

## EAST AFRICAN NOTES

BY DAVID PASTEUR

THE Ruwenzori has attracted a steady flow of visitors during the last year, and there is every sign that interest in it and other East African mountains will continue on the increase, especially with the prospect of cheaper air travel this year. Few strong climbing parties have been in the range however, and most of the ascents have been of the standard routes up Speke, Margherita and Alexandra.

A notable exception to this was an expedition by J. D. Graham of California and the Sierra and American Alpine Clubs in January this year accompanied by Felix Julen of Zermatt and Adolf Reist of Interlaken and Everest 1956. Graham came to East Africa in 1959, when he climbed Kenya and Kilimanjaro, but was then rained off Ruwenzori after climbing only Speke. Determined to be the first to climb all the peaks in East Africa over 16,000 ft. he returned a year later. The party established itself for two weeks at the Elena high hut and in eight climbing days not only succeeded in achieving its object but also put in at least two visits to each peak, some of them in very fast time, and did two new routes in the Elena/Savoia/Philip Group. For a man aged 63, as Graham is, this was a notable achievement.

Neither of the new routes are long ones but as first ascents in the Ruwenzori are not common they must be regarded as of some importance. Firstly, Philip was climbed from the north from the col between it and Elizabeth by a prominent ice gully which leads straight to the summit. This was at first almost vertical and gave one hard pitch of ice climbing, after an ice overhang had been hacked away. The gully was then followed to the summit which is about 250 ft. above the col; this was the third ascent of Philip, two previous ascents having been made from the south. The second new ascent was of the Great Tooth from the north, from the col between it and Elena. The climb of about 150-200 ft. was of Standard IV and mostly on steep rock. This was again the third ascent of this peak, the two earlier ascents having been made from the south. These climbs were done during several days spent in the Elena-Philip group and the party usually managed to traverse at least three of the peaks in this very compact area in each climbing day. Two ascents of Margherita and Albert were made via Alexandra.

None the less remarkable in its way was a lightning visit by J. Grover of U.S.A. who climbed Alexandra and Margherita in a round trip of six days from roadhead. He was accompanied during the climb only by a novice Mukonjo porter. This climb led to research as to whether the

route followed, which was via the saddle connecting the twin peaks and back over Alexandra again, had been repeated since first done by the Duke of the Abruzzi in 1906. Probably the original route was repeated by an Austrian party in 1953, and it was certainly followed in the north-south direction by Smith and Fletcher in 1956 (*A. J.* 61. 384). Several recent parties doing the normal ascent of Margherita from the E. Stanley Glacier, which entails surmounting at some point the cornices of the East-north-east ridge, have reported that they have found their way up from a point much higher up the glacier and nearer the saddle than is usual and Graham's party in fact used the Alexandra-Margherita traverse on two occasions, making the final ascent of Margherita by a steep ice slope leading up more or less directly beneath the summit from a point just west of the saddle. It may well be, therefore, that the normal route to Margherita will revert to the one followed by the first ascent.

The use of African porters on a major climb of this sort poses a new problem for the Mountain Club of Uganda. The Bakonjo are excellent porters by local standards, and the Club has recently been trying to strengthen the ties between them and itself so as to build up a regular body of men who can ensure continued access to the range. They are no Sherpas, however, and it is too much to expect that they should undertake serious climbing above the snowline unless they can be given some sort of instruction.

The last remaining unnamed peak in the range of over 15,000 ft., lying south-west of Luigi di Savoia and named wrongly on the present map (see *A. J.* 64, 60) Okusoma (15,021 ft.), has now been named Humphreys Peak in recognition of Dr. Noel Humphreys' notable contribution to the exploration of the Ruwenzori, which included the first visit to this part of the range. Okusoma, meaning in the local language 'reading', which goes with the neighbouring peaks Okuhandika and Okubara, 'writing' and 'arithmetic', making the three R's—R2, R4, and R17—of the Uganda Congo Boundary Commission, will appear on future maps in its proper place some half a mile east. The final drawing of the new Ruwenzori mountaineers' map, reported on last year, is progressing.

Climbers and scientists from Makerere University College made the fifth and last in their series of glaciological expeditions in connection with the International Geophysical Year, in January 1960. Full results of their work are not yet available, but careful surveys have been made of the movements of the Speke and Elena glaciers, and a wider and more general survey made of most of the other glaciers on the Uganda side of the range. In particular an interesting comparison was made of the present state of the glaciers with that recorded in the Duke of the Abruzzi's photographs of 1906, from which it is clear that the glaciers have receded a great deal and are still doing so. It is possible that the permanent snowline is not very far below the summits of the range and that

the rate at which ice is accumulating in that zone is not sufficient to keep up a good flow of ice on the lower reaches of the glaciers. The climbing however is not threatened by this.

The Club completed a new hut in the Bufumbira Volcanoes in 1959. It is situated between Mgahinga and Sabinio peaks, the latter being the second highest of the trio in Uganda, and the most attractive from a mountaineering point of view.

In Northern Uganda a long-standing problem was solved when Amiel, a tall rock pillar rising out of the open plains of Acholi was climbed in 1959 by H. A. Osmaston and A. C. Stuart of the Mountain Club of Uganda. R. M. Bere had prospected a route many years ago but due to its remoteness few further attempts were made. The route follows a buttress on the northern side and provides what is probably the longest and most attractive pure rock climb in Uganda, about 700 ft. of varying standard up to severe.

Two important new routes were made on Mt. Kenya in 1959. Both were long and hard routes and make an outstanding contribution to the exploration of the mountain. The Northey Glacier Route was done by W. M. Adams and R. Chambers of the Mountain Club of Kenya in February 1959. Their climb took  $9\frac{1}{2}$  hours from a bivouac at the foot of the Northey Glacier to the summit of Batian. The rock climbing was up to Grade V and ice work up to Grade VI. The icefalls on the upper part of the glacier were excessively steep and hard, two pitches of about 200 ft. in all taking four hours to complete. The route emerges onto the North ridge which is followed past its junction with this West ridge to the summit of Batian. The other new route was also on Batian, North Chimney, which was climbed by W. M. Adams and A. Bennett in August 1959. This runs to the east of the North-face route and its main feature is a 600-ft. chimney high on the North face which entails two artificial pitches and sustained climbing up to Grade V. The lower part of the route was probably much the same as that followed by a French party in 1952 and recorded in *From Kenya to Kilimanjaro*, but on the upper part of the cliff the French party did an artificial climb on the wall further to the east, having first been repulsed by the chimney.

In February 1959 the Mountain Club of Kenya completed a new hut on Mt. Kenya, which has been named the Arthur Firmin Memorial Hut. It has been built beside the old Top Hut near the Lewis Glacier and can hold a maximum of fourteen people. With the increasing number of climbers on the mountain it has proved quite indispensable. The Club are also to be congratulated on producing, in October 1959, a very excellent guide-book to Mt. Kenya and Kilimanjaro. A second guide-book covering rock climbs on the Lukenya cliffs near Nairobi has also been produced, and activity there is described elsewhere in this issue.