

Australian Capital Territory Section

Editorial Notes

IT is with a trepid and awesome feeling that we, the infant prodigy of Australian ski-ing, take our place as the "A.C.T. Section" in this revered journal. But young as we are, we are proud of our progress; we are proud of our new place in the sun; and, above all, we are proud of our enthusiasm.

Until a year or two ago Mount Franklin was admired from afar, merely as a piece of scenic grandeur, inaccessible except to that small band of enthusiasts to whom a 30 mile lorry trip plus a mountain hike of 10 or 12 miles with full camping equipment and ski, was all good clean fun. To-day, from glistening snowfields, the extent of which is only now becoming really appreciated, those pioneers look back over time and space to the lazy Canberra plains, 4,000 feet below. For in this mountain fastness there is now a road, many acres of cleared runs, and a comfortable club house which is the mecca of an ever-growing legion of snow-lovers. But we do not look back. There are still white tops in the distance—Ginini, Gingera, and Bimberi—a score or so miles along the range and another thousand feet up. Once again we are looking to the future, and, although our part in the development of these new fields is a matter for speculation, that they will be developed in the not distant future is a certainty. Canberra has mountain air in its lungs and snow in its veins; Franklin is only the beginning.

The Canberra Alpine Club

A Year of Progress.

THE 1939 snow season was, for the Canberra Alpine Club, one of the most eventful, if not the most progressive, since its inception.

The outstanding development was the conferring of State status upon the A.C.T., thus enabling Canberra skiers to compete as a team in the Australian Championships at Mount Buller. The valuable experience of first-class racing gained by the A.C.T. competitors should be of marked benefit to the standard of ski-ing in Canberra, and should provide a useful guide to future training.

Turning to purely domestic matters, important developments at Mount Franklin included a considerable improvement in the road to the clubhouse, the employment of a cook during the ski-ing season, and the creation of a widespread enthusiasm for ski-ing, the results of which will undoubtedly be reflected in the 1940 membership.

During the winter of 1938, the then newly-constructed road from the Brindabella Road to Mount Franklin, became badly waterlogged in many places, and chains were a necessity on every trip. Last season, however, it was found that the surface had packed down so well that, with the exception of a few occasions on which heavy snow fell, the trip could be made easily without chains. The improvement will continue as the traffic consolidates the surface, and, as much widening has been carried out, hazard-free travelling is expected during the coming winter.

Fears that war expenditure would preclude any extension of the road beyond Mount Franklin were not realised, and throughout the summer months a large gang of workmen was employed continuously by the Department of the Interior, carrying the road well on the way to the goal of A.C.T. skiers, Mount Gingera. However, motor travelling beyond Mount Franklin in heavy snow will be difficult, if at all possible, and at present it is intended to concentrate all efforts on the improvement of existing facilities at Mount Franklin.

The provision of a cook at the clubhouse was a venture which received well-deserved commendation and support. From the moment when Franklin's Man of the Mountain, "Old Bob" became sovereign in his domain, the kitchen, law and order descended upon the clubhouse, and all who crossed the threshold stepped warily lest they incur the displeasure of the club's bearded cook, philosopher, and weather-prophet. The arduous work in the kitchen was lightened by many willing helpers, and such was the enthusiasm displayed that on occasions the club was able to provide hot meals for up to seventy people. Unfortunately "Old Bob" did not remain until the end of the season, and arrangements during the concluding few weeks were rather haphazard. The experience gained, however, will enable the club to organise thoroughly the clubhouse for the coming season.

Ski-ing received a welcome impetus from the consistently good snow falls. Whereas, during the previous winter, the Novice Run had been covered for only one or two week-ends, last year it was available throughout the season. Schools of instruction were held every week-end, and many beginners were set on the right track. There was the usual crop of chronic "grave-diggers", and the usual sarcastic remarks about where the wax would do most good. For the more advanced skiers the Slalom Run presented plenty of problems, and the construction of a rather hazardous jump provided additional thrills for those who became bored with the less spectacular routine ski-ing.

Socially, the club had a successful year, commencing with a very enjoyable official opening on the first week-end in July. With the range still bare at the end of June, the pessimists were threatening to trade their ski for tennis racquets, but once again the weather did not disappoint, and club members had the novel experience of working on the runs one week-end, in perfect warm weather, and enjoying the fruits of their labour among two feet of snow on the next week-end.

A piano proved a popular addition to entertainment at nights, and there were many happy gatherings at the end of lively days on the snow. To mark the end of an enjoyable season a Treasure Hunt and Dance were held.

Office-bearers:—Patron, J. McEwen, Minister for External Affairs; president, C. E. Lane Poole; vice-presidents, Major R. G. Casey, Mrs. Casey, W. D. Fanning, H. Green, W. McDonald; honorary secretary, J. H. Jamieson; assistant secretary, Miss E. Newbigin; honorary treasurer, G. Draper; assistant treasurer, G. Rance; committee, T. Campbell, H. Ingram, D. G. Hyles, Miss C. Lane Poole, T. McGrath, W. McNiven.

Annual Sports.

The results of the Club Championships were as follows:—(Men): Club Downhill: H. Ingram, 1; D. Hyles, 2; R. Prowse, 3. Club Championship Slalom: H. Ingram, 1; D. Hyles, 2; F. Piggin, 3. Club Championship Jump: H. Ingram, 1; D. Hyles, 2; F. Piggin, 3. Club Langlauf Championship: R. Prowse, 1; H. Ingram, 2; F. Piggin, 3. (Women): Club Downhill Championship: Miss L. Brown, 1; Miss H. Dunncliff, 2; Miss E. Newbigin, 3. Club Championship Slalom: Miss H. Dunncliff, 1; Miss L. Brown, 2; Miss H. Tillard, 3.

Ski-making Competition.

Under the able supervision of the club president, Mr. C. E. Lane-Poole, Commonwealth Inspector-General of Forests, an interesting competition of ski made from Australian timbers was held, and for weeks the Forestry School was a hive of industry on Saturdays and Sundays.

The timbers used were Alpine Ash, obtained almost right on the Mount Franklin snowfields, and Spotted Gum from the south coast of New South Wales. Fox Movietone lent the proceedings an air of importance by sending a cameraman to film the competitors engaged on all phases of the work.

The best ski were selected and taken to Kosciusko, where the following awards were made by George Lamble:—Men: C. Gray, 1; F. Piggin, 2; K. Ingram, 3. Women: Miss H. Dunncliff, 1; Miss L. Brown, 2; and Miss E. Newbigin, 3.

Mt. Gingera

By J. C.

IF snow conditions are suitable, no visitor to Mount Franklin should miss the trip to Mount Gingera, which lies about five miles to the south of the club house.

The range, which for 30 miles forms the western boundary of the Australian Capital Territory, exceeds 5,000 feet in many places and occasionally reaches 6,000 ft. The highest peaks may be grouped into two sections, the largest of which has Mount Franklin (5,400 ft.) at the northern end, and Mount Gingera (6,100 ft.) at the southern end. Between those peaks the range divides, forming a double ridge, in the hollow of which lie pleasant grassy mountain flats, criss-crossed by small streams. The boundary of the Australian Capital Territory is on the western ridge, and here and there may still be seen posts and trees marked "C.T."—relics of the original survey when the territory was ceded to the Commonwealth by New South Wales, thirty years ago.

The Canberra Alpine Club's Chalet is situated on the south-west saddle of Mount Franklin, about 300 yards from the road. Shortly after leaving the club house, the ski track turns to the left and ascends the slopes of Mount Little Ginini (5,400 ft.), the summit of which affords an excellent panorama, including a bird's eye view of the Brindabella homestead in the Goodradigbee Valley, 2,000 ft. below. An easy run of about three-quarters of a mile through the stunted snow gums brings the skier to the southern spur of Mount Little Ginini from which another splendid view is obtained, this time of the snowy highlands in the vicinity of Kiandra.

Bearing again to the left, there follows a tortuous run of half a mile to the Ginini flats, at the end of which the track drops suddenly into a pretty little valley where, owing to a sunny exposure, the snow is sometimes uncertain. Here shelter may be obtained in case of emergency in a weatherproof hut built by the foresters. From the hut, the track rises gradually for a mile to the Gingera flats lying in the shadow of the peak itself, on which hardy gums rear their crooked limbs among giant boulders and crags. Another 45 minutes of steady climbing brings the skier to the northern spur of the summit, and here is the reward: To the southward looms formidable Mount Bimberi (6,270 ft.), the highest peak in

the A.C.T., and the highest of the Great Dividing Range north of Jagungal. To the south-west, the range forms an impressive wall of rock with Mount Jagungal, a treeless colossus of white, standing out in bold relief. To the east is the precipitous Cotter River Valley, the Murrumbidgee Valley, the Capital City itself, and the vast Monaro plains rolling back to the coastal ranges. To the north the view is again uninterrupted, and in clear weather can be seen the glistening headwaters of the Burrinjuck Dam.

Continuing to the southern end of the peak, a good ski track down to the flats, 600 feet below, can be found.

In the late winter the ridge abounds in wild life, including huge wedge-tail eagles, brumbies, kangaroos, wallabies, and wombats, and the myriad of tracks in the snow provide a fascinating study for the amateur naturalist. As the Australian Capital Territory is a sanctuary, birds and animals on the range have unrestricted freedom.

If an attempt is to be made to reach Mount Gingera, the newcomer should obtain the services of someone well acquainted with the country for the range is entirely uninhabited, and the track is not clearly defined.