



Top of the "A" frame of the Northcote Ski Tow, July, 1953. During height of season this was buried under more than 50 feet of snow.

Photo. P. Osborne.

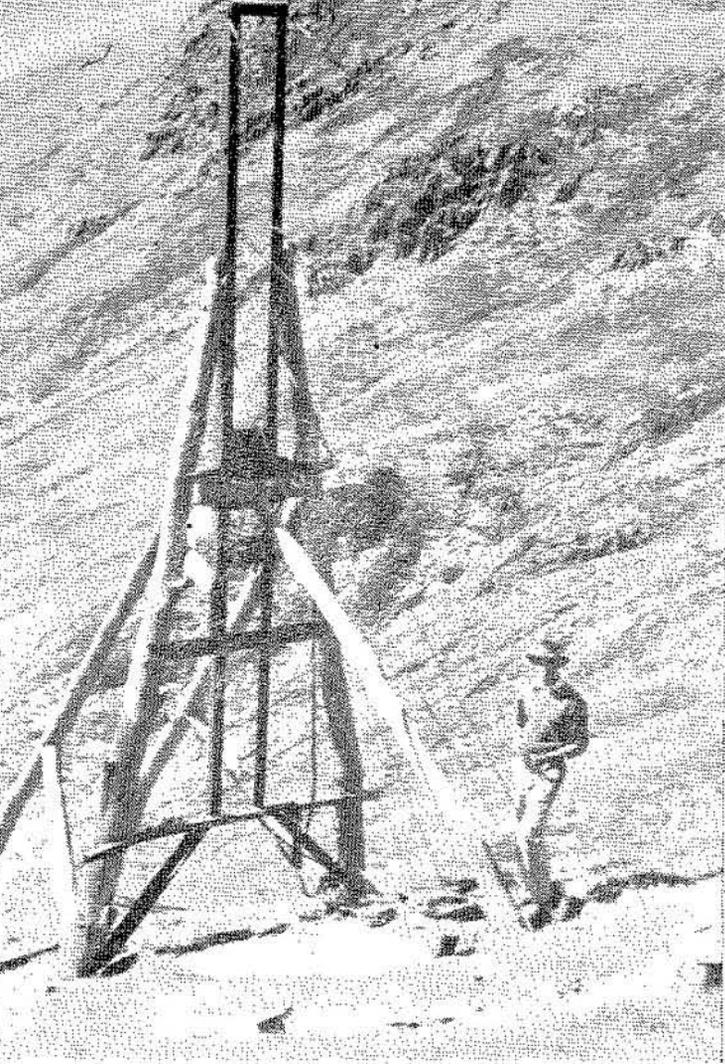
Ski Tow on Northcote

By Geoff Hughes

THE best week-end "party" I have attended was on 27th-28th March, 1954. Everything went according to plan and we put the finishing touches on Kunama and the Tow. It is great fun to put on finishing touches, especially when the weather is fine and everything goes according to plan. The Sydney contingent left town at 6 o'clock on Friday evening and arrived at Kunama at 4 a.m. on Saturday. Pat Osborne, Billy Davy and John Allen arrived in jeeps at 9.30 on Saturday morning, bringing a vast assortment of tools and the new lighting plant for Kunama.

We set to work on the tow and by mid-

afternoon the 1200-yard long rope had been laid out and spliced. A mild cheer went up when the tow motor started on the third kick. It is a reconditioned Rugby truck engine, simple and rugged, with a low compression ratio and a long, slow stroke. The engine deserved louder cheers than it received for, after being unused for nine months, it started willingly even with the spark plugs accidentally screwed in only finger tight. Finally, then, the clutch was let in and, wonder of wonders, the tow began to work. Alan Coogan, the designing engineer, watched with the sort of expression usually worn by proud fathers.



The new "A" frame, March, 1954.

Photo. Frank Adams.

After about twenty minutes, my rather crude splice caught in a "down" pulley, twisted the pole and the tow was brought to a rapid halt. Steps have been taken to prevent this twisting action on the poles. Also, the design of the "down" pulleys is being modified and Harry Malcher and I are to receive splicing lessons from a professional splicer.

We returned happily to Kunama at sundown to find that the lighting plant was in action, with electrician Balse Notari rushing around the hut turning on a vast number of lights. Kunama is about as big as an average living room, but Balse has installed no less than eighteen lights. To add to our delight, we found that there was plenty of hot water for showers before dinner.

That night we held a celebration to mark the completion of the State's first hut which has electricity, hot and cold running water, a proper sewerage system and a ski-tow. We

drank a special toast to Charles Anton who, for once, had been unable to come, but to whose energy and organising ability these achievements are largely due.

Next day we made further adjustments to the tow and ran it for over an hour. The engine is governed at a steady 1500 revolutions per minute and, in low gear, one is dragged along nearly 600 yards and up 530 feet in about eight minutes. In second, it takes about five minutes. We did not try top gear because we think that at peak revs. in top gear, people would be winning Golden Eagles in reverse.

Last year, the tow's top "A" frame was placed too high up the mountain and was swallowed by the cornice. It did not reappear again until Christmas, by which time only the top eight feet of a sadly twisted structure were exposed. This year, Bill Hawkins has built a much stronger "A" frame of steel and timber and has placed it lower down the mountain on a substantial natural mound. Also, the number of intermediate poles has been increased from six to ten, making the average span of the rope fifty yards. The poles are made of 3-inch steam pipes and have been stayed with wire ropes in the same manner as a yacht's mast.

Although the tow suffered disaster in the exceptional snowfalls of 1953, we derive some comfort from the fact that the Chalet Tow was also snowed in from mid-August until November. We are acutely aware of the fact that Kosciusko Main Range weather at 6770 feet (the height of the top of the tow) is really rough in mid-winter. People who should know, say that it is equivalent to the weather at 14,000 feet in Europe.

Our greatest problem this year may be the force of the wind on the rope if it becomes covered in rhyme ice. We intend to leave the rope safely in the tow hut until there are five or six feet of snow around the poles, and we believe that the support of the snow, coupled with that of the wire stays, will enable the poles to withstand the wind force.

Last year the rope was left out, unattended from June until early August, by which time it was well buried. This year the tow will be attended throughout the season by Harry Malcher. If the tow goes as expected, our obliging friend at Collector may give up going to bed before 1 a.m. on Monday mornings.