

Tasmanian Snowfields

THE quantity of snow which falls on the highlands of Tasmania varies considerably each winter. Unlike the grass-covered Alps of Victoria and N.S.W., a reasonable quantity is required to fill the cracks, crevices and minor undulations before any ski-ing can be obtained. The seasons vary from without any skiable snow during August to a winter with a preponderance of snow producing avalanches which uproot trees for hundreds of feet down the mountain side. The snowdrifts in such a year remain throughout the summer till the next winter.

MOUNT WELLINGTON.

Ski-ing enthusiasts in Hobart are indeed fortunate in having Mount Wellington, 4166 feet, so close to the city. The distance from the G.P.O. to the summit being only some 12 miles by road, the snow slopes can be reached very quickly and cheaply.

Unfortunately, because it is drier than mountains of the same elevation, which lie further to the west and further inland, skiers cannot rely on Mt. Wellington for regular enjoyment of their sport. Snowfalls are not dependable, but there have been very good years when ski-ing was enjoyed on the mountain from June until September.

There are two shelter huts for skiers on the upper slopes of the mountain, built by members of the Hobart Walking Club and the Wellington Ski Club with the permission of the Hobart City Council. The Council also assisted the clubs to clear a ski-run near the huts.

There are no long runs on the mountain, nor is there scope for any extensive touring, but there are quite good practice slopes, and many happy hours may be spent exploring on ski the country between the Pinnacle and Collins Bonnet, or touring across the moors and along the ridges, enjoying a marvellous view of snow-capped mountains to the west and south-west.

Other snow mountains in Tasmania offer great beauty of scenery and better ski-ing slopes, but none have a beautiful harbour lying at the foot. The skier on the short steep eastern slopes of the mountain, in a cold bright world of ice and snow, of blue-green crevasses and dazzling snow slopes,

looks down on beauty of a very different kind four thousand feet below, where the waters of the river, shimmering and iridescent, reflect light and colour from sky and land.

MT. FIELD NATIONAL PARK.

The entrance to the Park is 48 miles from Hobart, by either road or rail, and from the gates nine miles of road ascends to Lake Dobson, 3500 feet, where are located four huts, rented to the public on application to the Ranger or Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. Six club huts are scattered throughout the Park—The Hobart Walking Club and Wellington Ski Club each have a hut on the shores of Lake Dobson, the Alpine Club of Southern Tasmania has its headquarters at Eagle Tarn, whilst the Tasmanian University Ski Club have their cabin on the upper slopes of Mt. Mawson. The Ski Club of Tasmania's two huts are located further afield at Twilight Tarn and Lake Newdigate.

In an average year, snow may lie from June until November, providing extensive ski-ing slopes and in the early winter the possibility of skating on lakes and tarns. At a general level of 4000 feet miles of good touring may be had amongst magnificent scenery. The venue of State Championship meetings on past occasions, the Park provides steep slopes for those who like them, but until adequate tree runs are cleared on the lower slopes, the necessary length of descent for A.N.S.F. standards cannot be obtained. Enthusiastic members of one club have done much voluntary work in this rection.

As yet ski tows are but a dream, and in the absence of either snow-plough or snow-mobile, the transport of supplies must be done in summer months, unless after the advent of winter skiers are prepared to pack from the snowline by manpower.

MOUNT RUFUS.

Mt. Rufus, elevation 4800 feet, is situated at the southern end of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park. The upper 1000 feet of the mountain usually carries snow from June to November.

The main ski runs are at present above

the timberline, but with little clearing could be extended considerably. Fairly good if restricted wood running is possible on days when bad weather makes ski-ing on the open slopes impossible. In a good snow season the mountain has several runs of sufficient difficulty to attract first-class skiers.

Touring is limited, although the adjoining Hugel Range can be reached and traversed under moderate snow conditions. The mid-winter view from Rufus is claimed by many to be without equal in Tasmania.

Accommodation on the mountain is extremely limited. The Hobart Walking Club hut on the eastern side of the mountain at an elevation of 3800 feet is approached from the end of the road at Lake St. Clair (Cynthia Bay). With heavy snow the journey to the hut from the Lake should not be undertaken by beginners. The hut has accommodation for nine members. The Rufus Ski Club hut on the south-eastern side of the mountain is approached from the Lyell Highway, a few miles west of Derwent Bridge; it has accommodation for 14 members. In the last season a number of Polish migrants, some of whom are of no mean skiing ability, have joined the Rufus Ski Club.

BEN LOMOND.

About 30 miles from Launceston in a general south-easterly direction stands Ben Lomond, the home of ski-ing in Northern Tasmania and one of our few mountains over 5000 feet. With Ben Nevis and Mt. Barrow, Ben Lomond enjoys a splendid isolation from the succession of peaks and ranges which comprise the western highlands. Steep slopes falling away on all sides make the direction of the weather less of a gamble in providing good drifts and ski-ing may usually be relied upon from June until November, and sometimes later. Differing somewhat from western mountains the snow slopes are entirely treeless, allowing long uninterrupted runs, but at the same time denying the skier the shelter afforded by wood runs in inclement weather.

The strong and enthusiastic Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club have built two large huts, one at the treeline and the other just below the summit—Legge's Tor, 5160 feet. A good track marked with snow poles across the plateau links these two huts.

In the past few years the efforts of the N.T.A.C. have done much to raise the standard of ski-ing in Tasmania. Ben Lomond slopes, regarded as amongst the finest in the State, were this year chosen for the holding of the Australian Championships, and when the projected road is constructed greater development and popularity is assured.

CRADLE MOUNTAIN.

Cradle Mountain is located on the northern end of the central plateau. Its disadvantage for day trips is the distance from north-west coast towns, the very bad road requiring particularly slow travelling over the last seven miles. Also, after heavy snow falls thick drifts sometimes persist miles out from the mountains even though the road is clear further on.

There are good runs on the slopes around the Cirque, between Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff. Also, in good snow conditions Hounslow Heath, a short distance from the Chalet, offers pleasant practice slopes.

The only shelter available is the Visitor's Hut, which has tables and forms, no bunks, and two end fireplaces which smoke abominably. There is very little wood available close at hand and day parties can save time by carrying a supply of wood. For large parties arrangements may be made with Mr. Connell to open the Chalet.

OTHER MOUNTAINS.

The WESTERN TIERS, around Pine Lake, are easily accessible by way of the Lake Highway and offer short nursery slopes.

BLACK BUFF, North-west Coast, is reached by way of Nietta and before reaching the Loongana Mill the Leven River is crossed, where the track commences to Paddy's Lake around which are usually good drifts of snow.

The KING WILLIAM RANGE holds tremendous drifts and can be approached from either the Lyell Highway or across the button grass plains from Butler's Gorge Dam. When the reservoir is filled, boat transport should bring the ski-ing slopes on these ranges closer.

There are, no doubt, many other mountains which hold good snow and which would make excellent ski-ing grounds were they more accessible.