

The Ski-ing Huts of New South Wales

By C. Gilder.

During the last few years much work has been done in opening up the touring country on the Main Range at Kosciusko. Some years ago, one made plans days ahead before a tour to Betts' Camp was achieved but, with the advent of the Chalet at Charlotte's Pass, we find now, not only the venture-some and more experienced skier, but the fortnight-a-year skier, urged with a desire to explore the less known regions of the Range. Provided the necessary essential precautions are taken and at least one member of the party is experienced in touring, it is a perfectly laudable desire.

Of paramount importance to a party touring anywhere beyond Charlotte's Pass, is a true knowledge of the location and condition of all the too-few huts existent in this wonderful stretch of touring country. Given more of these huts, judiciously placed at intervals between the existing habitable huts, long trips in these regions will be the natural order of the day.

Even with these conditions, one must not lose sight of the fact that the Main Range, on account of its weather, will always demand respect, and, if a party does not wish to become be-nighted and spend a very uncomfortable night in the timber, this knowledge of the position of the objective hut and of the surrounding terrain should enable it to reach shelter under any conditions.

With the object of educating skiers as to the position and condition of the huts situated on the Kosciusko Plateau, the Editor has asked me to collect all possible information regard-



Mawson's Hut, Valentine River, in summer.

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ing these huts so that the prospective tourer will be able to share the knowledge collected from the most reliable sources.

Daner's Hut.

This hut is of no great consequence. It lies about 100 yards east of the road on the Hotel side of Daner's Gap. Its main purpose is as a shelter-shed for picnic parties in the vicinity.

Smiggin Holes.

The hut at Smiggin Holes is easily visible from the snow-pole line, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile above the crossing of Piper's Creek and 5 miles from the Hotel. A one-roomed hut, connected with the Hotel and Chalet by telephone. Built mainly as a shelter-shed for parties *en route* to the Chalet, it is an excellent objective for a one-day trip from the Hotel, surrounded as it is by very excellent snow slopes of every gradient. No provisions or blankets are provided.

Betts' Camp.

Once the paramount objective of the more adventurous ski-ing parties, Betts' Camp, 8 miles from the Hotel on the snow-pole line to the Summit, has of recent years been overshadowed by the advent of the Chalet. The hut consists of 3 rooms and a hallway, and is a regular resting-point for parties touring to the Chalet. During the overcrowded period at the Chalet, during the last two years, Betts' Camp has accommodated the overflow, being used during the 1933 season for the accommodation of the visiting Melbourne University Ski Club. During these periods, a man from the Hotel is in permanent residence, supplying the weary Chalet journeyers with a very welcome cup of tea.

The Laurie Seaman Memorial Hut.

The Seaman Hut is situated on the snow-pole line, on the route to the Summit, on the N.E. end of the Etheridge Range, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Kosciusko Summit itself. Emergency rations, first-aid kit, blankets and firewood are stocked in the hut, but should not, on any occasion, be used unless their use is absolutely essential to the welfare of a party. The hut is connected with the Chalet and the Hotel by telephone, and a party caught in the regions of the Summit by bad weather should have no difficulty in making this hut and allaying any fears as to their safety.

Tin Hut, No. 1 (Pounds' Creek).

An easy two hours' run from the Chalet, via Spencer's Creek, brings one to Pounds' Creek Hut, situated on the east bank of the Snowy River, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile below the junction of Spencer's Creek with the Snowy. Its proximity to the Chalet reduces its importance as a safety hut, but it is stocked with firewood, blankets, axe and cooking utensils. There is no emergency food or first-aid kit.

Tin Hut, No. 2 (Gungartan).

Built in 1928 by the Ski Club of Australia, in conjunction with Messrs. Litchfield, of Cooma, this hut was, for some years, an essential link in any contemplated trip to the country be-

yond Gungartan. The hut consists of one room, equipped with a Canadian stove and bunks for four people. Firewood, blankets and sleeping bags are stocked there, but no emergency rations are available. The hut is situated approximately 1½ miles north of Gungartan, and by a glance at the accompanying map should be located in any weather. Travelling from the Kosciusko end of the Range, the fence which runs through the Pass between the two high peaks of Gungartan* should be located on the White's River-Dicky Cooper Creek Saddle and should be followed through the Gungartan Pass down to the Finn's River-Valentine Saddle, where it takes a right-angle turn eastwards. The hut is on the left-hand or north side of the fence, approximately 200 yards down the fence, just before it dips steeply down into the Finn's River Valley. Water should be available in close proximity to the hut, under any conditions, from a stream located about 100 yards from the hut, in a due S.E. direction. Before using Gungartan hut, one should obtain the permission of the Ski Club of Australia.

Dicky Cooper Hut.

No information is available as to the condition, or even the existence, of the Dicky Cooper Hut. It was at one time located about 1½ miles N.W. of the Dicky Cooper-White's River Saddle. Information regarding this hut would be appreciated, as it forms an excellent getaway for a party travelling to Gungartan and meeting with adverse weather, making the ascent to the Gungartan Pass and the ultimate locating of the Gungartan Hut, not only uncomfortable, but possibly dangerous.

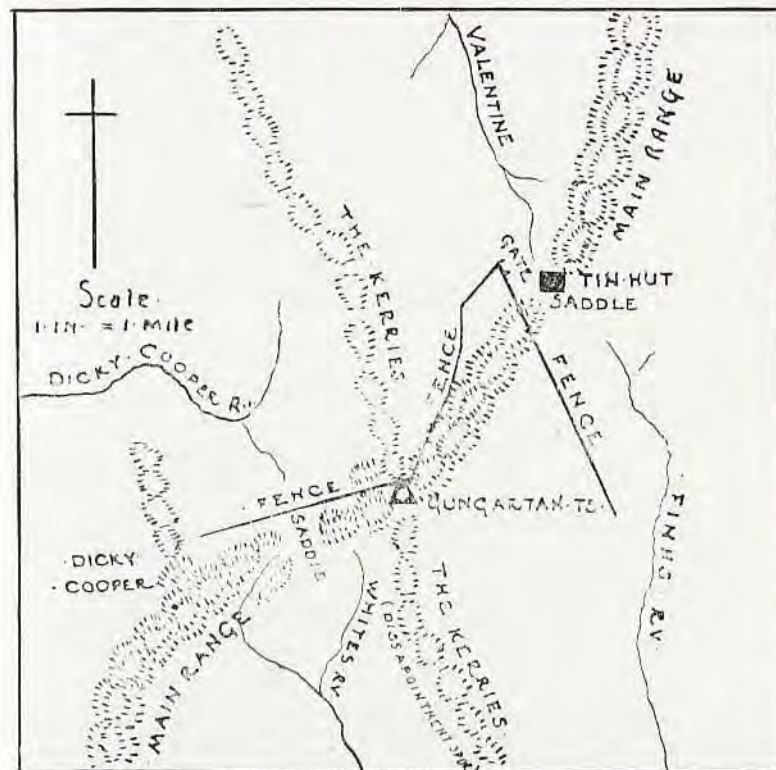
Mawson's Hut (Bobundna).

Built four years ago, it is the property of the New Zealand and Australian Land & Finance Co., who have snow leases in this area. Approximately 3 miles down the Valentine River from Gungartan, this hut is the most comfortable on the Range. It consists of two large rooms and a hall, all floored and having the walls lined with an insulating material. There are bunks for a party of four, but no blankets or sleeping bags

* Gungartan, unfortunately for purposes of concise description, is not, as may be imagined, a prominent outstanding peak. We find in the vicinity of the summit a jumble of prominent peaks formed by the crossing of the Main Range by the Kerries, each of these peaks appearing, until surmounted, the highest of the group. At least two of them have what may be mistaken for Trig. Stations on their summits, but one of these is only a stick.

From the top of either of these peaks no mistake can be made as to which is the true summit. The lesser of the two bears 30 deg. W. of N. from the Trig.

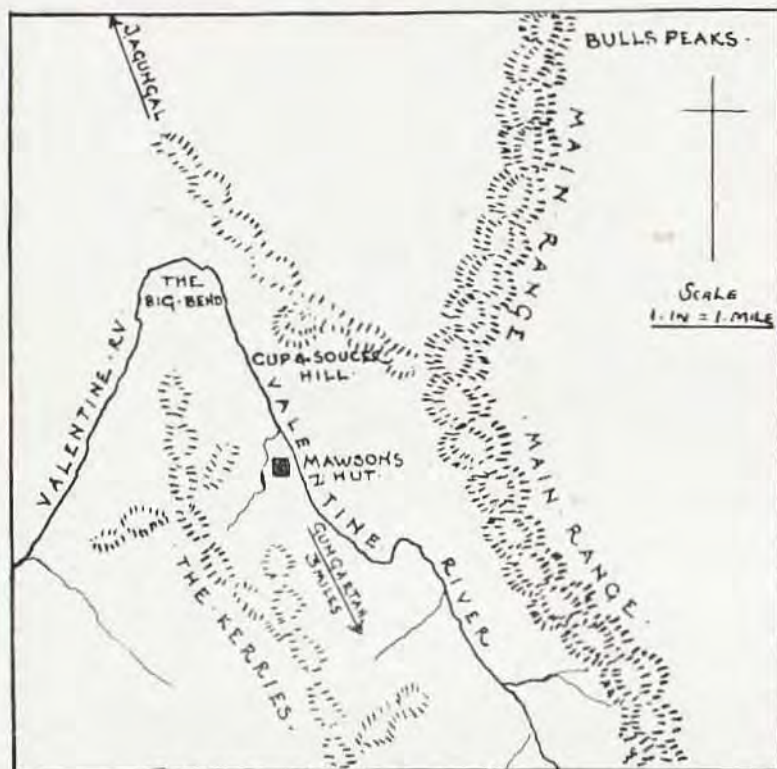
These two peaks form a well-defined pass, which is entered from the S.W. and through which runs the fence from White's River-Dicky Cooper Saddle. Possibly, under heavy snow conditions, this fence would be covered on the saddle itself and would not be located till well up towards the pass where, passing over very rocky country, it should be visible at some point, enabling the party to check up on their position. The fence, it will be noticed, starts slightly to the west of the White's River Saddle.



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Sketch map showing location of White's River Saddle and Gungartan Tin Hut.

should be relied on. A large open fireplace is installed in one of the rooms, but no provision for heating is provided in the sleeping room. It is usually stocked at the end of the summer months with firewood, but all provision for rations would have to be made by a party touring to this hut. Proceeding N.W. from Gungartan Hut, leaving the Main Range on the right and the Kerries on the left, a distance of about 1 mile will be covered before the declivity of the Valentine Creek becomes visible, as under heavy snow conditions the marshy upper reaches would show no change in the terrain of the country. Once the declivity of the Valentine is picked up no trouble in locating the hut should occur. If the visibility is good, Jagungal will be seen immediately ahead, and, slightly to the right in the immediate foreground, the prominent peak of the Cup and Saucer Hill which lies due north across the Valentine from Mawson's Hut. The hut would not be visible from the actual bed of the river, being about 200 yards up the steeply sloping bank. Even in bad weather one could hardly overshoot the hut, as the prominent Big Bend of the Valentine is less than one mile below the hut. Reference to the accompanying map



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Sketch map showing location of Mawson's Hut in the Valentine River Valley.

will show the position of these various outstanding features in the terrain. Permission from the owners would have to be obtained before using this hut.

Bolton's Hut, Oliver's Hut, Reid's Hut.

The timbered country east of Gungartan is well equipped with small huts of varying habitable conditions. These huts, built by shepherds during the summer months, some of them being of the slab type, have no food or wood stocked in them, and no guarantee can be given as to their condition, but, situated as they are, they provide excellent shelter in case of emergency. Of these huts, Bolton's Hut is the most important, situated on a branch of the Finn's River, in a direct line between Gungartan and the Hotel. It affords an excellent shelter in the event of a forced descent through this most inhospitable piece of country.

Farm Ridge Huts.

Approximately in a direct line, some 22 miles from Kiandra and 30 miles from Kosciusko, these huts were used by the first party (Ski Club of Australia) to accomplish the Kiandra-Kosciusko trip during the winter months.

Information as to the terrain in the immediate vicinity of these huts is not available. They lie on the head-waters of the Doubtful River, approximately due north of Jagungal, distant some 4 miles. No provisions or blankets will be found there, but the latest information is to the effect that one hut is quite habitable, having a well-built fireplace and raised floor.

Boobee (Cheney's) Miners Huts.

These two huts, situated on the S.E. slope of the Far Bald Mountain, on the W. side of the Happy Jack Valley, would be extremely useful to a party negotiating the country between Kiandra and Kosciusko. Difficulty would be experienced, no



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Telephotograph of Mt. Jagungal in summer from Mawson's Hut. The mountain is five miles distant and intervening valleys are not shown.

doubt, in locating them in bad weather as there are no outstanding landmarks in their immediate vicinity, with the exception of Far Bald Mountain. They stand on the edge of timbered country and are easily visible from the east from a distance of some miles during clear weather. A distance of only approximately 4 miles separates Farm Ridge Huts and these huts. Once again no guarantee of their condition can be given. Certainly no provisions or sleeping accommodation are provided, and, according to the latest information, they are not habitable as all the windows are missing.

McPhee's Huts.

These huts lie about 10 miles N.W. of Gungartan on the Dargals Range. At least one of the huts, consisting of 4 rooms (a veritable paradise) is habitable, and it is possible that blankets may be found there, but reliance should not be placed on this information. Providing rations were sent up during the summer months, some wonderful country could be opened



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Sketch map of the Eastern fall of the Main Range between Gungahartan and Bull's Peaks. Note difference in scale from other maps.

up for winter exploration, not only on the headwaters of the Geehi River, but on the Dargals Range itself.

Grey Mare's Bogong Huts.

Years ago, huts existed at Grey Mare's, being constructed for the accommodation of miners working in the vicinity. Their existence to-day is doubtful, but once ascertained they would form a half-way point for a party exploring in the direction of McPhee's Huts or along the Grey Mare's Ridge.

Table Top Hut.

Situated on the north end of the Range, approximately 9 miles from Kiandra, Table Top Hut forms a strong link in a contemplated trip from Kiandra to Kosciusko. A galvanised-iron hut of one room, with a raised floor, containing a stove and an abundant supply of firewood in the immediate locality. The hut is about one mile from the Table Top T.S., lying 36 deg. east of south.

As mentioned before, the information given in this article is collected from the most reliable sources available at the time, but any queries or suggestions would be welcomed by the Editor, as it is only by a slow process of inclusion or elimination that we can hope to gather reliable data.

A special appeal is made to all touring parties visiting these various huts to remember that the all-too-few emergency rations and medical kit stocked therein may be the means of saving life in the event of accidents, and should not, on any occasion, be used unless their use is absolutely essential.