

EXPEDITIONS

ANDES. We have received further information about the joint Chilean-Japanese expedition to the Chilean Central Andes in the early part of last year.¹

Three weeks were spent in the Yeso valley (February 2-22), during which time the Cerro Kobe, 16,733 ft. (first ascent), Cerro Bello, 17,061 ft. (second ascent), and Cerro Marmalejo, 20,013 ft., were climbed.

The expedition then moved to the Cipreses valley: there are no peaks above 5,000 m. in this region. Route-finding on the vast Cipreses glacier was rendered difficult and fatiguing by *nieves penitentes*. Three first ascents were made: Cerro Chile-Japón, 14,928 ft., Cerro Cotón, 14,272 ft., and Cerro Alto Cotón Norte, 13,944 ft.

The period March 19 to April 4 was spent in the Colorado valley and from a base camp on the Leiva Pass, near Aconcagua, four peaks varying in height from *c.* 15,580 ft. to 16,730 ft. were climbed for the first time, and the second ascent of Nevado Leiva, 16,076 ft. was made.

Mr. Naoyuk Ota was the leader of the Japanese party.

MONT BLANC, Central Pillar of Frêney. First Ascent. August 27-29, D. Whillans, C. J. S. Bonington, I. Clough, J. Djuclosz (of Poland).

We approached the climb from the Col de la Fourche leaving at 12.30 on the morning of August 27. We reached the Col de Peuterey at five o'clock. The couloir up to the col was quite straightforward, but had an awkward finish on loose rock. We halted on the col to have some tea and to wait for the morning sun. The foot of the climb is about half an hour's walk across the head of the Frêney glacier.

The actual climb was magnificent, giving about 2,800 ft. of climbing. Most of it was around Grade IV+ and V in standard, giving a wide variety of cracks, chimneys, grooves and slabs. The crux, that had halted Bonatti and Mazeaud in the first attempt, and Julien and Puissi in the second, was about 600 ft. from the top, where the Pillar becomes steep and smooth for 300 ft. We reached the foot of this difficult section on the evening of August 27. On the 28th, Whillans and Bonington overcame the smooth section, and dropped a rope up which the remainder of the party prussiked. On the 29th they climbed the remaining 300 ft. of the Pillar and reached the summit at midday.

The Franco-Italian Party (Puissi, Desmaison, Julien and another) arrived on the Col de Peuterey at about ten o'clock on the morning of August 27. They spent the rest of the day there, and slept that night in tents. On the 28th they reached the bivouac below the smooth

¹ See *A.J.* 65. 241.

section. They asked us to haul their rope up the steep section and to fix it for them. On the 29th they all prussiked up it and reached the summit of Mont Blanc at about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Technical Note

Start at the foot of the pillar, below an obvious *dièdre*; to the right some cracks and ledges give a line of weakness.

Climb diagonally to the right for 100 ft. (III) over slabs, to the foot of a chimney. Climb the chimney (V, 70 ft.). From the top of the chimney climb for 220 ft., first left then right, on short walls and snow patches (III). This brings the climber to the foot of a *dièdre* in the centre of the face. Climb the slab to its right (V, 100 ft.) to a ledge below a corner topped by a roof. Traverse upwards round the corner to the right (III, 40 ft.). Climb a *dièdre* to the line of overhangs, and traverse back left onto the face of the Pillar (V sup., 120 ft.).

Follow a crack to the left (IV), then back up right to a snow shoulder on the crest of the Pillar. Climb some cracks (IV sup.) to the foot of a slab, and up the crack in its corner (IV), to the foot of a sharp arête (fixed rope). Follow the fixed rope over slab and snow patches (III, 150 ft.). From its top, go diagonally left to the foot of a chimney. Climb the chimney (V sup, 70 ft.), then up on to the shoulder below where the Pillar steepens and becomes smooth.

Climb the crack to the left of a semi-detached pedestal (AI and V) for 50 ft. to its top—1st Bivouac. Climb the cracks above the pedestal to the overhang 70 ft. above (AI and V). Traverse right beneath the overhang for 30 ft. (AII and VI). Step down to a small hold and piton belay in a shallow niche near the edge of the Pillar. Traverse round the corner on to the right wall of the Pillar for 40 ft. (VI) to the foot of a groove, topped by a big roof. Climb the groove by a crack (this requires small wooden wedges, a little wider than the normal channel pegs, in its upper part, (AII, 60 ft.), then up the chimney through the roof (AIII). Climb the cracked wall above (IV, 30 ft.) to a ledge.

Follow the ledge to the left, to the left-hand side of the Pillar (bivouac on ledge, 30 ft. below on S.W. face). Climb the cracks near the S.W. edge of the Pillar (IV, 70 ft.), then up a slab (V, 100 ft.) to the top of the Pillar. From here a short abseil leads to a *brèche* from where snow and ice lead to the summit ridge.

Carry good bivouac gear and plenty of food. The party used a total of about 40 pitons and 3 wooden wedges. Half a dozen small wooden wedges would be very useful on the difficult crack below the big roof.

C. J. S. BONINGTON.

BRITISH PARTIES IN THE ALPS. This year many British parties have had an excellent season in the Alps. Perhaps the most significant fact

has been the number of parties climbing hard routes on their first visit to the Alps. A large proportion of these chose the Dolomites as their nursery and so missed the bad weather in Chamonix during the earlier part of the season; the camp-site at the Tre Cime di Lavaredo was so crowded with English tents that it was reminiscent of the Llanberis Pass.

My alpine season started in the Dolomites with Geoff Grandison. We travelled out with a group of climbers from Sheffield University M.C. Our first climb (with M. James, Sheffield), the N.E. arête of the Cima Grande, was followed by a thirsty three days on the French Direttissima on the N. Face of the Cima Ovest. The two nights were spent uncomfortably in *étriers*. It seems advisable to carry small 'swings' for this purpose and for use as stances, ledges being non-existent. Although the artificial climbing was rather 'thin' on some sections we were surprised when we later saw a technical note on the route giving nine pitches of A₃ and eight of A₄!

While we were in this group (Tre Cime) other British Parties were doing (or had done) the following routes:—

R. Smith and D. Haston (Edinburgh Univ., S.M.C.)

The first British ascent of the Swiss-Italian Route on the N. Face of the Cima Ovest. Three days.

N. Crowther and S. Clarke (Sheffield Univ.)

N.E. Arête, Cima Grande; Spigolo Giallo; S. Face, Punta di Freda (Comici); S. Face, Cima Piccolissima (Cassin).

M. James (Sheffield) with Guy Martin (a French Guide)

Punta di Freda (Comici); Spigolo Giallo; Preuss-Riss (with Jean-Louis Bernazat, another French Guide).

D. Gregory (Peak M.C.), *B. Webb and A. Wright* (Sheffield)

Spigolo Giallo; Punta di Freda (Comici); S. Face, Cima Piccolissima (Cassin); N. Face, Cima Grande (Comici), (Webb climbing with A. Atkinson, Alpha Club).

M. Wild and O. Woolcock (Sheffield)

N.E. Arête, Cima Ovest; Punta di Freda (Comici); Spigolo Giallo; S. Face, Cima Piccolissima.

D. Turner and A. Crowther (Liverpool)

N. Face, Cima Ovest (Cassin) (with D. Kerr, Liverpool University); N. Face, Cima Grande (Comici); Spigolo Giallo; S. Face, Cima Piccolissima; Punta di Freda (Comici).

Phil Gordon (London) and *P. Nunn* (Alpha Club)

N. Face, Cima Ovest (Cassin) (in 4½ hours!).

P. Nunn and A. McHardy (Alpha Club)

N.E. Arête, Cima Ovest (with A. Atkinson); N. Face, Cima Grande (Comici).

We then travelled to the Marmolada where we climbed the South Wall (normal) with Clarke, Crowther, Woolcock, Wild and James. After a hasty trip to Civetta (S. Face, 'Tissi', Torre Venezia, with Guy Martin) I rejoined the main Sheffield party in the Sella Group.

The tour continued to the Bregaglia where an adventurous two days were spent in climbing and returning from the N. Face (Cassin) of the Badile. The party, Crowther, Clarke, Clough, Grandison and James was made up into three ropes by the addition of one Claudio Corti (of Eiger notoriety; an Italian Guide now!). We were treated to a gripping electric and snow storm and were forced to bivouac near the final (allegedly easy) couloir. We seemed to be climbing slowly on this first day (Corti insisted on taking tension on every piton!) but still caught up with, and were held up by, a party of three slow Italian guides who had already had to bivouac once on the wall. The snow made things difficult the following morning ('Worse than the Eiger'—Corti) and as a final gesture Claudio led us back to the Sciora Hut that night over the Falso Passo Bondo (the description we had said 'under no circumstances must the FALSO Passo Bondo be taken'!). The descent of a long, steep, sustained ice slope, in the dark, with only two axes between six, was quite horrifying.

We saw in the Sciora Hut book that another party, R. D. Brown, J. Hartly, R. Leggett and M. White, had been there earlier in the year and between them had done the Cassin on the Badile, the N.E. Ridge (Badile), and the 'Flatiron' and S. Ridge of the Punta Innominata (Sciora).

I arrived in Chamonix in time to join Chris Bonington, Don Whillans and a Pole (Jan Dlugosz) on the first ascent of the Central Pillar of Frêney. As a training climb Bonington and I did the Roc-Grépon Traverse.

Finally, with Keith Sutcliffe (Karabiner M.C.), I did the traverse of the Chamonix Aiguilles. Starting from the Tour Rouge bivouac hut we climbed the République Arête of the Grands Charmoz, continued over the Charmoz-Grépon traverse and ascended the Spencer Couloir to bivouac on the N. Peak of the Blaitière. The second day we traversed round the Ciseaux, over and down the S.W. Ridge of the Fou (long abseils), round the Lépiney and Chevalier and by abseil down the Mer de Glace side of the Col du Caïman to join the route up the East Face of the Caïman. Here we experienced great difficulty in route-finding but, by a stroke of luck, found our way over to the far side to bivouac just above the Brèche du Caïman at the onset of a storm. On

our third and final day we ascended the ridge of the Crocodile, abseiled down, reached the summit of the Plan and completed the expedition by the Plan-Midi traverse (bad snow conditions) and caught the *téléphérique* down to the fleshpots.

Derek Turner and Alban Crowther of Liverpool had also been in the Chamonix area. Their first climb, the S. Face of the Gugliermine (Peuterey), turned out to be a three day epic. They bivouacked at the foot of the route which only took them $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours and returned to the same bivouac site that evening. There was a heavy fall of fresh snow that night however, and they had great difficulty in returning across the Fresnay glacier to the Gamba hut; another bivouac was necessary. The pair later climbed the N. Ridge of the Peigne.

The N. Ridge of the Peigne was also climbed by Phil Gordon and Alan Bell. The Nant Blanc Face of the Verte was climbed by Gunn Clark and Bell who were staying this year as guests at the Ecole Nationale. The pair later set off for the S.W. Pillar of the Dru (Bonatti) but returned after an accident to a British pair who were accompanying them (one killed, one seriously injured). It seems that this second pair were in the Alps for the first time!

Several British parties climbed the East Face of the Grand Capucin, among them Terry Sullivan, G. Allison, Jim O'Neil. Sullivan later climbed the S. Face of the Torre Venezia in the Civetta Group and had to retreat from the North Face of the Cima Ovest (Cassin) which was cluttered up with large parties of Germans carrying bivouac gear and intending to use it!

IAN CLOUGH.

BERNINA. After being rained off the Salbitschyn in early August, C. J. W. Simpson and F. L. Jenkins moved to the Bernina, where they did the following climbs in variable mixed conditions: Piz Morteratsch, Crasta Boval and Tschierva, traverse of Piz Bernina by Ostgrat and Spallagrat, Piz Roseg by the Eselgrat, Piz Bernina by the Biancograt. Renewed bad weather drove the party off Piz Palü in mid-August.

EIGER, North face. C. J. S. Bonington and D. Whillans found the Hinterstoisser traverse under two feet of ice on August 4th. Later in the month an Austrian guide was killed falling from the Ramp in a solo attempt. On September 2 four parties completed the ascent (August 29–September 2, R. Kuchar and Z. Zibrin; August 30–September 2, S. Biel and J. Mostowski; also three Swiss and one Austrian). While this mass assault was in progress, an attempt was made to photograph the climbers from the air which unfortunately led to the death of the three occupants of the aircraft. Bonington and

Whillans had also returned to the face; while retreating in deteriorating weather they saw two men fall and found one body.

MATTERHORN, North face. August 21-22, Stanislaw Biel, Jan Mostowski. August 23-24, Radau Kuchar, Zdeno Zibrin. August 30-31, Peter Carruthers, B. M. Nally.

His climbing companions included E. C. Oppenheimer (in early days), R. W. Workman and, most constant of all, Anthony Robinson, who wrote of their climbs in his book *Alpine Mountaineering*. Several contributed to the *A. J.* the obituary notices of Workman and Robinson, and, in volume 58, an article on 'Hill-climbing in Norway'. Much of his climbing was done handless and he was remarkably active almost to the end. He leaves a wife and son, the latter an active mountaineer, and we express to them our regrets at the passing of our former member.

T. S. B.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.—The Alpine season of 1891 was one of the worst, an agreeable contrast to the previous summer. William