

Forgotten Ski-ing Fields

By "Kiandra."

When one picks up a book at random and finds words which open up new fields of thought, it seems strange that such thoughts have so long lain dormant; thus it was with the writer when the Rule's Point ski-ing fields came, after an interval of years, once more before his eyes. Here we have a ski-ing area that is made little use of, but which will obviously one day take its place among the best ski-ing grounds of Australia.

It is well known that the Main Range between the summit and Jagungal acts as a divide to the Murray and Snowy waters, and that between Jagungal and Kiandra it runs between the heads of the Eucumbene and Tumut Rivers, but it is not generally known that the Divide continues northward past Kiandra to separate the heads of the Murrumbidgee and the lower Tumut Rivers. The actual line of demarcation runs from Mount Selwyn, three miles south of Kiandra, in a half circle, via the Three Mile Dam, Reid's Hill, "top of Lobb's Hole" and Shore's Hill to Bullock's Hill (5,000 ft.), nine miles north of Kiandra, on the Tumut Road, and then continues northward (with several distinct mountains which rise abruptly), at a level of about 4,250 feet, to the head of the Murrumbidgee (4,300 feet).

Altitudes make a great deal of difference in snowfields. It will be noticed from the foregoing that there exist north of Kiandra several mountains some hundreds of feet higher than that township, chief of which is Bullock's Hill. Mount Fiery is another with which I will deal more particularly later. Given altitude, there is one other feature of paramount importance to a ski-ing ground, the contour of the surface. It is impracticable to follow the highest ground for one's ski-ing for many reasons, but especially owing to the extra distance involved in getting from point to point. Fortunately, the country between Kiandra and Bullock's Hill is exceptionally even for mountainous country, and the Kiandra-Tumut Road gives a level surface for ski-ing. The run itself offers little downhill, but is excellent for cross-country practice and off the beaten track there are, doubtless, many yet-to-be-discovered timber runs. The country over a distance of six miles is absolutely open.

On the western side the snow-country ends within a few yards of the watershed, its place being taken by deep ravines, the altitude dropping 2,000 feet and more within a distance of four miles.

Bullock's Hill (called after a man who kept a "shanty" there in the early days of Kiandra) slopes away rapidly for a mile on the northern side to a level of 4,250 feet, and the altitude remains practically the same to the foot of Mount Fiery, two miles distant. This distance and portion of road is seldom deeply covered with snow.

Mount Fiery (approximately 5,000 ft.), a thickly-timbered, conical "hill," rises directly from the road in one long sweep of

approximately 800 or more yards. The writer has a knowledge only of the south-eastern slopes. It offers unusual possibilities as a jumping-hill and, by removing timber, would be equally suitable for downhill, control, or slalom racing.

The natural out-run is already good and could, at slight expense, very easily be made much more safe. The timber and scrub on Fiery are very small but thick and, if felled and left during summer to dry, would burn easily. The surface is smooth and fairly free from rocks. The snow, during an average year, is deep enough to break the heaviest fall. For instance, the writer had some fair running and jumping practice here late in July, 1933, when snow conditions were not good even at Kiandra or Kosciusko. Owing to the slopes facing the south-east, the fact that our heaviest wind-accompanied snow-falls come from the north-west, and its semi-sheltered position away from the sun, the snow is always evenly disposed and lies for long periods. At the time of writing (25th August, 1933), although the ground in the vicinity is bare, there is still sufficient on Fiery for ski-ing.

This ski-ing ground has, of course, not entirely escaped notice and parties from Tumut (46 miles distant) and the closer homesteads frequently spend the day on it. Unfortunately, however, sufficient enthusiasm has not yet been created for the formation of clubs, out-lining of courses, etc. When these clubs are formed they will have areas on which to base their activities which have not been enjoyed by any existing Ski Club.

Built to serve in summer the requirements of stock-owners pasturing sheep from lower country and being a base for tourists fishing on the rivers nearby, Rule's Point Hotel stands within a few hundred yards of, and directly facing, Mount Fiery. As well as the Fiery course, several smaller runs could be easily cleared on a hill behind the hotel. Of course, in a heavy winter short runs are plentiful, but we can judge best by taking into consideration the snow conditions in a bad year, such as 1933.

It seems strange that this northern end of the Main Range has not played a more important part in Australian ski-ing. In a short article, such as this, it is obviously impossible to set down one-half of the facts available, but a few words regarding travelling conditions, facilities and distances seem to be most necessary. A mail car does the return trip between Tumut and Yarrangobilly Caves (48 miles) twice weekly. The Caves are situated three miles west from the snow-line. Rule's Point is reached by turning west off the Caves road 4 miles from the Caves—it is one mile distant and, in most winters, the road is open for cars; horses and assistance can be obtained from the hotel, if needed. Accommodation at the hotel is most comfortable and the service excellent. From here, the road is mostly clear to the foot of Bullock's Hill, when ski have to be used to Kiandra. There being no hills to climb, the trip, though longer, is often a much quicker and easier approach to Kiandra than by the Cooma-Adaminaby route.

Future possibilities, seeing that so little is known of this area, can only be touched on broadly. Unless the Fiery Slam develops beyond expectations, it is not likely that this approach to the main Kiandra-Kosciusko ski-ing grounds will ever rival them for first-class ski-running; but, as a ground for beginners to find their feet or for those who take their skiing less seriously than our "experts," it will, when once started, more than hold its own. For the present, the most urgent need is for clubs to be formed and money raised to clear the course on Mount Fiery. The road leading to the run-out from the mountain is very rarely closed to motor traffic and, if so, only for one mile (all steep down-grade). The hotel is right on the ground. As a jumping-off ground for trips to Kiandra and Kosciusko, Rule's Point is happily placed and it is also in a very suitable position for those who require a base from which to explore the runs from Bullock's Hill southwards.

In the far future the steep decline from the snow-line at "Top of Lobb's Hole," as well as other places on the western side of the Kiandra-Fiery section of the Snowy mountains, may be used to link by funicular the natural outlet, "Lobb's Hole" (an old sunken sea-bed), with the Alpine regions.

