

MOUNT NIMMO TO WHITE'S RIVER

By Clive H. Monk



THE following notes cover a trip from Mount Nimmo, via White's River and Betts' Camp to the Hotel Kosciusko during July, 1938. The party comprised C. King, H. Davis, C. Monk, B. Sturgeon and Ray Adams (who acted as guide). Adams gave us a rare motor trip over the last few miles, during which we were off the roads and squeezing between logs, trees and ditches. The snow became increasingly thick until the gate about one mile east of Mount Nimmo (4,873 ft.). Even with all hands pushing, Adams had difficulty in driving this distance. The water was drained from the engine and the car left without any further attention to the mercy of the weather. After travelling about three miles we had to ford the Gungahlin River. Sturgeon carried a pair of gum boots for this purpose. Daylight failed soon after this and the remainder of the run was done in the dark. We arrived at Snowy Plains House (about 4,300 ft.) in readiness for a good meal.

The second day on the snow provided a climb of about 2,000 feet. The first mile was rather easy going with little climbing, though the whole party had trouble with balling. Before ascending the Brassy Mountains we fitted skins. After crossing the Brassy Mountains we headed for Kidman's Hut, where the steak fell before the onslaught of five hungry people. From Kidman's Hut the climb continued and in the early afternoon we struck the steepest climb of the whole trip—Bryan's Pinch. During the whole of the afternoon we continued climbing, accompanied by the crisp crunching of freezing snow. We arrived at Litchfield's Tin Hut after nightfall, having covered about ten miles since leaving Snowy Plains House. Tin Hut (about 6,200 ft.) is the highest hut which can be used for other than emergency cases in Australia. (The only higher hut is Seaman's Hut.) Snow had to be removed from the door with the ski to gain access, the fireplace, too, was filled with snow, which had to be shovelled out and great lumps of melting snow tumbled down the chimney when a fire was lit.

We left Tin Hut at 11 a.m. with a short run ahead for the day, a climb of about two miles to the top of Gungartan (6,776 ft.) from which peak a semi-circular downhill run of about one

and a half miles took us to White's River Hut, which was reached by lunch time. Its improved condition was a welcome surprise to two members of the party who had been there the previous year. Here we made our headquarters for about three and a half days. The hut was quite comfortable, except for the smoke, which persisted when the door and window were shut; however, we devised a method of directing the air currents so that they stopped the smoking yet did not cool the hut. On July 6 we climbed Dicky Cooper Bogong and the following day tried a new route up Gungartan, with a splendid two-mile run home to the hut.

On July 8 Davis and I prepared to go on to the Hotel Kosciusko; the other three decided to retrace their tracks to Mount Nimmo. We left White's River Hut about 10 a.m. for Consett Stephen Pass; here we had a stiff climb to the summit of Tate. Conditions were too icy for pleasant ski-ing on Mount Tate and the lack of steel edges to my ski was a definite disadvantage. After a long run down we crossed the Snowy on the ice and arrived at Pounds' Creek Hut. Pounds' Creek Hut is well constructed, but neglected. Snow was inside and all over the supply of blankets and mattresses, no axe was available and necessary utensils were lacking—the place was also filthy. We made a bad start next morning. The snow was icy and a fog began to settle above us; after the first half mile, however, the atmosphere cleared and the snow became ideal. Conditions were fair until Piper's Gap; after this bare patches were frequent and our runs were very much retarded. We arrived at the Hotel at 2 p.m.

Our route between Mount Nimmo and the Hotel Kosciusko was about forty (40) miles in length. In my opinion, the packs on a trip such as this should not exceed about thirty-eight lb. each. I carried forty-two lb. over most of the distance, but found anything above thirty-eight unduly awkward and cumbersome on ski.