

Three One Day Main Range Trips

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I describe these trips for several reasons —(a) they are within the capacity of the average skier; (b) they are pleasant runs, providing interest all the way, and with tucker and billy make happy picnic outings; (c) not many skiers seem to have made them; and (d) the routes are comparatively safe, even in uncertain weather conditions.

Alpine Hut-Valentine Falls: The route lies via Mawson's Hut, this section being so well known to Alpine Hut guests as to call for no description. Leaving Mawson's Hut one climbs the Kerries Ridge, crossing at a point about south-west of the hut; or Mawson's might be by-passed by climbing the knoll on which it is situated (roughly along the line of an east-west fence) south of the hut and climbing the Kerries Ridge at the point mentioned. From this point Grey Mare Hut is visible to the west and The Ghost stands out against the background of the Grey Mare Range; a valley lies ahead leading

directly to Valentine Falls, on the precipitous north face of The Ghost.

From the Kerries Ridge there is a descent of 300 to 400 feet through sparse stunted timber—a run that can be taken in control turns and traverses, or for the most part in schuss, with a good run-out at the bottom. To Milk Creek the route lies along a well-defined undulating valley (not very evident from the usual map), after which a sharp short climb takes the skier to the left bank of the Valentine where the river rushes through a rocky gorge before tumbling down to join the Geehi. Unless the snow be heavy it might be as well to doff ski here and to proceed on foot, keeping fairly high. The left bank can be followed down to a position immediately above the falls where, if the day be fine, one might bask in the warm sunshine to the accompaniment of the roar of waters and the occasional stimulation of a cloud of fine spray lifting on an upward current of air.

If the party has a fair amount of time in hand and energy is not flagging, The Ghost might be climbed on the eastern face for the excellent views that open out from the summit and the exhilarating run down to Milk Creek; or the bottom of the falls might be reached by crossing to the right bank (some distance above the falls, and on ski) and dropping down a steep thickly-wooded slope. The latter suggestion is not one for the novice, nor is an alternative return route of crossing the river below the falls and climbing The Ghost on the western face—for this climb is an arduous one and extremely thick small timber is encountered which makes the going very slow.

White's River Hut—Dicky Cooper Hut: Dicky Cooper Hut has been one of our objectives for several reasons, but on every occasion on which the run was contemplated bad weather supervened to foil the attempt. What made the feeling of frustration more intense was that this hut is little more than a hop, step and a jump from White's. In September, 1947, we set apart the last day of our stay for the trip, but, in accordance with the now well-established practice, the weather deteriorated with mist and rain heralding the dawn. Early in the afternoon, however, there were signs of improvement and at 2.50 p.m. we set out for this hut which, according to reports we had received, is cunningly concealed from the casual eye.

We climbed steadily out of White's Valley, leaving the eastern (and lower) of the twin peaks of Dicky Cooper Bogong on our left and crossing Dick Cooper's northern spur a little north of the summit. The spur was followed on the western slopes in a northerly direction through open small timber, and we decided to lose altitude gradually to avoid the thicker timber lower down and to maintain as extensive a view as possible of the area in which we thought the hut to be situated. After running a mile or so we called a halt to have a look-see and, to our pleasant surprise, sighted the hut directly below. Good navigation? or just good luck? We would like to think it the former, but we suspect the latter. Be that as it may, there was our goal, nestling in the afternoon sun in a clearing on a small ridge about a quarter mile south of a very straight reach of Dicky Cooper Creek where the creek flows south after a small-radius bend from a northerly flow. A short wood run brought to the hut—a one-roomed weatherboard and

iron structure containing a fireplace, and rough bed made from forked branches and chaff bags, a three-legged stool or two, and little else. It should make a good emergency shelter, however, and the surrounding timber and a low ridge to the west offer some degree of protection from winds.

The return trip was made via Dicky Cooper Bogong finishing with that delicious run down from the summit, after glissading for the first 50 feet.

Should a party experience difficulty in locating this hut, the north-south section of the creek referred to should provide an excellent "fix." The whole trip could be made comfortably in three to four hours, leaving good time for an exploratory run down towards the Geehi should a party feel so disposed.

White's River Hut—Snowy River: For a party in residence at White's River Hut this trip provides a pleasant day's ski-ing. For those who object to climbing on wax, skins might be taken for the return trip; climbing is, however, gradual except for a few short sections.

The route is simplicity itself, being confined to the valley of the Munyang (or White's) River—with occasional traverses into subsidiary gullies to maintain a reasonable contour. The left bank is followed in the higher reaches through beautiful snow-gum grooves, the terrain dropping by alternating schusses and gentle slopes and providing good practice in wood running for the not-so-experienced, the timber being close enough to prevent straight ski-ing yet sufficiently open to permit some pleasant continuous runs.

After a mile or two the right bank offers the better route, and can be followed throughout the remainder of the trip at varying distances from the river. When nearing the Snowy the left bank is steep and inclined to be bare in parts and rocky, whilst on the right bank (our suggested route) thickly growing timber is encountered. If one bears to the right, however, open running is available to a point on the banks of the Snowy about a quarter mile above the junction. Although ski-able, the boards might well be dispensed with here and the final drop of about 20 feet to the river made on foot through fairly thick small timber.

The immediate banks of the Snowy are rock-strewn and boulders lie in the bed of the river itself, whilst undergrowth hampers

progress. The skier is now half-way to the Hotel and neither the crossing of the river (except in a severe thaw) nor the immediate rocky climb on the eastern side should present any insuperable difficulties.

On the return trip to White's River Hut the skier will be moving slowly enough to appreciate the gentle beauties of the Munyang murmuring almost articulately as she

hastens happily on her way to the Snowy; and, as he climbs leisurely through the snow-gum groves he will have time to indulge in flights of fancy as imaginary nymphs and fairies play hide-and-seek among the gnarled old trunks or dance on the golden beams of a westering sun whose flickering light darts hither and thither among the leafy branches.