

## ALPINE NOTES

(Compiled by D. F. O. Dangar)

AN APPEAL.—Members of the Club and all readers of the *Alpine Journal* are reminded that their full co-operation is necessary in the compilation of 'Alpine Notes' and 'Expeditions'. We therefore renew our appeal to our readers to let us have notes on all matters of mountaineering interest that may come to their attention, and of all expeditions in which they may take part. Items for 'Alpine Notes' should be sent to Mr. Dangar and for 'Expeditions' to the Editor.

Out of forty-six items in 'Alpine Notes' in the 1965 issues of the *A.J.* only nine were either contributed by readers (other than the Editor and the Assistant Editors) or based on information supplied by them. It is hoped that this proportion may be increased in future.

PERSONAL.—We congratulate Sir John Hunt on the award of a Life Peerage in the Birthday Honours and Mr. J. R. Willis on being appointed a Judge of the High Court.

We also congratulate Mr. G. A. Mitchell on being created a C.B.E. in the New Year's Honours and apologise that this was not mentioned in our last issue, and extend our congratulations to Mr. G. F. Hattersley-Smith on the award of the Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for his glaciological investigations in the Canadian Arctic.

GORDON NÖEL HUMPHREYS.—Dr. G. N. Humphreys, airman, botanist and mountaineer, who died on March 11, 1966, was a member of the Club from 1926 to 1936. He made his first expedition overseas in 1910 when he went to Mexico and climbed Popocatepetl.

Some years after the termination of the 1914–18 war Humphreys went to Africa and devoted much of his leisure to the Ruwenzori, which had not been seriously explored since the Duke of the Abruzzi's expedition in 1906. He made two expeditions to the range in 1926 and five in 1932, two of them by himself. In the course of his seven visits he examined the Ruwenzori very thoroughly and added much to the contemporary knowledge of the range. He described his 1926 journeys in an article in *A.J.* 39. 99–104. For his work in the Ruwenzori he was awarded the Murchison Grant of the Royal Geographical Society.

Humphreys qualified as M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. in 1931. Later he

led the 1934-5 Oxford University expedition to Ellesmere Island and was medical officer to the 1936 Mount Everest expedition.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.—The season of 1866 was marred by two lamentable accidents on Mont Blanc. On August 23 Sir George Young and his two brothers had made a guideless ascent by the Bosses route. Finding the conditions not good enough for a descent by the 'ancien passage' they had to retrace their steps and make for the usual line of descent to the Mur de la Côte. In turning, one of the brothers slipped and dragged the others down with him. After sliding some distance they fell over a precipice 15-20 ft. high and were finally brought to a stop by the soft snow. Two of the party were quite unhurt but the youngest brother, Bulkeley Young, fell on his head and broke his neck.

An even more disastrous catastrophe occurred on October 13, very similar to the notorious Hamel accident in 1820. Captain Arkwright was making the ascent by the 'ancien passage' with three guides, two volunteers on a separate rope accompanying the party. An avalanche fell on them from above, overwhelming Arkwright and his guides. The bodies of the guides were recovered soon after the accident. Nearly thirty-one years later the remains of Captain Arkwright were delivered up by the glacier des Bossons and interred at Chamonix.

In spite of the mild set-back caused by the Matterhorn disaster, thirty-one alpine summits were reached for the first time in 1866. D. W. Freshfield with François Dévouassoud made the first ascents of the Tinzenhorn and of Piz Cengalo, C. C. Tucker being with them on the latter peak. E. von Fellenberg with Christian Michel and Peter Egger made the first ascent of the Mönch from the Wengernalp and also the first ascent of the Wellhorn. The Albaron, Monte Zebbru, and the Gross Litzner were among other peaks climbed for the first time.

Within the space of nine days the Hornby-Philpott partnership, reinforced by F. Morshead, and with the famous Oberland guides Christian Almer, Jakob Anderegg, and Christian Lauener, made the first passages of the Ebnefluhjoch, Schmadrijoch, and Agassizjoch.

The Matterhorn was not climbed in 1866, though John Birkbeck jr. made an attempt with seven guides only to turn back before reaching the Shoulder. Has ever another year passed, subsequent to 1865, without a single ascent of the Matterhorn being recorded?

A. W. Moore and Horace Walker gave a great impetus to winter mountaineering by making a round tour from Grindelwald by moonlight in mid-December. Leaving the village at 3 p.m. on December 23 they marched all night, crossing the Finsteraarjoch and the Strahlegg<sup>1</sup> and were back at Grindelwald by 1 p.m. next day.

<sup>1</sup> Professor F. J. Hugi had reached the Strahlegg in January, 1832, and has some claim to be regarded as the father of winter mountaineering.

Men were finding new playgrounds beyond the Alps. Leslie Stephen was in the Carpathians; John Ormsby made several ascents in the Spanish Sierra Nevada, including the Mulhacen and Picacho de la Veleta. W. H. Hawker was in Corsica and E. T. Coleman in the Cascade Range of the U.S.A., making his second attempt on Mount Baker, while J. R. Campbell was climbing in Norway and made the first ascent of Hornindalsrokk.

All in all there seemed little to support Farrar's later dictum that the deaths of Hudson and Croz held up the tide of mountaineering for fully half a generation of man.

A CORRECTION.—It is regretted that an error occurred in the printing of Mr. Tilman's review of *Americans on Everest* in the last issue of the *A. J.* On p. 165, seventh line from the end of the review, the figure for the cost of the expedition should read 140,000 and not 40,000.

A HANDSOME BEQUEST.—The National Library of Scotland was the principal beneficiary under the will of the late T. Graham Brown. Not only did he leave to it his collection of about 10,000 books, maps and papers, but he left it also the bulk of his money to provide an income (estimated at roughly £3,000 a year) for buying books and manuscripts on mountaineering or on polar exploration.

Since the National Library of Scotland had, earlier, received the valuable mountaineering library of R. W. Lloyd (*A. J.* 63. 237), Edinburgh should become a leading centre for research into all aspects of mountaineering, as well as Arctic and Antarctic exploration.

To the Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club, Graham Brown left a house in Edinburgh.

WHYMPER AND THE ROYAL SOCIETY.—It does not seem to be generally known that Whymper was proposed in 1894 for election to the Royal Society, though he failed to secure his Fellowship. No mention is made of the matter in either Freshfield's or Bonney's obituary notices of Whymper in the *A. J.*, nor in Smythe's biography.

Whymper was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1894, and on March 17 of that year he informed his father of this. In the same letter<sup>2</sup> he wrote:

'...Prof. Bonney informs me that my name is now *suspended* at the Royal Society, by which [I] understand that the list of signatures is posted up, so that any Fellows may add their names to those which are already down. These include Sir William Flower (the present head of the British Natural History Museum), Sir

<sup>2</sup> In my possession.—T.S.B.

Joseph Hooker, Rt. Hon. T. Huxley, Dr. Sclater, Mr. Robert H. Scott and a number of other leading men of science...'.<sup>3</sup>

To be proposed for election, even if unsuccessful, to the Royal Society may fairly claim to be a considerable distinction, especially for a man who had not had any formal scientific training. It underlines the point made about Whymper's scientific outlook in *A. J.* 71. 127.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

'A WORD FOR WHYMPER'.—In *A. J.* 71. 125, line 23, it should have been made clear that Whymper's remark, 'the guides did their duty manfully', did not occur in his letter to *The Times* but in the letter to E. von Fellenberg subsequently printed in the *Bollettino*.

MONT BLANC.—Early references in American newspapers. In the *A. A. J.* for 1966, Dr. Monroe Thorington has brought together all the references he has found in early American newspapers to mountaineering incidents. A selection of these appeared in *A. J.* 69. 285 and 70. 324. Dr. Thorington has now brought his lists down to 1879 (starting in 1785), so he has covered virtually a century. It will be interesting to watch if further entries are now brought to light as the result of his efforts.

Mont Blanc secured the greatest number of references; the Matterhorn in 1865 was surprisingly little noted. Mountaineering in the U.S. was also being mentioned from at least as early as 1837, but Dr. Thorington has only given a selection of entries.

TREATMENT OF FROST-BITE.—At high altitude oxygen was first used in the treatment of frost-bite by Dr. Raymond Greene on the 1933 Everest expedition. Since then it has been used at high altitude on a number of occasions.

In frost-bite ice crystals form in between the cells causing a loss of fluid from the cells and, therefore, interference with a number of complex mechanisms by which the cell functions. In addition, constriction of the small blood vessels occurs cutting down the blood supply, and therefore oxygen, available to the injured tissue. Any tissue devitalised by lack of oxygen is an excellent breeding ground for bacteria.

<sup>3</sup> *Sir Wm. H. Flower* (1831–99) was Conservator of Museum, Royal College of Surgeons, 1861–84, and Hunterian Professor of Comparative Anatomy, 1870–84; Director of the British Museum (Natural History), 1884–98.

*Sir Joseph Hooker* (1817–1911), the famous botanist, was an Honorary Member of the Alpine Club (*A. J.* 26. 61).

*T. H. Huxley* (1825–95) was made a Privy Councillor in 1892, so was correctly designated 'Rt. Hon.'

*Dr. P. L. Sclater* (1829–1913) was Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, 1859–1902, and a member of the Alpine Club, 1861–96.

*R. H. Scott* (1833–1916), Keeper of the Minerals, Royal Dublin Society, 1862–67; Superintendent, Meteorological Office, 1867–1900.

Recently the treatment of patients by oxygen at two or more atmospheres pressure has been made possible by the introduction of tanks in which the patient lies or sits. As a result oxygen, which is normally transported from the lungs to the tissues attached to the haemoglobin of the red blood cells, is dissolved in an increased amount in the fluid part of the blood (serum). This in turn means that more oxygen is made available for the tissues.

It has been shown too that hyperbaric oxygen inhibits infection. Two mountaineers, Bonington and Haston, who suffered from frost-bite during the winter ascent of the Eigerwand Direct, were treated by this method in the hyperbaric tank at The London Hospital with satisfactory results. In these two cases the hyperbaric oxygen appeared to accelerate recovery while inhibiting infection.

Probably the first case of frost-bite to be treated in this way was in Professor Sir Charles Illingworth's Surgical Unit in Glasgow. A few cases undergoing similar treatment have been recorded in North America.

The use of hyperbaric oxygen has many applications in medicine and it is still in an experimental stage of study. However, results appear to be good in certain specific conditions.

MICHAEL WARD.

GUIDES.—The death of Walter Risch was reported early this year. Risch, born in 1892, settled in Campfer after the 1914–18 war and soon showed himself a worthy successor of Christian Klucker in the Bregaglia Alps. Klucker, indeed, recognised Risch's capabilities early in his career and in 1924 could consider him 'on difficult rocks quite unsurpassed and a really marvellous performer'.

With Alfred Zürcher Risch made the first complete traverse of the entire Sciora ridge and also the first ascent of the North ridge of Piz Badile. In 1928 with a Swiss party he repeated the ascent of the North face of Piz Cengalo by the route taken by Prince Scipio Borghese with Martin Schocher and Christian Schnitzler in 1897. Another of his notable achievements was the first winter ascent of Piz Scerscen, alone, in March, 1924.<sup>4</sup>

Hilti von Allmen of Lauterbrunnen who, with Paul Etter made the first winter ascent of the North face of the Matterhorn in February, 1962, was killed by an avalanche in the Engadine on March 14.

DENT BLANCHE.—A paragraph in the newspapers of July 15 reported, with exasperating lack of detail as to the precise route, that Michel Vaucher and his wife had 'scaled the hitherto unclimbed north wall of the

<sup>4</sup> See *A.J.* 50. 321. The date given in *Bündner Alpen V*, 207, is incorrect.

Dent Blanche': this presumably refers to the 'paroi NNE' of the *Guide des Alpes Valaisannes*.

This great wall, over 3,000 ft. in height, was climbed almost in its entirety by Karl Schneider and Franz Singer on August 26-27, 1932. Their route went virtually up the middle of the face, but was not a *direttissima* as it eventually joined the Viereselsgrat about 300 ft. from the summit.

Four years earlier Miss Maud Cairney with Théophile and Hilaire Theytaz had also climbed a considerable part of the face before finishing the ascent by the North-north-west ridge.<sup>5</sup>

**AVALANCHES.**—Certain French farmers, it is reported, are of the opinion that the depopulation of the alpine regions is a cause of avalanches. If there are not enough cattle on the high pastures, so their argument runs, the grass is not eaten down and once it has been flattened it provides a smooth and polished runway over which huge masses of snow will slide with very little resistance. An avalanche which killed four skiers near Val d'Isère is quoted in support of this novel theory.

Without further evidence these conclusions are hardly likely to be accepted by the authorities, though they are said to be considering the spraying of chemicals from helicopters on dangerous slopes.

A recent issue of the *Scientific American* contained an article in which it is claimed that an American scientist has discovered, after researches spread over five years, a method of preventing avalanches by changing the structure of the ice crystals through watering slopes liable to avalanche with hydrocarbons such as octanol or even an ordinary anti-freeze mixture. This is said to prevent the formation of crusts of ice on which successive layers of snow pile up. Under the treatment the ice crystals change their usual 'star' shape for that of 'needles'. The watering must take place either before or immediately after the first fall of snow.

**COLORADO.**—In his article 'The Rockies of Colorado' in *A. J.* 71. Senor Echevarria mentioned that the Gore range was named after a buffalo-hunting Irish nobleman. A little more light is thrown on this diverting character in the *Guide to the Colorado Mountains* of Robert M. Ormes: 'The Gore Range was named after an Irish nobleman with an enormous bank account who hunted in the West for two years around 1855. To Jim Bridger, who served him as a guide, he read Shakespeare. He had a wagon fitted up like a Pullman car, a well stocked wine cellar on

<sup>5</sup> After the lapse of a fortnight and subsequent to the writing of the above note it was reported by *The Times* that M. Vaucher had later found out that the North face had been ascended by Schneider and Singer in 1932. M. Vaucher, however, is reported as 'having followed a more vertical route and his wife is the first woman to have made the ascent'.

wheels, hunting dogs, and a daily bath. He hunted alone from 10 a.m. to after dark but his retinue drummed up the game and headed them towards him. When he was ready to sell his outfit at the end of the trip he was so irritated by the attempts to cheat him that he sank it in the Missouri River.'

MOUNT EVEREST IN JADE.—The art of jade carving is one of the traditional crafts of China, and the present Government has encouraged such arts as had been falling into disuse. A recent example has been the production of a massive carving, standing about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. high, and weighing  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons, intended to show the Chinese mountaineers of 1960 ascending Everest. Whilst some of the carving, such as the figures of the climbers, is lifelike, the general result is rather ludicrous. For no attempt has been made to fashion any sort of resemblance to Everest itself; eighteen veteran jade carvers in Shanghai are said to have spent two years and four months on what turns out to be a monstrosity. It seems a pity, that with modern techniques to help them, something recognisable as the Everest massif could not have been produced.

CAUCASUS.—The traverse of the great Bezingi Horseshoe from Shkara to Lialver ranks as one of the most notable expeditions in the Caucasus. The first traverse was made by an Austrian party, K. Moldan, J. Schintlmeister, and K. Poppinger on August 23–28, 1931.<sup>6</sup>

The July issue of *Alpinismus* contains what we believe to be the first complete list of successful traverses to be published. This reveals that the expedition had been repeated only nine times by August, 1965, on six occasions by Russians and by another Austrian party last year; the latter was much delayed by bad weather and took ten days with nine bivouacs to complete the expedition from the 'Austrian bivouac' on the Bezingi glacier to the Zanner Pass. The other two successful traverses were made by a mixed East German–Czechoslovak expedition and a Bulgarian party.

ELBRUZ.—An article in *Alpinismus*, April, 1966, by Aleksander Borowikow revives the old story that the Circassian Kilar Haschirow made the first ascent of Elbruz in 1829.

In that year an attempt on the mountain was made by a party of Russian savants under General Emmanuel, accompanied by sundry Cossacks and Circassians. All but one of the party gave up at various stages of the ascent until Kilar was left climbing by himself and was seen by the General 'to approach the scarped rock which forms the actual summit, walk around it, disappear for a moment against the dark-coloured rock,

<sup>6</sup> *A. J.* 43. 400. A claim sometimes put forward that a Russian party made the first traverse is not correct. See *A. J.* 61. 320.

and then vanish behind the mists which again filled the valley, cutting off all view of Elbruz.' General Emmanuel was convinced that Kilar had reached the summit but it has been pointed out that the culminating point is not visible from the spot where he was watching the ascent.<sup>7</sup> There was therefore no witness to confirm that Kilar arrived on the summit. He himself claimed that he had done so and thus was able to receive the prize of 400 roubles offered to the man who should make the first ascent.

A translation of the narrative of M. Kupffer, the chief of the savants, which originally appeared in his *Voyages dans les Environs du Mont Elbrouz* (1830), can be found in *A. J.* 2. 170-5. As H. B. George there remarks, 'the Russian narrative is meagre, vague, and entirely unsatisfactory both to the geographer and the mountaineer, in spite of the high scientific acquirements of the author' and 'the miserable failure of the report to give any of the information we should now most naturally look for is to be regretted rather than condemned.'

Other authorities, in addition to H. B. George, have found good reasons for not believing in this alleged ascent, thus F. F. Tuckett in *A. J.* 4. 167; D. W. Freshfield, *The Central Caucasus*, p. 497; M. Kurz, *Montagnes du Monde*, 1946, pp. 46-7; and see note in *A. J.* 59. 460.

So nebulous and unconfirmed a claim as that of Kilar cannot seriously be entertained unless some further evidence is produced and made available to support it, and until this occurs and the claim is proved it must be accepted that the first ascent of the East Summit of Elbruz was made in 1868 by D. W. Freshfield, A. W. Moore and C. C. Tucker with François Dévouassoud and two Urusbieh hunters. The West summit was first climbed by F. Gardiner, F. C. Grove and Horace Walker with Peter Knubel in 1874.

**RUWENZORI.**—We learn from the Mountain Club of Uganda that the Ruwenzori, which was reported last year to be virtually closed to climbing parties because of political difficulties, is again open.

**HINDU KUSH.**—The Afghan Tourist Organisation announced towards the end of last year that the Government of Afghanistan intends to levy a tax of from 400 to 600 dollars on all expeditions to the Afghan Hindu Kush. The higher the mountain the higher the tax.

**TIERRA DEL FUEGO.**—The first ascent of Mount Buckland, *c.* 1800 m., was made by an Italian expedition in February. Extreme difficulties were encountered and the ascent must rank among the most difficult yet achieved in the Southern Andes.

<sup>7</sup> *Montagnes du Monde*, 1946, p. 47.

MOUNT KENNEDY.—Mr. Bradford Washburn writes: 'On page 149 of your May number, I was listed among the people who made the first ascent of Mount Kennedy in March, 1965. Actually, although I was the leader of the expedition which mapped the Hubbard-Kennedy area and was responsible for all of the planning, selection of the party, the right equipment, etc., I was not a member of the climbing party. Barry Prather of Seattle was the leader of this facet of the operation, and there were five other climbers in addition to Senator Robert Kennedy and James Whittaker.

'This advance party put the survey targets on top of Mount Hubbard and Mount Kennedy, and a larger group spent six weeks in the area during April and May, completing the ground survey. We now have a very beautiful and detailed contour map of 120 square miles of this superb region on the Yukon-Alaska boundary, which has been done for us and the National Geographic by the Surveying Engineering Department of the University of New Brunswick. No stone was left unturned in making it an extremely precise job.

'My wife and I have just returned from two weeks of photographic flights over this area, securing all the oblique photos needed to complete the final detail work on the map, which we hope will be published in a year or two.

'The reason that the National Geographic was so interested in this region was largely because Mount Hubbard, the partner peak of Mount Kennedy, was named seventy years ago after Gardiner Greene Hubbard, the first President of the National Geographic, during the course of the National Geographic's first field expedition, Israel Russell's attempt to climb Mount Saint Elias in 1891. Our expedition of 1935 also did all of the exploration and preliminary mapping of this region.'

CAMILLO PELLISSIER.—The distinguished Italian guide Camillo Pellissier, of Valtournanche, lost his life on August 6, 1966, while climbing the Dent d'Hérens. He fell unaccountably while leading one of the early pitches of the Albertini ridge. His client is reported to have said that he must have been smitten by sudden illness. He was forty-two.

He was famous as the hero of Kanjut Sar, 25,460 ft., in the Karakoram. On July 19, 1959, he and his friend and fellow Valtournanche guide, Jean Bich, were the final assault pair of the expedition led by Guido Monzino. An hour above the last camp Bich, already ill, felt his hands freezing and was unable to continue. Camillo went on alone, and after a difficult climb in intense cold, mainly up a long couloir which reminded him of the Penhall couloir on the Matterhorn, reached the summit.

He took part in several other expeditions, to Patagonia and to Greenland. In the Alps he did not climb widely away from his own district,

but he was a master of his own mountains. Son of a guide, member of an historic guiding family, he was brought up in Valtournanche and in the summer hamlet of Cheneil, below the rocks of the Bec d'Aran, where later he was the author of several new routes. All his adult life was devoted to guiding and ski teaching. He was a *maestro* of the year-round ski school at Plateau Rosa, but said that he preferred climbing in summer. As a porter he had the good fortune to come under the tutelage of the great Luigi Carrel (Carrelino). In 1947, while still a porter, he led his sister and cousin up Carrel's direct route up the Furggen ridge of the Matterhorn, one of the earliest repetitions of the route and for his sister, the first ascent by a woman. Recently he had become something of a specialist in another of Carrel's routes, the Albertini ridge of the Dent d'Hérens, on which he was killed.

Short of stature, dark skinned, with close-cropped black hair, his ready grin emphasised by a gold tooth, 'Camillotto' was an endearing character. He had a rare gift for friendship. I knew him only a short while, first in 1965 when he was instructing, for the third time, on the biennial course for young guides and porters of the Val d'Aosta. Having climbed with him then, I had hoped to do so much more, not just because of his technical skill, impressive though that was, but for his companionship. Alas, there was only one more climb, in 1966, three weeks before his death; but the few days I spent with him in the mountains are a happy memory, above all of good company.

He leaves a widow and two children. To them and his now elderly parents we send deepest sympathy. His untimely death is the more tragic in that his brother, who had given up guiding for a safer profession, was killed last winter in a road accident.

A. K. RAWLINSON.

ITALIAN MATTERHORN HUT.—During the summer of 1966 the guides of Valtournanche have been building a new and larger hut on the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn, next to the old Refuge Louis-Amédée. The new hut is to have room for fifty. It was hoped to finish it by the end of the season.

HERMANN GEIGER.—On August 26 Hermann Geiger, the well-known Swiss pilot who had made so many landings on glaciers in the Alps, in rescue operations, was killed in an air crash at Sion. At the time of writing it is not known exactly what happened, but it is thought that his plane collided with a glider during take-off.