



# ANTARCTIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Quarterly.

Editor: L.B. Quartermain, 1 Ariki Road, Wellington, E.2., New Zealand.

No. 6.

June, 1952.

## "NORSEL" RETURNS HOME

The Norwegian sealer "Norsel", headquarters ship of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Queen Maud Land expedition, has returned to England with her mission completed. The expedition arrived in the Antarctic in February, 1950, two years previously, accompanied on the "Norsel" by an R.A.F. reconnaissance unit of two Auster aircraft, which operated during the time the base, Maudheim, was being established and returned on the vessel to Europe. On her 1950-51 visit a Norwegian Air Unit went south. On her latest and final trip to the Antarctic, the "Norsel" carried two aircraft of the Royal Swedish Air Force, with six Swedes, a Norwegian aerial photographer, and two observers of the Royal Navy, to complete the detailed mapping survey commenced the previous season. Unusually fine weather made it possible to carry out an extensive programme.

The personnel of the Expedition disembarked at Santa Cruz in the Canary Islands and passed through London in February before dispersing in Oslo, Norway. Close liaison will be maintained between groups working in Britain, Norway and Sweden while the results of the Expedition's work are being collated and published.

The American-built weasels or snow-tractors used on the Expedition were a pronounced success. Capable of drawing a three-ton load at a satisfactory speed, they climbed without mishap the great snow-covered escarpment far to the south of Maudheim to reach the ice-plateau 7,500 feet above sea-level. In some respects, however, the dog-sledge still holds its own. For instance, the weasel gives no warning above a thinly-bridged crevasse, as the leader of a dog team will do.

The commander of the Expedition, Captain John Glaever, and leading scientists of the party, are to address the Royal Geographical Society during the 1952-53 session.

## THE FRENCH EXPEDITION

Those members of the French Adélie Land Expedition who have recently returned to France have been telling audiences the story of Mawson's heroic struggle back to his base at Cape Denison after the deaths of his companions Ninnis and Mertz. They have revealed that André Liotard, the original leader of the Expedition, used to read aloud a few pages from Mawson's book, "The Home of the Blizzard", each night after dinner.

The French paid their first visit to Mawson's old base, some 40 miles east of their own "Port Martin", in November, 1950. They found that the cross-piece of the Ninnis-Mertz cross, erected 37 years before, had been blown off, so when a second party visited Cape Denison in December they took with them planks, rope and tackle to repair the cross. They found the old hut white and worn to half its original thickness by the blizzards. The door was buried in ice, so they had to enter by a window in the roof. "In the wan light of the little window", wrote Dr. Sapin-Jaloustre in his diary, "we recognised with emotion the familiar interior: the wooden bunks along the walls marked with the initials of

each man; the shelves containing boxes of matches, candles, medicines.... But where were the chairs and tables? Suddenly we realised that there was more than three feet of ice on the floor, ice which had come in through the walls and flooring during the years. The chairs have disappeared and the tables are now close to the ground."

That night they lit their primus stove, melted ice, heated their pemmican soup and coffee, and cleared four bunks of snow. And so, writes Sapin-Jaloustre, "the Australian Expedition's hut, abandoned for nearly 40 years, gives welcome and shelter tonight to four Frenchmen who have come on a pilgrimage of homage and respect.....We felt confusedly presences around us. It was unbelievable that the shell of the hut was all that remained here of those years of work and courage. We almost expected to see the men of the Australian expedition, as dirty and bearded as ourselves, appear before us suddenly, or enter the hut to greet us."

The Frenchman were delighted to find French tinned foods, 37 years old but in perfect condition, and French photographic colour-plates which they took back with them to the manufacturers in France, who used them with good results.

The four men stayed five days at Cape Denison. Returning over the plateau they came across a petrol-tin which must have been dropped by Bickerton's western sledge party in December 1912-January 1913. (Information from an article by June Goddard, Paris, to the "Sydney Morning Herald".)

to study the Emperor Penguin Colony there.

Meanwhile seven men are wintering at Point Geologie base. It was intended (prior to the disastrous fire of 23rd January this year) to put a fourth winter party in Adelie Land in 1953.

#### NEW ARGENTINE BASE IN THE ANTARCTIC.

The Argentine Ministry of Marine has announced the establishment of a new Argentine naval base in Hope Bay, in the extreme north-east of Graham Land, which was the scene of an Anglo-Argentine incident last January.

Argentina now has six bases in the Antarctic: at Laurie Island in the South Orkneys (established by Dr. W.S. Bruce nearly 50 years ago and since maintained by the Argentine Government); at Deception Island; at Gamma Island in the Melchior Archipelago; at Punta Proa on Paradise Harbour, some miles further south; at Marguerite Bay in south-west Graham Land; and at Hope Bay. There are also several refuge-huts.

#### At. Marguerite Bay.

News received from the General San Martin base in Margarita (Marguerite) Bay, established in February, 1951, refers to the construction of buildings, power plants, meteorological installations and roads. The Argentine Navy's transport vessel "BAHIA AGUIRRE" this year unloaded supplies at the base and the ship's crew helped to build a storehouse and erect girders for new sheds to be completed later. A violent storm during the visit to Marguerite Bay cleared the ice, enabling the ship to operate more freely in the area. The team of scientists at the base was relieved by newly-arrived personnel.

On the return journey to Buenos Aires a way had to be opened for ten miles through the ice to enable the "BAHIA AGUIRRE" and the hydrographic research vessel "SANAVIRON" to reach the open sea. The vessels remained in the South Shetlands awaiting more favourable conditions before crossing Drake Passage to South America.

#### By Air to Antarctica.

The Argentine Navy Ministry has announced that it has established a "normal air service" to Graham Land in view of the satisfactory results of flights carried out by the Navy's Air Arm. Planes making the initial flights have returned to Tierra del Fuego. During the operations an emergency and support group using Catalina sea-planes and the frigates "TRINIDAD" and "HEROINA" patrolled the area, supplying meteorological information to the task force, but the safety of the service established between the mainland and the Antarctic was confirmed.

(Information by courtesy of the Argentine Consulate in New Zealand.)

Territorial Claims.

At a ceremony on May 10th in honour of General Hernan Pujarto, leader of the recent Argentine Antarctic Expedition, the President of Argentina, General Juan Peron, is reported in a despatch from Buenos Aires to have said that Argentina and Chile are the only countries that can legitimately claim any rights in Antarctica. He added that the way for Argentina to defend her rights in this case was "to occupy Argentine-Antarctica through a progressive plan."

"Argentina will no longer discuss her Antarctic claims," he said, "we shall defend them.....Last year's scientific expedition marks the beginning of action. We must throw generations of Argentines towards the Antarctic, but without fuss. Justice, God and the future are on our side."

(Reported in the London "Times")

The Helping Hand.

When two Argentine auxiliary naval vessels, the transport "BAHIA BUEN SUCESCO" and a tug, were trapped in the ice off Adelaide Island about 100 miles north of Marguerite Bay, late in March, Sir Miles Clifford, Governor of the Falkland Islands, at once offered to send the "John Biscoe", then at Port Stanley, to their assistance.

The Argentine ships, however, broke free and when last reported were waiting for suitable weather before returning to Argentina.

("Times", London.)

The "JUAN PÉRON"

The whaling factory-ship "JUAN PÉRON" build at Belfast last year and which was recently the subject of litigation, has been sold by its owners, the Compañía Argentina de Pesca, to the Argentine Government, and will be incorporated in the Argentine state merchant fleet. However, the Government is to lease the vessel to the company for ten years, with the option of a further ten years, and will also help the Company to buy catchers, without which a factory-ship is useless. It is not expected that the "JUAN PÉRON" will be operating in Antarctic waters until December, 1953.

FINN RONNE

According to a despatch from Washington, the now veteran American Antarctic explorer, Finn Ronne, hopes to take another expedition to the Antarctic next year. He plans to have a party of 24 men and at least two aeroplanes and to stay on the continent for a year. He hopes to winter in Gould Bay, at the southern end of the Weddell Sea, and explore the interior towards the Pole.

TRAGEDY ON HEARD ISLAND.Two Australians Lose Their Lives.

On Monday, May 26th, three members of the relief party who had landed on Heard Island in February set off on a five-mile journey across the Baudissen Glacier and round the beach to Saddle Point. Nearing their destination they were going along the beach under the terminal ice cliffs of the Little Challenger Glacier when heavy seas trapped them. Alex Forbes, a 31 year old Scot and the dog-trainer of the Expedition, was swept off his feet, but dragged to safety by his two companions. Then radio-operator Dick Hoseason was swept out to sea and not seen again. Forbes and the third man, the meteorologist Lawrie Atkinson, struggled to the shelter of some fallen ice-blocks, and from there were able, ultimately, to reach the moraine between two glaciers and to climb up off the beach. They set out to return to the expedition station, but Atkinson was weakened by their struggles in the icy water, the temperature of which would be about 32 degrees F., and so Forbes decided to push on over the glacier for help, with about two hours of daylight left.

Atkinson meanwhile huddled in a small cave on the beach till dawn, and then realising that Forbes could not have reached the Station, set off back along the beach. After a perilous journey he reached the

base completely exhausted, and with frost-bitten feet.

A search party immediately set out and found the body of Forbes at an altitude of 800 feet, half-way across the Baudissen Glacier. He had died of exposure in a gallant attempt to summon help for his friend. A sledge-party brought back his body on the 28th, and he was buried near the Station. No sign of Hoseason's body has been found.

A.N.A.R.E.

(Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition.)

The "TOTTAN" which left Melbourne on February 9th, arrived back on March 19th with fourteen men from Heard Island. Most of them had been relieved after a year on the Island, but Dr. O. Rec had been with the expedition since August 1950, and meteorologist J. Walsh had stayed on for two years to care for the huskies, now 60 strong.

Exciting incidents narrated by the returning party include the rescue of a man unhurt from a deep crevasse.

Four hundred pup seals were branded and four thousand birds ringed, in order to provide information about migration habits.

Macquarie Island Relief.

The "TOTTAN" left Melbourne again on March 24th with 14 men to relieve the party on Macquarie Island. Three of the men were "second-timers". Among the "stores" was a new cosmic-ray apparatus built in Tasmania and valued at several thousand pounds. Dr. P.G. Law accompanied the party.

Great difficulty was experienced in getting the 200 tons of stores on to the island. Previous relief parties had the aid of an army "duck" in getting stores ashore, but the "TOTTAN" was not big enough to carry the vehicle, so the stores had to be taken through heavy surf in small boats and on rafts.

The ship was back in Hobart on April 14th with 17 men who had spent a term on the island.

Dr. Law told reporters that the young Australian scientists on the Island were carrying out important research work that could be of real benefit to Australian agriculture: research, for example, on the microbiology of soils - important on Macquarie because the island is a borderline area south of which vegetation does not thrive.

Rich plankton life was found in a plateau lake previously believed to be sterile. Valuable data was also procured in meteorology, ionospheric, seismology and about the aurora.

Temperatures averaged between 40 and 45 degrees, but on one day the mercury dropped to 17 degrees below zero. During the eleven months these men were on the island, there were only 21 sunny days. For most of the time the island was under cloud. "The sun never shines, it merely appears", says one enthusiast.

Geologist Earl Lindholm brought back three wekas for the Melbourne Zoo. Wekas are not indigenous to Macquarie Island. Their ancestors were left there last century by sealers from New Zealand. Sealers also introduced cats, and rabbits, which have adapted themselves to their colder environment and now have thicker coats, usually black, with silver markings. Sheep introduced in 1948 are thriving on the Island.

"To Mrs. Miniver, a daughter, still-born."

Men on Heard Island manoevred a female sea-leopard into a strong cage on the beach. She was given a dip every few days. After nearly three months "Mrs. Miniver" as she was named, gave birth to a five foot long pup, but it was dead. However, its skin and skeleton will find a resting place in an Australian museum. After her unique contribution to scientific research, "Mrs. Miniver" was liberated, and promptly headed south. Sea-leopard births generally occur far south on the ice.

WHALING SEASON 1951-2

When a radio signal at midday on March 5th stopped Antarctic whaling for the season, the 16,000 blue-whale-unit quota had been reached in the record time of 63 days (January 2 - March 5). In 1949-50 it took 84 days and in 1950-51 78 days to reach the quota.

The "Southern Harvester" (15,364 tons), the first of the factory-ships to reach the Mersey, berthed at Liverpool on April 7th. She carried 141,940 barrels of oil, including 23,990 barrels of sperm oil, the total cargo being valued at £1,360,000. Three other factory ships were expected within the next few days.

The Dutch factory-ship "WILLEM BARENDZ" made a record haul. The total production of oil, it is reported from the Hague, was 15,500 tons as against 15,287 tons in 1950-51; and the sperm-oil total was 2883 tons (2066 in 1950-51). The oil was sold to the Netherlands Government for approximately £148 per ton, a total value of approximately £2,700,000.

(Sydney "Sun")

Moscow radio said on March 9th that the Russian whaling fleet had made a larger catch than in previous seasons.

The Norwegian Whaling Companies' Marketing Board has sold 9,000 tons of the 1951-2 season's whale oil to Sweden and 6,000 tons to Denmark at approximately £120 a ton. The British Government is paying £110 a ton for the oil produced by the British and South African fleets.

The amount of oil extracted per blue whale unit was 130.8 barrels, which is considerably higher than in any previous post-war season. Whaling experts attribute this higher yield to the later opening of the season, which enabled the whales to grow fatter. Total whale oil output for the season was 2,473,681 barrels, 169,991 more than last year. The total production for 1951 outside of Antarctica was 656,426 barrels.

The International Whaling Commission has issued a statement from Oslo that Antarctic whaling for the season brought in a total of some £30 million. The Commission, whose task is to conserve the whale resources of the world, began its annual meeting in London on June 3rd. The Joint Parliamentary Secretary, British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, told the meeting that if the Commission had not been created, whales in the southern hemisphere, as in the north, would have been virtually exterminated in the course of another five to ten years.

No alteration was made either in the present limit of 16,000 blue-whale-units for pelagic whaling, nor in the opening and closing dates of the next Antarctic whaling season.

HOME - TO TRAGEDY.

Victims of an air-liner crash near Frankfurt on March 22nd were four Norwegian whalers, including Anders Arveson, the world's number one whaling gunner. Arveson, who was 42, was in command of the South African whaling fleet in the Antarctic during the whaling season now closed. He died after seeing one of his dearest wishes fulfilled; his 16 year-old son, Albert, received his first Antarctic bleeding this year as deck-boy on his father's catcher.

(London "Times")

Then eight out of twenty-five members of an Antarctic whaling expedition who had left their tanker at Amsterdam and were travelling home on a Red Olsen Airlines Dakota, were killed when it crashed and caught fire in a forest in the Telemark district, en route to Jarlsberg, on May 6th.

MAWSON.

Sir Douglas Mawson, now in his 70th year, is retiring from the Chair of Geology and Mineralogy at the University of Adelaide which he has occupied for 30 years. In 1903 Mawson was a member of a geological exploration expedition to the New Hebrides. Four years later he went south with Shackleton, and participated in two notable exploits, the ascent of Mt. Erebus and the attainment of the South Magnetic Pole. In 1911-14 he led the Australian expedition based at Cape Denison, and in two cruises in

the "DISCOVERY" in 1929-30 and 1930-31 he completed a survey of the continental coast-line for 2500 miles west of the Ross Sea. In recent years he has played a major part in establishing the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition whose activities have been chronicled in this Bulletin. As Dr. P.G. Law has said, "He may retire from his chair at the University, but he will never retire from the Antarctic."

#### FORTHCOMING ANTARCTIC BOOK

Arthur Scholes, the Sydney journalist whose book "Fourteen Men" graphically described the doings of the first (1947-48) Australian party on Heard Island, where he was radio-operator, has told the story of Australian exploration in the Antarctic in "Seventh Continent" to be published in London next August.

#### R.G.S. AWARD

The Royal Geographical Society has awarded the Back Grant to Dr. H.F.P. Herdman, senior scientific officer on "DISCOVERY II", for his oceanographical work in the Southern Ocean.

("Times" London)

#### JAPAN AND THE ANTARCTIC

In the Treaty of Peace concluded at the Conference of 48 nations at San Francisco on September 8th, 1951, Article 2, sub-paragraph (e) reads:-

"Japan renounces all claims to any right or title to or interest in connection with any part of the Antarctic area, whether deriving from the activity of Japanese nationals or otherwise."

(N.Z. Government White Paper "The Japanese Peace Settlement")

#### HANDBOOK TO MAP OF ANTARCTICA.

Dr. J.S. Cumpston of the Australian High Commissioner's Office, Wellington, New Zealand, has a number of copies of the Handbook and Index accompanying the Map of Antarctica published in 1939. Dr. Cumpston was co-author of this valuable publication. The price is 2/6d. Copies of the map are NOT available as the map is now out of print.

#### THE POLAR RECORD.

The Society finds that its file of The Polar Record is incomplete. Any person who would be willing to supply numbers 11, 12, 13, 30 or 41, is asked to communicate with the editor of the Bulletin.

#### ERRATUM.

Antarctic News Bulletin, No. 5, Page 6, line 62, for "received" read "reserved".