

ALPINE NOTES

ALPINE CLUB CENTENARY

The Annual Dinner will be held on November 6, 1957, exactly 100 years after the dinner given by William Mathews at which the decision to proceed with the formation of the Club was reached. During November there will be an exhibition of pictures, books and other objects of interest connected with the history of the Club. The exhibition is to be opened by Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Gloucester in the Club Lecture Hall.

The culmination of the Centenary Celebrations will be a Reception in the Great Hall of Lincoln's Inn on December 9, when Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, have graciously consented to be present.

The American Alpine Museum hopes to stage a small exhibition in honour of our Centenary.

ALPINE JOURNAL

No. 295 of the ALPINE JOURNAL will be a complete volume in itself, Volume LXII. This will be published in two forms, in the ordinary paper covers and bound in cloth, both will be at the usual price of one guinea. Members and subscribers who like to have their JOURNALS bound uniformly will wish to have the paper-covered copy, but others will probably prefer a bound copy. In the absence of intimation to the contrary, members of the Club and regular subscribers will receive paper bound copies, but any member or subscriber who would prefer a cloth bound copy should notify the Assistant Secretary as soon as possible.

THE ALPINE CLUB OBITUARY :						Year of Election
Bowen, H. C.	.	.	.	.	.	1893
Greaves, Alan	.	.	.	.	.	1912
Sharpe, P. H.	.	.	.	.	.	1917
Merriman, S. de V.	.	.	.	.	.	1921
Graham, R. B.	.	.	.	.	.	1934
Tobin, H. W.	.	.	.	.	.	1938

HONOURS AND AWARDS.—We congratulate the following members on the receipt in the New Year's Honours List of the distinctions shown against their names :

Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders	.	.	.	K.B.E.
General H. Williams	.	.	.	K.B.E.
Mr. J. M. Wordie	.	.	.	Knight Bachelor
Mr. Rennie M. Bere	.	.	.	C.M.G.
Mr. Peter Lloyd	.	.	.	C.B.E.

We congratulate C. W. Brasher on winning the 3000-m. steeplechase at the Melbourne Olympic Games.

We also congratulate Mr. Chris. B. Briggs (well known to climbers in Pen-y-Gwyrd) and Police-Sergeant R. Fraser, who were both recipients of the British Empire Medal for their services in mountain rescue.

G. WOOD-JOHNSON.—George Wood-Johnson, who died on August 12, 1956, aged fifty-one, though not a member of the Alpine Club, was one of the most active members of the Himalayan Club in its early days. He had passed his youth in the Lake District and had become a fine rock-climber. He came out to Darjeeling when he was twenty-five as a tea-planter, but with the primary object of attempting some of the Himalayan giants, and did some useful exploration work in the then less-known parts of Sikkim.

In 1930 he joined G. O. Dyhrenfurth's International Kangchenjunga Expedition, of which the late Frank Smythe was also a member. Wood-Johnson accompanied the party in a dual capacity, as a climber and, with Tobin, as a transport officer. When Hoerlin and Schneider made the first ascent of the Jongsong Peak on June 3, Smythe and Wood-Johnson were the second pair. Although the latter had never before worn crampons he made a most determined effort to reach the summit but, probably as a result of his desperate exertions as transport officer, fell sick and had to abandon the ascent.

In 1933 he was invited to join the Everest Expedition under Hugh Ruttledge and again did splendid work, mostly with the transport. Not long afterwards he left tea and returned to his old haunts near his beloved Cumberland hills. His genial and loyal personality will be much missed by all who knew him.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF PIZ PALÜ.—I am greatly indebted to Herr Gredig, of the Kronenhof Hotel, Pontresina, for his kindness in allowing me to examine the visitors' books of his hotel when I was in Pontresina last summer. These books are of great historical interest and contain the original records of many first ascents and other early expeditions in the district. One of the most interesting entries is the account of the first ascent of the highest peak of Piz Palü.

Both Strutt's *Alps of the Bernina* (vol ii, p. 141) and the S.A.C.'s *Bernina-Gruppe* agree in stating that the first certain ascents of the Central (highest) and West summits of the Palü were made by K. E. Digby with Peter Jenny and a porter by the West arête in 1866. Strutt gives as his authority 'private information,'¹ but no account of the expedition was published in the ALPINE JOURNAL and that in the

¹ Digby was Strutt's uncle by marriage.

Kronenhof visitors' book is probably the only one extant and runs as follows :

' K. E. Digby & F. Harrison. 14 Sept. [1866.] Left this hotel at 2.30. Ascended the upper Morteratsch glacier West² of the Festung Rocks by which we reached the Bella Vista Pass at 10.30, the Western² (*highest*) point of the Piz Palü at 11.30 by the Eastern arête. Returned to the upper Fellaria glacier & descended by the rocks at the base of the Piz Zupo to the lower Fellaria glacier—snow extremely soft and laborious—continued close under the Zupo to the snow slopes separating the lower Fellaria glacier from the upper Scerscen glacier & made across it for the slopes connecting this with the Sella Pass, the Col of which was not reached till 5 P.M., owing chiefly to the state of the snow. Reached this hotel in three hours and a half. Total walking time without halts, 17 hours. Guides, Jakob Anderegg, B. Walther.'

It will be seen that this account differs in several important respects from the facts given in the two guide-books referred to above. Frederic Harrison took part in the expedition (the entry was evidently written by him) and the guides were not ' Peter Jenny and a porter ' but Jakob Anderegg and B. Walther.

Harrison's account indicates that only one summit was ascended, and the inference is that the party crossed the Fuorcla Bellavista to the upper Fellaria glacier and, having reached the summit ridge of the Palü from the south at some point between the East and Central peaks, proceeded along it to reach the top of the highest peak by its East arete.³

Harrison's statement that they ' returned ' to the upper Fellaria glacier seems to support the suggestion that the summit was reached from the south and not from the Fuorcla Bellavista, though this would have been an unnecessarily long route compared with the easy and more direct ascent from the Fuorcla.

In 1866 the nomenclature of the Bernina Alps was still very vague. In *S.A.C. J.* vol. vi (1870), the West peak of the Palü is twice referred to (pp. 242 and 245) as the ' Piz Bella Vista ', but an editorial note on p. 505 amends this and says the correct name is ' Piz Spina '.⁴ Digby and Harrison may have regarded it as a nameless peak of no importance

² ' E ' and ' Eastern ' had originally been written here instead of ' West ' and ' Western ', but a note in the margin states : ' Altered by P. L. S. [Sclater A. C.] at Mr. Harrison's request.'

³ Digby and Harrison were doubtless aware that Freshfield's party had reached the gap between the East and Central summits from the South in 1864.

⁴ The table of Alpine peaks in *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, 2nd series, vol. ii, p. 522, lists Piz Cambrena as the East peak of Piz Palü, and Piz Spinass is not mentioned.

and therefore thought that the highest peak of the Palü should be described as the Western instead of the Central summit.

The possibility that Harrison in his account meant Western—and not Eastern—arête, and that Sclater omitted to correct the third mistake, cannot be ignored. If this were so, the party would have passed over Piz Spinas on their way to the highest summit. The truth will probably never be known, but on the evidence of Harrison's account, as it stands, his party can only be credited with the first ascent of the Central peak. The first ascent of Piz Spinas would then have been made by Herr Wachtler's party in 1868 in the course of the first complete traverse of the three peaks.

D. F. O. D.

MONT BLANC.—We are indebted to Count Ugo di Vallepiana for details of an attempt on Mont Blanc by the Via della Pera made in December last by Walter Bonatti and Lieut. Gheser.

On December 24 the party went from the Torino hut to the Col de la Fourche bivouac, where they met the two students, Jean Vincendon and François Henry, whose misadventures were reported in the Press and who subsequently perished on the mountain. Christmas Day was spent in a reconnaissance, and the following day the two students attacked the ordinary Brenva route from the Col Moore while Bonatti and Gheser attempted the Via della Pera. Conditions were so bad that they were forced to cross to the Brenva route, which they reached at a point above the position of the other party and so took the lead.

Great difficulties were experienced among the séracs in the upper part of the route and at one point a 120-ft. rope had to be lowered to assist the two students, who were slower than the Italians. Both parties bivouacked for the night in different crevasses.

On the 27th the weather was still fair and the students decided to try to get down to Chamonix by the Corridor. Bonatti and Gheser, having reached the summit of Mont Blanc via the Mur de la Côte, descended to the Vallot hut where they passed a very uncomfortable night. The next morning Gheser's feet were found to be so badly frost-bitten that he was unable to put on his boots and had to wrap his feet in pieces of blanket. The two men set out for the Gonella hut and reached the Dôme glacier without mishap. Here Bonatti fell into a crevasse; Gheser managed to hold him, but it was only after a three-hour struggle that Bonatti succeeded in getting out. The night was spent in a bivouac on the glacier. The next day (29th) they reached the Gonella hut and two days later a rescue party brought them down to Courmayeur.

When the rescue party reached the hut Bonatti was 'as fresh as if simply back from a walk', and on arrival at Courmayeur he looked a great deal less tired than did some of his rescuers.

The first winter ascent of the Brenva route was made by MM. Couzy and Vialatte on February 26, 1956.

ALPINE TUNNELS.—The French National Assembly has approved a plan for the construction of a road tunnel under Mont Blanc at an estimated cost of £9,000,000. The tunnel will be $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length.

It is also reported that agreement has been reached for the construction of a tunnel through the Great St. Bernard Pass. The importance of this tunnel would be increased if another scheme for a tunnel beneath the Gemmi Pass, now in the hands of a committee, were to be adopted.

WITHOUT COMMENT.—A contemporary reports that on Mt. Hood (U.S.A.) a climber slipped and fell into a crevasse, where he was joined by his nineteen companions; the entire party of twenty was on one rope.

LADIES' ALPINE CLUB.—We offer our congratulations to the Ladies' Alpine Club, founded in 1907, upon the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

BRUNEGGJOCH.—The first crossing of this pass is attributed to Messrs. Hornby and Philpott who made the passage on July 30, 1864, with Christian Lauener and Joseph Vianin.⁵

There is reason to suppose, however, that the pass had been crossed in the previous year by Lord Francis Douglas with Matthäus Zumtaugwald. One of the expeditions mentioned in Douglas's qualification list for the Alpine Club is (in 1863) 'new pass (Zinal to S. Nicolas)'. Mumm⁶ states categorically that this was the first passage of the Bruneggjoch and adds that the expedition seems to have been forgotten but is recognised by J. Ball.

The second (1866) edition of Ball's *Alpine Guide* gives a brief account of Hornby's and Philpott's passage, and concludes: 'Nearly the same route was followed in 1863 by Lord Francis Douglas, but he seems to have encountered more serious difficulties.'

This indicates that Douglas had preceded Hornby and Philpott, though by a slightly different route. Zumtaugwald's *Führerbuch* is in the possession of the Alpine Club but contains no entry by Douglas. Ball probably had personal knowledge of the matter but it is unfortunate that he does not give the source of his information.

D. F. O. D.

GOLD IN THE ALPS.—The French Government is reported to have granted a claim over an area of ninety acres in the Chardonnet group to two Chamonix guides who intend to search for gold. A nugget the size of a lighter flint was found in the area last August.

⁵ *A.J.* 1. 432.

⁶ *A.C. Register*, vol. ii, p. 119.

Gold occurs in small quantities in parts of the Alps, especially near Monte Rosa, and was worked at Pestarena in the Val Anzasca in Roman times.⁷ Jacques Balmat, it will be remembered, met his death while searching for gold.

ANTARCTICA.—Three members of the New Zealand Antarctic party have made the ascent of Mount Harmsworth, *c.* 10,500 ft.

On Coronation Island, in the South Orkneys, Mount Nivea (4,179 ft.) has been climbed by two members of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. Having crossed a heavily crevassed glacier to reach the base of the mountain, the party made the ascent by a couloir leading to a ridge which they followed to the summit.

OJOS DEL SALADO.⁸—Mr. Adams Carter, who was leader of the American Alpine Club Expedition to Ojos del Salado last year, writes that his party made an accurate survey of the peak in August. The mountain is not the highest in the western hemisphere, being 244 ft. lower than Aconcagua. It measures 22,590 ft. (Probable maximum error of the survey is 3 m.) The new survey of Aconcagua as disclosed by Eduardo E. Baglietto, Director of the Institute de Geodesia, Buenos Aires, on October 27, is 22,834 ft.

NEW ZEALAND.—Professor N. E. Odell writes to draw attention to an error in his article in *A.J.* 60. 365. In lines 17–18, in place of ‘Harper’s Saddle’ *read* ‘Harper Pass’.

Harper Pass, or Hurunui Saddle, 3,152 ft., was named in memory of Leonard Harper, who, in 1891, was first President of the New Zealand Alpine Club.

Harper’s Saddle, 8,559 ft., in the Mount Cook district, was so named in honour of his son, Arthur P. Harper, who was the first Secretary of the Club and later President for two periods, 1914–32 and 1941–3.

Mr. David Hall wishes to draw attention to a mistake that he inadvertently made in his ‘New Zealand Notes, 1955–56’ (pp. 399–402). The name ‘R. K. Irwin’ should be amended throughout to ‘R. K. Irvin’. Mr. Hall mentions that up to the beginning of February the season in the New Zealand Alps had been ‘miserable, with very little done’.

PAMIRS.—In 1947 Messrs. Shipton and Tilman reached a point within a very few feet of the summit of Muztagh Ata (24,388 ft.) before having to abandon the ascent owing to lack of time.⁹

The summit was reached on July 31 last year by members of a Russo-Chinese expedition. On August 16 eight members of the same expedition made the first ascent of Qungur, *c.* 25,200 ft.

⁷ See T. G. Bonney, *The Building of the Alps*, p. 214.

⁸ See *A.J.* 60. 389, and 61. 397.

⁹ *A.J.* 56. 317 *sqq.*

COLOMBIA.—An expedition under Dr. A. B. Cunningham left last winter for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,¹⁰ the most northerly extension of the Andes. The expedition planned to explore, map, and climb in the eastern group of the range, which has not received as much attention as the western portion where the highest peaks lie. Dr. Cunningham visited the area in 1954, when his party climbed two peaks of over 17,000 ft. which did not appear on the map, and in addition made ascents of Ojeda, El Guardian, and Bolivar ; these three peaks had already been ascended more than once.

We have not yet learnt full results of the recent expedition ; two of the summits climbed had not previously been ascended.

PERU.—A party of six students, mostly from Cambridge, intend to survey and climb in the North-West Cordillera Vilcabamba during the Long Vacation.

HIMALAYAS.—Several British expeditions to the Himalayas are planned for this year. Major J. O. M. Roberts, with A. D. M. Cox, C. W. F. Noyce, Major C. G. Wylie and the Hon. R. R. E. Chorley, are to attempt the unclimbed Macha Puchhare (22,958 ft.) in Central Nepal.

Dr. R. C. Evans and Mr. D. P. Davis plan to attempt Annapurna II (26,041 ft.).¹¹

Masherbrum (25,660 ft.) will be attempted by a Manchester party. Two unsuccessful attempts have already been made on this peak.

Captain H. R. A. Streather plans to leave England early in June to explore and survey the approaches to Haramosh (24,270 ft.), and the Imperial College of Science is sponsoring an expedition to the Karakorum ; among its aims are the ascent of Saltoro Kangri (25,400 ft.) and a complete survey of the Siachen glacier system.

A Yorkshire Ramblers Club expedition is visiting the Jugal Himal and will make an attempt on the highest summit of the range (23,240 ft.). Another Yorkshire party proposes to explore the Baspa, Pin, and Upper Parbati valleys and to climb some of the neighbouring peaks.

Reports have appeared of other expeditions, including an Anglo-Italian expedition under the leadership of Mr. Alfred Gregory to attempt Disteghil Sar (25,868 ft.).

HIMALAYAN TARIFFS.—The Government of Nepal has announced a scale of charges to be paid by all future mountaineering expeditions to the country. For an attempt on Everest or one of the seven other

¹⁰ See *A.J.* 52, 243 ; also *Alpinisme*, 1952, p. 17.

¹¹ In referring to this expedition the *Sunday Times* erroneously informed its readers that Annapurna II is the highest unclimbed mountain in the world. There are several peaks higher than Annapurna II that have not yet been ascended.

highest peaks in Nepal the fee will be Rs. 3000. The payment for other peaks above 25,000 ft. will be Rs. 2000 and for those below that height Rs. 1000.

Compensation for the deaths of liaison officers and porters has been fixed at Rs. 3900 and Rs. 1600 respectively.

RUWENZORI.—Mr. Rennie Bere writes on March 5 :

‘ This has been a bad season on the Ruwenzori and although there has been a large number of parties on the range, so far as I can learn, none of the peaks, except Speke, has been climbed. The last ascent of Margherita was by Bernard Pierre last summer.

‘ To show that members of the A.C. are not entirely idle in Uganda, T. R. M. Creighton and I escorted the retiring Governor, Sir Andrew Cohen and his wife, up the very beautiful Debasien (10,050 ft.) in remote Karamoja between Christmas and the New Year. He was the first Governor, and Lady Cohen not only the first Governor’s wife but also (with Mrs. Creighton) the first woman to climb this mountain : a good effort and a nice final safari for them. In order to celebrate this event in traditional style, Tom and I carried up in our rucksacks a formidable stock of “ Bouvier ”. In spite of, or was it because of this, the two members of the Alpine Club and the two lady members of the party almost got benighted on the way down and in fact reached camp some time after dark ! Shades of the Golden Age.’