

EXPEDITIONS

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE ANTARCTIC. In the course of their field activities, survey and geological parties of the New Zealand party of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition operating in the mountain chain west of McMurdo Sound between the Barne and Mawson Glaciers climbed about forty mountains varying in height between 3,000 and 10,000 ft. The usual height to be climbed from camp to summit was 2,000–4,000 ft. Very few of these mountains were of any mountaineering interest, though some gave practice with axe and crampons, but all had the redeeming feature of a wide summit view of unexplored ranges.

Two major climbs were carried out. In February 1957, B. Gunn, A. Heine and G. Warren climbed Mt. Harmsworth (9,644 ft.¹) in the Worcester Range, direct from a camp on the Skelton Glacier. Their route lay over Boot Hill and up the East ridge. The height to be gained was 8,000–9,000 ft. and the horizontal distance was considerable. This 'tour de force' took them 26 hours.

Eleven months later, on January 26, 1958, Gunn and I climbed Mt. Huggins (12,870 ft.¹). This peak is the southernmost of the Royal Society Range. It is also the finest as viewed from the west where complicated snow-fields flank the other peaks of this range. There are many possible routes up this mountain and in our choice we were influenced by the fact that we would have to leave our dog teams unattended. We therefore chose the quickest and easiest. This lay up the deep trench-like glacier that cuts into the northern flanks of the mountain from the west. We left the dogs at the foot of this glacier at about 5,000 ft. and established a light camp near the head of the glacier at about 8,000 ft. We were surprised to find that this was a windless area of deep snow. (In this part of the Antarctic hard, wind-blown snow is usual.) The conditions were those of the Alps in mid winter. From this camp a steep climb took us to the broad upper slopes of the mountain from which we gained the easy North ridge (rock) which led to the summit. The ascent from camp took eight hours.

Conditions and future possibilities, etc. Snow conditions in this part of the Antarctic are usually excellent, hard, wind-blown snow, perfect for crampons, being usual. I never saw any sign of snow avalanches. Near the plateau edge it is usually too cold for difficult rock climbing (gloves being necessary all the time), but I did enjoy one afternoon's rock climbing at about 6,000 ft. near the plateau when it was amply

¹ The heights of Mt. Harmsworth and Huggins will probably be reduced by about 600 ft. by recent surveys.

warm enough to do without gloves or anorak. Lower down and nearer the coast it should be possible to do good rock climbing in late December and January, the warmest period. There are a number of shapely rock peaks, generally of Beacon Sandstone, bordering the Taylor Glacier, and a few miles to the north, north of the Wright Valley, are some strange rock towers. Any of these peaks may prove very difficult to climb, though they are unlikely to give good free climbing as the Sandstone tends to be either sheer and holdless or easy.

Undoubtedly the most attractive region for a mountaineer near McMurdo Sound is the Eastern face of the Royal Society Range. The Blue Glacier gives easy access to the northern half of this mountain scarp which is miles in extent and about 8,000 ft. high from glacier to summit. Good climbing can unquestionably be done here. Mt. Lister (13,353 ft.) the highest peak in the range is an obvious first choice. The southern half of this scarp rises from a desolate rocky cirque with small glaciers, under Mt. Huggins. It is more difficult of access.

Further north at Cape Hallett (Lat. 72 S, approx.) there seems to be an even finer field for mountaineers. The glaciation is noticeably heavier than around McMurdo Sound and some very fine peaks of up to 9,000 ft. rise straight out of the water. Mt. Sabine, in particular, deserves attention.

F. R. BROOKE.

HIDDEN PEAK, 1958. On July 4, 1958, two Americans made the first ascent of Gasherbrum I (Hidden Peak) in the Baltoro region. Hidden Peak² (26,470 ft.) is the first 8,000-metre peak (8,068 metres) to be climbed by an American party.

The 1958 American Karakoram Expedition, which consisted of eight Americans and two Pakistani Army officers, left Skardu on May 21. A temporary base camp on the Upper Baltoro was established by June 10, in spite of rather heavy snow which was encountered beyond Urdukas. Following several days' reconnaissance of the South Gasherbrum glacier, an attack on the Ertl-Roche (south) ridge was begun. Camp I was established at the base of this ridge (18,000 ft.). The route between Camp I and Camp II (21,000 ft.) was over steep snow which required approximately 3,000 ft. of fixed rope. Above Camp II, the arête became very narrow and corniced for several hundred yards and finally led to Camp III (22,000 ft.) at the top of a long steep ice dome. Camp IV was located 1,000 yds. beyond Camp III at the same

² Gasherbrum I is said to have been named 'Hidden Peak' by Sir Martin Conway, because of its position behind the ranges. Although the entire mountain can only be seen from the vicinity of Golden Throne, a portion of the summit is visible from the lower Baltoro glacier. According to Balti natives, Gasherbrum means 'Beautiful Mountain' (Masherbrum means 'High Mountain').

altitude and at the point where the ridge joined the vast snow 'plateau' on the south slope of Gasherbrum I. At Camp IV the party experienced four days of snow and bad weather, but on July 3, was able to proceed several miles through deep snow and established Camp V at an altitude of 23,500 ft.

On the following day, Andrew J. Kauffman and Peter K. Schoening climbed through heavy snow, first to the Hidden Sud—Hidden Peak Col at approximately 24,500 ft. and thence across the cirque of Gasherbrum's west glacier to the summit pyramid which consisted of 2,000 ft. of steep snow climbing. The summit was reached at 3 P.M. on July 4, America's Independence Day. Above the high camp, the assault party used oxygen at between two and four litres per minute. The equipment was of the open-circuit variety, similar to that used by the Swiss Everest Expedition. The final assault took a total of 15 hours, and it is certain that such a long summit climb, in heavy snow, would have been impossible without the use of oxygen.

Because of radio reports of an approaching monsoon (which did not arrive) the support party, consisting of Robert Swift, Nicholas B. Clinch and Dr. Thomas O. Nevison did not make a second attempt on the summit. One member, Thomas McCormack, was stricken with pneumonia at 21,000 ft., but fortunately was treated early and recovered satisfactorily. Other expedition members were Gilbert Roberts and Richard Irvin. In addition to the American members, the expedition included two Pakistani Army officers and six Balti high-altitude porters. The American base camp was located within yards of that of the Italian Gasherbrum IV expedition.

THOMAS O. NEVISON.

BREITHORN, by the Young Grat (Klein Triftje). August 18, 1958. T. A. H. Peacocke with Arthur Lochmatter.

The party left the Gandegg at 02.30 hours in rather doubtful weather. Some stars were shining, but thick clouds were rolling up from Italy. The usual route across the Klein Matterhorn and Breithorn glaciers was followed and the col at the start of the ridge was reached at 05.50 hours. The weather was cloudy but no worse than at 02.30 hours, so the party started up the ridge at 06.15 hours. The ridge proved to be in excellent condition. Only occasionally was it necessary to cut steps in ice. The snow was firm. The rocks of the Grand Gendarme were practically free from snow and the condition of the upper ridge was similar to the lower. The ice traverse was made some 30 ft. below the final rocks. There was 2 in. of good snow on the ice and hand holds could easily be cut in this. There was sufficient depth of snow on the ridge to obtain a firm axe belay for the leader while crossing. Using a 35-metre rope the leader could get to a firm stance on the rocks to

safeguard the second. From here a short ice-slope led to the ridge at 09.30 hours. The actual time on the ridge was $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours, including halts for photography. No pitons of any sort were needed. The party was helped by traces of a previous party. Owing to worsening weather and the imminence of storm the party descended at once in very thick mist on the far side and experienced considerable difficulty in route finding across the Breithorn plateau. This is a notoriously dangerous place in bad weather. The Gandegg was reached at 13.45 hours after a $\frac{3}{4}$ -hour halt at the Testa Grigia. The storm burst at 14.00 hours.

Owing to the heavy snowfalls in the spring the ridge this year was in very good condition. In certain circumstances occasioned by a very dry year the traverse can be on ice which is too thin to cut proper steps. In this case it would either be necessary to crampon across, which on a slope of 55 degrees is hazardous, or climb the upper rocks which are very difficult. It should be noted that a large rock flake belay exists immediately below the upper rocks at the top of the snow ridge.

T. A. H. PEACOCKE.

THE WEST FACE OF THE PETITES JORASSES. July 30–31, C. Bonington and R. Wathen; July 31–August 1, J. Brown, Don Whillans, and 'Mortimer' (Joe Smith). 700 metres.

We approached this climb in some trepidation, since it had the reputation of being as hard as any route done in the Alps in the last five years. We found it, in fact, to be a delightful free climb on clean rock, absent from objective dangers, and well suited to the skill and taste of any normal British VS party—just the sort of thing we get at home, only longer. Definitely not the hardest climb hereabouts, though one of the finest.

Route description. One hour from the old Leschaux hut to the highest snow below the bergschrund, at the foot of a 200-metre *dièdre*. Ascend this *dièdre* to within about 50 ft. of the enclosing roof (pitches of V-sup. and IV, steep at first, easing later; two pegs for belays). Now leave the *dièdre* and work up right to the arête (V and VI). Move up right across terraces to shallow couloir. Exit by wet chimney and traverse back left one rope-length over top of the overhang enclosing the primary *dièdre*. Go straight up two rope-lengths in crack-cum-couloir, which steepens into the crux of the climb.

The crux consists of two pitches—a long crack (VI) followed by an overhang (V-sup., though supposed to be A₃). There are two possible lines in the crack: straight up, which is hard, or the original line, which entails exiting left on to a line of pegs. Both lines converge on the overhang, which has very good finishing holds. We climbed this free, without sack-hauling. (The only explanation for the grading of 'A₃' given it by the first ascensionists is that the cracks are not suitable

for pitons and to climb it artificially is indeed a formidable undertaking. Ironmongery does not always make things easier.)

The difficulties now ease slightly. Traverse up a few pitches left to the large square ice-patch on the North-west face. From the top right-hand corner of the ice (which in good years can be by-passed by the rock on the right), return to the West face by traversing one rope-length horizontally right, to arrive at a good bivouac site in the chimney above.

From the chimney, move up slightly left in cracks for about two rope-lengths (V), keeping a good look-out for a traverse line (peg) which breaks off right (horizontally for one rope-length, IV, with a slab of VI). Ascend corner on right (V), then easily for a few rope-lengths (III and IV), till final slabs (V) lead to summit ridge.

Both parties started the attack late (about 8 A.M., the first party owing to bad weather earlier in the morning, the second because of a sick fourth man who had to be dropped). Bonington and Wathen reached the bivouac chimney at 7.30 P.M. on the first day, and pushed on to the summit in four hours' climbing next day. Brown, Whillans and 'Mortimer' missed the route at the ice-patch (apparently owing to some misunderstandings with the French language) and made their own finish up the North face, bivouacking on the summit. Bonington and Wathen descended by abseils and scrambling (loose rock) to the Frébouze glacier, and thence to Italy. Brown and party abseiled back down the face to the Leschaux glacier.

Tools : a rope for climbing and another for sack-hauling, bivouac equipment, peg hammers, and a minimum of pegs and karabiners.

Delightful outlook on to the North face of the Grandes Jorasses, with impressive side-views of the Walker spur. One of the wildest and most beautiful cwms in all the Alps.

R. J. WATHEN.

AIGUILLE DE BLAITIÈRE, West face, Brown-Whillans route. T. Jones, R. Smith. Third ascent; the second, by R. Gervais and R. de Vivie, used a different exit.

AIGUILLE DU CHARDONNET, Forbes arête. G. J. Fraser and E. D. G. Langmuir ; S. G. McH. Clark and party ; R. J. Wathen, M. Bicknell, R. Hargreaves and other members of C.U.M.C.

AIGUILLE DU FOU, South-west ridge, August 3-4. S. G. McH. Clark, M. F. Gravina, Miss M. Baldwin.

AIGUILLE DU GÉANT, South face. M. F. Gravina, Miss M. Baldwin.

AIGUILLE DU MIDI, Route Rébuffat, August 2. G. J. Fraser, E. D. G. Langmuir. The party took 9 hours, but thought this slow ; it was their

first climb of the season. 'The first half of the climb is excellent, mixed free and artificial, but the line and climbing both deteriorate in the second half.'

AIGUILLE DU PEIGNE, North ridge, July 26. D. Whillans, C. Bonington.

AIGUILLE DU ROC, Roc-Grépon traverse, August 4. G. J. Fraser, E. D. G. Langmuir. 12 hours from Envers des Aiguilles to Grépon summit.

AIGUILLE PURTSCHELLER, West face, August 11. G. J. Fraser, J. Cole. 4½ hours, Albert I hut to summit; 2½ hours on the face.

EIGER, North face, August 5-6. Diemberger and Stephan, two Austrian students.

GRAND CAPUCIN, East face. This climb is described as 'not terribly serious now it is fully pegged'. August 2: C. Bonington, R. J. Wathen; August 6: D. Whillans, D. Gray; August 14: G. J. Fraser, E. D. G. Langmuir; 'took 12 hours on the face and bivouacked on the descent.'

GRANDES JORASSES, North face. The Walker Spur has been climbed by four parties this season. A new route, to the Pointe Marguerite, was done by Jean Couzy and R. Demaison on August 5-6.

MONT BLANC, 'OLD' BRENVA. M. F. Gravina, Miss M. Baldwin. A storm necessitated a bivouac in a snow-hole at the top.

MONT MAUDIT, Frontier ridge. August 10. S. G. McH. Clark, C. Bonington.

PETIT CLOCHER DU PORTALET, North-east face. First ascent, July. M. Vaucher and Italo Gamboni.

PETIT DRU, West face. R. Smith, 'Mortimer'.

PETIT DRU, South-west pillar, Bonatti route. July 19-22. Walter Philip and another Austrian climber, D. Whillans and P. Ross, C. Bonington and H. MacInnes.

BRITISH EXPEDITION TO THE CAUCASUS. A party of nine members, including six members of the Alpine Club, spent approximately four weeks in the Central Caucasus during July: they were the first group from any country in the free world to receive permission to do so since an Oxford party in 1937. The party consisted of: Sir John Hunt, Alan Blackshaw, George Band, Derek Bull, David Thomas, Christopher Brasher, John Neill, Michael Harris, Ralph Jones.

The party was granted the privilege, unique in the Soviet Union, of being free to climb in the regions of its own choice, as well as choosing its own climbs. During the first half of their stay, they were based on a permanent camp (Spartak Base) administered by the Union of Co-operative Workers, situated near the junction of the Shkhelda³ and Baksan rivers, adjacent to Ushba and Elbruz. The main purpose of this part of the programme was to train and prepare for later ascents from the Bezingi Glacier, further to the east. Unfortunately, the weather was very bad throughout this period, but ascents were made of Pic Kavkaz (4,048 m.) and Pic Shchurovsky (4,200 m.).

With provisions for eight days, a base was established at over 4,000 m. on the plateau beneath the northern peak of Ushba, after ascending the difficult Ushba Icefall. The group planned to traverse Ushba from both north and south ; but snow fell almost continuously from July 7 until 12. By the morning of July 11 more than a metre of fresh snow had fallen on the Ushba Plateau, and the bad weather continued, making any attempt on the mountain out of the question. This marked the end of the first half of the programme.

The party then moved to the Bezingi region, where a base camp was set up at 2,300 m. on July 14, adjacent to two large Russian camps, near the snout of the Bezingi Glacier and at the junction of Bezingi and Mishirgi streams. In the following twelve days the group divided, and successful climbs were made, as follows :

(a) *July 15-20.* Third ascent of Shkara (5,200 m.) via the North Buttress (Müller Route) by Band, Bull, Harris, Kutsovski.

The second ascent of this route, graded 5A by the Russians, was made by a Russian group led by Vitali Abalakov.

(b) *July 15-19.* Second ascent of the Bezingi Wall via the Schwarzgruber rib on Jangi Tau (5,051 m.) by Blackshaw, Hunt, Jones, Brasher.

The party reached a point 300 ft. below the summit ridge, and approximately 700 ft. below the summit of Jangi Tau. Here, having climbed the rib and with no further technical difficulties ahead of them, they decided to discontinue the ascent owing to the dangerous condition of the snow. They accordingly descended by the same route, with a further bivouac on the way down. This route is considered to be 4B/5A by the Russians.

(c) *July 15-18.* Ascent of Gestola (4,859 m.) by Neill and Gippenreuter. Thomas accompanied this party but stopped below the final peak.

(d) *July 22-27.* First ascent of Dych Tau (5,198 m.) via the South Buttress, leading directly to the East Peak, by Band and Harris.

³ Pronounce Shi-elda.

This party then traversed the main summit, descending by the North ridge. This route would appear to merit a grading of 5B, the highest Russian grading.

An attempt on Dych Tau via the Mummery route (S.W. ridge) by Hunt, Blackshaw, Gippenreuter and Brasher during the same period as the above first ascent, was abandoned owing to the indisposition of a member of this party, above the Red Wall, at approximately 4,500 m.

Throughout their stay, the group enjoyed excellent co-operation and generous hospitality from Soviet mountaineers; very cordial relations were established with all concerned. Useful discussions took place about mountaineering methods and equipment. Soviet climbers accompanied the members of the British party, on the climbs from Spartak Camp, and on certain of the climbs from the Bezingi Glacier.

JOHN HUNT.

THE SECOND ASCENT OF MT. FAIRWEATHER.—Mt. Fairweather, 15,300 ft., is approximately 900 miles north of Vancouver and is an official boundary point on the border between British Columbia and Alaska. This makes it the highest point in B.C., though the highest peak wholly in B.C. is Mt. Waddington, 13,260 ft.

This year marks the centenary of British Columbia and as no Canadian party had reached the summit the provincial centennial committee agreed to sponsor the expedition. Fairweather, glaciated from sea-level to summit, had been climbed only once, in 1931 by Terris Moore and the late Alan Carpe.⁴ Several earlier attempts failed, including two by Bradford Washburn. This party was chosen from the Alpine Club of Canada and the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

A Royal Canadian Air Force amphibian landed the party of eight at Lituya Bay on June 17, then parachuted supplies on a glacier at the 3,500-ft. level. The drop was reached on June 20, and base camp established at 4,250 ft. by June 22. On June 23 the first party of four set out—Paul Binkert, Fips Broda, Joe Hutton and Walter Romanes. They stayed overnight at 5,100 ft. on the Fairweather glacier, and on June 24 set up camp at 9,300 ft. in a snowstorm. The storm continued next day, but they set off for the summit at 8.30 a.m. on June 26.

The route, more or less that taken by Moore and Carpe, was exceedingly steep, and entirely on snow and ice. The ascent took 13½ hours, including two hours for a 150-ft. ice-wall just below 15,000 ft., where several pitons were used. It did not get dark here and the party

⁴ See *A. J.* 43. 221. Commenting on the first ascent the Editor of the *A. J.* wrote: 'The ascent of Mt. Fairweather is, we understand, the hardest yet accomplished among the "Arctic" mountains of North America.'

reached high camp at 3.15 a.m., returning to base on June 27. Exposure was consistently high, with drop-offs of 5,000 ft. and more commonplace.

The second party, consisting of David Blair, Denis Moore, Paddy Sherman and Russell Yard, made the ascent on June 27, taking 20 hours for the round trip.

Later, Broda and Romanes made a 22-hour first ascent of a 10,400-ft. peak, and the others reached a point within 175 vertical feet of the summit of the unclimbed Mt. Lituya, 11,750 ft.

Prolonged good weather made conditions very dangerous, and glacier travel almost impossible, so the members walked out early. Two hours after their aircraft left Lituya Bay the area was devastated by a major earthquake and a 50-foot tidal wave.

PADDY SHERMAN.