

EXPEDITIONS

AMERICAN EXPEDITION TO CORDILLERA BLANCA IN PERU. The 1955 American Cordillera Blanca Expedition, composed of Nick Clinch, Dave Gagliardo, Ray Hoppenon, Andrew Kauffman, Bill McMannis, Harvey Platts, David Sowles and Harold Walton made three first ascents in the Pucahirca Range, including two peaks of about 20,000 ft. or over. Three members of the expedition approached the peaks from Caras over the Quebrada (valley) Santa Cruz, while the main body started from Yungay with pack animals and travelled via the Quebrada Yanganuco. The party had the services of three excellent high-altitude porters, brothers, from Huaraz: Emilio, Victorino and Eugenio Angeles and a fourth porter, Juan Pablo Ramirez, who acted as interpreter and caretaker of Base Camp.

Base Camp was established in the Yanajanca Valley, immediately north of the Jancapampa Valley, on July 1, at about 13,000 ft. or a little under. Camp I was situated at 15,500 ft. at the edge of the glacier. Two higher camps were established, one on the East ridge of North Pucahirca at about 18,000 ft. and another at about 18,400 ft. in a snow basin east of Nevado Angeles. On July 12, Walton and Hoppenon made the first ascent of Nevado Angeles (*ca.* 19,750–20,000 ft.). On July 14, Clinch and Kauffman made the first ascent of North Pucahirca (*ca.* 20,000–20,400 ft.), the expedition's chief objective. On the same day, these two also made the second ascent of Nevado Angeles. On July 16, Sowles and McMannis repeated the ascents of North Pucahirca and Nevado Angeles. On July 18, Kauffman and Sowles made the first ascent of an unnamed peak (*ca.* 17,500 ft.) immediately above Camp I. Clinch and Walton conducted an extensive reconnaissance of the South Pucahirca snow basin which lasted two days. Hoppenon collected a large number of botanical specimens. The party also carried on a certain amount of geological research.

The ascent of North Pucahirca can be described as difficult, but not severe, and Nevado Angeles, though not as remote, can be ranked in the same category. One ice-slope immediately below the summit of North Pucahirca was extraordinarily steep. The party used 1,200 ft. of fixed rope on the mountain.

The expedition returned to Yungay by the north via Pasacancha and Huallanca. Five of the participants then had to return to the United States, but three, Sowles, Hoppenon and Walton, remained behind and made the ascent of the South Peak of Huascarán (*ca.* 22,200 ft.), highest mountain in Peru.

A. J. KAUFFMAN.

UNIVERSITY PEAK (15,030 ft.), ST. ELIAS RANGE, actually a part of Mt. Bona. *Members*: Keith Hart, Leader, College Alaska; Gibson

Reynolds, New York; Leon Blumer, Trail, British Columbia; Tim Kelly, Seattle, Washington; Sheldon Brooks, Tacoma, Washington; Norman Sanders, Glendale, California.

Flown by Cordova Airlines, Jack Wilson, pilot, to landing strip at the foot of the Hawkins Glacier. Started up the glacier June 9, 1955. After two days on slippery rocks in the rain camped at 6,000 ft. at the foot of the ice-fall (4,500 ft. high). Camp advanced through the lower part the next day. The upper part took three days to work out a route on. They reached the Cirque at the head on the sixth day from the landing strip and received their air-drop on schedule. From the Cirque, camp was advanced to the Col at 11,700 ft. on the North-east ridge. On June 19, the party chopped their way up this ridge to the summit, which was reached at 6.0 P.M. Blumer, Hart and Reynolds were in this party. The other group, consisting of Kelly, Brooks and Sanders, made the first ascent of a 13,500-ft. peak the same day and started at 3.0 A.M. the 20th for University Peak. They reached the summit at 9.0 A.M. in a white-out. Nine hours were required to return to camp. The entire party descended to the Cirque and a day later made a third ascent of, and a new route on, Mt. Bona, 16,420 ft. The airstrip was reached on July 1 and the party evacuated by air the next day.

K. A. HENDERSON.

ISTOR-O-NAL. In June 1955 the Princeton Mountaineering Expedition to the Hindu Kush made the first ascent of Istor-o-Nal, 24,242 ft., in the state of Chitral, West Pakistan.

The expedition consisted of two Americans, Joseph E. Murphy and Thomas A. Mutch, and one Pakistani, Major Ken Bankwala of the Pakistan Army.

Base Camp was established at 15,000 ft. on the Tirich glacier. From here the route followed that pioneered and almost successfully completed by Hunt and Lawder in 1935.¹ A broad couloir on the Southern flank of the mountain gave access to the West ridge which was then followed until it joined a broad summit plateau leading to the summit proper. Four camps were established, the highest being on the West ridge in the vicinity of 22,000 ft. The climbing, with the exception of one steep ice-wall above Camp II and a difficult rock chimney just below the main West ridge, was not technically difficult. Two of the porters, all of whom were local Chitralis, climbed as high as Camp II at about 20,000 ft. The only sustained period of bad weather was a three-day snowstorm at Camp I.

Murphy and Mutch reached the summit on June 8 after an exhausting climb of eight hours in deep snow. Murphy suffered frozen feet during this day's climb, but was well enough to descend all the way to base the following day. The subsequent return from Base Camp was without incident and Murphy recovered completely after a brief period of hospitalisation.

¹ *A.J.* 48. 118. See also *A.J.* 42. 131 for an earlier attempt.



[To face p. 203.]

OBER GABELHORN FROM THE MOUNTET.

Near Istor-o-Nal, and bordering on the Tirich glacier, there are ten or more peaks in the vicinity of 21,000 ft. They are all unclimbed and, almost without exception, are of outstanding beauty and difficulty.

THOMAS A. MUTCH.

OBER GABELHORN, North-north-west arête direct. J. M. Hartog and J. S. Hobhouse. July 11, 1954. Start from the Glacier du Mountet by an icy couloir, clearly seen from the Mountet, which borders the Glacier de l'Ober Gabelhorn beside the North-north-west arête. From the top of the couloir gain the crest of the ridge, which is followed to the summit.

This route avoids the complex crevasses of the Glacier de l'Ober Gabelhorn (not named on the Carte Nationale), and in a snowy year is probably the best way of ascent. The arête is joined near its origin: below it widens into a steep rounded buttress without a definite crest.

J. M. HARTOG.

AIGUILLE VERTE, COUTURIER COULOIR. As reported in *A. J.* 60. 373, this was climbed on August 19, 1955, by G. J. Sutton, F. R. Brooke and W. Noyce. As it is a climb likely to be of interest to British parties, a note on its chief features may be worth giving.

The party started from the Argentière hut at 12.30 A.M., advisedly early as events proved, in order to escape the sun in the couloir and to be early in the Whymper Couloir on descent. The only considerable technical difficulty is in the crossing of the bergschrund at the bottom of the couloir. The upper lip this year gave hard climbing on a rising traverse of three pitches. Above that the angle is steep, about and sometimes above 55° , but very uniform and with the snow in good condition it is possible to move together. Tiring on the ankles. Head torches a great asset. The party took the variation on the right and reached the summit of the Verte at 9.30 A.M.

The descent was saddened by the fate of two Frenchmen behind, who had followed us and accepted a rope at the bergschrund. On the top they revealed that they were not very experienced, but one of them had done the Whymper Couloir and was confident about the descent. They were behind us, and at the traverse into the subsidiary couloir we were startled by the sight of them hurtling down the face. They hit a rock on the way and were dead by the time we could reach them.

The Whymper Couloir maintains its reputation for danger, particularly if it is descended by inexperienced parties and after a certain hour of the morning.

W. NOYCE.

LES COURTES, Aiguille Qui Remue buttress. R. L. Colledge and L. Waghorn. August 10, 1955.

The Aiguille Qui Remue is the small aiguille on the South-east ridge of Les Courtes, very close to the Col des Cristaux. On the Talèfre

or south-west side of this pinnacle, a pronounced buttress descends towards the Glacier de Talèfre, but does not quite reach the *rimaye*. There is no record in the Vallot guide-book of an ascent of this buttress, and we omitted to ask the guardian of the Couvercle hut if he knew of one.

The normal route to the Col des Cristaux was followed across the *rimaye*, above which very deep powder snow made progress very slow. This route leads under the foot of the Aiguille Qui Remue buttress, which we attacked by a cliff of steepening rock culminating in a short chimney pitch of III with a huge loose flake. There followed a mixed rock and snow ridge made laborious by the loose snow everywhere, although some interest was added by the discovery of several crops of crystals. The first and only difficulty was the huge gendarme which stands astride the ridge not far below the Aiguille Qui Remue itself. We arrived at a fine snow platform at the foot of the gendarme, with no apparent route beyond except a direct ascent which, if possible, would have called for more artificial aids than we had at our disposal. The obstacle was turned on the left or west side by an exposed pitch of IV. It led under a pointed overhang onto a steep slab with small but adequate holds and then up an open chimney. From the top of the chimney we traversed along the side of the gendarme by a system of awkwardly sloping snow ledges, cutting steps under the soft snow where necessary, and then up steep rocks and snow to the crest of the ridge once more. We were now very close to the Aiguille Qui Remue, the ascent of which is the logical conclusion to the route. Having no guide-book, we had no idea how or where this curious pinnacle had been climbed, although, in fact, the ascent has been made. Before we could start a reconnaissance the weather gave ground for anxiety and the prospect of a storm during the unpleasant descent from the Col des Cristaux made us abandon the pinnacle. The weather actually improved later, but the descent from the col was quite tricky.

R. L. COLLEDGE.

ØKSFJORD PENINSULA.—In August and September last year, a party consisting of A. Champion, E. L. Lewis, G. Murray, E. W. Norrish and W. G. Roberts spent five weeks in the Øksfjord peninsula of Arctic Norway, some 60 miles north-east of Lyngen. The mountains of this peninsula range from 2,500 to nearly 4,000 ft., and are dominated by three icecaps, the largest of which, the Øksfjordjøkelen, was first visited by G. Hastings in 1898, and although there are obviously many fine rock-climbs to be had in the area, easy scrambling routes exist on most of the peaks.

It was early decided to concentrate on covering the ground rather than on finding rock routes, for, besides Hastings, the only previous visitors to these mountains were a Norwegian who crossed the main icecap in 1905, and a German party which made some climbs in the same neighbourhood shortly before the Second World War.

The first camp was placed in the valley above Begrsfjord, from which the party climbed the four tips at the corners of the Svartfjell icecap, and made first ascents of Gunnarfjell, Baednagoppe, and Slaatekolla. After a week, they then moved to a site at the head of Langfjord, and climbed the Skalsatind and Amadalstind, as well as crossing the main Øksfjord icecap to the Lyngdalstind. It was also possible to explore the outlying peaks of the Langfjord icecap, many of which were previously unclimbed.

The largest glacier in the peninsula flows eastward from the Langfjord icecap and provides an easy route up to it. By this glacier the party then crossed to a third camp at the head of Frakfjord so that climbs could be made in the Stolen group and on the Frakfjord Middagsfjell, a Ben Nevis of a mountain which has its own miniature icecap. The finest day in the area, however, was had on the three unclimbed summits of the Spitnestind, to the south of Reindalen. Here, any number of rock-climbs await further investigation.

The final week of the expedition was spent in Magnusdalen, close to the north side of the Øksfjord icecap. Thus the scientists were able to make observations on the icecap itself and on the glaciers flowing from it to the north. Once again a party crossed the centre of the icecap, and climbs were made on Bretten, a long ridge which offers considerable scope for future climbing, and on the Nursfjord Middagsfjell, a fine flat-topped mountain with steep rocky flanks split by snow gullies.

These hills in no way compare with the peaks of Lyngen; they are Cuillin-like rather than Alpine in size and standard of difficulty, but Cuillins with large snowfields and a wealth of magnificent glaciers thrown in.

A. CHAMPION.

*Adamello Group*²

DOSSO DELLE GALLINE (2,382 m.). First recorded tourist ascent, June 7, 1955. J. Sanseverino, alone, ascended this peak from Tione (565 m.) in about five and a half hours. He descended by way of the Valle di San Valentino, reached after traversing the southern and eastern slopes of Monte Rosa (2,034 m.), to Villa Rendena.

DOSSON DELLA VALLINA (Highest point: 2,729 m.). First ascent, June 16, 1955. The same, with S. Serafini, on attaining the col between points 2,729 m. and 2,606 m., climbed this attractive peak by its eastern ridge. No difficulties were encountered (grade II), and no trace of a previous ascent was found. The descent was made by the South face to their bivouac in the Stracciola valley.

UNNAMED COL (*ca.* 2,640 m.) between Punta della Vallina and Dosson della Vallina. First tourist passage, June 17, 1955. The same party

² *Vide* Sheet 20, III, S.E., Carta d'Italia, 1 : 25,000. Heights, however, are taken from the CAI and TCI guide-book (*Adamello*) published in 1954.

crossed this pass in order to gain the Bocca della Vallina from the upper Vallina valley. An attempt on the Punta della Vallina (2,858 m.) was abandoned owing to deteriorating weather.

BOCCA DELLA VALLINA (2,710 m.). First passage, June 17, 1955. During the descent, the same party was hampered and delayed by rain and dense mist and experienced some difficulty in hitting off the best place to descend the Redont precipices above the Breguzzo valley.³ They were also disconcerted to discover that the area above the Redont crags was 'alive' with vipers. These were a serious menace, especially on the very steep sections, as the party were frequently obliged to assist themselves with their hands. After traversing blindly to and fro for a considerable period, they eventually succeeded in finding a way down.

*Southern Dolomites—Feruc Group*⁴

FORCELLA DELLE CORAIE (Lowest or western depression, 1,974 m.). First tourist passage, July 2, 1955. J. Sanseverino, alone, following the route recommended by the Italian A.C. guide-book (*Pale di San Martino*), crossed this difficult pass from a bivouac in the wild Coraie valley, a truly Dantesque *bolgia*, to La Muda (482 m.) in the Cordevele valley. Both the 1 : 25,000 Carta d'Italia and sketch map in the above-mentioned guide-book were found to be inaccurate as the Forcella consists of *two* depressions separated by a gendarme (probably unclimbed).

Mountaineers who may be tempted to visit this fascinating and unspoilt district are advised to arm themselves with a machete or cutlass, as, on some of the steep slopes, the 'shrubbery'⁵ is almost impenetrable. At least 150 ft. of abseil rope should also be taken.

³ The convenient path constructed during the Austrian occupation of the Trentino and traced in the above-mentioned map has almost disappeared.

⁴ *Vide* Sheet 23, IV, S.E., Carta d'Italia, 1 : 25,000.

⁵ Owing to the exigencies of space, Mr. Sanseverino's unusual but impressive botanical description cannot be given.

J. SANSEVERINO.