Authorship

The constant exchange of photographs between the mountaineers and amateur climbers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries presents a further challenge to determining who actually took various pictures in Kinsey's collection, as does the number of photographers represented in the collection. The photos in the alpine section of his collection, for example, include ones taken by his daughter, Zurbriggen, FitzGerald, Mannering, Fyfe, Ross, Ollivier and Adamson. The use of Kinsey's Christchurch darkroom by both local and visiting climbers saw images developed, shared and stored without clear attribution, making it difficult to determine just who had taken them. The previously mentioned darkroom set up by Jack Adamson at the Hermitage added to the lack of certainty over ownership owing to sharing of unlabelled negatives.

But the collection also contains groups of photos systematically labelled and ordered according to authorship. The layout of the photographs in the collection's *Day Book* illustrates Kinsey's systematic approach to organising this particular grouping.² The leather-bound *Day Book* is heavy and comprises over 700 ruled ledger pages with



Figure 21. J J Kinsey as Bugler. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p525

photographs inserted in purpose-made slots. Kinsey has noted on the inside back cover, "Given to Ollivier, 11th March". This is followed by a list of 11 photographs taken in the Southern Alps, a further example of the sharing that took place and the confusion of ownership that resulted. Descriptions of each photograph are handwritten and include appropriate information, including the roll number of the film and when it began. Some of the photographs in the *Day Book* are clearly photographs that Zurbriggen took from the summit of Aoraki/Mount Cook and which precede Kinsey's own images of mountain scenery. Other images in the *Day Book*, taken at the time of FitzGerald and Zurbriggen's climbs with Clark as porter, can be readily identified as ones that FitzGerald took and sent to Kinsey for development. The letter that FitzGerald sent with these particular rolls of film detailed times, exposures, weather conditions and locations, thus expediting the labelling process (Fitzgerald to Kinsey, 11 February 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/32, Canterbury



Figure 22. From left to right, Giuseppe Borsalino, Matthias Zurbriggen, John Holland Baker, Isabel Baker, May Kinsey, Jack Clark and Noline Baker picnicking at Kea Point. Joseph Kinsey photograph, 1896. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, PA1-q-137-66-1

Museum).

At times, sharing negatives seriously displeased the original photographer. On 12 June 1895 Kinsey wrote to FitzGerald telling him of Alpine Club Member Arthur Harper's annoyance that he, Kinsey, had given FitzGerald lantern slides that Harper had developed from his negatives (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 3/66, Canterbury Museum). Kinsey had understood that FitzGerald had received permission from Harper for Kinsey to do this but Harper denied this. On another occasion, Harper had asked Kinsey to provide prints from Fyfe's negatives and there is no mention of permission being sought or given (A P Harper to Kinsey, n.d. June 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 3/69, Canterbury Museum). In time, Kinsey assembled a large collection of Harper's alpine photographs in the *Hull Book*,

previously used for details of marine insurance.³ The *Hull Book* includes mostly A P Harper's photographs taken during his time working with the Department of Lands and Survey as assistant surveyor to veteran explorer Charlie Douglas. Like the *Day Book*, the *Hull Book* has purpose-made slots filled with photographs taken in or near Christchurch, the Aoraki/Mt Cook region, South Westland, Franz Joseph and Fox Glaciers and some of the West Coast.

Although many of Zurbriggen's images are clearly attributed to him in Canterbury Museum's Kinsey Collection, there is some confusion over whether photos Zurbriggen referred to on two separate occasions were his or Kinsey's. In a March 1895 letter to Sir W Martin Conway of the Alpine Club, London, Zurbriggen wrote:



Figure 23. George Mannering, Joseph Kinsey and Matthias Zurbriggen. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.1348

I have complete maps of the alpine district I have been over and a splendid assortment of photographs given to me by Mr. Kinsey – a gentleman who came with our caravan to the Tasman and took excellent pictures there – lives in Christchurch (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/51, Canterbury Museum).

On his return to New Zealand in 1896, Zurbriggen was interviewed by *The Press*. He gave a full account of a meeting at the Alpine Club in London where he spoke about the alpine regions of New Zealand. He then, he told *The Press* reporter, had returned to his home in Macugnaga, a mountain village in Northern Italy:

The photographs which I took Home were

*much admired and those who saw them were perfectly astonished. After I had set them up in my room in Macugnaga ... the climbers who were touring in this district came in numbers to see them and, as was the case in England, expressed considerable astonishment. Again I would desire to take the opportunity of thanking Mr Kinsey for these photos and maps, which were amongst the most interesting and valuable of the many things I took back with me (*The Press*, 17 February 1896: 6).*

Kinsey had kept in contact with Zurbriggen after his departure in 1895, sending him news of all that was happening in the Alps. Consequently, when Zurbriggen arrived in Melbourne prior to the last leg of his second (1896) journey to New Zealand, Kinsey was



Figure 24. *Ascent of Mount Torlesse.* Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p583

the obvious person to facilitate his plans once he arrived in the country. Zurbriggen cabled Kinsey requesting he organise porters and stores for his expedition to the Aoraki/Mount Cook region. Zurbriggen expressed his delight on learning that Kinsey and May would accompany him, and he was even more pleased when he learned Kinsey would be taking his camera. He was excited by the prospect of obtaining images of areas that had not previously been photographed. The antagonism felt by New Zealand climbers towards FitzGerald did not extend to Zurbriggen, who was popular and admired for his ability as a mountaineer. Accordingly, on his return in 1896, the Kinseys were not the only members of the climbing fraternity offering him a warm welcome.

"A Delightful Little Climb" – Gender and the Mountains

Kinsey's attitude to the capabilities of women climbers was condescending, even though May shared her father's mountain experiences and his enthusiasm for photography and there was no suggestion she held up any of the climbing parties. Having suggested in his *The Weekly Press* article that "A delightful little climb can be undertaken by ladies to the top of Mount Ollivier 6296 feet", he pointed out that this peak was only 700 feet higher than Mount Herbert (*The Weekly Press*, 1897: 3). On the next page of the paper, after describing the improvements made to the roads, tracks and huts, so lessening the danger of being overtaken by bad weather, Kinsey noted: "With such advantages there is no reason why ladies as well as men with a

competent guide should not visit those most distant points on the glaciers which, up to the present, have only been available to the hardy mountaineer." Condescending Kinsey and doubtless his mountaineering friends might have been towards lady climbers, but they still enjoyed the ease of a Sunday walk on the Port Hills above Christchurch (Fig. 25).

Climbing was considered a male institution, a manly activity following the traditions of climbers from overseas. Members of the New Zealand Alpine Club were predominantly middle-class males, in keeping with the club's elitist traditions. In a 2001 journal article, geographers Karen Morin, Robyn Longhurst and Lynda Johnston positioned the Hermitage and Aoraki/Mount Cook as a valuable location "for examining the entrenchment of the hegemonic masculinist New Zealand national identity constructed around heroic mountaineering" (Morin et al. 2001). They considered the experience of "white mountaineering women on Mount Cook" as both embracing the masculinist identity of hero and destabilising it. "Narratives about mountaineering too often ignore the huts, lodges, the places of staying behind. The roles performed by women (and some men) who never had the opportunity and/or the desire to climb but instead kept the home fires burning, and supported the efforts of others" (Morin et al. 2001: 117) describe the roles May (Fig. 26) and her father played during the heroic masculine mountaineering scene of the 1890s. While May and Kinsey did of course climb in the mountains, they never did so as the true mountaineers of the time.

Despite Kinsey's and May's efforts to persuade more people to come to the area, the costs of travelling to and exploring the environs of Aoraki/Mount Cook were a deterrent to many individuals, and women especially given their generally low wages if they were in paid employment or were reliant on men's incomes. An expedition in the 1890s from Fairlie to Aoraki/Mount Cook that included return fares (excluding the Christchurch leg),

accommodation at Fairlie at eight shillings per night, at Pukaki at eight shillings per night, and at the Hermitage twelve shilling per night, along with daily rates for hiring horses at ten shillings and guiding fees of ten shillings could sum up to approximately £10 for 9 days. Essentially, the cost of the trip, the months of leisure time necessary and the essential equipment was beyond the means of many, meaning most visitors were wealthy, a factor that added to the exclusivity of such an excursion.

The subscription to the Alpine Club of one guinea or 21 shillings for a member and half a guinea for a subscriber was in itself a disincentive for unskilled workers (read: men) earning 3 to 7 shillings a day or about two pounds a week.⁴ However, unlike its British counterpart, the New Zealand Alpine Club was open by this time to women wishing to join it. The *Otago Daily Times* noted that British reviews of a book entitled *Mountaineering* by C T Dent and others, reported that the club "is beginning to do good work and is unique in that it has elected a lady mountaineer as an active member" (*Otago Daily Times*, 12 November 1892: 5). However, given the British club at that time was not offering women membership, it is a moot point as to whether its members considered the New Zealand club's availability to women part of its "good work". Because Britain's first alpine club, formed in 1857, did not admit women as members, women formed their own club in 1907. The woman referred to as a member of the New Zealand Alpine Club was Forrest Ross, listed as a new member in October 1892. Her husband, Malcolm Ross, was at the time one of the club's four vice-presidents. Forrest was a very able climber and accompanied her husband on several climbs. Nonetheless, she reported that by reason of her sex she was expected to be "housekeeper and cook" during her alpine climbs (Ross and Ross 1934: 9).

In 1904, *New Zealand Illustrated*, the Christmas edition of *The Weekly Press*, highlighted the question of appropriate clothing for lady climbers, observing that "women's



Figure 25. Two photographs of a Sunday walk on the Port Hills, 1894. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p591 **A**, Kinsey is on the left with his camera set to record the scene. **B**, Kinsey is now seen celebrating the occasion.



Figure 26. *Washerwoman*, May Kinsey at Ball Hut, 1897. J J Kinsey photograph. W A Kennedy collection, Canterbury Museum 1975.203.20180.

skirts should be very short, say at least eight inches clear of the ground". Freda du Faur, who in 1910 became the first woman to climb Aoraki/Mount Cook and also recorded the fastest time, described leaving the Hermitage in a "proper skirt" and taking it off as soon as she was out of sight. Climbing with a single male guide jeopardised her moral reputation. Du Faur wrote:

As soon as I cheerfully announced, when asked, that I was going to climb Mount Sealy alone with a guide I found myself up against all the cherished conventions of the middle-aged ... One old lady implored me with tears in her eyes "not to spoil my life for such a small thing as climbing a mountain" (du Faur 2015: 35–36).

Du Faur clearly felt the disadvantages of

being a woman pioneer.

The concerns expressed over du Faur's attire and unchaperoned status not only emphasised the constraints placed on aspiring women climbers but also reflected the dominance and controlling influence of many men in the field of mountaineering. The comments of Albert Mummery (1855–1896), an English mountaineer and author, revealed the attitudes of men born and raised in the Victorian era towards lady climbers. He wrote:

... it has frequently been noticed that all mountains appear doomed to pass through the three stages, an inaccessible peak, the most difficult ascent in the Alps and an easy day for a lady. In other words, once a great peak had been climbed and was no longer deemed out of reach, any ordinary person might have a go – even a woman

– *and the mountains' greatness was gone*
(Mummery 1946: 113).

He did, however, admire and respect English mountaineer Lily Bristow's expertise and commented positively on her ascent of the Grepon in 1893. Bristow, who had scandalised her friends by sharing a tent with men, made numerous ascents in the Swiss Alps (Jones 2012). Of her rock climbing skill, Mummery noted "that she showed the representatives of the Alpine Club the way in which steep rocks should be climbed ... it was hardly an easy day for a lady" (Mummery 1946: 112). In fact, Mummery ranked it amongst the hardest climbs he made. Even by 1925 and a new generation of climbers, the attitudes of men to women in the mountains appear to have changed little. For example, A N Blakiston, a member of the New Zealand Alpine Club, wrote after a trip taken with Arthur Harper, then 60 years of age, and his daughter Rosamond, aged 16, that "Anyone who takes the responsibility of taking women (young or old, trained or otherwise) on hard mountain trips should have very adequate male support ... the female of the species can become very obtuse and difficult to deal with." (Alpine Collection, Box 7, Folder 25, ALP171.99, Canterbury Museum).

"To Write in Your Favour" – Kinsey's Mountain Letters

The uncertainty over what the government's purchase of the Hermitage in 1895 meant for its future and those who frequented the area generated a great deal of correspondence between those affected by this change. Both Adamson and Clark wrote to Kinsey asking for his support and assistance. In his letter, Adamson mentioned that he had written to John McKenzie, Minister of Lands, but he also wanted to know from Kinsey if he had been able to talk with McKenzie or any other Members of Parliament to cite his knowledge of the place and his outstanding capabilities (Adamson to Kinsey, 6 June 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55/47,

Box 1, Folder 3/64, Canterbury Museum). Kinsey replied, "I shall be happy to write in your favour." Clark, when seeking Kinsey's advice, asked, "Do you think that there would be any chance of getting a place there and who would I write to apply to?" (Clark to Kinsey, 9 June 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 3/65, Canterbury Museum). Ross also wrote to Kinsey suggesting that as he was in a position to have early news of the new owners of the Hermitage, he might be able to recommend his brother Kenneth Ross as a guide and stockman (Ross to Kinsey, 6 December 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55.47, Box 1, Folder 3/76, Canterbury Museum).

Like his earlier correspondence, the letters Kinsey received and wrote at this time contribute to the valuable record of early exploration in the Southern Alps. A P Harper, who had joined the Department of Lands and Survey as a surveyor in 1893, wrote to Kinsey in 1894 thanking him for photographs he had sent and requested "a print or two off some of Fyfe's negatives" (A P Harper to Kinsey, 30 August 1894, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/20, Canterbury Museum). A collection of Harper's photographs of the West Coast, taken during his time as surveyor, are included in the J J Kinsey Collection's *Day Book*. In an eight-page letter to Kinsey, which Harper described as an "epistle" from the Karangarua River, he expressed grateful thanks for the newspapers Kinsey had sent him.

Harper's letters were also rich in detailed descriptions of the landscape. In a letter he wrote in November 1894, he described Cassel Flat, which he had recently visited, as "about a mile long and $\frac{3}{4}$ broad surrounded by huge rocky hills rising nearly sheer – in some cases bare rock for 3000 feet or more – while here and there bush finds a foothold, the whole surroundings are grand" (A P Harper to Kinsey, 14 November 1894, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/23, Canterbury Museum). He then went on to provide vivid imagery of the terrain, weather conditions, swollen rivers, waterfalls and floods. His focus here reflected the early

colonists' view of Canterbury's rivers, with their wide gravel floodplains, as "threatening barriers. Their behaviour was unpredictable compared with the familiar streams of Europe" (Winterbourne et al. 2008: 41). Although Kinsey's experience of the mountains was limited to more accessible areas, he would have valued Harper's correspondence with its accounts of places he had neither visited nor was likely to.

During 1895, Kinsey exchanged a number of letters with alpine guide Jack Clark, with whom he had enjoyed various excursions in the Alps (Fig. 27) (Letters from Clark to Kinsey, 1 February 1895 [item 28] and 2 May 1895 [item 58], Canterbury Museum 1947.55.1). At some stage in that year, Clark travelled to Christchurch and it was then that he was interviewed by a reporter from *The Press*, with the article, titled 'A New Zealand Alpine Guide: A Chat with Jack Clark', being published in the paper on 21 May 1895. The article included photos taken by Kinsey. The following excerpt from a letter that Clark wrote to Kinsey from Timaru soon after suggests that Kinsey had arranged the interview in order to promote Clark as a guide:

While I am writing this the Press is just brought in. I can but poorly return thanks for all I owe you Mr Kinsey but I think you have managed to put it in very nicely and the illustrations come out fine. Seriously Mr Kinsey you will end by making me very Vain. (Clark to Kinsey, 16 May 1895, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/60, Canterbury Museum).

The reporter described Clark as a "young fellow ... lithe and full of pluck and courage" and then added, "Jack Clark has all the makings of a first-class guide." (*The Press* 21 May 1895).

Despite his superior attitude at times, Kinsey's gentle side was frequently evident in his correspondence, not only in what was said to him, but in what he said to and did for others, with his just-mentioned support of Jack Clark



Figure 27. Alpine guide Jack Clark with Joseph Kinsey. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.5310

being but one example. Kinsey also constantly showed his appreciation of kindness. He was always grateful to those who assisted him and acknowledged their thoughtfulness, usually by letter, but sometimes in his published writing. When relating, in *The Weekly Press*, a story of the arrival of one of his parties at Glentanner Station, where they were met by Malcolm and Forrest Ross, he wrote:

*In my own case I can never forget or repay the kindness to myself and party, when through wretched horses and the breakdown of our coach, and after walking from the foot of Pukaki, reaching Glentanner late at night they gave us an excellent supper, beds and breakfast and sent us away refreshed and rejoicing in the morning (*The Weekly Press*, 30 October 1897: 2).*

Jack Adamson and his wife Nora, managers of the Hermitage, also received a letter from

Kinsey in June 1896 thanking them for their hospitality and kindness. Kinsey made sure to let them know that Zurbriggen and FitzGerald were “particularly appreciative of Jack’s excellent knowledge of the area and Jack and Nora’s hospitality” (Kinsey to Adamson, 29 June 1896, Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 3/80, Canterbury Museum).

Zurbriggen gifted an ice axe to Kinsey that later came to be associated with the Antarctic and its use by Scott’s Northern Party in 1910 (Canterbury Museum ALP180.2). The axe was also loaned to Ross, who wrote of its significance and value. In Ross’s view the axe that had accompanied the famous guide to the top of 20 peaks in the European Alps was fundamental to his person. It was like a soldier giving away his sword. Regarded as a sacred text, the Italian Alpine Club published *Fiorio e Ratti*, the dangers of mountaineering and rules to avoid them in 1889, declaring ice axes as among the most “inseparable companions of the mountaineer”. The gift of the ice axe was generous, but Zurbriggen undoubtedly had much to thank Kinsey for. Without Kinsey’s assistance and generosity, Zurbriggen’s passage to the Alps would have been difficult. Kinsey’s organisation of porters and provisions for the journey smoothed his way.

New Directions

By the early twentieth century, Kinsey’s focus had altered. He was no longer actively involved in the mountain scene. May, his most constant climbing companion, had married and shifted to Dunedin in 1900. Many of the men he had corresponded with over alpine matters had also moved away. Harper went to Thames in 1896 as a barrister and solicitor; Mannering left Christchurch in 1897 to take a position in the Union Bank in Hastings; and Ross shifted from Dunedin to Wellington in 1900 to work as a parliamentary correspondent. Three years later, Clark moved to Millers Flat. The changed scene at the Hermitage and the uncertainty of its future may also have been a factor in Kinsey’s

declining interest. It was declared bankrupt in 1894 and purchased by the government in September 1895.

Kinsey’s last recorded trip into the mountains had been in 1898, when Clark guided him along with May and Mr W C Hill to the new hut at Malte Brun, an easy day’s walk from Ball Hut. On the way up the Tasman Glacier the party navigated by compass due to a dense fog. With the danger of crevasses in the poor visibility, they were safer roped together, and it took two attempts to find access to the hut up the moraine wall. Based at the hut for a week, they made excursions further up the glacier, where Kinsey secured a large set of photographs. No doubt Clark carried the heavy plate camera for him. A dump of snow delayed their return, and for a time they survived on “low rations” (Langton 2011). In her book, *Snow Kings of the Southern Alps*, Blanche Baughan attributes Figure 28, *Malte Brun Hut*, to Kinsey (Baughan, 1910: 33). It is in his collection, but it was taken by Clark. Close examination of the image shows Kinsey and his daughter in front of the hut. From here, wrote Baughan, the outlook is “sublime” with views of Aoraki/Mount Cook, the upper Tasman and the Main Divide: “... the long line of the very loftiest summits of these Alps ... [is] an experience rather than a sight”.

Conclusion

Kinsey’s photographic collection forms the legacy to the mountaineering phase of his life. Whether the images in his collection were taken by him, set up by him (with someone else taking the shutter) or were images he had collected from other photographers, all provide a valuable record of colonial adventuring in the Southern Alps and the antecedents of New Zealanders’ reputation (rightly or wrongly) as an outdoors people. Kinsey made a significant contribution to the heritage of the nation. As an advocate for his province Kinsey publicised the splendour and accessibility of the mountains through literature, his photographs and newspapers. In an age of global warming Kinsey’s images, for the most



Figure 28. Malte Brun Hut, with Joseph Kinsey and daughter May standing outside it. Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.4140

part housed in Canterbury Museum, provide a valuable record of the shifting landscape. But Kinsey's collection also contributed to his own identity or self-making. His photographs gave him the opportunity on many occasions to tell and retell the story of how the images were acquired. In finding and obtaining objects in this way, collectors like Kinsey merged "his own experience with the object, with his fantasy about its past history" (Rubel and Rasman 2001: 309).

Kinsey's photographs sit very comfortably amongst the collection of alpine photography taken by his friends and associates. But it is the images in his collection that are taken beyond the limits of his own climbs that allow him to live the myth of the true alpine experience. As Walter Benjamin noted and has been observed since, "For a collector ... ownership is the most

intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them" (Benjamin 1968: 319). The idea that Kinsey felt an impulse to achieve a measure of authority over the environment, for example over the mountain peaks he had experienced only from a distance, could also have been a valid reason for his collection. Specimens of rock that Jack Clark collected from the summits of the various mountains he climbed, notably Haast Arête and Haidinger, and then sent to Kinsey, functioned in the same way. "Mount Kinsey," Clark wrote to Kinsey (Kinsey Papers, 55/47, Box 1, Folder 2/28, Canterbury Museum) in early 1895, "is quite a fine Peak and will be a nice climb. I am keeping you a specimen of rock of Sealy. I will keep a piece of the top of every peak I climb ... I am taking your hint and keeping an account of the climbs. Would you tell



Figure 29. *Mount Kinsey from Fitzgerald Saddle.* Kinsey Collection, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12, p402

Mrs Kinsey that I have not got many edelweiss yet but will have by and by?" (Figs. 29 and 30).

In 1903, Kinsey's holiday house on Clifton Hill Te Hau o te Atua was completed and became a favourite destination for weekends and holidays, thus contributing to the next phase of his life, one away from the mountains that had so beguiled him in the last decades of the nineteenth century. A further reason for his altered focus can be attributed to his shipping company, which had been in his sole ownership from 1887 until he formed a new partnership,

Kinsey Barns & Co, in 1889. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, Kinsey's interest in his company took on a new imperative and absorbed more of his energy. The Antarctic era had begun and Kinsey's involvement in the affairs of the expeditions that passed through Lyttelton left little time for leisurely pursuits into the mountains with his Thornton Pickard camera.



Figure 30. The old Hermitage. J J Kinsey photograph. W A Kennedy collection, Canterbury Museum
1975.203.5538

Endnotes

- 1 M J Dixon wrote two articles for the *New Zealand Alpine Journal*, Vol. II: "Attempts on Aorangi from the eastern side: An historical resumé", May 1895, pp. 5–19; "The siege of Mt Cook", May 1894, pp. 245–257. His letter to *The Press* appeared on page 3 of the 28 December 1894 edition.
- 2 The *Day Book* (Canterbury Museum 1940.193.12) compiled by Kinsey has ruled ledger pages with photographs inserted in purpose-made slots. The album contains scenes of and people in Christchurch; FitzGerald and Zurbriggen expeditions in the Southern Alps and Aoraki/Mount Cook region; crossing to the West Coast via the Copeland Valley and return via Graham's Saddle; A P Harper's West Coast photographs; ascent of Mount Torlesse; and personalities at Aoraki/Mount Cook.
- 3 *Hull Book*, Canterbury Museum 1940.193.62. Photographs are inserted into purpose-made slots.
- 4 Miners' wages, *The Press*, 9 November 1894. Miners were reported to be earning £2/10s a week. An earlier report in *The Press* (31 December 1894) stated that the average wage for workers at the Belfast Freezing Works were between £3.17s and £4 a week.

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