

Ski Tourers' Association

By CHARLES ANTON

SINCE its formation five years ago more than 500 skiers have joined the Ski Tourers' Association, and the number of Foundation Memberships in the projects to date exceeds 750. In this time the Association has built Lake Albina Ski Lodge at 6,530 feet, Kunama Hutte in the Lee Northcote Clark basin, the Ski Tow House and the Northcote Ski Tow.

During the summer of 1955 members, with the help of the Kosciusko State Park Trust's bulldozer and jeeps, brought more than 15 tons of food, fuel and building materials to the lodges. They carried out maintenance and improvement work on all projects, and completed the additions to the Tow Hut. Thirty members can now be accommodated in our main range huts.

Northcote Ski Tow: The traditional start of our skiing season, Queen's birthday week-end in June, was a disappointment. Rains washed away most of the snow which had fallen earlier on the main range, and the tow did not operate until the end of June. This scarcity of snow at the beginning of winter was followed by unusually severe and long-lasting blizzards, which, though they prolonged our skiing season, caused heavy damage to installations, and loss of revenue. In August the tow was immobilised for nearly three weeks when the rope and some of the 20-foot intermediate poles were buried. A cornice avalanche descending on the top A frame and strong snow creep did not help matters. During September, however, the tow worked most of the time, and it was shut down only at the end of October by the annual survey party.

Tow House: Following the outstanding success of the tow during the winter of 1954, it was decided to enlarge the Tow House to provide accommodation for four skiers. This accommodation proved an outstanding success and incidentally increased the number of regular users of the tow.

Kunama Hutte was fully booked, although quite a number of members were unable to take up their bookings owing to bad weather. The newly erected snow-pole line between our bridge across the Snowy at Foremans (the Jimmy Walker bridge) and Kunama proved invaluable. It enabled members to ski to and from the Chalet in all but the worst blizzards. Kunama is the first of our lodges to conform fully with the standards which we have laid down for our main range establishments. For the coming winter season all lodges will have running hot water, gas cooking, electric light with reading lamps over each bed, septic tanks and stainless steel sinks.

Lake Albina Ski Lodge, with its greatly improved facilities, was very popular. For the first time an area manager, Bill Clark, looked after the Lodge. Members praised the installation of electric light as the biggest single improvement. Situated amid majestic mountain scenery conveniently close to the Northcote Ski Tow slopes and in the heart of Australia's best touring country, Albina is bound to become more and more popular with the younger generation of skiers now graduating to our main range huts. Already easily reached from the Chalet via Kunama and the Northcote Tow, it may become the hub of our activities once the new chair lift to Crackenback Peak—which is only about an hour's ski-ing from Albina—is built.

Northcote Eagle: This test run, inaugurated in 1953, is the first of its kind in Australia. It starts at the top of the cornice on Mount Northcote above the A frame and finishes some 800 vertical feet just below Kunama Hutte. The maximum time allowed for running this course—which is over half a mile long—is 42 seconds. Five golden eagles were won last year, bringing the total so far awarded to ten. Christine Davy was the first girl to win one. Golden Eagle No. 7 was won

by Toni Mandlik, No. 8 by Mackenzie Munro, No. 9 by Margaret Anton, and No. 10 by Geoffrey Hughes, the last two winning their Eagles during the annual survey party on October 30. On some occasions Harry Malcher, our Kunama area manager, stopped skiers who in his opinion lacked ability and experience to stand up to the exceptionally high speeds.

Speed Test on Mount Northcote: Present world ski speed record is held by Italian Zeno Colo. who in 1947 on a glacier at the Italian side of the Little Matterhorn, covered a distance of 100 meters in the time of 2.28 seconds, averaging 159.29 kilometres or 98.9 m.p.h.

The holding of tests depends on automatic electric timing equipment, and for the first time this year such timing gear became available on Australian snowfields. The Swiss firm of Longines (which also

Harry Malcher, Christine Davy, Tom Mandlick and Charles Anton, the four skiers who entered the speed trials at Mt. Northcote.

Photo. D. H. Baglin.



conducted the Italian trials) through their Australian Representative, Farren Price, generously loaned the equipment and made available the services of Hans Roemer, a Swiss trained operator, free of charge. It was decided to hold tests during the Bank holiday week-end early in August. Snow conditions were far from ideal, with a strong wind blowing. Nevertheless, 100 metres were accurately measured out on a stretch adjacent to the Tow and the equipment set up. Fortunately the wind dropped and we ran the event late in the afternoon. Christine Davy made the fastest run, 3.19 seconds, averaging 112.85 k.m., or 70.12 m.p.h. The other participants, Harry Malcher, Tony Mandlik and Charles Anton, reached speeds exceeding 60 m.p.h. Given more time for preparations, better snow conditions and a more representative field, much higher speeds should be reached next year, and the Australian speed record may one day come close to the 100 mile mark, which would certainly help to put Australian ski-ing on the map. We are checking with the Federation International de Ski whether there is an officially recognised ski speed record for women. Perhaps Christine's time was a world record?

(In the December issue of the American magazine *Ski* is an article describing how an American skier, Ralph Miller, reached a speed of 175 kilometres or 109 m.p.h. at Portillo, Chile, on the 26th August, 1955. However, the timing over a distance of only 50 metres was done manually by Emile Allais.)

Midsummer Races were held for the fourth time since 1951. They were an outstanding success in spite of indifferent and sometimes downright foul weather. The *Albina Summer Slalom Cup* was contested by 34 runners. The standard was very high. Men's Section: Ruedi Wurth won the race with the best time for any run of 45.4 seconds and a total of 1 minute 36.5 seconds; second Toni Mandlik, third Bob Janata, and fourth Danny Collman. Ladies' Section: First B. Lane, Victoria, second A. Moore, Victoria, and third Constance Hughes. Course set by Tony Sponar.

The *Hans Neering Memorial Race* was

held on the second spur of Mt. Townsend. A scarcity of snow and bad weather forced Ruedi Wurth to set a less difficult course than usual on the forty degree slope, and the race was a slalom rather than a giant slalom. Toni Mandlik and Ruedi Wurth tied for first place in the Men's Section in 29.4 seconds. Bill Davy was third and Bruce Hetherington fourth. Miss A. Moore won the Ladies' Section. This very successful day was concluded with prize-giving and party at the Chalet.

Akja Rescue Sledges: In addition to our two Nansen type sledges at Kunama and Albina, it was decided to order an Akja rescue sledge from Austria. This sledge is very light and can be broken up into two parts weighing 9 lbs. each and easily carried in rucksacks by two persons. It can be converted into a stretcher, and has a wheel attachment for transporting injured skiers over bare ground. In the event of a main range accident, say at the bottom of Townsend West, it could prove invaluable. Other organisations were so impressed with this sledge that we have arranged for the import of sledges for Sverre Kaaten for the Perished Ski Club, the Ski Council of N.S.W., and the Government Tourist Bureau.

Illawong Lodge Project: Another main range touring and shelter hut is scheduled to be built this summer. Application has been granted by the Kosciusko State Park to take over and re-build the old Pounds Creek hut at the foot of Twynam. Although not yet a Ski Tourers' Association project, it is sponsored by John Turner, a member of the S.T.A. Committee in charge of the Tow House, and by the writer. When completed, the project will apply to S.T.A. for affiliation (as did Kunama and the Northcote Ski Tow project in 1953). Foundation membership fee is £25, and applications may be made to John Turner, 26 Wolseley Street, Drummoyne. A lodge in this area would extend our chain of huts to include the magnificent touring areas of Mt. Tate, Anderson and Twynam and correspond with our original aim, stated at the inaugural meeting of the Association, of "building a chain of touring



THE WORKING CLASS. Alec Shand and Ray Ainsworth in his capacity as Park Ranger at Kosciusko. Ray has been of great assistance to hut builders. Photo. G. E. F. Hughes.

and shelter huts across the main range of Kosciusko."

Kosciusko Chair Lift and Thredbo Hotel Syndicate: Although outside our direct sphere of interest, a brief report is included, as this project will be of great importance to our main range establishments and also in view of the fact that all members of the Syndicate (Tony Sponar, Eric Nicholls, Thyne Reid, Geoffrey Hughes and the writer) are members of the Association.

Application has been made to Kosciusko State Park Trust for a long-term lease and chair lift franchise in the Thredbo Valley. The site of the projected hotel is at Friday Flat, on the new Alpine Highway—approximately 28 miles from Jindabyne.

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