

NEW ZEALAND NOTES, 1950-1951

BY DAVID HALL

THIS season has been extremely fruitful, for the weather has been unusually co-operative, even if actual conditions were not always so kind. The season seemed about two months ahead of timetable, so that parties found in January the sort of climbing they might have expected to encounter in March—wide crevasses and broken icefalls, bare ice and snow-free rocks.

I am indebted to L. Cleveland, S. Conway, G. C. N. Johnson, and J. D. Pascoe for kindly passing on to me much valuable information. If a great deal is left out of this account, it is because so much has a strong claim to be in.

In December 1950 Andrew Anderson achieved the well-earned honour of being the first to complete the ascent of all the peaks in our mountains over 10,000 ft. in height. With L. V. Bryant he climbed the west peak of Elie de Beaumont from Elie itself, their second ascent of it in two days. (It is rather controversial whether this peak is rightly named Wilczek: the original summit bearing that name is a lower peak in the nearby Maximilian Range.) Anderson regards this narrow horizontal crest along the high spine of Elie de Beaumont as 'a test of nerve and balance,' indeed the 'most exacting problem' he has ever faced; they spent seven hours on this portion of the climb. A few days later Anderson and Gilbert Natusch climbed Vancouver and Dampier by substantially the Barley-Forsyth route of last season. They did not reach the top until 4 P.M. and spent a night out on some rocks above the Linda.

Mrs. H. Ashurst (well known already as June Mulvay) and the guide H. Ayres climbed Dampier by the older route from the head of the Linda, then went on down the difficult ridge to David's Dome, retraced their steps and reascended Dampier to return to the Haast Hut in one long strenuous day.

From the Pioneer Bivouac, J. N. Hamilton, J. Lange, and L. Cleveland traversed Lendenfeldt (7 A.M.), Tasman (10 A.M.) and Torres (6 P.M.) ending their 21½-hour day in a snow cave previously dug on Katie's Col. They had to make two double-rope descents in negotiating the Tasman-Torres col, and a series of steep snow towers between the col and the top of Torres took delicate handling. The same party made the second ascent of the west (pioneer) ridge of Douglas and found that in the years since Dr. Teichlemann first passed that way the ridge had subsided below the summit and left a vertical step, which they turned in two hours' exacting work in an icy couloir of the south-west face. They were on the peak at 5 P.M. and descended it by the usual Glacier Peak route. This party used ski for all their movements on the Fox névé, an

example others visiting that area over Christmas-New Year might find it profitable to follow.

In February 1951 B. S. Gillies and the guide H. Ayres made the first traverse of the unclimbed ridge connecting Hamilton and Malte Brun, after a double traverse earlier of Hamilton by way of reconnaissance. They found a steep-sided gut troublesome and left a rope hanging from it in case of a return the same way; soon after passing this a difficult exposed slab led on to easier ground and a steady rise to Malte Brun. The whole traverse took them 15 hours.

The same party, accompanied by a second rope, M. Bishop and Miss M. Matthews, shortly afterwards climbed Mount Cook by Earle's route (last climbed in 1936). This had been attempted earlier in the season by N. E. Odell's party.

As usual, nourishing western ambitions, H. E. Riddiford, E. Cotter, W. B. Beaven, W. G. Lowe, and E. P. Hillary in late December 1950 took the long way round to reach the Callery from the Tasman Glacier. They crossed Tasman Saddle into the Murchison, then Whymper Saddle into the Wateria and thence found a new high pass to take them across the Maximilian Range into their land of heart's desire. They climbed a virgin rock peak on the range, which they reascended a few days later when (without Beaven, who had developed chicken pox) they made, on January 2, 1951, the first ascent, in 14 hours, of the Maximilian Range ridge of Elie de Beaumont. On the summit the party divided, Lowe and Hillary (also sickening for chicken pox) traversing Walter to the Malte Brun Hut, while Riddiford and Cotter descended into the Spencer and a night out. They returned next day to Beaven at their camp at the Burton-Callery junction and went out, three men carrying five men's gear, by the Tataré Valley to the Franz Josef. Cotter and Riddiford crossed back with H. Ayres over Pioneer Pass to the Haast Hut whence they climbed Mount Cook.

The hopes and good wishes of all New Zealand mountaineers accompany Riddiford, Cotter, Lowe, and Hillary in their present expedition to the Garwhal Himalaya.

A party (Colin Todd, Alan Goodyear, and B. Bowden), whose peregrinations ranged from Tasman Saddle to the Hopkins, in February 1951 climbed Haidinger by way of Ena's Dome.

In January 1951 A. C. Dick and J. O. F. Hamilton climbed Hopkins, reaching the south-east ridge (the route of the first ascent) from the Hopkins Valley side.

From the Landsborough in the same month R. J. Slater, A. McNaught and J. V. McNulty climbed Dechen and made the first ascent of Marchant.

In December 1950 and January 1951 a vigorous party (Miss B. Matthews, G. J. McCallum, A. Cunningham, and H. T. Barcham) journeyed from the Wilkin to the west branch of the Matukituki, by way of Newland Pass, Drake's River (a Waiatoto tributary, probably not previously traversed) and much tangled country that might be considered a sufficient feat to cross at all. They found it possible

(sometimes dividing their forces to assail different objectives) to garnish their high-level route with a galaxy of first ascents, including the north and middle peaks of Alba, Trident, and Dispute in the virgin Selbourne Range, Pegasus, Clio, Sombre and Rosy, Helen, Fingal's Head, and Cornerpost. Their efforts embraced practically every peak in the Shipowner Range, until recently a shrine of inaccessibility. They included the ascent of Aspiring by the south-west ridge in a prodigious outpouring of energy which took them on to more than twenty-five summits.

Aspiring received a good deal of attention this season, several parties traversing it after climbing the classic south-west ridge. One party (N. O'Neill, M. Pemberton, and D. W. Peacock) secured what may be deemed a moral victory over the Coxcomb Ridge. In January 1951 they scaled its bastions of crumbling rock to within 150 ft. of the top, retired down it, and spent a night out. A few days later O'Neill and Peacock climbed the south-west ridge and then could see how tantalisingly close they had been to a complete solution of an old problem.

The Otago section of the New Zealand Alpine Club spent a virtuous Christmas-New Year building the Esquilant Bivouac on Wright's Col in the Earnslaw group. The materials were dropped by air and mostly landed in fit condition to be used. The hut builders did not go home altogether empty-handed. Among other climbs, I. Bagley and B. J. Wilkins traversed Sir William (ascent by a new route), traversed from the west to the east peak of Earnslaw and climbed Pluto from Pluto Col (another new route), while C. M. Todd and J. Carruthers traversed Earnslaw east to west.

The Dart-Rees area attracted as usual its adherents. From the Whitburn, R. Aitken, G. Sweet, L. Dudding, and D. Aimer made the first ascent of Gamma in the Snowdrift Range.

Tutoko's difficult unclimbed south ridge fell in January 1951 to R. Rodda, J. Ede, G. Ellis, and G. Longbottom, who negotiated first a difficult approach through bush and bluffs to establish a suitable high camp. Their very exacting climb, even from this eyrie, took 23 hours. Darkness overtook them, as at one point they had to wait for the sun to leave an area swept by frequent stonefall. Tutoko, one of those inaccessible peaks whose reputation has not been cheapened by greater familiarity, had been climbed from Stickup Creek in December 1950 by M. Bishop, R. E. Offer, and Miss M. Matthews, a member of a family whose doings are chronicled elsewhere in these notes.

Another important peak climbed this year by a new ridge was D'Archiac. J. Pattle, B. McClelland, S. Conway, J. Sampson, and T. James in February 1951 spent four hours going through the jumble of the South Forbes icefall to the névé above, where they camped. Next day they climbed in 12 hours the delicate unstable rock of the south ridge, descended by the north-east ridge and—after a night out—were back at their camp 31 hours after setting out. They then traversed Coates to Twilight Pass. In March R. Johnson and M. Nelson made a fast ascent of D'Archiac (13½ hours up and down) by climbing the

South Forbes icefall and then following the Pattle-Conway party's route of descent. John Rogers and I had cast longing eyes on these attractive possibilities in December 1950 from Coates. From the Eric Stream bivouac we made a first ascent of a small peak on the Divide between Dennistoun's pass and Hidden Col.

In January 1951 McClure was traversed by J. Lanigan, W. Kenney, J. Clay, and W. Gibson who ascended the steep, shattered, unclimbed ridge from Terra Nova Pass. This party also climbed Outram.

In December S. Conway's party climbed a new peak in the Adams Range (also Baker and Kensington) in the course of a crossing by Perth Col from the Agnes to the Wataria.

In March 1951, a large party (G. McCallum, Miss B. and M. Matthews, T. Barcham, A. Cunningham, A. Witten Hannah, M. Bishop, and R. E. Offer), climbing in various ropes until the final rock-step, climbed Evans from the Bracken Snowfield in 17 hours, a time that would have been bettered by a smaller party. The same group (and also Miss E. Matthews and D. Cracknell) climbed Whitcombe by a variety of routes, Bishop and Witten Hannah making the first ascent of a peak to south-west of the High Peak from the Essex névé.

The tragic death in March in a climbing accident above the Fox Glacier of Dennis W. Howe, an Englishman who had come to live here after the war, robbed us of a companion from whom we had already gained much.

The New Zealand Alpine Club celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of its original foundation in a well-attended gathering at the Hermitage over the King's Birthday week-end. We have been provided with another interesting link with the past by the publication of *Beyond the Southern Lakes*, an account prepared from her father's diaries by his daughter, Mrs. Crozier, of the explorations in the Sounds country of the late W. G. Grave and his parties. Their journeys were epics of toughness and endurance.

Professor N. E. Odell's lectures on mountaineering topics have excited much interest and been a most valuable stimulus. It is an excellent moment for him to be here to tell us of his memorable experiences, as it is perhaps not too presumptuous to think that there is today an increasing number of young climbers coming on here who have acquired the technical competence to take full advantage of the rare bounties of our grudging mountain weather. The interruption of the war years seems now to have been made up for and we like to think that those who are no longer with us would wish the oncoming generation the successes they are coming to enjoy.