

## The Long Short Cut

By L. Diggins.

During August, 1934, three members of the Edelweiss Club decided to venture forth from Hotham Heights to Cope Hut on the Bogong High Plains. Carrying packs containing blankets and food for two days, the party left Hotham House and soon reached Mount Loch. From there they descended to Dibbin's Hut, situated in a valley beside the Cobungra River. The climb out from Dibbin's was not looked forward to, and there were loud cheers when the leader of the party decided it would be wiser to stop the night.

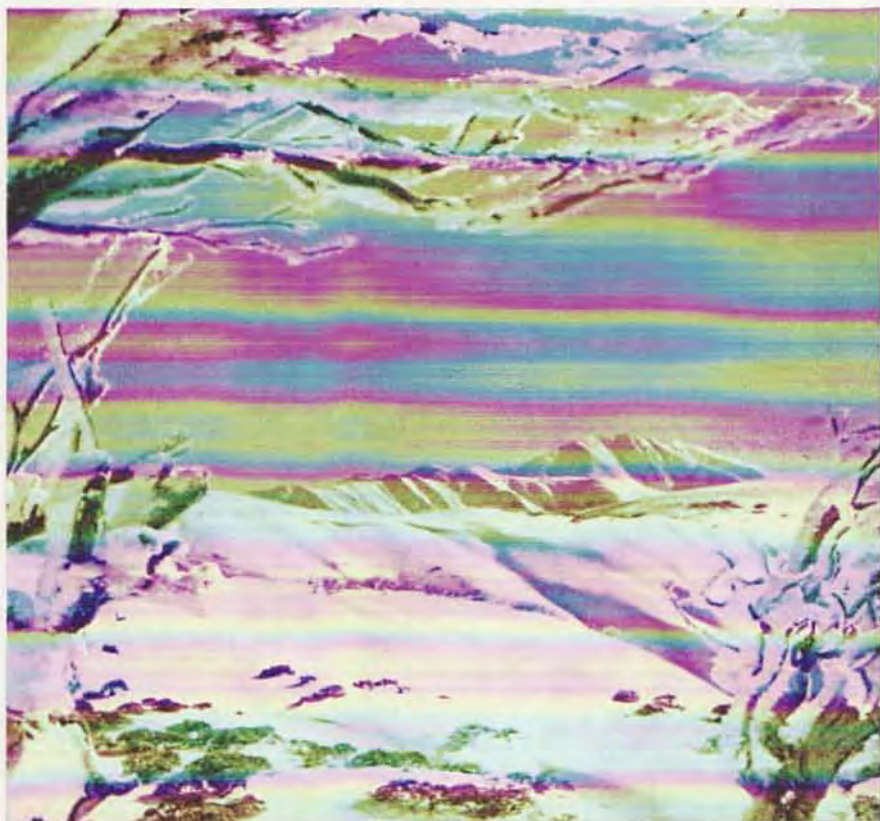
Next morning, leaving food and blankets in the hut, an early start was made, and Cope Hut was reached by 12 p.m. The trip to the hut was all one could desire, and the country quite different from any yet experienced by the members. After a short stay, the return journey was begun. As it was a clear day, short cuts were taken, thereby saving a couple of miles. After a most exhilarating run, the party once again descended into Dibbin's. About 11 o'clock next morning the party set off for Hotham. All went well until Mount Loch was reached. Looking across to Hotham Heights, it seemed so much shorter to drop down into Swindler's Creek and to climb straight up again, thus coming out below Hotham House, that it was decided to try that instead of travelling the three or four miles round the snow-poles.

At first the going was pleasant, stem-turning in and out through the trees. Then the snow got harder, till it was like ski-ing on a great block of ice, while the grade was getting steeper every few yards. Ski were taken off and carried, one careering away down to the creek. The next mishap was when one of the party inadvertently followed it. After consideration, it was decided to cross the creek, as there seemed to be an old road on the other side. While making use of stepping-stones the creek claimed two more victims.

The old road proved to be a water race, a relic of the gold-mining days. It contained water about two feet deep, covered by an inch of ice, and for about a mile the party tramped along breaking through the ice. Eventually, it could be stood no longer. Legs and feet were just about frozen, and the only thing to do was to force a way up through the undergrowth.



At the Hut.



MT. FEATHERTOP.

O. H. McCutcheon.

The snow was very deep, and the ski would persist in getting tangled in the bushes; however, time was flying and the party pushed on as fast as possible, eventually reaching a clear patch. Flagging spirits revived when it was realised that by traversing round an overhanging lip one would come out just below the basin. However, this optimism was dashed when it was discovered that the clear patch to be traversed was snow hardened to ice. All the stamina possessed by the members was needed to dig footholes. One slip would have been disastrous. It took about half an hour to cover thirty yards, and feet, legs and hands had lost all feeling. After this trap the weary members soon arrived, staggering but safe, at Hotham. It was irritating to realise that had the snow-poles been followed the party would have arrived at Hotham at least four hours earlier.

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