



The Staircase Spur and Mt. Bogong

H. S. Gibbs

Mt. Bogong, 1950.

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IN introducing the subject of Mt. Bogong one has to be cautious not to repeat what has previously been written in earlier Year Books. A survey of these articles reveals that no other mountain has received so much publicity, speculation and plans for development and yet seen so few skiers. These plans have changed very little since the aims of Cleve Cole were set out in 1934, and have been generally confirmed by subsequent enthusiastic Bogongites who have taken up the struggle.

One of the early developments suggested in 1934 was provision of a road up Mountain Creek. Whereas then a horse was necessary to cover the 9 miles up to the foot of the Staircase, to-day a good timber road passes the foot of this spur on the way up towards the Eskdale Spur. Wally Ryder has cut a track on to the Eskdale and now uses it as his summer access to the mountain,

thus completely by-passing the Staircase Spur with its Bivouac Hut, Summit Hut, radio and expensive steel poles.

This opening of the Eskdale was recommended as a most desirable access for future development. Admittedly it is a far better approach by horse in the summer and even in winter, until a point is reached below the Summit Dome. Here the spur narrows to a knife edge with a dangerous fall either way. Immediately beyond, the spur fades into a rounded dome, which has been found so icy on occasions that an ice-axe and crampons would be more suitable than skis. Hull mentioned in the 1947 Year Book that this section might be more exposed than the Upper Staircase. That is quite correct, because in viewing the Kiewa from this point, one overlooks the Upper Staircase and it is fully exposed to the north-west gales. By comparison, one feels much happier on the Stair-

case, which is still the shortest way home to Tawonga. With a car waiting at its foot, the writer has been from the Summit Hut to Tawonga in 2½ hours. Of course, this does not make the access any easier, because bad weather over the top can still hold a party at the Bivouac or Summit Hut.

Access by the Mitta and Mulhauser Spur is now taking some shape. As a result of an S.C.V. and P.W.D. survey of this spur in 1948, fingerboards have been supplied and we understand that Cr. Dave Northey, of Mitta Mitta, to whom we owe much, has had these erected at the appropriate places, i.e., the turn off from the main Omeo Highway—the junction of the Mulhauser and Glen Wills Spurs—and on a point where the Glen Wills Spur rises into Camp Valley. Eastern Roadlines have placed a cabin shelter at the saddle on the Omeo Highway opposite to the Mulhauser Spur, and passengers on their buses from either Albury or Omeo can be dropped here. A long easy climb of about six miles brings one to the junction of the Mulhausers and Glen Wills Spur. Just below this a half-way shelter hut is planned at the edge of the woolly butts. It is thence five miles to the Clive Cole Hut. If the journey be divided into two days, it should prove easier than approaching Hotham from St. Bernards and decidedly safer with its shelter of park-like snowgums all the way into Camp Valley. Snow poles should be required only from the entrance to Camp Valley to the Clive Cole Hut, a distance of 1½ miles, as the Glen Wills Spur is a very definite ridge with a flat top and merely needs short sections of scrub to be cleared away for skiing. This is planned for Easter, 1950, by a joint S.C.V.-Wangaratta S.C. party.

The western half of Mt. Bogong is still completely untouched, even the pole line to the Quartz Knobs having succumbed to ten years of storms. New life may be given to this area with the coming road into Bogong Gap, although the S.E.C. will be controlling

it. An easy climb of 2000 feet from the Gap and the sheltered gully of the Bogong Creek is reached. Here are some of the finest runs on the mountain, with several clear gullies running 2000 feet down to the woolly butts. Strangely enough, the snow is never so wind-blown as on the Eastern Ridge. The gullies on these south-west edges are more sheltered and considerably longer than those dropping into the Big River. The area, in its present undeveloped state, is about as hazardous as the west face of the Main Range. These difficulties do not apply in the early spring, but a shelter hut near the head of Bogong Creek is necessary before much real work can be done. It is worth a trip, for the scenery alone is truly alpine with its almost sheer drop to Mt. Beauty township 5400 feet below.

When the Clive Cole Memorial Hut was erected thirteen years ago, it was sincerely hoped that it would "provide shelter, summer and winter, in the years to come" for visitors, and throughout this long period it has been maintained virtually as a public shelter at considerable expense to the S.C.V. The post-war period has brought a great influx of summer visitors from all parts of Australia—one even from Fiji—as well as those from the nearby new S.E.C. towns. Along with the good, have arrived the careless, the dirty, and the straight-out vandals, so that we are now faced with an age-old problem. We must regretfully remind all, that this fine building is our property, that we wholly maintain it, and that no party has any authority to plan a visit to it without the permission of the S.C.V. This does not mean that policy has changed or that there will be discrimination between members and non-members, but rather that a greater degree of control has become necessary to protect club property. A building repair programme is now in hand and will be continued until the structure is in first-class order.

