Colombia

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Although the Englishman, Simons, produced the first useful maps of the Sierra Nevada in 1879 and 1881, British climbers did not set foot in the range until 1954. A. F. R. Wollaston, doctor to the first Everest expedition, and his wife, in 1923, failed to find a route into the high peaks from the hinterland of Santa Marta because of bad weather and thick forests. It was clear to us that we should climb in January, the only certainly dry month, and enter by a forest-free route. Before

Iceland

Hraunndragi, in Öxnadal. Two members of the Icelandic Air Ground Rescue Team, Finnur Eyjolfsson and Sigurdur Waage, accompanied by Lieut. Nicholas B. Clinch, USAF, accomplished the first ascent of Hraunndragi, August 5-6, 1956. The peak stands nearly vertical, 80 meters above the Hraun ridge, and has defied all ordinary means of climbing. The sagas relate that the hero Grettir Asmundarson had climbed it in ancient times and had left a knife and a belt on the top, "to belong to the one who could get it." The fact that nothing was found on the summit seems to prove either that someone had been there since Grettir, or that the hero had never been there at all—the latter appears to be the case, notwithstanding the saga. Enticed less by the legendary prizes than by the challenge of the peak itself, the three climbers flew from Reykjavík to Akureyri, where assistance was rendered by the local AGR as far as the base of the peak, on the Hraun ridge. From this base the climb was effected in nine hours, up and down, with the aid of pitons, nylon ropes, and other modern gear. (From Icelandic newspaper clippings.)
our first trip in 1954, Colombian, German, United States, and Swiss vis-
itors had made the first ascents of the biggest peaks. Without a complete
list of the ascents or even of the expeditions, all one can safely say is that
the biggest four or five peaks have all been climbed two or more times.

In 1954 I led a party of five on a reconnaissance to the region. My col-
leagues were Miss J. Kirsopp, Doctors J. Waterlow, H. Bunje, and P.
Hugh-Jones. To save time on our approach march, we eschewed the cus-
tomary route from the south side of the massif, which traverses numerous
east-west ridges of considerable height, and were encouraged by the aerial
survey map made by the Cabot Expedition *(Geographical Review, 1941)*
to try a new route from the east, following a river that flows out that side.
This route we now recommend most earnestly to intending visitors, as the
Donacui River (marked erroneously on the otherwise excellent Cabot map
as the Guatapuri) leads right to the heart of the highest peaks. In 1954, as
well as in 1957, we flew from Jamaica via Barranquilla to Valledupar,
whence we took a truck northward to Atanquez. This can be accomplished
in a day. On the second day mules carried all equipment and stores to the
Indian village of Sogrome, on the Donacui. On the third, Indian oxen
brought the party to the foot of La Reina, possibly the most beautiful peak
in the range (18,160 feet). In both years the oxen carried about a ton of
supplies right up to Base Camp, at 14,600 feet, under the north glacier of
El Guardián. The Indians are distinctly friendly, speak Spanish, and charge
moderately.

The 1954 party got to its base camp so quickly that only there was it
overcome by the discomforts of acclimitization. Hugh-Jones made a solo
ascent of the prominent east peak of Simón Bolívar (18,947 feet), and I
climbed El Guardián (17,175 feet) alone by the west ridge. These solo
climbs, probably the only ones in the Sierra Nevada, were made only be-
cause the others of the party were unwell at the time. The party climbed
Ojeda (18,012 feet) by the south glacier and west profile, and Miss
Kirsopp and I climbed a rock peak east of Colón and named it Pico
Juanita *(ca. 16,800 feet)*. Snow conditions were uniformly good, though
I met with literally hair-raising static electricity on El Guardián.

The objective of the 1957 expedition first made itself apparent from
the summit of Ojeda. The Sierra Nevada falls into eastern and western
groups, the highest peaks being in the latter. The high peaks had been
most visited and no climbing east of La Reina had come to my attention.
From the summit of Ojeda we clearly gazed upon the central of the three
parallel ridges which form this eastern group. Ojeda itself is at the western
down of the northernmost ridge, La Reina of the central ridge, and El
Guardián of the southernmost one. Seen from Ojeda, the ridge running east from La Reina is an astonishing sight, of which no hint is given by the Cabot map. It is immensely steep and caparisoned in ice from top to bottom because of its northern aspect. Aside from an ambitious program of high-altitude physiology, the 1957 expedition aimed to execute climbs on this central ridge, which we have since called the Sierra Tairona, and to map the Guatapuri basin, enclosed between the northern and central ridges. The party again included Bunje, Waterlow, and myself; its new members were Major R. Allen, of the British Army, and my brother, F. F. Cunningham, as cartographer. After spending Christmas in Jamaica, we were able, despite a leisurely journey, to be at Base Camp by the first day of 1957.

We began four weeks of climbing and theodolite-surveying with a second ascent of Ojeda. The doctors had an arduous programme, which involved measuring carefully each person's input of food as well as the analysis of regularly-collected blood and urine samples. Their chief concern was with the body balances of sodium and potassium. With the termination of surveying from the northern or Ojeda ridge, the party split, the doctors remaining at Base Camp while the survey team went back down to establish a new camp at 11,000 feet in the Donacui valley, which lies between the central and southern watersheds. From Tairona Camp, as it was called, the central ridge was partly visible, and from a col on the central ridge itself the whole of the northern range could be seen from Ojeda eastward to where the peaks drop away to reveal the Caribbean beyond. The four major peaks east of Ojeda were computed at 17,300, 17,509, 17,614, and 17,630 feet, respectively. Some peaks were climbed on the Tairona ridge, for survey purposes or pleasure, and the Colombian authorities have been asked to name two of these as Pico Santa Bárbara and Pico de los Hermanos. The latter is 17,377 feet; other Tairona summits were measured at 17,241 and 17,306 feet. It will be noticed that all these tops are higher than El Guardián, formerly thought to be among the highest half-dozen in the entire range.

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Argentina

Cerro Gallan, Province of Salta. Although our Austro-Swedish Andean Expedition did some excavations in the ruins of the Indian town of Guanchin and of the fortress of Batungasta near Fiambalá, it was not there, near the Ojos del Salado, but 225 miles north, in the province of Salta, that we planned to do our chief archaeological work. Some years before, the Salzburg climber, Dr. Dangl, had discovered some walls built at