



ANTARCTIC NEWS BULLETIN

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"We can't afford to ignore the great frozen continent at our back door. If we as a Nation haven't the energy to develop its great potentialities, there is little doubt there are men of other nations who have - and will."

This wassaid of Australia.
It is true also of New Zealand.

THE ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN EXPEDITION

Two Years' Work Concluded.

The "Norsel" left Capetown on December 1st on the way south to Queen Maud Land to bring back the Norwegian, Swedish and British explorers who had wintered there. Ice was met on December 12th in 58°S. Later, the ship was caught in a narrow lead between mile-wide masses of ice, and dynamite had to be used to blast a way out. The Antarctic Circle was crossed during the night of December 16-17. By this time wireless contact had been established with the base, Maudheim, and with sledge parties in the field. Norsel Bay was reached just before Christmas and the men on the ship sang carols which were clearly heard by the sledge parties 200 miles further South.

Summer Work

In November only five men were left at Maudheim, carrying out meteorological work and trying (not with complete success) to maintain radio contact with the teams in the field.

While temporarily alone at the Advanced Base (in 72°03'S, 190 miles South of Maudheim) Dr. Ove Wilson woke to find his tent on fire. He rescued his camera and notes, but had to make himself a virtually new sleeping bag out of portions of the old one patched up with surgical tape. Fortunately there was a spare tent at the base.

Schytt, the glaciologist, and Reece, geologist, who, it will be remembered, had an eye removed last June, report climbing a red-sandstone mountain in 72°06'S, 3°05'W. They joined Dr. Wilson at the Advanced Base on November 15th and reached Maudheim on the 27th after a two months' journey. An artificial eye for Reece, ordered by radio, was part of the Norsel's cargo.

What lies beneath the Ice-cap?

In our December issue (No. 4) we referred to the "echo-sounding" device used by the group under G. de Q. Robin, the Australian physicist, to obtain a "siesmic profile" of the Antanctica Continent and so learn what lies beneath the great ice-cap. Preliminary reports of the work of this 3-man party suggest some interesting results. Leaving Maudheim on October 18th (1951) they did not get as far South as was hoped, but reached 74°18'S in 6°40'E, 190 miles from the Advanced Base. Here they were 8,500 ft. above sea/

sea level.

In order to get satisfactory "echoes" from the rock far below the ice surface, the party had to bore up to 40 feet with equipment designed for a 10 ft. bore. Results suggest that the rounded ice-hills characteristic of the coastal area begin where the sea water is of insufficient depth to float the 600 ft. thick shelf-ice. At a surface elevation of 1700 ft. echo-sounding showed the rock underneath to be still below sea-level. Further South still, it was found that the level-surfaced ice was 1300 to 1660 feet thick even above the ridges, while over the intervening valleys the ice reached a thickness of 3,300 ft. 85 miles in from the ice-edge, rock in places 6000 ft. below the ice surface, and therefore below sea-level, suggests great fjords reaching far inland, and there were points even 180 miles from the shelf-ice where the rock beneath was below sea-level.

The greatest ice-depth recorded was 7,450 ft. It is computed that the water bound up in this colossal ice cap would be enough to raise the level of the world's oceans 90 ft.

The party arrived back at Maudheim on January 6th.

"Norsel" plays her part.

On January 4th a flight was made from the Norsel South and South West to 75°S, 13°5'W. Huge crevasses over a mile long were sighted, and open water could be seen at the Eastern end of the Weddell Sea.

On the 5th, "Norsel" left the Bay to map the coast of Crown Princess Martha Land, the first time an accurate survey of this coast has been made. The weather was ideal, with the sun shining from a cloudless sky. Back at Norsel Bay on January 9th, several successful flights were made by the Expedition's aircraft carried on the "Norsel", including one to 21°W, as far as the Weddell Sea.

Last Days at Maudheim.

By the time the coast survey voyage was over, the whole wintering party had gathered again at Maudheim and preparations for the departure were in full swing. By January 14th, the Expedition was ready to leave. The flags of the three nations, Norway, Sweden and Britain, were hauled down. All that was left to do was to load up the valuable equipment and the material collected on the arduous journeys of the past two years. Included in the specimens is a collection of insects made in the Boreas mountains. An attempt is being made to bring some back alive.

Then came the hated task of killing the dogs who, despite the success of motor transport, had played an important part in the work of the Expedition.

The Long Farewell.

The final sad task was the laying of a wreath in the national colours of Norway, Sweden and Britain, on the edge of the barrier over which their comrades Leslie Quar, John Jelbort and Bertil Ekstrom plunged with their snow-tractor into the ice-strewn sea. Maudheim, their Antarctic home, is already six feet under the snow. Ice pressure has twisted walls and floor and within a couple of years or so the whole base will have disappeared under the relentless snow. So it is unlikely that any mortal eye will ever gaze on Maudheim again.

THE FRENCH ADELIE LAND EXPEDITION

Small group carry on.

It is over two years since the first party of French explorers under Andre Liotard landed on January 19th, 1950, from the "Commandant Charcot" and established the base of Port Martin on the coast of Adelie Land, first discovered by the Frenchman, Dumont d'Urville, in 1840. A change of personnel took place in January, 1951, when the "Commandant Charcot" returned to the Antarctic, Maurice Barre replacing Liotard as leader, and only two of the original party remaining with the 15 new men for a second year.

The "Commandant Charcot" was replaced for the second relief-trip by a sister-ship to the "Norsel", the Norwegian sealer "Tottan" (546 tons) which reached/

reached Adelie Land on January 14th last via Hobart. She carried South eleven French scientists, including three who planned to establish an isolated base 50 miles away at Point Geologie, where the fifth Emperor penguin rookery in the world was discovered in 1950. On an archipelago three miles from the coast, and completely surrounded in Winter by sea-ice, it is estimated that there are 5,000 Emperor penguins, sheltered by a 20-mile long glacier. The leader of this party was Marcio Marret, who was with the original 1950-51 party. He planned to film life at the rookery, while the doctor and the biologist studied the breeding habits and the embryology and development of the "chickens". The party hoped to study also such puzzling questions as how this 70-80 lb. bird, three or four feet high, stands up to winter conditions which drive almost every other living thing towards the milder North.

Work of the Expedition.

On the 31st January, twenty-one members of the Expedition under Lieut. Barre reached Hobart on the "Tottan". Seventeen had spent a year in the Antarctic, the other four being members of the relief party, forced by the fire of 23rd January to return home.

The Expedition fully confirmed Mawson's name for this sector of the Antarctic Continent, "The Home of the Blizzard". In March, 1951, the wind never dropped below 45 miles an hour and at times reached more than 140 miles an hour.

One of the Expedition's major undertakings was a survey of the coast to the East. For this journey the explorers used "weasels", two of which were equipped with closed cabins in which the scientists could live in reasonable comfort if caught by a blizzard. This survey was completed in May last year.

Two days before mid-winter five men left the Port Martin base for Point Geologie, 50 miles to the West, on a task like that undertaken by Dr. Wilson, Bowers and Cherry-Garrard in 1912 in "The Worst Journey in the World", a flying visit to the Emperor penguin rookery. The Frenchmen, however, had two "weasels" and the rookery was reached after 48 hours' travelling. On the return trip, carrying Emperor penguin eggs, heavy snowfalls had made the sea-ice treacherous, and several times the "weasels" broke through the surface ice.

A journey towards the unknown West was checked by a lane of open water fifteen miles from Point Geologie. The water extended from the coast inland to the limit of sight.

In October a visit was paid to Mawson's old quarters at Cape Denison.

One member of the Expedition, Schwartz, was lost in a blizzard for three hours and had hands and face badly frostbitten. The radio operator underwent two operations for intestinal occlusion. Both men returned to Australia fit and well.

Fire on the Snow.

The disastrous fire occurred right at the close of the Expedition's stay in the Antarctic. It broke out at 3.30 a.m. on January 23rd in the engine room at the base. Fanned by a strong wind of more than 70 miles an hour, the flames swept right through the base in less than an hour, despite an early attempt to make a fire-break by destroying the barracks in the middle of the camp. The explorers then concentrated on saving what they could from the flames, and they succeeded in rescuing practically the whole of the records and specimens, the fruit of their year's work. But many thousands of pounds worth of buildings and equipment were destroyed.

Seven stay on.

When the "Tottan" left for Hobart seven scientists of the relief party remained in the Antarctic, and they have built a new base at Point Geologie, in a more sheltered position than the original base at Port Martin.

At Hobart, a French advertisement for "homes" for a fully-grown husky and four husky pups brought dozens of replies, but Australian quarantine officials said the dogs must either be left on the "Tottan" or be destroyed. When the "Tottan" left early in February for Heard and Macquarie Islands the dogs were still on board, so apparently their lives are to be spared. Another husky is going to Norway and then by air to France, where ex-expedition members have/

have assured it a home.

Five members of the returning party, including Lieut. Barre himself, are returning to France by air.

"DISCOVERY II."

The National Oceanographical Council reports that "Discovery II" left Fremantle on October 2nd and after carrying out various scientific investigations reached Plymouth on December 6th. The staff is now busy analysing the data gathered during the recent commission. Three previously unknown under-water mountains were discovered in the Pacific and Indian oceans. One member of the staff has been lent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as a whaling inspector on the factory ship "Balaena" for the 1951-52 season. After re-fitting "Discovery II" will work meanwhile from Plymouth, her next commission comprising mainly physical and biological research in the North Atlantic.

F.I.D.S.

The Falkland Islands Dependencies survey vessel "John Biscoe" carried out the first routine trip for the 1951-52 season between December 7th and January 3rd. Calls were made at Admiralty Bay (King George Is.) and Deception Island, in the South Shetlands, and at Signy Island in the South Orkneys, with mails, stores and reliefs. Grytviken in S. Georgia was also visited; and the base at Port Lockroy on Wiencke Island in the Palmer Archipelago was re-established.

"Incident" at Hope Bay.

On February 4th, 1949, following a fire on November 8th, 1948, in which two members of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey lost their lives, the British base in Hope Bay, near the tip of Palmer Peninsula, Graham Land, was evacuated. Last January the F.I.D.S. vessel "John Biscoe" left the Falklands on her second voyage of the season with stores, mail and reliefs for the various posts, and with instructions to re-establish the Hope Bay base. The vessel reached Hope Bay on the evening of Wednesday, January 30th, to find an Argentine party already established there. Bad weather delayed a landing until the Friday morning, when the Argentine commander informed the British party that he would resist the setting-up of a base, if necessary by force. The unarmed British took no notice of this statement and proceeded to land stores, whereupon several bursts from a machine-gun were fired over their heads. No one was injured, but the British party was surrounded by Argentinians armed with rifles, and forced to return to the boat.

In reply to a vigorous protest by the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires, the Argentine Government informed the British authorities that the over-zealous Argentine commander at Hope Bay had acted in error, and assurances were given that his instructions had been "rectified".

However, the British Admiralty promptly despatched the armed frigate "Burghead Bay" (1600 tons) to the Antarctic, with Sir Miles Clifford, Governor of the Falklands, on board, on what is officially described as "a customary seasonal mission". Meanwhile the landing of stores and equipment at Hope Bay was resumed, and the Argentinians, at the request of the "John Biscoe's" captain, re-landed stores which they had removed from the beach to the ship.

The Buenos Aires newspapers made cautious references to the incident, printing reports without comment, and the official organs ignored the occurrence almost completely.

THE ARGENTINE IN THE ANTARCTIC

An Argentine air expedition left at the end of November, flying via Rio Gallegos in South Patagonia to Marguerite Bay, West Graham Land, where an Argentine base, the fifth in the Antarctic sector claimed by the Argentine Republic, was occupied in February, 1951. The purpose of the new expedition is, it is stated, to "re-affirm Argentine sovereignty" over that portion of Antarctica, and to carry out scientific work in conjunction with the party at the base.

A Douglas plane also flew non-stop from Santa Cruz via Deception Island, Gerlache Strait, Liege and Brabant Islands and "the Melchior Archipelago", to South of the Antarctic Circle, and back to its base. Scientific observations were made throughout the flight and data gathered for the completion of marine charts/

charts of the region.

As part of an experimental plan to establish a regular air service between the Argentine and the Antarctic, naval Catalina planes flew from Deception Island to Buenos Aires in under one day, making one stop for re-fuelling at the Rio Grande naval air-station in Tierra del Fuego.

Argentine Navy active in the Antarctic.

The Naval task-force, stationed in the Antarctic, said to number 200 men in three aircraft and two naval vessels, has been carrying out reconnaissance and hydrographic research flights as well as taking ionospheric soundings and gravity tests. Scientists who accompanied the task-force have carried out geological, palaeontological, botanical, zoological and marine-biological research. Trees and shrubs suitable for cold climates will be planted as an experiment.

The hydrographic research vessel "Sanaviron" left Buenos Aires on January 15th to join the task-force.

An Argentine naval detachment on Melchior Island in the Palmer Archipelago reports the finding of fresh water on the Island after drilling to a depth of 11 metres.

WITH THE WHALING FLEETS

No more whale-marking is being undertaken meanwhile by the "William Scoresby". The Antarctic baleen whaling season commenced on January 2nd. Nineteen refinery ships and 280 catchers are engaged, and over 12,000 men employed on fleets of seven nations, Norway (10), Britain (3), Japan (2), South Africa, Holland, Russia and Panama. The season was expected to end about 10th March, by which time the full quota of 16,000 blue whale units, re-imposed on the industry by the International Whaling Commission at Capetown last year, would probably have been killed.

A "blue-whale unit" is reckoned as:-

One blue-whale of minimum length 70 ft.
Two fin-whales (60 ft.)
Six sei (40 ft.)
Two and a half humpbacks (35 ft.)

A Japanese chaser, "Seki Maru" (400 tons) arrived at Fremantle on 22nd December for repairs to a broken propeller-blade. The Captain stated that the Japanese fleet had been operating since November 14th near Scott Island, about 1700 miles South of Wellington. This would be presumably for sperm whales only.

A Japanese fleet which included the factory-ships "Gyokuei Maru" (10,419 tons) and "Setsu Maru" (9329 tons) was in radio communication with New Zealand on March 15th while under gale conditions between the Chathams and the South Island of New Zealand. On the 17th the fleet was sheltering at anchor off Napier.

The Dutch factory-ship "Willem Barendsz" (18,000 tons) extracted 2,700 tons of whale oil in the first two weeks of January, 30 per cent more than in the corresponding period of 1951. This oil has been sold to the Netherlands Government for approximately £146 a ton.

The new Argentine factory-ship "Juan Peron" has arrived at Buenos Aires. The largest of its kind in the world, it is said to be capable of producing 38 thousand tons of oil and 15 thousand tons of "sub-products". It is fitted for the processing of whale meat, and can also carry fuel-oil, frozen meat, cereals and other cargo. It is equipped with an operating theatre, X-ray apparatus, comfortable dining saloons, libraries and a cinema.

The Panamanian vessel "Omiros", which for the 1950-51 season was manned by Germans, has now a Greek master and crew.

A new device, says a recent report, enables a radio transmitter to be fired into a whale by the harpoon gun, giving out location signals every two minutes for several days.

AUSTRALIA IN THE SOUTH

The Antarctic Division of the Australian Department of External Affairs, under Dr. Phillip G. Law, intends to maintain the stations on Heard and Macquarie Island indefinitely, relieving the personnel every year, and plans a station on the/

the Continent itself, South of Australia, as soon as a suitable ship can be constructed. The Government hopes to begin building the 2,400 ton vessel this year, and to set up the continental station during the summer of 1953-54. In the recent estimates for the Department was an allocation of £149,000 for the expedition. Huskies are being bred and trained on Heard Island. Two Auster aircraft have been purchased as reconnaissance planes.

It was feared that owing to great difficulty in obtaining a suitable ship relief for the scientists and others on Heard Island would be at least two months late. They had completed a year on the Island in January, and had food for another four months. However, arrangements were finally made to charter the Norwegian sealer "Tottan" which arrived back in Australia from the Antarctic in February with members of the French Adelie Land Expedition. A relief party of 14 men left Melbourne on the "Tottan" on February 9th.

Dr. Law, who has already crossed the 50th parallel more than ten times, was expected to accompany the party to supervise the relief. With him was going a new cook for the Expedition, Paul Teyssier. M. Teyssier is a French chef, once of the Hotel King Georges V. in Paris, and more recently head chef at a leading Australian Tourist Hotel. A paratrooper and winner of the Croix de Guerre in the war, he has thrown away other jobs worth £1500 a year to go to Heard Island as cook at £12. a week.

Accomplishment on Heard Island.

Although for several years members of the Heard Island expedition have made attempts to get to Long Beach on the Southern shore of the Island, they have always been foiled by bad weather, poor visibility and the dangerously crevassed Abbotsmith Glacier. Early last year a portable depot-hut on sledge runners was drawn as far as the Western fringe of the glacier. In November a party of three discovered a practicable route across the glacier, and with great difficulty, culminating in nine hours of continuous glacier travel, attained the beach. It proved a biologist's paradise, and the party spent three days amassing a quantity of important scientific data.

Carrying on, at times drenched and half-frozen, they succeeded in making the first complete circuit of the Island in 16 days. During this period, their actual travelling time only amounted to 42 hours!

Back at Home.

Australia's newest and most exclusive club - the Anareans - held its inaugural meeting in Melbourne on 14th January. Membership is limited to members of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (A.N.A.R.E.) who have spent at least twelve months below 50°S, and have, in the opinion of the Club Committee, "made a worthwhile contribution to the success of one of the expeditions."

Technical and other difficulties prevented the carrying out of the proposed flight from Australia to the Antarctic Continent by Captain P.G. Taylor last year. The flight, to survey a possible landing place if a permanent camp were set up, will probably be carried out this year or in 1953.

"THE ANTARCTIC TODAY"

This first major publication of the New Zealand Antarctic Society, a 400 page production with 64 pages of illustrations, charts, etc., is expected to be on sale about August. No-one interested in Antarctic affairs can afford to be without this splendidly-produced and authoritative work. As the edition is strictly limited, and this is the sort of book which invariably rises sharply in value as soon as the edition is exhausted, immediate application for copies is clearly advisable. The price, 47/6d., is very low for such a first-grade book. Orders should be forwarded to The Secretary, N.Z. Antarctic Society, P.O. Box 2110, Wellington, N.Z.

ANOTHER U.S. EXPEDITION?

Commander Finn Ronne, veteran of Byrd's 1933-5 and 1939-41 expeditions, and leader of an outstanding 15-month exploring project in Graham Land in 1946-8, is completing plans for yet another sortie into the Antarctic. Mrs. Ronne, the first woman Antarctic explorer, does not intend to go again.

A resolution is now pending before the United States Foreign Affairs Committee by which the United States would declare its sovereignty over the area between 90°W and 150°W (i.e. James W. Ellsworth Land and Marie Byrd Land) and would receive rights based on discoveries and exploration in other areas.