

Main Range Development.

By Colin Wyatt

The war has put Australia more on the map than it has ever been before, especially in America, and after hostilities cease more people will visit it. Now is the time to plan. The existing tourist facilities in the Kosciusko area did not give sufficient accommodation on the snow for the pre-war body of skiers, and after the war they will be totally insufficient. Also, if overseas visitors are desired, the quality of accommodation for the price will have to be greatly increased, as well as the quantity of it at varying prices, so that there will be ample for all types of visitors arranged to suit all pockets.

At present the accommodation on the snow for the overseas visitor, and those who, because of age or other reasons, want reasonable comfort, is hopelessly inadequate and out of all proportion to the prices charged, while for the great mass of the really keen skiers, there is only accommodation on the snow at a price they can afford for some sixty to one hundred, divided between Bett's and the Alpine Hut. There should be enough for six hundred to one thousand throughout the range.

The amount of people turned away in the Winter of 1941, both our own skiers and overseas visitors with money to spend, is proof of that. The number of overseas visitors who left because of over-crowding and lack of reasonable amenities is further proof. And we need the capital that is brought from overseas to enable us to develop our own mountains for our own people, so that all can be sure of a bed or a bunk they can afford without having to book in months in advance to avoid being turned away.

However, the point of this article is not to harp on a state of affairs that is self-evident to most people, but to discuss some possibilities for opening up the N.S.W. Alps. At present only the very proficient or very tough can venture beyond the Chalet-Pound's-Bett's Camp triangle, or the Alpine Hut-Mawson's-White's triangle.

This latter area has been developed by private enterprise. And more power to it. If private enterprise was not strangled before conception by Government policy, we should have had our Alps opened up for all years ago. Many are those who had the capital and the capability to open chalets and who were refused permission to build and operate—the usual excuse being that they would take custom away from the Government Tourist Bureau's establishments. This excuse, a tacit admission of inferiority, is not correct; such private establishments create more skiers who would form an ever-increasing body of tourists who would fill out all Government-owned establishments as well as private. Also, private enterprise is not so short-sighted as to try to rival any other resort—it merely wishes to co-operate so that more and more of the mass of the people, especially the sporting youth of the people, can be catered for in their own mountains.

However, let us return to the range. The four best centres in the Alps for ski-ing chalets where the slopes approximate to those in Europe and America, and runs of 1,500 to 2,200 vertical feet are common, are:—

- (1) Lake Albina.
- (2) Pounds Creek.
- (3) White's.
- (4) Bogong Swamp west of Jagungal.

By a chalet, I mean a hut similar to the Alpine Hut. This is the type of hut now established all over Central Europe—often in places far less accessible than in Australia. I would develop Lake Albina first. A chalet here would have several advantages:—

- (1) It is right in the centre of the best downhill running in Australia—the western faces of Townsend, the International Course and "Little Austria." It has some six or seven 2,000 foot descents at its door.
- (2) It would open up the whole Summit-Townsend-Lee-Carruthers group for those for whom the trip out and back in one day from the Chalet is too strenuous.
- (3) It would make this area safe for parties caught in bad weather on the range.
- (4) It would be well sheltered from all storms and is surrounded by excellent practice slopes.
- (5) It would be child's play to take all building materials, and when built, all food, etc., in summer by lorry to the Summit, where it would be an easy matter to pack everything in by mule or horse.

Next I would develop the Pound's Creek site, on the opposite side of the Snowy to Pound's Hut, and right at the foot of Twynam. This site warrants the erection of a small hotel, as the 1,600 foot slopes of Twynam immediately above it are ideal for a proper ski-lift to the sheltered saddle by Little Twynam.

Advantages here are many and would be immense if such a ski-lift were installed:—

- (1) It is at the foot of countless 1,600 foot runs down Twynam's eastern slopes, has superb 800 foot wood runs above Pound's Hut. Also all the fine 2,200 foot runs on the Western Face and Watson's Crags are available, not to mention Tate West Spur. All this area is now almost untouched because even the strongest of parties can only do a fraction of it in the day from Charlotte's Pass.
- (2) It would make all the Twynam-Tate area safe for parties caught by bad weather, and would make the trip from Charlotte's to White's River much easier.
- (3) It is well sheltered and has endless practice slopes of all grades.

- (4) All building materials, and later food, etc., can come by lorry in summer to Bett's Camp, and then by pack train down Spencer's Creek to the site.
- (5) It would be very easy for an eventual motor road to be built to the site.

An hotel here, a hut at Lake Albina, and the present Chalet, would create a safe triangle of ski mountains that, with careful development, could in time match Sun Valley or St. Anton. A minor village would grow up, ski shops, barber's shop, tea shop, a small cinema, a skittle alley, a few private holiday huts, and so on, and Australia would have a national mountain playground for summer and winter for ski-ing, riding, walking and fishing that would rival any country in the world.

But to achieve this the secret of success is the mutual tolerance and co-operation of Government enterprise and private enterprise. Neither could make such a project succeed alone.

White's is the next area to consider. It is an ideal site for a hut of the Lake Albina type, with a resident couple to run it, a big living-room and bunk and palliase accommodation for sixty to seventy-five people.

Advantages are:—

- (1) It is on the through route from the Chalet via Pound's Creek to the Alpine Hut and thence to Jagungal, and throughout the Winter would never have less than twenty or thirty people a night, both residents and passers through. And in case of storm and bad weather, it could absorb three times as many and still be comfortable.
- (2) It is well known already and only needs enlarging.
- (3) It is well sheltered, has excellent practice slopes.

The only snag here is materials and food, but these could be packed in either from the Hotel Kosciusko or from the Alpine Hut. At present the hut is too small, and parties often do not like to risk going there for fear they would not find room.

Finally we come to Jagungal. This mountain is a beacon for every ski-runner on the range, and many have longed to go there but knew it was too strenuous for them. With the chain of chalets and huts already projected, they could easily get to the Alpine Hut—from there easily in a day to a Jagungal Hut, if need be with a break at Mawson's Hut. I would choose as a site the Bogong Swamp at the foot of the West Face because:—

- (1) The West Face of Jagungal offers several 1,600 foot runs of superb ski-ing, and also the usual way down can be extended down the creek to this hut.
- (2) It is well sheltered by trees and would get more sun than elsewhere.
- (3) It is on the easiest through route from the Alpine Hut to the Grey Mare Hut, to Pretty Plains Hut, to the Dargals and Finlay's Lookout and the Upper Murray Valley, and eventually to Kiandra.
- (4) With a few lines of snow-poles it would make the northern end of the range safe for parties in bad weather.

I admit that getting materials and food in to this site would be a long job, for everything would have to be packed in from the Alpine Hut, and for this reason I suggest it last of all.

Summary.—First and foremost we need more accommodation at Charlotte's Pass, and modification of the existing accommodation there. I would like to see the Lake Albina Hut built first, as the easiest to build and to provision. It would at once open up the best ski-ing slopes and give the public a taste of the beauties of the Range. In two years it would always be full and the public would be ready to fill an hotel at Pound's Crossing as soon as it was opened. Then, with Pound's Creek, the present Chalet and Lake Albina in existence, private enterprise could start the village development with a few shops for Summer and Winter visitors, a private hut or two would be built, and a true National Park come into being.

TEST BADGES. Only skiers who have passed the respective tests are entitled to wear the A.N.S.F. (Australian National Ski Federation) badge; lists of all tests passed appeared in last year's Year Book. The badge is oblong shaped with a plain coloured foreground—red for 3rd class and blue for 2nd class—with the letters A.N.S.F. superimposed. Only limited stocks of these badges are available, skiers who are entitled to wear the badge and who wish to obtain badges, are advised to do so at once. No fresh badges can be made.

Badges may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, N.S.W. Ski Council, Mr. T. A. Richards, 47 Castlereagh St., Sydney. Cloth badges are 2/- each, and Metal badges 3/6 each. (Postage 3d. extra for one or more).

YEAR BOOKS — BACK NUMBERS. Back issues of the Australian and New Zealand Year Book are becoming increasingly valuable and more difficult to procure. The following Richards, 47 Castlereagh Street, Sydney: 1937, 1939, 1940, 5/- each, and 1942, 3/6 each, post free. All other numbers are already out of print and only a few of the above issues are available.