

Mystery on Mt. Everest: Death at the Summit [B1]

Cento anni fa, George Mallory e Sandy Irvine tentarono di raggiungere la vetta dell'Everest. Sappiamo che morirono nel tentativo, ma riuscirono ad arrivare in cima?

In 1953 New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay were the first men to reach the [summit](#) of Mount Everest. At least that's what most people think. A hundred years ago in June 1924, British [climbers](#) George Mallory and Andrew "Sandy" Irvine also made an attempt to reach the [summit](#). Both men disappeared, but some believe they were [on their way down](#) from the top when they died. What exactly happened up there remains a mystery.

CREDENTIALS

George Mallory was a skilled and experienced climber and had taken part in two earlier British expeditions in the 1920s. Even in 1924, Mallory's team tried twice to reach the [summit](#) and failed. They were about to come home, but then Mallory decided to make [one last push](#) for the [summit](#). His choice of partner was unusual. Although he was extremely [fit](#) and strong, twenty-two-year-old Sandy Irvine was the least experienced member of the expedition.

TINY DOTS

On 7 June, Mallory and Irvine reached Camp VI, the highest camp established on Everest, and sent their porters back down to the rest of the team. At about 1pm on 8 June, Noel Odell, another expedition member, saw them "going strong for the top" on Everest's Northeast [Ridge](#). They were like [tiny black dots](#) just a few hundred metres from the [summit](#). Then [mist](#) and clouds covered them and they were never seen alive again.

SIGHTINGS

Fifty-one years later, in 1975, Chinese climber Wang Hongbao [spotted](#) the body of a climber near Camp VI. He later described it as an “old English dead” because of the old-fashioned clothes he was wearing. The body was almost certainly that of Mallory or Irvine. Wang died in an avalanche the day after he mentioned his discovery and never said where exactly the frozen corpse was located.

RECOVERY

On 1 May 1999, seventy-five years after his disappearance, a [search party](#) found the body of George Mallory at an altitude of around 8,200m and only an hour or two from the safety of camp. Decades of wind and ice had [torn away](#) most of his clothes, but had preserved his body, which was white and petrified like stone. Mallory was almost certainly the victim of a fall. He was [face down](#) on Everest’s north face with his arms above his head, as if he had tried to stop himself from [sliding downwards](#). He had one broken leg and a serious [wound](#) to the head, which probably killed him.

A PHOTOGRAPH

Mallory’s snow [goggles](#) were in his pocket — perhaps he was descending at night when he fell. He always carried a photograph of his beloved wife Ruth with him and planned to leave it at the [summit](#). This photograph [was missing](#) from his personal effects. Unfortunately there was no camera. Until either Mallory’s or Irvine’s camera is found with photographic proof, the conclusion of their expedition remains [mountaineering](#)’s greatest mystery.

Glossary

- **climbers** = scalatori
- **on their way down** = durante la discesa
- **fit** = in forma, in salute
- **Ridge** = cresta
- **tiny black dots** = piccoli punti neri
- **mist** = nebbiolina, foschia
- **torn away** = strappare
- **search party** = squadra di ricerca, squadra di soccorso
- **was missing** = mancare
- **sliding downwards** = scivolare verso il basso
- **wound** = ferita
- **summit** = cima, vetta
- **one last push** = un ultimo tentativo
- **spotted** = avvistare
- **face down** = faccia in giù
- **goggles** = occhiali
- **mountaineering** = scalata