



Kiandra By Bob Walton-Smith

The name Kiandra, no doubt, conjures up in many a mind's eye a vivid picture of a gold rush town of the early Victorian era. One can easily imagine a cosmopolitan mixture of every race and creed hailing from the four corners of the earth. Some eager to strike riches. Others in the general trading business behind counters in their dingy shops, all cluttered up with hides, evil smelling cheese, plus a mixture of every

kind of merchandise imaginable. Then the usual flock of gamblers, confidence men, cadgers and loafers.

In those days there was a population of some 16,000 people in the town, not to mention the surrounding district. It was also able to boast 28 hotels, not one of which remains to-day, the last one being destroyed by fire some eight years ago.

About 55 to 60 years ago, when the main gold rush was fast approaching its conclusion, a very fine, typical type of mid-Victorian structure was raised for use as both Court House and lock-up in order to handle the many law-breakers who imposed their unwelcome presence on the town. To-day, this is the only substantial building left in the town, apart from the Post Office. But even the Court House has been devoid of habitation since the previously mentioned hotel was burnt down; and now the only population in the winter time consists of the Postmaster and his family.

In spite of all this, a Chalet was opened there at the beginning of the '43 season. For this purpose the old Police Station proved to be an excellent building. I had the good fortune (subsequent upon my discharge) to spend quite a considerable time in this almost forgotten place. The sporting qualities of the district proved to be excellent, and, in post-war years, should lend themselves admirably to all grades of skiers.

Within easy reach of the town are slopes suitable for all skiers, whether novice or expert. One of the outstanding runs nearby is Township Hill, which rises some four hundred feet above the level of the town, and offers a descent of over three hundred yards. This slope is invariably well covered during the main winter months. Besides this, there is an untold number of irresistible open and wooden runs of every gradient. To the North, about half a mile from the Post Office, is the quaintly named New Chum Hill, with the even more quaintly named Bullock's Head Creek wending its way down the valley on the south side of the hill. From out of the South-Eastern flank of this elongated hill enormous excavations have been made by man in his frantic quest for gold, little knowing that he was creating a never dreamed of series of schusses to thrill the twentieth century skier.

There is also a very delightful trip to Mt. Selwyn, about three miles Sou-Sou-West from Kiandra. Upon leaving the town, one climbs fairly steeply to a plateau, about a mile and a half across, which leads to the head of Pig Gulley, down into which there is a gradual, most pleasing run through timber, about half a mile in length. In Pig Gulley itself, and at the foot of Selwyn, which is quite outstanding in view of its perceptible conical shape, is Pig Gulley hut, which, although very dilapidated, is situated in an exceedingly well sheltered spot, with water close by. It could easily be put into a habitable condition.

After crossing the creek the ascent of Selwyn then begins. Incidentally there is a good, steep, cleared run down the eastern face of this mountain. Upon arrival at the top an excellent view can be obtained by travelling along the ridge for a distance of about four hundred yards to the Trig sight or Cairn.

Almost due South can be seen the oblong, crouching shape of Mt. Tabletop, and slightly to the West of this the glacier-like majesty of Jagunal, with its twin towering peaks. For the more energetic skier, Jagunal provides an interesting four or five days' tour from Kiandra, via Tabletop, and Happy Jacks River; there being a convenient string of shepherds' huts all the way. To the S.W. the Round Mt. rears its stately head. In the opposite direction, to the N.W., appear Mts. Franklin and Jingera, not very far distant from Canberra, and which are the home territories of the Canberra Alpine Club.

At a distance of three miles to the North, entombed in what resembles a large crater, is the trout-laden Three-Mile Dam, which is a fisherman's paradise. This dam was constructed for the purpose of supplying water for sluicing the gold impregnated ore. In the distance beyond this stretch of water, usually ice and snow covered during the winter months, are the precipitous tree clad hills surrounding the Yarrongobilly Caves Valley. Since the closing of the Hostel Kosciusko and the Chalet, quite a number of skiers have stayed at the Caves House from whence they drive about five to six miles to the snow line daily.

After the war, Kiandra, which is situated well in the area which is to become a National Park, should prove itself an ideal spot for winter sports. With a bit of luck the private individual might, subject to certain difficulties being overcome, be able to build himself a private chalet. Here's hoping.