

## Kiandra to Kosciusko

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At long last the unknown mysteries with which winter has shrouded the Main Divide of the Australian Alps have been revealed by the 75 miles tour from Kiandra to Kosciusko accomplished in July of last year by four members of the Ski Club of Australia—Drs. Eric Fisher, John Laidley, Mr. William Gordon and the writer, together with a representative of the Ski Club of Kiandra, Mr. William Hughes.

The journey has opened up a new era for skiing in the Commonwealth, and has made the local ski world realise the enormous area we have for the sport in this country.

Before proceeding to describe the trip in detail a few historical facts concerning this wonderful Alpine region might be of interest. The birth of skiing in Australia was at Kiandra, a small mining town situated at the northern end of the 75 mile range. In the sixties a Norwegian miner said to be a relative of the famous explorer Amundsen was amongst those who settled in this small Alpine mining town. It was he, together with some miners from the Austrian Tyrol who first introduced ski-running to Australia and made the township habitable in winter. They formed a club and held races, even in the sixties, when the township had a population of nearly 10,000 people. No one outside the local population participated in its activities, until the nineties, when the late Mr. Charles Kerry, a well known Sydney photographer and mining man, visited the town and persuaded Dr. Antil Poekley, Mr. Percy Hunter, Sir James Fairfax, Mr. Percy Pearson, Sir Samuel Hordern, Mr. Kilburn Scott, of Sydney University, and the late Mr. Todd, general manager of Sydney Ferries, whose visit is apparent in the names of several well known ferry boats, viz.: s.s. Kiandra, s.s. Kosciusko, etc., as well as many other well known persons to go with him, year by year, for the miners' annual sports. As gold-mining ceased the town died, and at present there are not more than 50 people actually resident there. Still, with the assistance of the surrounding district they still maintain their club and annual snow sports. Thus we must consider their



### FIRST DAY.

Kiandra to Farm Ridge Hut, approximately 25 miles, in 10½ hours.

### SECOND DAY.

Farm Ridge Hut to Pounds' Creek Hut, approximately 35 miles, in 12½ hours.

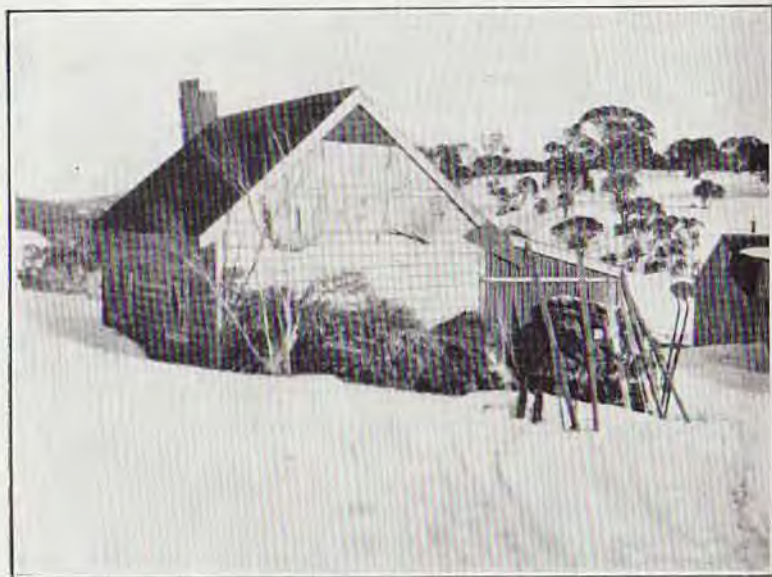
### THIRD DAY.

Pounds' Creek Hut to Hotel, approximately 15 miles.



club the pioneer of ski-ing clubs in this country and Kiandra as the Cinderella of Australian ski-ing centres.

Not so long after the foundation of Kiandra the Grey Mares Mines, situated near Jagungal, half-way between Kiandra and Kosciusko, were opened, and the miners used skis to carry their mail and food in winter from Kalkite across the Main Divide to the mines. The route followed the Gungarlin River and crossed the range between Bull's Peak and the Jagungal (Big Bogong) saddle along a secondary spur which includes Strumbo Hill, Smith's Lookout (5,680



THE NINE MILE HUT.

feet), Rocky Bogong and Grey Mares Bogong. Further on the spur contains Finley's Lookout (5,479 feet), the Ink Bottle, the Dargals (5,661 feet), and Jagumba (5,100 feet) at its terminus. This spur, which runs in a west north-west direction, is about 25 miles long and takes common origin from the Main Range, with the Big Bogong spur, which also runs in a north-west direction and contains Jagungal (6,755 feet), the Round Mountains (5,755 feet), and the Manjar or Black Jack (5,255 feet). As they went on their course these two spurs became separated by an undulating valley, six miles in width, through which the Tooma River and its many tributaries wend their serpentine courses. The two spurs ultimately approach each other,

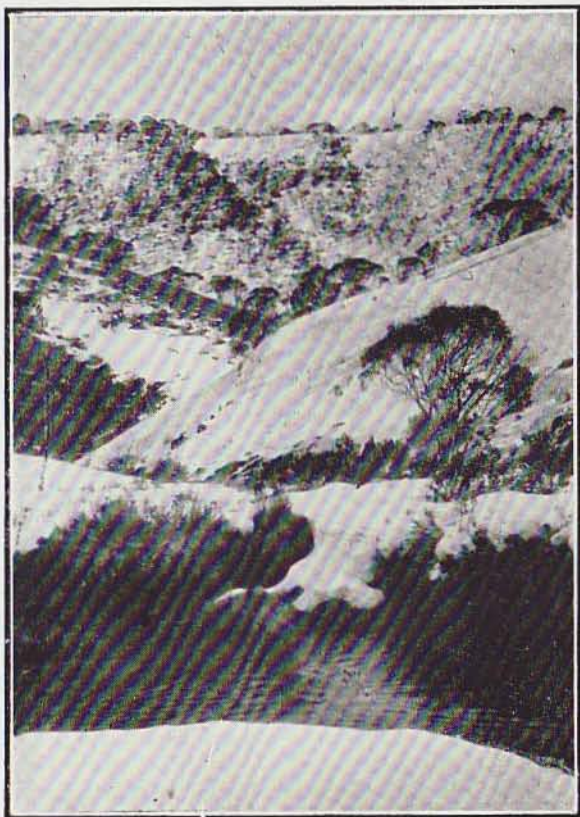
causing Jagumba and Black Jack to act as sentinels over a gap which affords the Tooma exit from the enclosure. Here is another 100 square miles of untouched ski-ing country with runs of every gradient and length. Furthermore, its westerly position, its complete protection, by two ranges nearly as high as the Main Range itself, its greater distance from the sea makes one believe that it will ultimately become the chief ski-ing centre of the Australian Alps.

Although the southern end of the 75 miles Main Divide was ascended for the first time in the summer of 1839 by Count Strzelecki, who called one of the highest peaks Mount Kosciusko from a fancied resemblance to the tomb of the Polish patriot at Cracow, no skier had touched its snows until the late nineties of the last century, when Chas. Kerry brought his Kiandra ski-ing companions Irwin and McAlister with others to make the first winter ascent of Kosciusko. They travelled on pack-horses from Jindabyne, via the Crackenback or Thredbo River track, which is out of the snow line, reached the snow near Merritt's Lookout on Ram's Head Range, crossed Etheridge Range and made the first winter ascent of Mount Kosciusko. From the Crackenback or Thredbo River this necessitated a climb of 3,000 feet and a distance of about three miles. Several other ascents were made by this route, but it was not until Percy Hunter stimulated the building of the Hotel Kosciusko that ski-ing proper was developed at this end of the range. The hotel was opened by Lord Chelmsford, in 1909, and the first winter ascent of Mount Kosciusko by the hotel road route was made in 1910 by the late Mr. John Cosgrave, Dr. Oscar Paul, Mr. A. G. M. Pitt and the writer. This necessitated ski-ing for 34 miles and the climbing of 3,500 feet there and back. Since then most of the peaks at the Kosciusko end of the range have been climbed at various times. Mount Townsend, in 1922, Mount Twyman, Mount David, Gill's Knobs, Mount Tait and Granite Peaks, in 1925, Gungartan, 1926, all over or approaching 7,000 feet in height.

Thus when we consider that ski-ing was established at both ends of the range and not unknown in the middle sector, it seems passing strange that only after the lapse of nearly 70 years since its introduction to Australia that the through journey from Kiandra to Kosciusko has been successfully accomplished. The credit must go to the skiers of Kosciusko who only visit the snow for three weeks each year, for ever since the first lessons were given them by the late Mr. Charles Kerry and Mr. Percy Hunter at the hotel, in 1909, they have dreamt and worked towards the accomplishment of this great project of connecting the old and new ski-ing centres. They had at first to make themselves proficient in the art of ski-ing and gain a thorough knowledge of snow craft, learn something about meteorology and the rules of navigation by compass. Then followed years of patient study of the Main Divide with its confusing daughter and grand-

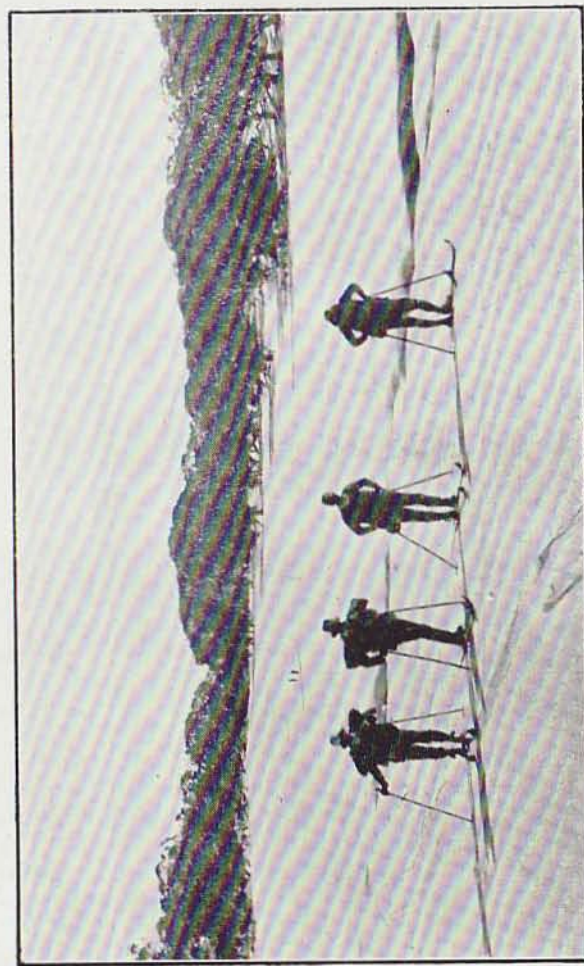


daughter ranges, as well as the sources and serpentine courses of all the rivers and creeks arising therefrom. Only a thorough understanding of these geographical features would make it possible to avoid being lost in a country where even bushmen get bushed. Many sectional ski tours were made, both from Kossiusko and Kiandra and



TEMPERANCE CREEK. TWELVE MILES FROM KIANDRA.

some through journeys in summer. The four day's ride across in the summer of 1927 finalised their knowledge of the terrain and allowed them to again inspect the new hut, erected as a safety zone by the Ski Club of Australia at Gungartan Mountain. On this journey the Misses Ryrie, two of our associate members, accompanied them, and the bravery and grit of Miss M. Ryrie (now Mrs. Pat Osborne)



CROSSING MILKMAN'S FLAT. SEVEN MILES FROM KIANDRA.



should be mentioned. She contracted pneumonia, near Jagunal, and spent the following two days in the saddle without a murmur of complaint, arriving at the hotel with a temperature of 103 deg. It was with joy and intense relief that we heard of her recovery.

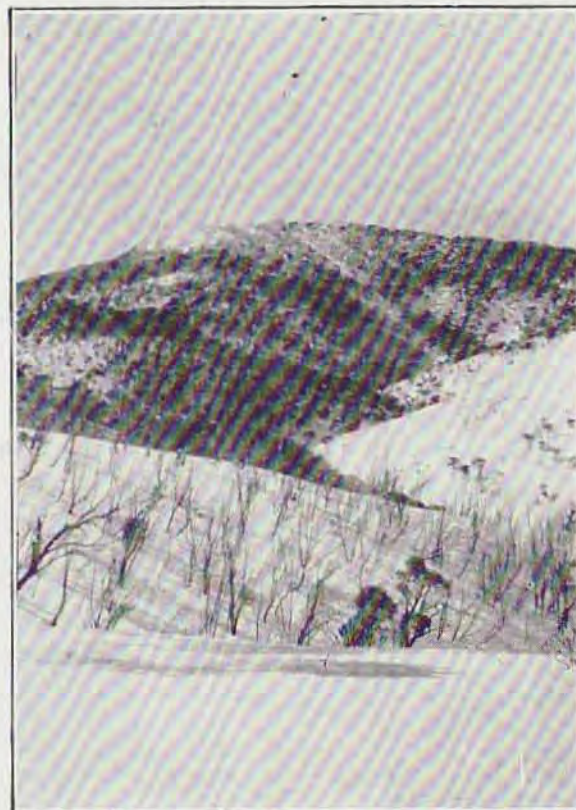
It now became a question of the actual winter attempt, and all who had taken part in the preliminary work of exploration wished to participate, but we were reluctantly compelled to limit the number on account of the limited amount of food and blankets stored in the several safety zones which were stocked before the snow season set in. The late Mr. Chester Foy had stocked one of his huts at the Nine Mile Mine, and Mr. William Hughes had taken out tinned rations and blankets to Farm Ridge. Mr. Speet, manager of Kosciusko Hotel, attempted to stock the Gungartan Hut, but could not get through with his pack-horses, so left the load at Reid's Hut, near the junction of the Snowy River and Finn's Creek, about four miles lower than Gungartan Hut.

After five days' training and preparation at Kosciusko, the party left for Kiandra on 27th July. We were compelled to ski for the last eight miles. Heavy packs, soft snow, and the steep grade of the Alpine hill made it no easy matter, and we were all tired when we reached the Alpine Hotel, where the proprietor and his housekeeper gave us cheery welcome, as we were the first visitors for many months. The licensee is a great booster for Kiandra, and he says that the people of the lowlands are not justified in giving Kiandra the cold shoulder, because any town that can exist for sixty years and have only 16 in the cemetery is worth a visit. After seeing the excellent ski-ing country around, we also believe more attention should be given to Kiandra by people seeking health, rest and sport.

We had wired Mr. Mares asking for a forecast of the weather for the next few days, but so far had received no reply. However, he had already supplied us with a schedule of the weather conditions about this period during the last seven years.

Before going to bed we gave attention to our bindings. Laidley and Gordon used Huitfield bindings, Fisher and myself the new metal Haug, which proved very satisfactory, and Hughes used the old Kiandra bindings, and took, at our request, some things which he found very necessary on the steep slopes towards the Kosciusko end. Much thought was given to the packing of our rucksacs, and one thing after another had to be discarded on account of weight: still by the time the bread, meat, sausages, dried soup tablets, extra bindings, wax, mending outfit, Tintoe, and emergency dressings, sun cream, brandy, change of clothing, map, compass, sleeping bags, wind jackets, canvas gloves, mufflers, white hats, sun glasses, cigars, tobacco and matches, tin pannikins, straps, were distributed, each had a load of something over 40 lb. on their backs.

We woke after a good night's rest to find a blue sky, brilliant sun, no wind, and a hard frost. After bidding farewell to our host we shouldered our mule-like packs and left the hotel, at 8.30 a.m. Half an hour after our departure a very pessimistic forecast arrived from the Weather Bureau. A Kiandra ski-ier followed us for nine miles, but failed to catch up. It was fortunate, because had we re-



TABLETOP MOUNTAIN FROM BOLTON'S HILL.

ceived and acted on it we would have missed the only two consecutive fine days in our three weeks' stay in the mountains. Mr. Mares' forecast was right, but we got just a little ahead of it.

In the first part of the journey Hughes, who was born and lived most of his life in Kiandra, saved us many miles. An immediate climb of 800 feet up Township Hill brought us to the Main Divide,



and we then followed the track to the Nine Mile. While crossing Milkman's Flat, four miles from Kiandra, we got an excellent view of Jagunal (6,755 feet) which is just half-way between Kiandra and Koscisko summit, and, on account of its characteristic shape and height, forms a notable landmark which can be seen from various points throughout the whole journey. We passed through the Nine Mile, leaving Cabramatta or Tabletop (5,850 feet) on the left, and climbed on to one of its spurs down which we ran to Temperance Creek. The snow was good and fast, but the ground was thickly timbered and steep, necessitating sharp turns, accompanied by many tosses, mainly on account of our heavy rucksacs. We had luncheon at Temperance Creek, 12 miles from Kiandra. We then crossed the creek and ascended the steep snowless northern side of Bolton's Hill. With our skis over our shoulders, in addition to our heavy rucksacs, we could do no more than 20 steps without a rest. We all agreed that it is the steepest hill we have ever climbed. By taking this short route we cut out the whole of the Happy Jack Valley, and we were well compensated for our effort by its gloriously snow-covered southern slopes. After some magnificent runs we crossed Mulligan's Creek, and then some undulating country brought us to the steep banks of the Happy Jack River. To descend these banks and find a crossing was no easy matter. We were forced to take off our ski and climb down amongst rough boulders, and in the effort a large piece of the sole of my left boot was torn away which ruined my downhill for the rest of the journey, as I found it impossible to steer properly. We had to strip to cross the Happy Jack, which is a turbulent stream waist deep. Fortunately there was some uncovered grass near the banks, but still dressing in the snow is not to be recommended. We now had a steady climb with some up and down (more up than down) until we passed the Boobee Hut, when we had more or less level travelling along the valley of an upper branch of the Happy Jack River, terminating in a gentle climb up to the Doubtful Gap (5,200 feet). The snow was excellent, but the light was beginning to fail, and we ran into a mild snow storm. After crossing over the gap snowing ceased, and we had just enough light to enjoy the magnificent downhill mile to the Doubtful River. Some of us were so tired that we waded the river, boots and all, only to spend a very uncomfortable hour with wet, frozen feet, as we edged our way at a snail's pace, and with many falls along the steep half mile valley at the head of which the Farm Ridge Hut is situated. We arrived at 7 p.m., weary and wet and out of temper. We prepared our evening meal, which we finished at midnight, and lay down to sleep on the hard wooden floor. Most had had enough by 5 a.m., and were up sitting before the fire waiting for the dawn. We had done 25 miles the first day, over

rugged and difficult country, with plenty of wood running and steep slopes, and some breakable crust.

A hasty breakfast and an early start found us travelling on the incomparable slopes of the Seven Hills approach to the Jagunal saddle. The snow had a morning frost which made both the uphill and downhill pleasant. It is impossible to imagine a better skiing ground than these hills afford. Almost every kind of gradient, timbered and untimbered, and seen from Jacky's Lookout, the wonderful



CROSSING THE HAPPY JACK RIVER.

long slopes down the Bogong Creek and other tributaries of the River Tumut, seems to go on for ever. I predict a great future for the snowfields of Farm Ridge and the watershed of the Tumut River, especially that part that takes origin on the northern aspect of Jagunal spur. It is hard to do justice to the magnificence and grandeur of Mount Jagunal, a most characteristic Australian peak, with its crouching-lion form sparkling and blazing with its diamond studded mantle of snow. Jagunal is also called Big Bogong, as are nearly all other peaks about Koscisko, and it is interesting to learn the reason



for this. According to Mr. Bowrie, a squatter called Mansfield, who lived in the Kiewa valley, many years ago, noticed that in certain drought seasons the local blacks were brought nearly to the verge of starvation on account of lack of food, and that they then migrated to the Kosciusko plateau, and would re-appear after several months sleek and fat. He asked what they did to produce such a transformation, and all they said, as they rubbed their stomachs, was "Bogong, Bogong." Being of an inquisitive turn of mind, he determined to go with them one year, and it is interesting to read his description. The whole tribe migrated to the vicinity of Ram's Head, and immediately upon arrival, the gins collected the long, tough grass fibres and made small baskets, and the men armed themselves with long sticks and raked between the rocks for the big fat moths which



FARM RIDGE HUT.

abound in this region. They were placed in the baskets made by the gins and cooked slowly over the fire, and eaten. This was the source of their well-nourished condition, and the reason why the mountains were named Bogong, the aboriginal name for the local moths.

After passing the head of Bogong Creek we made a steady slantwise traverse of Jagunal spur and soon found ourselves on the Main Range, at the foot of Bull's Peaks, about where the Jagunal spur takes origin. We had crossed the Main Divide, on the way to the Nine Mile, cutting out the big loop, which contains Mount Addicumbene and Near Bald Mountain. From now on we followed the crest of the Main Divide and as we passed Bull's Peaks we came upon the snow poles of the old Kalkite Road that lead to the Grey Mares Mines, and we saw the valley of the Tooma and its wonderful ski-ing possibilities previously described. Here is another field almost as extensive as the



THE KIANDRA PARTY STEMMING DOWN PIPER'S VALLEY ON THEIR WAY HOME TO THE HOTEL KOSCIUSKO.



A VIEW LOOKING WEST FROM CONSETT STEPHEN PASS.



Kosciusko plateau and the equal of anything in Norway or Switzerland. It is the privilege and good fortune of the ski-runner to realise what our well favored and wonderful country hides in winter from the eyes of the uninitiated. Something must be done that all may behold these wonders of mother snow and father frost.

From here we can also see the extensive snow area that covers the source of the Geechi River. The exploration of its extent is left to the enthusiast of the future. As we proceed along the Main Range we skim over the frozen surface, our skis and stocks singing with each lunge forward, with every now and then a half mile run through the balmy morning breeze which amply recompenses us for the muscular effort of the flat. As we make our way from Bull's Peaks to Gungartan and the Tin Hut along the eastern side of the great range, we look out upon the chocolate plains of the Monaro, with its indigo and violet mountains beyond. It is good to be alive, and the plodding and discomfort of the 1,000 feet climb disappears in the twinkling of an eye.

We kept well towards the Cooma side of the Main Divide, leaving the Cup and Saucer Hill well to our right. Further on we left the Main Range for a mile, taking the easier travelling along the valley of the source of the Valentine Creek. Eventually, by an easy climb, we gained the Main Divide and reached the Tin Hut at the foot of Mount Gungartan, about 1 p.m. We had taken about five hours to do 15 miles. After an hour's rest and luncheon we discarded our sleeping bags and all extra weight in the form of food, etc., and made the final dash for Pounds' Hut, from which we can get home in any weather. Slowly and with frequent stops, for our muscles are feeling the strain, we climbed to the top of Gungartan (6,776 feet) and we are repaid a hundred fold by a run of nearly two miles down its gradually sloping flank to the White's River saddle, except towards the end, when we ran into balling snow. By so doing we have avoided another acute bend to the west of the Main Range and shortened our journey by another three miles.

Now we must climb the last and most difficult sector on to the top of Granite Peaks. Steep; listen to the beating of our hearts and our short, deep breathing. At last, on top, we travel along a gently undulating plateau of ice knobs that never seems to end; but we are in well known country and have no fear. Then all of a sudden the old god of the mountain makes us understand that he is not to be conquered so easily, and envelops us in a blanket of fog which robs us of all sense of distance and hides from us such well known landmarks as the Perisher, Mount Tait, and Gill's Knobs. We must feel our way along to the Consett Stephen Pass, that landmark which will lead us to the Guthega River, the Snowy and home. There is some divergence of opinion—we must now be opposite the pass. Caution

says no—if we miss it and get into the Geechi Valley we are out for the night. Those that have been along the Granite Peaks plateau previously advise that we keep close to the western edge, as the precipitous-like slopes of Mount Tait will, as we reach it, force us into Guthega River valley. Just as we are all consumed with doubt we run on to the pass, and take compass bearings. The river runs in the



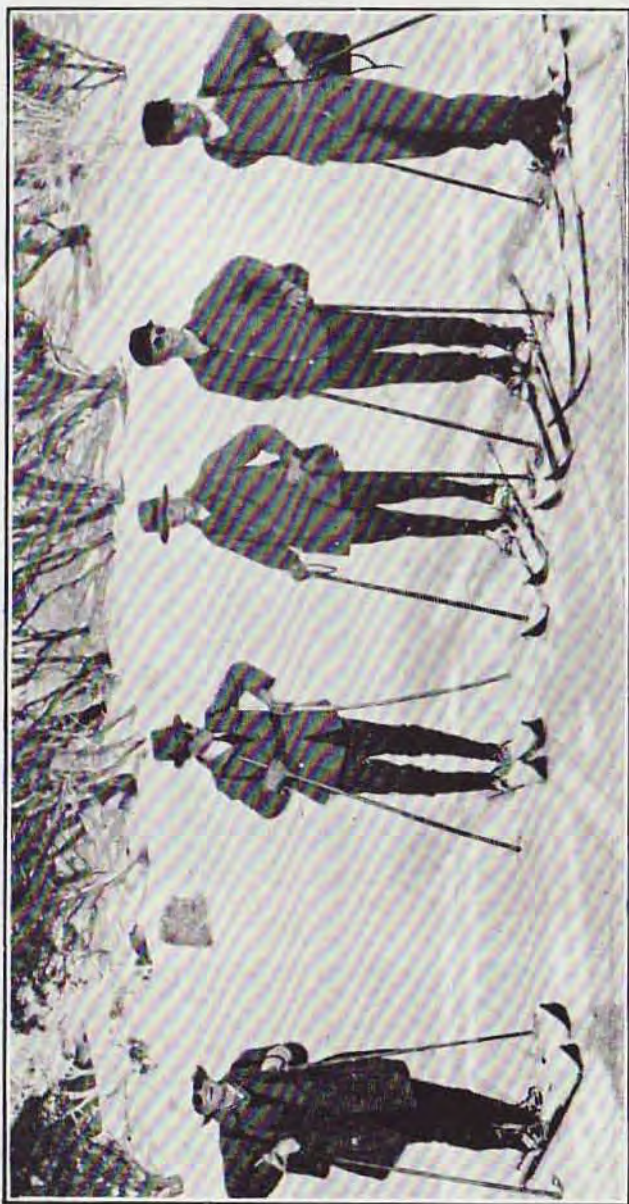
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TIN HUT AT THE FOOT OF GUNGARTAN MOUNTAIN.

right direction, so off we go, all hoping that we may strike the Snowy at its stellate junction with the Blue Cow and Guthega Rivers. If we are in error we may have to pass the night in the snow.

After many falls and tumbles we are pleased to find that we are right and particularly to see that the Snowy River is frozen over. No stripping and paddling in the frozen, turbulent stream. It would be hard to describe this run in the dark. The Guthega River was open in parts, and we had constantly to change from one side to the other. There was always the doubt as to whether we were in the





The Party photographed at the foot of Piper's Gap on their way back from Pounds' Creek to the Hotel Kosciusko on their third day out from Kiandra.

right valley, and even in the light the fall of 1,500 feet in less than three miles after 12 hours' travel is no easy matter. After crossing the Snowy, a half mile of edging on the steep bank of the river is accomplished with the aid of a stiff whisky, the first used on the journey. All is safe; we are within a quarter of a mile of Pounds' Hut; but that quarter mile seems longer than the rest of the journey. Five tired men drop into Pounds' Hut (35 miles in 12½ hours), eat like wolves, throw themselves on the spring mattresses, and sleep until 11 o'clock next morning. Next day 15 miles home, with luncheon at Betts's Camp seems child's play. We have accomplished what most thought a foolhardy project, and as we near the hotel and look at the Main Range, capped in clouds of fog, we admit luck has been with us for once.

Apart from the excitement of the trip and the stimulus of covering, for the first time unknown snow country, the journey has opened our eyes to the wonderful possibilities of ski-ing in Australia. Thus for the first time the through journey of 75 miles from Kiandra to Kosciusko Hotel has been made, and it has opened up many possibilities of exploration for future generations of Australian skiers, but we would advise only those who have made a thorough study of the terrain and ample provision for food and shelter to attempt this trip. We were extremely lucky in having exceptional weather conditions, and we, more than anyone else, realise that we might easily have met with disaster. Once proper huts are established in which skiers can remain for a week, if the weather demands and certain parts of the course mapped out, the pleasure of this journey will be available to any capable of passing the third-class test.

In conclusion, I would like to pay a tribute to my travelling companions—Fisher, daring but cautious, the carrier of extras such as remedies for colds and, although tired himself, always ready to retrace his steps in a companion's distress; Laidley, our navigator, cheerful and possessing an intelligent knowledge of the terrain, under all difficulties, a true son of his ancestors; Gordon, the novice, always leading, taciturn and tough as the granite we crossed, with a sense of the open spaces and the heart of a lion; Hughes, deferential and inquisitive regarding the capabilities of these "tender foots," and whose local knowledge saved us many a weary mile. Sport, like war and adversity, makes people have a regard for each other and establishes in this vale of tears friendships that no circumstances can mar or break.



and relates how many were killed on their toboggans last season at such and such a spot, you feel more bucked up than ever.

The Norwegians are hospitable people, but I advise anybody visiting their country to first see that their digestive organs are in order, as they will be tempted with many wonderful and rare dishes placed before them by genial hosts. As for language my knowledge only went as far as God Dag (good-day), Mange Tak (many thanks), Tak for Maten (thanks for the meal), and I needed no more because everybody seemed to be able to speak English.

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### THE VICTORIAN CLUB'S BOOK.

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We have received Volume 3 of the "Year Book" of the Ski Club of Victoria, this volume being for the year 1927-1928. We congratulate the Victorian Club upon its book, which is well printed and contains some very interesting articles and other information pertaining to the sport across the Murray. The joint Editors are Mr. C. T. Davenport and Mr. N. R. McDonald. Particulars are given of the year's activities, one of the most notable being a record of 3 hours 52 minutes from the Chalet (Mount Buffalo) to Horn Hut and back, a distance of 16 miles. A championship meeting was held at Mount Hotham on August 11, 1927, and this year's championship will be run in the vicinity of Mount St. Bernard, between August 6 and August 9. Entries for the championship will be confined to those who have passed the junior test. A race from the Chalet to the Horn Hut and back will be held between July 30 and August 2. The more important articles in the book deal with October ski-ing, early Alpine enthusiasm, snowfall and temperature records, of which most interesting and exhaustive tables are given: across the Bogongs, a trip to Donna Buang, Hotham Heights, Ski-ing in Austria and in Australia, snow photography, a trip to Mount Feathertop and the mountains of Tasmania, The Razorback, a course of practice, and the tests, etc. The article on the tests shows that a very creditable number of members has passed the junior test and four have succeeded in the second-class test. There are some attractive illustrations, cartoons and diagrams in the book upon which the Editors and all concerned are to be warmly congratulated. The record shows that numbered in the ranks of the Victorian Club are some first-class enthusiasts who can write as well as ski; while the descriptions of the terrain prove that there is splendid ski-ing country available in the Victorian Alps. What a pity it is that there is not a line of snow hills direct from Kosciusko to Buffalo.

## Suitable Chalet for High Altitudes.

(By Allen W. Gerard.)

### THE PROJECT.

The Ski Club of Australia is taking steps to provide additional facilities for its members in the nature of club quarters, erected above the lower Australian Alps.

The writer has been entrusted with the delightful task of formulating a scheme which will enable the special requirements of such a project taking concrete form. A suitable building was required which will provide sleeping and living quarters for a maximum of twenty members, including men and women. The site selected would be upon the terrain in close proximity to a spring of clear running water, and small rock boulders would also be available for constructional purposes. The climatic conditions may well be described as "antaretic," for about six months of the year, with heavy snow fall and strong winds, with resulting snow drift. All the necessary services for the comfort of its members in the way of warmth, hot water, lighting and cooking would need to be provided within the walls of the chalet. As its location would be several miles from any other building, adequate storage facilities for food and fuel would also be required, as well as for the storage of equipment used only during the ski-ing season.

In searching for precedent for such a structure as would adequately meet the special requirements specified above, one's mind instinctively reverts to the delightful buildings of timber which one finds dotted all over the Swiss Alps and Scandinavia. As the result of scientific experiment and practical application of building materials, Canada and the United States of America can also provide technical data of great value to our present purpose.

### THE PLAN.

Turning to a consideration of the lay-out or planning of the chalet, figures I. and II. are sketches of the ground and first floor plans and two elevations of the building. A lower ground floor would be provided (not shown in the sketches) which is located immediately under the kitchen and porch, which provides an entrance to the building for those who have returned from ski-ing. In this room wet clothing, boots, etc., may be doffed and skis placed in racks provided for the purpose. The stove for the hot-air central heating system is also located in this chamber, which will provide additional facilities for drying wet garments, etc. The preparation of skis will also be undertaken in this room. Leading up from the lower ground floor is a stair which gives access to the entrance porch, on the ground floor. This porch has access to the outside and also communicates with the