

NEW SOUTH WALES.

Holidaying on the Main Range

By T. W. Moppett.

[This trip was noteworthy for the fact that Miss Trimble was the first woman to do the Kosciusko-Kiandra traverse. —Editor.]



Things have changed on the Main Range and, with the large number of huts available, a complete holiday on the Range is possible. Even in later years this does not seem to have been realised, as, up to the present, so far as I can discover, only one party has stayed on the Main Range for more than five days. That party, consisting of Miss Jean Trimble, Mr. Oliver Moriarty and myself, was away for twelve and a half days, almost a fortnight. I assure readers that that tour was the most enjoyable holiday we have ever spent. I admit that parts of it were enjoyed more afterwards than at the time. There is a certain amount of hardship, and even some danger, involved in such a tour, but surely adventures such as these are well worth while. I might mention that we were away from Sydney for sixteen and a half days, yet the cost was about £10 each. A decidedly cheap holiday.

The morning after our arrival at Kiandra was very cold, 5 deg. Fahr. The frost was indescribably beautiful, as it glittered in the early morning sunlight. We climbed Township Hill and had a good run down for breakfast. During the day we went out to Mount Selwyn and on to the Main Range behind it. There were some very pleasant runs, and the climbing was not rushed. We arrived back in Kiandra to be welcomed by Moriarty, who had arrived during the afternoon. On the way back we met a porcupine having a drink at a pool. At our approach he tried to dig himself in, but was unable to work very fast in a patch of damp snow under a clump of trees. I dug him up with a ski stick and turned him on his back. He was very scared and twitched at the least sound. I turned him over and we watched him slowly disappear, doubtless vowing to keep a better watch, in future, for ski-ers. There was a full moon, so after dinner we spent a couple of hours ski-ing on Township Hill. Moonlit ski-ing is a glorious sensation. One seems to have double the energy of the day and can go on for hours doing the most marvellous turns.

Sunday was cloudy, and the sun very hot. Bad weather was approaching. By evening the amount of snow in the valley had noticeably lessened. Sunday night and Monday it rained and hailed. We spent the day in front of Mr. Downey's fire, the only cheerful spot in Kiandra. Tuesday morning was damp, dull and drab. Most of the snow had disappeared from the valley, dark clouds were hurrying overhead and occasional flakes of snow were falling fitfully. It looked like the fireside for another day. But at breakfast the idea suddenly occurred to me: Why shouldn't we start to-day? At eleven o'clock we said goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Downey and started off up Township Hill.

A fence runs from the top of the hill, past Mount Selwyn on to the top of the Range, and then along almost to Table Top Mountain. We followed this until it ran off the Range, then continued up the narrow ridge until the steep sides of Table Top loomed up before us in the mist. We skirted round the Table

to its opposite side, where the hut is situated. After going, as we thought, far enough, we began looking for the hut, but without success. It began to look as though we would have to spend the night in the open, and with a blizzard now in progress, I, for one, felt a decided sinking feeling. We did not, as yet, feel quite at home in the snow. A few days later camping out was accepted without the least disquiet. We knew a fence ran from the top of the Mountain down past the hut. We set about looking for it and discovered it only about fifty yards further on. We were soon digging the snow away from the door of the hut with our metal ski tips, which make excellent shovels.



Road difficulties.



Kiandra. O. Moriarty.

This shows the value of knowing where the fences are located. There is generally sufficient of the fence showing to enable one to follow it. They make wonderful guides when all landmarks are blotted out by a blizzard, and fortunately the Kiandra-Kosciusko country is well fenced. Although coming along the top of the Range we were exposed to the cold wind, we were quite snug in our coats, helmets buttoned to the coat collar and round the chin, and gloves, all of light proofed japara. Underneath we wore langlauf cap, woollen gloves, sweater, and other normal ski-ing clothing. Our packs were heavy, Miss Trimble's weighing about 30 lb., while Moriarty and I carried about 50 lb. each. We took it easily and were not tired when we arrived at the hut six hours after leaving Kiandra. Table Top Hut is small, with only one room, but is good for camping in. It is weatherproof and has a good fireplace, which does not smoke. We spent two very comfortable nights there. Our beds were down sleeping bags, our normal camping equipment, with the tent and groundsheets underneath.

The blizzard was still going strong next morning, so we decided to stay where we were. We were on holidays, and, as we felt like staying, we stayed. After breakfast we climbed Table Top and got some glimpses through the clouds of the maze of tree-covered ridges and valleys which surround the mountain. As we had nearly exhausted the supply of wood which we found in the hut on our arrival, we filled in the rest of the day replenishing the supply from the many dead snow gums near the hut. This was a task that had to be done at every hut.

Thursday morning we left the hut in a thick mist, but by the time we reached the Happy Jack's Plain it had disappeared, disclosing a bright sunny day, the only completely fine day of the tour. The plain is undulating, treeless, with granite outcrops here and there, and is drained by the river of the same name. We set off towards the Vale T.S., with Jagungal standing up behind it. When we reached the Happy Jack's River it looked rather uncomfortably deep for crossing, so we followed it upstream for about two miles. Here it was only knee-

deep, so we waded it and then immediately crossed, on a fence, McKeahnies Creek, a tributary of the Happy Jack's. We then had to follow Diggers Creek, which was downstream, we had to cross one of its tributaries on a log. We had a bad scare here. In throwing one of the ski across, it fell in, fortunately in some reeds and we fished it out with a ski-stick. The water, strange to say, was not clear in this creek, and if the ski had not caught we would have been in a difficult position.

The creeks, by the way, are most intriguing. They are like open drains, in that you don't walk down their banks, as with most creeks, but while walking along the flat, suddenly find yourself standing on their edge with the water a few inches below you. They are narrow, fairly deep, and fast running, and their course is that of a very energetic snake. Our track passed quite close to Boobee Hut. By the time we reached the Doubtful Gap and skied and walked down to the river it was dark. We thought we would be at Farm Ridge Hut in a few minutes, so, as we were very tired, did not bother to remove our boots, but waded through the river. We climbed up the other side and started searching for the hut. After several huts had turned out to be clumps of trees we decided to camp where we were, in the middle of some dead snowgums. Also our feet were beginning to freeze and it was necessary to dry them as soon as possible.

The snow was about two feet deep. Using the heels of our ski, and the metal ski tips, we cleared away enough snow to erect the tent and light a fire on the ground. We raised the side of the tent near the fire to a horizontal position so as to get the benefit of the first while inside the tent. After dinner we snuggled into our sleeping bags and very soon fell asleep. The air was cold and crystal clear. In our warm beds, high up on the hillside, looking across the Doubtful River, to the Gap and beyond, we were in an ideal position for ap-



Large Boots.

Kosmos.

preciating the beauties of the night, but were far too weary. We did not get to bed until 9 p.m. and had risen at 5.30 a.m. Unfortunately the ground was slightly sloping and several times during the night we woke sufficiently to discover that we had slid down to the bottom of the tent and doubled-up. We stretched ourselves out again and returned to a state of coma.

Next morning we found the hut about a quarter of a mile away at the head of a small creek. To reach Bogong Hut, on the foothills of Mt. Jagungal, we had to cross Farm Ridge, wade and climb several creeks and fences in the valley on the other side, then climb up and along the opposite ridge which has a top like a bread saw. It was only a few miles, but the day was hot and sultry and we were still tired from our efforts of the previous day. We were greatly relieved to finish the dreary trudge. Bogong Hut is very well built, two-roomed, and with every comfort, including beds. We spent most of the afternoon asleep in the cool dim interior of the hut. Next morning the blizzard was again in action and Jagungal was hidden behind an impenetrable cloud. We tried to climb the mountain but were forced to return.

Sunday morning Moriarty went out on a reconnaissance and returned to say that it was possible to leave. We had neither lunched nor packed, but within three-quarters of an hour had left our hut. The summit of Jagungal was covered in thick flying clouds, but below them it was fairly clear. After a long climb we disappeared into the clouds where the visibility was reduced to a few yards. We climbed up to Trig. Station but only stayed a few minutes; the wind was terrific and very cold. Going down the other side we had to go very carefully for fear of running into a rock or over a cornice, and at every check we skidded yards on the ice. Suddenly we dropped below the cloud level. One moment we could hardly see at all, the next we were in a bright sunny world, with a long slope beckoning us down to the undulating snow stretching across to the Kerrie's and Mawson's Hut. We took it straight, running far out across the flat, then set off for our next temporary home. The day finished off so brightly that we thought we had done with bad weather for a time. It was not to be. The next three days the blizzard raged round Mawson's, and we spent most of our time eating and sleeping.

We had had a tin of food left for us during the summer so we had plenty. Perhaps you would like to know what we ate. Our principal dishes were:—Porridge, stew, consisting of bacon, corned or smoked mutton, dried vegetables, rice, Globex; dried fruit and rice, and dumplings, pea soup, bread, damper, butter and jam, and flapjacks. Globex is a wonderful addition to the stew. Ordinary white bread keep better than any other, for at least a week, if sealed in cellophane. A lot of jam is required. A mixture of raisins, prunes, figs, cherries and jelliettes is excellent as spare food. We had plenty of chocolate but did not want it. The potatoes and onions found at Bogong Hut were relished. Thanks



Boots.

Dr. Paul Wo

**Mawson's Hut.****Table Top Hut.**

O. Moriarty.

to Gilder & Co. we had an extra pound of butter at Mawson's. As we did not have a crosscut saw we had to leave their damper lying in state on the shelf.

Thursday, 13th August, dawned perfectly clear. Before leaving, the Jagungal Cup was run. It proved a very exciting and hard-fought contest, Moriarty winning very narrowly from Miss Trimble. The Cup is awarded to the victor in a draughts competition, held by any party stranded in Mawson's Hut in a blizzard. At 8.30 a.m. we left for White's River. Half an hour later the blizzard had returned, as bad as ever. We followed the fence to the Tin Hut. The snow was piled high around it, so we did not stay. We followed the fence on to and along the Gungartan ridge. It was very difficult climbing on the ice in the high wind. We usually climbed on skins, but it was too cold to stop to put them on. After a while we slid off to the right down into a valley, which took us along to the Dicky Cooper Valley. It was a marvellous relief to be in that quiet, still valley, after the rush and turmoil of the exposed Gungartan ridge. We were in deep powder snow in a narrow V-shaped valley, sloping up to the gap which is the common source of White's River and Dicky Cooper Creek. All was white, for the sides of the valley disappeared into a white mist and even the few small snowgums had a coating of white powder. We climbed up to the gap and ran down White's River to the hut, arriving at about 4 p.m. The snow had drifted right up to the eaves and we had to tunnel a way in.

It is a new hut, built only last summer. It is one-roomed with a good fire-place and a porch. There are six mattresses, several stretchers, an axe and a

**Crossing Happy Jack's River.****West from Table Top Hut.**

O. Moriarty.

shovel in the hut. A little snow had blown in under the eaves, but not enough to do any damage. The hut is in a delightful, well-sheltered position, and there are excellent ski-ing slopes, both open and amongst trees. Down in the valley, I should think there would be deep, soft snow, the whole winter, with hard snow available on the top of the Range. We left at 8 a.m. for the Chalet. When we reached the top of the Range we found that the blizzard had increased in force overnight. The visibility was practically nil and the wind was terrific. I had never experienced anything like it before and am not anxious to do so again. In the heaviest gusts it was impossible to stand, and several times we crouched behind rocks for shelter. I turned my back to the wind on one occasion and a few seconds later discovered that one of the side pockets of my trousers had been filled with tiny particles of snow which had been pressed into a solid lump by the force of the wind. It was impossible to go on, so we dropped down to the eastern side of the range and turned back. Visibility was so bad that we had not even had a glimpse of Dicky Cooper or Gungartan. Although miserable in the wind, once shelter was gained we thoroughly enjoyed the run back to the river, and down it towards the Snowy. Soon after passing the hut the river drops fairly steeply down among the trees. Ski-ing down beside the river amongst the clean, bright snowgums, with their red brown and green trunks was lovely. It was one of the pleasantest runs of the tour. On the way down Moriarty had a bad fall, twisting his knee. Fortunately he was able to keep go-



White's River Hut.

O. Moriarty.

ing, although it must have hurt considerably. As we approached the Snowy, the snow began to disappear, so we cut off to the right to keep with it. We wormed our way through thick clumps of trees, crossed creeks and ridges, and for a change, open spaces, and eventually arrived at the top of the drop into the gorge where we could hear the Snowy roaring along below. The side of the gorge was very steep, thickly treed, with three feet of snow, covering scrub and logs. A very nasty piece of work. The trees were too close together for ski-ing so we had to walk, slide, crawl and struggle down as best we could, sinking through the snow at every yard, and here and there getting our feet caught in logs. When we eventually reached the bottom we had to struggle fifty yards upstream to cross the river. We were fortunate on being able to cross the river on rocks, wetting only our legs to the knees. By the time we had got our packs, ski, sticks and selves across our feet were nearly frozen and were entirely without feeling. Rocks which normally would be too jagged to walk on we could not feel. Rest, fire and food were very welcome and sorely needed.

The afternoon was well advanced by the time we left the Snowy, but we decided to go on. We climbed the side of the gorge and found ourselves on the ridge running from the Blue Cow to the junction of the Snowy and Perisher Creek. This side of the gorge was, fortunately, free from snow. On the top of the ridge we met the snow again so donned our ski and skins. We climbed well up the ridge, then commenced to traverse the north eastern end of the Perisher Range. The mountainside was very steep with the creek far below, almost under our feet. In our exhausted condition it was very difficult to keep our feet, and when only half way along we decided it was time to stop. The only thing to do was to drop down to the creek. We had hoped that it would gradually rise to meet us, but it drops suddenly in a waterfall from the Perisher Plain, and is then rather flat, so we had a long way to go down. We made a gradual traversing descent, and on reaching the creek prepared camp and food. The fire was a prize-winner. It gave forth the foulest smoke imaginable and nearly suffocated us. We had to put it out as soon as the pea soup was cooked. We drank hot Globex and pea soup and went to bed.

Saturday, 15th August, was perfectly fine. The only trace of the blizzard was a thick coating of ice on the tent. Not thinking that we would be out another night, we had left most of the remnants of food at White's River Hut. On Friday we had no lunch, just odds and ends of spare food at intervals during the day. Saturday's breakfast was more Globex and pea soup, not much to ski eight miles on. We started off at 7.30 a.m. Going up the creek was all right until we came to the waterfall. By the time we reached the top we knew just what sort of a breakfast we had not had. Moriarty's knee had grown stiff overnight and proved very troublesome, but by going very slowly and carefully he reached the top. Looking back, we could see down Perisher Creek, across the Snowy, and up White's River. Gungartan and Dicky Cooper, which we had been unable to see during the last two days, although ski-ing on them, stood out clearly. We turned away and skied the half mile or so to the snowpoles, where the party split up. Moriarty went to the Chalet, while Miss Trimble and I set off for the Hotel, where we arrived about eleven o'clock.

Our first thought, of course, was food. I strongly advise hungry tourers, when asking for food at the Hotel, out of meal hours, to have a machine gun ready to back up the request. We could only get a few small cakes and some tea. On asking for more we were told that we had to order it at the office personally.

Now, perhaps, you will see what I mean by making the tour a holiday. We set out to do the Kosciusko-Kiandra tour and to enjoy ourselves thoroughly. We were successful in both, although we had plenty of bad weather, and a couple of really hard days. Previous parties unable to reach shelter have spent very uncomfortable nights, but, even without keeping a fire going, we made ourselves most comfortable.

