

= British Alpine Hannibal Expedition =

The British Alpine Hannibal Expedition was an experimental archeology event that took place in 1959 . British engineer John Hoyte led an expedition that tried to reenact aspects of Hannibal 's legendary crossing of the Alps during the Second Punic War in 218 BCE . The group successfully took the female Asian elephant Jumbo , provided by a zoo in Turin , from France over the Col du Mont Cenis into Italy .

= = Background = =

After the Carthaginian defeat in the First Punic War of 264 ? 241 BCE , Hamilcar Barca secured an extensive territory in the Iberian peninsula for Carthage . At the beginning of the Second Punic War in 218 BCE , his son Hannibal took an army of perhaps 50 @, @ 000 men and 37 war elephants from Hispania (modern @-@ day Spain) to Italy , where he led a 15 year campaign against Rome . Hannibal avoided the coastal route , and took his army over the Alps . His march has been described by ancient historians Polybius and Livy . The exact route , however , has been subject of long but inconclusive scholarly discourse . In his 1955 book Alps and elephants : Hannibal 's march , Gavin de Beer lists 12 possible candidates from 30 different books .

= = The expedition = =

In 1955 , The Times published a debate about the route Hannibal might have taken over the Alps . This debate came to the attention of John Hoyte , then an engineering student at Cambridge University . Hoyte had an interest in both history and mountain climbing , and spent the summer of 1956 with friends hiking the Alps and comparing possible routes to the ancient descriptions . The group came to the conclusion that the Col de Clapier was the most likely pass , an opinion still supported by some modern historians .

A few years later , a friend suggested to test this theory with an actual elephant . Hoyte wrote letters to the British consuls in Lyon , France , Geneva , Switzerland , and Turin , enquiring about the possibility of obtaining an elephant for the experiment , but without a serious expectation of success . However , the Turin Zoo had just acquired a female Asian elephant , Jumbo , who was trained as a circus animal . The owner of the zoo volunteered Jumbo and became the first sponsor of the expedition . Hoyte put together a team of 8 people , including Richard Jolly as the expedition secretary and Colonel John Hickman , Lecturer (later Reader) in Veterinary Surgery at the University of Cambridge Veterinary School , who had gained experience with elephants during World War II in Burma . The group obtained insurance for Jumbo from Lloyd 's of London and further sponsorship from Life magazine , which later published a 7 page photo report .

The expedition started in late July 1959 in Montmelian , France . It followed the valley of the Arc river and then ascended towards the Col de Clapier . However , the route up to the pass had become narrowed and dangerous due to rockfall . The group retraced down into the valley and crossed the Col du Mont Cenis , another pass suggested for Hannibal 's route by none less than French emperor Napoleon . After 10 days of travel , the expedition successfully " invaded " Susa in Italy .

The members of the expedition originally planned to call the 5 @, @ 700 pound (2 @. @ 6 t) elephant Hannibella , however , the animal could not be made to respond to the new name and thus remained Jumbo . Jumbo was 11 years old and equipped with leather boots and knee pads for the most treacherous passages . A specially made coat was provided to keep her warm . Despite a diet consisting of 150 pounds (68 kg) of hay , 50 pounds (23 kg) of apples , 40 pounds (18 kg) of bread , 20 pounds (9 @. @ 1 kg) of carrots , and a vitamin B supplement per day , she lost an estimated 300 pounds (140 kg) during the first 4 days of the trip , and nearly 500 pounds (230 kg) in total . On arrival in Italy , she consumed cake and a Magnum bottle of Chianti .

In 1960 , Hoyte published a report on the expedition as Trunk Road for Hannibal : With an Elephant Over the Alps . Expedition member Cynthia Pilkington published the book " Elephant Over the Alps "

in 1961 , telling the story of the expedition .