

Ski-ing on the Grey Mare Range

By Lieut. O. Moriarty

[We publish without apologies an extract from the covering letter to Lieut. Moriarty's article:—

While waiting in the Royal Naval Barracks at Portsmouth during an air raid alarm, I read again the Mitchells' article in the 1940 *Year Book* and have penned the enclosed account of another way in which the trip was done. . . .

We continue to fight on with everybody's cheerfulness undaunted. I suppose some of our skiers have been on the sands around Bardia—good running!

Perhaps you have heard of Colin Gilder—our tracks have not met since

arriving here; am pretty certain he was serving in other places to me. At first I was in the North Sea as he was, but I continued there and in the Atlantic for a long time, whilst he seemed to vanish from my ken.

Glad to see the ski-ing fraternity are "carrying on"—hope things prosper reasonably well, so be ready for our home coming (a terrific blast there, but "our own" guns!) . . .—Editor.]

THE article by E. K. and T. W. Mitchell on page 73 of the 1940 A.N.S.Y.B. prompts me to write:—

The Mitchells state they "understand that we were the first skiers to ski on the Grey Mare". But Dr. Macintyre, of Sydney and Tasmania, and myself had made the trip some two months before and from a different direction, which I think there is no doubt offers much more pleasurable ski-ing.

We waited at the Alpine Hut for a suitable day in the last week of July—but the weather was too bad to go farther than the brow of the Main Range. On the morning of July 29, Dr. Macintyre and myself set off at 7 a.m. carrying one little belt bag with biscuits and butter, cocoa and sugar, raisins, orange-juice, nuts, waxes, spare ski-tip and binding, kerosene rags and matches, map and compasses. Dr. Parle had to be left behind ill at the last moment.

Climbing to the top of the Main Range we ran down towards Mawson's, obtaining excellent views of flying mists on the Cup and Saucer and Jagungal as we passed. By the usual stockman's track, which provides all varieties of up and down-going, we proceeded to the Rocky Plain River, and took off our ski to cross it on rocks and snow bridges. Then a long climb to the top of Strumbo Range, and the Grey Mare Range was seen sparkling in the sunshine with mists gathering at intervals, only to disperse again. There was ice going down to the Grey Mare Creek, but, once across, it was powder on the more sheltered eastern slope of the Grey Mare Range. A long traverse up a ridge beginning at the stockyard was made to the shelf under the lip of the range. Along the eastern edge of the range was a mighty cornice, extending for a mile or two. It had been avalanching, so we took care to keep clear as we proceeded south until a steep gully showed in it. Up this we traversed and were on top of the range. It is clear and undulating—undulating like no other part of our snow country—up a rise to a knoll, down to a flat a couple of hundred feet below—so it goes for miles as far as the Pinnacle. We were at the Twins about 10.30 or 11 a.m. The magnificent vista across the Geehi Valley to Townsend and the Dicky Cooper Mountains was opened only in fitful views as mists were continually rolling across. We pushed on towards the Pinnacle but, as the mists were becoming heavier, we stopped at mid-day for a scanty lunch and turned back. We were then roughly an hour from the Pinnacle.

There followed a glorious long run down for miles off the top of the range. We went into the Grey Mare Hut, where we brewed a little cocoa, then began an easy journey home. The Main Range was here comparatively free of the mists sweeping over the Grey Mare and Gungartan.

At 4 p.m. we made the steep run down to the Alpine Hut, and a cheerful fire and meal.

Owing to the long drawn-out blizzards it was a bad winter for touring, so in a better one the trip described should be one of the best day-tours in New South Wales. For those who do not wish to do the whole of it, it should give fine ski-ing and views to go only as far as the top of the Grey Mare Range.