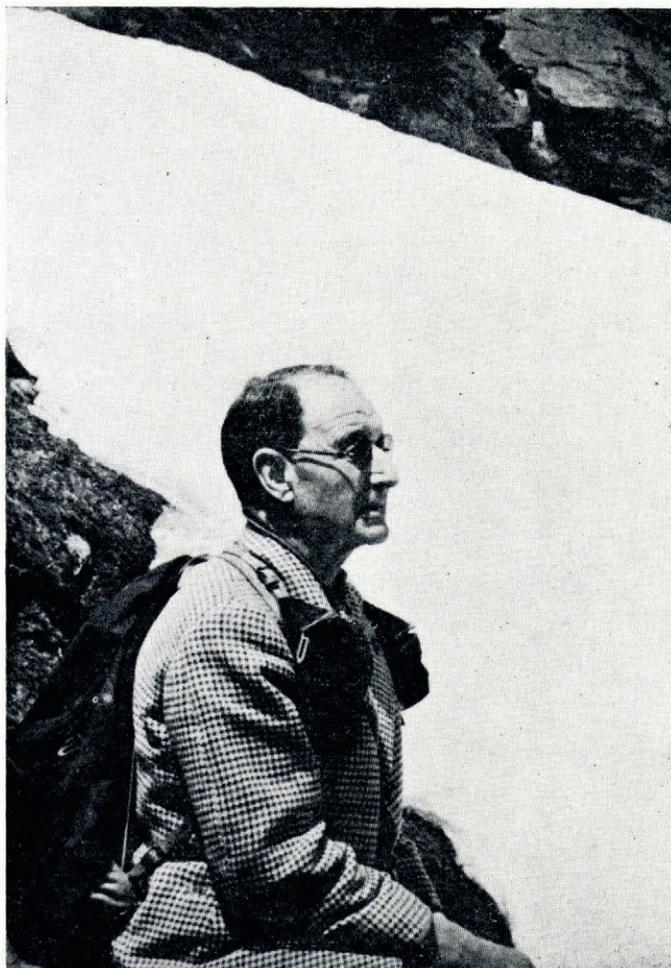


OBITUARY



GERALD SELIGMAN — 1886–1973

GERALD SELIGMAN, Founder of the International Glaciological Society and of the *Journal of Glaciology* died on 21 February 1973 after a long illness. In recent years failing health had forced him to retire from active work, but even after retiring from the Editorship in 1968, he retained a great interest in the subject, the Society and the *Journal*, while finding his enforced inactivity most frustrating to his active spirit.

Gerald Seligman was born on 26 March 1886 at Clapham Park, London, and was educated at Harrow School and the South-Eastern Agricultural College at Wye in Kent, now Wye College of the University of London. While there he became particularly interested in geology and chemistry, and decided to study pure science, reading the Natural Sciences Tripos at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1908.

Shortly afterwards he joined his brother, Dr Richard J. S. Seligman, in his newly founded company Aluminium Plant and Vessel, which manufactures specialized process plant and containers for the chemical engineering and brewing industries, and for the next twenty-two years was involved in the building up of this company, interrupted by the first World War, during which he saw service at home and East Africa.

However, from an early age he had been moved by the splendour of the mountains, and spent nearly all his holidays in the Alps or in Norway touring the mountains on ski. He joined the newly formed Ski Club of Great Britain in 1907, and was elected to its committee in 1921. He edited that Club's news bulletin, *Ski Notes and Queries*, and under his editorship it expanded from a small leaflet to a substantial journal. He became Vice-President of the Club in 1925 and President in 1927. He was awarded the Club's Pery Medal in 1933 and was elected an Honorary Member in 1936. He was elected a member of the Alpine Club in 1934.

Throughout this period of his life, Seligman's interest in snow had been changing from that of a skier and Alpinist to that based on a scientific study of snow. He was never particularly interested in downhill skiing and ski racing, preferring the older tradition of ski mountaineering, and the essentially practical problems of safe travel in snow fields led him to a more detailed study of snow structure and the natural history of snow and ice. In 1931, apart from retaining his Directorship in Aluminium Plant and Vessel, he resigned from business to devote himself full-time to his scientific work, and the result was an increasing flow of papers to the *British Ski Year Book* and elsewhere. His work on snow was consolidated when he spent a year at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge writing his influential book *Snow structure and ski fields*, published in 1936 and reprinted in 1962.

This work on snow inspired Seligman to think about the metamorphosis from snow to glacier ice, and in 1936 he decided to organize a field expedition to study this process on the Jungfrauoch, and in the next two years he led parties there, among the members being J. D. Bernal, F. P. Bowden, M. F. Perutz, T. P. Hughes and H. Bader. As a result of this expedition, many important papers were published on this fundamental aspect of glaciology, and the expedition was in many ways an example of what was to become the new style of glaciological research.

Shortly before the first party went to the Jungfrauoch, Dr J. E. Church, then President of the International Commission of Snow, invited Seligman to form a British group for those with an interest in snow and ice as part of the general plans to expand the work of the Commission to become a Commission of Snow and Ice with a wider subject field and with more lively activity between triennial assemblies, and so the Association for the study of Snow and Ice was founded in 1936, with Seligman as President, and with this impetus behind it, the little group began to produce in 1939 a duplicated publication, *Papers and Discussions*, which recorded its proceedings and which included a bibliography of "recently published works on glaciology and kindred subjects". But this promising development was cut short by the second World War, during which Seligman served with the Meteorological Office.

The eclipse during that war of all international glaciological activity seemed to herald the end of Seligman's scientific work on snow and ice, for he wrote in a letter in the *British Ski Year Book* that his contributions might now have finished, but instead his greatest work was yet to come, for, at the end of the war, when the older established means of communication in glaciology seemed to have ceased, he sensed the need for an initiative, and, transforming the Association for the Study of Snow and Ice into the British Glaciological Society, he launched a learned journal for the subject in the *Journal of Glaciology* under an editorial committee consisting, besides himself, of Launcelot Fleming (now Dean of Windsor), Robert Moss and Brian Roberts.

He remained as President of the Society throughout its formative years, guiding it with a firm hand as it developed from its British origins into a world-wide society for all those interested in snow and ice in all its forms, until in 1962 "British" was dropped from the name

to accord with this development. In 1963 Seligman retired from the Presidency, but retained his position of Editor of the *Journal of Glaciology* for a further five years.

Meanwhile Seligman's glaciological activities were not confined to the Society and its *Journal*, for he was President of the Commission of Snow and Ice from 1951 to 1954. His contributions to glaciology were recognized by the award of the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1959 and the award of the honorary degree of Ph.D. by the University of Innsbruck in 1963. In the same year the Glaciological Society decided to institute an award for the occasional honouring of individuals of particular eminence in the field of glaciology, to call this award the Seligman Crystal, and to make the presentation of the first Seligman Crystal to Seligman himself.

Throughout this period following the founding of the Glaciological Society, Seligman devoted himself whole-heartedly to its well being and to the fostering of a real spirit of fraternity within the membership. When he moved from London to a country home of great beauty in Biddenden, Kent, that home became a well-known place to visit for many glaciologists. His study and library, from which he edited the *Journal*, saw many fruitful glaciological discussions, and his presence and permanence gave the infant society the focus it needed to establish itself as an international corporate society in its own right. The science of glaciology owes much to Gerald Seligman, who made his own massive contributions to the understanding of snow, and who then went on to found both a society and a journal which gave that subject its own means of intercommunication between workers throughout the world.

JOHN W. GLEN