

June 1951.

CURRENT ANTARCTIC EXPEDITIONTHE ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN EXPEDITION IN QUEEN MAUD LAND.

It was reported in Sydney on 11th May that tragedy has struck the "Norsel" expedition. On 23rd February in a sudden thick mist a snow tractor with four men aboard went over a twelve-foot high ice-barrier into the sea. Dr. J. R. Jelbart (an Australian physicist who went south only this year), Corporal Leslie Quar of the R.A.F., and a Swedish mechanic were drowned. The only survivor, a Swedish photographer, swam some 200 yards in the icy water and managed to climb on to a patch of drifting ice, where he was 13 hours in a temperature of 12° below zero before his cries attracted attention, and he was rescued by the expedition's motor boat. The others were pulled under by the current.

Prior to this disaster all had been going well with the expedition. The leader, Capt. John Giaeaver, had reported that a reconnoitring party, in almost constant radio contact with the base, Maudheim, had found a suitable route for the "weasels" far inland, leading to the summer camp, the "Pyramid" situated 4,800 ft. up, on the rim of a newly discovered mountain range 185 miles to the south. Eight men with five dog teams and flotillas of "weasels" spent three months moving eleven tons of provisions to this advanced base on the plateau, which was planned to support eight men and fifty dogs for a four months stay.

Seven men were left behind at the base hut-village to continue the meteorological programme and to prepare for a projected intensive air-survey of the territory between 20° W and 15° E with Norwegian aircraft.

Meanwhile the expedition's ship, the "Norsel" (which we last reported as having left the Antarctic on 20th February, 1950) left Norway in November on her return voyage. She met the pack south of Capetown in 65° S on 30th December, and on the 6th January the seven men at "Maudheim" were startled after their eleven months of isolation to hear a knock on the one visible window of the base camp announcing the safe arrival of the "Norsel" on her relief voyage. Aboard was Prof. Sverdrup, Director of the Norwegian Polar Institute, who is responsible for the general administration of the Expedition. He went south for the duration of the "Norsel's" cruise only, but Dr. Jelbart, whose death we record above, was to have been the sixteenth member of the 1951 wintering party.

FRANCE IN THE ANTARCTIC.

KERGUELEN ISLANDS: A party of 22 Frenchmen, including meteorologists, biologists, ionospheric, oceanographic and radio specialists, as well as mechanics, under M. Sicaud, Chief Administrator of the French Territories overseas, left Havre late last year to re-occupy the station "Port aux Francais" set up earlier in the year on the Kerguelen Islands. They took 1,000 tons of equipment in raft, tip-lorries, a tractor crane, and pre-fabricated buildings - and planned not only an extensive scientific programme along the usual lines, but also experiments in sheep, goat, poultry and reindeer raising, cultivation under glass, and utilisation of the wind and water power on an extensive scale, and the establishment of a sea plane base. This last has particular significance in view of the fact that the Kerguelens are midway on the Cape-Australia air route.

THE FRENCH ADELIE LAND EXPEDITION: Eleven of the original members, including the leader, Andre' Liotard, who landed on the 20th January last year, have been relieved and returned to France on 2nd April. They report having mapped most of the vast Adelie Land Territory, and having set up permanent radio and weather stations in the area. Members of the party ranged from their base, Port Martin (66°50'S 141°25'E) a few miles from Mawson's 1912-13 base at Commonwealth Bay, over more than 1,500 miles or Adelie Land, and made several forays deep into the interior of the Continent. The "Commandant Charcot" reached Port Martin on this second voyage on the 9th January of this year. Two members of the original party stayed on for a second winter with 15 new men (14 French Scientists and an Australian Glaciologist) under Maurice Barre. This party plans to continue the meteorological and geological work until 1952.

THE WHALERS.

An important development in Antarctic whaling is the extended use of the electric harpoon which was successfully tested during the 1949-50 season.

Reports have been received of whaling activities this last season by Japanese fleets of 15 and 18 vessels respectively: by a 13,000 German manned factory ship, the "Olympic Challenger" with ex-British corvettes as chasers, and by British, South African, Norwegian, Dutch, Russian and South American

flots. There are said to be seventeen fleets operating in all. A Norwegian
Lavette, the "Thororn", dashed to Wellington with a sick man, in Decr. last.

The Jap Expedition was reported in late March as having caught 2332
whales between December 22nd. and March 9th.

An international whaling conference, with delegates from Norway, Britain,
Holland, Russia, South Africa and Japan is to be held in Capetown in July.

A Capetown report suggests that the South American fleet of a factory ship
and twelve chasers, manned chiefly by Germans, and "flying the flag of Panama",
was operating as a "pirate" fleet without the authority of the International
Whaling Commission. This may be the "Omiros" which called at Wellington to-
wards the end of March under the flag of Honduras.

Italy is said to be preparing to join in the hunt in 1952, with a 23,000
ton factory ship, the "Trinacria" under construction.

THE DISCOVERY II.

The Royal Research Ship, "Discovery II", which now forms part of the
National Institute of Oceanography established in 1949, left Wellington on 2nd.
November for a 5,000 mile cruise in Antarctic waters south of New Zealand.
During her stay in Wellington the Council of New Zealand Antarctic Society
joined with other interested bodies in an informal reception to Commander J.F.
Blackburn, D.S.O., Dr.H.E.P.Herdman, Chief of the Scientific Staff, and the
other scientists. Two New Zealanders joined the staff for this cruise. Mr.
W.H.Dawbin, lecturer in zoology at Victoria University College, and Lt.B.M.
Bary of the N.Z. Defence Scientific Corps.

"Discovery II" arrived back in Dunedin on 3rd December. On 2nd February
she cleared Fremantle, W.Australia, on the first leg of a projected winter
circumnavigation of the Antarctic Continent, with the little known Sabrina Land
(south of S.Australia) as first port of call. Held up by the pack on 21st Feb-
ruary "Discovery II" followed the ice edge roughly in a N.E.direction towards
the Shackleton ice shelf, on which Wild's party lived for a year in 1912-13.
Neither goal could be reached, and after a refit in Sydney "Discovery II" went
south again from Dunedin on 7th June to continue the circumnavigation of the
Continent.

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH.

Research work is being regularly carried out by Australian scientists on
Macquarie Island in meteorology, seismology, radio physics, auroral observa-
tions, cosmic rays and geomagnetism. A relief party of 17 men, the fourth in
four years, left Hobart on 1st May on the 5,100 ton freighter "River Fitzroy".
It included meteorologists, radio physicists, geophysicists, wireless opera-
tors, cosmic ray physicists and a Latvian surgeon. The ship reached Macquarie
Island after a three day run through heavy seas.

Australian scientists are reported to be planning the setting up of a Cos-
mic Ray Research Station on the Antarctic Continent, possibly south of New Zea-
land in the Mt. Longstaff area of the Admiralty Range.

SOUTH AMERICAN CLAIMS.

It was reported from London on the 9th May that Britain has formally pro-
tested against the establishment of two more Argentine bases and a Chilean
base in the British Falkland Island Dependencies during the past Antarctic
summer. An Argentine scientific expedition will leave for the Antarctic next
summer.

OPERATION POLE VAULT.

Nothing more had been heard of the Chicago Adventurers' Club plan to fly
a K.L.M. Constellation over both North and South Poles, with a stop, one of
four, at Ohakea. The plan was to fly from Chicago via Honolulu to New Zea-
land (where Ohakea was the only suitable airfield), then on over the South
Pole to South Africa, to London and over the North Pole back to Chicago. How-
ever, that was in January last, with a postponement ("owing to technical dif-
ficulties") to March. We are still awaiting the Constellation's arrival.