

# First Ski Ascent of Mount Bimberi

By W. A. Gordon.

[Mount Bimberi lies on the western boundary of the Federal Capital Territory, some 70 miles N.N.E. of Kosciusko, reaching a height of 6,262 feet. The Cotter River, which provides Canberra's water supply, rises to the south-east of the mountain. Bimberi lies within the catchment area of the Cotter Dam, some 45 miles away, and is, therefore, so far as we can ascertain, within the jurisdiction of the Water Conservation authorities.

Owing to its height the mountain reaches above the tree-line and has regular snow each winter. Its advantages as a skiing centre are obvious, and it will some day be a week-end skiing resort for Canberra. Fortunately all the main snow area lies within the Commonwealth boundary. The difficulty at present is access. The road through Tharwa and Naas is bad and includes the notorious Fitz's Hill, while from Orroral Station it is necessary to ride or walk the remaining nine miles. There are no huts. W. A. Gordon, with Bedford Osborne, made the first ski ascent on August 12 last year, thus adding to his already enviable ski-exploration record. A bridle-track runs from Orroral to Yaouk, passing near the foot of the mountain, and this would probably form the basis of a future road.—Editor.]

On August 12th Bedford Osborne and myself left our car on Mr. Andrew Cunningham's "Orroral" property, about 45 miles



Mt. Bimberi from Cotter Gap.

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from Canberra, and started for Mount Bimberli. We had camped the previous night at the car. The foot of the mountain is about 9 miles from Orroral, rising out of the Cotter River valley immediately above the old Cotter homestead. We had some difficulty in finding the bridle track, which runs over the Cotter Gap to the Cotter homestead from Orroral, but once located it proved a good path, about three feet wide. The journey was a slow one, as we were carrying our ski and heavy packs, and we did not reach the foot of the mountain until late in the afternoon. It was an unpleasant day, with occasional heavy falls of snow. We made a shelter out of green bushes, lit a big fire and camped for the night there.



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The Lower Eastern Slopes of Bimberli.

The next morning was reasonably fine and we climbed the mountain, returning to the same camp that evening, and back to our car and out of the mountains the following day.

Bimberli is 6,262 feet high. There is a climb of about 2,400 feet from the valley. I should think about 1,400 feet of the ascent can be made on ski. The first 1,000 feet of climbing must be made carrying one's ski. This is up a fairly steep, openly wooded ridge, which leads to a rather more gentle slope, where the first snow suitable for ski-ing is to be found.

From here the mountain ascends in three step-like ridges, linked by gentler slopes. On the top of the third ridge is the summit plateau which slopes gently up to the west, where there is a small hill which is the summit.

We found excellent ski-ing



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The Summit of Mt. Bimberli,  
6262 feet.

snow almost all the way up from first putting on our ski and the snow was only icy right at the summit; this was rather surprising, as we found a severe westerly gale was blowing when we reached the top, which we had hardly noticed on the way up, so sheltered are these slopes. The snow near the top is very deep, and most of the stunted trees that grow at this altitude were half buried.

The whole of the descent to the snow line, which I should think would be about 1,400 feet, would make an excellent wood-run for a moderate ski-runner. It might be compared with the conditions in the woods above the Chalet at Charlotte's Pass, but in most places it is not so steep, and the higher slopes are not so heavily timbered. It appears that at present there are too many trees on this mountain for straight running, but a few pounds spent in the future would make a very good and moderately easy straight run from the summit to the snow line, with just sufficient changes of gradient to make it interesting.

While in no way comparing Bimberli to Kiandra or Kosciusko, it would seem that, owing to its proximity to Canberra, it will certainly become a ski-ing centre in the future. A road would

first have to be constructed from Orroral to the Cotter River, as the nine miles, carrying one's ski and equipment is too arduous to be done often.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there has often been discussion as to



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Near the top of Mt. Bimberli.

how a party on a long tour on the Main Range near Kosciusko would get on if unable to reach a hut and forced to run down into the timber, carrying its sleeping bags, etc., to pass the night. Our camp under Bimberli was under similar conditions to these, as there was a westerly gale blowing at the time, and it was snowing at intervals all night. We made a shelter out of green leaves, and with a big fire we passed a very comfortable night, a much better one, in fact, than many that I have spent in the smoky atmosphere of some of the huts around Kosciusko.