

EDITORIAL

1998 was a year of celebrations. India celebrated her 50th year of freedom and the Himalayan Club celebrated its 70th year. When the British left India there was an apprehension about Indians taking up mountaineering as a sport. Any doubts were soon dispelled, as J. T. M. Gibson (Past President of the Himalayan Club) and others introduced many young Indians to the pleasures of the hills. To my mind the climb of Trisul by Gurdial Singh in 1951 marked the beginning of mountain climbing as a sport of Indians. Hence I was delighted when Gurdial Singh offered select pictures of that event and of his travels in the region for use in this volume. The narration of his meeting with Longstaff is interesting. For years I could not persuade him to pen-down memories and I am glad that he has done so now.

Trevor Braham revives many memories in his reflective article which again includes a meeting with Longstaff. Braham was standing on Kalindi Khal, on 15th August 1947 when India became independent! We have another recalling of memories by John Jackson and a tribute to Smythe. The route of G. W. Traill is followed by Indian trekkers and the historic trade route to the Karakoram Pass traced by a Britisher. I, with a few friends, followed the trail of Shipton and Tilman and was amazed at the energy these two legendary mountaineers had when they went in pursuit of a Hindu legend. In a similar vein, the Kongur Alps are explored by Waugh and the Germans unveil the Raksha Urai group in west Nepal. We have success and tragedy on Changabang and Skilbrum. The climbs on Satopanth (in 7 days), Gimmigela, K2 and Malubiting take on the higher peaks. New ascents are made on Pologongka, Kula, CB 11 and Draupadi ka Danda.

The Club lost a few stalwarts during the year. Jimmy Roberts could be credited with introducing 'commercial trekking' as an idea, particularly in Nepal. C. R. Cooke lived a rich life

exploring Sikkim in particular. Pierre will be remembered best for his expedition to and book on Nun-Kun. The Club is bound to miss them and some others very much.

For so many decades I had seen hillmen wearing their different caps but it was the piece by Bill Aitken in this volume that made me realise their variety and importance. 'Hats off' to such observation — now the hillman's hat will have a different connotation for me. To miss the razzmatazz of the Independence celebrations in the streets of Bombay, I escaped and enjoyed the freedom of the hills. I camped next to a shepherd. His newly married wife knitted him a variety of caps, as an expression of her love — another addition to Aitken's *topi-lore*.

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