

Victorian Section

Editorial Notes

THE year was notable both for the number of men who were on active service and so could not ski, and the number wearing the R.A.A.F. Reserve badge, who were having their last season of ski-ing, barring Canadian possibilities, until the war is over. This call to young and active men has meant a considerable reduction of club activity, as so many members have enlisted. The weaker sex will have to carry the main brunt for this while, with some assistance from the greybeards and rejects.

Now is not the time to institute any major reforms or to plough new fields, but at least we can usefully employ this period, when our recreation and pleasure must be curtailed because of the war effort, for the gestation of new ideas. Such plans, well considered and examined by those remaining, can be put forward with added clarity and less waste of time over preliminaries, when the time comes for us to lay down victorious arms and take up our peaceful pursuits anew. Meanwhile, clubs have given support in raising funds for the war effort and in aiding the National Fitness Movement.

Snow last year was as sparse as it was plentiful the year before. Bogong seemed to be better capped than Hotham or the Bogong High Plains, but bare ground was showing in the flatter spots at all three before the end of August. At Roper's Hut, on the northern edge of the B.H.P., only the chimney was visible in September, 1939, but grass was showing at one corner last year. The contrast was graphically emphasised at the Cole Hut on Bogong, where snow-gums felled for firewood at snow-level in 1939 were cut again last year to yield good six-foot logs.

Hotham recorded its first avalanche accident in August, 1940, though luckily the only damage sustained was a broken binding. "Schuss" reports the conditions as being drift powder lying above ice on a steep slope, below the cornice facing the Chalet. The skier was buried completely at one stage but was diverted to the edge of the stream after sliding thirty yards, and came to rest safely after a drop of about 200 feet in all.

The popular Austrian teachers, Anton (Tony) Walch and Rickard Werle, who went to America after the 1939 season, were not permitted to return to Victoria nor to stay in America till war ended. They were at Sun Valley (Idaho) for quite a while, and when last heard of they were in Tokio, apparently on their way home to Europe; their non-appearance was thought to be a set-back to the advance which has been made in the standard of Victorian ski-ing over the past two years. At Hotham, however, Manager Jim Bradshaw rose manfully to the occasion. His ski-ing has improved astonishingly, and of his own free will he gave many valuable lessons. He knows the Arlberg technique thoroughly, has the additional gift of being able to make it easily understood, and as a result his classes at Hotham were both popular and effective.

Carl Wraith also did a good deal of voluntary teaching in between his escort duties. For those who haven't seen Carl teach, it is sufficient to say that his teaching is of the same high standard as his ski-ing.

Victoria's Alps are by no means strangers to the "flying fox" which has been used as a means of cheaply transporting even fairly heavy machinery up steep and broken slopes. Malcolm McColl reports that at Hochsölden, in Austria, it was used to bring in the luggage of ski-ing tourists over very much the same

type of country as the Bon Accord Spur—perhaps we shall see this at Hotham one day, when chalet accommodation is expanded.

The portable ski-tow is another device, already widely used in the Americas, which should have a future in Australia.

Quoth the Railways: "Neither a portable nor a fixed ski-tow is practicable for such a small house as Hotham is at present, but one will surely be made in the peaceful future. We would be interested to have a consensus of opinion as to the most suitable slope for it".

For some time Americans, through "The Ski Bulletin", have been supplied with an excellent set of regional reports of their snow conditions, local forecasts and a general long-range forecast. Mr. E. B. Rideout, Meteorologist for broadcasting station WEEI, Boston, Mass., has been the genius presiding in these matters. It is to be hoped that similar talent will be uncovered in Victoria to draw aside the veil from our peculiar and much-abused weather system, so that at last the S.C.V. Secretary will be able to answer the Friday-nighters' question, "Will there be new snow at Buller on Sunday?"

Our good friends the K.S.R. have already commenced the battle in New South Wales with a series of interesting articles in their magazine on Kosciusko weather.

Articles on weather and forecasts have appeared in the 1931 Victorian Ski Year Book and A.N.Z.S.Y.B. of 1933, 1936, 1939 and 1940.

NEWS FROM THE SNOWFIELDS.

Except for the war, some extension would probably have been made to the accommodation at Hotham for next winter, but this has been postponed indefinitely. The same tariff will operate and the same excellent standard of comfort and service is promised this season. Club-booked accommodation has been limited to 24 beds, and six beds will be held for other guests if required. Not everyone knows that before June 28 and after September 13 the tariff is reduced (from £1) to 15/- a day. Before June 13 and after September 30 it is only 12/- a day.

Reference in an earlier Year Book to the blizzard hazards of the long and exposed St. Bernard route to Hotham leads us to record what is to-day common knowledge to all Hotham visitors and most Victorians, though it may not be so well-known in other States.

The Bon Accord route now offers a well protected and much shorter approach to Hotham from Harrierville and is safe for even raw beginners who are physically strong, provided they are in experienced company. A graded riding track of 7 miles finishes by a well-equipped hut at the snow-line on the Bon Accord Spur, where lunch is usually taken. The ski route, 3 miles 1,500 ft., rises steeply for about 200 ft. and thereafter climbs evenly to the Razorback, where there is an undulating mile of going, to the Diamantina Hut, on the side of Hotham. The terrific climb from Baldy Hollow up to the back of Hotham is all but eliminated, and even in a first-class blizzard all but the crossing of Hotham itself is partly protected. There are snow-poles all the way from the timber-line on the Bon Accord Spur to the Chalet at Hotham.

Nowadays the St. Benard-Hotham route is relegated to thirsty ones (when the pub is re-built), would-be langlaufers, and late spring skiers, as then, it is often possible to drive as far as the Blowhard Hut.



Tom Mitchell.



Derrick Stogdale.

Hut on Baw-Baw, Victoria.

G. Toye.



We asked the Railways what of the report that a portion of the St. Bernard to Hotham road was to be roofed in and so made available for traffic throughout the winter. They replied: "This rumour is the hardest thing to scotch that we have ever encountered. It apparently had its genesis in a remark of the late Major McCormack of the C.R.B. Such a scheme would be if not impracticable, prohibitively expensive, and for what? To serve, not a village, as in Europe, but one small accommodation house".

What happens when a new tramline is opened?

That ancient Harrietville landmark, the Star Hotel, has been re-built at last. A gleaming bar complete with all modern accoutrements has replaced the old two-by-four back parlour, where of a Saturday night the local footballers competed with skiers just down from Hotham—visiting anglers were rarely in the race.

Plans for Buller Chalet management are that a Swiss ski-ing instructor is to be engaged, and that one experienced in catering and accommodation management will be engaged just before the season commences as house-manager in charge of the Chalet. The building is being renovated and improvements in comfort made.

The road has at last been completed to the Chalet, and, though narrow, it seems to have a solid bottom and is well graded. Last season, as soon as the snow melted off it, cars had no difficulty in getting through to the Chalet, where there is a parking area.

Plans were finalised, and capital and management settled for the re-building of St. Bernard when war broke out, and it was decided to postpone all activities though the licence will be maintained. The Chalet planned was estimated to cost about £16,000 for a four-story concrete building with balconies, central heating and electricity, garage for 30/40 cars, and accommodation for about 60 people. A number of bedrooms were to have had private bathrooms, and some rooms were convertible into small suites.

The site for the new Chalet was selected some hundred yards higher up, giving a very fine view; the garage was planned to cover the old excavation, and the Harrietville road was to be snow-ploughed to the front door throughout the winter. *Après la guerre!*

The war has postponed plans for the erection of a privately-run Chalet on the Bogong High Plains. The S.C.V.'s license for a hut site near Mount McKay on the Bogong High Plains has been suspended by the Lands Department, because of an arrangement it made with the S.E.C. Use of the new road to Bogong Township, at the foot of the Kiewa hydro-electric scheme, is not at present encouraged.

The Rover Scout Hostel, erected early in 1940 between Cope Hut and the S.E.C. cottage on the Bogong High Plains, is a very well-equipped and comfortable structure, holding at least 30. It is unique in having two hot and two cold showers, as well as sanitary conveniences and a well-heated upstairs dormitory. The Rovers are justly proud of their Hostel, which they claim as the most completely equipped hut in the Alps. At all events, several denizens of Cope Hut last winter were very glad to have their first hot bath in ten days there.

Owners of S.C.V. maps of the Bogong High Plains are reminded that the pole-line from Cope Hut towards Kelly's Hut now passes within 100 yards of Wallace's Hut. The alteration was made when replacing poles destroyed in the 1939 bush-fires and is marked in current prints of the S.C.V.'s inch-to-the-mile map. As there are more poles in the new line, several between Wallace's and Cope are without number-plates.

The Marysville Division of the S.C.V. has erected a hut on Lake Mountain at the foot of the Snowy Hill run, cut just after the 1939 bush-fires. The hut is at about 4,400 ft. and should provide a good jumping-off ground for anyone wishing to try the Federation traverse on ski, as well as being a good base for week-enders from Marysville. The road has been much improved in the last two years.

A new ski-run was cleared on the Buffalo Plateau this year—closer to the Chalet than the Cathedral and Cresta runs. It has been called the Dingo Dell, about 350 yards long, and is located at about 4,700 ft.

NO BUNGALOW FOR FEATHERTOP!

Feathertop seems to have been temporarily eclipsed as a ski-ing resort. The Railways have no intention of re-building the Bungalow there, burnt in the January, 1939, bush-fires, and do not intend to play any part in the future development of Feathertop.

The Bungalow there was always a popular place for beginners and those not so well-equipped by nature for the longer trip to Hotham. The well-graded track from Harrierville is easy to follow, protected all the way and horses could reach the Bungalow in all but exceptional conditions, a feature especially attractive to the uninitiated and one which also eliminated the need for packing in a good deal of the food supply in preserved form during the summer, and sledging fresh meat during the winter.

Slopes are better than at St. Bernard, both for beginners and those more advanced. Here is an opportunity for the S.C.V. or Wangaratta S.C. to make more liveable the present hut near the Bungalow site, with the permission of the owners, the Harrierville Progress Association. Better still would be to re-build it nearer Little Feathertop, where there are some good southern slopes. There will always be a demand for such a hut, as without it the Razorback trip is not safe. The future may give it additional uses, as Tony Walch was keen to try the slopes of Big Feathertop for late spring ski-ing. The present hut has bunks for six.

Despite a recommendation from the S.C.V., the State Tourist Committee has not yet seen fit to put a pole-line across the Razorback from Feathertop to Bon Accord. Except the Fainter traverse, this is the last remaining high-level route which is used frequently enough to warrant such expenditure, and it is to be hoped that something will be done as soon as the war is over. The trip can be a delightful one on a good day, but the route is very susceptible to fogs and sudden changes of weather, and the loss of the half-way hut (1939 bush-fires) renders the trip doubly difficult in these conditions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLEVE COLE HUT.

Although much has been done at Bogong since Cleve Cole formulated the development scheme which first began things there, the slopes of the mountain are as yet barely scratched so far as ski-ing possibilities go.

An extension of the present pole-line is needed to the West Peak, where there is a fine site for a hut. Good ski-ing slopes exist both above and below this site, and the lack of wood could be overcome by having it cut and carried in during summer in similar manner to the scheme so successful at Cope in 1940. Such a hut would find its best use in the spring when the winter blizzards and fogs, for which Bogong is especially notorious, had abated.

Better use might be made of the Summit Hut by small spring parties, provided they are far-sighted enough to establish beforehand a plentiful supply of kerosene for the single burner primus, as this is the only means of cooking.

Some of the longest and steepest slopes on the mountain radiate from this hut. Visitors in the past have not observed the "pay-or-replace" code which governs the small store of kerosene and rations kept there for emergencies.

The water supply or the lack of it at Cole Hut in 1940 gave trouble to several parties and provoked some very sulphurous comments in the visitors' book. One party, determined to uncover the spring at the head of the pipe-line, dug many unsuccessful trenches along that line, and also at points where science or guess-work had prophesied the spring would be found. Fires were lit in the trenches to thaw allegedly frozen pipes, all to no effect. Until new snow fell it was highly dangerous, if not impossible to schuss the pole-line, because a profusion of trenches made the place like a small-scale tank trap.

Roy Weston (also party) who doodled in one day from Towonga, said "its over there". They dug, and sure enough it was—but the water still didn't run. Either the pipe was well frozen, blocked, or there is no longer sufficient head of water in the creek at that point. Meantime, parties relayed water manfully by bucket from a point 100 ft. below the hut for most of the winter.

Visitors to the Cole Hut are asked to make records at least once a day of temperature and pressure readings from the instruments installed recently. The low temperature thermometer is placed just inside the outer door of the porch, and the barometer hangs on the southern wall of the dining alcove. Duplicates of these records should be forwarded to the Secretary of the S.C.V., together with a note about wind and snow conditions.

Somehow, a stupid rumour has gained currency to the effect that the cement work in the walls of the Cole Hut is weathering away, and that consequently the hut is gradually falling to bits. This has probably arisen from careless observation by visitors, as it is noticeable that the front steps are slightly the worse for wear, mainly because they are used as a sort of anvil by those who prefer bashing to chopping up their firewood. The method is certainly spectacular and effective but destructive. A saw is provided for those who prefer the more conventional methods.

The true facts are that both outside and inside the hut the original trowel marks are sharply etched in the cement, which shows no sign of weathering whatever. With its foot-thick stone walls, the whole hut is still as solid as when it was built, and looks as though it will remain that way for many a long day.

OPENING UP APPROACHES TO BOGONG.

The four easiest approaches to Bogong are now too well-known to need any description. All are shown on the S.C.V. maps, available at 2/- each. Scale, one inch to the mile. They are the Staircase Spur from Tawonga, the Wills Ridge from Glen Wills, the Quartz Nobs Spur from the Bogong High Plains, and the T Spur, either from the B.H.P. or from Glen Wills.

The Staircase route, though the high-level sector is exposed, is most used, probably because Tawonga is 84 miles closer to Melbourne than Glen Wills and is not far by road from Harrierville, the base for Hotham. One day the road from Tawonga half-way to Cooper's Clearing will probably be extended up Mountain Creek and along the northern flanks of Bogong to pick up the Wills Ridge and make a junction with the Omeo-Tallangatta road. Until then the winter ascent of the Staircase will be best achieved by horse from Cooper's or Tawonga to the snow-line. The Bivouac Hut, half-way up, has been re-built since the 1939 bush-fires.

The B.H.P. approaches are high-level routes necessitating several days' skiing; those unfamiliar with the terrain should remember that Bogong is separated from the Bogong High Plains by the valley of the Big River, a 3,000 ft. rift well-

timbered on either side with spurs dropping precipitously the last 500 feet to the river. There is an all too common impression abroad that Bogong merges imperceptibly into the Plains, whereas by the shortest route it is a solid 8-hours' (with pack) of ski-ing and scrub-shoving to reach the northern (closest) edge of the Plains.

The most sheltered approach is probably from Glen Valley, via the old Tawonga mining track and up the T. Spur, but before coming into general use some improvements are needed.

This track of last century along the Big River if re-opened would need to be cleared. It has been captured by the thick river scrub and is altogether lost except in one or two places. It would be possible by this route to ride to within about two miles of the Cole Hut, and the remainder of the trip being sheltered would not be difficult.

Bill Batty, one of the leaders of the Glen Valley rescue party in the 1936 Bogong disaster, has offered to help open up another route, the one which he uses for cattle on to the Plains (see "Schuss" for August, 1940), namely, from Glen Wills, via Batty's Hut, across the shoulder of Nelse to Roper's Hut, down Duane's Spur, across the Big River and up the T Spur. This, however, would not be a trip for horses in a normal snow year, because of snow near Roper's, and involves a lot more climbing than the Big River track.

The T Spur itself faces south and forms the eastern wall of the hanging Camp Valley. Some clearing and snow-poling is necessary at its head, though it is already well blazed (by Roy Weston and Pat Tobias in 1940) from the upper scrub-line, 300 ft. above the Big River, right up to the finish of the woollybutts. The difficulty about navigation from the head of the spur disappears once one is familiar with the plan of the many creeks which run into the main basin of Camp Valley, near "Hotel Aertex". But it would be a very real difficulty late in the evening to one unfamiliar with the maze of little wooded spurs which seem to wander in all directions.

By day Camp Valley is a glorious place for that sort of pottering-about ski-ing best done on a hot spring day, or in a mist just thick enough to spoil free running on the bigger slopes. Set in one of these glades, cunningly concealed from the more open slopes above it, is "Hotel Aertex", or Maddison's Hut, the oldest hut on Bogong. It is a place to conjure up memories, and brings to mind the brave old days of touring, when that doyen of cattlemen, Walter Maddison, used to put up a tall sapling by the door in the autumn with a shovel tied to it, so that winter skiers could dig their way in if the hut was buried.

Chimney there is none, save a chink in one corner of the roof, but the hut is never smoky, mainly because of the excellent vents in the sapling walls. Of a morning you can lie very comfortably in your sleeping-bag on the shelf bunk which is half the hut, and first stoking the fire from the wood supply beneath you, cook quite a tidy pan of sausages. Wood is still plentiful nearby and a little stream chuckles merrily within twenty feet of the door, as though it had its own private joke. Perhaps it knows that the spring providing the water supply at the Cole Hut dried up last year?

So much has been written of Bogong in earlier Year Books that it is worth tabulating all the references for those who are interested.

Victorian Ski Year Book, 1929, pp. 11-9; 1933, pp. 27-29; 1934, pp. 121-122.

Aust. & N.Z. Ski Year Book, 1934, pp. 189-190; 1935, pp. 207-209; 1937, pp. 45-55; 1938, pp. 33-37 and p. 128; 1939, pp. 90-94; 1940, pp. 71-72.

A MORNING WITH MARTIN ROMULD.

Several years spent on the Plains as Meteorological Engineer for the S.E.C. have not altered Martin Romuld one bit, and have added to his remarkable

ability to cover country. Those who were at the 1934 Championships at Hotham will remember how in the Langlauf, having passed the field on the outward journey, he serenaded them on the home-run with "She was so good and so kind to me", and even showed them a Telemark or two.

We found him this year lying sideways on the floor to put on his left boot, because of a couple of damaged ribs. A mixed party from Hotham, Omeo and Cope had foregathered at the S.E.C. Cottage to do the morning rounds with Martin, and we observed with some relief that he was forced to adopt the same peculiar methods to clip his left binding.

After everyone had waxed, Martin donned a rucksackful of instruments and the party set off at a brisk slither, Martin and Carl Wraith in the lead. The mist swirled around us, a thin drizzle of rain began, the temperature rose, and the life went out of the snow like a pricked balloon. Martin ambled along, stopping here and there on a rocky eminence to point out where the beauty spots would have been if you could see through the mist, and each time the party caught up. We punted like fury down hills, skating on the flatter bits, produced our best three-step on the level, and still Martin ambled just ahead, pushing only with his right-hand stick. Once, indeed, on a steady climb he pulled out his pipe, filled it while still on the move, and puffed away contentedly, the rest of us climbing doggedly behind.

After mid-day he left us to go further along Rocky Valley for some snow-gauge readings. The mist lifted a little and we swung homewards at a more leisurely gait.