

The Anglo-Scandinavian Expedition.

During the winter months, the 14 surviving members of the British-Norwegian-Swedish Expedition in Queen Maud Land have had a particularly dark and trying time, as the Diesel generators in the snow-covered huts had worn down and could be used only for the radio, a few hours each day. The absolutely essential lighting was generated by the windmills with the help of the occasional gale.

Winter Work.

The geologists, as well as sinking the 325 ft. shaft into the ice referred to in our last Bulletin, drove another shaft of 30 ft. in order to study the annual accumulation of snow. This gave them a picture of climatic conditions over the past 13 years. Preparations for the Spring sledging journeys included the making of dog pemmican from stockfish, oatmeal and margarine. A new pier was built seven miles from Maudheim to replace the old pier in Norsel Bay, which had broken up.

Spring Journeys.

Sledging began earlier than in 1950. On September 22nd the geological and glaciological parties, five men in all, set out, followed on October 18th by the "siesmic group" of four men. In the main, the work planned was in the same areas as previously, completing the 1950 work and extending it where possible.

The siesmic group carried a living-hut built up on one of their sledges. Robin, the Australian physicist, planned a "siesmic profile" from the base all the way to the inland plateau. This work is carried out in a similar manner to echo-sounding at sea: sound-waves from a charge exploded on the surface travel down through the ice and are reflected from the rock beneath, the time between explosion and echo giving the thickness of the ice. This gives a picture of the underlying land surface.

The field work this season will be more difficult and dangerous, as the dogs are weaker and amateur mechanics will be handling the snow-tractors. (It will be recalled that the mechanic, Leslie Quar, was one of those who were drowned last February.) Only two of the "weasels" are left and Robins' party may have to jettison these and return by dog-sledge, in order to complete the siesmic profile referred to above.

When all teams are in the field, only five men will be left at Maudheim to carry out the meteorological work and maintain radio communication with the outside world. All the field parties will have to return to base in December or early January in order to be ready to return on the NORSEL.

Relief Ship.

The 500-ton Norwegian sealer NORSEL left Tromso in Norway late in October on her third voyage via Capetown to the Antarctic. On her first voyage in 1949 she carried the members of the Anglo-Scandinavian Expedition to Queen Maud Land; this time she is to bring them home again.

AUSTRALIAN ACTIVITIESFlight to Adélie Land.

The Australian Minister for External Affairs, Mr. R.G. Casey, announced on the 21st October that a 1500-mile pioneering flight from Hobart to Adélie Land on the Antarctic mainland is planned in January, 1952. Captain P.G. Taylor who will be in command will fly the same Catalina "Frigate Bird II" in which he flew to Chile some months ago. Although aircraft have been used on the Antarctic continent before, no aircraft has yet flown from a continental land base to the Antarctic.

The first lap will be from Hobart to Macquarie Island, a distance of/

of 500 miles; and the second from Macquarie to Adélie Land, approximately 1000 miles. A Navy vessel will probably be stationed at some point on this second section. Captain Taylor proposes to consult American airmen with polar flying experience before commencing his own flight.

A successful flight would teach us a great deal about Polar navigation, said Mr. Casey, and how best to send relief if needed to Australian Antarctic bases. Later, an air survey of the Australian sector would be made.

Australia plans to establish a permanent base on the Antarctic continent within six years, but realises that she must move quickly if she wishes to hold the land - nearly three million square miles - to which she lays claim.

In the Sub-Antarctic.

The Australian Antarctic Division is trying to obtain a vessel to replace H.M.A.S. "Labuan", which was so severely buffeted on its Heard Island trip early this year that the Navy withdrew it from Sub-Antarctic service. It is hoped that construction of the new Antarctic ship, plans for which are being drawn up, will commence early in 1952.

Meanwhile the Division is advertising for 30 men, including scientists and carpenters, to replace in January the men at present on Heard and Macquarie Islands.

The Heard Island party is breeding sledge-dogs from huskies left by the French expedition. An experienced dog attendant with some veterinary knowledge and, if possible, skilled in sledge-driving is wanted to train the young dogs for forthcoming Antarctic work, maybe on the Antarctic continent itself.

The biologists on Heard Island have been busy branding leopard-seals to check their movements. A portable forge is dragged on a sledge to the beach being worked and is left a "safe" distance from the shore at night. Recently a cyclone drove masses of ice a hundred yards beyond the beach, destroying the equipment.

9,000 ft. high Big Ben has been sending up smoke and steam from a spot halfway up the mountain-side, where previously there was an unbroken slope of snow and ice. An attempt to investigate the new crater was barred by deep and wide crevasses.

An attempt was also made to reach Long Beach, the most Southerly part of the Island. Early in September a depot hut built on sledge runners was taken in stages by dog-teams across the snow and glaciers, and established 200 ft. above sea-level. An attempt early in October to push on to Long Beach was defeated by blizzards and poor visibility.

Three drifting icebergs have been seen at Macquarie Island this Spring. The largest, which was a quarter of a mile long and a hundred feet high, was sighted east of Lusitania Bay at the southern end of the island. Another ran aground and broke up after twelve days on the Judge and Clerk Islands, two bare rocks about eight miles north of the A.N.A.R.E. Station. The third moved north east past the Station and provided a field day for photographic enthusiasts.

Icebergs in the Southern Ocean are formed when pieces of shelf-ice break off from the Antarctic Continent. Impelled by ocean currents they drift northward into warmer waters, break up and melt away. This is the first time that icebergs have been sighted by A.N.A.R.E. personnel off Macquarie Island.

DISCOVERY II

The Discovery II, which left Dunedin last June, called at the Falkland Islands, Durban, Kerguelen Island and Heard Island, where on September 7th she landed mail and stores, including French coins and magazines/

magazines, a present to the Australians from the Frenchmen on Kerguelen. Discovery then proceeded to Fremantle where she arrived on 21st September. She had been unable anywhere to get nearer than 90 miles from the Antarctic Continent. She sailed from Fremantle for England on 2nd October, having traversed 27,000 miles since she left Fremantle last February.

Frenchmen in Adélie Land.

The French Expedition now under Maurice Barre, which has occupied Port Martin in Adélie Land since January, 1950, is preparing for relief early next year. Reports received by the Australian Antarctic Division indicate that the scientific programme has been progressing satisfactorily. The Australian observer Dr. Loewe is said to be "thoroughly enjoying" his life with the French party.

A 42-day survey sledge journey followed the 67th parallel for over 200 miles. One party came upon a food cache left 40 years before by Mawson's Expedition, and dined that night on rhubarb and milk, 1911 vintage.

The "Commandant Charcot" is not making the voyage South this year. The relief party left Rouen in October in a Norwegian vessel, the "Totten". Captain Chabasseur and Captain Marret of the "Charcot" are on board. The "Totten" is expected to call at Adelaide and to reach Hobart early in December, before proceeding to Adélie Land.

F.I.D.S.

The Falkland Island Dependencies survey ship "John Biscoe" left Southampton on October 22nd. Her crew of 30 includes two English boys of 16 and 17 years of age, and on board are 18 men who will spend eighteen months to two years at one or other of the seven bases. One major task is to replace the hut at Hope Bay, burnt down with loss of life three years ago.

Argentine Claims.

The Argentine National Commission of the Antarctic, set up in effect to contest British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Antarctic Dependencies, was given higher official status by a decree issued by General Peron's administration on September 12th. Members of the Commission are now to include delegates from the Ministries of Defence, Army, Marine, Air, Agriculture and Livestock industry, and Commerce, Education, Communications and Technical Affairs.

Since 1947 Argentine has established five unauthorised naval, military and air bases in British Antarctica, as well as one weather station which was established by Dr. Bruce nearly 50 years ago in the South Orkneys and has since been kept in operation by the Argentine Government.

The Argentine Minister of Marine announced last month that naval aircraft would take part in the next Argentine expedition to what he called "the Argentine Antarctic". The planes will be carried on two transports which will form part of an expedition sailing South this month (December) to make a photographic survey of the Antarctic coastline. Since none of the vessels is a warship, presumably there will be technically no infringement of the agreement with Chile and Britain, recently entered into for the fourth successive year, not to send warships South of latitude 60° S during the current Antarctic summer, except on the customary routine trips.

Byrd Again?

Admiral Byrd announced on 24th November that he was planning to make his fifth expedition to the Antarctic "when world tensions ease". Operating again from Little America he proposes, says a New York report, to claim vast areas for the United States. Government backing is not yet assured. It is possible, says the report, that some women may be included in the party.

"Operations/

"OPERATIONS IN THE ANTARCTIC"

When Alan Reece, geologist of the Anglo-Scandinavian Expedition in Queen Maud Land, was sledging far to the South of Maudheim on 11th March, one of his eyes was injured by a chip of rock. Dr. Ove Wilson went out to meet the sledging party and examined the eye eight days after the accident, but the base was not reached until May 30th. Then, after radio consultations with a specialist in Sweden, it was decided to operate to save the other eye.

The operating table was improvised from boxes, the oxygen mask from spare "weasel" parts, and the special instruments from welding wire. With the expedition photographer as anaesthetist, geologist Roots as assistant surgeon, and the glaciologist as nurse, the injured eye was successfully removed. By the end of September Reece was out on another sledging journey, in perfect health.

The Heard Island cook was recently successfully operated on for appendicitis by Dr. Otaker Rec, the Czech doctor with the Australian expedition on the Island.

ANTARCTIC VETERANS.

Dr. L.D.A. Hussey, veteran of Shackleton's 1914 ("Endurance") and 1921 ("Quest") expeditions, and author of "South with Shackleton" published in 1949, was in Brisbane recently as doctor on the freighter "Clan Macauley". He has been a ship's doctor for the past four years. Hussey still plays his famous banjo, and recently, as President of the London Banjo Club, led the band in the first banjo television appearance ever made.

"Wyatt Earp" is for sale. Originally the Norwegian "Fane Fjord", constructed in 1919, she was the late Lincoln Ellsworth's ship on his Antarctic expeditions of 1933-1938. Bought by the Australian Government in 1939, she was on war service in the Pacific. In February, 1948, she sailed South again from Melbourne and made several unsuccessful attempts to reach the Antarctic mainland south of Australia. Now it has been decided to try again with a vessel of greater power.

THE WHALERS

The 1952 Antarctic Whaling season commences on January 2nd.

Statistics compiled by the International Bureau of Whaling Statistics in Sandefjord, Norway, show that last season 31,072 whales were caught, yielding 358,000 tons of oil, worth (at £210 per ton) over £75 million. An average sized whale is worth about £1500 in oil and by-products. Three quarters of the whales killed are caught in Antarctic waters. As approximately half the whales killed are females, of which a third may be pregnant, whales have already been so reduced in numbers that drastic restrictions have had to be placed on the catch.

For the coming season, the International Whaling Commission, which met at Capetown last July, has re-imposed the limit of 16,000 blue whale units. The season will end in April, or earlier if the quota is reached before that date, in which case a radio "cease-fire" would be radio-ed to the fleets by the Bureau of Whaling Statistics. Unfortunately, some countries, such as Argentine, Peru and Italy, are not signatories to the Whaling Convention although Argentine has been whaling for fifty years.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on London in June, 1952.

Britain (3), Holland, Japan (2), Norway (10), Panama, Russia and South Africa have been reported as sending whaling fleets south for the coming season. Competition will be keen, but there is unlikely to be any shortage of whaling crews. The life is tough, but all members of the crews are paid "on catch" and even the galley-boy may earn as much as £300 in the six-month season, while a skilled harpoonist may earn £5,000 or more. Last season there were 600 more volunteers for British whaling crews than were needed. 12,000 men were engaged in all, including 7874 Norwegians.

News/

News of the Fleets.

The Dutch factory ship "Willem Barendz" left Amsterdam on 11th October for her sixth Antarctic whaling cruise.

The first Japanese fleet of 22 vessels was to leave Osaka on 25th October, with a second fleet to follow at the end of the month. The two mother-ships, each of 20,000 tons, are equipped with sound-detecting instruments.

The "Thorshoevdi" and the "Norwhal" left Norway on 25th September.

A German-manned fleet of seventeen ships under the flag of Panama was reported as about to leave Kiel in September. The 13,000 ton factory-ship "Olympic Challenger" will carry a helicopter and other whalers will have radio sets giving the harpooners instant contact with the bridge and engine room. The crews total 520 men.

Russia's fleet will include the factory-ship "Slava".

The new 27,000 ton Argentine factory-ship "Juan Peron" lies at anchor near Belfast, where she was built by Harland and Wolff, because it has been found impossible to get an experienced crew. The Argentine Government may be forced to sell the vessel as an oil-tanker. Meanwhile the Belfast Harbour Commissioners are collecting £190 every day the ship fills a berth.

Meanwhile the whales are moving towards their rendez-vous with the killers, after spending the winter months in the tropics where the young whale-calves are born. Whaling has been active on the Australian coast during recent months, but has now ceased.