NEW ZEALAND NOTES 1953–4

By DAVID HALL

THE 1953–4 season in New Zealand was a good one. It showed fairly clearly the trends of recent years—an increasing number of ascents of the main peaks, some first ascents, and closer attention to the possibilities of new routes and unclimbed ridges.

Every season since the war has seen a larger number of climbers going into the hills. In 1953–4 the Hermitage peaks, the classic ground for us, attracted many parties. Malte Brun was climbed at least fifteen times ; Tasman eleven times ; Cook several times, including two grand traverses. Peaks like Elie de Beaumont, the Minarets, and Sealy were all well patronised.

Although it now requires some research in most districts to find an unclimbed peak, a surprising number are still to be found. A party (M. Bassett, D. Dawe, and R. Evans) which reached the Burton Glacier from the Franz Josef in January, 1954, climbed fourteen peaks, eight of them first ascents. These included Peter and Alec in the Maximilian range, named after the two celebrated guides, Peter and Alec Graham. Roger Evans a little later lost his life on Elie de Beaumont.

A party (S. Williams, L. G. Osborne, B. Waterhouse and J. Harrison) was energetic enough to establish a snow cave camp on a high snowfield above the South Butler Valley and was suitably rewarded. Their achievements included the first ascent of the northern Grey ' Virgin ' and of Loughnan's western outlier, first ascents from the west of Moffat and Loughnan, and the second ascents of the middle and southern Grey peaks.

On the western side of the Rangitata headwaters, M. Fowlds, G. H. Thompson, and their companions made four first ascents among the neighbours of Mt. Lambert, besides climbing other mountains. This party had the misfortune to miss an air drop, and it was scarcely a consolation that the pilot did drop some of its supplies near another party on the Erewhon Col, at least thirty miles away.

The veteran climber, Edgar Williams, responsible for much original exploration in this and other districts, made the first ascent, with A. A. Deans and R. Taylor, of the Lion, overlooking Milford Sound. Another Milford Sound peak climbed for the first time was Sheerdown, which W. G. Croll, F. Davidson, J. Ede, R. Miller, and W. Gordon ascended.

Members of the Southland Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club have in recent years been devoting much time to the exploration of the upper Hollyford peaks, steep mountains whose main difficulties are on rock. This group, including G. Hall-Jones, L. E. Warburton, D. B. Wilson, W. Gordon, M. Davis, and C. J. McFarlane, during the 1953–4 season, achieved several difficult new routes and made first ascents of

Mt. Moir, Mt. Adelaide, the East peak of Mt. Christina, and the middle peak of Mt. Crosscut.

Among new routes pride of place goes to the ascent by B. S. Gillies, with guide Harry Ayres, in February, 1954, of the formidable tower-studded South ridge of Douglas, one of the finest climbs of a pair who each year seem to produce some new venture of the highest quality. They also ascended Cook by Zurbriggen's route.

Torres was ascended by a new route from the Balfour and traversed by I. R. Wood, C. H. Tyndale-Biscoe, A. Berry, and J. M. H. Davie.

The Main Divide ridge of Elie de Beaumont from the Lendenfeldt Saddle was climbed for the first time by L. R. Hewitt, A. P. Thomson, and Mrs. M. M. Davidson. The same party made a valiant attempt on the unclimbed ridge of Green from Climbers' Col and, after some unpleasant adventures with falling stones, made an ascent from the west instead.

Dr. R. Rodda has made a number of visits to the difficult icy face of the Earnslawburn approach to Mt. Earnslaw. In December, 1953, he solved what is probably the final problem on this side of the mountain when he and F. C. Hollows made the first ascent of the West Peak by the Earnslaw Glacier face.

In Canterbury the headwaters of the Rakaia attracted back some of its most hardened devotees. J. C. Pattle and R. H. Watson made the first ascent from East Horn to the summit of Arrowsmith. In the Arrowsmiths also, M. Nelson and R. Johnson made an ascent of Red Peak by a partly unclimbed ridge. From a high camp on the Bracken snowfield, S. Conway, W. Hannah, P. Bain, G. Harrow, R. Chapman and E. Cotter energetically climbed Evans, Red Lion, Louper and Whitcombe, including some new routes. This party was the grateful recipient of the first part of the misdirected air drop. When the plane returned for the second drop, ' we had marked out the name EREWHON COL in the snow and we are sure the plane rose a hundred feet as the surprised pilot read out the message and realised his mistake.'

Hut building has gone forward with new impetus. The present tendency is for huts to be built at higher altitudes, with the materials usually air-dropped. Many existing huts have proved of limited value through being too low, and they have often been of more benefit to deer-stalkers than to mountaineers. The Canterbury-Westland Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club built a hut on Pioneer Ridge above the Fox Glacier. The Canterbury Mountaineering Club built a hut in the upper Hooker on the site of the upper Cook bivouac. Both these huts will give access to some of our highest mountains.[1]

[1] Since the above was written *The Times* has reported the ascent by Sir Edmund Hillary of Mount Magellan, the highest unclimbed summit in New Zealand. Magellan, situated in the Balfour range which separates the Balfour and La Perouse glaciers, is believed to exceed 10,000 ft. in height.—*Editor*.