

NEW ZEALAND NOTES

By NORMAN HARDIE

THE last season was notable for its bad weather, and hence there were few climbs at home. There was however considerable activity by New Zealanders abroad.

Most of the higher ice peaks were climbed two or three times, where four or five ascents can be expected in a normal season. Three parties reached the top of Mt. Cook, but Tasman and Dampier, the second and third highest peaks were not climbed once. This information must appear strange to men who climb on the Continent. The two main mountaineering clubs have a total membership of about 1,500, many of whom are in the hills each year, but they frequently tend to avoid the highest peaks as they so often involve sitting in a high hut for ten days with conditions so bad that only one sortie can be attempted. Such was the case in 1961, but one notable new route was accomplished—a face route on La Perouse.

There was much more activity in the more remote but smaller ranges. New Zealand is fortunate in having some vast areas of heavily forested country below glaciated peaks, which are relatively untouched. Some of these areas are visited perhaps once every five or so years, and some main valley systems have tributaries which are still untouched. There have been small groups of climbers specialising in this type of country for some time, and it is from these groups that our best expedition material is coming.

Parties go out for up to three weeks at a time carrying all their own food and equipment, expecting to see no one else while they are away. They spend a week swagging through their valley to the forest line, three or so days to get up and stock a high bivouac, or a snow cave, and then sit out the bad weather waiting for their climb. Some such parties might claim just one summit in a season, but it will be a hard-won new route. Such activities generally indicate that the New Zealander is a good carrier, adaptable, determined and experienced in organising closely-knit well-planned parties, but because of the few summits he reaches he is frequently lacking in the experience of étriers, pitons and slings. There are many who show no interest in these devices, and many more who realise that with the fragile quality of our rock, such items have no place here.

But, alas, new-fangled devices have been taking the toughness out of our brightest new hopes! Aircraft are dropping their ugly bundles

into our cirques. Climbers recline on their air mattresses awaiting manna from Heaven, running the risk that the weather will not allow the pilot to approach the area and hoping that in this badly charted land he can pin-point the prearranged dropping area.

The mountains of New Guinea should have been an area of exploration for New Zealand climbers many years ago, but the first party did not reach there until 1961. They were attempting the higher peaks of the Carstensz Range, about 16,000 ft., in Dutch territory. The normal frustrations of the first party into a new area were encountered and they failed, some three days short of their objective, owing to the absence of the proposed air drops. They have not yet returned, but from press reports it appears that heavy cloud covered the area for some weeks and the party was never located from the air. However, two peaks of over 14,000 ft. were climbed on the thinnest of supply lines.

A group met with considerable success in Peru. L. R. Stewart describes this Expedition in an article in this issue. Another Peruvian proposal is being planned for 1962.

The New Zealand Government has had parties on the Antarctic continent since 1957. There are always climbers present and under the cloak of 'science' or 'day of rest' more summits are reached each year. The expeditions are concentrating on the complicated and rewarding area on the west shores of the Ross Sea, still using dog transport and supported by air drops.

Sir Edmund Hillary's Himalayan Expedition had a strong New Zealand contingent participating in all aspects of the very broad programme. This party is having its activities adequately recorded in books and journals.

Four very notable mountaineers died during the year. D. G. Herron and B. H. Williams, two strong and experienced men were killed in a soft snow avalanche on the Aiguille d'Argentière. Peter Graham died at the age of 81. He was one of the first New Zealand guides. He set high standards in his craft, made many notable first ascents and established an hotel which had high standards and a genuine mountain flavour. Canon H. E. Newton, a Club member, died in England last January. He made the first ascent of the more inaccessible routes of many of New Zealand's highest peaks. He did a great amount of work for the New Zealand Alpine Club and his name will be remembered in the remote parish of South Westland where he was an outstanding vicar in a rugged province.

The foundations of New Zealand's climbing were firmly laid by Alpine Club members. A number of well-known men climbed here and an examination of our mountain maps shows the names of many members: Green, Fitzgerald, Tuckett, Horace Walker, Harper, Strutt, Pilkington and Teichelmann. Some climbed in this country and

others had their names recorded by local admirers. It is regretted that we have no mention of H. E. L. Porter on New Zealand maps, for his record is the most outstanding of all our visitors.

The Outward Bound movement seems certain to take firm root this year. It will have a mountaineering and sailing flavour, being controlled by men who have been trained in Great Britain, and some have instructed at Eskdale.