Dear friends,

In July 2017, a group of English travellers visited the Khi-Gol (Jombolok) Volcano Field in the Eastern Sayan Mountains of Buryatia to honour the memory of the explorers, Thomas and Lucy Atkinson. Four members of the group were direct descendants of the Atkinsons, who spent almost seven years travelling in Russia and Central Asia during the period 1847-53, covering almost 65,000 kms. During their extensive travels, the Atkinsons visited parts of present-day Kazakhstan, Djungaria, Mongolia, the Altai region, Irkutsk and Lake Baikal, the Sayan Mountains and Lake Khovsgol in Mongolia, the Khinghan Mountains in Transbaikal and areas around Abakan and Minusinsk. Very few explorers spent so long travelling or covered such distances.

The exploits of the Atkinsons in the Sayan Mountains were particularly notable. They were the first Europeans to visit Lake Kara Noor and in July 1851 Thomas was probably the first European to visit the Jombolok Volcano Field. He and Lucy both wrote about their adventures in this region in their books, describing the geology of the region and the manners and customs of the local Buryat people. Thomas also painted many fine watercolours of the area, some of which are now in important public collections, including the Surikov Museum in Krasnoyarsk.

One of the aims of the visit in July 2017 was to place a plaque at the foot of the Atkinson Volcano to commemorate the fact that some of the Atkinsons’ descendants had made the difficult journey to this remote place. This was successfully accomplished and the plaque is now a permanent reminder of connections between the past and the present and also shows that the family has not forgotten the achievements of their ancestors.

Figure 1 Plaque commemorating the visit of Thomas Atkinson to Jombolok Volcano Field in July 1851
We are very grateful to Alexei V. Ivanov, Sergei G. Arzhannikov, Elena I. Demonterova, Anastasia V. Arzhannikova and Lyubov A. Orlova, the Russian geologists from the Institute of the Earth’s Crust, Siberian Branch, who published the first scientific study of the Khi-Gol (Jombolok) Volcano Field in April 2011, particularly for acknowledging the role of Thomas Atkinson in discovering this remarkable place. In their important paper, they say:

“Initial information about the volcanoes in the East Sayan Mts. was published in a local Siberian newspaper in 1858 by an English architect, Thomas Witlam Atkinson. Later, he devoted a number of pages in his extensive travel book to the same volcanoes (Atkinson 1859). In 1852, Atkinson travelled from the inhabited Oka river area, along Jom-Bolok river (referred by him as Djem-a-look river) up to Haranur lake and the Hee-Gol valley. Apparently, he was among the first visitors to the volcanoes, because the local Bouriat people had great dread of that valley, and never ascended it except by compulsion (Atkinson 1859, p.461). His report was used later by the Russian royal Peter Alekseevich Kropotkin, who was famous for both his anarchist philosophy and contributions to glaciology (see Ivanova and Markin 2008).”

In fact Atkinson travelled to Jombolok in 1851, but the other details are correct. The authors add:

“Volcanoes Kropotkin and Peretolchin were named by the Soviet Geographic Society in 1941. Volcano Stariy (“old” in Russian) was named by Obruchev and Lurye (1954). Volcanoes Treshina (“fissure” in Russian) and Ostanets (“remnants” in Russian) group were named by Yarmolyuk et al. (2003a). Volcano Medvedev was named in this paper for the first time after Marat Medvedev, whose field-book notes were used by us to find the location of this practically unknown volcano. The name Atkinson is given to a previously unnamed volcano to restore the historical fairness.”

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So, it is our understanding that “to restore the historical fairness” the volcano next to the Peretolchin Volcano is now officially named as Atkinson Volcano. For this we are very grateful and also delighted.

On the group’s return journey from this region, one of the party, Nick Fielding, who is the biographer of Thomas and Lucy Atkinson, met with Vladimir Chernikov of the Russian Geographical Society and his colleague Sergei Izoupov. They were cycling from Krasnoyarsk to the Jombolok Volcano Field to place a plaque commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of Peter Kropotkin’s article *A Trip to the Oka Guard Post*, (Memoirs of the Russian Geographical Society, Siberian Division, book 9–10).

Mr Chernikov also said that he was planning to apply to the Russian Geographical Society to name one of the peaks in the Jombolok region after Kropotkin. Mr Fielding suggested that it would be appropriate if a peak in this region could also be named after Thomas Atkinson, who did so much to explore this area and to publicise its existence. Very kindly, Mr Chernikov offered to assist in making this happen.

And this is why we are now writing to you. Mr Chernikov has located a specific mountain peak in the Jombolok region that is yet to be named. It is located at the top of the Jombolok River Valley and almost opposite the entrance to the Khi-Gol Volcano Field, which is a perfect position. Thomas and Lucy Atkinson must have noticed this prominent peak during their travels in the region.

![Map of Peak Atkinson](image)

**Figure 3 Proposal for naming of Peak Atkinson**

We are now appealing to you to allow this peak to be named ‘Peak Atkinson’ in honour of the achievements of both Thomas and Lucy Atkinson, whose contribution to the exploration of Siberia is

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2 In this publication Kropotkin mentions Thomas Atkinson twice. He writes “Об этих водопадах говорил уже Аткинсон, ездивший из Окинского караула на Хар-Нур и к кратеру в вершинах Джунбулака. Мне указали недавно на выписку из сочинения Аткинсона, переведенную в Иркутских Губернских Ведомостях, где Аткинсон рассказывает про водопады на Джунбулаке (Джемалуке) и полагает высоту водопада в 86 ф. и, как водится, очень картинно рассказывает про этот водопад, потом про переправу через Оку и т.д. См. Иркутские Губернские Ведомости. 1858. № 19.”
unequalled by any foreigner. Thomas and Lucy Atkinson, of course, had direct connections with General MN Muravyev-Vilensky, who at the time of their travels was a founder member and Vice-President of your predecessor organisation, the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Lucy worked as a governess for his daughter, Sophie, and Thomas met him on many occasions in St Petersburg when he was seeking permission to travel in Siberia.

We hope you will look on this request favourably.

With best wishes,

Nick Fielding – Biographer of Thomas and Lucy Atkinson, Oxford, UK.

There follows 33 signatories to the letter, all of whom are direct descendants of Thomas and Lucy Atkinson. (I have removed them from this letter to protect their privacy).