

## VICTORIAN SECTION

### EDITORIAL NOTES

WE can look back over the year, once more, as one of success and improvement in Victoria. Despite the poor snow season, the number of visits made to snowfields by club members and others has been greater than ever before, owing, probably, to the great improvements which have taken place at old-established resorts and to the development of new fields. The improvement in the standard of ski-ing has been most noticeable. The efforts of three bodies are outstanding: the Ski Club of Victoria, the Victorian Railways Commissioners and the Rover Scouts' Section of the Boy Scouts' Association. Each of these has, in a different sphere, done a tremendous amount for the sport. The Ski Club of Victoria has, by providing a club with a low membership fee and services to members, created the largest active membership list of any club in the State for the year. It has brought about a standard classification of tests, developed new standard runs for tests, and appointed judges. It has developed in the last two years the new terrain of Mount Bogong and further progress is being made, through its efforts, in the development of the northern section of the Bogong High Plains, the Timm's-Mount Nelse district. There is also afoot a movement for the erection of a new hut at Mount Buller, vastly superior to the present S.C.V. Hut. The production of reliable maps by the club has also been of great value. The most recent addition is that of the Mount Bogong—Big River—Lower East Kiewa and Northern High Plains district, appearing in this volume. The Railways Commissioners, by their administration policy, have similarly given great impetus to the sport. The greatest achievement has been the expansion of the policy of providing ski-ing instructors. For the first time an Austrian instructor was at Mount Hotham throughout the season. The Commissioners are also greatly improving the accommodation at both centres. There is no doubt that the introduction, by Franz Skardarasy, of the Arlberg standard teaching has produced a much more rapid improvement among the general body of skiers. The Rover Scouts, by adding ski-ing to their out of doors training, have also developed the sport in a new community. In addition, all the other clubs greatly assisted in the expansion of the sport. It is gratifying to note that each one reports 1938 as having been a year of success.

It is impossible not to refer to the disastrous and tragic bush fires which swept almost the whole of Victoria during the first two weeks in January, 1939. Suffice to say here that over 60 lives were lost, the majority in the sawmilling communities, that at least one-half of the timber reserves of the State were destroyed, and that hundreds of buildings were burned. The fires were most fierce in the mountain districts; there is probably not one ski-ing district which was not affected. The main Alpine highway from Bright to Omeo suffered most. For over a hundred miles there is now nothing but a desolate expanse of scorched golden-red hue. The delightful gullies and tracks of the bush are now for the most part shadeless pathways strewn with black logs. It was only with the greatest effort and the assistance of one of the militia battalions that the township of Bright was saved; at Harrietteville several buildings were destroyed. How Harrietteville was saved from total incineration can only really be appreciated from an actual visit. At St. Bernard all that remains is a heap of burnt ruins. Those who experienced the fire in these parts report that the spread of it was as if an unseen aeroplane had passed overhead spraying petrol; at other times it seemed that the very air was ignited, the flames jumping hundreds of feet. Our old friend Barny Rush and others from the Hospice sheltered lying face against the wet earth in a newly dug spring just down the Dargo Road.



At Hotham all that remains is the wall of the original Country Roads Board Hut and the chimney of the new lounge. A mass of steel edges, bits of toe-irons and steel sticks shows where the ski-room once stood. Here the Bradshaws and party, including a babe in arms, sheltered all night in the well near Lawler's Hut. Of the huts along this road and on other approaches to Mount Hotham the following have also been destroyed: the Diamantina, the Bon Accord, the Razorback and all the huts between Mount Hotham and Omeo, at Whisky Flat, Brandy Creek and Dinner Plain. At Mount Feathertop "The Bungalow" was destroyed but the Feathertop Tourist Hut still stands. So also does the Blowhard Hut and Spargo's Home. How Bill Spargo fought a winning battle alone for hours against uneven odds, is nothing short of miraculous. From Hotham to Omeo thousands of cattle perished. Many of them were suffocated by the overpowering fumes and smoke. Cobungra Station, near Omeo, alone, is reliably reported to have lost 3,000 head of cattle and 100 miles of fencing. In the village of Omeo at least half the buildings were razed to the ground. The whole of the Kiewa, Mount Bogong and Northern High Plains country was similarly devastated. The Bivouac Hut, erected through the efforts of the late C. J. M. Cole half-way up the Staircase Spur approach to Mount Bogong was destroyed and Pritchard's Hut to the north-east on the Granite Flat Spur approach from Eskdale was also lost. Fortunately, the Cleve Cole Memorial Hut was undamaged and, like the bad penny, "Hotel Aertex" still survives. All slopes of the mountain were burnt as bare as boards.



Snow-Gum, The Bluff.

A. J. Aird.

On the Bogong High Plains all the huts of major importance are safe—Batty's, Fitzgerald's, Kelly's, Wallace's and Cope. Mr. Martin Romuld's cottage and the home of Mr. Joe Olsson near Wallace's Hut were only saved after a great struggle. All the cattlemen in the adjoining lowlands suffered losses of cattle and fencing. The fate of Dibbin's, Young's, Weston's and Blair's Huts is still in doubt, although reports indicate that they are probably safe. Great concern was naturally felt for a time as to the welfare of the Mount Buller Chalet, but all were pleased to hear that it had escaped the worst of the menace and is safe. On the north of the dividing range which separates Gippsland from Central and North-eastern Victoria the fire crossed from the Matlock country and swept the southern slopes of these ranges with extraordinary severity and loss of life and enormous damage to timber, sawmills and other property. Only those who have experienced war or bush-fire of any magnitude can imagine what many of our bush folk went through. The town of Noojee, twice previously burned, was again wiped out. At Mount Erica it is reported that the fires may have re-



sulted in the cleaning out of possible new ski-ing country. At Lake Mountain, Mr. Brampton Girdon (of the Melbourne Walking Club) lost his hut and at Mount Donna Buang the Melbourne Walking Club Hut was also burned. The S.C.V. Hut and the University Club Hut there are both safe, although the fire came right to the door of each.

Mount St. Clair in the Matlock country was the scene of the greatest tragedy of all. At one of the sawmills there only one man survived, thirteen lives being lost, including that of the proprietor and his two sons. A similar tragedy was only averted at a nearby mill by the presence of a brick house in which the mill hands sheltered. The fire ghost has left its trail in almost all parts of Victoria, to the west in the Grampians and the Otway Forest country and to the far north-east, right through the ranges from the Murray River to the sea in Eastern Gippsland.

A résumé of the season's ski-ing:—

Mount Bogong: The third and last section of the Cleve Cole Memorial Hut was completed and a record total of 65 persons booked into the hut during the season, producing a substantial income to the S.C.V. in reduction of its advances in respect of the building scheme. In addition, through the generosity of one of the members of the club who desires to be anonymous, a shelter hut, of first-class quality and comfort for its type, was erected at the head of the Staircase Spur (see article elsewhere).

Mount Hotham: The season opened with a new Hotham. Fortunately the fires did not prevent one season's appreciation by skiers of the addition of a comfortable sitting room and improved sleeping accommodation resulting from another dormitory above the new sitting room. In addition to these improvements the old dining room was redecorated and refurnished and separate locked cupboards installed for each occupant of new type bunks.

Mount St. Bernard: Barney Rush acted as host to the usual band of visitors for the last time. Since the destruction of the Hospice by fire he is not returning. Mr. Ward Ambler, an enthusiastic skier, enjoyed only one season's use of a most commodious log cabin which he erected at considerable expense for himself not far from the Hospice and which was also destroyed by fire.

Mount Feathertop: The Wangarratta Ski Club erected a jumping platform and the main ski run was greatly improved. The season was the first during which an instructor was present throughout in the person of Mr. Pryce Jones.

Bogong High Plains: The popular Cope, Kelly's, Wallace's, and Fitzgerald's Huts were all in great demand. The Rover Scouts, in particular, occupied Wallace's Hut for three full weeks. A new hut has been erected by the Batty brothers, cattlemen from Glen Valley, near the summit of Mount Nelse. Arrangements have been made with them by the S.C.V. to use it during the winter and this should afford opportunities for the opening up of the excellent Nelse ski-ing district. Considerable progress has been made with the new State Electricity Commission road along the Eastern Kiewa, indications being that at the commencement of the coming season this road will give access by at least ten miles nearer the snowfields than previously.

Mount Buffalo: The ski tow at the Cresta run was extended to approximately 600 feet in length and the surface of the run and the ski tow plant also greatly improved. An excellent piece of terrain was opened up in the basin on the Horn side of the Cresta run and the hut at the Cresta run enlarged and refitted. The road from the Chalet out to the runs was also greatly improved.

Mount Buller: The Chalet at Mount Buller and the S.C.V. Hut both experienced record bookings, the principal periods being the King's Birthday week-end and the Buller Spring Meeting. The poorness of the snowfall for the season undoubtedly brought out the advantages which Buller has as the nearest 5,000 ft.



mountain to Melbourne and Mr. Helmut Kofler is to be commended for his initiative in pushing on with great developments for 1939 (see elsewhere).

Mount Donna Buang: Snow conditions suitable for ski-ing only occurred over a few week-ends but they were well availed of when they did occur and the University and S.C.V. Huts were well patronised.

Mount Erica: The Rover Scouts have during the year done much in the opening up of this mountain and it is the objective of their Gippsland enthusiasts to make it the high level playground of Gippsland.

One of the strangest duties performed by any civil servant in Australia is that undertaken by the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau's Snowline Representative, Mr. Eric Stewart. Stationed at Harrietteville, he is responsible for the general welfare of visitors to Mounts Feathertop, St. Bernard and Hotham. He is obliged to be conversant with the expected movements of visitors and to give them information regarding snow and weather conditions, vacancies at resorts, the arrangement of horses, transport, and hire of equipment. First established during the 1937 season, the task of the representative became so onerous during 1938 that it became necessary to appoint an assistant, Mr. Carl Wraith, of Harrietteville. Another important duty of the representative is to prepare and forward to Melbourne as accurate a report as possible of the snow conditions at the three main points at least weekly and more often if there is any great variation. These reports are then made available through the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau in Melbourne and through the daily papers. The most energetic aspect of his job is, of course, the duty of escorting parties to any of the resorts where necessary.



Courtesy, A.N.T.A.

The season saw the usual array of new ideas, new colours and better products in the equipment sphere. When one contemplates the revolutionary improvements in various items of equipment over the last few years, one hesitates to think what will be presented to skiers of the next generation. Messrs. A. Broad and S. Summers remain the centres for Victorian ski-ing requirements, Mr. Broad turning out a record number of his ski. Much was done through the Rover Scouts and by a series of articles which appeared in the issues of "Schuss" from April to August, 1938, inclusive, containing explicit instructions on cutting equipment costs and the home manufacture of ski, sticks and metal edges to encourage those who find the economic situation likely to prevent their indulgence in the sport to make their own equipment.

Reviewing the sport as a whole, we find a trend towards an increasing popularity of holiday trips, a decline of interest in racing (except, perhaps, in the University Club) and an increase in the popularity of the sport among the major schools. There has also been an increase in the number of tests passed and a very substantial improvement in general standards. Victoria is undoubtedly fortunate in possessing six main centres for the sport so that a much larger number of people from different parts of the State can take an active interest.

A surprisingly large number of Victorian skiers skied abroad during the year. Mrs. James Broach (formerly Miss Dorothy Tickle) and Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm McColl met in Austria. Mr. J. Brockhoff went to America and saw the



**Open Jumping Championship.**—C. Wraith (11, 11.5), 1; A. Brockhoff (8, 8), 2; B. Bretherton (8.5, 8), 3; C. Gribble (8, 8.5), 4; F. Pullar (8.5, 8), 5; D. Stogdale (11\*, 10.5), 6; N. Dickson (7, 8), 7.

**Open Langlauf Championship.**—C. Wraith (1.30.50), 1; Jack Treasure (1.40.5), 2; Jim Treasure (1.46.40), 3; C. Gribble (1.51.25), 4; F. Pullar (1.58.0), 5; D. Stogdale (2.3.25), 6.

**Intermediate Downhill.**—C. Gribble (33.2/5), 1; B. Bretherton (34.4/5), 2; N. Dickson (41), 3; C. Hull (41.4/5), 4; V. Cole (42.4/5), 5.

**Intermediate Slalom.**—B. Bretherton (1.28 2/5), 1; N. Dickson (1.38), 2; A. Brockhoff (1.41 2/5), V. Cole (1.41 2/5), aeq., 3; C. Gribble (1.48 3/5), 5.

**Combined Results.**—B. Bretherton (195.98), 1; C. Gribble (181.39), 2; N. Dickson (171.64), 3; V. Cole (165.21), 4; F. Pullar (154.54), 5.

**Intermediate Langlauf.**—Jack Treasure (1.24.46), 1; F. Pullar (1.28.48), 2; C. Gribble (1.31.6), 3; R. Bell (1.37.34), 4; Jim Treasure (1.39.30), 5.

**Intermediate Jump.**—B. Bretherton (8.5, 8), 1; C. Gribble (8, 8.5), F. Pullar (8.5, 8), 3; N. Dickson (7, 8), 4.

#### Women's Club Championships.

**Downhill.**—Miss M. Wallace (36), 1; Mrs. A. Brockhoff (37 2/5), 2; Miss C. Joshua (37 3/5), 3; Miss K. Magill (41), 4.

**Slalom.**—Mrs. A. Brockhoff (2.22 4/5), 1; Miss M. Wallace (2.52 2/5), 2; Miss E. McEvoy (2.56 3/5), 3; Miss C. Joshua (2.57 2/5), 4; Miss K. Magill (3.13), 5.

**Combined Result.**—Mrs. A. Brockhoff (196.25), 1; Miss M. Wallace (182.64), 2; Miss C. Joshua (176.08), 3; Miss K. Magill (161.81), 4.

#### Women's Open Championship.

**Downhill.**—Miss M. Wallace (2.36 4/5), 1; Mrs. A. Brockhoff (3.34), 2; Miss C. Joshua (3.58 3/5), 3; Miss K. Magill (4.30 2/5), 4.

**Slalom.**—Miss M. Wallace (2.35 1/5), 1; Mrs. A. Brockhoff (2.36 4/5), 2; Miss E. McEvoy (2.48 3/5), 3; Miss C. Joshua (2.59 4/5), 4; Miss K. Magill (3.50 1/5), 5.

**Combined Result.**—Miss M. Wallace (200), 1; Mrs. A. Brockhoff (172.25), 2; Miss C. Joshua (152.03), 3; Miss K. Magill (125.42), 4.

## MOUNT BOGONG DEVELOPMENTS

By H. V. Doughty

### The Past:

1928.—August 18th—first winter ascent by four members of the S.C.V.—W. F. Waters, Kemble Gibson, E. C. Robinson and Eric Stewart (1). 1932.—August 17th—three members—W. D. Bertram, E. C. Robinson and J. K. Tulloh—accomplished the first complete ski traverse of the mountain. (2). The late Mr. C. J. M. Cole made a ski ascent up the Staircase Spur to the summit from the Tawonga side and Roy Weston, also a member of the S.C.V., spent some time on the mountain and produced an excellent map.

1933.—August: Messrs. Cole and Weston spent a week in Maddison's Hut at Camp Valley, being the first party to stay on Mount Bogong in winter.

1934.—First steps taken in the late Mr. C. J. M. Cole's Development Scheme, consisting of:—(i) the erection of a Shelter Hut on the Staircase Spur; (ii) the clearing of the track on the upper portion of the Spur; (iii) erection of snow-poles along the uppermost portion of the Spur to the summit and thence to Camp

(1) See pp. 11-19, 1929 S.C.V. Year Book.

(2) See pp. 27-29, 1933 S.C.V. Year Book.