

# Rover Scout Ski-ing in Victoria

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THE Rover Scout and his place in the set-up of the Scout Movement will not be familiar to all readers, so it will be helpful to mention that the Scout Association comprises four main sections, with appropriate leaders, as follows—Wolf Cubs, 8-11 years; Boy Scouts, 11-15 years; Senior Scouts, 15-17 years; and Rover Scouts from 16 or 17 plus to 23-25 years of age.

The main training activities of all sections are planned to take place in the out-doors, to secure the best results, and for Rover Scouts the emphasis on the "out" is most pronounced.

Obviously then, ski-ing as one of the finest of the out-door pastimes is well suited to a place in the scheme of training and Rover Scouts in some of the nations overseas are very keen on it, like their brethren in Victoria.

At the International Scout Chalet at Kandersteg, Switzerland, in 1930, I met a party of Hungarian Rovers who were taking part in Scout Ski-ing Championships in Switzerland, and that chance meeting gave me the idea to develop ski-ing as an activity for Rover Scouts in Victoria.

From the Scouting point of view the value of ski-ing to the Rover is that it supplies him with a lot of new experiences in the out of doors, and a stock of fresh knowledge of snow craft, weather lore, finding the way, touring and camping, and has the power of holding his interest and retaining him in the Movement against the attractions of outside bodies. The main basis of the activity for him is co-operative rather than competitive, but the latter aspect can be very helpful in its place in the scheme.

At the beginning all that the Headquarters Staff of the Rover Section possessed was the plan of the scheme. I had no funds, no revenue from the Association and no equipment. Rover Crews exist, like small clubs, with a membership averaging from six to twelve, as part of their respective Scout Groups throughout the State, having their own small funds, but paying no subscriptions to their Headquarters for such purposes, like members of a ski club, or like

ski clubs when affiliated as members of a central ski controlling authority.

Briefly, the scheme envisaged using Mt. Donna Buang, Warburton (50 miles from Melbourne, and the nearest ski-ing area), to give Rovers their first taste of ski-ing, and arranging seven and fourteen day tours to the Bogong High Plains, using cattlemen's huts as camping places until our own could be built. Each party had to pay its own expenses completely, and that arrangement is still followed.

In 1929-30 lantern lectures were given to develop interest among the Crews, and in May, 1931, the first class of instruction on grass at Mooroolbark was conducted; and some were held subsequently in other places.

In July, 1931, sixty-five Rovers took part in the first week-end ski trip to Mt. Donna Buang. There was no snow and plenty of disappointment, but interest was developing, and through the years since then week-end ski trips have been held regularly to Mt. Donna Buang, Lake Mountain and the Baw Baws.

In September, 1932, a party of four made the first trip to the Bogong High Plains, and since then without a break in winter and latterly in summer, parties have been regular visitors.

To develop ski-ing supplies of old skis, bindings and stocks were acquired and loaned to the Rovers at extremely cheap rates and that policy is still followed. Blue prints and instructions how to make skis were, and still are, issued and hundreds of Rovers have made their own.

A special ski-ing uniform was adopted, based on normal ski-ing garb, with a green flannel shirt, peaked cap and customary scout belt, scarf and badges.

In the early years parties in Warburton camped in various dwellings until, in 1937, the lease of an old four-roomed cottage on Brisbane Hill was secured. When that was sold it became necessary to look for our own property.

From 1932 to 1939 Bogong parties used the Government Hut at Mt. Cope and for a few years Wallace's Hut as well, by arrangement

with the lessee, Mr. Greenwood, who has also given us the privilege of arranging winter bookings for it.

In 1937-38 a site was selected for a Rover Chalet on the Bogong High Plains in the valley of Middle Creek below the Cope Hut, with the concurrence of Mr. Martin Romuld. The permission of the Lands Department and State Electricity Commission was secured to erect the building. The site is reasonably close to the middle of the High Plains, within two miles of the road to Bogong township, and is served by a bridle track from the Glen Wills-Omeo road. It is in timber, with permanent water handy, and on southern slopes that always carry good snow, even to drifts that last occasionally beyond Christmas.

The building, situated at an elevation of 5300ft., is about 50ft. long on the ground floor and 18ft. wide. It contains a ski room, indoor conveniences with running water and W.C.'s, a wash room, two cold showers, two hot shower containers fed by a Malley heater, a drying room, main living room 24ft. x 18ft., water laid on to two sinks, wood stove, two store rooms, main fire place and cooking stove. The dormitory upstairs measures 28ft. x 18ft. The Chalet is well lighted by ample windows protected by shutters and heated throughout by wood stoves.

Mr. A. Rudd, a leader in the Rover Section, was engaged in February, 1940, to erect the building, and with three assistants working 12 hours a day it was completed in five weeks. During that time they had to assist in loading pack horses and sledging timber from the road, so did a wonderful job.

The building cost £700 and was paid off fully within one month of completion. The funds to build it were raised within a period of two and a half years by the Rover Crews by social functions and the purchase of Life Memberships at £5 each, which entitled the holders, if individuals, to use the Chalet rent free, and if Crews, for one of their members to use it rent free.

A munificent donation of £300 sterling was given by Brigadier Mockler Ferryman, a British Army officer, now with the British Military Mission in Budapest. He was particularly interested in Rover Scouting while in Melbourne.

The Chalet is maintained generally by Christmas parties, who paint it, effect re-

pairs, chop supplies of firewood and instal alterations and improvements, clean up the site, between hikes and other trips, and on some occasions drift-ski-ing. The winter parties cannot do much except indoor repairs and urgent jobs.

Final selections of personnel is dependent on every member of the parties attending a training week-end at the Warburton Chalet at the beginning of July. There they are grouped into Crews (or parties) as for the Bogong trip and the routine duties of the Bogong Chalet are carried out. Talks are given on the menus, method of cooking, gear and equipment, ski-ing and safety precautions. Some grass ski-ing is practised by the novices and if there is snow on the run the party gets some actual ski-ing on the Sunday with tuition.

Membership of parties is not confined to Victorians. For years representatives from South Australia, N.S.W., Tasmania and, on one occasion, Canberra, have been included.

While in occupation the Chalet duties are carried out according to a specified routine, which ensures that everyone has variety and change in jobs, which are not too long, and which enables all necessary work to be done with no loss of ski-ing time.

The whole party of say, thirty, would be divided into four Crews of about seven each. In each Crew every man would have a specified job each day and corresponding partners in the other Crews. Every man changed his job next day after inspection and rises by daily steps up the ladder of duties until in charge of his Crew and the following day drops to the bottom of his Crew with his corresponding numbers in the other Crews.

Some clean the conveniences, bath, drying and living rooms, others chop and saw wood, some cook, others wash the cooking utensils and others the eating utensils.

Each Crew in turn is in charge of the Chalet and its Senior Man in control of the whole show.

Inspection takes place at 9.15 a.m., when all duties are completed and ready for the change over in duty roster which follows after.

Everyone can get six to seven hours ski-ing per day if he can take it.

Since 1938, qualified ski teachers have been engaged for the parties. Under their skilled tuition novices soon understand the technique of ski-ing and show style in their run-

ning. Most of the ski-ing to date has been of the touring variety for which the Bogongs are ideally suited.

So far it has been difficult to arrange races as the personnel of parties alters greatly each year and touring is very popular. Doubtless opportunity will present itself in time to include competitive events in the regular programme.

In the meantime, early in 1945 it had been decided to erect a Memorial Chalet at Warburton to commemorate those Rovers who sacrificed their lives in the Second World War. It was to be utilitarian in form and, while containing a suitable record and memorial to those who had paid the supreme sacrifice, was to provide accommodation for younger Rovers and Rover Squires engaged in hiking, ski-ing and week-ending in Warburton.

Plans were drawn for a commodious build-

ing 60ft. x 30ft. and search made for a site. Eventually, one, and later another adjoining block, totalling nearly two acres were purchased along the Donna Buang Road, about one and a half miles from Warburton.

When a permit to build the first quarter of the building, 30ft. x 15ft., working parties cleared the site of scrub and ferns and by the end of 1946 the first quarter of the main structure was well in hand. It was completed two years later, the long delay being due to shortage of materials and building restrictions. All work on it, except the building of the chimney, has been voluntary.

So far as ski-ing is concerned, its main use will be as a centre, where Rovers can get a first taste of the sport inexpensively and so start their interest developing towards ski-ing in future among the higher mountains around the Rover Chalet on the Bogong High Plains.