

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 17, 1933

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THE BEN NEVIS OBSERVATORY

The weather station now in operation on the summit of Mount Washington, New Hampshire, is one of many that have been maintained under more or less similar conditions in various parts of the world. One of the most celebrated was that operated for 21 years at the top of Ben Nevis, the highest point of land in the British Isles, about two-thirds as high as Mount Washington.

The observatory building was erected in 1883, but for long periods previous to that time, beginning in 1881, the enthusiastic founder of the enterprise, Clement Wragge, performed the remarkable feat of making almost daily climbs to the summit - a round-trip tramp of 14 miles - to read the instruments temporarily installed there. With the opening of the regular observatory a good-sized staff was recruited. At least two observers and a cook were always in residence on the mountain top, each of the former remaining there for two months, and members of the staff also operated an observatory maintained for making comparative observations at Fort William, at the foot of the mountain. In summer a number of volunteers, including students from Scottish universities, shared in the work.

The summit observatory was built of granite blocks and its walls were ten to twelve feet thick at the base. The only road up the mountain was a bridle-path, and all supplies, including the winter store of coke for fuel, were carried up on the backs of pack horses.

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