



Exit from White's River.

## What has happened to the MAIN RANGE Rats ?

Ever since seeing the plaque in the Chalet of Kiandra commemorating George Arlberg's record crossing of the Alps I had cherished an ambition to cross the Alps on skis from Kosciusko to Kiandra. Prudence suggested that familiarity with the route gained on a walking trip in summer might be helpful, so Easter 1957 saw a party of us leave the Summit on our "summer" trip. It scarcely felt or looked like "summer" as a blizzard was blowing, which lasted all the way to Albina and so froze my face up that I was unable to talk for some time. Four days later we arrived at Kiandra and stage one of the plan was completed.

I mentioned my idea to Mark Mealy and Rymil Abell, two young skiers of the Youth Hostel Association, and they at once began to make arrangements. My prowess as a skier is of a rather low order, and I rather fancy the only reason they considered including me in the party was in my role as navigator.

We made very careful plans; we carried sufficient food for the expected duration of our journey, five days, but to provide against being held up by blizzards we had emergency supplies left in Booby Hut. We expected to use huts each night for shelter, but took a special tent in case we could not reach a hut. This tent was a 3 man "A" tent, one end of which was sewn up and a floor was sewn in. As a further assistance to sleeping in the snow we each had hip pads made from plastic foam. We carried down sleeping bags, spare clothes, ski repair kits, a small petrol stove and a quart of fuel.

So equipped, we left Munyang Power Station on Saturday, August 10. Despite our very complete equipment, and including camera gear our packs weighed less than 30 lbs. each, plus the tent which we had agreed to take in turns. I cunningly volunteered to take the tent for what was left of the first day, but this was nearly my undoing. It is not a long trip



Camping in the snow.

from Munyang to White's River, a mere five miles, but there is a pretty steep ascent. Rymill was in good nick having just finished a week at C.S.I.R.O. hut, but Mark and I (especially I) were not yet acclimatised to the altitude. I was just about exhausted by the time we reached the hut, and I began to have serious doubts about my ability to complete the journey.

However, after having chopped a hole through a wall of snow to get into White's River Hut, we soon had a hot meal and snuggled down for the night.

Next morning we came out of the hut into fairyland. The heavy frost of the night had covered the ground with a million jewels. Gungarton lay across the valley, and the snow gums groaned beneath their burden of snow. We had hundreds of square miles of magnificent snow touring country around us, and the three of us had it to ourselves. The only tracks we saw on the whole journey were of rabbits, foxes and wombats.

(Rymill alleges he even saw an emu near Farm Ridge.)

We had three ridges to cross to get to Mawson's Hut, and we climbed laboriously up each and skimmed gloriously down the other side. Mawson's Hut is caneite lined—except for a sheet missing directly above the fireplace. This created an unhappy conviction of cool air, and this hut, which looked so snug, gave us our coldest night.

If Fairyland greeted us outside White's River it was surely Paradise around us next morning at Mawson's. The snow again sparkled like a jewelled rainbow. A few miles away to the north lay Jagungal, the Queen of the Alps, and all around us were the marbled gums knee deep in snow. The still air, the blue sky, and the brilliant sun made a breathless picture which we tried in vain to record on the camera.

On our walking trip we had climbed on to the Cup and Saucer mountain and followed the ridge to Bull's Peaks. On skis we decided to cross the Valentine River and follow straight up the valley keeping Jagungal on our left.

We climbed the easy slopes through a wide, treeless valley climbing higher and higher along the side of Jagungal. Here and there we saw the trail of a rabbit overlaid by fox tracks, and in one place saw signs of a brief scuffle and a little fur. Mr. Fox had had meat for dinner. A blue green creek broke occasionally through the snow, and at one such place we stopped and boiled the billy on our little stove. It is hard to describe—the beauty and scenery of the scene. No trees were here; only an occasional rock breaking through the miles of snow shining in the sun.

We finally reached the top of the valley, and drew level with Jagungal. We promised ourselves a quick run down to Farm Ridge, and then, maybe, over the Doubtful River through the Doubtful Gap, and so on to Booby Hut. But alas, it was not to be. We made splendid

progress to the end of the spur, and then instead of going right and picking up the track through the timber we took a "short cut" down the mountain side. The next two hours were purgatory. The afternoon sun shone on the north west slope making the snow soft. Innumerable cascades ran down the mountain. The surface was rocky and covered with dense low scrub; we could not ski and when we took off our skis we sank thigh deep in the snow. We were thankful to reach the Farm Ridge Hut at dusk.

The hut was filthy and we spent an hour scrubbing down a table and cleaning up, but we had a warm night.

Next day was dull and we ran easily down to the Doubtful River, groaned up the steep Gap and had a splendid run down Diggers Creek to Booby Hut. Here we picked the eyes out of our cached tucker and had a slap-up lunch. It is only a short run to the road which goes up to Junction S.M.A. Camp and we crossed the road to descend to Happy Jack's River. Here the snow ran out and we had to walk, wade across the River, and climb up the other side. The snow started again a few hundred feet up and we climbed right up on to Arsenic Ridge. As there was no convenient hut we decided to camp. By a stroke of luck under dense tree cover we found a patch of grass which we enlarged, and so had a dry soft floor under our tent. Soon we were enjoying coffee and steak, and wondering if we would make Kiandra on the morrow.

In summer there is a tricky trail to follow through the heavily timbered country around Table Top Mountain until one reaches the open plains south of Kiandra, but in winter when snow obliterates the track it needs careful navigation to avoid getting bushed. We had about fifteen miles to go, and by lunch time we had crossed Table Top Mountain and reached the old gold mine. We had only covered six miles. The sky

was grey and heavy with the threat of snow, and we were pretty tired with the tricky going through the trees. We plodded on for another three miles when suddenly we breasted a rise and came out into the open. On the far distant skyline we saw power lines and machinery in the Quarry on Mount Selwyn. "Land ho!" shouted Mark, and as if by magic all traces of weariness lifted from us, and we started the long easy run of about seven miles into Kiandra. We reached there by dark and found a strange world of no snow, but friendly voices greeted us.

So ended for us a momentous trip. How long will it be before another party crosses this Alpine fairyland? Surely downhill skiing is not the absolute and end for all skiers. There must be a small proportion who love the snowy landscape and the snow gums for their own sake, and like to travel not merely up and down one mountain, but over the hills and far away.



Crossing Happy Jack's River.

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for their active interest in our young skiers and for organising the September holiday races.

In the Interstate races last season the club was represented in the N.S.W. teams as follows:

**Men's Team**—W. Kater, W. Davy, J. Walker, M. Munro and G. Hughes.

**Women's Team**—Christine Davy (Captain), Jill Macdonald and Gillian Litchfield.

With regard to accommodation in the Thredbo Valley, six huts are being erected in the club area at Friday Flat, one being a club hut and five belonging to groups of our club members. It is expected that four of these huts will be occupied in the coming winter.

In addition the club's financial interest in Kunama Hutte and Northcote Ski-Tow has been transferred to Roslyn Lodge, in which the club holds 18 foundation memberships.