

THE ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN EXPEDITION.

The joint Norwegian-Swedish-British party in Queen Maud Land accomplished a great deal of exploratory and scientific work before the onset of the winter night confined them to their huts.

Summer sledging. Although the expedition has, and used, motor transport extensively, the day of the dog sledge is not over. As E.F. Roots, the senior geologist, puts it, "time, the supply of spare radiators, and the number of bitches in the maternity ward are likely to have as much effect upon any particular journey as the theoretical efficiency of dog pemmican against petrol.

Dogs were used to reconnoitre the route to the depot 48 miles south of the base, MAUDHEIM, but the stocking of this base was done by "weasels" (snow tractors). Then the dogs pushed on another 145 miles to the edge of the inland mountains: While motor transport was again used to draw the nine tons of supplies and equipment to this site and establish the advanced base about 190 miles south of Maudheim at  $72^{\circ} 16' S$ ,  $3^{\circ} 49' W$ , and at an elevation of 4,500 feet. Here, says Roots, the ice-sheet "leaps high up on the flanks of the mountains like gigantic sea breakers congealed in mid-splash". Beyond the mountains lies the interior plateau, some 5,000 feet in height.

From Maudheim, two parties sledged out to the Advanced Base on December 19th. One group of four, including two glaciologists with twenty dogs and two sledges, traversed an area air mapped by the German "Schwaben-land" expedition in 1939. Considerable correction was necessary: Mount Boreas, mapped by the Germans as 4,600 feet in altitude, proved actually to be only 825 feet high! To the south-east passes over 6,000 feet in height were crossed. Beyond lay vast areas of inland ice, with mountain ridges showing in the distance. This party returned to Advance Base on February 11 and then made a 24 day journey eastwards, during which the sledges crossed with difficulty an ice-stream twenty-five miles wide. The party returned to base at Maudheim for the winter on April 5.

The second group, a topographical and geological party of four, had four sledges and thirty dogs, and reached advanced base on January 6. From the summit of Mount Borgen (8,500 feet) they had an extensive view of mountains stretching an unknown distance - at least 90 miles - to the south. Badly broken ice prevented their pushing further south than  $72^{\circ} 50'$ . They returned to Advanced Base on February 21, made a further journey southwards, and finally returned to Maudheim on May 30, after 162 days in the field. Their dogs had pulled the sledges 1125 miles.

The Norsel. Meanwhile the Expedition's ship "Norsel", had returned from Europe to Seal Bay, near to the site of Maudheim, and was there from January 6th till January 20th. Some air reconnaissance was carried out during this fortnight, and several new mountainous areas were sighted, as well as a deep bay, previously uncharted, stretching south-east into the shelf-ice.

Norsel then returned to Norway, and has again been chartered for her third and final voyage to the Antarctic. She will be taken over by the Expedition at Gothenburg on October 25. She is expected to leave for the south early in November, to call at Capetown for supplies, and to reach Queen Maud Land before the end of the year. If ice conditions prove satisfactory, Norsel will embark the wintering party and leave the Antarctic continent on January 31, 1952. On this third trip the Norsel is to carry two planes, a twin-engined Beechcraft for photographic work and a single-engined Swedish Safir for reconnaissance. The Swedish Air Force is supplying two pilots, two radio operators and two mechanics to take charge of air mapping operations. A Norwegian photographer will probably also take part.

Wintering at Maudheim. Meanwhile the men have been spending the usual Antarctic winter in their base hut where the 100 watt electric lamp on its tall mast shines "like an anachronism in the ice-age".

Conditions have been harder this winter, storms following gales from New Year until July, when Captain Giaeever last reported by radio. Snow was then several feet above the hut rooftops. The resultant ventilation problem was solved by the lengthening of the original two funnels and the putting up of seven more six-foot high ventilators.

Man power has been restricted owing to the loss of three members of the Expedition in February, but a full programme of meteorological and medical research was being carried out. The first round-the-year colour film of an Antarctic expedition was being made. The glaciologists drilled the ice to a depth of 80 metres bringing up ice-samples which were formed by snow falling somewhere inland about the time of the French Revolution.

FRENCH ADELIE LAND EXPEDITION.

It will be recalled that the French Expedition under Andre Liotard established a base at Port Martin, Adelle Land, in January 1950. The Commandant Charcot returned to France in June, leaving again for the south in October with a relief party of seventeen under Lieut. Maurice Barre. At Hobart 11-27 December, the ship reached Adelle Land on January 9 this year. Disembarkation of relief personnel and stores was completed on January 17. Some hydrographical and survey work was carried out west of Port Martin before the "Charcot" left on April 3, with Liotard and eight of his men. The ship arrived at Brest on June 1. She will be sailing again at the end of September to bring back the members of the Expedition who have been wintering in Adelle Land.

Dr. Fritz Loewe, senior lecturer in charge of the Department of Meteorology at the University of Melbourne, was appointed Australian observer with the 1951 party. He became the expedition's glaciologist and planned to remain 12 months on the Antarctic mainland. Dr. Loewe went to the Antarctic with the Australian National Research Expedition in 1948 and was Australian observer on the "Commandant Charcot" when she first landed the French Expedition at Adelle Land.

This story was told by the Captain of the "Commandant Charcot" at Papeete on the ship's arrival at Tahiti in April.

While the vessel was tied up to a floe during a reconnaissance flight, the crew went "ashore" to play a game of football. While the game was in progress, the teams were astonished by the participation of several new players, madly chasing after the ball. They were Emperor penguins for whom anything like an egg has an irresistible attraction. A football of regulation size ought to satisfy the maternal instincts of the most ambitious penguin.

DISCOVERY 11

The Discovery 11, which left Durban in June to continue the circum-polar voyage which began from Fremantle on February 2, is now reported to have left Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands on July 4. She was expected at Simonstown, South Africa, on July 28. She was then to proceed to Durban, leaving that port on August 10, with Heard Island and Kerguelen Island as ports of call, the cruise ending at Fremantle about mid-September. Nine previous circumnavigations have been made, in 275 years, only one of them, that by Discovery 18 years ago, being a winter voyage.

FALKLAND ISLAND DEPENDENCIES SURVEY.

The F.I.D.S. Vessel John Biscoe made her now routine voyage from Port Stanley to re-provision the British posts in Graham Land, between Easter Sunday and April 22. The John Biscoe returned to Southampton on July 26, after a 40,000 mile Antarctic voyage. Several rare birds were taken to England, including some kelp-geese, whose normal food is seaweed. After overhaul, the vessel will set out again for the south in October.

CHILE IN THE ANTARCTIC.

A report comes from Santiago that the "garrisons" of the Chilean base in the South Shetlands, established in 1947 on Greenwich Island, and the base in "O'Higgins Land" (Graham Land) have been relieved; and that a third base is to be set up still further south. This Chilean base has been located by F.I.D.S. vessel John Biscoe at Paradise Bay, Penguin Island, in west Graham Land.

WHALING.

The International Whaling Commission's conference at Capetown, in considering proposals for the preservation of whale stocks decided to retain the limit of 16,000 blue whales and 1250 humpback whales as the maximum catch allowed in the waters south of 40° latitude next whaling season. During the past season the blue whale limit was exceeded by 413 and the humpback limit by 380.

Mr. Eric Louw, South African Minister for Economic Affairs, in opening the plenary session of the Conference on July 23rd., stated that the South African factory ship Abraham Larsen had obtained the biggest yield, 162,000 barrels.

The 1950/51 Season

The first Japanese whalers were welcomed back from the Antarctic on April 6th. During the season (22nd. December to 9th March) the fleet took a total of 2,332 baleen whales, while 409 sperm whales were caught before the opening of the baleen season. Japanese compliance with International Whaling Agreements is stated to have been "exemplary". The Japanese delegates to the recent International Commission stated that Japan did not intend to increase her fleet of Antarctic factory ships beyond the two she now had.

The Norwegian Whaling Journal states that whale oil production for 1950/51 season rose by 139,000 barrels to 2,150,000 barrels. 19 pelagic whaling expeditions took part, one more than in the previous season. The quota of 16,000 blue whale units was caught in 78 days, compared with 84 days in 1949/50.

With whale oil fetching over £100 a ton, some expeditions can hope to secure a £1 million turnover.

.....

Following the reference in our last bulletin re a Panamanian "pirate" whaling ship manned largely by Germans and operating, it was thought, outside the International whaling convention, comes a report that an attempt by Norwegian interests to buy out this group for £300,000 fell through, and that the Germans were able to sell their catch on the international black market at higher than the ruling world price.

.....

This year, meteorological broadcasts to the whaling fleets have been inaugurated. They were heard by at least three factory ships and 45 catchers.

#### New Factory Ships:

The British factory ships, Balaena and Southern Garden, will be joined this month by Southern Harvester and Southern Venturer. The Argentinian Juan Peron of 30,000 tons is nearing completion at Belfast. More news comes from Rome about the Italian factory ship under construction at Trieste. It is to be a 22,500 ton vessel and will be served by twelve fast hunting craft. The project is stated to be financed entirely by Italian capital and except for three Austrian technicians the staff are Italians.

#### The Electric Harpoon:

A strong adherent of the electric harpoon method of killing whales is Dr. H.R. Lillie, who recently arrived in Australia. He served as surgeon with a Scottish whaling fleet in the Antarctic in 1946/47 and after seeing nine explosive harpoons used over a period of five hours to kill one whale, he has given much time and thought to evolving a more humane killing method. The English General Electric Co. he says has produced a satisfactory electric harpoon system. When this harpoon is fired it trails a copper cable connected to a generator driven off the main engine of the catcher. The current (200-300 volts) stuns the whale as soon as the light metal harpoon enters the body. Dr. Lillie and others maintain that the system is practicable and much more economical than the explosive harpoon method at present used.

Australian whalers have discounted the reports of great suffering by whales and maintain that very few require even a second explosive harpoon. Most whales, they say, die instantly or in a few minutes after the first strike.

.....

A drug "ACTH" for the relief of arthritis is being made from a substance found in the pituitary gland of whales. Norwegian whalers are said to have taken a large quantity of this substance back to Europe from the Antarctic.

The Australian Minister for Air, said on August 17 that as the National Institute of Oceanography in London wanted information regarding the migration of whales off the North West Coast of Australia during July-September, Royal Australian Air Force aircraft engaged in training flights over the area were keeping a close watch. Their observations over an ocean belt 50 miles wide might prove useful in planning the operations of the whaling industry in 1952.

.....

#### ANTARCTIC FLIGHT.

A Norwegian biologist recently in South Georgia shot a giant petrel upon whose leg he found an aluminium ring bearing the inscription, "Melb.Vic.Aust.10, 50, 009."

This bird was "ringed" in October 1950 at Macquaries Island, so that the bird had flown half way round the world, a distance of at least 6500 miles across the Southern Ocean.

#### ANTARCTIC FLIGHT?

The Argentine Government is assisting the sportsman airman, Enrique Diaz Saenz Vallente in his organisation of a proposed flight from Buenos Aires to Melbourne via the South magnetic pole, a distance of more than 7,000 miles. The flight, scheduled to start "shortly" will be non-stop except for a call at Gallegos (Southern Patagonia) for refuelling. The project is said to be exclusively sporting but "does not exclude the aim of studying a direct route between the two continents for commercial air lines."

.....