

## The 1934 Attempts on Mt. Waddington

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THREE parties came, saw, but did not conquer Mt. Waddington last summer. Our 1933 approach from Tatla Lake, down the west fork of the Homathko, up Scimitar Creek and Glacier, and ascent of Mt. Combatant for a view of the northeast face of Mt. Waddington had, with the Mundays' previous knowledge, gained for us certain valuable information. Approach to the southeast (summit) tower, higher than the northwest peak by less than 100 ft., could be made from the east, a possible approach by Tiedemann Glacier excluded, only by climbing the east side of Fury Gap, and thence following the Mundays' long route of 1928 to the northwest peak, or by using a slanting glacier corridor from the Waddington-Combatant col to effect a junction with that route much nearer the peak. Fury Gap, which has since been climbed in winter,\* looked perfectly possible but highly dangerous in July, 1933, being swept several times a day by rock, snow and ice slides, and occasionally by large avalanches. We had nearly decided upon the upper glacier corridor route, when from the summit of Mt. Combatant at 4.30 A.M. we saw a huge ice avalanche sweep across it on a front of several hundred feet and roar on down to the main col below. The route itself would probably not have offered any real difficulty. A party would have been directly in the path of similar avalanches for perhaps two hours. From the base of the northwest peak there appeared to be entirely possible access down steep snow, ice and rocks to the col separating it from the forbidding ice coated summit rock tower. We all felt that the west side of the range from Knight Inlet offered the best approach to Waddington, and accordingly turned our attention to other objectives for the remainder of that season.

While we were making rather leisurely plans for our 1934 mid-summer approach from the coast, two able and determined parties very quietly dashed for the mountain in June. A Van-

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\*By Sir Norman J. Watson, Wing-Commander E. B. Beaman and the Chamonix guide Camille Couttet, in the course of their ski crossing (the first) of the Coast Range from Tatla Lake, via Scimitar and Franklin glaciers, to Knight Inlet, March 18th to April 19th, 1934. *British Ski Year Book*, 1934, pp. 304-318.

couver party composed of A. H. Dalgleish, Neil M. Carter, Alan Lambert and Eric Brooks left Glendale Cannery, Knight Inlet, on June 18; landed at the mouth of Franklin River at the head of the Inlet; made base camp at Icefall Point fifteen miles up Franklin Glacier on the 23rd and attempted to reach the southeast peak, by the Buckler Glacier and the southeast ridge, on June 26, the only entirely clear day for a considerable period, before and after. The party left camp at Icefall Point the evening before and had been out about fifteen hours when they were high up on the rocks of the southwest side of the southeast ridge at about 10,500 ft. The leader, Dalgleish, an experienced and daring climber, for some cause not determined, fell. The rope being frozen, or chafed by the jerk over sharp rock, broke. After striking rocks head first he went down a steep snow couloir about 800 ft., out of the sight of the others. They climbed down as rapidly as possible and found the lifeless body. Temporary and later permanent burial was made on the glacier. The attempt was abandoned.

At the same time a Winnipeg party comprising Ferris and Roger Neave and Campbell Secord had come in from the east to Tatla and Tatlayoko Lakes, whence after a very arduous back packing journey of nineteen days down the east fork of the Homathko they camped on the Tiedemann Glacier on June 23. On the 25th and 26th, with but one large sleeping bag for shelter, a Primus stove and food for eight days, they worked their way up a side glacier and camped on the main southeast ridge between Waddington and Spearman Peak. The accident had occurred but a few hours before, unknown to them, on the opposite side of the ridge, not more than a mile or two away. Bad weather cost a day, and on the 28th in intermittent light snow fall they climbed the upper snow slopes to the east base of the rock tower. A huge bergschrund forced them to take to the rocks at their lowest point. Four hours on the very steep ice-coated rocks during which they climbed perhaps 400 ft. brought them at night-fall to a point about 500 ft. below the summit. The most difficult part of the way lay ahead. Feeling the situation hopeless, they retreated; roped down the rocks with pitons to the steep snow slope; roped down into the bergschrund, finding there a snow cave where they spent the night, fortunately being able to make hot drinks with the Primus. In biting wind and snow they reached their high bivouac

the next day, finally stopping for the night, after about thirty-six hours of almost continuous climbing above 10,500 ft., almost entirely in doubtful weather or actual storm. A day down to the main glacier, and six days more saw them back at Tatlayoko Lake. This was undoubtedly one of the finest attempts on any mountain in Canada in recent years. It is a pity that the party was so handicapped by weather. They deserved better luck.

The principal approaches to Mt. Waddington have now all been worked out. The Mundays found the Homathko River and Scar Creek route from Bute Inlet, in 1926, almost prohibitively difficult and dangerous. The Neave party has found that the east fork of the Homathko offers a possible, but, I should judge, not desirable route for future attempts. By the west fork (Mosley Creek) we learned in 1933 that horses can be taken to the base of the mountain at the head of Scimitar Glacier with considerable work. The mountain itself is only accessible at some risk from that side. There remained the approach from Knight Inlet by the Franklin Valley and Glacier, already well known to the Mundays, and considered by them to offer the best chance of success.

With Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Don Munday, Hans Fuhrer and two nineteen year old students, Philip Brock and Ronald Munro of Vancouver, to help with the back packing, I tried that route last summer. Had we then known what we do now, we would have been only the more convinced that this, of the four possible routes of approach, is with little doubt the most feasible for a party intent on conquering the actual summit tower of Mt. Waddington.

The Mundays with Brock and Munro left Vancouver by Union steamship on July 11. Disembarking at Glendale Cannery in Knight Inlet the next afternoon they proceeded up the inlet, their sturdy little outboard motor boat being towed to save time by James Stanton in his gas boat. Stanton, with his wife, lives at the head of the inlet on one of the sloughs near the Klinaklini River mouth, trapping, taking out occasional hunting parties for grizzly or other big game, in which this country abounds, and otherwise living a rather precarious, but apparently satisfactory existence.

Hans Fuhrer and I took the July 25th steamer from Vancouver and fortunately connected, through the courtesy of the cannery manager, Mr. Matthews, with a gas boat going up to a small lumber operation at Glacier Bay about half way up the inlet. The

customary fresh afternoon wind sent waves several feet high rolling up the inlet, and it was not without some surprise, and I must say amusement, that we suddenly met the dauntless Mundays coming down to meet us, their engine broken down, but still fighting wind and tide after seventeen hours. As we swept around a rocky point Mrs. Munday was attempting with the oars to hold the boat to the shore while Don with the tow rope in his hand ran up and down the rocks like a monkey, almost slipping into the water on seaweed several times in the few minutes that we saw them. Rowing out, they were soon aboard, and we continued up the inlet, their boat in tow. Once our engine failed and we rode on the waves, in the full moonlight, rather too near to the perpendicular cliffs which here dropped straight for hundreds of feet into the water. Passing through the spray of a waterfall, the engine again running, we reached the lumber camp at midnight, tied to a buoy, went ashore for breakfast, and continued by Stanton's boat in lovely weather to the Franklin River mouth, where we arrived before noon. Brock and Munro came down to help us unload. In two weeks of intermittent rain and fine weather the advance party had packed the bulk of supplies and equipment to a cache seven miles up the Franklin Glacier, about fifteen miles from tide water.

Landing under the cliffs of Dutchman Head on the flats, we carried Munday's boat up into the woods and made camp just at the edge of the trees. We were rather startled in the morning to discover that an exceptionally high tide had come six inches from the corner of my tent during the night. The cloud ceiling was low, possibly 1000 ft. above the water, as we shouldered sixty to seventy pound packs the morning of the 28th and filed into the dense woods. In 1927 the Mundays had to make their way through the virgin coast timber, but their several subsequent trips had resulted in a usable trail, which was now in very fair condition after the passage of the June party, the burial party early in July and the relaying of four of our party during the previous two weeks. Through woods, out onto the gravel bars, over side channels on log jams, back into the woods sometimes crawling under or over large fallen timber, a short rest about once an hour, with forty minutes for lunch, and by five o'clock we were at "Last Valley" Camp within sight of the Franklin Glacier tongue and about seven miles from the sea. Ice cakes occasionally rolled and

bumped down the roaring Franklin which was here found to have a temperature of 33° F.

Under way by 8 A.M. on the 29th we soon came to the glacier, which ends only 500 ft. above sea-level. It has retreated 1545 ft. since the Munday's first visit in 1927. Passing under an ice arch, which was entirely gone on our return, we climbed up on to the débris laden ice and in another hour were about 1200 ft. above the sea. Luckily the glacier is almost a broad highway, as soon as the proper route between and along the moraines becomes known, and we made rapid progress. From the "Glacier Cache" the boys returned to Last Valley Camp and the rest of us pushed on with occasional detours for crevasses until opposite Confederation Glacier. There we went "ashore" on the west side and followed behind the moraine nearly all the way to Saffron Creek, a route which we avoided in the future on our relays in favor of the large crevasses near the middle of the Franklin, which always yielded a route. By 7 P.M. we had climbed 300 ft. up the steep wooded slope north of Saffron Creek to the Munday's tiny cabin. Our distance for the day was roughly thirteen miles and the altitude here was 5300 ft. This was to be our base camp, but little did we foresee nine consecutive days of rain as we made camp under the stars that night. The first three wet days were occupied in relaying the remainder of the cache up to base camp, the boys rejoining us on the 30th. With our tents pitched in various artificially created sites among the heather on the hillside, the cabin to store the food in, plenty of firewood and a complete roster of cooks we made out very well during the rain which occasionally stopped, but not for long. The *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest* and other literature did yeoman service. A wonderful rig made of burlap bags and old canvas, supported by various means, with a fire of six-foot logs outside made us very comfortable. This was Coast Range weather and instead of becoming down-hearted we just sat and waited, until the clearing on August 8th.

With packs we left that morning at 6.30 to find a site for a climbing camp nearer Mt. Waddington. At Icefall Point we came upon the camp site of the earlier party and found the very substantial cairn built two weeks after the accident by the burial party. In it was a brass cylinder containing an appropriate inscription on parchment, and standing on top were the skis of the late climber,

one pointing back to his last camp, and the other toward the mountain.

A diagonal crossing of the main glacier, here at 6000 ft. deeply covered by winter snow, brought us to rocks on the north side in two more hours, about four miles from Waddington and perhaps six miles from Fury Gap. Here 500 ft. above the glacier we found a perfect little camp site, a few square yards of grass and moss, clear but surrounded by snow banks which supplied a little pool with plenty of running water. "Little Alp" we called it. A return was made to base camp at Saffron Creek that afternoon, and another relay the next morning saw us established in this delightful eerie at 7200 ft., with three tents up and the Sievert and Primus stoves turning out excellent meals.

With the first streaks of dawn on the 10th the Mundays, Hans and I left camp at 4.10 for an attempt on Mt. Waddington. Crossing over a low ridge we dropped down onto Dais Glacier, followed this for an hour and were soon wending our way among large crevasses up the steep névé-fall to the base of the main rock mass of the mountain. In the clear morning air the peaks of Vancouver Island were visible. The bergschrund was easily crossed and by ten o'clock we were on the gneissic-schist rocks of which Waddington itself is composed. Fine weather earlier, changed, and we were soon just below clouds with occasional snow flurries. The rock soon grew steep, and holds fewer. Hans called down that there were no belays and that no one must slip. Still 2000 ft. from the summit, with, as we had seen far below, the upper section obviously more difficult, and the weather doubtful, we turned back. For this climb a party should bivouac at the base of the rocks so as to have all the daylight hours available. The rock itself is smoother than its white and pinkish pattern causes it to appear at a distance. Wallowing in the soft snow on the descent until the level glacier was reached we returned to camp by 5.15 P.M. Brock and Munro had made a first ascent of Mt. Cavalier, a 9000-ft. rock peak back of camp.

The 11th and 12th were not good enough for Waddington but in doubtful weather on the 13th we made for Fury Gap. There we looked down on Scimitar Glacier to our 1933 camp site, but gave up Mt. Chris Spencer because of the extremely rotten snow. The steep north side of Fury Gap, up which the British ski party had cut steps in April, looked just as it had the year

before at this season, possible but dangerous. The snow was everywhere scored by slides.

While returning to camp we were treated to one of the sudden changes of weather characteristic of this district; a dry southeast wind from the interior rolled the clouds back, entirely clearing the sky in less than an hour.

This was our signal, and at 3.20 A.M. on the 14th we set out for the northwest peak. Above the deeply crevassed Dais névé slopes we found a snow couloir leading up to the main ridge and thus joined the Mundays' 1927-28 route from Fury Gap.

The upper 2000 ft. took about four hours. In our rucksacks were food and clothing to allow a night high on the mountain in case we found the rock tower accessible from the upper snow plateau and offering some chance of success. Above 11,500 ft. the snow was entirely powdery and knee deep, an indication of persistent low temperatures even in the brilliant sun. At 12,800 ft. we were above everything but the twin snow peaks and all other peaks in the Coast Range, *except* the rock tower, still hidden by the snow peaks. The final snow slope, steep enough to necessitate backing down on the descent, was climbed laboriously with much kicking in for adequate steps. At 2 P.M. we stood at the foot of the highest point, a formation with frost feather foundation which had to be mounted cautiously. Hans went up first, saw the rock tower, and burst into a series of exclamations. I went up, had a look, and steadied myself on my ice-axe, so unreal and extraordinary is its appearance. The photographs are all disappointing, partly due to foreshortening. This is surely one of the most remarkable culminating points of any mountain range in the world. Our first impression, little altered by an hour's stay on the snow peak, was that the rock tower is next to unclimbable. It is less than one hundred feet higher than the snow peak. The rock itself is not only excessively steep but the most likely routes are protected by overhangs, and by snow formations of uncertain origin but perhaps caused by the freezing in successive layers of mist or clouds blown in from the sea. The rocks of the north side are apparently permanently glazed with ice and hard snow. The Mundays said that in six seasons they had not seen these rocks any freer of snow and ice.

With the exception of distant clouds and haze or smoke, the view was good for a distance of fifty to seventy-five miles. All

the local topography stood out in clear detail. We looked straight down the Franklin and Tiedemann Glaciers, the latter to the forks of the Homathko. The contrast between the snow covering on the seaward and landward sides of the range is very great. The largest snow fields are all near the heads of the inlets. Munday's aneroid, a Casella, and mine, a smaller one, indicated 13,600 and 13,900 ft., respectively, the actual altitude being probably 13,200 ft., according to the survey of J. T. Underhill from the Klinaklini Valley in 1928. Upon return to camp we agreed within less than fifty feet, both with each other and with the previously determined altitude of that point. We also checked very closely on return to base camp at Saffron Creek and later to the sea. The air was almost still and we could work for several minutes at a time at photography or notes without gloves. The actual temperature was probably not over 20° in the shade of our bodies.

On the way down we skirted around to the northeast base of the snow summit on the plateau, and found that we could probably have reached by steep snow and ice slopes, keeping above the bergschrund, the col from which the ascent of the rock tower would best be attempted. The chances of success on the tower itself appealed to us unanimously as so remote that we never seriously considered it, although we did have food and equipment for the night, except sleeping bags. After making a hot drink with Hans' alcohol stove, we began the downward flounder through snow, which below the wind-hardened surface of the plateau, seemed to have almost no bottom in places. Lower, a softened crust was even worse, but we moved almost without a halt, except once to eat, and in four and a half hours from the plateau reached camp at 9.15 P.M., just after dark.

On the 16th in clear weather we left at 3.20 A.M. for Mt. Bell (11,800 ft.), some miles to the westward. Reaching the head of Franklin névé, the hard crust ringing under our feet, we descended only a short distance to find further progress cut off by an almost vertical ice-fall, with Bell directly across a deep valley. The mountain could have been reached from a camp in this valley and possibly by a very long traverse of the rough rock ridge at the head of and separating the valley from Bell Creek, this ridge being accessible to us from the head of the névé. The serrated ridge, two or three miles long, would take hours to negotiate after which one would be at the base of the long, sharp southeast ridge of

Bell or its very steep and broken east ice face. We later saw a way down into the valley south of the icefall. An actual attempt on Bell would have involved a bivouac in the valley and probably three days from our climbing camp, for which we were not at this time prepared. After a fine view down the valley to the Klinaklini Canyon and the vast snow fields beyond, clouds came up. On the return we went up to the edge of the escarpment overlooking the head of Bell Creek, across which rose Mt. Geddes. Brock and Munro were at this time on the summit of Mt. Chris Spencer, but clouds prevented us from seeing them or Waddington farther back to the right.

On the 17th the Mundays and the boys went again toward Bell and climbed the highest peak of the group at the western head of the Franklin, to complete their topographical knowledge of the region, and named it appropriately Mt. Finality (9800 ft.). Hans and I remained in camp. In looking through my notes one interesting fact stood out. The barometer at a given point in three weeks had rarely varied more than .2 inch, regardless of changes in the weather. To an easterner accustomed to a normal range of at least one inch and sometimes more than 1.5 inches within a few days this seemed surprising, and in view of the readings of both our barometers on the summit of Waddington the idea re-occurred to me that its height may be greater than that indicated by the survey.

Our food practically exhausted we moved down to Saffron Creek on the 18th, stopped a day, and reached Knight Inlet in two more days, on the 21st. Stanton took us down to the Cannery on the 22nd, where Mr. and Mrs. King received us cordially, treating us to the luxury of hot baths, and in the evening we boarded the S. S. "Venture" again, for Vancouver.