

Grand Slam Memories

(By a Foundation Member.)

All who visit Kosciusko know the steep, straight run on the hill immediately behind the hotel as the Grand Slam, and many amusing incidents and some serious accidents have happened upon it.

The writer first saw the Grand Slam a few days before the official opening of the hotel, in 1909, and there was not a vestige of snow upon it. After climbing to the top and looking down he really did not believe there were any to be found foolish enough to try and break their necks by sliding down it. However, a few days later it was covered by a thin blanket of snow, and Chas. Kerry and Percy Hunter were found to be instructing the novices in ski manipulation while digging out several dangerous rocks and stumps. One youthful aspirant after a whole day of tumbles and tosses managed to run it in the old Kiandra style without a fall. I believe this was the first time the Grand Slam was ever run. I saw the runner in his bath that evening and he was black and blue from head to foot. He said he had had 70 falls during the day. When it is remembered that each time he fell his skis went to the bottom of the Slam, one can imagine the amount of exercise he took that day.

In those days just the toe strap was used. The late Captain Head was the first to tie his ski on with thongs, and all thought him mad, as he tried to run the Grand Slam. It was his first experience, and he was very bad, but Kosciusko gave him his first enthusiasm, and it is said that he followed the snow all round the world ever after. Norway, Switzerland, America, New Zealand. At any rate, he turned up at Kosciusko a few years later a competent skier. Also he brought with him eighteen trunks of skis, ski clothing, etc. Bradley, the hall porter, said it took a week to get all the trunks from the snow line to the hotel. As well as equipment he brought several dozen of Richardson's Shilling Ski book and distributed them free of charge amongst the provincials. He was the brother of Dr. Head, the eminent nerve specialist, whose name recently appeared in the London cables, and he did more to advance the standard of skiing in Kosciusko than any one man. When the war broke out he was recalled to his old regiment, and put up for auction all his ski-ing outfit, and gave the proceeds to the soldiers and sailors widows' fund.

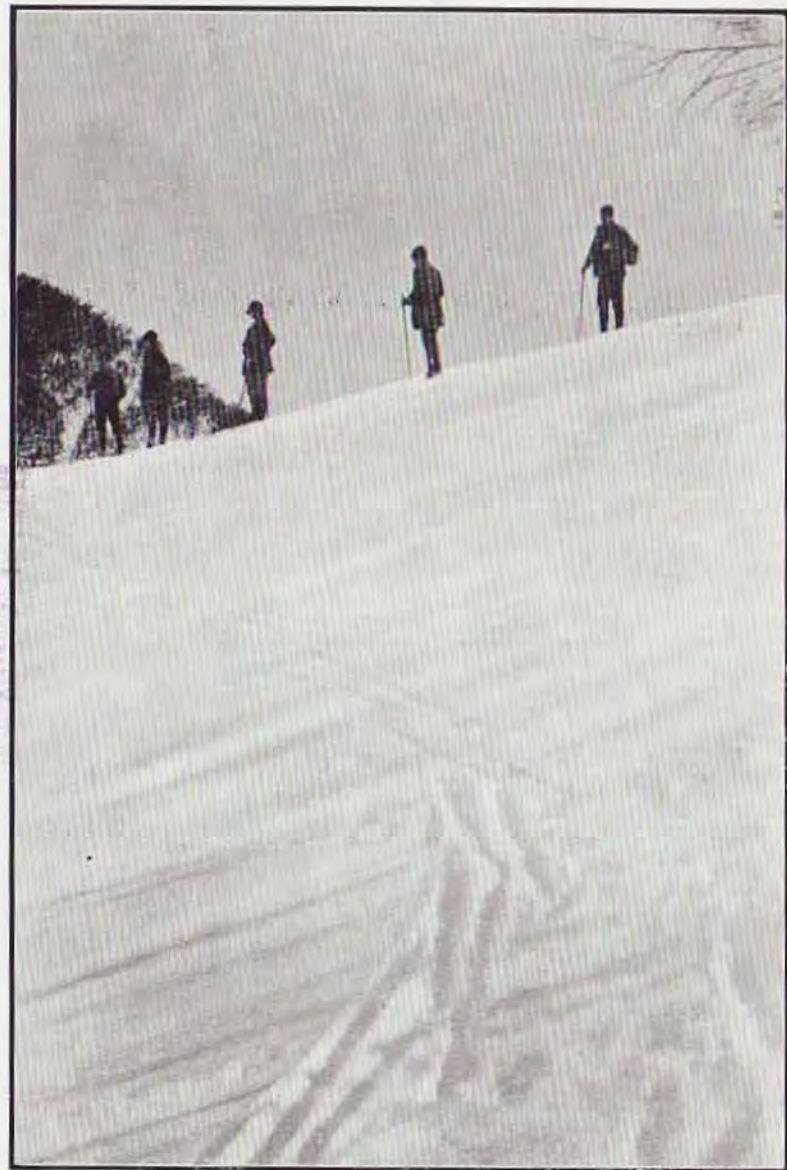
Another eventful happening on the Grand Slam was the morning R. Angus, of South Australia, ascended for the first time on ski, traversing and kick turning on the steep slope, something that appeared miraculous to the local know-alls who had always laboriously walked up dragging their skis behind them.

Among some of the partly amusing events on the famous slope was the toboggan run of the wife of a famous and distinguished colonial knight. Lady —— was stout, over sixty, but sporting, and when a young blood who boasted several seasons on the Cresta run at St. Moritz offered to slide her down the Slam she, in spite of her years, undertook the steep climb. The flat Canadian toboggan was used and she sat in front with Monsieur, the expert lying behind to steer. The first dip of the Slam saw the Continental expert fly into the air, leaving something like 16 stone careering down at a breakneck pace, entirely oblivious that she was alone on the toboggan. As all know the Slam has a gentle side slope towards Digger's Creek and the toboggan naturally took a course straight for the gas house. Her two daughters who were standing at the bottom of the course fainted into the arms of their male partners. All stood aghast, but fortunately an optimistic management had planted a row of small pine trees along the edge of the course, and the toboggan, by extinguishing their young lives for ever, just kept on the course, and the gas house was avoided by inches. The old lady, half blinded by the flying snow and entirely ignorant of her narrow escape from certain death, thought the experience wonderful and thrilling, as she was lifted off the toboggan, and wondered what all the fuss was about until she realised that her brave tobogganist was very shamefacedly walking down the middle of the Slam.

Another toboggan epic occurred in the opening year when an enthusiastic toboggan steerer offered to take two six feet by 15 stone women down the Slam. This exponent always rode in front and depended on leaning and lifting the forepart of the toboggan as a means of direction. He carefully instructed his passengers to fold their legs in and on no account to let them touch the snow. At the end of the first dip the pace was fast and furious on account of the weight, and the middle passenger got hysterical and out went her legs, which by physical laws formed a fulcrum for the fast moving load. Result, a catherine wheel of avoirdupois, which luckily ended without serious damage and afforded much amusement to the onlookers.

Present-day skiers hardly know how much they owe to our genial Editor for the ski-ing facilities which they now enjoy. If

the late Charles Kerry had not stimulated Percy Hunter to visit the miners' sports at Kiandra years ago, I doubt whether the Kosciusko Hotel would have ever been built. All know how difficult it is to create and carry out successfully even small ideas, but when they reach dizzy heights of over one hundred thousand pounds in hard cash, even the devotees of Croesus lose confidence. Hunter was notably the driving force of Kosciusko Hotel, but he had to do even a manual job to make the opening successful. Lord Chelmsford, recently arrived from Queensland to take over his third State as Governor, was invited to perform his first official act in New South Wales by opening the Kosciusko Hotel. The question was how will the Governor ever get there. The road was newly made of red clay; the recent rain had left bogs that no car could get through. We had attempted to get through the day before the opening, and after a precarious motor journey to the Creel, with four breakdowns, we were put into ramshackle traps, drawn by four shaggy mountain ponies, which had to give up at Wilson's Valley. We were deposited and had to walk four and a half miles. We had not gone far when we discovered Percy Hunter with his coat off cutting gum tree branches and placing them over the worst pot holes. We inquired the reason for his activities, and he curtly stated that the Governor's car had to get through for the official opening. He had been working like a navy since daybreak. My companion, always an indigestion subject and greatly weakened by our two mile tramp through the snow, meekly inquired how much further we had to go before the gnawings of his duodenal could be appeased. "Oh, about two and a half miles," in the manner of a Laconian replied Hunter. "What," said my friend Charlie in amazement and agonies, "and on an empty stomach?"



ON THE TOP OF MACLURCAN RUN.

Reminiscences by an Old-Timer

For the first few years after the Kosciusko Hotel was built it had no license and guests were compelled to provide themselves with alcohol. The usual custom was for guests to bring a case of whisky and give it to the hotel porter, Teddy, for safe keeping. Many and varied are the tales told about this lighthearted and humorous domo major. One of his condoned tricks was to tell the owner he had drunk all his own whisky and then sell him the last of his own case for a pound. It was always his custom when drinks which he designated quinine were ordered by the owners to help himself first by pouring out half a tumbler and placing it in his trousers pocket. Having served the drinks he would withdraw the glass and swallow the contents with a desire for your continuance in good health. No one grumbled because all were so interested to find out how, while serving, he could carry the full glass in his trousers pocket without spilling it. His assistant was unable to withstand so well the large draughts of quinine taken from the guests' stock, and when in a slightly inebriated state was fond of talking about his various exploits. One night a guest bet him that he could not catch one of the pigs which used to be kept at the hotel in those days. He took the bet and a lantern and re-appeared half an hour later covered in mud. Half an hour's effort in the dark was not successful.

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Talking of bets, one night someone dared the late John Cosgrove to run the Grand Slam in the dark, which on this particular night was frozen and badly cut up. Taking a hurricane lantern he climbed to the top, and in Kiandra skis and full evening dress ran the course without a fall. He lost the lantern at the bottom of the first dip. The noise of his ski as they rattled over the frozen cut up surface was like a stick drawn rapidly along a galvanised iron fence by a boy. He won the bet.

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The hotel was opened in the Premiership of Sir Charles Gregory Wade and in addition to a full house of guests and newspaper reporters, both Labor and Liberal members of Parliament availed themselves of the invitation to be present. Amongst notable parliamen-

tarians were Jimmy McGowen, Judge Beeby, Mr. W. A. Holman, Sir Joseph Carruthers, Sir Thomas Henley, Judge James, the late Gus Miller, the late Sir Charles Wade and many others. The hotel, though not enlarged at that time, had more inhabitants on that night than at any time since. Many dignified parliamentarians had to sleep on the billiard tables or in the barber's shop. A free champagne supper was given to celebrate the occasion, and Percy Hunter might remember giving a lecture on the possibilities of the Kosciusko snowfields. I said a champagne supper, but I am sure not one bottle in ten reached the guests. As proof thereof, the noise in the servants' quarters throughout the whole night and the fact that the doctor had to stitch up many wounds next morning is offered.

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An old identity of the early days of Kosciusko was the wall-eyed Crawford, who was supposed to know the country from cover to cover. However, when asked to accompany the first summit party, he refused, and predicted dreadful disaster. Later when the route was opened up he went on several occasions as guide, once with Lord Denman. On that occasion he drove Scott's dog team with one of Scott's South Pole sleighs full of food to Betts's Camp. I can remember him well now as he sat before the Betts's Camp fire which he almost put out by the amount of his expectoration, while he familiarly called the Governor General "Your Ex." Lord Denman was a good sport, and took his part as one of a crew. Betts's Camp was not too spacious, but we thought the Governor should at least have a room to himself. This he absolutely refused, and declined even to sit at the head of the table. Three weary days he spent in camp, owing to a blizzard, which prevented him from being the first Australian Governor General to reach the summit of Australia in winter. It still remains for a sporting G.G. to accomplish this feat.

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It was Charles MacLurean, who, on the occasion of another gubernatorial visit to the snow, emulated the captain in "Pinafore" and used a big, big D. when he found that the visitors had been taken to Dainer's Gap in a horse-drawn sleigh and that the much needed thoroughfare was in consequence deeply rutted and knocked about. The distinguished visitor, however, was very genial, and in spite of having chopped up the road he and his lady achieved great popularity on the snow.

The Monaro people, though used to the cold, are not great lovers of the snow, and never really reconciled themselves to the quaint fad of the ski-runners who would ascend the summit of Kosciusko in winter for pleasure. The stockmen regarded the slopes of the mountains after the snow came down with absolute horror, and never ventured into them after they had got the summer stock away until the warmth of spring was well advanced. When the Hotel Kosciusko was projected, at Digger's Creek, well within the winter snowline, and they learned that it was chiefly intended to house people in the winter, their amazement knew no bounds. "What are you going to do with that there 'orse-pice?" an official was asked by one well known identity of the district. When he was told that it was to house tourists he was supremely contemptuous. "They'll never go there," he said. "My old woman 'll look after all them for you." That was generally the local attitude, and a persistent prejudice had to be fought by the hotel amongst the district people. It is doubtful if it has yet been entirely eradicated, and the various hotel managers could tell many amusing stories of its results.

NEXT YEAR'S ISSUE.

"The Australian Ski Year Book" for 1929 will go to press on May 20. Space for advertisements will be strictly limited, and preference will be given to those advertising in the present issue. Information regarding advertising space may be received from the publishers, or from the honorary secretaries of the Kosciusko Alpine Club or the Ski Club of Australia. Contributors are requested to keep their articles within reasonable length and to bear in mind that purely personal items which may be suitable for a club journal cannot be given space in the "Year Book." It will be helpful if appropriate prints for illustration are sent in with the articles. Attention is drawn to a paragraph elsewhere, offering a prize of £5 for the best photograph submitted. The most suitable prints for re-production are half-plate or larger on glossy paper. "The Year Book's" pages are open for the discussion of any subject relating to skiing. If important topics are raised at a sufficiently early date it may be possible for the editorial committee to arrange for replies to be published simultaneously.