

## THE SUMMIT RECORD, 1938

By O. M. Moriarty

**B**REAKSPEAR'S attempts on the record were becoming legendary. In 1937 he had run the course at night under a full moon in 6 hrs. 32 mins., the long-standing record of Gelling being 6 hrs. 9 mins. for the 35 miles. On that occasion he had slipped on the bare ice on the Etheridge Ridge and, unable to hold himself, had slipped on his side for hundreds of feet into the bed of the Snowy River. A week before the final attempt he had run close to the record after being caught in a heavy fog on the summit at night.

As the result of these experiences it was considered that the Main Range part of the trip should be done in daylight. At 4.30 a.m. Tom called us and gave us each three eggs beaten up in milk as our breakfast. At 5.27 Friedl Pfeiffer sent me off and at two minutes later Breakspear followed. The air was clear and a half moon was shining. Climbing well on Klister he passed me near Daner's and went at express speed to Smiggin Holes. He was over the bridge and ready to leave as I came in sight. Up to Piper's Gap and over the Perisher Plain there was hoar frost which gave delightful fast going, though we side-slipped a little.

Rattling down to Betts' Plain on the icy crust I could see him leaving after waxing at Betts'. Frank was outside to give us orange-juice and sugar, a great relief after the fast push from the Hotel ( $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles). Breakspear was climbing the Sugarloaf on thick hoar frost as I came in sight. The early morning sun was now with us and it was a delight to be up and about on such perfect snow. A long traverse was made to the top of Charlotte's Pass along the snow-poles. Breakspear's time to here was 1 hour 55 minutes. To Betts' it was 1 hour 28 minutes and there he made a five minute stop. From Charlotte's he headed for the fork in the Snowy between the Foreman Hut and Seaman's, then climbed steadily along the low ridge to the Seaman Hut. Etheridge Ridge from Seaman Hut to the Cootapatamba saddle was covered with hard, knobbly ice on which ski would not grip; I began to doubt if he would get the record. He was stemming down from the summit before I reached the saddle, but did not pass me. It turned out that from the saddle he crossed over to the south-eastern side of the ridge to avoid the ice but had trouble with cornices, although, some days later, I saw that there is a good route on that side of the ridge.

Small sealed tins were left in the cairn at the summit and Breakspear was back at Betts' at 10.5 a.m. (4 hours, 30 minutes) and had coffee with plenty of sugar there. The snow now became desperately slow and cloggy under a hot sun. From Daner's to the Hotel ski would not run well, even on paraffin, and it took Breakspear 12 minutes or more to cover it. What a different story it would have been on the fast snow of the day before! Nevertheless, he reached the Hotel in 6 hours  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minutes, to lower the record and receive a welcoming glass of egg-nogg from Tom.

**Previous Records.**—1914: H. F. Shorney, H. H. Schlink, and J. Jacobson. Time, 15 hr. 15 min. 1915: A. G. M. Pitt, P. W. Pearson, L. G. Teece, and C. D. MacLurcan. Time, 14.15. 1917: H. H. Schlink, A. G. M. Pitt, and R. M. Scott. Time, 14.5. 1918: H. H. Schlink and E. M. Fisher. Time, 11.12. 1921: H. H. Schlink and N. Storaker. Time, 10.19. 1923: H. H. Schlink, L. G. Teece and H. Baillieu. Time, 10.13 $\frac{1}{2}$ . 1924: Ashleigh Davy. Time, 9.46. 1927: Ashleigh Davy and Arnold Moulden. Time, 8.10. 1928: Lorimer Dods and Arnold Moulden. Time, 6.55. 1929: R. Gelling and G. Aalberg. Time, 6.9.



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