

VICTORIAN SECTION

Editorial Notes

Mt. McKay appears to be the most likely site for the S.C.V.'s \$5,000 War Memorial Clubhouse, but a note should have appeared in last year's book that no final commitments have been made, and the committee will be quick to choose another area if any superior advantages should appear likely.

The McKay site is supported by a great many members, but Hotham, too, has its advocates. Their argument is that, with a chalet already at Hotham, a second building would make it easier to get a tow. Also make it easier to get staff, as well as to use a combined voice in agitating for road improvements and the like. Should someone open a ski store, by the time a few road workers appear and the post office demands a staff, a school may be likely; and, next thing, there is a village.

Against this, the Mt. McKay supporters contend that, even starting from scratch, there is a chance of getting a village on McKay sooner than on Hotham because it is handier to Albury, has an excellent road, and will have novelty. They also stress its summer attractions.

Without entering into the controversy, this note merely points out that most of the committee favour McKay, under present prospects, but retain an open mind about what will appear best when the time actually comes.

Racing Try-outs Racing since the war has, for a number of reasons, been abandoned, but now there seems to have arrived a time when it may be more practical to try to organise a few of the lesser types of events.

With this in mind, the S.C.V. committee has re-established its racing sub-committee. The idea of the sub-committee at the moment, says Fred Ewert, its chairman, is to select a willing and suitable member visiting each centre where skiers will be congregating. This member will act as their representative, and run what may be perhaps only "picnic races," but these are bound to create a lot of fun and some progress.

Each representative so chosen will be given a selection of sample programmes, and he can run whatever events seem to him to be

suitable for the particular members present on the field at that time, taking into account their various abilities.

The representative will be asked to take times with a watch. Perhaps a small prize or token may be awarded. In some cases, he may suggest a handicap; in some a langlauf, a slalom, or a short downhill.

Standard courses will be used as much as possible, with the object of comparing times, while new courses may also be tried with a view to fixing comparative standard times.

Only junior and intermediate racing is at present contemplated, but if a senior performer happened to be present he could make a trial run against the watch, or he could be handicapped.

As Fred Ewert puts it: "Only one who has raced can fully appreciate the rapid improvement made by timing oneself against the clock."

The consequence of the proposed experiment will be watched with interest. . . .

Hut Designs Why do so many huts have the chimney at one end, where congestion is aggravated and only part of the room warmed? Keen discussion in Victoria has led to the enunciation of these principles:

The chimney should be in the middle of the longest side; or, better still, in the centre of the building.

The door should be on the same side as the chimney to reduce draughts.

The door should be sheltered—or cold air blows into the warmest hut.

Bunks should be right around the walls, not all at one end away from the fire.

If two-decker bunks are used—greatly increasing the capacity—the lower is best at about 18 inches from the floor, and should have enough headroom to allow full use as a seat, etc.

Of course, there are some who say, "In the daytime, get out and ski. At night, get into your sleeping bag." There is a lot in this, too.

Skiers on Service

The roll of S.C.V. members who enlisted in the forces now numbers

224, of which 13 are women. The list, as completely as is known to the committee, was given in "Schuss" for March, 1945. Those who have paid the supreme sacrifice number 19; they are: D. S. Brown, J. G. Gadsden, J. C. Griffiths, P. O. Ingoldby, D. G. Kit-chen, R. N. Mellor, A. C. Neil, K. Neundorf, G. C. Parkin, J. M. Pizzey, R. H. Roe, J. H. Rogerson, E. C. Sellers, I. L. Smith, L. J. Sparke, L. G. Vial, D. J. Walker, I. K. Whittaker, A. J. Wilson.

Five members are missing: T. Beauchamp, R. C. Burns, J. L. Donaldson, F. J. Irvine, and E. C. Nodrum.

Nine prisoners of war are: H. J. Ead, W. D. Finlason, T. W. Mitchell, R. G. Orr, M. J. Pullar, L. F. Rolling, J. F. Ross, R. D. Shands and G. H. Veitch.

Discharged members include: M. Ashkanasy, T. E. Austin, Sybil Church, S. Crawcour, A. C. Doggett, E. C. Head, A. H. Robins, L. Salmon, R. Schilling, Pat Tobias (now Mrs. Cardwell), Mary Wallace, E. R. Weston, Carl Wraith.

The report in "Schuss" is probably not quite up to date, particularly in regard to promotions and decorations, some of which we do not hear about until long afterwards. If anyone can give us later information of any member, it would be welcomed.

Ski-ing Standard Improves

Officials of the S.C.V. say that there is a marked improvement in the general standard of ski-ing, compared with even a few years ago. At Hotham, for instance, more members are seen running the steeper courses, where, a few years ago, many were content with the modest slopes of the Basin and the Pole Line—these days almost deserted.

Not only this, but tests are generally passed earlier in the member's ski-ing life. Good athletic skiers have been obtaining their Junior Test in a week; sometimes even their Third Class. Originally, the Junior Test was expected to take about three weeks.

Judges are emphatic that they have not relaxed the standards, and the general performances of Victorian skiers confirm this. The enthusiasm of one McNabb is reckoned responsible for more people attempting tests, as well as for keeping them at assiduous practice.



First S.C.V. President under new constitution

Arthur Shands, who is the S.C.V.'s new president—the first under its new constitution. A skier since 1929, he was president 1933-35; and a review of his earlier activities was published in the 1937 Year Book, as No. 8 in the S.C.V. Prominent Members series.

Former president Ted Tyler has been away for several years in the R.A.A.F., but was recently re-elected to the Committee until 1947. Arthur Shands became acting president upon Ted Tyler's departure. (Photo by Edwin G. Adamson.)

Along the Cornice on the Loch Spur

Photo Victorian Railways.



SPACE SAVING AT FEATHERTOP or Thirteen into Six Will Go!

By Malski

We hope it will be a long time before we have another snow season like 1944—the lightest snow conditions conceivable, and hordes of skiers (medium class, low class, and no class). With so few huts, austerity protruded its improving head everywhere, and, to overcome the housing problem, the S.C.V. decided to restrict hut bookings to the basis of "first come first served." This certainly limited overcrowding, and made the best of a bad job.

Thus it was that, as one of the thousands of hopefuls, I was elated to hear that my booking for the Buller Hut in the first week of August had been accepted. But elation soon gave way to an awful jar—hut capacity 12, and I was No. 16!

It was hardly reassuring to be told that everything would be quite O.K., if all the occupants slept head to toe, and no one exceeded 15 inches of space, sleeping bag included.

The more I thought of that 15 inches of space allotted to me at Buller, the less I liked the idea. So, when I was approached by two skiers, with a suggestion that I fill a vacancy in their Feathertop party, I accepted with glee, secure in the knowledge that I would have a nice comfortable stay at "Feather," instead of all the rush and crush at Buller.

We paused a day at Harrietteville, where we heard news of another party, also bound for Feathertop. We had hopes that the party was a small one, and it was not until I overtook a horse and rider on the Feathertop trail that I learned the worst—there were seven in the other party and six in ours!

After 4½ hours of steady climbing, I joined the crowd outside the hut. It is 16 feet by 10. The fireplace takes up one side. There are only six bunks. Well, six bunks among 13 equals two point something per bunk—which is impossible, both mathematically and otherwise.

The hut was not equipped with elastic walls, so, when all were in, the door could not be closed. However, it possessed a sort of "half loft," made of some baltic pine reminiscent of the charred ruins of the Chalet. One hopeful tried the loft, but nearly fell through, so that idea was abandoned, until a structural genius pointed out that, with an axe and a pair of pliers, the baltic pine could be stripped from the loft and nailed over the top of the ceiling joists, instead of under the joists as they stood originally.

An hour and a half saw the changes made, and, provided the ceiling joists did not collapse, all was O.K. Three of the architects elected to test the new mezzanine floor, and their combined 38 stone was placed on the weakest joist. It held.

The two parties subdivided the wall space, and, with a few saplings and salvaged nails, all gear was stowed clear of the floor. Shelves were made to keep the food safe from rats, as the snow line was well above us, although it was early August.

The two parties elected two cooks apiece, and all settled in—the other party in the six bunks, two of my comrades on the floor, and five of us in the loft.

It is pleasant to know that we had ample space for two more in the loft—and there was room on the floor for four more, making a comfortable place for just 19! So you see what CAN be done!

The arrangement was a roaring success, even if snow conditions were poor. I lived there happily for my allotted week, and at least nine of the party decided to stay on. But don't think you can get more than 19 in next year unless you take up a set of elastic walls with you.

By the way, I finally arrived at Buller Hut, and found myself only the fifth occupant—so you see how desirable it is to check up on hut bookings!



Evening Shadows, Mt. Loch, Victoria.

D. Bennett

A SEASON LIGHT BUT SWEET

By R. D. McNabb

The 1944 snow season in Victoria opened promisingly with heavy falls of snow in April and May, but unfortunately failed to continue its early standard, and finally was written down as one of the lightest and shortest we have known. An unusual feature was that the more southerly mountains fared better for snow than the higher Alps. Equally uncommonly, there was not one heavy blizzard for the whole season. There was an abundance of sunny days and fine settled weather.

The latter condition was, of course, linked with the widespread drought prevailing over south-eastern Australia, and was accompanied by heavy frosts which produced hard, icy surfaces for many weeks. Indicative of the lightness of the snow cover generally over the Alps was the record low intake for the year into Hume Reservoir, which was at dangerously low levels for the summer. Spring conditions set in unusually early, and, although there were none of the usual thawing rains, the scanty snow faded rapidly, and, for practical purposes, ski-ing ceased at the end of September.

Over the main Alpine area, little snow was received in June; best ski-ing conditions generally were in July; exceptional frosts and icy snow spoil the usually enjoyable August ski-ing (one skier used crampons at Hotham with

conspicuous success); while milder spring weather in September left surfaces relatively soft and slow. The weather generally was much better than average, with many sunny days and little wind.

MT. HOTHAM'S accommodation was again fully taxed, and again all requirements were efficiently met. Transport provided some anxious moments for skiers on a number of occasions, but, considering current conditions, it was on the whole very satisfactory indeed. The sledging system between Bon Accord and the Chalet, which was introduced the previous year by Eric Johnson, was developed to a regular weekly supply service, and has revolutionised both inward and outward journeys.

Hut trips were much more numerous than in recent years, and it is apparent that their former popularity has returned. A contributing factor is, of course, the temporary shortage of chalet accommodation. Two huts at least, Diamantina and Feathertop, were seriously overcrowded for a while in late August.

WANGARATTA SKI CLUB resumed operations in June, and ran trips to St. Bernard and more frequently to Feathertop.

MT. BUFFALO CHALET operated on approximately half capacity, and that naturally was in heavy demand. Snow was very lean, so lean, in fact, that what transport reached the Chalet was

usually able to drive out to Dingo Dell practically unobstructed. Lake Catani was well iced by the heavy frosts, and very good skating was enjoyed for a lengthy period.

MT. BULLER enjoyed a reasonably good season, lasting from mid-June to the end of September, though it, too, was afflicted with icy conditions in the mid-season period. July provided the best weather, and possibly the best snow conditions. The S.C.V. Hut was well occupied throughout the season, as transport to the mill was more regular than previously.

MT. ERICA DIVISION had the good fortune in such a light season to have snow on the Baw Baws at least up to average in quantity and better in quality from mid-June to late September, with a further heavy fall in October. These conditions were due to the frequent southerly squalls of moderate intensity which brought snow regularly to these southern areas when none fell on the Alps further north. The weather was good throughout, but unfortunately transport to take advantage of it was very scarce, so much so, that one group of members resorted to bicycles for a couple of trips to Mt. Erica. The whole of the Baw Baw Plateau was visited by touring parties during the season, and three parties from the Division visited Mt. Hotham in August.

DONNA BUANG also benefited from the southerly conditions mentioned above, and enjoyed a good season, ski-ing being pos-

able, with only a few breaks, from the end of June to mid-September, with further snow in October. There were no exceptionally heavy snowfalls, but a regular series of lighter falls. The weather generally was good, with very little thawing occurring between falls of snow, and the runs, in consequence, were in good condition. The S.C.V. and U.S.C. cabins were again used freely throughout the season, members travelling mainly by train and service bus.

No reports were received of any ski-ing on Lake Mountain, all Marysville Division members still being on active service.

ENTHUSIASM

By A.M.F.

I know it takes a lot to keep a good skier down—down in the valley, when there's snow on the tops. But I think most of us would boggle at the marathon taken on last year by a party from the Mt. Erica Ski Club.

Snow on the Baw Baws was not as light as on most of our other mountains, and the white crest of Mt. Erica was a visible temptation to skiers engaged in their mundane tasks at Yallourn and Moe.

Yallourn to Erica is 33 miles by road, just, you might think, a nice easy trip by car. But these petrol-less days such trips are off.

For you and me, maybe, but not our Erica heroes. Not a bit of it. They have bikes.

So, in the words of the official record, "at a quarter past one in the afternoon of Saturday, August 19, 1944, a calm and sunny day," a mixed party of five took off. They made Erica township (26 miles) by 5 p.m., stayed the night in the hotel, and left early Sunday morning on the last 7 miles of their road journey. But in their case the end of the road was not the end of the trail.

There was still the small matter of a 2,400-foot climb in two miles. That, of course, was a mere trifle, and by lunch time they were on the snow, thoroughly enjoying themselves, but faintly apologetic because the necessity for a return start at 3 p.m. precluded climbing the summit.

The 35 miles return trip was made without incident, and the first pair of riders reached Yallourn at 10.30 p.m., the others later—much later!

And just to prove they liked it, a few weeks later they did it again. This time they cut out the pansy business of staying the Saturday night in the hotel, and camped in a hut on the logging railway further up the mountain, making the summit quite early in the morning. The fun was so good that the return journey was left to look after itself. Consequently,

a late start after a big day meant arriving back at Yallourn at . . . 2.30 a.m. Monday.

So there you have it! A climb of just on 5,000 feet in a 70-mile week-end return trip by bike and Shanks' pony for the sake of a couple of hours on the snow! Beat that if you can. That's keenness! That's enthusiasm! That's . . . ! I dips me lid.

S.C.V. PROMINENT MEMBERS

No. 14.—Frank Gilbert

One of the club's best-liked members is Frank Gilbert.

It was in his capacity as Chairman of the Huts and Trips Sub-Committee through the past three seasons that many have made contact with Frank; and some of that time his 'phone never stopped ringing. But his part in Victorian ski-ing goes back many years.

His first contact with our snow-fields was in September, 1927, while still at Ivanhoe Grammar School, when he was a member of a party organised by Gerald Rush to visit Mt. St. Bernard. Gerald's instruction in ski-ing and snow-craft deeply impressed Frank, and his keen interest in the sport has grown steadily ever since.

In the intervening years he has visited every Victorian ski-ing resort except Mt. Erica; and he has acquired a vast experience of our mountains. He has taken part in many official club trips, as well as unofficial ones. Although he has attended a number of racing meetings, he is not so enthusiastic about that feature of the sport.

About 1932 he passed the old S.C.V. 3rd Class Test, and has attempted none since. But his ski-ing ability has continually progressed. At Hotham he attended Toni Walch's classes, and was an apt pupil. Building on his earlier solid knowledge, he has developed both a proficiency of the highest standard and a keen interest in ski-ing technique. Frank has become one of Victoria's most capable skiers.

Joining the S.C.V. Committee in 1941, he became Chairman of the Huts and Trips Sub-Committee. His experience proved of the greatest value in a difficult period, both to the Committee, in all of its work, and to individual members in arranging for their ski-



ing under limited opportunities. It was typical of Gilbert that he carried out a large volume of work with quiet efficiency. He was the first club official to receive the news of the Mt. Bogong tragedy that shocked all members in 1943. He was one of those to drop his business and rush to the north-east to take part in the search.

Everyone is sorry that his pharmacy business, with incessant demands in wartime, enforced his retirement from the Committee at the beginning of this year.

Frank's wife, Frances, accompanies him on many of his ski-ing trips. Under his instruction she is making very good progress. Many other skiers also owe much to his assistance on the snow, and acknowledge his helpfulness to them at all times. The ready smile that goes with his happy disposition has won him many friends amongst skiers, particularly at Hotham, where he makes the most of his ski-ing holidays—and where, a couple of seasons ago, he cleaned up the poker school with a pair of two's.

(Numbers 12 and 13 in this series appeared in the 1941 Year Book).