

A Winter Flight Over the Australian Alps

By C. M. E. Gifford.

The project of a flight over the snowfields was discussed by various people at the Chalet, and the conclusion was reached that it would be rather too risky an undertaking with a single-engine machine. However, after his return to Sydney, Mr. R. H. Allen approached Australian National Airways and made some inquiries with regard to the cost of hiring one of their three-engined Avro-Fokkers. It was found that the cost per passenger would work out at approximately £12, which was more than most people were prepared to pay. Mr. Allen was, however, not content to drop the matter and succeeded in arousing the interest of the "Sydney Morning Herald," the Government Tourist Bureau and the Fox Film Corporation. As a result of the contributions of these organisations, five fortunate members of the Ski Club, Messrs. R. H. Allen, Morton Lodge, Walter Pye, Leslie Stephen, and Lieutenant-Commander C. M. E. Gifford, were able to make the flight for a cost of less than £5 per head. The "Sydney Morning Herald" sent one of their photographers and the Fox people installed a full-sized camera and operator.

Everyone was out at Mascot by 8.30 a.m. on 3rd August in



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."

Starting from Mascot: From left: O. M. Lodge, Captain Taylor, J. W. Trerise, R. H. Allen, L. C. Stephen, C. M. E. Gifford, and W. Pye.

spite of the fact that the weather conditions did not look promising. The fitting of the large camera into the machine took some time and several calls were passed to the Hotel Kosciusko before it was finally decided to start. The Film Company were paying a large proportion of the cost of the machine and, naturally, they wished to make quite sure that there was a reasonable chance of taking some good films.

Stephen caused us all much amusement by turning up at the aerodrome in ski-ing kit. We could only assume that he did so in order to be fully prepared in case of a forced landing.

The "Southern Star" finally took off just after 10 a.m. Captain P. G. Taylor, M.C., climbed above the clouds before reach-



Courtesy

Kiandra.

"Sydney Morning Herald."

ing Bowral and set a compass course for Kiandra at a height of about 7,000 feet. The brilliant sunshine above the unbroken layer of white clouds is a sight which most of us will always remember. The clouds remained an unbroken mass below us until just before we reached Canberra, when we had a glimpse of Lake George on our left.

Some members of the party were getting rather pessimistic by this time, as the layer of cloud seemed as though it might extend over the whole countryside. Soon, however, a more brilliant white patch was observed ahead. After some moments of doubt it resolved itself into a portion of the snow-covered ranges. Soon the clouds below us became more and more broken, and shortly afterwards we left them behind altogether. Ahead of us was mile after mile of snow-covered country. We were fortunate in the fact that there had been some recent falls, and the snow-



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."
Rocky Outcrops on Mt. Jagungal.



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."
The Main Range from the Western Side.

covered area extended practically to Cooma. Not only was the visibility magnificent, but it was a perfectly still day without a bump in the sky; in consequence it was possible to fly with perfect safety quite low over various peaks.

A few black dots appeared ahead which soon resolved themselves into the Hotel, and a few scattered buildings which are all that is left of the once prosperous mining town of Kiandra. We were circling the Hotel at 12.15 p.m., two hours and ten minutes after leaving Mascot. From this moment, until the snow country was left behind, there was feverish activity in the machine. Cameras and cinemas, large and small, were hard at



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."
Over the Chalet, Charlotte's Pass.

it. People afterwards passed remarks how cold it must have been. The writer, on the contrary, got so warm jumping about the machine with the club's ciné-kodak that he had to strip off his coat.

After leaving Kiandra, Captain Taylor followed the line of the Main Range on the Victorian side. Jagungal was reached at 12.30 and several circuits of this magnificent mountain were made. A search was made for "Tin Hut," but even those who had spent several nights there were unable to pick it out. The traverse of the Main Range continued and soon we arrived over the well-known area of country where we had been ski-ing only a few days previously. Mt. Twynam, Blue Lake, and Carruthers Peak shot underneath in quick succession. A party on the lake were clearly visible waving their sticks as we passed.

Punctual to the minute, in accordance with the programme



The Fokker over Mt. Stilwell.

R. Perier.



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."

The Aeroplane's Shadow over Betts' Camp.

sent by telegram, we flew over the Chalet. About fifteen or twenty people were gathered to welcome us. After a couple of circuits we came down to within 100 feet above the valley and a parcel of mails and papers with streamers attached was neatly dropped a few yards from the front door. It was almost possible to recognise individuals, and more than one of us were prepared to swear that they had picked out Margaret Hagon's beautiful strawberry jumper.

Then followed an exploration of the Guthrie and Perisher Ranges, together with a view of Betts' Camp. There was still some time to spare before we were due over the Hotel, so an ex-



Courtesy

"Sydney Morning Herald."

Hotel Kosciusko and Digger's Creek.

tended circuit of the Summit was made, in order to fill in time. The snow poles and the Cairn were clearly visible and showed up well on the film. At 1.45 p.m. we glided low over Dainer's Gap and followed the route down to the Hotel. The Kerry course was crowded with people and many of the staff were out in front of the Hotel. The pilot did a left-hand turn past the Grand Slam and the Hotel farm. Just after passing the farm we got a curious effect from the shadow of the plane passing over the snow. Some excellent film was taken of this shadow.

We again passed very low over Dainer's Gap, and this time Taylor swung over to the left and actually flew up the Kerry just over the heads of the small crowd which had gathered. A party started off down the course as we went over. After two or three more circuits of the Hotel and neighbourhood we set off for home, following the road down towards the Creel. The

road was clearly visible, looking like a huge black snake, crawling along the snow. We finally left the Hotel at 2.10 p.m. and five minutes later the luncheon bell was rung.

All hands turned to and made short work of the drinks and sandwiches, of which we had a good supply on board, thanks to Allen's forethought. Then, half an hour after leaving the snowfields, we ran into low clouds and rain which continued until we were within 50 miles of Sydney.

On the return journey we flew quite low, only about 500 or 600 feet above the ground. In addition to Captain Taylor there were not less than four pilots on board. All of us took a turn at the controls, either on the outward or on the homeward journey. Moss Vale was picked up about 4 p.m. and we landed at Mascot at 4.30 p.m., having been in the air just over 6½ hours.

All those of us who were on board the "Southern Star" considered the flight a most interesting experience. The outstanding factor was the excellence of the weather over the snowfields, in spite of the unpromising outlook nearer Sydney. If one tried for years it would not be possible to pick a more perfect day.

SUMMER SKI-ING.

By G. Lamble.

Each Christmas at Kosciusko finds enthusiasts learning to ski on those drifts of snow left from the winter season. Christmas 1932 saw large parties, not all of whom were ski-ing, but a large majority were encouraged to have a try. Ski-ing on these drifts was very good this year until about New Year's Day, but in the summer of 1931-32 ski-ing was carried on on the Main Range until the 22nd February.

Snow which fell this year on December 23rd and 24th gave the guests of the Hotel a chance of experiencing winter conditions. The drift snow is hard and consolidated underneath, with a soft coating of melted snow which provides a medium-pace ski-ing ground.

A large gathering took place this Christmas at the Summit. Runs of about ¼ mile long were available and a picnic lunch at Cootapatamba Saddle was eagerly awaited by those who took the opportunity of learning to balance on ski.

May I add that these drifts will be a wonderful asset to skiers who take a prominent part in the winter competitions, as there is nothing like practice to make perfect. The best example I can give in support of my remarks is Mr. J. Frazer, of the Snow Sports Club, who visited these drifts at Christmas 1931 and practised slalom racing. In 1932 he ran close to securing a place in the State team.



First Ski Ascent of Mount Bimberi

By W. A. Gordon.

[Mount Bimberi lies on the western boundary of the Federal Capital Territory, some 70 miles N.N.E. of Kosciusko, reaching a height of 6,262 feet. The Cotter River, which provides Canberra's water supply, rises to the south-east of the mountain. Bimberi lies within the catchment area of the Cotter Dam, some 45 miles away, and is, therefore, so far as we can ascertain, within the jurisdiction of the Water Conservation authorities.

Owing to its height the mountain reaches above the tree-line and has regular snow each winter. Its advantages as a skiing centre are obvious, and it will some day be a week-end skiing resort for Canberra. Fortunately all the main snow area lies within the Commonwealth boundary. The difficulty at present is access. The road through Tharwa and Naas is bad and includes the notorious Fitz's Hill, while from Orroral Station it is necessary to ride or walk the remaining nine miles. There are no huts. W. A. Gordon, with Bedford Osborne, made the first ski ascent on August 12 last year, thus adding to his already enviable ski-exploration record. A bridle-track runs from Orroral to Yaouk, passing near the foot of the mountain, and this would probably form the basis of a future road.—Editor.]

On August 12th Bedford Osborne and myself left our car on Mr. Andrew Cunningham's "Orroral" property, about 45 miles



Mt. Bimberi from Cotter Gap.

W. A. Gordon.