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(Final ?)

HAYES RANGE, ALASKA

A party from the Eagles Ski Club, comprising Mike Browne, Rob Collister, Richard Cooper and David Williams, made a ski traverse of the Hayes Range during Spring 1986, climbing six minor peaks on the way. Leaving the George Parks highway at mile 229 on 29th March we arrived at Black Rapids roadhouse on the Richardson Highway on 18th April. For the first four days, as far as the moraine of the Yannert glacier, we had dog-team support. This period coincided with a cold snap with temperatures at night dropping to 40°F, and two members of the original party, Paddy O'Neill and Steve Thomas, had to turn back with frostbitten fingers. (Fortunately there was no permanent damage).

After a further four days of hard work relaying loads through deep snow up onto the Yannert glacier, we established an enjoyable routine of both climbing and travelling most days. We were helped by excellent weather, with only three days too poor to travel, although on one of those days the wind was so violent that we had to drop the tents and take refuge in a hastily-dug snow cave. Crevasses were never a problem, but with a recent history of heavy snowfall and strong winds, slab avalanches were a definite hazard.

From a camp at 5900 ft on the Yannert we climbed P.8245 from the North, crossing a low col to the South, we climbed P.7440 and P.8345 the same afternoon, and the following morning climbed an attractive peak of 8000 ft to the East before travelling to the 6000 ft col South of Deborah, helped by surfaces of wind hardened *rastrugi*. From there we attempted P.8020 by its North ridge, turning back after releasing a small avalanche, and continuing East to camp beneath P.8240. This we climbed the next day by the West ridge and moved on North East to camp beneath a col of 7300. Back-tracking slightly, we visited the col to the North East of P.9280, enjoying a view onto the Gillam glacier and across to Gidding Geist and Skarland but deciding against an attempt on the 9000 ft Peak to the East, crossing the col above our camp - steep but short on both sides - the same evening, we were delayed by a day of heavy snowfall which resulted in fine powder skiing when we continued on down to the Susitna glacier. From the Susitna - Black Rapids watershed we climbed Aurora Peak 10,065 ft by its long South West ridge and then skied down to Black Rapids on a fast surface in just over a day, relieved to find the Delta River still well frozen.

ROB COLLISTER

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