

NEW ZEALAND NOTES

BY NORMAN HARDIE

IN the normal temperamental weather of this Pacific area a large number of climbs were made during last season. Several notable climbs were by visitors, while on the other hand, many New Zealanders completed major overseas climbs.

Two Americans, John Evans and Jeff Foott, spent the summer in Antarctica, and on the way home they made a new route on Mitre Peak. This rock mountain rises 7,000 ft. from the main tourist sound, deep in the complicated rain-soaked area of Fiordland. During the four days of their climb ten inches of rain fell at the hotel eight miles away. On the lower slopes they were frequently belaying over tree trunks and large tufts of grass, incredible but true in this area of rain-drenched precipices. Eventually clear of trees, they encountered steep, firm rock with good handholds. This area is the only region which has good granite and big mountains. Unfortunately the weather is generally so appalling that few climbers visit it, knowing they are likely to get a major share of the 300 inches of annual rainfall.

For a few days a Japanese flag stood in isolation on the summit of Mount Cook. This was the first completed ascent by a Japanese party. Mount Cook was climbed by several orthodox routes by other parties. One route out of the ordinary was a South ridge ascent and Linda descent.

The East ridge of Mount Sefton, the scene of several early 'classics', has still been climbed a total of only ten times. A surprising new route was established up the buttresses of the North, or Copland, face. Here the rock proved to be more reliable than the notoriously fragile argillites which crumble under a boot on the lower sections of the East ridge.

Several New Zealanders and Australians were in the party which Warwick Deacock led to Heard Island in the South Indian Ocean. This very exposed volcano attracts incredible weather and it has no safe anchorage. The mountain was climbed, their equipment was lost and every one came back converted to ocean sailing, especially when skippered by H. W. Tilman. On the subject of sailing, David Lewis, a long absent member of the New Zealand Alpine Club, is gradually making westward progress from Valparaiso. He had a medical practice for many years in London and is well known for many crossings of the Atlantic.

Sir Edmund Hillary made many further forward steps in a very

ambitious Sherpa aid scheme. An airstrip, two bridges and three schools were built, and the very formidable Thamserku climbed. Hillary's latest book, *Schoolhouse in the Clouds*, about a previous expedition, states the aid case very clearly. He is a sincere believer in schemes where the receiver must do half the work, and all structures are of materials which the local residents can maintain.

New Zealand's first famous guide, Peter Graham, died three years ago, when he had partly written an autobiography. His family and two experienced writers have worked on his material and a noteworthy book has been published. It is a major contribution to a period when no mountaineering journals were being published in this land.

New Zealand Notes should not be closed without mentioning two other visitors. Dick Sykes did a large number of major climbs in a long tour while travelling from Canberra to England. Viscount Glentworth flew in for two days in search of mountains. He flew among them on one day and then climbed Mount Rolleston with Sykes, Brian Hearfield and the writer.