

GRAEME WALLACE

From the age of fifteen, when he bought his first SLR camera, Graeme has enjoyed a love of photography, eventually turning his hobby into the driver for his publishing business. He now specialises in photographing and publishing books on his native Scotland.

During a visit to the Canadian Rockies while in his mid-twenties Graeme became captured by the mountains, and subsequently published his first photographic book on the area. Since then he has focused on creating work that presents Scotland at its best, travelling ever deeper up glens and climbing ever higher to produce captivating and evocative images.

While climbing was, initially, simply a reason to acquire vantage points for photographs, over time, it often became the primary objective, although always with camera close to hand.

In producing this book, Graeme has drawn on a culmination of over thirty years' experience to realise his most challenging and rewarding project to date. With two years' preparation, the objective was not only to scale the Matterhorn 150 years after it was first climbed, but also to ascend the more challenging Italian side and descend the popular Swiss side. Walking in the footsteps of Edward Whymper, Graeme's aim was to portray the many aspects of the Matterhorn through his photographs and to illustrate why mankind has been both enraptured and beguiled by the mountain.

The Matterhorn is one of nature's masterpieces and is unsurpassed by any other peak for access to its towering precipices. While some feel the need to climb to its summit, others are satisfied to gaze up at it in awe. Either way, it is hoped that this book gives inspiration and an intimate understanding of this quintessential mountain.



MATTERHORN

THE QUINTESSENTIAL MOUNTAIN

The high peaks of the Alps are quite simply magnificent; imposing; threatening; captivating.

Today, we can enjoy many of the great mountains from strategically placed mountain huts, and are able to explore them, confident that a phone call can instigate a helicopter rescue at almost any time; a benefit that can all too easily be taken for granted.

Back in the early 1860s when Edward Whymper first saw the mountains, it was a more remote landscape. He was smitten by its remoteness and inspired to explore more deeply and higher. Often traversing uncharted territory he found his purpose in life; his ultimate objective quickly becoming the first ascent of the 'unclimbable' Matterhorn.

Whymper's pioneering spirit, bravery and self-belief was in keeping with an era when the Victorians felt the world was theirs to conquer. Unlike most, Whymper did not seek fame and glory, but instead, embarked on a more private mission, climbing imposing mountains no one had climbed before for his own personal reasons, which were never fully explained or understood.

As a result of his ambition, and drive in overcoming considerable adversity and hardship, he became the most successful mountaineer of his day, ushering in the end of the Golden Age of Mountaineering, and establishing the way for people of all abilities to enjoy the Alps.

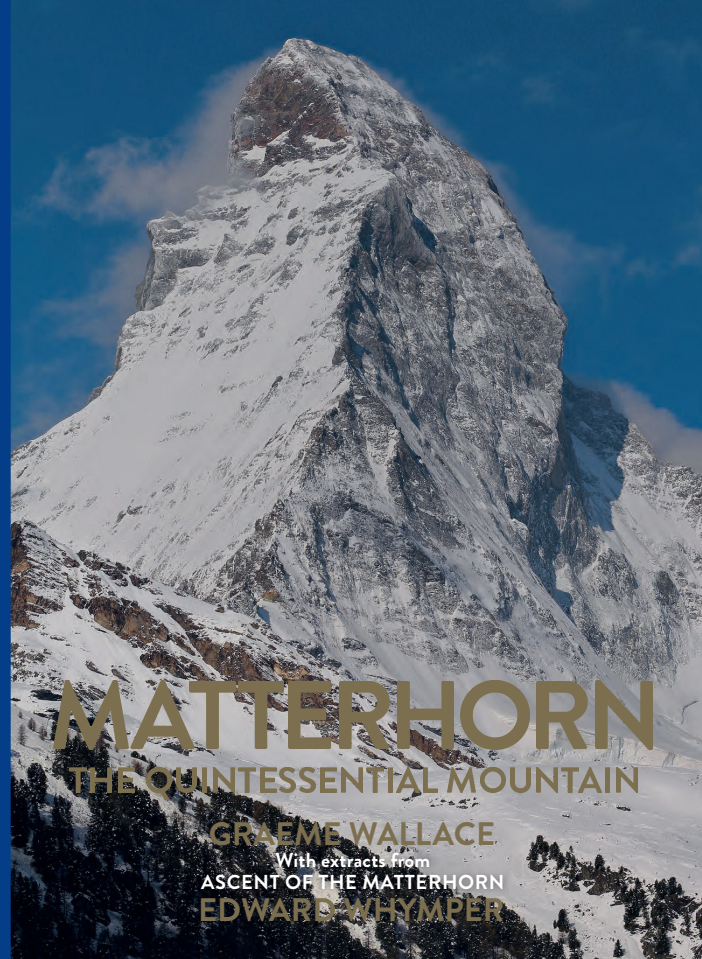


Commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first climb of the Matterhorn by Edward Whymper and his party in July, 1865, this large-format pictorial book features over eighty photographs of the world's most recognisable mountain, together with tantalising extracts from Whymper's own book, *The Ascent of the Matterhorn*, and the narrative of Graeme Wallace's attempt to reach the summit, 150 years later, in 2015.



£30.00

MATTERHORN THE QUINTESSENTIAL MOUNTAIN GRAEME WALLACE G&P PUBLISHING



MATTERHORN

THE QUINTESSENTIAL MOUNTAIN

GRAEME WALLACE
With extracts from
ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN
EDWARD WHYMPER



PREFACE

In 1880, English mountaineer, Edward Whymper wrote the book *The Ascent of the Matterhorn*, in which he describes his six years mountain scrambling in the Alps between 1860 and 1865, culminating in his eighth attempt to ascend the Matterhorn. His work was descriptive, graphic and captivating and was supported by wood-engraved illustrations, created by Whymper himself. The book graphically relays the challenges, emotions and decisions that Whymper and his companions faced, and highlights the same considerations that today's mountaineers still confront. *The Ascent of the Matterhorn* was published in 1880 and was a revised copy of his earlier book, *Scrambles Amongst the Alps*, which was first published in 1871. *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* is now currently available as part of the *National Geographic Adventure Classics* series.

Sadly, it is often the failures, mistakes and tragedies that grab our attention and in his text, Whymper never shies away from highlighting his own poor judgements or, indeed, the mistakes and shortcomings of others.

There were mistakes made, not only by Whymper, but also by a great many of the pioneering mountaineers; so much so that Queen Victoria questioned the viability of the sport and consulted her Lord Chamberlain as to whether mountain climbing should be made illegal. However, men and women were by then hooked and it would have been impossible to reverse the tide of English 'tourists' wanting to set foot on the lofty peaks of the Alps. *The Times* newspaper was particularly questioning with an editorial on 27th July, 1865:

What is the use of scaling precipitous rocks, and being for half an hour at the top of the terrestrial globe? There is use in the feats of sailors, of steeple-climbers, vane-cleaners, chimney sweepers, lovers, and other adventurous professions. A man may be content to die in such a cause, for it is his life's battle. But in the few short moments a member of the Alpine Club has

to survey his life when he finds himself slipping, he had but a sorry account to give of himself. What is he doing there, and what right has he to throw away the gift of life?

Throughout his book, and particularly toward the end, Whymper gave his own more convincing response and reasoning for climbing, and frequently relays some of the emotion and elation upon reaching a summit or success. Simply put: 'a panorama extending over as much ground as the whole of England is one worth taking some trouble to see'. It is true that the views are often breathtaking; more so than words and pictures can relay. But there is more that drives people to take up the relatively high-risk sport. The sense of accomplishment at having pitted oneself against the elements and attaining a difficult goal provides lasting character traits that make us more fulfilled and better able to deal with everyday decisions and challenges.

Whymper goes on to say in his Preface: 'The ablest pens have failed, and I think must always fail, to give a true idea of the grandeur of the Alps. The most minute descriptions of the greatest writers do nothing more than convey impressions that are entirely erroneous-the reader conjures up visions, it may be magnificent ones, but they are infinitely inferior to the reality'.

There is certainly truth in this statement, but Whymper deserves particular recognition for doing an outstanding job in portraying the grandeur of the Alps and his time amongst the many soaring peaks.

In this book, tribute is paid to Edward Whymper, not only for his climbing achievements, but also for his artistic talent and literary work. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Whymper's crowning achievement, this book combines substantial extracts and illustrations from *The Ascent of the Matterhorn* interwoven with my own story and photography, as I walk in some of the footsteps of this pertinacious pioneering mountaineer.



CONTENT

Preface	v
Introduction	12
Chapter One	
Edward Whymper	13
Chapter Two	
The Matterhorn	15
Chapter Three	
Mountaineering	17
Chapter Four	
From the Preface of <i>The Ascent of the Matterhorn</i>	19
Chapter Five	
1860: First Explorations	20
Chapter Six	
1861: Mont Pelvoux and the Matterhorn	57
Chapter Seven	
1862: Renewed Attempts on the Matterhorn	91
Chapter Eight	
1863: Dent d'Hérens, Grand Tournalin and the Matterhorn	124
Chapter Nine	
1864: The Aiguilles d'Arves, Barre des Écrins, Mont Dolent, Aiguille de Tré-la-Tête and Aiguille d'Argentiére	154
Chapter Ten	
1865: Grand Cornier, Dent Blanche, Grandes Jorasses, Aiguille Verte, La Ruinette and the Matterhorn	189
Afterword	253
Author's Log	
Preparations and Training	23
Winter 2015	24
Spring 2015	69
Summer 2015 (Week One)	99
Summer 2015 (Week Two)	131
Summer 2015 (Week Three)	169
Summer 2015 (Nadelhorn 4,327m)	213
Summer 2015 (Matterhorn 4,478m)	233

INTRODUCTION

During one of our regular mountaineering trips in the Highlands of Scotland, my climbing partner Mat Tams recounted the details of the story he had learned as a child about the first ascent of the Matterhorn, the most recognisable and iconic mountain in the world. It was in the Golden Age of Mountaineering, dominated by proud, self-assured and intrepid characters from the British Isles, who were still enjoying their Victorian perspective of being superior and invincible. Exciting and daring, they were pioneering men, trail-blazing and seeking to be amongst the first, if not *the* first to scale the Alpine peaks.

Perhaps it was inevitable that our conversation would lead to us considering scaling the Matterhorn, and soon a date was set to make our dream a reality. Mat had, in fact, made two previous trips to climb the infamous peak, but on both occasions was unable to make the attempt, owing to unsuitable weather. I was determined not to suffer the same fate and so the planning started for how to maximise our chances of success. At this time, we had not appreciated that the year we had planned to climb was also the 150th anniversary of the first summit in 1865.

The weather-window for climbing the more challenging Alpine peaks is mid-July to early September. Our experience was that later would be better, so we agreed on the last week in August and first week in September for our trip. We subsequently learnt that in 2014, no guides went up on the Matterhorn until mid-August, which reaffirmed our reasoning and belief that our planning was sound. Nevertheless, allowing for some acclimatisation and knowing that an early snowfall would halt our plans, we did everything possible to keep our options open, in order to catch a good calm and clear two-day period.

Edward Whymper made a total of eight attempts to climb the Matterhorn, most of them from the Italian Liongrat (Lion) Ridge to the south-west, as any other route was considered impossible. Whymper's one and only attempt from the Swiss, Hörnli Ridge to the north-east resulted in success, and this route has subsequently become the

normal ascent for most climbers. However, in order to best experience some of Whymper's ordeals, our plan was to climb to the summit via the Lion Ridge and to then descend the Hörnli Ridge. It was hoped that this would also provide a more interesting and challenging trip.

Upon learning that 2015 would be the 150th anniversary of Edward Whymper's and his party's first ascent of the Matterhorn, I felt it would be only fitting to produce this book in commemoration of their success, and in recognition of Whymper's wider achievements in the Alps. This, in turn, meant numerous additional trips would be required in order to understand and portray the Alps as Whymper saw them.

Details of our experiences are recorded throughout the book, indicated by a light blue background to the page. A more detailed account can be read on the blog www.thematterhorn4478.com



EDWARD WHYMPER

14th July, 1865. This is the day that marked the end of the Golden Age of Alpine Climbing and Britain's greatest mountaineering achievement to date. Brought about by the events that took place on the Matterhorn, it was the end of one age but the beginning of a new one. Prior to this date, Edward Whymper had been mountaineering — or more aptly 'mountain-scrambling' — for a mere five years, and yet by comparative standards, had quickly become one of the most experienced mountain men of the age. He was a natural: strong, fit and fearless, with a willingness to accept discomfort for the greater reward. He was quick to learn the skills, was prepared to push boundaries, and crucially, was unafraid of what the unknown might hold and of what deadly hurdle might lie ahead. He had a good sense of direction and was resourceful, determined, tactical and skilful. He attacked the Alps with a vengeance, and was not simply there for recreational or social reasons, which was the case with most other English Alpinists. He was there to conquer and, in particular, to conquer the most invincible of mountains: the Matterhorn.

Whymper never fully gained the level of respect that he very much deserved from the Victorian public and among the English climbing community. He did, however, earn the respect and friendship of some of the best European mountain guides of the day, and as is so often the case with the British, was more highly regarded overseas than at home.

One characteristic that was an essential attribute to all Victorian mountaineers was wealth. In addition to the time away from work and the various travel costs, guides and porters were needed, and as the typical excursion was effectively an expedition, costs quickly escalated. Thus, the poor did not climb in the Alps. The sport was generally considered to be a pastime for men with power and heritage, and men held in high esteem. And so, it was the aristocracy, successful merchants and businessman that first climbed the Alps, along with

scholarly men, such as scientists and men of the cloth!

Born in 1840, Edward Whymper was neither poor nor particularly wealthy, but had just sufficient capital to pay for his passion. He was the second of eleven children born to Josiah Whymper. His father had left the security of the family in Suffolk, which had fallen into financial hardship, and settled in London, making his own way as an artist, illustrator and wood-engraver; his company eventually becoming one of the most highly regarded firms in London's publishing arena. Edward was trained by his father as a wood draughtsman, and by the age of twenty had mastered his skill and was receiving commissions.



Clearly, Edward Whymper inherited the pioneering spirit from his father and his grandfather, Nathaniel Whymper, who had established a brewery in Ipswich. Nathaniel's cousin was Sir William Whymper, a notable physician in his day, who became Surgeon-Major to the Coldstream Guards and Physician to the Duke of

THE MATTERHORN

Straddling Italy and Switzerland, the Matterhorn is unquestionably the king of the Alps, although at 4,478m (14,692 ft) it is not the tallest. It is, in fact, the sixth highest mountain in the Alps, and as part of the Pennine Alps, is the eleventh highest peak in the range, of which 32 are above 4,000m (13,123 ft). Its solitary position and symmetrical pyramid shape make it appear particularly lofty and indomitable when viewed from the north and north-east, while from the south it emerges as a menacing hulk.

From the Italian side to the south, it appears less uniform and acute, but still foreboding, dominating the scattered dwelling at its feet. So imperious was it that only a handful of Italians and Swiss who lived in its shadow, believed it could be climbed, or was worth the attempt. It was considered by many of the locals as a place where only spirits dwelt and that anyone who tried to scale it was mad and would suffer its wrath.

To the north of the Matterhorn lies the bustling Swiss town of Zermatt in the district of Visp, which is in the canton of Valais. At an elevation of 1,620m (5,310 ft), this has traditionally been, and still is, the hub and starting point for people visiting the mountain from the north. To the south lies the small Italian town of Breuil-Cervinia in the *comune* of Valtourneche, which has a town of the same name 9km (5.6 miles) further to the south. Simply referred to as 'Breil' by Whymper, it sits 2,006m (6,581 ft) above sea level, yet still enjoys a lush meadow setting.

The quickest way to travel on foot between Zermatt and Breuil-Cervinia was over the Theodul Pass, a glacier pass at 3,295m (10,810 ft) to the east of the Matterhorn. Whymper and his fellow 'tourists' relied on this ancient pass to transfer between the two towns. Few travellers today would consider taking this direct route of 19km (12 miles), and will take the 228km (141 mile) road trip instead. However, the novelty of skiing over the border between Switzerland and Italy

attracts keen skiers to the Theodul, benefitting from the cable-car points on either side.

Today, it would appear odd to hear of someone that did not consider the Matterhorn as an object of beauty, and for the mountaineering fraternity to ever think there was a time when man did not want to climb it. But this is precisely the case. The earliest shepherds and brave pilgrims considered it to be the throne of a god, or home to a demon that would hurl rocks down upon these simple people. Not until 1789 was it written about in admirable terms. Swiss botanist Horace Saussure had climbed Mont Blanc in 1787, the year following the first successful ascent, and noted of the Matterhorn: 'Its precipitous sides which give no hold to the very snows, are such as to afford no means of access.'

In 1818, Johann Gottfried Ebel's primitive guidebook was translated into English. In it the mountain has three names: Silvius, Mont Cervin and Matterhorn. The guide, which referred to it as 'one of the most splendid and wonderful obelisks in the Alps', no doubt played a major part in ushering tourism in to the area, with the affluent English arriving to actually admire or study the mountain first hand. These first 'tourists' will have seen the mountain in a way we can only imagine: peaceful, simple, isolated, magnificent.

In 1825, William Brockendon described it as 'a spectacle of indescribable grandeur', while Lord Minto, during a visit in 1830, claimed, 'It is impossible for words to convey any idea of the immensity of this pyramid, regular and symmetrical in form, as if it had been designed by an architect'.

Eminent philosopher and seasoned traveller James David Forbes went on to note, in 1841, 'the most wonderful peak in the Alps, unscaled and unscalable'. And so, like a red rag to a bull, the stage was set for men, primarily English gentry, to dream of its ascent.

Italians can take pride in knowing that the first