

SIR,

The Snow Survey of Great Britain

Messrs. Hawke and Champion have presented us with a most interesting and valuable record of snowfall conditions over the country in the memorable winter of 1946-47 and one can only regret that the snowy winters of the war period could not have been included for comparison. To make reliable categorical comparisons between one snowy winter and another according to one or more criteria is very difficult, since each season always has its own special features. It is quite impossible to do this before the 1860's, when Symons established his Rainfall Survey of the British Isles, documentary evidence being scanty before that decade. Mr. Hawke has quoted 1878-79, with special reference to January 1879, as a season comparable with 1946-47, but I should like to suggest at least four or five other seasons since then as possibly in the running.

The winter of 1885-86 was one of outstanding severity, not so much for the length of any particular spell of unbroken snow cover as for the prolonged succession over many months of heavy snowfalls over the entire country. In 1890-91 most of England was continuously under snow from November 27 to January 21, a longer period than in either 1894-95 or 1946-47, and after a snow-free February there came the terrific snowstorm of March 1891 in the south-west, about which so much has been written. But this season was less rigorous in the north, and travellers from Edinburgh to London in December 1890 commonly observed that signs of really severe weather only began to appear south of York. In 1895 the whole of the British Isles lay continuously under snow for about six weeks from January 22 to March 6, which may be compared with the similar period January 25 to March 10 in 1947. In February 1895 the snowfalls were less heavy over most of England than in February 1947, but equally heavy, and locally even heavier, in Scotland, the Lake District, the Isle of Man, Ireland and parts of Wales and the south-west of England. The winter of 1916-17 was somewhat similar in general character to that of 1885-86, but not quite so long. In January and February 1942 there was a long period of continuous snow cover over a large part of eastern and northern Britain with tremendous accumulations at high levels. Mr. C. K. M. Douglas is quoted as saying that 1946-47 was undoubtedly the snowiest winter of which we have any precise record. This, however, is in itself a cautiously worded non-committal statement in so far as it does recognize the difficulty of making precise comparisons. It has to be remembered, too, that weather memories, even among meteorologists, are short, so that recent experiences tend to be over-estimated.

13 *Christchurch Hill*,
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L. C. W. BONACINA

AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB RESEARCH FUND

This fund was established in 1945 to promote "scientific, literary, educational or historical research and publication related to mountaineering, geology or geography." The Trustees of the fund are Christine L. Orcutt, Weldon F. Heald and Joel E. Fisher.

The *American Alpine Journal* (Vol. 6, No. 3, 1947, p. 328-43) publishes projects of research under this scheme on Forbes' Bands (J. E. Fisher), a survey of Palisade Glacier, Sierra Nevada (W. F. Heald), and a report on Alaskan glacier studies in 1946 (Maynard M. Miller).

The fund should result in much valuable research and pioneer work, particularly perhaps in glacier and glacial morphological studies.

OBITUARY

We regret to record the death of Rollin T. Chamberlin, emeritus professor of geology in the University of Chicago. Professor Chamberlin made notable contributions to glaciology.

We also record with great regret the death of François E. Matthes, formerly of the U.S. Geological Survey and one of the best-known figures in modern glaciology.