

# TASMANIAN SECTION

## N.T.A.C. Activities on Ben Lomond

By R. F. Tilley

WHILST it cannot be suggested that the development of Ben Lomond has kept pace with the rapid progress made on Victorian mountains, there has been considerable activity over the past few seasons, primarily directed towards the improvement of access to the mountain.

It had been felt for many years that Ben Lomond could not be developed until it was possible to get motor vehicles to the Carr Villa Chalet at 4000 feet. This point is within 1000 vertical feet and  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles in distance from Legge's Tor (5160ft.), the highest point on the mountain, where the majority of huts and the best ski-ing grounds are to be found.

For many years the Club had made every endeavour to persuade the State Govern-

ment of the need for such a road without any result and in 1952 it was decided that the club should endeavour to construct its own road to the mountain, a tremendous undertaking, necessitating some 7 miles of road climbing to 4000 feet.

Work had progressed so far by the winter of 1952 that it was possible to get F.W.D. Jeep-type vehicles to The Chalet during the wettest winter for many years. Additional bulldozing and re-routing of some of the wet sections of the road have now enabled more normal cars to be seen at the Chalet during this summer, and it is hoped that with further work before the winter sets in it will be possible for skiers to get their cars to the Chalet right throughout the season.

However, a tremendous amount of work will still be necessary to make the seven miles of road thoroughly satisfactory to some of the more fastidious car owners. When it is realised that the Government estimate for a road to the Chalet was £40,000 the foresight and courage of the N.A.T.C. members who undertook this project are certainly to be admired.

Hut building was, of course, almost brought to a standstill on the mountain during that period in which the road was being developed, as it was felt that the completion of the road would greatly simplify building material transport problems. However, a ski store and shelter shed has been constructed at the mouth of the Borrowdale (the valley which is used for access to the plateau) to save members carrying their equipment from the Carr Villa Chalet to the snowline on each visit. This store will be fitted with a floor and made weatherproof this summer.

There has been no increase in the sleeping accommodation on the mountain in the two club and four members' private huts, activities here having been restricted to maintenance.

A most successful series of competitive events was conducted during the last season, ranging from novelty events to the State Championships, results of which are given below. Many of the names of the place-getters have been seen in these positions before and everything is being done to encourage new members, with a view to bringing on some "new champions." A move in this direction has been the abolition of the entrance fee, which means that for an annual subscription of 30/- the young Tasmanian

can enjoy what must be the cheapest skiing in Australia within 30 miles of Launceston.

**Tasmanian Inter-Club Championship.**—1. Northern Tas. Alpine Club; 2. Ski Club of Tas.; 3. University Ski Club; 4. Alpine Club of Southern Tas.

**Tasmanian Jumping Championships.**—1. R. Tilley; 2. R. Naylor; 3. R. Vial.

**Tasmanian Downhill Championship (Men).**—1. R. Naylor; 2. R. Vial; 3. G. Bernhardt.

**Tasmanian Downhill Championship (Women).**—1. M. Vial; 2. S. Foster; 3. E. Masterman.

**Tasmanian Langlauf Championship.**—1. R. Naylor; 2. R. Vial; 3. R. Tilley.

**Tasmanian Slalom Championship (Men).**—1. C. Pretymann; 2. R. Tilley; 3. R. Vial.

**Tas. Slalom Championship (Women).**—1. M. Vial; 2. G. Foster; 3. E. Masterman.

**N.T.A.C. Club Slalom (Men)**—1. R. Naylor; 2. H. Von See; 3. R. R. Vial.

**N.T.A.C. Club Slalom (Women).**—1. Mrs. Vial; 2. Mrs. Waterworth; 3. Mrs. G. Foster.

**N.T.A.C. Club Downhill (Men).**—1. R. Naylor; 2. R. Tilley; 3. R. R. Vial.

**N.T.A.C. Club Downhill (Women)**—1. Mrs. Waterworth; 2. Mrs. Vial; 3. Mrs. Forster.

**N.T.A.C. Langlauf.**—1. R. Naylor; 2. R. Tilley; 3. R. R. Vial

**N.T.A.C. Jump**—1. R. Tilley; 2. R. Naylor; 3. R. R. Vial.

**N.T.A.C. Novice Race.**—1. M. Woodroff; 2. W. Lloyd-Green; 3. B. M. Thomas.

**N.T.A.C. Club Handicap Giant Slalom.**—1. S. Anderson; 2. B. M. Thomas; 3. M. Campbell.

**N.A.T.C. Club Handicap Jump.**—1. J. Tilley; 2. P. Anstie; 3. R. Tilley.

## Ski-ing in Southern Tasmania

By T. W. Mitchell

MY first experience of Southern Tasmanian ski-ing was a very happy sherry party at Peter Stops' house in Hobart, where I met representatives of all the Southern Tasmanian ski clubs. My second was the following day when I was motored right to the top of Mt. Wellington (4166ft.). This mountain rises abruptly in a giant whale-back almost from the Hobart water's edge and is spectacularly capped by dolorite columns.

On top there is a certain amount of plateau formation, liberally rocked, and it is here that ski-ing is done. Unfortunately the occurrence and quantity of snow are both highly uncertain and as a result Mt. Wellington is not thought very highly of as a ski-ing ground. But, at least the Hobart skier can look out his suburban window and if there is snow on the mountain he can throw his skis into his car and be on the

snow in little over half an hour—an amenity that many a Sydney or Melbourne skier would give anything to possess.

Mt. Wellington was first named by the explorer George Bass in 1788. From its summit the skier gazes northwards over a semi-circle of land whose periphery is dotted with snow-capped peaks from Ben Lomond (5160ft.) to Adamson's Peak; and southwards over a semi-circle of heavily indented coast line redolent of early Australian history. Between and below your ski tips are the huddled roofs of Hobart, while beyond the jagged frieze of bay and headlands are the blinding distances of the oceans stretching on and on to far distant Antarctica.

The next day Peter Stops motored me up to the main Southern Tasmanian snowfields in the National Park some 50 miles out of Hobart. On the way up through the ordered hop fields of the Derwent River valley, he indicated a white snowed range showing attractively and invitingly through a deep V-shaped notch in an intervening dark mountain wall. "That's where we're going," Stops said, treading harder on the accelerator. Not long afterwards we arrived at the foot of that dark mountain wall and found the gates of the Park. We also found, and were joined by, my old friend G. T. F. Chapman, whom I had last met in the inter-state race at Kosciusko in 1933. *Eheu tempus fugit!*

Immediately after the gates we started to climb steeply and quickly through towering and densely leafed beech woods that seemed more like Malaya or New Zealand than Australia. These eventually end and the road sweeps and swings through a rock and tree splattered gorge. The road then passes Lake Fenton—a demure little lake under a sharp peak—and runs out on to the open expanse of Wombat Moor. Ahead were Lake Dobson and Eagle Tarn and sheer above them was the white wall of the Mount Mawson-Rodway Range ski-ing grounds. We left the car by the shores of Lake Dobson and performed a preliminary scramble through a belt of bushland. Having made our way through this, we then proceeded to climb up the dramatic snow wall of the Golden Stairs. This unique slope averages 30°. It is an ideal slalom slope and just yells for a ski-tow.

On the top we met Tasmania's ski-ing Cabinet Minister, the Hon. R. Turnbull, M.H.A., whose daughter won the school girl championship at Buffalo last winter and whose son, Shan, won three out of four of

our Inter-Varsity events and was runner-up for our State Slalom title. With Dr. Turnbull were Miss Eve Masterman (the Southern Tasmanian Woman Champion) and Victor Smith. The latter has a profound and sincere knowledge and love of ski-ing and the mountain lands. He has been a member of the S.C.G.B. since 1925. An inseparable article of his ski-ing equipment is a goat skin wine "bottle" he bought in Spain. He holds that a few drops of wine squirted from this "bottle"—it is against all canons of ethics to put it to your lips—is the best thirst quencher of all.

After getting our breath, Chapman, Stops and I set off along the wide ridge connecting Mt. Mawson and the Rodway Range proper. This proved a flattish section. Just where the main massif of the Rodway rears its bulk up against the sky, we swung right and ran down on to the Tarn Shelf, carved by ancient ice from the rock walls of the Rodway Range. We set off on slightly damp snow along this shelf, gingerly gliding across the softening ice of a string of seven tarns that give the shelf its name. Between the tarns we turned and twisted between clumps of boulders left by the ancient glaciers. Here I met the vegetation whose shape and colour—particularly the latter—gives these snow-fields their weird and unique character. These are the King William Pine (known as King Billy); the Pencil Pine; and the Dwarf Beech. The latter is deciduous and, although at this time leafless, nevertheless imparts to the landscape a dark warm chocolate colouring. But the queerest of all is the "pandanny" or Giant Grass Tree that looked as if it should have a pineapple growing on the top. Its long crimson tinged leaf blades stick stiffly up through the snow and give a unique brightness and warmth to the landscape even on a dull day. The dead leaves hanging tightly packed down the trunk makes good tinder.

On our way through this weird and unreal snowland, Stops suddenly called me over to him. I glided over swiftly, but suddenly had to jam on all brakes because immediately ahead the earth vanished and I looked straight down a giant shaft to the grey waters of Lake Seal. This shaft, with its dramatic, scarred, bruised walls, was punched out of the living rock by glacial action, a fine example of a glacial cirque.

By the time we had resumed our journey the weather had deteriorated considerably;

the wind had risen and flurries of rain splattered down on us from the low grey-black ceiling of cloud just above our heads. Spume whipped up from the waves breaking on the ice of Lake Newdegate lashed our faces so that it was a very damp trio that shouldered open the corrugated iron door of the Lake Newdegate hut. However, the undaunted Champan soon had a warming fire going in the rusty old stove. We were joined by a couple of other Hobart skiers who were on their way to the Twilight Tarn hut, which lay a couple of miles or so further on. A positively vicious and sustained staccato of rain on the tin roof made conversation difficult. We had lunch and then set off back. The rain had largely cleared, but the afternoon was still threatening. I will never forget the strange formal shapes of the pines silhouetted darkly and rigidly against the surface ice of Lake Newdegate.

On the way back the sun broke through and I was able to turn and observe the promised snowland of Newdegate Pass spilling down from an unsuspected gap in the giant wall of the Rodway.

And now disaster overtook us. We were ski-ing across one of the tarns when Chapman, who was leading, skied on to rotten ice and started to break through. Stops and I made for the adjacent shore, but with a queer sinister sloosh the ice suddenly vanished from immediately around me, my skis vanished in a black watery flurry, and down I went. An appalling feeling of utter helplessness was sweeping over me when suddenly the lake stopped rushing upwards towards my mouth, the world suddenly became real and stable, and I realised that with water already waist deep, I had landed on a submerged rock. Stops had gone in up to his armpits, but Chapman's courageousness in going straight on was rewarded and he alone was dry. Before tackling the remaining tarns we always loosened our bindings. Those tarns are very deep.

The wind chopped completely round as we climbed back up from the Tarn Shelf to the main ridge and for some time we caught a real pasting from a snow storm, but by the time we had returned to the top of the Golden Stairs this spate of temper had passed and we were able to look out from the top of the Stairs over Lake Dobson to the reddish hues of the Wombat Moor.

After a few minutes inspecting the University Lodge at the top of the Stairs, we skied down in somewhat wet floury snow to the tree line and then off through the wood trail along the side of Lake Dobson to the Hobart Walking Club Lodge, where we spent a convivial few minutes with a cheerful collection of inmates. We then crossed the narrow wooded isthmus between Lake Dobson and Eagle Tarn, and spent a few minutes looking across this minute sheet of water to the lodge of the Alpine Club of Southern Tasmania, nestling under the trees by the beach on the further shore. Then back to the car via the other side of Lake Dobson with a flurry of giant goose feather snowflakes cascading between us and the steepness of the other shore.

We were home in Hobart just after 8 p.m.

This is a lovely area and probably the only bad features are the low altitude of the snowlands hereabouts and the complete unpredictability of rain, which may come—as far as I could gather—at any time and do anything to the snow, including suddenly and unexpectedly removing the lot.

Apart for some snow ploughing needed in full winter near Lake Fenton and at one particular spot deep down in the beech woods, the road is good.

There is no specific "alpine village" on our Mainland ideas, but the Wellington Ski Club lodge, the University lodge, the Alpine Club of South Tasmania lodge, and the Hobart Walking Club lodge are all reasonably close together and near to a small the Lake Fenton side of Lake Dobson, which are open to the non-club general public at two shillings per head per night. The Ski Club of Tasmania controls the huts out at Lake Newdegate and Twilight Tarn.

To date the really progressive ski-ing has all been at Ben Lomond in Northern Tasmania with the Southerners split into little separate independent lodge groups, but now there is a definite movement in the South to co-operate much more fully with the North and also in A.N.S.F. affairs as well.

I find the memory of this extremely colourful and attractive area makes me feel that quite definitely, be it winter or summer, I must go back.