

**MOUNT IONIA
CLIMBED
AIR TRANSPORT FOR
MOUNTAINEERS
SUCCESS OF CANON NEWTON'S
PARTY**

Highly pleased with the success of the arrangements made for the transport of the party, equipment, and stores by aeroplane, Canon H. E. Newton, one of New Zealand's most active climbers before the war, but now resident in England, returned to Christchurch during the week-end from a successful trip to the headwaters of the Arawata river, South Westland. With Misses M. L. Roberts and M. B. Scott, of Dunedin, Mr Alec Graham, and Guide Jack Cox, Canon Newton made the first recorded ascent of Mount Ionia.

Canon Newton has been delighted to get back into his old hunting grounds in the New Zealand mountains, but he told a reporter of "The Press" last evening that one of the things that have given him most pleasure was to find how interest in mountaineering has increased among New Zealanders in the last few years. He is generous in his praise of the thorough exploration work that has been carried out by parties from the New Zealand mountaineering clubs in a comparatively short space of time.

Natural Landing Ground
Canon Newton told the reporter that Mr J. C. Mercer, of Air Travel (N.Z.), Ltd., had transported his party into the Arawata in a day—a trip that would have taken five days' packing from Waiho in the early days. The party's gear was taken to Okuru by boat and Mr Mercer picked it up there. Air transport for mountaineers, of course, was limited by the nature of the country into which they wished to penetrate, but it was a remarkable thing that clearings and river flats suitable for landing grounds were to be found in some of the most inhospitable country. In the headwaters of the Arawata there was a natural landing ground, and it was there that Mr Mercer had recently bought some land. He was now erecting a hut on these river flats.

The party was flown into the Arawata Valley on Saturday, February 23, an excellent site for a base camp being found. Some time was

spent in cutting a track through the bush track to the spur leading to Mount Ionia, and after a night spent in a high altitude camp the party climbed Mount Ionia on Wednesday, February 27—"an interesting but not difficult climb," it was described by Canon Newton. This was Canon Newton's first visit to the district, and he was much impressed with the extensive glaciation of the neighbouring peaks in a year that has seen remarkably little precipitation of snow.

An Interesting Relic
A magnificent view of the giant, Mount Aspiring, was obtained from the ice-capped summit, but the foreground was spoilt to some extent by the bulk of the low peak of Mount Ionia. A traverse to this peak would have been exceedingly arduous in the prevailing conditions—every crevasse in the ice was "open"—and it was decided that an attempt should be made to ascend the Turk's Head, a peak to the south on the same range. This would also give a fine view of the country beyond the Arawata Gorge, which would make a base for some particularly fine climbing. Mr Mercer has prospected the country, Canon Newton said, and was hopeful that a landing could be made in it with an aeroplane.

A return was made, therefore, to the base camp, and another day and a half were spent in cutting a track through the bush to give access to the peak, which has a fine leading ridge of saw-tooth appearance. Again the party bivouacked at a high camp, and here an interesting relic was discovered. When clearing out a space under an overhanging rock they found a rotted four-inch wooden stake charred by fire at both ends. Canon Newton believes that it must be the remains of a camp made by Charles Douglas, Westland's greatest explorer, who made expeditions into this country in the 'eighties. Douglas is believed by some to have made an ascent of Mount Ionia, but there is no definite evidence on the point, and Douglas himself was not an enthusiast for the peaks.

Storm Turns Party Back
On the western ridge of the Turk's Head the party was caught by a sudden south-easterly storm, and as the ridge presented difficulties that the party would have preferred to tackle under more favourable conditions it was decided to turn back. The party returned to the base camp and after a day's rest the members were flown back to the Franz Josef.

Canon Newton was enthusiastic about the advantages of aeroplane travel on this trip. He said that the use of the aeroplane saved not only time but money. The expense entailed in hiring packhorses for several days would be considerable. He thought that there were distinct possibilities in the use of the aeroplane, also, for dropping stores to parties working in remote districts, but it would first be necessary to make sure that suitable parachutes were obtained. One Otago party had been unfortunate in a venture of this nature, for the supplies delivered to it by air were smashed to smithereens when the parachutes failed to operate properly.

Canon Newton will conclude his holiday in New Zealand on April 30.

FIRST ASCENT OF MOUNT IONIA

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PRESS.
Sir.—In "The Press" of March 11, I notice that Canon H. E. Newton and party are accredited with making the first ascent of Mount Ionia in South Westland on February 27, and that the successful attempt was made from an aeroplane base at the head of the Arawata river.

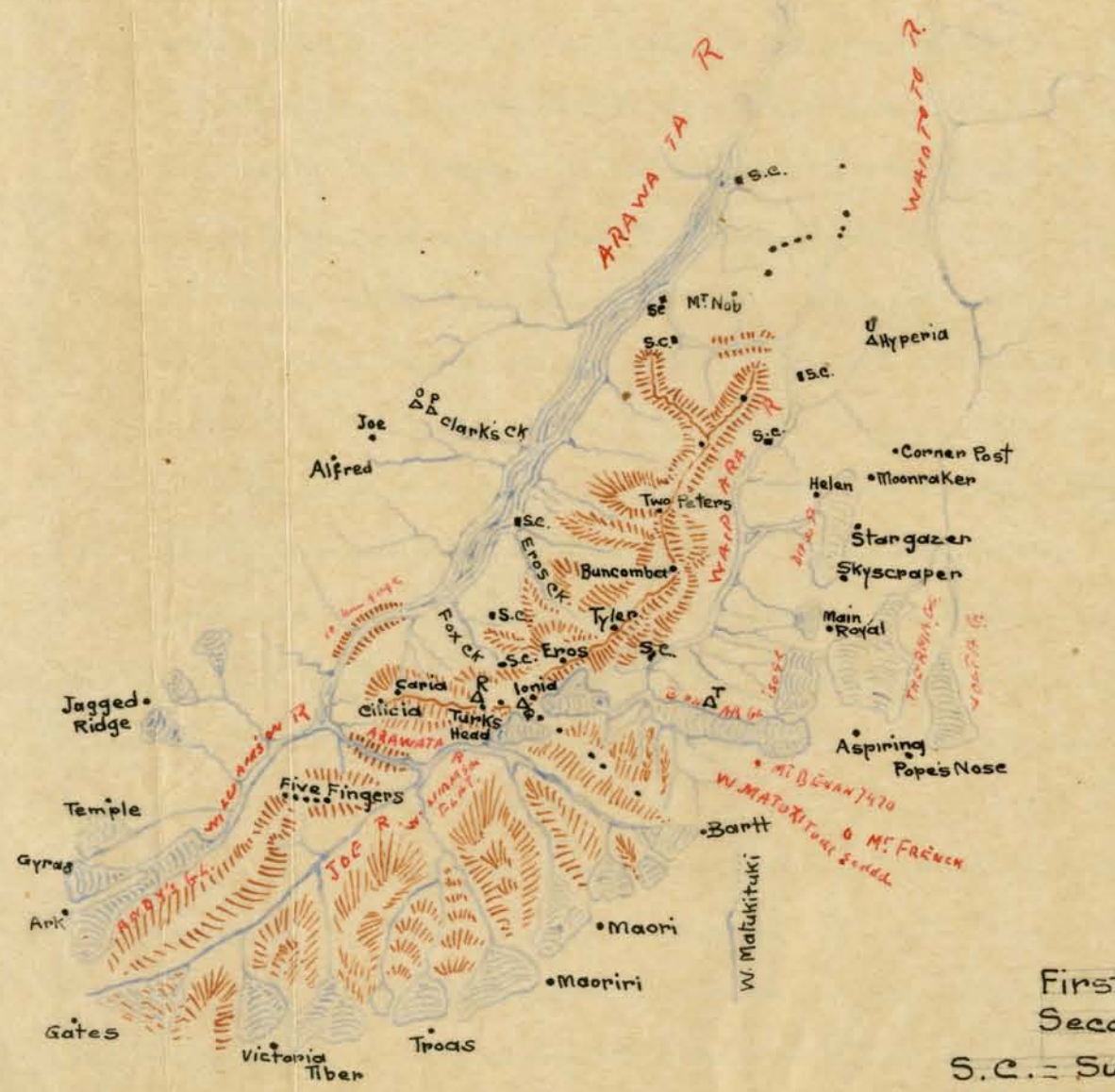
Without wishing to disparage the reverend gentleman's splendid feat of mountaineering, I wish to point out that Mount Ionia was first climbed in the year 1885 by Mr Gerhard Mueller, district surveyor, and his report to the chief surveyor at that time of his exploration work in the Mount Aspiring district is most interesting to mountaineers. I also wish to point out that there is absolutely no possibility of an aeroplane being able to land or take off from the headwater of the Arawata river, as there is not enough flat land there to pitch a decent tent.

The actual source of the Arawata is from a snowfield and glacier on the north-west shoulder of Mount Barff, some three and a half miles north-west from the Arawata Saddle, as shown as the source on Mueller's map of the district. I presume that the aeroplane base mentioned was at Williamson's Flat, some 15 miles down the river at its junction with the Joe.

In December, 1932, three others and I crossed the Arawata Saddle from the west branch of the Matukituki and after descending the Arawata for about six miles we crossed the Olivine Range between Mount Barff and Mount Ionia and were the first party to discover the pass between the headwaters of the Arawata and the Waipara rivers; and I was the first of the party to cross the divide, which we named the Waipara Saddle. If anybody cares to search among the ashes of our camp fire about 150 yards south-west of the foot of the Bonar glacier and the source of the Waipara river, he will find the head of my alpenstock and a bottle containing an account of our trip; or if he should happen to visit the Alpine Club's hut at Cascade creek in the Matukituki, he will find in the visitors' book there an excellent map I drew of the route we took.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I consider that the district under discussion contains some of the finest unclimbed mountains in New Zealand.—Yours, etc.,

W. A. MOWAT,
Waitaki Hydro Works.
March 12, 1935.



*Red ink - see later notes S.A. 11
Note chain Buncamba by the
Joe's river down to S.E. of
Joe's river & Aspiring. 1/4 mile
to the S.E. of the Arawata
to the Waipara & the Bonar
glacier.*

Buncamba	6230.
Tylar	6470.
Eros	7451.
Ionia	7390.
Q	6950.
Turk's Head	5810
R	4920
Hyparia	5570.

First Camp, Fox Ck 2280
Second " " " 3590.

S.C. = Survey Camp.
ΔQ = Observation Point.

E.R.

The Duff Saddle is really in the SW corner of the Westland.

*The Westland was
repeated when he was
before the newspaper that
he had climbed Mt. Ionia
this was due to a photo of
his peaks from the district in the
name of Ionia & Turk's Head.
Mt. Aspiring was not shown in
his book. I was much surprised
in the course of my trip to hear
of the map in the Westland
section. Subsequently
investigation made it clear
that the elevation of the
mountain was 7390 feet
as shown. The channel was
in a small inlet of the high S.E.*