

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG D.Litt. (1876 - 1958)

Geoffrey Winthrop Young was the second son of Sir George Young - who was also a mountaineer. Educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge he completed his education at Jena University and Geneva becoming an accomplished linguist. Whilst at Cambridge he published anonymously [*The Roof Climbers Guide to Trinity*](#).

He was a master at Eton (1900 - 1905), a Secondary Schools Inspector (1905 - 1913), and finally (1932 - 1941) Thomas Wall Reader in Comparative Education at London University. In 1918 he married Eleanor (Len) Slingsby, the youngest daughter of William Cecil Slingsby a noted mountaineer in the Alps and Norway.



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Young was probably the greatest English Alpine Climber, with noted routes on the Zermatt Breithorn (the "Younggrat"), the west ridge of the Gspaltenhorn, on the west face of the Weisshorn, and a dangerous and rarely repeated route on the south face of the Täschhorn.

His finest rock climb was the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon. In 1911 with H O Jones he ascended the Brouillard ridge of Mont Blanc and made the first complete traverse of the west ridge of the Grandes Jorasses, and the first decent of the ridge to the Col des Hirondelles. On most of his routes he climbed with the guide Joseph Knubel of St Niklaus.

During the First World War when commanding a Friends Ambulance Unit in Italy he was severely wounded at the battle of Monte San Gabriele and lost his leg above the knee. He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded many honours for bravery, including the Order of Leopold for "exceptional courage and resource". After the war he surprised his friends by continuing to climb on a metal peg limb. He reached the summit of Monte Rosa (4634m/15200ft) at the age of 51 in 1927, and the Matterhorn (4478m/14782 ft) and the Wellenkuppe in 1928. His last big ascent with his old guide Knubel was the Zinal Rothorn in 1935.

His meets at Pen y Pass at the head of the Llanberis Pass, began in 1903 and continued until the 1930's. He spent every Easter, except for his war years, at Pen y Pass from the earliest of his visits until 1941. Interestingly his early mountaineering practice with his artificial leg was in North Wales, when he must have been based at Pen y Pass. He published a collection of his despatches as a war correspondent for the Daily News under the title of *From the Trenches* in 1914, and after the war the instructional book *Mountain Craft* (1920, running for many editions through to the 1950s), following this with a description of his great routes in *On High Hills* (1927). His *Collected Poems*, which were the product of three earlier books of poetry, *Wind and Hill*, *Freedom* and *April and Rain*, appeared in 1936. Finally he published an account of his later life and his one legged climbs in *Mountains of a Difference* in 1952. He was President of the Alpine Club from 1941 -1944, having been a member since 1900.



At Pen Y Pass - he is third right back row.

For further information the reader is advised to obtain **GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG**

by Alan Hankinson

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