

# Progress at Mt. Buffalo

By A. W. Keown

**M**T. BUFFALOL, the Cradle of organised Ski-ing in Victoria, has moved steadily onward along the predetermined path of "Nursery" Ski-ing.

For years, the declared objective has been, or could be expressed as—"learn to ski in a week!"

Since the advent of Franz Skardarasy in 1936, the Arlberg way has been the Buffalo way, with two mildly wayward seasons when Arlberg Instructors were not available.

Between 900 and 1000 neophytes are initiated each winter into the elements of safe ski-ing. What is afterwards grafted on to the parent stock in the way of ski-ing technique is not the concern of the School. The aim is to teach the A.B.C. without frills and without abandoning the dogmas of the system. In all the years there has been remarkable freedom from accident and this is due to safe slopes, good teaching and subsequent good control.

But, enough of technique! Where is the School? It is at Dingo Dell, a sheltered hill running N.W. and S.E., flattish at top and bottom and extremely wide: on one side is the endless-rope ski tow.

With several seasons' experience of this type of tow—innocent of artificial grips and

so simple that second-day skiers can ride it—it is felt that it has all the attributes a beginners' tow can have. It holds 13-14 skiers at a time, and travelling time is 60-80 seconds for the ascent.

The amenities for skiers consist of concrete block conveniences, which are sewered, and, until this year, a long wooden hut with kitchen and two fireplaces.

Motor transport stopped at the road about 200 yards away and skis were carried across to the hut. At that, it wasn't such a bad hut. Hot lunches were served daily, the main disadvantage being the humping of ski and cold waits on the road waiting for buses to arrive or to fill.

The Ski Run is part of the Mt. Buffalo National Park and, with the Park, is controlled by a Committee of Management—not by the Railways Department, which operates the Chalet.

The Chalet guests, about 180 in number, are in the majority on week days, but on Sunday the number of day visitors to the Park usually numbers about 1000. Nearly all of these are "woollies," tobogganers or "abominable snow men" (and women), but some find their way out over the four miles of gate-controlled road to "The Dell."

The Park Committee, with the addition of cash derived from the Tourist Committee to its monetary resources (made up of parking, toll and ski tow fees), will have completed this winter a modern ski lodge on the site of the old huts.

The track from the main road has been diverted and bridged and Chalet buses—but not private cars—will run to the lodge door. Skis will be left in ski racks inside—thus obviating the cold wet carry and the fatiguing throw up and throw down to and from bus top.

The lodge is a skillion roof design sloping to rear, largely constructed of the native granite with timber superstructure and lined with boards from the pine plantation in the valley below. A large fireplace with hood dominates the main room, which is 50 feet x 25 feet with large entrance porches. This room is floored with coloured concrete slabs and with dining shelves around wall and tables down the centre with combined ski racks and seats—at far end opposite to cafeteria. The cafeteria can be completely locked off from the main lounge and is served by a compact and effective kitchen with water-heating appliances for tea making and washing up; with large range and oven, crockery

and cutlery cupboards, staff dinette, ski rack and lockers for staff, with large fuel stove and repair bench at rear.

A "Day Visitors'" room is provided in the S.E. corner of the building with fireplace and grilling grid, and this will always be open.

What—you ask—what has Mt. Buffalo that other places have not? The answer is this: in the near background the Chalet with its high standard of comfort and cuisine. Not very high—4500ft.

Four miles away, and higher, with cheap bus transport is Dingo Dell. Here is the cheapest Ski School in the world! Come, come, now! Not the cheapest surely! Well, six days' tuition—morning and afternoon—with an enamel school badge thrown in, for 12/6. Where is the cheaper school?

And, it should be added, a school with highly skilled professional instructors possessed of that combination of physical fitness, mental agility and infinite patience—plus the latest in ski-ing garb, that makes the learning painless and pleasant.

And, to re-emphasise the point first made, it is the Nursery of ski-ing in Victoria; safe, easy, cheap and, now, convenient for every aspiring skier.