

NEW ZEALAND NOTES 1959-1960

BY NORMAN HARDIE

THE event deserving pride of place in last season's activities was the New Zealand Alpine Club's first Antarctic Expedition. For many years there have been climbers talking of ascents still to be accomplished in the area west of the Ross Ice Shelf. Three years ago a sub-committee began negotiations to arrange permission and transport. Last year, some six weeks before the scheduled date of departure, these vital items were approved, and an eight-man party, led by R. W. Cawley, flew off to the New Zealand Government Base on the wings of the United States Navy.

To obtain permission the leader had to guarantee a fairly heavy scientific programme, and he had no choice of the area to be explored. The party found itself landed at 84° south, the latitude from which began the exploration of the ranges between the Scott and Amundsen polar routes. For local transport they could afford only the methods traditional to the Beardmore—manhauling. From the Ice Shelf at about 400 ft. above sea level, they climbed some ten peaks of altitudes approaching 8,000 ft., carrying theodolites up each of them. Lichens were found at less than 400 miles from the Pole, some 1,000 square miles were mapped in detail, and there will be a considerable geological report on the area.

This Expedition received generous support from the Mount Everest Foundation. Another party, at present in the Andes, had its proposals made possible from the same source. This is a private party of members from the two main New Zealand Clubs.

Another group of New Zealanders, all of whom were residents of the U.S.A., had a successful season in the Andes. Among the summits they gained was Ndo. Huascaràn (22,205 ft.).

In New Zealand there were many outstanding climbs, marred unfortunately by several accidents. An Austrian pair forced a difficult face route on the country's second peak, Mount Tasman. On the opposite side, a rib rising out of the inhospitable Balfour submitted to strong pressure from a party of four. Two of these men, John Harrison and Wally Romanes, both of whom have Antarctic experience (and Harrison was on Masherbrum in 1955) are to be with Sir Edmund Hillary in the Himalayas this year.

Mike Gill, one of Hillary's physiologists this year, led a fine new climb on a ridge which has been admired but held in awe for the last

sixty years. It is the South ridge of Mount La Perouse, fully visible from the main climbing hotel, but thought in the past to be rather vulnerable to falling rocks and overhanging ice. Gill was also in the party which made new routes on the smaller mountains Green and Aiguilles Rouges. An expedition to the remote side of Elie de Beaumont was rewarded with a new ascent of considerable merit.

Much climbing was done on the established routes and one man made his own list of all the 10,000 ft. peaks, then climbed them all. Unfortunately there is not full agreement that the list is final. Mountains far from the main Alps were covered by ever-increasing numbers. Again a climbing school was held for visiting Australians, in an attempt to prevent them being ahead of New Zealanders on the annual death roll. I, being an ardent disciple of Charles Evans, was the chief instructor. It is only in the last year or so that *On Climbing* has received universal recognition.

A tragedy occurred which staggered younger members—comparable to the Bourdillon-Viney accident. Jim Glasgow and Harry Scott, editor of the *New Zealand Alpine Journal*¹ and committee member respectively, fell from the summit ridge of Mount Cook. Their enthusiasm and wise counsel are sadly missed.

Alpine Club visitors are regrettably rare, although there are twenty Club members resident here. The only such visitor so far as I know was Saburo Matsukata, vice-president of the Japanese Alpine Club, bringing a breath of new air from people very active in their mountains. We are soon to be visited by five Japanese women climbers.

There is always much talk of future expeditions. In Hillary's Scientific and Climbing Expedition, seven are New Zealanders, six are from the United Kingdom and five from America. The seven are, Hillary, Harrison, Romanes, Lowe, Gill, Mulgrew and myself. There are serious discussions about climbs in New Guinea and more in Antarctica.

¹ J. G. Wilson is now editor of *N.Z.A.J.*